

Free Write Journal #45

Rhyming Poetry

Kala-kantha dasa has published a book of poetry, *All That Lies Between*. It is a collection of rhymed, metrical verses in English. The poems are devotional, well-structured and particularly Prabhupada/Krsna oriented. I am impressed and satisfied with the poetry. But in his introduction he has made a derogatory remark about free verse poetry. He writes that it is like “playing tennis without a net.” He took this quote from a rhyming poet, perhaps Robert Frost. But I don’t think it was necessary for him to make a slur remark on non-rhyming poetry in order to defend his rhymed verse. Since the 20th century, 99.9% of published world poetry has been written in non-rhyming form. At the beginning of the 20th century, T.S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams wrote in free verse, and others followed. Now today in the 21st century, young poets perform spoken recitations of unrhymed poetry to big audiences at “poetry slams,” which are very popular. I think my Godbrother’s slur about free verse poetry was uncalled for.

More on Roses

In the Vedic literature, the lotus flower is most often referred to as most beautiful. There are many comparisons of Krsna to the lotus flower. He is “lotus-

eyed,” and He has “lotus feet.” Krsna’s spiritual abode, Goloka Vrndavana, is in the shape of a huge lotus. But several times Prabhupada has remarked that the rose is the most beautiful of all flowers. We have many roses in our garden, pink, yellow, cream and red. They are all very fragrant. When they blossom fully, they are a delight to see. We pick roses from our garden and place them in vases on the altar besides our Deities. That is the epitome of their usefulness and success, when they are offered to the Lord.

The Vaisnava is said to be as hard as a thunderbolt and as soft as a rose. He is hard against the Mayavadi-Sunyavadi teachings, which deny the personal form of Krsna. He does not tolerate such teachings and speaks strongly against them.

Prabhupada once addressed a disciple who was going to preach in Bangladesh and said he should be as brave as a British soldier and as soft as a Bengali mother. Prabhupada’s soft side was often displayed. He was kind to everyone he met. He took time out to give attention to his disciples’ young children, distributing to them cookies from a plate after he gave his lecture. He did this very soberly and lovingly, making sure even the smallest toddler got a sweet. He was always open and forgiving, even to devotees who had left his service and then wanted to come back again. He welcomed them and reinstated them in positions of responsibility. He said he cried when they went away. His skin was also soft, especially his feet, which could be seen when he received his daily massage. Prabhupada was also soft to any devotee who went to a difficult place to preach, such as a Muslim country or a communist country. When they returned to him, he expressed his appreciation and

rubbed their heads. Even when I went off to open a center in Boston in 1968, as I bowed before him he rubbed my back extensively and gave me mercy to face the tough times ahead in “Beantown.”

Longevity

It is unfortunate when a person or even an animal is cut off prematurely in their life duration. It was a great loss to ISKCON when Tamal Krishna Goswami suddenly passed away in a car accident just as he was beginning his promising academic career. It was a considerable loss to the preaching when such a powerful devotee disappeared untimely. The cows and calves that are killed untimely (before they can live out their natural life duration) are dealt a great injustice. Those who kill them, cutting off their natural longevity, will be punished by Yamaraja.

The *Bhagavatam* states, however, that even a moment of full consciousness is better than living for thousands of years with almost no consciousness, as a tree. Longevity is not the most important thing, but rendering devotional service for as long as you can live. Krsna says in *Bhagavad-gita* that even a little devotional service performed is never lost and will save one from the greatest fear at death (the fear of being plunged down into the lower species of life in *samsara*). The expert yogis can extend their longevity by many years through austere practices and penances. But their extended duration is a waste of time, because they do not have as their goal unalloyed devotional service to Krsna. The fabulously long life durations obtained by the demigods on the higher planets are also a frustration,

because their aim is to enjoy life, and they do not concentrate their endeavors in pure devotional service to please Krsna.

Reading

Baladeva's sister Kathi, who is a Buddhist meditator, gave me a book by a Buddhist monk. I found it interesting because it was autobiographical and told about his adventures when he left the monastery and wandered alone without support for four-and-a-half years. She then gave me another book by the same Rinpoche. This one is more about the fundamentals of Buddhist practices. I began reading it but then lost interest because I am not a practitioner, and so the teachings were not meant for me. Meanwhile, in the letter I received from Partha Sarathi Maharaja, he mentioned that he was reading the Gosvamis' literature. This sparked my interest, and I got out my books by Rupa Gosvami and Narottama dasa Thakura. These are my tradition, and when I get into them, I receive much transcendental pleasure reading the pastimes of Radha and Krsna, as told by the great *rasika* devotees coming in the line of Lord Caitanya.

Question from a Disciple: “What is your most important mission in life now, and how can we be a part of it?”

I have spent many decades taking preaching and managerial services in ISKCON. Now in my old age, I concentrate on writing. I post a weekly *Free Write*

Journal on my website, and try to publish two books a year. So since I am writing as my priority, I would like my disciples to read and understand my writings, to appreciate them, study them, and put them into practice. They can even help me by teaching others from my books along with their teaching from Prabhupada's books. They can help me by keeping my books in print and reading them as much as possible. Prabhupada used to say, "If you want to know me, read my books." The same is true for me. One of my close disciples, Haryasva dasa, very much appreciates my books. He says I have a different "voice" in my books, and he appreciates that unique voice, which he feels is very accessible to devotees. He wants to share my books with devotees and teach them in classes. He is an excellent example of what I want a disciple to do.

(Unfortunately, Haryasva doesn't know how to access my *Journal* from the computer. He says he is going to learn how to do it from another disciple. Then I request him, as I request all my *Journal* readers, to send me in questions that I can answer in *Free Write Journal*.)

Return

The purpose and the great advantage of the human form of life is that in this form one can prepare oneself and purify oneself so that he or she can return back to Godhead, back to home. Most conditioned souls are not interested in returning back to Godhead. They maintain attachments to this world and engage in sinful activities. And so at the time of death they do not enter into the spiritual world but return to

the material world in one of the 8,400,000 species of life. Those who have performed pious activities elevate themselves to the heavenly planets, where there are immense pleasures much greater than those on earth, and where the residents are all devotees of the Lord (although they have material attachments). The residents of the higher planets live a long time there, but when their pious credits are used up they return again to the earth planet, where the miseries of birth, death, disease and old age are prominent.

The whole huge battle of Kuruksetra was fought because the Kauravas would not return the rightful claim to the kingdom to the Pandava brothers. The Pandavas went into exile after losing the gambling match, and when they returned, the Kauravas, led by Duryodhana, would not even give them five villages to rule. Regarding “return,” the devotees of Ramacandra and Krsna were all overwhelmed in bliss when their Lord returned to His home in Ayodhya or Mathura or Dvaraka. They received Him with delirious happiness and offerings of gifts. This was the real homecoming, from the heart. It is said that in the absence of the Lord, the residents felt as if the life had left their senses. But on Rama’s or Krsna’s return, they became alive again. The condition of the *gopis* of Vrndavana in separation is pitiable beyond words. They waited for Krsna to return and maintained their lives only in the *hope* that someday He would actually come back. In a higher sense, it is said that Krsna never leaves a step out of Vrndavana but stays there in His *bhava* form. But the *gopis* felt real desperate pangs of separation from Him, and their bodies and spirits withered up like scorched lotuses.

Update on Out-loud Reading

We have been hearing from the Third Canto about the battle between the demon Hiranyaksa and the boar incarnation of the Supreme Lord. The demon attacked the Lord and tried to kill Him with his heavy mace. But the Lord grabbed the mace, disarmed the demon and smashed the mace. Hiranyaksa used other weapons, but in each case Varaha protected Himself and rendered the demon helpless. Hiranyaksa finally tried to throw his arms around Varaha and crush Him in an embrace. But he found that the Lord was outside his grip. No one can capture the Supreme Lord.

We also heard about Lord Brahma creating sons who attacked him for sex. Prabhupada writes in a purport that homosexual relations among men are demoniac. After the reading, Manohara questioned me about this purport. He said that nowadays gay people are accepted without prejudice, and he wondered if in future editions of Prabhupada's books this reference to gays being demoniac might be changed. I told him that the GBC and the various BBT publishing houses were very reluctant to change anything Prabhupada wrote. I referred him to a book I was reading by the 20th century American poet William Stafford. It is subtitled *Meditations on the Writing Life*. In his essays, Stafford uses the words "he" and "his" to refer to all poets. His editors have printed a footnote as follows: "Some of the pieces in this volume were written at a time (1965, the date of this and the last piece in this section) when 'he' and 'his' were used without a specific gender connotation

to refer to writers in general . . . we have, however, let stand his original language as being the words used by him at this time.” I told Manohara that although the BBTs were unlikely to change any of Prabhupada’s purports, they might consider this footnote application.

Advance Copies

Caitanya-candrodaya sent me several advance copies of Volume 1 of *POEMS/A Retrospective*. There were a couple of errors on the cover. That was because he waited too long to send me the advance copies. He said one of the errors (the omission of the subtitle *From Every Day, Just Write*) could not be changed. I was disappointed by this and will ask Caitanya in the future to keep a tighter deadline so that I can receive the advance copies with time to spare to make corrections.

Yesterday John Endler came by, and I gave him an advance copy of the book. He was very enthusiastic to receive it. He thought the covers were fine, and he loved the appearance of the poems and layout and design. Hearing his enthusiastic approval of the book, I became more encouraged that it was all right. I even thought the book was too long at 400 pages, but John assured me that it was a “handy” book to carry and read. So I am feeling more reassured and eagerly awaiting the 200 final copies to arrive from the printer. There are only three weeks left before the date, July 6th, on which I’m scheduled to distribute the books at the midyear meeting of my disciples and well-wishers.

Heart

Prabhupada suffered two heart attacks on the Jaladuta in his voyage from India to America. He thought if a third one occurred, he would die. But he had a vision of Krsna in His different incarnations rowing a boat. He recovered from his heart attacks and regained his strength. He received an extension on his life. Demons such as Ravana were struck in the heart (by a flaming arrow shot by Ramacandra), and Kamsa was killed by Krsna punching him on the chest. Prabhupada writes that a yogi can escape the death blows intended for him and extend his life. Krsna is seated in every individual's heart in His localized Paramatma form. Yogis undergo austerities in meditation just to gain a *darsana* of the Paramatma. A verse in the *Bhagavatam* states that if your hairs don't stand on end and tears don't flow when you chant Hare Krsna, then your heart must be steel-framed. The *gopis* and Sitadevi were brokenhearted in separation from their beloved Lord. The heart is also referred to as the seat of affections. A person is soft-hearted or hard-hearted according to his or her nature. Draupadi, after her hair had been insultingly touched by Dushasana, declared that she would not put her hair up again properly until Dushasana's heart was ripped out. Bhima later tore out Dushasana's heart in front of Draupadi, and she dipped her hair in the blood of Dushasana and then tied her hair up again.

From *The Radha-Govinda Worship Book*

“So many intrigues going on in Rupa Gosvami’s drama. Be interested in them. Let your mind get entangled in that gossip and fear, the fear that Abhimanyu might take Radha to Mathura, but the assurance quickly from Purnamasi (Bhagavati) that she will talk Abhimanyu out of it. Then Radha and Krsna playing in the groves of Vrndavana. But the *gopis* of Radha are intriguing against the *gopi* followers of Chandravali. Who shall outsmart who? It appears for a while that one group has outdone the other. But we know Radha will triumph. Hare Krsna.

“Meanwhile, in the present time and place I am dressing Radha and Govinda in white and pink outfits made in Vrndavana. I cannot make Krsna as nice as I’d like. His clothes need more sewing. My fingers are also somewhat clumsy and not fastidious enough to make the Divine Couple look perfect. Be more patient how to place the peacock feather in the Lord’s crown. Yes, as You order, I shall do. They exit; all exit.”

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“I dressed Radha-Govinda in the outfit with peacock-feather patterns over pink. With plenty of gold trim. It doesn’t reveal His lotus feet, but once or

twice a week I may use these clothes because they are royal and elegant.

“O Kana, O black boy who herds the cows, Karela,—the mother of Candravali reprimands Krsna and the *gopis*. She threatens that Govardhanamala, Candravali’s husband is a wrestler and intimate friend of Kamsa. Krsna replies, ‘So what?’ He is not afraid. The old women interrupt in the pastimes of the Lord. The *gopis* are speaking in Sanskrit with double meanings. You have to be a scholar to understand it. ‘O host of moons, Anuradha, the followers of Radharani.’ It is all quite learned, very much in the *madhurya-rasa*. Who can taste it if he has any mundane lust, or traces of it, in his heart?”

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“Krsna holds the long golden flute with the peacock design at the end. He wears shiny emerald earrings. His dress and *chadar* are of light green, and Radha is also dressed in that color. Side by side. O Lord Nrsimha, please take away from me any false ideas. We dwell in the perverted reflection of sex desire, and we impose that on the most brilliant of Krsna’s pastimes. We must simply reject the notion that Krsna’s activities are lusty. It is a different category of life, with nothing lusty in it. The *gopis* are pure. Their love is conjugal, but it is not lusty. You cannot understand it as long as you feel lust. But at least you can respect it and know it is not a material thing. To clean the heart, chant Hare Krsna and hear about Krsna from the pure devotees.”

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“My fingers seemed extra stubby and inept as I put on the earrings and *chadar* of Srimati Radharani. But I did it. They are dressed, and Srila Prabhupada is dressed. Today is Nrsimha Caturdasi, and we’re fasting. All glories to Lord Nrsimhadeva! May he (I don’t really mean this) chase away people from my front door. Don’t ask Him to chase away devotees. Krsna is not your doorman. Stop jesting with the name and pastimes of the Lord. All right, may Lord Nrsimha reign supreme, always in the presence of His beloved devotees. May I stand sometimes with them and receive His *darsana*. I pray to my Lord that by remembering Him I can banish my fears and demons of bad things that still possess the territory of my heart. When the Lord kills my demons, then I’ll be eligible to turn to Radha, Madhava and the *gopis*.

“While tending to the Deities, I heard the prayers of Narottama dasa Thakura. He was praying, “When will that day come when I will be able to directly serve the Divine Couple?” I was not able to pay attention to his prayers—only a few words drifted by. My scan of attention. One song says, ‘Those feet Those feet,’ referring to the feet of Rupa-manjari. Other songs lament the author’s fallen condition. I could not worship the great devotees of Lord Caitanya, not even for half a moment. He hankers to have better days and be raised to the highest point. Please be merciful, please allow me to live in Vrndavana. I heard that my mind went to my own visits and attempts to appreciate Vrndavana. I thought of the surface of Vrndavana and how difficult

it is for me to be there. The harshness of ISKCON temple life, the monkeys, the harsh (too hot, too cold) climate. But I don't think of Vrndavana in an offensive way. Pray to enter it, if not physically then mentally. Chant Hare Krsna, hear about the Divine Couple.”

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“Radha and Govinda in charming light-blue clothes. Bluish and pinkish, with rich-looking necklaces. His silver flute and leaning staff. Srila Prabhupada in brown with a saffron wool scarf. They're fine clothes, and I am pleased sensually to touch Them and to observe how handsome the cloth looks on the bodies of my worshipable Deities. This is not sense gratification, but worship.”

Random Looks at the Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary (12th Ed.)

rope (n.)

: a large stout cord of strands of fibers twisted or braided together.

The guru may say that, “This is a rope,” and when the disciple goes to grab it the guru may say, “Actually, this is a snake.” Then again he may say, “Actually, this is a rope.” In either case the disciple believes what the guru says and acts accordingly—

a rope, a snake, etc. The guru throws out the rope to rescue the conditioned soul, who is like a person in a blind well. The person simply has to grab onto the rope, and the guru will pull him out. A rope is placed through the nostril of an oxen to control him. This is compared to how a conditioned soul is helplessly controlled by maya.

plot (v.)

: to invent or devise the plot of (as a movie or literary work); to form a plot

The *Mahabharata* has a fascinating plot that captures the attention of the hearer or reader. It is filled with political intrigue, heroism, romance, etc. The plot of the Mahabharata is to catch the attention of the less-intelligent people—the women, *sudras*, and the *vaishas*. The *Mahabharata* plot is certainly a “page-turner,” keeping up the interest of the audience. It is recited in villages in India every night. The plots of mundane dramas or novels are a useless waste of time. A valid plot keeps the audience fixed in Krsna consciousness. The plots of Rupa Gosvami’s dramas are wonderful intrigues in which Radha and Krsna play the leading roles.

mind (v.)

: regard with attention: consider important—often used in the imperative, following *you* for emphasis. [I am not against inspiration, *mind you*]

: to follow the orders or instructions of

These definitions of mind refer to being “mindful,” to be concerned about. We should not be distracted by the many materialistic allurements and attractions. Our minds should be fixed on devotional service to Krsna. We should pay attention to that. We should “mind” the orders of the spiritual master and the *sastras* and ignore the influence of the material world.

horoscope (n.)

1 :a diagram of the relative positions of planets and signs of the Zodiac at a specific time (as at one’s birth) for use by astrologers inferring individual character and personality traits, and in foretelling of a person’s life.

In the *Bhagavatam*, Maharaja Pariksit’s horoscope is given elaborately. All his qualities are described. For example, he will be a warrior as good as Arjuna, etc. In Vedic times marriages consulted horoscopes to determine compatibility of the man and woman for marriage. Nowadays, the astrologers are not so accurate or profound. Formerly a horoscope was mandatory for determining the compatibility of marriage. But Prabhupada writes in a purport that if the boy and girl are Krsna conscious, that is sufficient information for their marriage. An “all-knowing” astrologer went to visit Lord Caitanya. He read Mahaprabhu’s signs and said in His former life He was the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Lord Caitanya replied that as far as He knew, He was a cowherd boy in His previous life. Astrologers used to be

able to tell a person when it was a good time to begin something. Especially if a person were pure, he could learn what was the best time for him to die. Bhismadeva waited for the right time for the conjunction of the planets. Astrologers also calculate the best time for events like marriage. Although they may not be so expert, there are many astrologers today. I know one devotee who is an astrologer, and he says predictions are determined 10% by using data from computer software and 90% from the astrologer's intuition. It is a business taken up by *grhasthas*. Some gullible persons become overly dependent on their astrologer. I know a man who didn't allow his daughter to go on an ISKCON bus pilgrimage for girls just because his astrologer advised him against it. Astrologers also advise when to start a business, when to take a vacation, and even when to "stay away from electric sockets and machines." At the end of his life, Prabhupada consulted a few astrologers, not in seriousness, but he said, "Just to see the fun." His astrologers did not give him accurate predictions as to what actually happened to him. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was a brilliant astrologer at the beginning of his career. He engaged in a debate with a top astrologer of the times while the guru of that astrologer was watching. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati defeated him soundly, proving that the standard timetables the other astrologers were using were several days off. Prabhupada dismissed astrology and said that all the lines in one's palms would change if one clapped his hands in chanting the Hare Krsna mantra before the Deities.

Dead Body

Different cultures with a dead body in different ways. In India, a dead body is cremated, especially on the bank of the Ganges at Gaya. Then there's an offering of *pinda* to the ancestors at a Visnu temple. This ensures that the person who passed away will at least get a human body and not a ghostly body. *Sannyasis* are not cremated, but they are buried in a deep pit and covered with protective lime and dirt. The Parsi community throws the corpse on a grate over a well. The vultures come and eat the flesh, and the bones fall into the well. Powerful spiritual masters like Sukracarya could bring a dead warrior back to life as long as his essential limbs and head were still available, even if they were cut off. A snake charmer can bring back to life a person who has died from snakebite. The tradition is that if a person dies during the day, he is cremated or buried before sunset. If he or she dies at night, the body is disposed of the following morning.

Srila Prabhupada passed away at 7:30 P.M. in his bed at Krsna-Balaram Mandir. He was placed on the temple *vyasasana* overnight, and in the early morning he was carried on a palanquin to the major temples of Vrndavana. Only then was his body lowered into a pit at the spot where his *samadhi* would be built.

In India, when a person dies, he or she is bathed and dressed in new clothes before they are taken for cremation. There is an ironic phrase, "decoration of a dead body," which is used to criticize materialists taking so much care of a person's body while he is alive. After all, he is doomed to die eventually, so the body care while alive should not be overemphasized. It is like the decoration of a dead body.

Spiritual Body

Everyone is an eternal spirit-soul. The spirit-soul keeps the body alive and fresh. When the person passes away, the spiritual soul transmigrates to a new body according to his karma. Those who have perfected their Krsna consciousness go back to Godhead, back home, where they assume a fully-developed eternal spiritual body with all knowledge and bliss, in association with Krsna and His *parisads*. The spirit-soul cannot be cut or dried or slain. It doesn't die when the body dies. Krsna has a spiritual body. When He descends into the material world, He does so in His eternal spiritual body. The impersonalists think that He descends in a body made of matter, but this is their mistaken speculation due to poor fund of knowledge.

Fire

During His appearance on earth, Krsna saved His devotees on separate occasions by swallowing a forest fire. When there's a fire in the forest, the animals are trapped. Some of the animals can flee, but the snakes are burned. The fire is not started by any man, but it is set off by bamboo rubbing together in the wind. The fire of material enjoyment is put out by the rain cloud of the spiritual master.

The Kurus, with the permission of Dhrtarastra, arranged to kill the Pandavas and their mother, Queen Kunti, by inviting them to stay in a house of shellac, which they planned to set fire to. Vidura gave hints of the conspiracy, and the Pandavas dug a tunnel out of the house and saved their lives. The demon Maya Danava begged

Arjuna to save him from a fire. Arjuna obliged him, and in return Maya Danava built the Pandavas a wonderful assembly hall.

When Vidura returned to the Kurus after his pilgrimage, he preached to the dying Dhrtarastra, urging him to quit family life, living at the expense of his enemies, and to become a *dhira*, one who leaves home without anyone's knowledge and who dies in a remote place. Dhrtarastra took Vidura's advice and left home along with his wife Gandhari. Dhrtarastra practiced austerities and burned his body in a yogic fire. His chaste wife entered the burning cottage where Dhrtarastra was and gave up her own life. Other devotees like Sati, the wife of Lord Siva, burned their bodies in yogic meditation. Krsna and Balarama jumped from the top of a burning mountain and saved Themselves by falling 800 miles safely to the ground. After Sita was released from captivity by Ravana, She proved Her chastity and purity by walking through fire.

From *Prabhupada Nectar*

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“It was only after two years of leading ISKCON in America that Srila Prabhupada agreed to be addressed by the proper title Prabhupada instead of Swamiji. As early as 1960, in his first volume of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, he had written in a purport, “The pure devotees whose only business is serving are honored by the names Prabhupada and Visnupada, which indicates such

devotees to be representatives of the lotus feet of the Lord.’ (*Bhag.* 1.1.15)

“Yet although the address Swamiji is common and not very respectful, it was the only name his followers knew and had become a most endearing term for them. They inquired and prayed to him by that name, and they addressed all their letters, "Dear Swamiji". So it was a bit of a shock when the name changed.

“One devotee on hearing the new name from Srila Prabhupada's secretary, couldn't accept it without personally asking Srila Prabhupada. On the next morning walk he inquired, ‘Swamiji?’

“‘Yes?’ Prabhupada replied.

“‘I understand that you prefer to be called Prabhupada.’

“Prabhupada turned quickly. ‘Where did you hear this? Who told you this?’

“Prabhupada appeared annoyed, and then he became silent. But after a few moments he spoke again. ‘Actually I do not *prefer*. But it is better.’”

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#3

“Srila Prabhupada's servant was having difficulty controlling his senses, and he asked Prabhupada to give him a special diet. When word got around that Prabhupada had recommended a special diet, another devotee approached Prabhupada for similar treatment.

“Prabhupada is there anything I could get that would help me control my tongue more? Are there certain things to avoid like sugar?”

“Prabhupada said, ‘The method to control the tongue is to chant and to pray.’

“Well,’ the devotee said, ‘I am chanting and praying, but still I am having difficulty.’

“Prabhupada sat back in his seat and laughed. ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I know. I have a tongue too. It may be difficult, but as much as you can, try to eat simply.’

“Srila Prabhupada went on to describe how during World War II there was a bombing of Calcutta—during a time when Prabhupada was just about to honor *prasadam*. Friends had come running to the house giving warning: ‘Abhay Charan, come quickly! The air raid siren is going off! The bombs are coming!’ Prabhupada had responded by saying that he could not go because his wife had just prepared some *kacauris*. He told his friends, ‘You go to the shelter. I will stay here.’ And so he offered the *kacauris*, ate them, and chanted Hare Krsna.”

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“During an early-morning walk in Vrndavana, devotees were asking Srila Prabhupada about the moon. A pale remainder of the moon could still be seen

in the sky and various birds were cooing and calling from the trees.

“Prabhupada said the moon is shining and therefore has heat, and yet its effect on the earth is cooling. Visakha dasi was one of the few women who regularly accompanied Srila Prabhupada on his walks, because of her assignment as photographer. On this occasion, she stopped taking pictures and walked closer to ask Prabhupada a question about the moon.

“Prabhupada, it is stated in your *Bhagavad-gita* purport that because of the moonlight, vegetables have taste. So why is it that the moon makes the vegetables have flavor?”

“Prabhupada stopped walking to consider her question. His demeanor was mellow and soft, but his look penetrated into her eyes.

“Why don't you ask him?’ was his only reply, and then he walked on.”

Hellish Planets

There are hellish planets described in the last chapter of the Fifth Canto. Sinful persons who go there as a reaction to their misbehavior are put through extreme tortures. “Punishment in the hell called Maha-raurava is compulsory for a person who maintains his own body by hurting others. In this hell, *ruru* animals known as *kravyada* torment him and eat his flesh.” (S.B. 5.26.12) Those who satisfy their tongues by cooking poor animals and birds are carried by the Yamadutas to a hell where they are cooked in boiling oil. “If a person deviates from the path of the Vedas

in the absence of an emergency, the servants of Yamaraja put him into a hell where they beat him with whips. When he runs hither and thither, fleeing from the extreme pain, on all sides he runs into palm trees with leaves like sharpened swords. Thus injured all over his body, and fainting at every step, he cries out, ‘Oh, what shall I do now? How shall I be saved!’ In his next life a sinful king or government representative who punishes an innocent person or who inflicts corporal punishment upon a *brahmana* is taken by the servants of Yamaraja to a hell where the powerful assistants of Yamaraja crush him exactly as one crushes sugar cane to squeeze out the juice. This is the result of punishing a faultless person.” (S.B. 5.26.16-17) There are many other hellish planets with specific tortures. In the beginning of the Sixth Canto of the *Bhagavatam*, Maharaja Pariksit asks if there is any way these people can be saved from the hellish punishments. In reply, Sukadeva Gosvami relates to him the story of Ajamila. Ajamila was a very sinful person, but at the time of his death he called out the name of his son, Narayana. The servants of Yamaraja had come to take Ajamila to the hellish planets, but because he inadvertently called out the name of God (Narayana), the Visnudutas came and prevented him from being pulled down to hell.

Father’s Day

Recently we have passed through Father’s Day. I received a few phone calls and messages from my disciples wishing me a good Father’s Day. How does it feel to be a spiritual father? How do you feel when your “children” grow up? When they are

mature adults, I still feel I am their father. I am old enough to be the father of all my disciples, and even if they are grown up, I feel the responsibility to guide them and inspire them in Krsna consciousness. Our relationship is not a material one, but it is spiritual, and I am obliged to give them spiritual instructions, helping them to make progress for going home, back to Godhead. How do I feel about my spiritual sons and daughters being good or bad, or distant, or gone? I believe for the relationship to be alive and valid, they should remain submissive to me and follow my instructions. They should be alert to keep up the relationship in *vapu* and *vani*. I feel sad and somewhat brokenhearted when a disciple is distant or goes away from my relationship with them. Faithful disciples enthuse me to serve them, which I do by holding meetings and providing ample writings for them.

Reform

What advice would I give to a disciple feeling the need to reform his or her Krsna consciousness? I would advise them to return to the fundamentals of devotional service, such as following the initiation vows, avoiding the four sinful activities and chanting at least sixteen rounds a day. I would advise them to associate with like-minded devotees, and return to a life of solid *sadhana*. They should consult with their spiritual master as to how they can reform in their particular life situation.

Books on the Holy Name

I have written many books on the Holy Name; it has been a very important part of my spiritual practice. How can my disciples improve their relationship with Krsna by reading my books on the Holy Name? They should begin by realizing that the Holy Name is not an “it” but a person, Nama Prabhu, Hari Nama. The Name of Krsna is not different than Krsna Himself. My books glorify the Holy Name and its importance in a devotional life, yet I also confess my deficiencies in attempting to reach pure chanting. These confessions can help the readers who are also not on the highest platform of *suddha-nama*, readers who can be helped by the candid admittances of a fellow devotee trying to improve. One’s relationship with Krsna can be improved by reading my *japa* books because they are serious meditations and practical “how-to” handbooks teaching practical advice in developing one’s relationship with Krsna through chanting.