

## *Free Write Journal #49*

### **Random Looks at the *Srimad-Bhagavatam***

#### **Instructions by Maharaja *Prithu* (4.21.28-29)**

**“This is confirmed not only by the evidence of the Vedas but also by the personal behavior of great personalities like Manu, Uttanapada, Dhruva, Priyavrata and my grandfather, Anga, as well as by many other great personalities and ordinary living entities, exemplified by Maharaja Prahlada and Bali, all of whom are theists, believing in the existence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who carries a club.”**

**Comment:** From the purport: “The best way to mold one's life is to follow in the footsteps of the authorized persons like those mentioned herein by Prithu Maharaja. The safest path in life is to follow such great personalities, especially those mentioned in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The *mahajanas* are twelve great personalities whom one should follow.” It is not just by reading books privately, but by following the great personalities, their instructions and behavior. “The word guru

refers to one who gives proper direction under the authority of the Vedic injunctions and according to the examples of the lives of great personalities.”

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### **Ideal Family Life (7.14.16)**

**“When one is enriched with wealth and knowledge which are under his full control and by means of which he can perform *yajna* or please the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one must perform sacrifices, offering oblations to the fire according to the directions of the *sastras*. In this way one should worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”**

**Comment:** These are Narada Muni’s instructions to King Yudhisthira. A grhastha who has some wealth and knowledge must perform sacrifices and worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In his purport Prabhupada states that “If money and education are not engaged in the service of the Lord, these valuable assets must be engaged in the service of *maya* . . . [but this] creates a chaotic condition in the world.” In this age of Kali, the man with some money and education should sacrifice it by dedicating it for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord and joining the *sankirtana* movement (the *yajna* for the age of Kali).

### **Durvasa Muni's Life Spared (9.5.23)**

**“Durvasa Muni had left the place of Maharaja Ambarisa, and as long as he had not returned—for one complete year—the King had fasted, maintaining himself simply by drinking water.”**

**Comment:** Durvasa Muni was offended by Maharaja Ambarisa's drinking water although he was fasting. Durvasa tried to punish Ambarisa Maharaja by sending a demon after him. But the Supreme Lord protected Ambarisa Maharaja and sent His Sudarsana Cakra after Durvasa Muni. The Sudarsana pursued the *muni* close on his heels to burn him, but the *muni* fled to all places in the universes to escape being destroyed. He even traveled in one year all the way up to the gates of Vaikuntha and asked Lord Narayana for mercy. Lord Narayana told him there was nothing He could do. He advised Durvasa Muni to go down and ask pardon of Maharaja Ambarisa, whom he had offended. Durvasa did this, and Maharaja Ambarisa immediately released Durvasa Muni from the danger of the Sudarsana Cakra. This is an example that the greatest yogi cannot hurt one who is a mere king, a *ksatriya*, when the king is protected by the Lord. Maharaja Ambarisa was a flawless devotee, and he had the Supreme Lord's protection. No mystic yogi can harm a pure devotee, even if that devotee is not as powerful as the mystic yogis who try to harm him.

Moreover, Maharaja Ambarisa had no enmity toward Durvasa Muni, and he immediately prayed to the Lord that Durvasa be spared from the danger of the Sudarsana Cakra.

## **Free Writes**

### **Influence**

Srila Prabhupada is the main influence in my life. Ever since I met him, he completely changed my behavior, ways, and beliefs. Over 50 years later, he is still my main influence as I follow the path of Krsna consciousness. For eleven years I followed him closely in his *vapuh*, or physical personal form, but for 40 years I am following him just as vividly by pursuing his *vani*, or teachings.) I do this in the association of his other devotees and in a world which is being chaotically influenced by *maya* or the illusory energy of God. *Maya's* influence is all-pervading in this age of Kali (21<sup>st</sup> century). But we can keep ourselves clear of the material modes by staying aloof from them and keeping shelter in the influence of Prabhupada and his Krsna Conscious Society.

### **Peacemaking Mission**

Haridasa dasa told me about a book he read describing a peace mission that was attempted near the end of the U.S. Civil War. At that time, the Union forces were obviously winning the war, and the top leaders on both sides earnestly wished

for peace and the end of the horribly violent war. Abraham Lincoln went to Virginia and met with top diplomats of the Confederacy. Abraham Lincoln's conditions were that the Confederacy should join again with the Union, and that they should end slavery. The diplomats were in favor of these conditions, but they had been given strict orders by the commander in chief of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, that under no circumstances should they rejoin the Union. Haridasa said this stubborn stance by Jefferson Davis caused great suffering and trouble with the prolongation of the war and bad feelings afterwards. Haridasa compared it to the stand made by Duryodhana against the Pandavas. The Pandavas said that they at least wanted to rule a village each, but Duryodhana said he wouldn't give them land enough to put a pin on. So this made the Kuruksetra War inevitable, and the cost of the war was millions of lives and great sorrow for both sides in the Civil War.

### **Letter from a Disciple**

A disciple from the Caribbean is here for a week. He has submitted a letter to me which I answered by Dictaphone. He told me about his 31-year-old son, who for a long time has been addicted to drugs. The son took his father's car and smashed it in a total wreck. The devotee put his son in a rehabilitation center, where he was confined, and he had to pay \$4,000 a month to keep him there. The son finally escaped and disappeared. I advised my disciple to keep aloof from his son and not to give him any more financial support. He should not attempt to reform his son any more but leave him to his destiny and not be agitated by familial bonds. The devotee

also complained to me that in the Caribbean ISKCON temples few devotees attending the morning program. He said it discourages him. I told him that I didn't know how to get the devotees to attend the morning program, but that he himself should follow the program rigidly. Either living in the temple or outside, he should rise early, hold *mangala-arati*, *kirtana*, conduct a *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class, etc. He seemed pacified by this advice.

### **Apple *Prasadam***

As soon as Swamiji began holding his *kirtanas* and lectures, at the end he sliced up an apple with a knife and gave out small pieces to everyone in the audience. The people took it as something holy and rather quaint. It was a very low-key offering, just a humble slice of apple, but people regarded it as something like a Catholic holy wafer. It was given out personally from Prabhupada's hand. Once, an intruder came into the temple and went right up to Prabhupada's dais and sat beside him. It was time for Prabhupada to distribute the apple. He handed the apple and the knife to the upstart visitor. The audience of Prabhupada's disciples were worried about what the boy might do with the knife. Prabhupada handed the already cut-up apple and the knife to the boy. The boy chose the apple and gave Prabhupada back the knife. We gave a sigh of relief.

**My Father (and Mother) Disowned Me, But Swamiji Told Me He Was My Eternal Father**

Shortly after I joined the Swami's regular meetings, I sent my parents a "prospectus" that Hayagriva had written describing the aims of ISKCON. He wrote it in a non-sectarian way, but when my parents read it, they were very upset. My father was only a nominal Catholic (he didn't attend Sunday Mass), but my mother faithfully attended Mass and was devout. I phoned my parents just to tell them what I was doing, and my father spoke very negatively, cynically, and sarcastically about the Swami and ISKCON. He was actually blasphemous and said the Swami was a cheater. He told me that he and my mother would have nothing to do with me if I remained faithful to the Swami and ISKCON. I was emotionally shattered by this abrupt disowning of me as the son of my parents. After the phone call, I cried some tears and went to see Swamiji. I told him what my father had said. He didn't seem to take it as terrible news. I was too upset to listen carefully, but I think he preached to me that the material father is only temporary; the real father is the eternal spiritual master. Anyway, he dried up my tears and expected me to not remain upset but to go on with my Krsna conscious duties. Shortly after this, he wrote me a letter in which he said that the material father was transient and temporary. He wrote that he was my eternal father. I was greatly relieved to read this in a letter, and it quelled my sorrow of being disowned by my parents. I thought of the case of the great devotee Narada Muni, who lost his mother at a young age and went and meditated on Krsna, received His *darsana* and then traveled, even as a young boy, preaching Krsna consciousness.

Years went by without any contact with my parents. After about ten years, I

phoned and my mother answered. She asked me what I was doing, and I didn't hide the fact that I was still with the Hare Krsna Movement. She abruptly replied, "As long as you are with them, we don't want anything to do with you." I tried to prolong the conversation, but it only lasted about another thirty seconds before she said goodbye. I tried again after another ten years, and she asked me, "Where have you been?" I said I had been traveling all over the world with the Hare Krsna Movement. I didn't want to hide it. I wanted them to accept me as I was. But she repeated her same line from ten years ago, "As long as you are with them, we don't want anything to do with you." The whole cutting-off of relationships was a kind of relief for me. I dove into my duties with ISKCON unhampered by material family ties.

### **From *Prabhupada Nectar***

#### **"#7 PRABHUPADA TELLS A STORY"**

"During Srila Prabhupada's last days in Vrndavana he used to be carried up and down the stairs in a palanquin chair. His habit was to take rest during the day in his bed on the roof. One day, going up the narrow staircase from the first floor to the roof, Satadhanya Maharaja was carrying the rear portion of Prabhupada's palanquin by its two handles and another man carried the

front. Tamala Krsna Gosvami led the group, and Upendra dasa followed, carrying Prabhupada's drinking *lota* and quilt. Suddenly Srila Prabhupada began to laugh uncontrollably. The devotees were amazed because Srila Prabhupada was very ill and had been silent and grave.

“Do you want to hear a funny story?’ he asked.

“They all answered, ‘Yes, Prabhupada!’

“Let us go upstairs. There I can say.’

“While Upendra rushed to get his tape recorder, the others brought Srila Prabhupada to the roof, placed him on his bed, and sat at his feet. Srila Prabhupada's body was very gaunt from the months of fasting, and he lay back but continued laughing.

“There is a Bengali proverb,’ he said. ‘*Garib manus ca chinga khai hakta gelo gauda jaya.*’ Just to say it made Prabhupada laugh more. The devotees remained mystified, and expectant.

“Now I'll explain,’ said Srila Prabhupada. ‘*Garib manus.* “*Garib*” means poor and “*manus*” means man.’ Again Srila Prabhupada broke into laughter, his thin body shaking and his whole face smiling. ‘*Ca chinga khai,*’ he continued. “*Ca chinga*” means a grasshopper. “*Khai,*” eats. So this poor man has nothing to eat except he is finding some grasshoppers and eating them. *Garib manus ca chinga khai hakta gelo.* But when he goes to pass stool—*gauda jaya,* he rides on a big white horse.’ Prabhupada laughed loudly, and all the devotees sat by in amazement. Then Prabhupada turned to Upendra and

said, ‘You understand?’ Upendra's face became red in nonunderstanding. Satadhanya Maharaja was thinking, ‘I hope Prabhupada does not ask me.’ Satadhanya turned to Tamala Krsna Maharaja and whispered, ‘Tamala, do you understand?’ Tamala Krsna Maharaja gave an unsure nod and said, ‘Yes.’ But he remained silent.

“Prabhupada said, ‘Just see. *Garib manus*. He is a poor man eating only grasshoppers. But when he goes to pass stool, he rides a big white horse.’ When Prabhupada saw that they could not understand, he explained further. ‘Similarly, I am a *sannyasi*. So a *sannyasi* is a beggar, a poor man. I am a poor man, and yet when I have to go to sleep, then four men must carry me in a palanquin.’ In this way, they all laughed and enjoyed Prabhupada's story, but not quite as much as did Prabhupada himself.”

“#11”

“There were many inconveniences Prabhupada had to face due to old age and disease, but he was never affected in his pure Krsna consciousness. Even externally, he often refused to bow to the dictates of his maladies, variously diagnosed as diabetes, poor digestion, and many others. He or his followers would call for doctors periodically, but Srila Prabhupada rarely took their prescriptions or followed their diet regimens. He was not what you would call

a good patient.

“When in New York an Indian allopathic doctor visited and gave Prabhupada medicine and antibiotics, Prabhupada was polite and agreeable. But his servant Hari Sauri was doubtful.

“‘Will you take your medicine?’ he asked.

“Prabhupada patted the little pills on his desk and said, noncommittally, ‘We shall see.’ And he never took them. Some of the devotees thought that Srila Prabhupada was seeing doctors just to engage them in devotional service.

“He rebelled against strictures on his diet, even when he was quite ill. A *kaviraja* in India ordered that Prabhupada couldn't eat rice, potatoes, sugar and certain fruits. When he called in his cook, Daivi-sakti, in Vrndavana and asked her to make *panjab boli*, a hot potato *sabji*, she dutifully reminded him, ‘But Prabhupada, you can't eat potatoes.’ He endured it for a few days and then overthrew the order. He called for his old lunch of rice, *dal*, *capatis* and *sabji*. At that time another of his well-meaning servants, Upendra, intervened and tried to restrain him. ‘But Prabhupada, the doctor told you not to take all these things. You're going to get sick.’ Prabhupada replied, ‘We are not “doctor dasa,” we are Krsna dasa.’ So from then on he resumed his normal diet.

“In Mayapur, his cook Palika dasi attempted an even stricter discipline, based on the instructions of a famous *kaviraja* from Calcutta. In this case, Prabhupada was to follow an intricate schedule by which he would take pills

and eat and drink only at certain hours. This was in 1977, when Prabhupada was so sick that he was rarely coming down to the temple to give classes or go on morning walks. One afternoon, a devotee named Anakadundubhi, unaware of the tight schedule of Prabhupada's drinking and eating, brought Prabhupada a fresh coconut *dob* to drink, as usual. Although Prabhupada knew very well that he was not supposed to take anything at this time, he quietly accepted the *dob* and poured it into his cup. But just as he started to drink it, Palika came by and admonished him, 'Srila Prabhupada! You're not supposed to take anything...'

“Prabhupada became defiant. ‘Who said?’ he challenged, and immediately drank down the whole cup of juice, although it was usually his custom to sip it slowly. ‘All my life,’ he said, ‘I have done whatever I wanted!’”

### **Regarding Hearing from Srila Prabhupada:**

- 1) Was It Better to Hear Him in Person When He Was Here?**
- 2) What About When He Was Here and You Were Hearing the Recorded Lectures Only a Few Weeks After He Actually Gave Them?**
- 3) What About Hearing Them Now, 40 Years Later?**

Hearing directly from Srila Prabhupada when he was present in his *vapuh* form was best. You had the immediacy of seeing the spiritual master and paying attention to his words as he spoke them in present time. It seemed there was more

chance of emotional and physical response to his words when you actually heard them in his presence. Hearing his recorded lectures a few weeks after he gave them, while he was still on the planet, was second-best. You had the excitement of listening to the living *acarya* who you knew was somewhere in the world and who you might see again in the future, perhaps at the annual Mayapur festival. Hearing Prabhupada's lectures now, 40 years after his departure, is also potent.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said one should not see the spiritual master but hear from him. One can gain all the potency of his lectures heard 40 years later because they are eternal truths. They do not grow hackneyed with time and repetition. There are always new discoveries and new lights to be seen in hearing him speak. Even when Prabhupada was present, there were impediments to hearing him attentively. Devotees often had minimum sleep, and they grew drowsy while hearing him speak. The *sannyasis* had the advantage of steadying themselves with their *dandas*. But sometimes that didn't even work. In sleepiness, their *dandas* dipped forward, and it was most embarrassing to see his "best men" in that condition. Non-*sannyasis* also found trouble in paying attention in his presence. There is a certain advantage in hearing now, 40 years later, if you come well-rested and in a submissive attitude, sitting at his lotus feet with ears open and mind open to the transcendental sound vibration.

While Prabhupada was still present, there was a high peak of appreciation for him. Temples used to play his tape recordings in different areas throughout the day, and it helped keep a high Prabhupada consciousness. Inspired by Prabhupada's

incredible foresight and faith, hundreds of devotees used to hear him singing *bhajan*s on amplifiers during *prasadam* time. These *bhajan*s were recorded as early as 1965, when Prabhupada was all alone, or maybe with one or two listeners.

## Visitors

We have had lots of guests. Nikunja and her sister Damodara-rati and Damodara-rati's son Kesava, age 13, were here, and Nanda-kisora from Italy. They are each struggling with problems but trusting in Krsna. They stayed for a week. The Gujarati ladies cooked special meals. Nanda-kisora worked in our flower garden. They are all welcome. Kesava wanted to help in the garden. They are longtime, faithful disciples. We have a bond of love.

## Tests

My guests were good at seeing adversity as sent by Krsna. We don't blame Him or criticize Him, and they are determined not to leave His shelter. In a sense, this does not mean that their sufferings go away, but they are able to see things from the eternal perspective. I am proud of them for these attitudes. One of them said she had always heard that as you advance in Krsna consciousness, *maya* hits you harder. I disagreed. My impression of Prabhupada's teachings is that as one advances in devotional service, *maya* eases up on one and starts to release her clutches. She says, "Oh, you have conquered" and becomes an ally of the devotee. These devotee-guests traveled a long way to visit me for a limited time. They were happy to be with

me, even though I could only give limited association. Even though they are geographically far away, they feel close to me and aim to visit me once a year. For those disciples who can't or won't make the long journey to visit me, they can keep in touch by reading my *Free Write Journal* and my books. One of the guests said it was my books that attracted her to me in the first place. I emphasize letter writing to my disciples. They can always get a translator if they can't read English. Prabhupada's letters to me were so important to my relationship with him, and they guided me in all ways. My disciples should not be silent but should write to me and tell me how they are doing. I always answer each letter substantially.

### **Update on Out-loud Readings**

We just heard about the Daksa *yajnas*. In the first *yajna*, Daksa arrived at the assembly of great personalities, and everyone but Lord Siva stood up to receive him. It is later described that Siva was meditating on the Supersoul within Daksa and did not need to make obeisances to the material body of the *prajapati*. But Daksa took it as a great insult because he was the father-in-law of Siva. He unwillingly gave his daughter Sati to Siva in marriage at the advice of Lord Brahma. But he was always adverse to Siva and envious of him. So when Lord Siva did not welcome him at the *yajna*, Daksa became very angry and cursed Lord Siva. Daksa cursed Siva to become an atheist, and he cursed him for being unworthy to be married to Daksa's daughter and for being unclean, associating with ghostly persons and exhibiting strange behavior. Daksa did not understand that Lord Siva is the most powerful demigod

and is the greatest Vaisnava (*vaisnavanam yatha sambhuh*). When Daksa cursed the all-auspicious Lord Siva, one of Lord Siva's chief associates counter-cursed Daksa and said he was a false, materialistic *brahmana*. In great anger, Daksa left the arena of sacrifice despite the sages' pleading with him to stay. The cursing and counter-cursing went back and forth. Lord Siva remained silent, but then he too left the arena of sacrifice. Lord Siva's leaving the arena was considered a good move by him because he then wouldn't have to associate with the materialistic demigods or eat with them. They were all below him, and he did not have to become contaminated by mixing with them. Daksa became worse and worse because of his curses and enmity to Lord Siva. He started a second *yajna*, and this time he did not invite Lord Siva to attend. From Siva's residence his wife Sati could see the wives of the demigods traveling in airplanes to attend the second *yajna* to be performed by Daksa. The women were beautifully ornamented and dressed, and Sati desired to go to the *yajna* and meet with her relatives. Lord Siva advised her not to go. He said that when Daksa saw her, he would neglect her and insult her because of her relationship with him, and that insult would be worse than death to her. Sati was indecisive whether to obey her husband or go alone to the *yajna*. She finally decided to go alone. But the associates of Lord Siva quickly accompanied her, so she went in a big procession. It is said that she wanted to go because of her womanly attachment to social functions, but later it is revealed that this was not her motive. She actually wanted to go and wanted to reprimand her father and defend the honor of Lord Siva. When she arrived at the *yajna*, only her sisters and mother greeted her, and Daksa

and all others deliberately ignored her. Sati began to speak out against her father. She glorified Lord Siva. She spoke out of love for him, but also based on the actual facts of his exalted character. She looked at her father as if she would burn him. She changed into saffron garments and sat down in a yogic *asana* and meditated on the self. She brought about a yogic fire which destroyed her body, and thus, in the company of all persons at the *yajna*, she committed suicide. She said she did not want to keep the body that had been born by sinful Daksa. When Narada Muni brought news of Sati's death to Lord Siva, he became furious. He plucked the hair from his head and threw it on the ground, creating a huge black demon named Virabhadra. He directed the demon to go to the *yajna* arena and kill Daksa. Lord Siva's warriors went with the demon to the *yajna*, and they attacked the whole arena. They tore down the *pandal* poles, entered the womens' quarters and the kitchen, urinated on the sacred places to put out the sacrificial fire. They completely devastated and polluted the area. Virabhadra sat upon the body of Daksa and cut off his head by placing it in a wooden device used for sacrificing animals. *Brahmanas* who had smiled while Daksa blasphemed Siva had their teeth knocked out, and others had their bones broken. Lord Brahma, along with Daksa and Lord Siva, had departed from the first *yajna* because of the cursing and counter-cursing. Brahma did not attend the second sacrifice. But after the defeat and desecration of the second sacrifice, Brahma was approached to make some settlement. He went to Mt. Kailasa and saw Lord Siva meditating under a huge banyan tree. He was very careful how he spoke to Siva, thinking how he might still be angry over the death of his wife.

Brahma spoke to Siva and asked that Siva restore the chaos that he had created in the second *yajna*. He asked that Daksa be given back his head and that the *brahmanas* whose teeth had been knocked out could have them restored. He asked that the *yajna* arena be sanctified so that another sacrifice could be performed there. Lord Siva replied that he had punished the offenders not out of malice but to punish them for their wrongs. He said he would put back a head on Daksa, but it would be the head of a goat. He said the *brahmanas* whose teeth had been knocked out would have to eat what their disciples first chewed, or if they were alone they would have to eat soft dough made with chickpeas. Siva agreed to set the arena in order again so that a new sanctified *yajna* could be performed. Daksa, with the head of a goat, made pleasing, surrendered prayers to Lord Siva. The affair was settled, and the final *yajna* was performed in peace and sanctity.

## **Teeth**

At the Daksa-yajna, those who laughed and showed their teeth while Siva was being blasphemed had their teeth knocked out by the giant demon Virabhadra, created by Lord Siva. Lord Siva said they would have to eat the food already chewed by their disciples, or if they were alone, they would eat raw dough with chickpea flour. At the gambling match where the Pandavas lost their kingdom and Draupadi was insulted, Dushasana smiled broadly. Later, at the Battle of Kuruksetra, Bhima knocked his teeth out. When Prabhupada first came to America, he had all his teeth, and his smile was brilliant. Over the years, he began to lose teeth, and he had one

front tooth replaced with a gold tooth. Once, a tooth fell out in the presence of his servant Hari Sauri. His servant asked if he could keep the tooth, and Prabhupada gave it to him. Hari Sauri put it in a reticule and wore it around his neck. Later it was placed on a temple altar and kept as a sacred relic of Srila Prabhupada. I have no teeth, but I wear full dentures. At present, they have become loose and need work on them. They are so loose that they fall out when I am trying to speak or eat. But if I put a dental adhesive, Poli-grip, in my dentures, they hold firm. I was trying to get an appointment with my dentist to fix it, but his office is on a week's summer vacation. My midyear disciples meeting is occurring while the dental office is closed, so I will have to rely on the Poli-grip. It is just another inconvenience of old age.

### **Update of Out-Loud Reading**

Dhruva Maharaja meditated on the form of Lord Visnu in his heart for six months while undergoing severe austerities. Suddenly, his meditation broke. When he opened his eyes, he saw the actual transcendental form of Lord Visnu standing before him. He was astonished at his good fortune but was incapable of speaking. Lord Visnu touched his head with His conchshell, and Dhruva attained *brahma-jnana* and was able to make beautiful prayers to Visnu. The motive of Dhruva Maharaja's austerities to see Visnu was to obtain a kingdom greater than Lord Brahma's, and he retained feelings of revenge towards his stepmother, who had so cruelly spoken against him. Dhruva was now ashamed of his motivations for seeing Visnu, and he felt very morose. Prabhupada writes that many acaryas have made

their commentaries on why Dhruva Maharaja was morose although he was getting the direct *darsana* of Lord Visnu. Lord Visnu knew the heart of Dhruva, and He desired to give him His benedictions, even though they were material. Visnu awarded Dhruva Maharaja residence in the eternal planet, the Polestar. And Dhruva Maharaja would be the emperor of the world for 36,000 years. At the time of the annihilation of the universe, Dhruva would transfer to the Polestar, which is an eternal planet like a Vaikuntha planet.

Earlier in our reading, a devotee asked whether the Polestar was already created, or was it created for Dhruva Maharaja. I said this question was a “guru-stumper,” and I didn’t know the answer. But the very next day in the text of Srimad-Bhagavatam, we learned that one of the *purusa* incarnations of Lord Visnu created the Polestar before Dhruva Maharaja resided in it. Then it was awarded to Dhruva Maharaja, and he is ruling over it eternally. This information from the book proves that the “guru stumbers” are all answered in the course of carefully reading the Bhagavatam and Prabhupada’s purports.

### **Mundane News**

In his book *Amrta-vani* (“Nectar of Instructions for Immortality”), Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura states that a devotee should not hear mundane news; he should only hear *krsna-katha*. I confess that I have an abiding attachment to keeping in touch with world events. I receive a news magazine, *The Week*, glance through it in 20 minutes and throw it in the trash. When I go to the hospital they ask

me questions to see if I am sane and in touch with the world. One standard question is, “Who is the president of the United States?” If I would be true to the teaching of hearing only *krsna-katha*, I would not bother to get the knowledge of who was the president. Some senior devotees have said that we *should* keep in touch with current events so that we will be more relatable to the people we are preaching to. I remember when I was the temple president of Boston and lecturing to the Sunday feast crowd, and I spoke a gaffe of misinformation of current events. It was an embarrassing moment, and the audience, especially the young people, laughed at me. It diminished my ability to be credible to them. So there’s something to be said about knowing a little about what’s going on in the world, for a preacher who speaks to worldly people. I don’t think my weekly glancing at *The Week* seriously distracts me from my absorption in chanting and hearing *krsna-katha*.

### **J. dasa**

My old disciple J. dasa recently underwent a several-month retreat at the Ecovillage. He there underwent Ayurvedic treatment and diet. He and another devotee stopped at our *ashram* with little notice. They told us they wanted an Ayurvedic meal. That day my visiting disciple Damodara-rati was cooking lunch for me and the other residents in the *ashram*. J. attempted to get my cook to prepare his Ayurvedic meal. He wanted to direct her on all the details of the spicing and ingredients. Damodara-rati is a fragile person, and she became rattled by J.’s intrusion. Our *ashram pujari*, Krsna-dasi, intervened, and told J. that Damodara-

rati was cooking my lunch, and that she could not simultaneously prepare all the details of J.'s Ayurvedic diet. We can accommodate special diets, but there has to be some warning. J. gave us no warning and attempted to utilize our single cook.

### ***Harinama sankirtana***

The *yuga-dharma* for Kali-yuga, as established by Lord Caitanya, is congregational chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra. Over the years, the word *sankirtana* has been abused in ISKCON. In the early years, devotees would go out in public for many hours and simply chant Hare Krsna. This activity gradually evolved into book distribution, with no *harinama*. Further developments saw devotees collecting money by selling paintings, candles, hats and other paraphernalia at venues such as rock concerts and sports events. Selling stickers was also a big trend. The line used while collecting was often that we were “feeding the poor,” “feeding the people,” “feeding the kids.” Actually only a small percentage of the money, if any, was used to feed people (other than the devotees themselves).

### **Cinema House**

There is a cinema house in Mumbai close to the ISKCON Juhu land. When ISKCON had only a makeshift temple, they nevertheless carried on and held lectures and *kirtanas*. The traffic at the beginning and the end of the cinema show was very noisy and disturbing. But an officer in the city municipality wrote a statement that the Hare Krsna *kirtana* was “a nuisance.” This remark made Prabhupada very

angry. He said the man could have made a statement with polite words, but his blasphemous calling of “nuisance” to the Hare Krsna mantra was intolerable. Prabhupada said the man should be punished. As ISKCON Juhu has grown over the years, it is now an expansive, very impressive pilgrimage spot, which draws hundreds and thousands of people to visit and pay their respects every day. The cinema traffic noise is now insignificant in comparison to the activity going on at the beautifully-architected temple by the pious crowds gathered there. The Juhu complex is not just a temple, but it has a world-class restaurant, theater, conference facilities and elegant marble guest rooms.

## **Inspiration**

Srila Prabhupada gave all credit to his spiritual master for his wonderful accomplishments. But Prabhupada himself was an inspired preacher. Even as a householder and businessman, he would always talk about Krsna and his desire to preach in a big way. He was inspired by the Supersoul in the heart. Prabhupada was inspired by the *caitya-guru* (Krsna) within, and his spiritual master (Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura) without. At an advanced age, after writing and publishing three volumes of the First Canto of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and obtaining free passage on a steamship, he went to America without any institutional support or money or careful plans what to do in the West. Meeting many obstacles, he had to keep up his inspiration to continue his mission. For a year in America, he

could not do much. But then he gathered a small group of followers on the Lower East Side and started ISKCON, the International Society for Krsna Consciousness. Prabhupada was able to transfer his enthusiasm to the young group of new followers who took up the task of spreading Krsna consciousness. Soon, individual disciples became inspired to go out alone and start new centers of ISKCON in different cities of America and Europe. All his followers acknowledged that their inspiration came directly from Srila Prabhupada.

For myself, I began enthusiastically writing diaries when I was 17, even before I met my spiritual master. I went on to write novellas and poems and had one of my chapters published in a *Beat* magazine. When I met and joined Srila Prabhupada, I decided that my writing was all false ego, and I burned my pages of manuscripts in the incinerator connected to the temple storefront. But my Godbrother, Hayagriva, told me that he was going to “write for Krsna”! I started doing that too and wrote straight *parampara* essays in Krsna Consciousness, which were published in ISKCON’s magazine, *Back to Godhead*. Prabhupada liked my articles and encouraged me to go on writing. I wrote these straight *parampara* articles for twelve years. After Prabhupada’s passing away, I continued to write and publish for the devotee audience. I gradually evolved to an experimental form of writing employing spontaneous techniques.

Then when I was 50 years old, I began painting. I created under the umbrella of “outsider art,” self-taught art, in primitive modes. I painted Krsna-oriented topics and derived great satisfaction from art. Some of the devotees, used to the polished

realism of the illustrators of Prabhupada's books dismissed my art as childish, but others gave me their support. I became encouraged by those who encouraged me. Mahaprabhu dasa, the head of MOSA (Museum of Sacred Art), bought 100 of my paintings and made a one-man exhibit of them, and they have become part of the MOSA permanent collection. I wrote and painted in an atmosphere (ISKCON) that was very conservative and not so much appreciative of what I was doing. But I had my personal inspiration, and that kept me going. My most widely-accepted book, *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*, was begun almost immediately after Prabhupada's disappearance. I was commissioned to do the authoritative biography of His Divine Grace by the GBC. I worked with a team of devotees who assisted me in getting interviews, typing, editing, etc. While I wrote the *Lilamrta*, I felt personally empowered by Prabhupada and Krsna to continue the work, volume by volume. The warm and enthusiastic reception of the biography as it was published volume after volume was very inspiring to me. My writing career was validated by that one book.