

Free Write Journal #5

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August 30, 2018 (continued)

This is the fifth week of the *Free Write Journal*.

Sometimes I am writing ahead of the calendar and sometimes behind; Janmastami is happening on Monday, it is yet to come. It doesn't matter. This is not meant to be an accurate time log diary. By the time this fifth week is posted, Janmastami will have already passed. But here I am, anticipating it. Please don't mind. I would like to go deep, but NK advised I have already given my readers plenty (200 books). Now they just want to be with me and know what I am doing. For several months I had stopped writing and posting on my websites. Now I'm back; I hope it is sufficient.

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August 31, 2018

I am expecting a visit from John Endler today. He comes every Friday, but last week he was sick. I am anticipating that he will have written more prefaces that go before the poems of a particular volume of *EJW*. And I am hoping he has typed more poems. Here is the Introductory Note I wrote at the beginning of the book:

"This book consists of poetry from the prose and poetry volumes of *Every Day, Just Write*. It was conceived by my friend and avid reader of my books, Rev. John Endler. He was reading the long series of *EJW*, and he wished that the books could be more widely read and distributed. The volumes of *EJW* are available in e-book format, but they don't have many readers. So John thought that if we just published the poetry, it would be more accessible than expecting readers to consume the entire volumes of *EJW*. The *EJW* books are mostly written in the late 1990s, so they would appear new and fresh. (My poetry used to be the least popular of my writings. Readers couldn't understand them and we sold less poetry books than the others. But times have changed. A new generation of devotees and seekers are more friendly to my poems.) John and

I were excited at the prospect of publishing only the poems. He would write prefaces explaining the poems in the context of the volume of *EJW*, and I would write an introductory note. John typed the poems on a weekly basis, and we were off on a happy new literary adventure."

I think a compilation of poems written in the late 1990s is good, and I am eager to see it progress into production. I'll see what John brings to me today.

The Journal rolls along. It is pulled by four horses. Who is the driver, and who is the archer? Not Acyuta and Arjuna. Yet I am a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. I am repeating his words: "Give up all religions and just surrender to Me." In our reading at mealtimes we are hearing about Aditi's appeal to Lord Visnu, who has appeared to her for being pleased with her performing the *priyavrata* ritual. She prays to him that Indra and her other sons among the demigods may be brought out of exile and returned to their heavenly residence in opulence. Lord Visnu replies that the powerful demons are very hard to defeat because they are being protected by the *brahmanas* and their spiritual master, Sukracarya. He agrees, however, to take birth from Aditi and Kasyapa and deal with the situation as the *avatara* Vamanadeva in the form of a dwarf-saintly person. Vamanadeva

appears and is provided with many gifts from the demigods. He then goes alone to the camp of Bali Maharaja. When Vamanadeva entered the sacrificial arena of the demons, His effulgence outshone everyone present. They all stood up to offer Him respect. Bali Maharaja poured water from his pot on Vamanadeva's feet. Bali is very favorably disposed toward the *brahmana*-dwarf, and he tells Him he will give Him whatever He wants. At this point, Sukracarya orders Bali not to give the *brahmana* anything. By his mystical powers, Sukracarya can understand that Vamanadeva is actually Lord Visnu, and in the guise of begging He will take away all that Bali possesses. Bali replies that he already promised charity to the dwarf *brahmana*, and he won't go back on his words. He then asks Vamanadeva what He wants. Sukracarya becomes angry, curses his disciple. (As a result of this curse, Bali and the demons lost their unconquerable military power, and the demigods would be able to defeat them.) Vamanadeva asks for only three steps of His feet. Although it was an insignificant benediction, Bali granted it to Him. Then, before everyone's eyes, Vamanadeva expanded His body to a gigantic size. With His first step He covered the entire universe. With His second step He pierced the outer shell of the universe, from which the Causal Ocean leaked in. (Lord Siva caught the water on his head so it wouldn't crash violently to the earth.) Vamanadeva said to Bali, "I have

covered all space with My two feet. How will you be able to keep your promise by providing Me with a third step?" Bali Maharaja responded by offering Vamanadeva his head to step on. (To be continued in our lunchtime reading . . .)

On Fridays, John Endler first goes to Ravindra Svarupa's house and they have a long talk. He usually arrives here about 10:45 A.M., meets with me and then goes downstairs to cook lunch. I wish we had more time to spend together. We have so much to go through on the progress of the book. At his home, John has to write prefaces and type poems and bring them to me for approval.

John and I met. He was sick most of the week and only wrote one preface, but he typed the poems from several volumes of *EJW*. One was *Econoline Preacher*, and *Putting Yourself Out*. They were written when I toured throughout southern Europe. I went there soon after the fall down of the high-profile GBC man and guru, Bhagavan. He left ISKCON for a woman. The many disciples and temples were sorrowful and confused. I spent time counseling and comforting disciples. My health was weak, and the "pastoral counseling" was a strain. In my *EJW* I wrote fewer poems. I finally returned to my reclusive home base in Ireland with great relief. John told me once there, my poems flowed prolifically and in free style. They are

numerous, in an *EJW* volume, *Blackberries*, and I am eager to read them after twenty years. John and I vision this book as for a new generation of readers. John says they will "eat it up." It's one thing to compile and publish it, but then there's the important stage of distributing the books, getting them into readers' hands. John says he's "brainstorming" how to do it.

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September 2, 2018

I spoke with Saunaka Rsi. I was impressed when I heard his longtime *sadhana* practice of accepting adverse conditions as Krsna's mercy. He applied this when he was expelled as temple president of Belfast, and it saved him from becoming greatly disturbed. He underwent a surgical operation, and the doctors mistakenly left staples in his body, causing him prolonged pain. The doctors didn't know what caused the pain and performed repeated operations. Finally they found the staples. The surgeon came to Saunaka and apologized for his mistake. Saunaka told him, "I am not going to sue you. I see all this as Krsna's mercy." When Saunaka Rsi's wife died at fifty years old under awkward circumstances, his *sadhana* commitment instinctively worked. He approached her body and uttered, "Krsna is kind." How different Saunaka is from Rabbi Harold Kushner,

whose son died at fourteen, devastating Kushner and making him change his attitude toward God and His scriptures, which he writes about in his bestselling book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. He now no longer believes that God is all-powerful, and he wildly speculates on His nature. I am convinced that Saunaka Rsi is an advanced devotee and is living a life of self-realization, in Krsna's shelter. I will ask him to speak on the occasion of Janmastami, and I will also ask Jayadvaita Swami and Rama Raya to speak. I hope they won't refuse.

Saunaka told me about the twentieth anniversary of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. They had a feast at an outstanding venue, and 275 people attended, including prestigious persons from Oxford University. The OCHS is now a recognized part of Oxford--the place to go for Hindu studies.

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Bali Maharaja was arrested and tied up in ropes. The Supreme Lord said, "I have covered all space with My two steps; how will you remain truthful and give Me a place to put My third step?" Bali replied, "I still have my body; You can place Your foot on my head." Vamanadeva was very pleased with Bali Maharaja. He still punished him by sending him to the

hellish planet, Sutala. However, the Supreme Lord also agreed to reside in Sutala and serve as Bali's doorman. For his full surrender of all he owned and his devotion, Bali Maharaja is recognized as one of the twelve *mahajanas* (authorities) in Krsna consciousness. He is a great soul, like his grandfather Prahlada Maharaja.

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September 3, 2018

On Janmastami, four of us will be speaking: me, Jayadvaita Swami (who will be sitting beside me on a chair the same level as mine--no pretensions of zonal-*acarya* days, where the guru sat on the high *vyasasana* and his Godbrothers sat on the floor), Saunaka Rsi, who will speak on the OCHS, and Rama Raya, who will speak on *harinama* in the park and subways of New York City. Jayadvaita Swami and Saunaka Rsi are sympathetic to my not fasting until midnight. Jayadvaita Swami said, "Children and old men don't have to fast." We have a nice program planned: four devotees speaking, *abhisekha* of Radha and Krsna for everyone, *arotika* and serving of *prasadam*. Later in the afternoon we can have more *kirtana* and reading from *Krsna Book*. Ours is not a Janmastami with thousands attending. It is an intimate gathering. We are among

friends. Madhumangala, the disciple of Narayana Maharaja, was close friends with Rama Raya, but they had a disagreement and Rama Raya broke up with him. But he is now back under the good graces of Rama. He is attending our Janmastami. I will greet him, "Welcome back!" and embrace him.

The festival went well. About seventy people attended, and mostly not Hindus. I read for about ten minutes--on the evidence that Yasoda is the actual mother of Krsna. Jayadvaita Swami spoke for over half an hour. He diffused my point a little but I was glad he was satisfied. Rama Raya and Saunaka Rsi spoke briefly on *harinama sankirtana* and OCHS. The weather was mild, and everyone had a chance in *abhisekha* to pour liquids on Radha and Krsna.

I noticed a young *brahmacari* pacing back and forth on the grass with his hand in a bead bag. I pointed him out to Jayadvaita Swami and said he was probably chanting 64 rounds this day. Jayadvaita Swami expressed his approval of the *brahmacari* and lamented on the quality of his own *japa*. I can lament also. When it was time for *prasadam*, almost everyone broke fast, following my example. But I didn't eat much. At most of the ISKCON temples Janmastami means huge crowds of mostly Hindus. As Bala said, our festival was "a little different."

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September 4, 2018

Today is the anniversary of Prabhupada's birthday. On Janmastami some of the devotees stayed up until midnight, fasting, holding *kirtana*, and reading from the *Krsna Book*. But we will all gather at 10:00 A.M. and speak homages. Ninety-nine percent of the devotees were not initiated by Srila Prabhupada, but they have every right to praise him and express their gratitude to him as the pre-eminent *siksa* guru for all devotees in ISKCON. I want to speak first and read some of my favorites from the *Tributes* book, then let all the devotees speak from their love and appreciation for their "ever-well-wisher," the Founder-*Acarya* of ISKCON. I expect it will be a pleasant morning, hearing the devotees express their dedication to our spiritual master. He is the pure devotee, come into our midst, to debunk the nonbelievers and materialists, and to establish pure devotional service to Krsna as the highest goal of life. "Those who are fortunate in the generations to come will heed his call."

All glories to Srila Prabhupada on Nandotsava, the day of his

appearance! Vyasa-puja Day was sweet. Some significant devotees didn't attend. About thirty persons gathered, and I was the only one initiated by His Divine Grace. I reassured the devotees that anyone who has gratitude and adoration for Srila Prabhupada is entitled to speak an homage. It took an hour for everyone to speak; Rama Raya spoke the longest. I read some of my favorites by some of Prabhupada's initiated disciples in the *Tributes* book. Jayapataka Maharaja mentioned what he would like to see happen in the future. One was the unification of devotees in the disciplic succession of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. I thought to myself, "That's not possible." But then Madhumangala (whose guru is Narayana Maharaja) was present, and he nicely glorified Srila Prabhupada. After the homages *prasadam* was served, and the senior devotees sat on chairs around a table. Saunaka Rsi and Rama Raya took turns telling jokes from Saunaka's big repertoire. Most of us had heard the jokes before, but it was fun hearing them again. Some of his jokes I didn't "get," but I let them go without an explanation.

At the Vyasa-puja gathering there was *kirtana*, and some of the devotees were dancing. I felt sorry for myself that I could not dance or even walk. Later I told Baladeva about my mood. He quoted to me something Prabhupada had said near the end of his life when he was staying at Jagannatha Puri with some disciples; I was also there. He looked out at the

ocean and said, "I remember being a young man and jumping in the waves [at Puri]. Now I am an old man walking with a stick." He said it as a matter of fact with no self-pity. This incident from 1977 reminds me not to be sorry about my crippled left foot.

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Directed free write; direct yourself to the lotus feet of Govinda. Radha-Govinda are wearing especially fancy outfits for the holidays. (See Their photographs on the websites from Janmastami and Vyasa-puja.) Their dress is not Vaikuntha or Dvaraka; it is Vraja, but very festive. The Vrajavasis have their own opulence of sweetness: *madhuram, madhuram, madhuram, madhuram*. Radha-Govinda are wearing golden cloth with shiny silver borders, *tri-bhanga* pose, and Radharani holding a Tulasi leaf in Her right hand. Krsna dasi has dressed Govinda in a superlative turban with yellow and red layers of cloth, little pink flowers and a discreet peacock feather.

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Now the last of the guests have gone. It's just the four of us and many Deities. The weather is still warm. Bala is harvesting the last of his vegetable and flower garden, and Krsna dasi is enthusiastically engaged in *pujari* services. Baladeva is hanging in there cheerfully with his less-than-"Superman" body. I am also hanging in there, confined to this house. In two weeks it's Radhastami, and we'll observe it quietly in Viraha Bhavan; I'll be expected to speak something, though I'm not prepared. Radharani is a very confidential topic. Prabhupada was grave in discussing about Her. He didn't like his disciples singing Her names in *kirtana*. One day a year we expose Her feet, on Radhastami; the *pujaris* do it with the eight principal *gopis* in Mayapura. She is the *hladini-sakti* (pleasure-giving potency) of Krsna. More later.

Radha-Govinda look splendid in Their festive outfits. I am "chilling out," resting in my comfortable chair, receiving Their *darsana*. Rama Raya showed me his Govardhana-Silas, Radha and Krsna. Aindra Prabhu permanently decorated Their eyes and facial features for him. Rama also has many small, black, smooth Silas which are in the shapes of fish, conch, etc. Someone brought many Silas to Aindra, and while he was picking out which ones he wanted to keep, he invited Rama Raya to take some for himself. I don't have any Silas. All of my *murtis* are human or Deity shapes

(Jagannatha, Hanuman, etc.). I do very little personal service for my Deities. My disciples feed and dress Them. My sole service and meditation is *darsana*.

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September 6, 2018

5:00 A.M.

I have finished my sixteen rounds. They were attentive to the mantra's syllables but not deep in uninterrupted meditation on Radha-Krsna. In Her festive dress, Radharani's breasts are more prominent. She is wearing only one small necklace. When She wears several heavy necklaces it covers up Her chest. I prefer the way She looks today. I think Govinda likes it too. Radhastami falls on September 16th, a Sunday. We will observe it at Viraha Bhavan. We are not inviting any guests, but some may come over, and we are prepared for it. I will read in the first volume of *Caitanya-caritamrta, Adi-lila*. We will prepare a feast for 1:00 P.M., and we'll serve "Radha-red" chutney. Prabhupada said Krsna is strong, and so He asks us to fast until midnight on His birthday; but Radharani is more lenient and softhearted, so She only asks us to fast until 1:00 P.M. on Radhastami. In Vrndavana, Radhastami is sometimes observed with a festival bigger than Janmastami.

The residents of Vrndavana are all natural devotees of Radharani. They greet each other with the words, "Jaya Radhe!" Prabhupada would reply to them, "Hare Krsna," which means, "O Radharani, O Krsna." We have heard from the Gaudiya Vaisnava *acaryas*, including Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, that the words "Rama Rama" do not refer to Ramacandra or Baladeva, but to Radhika-Ramana, Krsna, the lover of Radha. So all the words in the *maha-mantra* are a calling out to Radha and Krsna. It is a *yugala kisora* mantra. That's why it's so nice to chant *japa* while taking *darsana* of Radha-Govinda. We are on the second day of Their wearing Their special festive dress. I'm beginning to think it's too shiny and *aisvarya*. I look forward to seeing Them in simpler dress of a country cowherd boy and girl. They will be well-fit, clean, and decoratively patterned, but not so majestic.

I will repeat myself in this journal, out of enthusiasm. I so much like the painting of Mahaprabhu in the Gambhira commissioned by King Prataparudra. You think it is an extraordinary likeness to the Lord. It reminds me of the photograph of Jesus Christ that Maddalena keeps on her altar. Supposedly, a nun had a miraculous *darsana* of Jesus, and he allowed her to photograph him. The picture shows him more swarthy than pictures painted in the west. The commissioned painting of Lord Caitanya as a *sannyasi* creates faith in you that this is the way He actually looks. His

face, His freshly-shaved head, His pacific, transcendental eyes, His beautiful mouth, all make you think you are getting the private audience of Mahaprabhu. I often glance at this painting without tiring. It is so easy to gaze upon the image of Him as God disguised as a young *sannyasi*. Baladeva has seen the original painting in the Gaudiya Math temple in Navadvipa. He said the case it's kept in is dusty and dirty; "not pristine." It's over 500 years old and probably needs some renovation and a touch-up. But will they do it? At least we have these excellent photos of the painting, and they are distributed all over the world.

Same with the *murtis* (divine forms) of Radha-Krsna, Gaura-Nitai and other expansions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are well-kept and worshiped, especially in the ISKCON mandiras. No mice or rats crawl around the feet of our Deities. We keep a high standard of cleanliness and protection from rodents. It is reported that Vivikenanda saw a rat playing around the feet of an installed Deity and he decided, "This cannot be God. It is an idol." It is a disturbing sight, so we protect our sacred images from such contamination. (Sometimes I have fearful "hallucinations" that I see a rodent crawling upon my Deity. I close my eyes, chant Hare Krsna and drive the illusion away.)

Another nightmare: that *gundas* enter the temple, hold the devotees

at bay with weapons, and attempt to smash the Deities or steal Them. This has happened over the years. Some temples have installed iron gates or bulletproof glass in front of the Deities. Some centers arm a member of the congregation with a gun. These attacks on temples are rare, but they can happen.

Let me end this page on a lighter note. Krsna says in *Bhagavad-gita*, "My devotee will never perish." He says that one who accepts adversity as Krsna's mercy (not karma) will be freed from the miseries of life.

Prabhupada writes repeatedly that a pure devotee will go back home, back to Godhead, "to play and dance and eat with Krsna"--(eternally). Krsna is *sat-cit-ananda vigraha*, and so are His associates in the spiritual world.

Today we are honoring Ekadasi, but I just drank a diabetic shake that has traces of corn starch in it. My excuse is that it's "medicinal." Baladeva told me about a Prabhupada moment that a disciple spoke on the video series *Memories*. Prabhupada was handing out simply wonderfuls on Ekadasi. A devotee rushed into the room and shouted at his spiritual master, "Stop, Prabhupada! Stop! Simply wonderfuls have corn starch in them!" Prabhupada calmly replied, "We are not fanatics," and popped a simply wonderful into his mouth (and continued distributing them). In the early days, Swamiji walked into the kitchen, where Yamuna dasi and other

young ladies were preparing food. They were handling strawberries. Swamiji picked one up and ate it. Yamuna mock-scolded him, "Swamiji, that wasn't offered yet!" He responded with a smile. *He was a mahabhagavata.*

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September 7, 2018

All of my five Sheaffer cartridge pens are not working; I have switched to a Pilot Precise (V5) rolling-ball pen. It is slow, but at least it doesn't skip. I am coming to the end of the fifth week of the Journal. John Endler is coming today, and there are important editorial changes I want him to make in the poetry. In 1997 I was heavily into jazz, and I make frequent references to my favorite musicians. But two months ago I renounced jazz. I discussed with Baladeva and we concluded that it was dangerous for a person my age--approaching death--to have that music running through my mind. Since making my *vrata* not to listen to jazz, I have been hearing exclusively Prabhupada's *bhajan*s and Hare Krsna *kirtana* by *kirtaniyas* like Aindra and Madhava. Krsna says in *Bhagavad-gita*: "Whatever one thinks of at the time of death, he will attain to that state in his next life." I

will tell John to omit the names of musicians as well as explicit references to jazz. And omit statements that I am a jazzophile in his prefaces.