

Free Write Journal #55

Free Writes

Cow

Prabhupada said the cow is not the most beautiful animal in the world. A well-groomed horse is beautiful. But the cow is most useful because she gives nutritious milk for human consumption. Milk improves the brain tissues for learning spiritual knowledge. Modern dietary faddists make propaganda against drinking milk, but that is not the Vedic version. The brilliant Krsna conscious sage Sukadeva Gosvami consumed only milk, and he was able to speak the entire *Srimad-Bhagavatam* in *parampara*. Many sweet preparations are made from milk such as *sandesa*, *rasagulla*, *burfee*, *para*, sweet rice, etc., and they are suitable for offering to the Deities. The worldwide slaughter of cows is an abominable sin, and in Kali-yuga, according to the law of karma, those who participate in cow slaughter will have to suffer widespread sinful reactions. Prabhupada said according to the *Manu-samhita* there are six members of such a conspiracy: the one who slaughters the cow, the one who orders the cow slaughtered, the one who skins the cow, the one who buys the cow meat, the one who cooks the cow, and the one who is eating—they are all butchers. Just like if there is a murder case and there is a conspiracy, so it is not just

the man who has directly killed some person who is arrested, but everyone in the conspiracy is arrested.

Suresvara

My long-term friend and Godbrother, Suresvara, visited me for two days. The big question I had for him was, “Are you still inspired to travel and give your seminars on Prabhupada as Founder-Acarya?” He replied, “Yes,” and said many ISKCON temples have invited him. He said he asked a devotee what was the first thing he wanted to do in Krsna consciousness and the devotee said he wanted to aspire to be initiated by an ISKCON guru. Suresvara said to him that this was premature. First a devotee had to find his foundation, which was to learn about Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-*Acarya*. I asked Suresvara whether his presentation minimized the importance of the ISKCON guru. He said no, he was controlling the pendulum swing. On the one hand, we have devotees who think only of the importance of their *diksa* gurus, and at the other extreme we have the *ritvik* guru movement, which propagates that Prabhupada is the only initiating spiritual master after his disappearance. Suresvara said he is trying to check this pendulum swing and set it right. I haven’t attended Suresvara’s seminar, so I don’t have an opinion of what he actually says. He told me that senior devotees like Jayadvaita Swami and Pancaratra Prabhu attended his seminar and gave him positive feedback. As he gains experience in presenting his talks, Suresvara is “tweaking” them so that they will be free of any error or imbalance. Suresvara faithfully reads my *Free Write Journal*, and he had a list of questions to ask me from the latest posting. We

discussed what is the difference between poetry and prose, and I subsequently wrote about it and gave examples of my writing in both modes. I told him that his meeting with me gave me no stress or strain. He told me our Godbrother Haridasa had coached him not to engage me in controversy or management. He likes to talk about early memories in ISKCON, and I like to take part in those conversations too. He did engage me in some ISKCON management. He talked about a committee of non-GBC leaders who will give feedback to the GBC resolutions, and the GBC is expected to take their opinions seriously. I told him I was approached by this committee, but I told them I did not want to take part in it. He told me that Visakha devi dasi also declined to take part in the new committee.

How Do I Prepare for a Day in Which There Will Be Interruptions to My Routine, Such As Living While the Roofers Are Here, Going Out to Meet Doctor's Appointments, Meeting Demanding Guests, Etc.?

Usually these interruptions mean I have to cancel my daily morning physical exercise, and I regret that. I try to take the intrusions in stride and not get in anxiety about them. I don't do special yoga breathing or meditation to center and calm myself down.

How Do I Feel About the Fifth Canto Descriptions of the Structure of the Universe and Other Technical Sections Such as Lord Kapila's Sankhya Philosophy and Other Sections Containing Genealogical Lists of Names?

Prabhupada says every word of the *Bhagavatam* is important. But having read these difficult sections several times, I don't look forward to reading them again. I *love* what I consider the more interesting sections, with stories and narratives of devotees' interactions with each other and with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. I do consider skipping the too-technical sections rather than facing them as impenetrable walls. Some erudite devotees are not fazed by the descriptions of the structure of the universe in the Fifth Canto. They study it with relish and seek to apply it in accordance with Prabhupada's wishes. For the Vedic Planetarium in Mayapur, some devotees, inspired by the work of Sadaputa and the Bhaktivedanta Institute, equip themselves to be able to debate with the materialistic scientists about the nature of the universe, and spirit and matter. Is it negligent to skip reading the too-technical sections, after having read them a few times? Aside from the devotee-scientists and devotee-philosophers, it may not be pertinent to one's service to keep trying to penetrate what seems too difficult and unpalatable. We have so little time to spare for reading. So we should allow ourselves to read what is enlivening to us.

Amplified

The ISKCON Govardhana Palace is an ideal place. It has a close view of Govardhana Hill and thick walls to protect from the changes in weather. It does not accommodate so many devotees, so it is intimate, not like the congestion at the Krsna-Balaram Mandir. But in recent years, ashrams in the neighborhood of the

Govardhana Palace have installed powerful amplifying systems, and they play *bhajan*s and lectures all day long. It tends to ruin the quiet atmosphere that used to be the Palace. A Gaudiya Math *sannyasi* remarked that the ISKCON policy of playing Prabhupada's *bhajan*s on amplification all day long was excessive. He commented that he thought Prabhupada must be "tired" from singing constantly all day. I agree with this opinion. I myself like quiet spaces in the day where we can talk about Prabhupada, read his books, and think about him. The ISKCON authorities intimidate the devotees with their policy of nonstop loud Prabhupada *bhajan*s.

Aerogrammes/Telegrams

In the early years, communication between India and the West was very difficult. Now we have email, and the telephones are more convenient. But in the 1970s when Prabhupada was with us, he resorted mostly to letters typed on blue aerogrammes, which were glued on one end and sent in the mail. There was not so much room to write a very long letter, but there was enough for essential communication. When something urgent had to be conveyed, Prabhupada resorted to a telegram. It might say, "Do not surrender the Juhu land to Mr. Nair. Take him to the courts. I will write instructions in a letter." Prabhupada's letters encouraged the devotees not to give up when facing difficulties in trying to construct the main temples in India: Vrindavan, Bombay, and Mayapur. He told the devotees that their case was strong and they should not be afraid or bullied by landlords or municipality officers. He sympathized that they did not have much worldly experience for dealing

in India, but urged them to be brave and vigilant and not be cheated. He gave explicit instructions how to protect his properties and how to deal with the inimical forces the devotees faced. When Prabhupada actually went to India, he dealt with these managerial affairs in person, and the devotees felt more protected.

At one point in Bombay, the leading devotees caved in to Mr. Nair and told him he could take the property back. But when Prabhupada went to India, he changed this decision and took control of the property. He was not intimidated by Mr. Nair.

The blue aerogrammes were received with great delight by devotees in the West. They were usually addressed to the temple president, and he shared the contents with the eager devotees. There were so many practical and tangible instructions in these letters and calls to rise to the occasion and push on with Krsna consciousness despite all obstacles.

Remembering Srila Prabhupada: A Free-Verse Rendition of the Life and Teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Suresvara told me that the devotees in ISKCON Tucson hold regular meetings in which they read from the poetry of *Remembering Srila Prabhupada*. He said they find it even more accessible and enjoyable in a way than the authorized biography, *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. Here are some poems from the book:

“YOU CAME ALONE, BUT NOW . . .”

But now you were not alone.

Your boys went out on their own

to the Love-Pageant rally, a hippie protest meeting,

and while the crowd was milling aimlessly

started Hare Krishna chanting.

In the same park where you

had led them personally,

now on your order, among their peers they chanted,

with your drum, *karatalas*, and a tambourine of soda caps.

The Love-Pageant flared up in devotional chanting

and the *Village Voice* reported,

“The backbone of the meeting was the mantras,

holy chants from the Sanskrit *Bhagavad-gita*,

and for three hours it became like a boat

on a sea of rhythmic chanting.

Led by fifteen disciples of Bhaktivedanta Swami,

who operates from a storefront on Second Avenue,

the mantras ebbed and flowed with the rhythm of drums . . .”

“They ran, ecstatic to tell you:

‘Swamiji, it was fantastic!’

as if to say, ‘We did what you told us
and it worked! We ourselves are amazed,
and our faith increased a hundred times
to go out and spread this everywhere.’

‘Do it,’ you said. ‘Go everywhere
and chant, and save your people.’

“The American revival of *Back to Godhead*
was also accomplished by your men
and no longer were you alone
writing that Krsna is supreme.

“‘I am an old man,’ you said,
‘but you are young.
Learn it and do it—
how to play drum, how to sing and cook.
Be without sense gratification,
and chant 16 rounds daily without fail,
and one day you can each go
and open a center, just as I have done.
In Russia, in China—who will go?
Brahmananda, will you go to Russia?’

At first it seemed too much—a joke by Swamiji.

But maybe we could do it,
if that was what he wanted.

“You were no longer alone,
as a mother with young children is not alone.
It was more burden to have us.

Years later you even said,
“When I was all alone in New York,
it was very nice—no one to depend on but Krsna.’
But you wanted this burden,
the growing-up youngsters
ready to go out
to turn protests into chant-ins,
to turn the world into devotees,
when empowered by you.”

“Swamiji”

“Swamiji, I too have been to other places,
seen you and been with you on later fields
when there was bigger work to do,

and I have taken on new services, new names,
but I always return to you in the first days,
because that is the way it will always be.

“Srila Prabhupada, you often recalled
the beginning and said, ‘Those were happy days,’
when you would look out your kitchen window,
the weedy tenement garden below,
the rush and noise of traffic on First Street,
and you would be full of hope.

Throughout your years of travel
and fabulous growth of success,
after opening multimillion-dollar temples,
writing and publishing sixty big books,
and taking thousands of disciples,
still, you often said, ‘Those were happy days.’
Remembering them one by one, as if they were before you
you spoke about your preaching at 26 Second Avenue
even in your last days in Vrindavan.

“They were happy days for you, and also for us,
the boys you lifted up.

They were happy days for the whole world,
 when you began your preaching on Second Avenue,
 your first place in America,
 where you chanted in Tompkins Square Park
 and stood before the elm tree.

Then one day late in '66 you shocked us:
 ‘Now I will go to the next place,’ you said—
 ‘to San Francisco.

Take care of everything here.

Keep up the classes, and the love feasts,

Go out with magazines and *kirtana*.

Everything should be maintained in my absence.”

“And, then you left—in January 1967.

And then you left, in November 1977.

And now we are living on your orders.”

Shack Notes: Moments While at a Writing Retreat

Shack Notes is the first book in which I tried to write in the process-oriented method, where one just starts writing, moving the hand and letting the mind express

itself freely. This was my first free write book, and it wasn't all-out freedom. But it was the beginning. Here are some excerpts:

“Today while I had my eyes shut and we were all hearing Baladeva reading ‘The Prayers of Lord Brahma to Krsna,’ it started thundering. Lightning flashed ominously. We continued reading, and I didn't notice how dark it was getting. I said, ‘Brahma's description at the beginning of this chapter is one of my all-time favorites. Yellow *dhoti* glittering like lightning, helmet with forest flowers, bodily hue like a fresh rain cloud, a morsel of food in one hand, a flute tucked in His belt, small lotus feet—and yet He is the inconceivable Personality of Godhead, the source of all.’

“Then it started to rain. Usually, you don't get wet in the shack. But this was a heavy downpour. We moved to a dry corner and continued. Brahma's glorious speech resonated louder than the thunder. I imagined Lord Brahma beginning to speak, his voice low and quaking and then gathering volume as he said, ‘*Jnane prayasam udapasya namanta eva.*’ I could hear the strength of his voice, see his chest filling out, his intelligence flowing. It is one of the most Krsna-triumphant speeches ever made by any devotee in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He does not just praise God, not just Visnu, but specifically Krsna as the source of all the incarnations, and he describes His Vrndavana pastimes as the sweetest

of all. We cheered Brahma on, listening as best we could. He who had made a fool of himself before Krsna was now used by Krsna to speak wonderous and strong Krsna conscious prayers.

“Winding up the first of three intended parts of *Shack Notes*, I am happy to live for this. May I learn to face the truth—a fool again. O Lord Brahma, how magnificently you teach us to rebound from mistakes and to become malleable in the hands of the Lord, to do His will. You teach us to aspire for a future birth free from passion, as a humble-as-grass servitor of the residents of Vrindavan. O Lord Brahma, although you are not yourself a resident of Vraja, you have become the best philosopher and poet of Vraja-lila, and Sukadeva concludes ultimately it is Krsna who is pleasing and attractive. He is the Supersoul of everything. And in order to give us this information Krsna descends and tells us that the attractive center is He Himself. Without being an expansion of Krsna, nothing can be attractive.”

While writing *Shack Notes* in the little forest in Samika Rsi’s backyard in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, I discovered the wood thrush. His call is unique even among all the forest birds. He sings several somewhat complicated notes, and they are very attractive. Finally, I spied him high on the branch of a tree. I observed his body was silver, with brown trim on his head. I shifted my feet to get a better look at him and he shyly flew away. But I continued to be blessed by hearing his song, and

occasionally catching a glance of the bird. The wood thrush was like a muse to my free writing adventure.

Speedy

In Greek mythology there is a god, Mercury, who has winged feet. Vedic literature describes the residents of Siddhaloka; they are accomplished yogis and can fly from one planet to another without the aid of any vehicle. Dhruva Maharaja and his mother were carried very swiftly in Vaikuntha chariots through all the material universes and up to Vaikunthaloka. They were transformed into spiritual beings and entered the association of the residents of Vaikuntha. When a pure devotee transfers from this planet to Vaikunthaloka or Krsnaloka, he goes without delay. There are no security checks or custom searches. He goes at once in his spiritual body to join with the Supreme Lord's associates and the Lord Himself. Srila Prabhupada walked so briskly on his morning walk, his young disciples had trouble keeping up with him. The human lifetime passes very briefly in comparison to universal time or the time in the upper planets. The conditioned souls are not aware that their lifetime is just a brief flash, and they neglect their real responsibility for self-realization.

Kindle Reading

In my Kindle-reading I am up to the first chapters of the "Talks Between Narada and Vyasadeva." Despite having written so much Vedic literature, including *Vedanta* and *Mahabharata*, Vyasadeva was feeling despondent and not satisfied.

Vyasa's spiritual master, Narada, came to him and diagnosed his dilemma. Narada said, "Although you have written much about religion and philosophy, you have not visibly described devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna." (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.5.9) After Narada's instructions, Vyasa meditated and saw a full vision of the Supreme Lord and His energies. He saw the sufferings of the conditioned souls and their remedy. He began to write *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which directly teaches devotional service to Krsna as the highest goal of life. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, written by Vyasadeva in his maturity, is the natural commentary on *Vedanta-sutra* written by the author of Vedanta himself. Lord Caitanya called the *Bhagavatam* the spotless *Purana*, and He recommended His followers read it. The different Vedas were written for people in different modes of nature, with concessions for those in the modes of passion and ignorance. But the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is above all the material modes. It is the highest authority. No wonder Srila Prabhupada took the writing of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the translation and commentary, as his life's work.

Why Am I So Worried That I Am Overweight?

All the years that Srila Prabhupada was with us, I was very thin. A magazine article describing me as the temple president of Boston wrote that I was "a lean chieftain." My wife used to nag me that I should gain weight and it wasn't good for me to be so skinny compared to the other men I was in charge of. But there didn't seem to be anything I could do about it. Now as I've grown older, I have put on some

pounds. I have a large tummy and soft breasts. But the doctors aren't worried about my weight. My height is 5 foot 10 inches, and I weigh 188 pounds. This is not alarming to them. All my devotee friends say I look fine, better than the last time they had seen me. I don't eat too much. Extra weight could be due to a lack of exercise because of COPD and my inability to walk. It could be diabetes, side effects from meds, thyroid . . . these are things out of my control. But my blood pressure is good, my prostate is good, my oxygen level is good, my heart is strong. I just had an eye checkup, and the doctor said my eyes are all right (with glasses). My hearing is okay. So maybe I shouldn't be so worried about it. Maybe it's an obsession.

Srila Prabhupada Samadhi Diary

This book was written in what I call the two most sacred places in Vrndavana, Prabhupada's *Samadhi Mandir* and his residential quarters at Krsna-Balarama *Mandir*. I have already said I wrote it at a time when I thought I had taken too much shelter under another *siksa-guru*, and I was repentant and wanted to purify myself and come back to Prabhupada's exclusive shelter. I did this by writing diaries in these two most sacred places. The *Samadhi* was not a quiet place. Many casual visitors came and went briefly into the *mandir* to look at Prabhupada's golden murti. They spoke loudly among themselves and then quickly exited. I grew in appreciation for the *mandir*, seeing it as a public monument to which many people could come and pay respects to India's great saint. It was spacious, clean, and holy. The residential rooms had a different mood. I went there and mostly found few

persons present. I was not so much distracted by the action there. It was a good place to reflect on my relationship with Srila Prabhupada. Here are some excerpts from the book:

“Samadhi Mandir

10:00 A.M.

“Dear Srila Prabhupada,

“You told me to encourage the devotees more and more. I tell them to be determined and patient and not to expect to become 100% pure and surrendered overnight. I give myself that advice too. But you are expecting more from your older students. We can't *only* say that it takes time, that surrender is gradual. When one devotee said he could not do as much as you because you are a *paramahamsa*, Prabhupada, you replied, ‘You also become *paramahamsa!*’ Work hard, surrender.

“I'm sitting before you, writing. If we leave Vrindavan early this year, it will be to go and preach on your behalf in the temples.

“People are coming into the *mandira* and making *pranamas* before your form. You sit and receive them as you used to in your room. Are you telling them about Krsna? You said that even if people don't learn philosophy from a *sadhu* but just render him service (as the child Narada did to the *bhaktivedantas*), then they still make great spiritual

benefit. You hinted that we should come up to the standard of *bhaktivedantas*. At least we know you are *bhaktivedanta*, and that the people who come to see you with respect get your mercy.

“In your golden *murti*, you are fingering *japa-mala* in a beadbag. Today, group after group comes in, mostly simple villagers from Vrindavan and Rajastan. Sometimes someone asks me something in Hindi, but I can't reply. I just smile and nod. Hindi is not required, you said, not so important for someone like me. But I have to preach fully in American English.

“I wish I could write a nice poem, and I tried reading your purports earlier, but it was hot in the room and I was too drowsy. I'll try again. I'm determined to gain the greed to go further and further into your books. Bit by bit I can attain it by your grace.

“When will such mercy fall to this one who is weak and devoid of intelligence? Allow me to be with you.’

“In the past, I lost the opportunity to be with you. I'm coming back to try again. Someone could call me a hypocrite, insincere, sentimental. They could say, ‘You failed when you had the chance because you couldn't surrender your false ego. Now you are trying in an easy way—when Srila Prabhupada is not here to reprimand your faults. You can't take the real thing—real surrender in Prabhupada's presence.’ Something is better than nothing. I repeat Bhaktivinoda Thakura's

words: ‘Allow me to be with you.’”

“Prabhupada’s Room

4:36 P.M.

“The door was locked at 4:30, so we sat in an outdoor alcove under the low branches of the trees, sipping water from a coconut which the *pujari* gave us as *maha-prasadam* in the *Samadhi Mandir*. Now they have let us in.

“Selling beadbags and books at the counter. Her duty is to open the rooms and sit there. She wants to do it. We each have some service, voluntary or compulsory. I want to come here. I'm also compelled.

“We all hope we can improve. Why else do we come to Vrndavana and roll in its dust and go out on *parikramas* to the most sacred places? We ask for a boon. We ask the dust to grant us a drop of appreciation for Vrndavana and for devotional service. I do the same when I come to Srila Prabhupada's room. Here it's most direct. I face my spiritual master. One might even say it's frightening to come so directly in front of he who can order you to do whatever he likes. One could be cynical: ‘You don't *have* to do what he says. You can make up some excuse and say

you didn't hear him or you don't believe he can instruct you after his disappearance. Besides, you get headaches.'

"I'm not *that* fearful or cynical, although I may have a touch of each. I used to like to come before Srila Prabhupada. I fully trusted him. I knew it was in my own soul's interest to do as he said. That full faith of my youth—I want to recapture it. Maybe I'm more surrendered now. Now I take into account more my total self, and I'm more aware of my limits. I act maturely on his order. But there was something nice back then. 'What do you want me to do? Where shall I go?' Sometimes the tests were too great. He allowed us to express our inclinations.

"I'm waiting for the meetings to end so I can go forth and try to do it, to serve Prabhupada without the close support of these *tirtha* visits (I'll miss them).

"Prabhupada, Prabhupada, the whirring of the fan and its motor remind me that prayer to you is a constant thing. I like to chant Hare Krsna with a sigh and with a tone that goes deeper than the conversations around me. I chant the *maha-mantra* in service to you.

"The letter to Sudama is still on your desk. Someone said if I liked, I could continue to read one of your letters each day when I'm away from here and imagine that I'm in your room. I doubt it will be the same."

Krsna goes barefoot in Vrndavana, and doing so impresses the marks on the soles of His feet on the ground. The marks on the soles of Krsna's feet are a half-moon, a water pot, a triangle, a bow, sky, a cow's hoofprint, a fish, a conchshell, an eight-pointed star, tiny *swastikas*, a wheel, a parasol, barleycorn, an elephant goad, a flag, a thunderbolt, *jambu* fruits, an *urdhva-rekha* line, and a lotus. In Dvaraka, Krsna wears slippers. One of the advantages of Vraja is that everywhere one can see the footprints of Krsna. The aborigine women collect from the grass the red *kunkuma* Krsna's feet pick up when He rests them on the *gopis'* breasts, and when they smear it on their faces and breasts, they become fully satisfied and give up all their anxiety. These Pulinda women are not much aroused when their husbands caress their breasts, but when they collect the *kunkuma* from the ground in Vrndavana, they are ecstatic and their lust is satisfied. Lord Brahma and Uddhava prayed to be born in a future birth as creepers or grass in Vrndavana. They knew that the *gopis* would step on these places, and they wanted to receive the imprint of the *gopis'* feet, which are so intimately connected with Krsna. Lord Caitanya prayed in His *Siksastakam*, "O Son of Maharaja Nanda, somehow I have fallen into the ocean of repeated birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean of death and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet." (*Siksastakam* 5) When the Kumaras smelled the aroma of *tulasi* placed on Krsna's lotus feet, they became converted from *brahmavadis* to pure devotees of Krsna.

When there is danger, we should seek protection at Krsna's lotus feet. Krsna would sometimes indifferently kick a demon on the head and kill him; but this was a

great benediction on the demon, who attained liberation in the spiritual sky. Krsna ran very fast on His bare feet to chase Sankhyacuda, who was trying to kidnap the *gopis*. He quickly caught up to him, and with a punch to the demon's head, He took his life. The feet of the Lord in His incarnation as Vamanadeva were fabulous. He went to Bali Maharaja and begged for only three feet of land. Bali granted it, and with one step Vamanadeva covered the entire universe. With His second step, He pierced the outer shell of the universe, and some drops of water from the Causal Ocean (which was the Ganges) fell down to the earth. Vamanadeva asked Bali how he could keep his promise and give a place for Vamana's third foot to stand on. Bali Maharaja said to the Lord that He could please place His foot on Bali's humble head. When the Kuruksetra War was about to begin, Krsna was lying down, resting, and He said He would take the side of whoever He saw first when He woke. Duryodhana thought it would be very clever to sit at Krsna's head and be first seen by the Lord when He opened His eyes. Arjuna humbly took his position at the Lord's lotus feet. When Krsna awoke, He sat up and first saw Arjuna at His feet. Thus the outcome of the war was predicated, because Krsna would be on the side of Arjuna.

Clean

Prabhupada used to quote the saying, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." He also said that the devotees in Krsna consciousness were "revolutionary clean." He spoke of cleaning outside by bathing three times a day and inside by constantly chanting Hare Krsna. It is said that we devotees are on the path (*marga*) of

Gundica-marjanam. This was a pastime in which Lord Caitanya gathered all His devotees and did a *maha*-cleanup of the Gundica mandir, where Lord Jagannatha would be coming to stay for a week at Ratha-yatra time. Lord Caitanya led the devotees, starting with sweeping with brooms and picking up dust particles. He collected more dust than anyone else. He criticized those who collected only a small portion of dust and praised those who collected a big amount. The next phase of cleaning the *mandir* was to throw buckets of water on the ceilings and walls and let it pour out of the drains. Caitanya Mahaprabhu personally polished the walls with His own *sannyasa* cloth. Prabhupada said that when we clean the temple kitchen or *mandir*, we are cleaning our hearts. He insisted that devotees clean pots until all the black was removed on the bottom of them.

In the early 1970s, when Prabhupada was traveling with a group of his disciples, he personally showed them how to clean the floor in Gorakhpur. He hitched up his *dhoti* and got down on the floor with a clean wet rag and demonstrated how it should be done. One time, while being taken on a tour of the Krsna-Balarama Mandir by his GBC representative, the GBC man kept saying that everything in the temple was “first class.” Prabhupada pointed overhead to a bird’s nest in the fan and said, “I have to come 10,000 miles to point this out to you.” In *Caitanya-lila*, a well-to-do disciple of the Lord was very extreme and meticulous in making nice offerings to the Deity. He used to look for coconuts even in a distant place, then collect them and offer them to his Deity. One time the devotee noticed that a *pujari* holding a coconut touched it to the ceiling. He chastised him and told

him that the coconut was now dirty from the dust raised by people walking there. Prabhupada comments that this devotee did not have a “cleansing phobia,” but he was just being very strict to keep a high standard of *puja*.

Once Lord Caitanya and Nityananda were invited by a *tantric* yogi to take foodstuffs at his place. They ate some fruits, but the man insisted that They drink some “bliss.” Lord Caitanya and Nityananda knew that he was referring to wine, and They ran away from him and dove into the Ganges and floated away to Advaita Acarya’s house. It was said in those times that one should bathe after seeing the face of a *karmi*. It is said by Vaisnavas that by chanting Hare Krsna one is cleaning the mirror of the mind.

Prabhupada Nectar

Prabhupada Nectar was first published as a series of miniature books, which the devotees referred to as “the little red books.” Later they were all assembled in one volume. The little red books were named for their similarity to the books of China’s Mao Tse Tung, who published red revolutionary tomes in small sizes. Similarly, a devotee was a revolutionary, and he could keep our miniature-sized *Nectar* book handy in his pocket. Originally five of the small books were published. Later, they were all compiled into one volume, and they have remained very popular among the devotees, coming out in new editions and translations. Here is an excerpt from *Prabhupada Nectar, Volume 1* (#43):

“A few months before Srila Prabhupada's first visit to ISKCON Dallas, a strong windstorm hit the area, felling trees. A tall, valuable shade tree in the courtyard of the temple also fell over and remained leaning against an adjoining building, the children's *prasadam* hall. The tree still had its roots in the ground, but its heavy weight, with dangling branches, now lay in a sharp angle right across the walkway, leaving barely enough room to walk under it. Satsvarupa dasa, the temple president, took no immediate action, but different devotees approached him and said that the tree had to be removed right away or it might cause collapse of the building it was leaning against. Satsvarupa agreed, and one of the devotees climbed the tall tree with a power saw and gradually dismantled the upper branches and trunk until nothing remained but the lower ten feet of tilted trunk.

“And thus the tree appeared when Srila Prabhupada came there in September 1972. As soon as he walked into the courtyard, accompanied by temple leaders and trailed by the whole assembly of *gurukula* children and teachers, Prabhupada saw the remains of the big tree, and his face expressed trouble. He walked off the cement path and went up to the tree, and so did everyone else behind him.

“‘Who has done this?’ he demanded. Satsvarupa admitted responsibility and explained the reason the tree had been destroyed.

Prabhupada shook his head angrily. That was no reason to kill it, he said. Satsvarupa tried to explain the dangerous condition and pointed to the dent in the roof of the building. He also said that the fallen tree would probably have soon died.

“No, it is not dead,’ Prabhupada challenged. ‘Look. There is a green twig growing out of it.’ Prabhupada walked away disgusted, and the devotees remained shocked at what they now saw as a brutal, unnecessary act. In his room, Prabhupada continued to criticize the killing of the tree. He said this was the typical American attitude—when something is wrong, immediately cut it down and destroy it, with no understanding or compassion for the presence of the soul.

“Later, feeling repentant, Satsvarupa asked if he had committed an offense.

“Not offense,’ said Srila Prabhupada. ‘You are ignorant.’”

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“During a short visit to Boston in 1971, Prabhupada gave the devotees a gift for their altar.

“Brahmananda had asked Prabhupada why he always applied his Vaisnava *tilaka* by using water from an old jar. Prabhupada replied, "I will give it to you. It is Ganga water and never decomposes.’

“Brahmananda thankfully accepted the jar of water. ‘Thank you, Srila Prabhupada. We will get a silver container for it.’

“‘No,’ said Prabhupada. ‘Put it on the altar as it is.’ So the devotees placed the jar, which was clearly labeled ‘Maxwell House Coffee,’ on the altar alongside the Radha-Krsna Deities and all the other standard paraphernalia. Sometimes visitors to the temple would ask about the significance of the Maxwell House jar on the worshipable altar, and the devotees would proudly and gladly explain that it was a gift from Srila Prabhupada.”

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“When Srila Prabhupada began the worship of *salagrama-sila* in Mayapur, he did not give much instruction to the *pujaris*.

“‘Give some *tulasi*,” he said, “and then you can give this water drip.” He meant that the *salagrama* should receive a daily watering as Tulasi does during the month of Vaisakha. ‘*Salagrama-sila* means mantra,’ said Prabhupada. ‘Mantra, sleeping, mantra, sleeping, mantra, sleeping . . .’ Prabhupada started laughing. He explained that *salagrama-silas* are worshiped not so much in the temple, but privately. A *brahmana* will do his *puja* and then put the *sila* away in a box, and then again at a later time take Him out and do *puja*, and then

put Him away in a box. ‘Mantra, sleeping,’ laughed Prabhupada. ‘This is *salagrama* worship.’”