

## *Free Write Journal #57*

### **Radharani Free Writes**

### **Radharani Talk**

Talk of Radharani is very confidential because externally Radha and Krsna appear to be “lawless” lovers. Prabhupada explained this with an analogy when he visited Boston in 1968. He entered the storefront and bowed down with the devotees before framed pictures on the altar. When he sat on the dais, he told a story of a cow in a barn when a fire occurred. The cow survived, but when she saw the color red, she was traumatized and thought, “There is fire!” Prabhupada said we conditioned souls are so much accustomed to sex life that when we see Radha and Krsna together, we think, “There is sex life.” That is why the Vedic literatures are confidential in describing Radha and Krsna. The name Radharani is not mentioned in the entire *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Nevertheless, Srila Prabhupada compassionately and carefully described Radha-Krsna in the *Krsna* book, *Caitanya-caritamrta* and *The Nectar of Devotion*.

On Radhastami I will tell two short pastimes of Radharani from Srila Prabhupada’s books. I will tell the time Radha and Krsna escaped from the *rasa* dance to be alone together and how all the *gopis* searched after Them. Then I will

tell the time Uddhava visited Vrindavan, and while he was delivering a message from Krsna to the *gopis*, Radharani stood apart and in madness spoke to a bumblebee, criticizing it for being “an unreliable servant from an unreliable master.”

## **Radhastami**

We celebrated a festival for Radharani in our *ashram*. Krsna dasi and her helpers placed profuse flower decorations made from the flowers in our garden. Big (36 inch) Gaura-Nitai were covered in an outfit of marigolds and roses. Radha-Govinda wore garlands of flower petals. Radharani had Her skirt lifted so that we could see Her lotus feet, this one day of the year. Aside from the two lectures, Ramaya led melodious kirtan with the harmonium, and Haryasva and others danced in ecstasy. After *arati*, a feast was served outdoors under a tent, with tables and chairs. The preparations included delicious hot *samosas* made by Krsna-lila, crowd-pleasing *halava* with blueberries by Baladeva, and Radha Red plum chutney. For dessert, each devotee received a cupcake with a sign on it describing one of Radharani’s qualities. Homemade ice cream was also served. Everyone agreed it was a great party for Srimati Radharani.

## **Caitanya Mahaprabhu/Radharani**

In my Radhastami talk I discussed Radha, Krsna and the *gopis* but didn’t mention Lord Caitanya. This was a great oversight on my part. Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu came to the rescue in his talk. He quoted a verse from *Sri Caitanya-*

*Candramrtam* that if one is very fortunate, he becomes acquainted with Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. And if he inquires further into mystery of Lord Caitanya, he receives the mercy of Radharani's lotus feet. Ravindra went on to describe the three unfulfilled desires of Lord Krsna: 1) He wanted to know the position of Radharani; 2) He wanted to know the sweetness of Himself that attracts Radharani; and 3) He wanted to know the bliss Radha feels when She meets Krsna, which is millions of times greater than what He feels. Krsna could not experience these things because He is the male enjoyer, the object of love. Krsna therefore took birth as Lord Caitanya in the complexion and mood of Radharani just so He could taste Her *rasas*. Ravindra said we too could receive the mercy of Radharani if we follow Lord Caitanya and chant Hare Krsna.

### **Initiation Day**

I was initiated on September 23, 1966—53 years ago—on the occasion of Radhastami. I was initiated with two other devotees, Kirtanananda and Acyutananda. Prabhupada conducted the ceremony personally, and it was held in his apartment. He chanted a full round audibly on each of our set of Tandy's wooden beads and then handed us the beads and asked us what were the four prohibitory rules and ordered us to chant sixteen rounds daily. I remember Swamiji made me bow down at his lotus feet and repeat after him his *pranam* mantra. He said one or two words at a time, and I replied: "*Nama om visnu padaya krsna presthaya bhutale srimate bhakti-vedanta . . .*" When he said the word "bhakti," I plunged into a

swoon of devotional emotion with my eyes closed. It was an unusual out-of-the-body experience for me.

In his lecture, he mentioned *guru daksine*. It was the first time I heard the words. He explained that in return for the gift of initiation by the spiritual master, one should offer him a gift. He said the gift he wanted was that we enthusiastically preach and tell others about Krsna consciousness and ask them to practice it. Since this was the first time I heard it, I felt a new sense of responsibility connected to the initiation. Prabhupada was giving us the mantra and the beads and the order to chant and avoid sinful activities, but he was also expecting us to preach on his behalf. This was a new order, a new responsibility, and I accepted it sincerely, but as a weight on my shoulders to oblige. Every year on Radhastami some of my disciples congratulate me on my initiation anniversary. It is an auspicious coincidence that I received *diksa* under the shelter of Srimati Radharani's Appearance Day. I am proud of the coincidence, and I take it to heart. It is a little something extra to bring me closer to Srimati Radharani. Out of all days in the year, I was given initiation on Her birthday! This was the mercy of Srila Prabhupada. I missed the first initiation, which was held two weeks earlier on Krsna Janmastami. I felt I wasn't ready to fully surrender, but when I saw the devotees with their red beads and heard their new Sanskrit names, I became anxious and enthusiastic to also become an initiated devotee. So I went to Prabhupada and told him I wanted to be initiated. He said yes, and that there was an auspicious date coming up in two weeks, and I could receive it then. That auspicious date was Radhastami, and he picked it out personally.

## The Gopis as Detectives

When the *gopis* searched for Krsna after He disappeared from them, they were like detectives. They inquired from the trees, plants and deer whether they had seen Krsna passing by. When they discovered the footprints of Krsna and then Radharani's walking beside Him, they became clairvoyant and accurately conjectured what the Divine Couple were doing just by finding clues like crushed grass, etc. They were like great detectives (such as Sherlock Holmes) in pursuing their "culprits." At first they were a little envious of Radharani for going alone with Krsna, and they criticized Her. But when Krsna disappeared from Radharani and they found Her alone, lamenting Him, they became sorry and sympathetic to Her. Radharani then joined them. The night became too dark, and they stopped searching and sat on the bank of the Yamuna, thinking Krsna must appear to them. They chanted His holy names and waited. The *gopis* were almost mad. They were enacting Krsna's own pastimes. Krsna was watching them from a distance. He wanted to churn their feelings of loving separation for Him. Finally, He reappeared to them and satisfied their desires.

## **"Radha Red"/Sunday Feast**

"Radha Red" is mandatory for the feast on Radhastami. It is a plum chutney with grapes and candied ginger and other sweet spices. Srila Prabhupada himself was the first one to cook a Sunday feast. He served it upstairs in his apartment for about twelve boys. He made sweet rice, *puspana* rice, *subjis* and *halava*. The

newcomers were “knocked out” by the sumptuous preparations personally cooked and served out by Prabhupada. He walked among the devotees in his bare feet encouraging them to “take more.” The first two times he cooked these feasts, no one stayed back to help him clean up. But then they caught on that they should serve the spiritual master and do the cleanup. Eventually the feasts became expanded, and advertised as “Love Feasts,” inviting the hippies from the Lower East Side. The Love Feast caught on, and attendance grew. The janitor, Mr. Chuddy, complained that the guests were eating their plates in his courtyard. Brahmananda did his best to calm Mr. Chuddy down because Prabhupada had told him to treat the man very politely, like a father. As more centers opened and each one served a Sunday Love Feast, the preparations were standard and sensational. Devotees and guests ate to their full satisfaction, taking seconds and thirds. As ISKCON has evolved, the standard feast has changed with the introduction of devotees following vegan diets. The sheer pleasure of the early feasts has become endangered. One of the devotees in our ashram complained, “They don’t know how to make a Sunday feast any more!” So we are determined to make an old-time 1960s feast for Radhastami.

**From *Prabhupada Nectar***

**“PRABHUPADA SAID”**

“Question: How many other people are there on the planet who have made as much spiritual progress as you have?”

“Srila Prabhupada: ‘Some, but not many. But there are a few. There are no statistics in my possession. What is the use of taking statistics of how many are there? Why don’t you become one of them? Why are you wasting your time in that way? These are not very intellectual questions. You just try to become enlightened. What is the use of knowing who is enlightened or not? You try to become enlightened, that’s all.

“When you are going somewhere, purchasing the plane ticket, do you ask, “How many tickets have you sold?” Huh? What is the use? You just purchase your ticket and get on the airplane and go.

“Don’t waste your valuable time in that way. If you are serious, just purchase ticket and get on the airplane. That's all. All right.

Chant Hare Krsna.’

“Question: ‘If we are on the street collecting money and we are thinking, “I am collecting so nicely,” is that all right?’

“Srila Prabhupada: ‘Yes, yes. You are a very good collector for Krishna.’

“Question: ‘But if we—’

“Srila Prabhupada: ‘Yes, yes, you should be proud. You should feel proud, “I am working for Krsna very nicely.” We don’t reject anything, even this pride. “Yes, I am the greatest servant of Krsna. Yes, I am proud.” That kind of pride is nice. Yes?’

“Question: ‘This might be a stupid question, but—’

“Srila Prabhupada: ‘Well, we are all stupid, so question must be stupid because we are stupid. He says, “I have heard in the street.” We have to hear everything from Krsna, then it is perfect.’

“Question: ‘Well, sometimes I feel what they call *cakras*. I feel clear light over here, and I feel something swirling over here that they call “House of the upper lotus.” Is this my imagination, or are these things real?’

“Srila Prabhupada: ‘Yes, it is imagination. If you just open your skull, you will find no lotus there. It is your imagination, that’s all. These imaginations are prescribed for persons who are too much absorbed in the bodily concept of life: “Here is a lotus, here is a nonsense, here is an ocean of bliss. You have to find out.” It is just to make him concentrate. Just like a naughty boy, to make him stop doing nonsense, “Please sit down here. Stop all this.” Our proposition, “I am not this body. Even if there is lotus, what have I to do with this lotus? My first proposition is, “I am not this body.””’ (Volume Five, Item #17)

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“Yamuna dasi was not sure of how Srila Prabhupada wanted the Deity of Srimati Radharani to appear. Often Radharani's right hand is raised with the palm facing outward, and Her left hand is at Her side

holding a lotus flower. In Mayapur at Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's temple, however, Radharani's arms are bent and Her hands are at the same height. 'Should She be like that?' Yamuna dasi asked Prabhupada.

“No,’ said Srila Prabhupada, ‘She should stand like this,’ and Prabhupada struck a pose. He raised his right hand and cupped his palm, and he bent his left arm and held the palm downward. He then turned his head and tilted it slightly. To Yamuna dasi, Prabhupada appeared to be in a classic and very graceful pose of Srimati Radharani dancing. Then Prabhupada said, ‘If Radharani were to stop dancing, the whole business would be finished.’ He then explained that in Vrindavan, Radharani never stops dancing, and that of all Her superexcellent qualities, Radharani's cooking and Her dancing are particularly outstanding. Prabhupada said that no one can excel Radharani in Her ability to please Krishna by cooking, and that She cooks for Him eternally without ever making the same preparation twice. In this way, Prabhupada explained, She keeps Krishna under Her control. Then he said that even above Her cooking skill is Her dancing skill. Therefore, Prabhupada said, in the Krishna-Balaram Mandir in Vrindavan, Srimati Radharani will be dancing. Later he said, ‘Radharani is the color of *sindura* powder and *hinglu* powder mixed with milk.’” (Volume 5, Item 14)

## **Additional Free Writes**

### **Early Morning *Bhajana***

I turn on the light at 2:00 A.M. and sit up in bed. I receive the *darsana* of Radha-Kalachandji in a blown up photo (28 inches by 36 inches) of Them taken in 1972 in Their night outfits without jewelry or garlands. I chant *japa*. I look at the pink benedicting hand of Radharani, then down to the lotus feet of Kalachandji smeared with sandalwood paste. I fix my gaze at His feet for some time. If I become distracted and glance at my beads or clock or Baladeva, then I look back to Radha's benedicting hand for rejuvenation. Sometimes I look briefly to Her lovely face and then return to my base, the large feet of Kalachandji. This goes on for over an hour. Then I go into the other room and feel a thrill as Baladeva removes Prabhupada's night *chadar* and gives him a bead bag and *pavitra* garland. Then I gaze at Radha-Govinda. I do the same thing: I look upon Radharani's extended hand with tulasi leaf, and then fix my vision at the lotus feet of Govinda. I notice the marigolds scattered on the altar and the form of Lord Caitanya. I finish my rounds and turn, searching for topics for this morning's *Free Write Journal*.

### ***Varnasrama***

We are now hearing in our out-loud reading at mealtimes consecutive chapters in the Seventh Canto about *daivi-varnasrama*. One chapter is "Perfect Society: Four Social Classes;" another is "Perfect Society: Four Spiritual Classes;" another chapter

is “The Behavior of a Perfect Person.” And one chapter is “Instructions for Civilized Human Beings.” These chapters occur at the end of the Seventh Canto. Narada Muni is speaking to King Yudhisthira.

In the early years of ISKCON, Prabhupada concentrated on training devotees to become *brahmanas*, the head of the *varnasrama system*. He said without *brahmanas*, a society was missing a head. But in his last years, Prabhupada said that only one half of his mission was accomplished, and that the other was *varnasrama*. He said he wanted to stay at the Gita Nagari Farm and train and guide the devotees in *varnasrama dharma*, but because of ill health he was never able to carry it out. But the instructions are in the *Bhagavatam* about how it is needed, and how to do it. Society needs, in addition to Deity worship in the temples and book distribution, self-sufficient farms where devotees are employed in the different divisions of *varna* and *asrama*. Some devotees would serve as *brahmanas* and give guidance to the other orders. The *brahmanas* are the head. Then *ksatriyas* are needed, and *vaisyas* to engage in agriculture and cow protection. *Sudras* have no higher qualifications, but their duty is to faithfully serve the higher orders.

## **Helmets**

The helmets worn by Krsna and the Vedic warriors were not the helmets worn by soldiers in World War I and World War II. They were gorgeous golden ornamented headgear that made the warriors look like opulent royalty, not “G.I. Joes.” When the warriors were killed, their enemies were eager to collect the costly

helmets and keep them as booty for themselves.

In pictures of Krsna as a *ksatriya* in battle, He is shown wearing a gorgeous helmet and other military paraphernalia such as a bow, a quiver of arrows, a sword, etc. Krsna never was defeated or harmed in combat. In fact, all of the enemy soldiers killed by Krsna were revived in their liberated forms. Prabhupada observed compassionately that the young men in America were raised as *sudras*, not *ksatriyas*, so when they were drafted to fight in Vietnam and other places, they protested and did not want to go. He gave them shelter in the Krsna Consciousness Movement. In his time, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was approached by Subhas Chandra Bose, the Indian freedom fighter, and he asked Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati to donate some of the men in his *matha* for the military cause of India against Britain. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati tactfully put him off and said, “These are skinny men. They are not fit for soldiers. Don’t cast your glance on them.” Some ISKCON devotees who have some martial arts training or who are strong men, claim that they are *ksatriyas*, but they are far from living up to the code of a Vedic *ksatriya*. Prabhupada was not interested in cultivating *ksatriyas*. He knew we were not powerful enough to form an army, and that it would be against our interests. He preferred to cultivate *brahmanas* (or Vaisnavas).

## **Shoes**

Prabhupada’s devotees didn’t wear leather shoes because they were made from slaughtered animals. But in a rare exception, he once gave the devotees in Montreal

permission to buy leather shoes for the extremely cold winters when no warm non-leather shoes were available. Prabhupada himself came to America in pointy shoes made of artificial material until they eventually wore out. Then he switched to American-made canvas shoes without laces. He had the devotees dye them saffron and they were a perfect match for his *sannyasi* clothes. Virtually all the men followed this example and wore similar shoes, and Prabhupada did not object. He didn't go barefoot, as many *sadhus* do in India. Prabhupada preached in the Western countries, and the ground was hard and sharp, and one couldn't walk barefoot. When ISKCON devotees started going to India, they began walking barefoot. One reason was when they left their shoes outside of a temple, they would be stolen, even when the shoes were put outside our own ISKCON temples. Also, the Indians criticized shoes worn by devotees that appeared to be leather, such as Birkenstock sandals. I remember taking part in a *kirtana* in public in Jagannatha-Puri. I was wearing a pair of faux-leather shoes, and a crowd began to gather and point at my shoes. I was the obvious *sannyasi* leader of the group, and the small crowd became angry. For a while, I ignored them and kept my shoes on. But when I saw it was beginning to create an awkward scene, I threw off my shoes, and the crowd was pacified. When Prabhupada was a very young boy living with his father and mother, he was very proud when they purchased him a pair of leather shoes made in England. Abhay, a young child, had demanded the shoes from his father, and they tolerantly pacified their pet son. There is an incident related in the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* about shoes. It took place when Prabhupada was recuperating

from his stroke and was resting at a beach house in New Jersey:

“Sitting inches away from Prabhupada on the beach blanket, Satsvarupa asked a question on behalf of the devotees in New York. "Swamiji, is wearing of leather shoes permissible?"

"No."

"What if someone has given us some leather shoes?"

“‘Leather means violence,’ Prabhupada said. He pointed to Satsvarupa's shoes of inexpensive manmade material. ‘Your country is very nice. By your technology you can get these shoes easily without wearing leather.’ For Satsvarupa and the others the question was answered for a lifetime; and the time and place became a reference, like a chapter and verse number in the scriptures.”

**I Started Out with 8½ x 11 Inch Artwork, and That Facility Is Still Available. I Don't Have to Go Downstairs, Which Is Too Difficult for Me with My Crippled Foot. What Changed or Evolved for That Part of My Life to Be Stopped? I Have a Gift. Would I Like to Be “Remembered” as an Artist?**

I now feel very modest and humbled about the art I used to do. I look at the BBT illustrators and I feel embarrassed about my primitive, “naïve” art. Somewhere along the way I seem to have lost confidence in the worth of doing it. But just now, asking myself this question about returning to art on a small scale, piques my interest. I would like to do it again, maybe starting with markers and crayons and

felt pens. Yes, I would like to be remembered as an artist. So maybe I will ask Baladeva to set me up again. I can do it on a little table while sitting in my chair.

### **I Haven't Written So Much about Nrsimhadeva Over the Years.**

**How Do I Palpably Feel His Protection Since Bringing Him Upstairs and Putting Him on an Altar of His Own? Did I Ever Take Shelter of Nrsimhadeva During Dangerous Times in My Life? What Was Going On When I Put the Word Out That I Wanted to Worship Him?**

I think that my Nrsimha *murti* is an important worshipable Lord for me. I have cried out to Nrsimhadeva during dangerous moments in my life. I have often simply cried out, "Krsna!" when in a dangerous situation. When I didn't have a Nrsimha Deity, I began to yearn for one. I don't remember exactly what the feeling was, what the lacking was that I didn't have Him. Externally, I was at a low point in suffering chronic migraines. I simply wanted the protection of Nrsimhadeva in my life. I put the word out that I wanted to worship Him. Then one day, while in the Krsna-Balarama Mandir in Vrndavana, my Godbrother Bhagavan dasa approached me and said, "I hear you want to worship Lord Nrsimhadeva." And he generously handed me over a small brass *murti* of Laksmi-Nrsimhadeva. He said he had sent his men all over India looking for Deities. They had found three Nrsimhadeva *murtis*. They were old Deities, and they found them in antique stores. He gave one to Indradyumna Swami, kept one for himself and gave one to me. I was very pleased and grateful and began a simple daily worship. Now He is assembled in my sanctum,

my private room at Viraha Bhavan, Stuyvesant Falls. He is assembled in the *kunja* of flowers and plants where Radha and Govinda is the main *ishta-devata* and Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya are also present. On a raised shelf inside a wooden “cave,” Laksmi-Nrsimhadeva reside. We offer Them three meals a day and perform a *dhoop arati* to all these Deities in the morning. Partly I took to His worship for protection from my critical health. I had placed Him on the altar downstairs, but I said to myself I wanted “the big gun” to come up and be close to me.

## **Jazz**

In preparing Volume 3 of *POEMS from Every Day, Just Write*, I omitted all references to jazz musicians and their music. But my editor, John Endler, asked me to reconsider and put back some of the references. He said it would add bounce to the poems and retain the authenticity of the writing as it was actually done in the 1990s. I could see his reasoning, and he is going to type some of the references back into the poems and resubmit them to me for my final judgment. On the one hand, I think, “Why should I keep the references, since I have taken a vow not to listen to jazz anymore for the rest of my life?” But John’s sheer enthusiasm convinced me to at least give him a chance to revise the poems and let me look at them again. He said seekers would appreciate seeing the references. He also said that jazz musicians would like seeing the references, but I think that reason has no validity. When I wrote the poems, I was using the tools I had (my deep commitment to jazz), and it might seem unfair to just banish it all. But I am not sure if this is *yukta-vairagyam*,

dovetailing material things in the service of Krsna. I eagerly await a resubmission of the poems, and will make what I hope is an impartial decision on the matter. I have taken a vow not to listen to jazz any more, and I have faithfully moved on in my devotional career, without regrets or lamentation. But I don't want to be in denial that I never went through that period—and it was a period when I was fully practicing Krsna consciousness.

### **Submissive**

Prabhupada says we should be gentle and submissive. We should give faithful aural reception to guru, *sastra* and *sadhu*. We should not come up with our own concoctions about *Bhagavad-gita* or Krsna but follow the authoritative sources. This is called the descending process, taking what is coming down to us in disciplic succession. The ascending process is to speculate with our mental power, and we can never reach God in that way. It would be very arrogant to dismiss such a deep and complex subject on our own brainpower. Prabhupada gave a strong argument against the atheists. He said they are speaking that there is no God. But from where are they getting the power to speak? Who is giving them that power? It can actually be withdrawn at any moment. Are they getting the power from a store? The very fact that they are saying, "There is no God" means that they are saying it on the strength of some higher authority. I think this is a simple, down-to-earth, but very strong refutation of the atheists' speaking.

## **Rocket**

Prabhupada says humans cannot reach higher planets by mechanical means, such as jet-powered spacecraft. By accumulating pious credits, yogis can transfer themselves to higher planets, but when their good karma runs out, they have to be turned back to the mortal planets. In *Bhagavad-gita* Chapter 4, Verse 9, Krsna states, “One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.” This is a reference to the process of *bhakti*. When one attains unalloyed loving service to Krsna, his material attachments are vanquished, and he transfers to Vaikuntha or Goloka Vrndavana.

How can they think they can do such a fabulous thing as create a machine and maneuver it through outer space (which is cluttered by the refuse of previous adventures in outer space travel)? Flight experts have not even mastered the art and science of flying around the earth planet. There are so many crashes and limitations and incomplete knowledge in regular earthly air travel. They have not even come close to knowing how agile and expert the birds are in flying. The outer space entrepreneurs are spending so much money in their experiments. They are making so much money from their endeavors. But what is the ultimate use of it? How does it actually benefit humankind? And how is it pleasing to Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

## **Cold**

In the early years of ISKCON, the temples were often cold in winter. Sometimes the management couldn't pay the fuel bills, and there were broken windows and no warm water to bathe in. The devotees were young and somehow took all this as austerities. We did not have enough money to go to regular retail stores and buy winter clothing. We shopped in Salvation Army outlets and shared community clothes. The devotees would wash the clothes and leave them in a pile, and different members in the community would pick out what they could and wear them. It is not that everyone had their "own" coats, jackets and hats. The devotees, in their devotional ecstasy, transcended these cold hardships, just as the yogis in the Himalayas do. They were so enthusiastic to go out and preach that they didn't let low temperatures stop them. I can attest that this was the case in Boston.

### **From *ISKCON in the 1970s—Diaries***

Here's an excerpt of my notes from when Prabhupada was in Jagannatha Puri. In January 1977, he had begun work on the Tenth Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He was very weak but went on dictating. He spoke to the devotees about a court case against ISKCON in America:

“He was telling us not to expect a smooth path; be tolerant. He was saying that the demons make us more enthusiastic to fight them on Krsna's behalf. *Apratihatah*. The devotee makes progress in spite of

being checked; that is a pure devotee. He spoke of three heart attacks—two were on consecutive nights on the way over to America in 1965 on the boat. The third was in New York. He spoke of the doctors' treatment in the hospital, how eager they were to experiment on his brain.

“Whatever happens to me,” he said, “don't call a doctor.” Then he quoted *matra-sparsas tu kaunteya*. There are impediments in the body, there are impediments in the form of our enemies; we cannot expect smooth, happy-going life. Krsna never said I will play magic and there will be no trouble. He never gave Arjuna a tablet.

“Krsna didn't give, as modern gurus do, a magic ash, but He said, ‘Tolerate.’ Nor did Arjuna say, ‘Why do You make me fight, Krsna? Give a magic ash.’ We have to face things as they are and go on with our duty. Do not expect any ash, any miracle or magic tablet.”

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“The meeting with Rupanuga, Balavanta, Bhagavan, and myself about why ISKCON was not preaching took place spontaneously. It wasn't any kind of GBC agenda item, but we just gathered late one night in a hotel room in New Delhi before all going to fly off in different directions. Talks like this among Godbrothers are actually wonderful and can lead to real activity, even more so than meetings where things are officially resolved. Everyone was willing to admit their own shortcoming

in the area of preaching, and that candor made it an appealing exchange just on the level of friendship. Aside from the topic itself, there was a mood of genuine, personal encouragement of one another. I wish I could take part in more meetings like that without politics or fear of something being taken away. It was as if we were reminding each other of the main responsibility Prabhupada had given us, which was something that could be overlooked in the burden of office work and management.

Prabhupada himself had that spark of wanting to convince people to become devotees, so it should have been somewhere within us too.

Somehow it had become covered over. We spoke excitedly into the night, remembering that the spark was still within us and promising each other in an informal way to try and follow Lord Caitanya's statement,

‘Whomever you meet, tell them about Krsna.’”

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“The mantra or prayer, ‘My dear Lord Krsna, if You so desire, please cure Srila Prabhupada,’ was personally given to us by His Divine Grace. Devotees were making up some of their own sincere prayers and some asked Prabhupada for prayers that we could make. In response to our pitiful request, he made this prayer. The prayer is admirable because Prabhupada didn't ask us to demand of the Supreme Lord, but instead included the phrase, ‘if You desire.’ It is another example of

Prabhupada's expertise in training us to appreciate that everything is under Krsna's control. Otherwise, it is possible that we might have been strongly praying for something Krsna didn't want.

“It isn't harmful for a devotee to express his deep emotions, as long as he or she knows that Krsna will make the final decision. In this matter of whether Prabhupada would stay with us longer, Prabhupada himself seemed to wait for Krsna's ultimate decision. In a sense, the prayer seemed to reflect Prabhupada's own feeling that he would like to stay with us, but if Krsna desired otherwise, he would also accept that wholeheartedly. Of course, once we began to recite the mantra, our emphasis was on ‘My dear Lord Krsna, please cure Srila Prabhupada.’

“As the saying goes, I really ‘got into it’ with this mantra. Without trying to practice anything such as constant prayer, and without any knowledge of some of the techniques of ceaseless prayer as have been developed by mystics and saints, I actually began to recite this mantra within myself almost all through the day. I did not chant it aloud, but it was always running through my mind, not mechanically, but with real supplication to Krsna. . . .”

Rupa Gosvami says to reject material things is incomplete renunciation. To accept everything in the service of Krsna is higher renunciation. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was the first *acarya* to use automobiles and sewn clothing in his mission of spreading Krsna consciousness. He was especially committed to use the *brhad-mrdanga* (the printing press) to spread widely the teachings of Lord Krsna and Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. There is nothing of sense gratification for those who use material things in Krsna's service. They act as servants of Krsna and do not enjoy anything for themselves. Immature *brahmacaris*, acting out of passion, excessively reject everything as sense-gratification, and in pride they offend the *grhastha* ashram. But all too often, they go on a pendulum swing and get themselves married. Some devotees think their particular service is the best, the most renounced, and they fall victim to pride in this way. The other swing of the pendulum is that some devotees immaturely misuse the broadminded vision of accepting everything in Krsna's service and fall victim to sense gratification in the name of *yukta-vairagya*.

## **A Letter**

My secretary Baladeva Vidyabhusana received a letter from a former member of ISKCON:

“Is this Baladeva Vidyabhusana? This is Krsna dasa, formerly from New Vrindaban (although I don't go by that name any more, except for my old friends from ISKCON). I believe we met or corresponded many

years ago. In any case, I hope you and Satsvarupa dasa Goswami are well. I always enjoyed his visits to New Vrindaban in the 1980s and have fond memories of the one summer festival when he and Bhaktipada sat in the back of the truck with fire extinguishers and sprayed us devotees in the procession.

“Anyway, I’m almost finished with my second book about the Hare Krsnas, *Eleven Naked Emperors: The Crisis of Charismatic Succession in the Hare Krsna Movement*. Do you think Satsvarupa Maharaja might be interested in reading my manuscript? He could be of great value in determining errors in my history, or perhaps he might add more information.

“In any case, I should mention my book is not entirely favorable to the eleven, but I always thought Satsvarupa Maharaja was the most humble of the eleven, and as far as I know he was the only one to have publicly apologized for the abuses during that era of ISKCON history.”

Baladeva responded to this letter by writing “It is too embarrassing and painful to revisit.” My thoughts are: how long are you supposed to repent for mistakes, correct the problem, apologize, clear with Prabhupada and Krsna, repent, move on? In the Ajamila section of the *Bhagavatam*, Prabhupada writes in a purport that we should *always* remember what we were (fallen) and always repent. I tried to do this. But I don’t think it is necessary to write books about the mistakes we made 30 years

ago. A valid reason for writing the history might be to remind us not to commit the same mistakes again. The main root of the problem is lack of humility. Lord Caitanya's verse in *Siksastakam*, which Krsnadasa Kaviraja said should be worn as a garland around one's neck, is still pertinent: "One should think oneself lower than the blade of grass, more tolerant than the tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige and ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind, one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly." The presence of arrogance and pridefulness is still present in ISKCON, although much institutional reform has taken place.

### ***Mangala-arati***

*Mangala* means "auspicious." It begins at 4:30 A.M. during the *brahma-muhurta* hour. The *pujari* blows the conch three times loudly. The doors are open, revealing the temple Deities: Gaura-Nitai, Radha-Krsna, Lord Jagannatha, etc. The lead singer begins Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura's *Samsara dava nala lidha loka*," and the devotees respond, accompanied by *karatalas* and *mrdanga*. In some temples in the West, only a few attend. But in India and Russia, the temple hall is packed. The Deities are dressed in Their simple night outfits with no ornaments. It is very sweet and intimate. Halfway through the *kirtana*, they begin singing the Hare Krsna mantra, the morning tune. For many devotees this is the most relishable *darsana* and gathering of the day.

*Mangala-arati* gives impetus and spiritual strength for the whole day ahead. If one misses it, he or she gets off on the wrong foot. Some devotees chant all their

rounds before *mangala-arati*. But chanting your *japa* immediately after *mangala-arati* is also a good time, when you have fresh enthusiasm and auspiciousness coming right after the *arati*. *Mangala-arati* should be something to look forward to, not to dread. There is a potency in attending *mangala-arati* on time and beginning to sing the first stanzas of “*Samsara-dava*.” The opening of the temple doors is a major event after a long night of separation and should not be missed.

### **Changing Seasons**

In a few weeks the temperatures will drop. We have had a mild seasonal summer here. We will have comfortable weather in September and October. In November it becomes nippy, and in December cold weather begins with the threat of snowfalls. I do not like the long, frigid months of winter. I run the risk of another debilitating bout with pneumonia. But it is all in Krsna’s hands; I leave my longevity up to Him. In the *Krsna* book, there is not much description of winter. But in the holy place of Nara-Narayana in the Himalayas, it becomes frigid in winter. The roads close down and no one can enter. It remains populated only by the most serious *tyagis* and yogis who are practicing. Some who stay in Badarikasrama are impersonalist yogis, but some are *bhaktas* who stay and try to cultivate a relationship with Nara-Narayana, who are residing there.

### **Funeral**

A devotee arrived here yesterday after attending his father’s funeral. There

were many, many relatives gathered there, and they were glad to see him (in his civilian clothes). They remarked how much he resembled his father. But the devotee had mixed feelings about attending. He had wanted to put *tulasi* leaves and Yamuna water on the body, but the casket was closed, so he was not allowed to do it. This devotee had been visiting his father a couple of times a year, and they kept a friendly but distant relationship. The devotee wondered if he could have done more to try to bring his father to Krsna consciousness. But there's a danger in doing that when the nondevotee parents are not receptive. They want to get you entangled in family relationships, attending weddings, etc. The devotee doesn't have time to do that. He is busily engaged in going out on *harinama sankirtana* every day. I have advised devotees to concentrate on becoming pure devotees themselves. Then they can liberate generations of relatives.