

Free Write Journal #60

Free Writes

Pavitras

We received a new batch of *pavitras* from Manohara. *Pavitras* are the silk garlands the devotees offer to Lord Nrsimhadeva in Mayapura. We use them as garlands for our Prabhupada *murti*. Every third day, Krsna dasi changes the outfits of Radha-Govinda. On that day, we also change the *pavitra* for Prabhupada so it matches up with the color of Radha-Govinda's dresses. It is a nice ritual. I love the Prabhupada *murti*, but I worry about him. He is made of resin and is 40 years old. Twice his arm was broken and we glued him back together. I don't want any more injuries or breakages. I keep him in his *vyasasana* on my private altar upstairs. But for festivals, devotees carry him down and place him on a more public altar. I become nervous when others carry him and handle him. I just wish that he may remain unharmed until I pass away. Then other devotees may take care of him and worship him.

My elderly disciple Hemagaura told me that when he first visited an ISKCON temple, he thought the life-sized *murti* of Prabhupada was a man sitting unmoving. Many others have had this experience because the likeness is so accurate. The GBC resolved that aside from the Prabhupada *murti*, no statues should be made of

ISKCON gurus or prominent Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis. The exception is the *murti* of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami, Srila Prabhupada's spiritual master.

Bhaktivinode Thakura

A lawyer-devotee wrote to me and asked if it was all right to read the books of Bhaktivinode Thakura. He is already reading Prabhupada's books. I told him it was certainly all right to read Bhaktivinode Thakura's books. Prabhupada's disciple Guru Dasa once said to his spiritual master, "My second favorite author is Bhaktivinode Thakura." Prabhupada replied, "Why second?" So Prabhupada approved of his disciples reading Bhaktivinode Thakura. His writings are as authorized, potent, and nectarean as the previous *acaryas*, and he is closer to us in time, which is an advantage. There are so many books available in the prominent bookstores in Vrndavana. One can be bewildered as to whether a book is authorized or unauthorized. Prabhupada may have approved of a title in one of his purports, and it is all right to read that book. Otherwise one may ask his spiritual master about reading particular books. The *acaryas* say one should not read too many books just to become a scholar. If one reads only Prabhupada's books, that will be sufficient for raising him to a learned *brahmana* and make him eligible to go back to home, back to Godhead.

Sense Gratification

A woman wrote me with what she thought was a problem in her life. When she ate *prasadam* she enjoyed the taste and thought that this was sense gratification. I assured her that once the food has been transformed into *prasadam*, there is no harm in relishing it. The prayer states, “Now let us take this prasadam to our full satisfaction.” But I know what she means about falling into sense gratification. We should *honor* the *prasadam* and thank guru and Gauranga for providing it. We should not eat voraciously or overeat. We should honor prasadam in a prayerful, contemplative mood, not talking *prajalpa* or better yet, listening to a *sastric* reading. Most Deity cooks say that by the act of preparing, cooking and serving the offering, the senses are controlled and satisfied. They are not so likely to eat voraciously because they are satisfied by the act of preparation. They are more likely to be satisfied by transferring the plates and serving out the *prasadam*. *Maha-prasadam* is special!

Dress

We should dress in Vaisnava devotional clothes or in respectable civilian dress. Our personal wardrobe should not be too expansive. We should be eager to provide the Deities with as many gorgeous outfits as possible and change Them frequently. In addition to wearing clean clothes, we should bathe ourselves once a day or more. Our living rooms and paraphernalia should be tidy and free of dirt. “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” Prabhupada said we should be “revolutionary clean,” indicating a vigorous effort, and fight to be free of the *tamo-guna* of dirtiness.

* * *

In our *ashram*, Baladeva's space is dirty and cluttered. Unfiled papers, unopened mail, and "works in progress" lie scattered for months. Every once in a while, he gets inspired and cleans up his area. It really doesn't take that long to do, but his tendency is to procrastinate and leave it untidy.

Arca-vigraha

Radharani is the feminine counterpart of Krsna. The right hand of Radha is in two positions. In one, Her hand is turned to Krsna, making an offering to Him. This is an intimate gesture. She holds a red betel nut, or the *pujari* places a tulasi leaf in Her hand. In the other position, Radha's is extended palm-forward to the worshipers. Prabhupada writes in a purport that Her benedicting hand is giving the devotees permission to look down and take *darsana* of Krsna's lotus feet. After minutes of staring at His feet, one may feel restless, and then he can switch back to looking at Radha's hand of benediction for rejuvenation. One may also look up at Radha's lovely face, but not for too long. After finishing three rounds, I look up from Kalachandji's feet to the upper portion of His body, His massive chest, strong arms, and mild, charming smile. Rotating the vision in this way, but mostly staying with His lotus feet, I am satisfied with a full *darsana* while chanting my *japa* briskly. I do the same process with Radha-Govinda. In Their case, I look more frequently at Them during the whole day. Their special feature is Their new change of outfits every three days. This is an opulent standard and is a feast for devotional eyes. The

pujari is Krsna dasi, and she dresses Them with great devotion and expertise.

Guests

While making applesauce and cookies this morning for our guest Jayadvaita Swami, Baladeva thought of the whole Vedic culture of receiving guests. A guest is considered as good as God. At the Battlefield of Kuruksetra, after the day's fighting, the two opposing sides would meet at night in a friendly, unaggressive manner and talk freely and share *prasadam*. Even if an enemy comes to see you, he should be welcomed as an honorable guest. One should wash the feet of the guest, and give him a comfortable sitting place and a drink of water. One should offer him sumptuous food. If one is poor and cannot arrange for sufficient food, he should at least offer his guest a glass of water. And if he doesn't have a comfortable sitting place for him, he should offer a clean mat. If he has no food to offer, he should speak sweet words honoring his guest. If he cannot even do that, he should cry tears and apologize for his inability to honor his guest.

We have been receiving many guests at our *ashram* during this summer's end festival time. We do our best to offer guests nice accommodations, *prasadam*, and give them ample time to meet with me and talk confidentially. We try to give the guest a much needed break from heavy duties of their temple, or wherever they come from.

* * *

Having an open-door policy for receiving guests can be demanding and even

dangerous. The temperamental sage Durvasa Muni used to show up at a *grhastha's* house along with his ten thousand disciples and expect to be well-received and fed. If Durvasa Muni wasn't satisfied with his reception, he might curse the host. Duryodhana arranged that Durvasa should go with his many disciples to visit Yudhishthira and his brothers living in exile. Durvasa arrived just after Draupadi had already cooked and served the midday meal. She had a boon that she could satisfy any number of guests, but not after she and her husbands had already eaten. Durvasa arrived after Draupadi had cooked, and the Pandavas were threatened with a great dilemma. Krsna appeared there, and He asked Draupadi to show Him the cooking pot she had used. He found a fragment of vegetable on the pot and ate it. Immediately, Durvasa and his disciples, who were bathing nearby, suddenly became full to the neck, and they were embarrassed that they wouldn't be able to eat anymore if they went to the Pandavas' place. So they slunk away without going to the Pandavas.

* * *

One time Lord Caitanya was a guest for a meal at Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya's house. Sarvabhauma and his wife Sathira Mata prepared a great feast for Mahaprabhu, and He sat down to honor it in respect of His host. While He was eating, Sarvabhauma's son-in-law, Amogha, entered through the back door and saw Caitanya Mahaprabhu eating. He cried out, "This *sannyasi* is eating too much! What kind of a *sannyasi* is He to eat so much food? He is eating enough food for ten men!" When he heard these offensive remarks, Sarvabhauma grabbed a stick and chased

after Amogha to beat him. Amogha escaped, but his mother-in-law Sathira Mata cried out, “Let my daughter become a widow rather than keep such an offender in the house!” Both husband and wife were mortified that Lord Caitanya had been insulted in their house, but He assured them that He was not disturbed and that Amogha was just a boy. But Amogha was stricken with a terrible disease. Lord Caitanya heard this, went to Amogha, touched him, and healed him from his disease. He told Amogha not to keep offensive thoughts in his heart, since he was a *brahmana*. The affair was settled, but Sarvabhauma and his wife remained upset.

* * *

Prabhupada’s father, Gour Mohan De, invited at least three or four persons to share lunch with the family every day. Some of the persons were not *sadhus* or Vaisnavas, but Gour Mohan De invited them anyway. Gour Mohan De would accommodate his guests in every way, and then ask them for a blessing: that his son Abhay could grow up to become a pure devotee of Radharani.

My Dear Lord Krsna: A Book of Prayers

My Dear Lord Krsna was composed on a typewriter over a period of months while I was living in Delaware. A few of my disciples have told me this book is very special to them and is their favorite. I felt that a window was open for me by Krsna, and I was able to render sincere *parampara* prayers directed to the Supreme Lord in my own voice. I took courage from Prahlada Maharaja’s statement that anyone who is born into the material world can make prayers to the Lord and should do so. I

compiled two full books of prayers, and then the window was closed to me, and the project was finished. Jayadvaita Swami liked *My Dear Lord Krsna* very much. The book is different than my more “human” confessional books, and I am sincerely aiming straight to Krsna.

Here’s an example from *Volume Two* (pp.167-168):

“My dear Lord Krsna . . .

“You come to me in many ways, and I am grateful for that. I want to thank You and acknowledge some of the ways in which I connect with You in *bhajana*.

“First one—the Holy Names—the Holy Names, the *maha-mantra*. This is the chief way I gain access to You, as confirmed in the scripture. I like to chant my *japa* early in the morning, completing the minimal requirement of sixteen rounds before breakfast. I do some extra if I find time in the afternoon. I am very conscientious about the performance of the rounds, but at present I am not satisfied at the standard of my chanting. I want to be more attentive, and I am waiting for the opportunity to go beyond mere reciting of the syllables and meditate on Your pastimes, qualities and form. I want it to be more personal, for I am feeling emotions of calling to You and Srimati Radharani. But at least I give it priority.

“You come to me very importantly, in the scriptures. I would like to

spend more time studying *Caitanya-caritamṛta*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gīta*. At least I do something every day. Knowledge of You (*tattva* and *rasa*) is found in the *sastras*, and my intellectual foundation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness rests in the books. I like to hear Prabhupada lecturing, and I want to periodically revisit all sections of all the books. In this way I remain strong. Prabhupada has even written that as a person gets strength from eating grains, so we get strength from reading the books. And if we don't read, we will suffer from malnutrition. I ask You to be a good conscience for me and remind me to read.

I have Radha-Govinda *murtis*, and I perform a simple worship by bathing You, polishing You and changing Your clothes. My main worship is simply to look upon You, as I keep You just a few feet in front of my main sitting chair. All day long I have repeated *darsana* of Your lovely forms. You keep the Vrndavana atmosphere in my room, and even a low person such as myself can regularly keep in touch with You in this intimate way.

“You come to me strongly in writing. I write Kṛṣṇa conscious poems and reflections and exercise my mental and creative faculties in devotional service through writing. It is my main method of preaching, and since preaching is so important, my writing has become a necessity for me. I have made a lifelong career of writing Kṛṣṇa conscious books,

and it is my major legacy as a disciple of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya. Writing has given me many hours of meditative connection to You, and I intend to keep it up until my last breath.

“You come to me through the service to my spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada. Service to guru is the essential way to please You. Srila Prabhupada emphasized preaching work; I preach mainly through writing. I have written many books about Prabhupada himself, and I have created a library of memories and personal praises. I do this to attract others to serve Prabhupada and to preach on his behalf. Without this connection, my spiritual life will be sorely lacking.

“There are other ways You have come to me, such as through Your presence in my heart as the *caitya-guru*. I am aware of Your presence as the inner guide, and I turn to You for protection and solace. I cry to You and pray to You. Much of my prayer-writing is addressed to this form of You in my life.

“And so You come to me in many ways. Krsna consciousness is a rich spiritual life, and we can connect to You not just in one way, but in many ways. Please help me to improve in serving You in various ways so that I can rise up and become a true *bhakta* for my own good and the good of others.”

Marathon

A BBT editor wrote me that they were very busy now preparing to print Srila Prabhupada's books in a number of languages for the marathon. I took it she meant the Christmas book distribution marathon. For many years, ISKCON devotees have made strenuous efforts to distribute as many books as possible through the holiday season of December 1st through January 1st. There is a fierce competition also in the temples as to who can distribute the most books. Some temples receive large donations to subsidize the books and give them away free. Most devotees depend on one-to-one exchanges with the bookseller and the public. The devotees go out to public places like airports and malls and wherever they are allowed to approach people. The devotees are enthusiastic and determined to do as much as possible during the Christmas marathon.

In India, there's a uniquely lucrative situation for marathon book distribution. A devotee will sell 1,000 books to a businessman, who will distribute them to his customers and employees. *Bhagavad-gita* is so respected in India that this kind of arrangement is not possible anywhere else in the world.

The mood in the temples during the marathon is to "tighten the belt" and allow devotees to suspend their other services and go out on book distribution. Even those who are not directly distributing books take part by doing other services, like cooking, laundry, driving vans with books out the distributors, delivering them prasadam, and in every way supporting their effort. A pot washer may be a willing book distributor, and he is allowed to go out and distribute books. Someone else

who is not accustomed to washing pots takes over his service. In general, the marathon creates a cooperative effort which enlivens the whole community and focuses them on the main effort—to participate in the marathon. Everyone feels closer to Prabhupada; all the devotees get to feel what the book distributors are experiencing every day.

Author’s Note for *Volume Three of POEMS*

I wrote another author’s note for the series of POEMS books that we are publishing:

“I would like to thank Rev. John Endler for his help in compiling this book. At the beginning of the first volume in this series, I acknowledged that it was John who conceived that we publish only the poetry of *Every Day, Just Write*. I asked him to write introductory essays, and we were off to a happy literary adventure. Now, in *Volume Three*, Rev. Endler has taken special care. In combing through the twenty-year-old volumes of *EJW* (“like an archaeologist”), he found that some of them had little poetry. So he selected prose sections with a particularly poetic quality and he titled them. Thus we are titling this book *Meditations and Poems from Every Day, Just Write*. In addition to the ‘prose-poems,’ he found a 400-page collection of poetry. He excitedly declared that they were the most daring poems that I had written to date, that they were ‘kaleidoscopic,’ and they tapped into the

unconscious. I read them with enthusiasm and agreed that they were among the best. I hope you will find surprise and good quality in *Volume Three*. I intend to continue the project.”

***Writing Sessions* First Announcement**

I’m going to start posting *Writing Sessions* in a week. I did them years ago. They are completely free writing. I never intended to publish them. But now the time has come. They fit perfectly into the mood and scheme of the *Free Write Journal*. I can give you a little taste from now, 9/25/19:

“Henry Higgins was raised in a secure family, no abuses, no divorce, etc. But when his father persuaded the malleable, sensitive son to enlist in the Navy, he suffered and resented it. He vowed that when he was discharged he wouldn’t go home but would move right into the Lower East Side of New York City, where his hip college friends lived. After two years there, smoking pot, taking LSD and writing novellas, he met his spiritual master, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. When he told his parents he was a disciple of an Indian guru, they said, “As long as you are with him, we won’t have anything to do with you.” In other words, they disowned him. Henry, (now initiated as Haridasa and free of his bad habits) cried a few tears and went to his spiritual master. The Swami told him nothing terrible had happened and assured him that he was his eternal father . . .”

More later.

Writing Sessions Announcement #2

In a few days I will post spontaneous writing sessions written twenty years ago. Some were one hour timed pieces, completely improvised. I did them while traveling and indicated, “Guyana, One Hour,” “Italy, 45 Minutes,” etc.

Here is an attempt at a sample done September 26, 2019 in Stuyvesant Falls, New York:

“Bring on the brigadiers. I still have dreams of sex desire, but they are not as provocative or alluring. Devotees are going to Vrndavana and Mayapur and asking my blessings. It’s a formality, yet they think if I bless their pilgrimage, we’ll be more auspicious. So I bless. I think it’s good that they are going. The body is so vulnerable, and life is very fragile. It has been described as a water drop upon the leaf of a lotus flower; at any moment it can fall off. It is all under the control of Krsna. Once during a *kirtana* at Srivasa Thakura’s house, Srivasa’s son died. Not wanting to disturb Lord Caitanya, Srivasa said nothing of it. When the *kirtana* was over, Caitanya Mahaprabhu went to the dead body, touched him, and he began to speak: “So long I have been living here according to Your will. Now my time is up and I have to leave for another

body.” All the devotees and relatives were amazed. They gained transcendental knowledge and gave up their lamentation. Lord Caitanya and Nityananda said to Srivasa, “You have lost your son, but We two brothers will remain with you always.”

An Author’s Note to *Writing Sessions*

I did the *Writing Sessions* from 1993-1996. At the time, I didn’t think I would publish them. But now, twenty-five years later, I think their time has come, and I have found a vehicle for them. The *Free Write Journal* is a fine place to post them in. The sessions are actual free writing, which is what the *Free Write Journal* claims to be. I intend to print excerpts from my writing sessions for quite a while. I hope the readers of the *Free Write Journal* will enjoy them, and get the point, take them in stride. —September 27, 2019 SDG

*

*

*

An introduction to the *Writing Sessions* of Satsvarupa dasa Goswami:

“The years 1993-96 mark a pivotal moment in the evolution of Satsvarupa Maharaja as a writer. For in this period, following the 1992 publication of his book *Shack Notes: Moments While at a Writing Retreat* and before the beginning of his extensive literary series *Every Day, Just Write*, in 1996 Satsvarupa Maharaja earnestly pursued a particular style of writing entitled *free writing*. This writing practice

made its publishing debut in *Shack Notes*, and would become a hallmark of much of our author's literary style in the subsequent years. *Free writing* is defined as "a writing practice without agenda," and even the types of structure that often characterize both prose and poetry. This practice has allowed the author to follow the movement of his soul as he ranges over a wide variety of topics in many different voices.

"During this period, Satsvarupa Maharaja produced numerous manuscripts, many of which are simply titled *Writing Sessions*. Within these sessions, often timed, Satsvarupa Maharaja probes in ever-deeper ways his self-understanding as both a writer and devotee. He considers the nature of writing itself, the relationship between writing and devotional life, and the pursuit of this artistic vocation with authenticity and integrity.

"Having begun the publication of the poetry of *Every Day, Just Write*, I began to carefully read these writing sessions as a way to ground Satsvarupa Maharaja's *EJW* series in his preceding work. In so doing, I quickly discovered the significance of these sessions as part of his broader literary endeavors. While at the time they remain unpublished, Satsvarupa Maharaja's own movement beyond the dichotomy between "practice" sessions and publishable work moved me to suggest that these writing sessions deserve a more public reception. Satsvarupa Maharaja graciously agreed to my publishing suggestion, and he proposed that

excerpts of these sessions be included in his weekly *Free Write Journal*. So I have been carefully re-reading and now transcribing excerpts for Satsvarupa Maharaja's consideration, and he will select pages for this Journal.

“The entries published here mark the beginning of what will be an extensive series that will enable the readers of Satsvarupa Maharaja's books to gain an ever-deeper appreciation for his work as a whole. It is our hope as well that these excerpts will also be of interest to the readers of his *Every Day, Just Write* poetry, which in itself will be a multivolume project when completed in 2021. I am certain that the publication of these *Writing Sessions* will enable readers to discover the organic thread that connects works such as *Shack Notes* ultimately to Satsvarupa Maharaja's more recent novels, *Under Dark Stars* and *Write and Die*. For readers who would like to explore these texts in full, I would recommend you to visit Satsvarupa Maharaja's website www.sdglegacy.com, where many of these writing sessions are available.

“Happy reading to one and all!”

—Rev. John Endler

From *Writing Sessions*

“Just write with clean and happy health in this
 boxed garden house, given for your use,
 break free happy words Krsna Krsna
 I too can utter them from broken mind and
 spirit, confused. I who so often doubt my
 own abilities and intentions, partly out
 of fear I may go wrong but partly in
 crippled sense of self and too-sensitive
 notion of my intention. Krsna, I love You.

“I am made to love You. If I say ‘I love
 You,’ it is the *sastric* truth,
 the constitutional position. I love You but forget it.
 I love You but I am covered over.
 I love You but my words get in the way.
 And You love me as You love all living beings.
 You seem far away and I seem to not know You
 because of
 the abuses of carping doubts in God
 and the sins I have committed. Yes, I have to look back
 and remove the sins, I’ll be sorry for them. Do all
 you can

to remove the wrongs. I am sorry, Lord.

I confess all I have done

and will commit no fresh sins. Please, please, I am sorry.”

—July 29, 1996

Ireland

*

*

*

“These days are peaceful, but I’m keeping up a momentum of extensive writing sessions. It is work. You have some expectation that it will be good. But you can’t demand of a process like this—‘Am I going to go deeper? Is this session going to catch fire and reveal and confess? Where is the good poem I could take out of this for publishing?’ No motives, but writing. And devotional service is the assumed purpose of it all, even though not always explicit.”

*

*

*

“This is the *purnima*. Look up through the skylight and you will see a brighter sky than usual. The rays will fill the room enough to see objects faintly. As you chant. No disturbing sights. Just chant in the rays of Lord Caitanya’s mood and beg to be able to hear those Names and ask the Supreme Lord who’s in your heart to keep you always faithful and affectionate to your spiritual master. One isn’t supposed to pray always with petitions. But yes, you asked for strength to serve. And you try to

listen, *just hear*, what Krsna wants you to do.

“Pray, recite and savor verses, strive to be a devotee. A lowly *sadhaka* practices his *bhajana*. I don’t try to think of Krsna’s activities in Vraja and myself as a *manjari*. I just chant and try to hear.”

*

*

*

“I will try to be tolerant. I must protect myself in that way. I can remind you gently that you tread on me, but the main thing is to find inner reserves of strength. So that I don’t get agitated by your laying a trip on me. I see it as a natural misery, as your own failing and shortcoming. But I won’t let it disturb me. You can’t have the ideal state here. Don’t be broken-hearted, don’t hope for that better state, but just be in tune with the real solace, which is the holy names of Krsna. In shortcoming situations, you might turn to your diary and say quick (in short form) what it is that just happened: ‘I was hurt in this way.’ Dear Lord, You are the only recourse for these things.”

*

*

*

“The way, the August month. The late-summer bugs eat through leaves, flowers fade, last hot days and maybe hint of cool ones—at least in Ireland. Spent time here writing. It’s all right.

“You say what comes to mind, leather wings.

“But I like

“Maybe you should have read of the Gosvamis before taking rest instead of just the mail. I went to bed early but didn’t gain from it. O Gosvamis of Vrndavana, you are great indeed, and hearing of your lives is inspiring.

“Read Cc.—an ad to myself—

“Flash it on the screen.”

“Read Cc. and save yourself.

“Become a happy person.

“Be happy in K.C.

“Learn esoteric secrets and solid

basics and be with your s.m.

“Read Cc.”

*

*

*

“I remember hyacinths. You thought to quit the ‘Memories’ out of a good urge to be seriously K.C. As you massaged S.P. you asked him what to do, what did he want you to do. And the answer you felt was, ‘You decide.’ You decide how you want to serve him. Aren’t those the terms of pure loving service? We have to serve, either *maya* or Krsna. We are not master. So if we decide to serve Krsna, then still we keep our

individuality and initiative . . .”

“What do you want to do?

“As a writer, what? A book? A series of practice sessions? Let the process unfold and the shape will come, like a Picasso drawing, developing its stories in a series of strokes. It begins looking like a fish or a bird, and in the last two minutes it turns into a strange black cat.”

*

*

*

“Wiry gyrations. Wire smashed. Thumb.

“Peace I want, but Prabhupada says not in this world. ‘Socrates said, “You want me to drink hemlock? Come on! I’ll drink!”’ Because he believed in the immortality of the soul, ‘He was *mukta-purusa*,’ Srila Prabhupada said. I heard it today.

“You are a groupie
for your spiritual master
a fan-addict.

Wear a button, ‘I’m a Srila Prabhupada man, through and through.’ Yeah, get all the photos of you and your spiritual master, but that won’t ease the void.

“You’ve got to serve him with body, mind and words the way he served
his guru

maharaja. That’s the way it goes.

In Trinidad. In Wicklow.

“So there’s no more to go or say.”

*

*

*

“Proverbs.

“The end of night. The mission to be accomplished. Just give us ten
more minutes.

“In India I stopped writing out long descriptions of what comes
until you get tired of it, and when to say something else which you hope
will be more worthy.

“The straining of a car engine. Where’s she trying to go? The
achievement—to be reading and relishing from your spiritual master.

“Good talks on the walk.

Low stone walls. Green meadows for sheep.

“Young water buffaloes all tied together in the back of an open cart
in Mathura, some of them dead, others alive, all tied down—a horrible
sight amidst the melee of heavy foot and camel and car and temple and
man-drawn cart and bike and scooter on the main drag. Hell’s a-

popping.

“Is this Mathura? Or Kamsa?

“I can close my eyes and imagine seeing the Kesavji Math tower on the congested street. But it is all more or less friendly. India is ‘Let everything hang out,’ even when they shout and get angry. We’re on an upper level of society as rich, Western *sadhus*. Maybe that’s why it’s always comfortable—the poverty and chaos doesn’t really pinch where it hurts. You drive through it on a rickshaw, talking of esoteric Gaudiya subjects or politics, and you can always go home to the guesthouse or similar safe place.”

—November 14, 1993

Wicklow, Ireland

*

*

*

“Riding out to a place described in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. You did know how important it was to you (smiles the-pushy-Indian-wife and the- disciple-photographing-you smile). Smiles the—you didn’t know the world of *Bhagavatam* was calling to you—takes you out of this place where tomorrow is Sunday; you promised to speak to them.

“Speak to M’Lou

I’ll find another one better than you

Skip to M’Lou, my darlin’.

Yes, I'll find . . .

Uh

“Pause. Pass of air. Pass nine. Pause ten.

“But isn't there a way to avert the disaster?

Yes, but you gotta spell it right. For that you need a better proofreader.

Six words substitute for the regular catcher-pitch-hitter surprise.

Oh stop, stop, play the puffs.

I don't want seriouser thoughts. The Stump. The *Nimai* book lost and Survival in the N'West.

“The ink. The stink. Who is writing this? Would he like to take his sweater off? Pass the pig.

“World of miseries. I only know . . . my sorry is due to the epic bottle Few and the anchor's normal view and the water's feel grave and the guitar blazing 'bove.

“Of Alice, he said, ‘She sure was sweet and sorry in her fantasy of fearless, and the Walrus and the Carpenter cried on the beach.’

“False tears

eight in a row.

No corn in sight.

The mountain, sir, has obscured us. There's a plane in your future, a long ocean voyage. But where do you go on inner voyage?

Begone, sir, the devil is not afoot."

—Trinidad

February 1, 1995

*

*

*

"I can't say what Krsna thinks. I am His part and parcel, but I am not Him.

"I admit I write as practice only, and it's a way to find better expression of something (out of all this) that *can* be used for preaching to the devotees.

Is there a more economical way to write without passing through all these little towns? I don't know.

"Class, seven minutes left."

*

*

*

"I've been talking to God, or about Him. Now pray. 'Dear Lord, everything is Your energy, nothing outside You. But all novels and newspapers and godless books and shows are in Your *maya*. I wish to be delivered out of that *maya*."

“I am writing helplessly and *between the lines of what I say*, please find a straight, devotional message.

“Unless You rescue me, I am doomed to preen this way. To think myself better (or more special) than the ordinary devotee who doesn’t dare go alone to spew off words like this. Please help me. You know what is best. Maybe You want me to practice *mauna*, ‘No more writing.’ But I prefer to think You want me to write in a better way.

“*Srimad-Bhagavatam* says consciousness never stops, and the point is to make speech chaste by confining it to Vedic sounds, to praise of Krsna. I am trying to do that.

“Okay, turn in your papers, finish your sentences in two minutes.

“Goodbye for now, Lord of my heart. I have been with You. You will send me wherever You desire. I am simply counting up pages in a discipline called ‘Writing Practice.’ I mean no harm. Another time it will be better. Even today I’ll do some straight *Srimad-Bhagavatam* notes. For now I end this and hand it in, ashamed, but with no alternative except to say I wrote this in my precious time, which passes to the Lord’s musing because I am His servant.

“A preacher of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada who seeks rectification. (Written while a crow caws in Canada.)

I bow down.

I bow down.

I end a session.

Sorry about the nonsense.

Please find some good in it and forget the rest. Wasted

breaths. I had to do it in a way to get free.

Amen.”

—January 29, 1994

Saranagati, British Columbia, Canada

*

*

*

“O Witherspoon,

thy divine feet

smell badly.’

(No, that sounds blasphemous. Try again.)

O pretender, your conditioned

soul irks badly.

You need a fix in the drainpipe.

Oh P.S. Eight days you

don’t wither in mind or time

but sing in me at night

memories sweet and bitter

of autograph books
and Levi's worn to school if you dared.
Geez, I ain't gonna keep writing
that.

"O mouse, O heart that
wavers, why
is this yurt dirty?

"O ink that smudges, I find a cup of water
contains transparent truth
clear through but
fear m'sanity if I create
my own world as fiction.

"The blasted ruins of war all
one hundred years of torture and rebirth.
He can't face it. Who can?
Bold *ksatriyas*, men who can
grip the giant swords in
the Rajastani Museum or
sign papers sending young men

to die in foreign countries to
 protect some monied interest in America or some idea
 that our country shouldn't allow
 tyrants to take over theirs.

“Cigars, embattlements, how can
 you write stories if you want
 peace? Stories are of conflict
 in the worldly world and
 it's not enough to say, 'It's all illusion.'”

Whereas poems
 leak radioactive poison
 in a different way and rejoice
 as peppercorns get crushed in
 a hand-grinding machine and sprinkled onto the
 dish of *subji*
 you waited for.”

*

*

*

“Prabhupada, I dream of you.
 I massage your form,
 read your book.

Please come and stay with me
always. You know the best
way for me to directly approach Krsna, the Son of Nanda.
You're the best possible guide
and I assign my soul to your care.
I do wish to serve you,
sorry I failed to be your menial servant.
If I had been humble and pure enough,
it would have been ideal for me.
I could have written all you say and do
and my own thoughts.
But that wasn't meant to be.
A test I failed though you saved me
and let me preach successfully—
so it seemed—
at the U.S. colleges.
I do wish to serve you always,
now by writing for your devotees.
And I'm getting at myself to see
who I am, what makes me tick
and how to be a better soldier,
your skinny-faced, ears-stick-out

Satsvarupa from New York, one of your first students.

All of us, your students

and you taking care of so many of us.

Now I wish to be a grown-up son

and not demand of your time,

but assist you and spend time with your books.

Coming to know Krsna,

training and giving it to others.”

—January 31, 1994

Saranagati, British Columbia, Canada