

## ***Free Write Journal #66***

### **Free Writes**

#### **Vyasa-Puja Books**

I am waiting on pins and needles to receive the shipment of books I intend to distribute on Vyasa-Puja day. It is Volume 2 of *POEMS, A Retrospective*. It's getting close to the deadline date. But the devotee in charge of working with the printer tells me I'll get the books on time. I'm just impatient.

We are also going to distribute another set of books on December 7<sup>th</sup>. It's a new edition of *Prabhupada Meditations I-IV*, in two volumes. The first edition came out in four volumes many years ago and is long out-of-print. I consider this an important book continuing the inspiration with which I wrote *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*. I give my readers many books and expect them to read at least some of them. Book writing is my main contribution, and the best way for me and my followers to keep in touch. *Brhad-mrdanga ki jaya!*

#### **Beyond Hari Bu**

My friend said he is minimizing his Buddhist practices and his worship of the Buddha statue. He's focusing on his Gaura-Nitai *murtis*. So I won't call him "Hari Bu" anymore. The two paths really don't go together. One has the goal of voidism,

while the other is devotional service unto Radha-Krsna. The statues of Buddha in the temples (some of them huge) are not regarded as God. They have the concept of Bodhisattva, where the compassionate Buddha keeps returning to the world until all the conditioned souls are awakened and sinless. There are many different Buddhas who are approached in different meditations. But none of them are the supreme controller, and none of them offer residence with them in a Vaikuntha planet of eternity, bliss and knowledge, or residence in Goloka Vrndavana, where eternal love of Krsna reigns supreme. I am glad my friend has turned his attention to Gaura-Nitai. By worshiping Them wholeheartedly and chanting Their holy names, we can attain the bliss of *bhakti-rasa* and leave the unsatisfying path of Zen Buddhism behind.

### **Deity Dresses**

My disciple Sastra dasa has sent us new outfits for Radha-Govinda made by his *mukut-walla*, Prince, in Vrndavana. We have already photographed Them in the two sets and posted Them on Facebook, so maybe you have seen Them. Also the master Deity dressmaker, Tapan, is making new sets for us and sending them in the mail. Please don't think our acquiring many outfits is excessive. It is out of love for Gaura-Nitai and to offer Their pictures to the fans at Facebook. Our *pujari* said, "We will be stocked for winter." Yes, that's the spirit. I say let us gradually have enough sets for every third day. Our *pujari* dresses Them so nicely and expertly; that adds to the splendor of the dress. Govinda wears a braided turban, and His feet are exposed.

Radharani is thin-waisted, with two short necklaces upon Her bosom. She wears an elegant jeweled *candrika* on Her forehead pointing in Govinda's direction.

Downstairs on the altar, large 39-inch Gaura-Nitai Deities wear new outfits also. I will receive Their *darsana* when I go down for lunch. For months we have been collecting profuse flowers from our garden and decorating the altars with garlands daily for Gaura-Nitai. But now the cold is killing the flowers, and we have to budget money for the florist.

### **Radha-Govinda Worship Book**

Jan Potemkin especially likes *The Radha-Govinda Worship Book* entries in the *Free Write Journal*. He wants to see more of them. He likes to read the intimate view of me handling the Deities. The entries were written 20 years ago in Ireland, when I was the "hands-on" *pujari*, daily bathing Them with soft, warm tissues and drying Them with fresh towels. I wasn't an expert dresser, but I made the effort to fit Them in one of the many beautiful outfits made by Maha-mantra devi dasi. I would listen to a recording of Rupa Gosvami's dramas while I worshiped. It was the most intense and purifying part of the day. Now, two decades later, I am no longer the direct *pujari*. Krsna dasi (the wife of Baladeva from Trinidad) does all the cleaning and change of dress every third day. She learned how to do it at the Deity school in Mayapura, and as the *pujari* in Trinidad for twenty-five years. She makes expert personalized turbans for Govinda (no crowns), and dresses Radharani exactly as I like to see Her, thin-waisted and with two short necklaces that reveal the shape of

Radharani's bosom. She places a jeweled *candrika* on Her head. Govinda's lotus feet are always exposed. Krsna dasi does all the work by herself but under my supervision, and that makes the relationship complete and authorized. My role is to take up-close *darsana* throughout the day and to see that the *arca-vigrahas* are fed three times a day. I say it was a pinnacle when I served Radha-Govinda physically in Ireland, but it is still sweet when I glance at Them all day, in my old age at Viraha Bhavan.

**From *The Radha-Krsna Worship Book***

“Red *chadars* for Radha-Krsna and brown heavy one and wool cap for Srila Prabhupada. We are snug and warm since the room is chilly (heater not working). Alas, no structure, no new pot, the same rotation. Red and gold. Bright they are, and Srila Prabhupada comfortable in Vrndavana, or wherever he is, there is Krsna.

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“Radha-Govinda were cleaned today, and that worrisome spot disappeared from His forehead, I'm glad to say. Shiny Lord and shiny Radha. And Srila Prabhupada calm, receiving my hand's massage on his body. A marigold garland of orange and dark-reddish flowers.

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“The room darkens now, and Srila Prabhupada sitting, brown chadar. Radha-Govinda with silver flute and stick. Their exquisite, pretty Vrndavana outfits of soft blue, soft dark-pink. You can’t know unless you come and see Them, and even then you need eyes of love. I am the first audience of these Deities. They extend kindness to me, my first line of hope of knowing the forms of Radha and Krsna. These forms I want imprinted on my mind.

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“This morning’s Deity worship was very nice. The grape color of Their dresses with silver trim. And the folds of the clothes seem to fall right, and my fingers cooperating. And the ending of *Vidagdha-madhava* is so charming and easy, where Krsna, disguised as a beautiful girl, pretends He’s the goddess Gauri, and Abhimanyu and Jatila swear they will never take Radha out of Vrndavana. A blessing is given to all devotees that they may attain Vrndavana and love of Krsna.”

### ***Write and Die***

Several times in this book I delve into world literature and link it to Krsna. My favorite is a section about Orpheus and Eurydice, the Greek myth as retold by the German-language poet Rilke. The story of Orpheus is that he goes to the underworld

to try to rescue his beloved Eurydice. The king of the underworld says he can take Eurydice away, but on one condition. He has to go ahead of her and play his music, but he can't look back. If he looks back, she will have to stay in hell.

From *Write and Die*:

“It was at that dreadful door that Orpheus turned back just before it opened, and he lost Eurydice. He had almost achieved the impossible—the resurrection of both himself and her—but failed at the very last moment. So it cannot be done. Unless a power like Krsna wills it. Most of us must write and die.”

Orpheus returns to the earth alone and wanders, playing his music, feeling separation from his beloved.

From *Write and Die*:

“This sounds like a sliver of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, *who in the mood of Srimati Radharani feels ecstatic separation from Krsna*. This is a separation of illumination because His separation is the highest ecstasy. We do not imagine that Orpheus had such ecstasy as he wandered the earth after he lost Eurydice, and yet there is an indication that he did remain in search of her and in contact with her, and she in contact with him. And that's what the *Sonnets* will tell us. Furthermore,

the search was on a cosmic scale, and when he played his music, everyone could hear it, and when she danced, the whole world danced with her. And when they remembered, they were not apart but together. When she was in Hades, she was actually in the arms of her lover, and that was how he loved her best.

“Lord Caitanya was not a writer penning these things down, although occasionally He wrote and He compelled His intimate companions to recite poems of separation. Yes, He did these things to give spice to His separation, but even more, He lived it day and night in tears and strange actions, like swimming unconsciously in the water and falling unconscious among the cows at the gate of the Jagannath temple, or changing the shape of His body.”

## **Snow**

This morning it's predicted to snow for three hours in upstate New York, the first snowfall of the season. We can expect many days of snow in the winter, in this part of the country. It's the last day of Karttika and there is a full moon (Sri Krsna Rasayatra). The devotees will end their *vratas*, and most of them will leave Vrndavana. The Krsna-Balaram Mandir was tremendously overcrowded during the month of Damodara, and now it will return to normal. At Badarikasrama in the Himalaya in the winter, the snow and ice make it inaccessible to pilgrims. Only a few ascetics, wearing little clothing, remain

there in austere meditation. The Nara-Narayana Deity is located in Badarikasrama, but the devotees have to wait until spring to get His *darsana*. The same is true with the two sacred sites, the source of the Ganges and the Yamuna. One has to wait to see the pure crystal waters of Ganga and Yamuna when their access is no longer covered with snow. The majority of India remains tropical and doesn't experience snow or ice.

## **Deadlines**

Prabhupada gave his disciples deadlines in their tasks for him. Perhaps the most famous example was when he demanded his BBT to publish fifteen big books in two months. The manager told Srila Prabhupada it was "impossible." He replied, "Impossible is a word in the fool's dictionary." So they went on an all-out marathon and got it done on time. From Vrndavana, Guru dasa wrote, promising Prabhupada that the temple would be open by Janmastami. It was just a construction site. Guru dasa was in denial. He kept telling his spiritual master it would be ready. But when Prabhupada visited and saw the unfinished project, he became furious and told them to cancel the invitations.

Connected to deadlines is quotas. In the early years, Prabhupada ordered Tamal Krsna in L.A. to exponentially increase the number of BTGs sold, and he asked the New York devotees to do the same. When book distribution became the big thing, a kind of competition arose between the temples and

between Prabhupada and his disciples. When the BBT reported one year that they had doubled the sales, he asked them to double it again. Prabhupada gave me deadlines, and now I am giving a deadline to the devotee who is publishing my book. We gave him plenty of time to finish the work, but he procrastinated, and now the printing and shipping time is tight. This happens every year, and I have a loving “*rasa*” with him, as Prabhupada had with his disciples.

### **Writing Sessions**

These excerpts from spontaneous practice were done in 1994 in Wicklow, Ireland, and Mayapura during Karttika.

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### **Writing Session #3**

“This is half-done, this morning writing session. It’s a long (one-hour) jog in darkness at a desk. ‘Where is the kingdom of Yadu-pati, and where is Ayodhya now?’ Wrote Rupa in a cryptic note, ‘Make the mind steady by thinking of the eternal.’ He encouraged Sanatana in jail to meditate that all things are temporary, even the *dhamas* located in this world wear down, so your suffering in jail is also a temporary thing. Fix your mind on eternal Krsna, His *lila* and His instructions.”

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“Quota—gulp. It’s *vaidhi-bhakti*, sixteen rounds, nine of this, three of that, a thousand of this. You also give a quota of suffering.

“But some things are done freely without a quota. You go beyond the quota, beyond sixteen rounds. *Kirtanas*. Service in love.

“Quotas, however, are useful for minimum upkeep, for reading *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and in scheduling days such as when you use your reading log.

“It’s also mentioned in *Isopanisad* that each person has a quota given by God. So, go ahead and get your quota. But the main thing is to surrender to Krsna.

“Just write as much as possible.

“I am a *vaidhi-bhakti* person, and that’s good. I drink a certain amount of milk, I sleep a certain amount of time, I eat, but not too much.

“I am dictating this cluster on ‘quota.’ I am greedy for more *bhakti* than can be given by a mere minimum quota.”

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“Ten minutes to 4:00. I want to write honest and alone. Not a story. Not a ‘sorry.’ Get into this retreat. Then you can write a story. Even ‘reading Srila Prabhupada’s books’ isn’t enough unless you do it deeply and alert and have your purpose in mind. That’s what they say in

*lectio divina*. You read the *sastra*, but then you consider the Word in your own life. Then you pray to Krsna to help you know and do what He wants of you. Be honest.

“As I read about ‘*Oratio*,’ prayer, it occurred to me that Writing Session is my honest prayer. I don’t intend to be perfect.

“I was going to read a writing session before starting this one, but I forgot. (Press on. You don’t need anything. Just a pen and paper and fortitude to keep going. Everyone needs Krsna in the heart or you can’t go forward.)”

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“A tame kid  
 on the block new and alone  
 don’t exaggerate, he knows  
 the ropes too, how to hide  
 and be his own way, grown,  
*bhakti’s* giving him fringe benefits. Our kid guru now  
 on space and last borrowed time  
 spends slight sorrows a robin  
 didya’ know  
 a sparrow, didya’ know

“A dog is chained up in our backyard by the landlord. ‘So much for the kindhearted Dennis.’ Black-and-white mongrel collie has a sore neck from the chain. Yelps sometimes. M. says, ‘I speak his language.’ Ah, dogs.

“So I am on Day One near the end and don’t want artificially-flavored nightclub drinks, or can’t be happy by gorging food. *Atyahara*. Be still and know you are God?

“Rumi, got room for him?”

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“Cluster on the words ‘Day One.’

“Good start, be patient and live. Day by day. And do it. Words come, just like France.

“You say you got no breakthroughs? You had to face that fact, whadaya’ want? Hopes were dashed? No, it’s okay. You wanna say I started a book and wrote chapter one. But fiction seems so phony. So I’m just not satisfied.”

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“Writing sessions. You start them right off on day one, but you talk around the point you can’t cut through, who is against it?

“Writing sessions, one word leads to another, like ‘beer

commercial,’ and then you cluster into Piels, Schaefer, the Rheingold Girl, remember her? The past is gone. Secular reminiscing. And then you wind up saying the secular is truth and God is phony. But that’s not a fact, however. Sometimes religion is by rote only.”

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“Enter the detached frame of mind. Not, ‘Produce a seminar, write a book of short stories, do *good*. Writing sessions. Follow your schedule to the minute . . .’ You are a *niyamagraha* slave with an ink stain.

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“Krsna, You see me. This prayer of truthfulness, saying I wish I loved You, wished I had the currency (spiritual qualification) to say it in truth, and to feel it, and to act as Your pure devotee who does Your bidding. When I cannot, I’ll be apart and sorrowful. But if I listen to Your words in *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, that will give me solace and feeling for You, the Supreme Person, who loves us all, in separation mood.

“The writing session is my prayer when I can make it honest. Sadness of driving to Gita-Nagari when winter is ahead and those towns along the way with German names . . . . Can’t even remember them now, even when we had the ’78 Olds. It was like that, and then You got the burst of high feelings. But not based on something permanent. Do your

counseling work, eat some carob fudge and sleep in the cabin and go see Radha-Damodara and women, all of us still young enough to honor the silk-wearing guru.”

(August 16, 1994

Wicklów, Ireland)

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“Leave me alone and bless me to go alone so I can gradually produce better writings, interesting and entertaining books. I need to be sure of myself, need time to walk alone with *Gita* verses and speak to myself.

“Okay, now I’m in Bombay. No more than twenty minutes for this pre-*mangala-arati* writing session. I did twelve rounds and prepared the lecture. Now I have to get ready to go down into the marble *kirtana* hall.

“Be be witters.

titters and alarms go up

where we least expected them.

Don’t be afraid folks,

Mr. Magoo is near-sighted

for all of us, have a laugh

at an old man’s mistakes and

watch out, the voice is Jim

Backus.

“And I don’t even know . . . But a man died, and they held his hand as he went out. Professor Kotovsky says, ‘That’s all, no next life, Swamiji.’ He’s a professor, and such a fool.

“Prabhupada, this fool of yours is writing and running naked, and there’s method in the madness. I don’t claim freedom to rebel from you, but need to let off steam. Bell rings four times. Smile for the camera, tilted teeth.

“The rare garland,

The juicy and stale *rasagulla*,

The tale of tests

The rest of time he hypes me and I embarrass him.

And die-liner delights.

I will go to Indian City,

“tired and scared. I make propaganda that you be gentle with me and give me passage, and if you don’t, well, hell with you anyway. No one knows me, no one but Jesus and Supersoul. God, Krsna, knows each person’s suffering.

“Don’t be selfish,

tell others your private life.

“Be generous in that way, in writing and giving them joy and assurance, especially sensitive ones (we all) like yourself.

Okay, let M. in and say good morning. We’ve got a good plan.

“Please write more today, even ten minutes free.”

*(Notepad #2,*

*pp. 50–51)*

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“Will Krsna take up residence in my heart and not be consigned to an abstract wing in my house? Will I realize my house (body) is actually His dwelling place and I am His eternal servant? When will I surrender and cry tears as I chant His holy names? “When will my voice choke up, and when will the hairs of my body stand on end at the recitation of Your Names?

“You know, know, whir whir whir . . . the quick fan next-door, and the heavier, slow rotations in this one.

“Small planes commuting to New England locations in winter. No exaggeration. But what about joy uplifts in moments . . . Capture them too as genuine. No exaggeration, but no cynical cut down either. You said call a spade a spade. Yet sometimes feel roses and joy uplifts and Krsna conscious moments.”

(“Notepad #2,”  
p.61)

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“Krsna consciousness has veneer, when I pretend to be a devotee  
and speak what appears to be officially correct and “*parampara.*”

“But this fellow is not  
always *parampara*  
and to get into the rhythm  
and blues I require  
banjo-knee,  
knee socks to prevent  
mosquito bites, lie down  
in back of bumping bus and  
dream we wish it could  
someday be a vision, and I’ll stop  
all foolishness when  
Govinda declares to me,  
“Write this and only this, what  
I speak to you.”  
Until then (and I don’t beg for it)  
I’ll write who I am and what

passes through my mind.

“Heart, heart, whatever that  
is, the whole self,  
the cherished wish,  
the blood-auricle-ventricle  
to wherein the Lord is  
transcendental and the  
tiny spirit-spark rests.

Head of cut-through pass  
me where I have to die and  
give up all attachments  
forced at death  
to leave behind my words  
and give up efforts for at least this one life—  
that heart,

I pray  
can become the resident  
of the revealed Lord.

“He can do it whenever He  
wishes. Can transform

can appear

*Hari-nama*, can spread His light

and form and acts and teachings

throughout me

and then I can act not

falsely

but wholly (no pretense) act as guru

to serve people all over the world.

Be strong enough to accept service

and austerity to travel and preach.

Not retreat but advance.

Yeah, but now, now I am

honest and say what kind of a

guru are you. Still I can

function, I can function,

keeping in mind . . . .

“So heart, may we hear

Govinda’s words, way we

advance and may Mayapur *dhama*

give me its much-advertised

benediction—One day there were

millions of lives in Varanasi  
sleeping there as good as obeisances,  
no overeating of *prasada*—  
be blessed fella  
in Mayapur.  
Bus is ready, I am ready  
here we go.  
Head is tow-head  
Blank is fault  
sky is dark  
crows raucous  
so long Calcutta,  
timid fellow  
about to launch his trip  
he better be  
alert and promises to  
clerk, record, write down,  
the broken sonnets  
no girl attractions  
hope the grave face prevails  
until smile cracks  
by force of Govinda.

Radha-Madhava—  
 I went there first in 1973.  
 he knows me,  
 welcomes me to his  
 place of worship.”

(October 28, 1994,  
 “Notepad #2,”  
 pp. 87–89)

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**From *Karttika Papers* (continued):**

“Be serious. No man is an island. When so much pain came, the young girl couldn’t concentrate on Radha and Krsna. She died with the guru saying holy names in her ear and a picture of Radharani near her.

**“*Before-lunch Poem*”**

“I am cynical  
 and disbelieving but I want  
 the real thing for me.

I mean just by holding a picture  
of Radha, is that  
the way? Prabhupada didn't  
demonstrate that.

But an ISKCON guru could  
help, couldn't he? Couldn't  
he *serve* by chanting holy names  
in the ear?  
Couldn't he serve?

“Serve in the school of free  
expression to flee to the  
enunciate.

Gosh, I'd like to make it clearer,  
Nrsimha dasa.

But what can I do? No  
ghosts. I'm listening to voices  
though, that want Out.  
'Let me out!' Let me speak.

“He said, ‘I have been here ten  
days in Mayapura “transcendentally

enjoying,” along with his son.

Now they went on

to Puri.

What’s all this moving around

and pilgriming? A reformed ISKCON *sannyasi*

said, ‘Come to the *dhama* and

serve—that’s the secret. Don’t

be a monk, but I mean a pilgrim.

Seeking. But *give.*’

Oh, I see.

He’s got the clues right and inspired-wisdom authority.

“Come to the *dhama* to serve

by vigorous dancing, he said.

Oh, I can’t do that.

But my heart does

and my words.

“It’s Mayapura, ‘Stir up the Magic of *Puja.*’

Read a billboard

I saw coming out of Calcutta

yesterday. Lord of *pujas*

and hooligans, fallen stars.

The elk and the elephant,

I haven't seen the zoo yet.

“Give me more notepads.

This is Mayapura where

you can't commit offenses.

Everything you do is blessed.

The Two Brothers reign.

They bring you to *gopi-bhava*.

I'm on good behavior.

“I'm setting an example,

sending a message by this

year not traveling to Vrndavana.

“Dear Child Nimai, give me blessings of foot dust  
of Nadia.

Dear Prabhupada, let me read

your books and find

it there so even when

I read *Bhagavata-mahatmya*

it's in the consciousness of your  
 follower.

“I must read him mostly.  
 I want that. This is Mayapura,  
 home of the *kirtana* band.  
 Thump-bethump be  
 stars, the sky,  
 the peanut-butter sandwich  
 in the sky of my memory, here  
 in Mayapura mail comes and *N.Y. Times*  
 telling of Ozzie and Harriet and  
 Groucho Marx, good old stars,  
 you better kick them out  
 and for that the sharp nails  
 of Nrsimha will do.  
 Okay I don't hate you but  
 I've got to part from you—  
 and so with love—  
 ‘Get out!’  
 Let the way be cleared for  
 the appearance of Gaura-

Nitai in my heart.

“You die and then live again.

Let’s live until we have to die.

Let’s travel in the West and speak

and write our best. O Navadvipa—

I heard one can’t commit the offense

of overeating here, and if you sleep

it’s as good as making personal obeisances.

“I just talked to six, my disciples.

That’s all. I told them of our delayed

Alitalia flight and how they cheated us—

said it was nonstop to Bombay but

stopped in Kuwait City.

Yeah, I told them. My teeth held in

firm, my head didn’t fall off the neck.

I didn’t lust, I bluffed, I looked at

my watch and beyond myself—the news of

*viraha* from Krsna came through. Things

I’d read in *Bhagavatam*. I praised

*Bhagavatam*. Now I’m telling you all

this. Somehow, it's all important,  
sweat-stained shirt underarms.

Srila Prabhupada singing on loudspeaker out  
to the *dhama*, the tit-mouse (bird in  
Gita-nagari, cold fall there). All I could  
enumerate . . . . Why should I hide from you?  
You. I'm in liberal *audarya-dhama*.  
Lord Caitanya's grace."

### ***Night***

"I'm in Mayapura with earplugs on but  
let's take them out and live. They are  
singing *Damodarastakam* . . . the Bengalis . . .  
But you see I need earplugs because of  
the next room, and when he clears his throat  
I lose my train of thought . . .

"If I could be all alone and very clear  
in thought  
I don't know what would happen.

I believe the Truth descends.

The Name descends.

I'm not complaining but

not much descends to you, is that what

you are saying?

No, not that either

I'm happy but I'm aware I'm not

getting much, not the Divine.

“So listen . . .

I am honored here and at least I can be

honest about things. Tell them down-to-

earth stories. Avoid sitting on big cushions.

And share the *Bhagavatam*.

I am not in the material world.

“I'm sheltered in ISKCON and

the duty my master gives me.

Okay, but what about this song tonight?

Give us a picture of flaming lamps offered

before Mother Yasoda and not-so-frightened

Krsna? No, I'm up in my room avoiding the crowd.

This is TKG's room, a big reception room  
 but I am alone in the middle of it. On  
 the wall is  
 a big original painting of Lord  
 Nityananda and  
 one of Gauranga and on the other side  
 of the room  
 is a photo of Radha-kunda.  
 That's the setting. Got it?

“Hear, hear, we are in Mayapura.

“We” means me and the weekly

*N.Y. Times Week.*

At a glance, Clinton's down, Clinton down  
 there may not be another King of England—  
 900 perish at sea in a ferry with unwelded  
 front to it, like the ones we always use.  
 Maybe he should have told me for safety  
 but didn't want me to worry. The worst  
 could come, yet . . . but maybe Krsna wants  
 you to go along easy.

“He is the Boss, The King, the reason and  
*mattah parataram nanyat.*

They want to read *Krsna-bhagavatamrta.*

As they die in Vrndavana, even a 19-year-  
old girl. Oh, let them. ‘I just know what  
I need,’ I say, ‘Even as I fail to take it.’

“Mayapura is too busy for me. Give me  
the pasture and rain and low stone walls  
alone in Ireland. I’ll make some nice  
music for you there. They say one day in Navadvipa  
is worth a million anywhere else.

Well Okay, I chalked it up.

But just left big green ink stain  
on the sheet. What will TKG say?”

*(Notepad #3,*

*pp.115–7)*