

## ***Free Write Journal #74***

### **Free Writes**

#### **Radha-Govinda Dresses**

I wrote to Sastra and thanked him again for all the outfits he brought from Vrndavana for Radha-Govinda. I told him it is the perfection of my eyesight to see Them in new dresses every third day. Some of the viewers of the photos we post ask, “Do you change Them into new dress every day?” Right now we are going through a new series that are particularly to my liking. They have no *jari* or flashy embroidery. They are colorful but simple, Vrajavasi cowherd boy and girl. We have many new ornate flutes, and this is a great opulence to offer to Govinda and to behold in *darsana*. And we want more outfits, enough for a new change every day of the year. One may doubt, “Why do you want so many clothes? Isn’t it excessive?” But I and the head *pujari* are possessed with greed. It is spiritual and is called “*laulyam*, hankering more and more for loving service to Radha-Krsna. For ourselves, we wear simple clothes and don’t demand variety. But for Radha-Govinda it’s a different thing. We are surprised and delighted to see Them with new dress and paraphernalia.

## **Srila Prabhupada on Jesus Christ**

To commemorate Christmas, a Godbrother sent me a number of quotes by Srila Prabhupada declaring that Jesus Christ is a *saktyavesa avatara*, an empowered incarnation. Anyone who is preaching about God is an empowered incarnation. Prabhupada said he was invited to a priestly meeting in Melbourne and they asked him, “What is your opinion of Christ?” He replied, “He’s our guru.” In another citation, Prabhupada said: “Now we can just imagine what kind of people he had to deal with, that his commandment is ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Then understand how much they were accustomed to killing. So what kind of men they were? And not only that, in spite of hearing his instruction ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ they killed him first. So what kind of men they were, just imagine. He said, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and they decided, ‘We shall kill you first.’ So this class of men he had to deal with.

GUEST: “What would happen to the people that killed Christ on the cross? Very bad, it seems . . .”

PRABHUPADA: “Christ cannot be killed, but they killed themselves.”

Another time, Prabhupada said, “Guru Maharaja said *saktyavesa avatara*, powerful incarnation . . . We took it from Guru Maharaja.” And, in a lecture in 1976 in Vrndavana:

“*Suhrdah* means the other side does not do anything for your benefit, but one side is always willing. This is called *suhrdah*. Similarly, a

*mahatma*. He is not well received. He is criticized, insulted, sometimes injured. Still he wants . . . just like lord Jesus Christ. He was so badly treated, and still he was thinking, ‘Father, they do not know what they are doing. Please excuse.’ This is *suhrdah*. He is praying to God. This is *sadhu, mahatma*. *Suhrdah*—in India there are examples like Haridasa Thakura, Prahlada Maharaja. And the Western countries also, lord Jesus Christ. He is *saktyavesa avatara*, God’s son. And he tolerated so much. These are examples of *mahatma*. Don’t misunderstand that we are preaching that *mahatmas* are only in India.”

## **Sickness**

Two of our ashram inmates are sidelined with illness. One is taking antibiotics for an infected chest, and the other has a cold. Our two-week guest also has weak health and is taking a strict Ayurvedic diet. Some say it’s karma, some say it’s bugs. Some say a person has weak health, and some say he’s a hypochondriac. Prabhupada said we should be compassionate toward diseased devotees and not demand that they work as usual. The “well” devotees need to protect themselves from the contagious diseases of the other devotees. The few remaining devotees who have good health have to shoulder the extra duties.

Prabhupada had many diseases, but he pushed on with his mission in service to his spiritual master. As he flew repeatedly around the world in jet planes and kept hands-on management of ISKCON, some doctors said he shortened his life. But we

cannot imitate Prabhupada.

I myself suffered from chronic migraine headaches for twenty-five years. There were many different opinions about my painful condition. Some said I was getting reaction from my offenses (failure to serve Prabhupada and all his devotees.) Some said it was stress-related—my psychophysical nature was not suited to the managerial responsibilities of a GBC person. Some suspected I was hypochondriac and was using my headaches as an excuse to avoid GBC duties and to spend time writing alone. After two decades of debilitating migraines, I resigned from the GBC in 1986. Gradually I found some relief when an allopathic doctor and psychiatrist diagnosed it as “anticipatory anxiety” and treated me with appropriate medication. I no longer get migraines, and except for my complete immobility caused by crippled legs, I am in good health, peaceful and content in my service.

### **More on Diseases**

Writing about my migraine affliction just now triggered off a regular headache. I took two over-the-counter painkillers. I am still fragile when there is too much stress.

I meant to mention that another cause for disease comes from the Vedas. If a spiritual master’s disciples commit sinful activities, this may cause him to become ill (or have bad dreams).

In addition to physical ailments, there are also mental diseases. I know devotees who are bipolar. They are either manic or depressive. By treating it with

medicine, they keep a balance. I know a man who is very depressive, but by taking two medicines he gets relief from his depression.

According to Vedic literature, there are four major miseries (birth, death, disease and old age). So disease is one of them. No one can prevent disease. It is one of the conditions of material life.

The aim of human life is to get rid of all four miseries by taking to Krsna consciousness. Krsna says in *Bhagavad-gita* that one who knows of His birth in this world and His divine activities, does not, at the time of death, transmigrate to another material body but goes back home, back to Godhead to associate with Krsna and His liberated devotees for eternity, in bliss and knowledge.

### ***Brihad-Mridanga***

The *mridanga* drum can be heard for a couple of blocks. The *brihad-mridanga* (printing press) can be heard all over the world. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was pleased if his *brahmacaris* distributed only a few magazines. Our Prabhupada's disciples discovered the art of mass distribution and have distributed millions of his books in many foreign languages.

The *Brahma-sampradaya* is called "the *sampradaya* of the book." Srila Vyasadeva compiled all the Vedic literatures to teach humanity the ultimate goal of life. Lord Brahma and Narada also wrote books in disciplic succession. Lord Caitanya wrote only the *Siksastakam*, but ordered His disciples, the Six Gosvamis of Vrndavana, to write many books about the *bhakti* cult. A *gurukula* boy sent a letter

to Srila Prabhupada asking if he could write. Prabhupada encouraged him and said that all his disciples should write articles and books expanding *parampara* unlimitedly. I also wrote a letter to Prabhupada asking if I could write. (I was afraid it was presumptuous, since he was writing.) But he wrote back with full encouragement and said just as the previous *acaryas* had written, and he was writing, so he expected his students to also continue writing. With this encouragement, I wrote articles for *Back to Godhead* magazine for twelve years. I accumulated them in one of my first books, *A Handbook for Krsna Consciousness*. He later told me to write a book that *All Things Fail without Krsna*. Since his disappearance I am continuing to write prolifically. It has become my vocation and the best way for me to keep in touch with my disciples and like-minded readers.

### **Janmastami dasa**

Janma is leaving for India in early February. His plan is to stay there for two years, enrolling himself as a student in Mayapur and Vrindavan and deeply studying Prabhupada's books. He is physically, mentally and spiritually exhausted from decades of ISKCON management and collecting. He hopes to regain his memory by immersing himself in the scriptures. He wants to enter a brahminical mode of life. Regarding his *sadhana*, I wrote a poem about him in 1985, when his *japa* was strong.

*Janma's Japa*

Janma's deliberate *japa*  
is an inspiration;  
he paces growling, uttering.

Round and round the temple, Janma's *japa*.

Thick eyeglasses,  
strong faithful body,  
the promise of Krsna  
in his heart  
absolute.

Around again, pushing out the mantras  
early in the morning.

I have to retire  
and come out again;  
he just keeps going strong.

Like a waterfall, a truck,

like Krsna's promise, Janma's *japa*.

He doesn't fall asleep sitting against the wall.

He's got his problems

but his *japa* is together.

## Appreciations

I received a short note from a devotee named Pavanadeva: “I enjoyed reading this *Free Write Journal* #72 very much, the most of anything of yours I have read to date. Thank you for writing it and sending it to me.” I receive a number of appreciations like this. They are important to an author; they validate his work, they encourage him to continue. A famous American poet was interviewed, and she said the important thing for her was that her poems be “useful.” There are many lonely people out there, and if a poem can offer solace, that is the poet’s reward. I like the idea of being useful, and I like hearing a reader’s appreciation. One time I wrote a letter to the editor of a *haiku* magazine who had published a number of my poems. I told him I was frustrated by what I called “the wall of silence,” meaning that I never received a response to my poems. He wrote me back not to expect response. People are very busy, and I should not expect them to write to me. Be satisfied that you are published, and assume that some are pleased with your work. This editor’s letter changed my attitude, and I told him so. I no longer resented the “wall of silence.”

Writing is its own reward, and publishing is the cherry on top. If I occasionally receive a favorable note from someone like Pavanadeva, that is a special delight.

### **First Days as Prabhupada’s Servant, 1974**

I am listening to Srila Prabhupada’s *Srimad-Bhagavatam* lectures given in January 1974 in Los Angeles. This was the time he had called me to be his servant and secretary. In hearing the lectures (about Maharaja Pariksit) over 40 years ago, I am trying to get a feeling for what it was like to be there. But by hearing the lectures they are all new, and they don’t bring me memories of being there. For recall I turn to my book, *Life with the Perfect Master*, which is a memoir of those days:

“The first few days in Los Angeles, Srila Prabhupada came into the small room where I worked and stood beside me, showing me how to cook. He demonstrated the proper texture for *chapati* dough, making it as soft as possible. It didn't matter if the dough was wet, he said, because you could add flour to each patty while they were being rolled.

Prabhupada also showed me how to spice and how to make an instant version of sweet rice.

“Each day when the massage was over I would dash back to the boiler. My biggest problem was the rice. Being in the top pot, it cooked slower than the *dal* and vegetables, and I would have to make a frenzied attempt to finish it. In that brief fifteen to twenty minutes between

massage and lunch—while Srila Prabhupada bathed, dressed, put on *tilaka*, and recited his *gayatri* mantra—I also had to cook the *chapatis*. After his *gayatri*, Prabhupada would ring his bell and that was it; I had to bring his lunch without a minute's delay. Srutakirti was around to give me some tips, but for a few days Prabhupada tolerated a less-than-average lunch.

“I have never experienced such combined anxiety, anticipation and breathless pleasure as I did in preparing Srila Prabhupada’s lunch, serving it to him, standing by to see what he would say, and running back and forth to bring hot *chapatis*. The kitchen area in the servant's quarters was disarrayed, full of pots and covered with flour. My mind and senses were completely tense and ready to jump at Prabhupada's command.

“Sometimes Panditji would come in and help me prepare the *chapatis* while Prabhupada was eating. Prabhupada liked them round, thin, and biggish. After rolling one on a floured surface, I would pick it up, pat off the flour and put it in a frying pan on medium heat. When the *chapati* stiffened slightly, with air bubbles appearing on its surface, I would flip it over, briefly cook the other side, then remove it from the frying pan with tongs and hold it over a low flame. When it puffed up, I took it off the flame and buttered one side. Each operation had to be done just right.

“As Panditji and I took turns running *capatis* into Prabhupada, he would often make comments. If the *capatis* or other dishes were not cooked to his satisfaction, he would say something sarcastic like, ‘It’s half-cooked;’ or ‘It’s burnt.’ Or if something was all right, he would be pleased and say so. Sometimes I made something I thought was bad, but Prabhupada would like it, or just the opposite. Sometimes he would seem very easy-going and kind no matter what I cooked, and sometimes he would become angry as if my poor cooking were a great calamity. There was no way to take it but to surrender to whatever he did.

“One of the first times I cooked lunch, several of the preparations didn’t come out at all well. I brought the lunch in with great trepidation. But just at that moment, a devotee from the temple arrived with some *samosas* that Srutakirti’s wife had made at her apartment. Prabhupada ate them all deliciously, and the day was saved.

“In addition to cooking, I massaged him and did other physical services. I also typed his letter correspondence. I was still the GBC secretary for a zone in the U.S. and spoke on the phone with temple presidents. In addition, I was editor-in-chief of *Back to Godhead*. I read all the submissions and spoke with Jayadvaita and the other editors. I was breathlessly busy. It was all too much.

(Later, in Hawaii, I complained to Prabhupada that I had too much service. He

told me to delegate my work to others. I wasn't too successful at that. Gradually I became nominal in my leadership in the GBC zone and *BTG*, and concentrated on being a competent servant of Srila Prabhupada.)

### **Radha-Damodara**

I had a long relationship with Sri-Sri Radha-Damodara at Gita-Nagari. I spent a lot of time there as the residing GBC. Just like the other devotees at Gita-Nagari, I developed a close relationship with Their Lordships. Every morning the whole community would get to see Them at *mangala-arati* in Their night outfits. Then for Greeting of the Deities, They were all dressed up and decorated. Although They are large brass *murtis*, They were taken outdoors (unlike the practice of taking outdoors the small *vijaya* Deities). For Jhulan-yatra, They were swung on a swing suspended between two trees. It was great fun and intimacy with Their Lordships. Sometimes They were taken out and pulled by the oxen. They were taken into the barn to give Their *darsana* to the cows, and *arati* was performed for Them there. They would also go on cart rides through the fields.

I had Their shelter for a long time while writing the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* and other books in my cabin at Gita-Nagari. I wrote a book about Radha-Damodara with many poems about Them. Here are a few:

### **22**

“An etched, curved silver cane;

small butterflies of gold, blue and red;  
 bumblebees, yellow and black, whose beady eyes  
 sometimes befuddled the *pujaris*;  
 multicolored, threaded belts  
 against His softly-curving belly  
 ankle bells that attract our eyes  
 to His red-soled lotus feet; rings, mostly for the little finger  
 of His aristocratic right hand;  
 long and dangling earrings of pearl and rhinestone;  
 many gold and silver *jari* crowns  
 strands and strands of lovely white pearls;  
 wide bracelets;  
 many, many turbans . . .  
 These are all *tadiya*  
 connected to Lord Damodara,  
 and Lord Siva says  
 they are as good as He  
 increasing the ecstasy for the followers of Damodara.”

### **23**

“The opulence of the farm  
 is milk and grains and garden-fresh produce,

and to offer these to Damodara is Krsna conscious  
perfection.

‘No one goes hungry in this village,’

said Krsna to His pure devotee,

and so Damodara decrees,

‘Offer all to Me

and I will bring what you lack

and protect what you have.’

By His grace, what do we have?

Our daily offering to Him:

*ksira*, sweet rice, *rabri*,

freshly churned butter,

*burfi*, *pera*, yogurt, curd,

ghee-cooked *sabji*, hot foamy milk —

all from His brown Swiss herd.

And from His own golden harvest comes

bread or *capatis*, pastry or *puris*.

And in garden time

beets, carrots, lettuce, strawberries,

spinach, peas, cabbage,

peppers, eggplants,

and many bushels of many others.

They are prepared and cooked in His kitchen,  
 carried in on silver, and placed at His lotus feet,  
 whereupon He mildly smiles.

It's our loving exchange  
 feeding this Boy  
 who feeds His devotees  
 who serve in His village  
 where the *Gita* is sung—an example in devotion  
 for the blind, mad world.

## **25**

“When the schoolgirls start thinking too much  
 which boy they want to marry, prematurely, distractedly,  
 their teachers suggest,  
 what about young Damodara, why don't you become  
 attracted  
 to Him? Who is better than He for looks and strength  
 and fame and wisdom? Our young girls admit  
 it is not hard to do — serve Him by cooking and looking  
 like *gopis* helping Radha.  
 Marriage will come later and later it will go,  
 but this love is eternal.

Navanita Taskara writes, ‘His eyes are like lotus petals, and they are just trying to drink the nectar of the nectarean looks of Radha.’

Who am I to doubt or weigh these words?

‘In the morning when we are in front of Them,’

Mohini says, ‘sometimes I feel like Radha-Damodara are looking right at us, watching what we are doing, and seeing if you are really Krsna conscious.’

If I call that a girlish sentiment,

then it's a pity I've never known it or outgrown it.

Jahnava says, ‘When I see His sweet, smiling face it reminds me of when

He was a little cowherd boy.

It also reminds me of when He used to play His flute and it attracts the minds of the *gopis*.’

Of course,

she has heard all this from her elders,

lucky girl!”

## **26**

“Everyone wants to remember the old days—

‘When and where did *you* first see Radha-Damodara?’  
 Gour Hari came out of Macy’s, 34th Street, Manhattan  
 and there They were on the sidewalk with Their men.  
 Puspavan first saw Them in Philly downtown  
 where suddenly it rained and Their servants  
 picked Them up and ran into the subway.  
 Visnujana Swami sliding in his socks  
 the full length of the Baltimore temple floor,  
 singing, ‘Jaya Radha-Damodara, Jaya Radha-Damodara,’  
 and singing it amplified on dozens of college campuses,  
 magnetic performances drawing thousands to *darsanas*.  
 Prabhupada saw Them again and again and gave Them  
 Their Name because he heard the naughty Boy  
 must be tied so He wouldn’t fall while riding the bus.”

### **31**

“The song of a seamstress:  
 ‘I remember sewing late at night,  
 hearing those insects in the trees  
 with their loud din that goes in a pulsing pattern,  
 thinking, ‘This is the hour when Radha and Krsna meet,  
 this is the hour when all others are sleeping,

and I am sewing, unable to sleep,  
 wanting to complete one more shirt, one more skirt.’  
 Making an outfit of yellow, blue, red, and white,  
 with aprons, shamrocks, *fleur-de-lis*  
 that makes Radha-Damodara resemble  
 a Swiss Alpine cowmaid and cowboy  
 yet just in a mood suitable to Them  
 but not knowing how it will really look  
 until the intense moment—  
 after months of endeavor—  
 when the curtains are opened  
 and in breathless anticipation we see  
 Radha and Damodara smiling,  
 and the Vaisnavas pleased —  
 then all labors are rewarded.  
 And she wants to sew another and another,  
 and never stop this ‘sewing *sankirtana*.’”

### 33

“A visitor's song:  
 ‘I don't say here it's overdone, but where I come from  
 the Deity is more worshiped in awe.

Here They go out on Damodara sports,  
cavorting down the factory lift,  
or crashing through the tall cornfields  
without a thought that it's strange or rough!  
I get the feeling He loves to play,  
and somehow He's conveyed that to His servants,  
who provide such times — and *that's* special.  
As Rama and Krsna, the Lord walked the earth,  
and also as Damodara the same is true —  
you can see and feel His oxcart's tracks  
the chains for His swing hang in the tree  
and He's seen and been seen everywhere.  
Radharani goes too — for the fun — both wrapped  
in Their sheep-wool *chadars* when it's cold  
and Their gold auras outshine the beauty of the skies.  
I heard once Prabhupada came here too,  
and he drank clear water from Damodara's spring,  
tasted the same burnt-dark *chapatis*  
and said they were 'ecstatic.'  
So even when He's not out there in person,  
it's His friends who are walking, working, and playing  
in the fields of Damodara,

with Damodara's bulls,  
and Damodara's cows.”

## WRITING SESSIONS

*These excerpts from spontaneous practice were composed at Samika Rsi's house in 1993 and Saranagati Farm, British Columbia in early 1994.*

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### ***Samika Rsi's House, Pennsylvania***

*December 25, 1993*

3:12 P.M.—A Short Session

“Who are you? Where are you going? And what do you care? I am Satsvarupa dasa. I'm going to Gita-nagari tomorrow (if Madhu isn't too ill and if there's no snowstorm, etc.). I care to become a better person, but to especially follow *vidhi-marga* and brush my teeth and eat and eat and sleep until I die—croak, be-rivet. And then?

“Let’s not ask little questions in this last light of your last day in the peaceful retreat, let’s read before it gets too cold. Read a purport or two of the *catur-sloki*. I’m not a rascal who says, ‘Krsna with the *gopis* is good, but all other *lilas* are not good.’ No, I say that all words and *slokas* of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* are good because they are in relation to Krsna.

“The sun has form, but it is not visible to all on earth. At night we can’t see it. Similarly (the power of analogy, a suggestion for the common man—me), the Supreme Lord has His eternal form in Vaikuntha and in His incarnations in the universes. It is not seen by unqualified persons. That doesn’t mean He’s formless.

“When I first heard the teachings of the individuality of the Supreme Lord and the individual soul, I liked it (as taught in *Bhagavad-gita 2.12*). I rooted for it. I studied Srila Prabhupada’s examples to defeat the Mayavadis. Now it’s almost thirty years later, and I still agree. I don’t meet many Mayavadis, although I may expose the fallacy of their position in a lecture to devotees. What do I mean to say here? That I am stale or bored—or removed from this debate? I am also largely spared from the contamination of claiming to be one with God. My contamination is more like a general skepticism, an ennui, *mandah sumanda-matayo*, a bad and slow Kali-yuga student. ‘Who cares?’, I shrug.

“The young suburban couple drive their car into ‘The Woods’ and

park. He wants to seduce her. She says, ‘But it’s Christmas Eve,’ invoking some piety for Christ. He says, ‘Oh, the hell with that.’ We grew up like that—sensing that our parents didn’t really give a damn for the laws and morals of Jesus Christ, so why should we? Why bring up that point now? Because I’m reading *catur-sloki*. I wish I was better. Anyway, a blind uncle is better than no uncle at all. Let me be my own uncle. Yes, I accept you and yes, I accept *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

*Para-prakriti, apara-prakriti . . .* I read aloud in the shack. It’s mostly quiet. There’s a thin covering of snow (you got it, a white Christmas) on the ground. Many cars parked in front of the neighbor’s house. I’m reading the technical science, but my mind is daydreaming as to how I can put a better paper cover on this volume to protect it (a form of *bhakti*), and which book I’ll carry, which I’ll leave behind . . . Read by the clock. I’ll let you go in after a total of 40 shack minutes. White covering. Leaves, seems like a bleached photo effect, or lime thrown everywhere, as Swamiji saw it for a moment in Manhattan.”

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## ***Saranagati***

*January 25, 1994*

“The Wild West movies are coherent, but since when do you begin a new paragraph without thinking carefully?’

“You don’t know? It’s called free-writing, Prabhu. It moves quickly and may release thoughts and images before my “critic” can even consider them.’

“Yes, but why do you want to do that?’

“Why not?’

“Well, there might be virtue in more carefully thinking out what you want to say.’

“Oh.’

“Yes.’

“Green grow the rushes, Ho! The arm of the law can reach into Saskatchewan and Kamloops and to the caribou trail. In the warmth of the excavated den, the mama bear produces two cubs every two or three years. The species are going extinct. The coyote . . . .

“The reason I might want to write slower is that we are deep old men and can’t relate to the younger generation. I thought we’d be blowing off steam. But just be yourself. Be the wood on the desk and the little cuts of splinters on your soft skin. Be gloves to protect them. Be the chunks of wood.

“Will your ankle hold up for the walk? The scissor-motion of your legs . . .

“I live in one large room of this yurt; it’s a circular, premature house, not designed with a decorator’s eye. Just put one object here and another there and live and work and write. But keep it clean, especially the tabletop where Prabhupada *murti* is.

“You write what you know and experience. What do you gain by that? Will you share it? Sometimes you write things you don’t know.

“Faith in the individual writing session and the overall process. I am *in process*. After a year of better session appearance, we go through them twice. First dibs is *Churning the Milk Ocean*. Second dibs is ‘Among Friends.’

“Ink on my forefinger—just accept it and stop worrying, or cleaning it. It will be and will fade and re-grow.

“See the grains in the wood on your desk. The first to hear you suggested that you needn’t be a searcher these twenty days or be writing a theme. Just let it unfold and tell the story of what comes. I am still with that. I don’t take so seriously a voice that tells me, ‘What book are you writing? What are you searching for yourself in this wilderness retreat? Are you praying to Krsna to please reveal Himself in His Name? If not, why not? Are you crying out? Are you attempting to preach through writing? And what is your Centennial project?’

“I just walk and talk and write. I am also trying to avoid too much outside reading. Mostly it’s just poetry reading at the time I go to write my own in the big pad. And books on writing for springboard. Not any extended reading, thank God. Main thing is *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Prayers now, of demigods, spoken by Maitreya. He’s telling how creation takes place. At that time the demigods pray to the Supreme Lord. Their prayers are nice, about taking shelter of His lotus feet. Srila Prabhupada tells us not to despise the demigods. They sometimes take the side of the demons in order to gain control over them. The *devas* are good devotees given charge of cosmic duties by Lord Krsna. Their prayers are faithful expressions.

“I like it, and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* authors think it’s best for us. Later I may read more *rasika* topics as they are presented. Srila Prabhupada and *Bhagavatam* are now best. The *Bhagavatam* is not merely for neophytes or mixed devotees. No cheating religion. No, cheating religion is kicked out at the very beginning of the First Canto.

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***Saranagati, British Columbia***

*January 1994* (continued)

“You think there will be stuff in what you write that we can use at the firehouse? Why do you jerk your mind this way and that? Why zany? I don’t choose it.’

“Yeah, but why record such movements?’

“Prabhu, it’s a way to allow the ‘unconscious’ to enter more.’

“But won’t it produce silly stuff?’

“It may. But I like this process, Prabhu, and I’m committed to it. We’ve seen good results. Even what you call jerky movements often turn out to be normal for the reader, who is used to quick changes from his own mind.’

“Noises. I don’t know what they are. Relax shoulders and neck and go on with this early morning run. We are not a trout fisherman, or a coyote with blazing eyes and fangs in the cold, but a civilized human being who spent four hours under bedcovers.

“The thing is falling apart. The body. You can hold it together for a certain amount of years. It’s a material machine and can’t endure forever. Life, or the soul, lives within, but when the body is too decrepit or gets diseased, then there comes a point where the soul can’t stay, so it moves on. It’s really good if you can realize this duality between body and soul. They are not one. The body is a machine and will be disentangled, but the self will move on. There is nothing to lament.

“In this limited time, let’s work at self-realization. Writing this way seems very roundabout, but we’ve discovered its virtues over trying to make sense at every step of the way. Now you should turn to direct reading of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

“Srila Prabhupada makes everything very clear and simple, and he insists this is all that is needed. Don’t complicate transcendental endeavor with artificial attempts to become one with the Impersonal.

“The devotee has only to hear about devotional activities, which are as simple as anything in ordinary life, and he also acts very simply . . . The devotees enter the kingdom of all pleasures even from the beginning of their attempt.’ (*Bhagavatam*, 3.5.46, purport)

“I think of Merton and Thoreau and that new-age tape, Shakti-Gawain bluffing to tell us how to turn into the ‘Intelligence of the Universe.’

“It’s quiet here. You have to work for it.

“Srila Prabhupada argues on behalf of *bhakti* and *bhaktas*. He says it’s easier than speculation or meditation or yoga, and it brings you to a much higher destination. One might say his argument is not objective but is simply praise of the *bhakti-marg*. But what Srila Prabhupada says is what *sastra* says. (See *Srimad-Bhagavatam* 3.5.47: ‘But for them there is much pain, whereas the devotee simply discharges devotional

service and feels no such pain.’ Same in Lord Brahma’s prayers (*Bhagavatam* 10.14.4) in the example of beating an empty husk after the grain has been removed, and *jnane prayasam*. Srila Prabhupada says devotional service duties are also labor, but the devotee prefers to have them rather than be without them. His destination is much higher than the nondevotee’s. The means is simpler and brings immediate pleasure. I agree. Why did I then find some fault with Srila Prabhupada’s statements as I read them? It’s just the agitation and movements of the mind. Because I am so consistently favorable and agree with whatever Prabhupada says, the discriminative faculty of the mind wants to ‘balance out’ such appreciation. Yet that faculty shouldn’t be applied here. The more you love what Prabhupada writes and accept it, the better. Use discrimination to understand clearly why he and the previous *acaryas* are perfectly right. Use your own brain to expand on these themes in agreement with *siddhanta*, and this way I can use the critical faculty.

“They look to me for teachings and example. I am not writing for entertainment but to inspire serious devotee readers who have left nondevotee worldly writers behind. Therefore it may be suitable to simply read *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and just write whatever comes. I have the assignment to repeat the *parampara*; now it’s just a matter of how I

do it. Don't forget that your specific writing tasks are those of a servant of the Vaisnavas, the notes of a struggling *sadhaka*.”

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## ***Saranagati***

*January 31, 1994*

“I pause to take a snapshot. Now that I am proclaimed a fiction writer, I may merge fact and fiction in my journal, like John Cheever did in his. I'm only kidding. You gotta believe me.

“Horn a'plenty. Nose. Nosedive. Censor that thing. The writing practice goal where you write whatever comes quickly and look at it much later.

I saw a pear soft in their room and hoped in the future I would eat it. I saw old *BTGs* and looked for myself and crew in Boston.

“The pear split down my teeth. O Reverend, please save us. Play on God's trombone music of words flowing.

“Sure, I look forward to your latest prose fiction in the pages of *Among Friends*. That is, if civilization holds up a little longer. You can use amenities (I said) in the city and preach, but out here you should try to avoid the connection, and not just because the world civilization will end, but (Oh, I was so wise I surprised myself, and so relevant and

entrancing that I make it sound—the process of *sravanam-kirtanam* — as if no one but me actually reads. Little did I know the swami in the audience regularly reads *Krsna* book and loves to hear and discuss Lord Caitanya. You are just on the reform of bad habits. Some never lapsed as you did and did not venture into considering they are *palya-dasis* of Radha. I’m not saying it’s wrong or right, what was right for me was full steam ahead in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. There’s no danger you’ll hit an iceberg like the Titanic did if you ride on *Srimad-Bhagavatam* through the waters of life guided by the *acaryas*—fair passage back to Godhead for he who does it wholeheartedly.)

“I’m sorry you did not get the Nobel Prize for Literature for what you write here, but you can leave a Post-it, ‘More firewood,’ ‘Return part john long john and Italy’s secret,’ ‘Missive of the crypts,’ ‘Food in the Egyptian tomb.’

“Oh, he invited me one night to the men’s support club. Go and scream if you have to. Guys will be there to hold you up, and I flashed, ‘I could *write* about this.’ It’s just a metaphor for me, a gimmick (more than that) so I can get off into a vignette that I must tell. Is it immoral to use life and make fun? I’m not making fun. Be courageous.

“Then he invited me to ‘The Sweat.’ Said J.G. Maharaja attended. Of course I won’t go and won’t tell a story in a sweat lodge because I don’t know what it’s like.

“Help!

Kaliya-

Krsna danced upon the hoods

metaphor reference to the hood

of a Cadillac

racing Srila Prabhupada to a speaking engagement.

Devotees in the city need fast cars

like the police do,

but in the country you

need cookies in both places and

need to learn to cook with food

(a nice poem)

stored in the root cellar.

Save time and write jolly poems

simple living and high, high

thinking beyond Brahman

beyond nose and pose

and Paramatma will teach

the devotee from *vaidhi*

to *raga*.”