

Free Write Journal #76

Free Writes

Fundraising Campaign

I put my heart and soul into writing books. The cycle is complete when my disciples reciprocate. It is a two-way loving exchange. By donating to the fundraising campaign to pay for printing the books, by purchasing and reading the books, by distributing the books to others, we serve together in our “family business.” We are publishing four books in the year 2020 to commemorate my 80th year. Caitanya-candrodaya and Lal Krishna will do the layout, design and covers. Krishna-kripa and others are proofreaders. Rev. John Endler collaborates with me in compiling the books.

The fundraising has gone well. We have received several nice donations, enough to cover the entire cost of printing four books. I am swept off my feet by the spontaneous generosity of the devotees. I offer them my obeisances and blessings. All glories to the *brhad-mrdanga*. All glories to Srila Prabhupada, whose books are the highest priority, and who ordered me to write books in *parampara*.

Sacinandana Maharaja at the Govardhana Retreats

I listened to Sacinandana Maharaja speaking for two hours on the chanting of

the holy names. It is marvelous how he can go on and on with this one sublime subject. He quoted Srila Prabhupada that of the nine processes of *bhakti*, the chanting of the holy name is most important. And Krsna appears in two ways: in His personal form, and in His sound vibration. Of the two, the sound vibration is more merciful. Sacinandana Maharaja read from *Bhajana-rahasya* by Bhaktivinoda Thakura, which has many gems about the holy name. He said it was very hard to avoid the ten offenses to the holy name all at once. He chose to speak on one, *pramada*, inattention while chanting. He said it was the root of all the other offenses. Bhaktivinoda Thakura recommends going into seclusion or chanting in the association of devotees serious and advanced in *hari-nama*.

Maharaja also spoke on the meaning of the *maha-mantra*. It is a calling out: “O energy of the Lord, Radharani; O Lord Krsna.” Then Their Lordships may reply, “What are you calling Us for?” The chanter fervently replies, “Please engage me in Your service.”

“Maharaja recommended chanting along with a recording of Srila Prabhupada saying his *japa*. He said there was a more recently-discovered recording of Prabhupada chanting more slowly than the famous “Sit properly!” recording. He generously asked the devotees to give him their home addresses and he would send them the valuable recording.

Sacinandana Maharaja is a kind of touchstone for his Govardana Retreat talks on the holy name. He reforms and inspires the devotees to improve their *japa*. He is doing a great service to ISKCON and pleasing his spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada.

Giriraja Swami

Giriraja Swami sent me an email that he had submitted the final manuscript of his book about Prabhupada and Juhu, *I'll Build You a Temple*, to be formatted for publication. First he had to live through the struggle along with Prabhupada to secure the land and build the temple. Then he labored for years to complete the book. He is growing older and had health scares while writing the book. Prabhupada personally said the Juhu story was “history,” and a book should be written about it. He also said that the ordeal was like the Battle of Kuruksetra, and that Giriraja was his Arjuna. Giriraja sent me a reproduction of the front cover. The title is in big letters, and it has a photograph of Prabhupada with his disciples, including Giriraja, on a morning walk at Juhu Beach. It will be a great triumph when the book is finally printed and distributed to the world. Giriraja wrote me that I have been an inspiration and guide. I don't think I have done much; I simply encouraged him to go on with his great dedication in writing. Only Giriraja Maharaja could tell this story of Prabhupada's success in building a temple for Radha-Rasabihari, which Giriraja participated in intimately in service to his Guru Maharaja.

Local News

A New Schedule

For a couple of weeks now I have been following a new schedule. I

go to sleep at 7:00 P.M. and get up by the alarm at 2:00 A.M. I take a nap after breakfast and another after lunch. But I have been noticing that I wake up in the middle of the night and have trouble getting back to sleep. This indicated to me that I've been taking too much rest with my naps. So I cut out my after-lunch nap, which usually lasts one and a half - two hours. Instead of going to bed, I sit up in my chair and proofread my books or listen to lectures by Prabhupada or the Govardhana Retreats. I don't get sleepy by doing this. Neither do I become wide-awake in the middle of the night. I am pleased with this change, which has become well-established. Prabhupada has always encouraged his disciples to sleep less, and he pointed to the example of the Six Gosvamis of Vrndavana (which is not to be imitated).

A Busy Day

I had two appointments in one day. I knew it would be strenuous. The "taxi meter" started at 8:00 A.M. when I put on my coat and got into the car to drive to the medical center in Chatham. It was dangerously foggy, and we went slow, with our headlights on. We saw our primary care provider's assistant, and she took blood pressure and other things. Then Ryan, the Nurse Practitioner, came in. He asked questions, checked my symptoms and said I looked good. (We gave Ryan, his assistant and the receptionists homemade chocolate "fudge"—

burfi prasadam—to go with their morning coffee.) Then Baladeva bumped me through two heavy doors and out into the parking lot, where I climbed back into the car.

Returning to the house, Rev. John Endler had already arrived. I took a half-hour break, resting in my chair, and then I invited him upstairs. As usual, he was intensely enthusiastic. He has been selecting poetry and prose from *Every Day, Just Write*, written over twenty years ago at the height of my creative power. We are compiling them into books. John loves reading my writing out loud to me, and I enjoy the exchanges. He not only reads but he explains, analyzes and expresses his appreciation. Of all my readers, he has the deepest understanding and dedication to my work. If it weren't for him, these new books of excerpts from *EJW* would never see the light of day.

The sheer intensity of John's presentation tired me out after the early morning medical exam. I developed head pressure. After he left, I took two pills for headache. I was so worn out I didn't go downstairs to share lunch and out-loud reading with the other devotees. I ate quietly alone. After lunch I was exhausted and took a two-hour nap.

Power Failure

The electric power went out at 3:00 A.M. We were left in the dark with one battery-run spotlight on the photo of Radha-Kalachandji. Our

two electric digital clocks went off, and we lost track of time. I thought I would have to sit in the dark and not be able to write in my *Free Write Journal*. But after twenty minutes the power came back, and I thought how dependent we are upon electricity for heating, etc., in the civilized world. I remembered my many visits to India, and how the electricity would regularly go out for twelve hours or more; there was no central heating in the rooms in winter. But the people pushed on and did their duties.

I remember Prabhupada's first year in New York City, when he sat alone in Dr. Misra's office and the power went off throughout the city. Prabhupada sat calmly, constantly chanting Hare Krsna on his beads. After a few hours, a man came in and offered him fruits and candles.

I am glad the lights are on again and I can write this little episode.

Snow

It snowed last night, six inches. Baladeva asked me if I liked snow and I said no, because Baladeva has to shovel it. He told me he likes to shovel, he gets physical exercise and fresh air. The neighbors see us out working like them. It's like mowing the grass; it raises B.'s self-esteem.

There is not much mention of snow in the spiritual world. But everything here is a reflection of the original spiritual world. Perhaps they have spiritual snow with no numbing cold. I seem to remember

snow falling on Krsna and Balarama, giving Them relief from the tropical heat.

On the earth, in Badarikasrama, India, there is heavy snowfall in the winter in the area where Nara-Narayana is worshiped. Tourists and seekers cannot go there at that time, but the *tapasvis* stay and do their *bhajana*, not even wearing warm clothing.

In the West, skiers love snow. In the summer, they are idle. Children throw snowballs and build snowmen.

As for me, I just take it or leave it. Seeing the flakes twirling down, I have mixed feelings. But Prabhupada, seeing a snow-filled field from his car window said, “This is Krsna’s picture.”

Book Report

In our out-loud reading of *Caitanya-bhagavata*, Nimai Pandita and His students travel to Gaya, East Bengal. But on the way, Nimai contracts a high fever. His students bring Him many medicines and treatments, but there is no relief. Nimai then asks them to bring water that has been used to wash the feet of a bona-fide *brahmana*. Nimai drinks the water and is cured. He then speaks of the auspiciousness of water used to wash the feet of a genuine *brahmana*.

They then reach Gaya. Nimai sees the devotees making offerings to the lotus feet of Visnu in the temple. They do this to release their forefathers from *samsara*. When Nimai receives *darsana* of the Lord’s lotus feet, His body manifests the

physical transformations of transcendental ecstasy. By the will of Providence, the dear disciple of Madhavendra Puri, Isvara Puri, arrives at the spot. Nimai makes obeisances to him, and Isvara Puri embraces Nimai. They both shed tears, and their hairs stand on end. Nimai has met Isvara Puri before and has been greatly impressed by him. Now Nimai asks Isvara Puri to award Him initiation and become His spiritual master. Isvara Puri tells Nimai, “I know that You are an expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” Isvara Puri says that initiation is so important that even when the Supreme Lord appears, He accepts it. Both of them joyfully agree on the initiation, and it is duly performed.

Nimai returns to Navadvipa a radically changed person. He stops His scholastic studies and constantly chants the names of Krsna. He starts the *sankirtana* movement, joining with the Vaisnavas in the house of Srivasa Thakura. At last Nimai has revealed Himself as an ecstatic pure devotee of Krsna, and Advaita Acarya is fulfilled. Sometimes Nimai even reveals His opulence as Visnu.

Visakha

Visakha (Manohara’s wife) is here for a six-week stay. She was able to come because the restaurant she worked in closed down, partly due to the vicious behavior of the local vegans. The restaurant owner was tired and was thinking of retiring, but the vegans’ action was a kind of “straw that broke the camel’s back.”

The restaurant had purchased two cats to control the mouse population. This made the vegans furious that the restaurant did not pick up stray cats from a rescue

center (where cats that were not adopted would eventually be killed). A group of vegans went on the Internet and condemned the restaurant (which was also vegan), advising people to boycott the business. Visakha said this group of vegans come on as protectors of animals, but they are violent to humans. She has another restaurant job lined up for March, but it is an hour-and-a-half bus commute to and fro.

Visakha is here just in time to cover for Krsna dasi, who has gone to India for a month. Visakha is a graduate of the Mayapura Academy Deity Worship course, so she is a world-class *pujari* to change Radha-Govinda's dress every third day and put fresh flowers on Their altar. Visakha is an expert cook, especially for Italian and Indian menus. This will be a real treat for us. Her husband, Manohara, will visit Viraha Bhavan for a week in February, and we can do private out-loud readings together, perhaps starting with *Gita-govinda*.

The News Is Always the Same

The Week magazine went on vacation for three weeks. But when they came back, you didn't feel you missed anything. There were no new columns, no new achievements. In American politics, there is no sense of cooperation. The Democrats and Republicans are fighting tooth and nail about everything. In the Mideast, countries see America as "the great Satan," and the U.S. president punches back with sanctions and drone killings. There is not a speck of information about spiritual life, the science of God. Therefore the news is useless, illusion. It's a complete distraction and waste of time. War, politics, entertainment—it all takes

you away from the search for self-improvement.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said he could produce a new newspaper from the spiritual world at every moment, and it would be ever-fresh, coming from the spiritual world. The only problem would be that there would be no customers. The only reality is in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and Vedic literature. That reality has stood the test of time, whereas the flickering of current events is coming from those who are about to die.

Prabhupada asked me to write a book about “how things fail without Krsna.” I did it under the title *Daily News*.

The Nectar of Devotion Lectures, 1972

On my audio device I’m listening to Prabhupada’s lectures on *The Nectar of Devotion*, delivered mostly in Vrndavana in the courtyard of the Radha-Damodara temple in 1972. The scene is described in the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta*:

“Vrndavana

October 17, 1972

“Prabhupada had come to Vrndavana to observe the Karttika season (from October 16–November 14). He planned to lecture daily at the Samadhi of Rupa Gosvami in the courtyard of the Radha-Damodara temple, speaking from *The Nectar of Devotion*, his own translation of

Rupa Gosvami's book *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*. On his Western tour he had invited devotees to join him for Karttika in Vrndavana, and now a few dozen devotees from America, Europe, India and other parts of the world had gathered to be with him.

“He was concerned with developing his Vrndavana project, so rather than immediately rushing to Bombay, he had come here first, sending some of his leading disciples to tackle the problems in Bombay. Now, like a general engaged on a different front, he awaited word from his lieutenants in Bombay. He moved into his two small rooms at the Radha-Damodara temple while his disciples stayed nearby in the former palace of a Maharaja of Bharat-pura, an old building near the Yamuna.

Although Prabhupada was introducing his disciples to Vrndavana, he was also introducing the residents of Vrndavana to his disciples. Already his group was encountering some of the same attitudes Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati and his party of pilgrims had met in 1932; the people's refusal to accept lowborn persons as Vaisnavas. Prabhupada trusted, however, that if his disciples could construct a wonderful temple for Krsna and Balarama, the hearts of the Vrndavana residents would change, and they would accept his disciples. He tolerated the roughness and slowness of his disciples, and when Vrndavana residents came to see him, he humbly requested they also overlook his disciples' faults and recognize them as genuine devotees of

Krsna; after all, they had given up sinful life and were regularly chanting the holy names of God.

“Prabhupada lectured both morning and evening. Sitting on a simple *asana* about two feet high, a bare bulb suspended over his head, Prabhupada would address his disciples and a few interested guests who sat before him.

“Some of the devotees had speculated that since they were now in Vrndavana, Prabhupada would probably talk on highly elevated spiritual topics, such as Krsna’s *rasa* with the *gopis*. But it was not so. Rather, one of his disciples would read from *The Nectar of Devotion*, and Prabhupada would interject extensive philosophical comments on attaining pure love of Krsna through the successive stages of *bhakti-yoga*.

“While Prabhupada’s talks were especially for his disciples, he also stressed that the *brahmanas* of India accept the Western Vaisnavas. And he cited dozens of scriptural references to prove his point: that birth status, being a material designation, should not apply in spiritual life. Stressing preaching as the essence of Krsna consciousness, he urged the disciples present to propagating the Krsna consciousness Movement.

“Prabhupada’s disciples were thrilled by these talks and by Prabhupada’s personal dealings with them in the intimate atmosphere

of his rooms at the Radha-Damodara temple, which he referred to as his “eternal residence,” the place where he had actually begun his plans for the Krsna consciousness Movement. His disciples could hear him rise early and begin translating *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and dictating his purports. At *arati* time, he would open the shutters of his room and behold the Deities. At other times the devotees might see him walking on the terrace chanting *japa*, and they found him always available to answer their questions and help them with their personal problems.”

While listening to the recorded lectures, I hear the many noises from the Radha-Damodara temple in the background. Parrots screeching constantly, piercing the atmosphere. *Arati kirtana* with *karatalas* and gongs flare up in the Radha-Damodara temple, as well as other *mandiras* heard outside the walls. Cacophonous sounds of human voices interrupt Prabhupada’s talk—“*Har-i-i-i-i-bol!*” “*Radh-e-e-e-Syama!*” Prabhupada has Panditji read aloud from *NOD*, and after a few moments he interrupts the reading. He doesn’t necessarily paraphrase or expand on the precise subject for his disciples. He does, however, explain Sanskrit words from *Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu*, and he glorifies Rupa Gosvami. In one of his talks, Prabhupada mentions that he has received “very encouraging” news in the mail. A newspaper from Durban, South Africa, reports that two devotees, Rsi Kumar Swami and a *brahmacari*, have brought Krsna to South Africa. Prabhupada proudly reports that Rsi Kumar was only twenty years old. Also in the mail was a

poster stating that two *goswamis*, Hridayananda Goswami and Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, are holding *bhagavata-dharma* discourses in Midwest America.

Prabhupada addresses his live audience and says, “Similarly, you are members of this Movement, and you should preach.” These historic lectures continued for weeks. Fortunately, they were recorded by the Bhaktivedanta Archives and are available for listening now in 2020 and well into the future.

Prabhupada Appreciation

This book was published in 1990. It remains one of the most thoroughly researched books that I have produced. I gave lectures in a seminar on all the chapters, had my talks edited by a competent editor and rewrote parts of it. The separate chapters focus on Prabhupada’s various contributions. Chapter Six is called “Appreciating the Bhaktivedanta Purports and Summary Studies.” It begins with a quote by Prabhupada: “If you want to know me, read my books.”

“Prabhupada said, “The purports are my devotional ecstasies.”

Ecstasy was a very important part of Lord Caitanya’s influence in preaching. Stern warnings from preachers may not prompt us to leave the material world, but the ecstasy of the Lord and His devotees can attract us. We can get a taste of that ecstasy if we submissively study Srila Prabhupada’s books.

“There are many other statements made by Srila Prabhupada to

describe the importance of his books. He said, ‘My books will be the lawbooks for human society for the next ten thousand years,’ and, ‘So there is nothing to be said new. Whatever I have to say, I have spoken in my books. . . . My purports are liked by people because they are presented by practical experience. It cannot be done unless one is realized.’ He told his disciples to ‘cram’ his purports, and that ‘Writing is the first duty of a *sannyasi*.’ And he told the book distributors, ‘My books are like gold. It doesn’t matter what you say about them. One who knows the value, he will purchase.’

“ . . . Professor Thomas Hopkins commented that Srila Prabhupada had bridged ‘an enormous cultural gap’ by his purports. Scripture that was originally composed for people in a completely different cultural milieu was being made applicable to Westerners. He adds, ‘The kind of teaching that really makes an impact is the kind where you *know* that someone is speaking out of his own experience. You certainly get that sense with Bhaktivedanta Swami . . . When that wealth of knowledge and insight is processed through the mind and experience of a holy person, it emerges as a statement of his own understanding.’

“ . . . Srila Prabhupada said that *he* did not write the books, Krsna did. This is a mystical statement and is difficult to understand. But we can understand that Prabhupada was a *saktyavesa avatara*, a directly

empowered messenger of Krsna, and in this way, everything he says is reflective of Krsna speaking. He also faithfully repeated the words of Krsna without adulteration or addition, so in that sense the books are ‘speaking.’ And Prabhupada’s words definitely carry the potency of Krsna—they make devotees.

“We can say for certain that the more we study Srila Prabhupada’s books and chant Hare Krsna attentively, the more Krsna conscious we will become; the more we associate with Krsna and His pure devotee through their instructions, the more we will become like them.

“Individually and as a Movement, we can always improve and increase our capacity to hear *krsna-katha* from our spiritual master. Prabhupada’s books are a real unifying principle; they provide the true direction for the whole society. We can increase the Krsna consciousness Movement by reading more. The more we read, the more we will want to read. Like anything in Krsna consciousness, we have to start at whatever platform we are on and take a step forward. There is nowhere to go but to the shelter of Prabhupada’s lotus feet.”

WRITING SESSIONS

These excerpts from my spontaneous writing practice were composed in South Italy, 1994 and the last week of September in 1996 (while staying at Manu’s house in Geaglum, Northern Ireland prior to European travel). The Geaglum

excerpts are a continuation from the previous issue.)

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“South Italy, 1994

“I do like prayer. And I also like schedule and calmness, and so many things. Please engage me in Your service.

“FREE MAN: the wet-diaper man cut the free man. On the head, where else? On the private parts. (This happened in Vrndavana *gurukula* when he was a young boy. The Indian boy stole the diapers; his *mata* didn’t want him to breast-feed anymore and put vile liquid there.) Growing up was painful, but he seems to have no complaints that he’s a devotee and wants to be, so that’s good indeed.

“A little blood never hurt anybody.

a little gore, Al Gore, baby. And ripe.

Yes, We Have No Bananas,

I a scholar of the Interpretive Warp

and Means Committee

Ugh. I afraid, chief

of just the word ‘committee.’

Don’t put me on one.

“Oh, don’t be afraid if they did. I mean, just say it happened beyond your control, or you could write about it in a poem.

Learn to bear more stress before a headache comes.

“Krsna conscious man: The self is in the Vedas, but to get at it you don’t go direct to *sastras* or their translations--you go to *mahajanas*, exemplary devotees of Krsna, you serve them and inquire from them, and thus it comes.

“Waiting for a letter. Don’t hold your breath. It doesn’t matter much. Find your friend in Srila Prabhupada’s books. The gift of disciples. The responsibility. I am happy that *Among Friends* has taken a new turn toward more instructing, and also happy that storytelling is still alive in me, maybe more nonfiction than otherwise.

“Three blind mice

see how they run

man on brown sax screams, he in purple shirt.

“Ornette Coleman—a fragment of newspaper, ‘rural roughness’ on it, and his name. Those old days. It doesn’t matter. Don’t try to find out what happened to all the old friends (Kowitz and Mednick) and where the famous people are now. If they are not in Krsna consciousness, where can they be? Somewhere ‘out there.’ It doesn’t serve my purpose to know.

“Main thing is to maturely focus on what you most want to do, and you do it the best you can. You don’t explore possibilities, you focus on your contribution. Do it now, and later if He wills. He can put you on any planet or into any mindset. I mean in this body, and certainly in future bodies. You have only a small amount of free will, and you should indicate to Krsna that you want to serve Him.

“Press work

Mack truck

drive front end

“Drive the *Autostrade* and French southern highway and jinx of Spain and the friendly farm. Sparkle in Spain’s yard eyes and Poles and Czechs too this year? But stop to write and read, and more and more.

“Give me three weeks, four at most, and I’ll finish the newspaper assignment, preaching several times a day. *All Things Fail Without Krsna.*”

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South Italy

February 23, 1994

“Awake by 11:15. Thinking of the varied forms of writing I’m attempting. I hope I don’t fail and omit Krsna or a clever and probing

way of explaining Krsna consciousness. Keep plowing ahead with it, restricting your time span.

“And this ‘*bhava*’ for the writing sessions. Will it hold? It should, as long as I recognize this as the foundation of all writing and know I can fail here and not be ashamed. This is where I write what I am and don’t care what it looks like.

“I want to be Krsna conscious. I want this to be an act of Krsna consciousness. But I will come to this altar as I am. The very fact that I wish to make this written offering so constantly, so frequently and at length (one hour apiece, several times a day), means I have to do it without pretense.

“Be ready to speak to Krsna. ‘Be ready to speak Krsna consciousness without a moment’s notice,’ Srila Prabhupada said. Yes, I say. Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He’s in the news. He is prayed to by all great Vaisnavas, as recorded in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. We accept whatever the *acaryas* tell us. Our acceptance is not blind because they explain Krsna fully, why He fulfills all the criteria of Bhagavan, and how the *sastras*, *sadhus* and gurus prove, how Krsna’s pastimes and history prove it. We accept what *sruti* says, as explained by the *mahajanas* and their *parampara*.

“Krsna is my Lord and your Lord

I make my offering to Him.

“He’s the temple Deity in Bergamo, Italy, as Radha and Krsna. You pray, ‘Dear Lord, please accept my humble obeisances.’ You stand in your saffron uniform, aging body, holding the symbolic *sannyasa* rod . . . And you think to yourself, ‘It would be nice if I could go alone and write something of my inner state.’

“Always that hankering. The Lord lets you do it. ‘Go ahead, be alone, and think of Me. Praise Me in that way.’ He also sanctioned Kardama Muni going off to the forest to practice *bhajanandi*. But *gosthyanandi* is better. I write and distribute. I go alone and then come back and give a lecture in the ISKCON temple. My allotted time races along in this way, and my choices bear consequences.

“Yes, I am becoming a loner, and it is my strong conviction to act and live in this way. Now if I can only vindicate myself. Should I not feel that I have to prove my solitude is worthy? But a devotee is always in anxiety ‘whether I’m spending my time fully in Krsna consciousness.’

“What kind of writing shall it be? What shall you do when you’re all alone? How is it pleasing to Srila Prabhupada? I’m not the only one who is accountable—we all are. If one is a little bit clear of the grosser forms of *maya*, he should help others. I’m going to be asked, ‘What did you do with the wonderful gifts you were given? How did you develop and distribute them?’

“The die is cast. Now, let’s not fritter away energy by worrying whether I’ve done the right thing. It’s not mere self-indulgence, provided you make the best use of your time. You have deduced that the most valuable commodity is private, personal time, so you are taking it. You are after the gold. Now, having taken it, don’t be a miser or a squanderer. Use it in the service of the Lord.

“I hope the writing session will help. I’m a writer by choice of location. I have written many books. There’s not much point in adding to the pile. I mean, that’s what we all do, more and better. The *sankirtana* man has already distributed millions of books. What does he do now? He does more and better if possible. And we humans—we have a career lifespan. Maybe we dwindle? No, in spiritual life you glow. You change but don’t dwindle. More books. More writing. Now I write for myself, to the heart of it, each time openly, honestly who I am. That’s the purpose of this writing service.

“(Downhill on skis, out of control but in control. Too fast for contact, and that’s the beauty of it.) Don’t break your neck, daredevil.

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“*Manu’s House, Geaglum, North Ireland*”

Last week in September, 1996

[CONTINUED]

“September 28, 1996

12:30 Midnite

“Keep an eye on Krsna. If you can’t surrender, then at least chant. Srila Prabhupada writes, ‘Sixteen rounds are essential.’

“Report in here and leave record—but not just for the sake of a log or record. That is a clerical function, or like a ship’s log kept by men on watch. It’s just history that no one reads except for official purposes. I’ve seen our security guards at Hare Krsna Land, Mumbai. They keep records of their standing watch, and this paperwork preoccupies them in a life of boredom with nothing else to do. My writing shouldn’t be like that, perfunctory.

“But do I feel the need to record some things in that way of a daily round? The first signs of a flashing pain (no matter how slight) in the right eye are important to me because they warn me that I can’t even do this function of writing. They tell me I have to pull the plans right away. Can’t write long or passionately, have to decide what to do aside from the desire to go all-out in writing or reading. What care and repair for the body?

“That’s an example of why I do write down log material: ‘Slight flashing light in right eye. Reluctant to get up at midnight . . . Ship is

plying smoothly. Steady as she goes.’

“Harrumph. Be quiet. Others are asleep. I like people to sleep while I write. Then I can chant softly to not awaken them. I’m a considerate person at least in that way—don’t disturb their sleep.

“Last two days here. Lots of packing to do. M. says he works slower as part of the general slowing-down (growing older). I don’t think he’ll do this again, outfit a whole van from scratch. I also may not ‘forever’ be willing to travel like this. We are hopeful of at least this October-November tour, but it occurred to me that it could be a bust. I might get so many headaches (and pills cannot check them). And the whole thing gets out of control, and we come back (like Francis of Assisi comes back from the Crusades), ill and apparently defeated—and try to turn that too into a victory for the spirit.

“But if as we start out, we do get more headaches, that doesn’t mean we instantly push the panic button and come back. Tolerate and suffer for a while, staying in the van, lying down in the bunk there, not seeing people or giving temple classes until I get clear of the headache.

“Steady as she goes. The tugboat, the boat crossing the sea, old boat, engine holding up but with a problem. Keep moving and chanting Hare Krsna. Keep yourself together for giving the class today.

“At 5:15 A.M. we do physical exercises, but only if we feel up to it. And listen to Aindra’s *kirtanas*.

“Goodbye again, Geaglum. Rushes, weeds blowing by the lakeside. The little prefab shed poised there. When on the lake strait you can see the little shed in the field on the edge of the forest, it’s a good place to start. I’ve felt I cannot write unless I go out there, it is so congenial for starting you.

“Read a little. ‘I must each day,’ says M. He’s been so busy with the van these months, he hasn’t read. But now he’s installed a fifteen-minute (at least) slot early in his day to read *Bhagavad-gita*. He feels its potency and his need for it. No other regular program of *sravanam*. Take it. We are not ordinary workers. Try to improve your chanting. I will give standard references to the devotees that of all the instructions of the guru, the order to chant sixteen rounds is most important. Which of the nine principles is the most important? I will hold their attention with this talk. Now, I have only three minutes left on my schedule. Then sit as calmly as possible but move rapidly and quietly through mantras softly uttered. Wear a surgical glove of thin rubber. Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna—my writing contains mantras. Give the mantra freely to others. Encourage people to chant the Hare Krsna mantra. It’s the panacea in this age. No other way. But to be most effective, avoid ten offenses.

Chant.

“Can’t,’ they say. They are too sophisticated and will never chant. I cannot convince nondevotees. My congregation is those who already know they should chant, who have vowed to chant. Inner preaching is equally important as preaching to the nondevotees. All preachers have to cooperate and preach to various groups—nuns in the Midwest, college students, Navy kids, cookie-bake moms and disciples growing older. Hear my talk.

“Time is up.”

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4:10 P.M., in the house

“Almost over, these writing sessions and the Geaglum stay. Didn’t write today in the shed. Busy loading van. What goes in and what stays in the house-storage? Go through many items, socks, crayons, books . . . funny how you decide one way or another. Slim down, then take on weight while head fogs. But I delay taking second pill of the day.

“Class on *japa* went okay. Disciples. Holy name. Abhaya says—‘I tried saying prayers of forgiveness to the holy names, but I never improve, so it seems no use—offensive—to keep asking forgiveness.’

“Yeah,’ I say, ‘so then pray, “Please give me the strength, please let

me improve.” Try your best, your worst, your mediocre.’ Don’t pray as you can’t, pray as you can.

“Walk or sit, calm or loud. My motivation in chanting? It’s okay. I’ll tell her.

“How to develop humility?

“I’ll tell her—something.

“Questions and answers.

“Declare my October book is not a story of European travel in the sense of a well-told, fast-paced novel. It starts out with four days parked in a courtyard of the Belfast temple after a mere two-hour drive there. And in repeated writing sessions, I’ll delve. I’ll be busy with class and seeing Bhurijana on Tuesday, but I’ll find the time to write, no doubt. Gee whiz. I hope nobody steals from our van or takes the van itself (or ourselves) as hostages. In any case, you could still chant Hare Krsna—if you were determined.

“It’s a test, Prabhu. Ink cartridges, Post-its, books, what to take and where to stash it. Think over, my friend, how to keep dry on a rainy day. And how to calm your mouse’s heart. And stout the way.

“They stay here in the house or temple, whereas we move in a small-space van. See new places, new faces, *sannyasi*’s privilege and austerity. On the move. What’s my purpose? I say I like it here; I hope I

can soon return. But off I go—if you love a place and people, you still have to leave. *Kala* forces you.

“*Gopis* thought Providence forced even Krsna to leave Vrndavana. But He was only playing.

“In my case, I have to go here and there like Narada, on a mission. Stop and write, and then finally . . .

“Sick on a journey
my dreams travel forward
over the moor.

“To the New Land, promised Goloka—not for you, Prabhu, you need a lot more seasoning in the minor leagues. Feel it’s unjust? A touch of irony and resentment in your voice that Krsna didn’t promote you to His topmost Kingdom? No, He’ll make it clear to you why you can’t go there.

“‘How can we be humble?’

“‘Just look in the spiritual mirror.’

“The collie barks and trots in the rain. He’s used to the outdoors. Some Irish men and women are also not so afraid of the rain.

“All cloudy, no big pleasure boats today. As winter comes, you won’t see any at all. When and if you come back here, won’t it be nice?

“Keep it quiet.

“There is no proof.

“Hare Krsna. ‘Could you look at a little *sastra* for your own benefit?’ I think I could. Bring yourself close to a few *Gita* verses and purports every day, as much as possible, S.P. said. Read *S.B.* Model yourself as a Maharaja Pariksit who knew he had only seven days to live. He wanted to know, ‘What is my duty now that I am about to die?’ And it was decided he should hear *S.B.* from Sukadeva Gosvami. We should also be *nityam-bhagavatam sevaya, kirtaniya-sada-harih*, always chanting and hearing. At least sixteen rounds, and some time daily in the book. That’s what I tell them. And give out stiff cookies at the end.

“When you go on the road,
say a prayer for me, please.’ Yes I will.

‘I can’t,’ Suhotra says.

New York Daily News says

hang on, jerk, to the strap

in the subway car.

In dream again, two thugs

surrounded me and said, ‘Its obvious

we are gonna mug

you for all your possessions.

So you might as well give 'em over
before we club you.'

“And I do, ruing that even my passport has to go. But then I wake up, locate my passport in the drawer of this safe room and then re-enter the dream. After the mugging I go wandering, seeking a place to stay for the night. I get the idea to go to 26 Second Avenue. I'm not expected there, but they will know who I am, and I don't think anyone stays there overnight, so they ought to let me. It's too dangerous to wander in these city streets.

“Barbed wire in-between posts, for keeping cows within a grazing area and away from this house. Lord, Lord, no lawnmower trimness—the house is okay, with a view of the lake and island. I talk myself out. No more. This pen is stingy. Use one that flows more smoothly and broad to get you through the last few minutes.

“Race steeplechase.

“No music request, except *kirtana*.

“Mister, we hear you say the same things over and over like a broken record.'

“That's why I'm going to a new place, at least to get something different to see and say. I'm sorry about the repetition and the poor chanting. I say same names, Hare Krsna.

“She said, 'I think of the English names: “O Radha, O Govinda,

please engage me in Your service.” I made it relative and said ‘Yes, you can think of *arca-vigraha*, and some think of Nama Prabhu. Each one prays to Krsna, and it’s okay. Go ahead.’

“You are looking old, lady.

“We’re all moving along in years, and time is cruel to the body, wears it down. No more pretty, comely faces after 40 and 50, and by 60 we’re dried up and wrinkled like prunes. You can smile, though, because you’re with Krsna in your heart. Believe it. Be happy because it is nice.

“Hare Krsna, see you later.

(24 minutes)

“Give me six more. He played his horn. ‘Encore! More!’ they shouted. Aniruddha walking along in the rain away from the van, casts a look back. I’m in the back of the van. I don’t think he can see me. I think I wrote you a letter. You’ll get it tomorrow. He’s walking alone. We are not alone, but we get lonely. Be happy.

“She said, ‘My motives for chanting are not too good: 1) I’m afraid that I’ll fall into the material world and 2) chanting helps me to cope with the day.’ I said, ‘Those are not bad motives. They are not the highest, but they are good. Bad motive is to commit the seventh offense in chanting.’ ‘Yeah [she said], we talked of that in our *japa* support

group, openly admitting who doesn't chant and try to help them. Don't have that anymore.'

"Oh mister, are you gonna have another disciples' meeting on Monday in Belfast? And if so, what will you say? Oh, I'll think of something. From *sastra*, I will read. Maybe say, 'Let's love Krsna. Let's hear what He says in *Bhagavad-gita*.' Gee, I'll have to think of *something*, no doubt.

(30 minutes)