

## ***Free Write Journal #79***

### **Free Writes**

#### **Valentine's Day**

Today, February 14<sup>th</sup> by the calendar, is Valentine's Day. Our Godbrother Muktavandya has been going outside on this day for 30 years, selling flowers and collecting donations for the temple. On Valentine's Day, his line of customers will go halfway around the block. (Muktavandya has recently contracted glaucoma, and when they put the needle into his eye, a side-effect of cataracts arose, and he can only see out of one eye. This condition will prevail for four weeks and then both eyes will be restored in sight.) The winter weather presents another austerity; it is not predicted to go above 20°F (-7° C). Mukta wears a pacemaker from his two previous heart attacks, so he is happily going out risking his life along with the other devotees in order to collect funds for the ISKCON temples in Boston and Gita Nagari.

In the spiritual world, Krsna and the devotees do not exchange "lover's day" gifts only once a year. Every day is Valentine's Day, as Radha and Krsna exchange artistic homemade cards, love messages, and plans for secret trysts and rendezvous. They exchange transcendental *prasadam* with unprecedented tastes, and They engage in amorous pastimes. There is no impediment to expressions of undying eternal love for each other.

What’s missing in the world of material lover and beloved is that their love is never permanent or increasing. Even if a couple stays together it becomes dry, most often their “undying passion” wears out, and a celebrated lover becomes tired of his or her partner and seeks a new one. The onlookers of these material love affairs grow tired and disgusted with following the exploits of their heroes and heroines. But Krsna and His paramour never disappoint. When, forced by Providence, They are temporarily drawn apart, this brings about love in separation (*vipralambha*), which is a higher emotion even than *sambhoga-lila*, or the ecstasy of being together with one’s beloved.

### **Reading Report**

We did a lot of out-loud reading from *Caitanya-bhagavata* while I was ill. Visvambhara makes His decision to take *sannyasa*. He was loudly chanting the name “*Gopi! Gopi!*” and some arrogant students criticized Him and told Him to chant the name “Krsna.” The students didn’t know that Visvambhara is half Krsna in separation from Radharani and half Radharani in separation from Krsna. Visvambhara felt very sorry that the students didn’t respect Him. He thought that if He took *sannyasa* they would be obliged to respect Him and thus accept Krsna consciousness.

But when Visvambhara’s associates heard the news of His accepting *sannyasa*, they became most unhappy—this meant that He would travel away from them, and that He would cut off His beautiful long hair.

Visvambhara accepted Kesava Bharati as His *sannyasa* guru. He previously accepted Isvara Puri as His initiating spiritual master. A *brahmana* came to Advaita Acarya's house and asked, "What is the relationship between Isvara Puri and Visvambhara"? Advaita replied, "Isvara Puri is the spiritual master of Visvambhara."

At this moment, Acyutananda (Advaita Acarya's five-year-old son) runs into the room naked and covered with dust from play. He looks as beautiful as Kartikeya. Acyutananda speaks up to his father: "What did You say! Visvambhara is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and You say that He is Isvara Puri's disciple? This is absurd." When He hears the words from His five-year-old son, Advaita Acarya becomes greatly happy, picks up Acyutananda in His arms, and they dance together ecstatically for a long time. These are some of the many pastimes we've been fortunate to hear as Lord Caitanya reveals Himself and then disguises Himself in the company of His devotees.

### **On Morning Rising**

The alarm clock goes off at 2:00 A.M. Baladeva sets up my back supports so I can sit up in bed. I take up my bead bag and began *japa*. The spotlights are turned on brightly upon Radha-Kalachandji. We play "Olympics," tossing the washcloths against the metal rail on the door. Then I take medicine. I enter pristine time with the *japa*, while taking *darsana* of the Deities. I look first at Radharani's palm of benediction, then focus myself at Kalachandji's solid feet adorned with sandalwood paste. I finish four rounds and go on to the second set (rounds 5-8). By this time I

allow myself to look at Radharani’s charming face, and I also look upon Kalachandji’s upper portion—His arms, chest, graceful hands holding the flute, and His face (mild smile and lotus eyes, known as the “smiling face of the Tenth Canto.”) I don’t spend so much time on the upper portion but return to my humble position at the lotus feet. Baladeva just finishes massaging my feet when I complete my sixteen rounds. I then go into the other room and behold the thrill of the removal of Prabhupada’s nighttime *chadar*. I then look upon my *ishta-devas*, Radha-Govinda, in Their newly changed red-and-orange dress. Next I turn to writing my free writes in the *Journal*.

## **Health Report**

Just after Baladeva took off his face mask after a weeklong cold, I developed a bad sore throat. I took Vitamin C and Echinacea, gargled with Listerine and chewed ginger patties. After two or three days, the symptoms of sore throat went away but were immediately replaced with a bad, sharp, crackling chest cough. For this I took cough syrup, antibiotics and Prednisone. We had a five day dosage of these medicines. As side-effects I had diarrhea and mental disorientation. I was not able to do my crucial service of dictating the *Free Write Journal*. By the end of the week my symptoms had diminished, and I cut down on my intake of medicines. I rested extra during this time and listened to Srila Prabhupada’s lectures in recordings. My medical doctor diagnosed me as having a viral cold.

It was disturbing not to be able to perform my regular devotional service. But

then I thought of devotees and people all over the world who are suffering worse illnesses and have to deal with being sidelined every day. We have to develop tolerance in such situations. In *Bhagavad-gita* Krsna says we should accept such climactic changes of winter and summer and learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.

I had to tolerate chronic migraine headaches for twenty years, so this weeklong bout was a “piece of cake.”

### **My Personal Reading Program**

On my Kindle device I have finished the First Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. It is filled with the narratives of different persons, their activities, prayers, talks, etc. This is my favorite kind of reading.

Maharaja Pariksit threatened to kill Kali when he saw him beating the legs of a bull (the representative of religion) and a cow (the earth personified). Kali surrendered and Pariksit spared his life, but he was told he had to leave the kingdom. Kali pleaded that there was nowhere in the world where he could carry out his nefarious activities. The king then allowed Kali to reside where gold was kept because there all the other sins are present—illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling. Kali felt he was cheated because his activities would be so restricted while Maharaja Pariksit ruled the kingdom. That was five thousand years ago, and now Kali’s influence is so rampant that the pious, sane section of society are harassed and unprotected. The leaders of the citizens are themselves Kali’s agents, and they

heavily tax the people and don't prohibit sinful activities. Yet five hundred years ago, Lord Caitanya descended with a revolutionary panacea to the effects of Kali-yuga. He introduced the *sankirtana* movement, which is predicted in the scriptures to be the only religious sacrifice possible in the age of Kali. *Sankirtana* means the congregational chanting of the holy names of Krsna. It purifies the heart and brings transcendental bliss. *Sankirtana* is popular now, and thousands and millions of people are chanting. If the souls suffering from Kali's iron grip were to take to *sankirtana* en masse, it would change the world from chaotic disruption to peace and prosperity. Such is the power of God's holy name.

Now I am beginning the Second Canto. It begins with the invocation *om namo bhagavate vasudevaya*. In the first verse, Sukadeva Gosvami says to Maharaja Pariksit, "Your question is glorious." (Pariksit's question was, "What is the duty of one who is about to die?") Sukadeva says, "The answer to this question is the prime subject matter for hearing . . ." Sukadeva Gosvami then speaks of the *grhamedis* who have many subject matters for hearing. They do not inquire into the problems of life. They are attached to the "fallible soldiers" (like the body, children and wife), although they are sufficiently experienced that the soldiers cannot save them from inevitable death. Sukadeva says one who is desirous to be free of all miseries must talk about, glorify and also remember the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In answer to the King's inquiry, Sukadeva says, "The highest perfection of human life is to remember the Personality of Godhead at the end of life." Thus again we have a

dialogue between two topmost transcendentalists about the ultimate subject of life.

## **Newsmagazines**

Lord Caitanya taught Raghunatha dasa Goswami not to hear *gramya-katha* (worldly village news) and not to repeat it to others. Is my reading of *The Week* magazine *prajalpa*? How do I justify it, as Rupa Gosvami says, using material things in the service of Krsna? TKG used to urge the devotees to be aware of current events in order to be relevant in preaching. In the hospital, they asked me, “Who is the president?” “What is the date?” and “What hospital are you in?” You had to be in contact to prove that you were sane. But you should keep the world tidings at a distance and be detached. Be always absorbed in chanting Hare Krsna and hearing *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which descends from the spiritual world and purifies one in material consciousness.

## ***The Radha-Krsna Deity Worship Book***

“*Puja* is offering incense but  
 you need to offer your whole self  
 just as you are  
 and hope that Krsna will  
 not reject you.

“*Puja* is sweet in any season  
 unusual, calm, divine, the Lord  
 just stands and Radha  
 always at His side.  
 I really want to be part of it  
 in case you wondered.”

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“The golden forms are still impressed in my vision. Srila  
 Prabhupada suggested a simple meditation like that: see Radha-Krsna in  
 the morning and then throughout the day. When you close your eyes,  
 you’ll see Them—it’s just a phenomenon that will work on *anything* you  
 see, so why not do it with Govinda? In that dark-fuzz-edged chamber in  
 your head, you see Their outline, and your mind contains gold.”

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“The Deity is impressed in our vision (gold and pink and peach  
 patterns) and we hope it will enter affection, for Radha and Krsna are  
 only known to Their pure devotees. Everyone else misses the boat. Srila  
 Prabhupada, save us!”

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“Very beautiful, white with golden trim—my Radha and Govinda. Compact mercy and sweetness of male and female, worshipable Personality of Godhead and His *hladini-sakti*. And Srila Prabhupada.”

### ***ISKCON in the 1970s: Diaries***

*This book was compiled from many small notebook-diaries that I kept over the decade. A sannyasi Godbrother said the title of the book was not appropriate. I guess he meant it should have been more comprehensive of all the happenings in ISKCON over ten years. But my subtitle “Diaries” sets the tone. It is my experience of ISKCON in the 1970s, my diaries of observation, note-taking and glimpses of Prabhupada.*

“I'm not one of those very intimately involved and relating to him in his last days. Of course, this causes me some pain because I want to love Srila Prabhupada and receive his blessings. Others are taking care of him, giving him medicine, helping him relieve his body, consoling him. Certainly they are receiving special blessings for doing so. There is the case of Isvara Puri, who cared for his spiritual master even in the sickness of old age, and who cleaned his stool. I'm not one of his bodily or personal servants, and the tendency is to be envious of them. I am feeling more confident when I think of the lifetime of service I can give to Srila Prabhupada. I want to carry on his *BTG* magazine, and when the

going gets rough after his departure, I want to maintain the strict *parampara* and prove myself a real helper in his movement of pure devotional service.

“Now I have to be patient, subdued, and try not to commit offense even mentally to those who are so dedicatedly serving him in his last days. I have to admit their intimacy is spiritual and pleasing to Krsna, and surely they will get special benediction. As Srila Prabhupada still has a will to live and even recover and go on, so I have to pray to Krsna to please cure Srila Prabhupada. Krsna is the Supreme Lord. Therefore, we pray, ‘If You desire’—because He may desire to take Srila Prabhupada back soon. But we pray that He please let him stay, please cure him, because in this condition it is too painful, he cannot work or preach.

“Please let him again have strength in his body and translate and preach for twenty more years. For myself, I do not belong, I think, in too much intimate friendship to him in his physical presence. Let me behave without offense or envy of his servants or his will to live. Let me nurture and prepare to carry out his will, expanding my own service and becoming exemplary.

“I am looking forward to the arrival of all our GBC; most are just devotees like me.”

*“On the Plane Back from India*

“Just last evening, driving in a rickshaw to Mathura station, trees full of hundreds of parrots chirping noisily, sky going black, anxiously trying to arrive on time for the Taj Express, a black locomotive-pulled train to New Delhi.

“I am going back to preach. *Sannyasa* is not for bodily comfort. In the U.S.A. we have so much material paraphernalia, so we have to use it for Krsna's service. The materialistic ‘culture’ (what culture?) is of no value. It is all a cheating process.

“I am a dull devotee and inexpert in most affairs, but I want to help the temple presidents so that they can be enthusiastic to run the centers as preaching places. Men must go out and preach, distribute books, and lecture at colleges. In the temple, the Deity worship has to be gorgeous and *prasadam* nice, and classes going on for the purification of the devotees. Finances have to be kept in order to insure stability of the projects. Let me first sit down in Dallas and help them with these things. They have to get people to come there on Sundays, make devotees of regular guests.

“I have to speak not false show, but real enthusiasm for this movement.”

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“Another time, a professor who was listening to me addressing his colleague about how the *Gita* could definitely be known, interrupted to say,

‘*Gita* can be understood in different ways. On the one hand, you have Krsna saying to Arjuna, who did not want to fight, that the soul is immortal, and therefore you can’t kill anyway. Then on the other hand, He is telling Arjuna that as a warrior he must fight because it is his duty. The *Gita* teaches that one's duty is the highest truth.’

“That is also a typical professorial gem. While it is true that Krsna told Arjuna to fight, as it was his *ksatriya* duty, the real sense of the duty is that it is his obedience to God. ‘Do it for Me,’ says Krsna, ‘and there will be no bad reaction.’ They often put the highest meaning of *Gita* as this ‘duty,’ or they speak abstractly of ‘devotion to the God’ a million miles away from themselves—‘for objectivity's sake.’ No, Krsna doesn't teach abstract duty for its own sake as the highest principle, or a wishy-washy indication of ‘devotion to God’ (whatever God may be), but, ‘Surrender to Me. I am the Supreme Personality of Godhead standing before you.’ This message is for all humanity. That is the real meaning of *Bhagavad-gita*. Just see how they twist it and screw out mistaken

meanings to suit their own likings. If they did not do that, they would have to consider themselves in the bright light of self-realization and would have to give up sense gratification, the sense of being the lord, and their insatiable lust for mental speculation.”

### ***Prabhupada Nectar***

Prabhupada Nectar *was published after Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta. It first came out as a series of five miniature red books and was later compiled into one volume. It consists mostly of interviews with devotees.*

### **“Personal Glimpses**

#### “PRABHUPADA AND HIS PHOTO

“He liked the photo of himself on the back of the first Hare Krsna ‘Happening’ album. In that photo his hair seems to be standing on end, and his visage is grave, penetrating, mystical. He said of that photo, ‘A swami should look philosophical.’

“A disciple named Dinesa told Prabhupada that he wanted a picture of him with his *mrdanga* for a second record album, ‘*Vande ham.*’ Prabhupada said, ‘I am not a professional musician that I should pose with a *mrdanga.*’ He suggested instead more formal pictures, like those of his own Guru Maharaja.

“The guru is in his picture. ‘There is no difference between me and my picture,’ he wrote in a letter.

‘Therefore we should honor and keep pictures in that spirit. If we throw pictures this way and that way, that is an offense. The name and the picture are as good as the person in the spiritual world. In the material world, either picture or person, everything is illusion.’”

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“During a winter visit to Japan, Prabhupada stayed in a cottage where the walls were made of paper. The landlord supplied a kerosene heater, but it only warmed a small area. Prabhupada wrapped himself in his gray wool *chadar* and went on translating the *Bhagavatam* through the cold early-morning hours, but he remarked that it was very uncomfortable. When devotees went to the landlord and asked for a second heater, the landlord's wife objected. The landlord finally found a spare second heater, but the kerosene fumes made the room too stuffy. In addition, the house was filled with a bad odor. In that neighbourhood there was an open sewage system: a truck was supposed to come by with a vacuum cleaner and suck out the contents of the stool pits, but the truck hadn't been there in over a week. In anxiety that their spiritual master was suffering much inconvenience, the devotees went to the

landlord and pleaded with him to do something about the stench. The man was humble and accommodating, and he respected Prabhupada as a spiritual leader. He agreed to clean out the pits himself, using hand buckets. But the landlord's wife again objected that her husband should make such an extraordinarily humiliating effort to accommodate Srila Prabhupada. The man did it anyway, and the bad odor disappeared.

“On Prabhupada's last evening in the paper cottage, he gave a public lecture. The house had one floor plus a stage-like mezzanine. The speaker's dais was set on this stage, along with a microphone. The little dwelling was filled with guests, and Srila Prabhupada led *kirtana* and then began lecturing in English, which at least some of his audience could understand. But in the middle of his talk, the landlord's wife, a small, middle-aged Japanese lady, entered the house and began screaming in anger. A few devotees moved forward to stop her, but she evaded them. She walked up onto the stage beside Srila Prabhupada, making angry gestures and completely disrupting the meeting. Prabhupada asked a guest who she was and what was the matter with her, and he heard that the lady was the landlady and that she was angry that Prabhupada made her husband clean out the stool pits. When he understood, Prabhupada broke into a grin. He leaned forward and spoke into the microphone, as if making an announcement. ‘Japanese landlady,’ he said, and the audience and devotees relaxed and laughed.

It was as if, by two words, Prabhupada had made a philosophical statement, explaining the universal phenomenon of landlords and how they had to be tolerated. After a pause, Prabhupada continued his lecture, and the landlady, who had become disarmed by Prabhupada's smiling words, went down the stairs and left the cottage.”

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“One time while traveling on a train in India, Prabhupada asked for *samosas*, and the devotees purchased a bagful. Then one of the women began arranging to offer the food as *prasadam* for Prabhupada and the devotees. In the presence of Prabhupada, she stood up and began to make a place for an offering. She put down a cloth and placed Krsna's picture there, got a plate, and proceeded to prepare an offering. Prabhupada was watching, but before she had placed the plate down on the improvised altar he stopped her.

“‘This is not the way to offer,’ he said, ‘in front of all these people.’

“Prabhupada quoted a Sanskrit verse, beginning *dravya-mulena sudhyati*: when a thing is purchased, even if its source is not pure, it can be offered to Krsna. He also stated that sometimes in awkward circumstances a devotee may have to offer food to Krsna mentally, as long as it is not forbidden food.

“One time in Tehran, Iran, Prabhupada showed a similar flexibility

to time and place. Prabhupada's secretary had noticed that the devotees were keeping frozen vegetables in the freezer. The secretary told the devotees that they should immediately throw them all out. He said that it was offensive to the guru to offer him vegetables that were not fresh and that they did not understand Prabhupada's instructions.

“You don't know how angry he would get,’ said the secretary, ‘if he saw those frozen vegetables. And you are even feeding them to him!’

“Nandarani, who was living in Tehran with her husband, Dayananda, became distressed since she was using the frozen vegetables in her cooking for guests in their preaching dinners three nights a week. She went to Prabhupada to ask what to do. By this time Prabhupada had already been informed by his secretary about the frozen vegetables.

“Why are you using frozen vegetables?’ he asked.

“Because we have dinner parties,’ she replied. ‘We have to feed them something. These dinner parties are our only preaching here. If we can't feed them *prasadam*, then practically we are finished.’

“That's all right,’ said Srila Prabhupada. “You cannot get other vegetables?’

“No, Srila Prabhupada, nothing is available here. Maybe we can feed them some potatoes.’

“That's all right,’ Prabhupada said. ‘Use frozen vegetables. It is part of our *sankirtana*.’”

**Note by SDG:** *This reminds me that when Prabhupada was staying with the Agarwals in Butler, Pennsylvania in 1965, they took him shopping at the supermarket. He was curious and fascinated by the frozen vegetables. He thought it was nice that in America you can get vegetables in this way, all ready to cook.*

## **WRITING SESSIONS**

*Below is one free write excerpt from my book Radio Shows, Volume 2, and a continuation of free writes from the Geaglum Free Write Diary, composed at Manu's house in Geaglum, North Ireland, in June and September 1996.*

### **From Radio Shows, Volume 2**

“I want to talk some more about this concept of being alone and speaking your heart to God. I have spoken in the past about the flute player in the pit and also about Jean Shepherd's radio show and the aloneness and intimacy he was able to capture with his audience. The flute player is put into a pit to play his flute with no audience other than God. There's just no one else listening, no one at all. Therefore, he has no hope of acclaim or even criticism from his peers. All his hopes have to be pinned on God's willingness to listen and receive his expression. God is his audience and by acknowledging that, God becomes real to him. If he starts out with doubts either about God's existence or God's willingness

to hear him, then there is no hope at all. His success is not his best musical expression but his development of unwavering faith. In the story—as Charles Simic told it, which he said was also told by Jean Shepherd—an anthropologist recorded one of these dying flute players alone in the pit, so we could hear that final cry of faith.

“In contrast, Shep himself used to speak his radio shows in a fully equipped New York studio, WOR in those days. I used to listen in the late 1950s, along with a potential audience of millions of others. The shows weren't played alone in a pit but knowingly broadcast all over New York City. That is quite a different experience than the flute player's experience. What Shepherd was able to achieve, however, was the ability to speak intimately and personally, as if just to one old friend, as if he were sharing his deepest secrets to that huge audience.

“Both images were on my mind when I began doing radio shows last year. I even thought it would be good to listen to some of those old radio shows so that I could capture their magic. I'm sure I missed a lot when I heard them as a teenager—seventeen, just out of high school. Shepherd was my first real introduction to the intellectual life and the life of art and rebellion and sensitive thought and of not going along with the crowd. Anyway, I didn't hear them again because they had disappeared without a trace.

“What I found out, though, was what had become of Shepherd. He has written some books which he refers to as Americana and which detail, with humor, the American scene of the 1950s—dating, a boy receiving an air rifle for Christmas, stuff like that. I also heard that he had been doing stand-up performances in various places. I heard he did one at Princeton University where he shouted out to a large audience, pretending to be a big-time comedian. Each of his lines was followed by hundreds of people guffawing in the audience, and then he would reach for another guffaw. Vulgar. Furthermore, they spiced his performance with rock ’n’ roll to give it a more 1950s feel. Just hearing about it was a turn-off. To think of Shepherd, that man who was able to speak intimately to me in my attic room during my teenage years, blaring rock ’n’ roll and making wise-cracks—well, it just doesn't sound like the same person.

“In any case, I hold onto these two images and sometimes try for the mood of the flute player in the pit and sometimes for the more traditional radio raconteur of the 1950s speaking alone to his audience, imagining them into existence as he speaks from his soundproof room with an engineer seen through the window, giving him a thumbs-up sign to indicate when to start.”

**June 9, 1996**

“I am leery I may develop an eye twinge. Writing here anyway.

“The birds have begun. The fire is hissing in the wood stove. The light of blue has already begun. I will be out walking my laps soon. I thought, ‘Maybe I won’t do it after all.’ Thought that for only a moment, then rejected it. Everyone dies. Therese of Lisieux died very young, only 24, but she is no exception. You may live a little longer, who knows, to 70 or 80. It is your own death. Try not to be so completely self-absorbed, as if the world ends when you die. It is not the most important event. Most important is the general invitation, and specific too, by Krsna to every living being to come back to Him.

“He is Adhoksaja. He can’t be known by direct sense perception. There is no need to research for Him, however. He is declaring Himself directly in *Bhagavad-gita*, and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* declares about Krsna. What can you add to this by your puny research? He is known by Vrajavasis as the lifter of Govardhana Hill because He did that to protect them when they had incurred Indra’s wrath by obeying Krsna’s instructions to stop the Indra *yajna*.

“‘Oh, but God is expressed in so many different world cultures.’ That’s true, but it all comes from the Vedic. The ISKCON scholars may help to prove that. But even if all the pieces cannot be put together, we can examine it in an impartial way as to which world culture tells us the

best of our God. What is the conception that I will follow? It is the conception of *krsnas tu bhagavan svayam*. This has been imparted to me by Srila Prabhupada. It is very important to stay faithful to guru because he is the one who imparts Krsna's mercy to you.

“Reading Bhaktivinoda Thakura on *Upadesamrta*. He says *utsaha* is a very important factor—you can't have faith without it. You won't be able to practice devotional service without *utsaha*. It's a great thing. You have to work on your inattentive chanting, which is due to apathy and distraction. Distraction I know very well. I pray that by enthusiasm (which is also like determination) to never give up. *Bhakti* will triumph over inattentive chanting.

“Yes, Bhaktivinoda Thakura has given us nice teachings, and our spiritual master has taken from them. He sings the songs of Narottama and explains them, our spiritual master. And he orders us to go out and preach Krsna consciousness in one way or another. Make propaganda. Tell these fools they are wasting their time in sense gratification and speculation. Take up this charge given by Srila Prabhupada in one way or another. This quiet old boy writes as the first light comes, not wasting a moment, providing the fuel for more, for more, for more.

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“Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna. Go on chanting and never stop. The writing is like constant chanting. It is even better for me because I have

some taste when I go in for it. But I cannot claim Krsna appears in this writing: “Dear Lord, Your writer, son of Prabhupada, writes more today. Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna. He wants to serve You by this spontaneous process. If he persists in his folly, maybe You will give him mercy anyway. Any one of the nine ways will work. We have heard, and so may it happen. These are devotional writings.”

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“You don’t have to write this. It’s not a duty or punishment. But if I don’t do this, I’d have to do something else such as read Cc., which for me entails doing it with a sense of duty. Do constructive Krsna conscious work. I feel idle or wrong otherwise. Maybe in writing free writes you allow yourself that it might be ‘like’ sense grat, but you dovetail it—something you like to do. There are so many things I like to do where I even suspect deeply, ‘That’s wrong to enjoy something’ when someone’s enjoyment is the prime motivation. You sleep or relax not as enjoyment but to maintain the body. Otherwise it is tamo-guna. The modern psychologist wants to liberate us from this, but we reject his godless ‘pleasure principle.’ We are made for the Lord’s pleasure. As His pleasure increases, so does ours by intimate relation with Him as servant and master.

“It’s a rainy Sunday. All day yesterday I thought it was Sunday. I will see devotees rowing to the island in the afternoon, maybe for the

feast. It's rainy. I walked.

“Hare Krsna Hare Krsna. The ‘Therese’ film lives with us. We mention its images and phrases: ‘A woman with a broken heart makes a good Carmelite.’ All for God. Not much left over to become a writer-poet? But then John of the Cross was both.

“Vaisnava saints. Godbrothers who reside in Vrndavana.”

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“Be kind to the man in the moon. Your sister is blister-bound. Your sweater is pepper-gray with little flecks of yellow, blue and red, made in Ireland, where you are actually allowed to stay a year to write religious books. But you'll actually spend your time

sashaying around Europe,  
 German forest friend  
 teaching in clean Belgian school  
 and we hope to travel and live in  
 your Ford Econoline van.

“Well, that's all right provided you don't publish this widely and reveal plans that are better kept private. After you die it's a different thing. Protect your rights. Where is the excellent next book? Are you spending your time well?

“Yes, and to prove it, I think I'll try to stay awake now with open Cc. The sometimes tedious but jolly argument is over, where

Brahmananda Bharati (who gave up his deerskin) proclaimed Lord Caitanya as the Supreme Lord and Sarvabhauma said, ‘Yes, Brahmananda has won the argument.’ Lord Caitanya accepts that and what comes next: devotees flowing to Jagannatha Puri to be with Him.”

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### **9:30 A.M.**

“‘It is only my diary.’ I don’t have to achieve anything. Maybe some good talks ahead in the woods with a friendly Godbrother this month. What would you tell him?

“That I can write and no one cares about it, and that’s okay. But I need some sense of satisfaction and conviction I don’t always have. But I think a writer may have to work each day with some of this uncertainty, and besides, I’ve always had this, no matter what I was doing—when I worked for Swamiji as welfare worker in NYC, temple president in Boston, headmaster in Dallas, USA wandering college lecturer, GBC, BTG editor, etc. It’s my makeup.

“Yeah, well you want him to encourage you in what you are already doing?

“Maybe. Some love. Can you open up to another person that way? Face to face?

“Who was it recently that said, ‘It was nice being with you face to

face?’ I don’t remember. Someone who usually knows me only by reading my books.”

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“You will have to go alone again and twice a day for only half an hour each, you get a chance to write poem lines. This is a free write diary time. Relax and loosen. You can help others if you help yourself.

“I’m using a plastic piece on my lap and across the arms on the chair for a desk. When I look down, I can see my face reflected in this portable desk. This head will not live forever. Will you take a different body then? Maybe even a different sex—female next time—and go somewhere in a better life for spiritual advancement? Yes, that’s what the *siddhanta* teaches.

“It will be further into Kali-yuga, more degraded, but I’ll be on a better planet. Why? Why aspire for heavenly planets and to be a Vaisnava poet there?

“You don’t think you’ll go back to Godhead?

“They say you have to be directly cultivating your eternal *rasa*. But maybe not.

“I can’t talk about these things with any Prabhupada follower. Besides, I know the answers as well as they do. If they know more, it’s mostly a piece of scholarship I overlooked—some esoteric doctrine

written up by the Six Gosvamis or their followers. I already know. But in my heart, something simple doesn't occur."

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### **"5:00 P.M**

"Heaven and earth shall pass away . . . . We watched the first half of a Christian-made film of the life of Jesus called *Jesus*. I don't think I'll watch the second half. It wasn't nearly as good as the one produced by Zeffirelli, the Italian moviemaker with the all-star cast.

"It was like being in Sunday school or a high school play. Anyway...

"His preaching is strong and beautiful, but they were rattling it off. Oh, I don't feel I was in his presence but at a pageant play produced by pious followers. The extra actors and actresses were particularly amateurish. What is drama but the attempt to make you believe that things are actually happening before your eyes? Jesus saved them from one another.

"I certainly don't want to be cynical about *him*. The film had a reverse effect on me. It didn't enthuse me about him. Better not to watch it anymore, if that's how I'm feeling.

"Then I come to ask myself why I am out of normal action for a *sannyasi* and why, if I take a writing retreat, aren't I working on a more specific project—to produce a film script, or writing a propaganda essay or a research study? I am doing *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam*,

one shot a day, but I also ‘need’ this other honest, rambling reporting. It is hard to face and keep turning out.

“The trees with white blossoms and thorns are not blackthorns as Syamananda told me, but hawthorn. The reason they call hawthorns unlucky is that the odor of the hawthorn supposedly resembles the odor of the plague that was going on in England. Hawthorns—sharp thorn, pretty but fragile blossoms. Every tree has a history involved with the people and the land.

“All I know is that it was blossoming and I wanted to offer it. I want to increase my service of worship for my spiritual master. Hare Krsna. Am I to only produce a high school play about Krsna consciousness in my writing? Am I doing something that doesn’t grip people, about Krsna consciousness, in my writing? That doesn’t get to the heart of expression that occurs when what you do something like putting on a show, or it happens when you are not expert in your art. Diary, we say, is not an art. But everything is an art. Even if you see it as artless, that means without pretense. There is a quality that makes the writing compelling to read. I want that. That is what the Jesus film lacked—it wasn’t compelling. It was a routine run-through dogma, trying to create an effect, a sort of ‘canned Jesus.’

“I am afraid about a film about Krsna or Lord Caitanya that may suffer in the same way. It is hard to do. And for the writing to succeed, ought it be compelling? I try to see that I don’t have to measure up to

that because I'm just writing of the little life.

“I hit paydirt when I write how I actually feel. I have my doubts about being on a writing retreat, and I have to fight through it.”

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Our van has arrived in Liverpool. M. is on the phone with the company. He says, ‘So far, so good.’ They are supposed to get it through customs, and then tomorrow bring it by ferry to Dublin. Then next Thursday morning he will go down to Dublin to pick it up. Then he has to do paperwork there. That means I will be alone in this house for a few days, at least Thursday and Friday. Hare Krsna Hare Krsna. That means more pressure living alone, reading and writing alone.

“‘Simon, Peter, what did you read today?’ I read something about the faithless, and I read some good Cc. account of the followers of Lord Caitanya from Bengal, and how they gathered at Jagannatha Puri. Sarvabhauma explained to the king that Lord Caitanya’s followers were in a spontaneous stage of devotional service, and that’s why they didn’t observe the rituals for approaching a holy place, such as shaving heads and fasting. They went straight to Lord Caitanya’s place and took *prasadam* from His hand.

“That is the highest standard, better than fasting.

“Fasting and praying. Think about that. O hawthorn tree—think about your life, and ask Krsna and Prabhupada to tell you what to do.”

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**“6:30 P.M.**

“Hmmm. Good night.

“All the writing will get you . . . where?”

“Good night. Wind whistling. Rowboats of various hues, and from a distance—the oars go up and down. Can’t see how they pull the boat. Far away. Srila Prabhupada is nearby. Hare Krsna comes straight from Krsnaloka, but with chanting I have no connection.

“Devotee getting out of the grips of a bad dream by recalling *hari-nama* and facing down demons in bad situations. May I recall.

“*Haribol*, partner. You are my man, I wish you well.”

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“Sit by the fire, mate. Tell me how you feel. Consider your handwriting as a drawing. As the artist moves in and fills in, you may do the same. Words. Shadow of my hand. Light not so good. Orange in the wood stove. Birds calling. See out the window Lake Erne. What’s in a name? Just as in the temple on the island, so in this room Srila Prabhupada *murti* faces in, and behind him is a window. You look at him, and then you look over him out the window and see the lake, land and sky. Please be okay. God is great.

“Be here now.”

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**“September 24, 1996**

**Geaglum, North Ireland**

**Manu’s House**

“Manu has brought me the Nobel lecture delivered by Seamus Heaney in 1995. It’s called ‘Crediting Poetry.’ It will be sensitive—Manu called it ‘intense’—praising poetry for ‘truth to life, in every sense of that phrase.’ But in his works and worship in poetry lifelong, Heaney won’t give credit to Him, the Intelligence from whom comes all poetry, life and truth, the Supreme Person. No, because the Nobel poet is a modern secular man, and thus a true poet for the world.

“Fatally parochial am I  
 fatally archaic, not so bright or learned,  
 don’t want to go to school  
 or deep study for poetry or math  
 or doctor’s lessons or politics and  
 no body and mind for sports.  
 Sure, I could indulge in the pits  
 of lust and sloth and waste, but not that  
 either. I’m on the Vedic path. Hearken to  
 Krsnadasa Kaviraja saying, ‘In this age of Kali there

are no religious codes of behavior. Only Vaisnavas and Vaisnava scriptures.’ These are powerful and can save us.

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“Now the sun is out and now it hides.

“Heaney says he believes his favorite poets have taught him to believe in ‘poetry’s ability—and responsibility—to say what happens, to “pity the planet,” to be not concerned with “Poetry.” I can learn from that if I want to take poetry writing seriously, even with the Krsna conscious perspective. (And I am always in that perspective, or I’m in illusion.) We can write the lines of how we experience the struggle to practice Krsna consciousness, and that includes the struggle to live within an imperfect religious institution and the failure in our striving to experience God in our *sadhana*.

“Heaney says more than I can. He writes with oceans more discipline and skill and care for cadence, sound, meter, rhyme—and his theme of crediting poetry is a deep one that *costs*—that poetry ‘is to touch base with our sympathetic nature, while taking in, at the same time, the unsympathetic reality of the world to which that nature is constantly exposed . . . The power to persuade that vulnerable part of consciousness of its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it.’ He also says that the stability of truth occurs to a poet as a

‘stability conferred by a musically satisfying order of sounds.’ Both as a responsible human being, one who gets involved in the tragedy of violence and politics, and yet as an artist, a person like Heaney takes full responsibility. But there is no God, no soul. Modern times. Guns and politics have driven out hope in God. Religion is fanaticism and ignorance. And the so-called triumph of hard science and psychology and whatever else—Kali-yuga’s leer and Mother Kali’s punishing of those who sin.

“I am right in Krsna consciousness, but who will hear us? Srila Prabhupada asked of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, ‘Who will hear your Lord Caitanya’s teachings? We first have to become an independent nation.’ But Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was adamant—Krsna consciousness didn’t need to wait for political change. It had its own truth and course to take. His disciple Srila Prabhupada made it happen, and here we are.”