

Free Write Journal #83

Free Writes

In the Mail

One devotee wrote me from Italy. He says he is in “prison-like” self-isolation because of the virus epidemic. He works in a tourist hotel, and the business is suffering. “Lucky if I can preserve my job.” A female disciple writes me from California:

“I am curious about your thoughts regarding the state of the world, as the coronavirus has inspired widespread fear. Regardless, the outcome is seemingly grim. I am trying not to feed into the frenzy. I want to reframe what is occurring in my mind and be grounded in Krsna consciousness, but it is challenging.”

I found her attitude sane and Krsna conscious. I’ll advise her to keep up with her job and college and avoid the mass hysteria of fear. Depend on Krsna and practice your *sadhana*.

Another *mataji* wrote me she is so involved in her family drama that she is unaffected by the coronavirus.

Rama Raya sent me an “annual report” of the Yuga-dharma Ashram in NYC. They go out for six hours daily chanting the holy names and distributing books. He

sent me a quote from the *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* referring to when Prabhupada was a young boy and there was a plague in Calcutta. It did not go away until the *sadhus* formed a *sankirtana* party and chanted in the streets. Rama Raya's party has a similar vocation, to purify the atmosphere from material contamination and bring down Krsna's mercy on the fallen souls.

New York City has declared a state of emergency for coronavirus. But the reality has reached upstate and Stuyvesant Falls. Nimai Ananda wrote me that his R.N. mother-in-law says we should wash our hands frequently with soap and water when we have touched a foreign object, and we should refrain from touching our faces. The epidemic is media-driven. The latest issue of *The Week* magazine shows on the cover Uncle Sam soaping up his hands and with a thermometer dangling from his mouth. "How Bad Will the Epidemic Get?" The people are buying up food from the stores and stocking it up. The virus is a pervasive topic of conversation in the village here, even in jokes.

Jaya Govinda just sent me information for dealing with the coronavirus. It's the same basic guidance I received before, but with much more updated details. It was compiled by a researcher living in Wuhan, China: 1) Wash hands frequently and disinfect them; 2) Consume hot drinks frequently; 3) Drink a few sips of water every fifteen minutes. (The virus may be in your mouth, but by drinking liquids it will go into the belly, and the stomach gastric acid will kill all the virus.)

The heading to the information reads: "The coronavirus cannot be stopped by panic but by intelligence." Following this advice may seem like not depending on

Krsna; after all, it is a material phenomenon and we should rise above it. But the procedures and their explanations make practical sense. We will wash our hands, but we will not become caught up in “epidemic *prajalpa*.” We will chant our prescribed quota of rounds, hear the *Bhagavatam* and depend on Krsna in health or disease. We may go about our worldly duties (like the Indian *mataji* and her family moving from Jammu to New Delhi), but we should act always for Krsna’s pleasure, not for our sense gratification. We Krsna conscious persons should not become obsessed on the topic of coronavirus. Wash your hands and sip water and chant Hare Krsna.

Health Report

It has been a month since I recovered from a ten-day cough. I am slowly resuming my daily exercise regimen, but I am restricted by COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). This makes me short of breath, and I have to rest after every repetition of exercise. My life is very sedentary because I cannot walk (because of weak legs and unsuccessful surgery on my arthritic left foot). The experts say a sedentary life is unhealthy and shortens your longevity. I have no option because of my immobility, but fortunately I like to do the activities that I’m restricted to: writing, reading, hearing lectures. So I am content.

Personal Tastes

Devotees have individual preferred tastes in *prasadam*. It is not exactly sense

gratification to like certain foods and avoid others. For example, Srila Prabhupada took rice, *dal*, *subji* and a few *chapatis* or *rotis*. If a special cook occasionally offered him *samosa*, that was welcome. He did not like to be presented with an oversized silver dish containing numerous feast preparations.

He would take a couple of *sandesa* after his meal. He didn't overeat. I have a limited palate and don't eat large portions. Yesterday Uddhava prepared *kichari*, broccoli with sour cream dip and *kerela*. I ate a bowlful of *kichari* but left the rest uneaten. On other days I eat more.

In the *prasadam* prayer, one line is recited: "Now let us take this *prasadam* to our full satisfaction." In 1966, when Swami sat with the boys and honored *prasadam*, he would encourage us to "eat more, eat more." Lord Caitanya's immediate associates were not instructed to avoid *prasadam*, but Krsnadasa Kaviraja reports that they had the capacity to "eat up to the neck." Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, however, did not like his disciples to become fat.

Individual tastes are permitted, but the tongue should be controlled ("One should not eat too much or too little") by offering all one's food to Krsna and then eating His remnants.

Book Report

In our out-loud reading of *Krsna* book, we just passed through the boys' begging for food. They told Krsna and Balarama that they were very hungry, and They sent them to some *brahmanas* who were performing a sacrifice. But the

brahmanas, although expert in ritual, were nondevotees of Krsna and Balarama, and they ignored the boys. The cowherd boys reported this to Krsna, and He asked them to go back and beg from the wives of the *brahmanas*. He said they were His great devotees, and they wouldn't refuse to give. The boys went to the wives, who became ecstatic on hearing the names of Krsna and Balarama. They had not met Them, but they had heard from authorities and had fallen in love with Krsna and Balarama. The wives quickly gathered up the feast preparations intended for the *brahmanas*' sacrifice and started out to bring them to Krsna. But their husbands and brothers forbade them to go. The wives ignored their husbands' orders and ran out to the forest. They found Krsna looking beautiful and dressed in golden garments. With their eyes, the wives embraced Krsna within their hearts. Krsna graciously accepted the food, and He blessed the wives for their devotion. He then asked them to return to their homes and join with their husbands in performing the sacrifice. The wives protested. They said that they had defied their husbands, and their husbands wouldn't want to take them back. They wanted Krsna to accept them as His maidservants and let them live with Him. Krsna insisted that they should return home. He said their husbands and relatives would receive them warmly. He said intimacy was not attained by physical proximity. So the wives returned and found their husbands welcoming them, humbly praising them and bitterly regretting their refusal to grant charity to the cowherd boys on behalf of Krsna and Balarama. In a series of statements beginning with the words "To hell with—", the *brahmanas* denounced their austerities, their brahminical knowledge, their expertise in rituals—

because none of it had brought them devotional service to Krsna. Despite their repentance, when some suggested that they go and pay their respects to Krsna, they were unable to do so—because of their fear of Kamsa.

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Now we are up to Kamsa sending Akrura to Vrndavana with orders to bring Krsna and Balarama to Mathura. Kamsa has various plans to kill the boys. When the *gopis* find out why Akrura has come to Vrndavana, they become devastated. No one has told them directly of the plan or gives them words of solace. Krsna doesn't meet with them but seats Himself on Akrura's chariot. The *gopis* try to block the horses, but they fail. Krsna finally sends them a message saying that He will soon return; the *gopis* and Mother Yasoda are completely bereft.

“Krsna kills Kamsa and settles in Mathura. After a while, He sends Uddhava to visit the residents of Vrndavana. Uddhava is astounded to see their depth of love for Krsna in separation. While he is reading a message from Krsna to the *gopis*, Radharani stands apart and starts a conversation with a bumblebee. In ecstatic madness, She takes the bee to be a messenger from Krsna. (Indirectly, She is talking to Uddhava.) She criticizes the messenger-bee and says he is “an unreliable messenger from an unreliable master.” Uddhava overhears Her and is overwhelmed by Her talk, which great devotees describe as the highest stage of *maha-bhava*.”

Gaura Purnima at Viraha Bhavan

Ten adults attended our festival at Viraha Bhavan on the day of Gaura Purnima. For days before the event, Krsna dasi was absorbed in preparing large Gaura-Nitai and the other Deities on the first floor. Kalki dasi and Rukmavati from Gita-Nagari had sent many bangles and jewelry by post for big Gaura-Nitai. The items arrived just in time for Gaura Purnima. In the last minutes, Krsna dasi was threading garlands for all the *murtis*. When she was finished, she stepped back, looked at the altar and said, “It’s as good as any altar in ISKCON.”

A “songbird” devotee, Damodara Priya, attended, and with her harmonium she led *bhajan*s and Hare Krsna *kirtana* in a sweet voice.

Ravindra Svarupa gave a lecture. Using his laptop, he gave a detailed overview of all the verses of *Siksastakam*. He pointed out that Lord Caitanya emphasized *dainya*, feelings of unworthiness or grief for chanting with offenses and feeling the whole world as void in separation from Krsna. Ravindra spoke for an hour. Each verse yielded more treasures of chanting the holy names in pure devotion. He elaborated on the final verse of *Siksastakam*, which is spoken by Radharani. She says, “Krsna may treat Me in any way He likes, but He remains the Lord of my life.”

Meanwhile, Baladeva and Uddhava prepared the feast. They offered it to Their Lordships, and then we sang while *arati* was performed.

We all sat around a big table and together honored the feast. My favorite preparations were spinach with *panir*, Gauranga potatoes, *halava*, sweet rice, and a nectar drink.

Several devotees remarked that the small attendance did not create a

disadvantage. They liked the intimate atmosphere that it created. Everyone was satisfied by the observance of Gaura Purnima at Viraha Bhavan.

Update from India

Nitai has sent us details of my books and the dates which they can be shipped. There are a total of fourteen titles. Six titles can be shipped immediately, and other titles can be shipped in subsequent months. These books are all out of print for many years, and it will be wonderful to make them available again to the devotees. The books he has ready to be shipped immediately are: 1) *Vaisnava Compassion*; 2) *Vaisnava Behavior*; 3) *Reading Reform Notebook*; 4) *Japa Reform Notebook*; 5) *Japa Transformations*; 6) *Churning the Milk Ocean*.

The books that will be ready to be shipped in April are: 1) *Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name*; 2) *From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About*; 3) *Prabhupada Meditations, Volumes 1-2*; 4) *Prabhupada Meditations, Volumes 3-4*.

The books ready to ship by May 7th are: 1) *Life with the Perfect Master*; 2) *Vandanam*; 3) *Prabhupada Appreciation*; 4) *He Lives Forever*.

We have a wonderful devotee in America who has volunteered to be the donor to pay the shipping from India.

Tributes Book

I have received notice that the *Tributes* book for praising Srila Prabhupada *by his disciples*, is now open to receiving homages. This is the 11th edition of the book. It

is a wonderful publication, because unlike the official BBT Vyasa-puja book, it invites *all* of Prabhupada's disciples to submit homages, regardless of their situation.

The publishers give some guidelines. 1) The homages should be for glorifying Srila Prabhupada; 2) One should not use their homage to vent grievances; 3) Don't take stands on internal philosophical controversies. "Let the jiva fall or not fall in some other book."; 4) Don't promote institutions other than the ones Prabhupada founded or that feature other contemporary spiritual guides; 5) Don't fault-find devotees of the Lord; 6) Don't explore Srila Prabhupada's personal *rasa* with the Lord. (In a previous year's edition, a couple of articles on this subject were published. Consider that the topic has "been done." Let us move forward.); Etc., etc.

I think I can avoid these objectionable offerings. But right now I can't think of what to write. I will have to put my "thinking cap" on. I want to write from the heart. I want to praise Srila Prabhupada. For a starter, I may do some directed free writing. That is, stick to writing about Srila Prabhupada, but just "keep the hand moving, don't think," just write down whatever comes to your mind. I hope that by starting with this method I will come to some coherent, sincere, loving thoughts of Srila Prabhupada.

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I wrote and sent in my Vyasa-puja homage to Srila Prabhupada to both the *Tributes* book and the BBT book. The deadline for submissions is April 15, but the editors say it's better they receive them early and not in a last-minute panic.

It is nice to write homages to Prabhupada. It forces us to think why we appreciate him and glorify him in our own voices. It's a treat to read all the homages in a book. I'm always impressed with how the devotees write something better than me. It inspires me in my devotion to Prabhupada.

Jagattarini Mataji

Before she went to India, Jagattarini lived at Gita-Nagari with her husband Bhurijana and their young daughter. I also resided at Gita-Nagari then. I worshiped small Jagannatha Deities, and Jagattarini made many outfits for Them. Once she asked me if Jagannatha worship was in our line. I told her that Lord Caitanya worshiped Jagannatha at Jagannatha Puri. You could say the Deities were His *ishta-devata*. He would view Them in *darsana* while standing by the Garuda *stambha*. Every year He would follow Them in procession at Ratha-yatra with ecstatic *kirtana* and dancing.

When Jagattarini went to reside in Vrndavana, I would see her on my yearly visits there. At one point she stayed for thirteen continual years in Vrndavana. She describes what a shock it was to return to the brazen materialistic West in Australia. She said a man in Vrndavana conversed with her, observed her demeanor, and said to her, "You have no *sadhana*, you have no *bhajana*, but just by wandering around Vrndavana, you are making spiritual advancement." I think her main *bhajana* is artistic: making miniature dioramas of Krsna's and Lord Caitanya's pastimes. She has a trailer filled with them in Perth, Australia, and presents it as an art gallery.

In the last decade she has been one of the three speakers in the six-day retreats held at Govardhana Hill. Her subject is the special nature of the *dhama*. She mentions different levels of entering the *dhama*. One level is the cultural—this is the easiest and most accessible to enter. Put your brain or mind—or all your senses—in a very attentive mode. Observe the ladies and men, the animals, the *sadhus*, the trees, the birds, etc. This is the best way to retain impressions for when you have to leave the *dhama*. There are deeper levels to realize the *dhama*, but this is the only one I can remember.

The other speakers on the Govardhana Retreat may present more *sastra pramana* and more vigorous rhetoric, but I like Jagattarini Mataji's talks the best.

Under Dark Stars: A Novel

This book is a kind of free write. Some devotees have found it difficult to read. I think if I pick some excerpts they can stand on their own and will be interesting.

“Chapter Seven

“I’m sorry to tell you this, but your overall grades do not qualify you to enter Brooklyn College. I regret to say that once having signed a military entry form, there is no way out. You were sane when you did it, of adult age (17), and you can’t claim, ‘My father forced me.’

“Woke up suddenly on Harvard Square seven years later with a

new identity, a mold broken: ‘I’m distributing magazines as a Hare Krsna devotee.’

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“ . . . Penelope got married and buried in the same church in Eltingville within a few years. I was a several-years-younger teenager than she. She was Episcopalian and a close friend of Madeline, my sister. All this was mostly over our heads. How could a woman, with a husband who had a quick tendency to grow a beard . . . How could a woman with a sweet, flirtatious, vivacious smile marry a man and then die because of cancer, or something? Could it be explained by our God? Over my head I heard the lovely organ, twice within two or three years, once for the marriage, once for the funeral. It was a footnote to my life because I had other things to do, and it was a mystery. When did Penny die? What can you say? She was the nicest person anyone ever met. Then you go home awkward. I never even thought about it deeply. Did your sister feel it deeply? Who feels for whom? The quick, moving mysteries of God. The pastor is hard-put to make some sense out of it.”

Soul Eyes

“I Heard a Guarantee”

“I hear a rhapsody
I hear a guarantee
that I will go back to Godhead.
I heard the guarantee
that because I listened to a pure devotee
I will attain Krsnaloka
and so my old age is
an impetus to going there.
Do I believe it?
Why should I doubt?

“Because I am so fallen,
such a neophyte.
I think the guarantee
means you hear and
you transform yourself,
you work hard at your
sadhana because of
once hearing from a pure devotee.

“The guarantee is not for
laggards and miscreants.

It's for one who becomes a pure devotee.

“The guarantee is for me,
it's for you. It's for those who have
causeless devotional service
toward the Lord.

I want the guarantee,
I want to turn in the ticket and be admitted.

“But it cannot take place
unless my heart
is burning with desire
to serve the lotus
feet of the Divine Couple.

“Oh, give me the guarantee!
If You want to, I will
take whatever
You give. I'll have to be
satisfied with
whatever You give me.

“Please give me
a happy grateful heart
to accept whatever You
give and to work
for You in whatever capacity I have,
to preach Your message.
Give me a tongue to
chant Your holy names
and I will give You my
guarantee to try my best
to give You loving service.
All my day, all my
remaining months in
this life and the future and all
the future . . . whatever it is.

“I guarantee . . . I hereby
pledge and accept
the guarantee that
comes upon
my death, to live with
it in blissful surrender.”

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“Radha with the Laughing Eyes”

“Radha with the laughing eyes,
to Krsna She’s always a surprise.
She enchants Him in every way
that He doesn’t know what to say.

“She’s His enchantress, though
He rules Her heart:
They are never apart.
Radha with the laughing eyes
is more than Krsna can surmise.

“She stuns Him with Her glances,
but He keeps on taking chances
to keep Her conquered by His love.

“Radha with the laughing eyes
is Krsna’s favorite *gopi*,
and She’s His only Queen.

Not even in a dream
 will He forsake Her.
 Krsna with the loving glance
 enchants Radha, and She's
 conquered, but always
 ready for another ruse."

Dear Sky: Letters from a Sannyasi

April 7th

Marche, Italy

"Dear dawn-chirping birds,

"My boots are making so much noise on the gravel road that I can hardly hear you singing. Now I've stopped to listen. There are so many of you little fellows out there in the gray dawn that I can't tell one from the other. Please excuse me for not knowing your names or being able to distinguish your songs. I just want to say in this letter that life on earth is made pleasant by the songs of birds. And birds come from Krsna. We hear the birds in Vmdavana, and even in the cities. They start to sing just near the end of our most intense, early morning *bhajana*.

“Of course, I can't talk poetically about bird song without eventually thinking how birds are spirit souls locked in little feathery bodies (which isn't so nice for them). The birds are also preying upon other creatures and eating them. But still, we cannot deny that the singing of birds enhances our humanness. It places us deep within our humble earthiness. Your songs bring us back to our childhoods. We remember all kinds of times, some of them hard times, when we were up in the morning and you were singing in the background.

“You have hard times too, especially in winter when food is not so available. But you're always so faithful and dutiful and, at least to us, you sound joyful early in the morning.

“I hope I don't ever get so old or self-absorbed that I stop noticing the spring and the birds' songs. I want to always be grateful that Krsna is giving me another springtime on this earth. I think of it not in terms of mortal longevity, which is a vain pursuit, but in terms of my limited devotional service in this lifetime. I want to keep performing small acts of devotional service. I want to preach for another springtime, another summer. We belong to the earth, at least while we're here, and then we go away. It's Krsna's place and His trademark is the singing of the birds.

“Our appreciation of your music is part of our longing for the spiritual world. There will be birds there too. Early in the morning it's the birds' singing, impelled by Vrnda-devi, that wakes Radha and Krsna.

Will the day come when I will be able to hear the birds like that, as warnings to Radha and Krsna to wake up and go home? Will I ever have my own services to do as a servant of Their servants?

“Let me share these thoughts with you, morning singers, here in Italy. In your ever-fresh quality and your undaunted courage, you are like gurus to me. I can take instruction and example even from your life of small consciousness. Hail to you, blithe spirits. Birds you never were.”

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April 6th

Mahavakya Dasa's House

Marche, Italy

“Dear yellow flowers,

“I'm picking you from the bush. You're easy to rip off because your stems are so soft. Now the big question is, why am I killing you? I'm not even sure that I am killing you, since after all, I'm only picking you off at the stems and the bush is still growing.

“It's difficult to figure out about spirit souls. If you pick an apple, you're not killing the apple because the spirit soul is in the tree itself; the apple is a by-product. But even if you consider a flower on a bush as an entity, then I'm sacrificing these flowers to the pictures on my altar. I

want to glorify Krsna. But that makes me doubtful too. Am I actually offering the flowers, or am I just trying to create a nice atmosphere in my room for my own benefit? Are the pictures themselves to cheer me up and help me to be what I consider Krsna conscious?

“These doubts make me unsure enough to stop picking flowers. Okay, I've got enough. Let's not pick so many. We pick flowers and put them in a glass of water, and after a few days, they die. I reason that if I didn't pick these particular flowers, they would die anyway. But still, we should be careful not to plunder our environment unnecessarily.

“Dear yellow flowers, I'll try to find out your Italian name (and maybe your English name) so I can address this letter properly. What I wanted to say is, you are very pretty and you probably have some cousins who participate in Radha-Krsna's Vrndavana pastimes.

“Do you know that in Vrndavana, Vrnda-devi decorates the forest for Krsna's pastimes? Her work very much depends on flowers. In Vrndavana, there are flower garlands, flower earrings, flower crowns, even beds made of flowers. So you're a very important part of *krsna-lila*. There the spirit souls don't die; they're eternal. Exactly how it all works I don't know. But in this world, the *acaryas* have encouraged us to pick flowers and use them in Krsna's service. Therefore in all the temples in India, the Deities are offered many flower garlands. Flowers are also picked and sewn into garlands for saintly persons.

“Everything has to be done thoughtfully. If you pick flowers, you can say they're for Krsna, but you have to actually offer them, and without unnecessarily devastating a whole bush or wasting any or making the offering improper somehow.”

Srila Prabhupada Samadhi Diary

October 1, Samadhi Mandir

10 A. M.

“Madhu says he also has a practice when we go to the Samadhi Mandir and Srila Prabhupada's rooms: he prays to Srila Prabhupada while chanting extra rounds. This made me think, ‘Am I praying in writing?’ Yes, for better or worse.

“I start with description: it's hot, workers are hammering, the Mandir is empty except for a few *japa* chanters. The blessed Hare Krsna mantra was given to us by Srila Prabhupada. He instructed us to chant incessantly.

“A Catholic priest once told a story that when he was a child, there was a man who stopped into the church every day, even if only for a few minutes. He entered the church and said, ‘Hello, God, it's me, Billy.’ When the man was dying, God came to him and said, ‘Hello, Billy, it's Me, God.’ The priest was encouraging us to go to church and pray; don't

forget God or the house of God. The Samadhi Mandir is Prabhupada's 'church.' Hello, Srila Prabhupada, it's me, Satsvarupa.”

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Prabhupada's Room

10:30 A.M.

“Prabhupada, when I came into your room just now, several ISKCON *matajis* were talking animatedly in the center of your room. I think they were planning arrangements for your service here, but they kindly exited so that I could be alone. It's a fact it would have been entirely distracting if I tried to sit in a corner while they talked in the middle of the room.

“The letter on Prabhupada's desk is to Makhanlal, 1971. Srila Prabhupada wrote that he would not attend the San Francisco Ratha-yatra that year. He went there for three years in a row, but, ‘This time I have been very fervently requested to attend the London Ratha-yatra, where they are expecting fifty-thousand ... So it is not possible to attend both festivals.’ He said he would visit San Francisco when he went to America. ‘So you should go on with the festival more enthusiastically, even in my absence.’ Srila Prabhupada wrote this from Bombay, on his way to Moscow and then Paris.

“Our spiritual master flying all over the world, writing us letters and giving us the hope of seeing him again. He also gave us encouragement and expected us to be answerable. There was no question of other gurus in those days. Our simple desire was to put on a festival or distribute his books or to preach somewhere, and to be accountable. He captured us, whether he was mellow and soft with us or acted like a military general.

“You wear a garland of all roses and another of orange marigolds. Your desk lamp is on. Nothing is known to us of the future, and we know very little of the present. We are still stumbling out of the past. Impurities lurk in our hearts. I repeat this theme to remind myself of what I have to do to become more fit to serve you.

“Srila Prabhupada, here comes one of your *brahmacari* followers. He is carrying a quilted saffron book bag. He prostrates himself before you, then leaves the room. Devotees notice me, an old-timer. Let *me* notice me that way. Wake up, Satsvarupa, and live up to your heritage. Be humble, but exult in inner pride and satisfaction that Srila Prabhupada blessed you—not *only* you, but you too. Now *do* something with the blessing.”

WRITING SESSIONS

“Geaglum Free Write Diary

“Manu’s House, North Ireland

“June 19, 1996 (continued)

“Birds calling. It’s cool out there. Today I am scheduled to have a meeting with disciples. What to say to them? I thought of starting out thanking them for supporting me to take this writing retreat in their midst. Say how I am a writer, that’s my service, and it takes concentration. Devotees usually don’t understand since most service is done conjointly, but this service has to be done somewhat apart, although it is meant as a contribution to the whole. But I don’t like to live apart from a devotee community. I have done it in Wicklow and now for the first time here.

“Tell them, ‘You may know that to import a van from the USA in my name, I had to establish residency in Ireland.’ We explained to the Department of Justice that I am staying here to write religious books. Manu was the one to sign for it. He said, ‘Yes, we invited him to come for this purpose.’ Once we did that my imagination began to work on it and think, ‘Why don’t you actually do that?’ Let us see.

“Then I want to say something about them being members of the Inis Rath and Geaglum community. Say I know it is not as tight knit as

the families at Wicklow, but you are here and you have your own character and ethos (as they say). I'm not about to meddle or presume to shape it. But I do have an individual relationship with each of you and hope to encourage you in devotional service, which includes your services here for Radha-Govinda and the island of Inis Rath. Yes, that's a speech and I can ask them for questions. But I ought to go longer with the speech. Once having said that, I can't suddenly launch into describing Lord Caitanya at Ratha-yatra. How would I continue it before asking for their questions?

“Something about the guru and disciple? Yes, but I must save some of that for the upcoming Belgium meetings. I don't know, I don't know. Hare Krsna. I'll talk with M. He may have an idea for that.

“River lake rushes by. It is not Tuscarora, but what's in a name? Don't be enamored by the beauty of this world or you'll have to taste ugliness. Service to Krsna the all-attractive. See Him manifest in this world.

“I had a good time this morning (midnight to 1:45) making comments on 1.6.37, which is the freedom purport. Freedom is the pivot in *bhakti*. You may get it or not. Krishna's free, independent. I really think I can carry *S.B.* with me anywhere and even on a busy day, get time for another comment. First, I do the summary and I dictate it onto the tape. Then I look at the questions that have been submitted, notice

them and take notes on them. Then answer them straight, dictating as I would speak after a lecture. Then just sail into a direct kind of free-writing. It is a wonderful set-up and I can continue it my whole life. It's especially for when I cannot be on a full retreat. When I do get a retreat, perhaps I'll try for more marathon-like intensity of a timed book. I'm planning that for August."

"June 20, 1996

"Somersault. Winding up here in a few days. Uncertainty. Either today or tomorrow I may go to Dublin, or maybe not. At any rate, I will have to go down there on Monday. It all depends on how Madhu is able to progress with the motor bureau. I am ready to travel today if he phones us from there and says my hoary skin presence is required."

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"Goodbye, sent off Madhu at his 5 A.M. departure. He is always fixing the van. Why? So that I can write and ride. It would seem fit to write something called 'The Back of the Van' once we start living in it. I hope that will be July. I really ought to write about that. Yeah, I could, I could take off on it. Maybe we'll take a big pause in *Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam* at the end of the sixth chapter.

“I could get into something with a certain form like prose and poems strung together, the theme is: here we are in the van and we are traveling and lecturing and I am trying for honesty.

“Break bottle of champagne over the bow (not really) and off she goes, and you write your head off, seeking Krishna consciousness in the books of Srila Prabhupada and his tapes and your honesty to show to a few friends.

“I go for a man who wears an Adam hat.

“I go for a pint, Smithwick. I go for a *rasika-guru*, I go for a *rtvik* (spit) *japa*. I am not afraid of Steven “the serpent” Voigt, as long as there is an ocean between us. Oh, spare me the Aikido kiddo karate punch in the back of the neck when I wasn’t looking. Spare me the jazz sounds and the hound sounds. I will listen only to the music of the spheres and my guru’s *bhajana*. Don’t you tell me how to understand him. Okay, okay, I will listen to what you’ve got to say.

“Light, white sky now and above that dark blue stream layer of clouds. The water is dark, and I soon will be out walking...Dear Lord Krsna, please come into my view. I love to prepare the purports, but maybe I will get off on the van trip.

“Yeah, yeah, it would be nice to live in a trice. Send back notes as did the preacher of photos in the hideout. In June. I’m just fooling

around now by playing the piano my way before going out to hear the holy names seriously.

“In a couple of days, I’ll be busier, lecturing. Get prepared. I could tell them what I recently read, about how the mercy of Lord Caitanya went to King Prataparudra. You like that? Yes, of course. It comes when He sees you are kind to His devotees, the way the king was to Ramananda Raya, and when He saw the king doing menial service of Lord Jagannatha. You could pick out some section like that and read a few sentences. Oh, the Lord danced wildly at the Ratha-yatra. Talk about Him. He is the leader of the Vaisnavas. He is the Supreme Lord. Oh, after they cleaned the Gundica, that is a good one. They all had a big feast. I could talk of the Gundica once again. How to clean the heart – it is symbolic and the cleaning. He cleaned and cleaned as I want to do in my writings. These are some things I could talk about. Hare Krsna.”

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“Madhu has gone to Dublin. I’m in the house alone and I’d like to celebrate it, but I can’t settle into anything. At any moment I might get the call to get in the car and go down to Dublin. I’m hoping instead to get the call to stay here today. Still, things are too much in flux to write deeply on a project. I’m thinking of suspending *A Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam*. I’m waiting for July so that I can begin ‘In the Back of the

Van.’ Even the *Geaglum Diary* feels jittery because I know we are going to have leave here soon, although I don’t know exactly when. I suppose I should just get used to writing without knowing how long I have in one place.”

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“It’s building again, a desire to take a break from *PMRB*. Manu pointed out that two parts – *S.B.* preaching and ‘loose’ writing create a stark swing. I’m not sure now about the free-writing. Just read some *May Apples* and liked it. Perhaps I am able to do writing practice and with just a slight touch for shape and momentum, it turns into a book. Basically, however, they are writing sessions. *May Apples* is that. It’s the genuine thing.

“It does go to Krsna consciousness.

The unconscious and all that.

So ‘Back of the Van’ is good.

“*Geaglum Diary* has no direction at all. It’s just a part-time product done when not preparing *PMRB* and when not reading or worrying about when I may have to run down to Dublin.

“Take it with me.

“Want writing to be more Krsna consciousness. I thought this while reading a wonderful Cc. purport. Krsna tells the *gopis* they will see Him soon. (This is a dialogue created by Lord Caitanya in the mood of Srimati Radharani at the Ratha-yatra in Jagannatha Puri). In the purport, Srila Prabhupada quotes *premanjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena*, and speaks of seeing Krsna with devotion even when He is not physically present. The devotee is always filled with Krsna conscious thoughts, so when he leaves his body, he goes back to Godhead to join Krishna. I read that and thought, ‘What am I doing to promote that in my life and writing?’

“Eyes heavy now. I’d doze in this chair. Just when I was about to face something profound. A little at a time. I registered the desire to write something Krsna conscious.

“Thinking something profound, he almost fell asleep in the easy chair.

“*Geaglum Diary* could finish strong. I don’t have to doom it. Before you guys actually start up your life in the van. Tin box space. Don’t be attached to it.

“The lake has breezy ripples. It was nice taking a little extra time massaging Srila Prabhupada, feeling my fingers on his back, smelling the odor of his body. Srila Prabhupada writes that those who worship

the Deity gradually come to know Krsna gradually that way. It was nice when I turned him to massage his back and he sat facing the lake.

“I have devotee assistants and living with them is a nice intimacy. I express to them my desire to be Krsna conscious, yet my preference for time alone so I can write.

“I have only a small, quiet space and then I’ll have to be more attentive to the outer world.”

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“Why is it important to write? Because I am a writer. I have discovered that when I write for about fifteen minutes at 4:15 A.M., for the last few days, I was able to come to decisions about writing projects. What was it this morning? I think that’s when I decided to go ahead with “Back of the Van.” I decided that in July, I would do free-writing rather than *PMRB*. Ready to put it aside. I feel guilty when I am not doing *PMRB*, but it is all right to take a long pause again. I paused for three weeks and then I worked for about two weeks quite well, so this itself is a good rhythm. Nothing to feel guilty about. I am way ahead of the publishing of it. And the quality...It will help to see *Volume 1* published. The direction for the new thing, “Van.” I want to see myself writing as long as I can in Europe more. Go for it and if after less than a month I don’t want to do ‘Van,’ I can always come back to *PMRB*. I am

not deserting it, not deserting *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. It will be ready when I return.

“I also read some more *Cc.* about King Prataparudra. But when I thought of telling a version of this for the Saturday night disciples’ meeting, it seemed too much summary. I will have to think of something else to do for that meeting. Maybe take one purport from the *Cc.* on this theme and then tie some things together. The Lord in Vrindavan...Look through and see what is my favorite among them.

“Exchanging with Manu. When he said he found the swings in *PMRB* stark, that affected my enthusiasm. I hinted at it in a letter. Then he wrote back saying that *PMRB* is a major opus and a proper kind of writing for a follower of Srila Prabhupada. It was “too late.” I sensed he was just trying to respond to my own expression and didn’t want to disappoint me. He is not expert, or let’s say *we* are not expert, as a team yet in exchanging. It’s a sensitive thing when to encourage and when to hint in favor of one thing or another. We have to keep at it and we will get better in exchange. I am very suggestible, but that doesn’t mean I have to seal myself off from all exchange.

“Reading Kathleen Adams on journaling. Remember that I am not writing a journal. I am writing books in Krsna consciousness in which I may use journal techniques. Or it is part journal, diary, and goes beyond

into sessions, writing practice, and a structure or theme if I am lucky to find one.

“Jayadvaita Maharaja was a good typist, and Prabhupada said so...

“Buttercups and the wind. I don't go outdoors, it's too blowy.

Don't want to meet anyone either. Hare Krsna. Now I have run out of steam.”