

## ***Free Write Journal #89***

### **Announcement:**

I have been invited by my disciple Madana-Gopala dasa to give a Krsna conscious internet talk on Zoom and Youtube on Saturday, May 9 at 11:00 A.M. EST.

The Zoom link: <https://tinyurl.com/ud7rxd4>

The Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/iskconofnj>

This will be a live broadcast, and I invite all *FWJ* readers and other interested parties to tune in.

### **Free Writes**

#### **Mortality**

Baladeva is in anxiety because he goes out shopping and he's afraid he'll bring back the Covid virus and infect me. He knows the spiritual master is in Krsna's hands and cannot be affected by karma. Not only Baladeva, but my disciples are phoning in and asking about my well-being. Materially speaking, I'm a prime candidate for the virus. I'm 80 years old, have weak lungs, diabetes, and a history of repeated pneumonia. The devotees are all facing the issue of their mortality and my mortality. They are questioning how they would fare if I were not present in the world.

The whole world population is facing the issue of mortality. People are taking precautions with antivirus equipment and social distancing, and there's a grave mood rather than a frivolous one. A small number of devotees have died from the virus. The number of cases is slowing down to a plateau, and the politicians and health officials are agitated about *when* we can relax the restrictions and open up the schools and go back to work. The devotees would like to resume their regular activities of holding Sunday feasts and *harinama* gatherings and normal preaching contacts with the people.

I am personally not much worried. I lead a reclusive life. I keep myself informed of the world crisis, but I watch it from a distance and don't feel danger. I try to take shelter at Krsna's lotus feet and depend on Him for whatever may happen to me. I happen to be a prolific writer, so my preaching is going on through the *Free Write Journal* and publishing of books. I get encouragement from readers who say my writing is helping them and that they feel close to me through my postings, and they gain assurance about the world crisis hearing my attitude about it.

### **Last Words**

I have a disciple who is dying in the hospital with pneumonia and Covid-19. She is breathing with an electrical ventilator. It has been going on for one week, and she has decided it is no improvement. So she has asked the technicians to disconnect it from her. This means she will probably leave her body shortly afterwards.

I am scheduled to speak last words to her today. I understand she will be able

to hear me but will not be able to respond verbally. I plan to advise her not to harbor any hate or grief or resentment. She's going to be relieved of a longtime condition of much physical and mental pain. Her next life will be brilliant. She will either go directly to the spiritual world, or she will be born in a family of pure Vaisnavas who will guide her to go back to Godhead in one lifetime. In the remaining time she has, I will advise her to chant the Hare Krsna mantra in her mind. She should hear the syllables—"Just hear"—as Prabhupada has advised. Cry out to Krsna to please accept you in His service.

I will tell her, "I love you very much. You have done great service to me and Prabhupada by effectively attracting people to the Krsna Consciousness Movement. You used to set up a book table at the Berkeley temple every Sunday and sell my books and Prabhupada's books. I am deeply in gratitude for all these services you have rendered."

I will slowly chant the syllables of the Hare Krsna mantra to her and ask her to chant along with me in her mind. This will bring us close together, praying at the lotus feet of Prabhupada and Krsna.

I also plan to say, "I will keep this message short and sweet so you can concentrate on it and hang on to it in your last hours. Remember my advice not to harbor any ill feelings toward any of the devotees or other living beings. Don't lament. Look forward to a brilliant next life. And in your last hours, constantly chant Hare Krsna in your mind. These are my last words to you, dear Jaya Gopala devi

dasi. You have always been dear to me and the devotees, and we pray for your spiritual well-being.

*“Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare /Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.”*

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The phone call turned out to be strange. I had been prepared to talk to her with the assumption that when she went off the ventilator she would probably soon die. So I spoke to her and said, “This is probably the last time I will be able to talk to you.” I guided her in ways to think at the end of life, and she was able to hear me speaking to her but she could not answer back.

Suddenly the nurse interrupted my talk and spoke to me. She said my disciple, on coming off of the ventilator, might be able to breathe again, and she was better today than she was yesterday. The nurse’s comment completely broke my mood of speaking to a person who was about to face death. I became confused, but I continued speaking as if my disciple was at the end. I thought the nurse’s comments were inappropriate and out of line. I was speaking as any priest would speak to a dying member of his congregation. The nurse was speaking in denial of death and with no knowledge of *Bhagavad-gita*. I continued speaking as I had prepared myself, telling my disciple to chant Hare Krsna in her mind constantly in her last hours.

Then I said, “We are all going to die.” This seemed to bring a change over the

nurse. Based on the nurse's final comments to me, she seemed to get my message that we're all going to die, and it changed her attitude. But she had already done the damage to the presentation. I hope my disciple took my words submissively and took them to heart. I wish her well in the ultimate sense.

### **A Devotee Revived and Book Projects Update**

I received a letter from a disciple whom I haven't heard from for many, many years. He describes that he has spent decades involved in academia (getting a PhD) but he now feels he has wasted twenty-five percent of his life. He has slackened in his spiritual life, devotional service, and relationship with his guru. However, his wife Satyasara has constantly been by his side encouraging him to return to spiritual life, and she has been a great help and inspiration. This longtime disciple of mine, Krsna Bhajan, now wants to come closer to a life of devotional service. He has been in touch with some of my devotees who are involved in book production—Ananda-kisora in Italy and Nitai dasa in India, who are proposing to sell my books online. Both he and his wife have joined the team and are enthusiastic to work at typing and proofreading out-of-print books.

This proposal to sell my books online seems like it's going to happen, so once the online print books are available devotees can obtain them for themselves or to give away to friends. I am asking my disciples to distribute my books in this way. We are all in a mature stage of life, and this is the last chance to get together and work

on this project. It delights me when my books reach new readers.

Jaya Govinda wrote to us about the proposal to sell books online and other topics:

- My plan to have four new books published this year available online
- My plan to distribute them at the two main disciple meetings at Stuyvesant Falls (July and Vyasa Puja)
- More than twenty old-title reprints on the way to Viraha Bhavan from Nitai
- Online sales as a great way to sensibly increase book distribution and revenues
- Covid-19 emergency restrictions potentially impacting the above distribution plans. (These restrictions mean I may not be able to hold my meetings, and so the online plan becomes very important.)

Despite the health crisis and economy drop, 2020 is a good year for my book distribution, as devotee-workers are coming forward to do services of typing, proofreading, etc. Ananda-kisora and Jaya Govinda, from Italy, are proposing to put my books online. They see this as an excellent way to increase distribution, and they are enthusiastic to do it. Nitai in India is a key man in this book revival. He has been producing out-of-print books. He lapses sometimes because of being preoccupied with family and business, but I am asking him to work with the other devotees who are joining forces. I want him to send me a monthly report and tell me the books he wants to reprint. I would like to be the one who sets the priority for what books they are going to do. I can't initiate any more and I have a small band of disciples, but if

we can come together and rally, we can do great things. I ask my disciples who haven't come forward yet to volunteer their services and do proofreading, typing and other parts of the big project.

### **Memo from John Endler**

Rev. John Endler has found a silver lining in the coronavirus pandemic. His church is closed, and he has much more time to work on my books. He sent me an update of the book projects he's working on:

*“With the number of projects undertaken for this year, I thought it might helpful for Guru Maharaja if I provided him with update reports. —John Endler*

#### “Book Projects – 2020

##### *“Daily Compositions*

- I have emailed Lal Krsna the back-cover excerpts.
- He will send you a final proof before the book is sent to the printers.

##### *“Kaleidoscope*

- The Table of Contents is completed in addition of my essay for Part One.
- My essay for Part Two and the Afterword will be completed by the time of our next conversation (Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>).

- Guru dasa will complete the proofreading by the end of April. I will then input his edits and then send the manuscript to Krsna-Bhajana for the second round of proofreading.
- The manuscript will be sent to Lal Krsna by the end of May for layout.

*“Seeking New Land: At Sea with Hemanta Swami*

- I expect to have my introduction completed by the second week of May.
- Guru dasa is currently proofreading the manuscript. I will ask Krishna Kripa if he is able to provide the second round of proofreading.
- I have sent the manuscript to Lal Krsna so that he might have a preview of the book.
- I hope to have the manuscript to Lal Krsna for layout in early June.

*“Free-Writes for the weekly online journal*

- I have completed *The Faithful Transcriber* and I have now begun transcribing the *Wicklows Writing Sessions* - these sessions continue the summer series, 1996.

*“California Search for Gold*

- I have now completed Chapter Eight – and I will be sending you my reading notes for Chapters Four – Eight.
- My plan is to provide you with weekly reading notes as we discuss the future serialization of the manuscript.

“JFE”

### **Govardhana Retreat**

I’m so relieved that my technology is repaired and I’m able again to listen to the recordings of the Govardhana Retreat. Bhurijana is describing Upananda’s speech to the cowherdspeople, his opinion that they should leave Gokula because it is the place of so many dangerous incidents, attempts at Krsna’s life. They should at once move somewhere else, and he advises they go to Vrndavana. He describes the advantages of Vrndavana *dhama*.

Upananda was meant to be the leader of all the cowherdspeople, but he abdicated his position out of respect to Nanda Maharaja, who was so much loved by all the Vrajavasis. Still, he was the second-in-command, and everyone listened to him very seriously. The people at once agreed to his proposal and his advice that they move at once, that very day.

Bhurijana describes how the Vrajavasi men loaded all the carts with their household belongings and yoked the bulls to carry them. Krsna and Balarama sat in one oxcart on the laps of Yasoda and Rohini. Krsna was just a young child at this

time, and He asked His mother why they were leaving their home and when they would return. She told Him of the beauty and safety of Vrndavana, and He was pacified and looked forward to the new location. One could only imagine how simply they lived that they could dismantle their homes and pack everything on the oxcarts and move in one day. They had to live in oxcarts until new buildings were constructed in Vrndavana. When They arrived there Krsna and Balarama placed Their lotus feet on the ground, and all the flowers and plants burst into bloom. They walked together with Their friends, thoroughly enjoying Their new environment. The new place was situated near Govardhana Hill and the Yamuna River, and this caused Krsna delight.

Then Jagattarini Mataji narrated the pastime of Krsna and the Kaliya serpent. She used her talents as a former actress and made a wonderful dramatic presentation, capturing the alarm of the boys and cows when they saw Krsna swimming in the poisonous lake of Kaliya. In a masterful way, she heightened their sense of danger when the snake came out and bit Krsna on the chest. She imitated the cries of the boys, “Alas! Alas!” Krsna had told them to stay back from the bank of the river, but when they saw Him fighting with the serpent they rushed forward again to the edge of the river. All the elder Vrajavasis were informed of the dangerous situation, and they flocked to the riverbank in great distress. Mother Yasoda tried to enter the water, but Balarama stopped her. He was the only one who was not in fear for Krsna’s life because He knew His younger brother was all-powerful and could not be harmed by a snake of the material world.

Krsna allowed Himself to be enveloped by the coils of the serpent for some time, and this put all the residents of Vrndavana into a near-death state of mourning and alarm. When Krsna saw that they were suffering too much, He expanded His arms and released Himself from the grip of Kaliya's coils. He then began to dance on the hundred hoods of the serpent in a wonderfully artistic display of the art of dancing. But by His dancing He was crushing the serpent's heads and causing him great pain. Kaliya grew weaker, and he stopped emitting poison and began to vomit up blood. I am eager to hear Jagattarini complete the pastimes of Krsna and Kaliya.

The Govardhana Retreat speakers bring us wonderful intimacy of the pastimes of Krsna and His confidential eternal *parisads*. They are filling my days in lockdown with joy and satisfaction.

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Sacinandana Maharaja spoke about Akrura's journey to Vrndavana. Akrura meditated on Krsna as he traveled. He saw the deer passing him on his right side, and he became elated, taking it as an auspicious sign that he would see Krsna that day when he reached Vrndavana. Sacinandana Swami encouraged devotees to look for signs everywhere in their life, signs giving them confidence that they would reach their goals in Krsna consciousness. Maharaja encouraged devotees to meditate while they chanted the holy names. He said we should meditate on Krsna while we chant, starting with His lotus feet and rising up to His smiling face. He said devotees in ISKCON are not inclined to meditation, and this is a shame. They should meditate

like Akrura and see everywhere the auspicious signs to give them confidence in reaching their goals.

By associating with Maharaja, by hearing him speak on these topics, we become enlivened and think what he is saying is achievable in our lives. Such is the effect of association with advanced devotees.

Sacinandana Swami continued to speak about Akrura's journey to Vrndavana. After he jumped out of the cart and smeared Krsna's lotus footprints over his body, he got back into the cart and proceeded to Vrndavana. Sacinandana Swami then said he wanted his audience to emulate the footsteps of Akrura. He had them chant Hare Krsna kirtana slow and sweet, and he had designated devotees pour dust from Vrndavana on the heads of everyone in his audience. He said one should enter Vrndavana without fear, without pride and without lamentation. He quoted a Prabhupada purport that said when one enters Vrndavana he should smear the dust of Vraja over his body without consideration for his position and be prideless. When Akrura actually saw Krsna and Balarama, he was overwhelmed by Their personal beauty. He again bowed down at Their lotus feet, and They in turn embraced him and called him "Uncle" because he was older than They were. They embraced him. The two Brothers did not receive Akrura as a messenger from Kamsa but saw his good intentions and accepted him as a pure devotee. Thus, all of Akrura's desires were fulfilled.

## ***My Search Through Books***

*“Jimmy was the youngest of my father's four brothers. I knew him quite well because when we moved to Staten Island, he was unmarried and lived with us. I shared my bedroom with him. He used to play Italian opera and everyone else made fun of him. He liked to listen to Don Juan. In the last scene, Don Juan is in hell. The baritone singer was crying in hell, and my father and the others imitated him and made fun of Jimmy for listening to it. But he continued to listen.*

*“When Uncle Jim moved in with me, he brought his books and put them on my shelf. One book I particularly remember was by Mark Twain. It wasn't one of his classic novels for boys. Mark Twain was an atheist and was cynical toward humankind, especially in his later years. One story in the collection was a parody on the Bible, with Mark Twain's version of Adam and Eve. It blew my mind. It was just the opposite of the Bible. Uncle Jim had other books, but I cannot remember them.*

“One who is raised in a nominally religious family, where belief in God is the party line, and where love of God is not practiced spontaneously, will one day experience a crack in the foundation of official church piety. Everyone can remember his or her first whiff of

atheism. The news of anti-religion does not always reach us as a negative thing. Because it smacks of rebellion, and since our experience of so-called religious life is often dull and restricted, we harken to the call that there is something else. Mark Twain also said, "Heaven for climate, hell for society." The interesting people are not teetotalers. Don Juan is in hell. So runs the easygoing version of humanistic, fun-loving atheism.

“On my knees in the converted attic bedroom, I pulled out Uncle Jimmy's offbeat books from the shelf, and read what I had never dared to imagine—that the Adam and Eve story was make-believe, that there was a different point of view. How unguided I was! No one taught me about God in an interesting and formidable way; no one explained atheism. One had to stumble across these things on one's own, risk becoming confused, contaminated, and try to keep it a secret.

“I would prefer a Krsna conscious childhood.

“Maybe that is what I will get next time around. It will be a true head start. Instead of beginning spiritual life at age twenty-six, I could start at once chanting Hare Krsna. I will be in good association. Religion will not be dull. Devotees will love me as spirit soul and take care of my bodily needs as well. They will help me to understand the workings of my own mind. I will learn about atheists, and I may even read Mark Twain, but not with my jaw dropping open as when I read him in this life. Yes, I prefer a Krsna conscious childhood. And if there is an Uncle

Jim who has to live with me, I will tell him, just as five-year-old Sarasvati dasi told the old *babas* in Vrndavana, ‘Prabhupada says you shouldn't smoke. Why don't you read a Krsna conscious book instead of all these speculations and *maya*?’”

### ***Entering the Life of Prayer***

#### **“Entering**

“Hare Krsna. I am starting another morning walk. My dear Lord Krsna, please have mercy on this sinner. My dear Lord Krsna, thank You for Your mercy. Talking to myself to help me pray is not a sentimental thing or merely emotional: it is philosophical reason.

“The motivation for prayer and for always thinking of Krsna is that we are actually helpless in this world. We are in a very dangerous position. We don't know what is going to happen at death, what may happen at any moment. The *sastras* say there will be transmigration and so much suffering. That is the salvation angle; we should get out of this condition. Beyond that, however, is the attraction to Krsna.

“We are rascals. We have come to this material world and committed so many sinful activities; so we should want to get out of this

situation. We are helpless, sinful. *This* is the motivation for prayer, to talk to our protector, our well-wisher, who will take us beyond salvation to Him—if we can just attain this immediate, simple thing of always talking to Krsna and of being with Krsna by chanting the holy name while thinking of Him.

“It seems to me that I might have had a little bit more of that when I first joined as a devotee, when I saw it in Prabhupada, and when I thought spontaneously of Krsna from minute to minute while at the welfare office. I think it has been drying up by the institutional work, by Prabhupada's absence now, by the offenses I committed as guru, and just by the resurfacing of material desires. To be gaining this again is nothing extraordinary; it is my natural situation and I am going back to it.

“I was complaining and objecting that I couldn't identify with that particular prayer, ‘Please have mercy on this sinner,’ but brother, that's you all right. You are a sinner and you need Krsna's mercy. You can pray for it as Bhaktivinoda Thakura does, ‘O please give me Your mercy, just give me a particle of Your mercy. I am a fallen rascal, O Gopinatha.’ All the *Saranagati* verses are like that.

“My dear Lord Krsna, I want to enter into all the implications of becoming Your friend again, which means that You are my best friend. I should love You first and foremost, and other love should only be in

relation with that. I am really only happy when I am with my best friend, Krsna, or talking about Him. I want to cultivate that and share with You in terms of my mind and activities. To the degree that I am inevitably centered on myself, then I have to see it as Your service, and myself as Your servant. As Your servant, I'll turn to You and Your service in a way that pleases You.”

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### **“Further In**

“Today is the day that Madhumangala goes to Ireland to find a place for us there. I've been searching my motives and asking myself tough questions, reaching indecisions and going past them. We are still fixed on our course of setting up a life .plan of sometimes living in a solitary base and sometimes traveling out from there. While he is gone, we may have an opportunity to be even quieter.

“Thinking of Krsna during the day has to be spontaneous, and yet there is a habit and technique to it. How to think of Him in every odd moment, how to offer everything to Him, how to pray as much as possible? I don't want to call them techniques, but let's just say that I want to develop the habit. My dear Lord Krsna, I mention to You my intentions.

“These quiet weeks alone shouldn't be seen as enjoyment. Of course, it is the sweetest kind of pleasure to follow the trail of Krsna consciousness and to try to practice talking to Krsna, reading about prayer, and reading Prabhupada's books clearly. However, all this is for trying to be Krsna's servant. This also means that you have to own up to your lack of surrender—not only intellectually, but feel it and ask Krsna's forgiveness for offenses. I have only scratched the surface of feelings of what I have done wrong during the Big Guru decade from 1978 to 1987. I have yet to cry about this.

“So going alone and trying to enter one's relationship with Krsna is not just for the sweetness, but for the real surrender, for feeling unworthy, step by step. Without artificiality, we try to understand this according to time and the indications from the Lord.

“There are many things I will have to sacrifice when I leave this solitary base for preaching tours. However, the one thing I hope I can keep with me is turning to Krsna as much as possible. It doesn't take extra time, it takes quality. This is something I can learn to do here and do wherever I go, because Krsna is everywhere. He is always in our heart. In fact, there may be even *more* impetus for talking to Krsna and praying to Him in stressful situations.”

## ***Passing Places, Eternal Truths--Travel Writings 1988-1996***

### ***“Ireland***

“Back of van, on queue for ferry. Pain in eye all day, en route here and now. Of course, I look forward to when it will go away, but what's the normal condition, this or relief? En route, saw ‘Pax Nursing Home’ and ‘Convalescent and Retirement House,’ and old hag lady, white-haired man. Funeral home, cemetery. The living and the dead. The living have their photos on billboards: ‘Elect Pat Lynch, Rock Solid on Munster.’ We don't hear from the dead.

“In that sense, the pain in my eye is not my permanent condition. I had better not waste time.

### ***Irish Coast***

“Steel drawbridge like a closed curtain in a theater. It lowers. We see daylight. Enter Ireland. Passport control. The road. Gorse in full bloom. I realize that life in the front of the van is also life. It's not just going somewhere and thinking of what you will be—it's now, traveling, this life today, as good as tomorrow. In other words, today I promise to

be more Krsna conscious and tomorrow I will try harder.

“I just saw Clare Island off Clew Bay.

That sight is an inconceivable glory of God.

Dawn comes over a peak as if

there were a big fire on the other side.

### ***Port Laoise, Ireland***

“We have broken our journey to Wicklow by stopping for lunch at Prahlada's house. Sitting together on the lawn, we read and discuss Krsna's pastime of showing His universal form to Mother Yasoda. It's a sunny day, and many flowers are blossoming. Prahlada is expert in growing plants and flowers, and now he has begun another vegetable garden. Their house is in a peaceful woodland area with no neighbors on either side for a mile. But there is one unfortunate presence here: in a shed just behind their house, a farmer keeps about fifteen cows for slaughter. These cows are never allowed out of the shed, and they are never cleaned of their own stool. The farmer comes once a day, shoves feed at the cattle, and goes away. I looked in at them, and it was shocking how filthy and miserable they were. ‘Like a concentration camp,’ said Gobhata. ‘Very unfortunate,’ said Prahlada.

“Even as we speak, I hear the farmer coming for his daily chore, whistling a lighthearted tune. Ireland is known as the ‘slaughterhouse of Europe’; its main contribution to the European Common Market is beef. Ireland is also supposed to be pious, but there is no protest against slaughter because ‘animals have no souls.’

“We are not in a position to free them, so what can we do? All we can do is keep preaching and showing the example of cow protection. Prabhupada writes:

“While living one may be proud of one's body, thinking oneself a very big man, minister, president or even demigod, but whatever one may be, after death this body will turn either into worms, into stool or into ashes. If one kills poor animals to satisfy the temporary whims of this body, one does not know that he will suffer in his next birth, for such a sinful miscreant must go to hell and suffer the results of his actions.” (*Bhag.* 10.10.10, purport)

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## **South America/Caribbean**

***JFK airport, NY, en route to Brazil***

“I am in the Pan Am lounge alone while Madhu is out seeing about a luggage problem. There are lots of people here, all waiting for the flight. I am waiting for you, Srila Prabhupala. I don't know what I mean by that, but I wanted to say it.

“At the gate to our flight to Brazil, I was surprised to see women wearing earrings as big as bracelets and to hear the sound of Portuguese. Not a drop of English. It reminded me that we were now *foreigners*—those pitiful, ignorant people who cannot speak even a simple sentence.

“In Vista Alegre  
 there's a luncheonette without seats  
 and here the people eye us,  
 while they're eating  
 and while their radio plays  
 George Harrison's  
 'My Sweet Lord.'  
*I really want to see You, Lord,*  
*but it takes so long,*  
*Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna . . .*  
 If the people would just listen  
 they'd hear it too,  
*but it takes so long . . .*

## **Sao Paulo, Brazil**

“At 2:30 A.M. Sunday morning, I hear angry, drunken shouts near the wall dividing the temple grounds from the rest of the city. A man is accusing a woman, and the woman accuses him back. Human beings growling and hooting, cars roaming even at this hour. There are fifty of us on this side of the wall now rising from bunks, bathing, preparing to gather soberly before Lord Jagannatha. Some call this life insular, but I think it's best.

## **Brazil**

### ***Travel Day***

“To the traveler:

may Lord Narayana protect

your feet in the car

may He protect your head

from bumping against the roof

may the Lord of intelligence

protect your thoughts

may the Lord of *bhakti* bless you

to follow the *boa proposta*,

to always chant Hare Krsna

even when you've finished  
 the minimum *japa* quota  
 and even while sitting  
 in the 'asana' of the car.

(May Lord Narayana also bless our assertive driver.)

### ***Peacocks***

A peahen with baby chicks  
 is pecking at my ball of *tilaka*  
 drying in the sun.

Peacocks keep away mice  
 and turn their stiff necks  
 to give you a look.

If I were a lover of Krsna  
 like Murari Gupta was,  
 these rainbow birds  
 would make me swoon  
 as they jump  
 toward the gathering clouds.

***In The Garden***

Twirling the scythe  
 by the gurgling stream,  
 a garden worker starts  
 at 6:00 A.M.,  
 stripped to the waist.  
 They say he does his *japa* later,  
 and in fact I often see  
 men chanting at dusk  
 on the bridge over the lake  
 and in the bamboo forest.

***Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name***

*April 14, 2:06 A.M.*

“I write to help myself conduct this particular *japa* retreat, to see how to improve chanting now and in an ongoing way.

“I also write to reach out to others with guidance and to share the teachings of the *acaryas*. All writing is different ways to package Krsna consciousness, to keep readers interested, and to give them nectar and instruction.

“I gained a little strength in recognizing incoming (impeding) lines of thought and putting them aside in favor of *japa* concentration. This morning, serious thoughts invaded my *japa*: ‘You need to plan the lectures for the seminar on Prabhupada's life. It is coming up soon.’ But I assured myself, ‘Be confident, there will be time to plan. And you don’t need as much time as you think. Go and speak lovingly of Prabhupada memories at 26 Second Avenue. Anyway, now is not the time. This is *japa*. Right now, *japa* is most important.’ I parted with the planmaking and I'm back to brisk rounds.

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“Just finished sixty-four rounds. You could keep going, beyond evaluation—neither good, bad, nor indifferent. You chant and chant.

“A game to play during *japa*: ask yourself, ‘What is more important than chanting right now?’ The diverting thoughts and possible actions fall away. Nothing is more important than chanting right now. Everything else can wait. (This game can wait too.) When you think of it in terms of life-and-death or temporary and permanent, the chanting is most important.

“Your muscles and stamina build up to the point where you don't have to evaluate it anymore. Krsna is Krsna; Radha is Radha. I am very far away from Them, and yet I am as near as possible by chanting. *Japa*

gives that immediate connection, more so than any other process. Your tongue and ear and His names. No more to say.

“Today I noticed a difference between involuntary and deliberate distraction. I was going over in my mind the batting lineup of the Brooklyn Dodgers team of the 1950s. I caught myself doing it, but I continued indulging. I tried remembering how many home runs Gil Hodges used to hit on an average each year, and how many did Roy Campanella hit. It seemed harmless and amusing. But because it was interfering with my ability to hear my *japa*, it was not harmless, so I dropped it.”

### ***Looking Back, Volume 1***

“We accept Suta Gosvami as the captain of the ship, and we accept Prabhupada as the captain of the latest ship in the Krsna conscious armada going back to the spiritual world. If you don’t become perfect on this cruise, then you will be born as a crewmember in another fleet ship with another competent captain. Or, it is said, you will find your eternal spiritual master, life after life.

“Please accept me, Gurudeva. Let me come onboard, not with a heavy heart but with my duffel bag manfully on my shoulder and eager to meet adventure. May I serve and sit at the dinner table, satisfied with whatever *prasadam* is offered to the crew and take up work under the

Petty Officer assigned to us. Even though he may be imperfect, he is part of the hierarchy, for the captain is beloved and the ship is being guided unerringly.

“There’s a picture of a big boat, like an ocean liner, with two big smokestacks, and it says, “ISKCON Worldwide Center” on the side of the ship, ‘Room for All, Individuals Too.’

“The mice, it seems, are stirring under the bed. Maybe that other sound is the branches scratching against the window. Tiny gnats under the desk light. Remember one day Prabhupada was leaving Krsna-Balaram Mandir (1976) to go on his morning walk. Vishala stood before him and recited this *sloka* out loud: ‘We think that we have met Your Goodness . . .’ Prabhupada interrupted him and said, “Do something useful. Here is a puddle of dirty water. Clean it up.” Vishala was shocked. He gave up his loud recitation in favor of practical service.

“We think Your Goodness—Do something useful!”

### ***Dear Sky: Letters from a Sannyasi***

“Dear Gray Dawn,

“You are misty this morning. When the sun comes out, the mists will lift and you will disappear into the sunshine. Therefore, we are together only briefly.

I enjoy walking down lanes surrounded by your mists, but the sun evaporating the mist and dispelling the dawn reminds me of how the sun of Krsna consciousness also exposes my life. The newspapers finally caught up with us the other day. I read about some cult that killed its members. I'm afraid that will bring us bad publicity. As devotees, we have to face so many things. I don't want to face them right now. I just want to walk through you, gray dawn, and think my private thoughts while you are still covering the earth.

“It's not very cold today, so you are muted. You hold the world in semi-darkness, only gradually releasing it to its natural colors. You are not ignorance, but atmosphere. You lend mystery and gentleness to my surroundings. You make it easy for me to come out and pray to Krsna and chant His holy names. Of course, you also cover death. Sometimes I hear an animal scream or a bird swoop down for its prey. But I prefer to think of you supporting my privacy in prayer and chanting and my desire to be alone with Krsna. You encourage me to simply walk in Krsna's shelter because you haven't yet exposed me to the light of day and the business of other people. I am simply alone with the Supreme Lord at this time in the morning.

“Therefore, you are precious to me. I don't know how much more of your association I will have in this life, and I suppose once I leave you,

I won't even want to be with you again except in the spiritual world. I have heard that the dawn in Goloka Vrndavana is sweet.”

## WRITING SESSIONS

### *The Faithful Transcriber (continued)*

**July 7, 1996**

“Ratha-yatra in London and Paris. Which are you going to? I’m staying here. ‘I get headaches.’ Faithfully tell your truth. Under veneers, strip away. Tell the truth. If you don’t worry about censors you can go a long way *in, in, in*.

“I’m not going to the Ratha-yatra  
my stomach growls.

I want to see Lord Visnu.

I want to write honestly even if it’s not always KC.

“In a dream Kim Knott was lecturing on her role of defender of freedom for small groups such as people who chant Hare Krsna.

“Hey, hey.

“I read some in the book *Surrealist Games*. Realized I’m not much committed to trying to destroy the individual’s talent or to be irrational, to worship chance, to be irreverent, to write in an automatic way to shortcut discursive language, etc. I see the use in that, but I do have

something significant to say in delivering Krsna consciousness. My purpose or interest in some methods of Surrealists might be (as in free-writing) to get past my censors and not say things in same ways that have become half-dead by use and familiarity.

“But not just change for change’s sake.

“You’ve got a message?

“Go to Uddhava’s, work in the attic and sometimes in the outdoor room he has in the garden, and work steady in writing-exercise manner. How will it be different than that series of many writing practice sessions I did there some years ago in the summer? They didn’t have any theme, and they ended in my becoming tired of them and finally writing *Progresso* in ten days. I don’t know what the difference be. Can’t give you a guarantee. The ‘guarantee’ would be to think ahead of a ‘story,’ theme, etc. and then follow it. But you say you want freedom. Freedom also means staring into space and writing into it. Trust you’ll go somewhere if you just go and explore.

“The heart’s truth rather than try to please (or make publishable).

“Will something like that even come up or is it just a truth of humbly writing down little things? Look at *Last Days of the Year, 1994*.

“It’s a road,

bridges

streams to cross

it really is your *pada-yatra*  
and this is what you meet.

“You are writing right now of what it will be like in a week. But what is it like now? It’s okay. Belch and sigh. Today ‘everyone’ is going to Ratha-yatra so, I don’t have to go either to the temple or to the RY. Stay in this house. I’ve answered the mail, I am mostly prepared for the four days of meetings. So, I can do what I like in this one day. Read some *Cc*. Maybe take another shot here.

“The word ‘cult’ is sticking in my brain from the anti-cult propaganda— destructive cults and the bad name they give us and the governments branding us. Let me, let us not get bogged down by those fears or disapprovals. Hridaya is worried it could affect their tourism program in this temple. Krsna consciousness means to give people Krsna one way or another.

“Don’t be afraid to wear *sannyasa* clothes and *tilaka*. Tell people about Krsna. Let them at least see you as a devotee. Pray? Yeah, why not? But did Srila Prabhupada say that? He so much emphasized *more* than a silent, enclosed prayer to bring others benefit. Go out and chant loudly to them. Place a book in their hands, etc. But God is the great mover in people’s hearts. You can pray to Him.

“It will be nice in a trice.

“I’ll go my way.

“M. is working on the van. Sometimes you wish he’d pay more attention to this inner literary world. But it’s good too – as he turns enthusiastically to his van work and workers helping him, I may take it as a signal that I should turn to my world of writing – as that is a lone world.

“I have the privilege to do it. I have the opportunity many don’t want to have. ‘A writer? Fantastic! I wish I had time to write.’

“Go do it, Mr. Blake, Mr. Hive. Go create your world of Krsna conscious writing.

“And how will it be used?

“It may be used, I’ll tell you. Free-write taps into ‘unconscious.’ We want to do that, not just for its own sake to see dream monsters and oddities and puzzles unsolved. Keep going to a truth – do you see it may be dangerous?

“At last the words of truth are torn from deep in his heart, the mask is removed and reality remains.’

“Homely, homely reality.

Don’t be so hard on yourself,

wrote Max Perry to me.

But it’s a question of truthfulness,

not whether I feel good or bad.

You think catching words from the  
periphery will help?

“Yes, faithful transcriber and also reaching out for them. But  
more than that.’

“Imagine, imagine

“the facts beyond your prose and beyond your own life. Fiction  
and fact meet there. Where? That ‘transcriber’ and the ‘lies’ – remember  
that program? Write your feelings and you owe nothing to reality.

“In and out at any moment, changeable like the weather.

“Which Ratha-yatra are you going to?’ he asked.

“I said, ‘Oh, I’m giving disciples’ meetings the next day so I am  
staying back.’

“Then he said several times, ‘You must go see my shop, my store.’

“I said okay, but why should I? What’s the point? What do I owe  
him or anyone?

“Why don’t they come and read my books? I could say, ‘I will go to  
your store if you read my book.’ But I don’t say that. I’m okay.

“I’m a person. I am ten persons.

“I am writing a book. After these four days I will have had quite a  
dose (eight meetings) where I am myself the guru with disciples. That

will be a good time to get away for writing. (If they will let us over their national borders and we can go where we want to go.) It is all right to go to the same place and write the same thing because as the Greek (was it Heraclitus or Pythagoras or Plato?) said, ‘When you step into the river you never step into the same place twice.’ It won’t be the exact same. There will be flies in the backyard and he and his wife will come to tend their garden frequently and that may break some of the solitary nature of your trying to write. Those things are common factors, you may feel free to write in the hermit’s life. Okay?

“First, these days of disciples’ meetings.

“Hello, dear disciples. I am training you to be such-and-such. I am trying to leave you and go to write. That is what is really on my mind. No, don’t project that, “I’d really rather be somewhere else,” but give them in those hours that you are with them. It is all right that you are ultimately detached from it. That adds to your spiritual offering, if you can do it rightly. You don’t have to be lovey-dovey, but you feel obliged to be with them. They supposedly like to be with you and respect what you give. So, give it. It may not touch your heart utterly, but maybe writing and being alone doesn’t do that either. Only Krsna can do that. And, do you show yourself sufficiently interested in Him for Him to reciprocate that way?

“Eight classes, young faces. Another thing is I am changing within the process of writing. Maybe I don’t believe as much in the idea of ‘First thoughts are best thoughts.’ I don’t have to be obliged to the sounds of words, or the play of them, or just because one floats up on the stream. But neither do I want to too carefully think something out.

“Could you do a different kind of work? Look, no one can do this for you. You were going to write a book *In the Back of the Van*, but the back of the van isn’t ready. That’s an example. So, write where you actually are instead. Then you thought maybe you could write something witty and fictional about the fact that you had to prove to the Irish government you are Stephen Guarino and get residency in Ireland on the basis of being a religious writer. You actually did that one day at the Justice Department, but you didn’t get much mileage out of it in writing. You wrote instead a *Geaglum Diary*, and that data is preserved.

“What actually is and was: the hawthorns in bloom, big pleasure boats on Lough Erne, the split in your energies between *Poor Man Reads the Bhagavatam* and diary, and finally backing out of *PMRB*.

“Oh, you did that. Gave up *PMRB*? But wasn’t it good to be so close to *sastra*? Yeah, it was. But it was no longer gelling or as organically satisfying as I felt it had been for the first fifteen hundred pages. You don’t expect me to write my whole life that way, do you?

“The dare I have thrown out to myself is – do you dare to change the structure of *PMRB*? That one will have to wait a while.”