

## ***Free Write Journal #91***

### **Free Writes**

#### **Springtime at Stuyvesant Falls**

Columbia County has fewer cases of Covid-19 than the other counties. The post office at Stuyvesant Falls is very small and only allows three people in the building at once. That's because with more than three, they can't maintain the six-foot social distancing.

Yesterday two neighbors hired professionals to cut down their very big trees. It was a very noisy day, cutting and grinding. They supposedly cut down their trees because there was a danger of the heavy branches falling on their houses. But Prabhupada chastised me for cutting down a tree which had fallen and was leaning against the roof of a *gurukula* building. He saw that a tree was still alive, and he thought it was ignorant to cut down the tree into small pieces. So I felt that way yesterday about the neighbors' cutting down of their big trees.

Signs of spring: we are able to take our many potted *tulasi* plants outdoors during the day. But it gets cold at night, and we have to take them in at that time. We also have hanging pots of petunias on the porch that have to be protected by bringing them in at night when it gets cold.

We have started mowing the lawn and reseeded bare patches.

All the birds are chirping after sex. The male birds chase the female birds, who run away. But every once in a while there's a conquest, as in Hollywood.

Now, every day, we're using flowers from our garden to decorate the Deities. The hyacinths are finished, but the tulips and lilacs have started blooming.

### **Zoom Lecture**

Saturday I gave my lecture on Zoom, joining in solidarity with the other devotees who are giving lectures there during this Covid-19 pandemic, where the devotees can't gather at the temples. Madana-Gopala told me approximately 350 people watched my first Zoom lecture, and that night seven hundred more watched on Youtube. I won't review it here; if you didn't see it you can watch it on Youtube.

Later in the day Madana-Gopala phoned me and congratulated me on the good response. He asked me to give another lecture. At first I said no. I spent a lot of time preparing myself and rehearsing and memorizing to give the lecture. It diverted me from my other studies and *bhajana*. But Madana-Gopala seemed disappointed, and so was Baladeva. So I changed my mind and decided that after some time I will give another Zoom lecture on Madana-Gopala's connection. But I need time to prepare materials for what I'll speak about. I'm a little reluctant to spend a lot of time reading from one of my books, but from the emails I received, devotees didn't seem to mind my reading. Maybe I can also think of something to speak without reading. It seems too good an opportunity to let it go, when I can lecture sitting in my chair in my room at Viraha Bhavan and talk to devotees all around the world.

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I've decided to do another Zoom lecture with Madana-Gopala, and he said the next open spot for me is Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 A.M. So I'll be preparing for that. I want to talk some and read some poems from my books about Prabhupada.

### ***Remembering Srila Prabhupada***

In the lecture I gave on Zoom, my topic was “Prabhupada Stories.” For part of the talk, I read from my book of poems, *Remembering Srila Prabhupada*. This volume has pastimes that were told in the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* but also things that were not included in the biography. I apologized to my listeners for reading from a book but told them that although the process may be awkward, the content was good. The first poem I read was “*ISKCON Press/Boston, December 1969.*” At this moment in history, Boston was the most populated temple in America. That was because the Press had moved to Boston, along with all its workers. There were 60 devotees living in an old mansion in a suburb of Boston.

#### ***“ISKCON PRESS/ Boston, December 1969***

“The press was in Boston,  
and Prabhupada agreed to visit.

The devotees there were worshipping

very small Radha-Krsna Deities  
in an old house in the suburb of Allston.  
One hundred and fifty devotees were on hand  
from various East Coast temples.  
At the airport people could hardly believe  
the intensity of the reception for the Swami—  
it was as if the Beatles had arrived!  
The devotees were also amazed;  
Prabhupada was so great,  
coming from London wearing a white wool sweater  
and carrying a white plastic attaché case,  
smiling to see his disciples,  
his right arm upraised,  
his bead bag wrapped around his hand.  
He was pleased with both  
the temple and the press,  
but in the press room he embraced the devotee-printer.  
‘This is the heart of ISKCON!’ Prabhupada said,  
standing beside the offset press.  
‘You are the heart of ISKCON!’ a devotee cried.  
‘And this is my heart,’ Prabhupada replied.

“The basement was like a chilly cave,  
but filled with precious goods,  
printed pages of his books in dozens of stacks,  
ready to be folded, cut, collated, and bound.  
He loved the press  
that printed Krsna's books,  
and he appealed to those who were helping him  
to work hard at producing those books.  
Type them, edit them,  
paint pictures for them,  
compose them, lay out the pages.  
Or be the wife of a press worker  
and peacefully raise children.  
Or be the printer, the collator, the hand binder.  
Or for extra mercy go to the front lines  
and distribute the books.  
But somehow or other work with the books  
and know the greatest nectar.  
That was the open secret  
he conveyed that night,  
as the ISKCON press workers already knew.  
‘This is the major *sankirtan* party.

As the street chanting is heard a block away  
 by the sound of the thumping *mrdanga*,  
 so the press is the Big *Mrdanga*,  
 to be heard all over the world.'

As he stood in the cellar  
 he made a pact,  
 'Print my books, at least one every two months,  
 and you will go back to Godhead.

We have unlimited stock.

I can translate more—

if I can get time.

And if you can produce them.

This is the field work of our Movement.

Temple worship is secondary.'

This was the thing most dear to him.”

## **Re-Introduction to Free Writing**

I just received a new batch of free writing from Rev. John Endler. He picked it out from selections done in 1996 in *Every Day, Just Write*. I first learned about free writing from a variety of writing teachers. One was Peter Elbow. But the teacher that most inspired me was Natalie Goldberg in her book *Writing Down the Bones*. She taught that one should write without thinking, just let the hand keep moving and not

stop. I place my free writes at the end of every edition of my *Free Write Journal*. I want my readers to be acquainted with what I am trying to do in the free writing sessions. They have to be able to flow with the writing. It is a little unorthodox, but I have become confident over the years that I will always steer to Krsna in my practice. I am confident that I am a devotee of Srila Prabhupada and that, as in the churning of the Milk Ocean, my free writing may produce unusual objects, but it will lead to the nectar of immortality brought by Danvantari. And it will be drunk by the demigods to the defeat of the demons.

In relation to free writing, I am reminded of what Bhaktivinoda Thakura called “the zig-zag path to truth.” He said as we proceed to write, we may sometimes veer a little to the left or the right. He said when we do this we should not go back to the very beginning and try to correct ourselves. But we should zig a little to the right and zag a little to the left and make our progress to the absolute truth. I hope my old and new readers will enjoy this latest installment of free writing and get accustomed to it appearing regularly in the *Free Write Journal*.

## **Govardhana Retreats**

It’s good to get back to listening to the Govardhana Retreats after spending my time preparing for my Zoom lecture. Jagattarini Mataji made an announcement that she’s going to give a series of talks on Uddhava’s carrying a message from Krsna and going to Vrndavana. She said it’s a “sad” story, yet Uddhava manages to uplift the spirit of the half-dead *gopis* by telling the pastimes of Krsna. Uddhava is so much

like Krsna that he enlivens all the inhabitants of Vrndavana during his stay reciting Krsna's pastimes. But Krsna has sent him there not just to enliven the *gopis* but to be humbled by seeing the great love of the residents of Vrndavana for Krsna, which is even greater than Uddhava's love. I'll be looking forward to hearing that series.

Sacinandana Swami was talking about meditating on the lotus feet of Krsna. He said that this is something that is repeatedly recommended in the *sastras*, but it's not something that ISKCON devotees do. He criticized the ISKCON devotees for not taking to this process, which he says is very nourishing and enlivening.

Bhurijana Prabhu was talking about the beauty and attractiveness of Krsna to all the moving and nonmoving beings in Goloka. He emphasized that Krsna wasn't acting like the Supreme Personality of Godhead, or like the ruler of the universe. He was just a cowherd boy who walked around Vrndavana without any shoes, and who joked and played with His cowherd friends, and dealt with the young *gopis* in amorous sports. He told how Krsna, when He was only about four years old, used to herd the cows along with His *gopa* friends. Mother Yasoda was very afraid of this activity. The cows were very big animals, and she feared that they might accidentally step on Krsna and hurt Him. She forbade Him to continue. Krsna told her that cowherding gave Him the greatest pleasure and He wouldn't stop, even if she told Him to. The elders then consulted amongst themselves, and they came up with a compromise. They decided that Krsna and His little friends should herd the calves instead of the cows. The calves were small and less likely to hurt Krsna with their big bodies like the cows. Krsna agreed to this proposal, and He became a herder of

calves. Early in the morning He blew His bugle and called out to all His friends to wake up. He called them all individually by name and said, “Come on! We’re going on a picnic today! Hurry up and bring your calves.” Actually the boys didn’t have to be awakened because they were awake all night waiting for Krsna to call them. The boys, numbering in the thousands, then poured out of their homes along with an *unlimited number of calves*. The *acaryas* comment on how it is possible for Krsna and the boys to accommodate an unlimited number of calves in Bhauma Vrndavana even though it is inconceivable to the ordinary person. Krsna tells the boys that they are going to have a picnic that day. He finds a beautiful spot with soft sandy surface near the bank of the Yamuna, and He sits like the whorl of a lotus with the thousands of boys surrounding Him in concentric circles. The boys strain their faces and necks to get a look at Krsna, and they hope that He will recognize them. Krsna performs a miracle so that each boy thinks that Krsna is seeing him alone. They open their tiffins and prepare to eat their lunch. Meanwhile, the calves have wandered off in search of tastier grasses. When the boys notice that the calves have wandered off, they become anxious. Krsna assures them not to worry. He says they should stay there and enjoy their lunch, and He will personally go, find out the calves and bring them back. Meanwhile, Lord Brahma, looking on from Brahmaloaka, sees the childlike activities of Krsna and he is amazed. He knows that Krsna is his supreme Lord and master, and he is His servant, but he cannot comprehend how Krsna could be playing like an ordinary cowherd boy in playful pastimes with the calves and boys. So Brahma thinks he will show Krsna his own mystic power. His

pastime is called *Brahma-vimohana-lila*, or the bewildering of Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma fell into illusion and thought his mystic power was greater than Krsna's, and he wanted to test Krsna. So while Krsna was searching for the calves, Brahma came down and kidnapped all the boys and put them to mystic sleep in a cave. We will stop here and leave you with a cliffhanger. If you are interested, you can turn to the *Krsna* book and read Chapter 13 of the Tenth Canto, the *Brahma-vimohana-lila*.

### **Prison Inmates**

I write to a number of prisoners who are interested in Krsna consciousness. They have some of Prabhupada's books and my books, and they are very interested in them. One disciple who's been in on a long sentence has finally been released to a halfway house with far less restrictions. He even goes shopping, accompanied by his Correctional Officers, and he has a telephone (and asked for my number). In this halfway house, the inmates are referred to as "clients," and they take classes in re-orientation to the free world.

Another disciple, Upendra dasa, has a fulltime service of writing letters to prisoners. He says some of them become interested for a while and then fall away, but he has a few who are enthusiastic and keep writing to him, and they love to receive books. In one sense, I tell the inmates that they're not in such a bad situation. They have time for *sadhana*, and they can control their senses and not commit sinful activities. When Haridasa Thakura was put into prison, the prisoners were eager to hear from him, knowing him to be an empowered saint. He told them

that their position was advantageous. They could spend their time chanting Hare Krsna and not be distracted by the material world. They were a little disappointed at first with his message, but as he explained it to them they became enlivened and faithful. The devotee in the halfway house says he can now receive any books that we may send him, Prabhupada's books and my books. I'll write him and ask him what books he has already, and we will send him a shipment of books he hasn't read.

### ***Vairagya***

In my daily listening of a lecture by Prabhupada, I heard him speak a verse by Prahlada Maharaja to his demoniac classmates. He told them how difficult it was to detach oneself from householder life. He said the wife is a sympathetic friend and speaks sweet words in a solitary place. Just by the tongue, her sweet talks and her cooking nice foodstuff, she controls the man. Then he becomes strong in his other senses and enjoys his wife with his genitals. How can one get out of such a bond relationship with an affectionate wife? Then there are children. The man becomes very attached to the little children's broken words. How can he ever leave them? Prahlada enumerates all the attachments of householder life and says it is like being in a blind well from which one can't get out. But Krsna consciousness requires *vairagya*, detachment. One can practice detachment as a householder by following regulative life instead of indulging in sex. One performs devotional service with his family members, starting with chanting and hearing the names and activities of Krsna. According to *varnasrama dharma*, one stays in marriage for 25 years. At the

age of 50, the man leaves home and travels to holy places to purify himself. At this time his wife may remain with him as an assistant, but sex life is stopped. *Vairagya*, or detachment, is a necessary feature in the life of a person who wants to get relief from birth and death and attain to the path of going back to Godhead: *vairagya-vidya-nija-bhakti-yoga*. The life of *bhakti* is a life of detachment from material gratification. It is done by experiencing the higher taste. One can practice it with one's family members by chanting and hearing the names and pastimes of the Lord. The family members can experience a higher taste in spiritual life and automatically become detached from sense gratification.

### **Out-loud Reading**

In our group reading, we heard about “The Pregnancy of Diti in the Evening.” Diti is pleading to her husband Kasyapa Muni to have sex with her right away. Her other co-wives have children but she does not have any, and she desperately wants to have them through sex with her husband. Kasyapa says he will oblige her, but now at this moment it is not a favorable time. It is evening, and Lord Siva is roaming about with his ghostly companions. To create a pregnancy at this hour would be inauspicious. But Diti, impelled by sex desire, pulls on the cloth of her husband just like a public prostitute. In his purport to the Third Canto, Prabhupada compares Kasyapa to Haridasa Thakura. Haridasa Thakura was visited at night while he was alone by a beautiful prostitute who tried to seduce him. But he remained determined and detached and did not fall for her seduction. Prabhupada writes that Kasyapa

was not so powerful. He appears to be an impersonalist and a worshiper of Lord Siva, so when he sees he cannot pacify his wife or make her patient, he makes a prayer to Fate and lies down with her in a secluded place. After the sex act, Diti approaches Kasyapa with lamentation and fear. She asks him to pray to Lord Siva that he not destroy the embryos in her womb out of anger that she has performed sex at the wrong time. Kasyapa chastises her and tells her that she will give birth to two ferocious demons who will be personally killed by Krsna. Diti is relieved to hear that her offspring (the demons Hiranyaksa and Hiranyakasipu) will be personally killed by Krsna and thus delivered from the material world. Kasyapa also tells her that she will have a grandson, Prahlada Maharaja, who will be a perfect, powerful devotee who will grant auspiciousness to all the world. Diti is very pleased to hear about her grandson. In order to protect the demigods from the wrath of her demoniac sons, Diti keeps them in her womb as embryos for a hundred years to spare the demigods from pain and suffering. But by withholding the birth of her children the universe turns dark, and she finally has to release them. As soon as they are born, they begin to wreak havoc upon the innocent *prajas* of the world.

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Now we are up to the section where Kardama Muni, after his austerities for thousands of years, gets direct *darsana* of the Personality of Godhead. Kardama makes obeisances to the Lord and honors Him with suitable prayers. Visnu tells him He knows what Kardama desires in his heart—a suitable wife as a partner. Kardama

was a *Prajapati*, one who is meant to increase the population, but he was also fully realized in God consciousness. Visnu told him that in two days the emperor Svayambhuva Manu would come to him with his young daughter Devahuti. Svayambhuva Manu would offer his daughter to Kardama as a compatible wife qualified in all ways. She would be an assistant and a wife beyond the imagination of his desires. In two days, Svayambhuva Manu and his wife Satarupa arrived at Kardama's *asrama* with their daughter, Devahuti. They saw Kardama just as he was finishing his long vow of sacrifice. He appeared to them like an unpolished gem. From the long austerities he was performing, he was dressed in rags, and his body was somewhat unclean. Mostly ascetics who practice penance become emaciated, but Kardama, because he personally had *darsana* of the Lord, was not emaciated at all. The king's daughter was very pleased to see Kardama, and she accepted him in her heart. Kardama also became attracted to Devahuti, and Svayambhuva Manu turned her over as a bride for the sage. Lord Visnu had told Kardama that he would conceive nine daughters with Devahuti, and then he would conceive an incarnation of Visnu named Kapiladeva, who would teach *sankhya-yoga* to Devahuti, His mother, and to the world. Both the bride and the groom were *maha-yogis*, but Devahuti had not reached perfection yet. Kardama, therefore, went on with his lifestyle of renunciation, and Devahuti assisted him. Devahuti herself became austere. Her body became skinny, and she wore matted locks and lived in his simple leaf-cottage as a faithful wife.

### ***“Grains in Pestilence”***

Jan Potemkin sent me a poem. I thought it was really good, and I’m suggesting to him to submit it to a poetry magazine for publication. It’s ironic, and the final line, “The mat that welcomes all guests,” is his genuine admission that the rice was welcomingly distributed to all the birds, chipmunks and squirrels. Here is the poem:

#### “Grains in Pestilence”

“Because of the plague,

I decided to learn Indian cooking

and eat the foods of the liberated gods.

The rice I had was unsuitable. Sticky.

I went to a hip organic store.

It was proudly aromatic—lavender, fennel, expensive soap.

I didn’t want to linger though—the risk of infection was too high.

I bought Basmati rice that slid from a vertical cylinder that held the long grains.

When I got home, I fumbled with keys, mail, newspaper, rice,  
the surgical gloves shiny and slippery with the rain.

The thin plastic bag fell and split with an ease and efficiency  
that startled me, so defiant of its function,  
just before my anger emerged.

The rice, emancipated, flowed eagerly over my porch, hastening to escape.

As I picked up the bag, the tear responded by opening faster and faster.

I flung the limp thing and the few lingering grains onto the lawn.

I swept the rest off into the bushes,

and as the days passed,

it was all eaten.

Birds, chipmunks, squirrels,

taking it from the steps, the soil

the spaces in the lattice doormat,

The mat that welcomes all guests.”

## Questions and Answers

It is *parampara*. It takes a qualified inquirer and a qualified person to answer the questions as he's heard from higher authorities. Krsna taught Lord Brahma when there was no other being existing. Brahma taught Narada, and Narada taught Vyasa. In this way, the *parampara* comes down. We are reading in the *Bhagavatam* about Vidura, who went on pilgrimage and met Uddhava and inquired from him. Uddhava imparted knowledge of Krsna in and out of Vrndavana. Then Uddhava sent Vidura to hear from a senior Vaisnava, Maitreya, who was present when Krsna spoke His last instructions before departing from the world. So Vidura's questioning of Maitreya is a continuation of the *parampara*. In *caitanya-lila*, Caitanya

Mahaprabhu took the role of an inquirer and put His questions to Ramananda Raya, who replied perfectly. Ramananda said that he was being used by Lord Caitanya as a puppet, and whatever he said was actually dictated to him by Sri Caitanyadeva.

Srila Prabhupada came and taught the same *parampara*, the science of Krsna as spoken in *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*. He did not manufacture anything new. Prabhupada said his only credit was that he followed his spiritual master and the previous *acaryas*. He had full faith in the *parampara*. Prabhupada answered thousands of questions through letter correspondence, and when he was in India, he kept an open-door policy, and the devotees could always go in to see him and ask their questions.

### **Lighting Up Radha-Govinda's Forms**

Today we just changed the batteries in the spotlights that illuminate Radha-Govinda. This makes Them bright and clear to see, but the batteries only last a few hours before they begin to gradually dim. In former times before electricity, the *pujaris* used to light up the Deities with ghee wick lamps or candles. The effect was softer and less strain on the observer. A decent-sized candle lasts longer than a battery-lit spotlight. What's nice about the spotlight is that it enables us to see Radha-Govinda's features and jewelry, and Govinda's lotus feet, Radha's braided hair, and Their facial features.

## ***“THE SUMMER MARATHON***

***“August 3***

1:15 AM

“Read *api cet su-duracaro*. The devotee's faults are like the marks of a rabbit one sees on the moon. Glad I got up early. The densely populated campground is mostly silent now, campers breathing in and out in tents and caravans as my pen scratches away, ladybug helping me through, the light of the good desk lamp like a transparent yellow liquid flowing down onto the page. It's welcome. The ink meets it in a dance of rapture.

“Krsna consciousness is not a tag we add onto our writing or our lives. It's not a label on a shirt or sweater, ‘Made in a Union Shop.’ It's the warp and woof of the threads themselves. It either is or isn't Krsna conscious. Of course, by deliberate action we put Krsna in our sentence, although He is already everywhere. I bow to Him and beg Him to inspire me. He said to Arjuna, ‘You should engage in My devotional service.’ He meant it for Arjuna and everyone. ‘Therefore having come to this temporary and miserable world, engage in loving service to Me.’ We were fools to come here. Now we should know it's ‘not habitable for any

sane gentleman.’ Get out as quickly as possible. ‘Take to My devotional service and come quickly back to Godhead, back home.’

“*Bhagavad-gita* (9.30) admits the power of the material energy. A sincere devotee may accidentally fall down. We shouldn't find fault with him. *Bg.* 9.33 states that we have come here to this dangerous place. My writing tells, unearths the worms of my past and tells of the worms' present proximity. I keep away from the dangers of illicit sex, which I may compare to poisonous snakes slithering outside the van in this campsite. I may mention it; I may say it's here just so we can avoid it. (Some will object that I put down the material world; that's another kind of criticism of devotional writing.)

“I name the spade. Don't be adversely affected. Dear reader, if you have a problem with this, if you are quick to take objection, perhaps you had better not read me. Kierkegaard dedicated many of his books to ‘that *individual* whom with joy and gratitude I call *my* reader.’ I am the first reader, the one who draws the direct benefit.

There is joy of creativity,  
and responsibility.”

“*August 6*

“I'm scheduled to meet with Sacinandana Swami at 2:00 P.M.

Hope I'm clear of head pain to do it. I was thinking, 'What shall I present to him as an agenda for our talk?' He expects me to represent 'the inner life.' Sometimes we speak of this in a tantalizing, unclear way, as 'mysticism' or 'the life of prayer.' Sometimes we allude to private (secret) interest in deeper levels of Krsna consciousness. For me, inner life means concentration, saving optimum time to read Prabhupada's books and to chant *japa*. For me personally, it also means writing. This is the '*babaji*' content of my life. I advocate it quietly as the inner life of a preacher. It's all up front and non-secretive. The secret or private aspect of it has to do with something else.

"I read *Bhagavad-gita* this morning for fifty minutes. Good! Please do it every day and seek ways to have taste and disciplined practice for other readings throughout the day—even random reading in Prabhupada's books and letters throughout the years, one may go from one book to another, tasting nectar like a bee.

"Yesterday afternoon I typed two pages intended as part of this 'marathon,' but then I threw them away. It's good to be detached and not think that everything that I write has to be preserved. Usually I include everything I write within a certain time period as part of a timed book; I rarely crumple things up or rip them into pieces. I wonder what made me do it this time. I don't want to lose nerve or confidence in the

worthiness of recording as much as possible. That is the meaning of endurance in this marathon.

“Sometimes, in a wild dance, words fly off like sparks from a spark machine. That’s free writing. Sometimes I write sarcastically, coyly or ironically. I prefer to be more direct. When I can find access to a soft and sincere devotional heart, however, I don’t want to avoid writing. Srila Prabhupada gave the example that we should be like businessmen who are expert to make profit in both a strong or weak economy. I can be writing profitably on one level or another.

“Here are some phrases from the pages I threw in the trash along with an empty bottle of drinking water, tissues, filings from sharpened pencils, gone-dead batteries, etc. You can’t keep it all; some is junk:

“He asked your secretary, ‘What is he really like? What is he into?’

“He said, “He doesn’t like to go to big festivals; he likes to read and write alone.””

“Yeah, well, I like to do that, the man said. And he likes radishes and polecats and words that have fur on them . . .’

“Much of it can be trashed, I admit.”

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***“Belfast, North Ireland***

*“The Mixture*

“Radha-Madhava, I sing for You,  
 mixing *sastra* with gray sky. In the *Bhagavatam* class I  
 spoke  
 of friendliness among devotees,  
 while magpies carried twigs to the treetops.

***“Inis Rath, North Ireland***

“Getting ready to travel produces a life-sadness, uneasiness—more aware than usual that my life will eventually end, as it does for everyone.

“Grass growing long here. Manu is too busy to cut it. Me too. Rats run to the leftover grains from last July's marriage yajna and fire arena. The cat stalks the rats. Twice I came upon fresh rat corpses on the path where I chant.

***“Heathrow Airport, London***

“Saw an old man dressed in fashionable blue suit. He looked like the next to last figure in the ‘changing bodies’ diorama. He had some

kind of attack, so he sat down, calmed down his breathing, then stood and walked off slowly toward his gate. I told M. that a devotee hopes to die in a recollected state on the ‘battlefield’ for Krsna.

“Not at Heathrow,’ M. said, ‘trying to make a plane connection.’

### ***“America***

*“Los Angeles, U.S.A.*

“‘Welcome home, Sir,’ said the lady at Immigration, returning my passport.

“‘Thank you,’ I replied, and passed under the American flags and photo of Ronald Reagan. Then the man at U.S. Customs asked me why I went to India.

“‘To visit temples in connection with our religion,’ I replied.

“He glanced into my eyes. Should I have made a more straightforward reply? ‘Sрила Prabhupada wants us to go. Mayapur and Vrndavana are the two holiest places on earth. We go for purification.’”

***“U.S.A.***

*“Return Trip*

“With car parked in Amish country  
 Prabhupada is singing *Brahma-samhita*  
 and we’re eating juicy melons  
 amidst the dry brown cornstalks.  
 Do I want to hold this moment?  
 Do I know how to let it go?  
 His Divine Grace  
 is our only hope.”

### ***Prabhupada Nectar, Volume 3***

“Jagad-guru dasa Brahmachari and another *brahmachari* journeyed to Mayapur three weeks before the annual festival in hopes of getting a private *darsana* with Srila Prabhupada. They had been preaching in North Africa and were carrying a \$12,000 check from a man who asked that it be personally given to Srila Prabhupada. While being massaged by Hari Sauri, Prabhupada received Jagadguru on the roof of the Mayapur building. Prabhupada asked where the devotees were coming from, and they proudly answered that they were coming from North Africa. ‘Oh, North Africa,’ said Prabhupada, and he seemed impressed. When the brahmacharis gave Prabhupada the donation, he remarked that this was successful preaching. The people must have been pleased, he said,

otherwise they would not have given such an amount of money. He then asked Jagadguru if he liked India. When he replied, ‘Yes, Srila Prabhupada,’ Prabhupada was pleased and asked him to stay in India. As a member of ISKCON Africa, Jagadguru was working under Brahmananda Swami, the GBC for that continent. Jagadguru was Brahmananda Swami's only *sankirtana* collector, and Brahmananda had asked him to request of Srila Prabhupada that the \$12,000 be used to pay ISKCON Africa's BBT debt. ‘Can this money go to the credit of our debt?’ Jagadguru asked. ‘No,’ said Srila Prabhupada. Anticipating Brahmananda Swami's displeasure, Jagadguru tried to explain about the BBT debt. Again Prabhupada said, ‘No.’ Jagadguru tried a third time to explain, but again Prabhupada said, ‘No!’

“Prabhupada put out his hand and slapped it with his other hand. ‘My Guru Maharaja always kept us in debt,’ he said. ‘As for Brahmananda Swami,’ said Prabhupada, ‘we will not hang him, but he will work for this debt.’

“Prabhupada then told a story of how Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura used to build a temple or create a big project and put the whole Gaudiya Math into debt. *Sannyasis, brahmacaris*, and all members would enthusiastically go out and collect money, and Guru Maharaja would simply start another program so that the Gaudiya Math would

remain in debt. ‘In this way,’ said Prabhupada, ‘he always kept us in debt and always working and always busy.’”

### ***Radha-Govinda Worship Book***

“Radha-Govinda reciprocate with me.  
 Radha-Govinda, now I can see You clearly  
 and without impediment, and I am elated  
 and very satisfied. I have  
 the intimate *darsana* of three sets of Deities:  
 First, Srila Prabhupada, finally situated up close,  
 seated on his regal *vyasasana*  
 with his hands folded in front of him.  
 He is an excellent rendition  
 and nondifferent from the Prabhupada we knew  
 and lived with. Below him on the altar  
 is Lord Caitanya with His arms upraised dancing in  
 the ecstasy of His Navadvipa *sankirtana* pastimes.  
 Above Him on the topmost step  
 of the altar is Radha-Govinda  
 in the highest epitome  
 of relationship, *madhurya-rasa*.

You Two bestow Your complete  
 love to the people of Vrajabhumi and  
 You offer it  
 to all living beings who are  
 Your parts and parcels  
 by constitutional nature.  
 If they refuse Your mercy, it is their greatest loss,  
 and they have to undergo transmigration  
 life after life in  
 miserable species of life. Srila Prabhupada spread  
 the Krsna consciousness movement all over the world  
 under the order of his spiritual master  
 with the blessings of Lord Caitanya  
 just to give a chance  
 for the fallen souls  
 to come back  
 starting with chanting Hare Krsna.  
 I am grateful Radha-Govinda  
 reside with me at Viraha Bhavan”

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## WRITING SESSIONS

***“The Faithful Transcriber (Conclusion)”***

***“July 9, 1996”***

“12:16 A.M.

“Walking as writing. Or rather, a full day’s writing as walking offered to Krsna, just as Bhakti Swami is doing. Nowadays it’s just a note early in the morning before the *real* day starts. I ask for questions.

“One I got is:

‘What causes your stress?’

One is,

‘How do you make spaghetti? When you were a little boy, did you eat it every Wednesday or what?’

“Walk the sweat off through the pores. Got enough to work off from what I’ve done and heard.

“Lax said he was living in New York City. when the answers to all the questions he heard were New York answers. So, he wanted to escape that. I guess I have ISKCON GBC answers to things and I want to hear myself. I don’t want to hear N.M. followers or anybody else, even the doomsday astrologers. Write, write, and if it helps someone, okay.

“Data, data. This is what I want: to get alone. You’ll be among people at Wicklow. Will four weeks be enough? Attend (or send note to) the all-Ireland convention and say, ‘I propose to write and live alone most of the time and only come out for certain things like these meetings.’

“Cree-ripe.

“‘The modes of nature bear heavily down. You can’t escape it, but write down things that occur to you.’

“Your doodles are permissible in your own book. If it is good it will do good for others. If not, it will not last. Who will assure this?

“A drawing doesn’t always have to be clear as to what it is, at least not super-clear each limb or the intention of the people. You are trying to make something clear but you don’t know yourself what it is, so how can the drawing – or words- be completely clear?

“Are people willing to read unclear writing? Is what people want your ultimate goal?

“Now fax, flax and lax ask him for the pax to nax. Got it?

“Oh, disciples’ meetings be blessed.

“I was going to play ‘*Krsna* be blessed.’ But maybe a little of this and a little of that would be better.

“Dare to improvise at the disciples’ meetings. A little of *Bhaktya-loka* reading with comment, and a little something else. There are really few meetings, so I don’t have to worry how I will get through.

“You mean a grab-bag of potluck-questions. We will start out in the hour and see where it goes. The first meeting dug up so much you could keep going on that for quite a while.

“So typically, I would end this midnight session early and go look at what they wrote yesterday and find good things to comment on. Each one might yield mileage.

“Oh, he is walking

she is talking

they are looking, someone is putting. It is an epidemic, a bomb and a bomb shelter.

It’s not joke. All your writing could go up in smoke.

“Are you willing to face the bad things in your dreams? Lately I half-awake from dreams and only imagine that I put them on the tape recorder. Then I go back to sleep. I’m not really up to recording most of it. Only a fragment. I do have to sleep and not merely recover dreams. I am more aware that I do a lot of dreaming while I sleep. Need to deeply rest. Don’t want so much to get up when midnight comes. I think of reasons not to get up. That’s not so enthusiastic, is it? That’s how I am

these days. The main thing is these two shots of meetings. Get rounds done and go to that room for meetings with the men and women.

“See the doctor today after breakfast. Tell him that yesterday I didn’t take any pills but I wanted to see you, thinking that I was in a crisis. But yesterday at least I was better. One day at a time.”

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***July 10, 1996***

“This is the third day of the disciples’ meetings. It’s one in the morning. I had a difficult night, didn’t sleep well. First a fly was bothering me, then I felt some indigestion. When I woke, I was feeling depressed by these events of the night in which I was trying to get some peaceful rest. Here during the day I am being honored as a spiritual master, but at night I can’t sleep and I fall asleep but have different series of dreams. And as usual, there is always so much danger in them.

“They scheduled too many events for me today. In addition to the morning and evening classes, they’ve scheduled me to attend a lunch with all the disciples at 1:00 P.M. But I think it may be too much to ask because I have to make an extra trip there and back and I’ll barely have time to get back again by four o’clock.

“Madhu spent all day yesterday: over two hours driving one way and then back, and it was all mostly fruitless. He went to some mechanic who promised to install a gas tank under the van but never did it. Maybe I shared his frustration too as I tried to sleep.

Nevertheless, I must persist with these disciples’ meetings. They’re going well, and there’s just two more days and then I’ll be free to begin a fulltime writing retreat.

“Right now, I’m feeling some pain in the eye which is unusual for such an early time of the day. I’m not about to engage in wordplay here to go beyond the diary but I’m going to get ready now to chant my rounds. This is the faithful transcriber who doesn’t feel much energy for telling lies or making literature but he’s reporting in for the future record. Hare Krishna.

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***July 11, 1996***

“I just finished writing outline answers to questions from disciples. This will be the basis for the last meeting we’ll have today at 10:00 A.M. Here’s a sample of some of the questions and answers:

“Q: Is it wrong to desire or feel the need for personal attention from the guru?’

“A: It’s not wrong to want personal attention. But be patient. Develop a personal service relationship and it will come naturally. Don’t be envious.’

“In answering this I’ll go on to read a letter from a disciple saying how he felt so much reciprocation when rereading *Radio Shows*.

“Dear Diary, I find it too tedious to write down any more of these questions. I already just did it and it would be redundant for me to put it here. Besides, I have limited physical energy. Mainly I want to get through this day. I have to chant my rounds now. Then one activity after another happens really fast today and it’s very tight. I have to worship Prabhupada earlier than usual, put him in the travel box and then by 10:00 A.M. we’re supposed to be all packed up (Madhu has a huge amount of packing still to do). And then I go to the 10:00 A.M. class After that it’s only a brief while before we have the 12:30 meeting to see

a *gurukula* show and then 1:00 P.M. *prasadam* – which is a public affair with all the devotees together. And then departure at 2:00 P.M.

“One of the questions was, ‘How did Srila Prabhupada sing the Nrsimha prayers? I would like to learn to sing it the way he did.’

“For the answer, I’ll sing it the way I do, which is the best I remember of the way he did it.

8:30 A.M.

“Packing. M.’s got several men doing last work on the van – fixing a strap so the typewriter can ride on a shelf, fixing something so the plastic cartons can be strapped securely. And emptying this house. He tends to time everything so it’s all done by just the last minute. An old story with us.

“I’m afraid of change,’ writes G. dasi in a last letter I get. Tell her something from the philosophy and from my own view: Krsna wants us to depend on no niche or situation except His shelter. Easier said...Guru’s words, how weighty and paid for?

“Go alone and pay and weigh,  
relax, sigh relief, write  
quickly and slowly.

“Always looking for a future. This last meeting is a good chance.

I told M. I could prepare some more Srila Prabhupada excerpts for classes or even seminars. Transcendental disc jockey. ‘You seemed to enjoy it.’ he said. Yes, I guess so. Do I enjoy more going alone to write or is that a myth?

“You have to face the blocks and cotton candies. The afternoons when words don’t come from a hole, just sparks and surfaces – the attic, the backyard, the misgivings, the things of ISKCON that pass through your mind.

“In about twenty minutes put Srila Prabhupada in the wooden box and pack it up with the other crates. He’ll sleep as we travel.

“I intend to track the last two days. True to the theme of the *Faithful Transcriber*, but not the imaginative flights, no creative lies.

“Once there was a man...They gave him jam with hemlock in it. He dreamt recurrently of possessing false currency bills. Always. Try to pass off your money.

“Hope they don’t detain us at the border into England at Le Shuttle. They do a quick security check of the van and then ‘passport control.’

“Sir, I was admitted to England on May 31<sup>st</sup> for six months, and since then I’ve become a resident of Ireland.

Why would you want to do that?

To write books.

Oh, have you written one honestly and what's it about?

“About Krsna consciousness. *Raja vidya*. I'm a guru. Don't call me in for more interviews to prove I'm the owner of the van. I'm tired of that.

“Don't stop, we want to go write a timed book starting as a sigh and then a slow walk, building momentum. Don't know what it is, but that it is built on words.”

1:15 P.M.

“Watched the *gurukula* play – Savatri got her husband back from death. Smiling bare-chested boy in short pants playing dead sat up and said, ‘Something strange happened!’ – smiled beautifully.

“Then they sang:

‘Devaki, Devaki,

please don't cry

tears of a mother's eyes.

Kamsa will die

and Krsna will appear

to dry up your tears

and relieve you of your tears.’

“Now lunch is late and we wait. I hope I don’t get a headache, and I hope the van operates okay into England. Ekadasi. Seven-hour drive. It could be bad luck on Thursday afternoon. Chant Hare Krishna and all will be well. It may be a bad time to travel but our purpose is to serve.

“Devaki, Devaki. Chant Hare Krishna as we travel. Beads in hands. Faithful scribe writes it down. Motorcycles. I’m in the back of the van, sitting out for the announced fifteen minute delay before *prasadam* is served. M. is threatening them that we will leave at 2:00 P.M. with or without *prasadam*.

“Lord, please protect us.

“The young king died, one year after his marriage. His wife brought him back to life. But then we have to die a little later.

“Hooded Yamaraja held a white noose. We thought it was fun. Headaches? Death? Cross into England?

“Flies back here like the warmth. O angels. O Devaki. Lunch is ready.”