

## ***Free Write Journal #93***

### **Free Writes**

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### **The Trucks Roll By at Stuyvesant Falls**

For two weeks now there has been a constant flow of huge trucks passing right by our house. For one week they carried grass for the cows, and now they are carrying liquified manure. The manure is used in fertilizing the fields to make grass for the cows.

They are dairy cows who are not allowed out of their stalls. The men come and milk them, but when the production of milk gets low, the cows are all slaughtered. It is a gruesome, sinful business, the biggest business in the county. The trucks pass in constant waves. Their engines roar, and they change gears loudly.

Baladeva oddly said the passing of the trucks reminds him of the constant flow of the waves at Jagannatha Puri. But I don't see it that way. A group of ten of us went some years ago to Jagannatha Puri and stayed by the beach. We heard the constant flow of the ocean waves, and I was inspired to write a series of poems about the waves. It was a blissful time. We read *Caitanya-caritamrta* together and went out and saw the places where Lord Caitanya visited during His appearance. All night I heard the waves, and they put me to sleep.

Here's an excerpt from a collection, *Our Group At Nilacala*:

“The waves pound and don’t stop.  
 They could kill a man.  
 I hear them from a timid  
 distance. I praise their  
 drumming, rolling qualities.  
 I sing of the hypnotic Supreme  
 the drunkenness of trance-words,  
 the drum (admit it, it’s  
 a sort of drum roll), a  
 roll call of names  
 of the living and the dead.  
 ‘From thence He shall judge  
 the living and the dead.’  
 Just here happy with our  
 group in Nilacala.”

Our pilgrimage to Puri and tuning in to the waves was hardly like the sound of the murderous trucks carrying their cow-slaughtering business!

It will be a relief to get free of this parade of trucks, and we can do it by reading *The Waves of Jagannatha Puri*.

**Local News**

I had another rare meeting with Saci Suta—on a Sunday when he wasn't working—on my front porch. He was sitting downwind eight feet away with a mask on. He talked about how his laid-off workers won't come back to Equal Vision because they're getting more money on unemployment. He talked about how each of his children were doing, and how his wife is building a new fence. Our talk on the porch seemed to be in a peaceful atmosphere, but the parade of huge manure trucks kept rolling by to interrupt our talk. The local fire engines also came by. (They go out when there is a child in the neighborhood who's having a birthday. The children are not allowed to have a party because of social distancing required, but the fire trucks bring much excitement with their flashing lights and horns. The fire trucks' sirens and horns make a great noise, but the stay-at-home children are thrilled.) There has also been noise from neighbors felling their big trees with chainsaws. It is nerve-racking hearing them go at it with chainsaws and chippers. There are at least seven trees within a five-house radius that were cut down, including one of our own that was dead.

Saci Suta discovered two big manuscripts of mine in a trunk while he was cleaning out his garage. One is labeled *The Heart of Sanatorium, Volume 2*, and the other is *The Autobiography of Stevie-Satsvarupa*. I have begun to read them. They're about twenty years old, five hundred pages each, and I don't remember what's in them. I'm starting to read them, and they seem like new.

## **Neighbors**

We have good relationships with our neighbors in this small town of Stuyvesant Falls. Leo first stopped by and questioned Baladeva as to what we were about. Then Bala from Trinidad talked to him and gave him a *Back to Godhead* magazine. He looked at it and said we were good people. At this time of lockdown, he stops by and asks us if there's anything we need. He also has contributed to the rental fee when we hold our twice-a-year programs at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. Yesterday he came by to say the VFW has decided to cancel their annual big fundraiser in August, so he said that we will probably want to cancel our proposed program for July 6<sup>th</sup>.

Our across-the-street neighbor, Jody, is a handyman and has friendships with other handymen. He helps with plumbing and electrical issues around the house. Jody and another neighbor, Louie, help prepare Trinidad Bala's garden (especially now since Bala is stranded in Trinidad with the airport closed). Jody's wife, Vicki, takes vegetables from our garden, so it is a kind of community garden. Bala's two neighbors donate vegetable plants, and Louie's wife takes Krsna dasi to a nursery to pick out flowers to plant. Louie and Jody are a mixture of the modes of goodness and ignorance. They are always willing to help us out, but Louie is always smoking marijuana, and Jody is an alcoholic.

On the other side of the block, two neighbors bring flowers in season and other gifts. There's another neighbor with a plow who helps out in the winter and plows our piles of snow. Another neighbor just declared that our lawnmower was dead after ten years of good service, and we have to get a new one. All of these neighbors

get *prasadam* from us.

In these ways, we are engaging a whole neighborhood in service to Krsna, and they all appreciate how nicely our ashram looks with its garden and lawn.

## **Health Report**

My condition is steady. I protect myself against the Covid infection by staying in lockdown with the other members of our ashram, except for Baladeva, who goes out once a week and shops and does errands. When he returns he takes a shower and washes his clothes. We don't allow anyone to visit us at our ashram, and we even disinfect our incoming mail. My main problem is I cannot walk because of fused ankle and weaknesses of legs. I can't move without a wheeled walker or someone's personal assistance. I do exercises in the house but not enough to reverse the problem because I have COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), which is mainly symptomized by shortness of breath. This condition, therefore, seems irreversible. I am very sedentary, spending most of my time in the chair, which is not so good for my health. I'm still able to write my weekly *Journal*, and I work on books and book publishing with the help of Rev. John Endler and a whole crew of helpers (proofreaders, designers, etc.) The doctor said I am lucky that I like to do reading and writing and listening to lectures, because in that way I'm living within my limitations. My physical handicap does not cause me mental depression. I am peaceful and content; I take it as Krsna's mercy. As Krsna advises in the *Bhagavad-gita*, I tolerate my situation, as one tolerates the changing seasons of winter and

summer without being disturbed. Krsna advises one to take the changes as due to the material nature and go on with one's duty.

### **Srila Prabhupada's Lectures**

Every day I listen to a lecture by Prabhupada. There are hundreds of recorded lectures by him, and the listening is always fresh and purifying. To associate with the pure devotee by submissive aural reception is a great boon, and that we can do it by hearing recorded talks is a gift of modern technology. Prabhupada personally, starting in 1965, obtained a reel-to-reel tape recorder and recorded his voice, even when there was no audience. He knew the importance of preserving his *parampara* talks for the people of the future. He even recorded *Introduction to Geetopanisad*, which became the foreword to his book *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

When I play his lecture, I am not able to remember specifically what he said for later recall. This is a phenomenon of Kali-yuga, when people have short memories and cannot retain the words of the spiritual master. (In the past, people had long memories and could retain the words of the guru even by hearing them just once.) I do not lament my forgetfulness of the specifics of Prabhupada's talks because each day I can listen to a new talk with new information from the spiritual world, with another chance to be purified by hearing from the pure devotee. *Tulayama lavenapi*: It is stated that just by hearing one moment from a perfectly realized soul, one can be purified and qualified to return back to Godhead. This is the power of *sadhu-sanga*, associating with a saintly person. As long as one listens submissively

and attentively, there are always new lights. It never gets boring or hackneyed.

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I just heard a lecture Prabhupada gave in Bombay in 1971. It was from the Seventh Canto, where Prahlada Maharaja is teaching his demoniac schoolmates. Prabhupada called them “the sons of demons.” Then he said they were not actually demons themselves but the sons of demons. Then in a lighthearted way, he said pointedly to the devotees present, “They are just like you, yes? You are not demons but you are sons of demons. You have given up your connection to your demoniac fathers.” The devotees laughed in response to Prabhupada’s amusement. They felt grateful to be under the protection of the pure devotee and free from family ties. Prabhupada went on to say how Prahlada attracted the demon sons and brought them to Krsna consciousness—just as Prabhupada had done with his disciples. They were now surrendered souls, living in the rat-infested jungle at Juhu Beach, surrendered to his vision of building a grand temple there for Radha-Rasabihari. The devotees had to fight Mr. Nair, the demoniac landholder who sold the property to the devotees but then tried to cheat them and drive them off the land. It was a long, protracted fight to secure the land and begin the construction of the temple. But Prabhupada said, “It was a good fight.”

## **Moving to Vrndavana**

At the Govardhana Retreat, Bhurijana Prabhu spoke of the Vrajavasis moving to Vrndavana. The second-seniormost cowherd man, Upananda, spoke up to the others and said, “Where we are living, in Gokula, there are so many attacks from demons sent by Kamsa. They are attempts to kill Krsna, but He has been saved by Visnu every time. It is too dangerous, however, to live here. I say let us move and go to Vrndavana, where it will be safer. In Vrndavana there is Govardhana Hill, which has many fine grasses for the cows, and the Yamuna River is there with clear water for drinking by the cows and calves.” Upananda’s proposal was immediately agreed upon by the other cowherd men, who called out, ‘Yes! Sadhu! Sadhu!’ So immediately all the cowherdspeople loaded up all their belongings, their bedding, utensils and all their household paraphernalia, and put them on the bullock carts. Krsna and Balarama, who were very young at this time, sat on the laps of Their mothers, Yasodamayi and Rohinidevi. It is remarkable how their life was so simple that they could collect all their belongings and stack them on the cart and move to set up new homes in Vrndavana within one day. In the move, the cows were put up in front, and then the ladies in the bullock carts. The men went on the sides of the procession carrying bows and arrows to protect the Vrajavasis. As an inquisitive child, Krsna asked His mother why they were moving, where they were going to, etc. As she satisfied Him with all the answers, He became eager to see Vrndavana for Himself. They journeyed for some time, but when it grew late, Nanda Maharaja decided not to cross the Yamuna River but to stay where they were on the bank, rest there for the night and proceed in the morning. They arranged all the carts in a circle

for protection, and they settled down to rest for the night. Nanda Maharaja and his confidants stayed up and discussed plans how they would cross the Yamuna in the morning and go on to Vrndavana.

In the morning, the men guided the cows and calves to cross the river against the heavy current. The carts were carried on big boats, and everyone made it safely to the other side. Soon they reached the precinct of Vrndavana. When Krsna was allowed to get off the cart and touch His feet to the ground of Vrndavana, all the trees and flowers blossomed at once as if to welcome Him. He called the names of His friends, and they began to walk around together over the beautiful tract of land. The cowherdspeople unloaded their possessions and gradually began to build simple homes made of bricks, mud and cow dung. Everyone was delighted at their new homeland.

### **Introductory Essays**

I am guiding John Endler in writing his introductory essays to my forthcoming books. I asked him to omit a substantial section about Gertrude Stein's stream-of-consciousness in the essay to *Seeking New Land*. He agreed and said he would make it more *sastric*. He wrote an afterword to *Kaleidoscope* about a man in a boat looking at many colored bottles in the water. I told him this was somewhat mundane, and he agreed and enthusiastically said he would make it more *sastric*. I also asked him to make an explicit reference in his essay on *Seeking New Land* to Hemanta Swami's finding land in Greenland, where he establishes a preaching

center.

For weeks now, Rev. John and I have been communicating by Zoom on the computer because we can't meet in the same place due to safe distancing regulations. We both find the Zoom arrangement satisfactory, as we see a large image of one another and get a live sense of presence as we talk and see each other. We talk about 45 minutes a week and get our business done. John also sends me emails during the week containing additional work he's done. He is a real collaborator on these projects, and I thrive on his cooperation and enthusiasm. It makes our working relationship more pleasurable that John is so malleable to my suggestions. He works hard to come up with creative ideas, but he leaves the final decision up to me, and he's not attached to his own work.

### **Random Looks at *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11<sup>th</sup> Ed.)**

**infinity** : a. the quality of being infinite

: b. unlimited extent of time, space, or quantity: BOUNDLESS

**2.** An infinitively great number or amount [an infinite number of stars]

Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is infinity. He cannot be measured in time, space or quantity. He is boundless. From the Negro spiritual: "My Lord is so high you can't get over Him, so low you can't get under Him, so wide you

can't get around Him; such is the glory of the Lord." There's no limit to the Supreme Lord or His planet, Goloka Vrndavana.

**give** : to make a present of [give a doll to a child]

: to administer as a sacrament

: to administer as a medicine

The Supreme Lord awards every soul a limited amount of free will. Everyone has been given a minute amount of independence, or freedom to act. This is the causeless mercy of God—He gives. But the living entity is so small that his free will can be overcome by the material modes of nature. A pure devotee freely gives Krsna consciousness to all fallen souls. This is his missionary spirit. He gives freely. He gives on the order of his spiritual master; he gives out of spontaneous love and compassion.

**ignite** : to set afire: KINDLE EXCITE:

: to set in motion :SPARK

The pure devotee ignites fallen souls with the spark of love of God. Devotion to God can be ignited if a person is submissive and receives knowledge from a bona-fide spiritual master. Lord Caitanya ignited *bhakti* in the hearts of all people who saw His dancing and chanting in *sankirtana*.

**entity** : being :EXISTENCE

: independent, separate or self-contained existence

: something that has separate and distinct existence and objective or conceptual reality.

God's parts and parcels are living entities. They may be conditioned or liberated. A living entity can never be equal to or greater than God. A living entity can be purified of his material condition—sufferings of birth, death, disease and old age—if he associates with a pure devotee and the Vedic *sastras*. There are 8,400,000 different forms or entities in the world. One takes birth as a particular entity—a human, a beast, a bird, a demigod, etc.—according to his pious or impious acts. The soul may be called an entity. He does not die, he can't be killed, he can't be cut or dried or drowned. He is an eternal servant of the Supreme Lord, and when he knows this he is liberated, and when he engages in devotional service, he experiences transcendental bliss.

### **Letters from Srila Prabhupada**

“Honolulu

May 23, 1976

“Los Angeles

“My dear Satsvarupa Maharaja,

“Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated

May 19, 1976 as well as your copies of two purchase orders from two universities for the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

“The public libraries can order many sets, 50 to 100 at a time, for all their branches. Your tactics sound very good. The Indian professors’ reviews can be used to stimulate American orders, and the American professors’ reviews can be used to stimulate orders in India. So now with so many testimonials, why these libraries will not purchase?

“The scientists cannot make a machine from a seed. Why not? Can they make a typewriter machine tree, or an automobile tree, that you plant a seed and you get an automobile . . . it gets bigger, bigger, bigger until it is a full size automobile. They cannot make even one egg, and they are going to manufacture life? And we have to believe it? They are lunatics, this is demoniac. They want to compete with God.

“Concerning the Deities in Chicago temple, if you want to have large-size Gaura-Nitai, then I have no objection. Your new traveling mobile temple sounds very nice. I shall be glad to see it when I visit Detroit. Keep yourself comfortable so that you can work nicely. There is no need of dry *vairagya*.

“I hope that this meets you in good health.

“Your ever well-wisher,

“A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami”

This letter focuses on Prabhupada’s desire that the Library Party place many of his books in the public libraries. We were able to do this in all the universities, but we were not successful in selling his books to the public libraries. They had their own method of putting books on their shelves, and we could not use our process that had worked so well in the colleges and universities.

Prabhupada writes about the “lunatics” who say they can manufacture life from matter. He asks if they can make a typewriter or an automobile from a seed, will you get a full automobile in time? He says those who put forward this “life comes from matter” belief are lunatics and demonic—“They want to compete with God.”

Prabhupada approves of the Chicago temple installing Gaura-Nitai Deities. He also says my new traveling mobile temple sounds very nice; he will see it when he comes to Detroit. He actually came and saw our RV vehicle. He boarded it, saw the Gaura-Nitai Deities and bowed down to Them. His point is nice and assuring: “Keep yourself comfortable so that you can work nicely. There is no need of dry *vairagya*.” I was happy to hear that Prabhupada wanted us to be comfortable in our new vehicle. There was no need of dry renunciation. This was his advice to *sannyasis* in 1976: his men should be comfortable so that they could work nicely.

***Journal and Poems, Volume 1 (January-June, 1985)***

“Early this morning from within my room I heard the songs of several different birds. One I knew was a robin. Baladeva said there was

also a nuthatch. Their songs lifted my spirits, and when I opened the curtains, I saw a pair of ducks sailing swiftly downstream in the rain-filled creek.

“My feelings in response to the calls of the robin and the sight of the ducks are spontaneous with me due to my conditioning.

“I will not refuse these feelings or become callous toward them. I am reaching out for what is closest at hand and seeing how it can be transformed. (The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* also lifts one's spirits, but in a deeper, even unconscious way.)

“I should be careful that I do not become a worshiper of the Universal Form (seeing flowers as Krsna's smile, birds as His song, etc.). Beyond the *visvarupa* conception is the topmost spiritual engagement of chanting the holy name as given by Lord Caitanya. So in an ultimate sense, endeavoring to see God in nature is supplementary to these other spiritual activities. Yet, even now, in this very body, at my very door, I am seeing little bits of Krsna, and that should not be discounted.

Hoping for the best, I go on collecting  
 a tiny servant's view  
 of Lord Krsna's nature.

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“I also appreciate Prabhupada's books. I am impressed with how he establishes the historical truth of the accounts in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. The most important thing for the neophyte reader is to accept the existence of Krsna in a literal way. Otherwise, even if nectarean *lila* of Krsna or advanced states of devotional service are described, the hearer will think it is mythology. Prabhupada writes,

“They accept the statements of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* to be allegorical, and they try to interpret them in their own way. But factually the Lord lifted the hill in the presence of all the inhabitants of Vrndavana, as corroborated by great *acaryas* like Vyasadeva and Narada. Everything about the Lord—His activities, pastimes, and uncommon features—should be accepted as is, and in this way, even in our present condition we can understand the Lord.’

“Prabhupada's constant effort to convince us of the literal truth of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* makes his presentation great and powerful. Especially in Kali-yuga people are slow and faithless, and there is a huge army of speculators and atheists who are conditioning people to disbelieve. Prabhupada's clear purports have convinced many intelligent persons—even in Kali-yuga—that the seemingly fantastic events of Krsna's pastimes, although beyond material conception, are reality.

Unless spiritual teachings have this potency to convince people of the truth of the Vedic statements and of the need to practice devotional service, they are useless, like ornaments on a dead body. We have yet to fully appreciate how Srila Prabhupada has singlehandedly gone against the predominant atheistic tide of Kali-yuga and effectively presented Krsna. We sometimes glibly say, ‘Prabhupada preached all over the world.’ But the astounding fact is not simply that Prabhupada traveled widely, but that wherever he went he convinced people to give up all their previously held material conceptions and accept Krsna consciousness. This he did by his purity and his faithfulness to the *parampara*.”

***Journal and Poems, Book 2 (July-December 1985)***

**“September 19**

*Fourth Day of Meetings*

“Even to contemplate the cause of these meetings requires great compassion and intelligence. My notes of these meetings, by their sketchiness and by the fact that I am not even attempting to fully capture the phenomena, may seem like another symptom of the leaders' failure

to realize and regret. I acknowledge this inadequacy in myself and in these notes.

“The fact remains that the added strain for me of trying to deal with a physical illness makes it impossible for me to attempt more strenuously to describe what is happening.

“I tend to think, ‘I am not my brother’s keeper.’ But that attitude, by which I absolve myself of the wrongs committed by other ISKCON leaders, is not much appreciated by thoughtful moralists. Nevertheless, one cannot solve all the problems of the world, even if one is a leader. One can tend to one's own garden and try to develop Vaisnava relationships fairly with those with whom he is working closely.

“I am trying to realize, regret, and rectify my wrongs I have done my Godbrothers by virtue of my assuming the elevated responsibilities of guru and GBC. But it is unfortunately difficult for me to do very much about the wrongs that may have been committed to others in all different parts of the world of this great movement.

“For me to increase my compassion or to improve my own relationship with others, the health recovery remains a part of my concern. If one cannot even meet with another devotee due to ill health, then immediately there is a great limitation. I am aware that many devotees are suffering unhappiness, some may even be suffering physically, and I should avoid a too self-centered attitude about my own

incapacities. When one Godbrother asked me how I was doing, I replied, 'I shouldn't really be here' (meaning I should not have even attended these meetings for health reasons). He smiled and replied, 'None of us should be here.' In other words, we all should have acted in a more intelligent way since Srila Prabhupada's disappearance and not have come to this point of a world crisis in ISKCON which has drawn us all to New Vrindaban.

“None of us should be here, so why am I *particularly* complaining that I should not be here? There is the suffering of the wronged Godbrother, there is the suffering of the over-criticized, sincerely-working G.B.C. leader, and there is also the suffering of the physically ill who feels guilty that he cannot participate more and yet seeks the sympathy of Godbrothers who are themselves deeply involved in disturbances traced as due to the ISKCON system and its mismanagement.

“What more could I do if I were well? Probably not much. I would be able to more fully attend the meetings, but in my silent way. At least it might appear more that I was paying my dues, experiencing every inch of the ordeal of trying to debate and sensitively discuss with disturbed Godbrothers their grievances, and to work together to make resolutions of rectification. My karma is to pay out my dues to a difficulty which is more intense on the one hand than those experienced by the healthy,

and which on the other hand exempts me from the full responsibility of committee deliberation and long, personal discussions.”

“I cannot pretend to be an historian making a comprehensive picture of this time, neither was that my intention. In the future my notes may be seen as an example of one struggling through the situation with a particular human viewpoint, limitation, and handicap. Limitation is also due to psychological tendency.”

### ***The Story of My Life, Volume 2***

*“January 12th, 6:25 a.m.*

“Nowadays, devotees wonder whether it’s enough to wait for Krsna. They’ve heard different gurus emphasize different things. They’ve been told it’s not enough to serve Prabhupada’s mission; we must also know Prabhupada in his eternal form. I prefer to think it is enough to wait for Krsna, simply because that’s what Prabhupada taught. Therefore, we can safely conclude that if we do what Prabhupada says, we will reach the highest perfection. Prabhupada is not telling us to worship Satyabhama but Radha and Krsna in Vraja. We may be so inexperienced that we don’t understand how it will all come about. It’s natural for children to have a meager understanding of the mechanics of life. Whatever the case, we will not go to Vraja by academic or theoretical understanding.

Actually, a premature understanding can hinder our progress and delay us from reaching the goal. It has been said that if we think of ourselves as female servants in our eternal forms without first becoming free from mundane bodily identification, then we could be forced to take birth in a female body the next time around – not in the spiritual world, in the material world.

### ***Truthfulness, The Last Leg Of Religion***

#### **“Age of Hypocrisy**

“Every conditioned soul living within the material world has the tendency to cheat others. According to the Vedic *acaryas*, there are four defects which no one can escape: (1) the tendency to make mistakes; (2) the tendency to be illusioned; (3) the propensity to cheat others; and (4) imperfect senses. An example of cheating is to pose oneself as very intelligent. Although a person may be in illusion by mistaking his self for the body, and although he makes many mistakes, he still puts himself forward as an authority, professor, author and so on. Srila Prabhupada

says, 'He writes books of philosophy, although he is defective. That is cheating.'

“The self-realized sage, Jada Bharata, was engaged as the palanquin carrier for King Rahugana. But one day Jada addressed the king:

“My dear King, although you are not at all experienced, you are trying to speak like a very experienced man. Consequently you cannot be considered an experienced person. . . . Any advanced, experienced man, considering the Absolute Truth, does not talk in this way.’ (*Bhag.* 5.11.1)

“Jada Bharata's exposure of the king as a cheater is similar to Krsna's telling Arjuna:

“While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead.’ (*Bg.* 2.11)

“In both these cases (by Lord Krsna's arrangement), King Rahugana and Arjuna were posing as learned men although they were not actually so. Maharaja Rahugana's posing as a king was a similar fraud. But the cheaters may be delivered from ignorance. As stated in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*:

“... If one carries out the order of the spiritual master in disciplic succession, or the *parampara* system, he overcomes the four defects. Therefore, knowledge received from the bona fide spiritual master is not cheating. Any other knowledge which is manufactured by the conditioned soul is cheating only.’ (*Srimad-Bhagavatam*. 3.24.12, purport)”

### ***From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About***

“In *Atma-nivedana*, Song 4, the devotee expresses a high realization. From the negative, the hopeless depression, has sprung a most positive stage of spiritual love.

“I no longer belong to myself. Now I am exclusively Yours.’ The prior step was poverty, and now complete surrender of self to Krsna.

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura expresses the ideal *yukta-vairagya* where the householder gives up everything he has, including his wife, family, house, and belongings—even his own body—yet remains alive in order to actively engage all of these as a servant in the Lord's house. ‘You are the Lord of my house, and I am Your most obedient servant. Your happiness is my only endeavor now.’

“Previously I was almost complaining that Bhaktivinode Thakura was not really a sinner, although he was expressing the feelings of a

reprobate. But I appreciate now how he is teaching us. His compassion for less advanced devotees is deep and real. He wants to deliver us, and he feels our plight. Therefore he tells it as we know it—the life of crushed hopes and frustrated ego, the defeat of old age and death. He is extending his hand to help us out of the well.

“By this act of surrender, the prisoner is freed: ‘Whatever piety or sins were done by me, by mind or deed, are no longer mine, for I am redeemed!’

“‘From this day,’ he says. Surrender can be as dramatic as that. One day you just surrender. Most of us surrender a little at a time, constantly, every day. Why are we holding back?

“We are afraid of running into danger and of going wrong. A celibate monk with disciples has to watch his step. Srila Prabhupada says a little inattention (as in shaving one's face) can cause bloodshed. Krsna gives us signals: ‘Beware!’

“He is trying to protect us. But some of the signals aren't coming from Krsna; they come from our materially conditioned minds and senses. They are stifling to our spirit of full surrender. We have to take risks to love Krsna fully, but how do we know when to see the signals as Krsna's protection of our spiritual lives and when to see the mind's bluff? Our minds don't love us. They don't want us to reach our full potential. They are themselves afraid of losing the opportunity for sense

enjoyment. We have to examine our feelings more and find the surrender of which Bhaktivinoda Thakura sings.

“Can a deer step forward out of the forest without getting shot by a hunter? Do you hear that barking dog? Should we run away or hide? But spring is Krsna's favorite season.

“It's hard work distinguishing.

“In the material world, distinguished honors go to the man with the beard, the *New York Times* journalist who wrote at great risk in what was Yugoslavia. He won the Pulitzer prize. His stories were sent out from the war zone, where he was often the only eyewitness reporting in writing. He wrote what he saw and tried to tell the world the truth in the honorable tradition of newspaper journalism.

“I am not camped in a war zone. My place is more behind the scenes. It is conducive to finding freedom and surrender. It's a good place to get work done without being disturbed. A few friends are waiting for my written report.”

“Who am I? That is my question. What is this experience of being a devotee? I am trying to be receptive here.

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura prays that the urgency of his self-surrender not be a temporary mood. He doesn't want it to be like the ‘momentary cleanliness of an elephant after his bath.’ (*Saranagati* 2.6.7)”

## WRITING SESSIONS

### *Wicklow Writing Sessions*

#### **Session #2**

“2:49 P.M., Hut

*“Happy to be sailing after headache-caused delays; discussion of the nature of writing (what else?) – Manu liked the Examen in a former Diary. Do I have to do a WS nonstop or take a break? Writing – nothing – is so easy. Good writing comes from a good life.*

“I almost forgot how to write because I have not done it all day due to a headache. Do you try to say something that will be heard, that is pretty? Do you say, ‘O Krsna, O Krsna’ with your mouth wide open in a big ‘O’? Do you think of your friends rooting for you from the bleachers and box seats? Do you try to remember your times at Ebbets Field? Do you remind yourself, ‘I am not this body,’ so whatever you recall of life in this Guarino lifetime is of no account except after you met the Swami, and it accounts only if you tell it as a pleasing anecdote fit for a lecture from the *vyasasana*? Do you, do you want to join the dance?

“Are nondevotees allowed? What about the shocked faces and minds of the readers, and the fearsome literary board who may one day decide on your fate?”

“Yes, I forget how to write. I thought it was for your own good. And if you make an effort to make it come out good, then it definitely ought to be with a view for publishing as soon as possible. You are made to be useful to the KC movement and at the same time flatter and improve the person who you are. Now when I consider my friends—I mean to say my rivals and my brothers, neutral and inimical—I think they must be as imperfect as I am. They must have mixed motives. When they do something for Krsna, some preaching exploit, they must do it partly out of a desire to be promoted, to make various gains. Oh, we may say they do it innocently enough, but when the opportunities come for sense grat, they fall prey to that. Some admit readily and say, ‘There’s nothing we can do about that right now so just pray for eventual purification.’ And they go on sweating and climbing to the top. But we would like to warn them. Maybe we could go about it in a way that may prevent our falldown and the disappointment of those who have faith in us.

“Yes, what is the important meaning? Do you think you have a right to speak to the whole society as you did when you wrote your *Guru Reform Notebook* and mailed it to every ISKCON center? No, I am not

so foolish, or let us say not so arrogant, not so presumptuous. I don't think that what I write should be thrust in front of other's people's eyes whether they care to read it or not. Rather it is a secret sort of doctrine or free prose. Like Allen Ginsberg? No, no.

“Like Rupa Goswami? Oh, I dare not say so great.

“Then like whom?

“I mean in the early days of *BTG* I wanted to be published, my poems and '*Karma-yoga*' essays, and tried to be modest and not care when Rayarama didn't put me in the first issue. I thought, 'Oh, all right,' but I wanted it. And then he gave me cover billing as 'Stephen Guarino' in the second issue and that pleased me very much. We distributed the Society's magazine, and I was there on the cover as befitting an NYC author who wanted to be published. And it was the Swami who gave us shelter and authorized us.

“And here we are cruising in a sailboat in fair weather. I thought I'd never get out today, it was such a slow start. We missed two of the usual opportunities. But here we are on a *lough*, the Irish lake. Here we are sailing to nowhere, sailing under a KC banner, the sails big and clean and my thoughts not perfect. Will we stop for tea and a special reading? I don't think so. We'll just have to keep going for whatever we are already and stop to read later.

“Oh, and sing that Krsna is the *paratattva*, and the expansions all come from Him. He asks us to surrender to Him, not just the people of India but the whole world. Then He gave us a second chance in Kali-yuga, appearing in His devotional form as Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, along with Nityananda and all the other stalwarts. And He said the same thing He said in His original appearance: ‘Surrender to Krsna, praise Krsna, serve Krsna, read Krsna.’ And now it’s up to us to take it up. He appears to eradicate the darkness, Rupa Gosvami has written. And Srila Prabhupada said he came to speak the same thing—old wine in new bottles. And you boys and girls have to take to it because it’s not presented with concocted imagination, but the original, appealing truth: chant Hare Krsna Hare Krsna. Of course, it’s not possible to know Krsna in full, but at least accept that He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Accept it from the scripture and from the soliciting of His pure devotee.

“Clear day sailing, clear head at last. The promise of the WS is that you don’t worry how it comes out. The toughness of it is the detachment, just writing along and not being concerned how it is made or if it’s using your time well, is it publishable in full or in part, what will my editor and publisher do with this?

“You have to believe in the act of writing, the process which may bring either immediate result or may lead to a book like *Photo Preaching* or *My Relationship with Lord Krsna*, which came at the end of a retreat in the last five days. One thing leads to another provided you follow them religiously and carefully and write at each step wholeheartedly. But wholeheartedly also means don't hold the clutch too hard. That is, just let it flow as (Manu dasa said, who read it) the Lough Derg diaries, just floating along, saying what comes to your mind in a relaxed way so that it becomes a mirror of your mind. What he seemed to like were the things I was doing, just like the daily Examen. At first, I thought, 'He's appreciating something I did, not something I wrote.' But then I thought, 'Let him like whatever he does.' They go together, what I do and what I write. The Examen produced an ability to look at little states during the day, admit what was the high point and what was the low point. It helped you develop a conscience for particularity and to catch it and frame it in words. For a writer that means you keep a record. So, if the reader liked the daily Examen, don't complain. I want most of all to produce something that they liked?

“No, no. Let them like or dislike. He also made a comparative study of two different books of mine. I thought that was his doing. It may or may not be true. I myself didn't see much difference between them. In the writer's meditations in *Alligators* we're told something

similar. That you write and a reader picks for us an image of who you are as a person. But that is not the actual you. It is the image found in your writing. Your job is to go on writing. So, Manu found not so much a person but a kind of book and he liked one better than the other. And I am not responsible for that. That is the way he read the trail and the signals and the words. I'm glad it absorbed him in a story of my 'literature' but what I actually wrote, and who I am as a writer—that I need not know. I do not owe anything to that image, or I don't need to make a judgment on it.

“When I was doing *Pada-yatra* I would stop and take a break to read and then write some more. Do you want to be more strict here and not stop? You've been going only twenty minutes. Of course, I don't want to do anything that causes headaches. You don't have a stopwatch or a whip or a timed clock that records mercilessly. 'You only wrote such and such hours.' Mainly just number the Writing Session, and then at the end you can tell the whole story. You can say, 'I wrote for twenty minutes or for an unrecorded amount of time then took a break and wrote some more.' Don't feel obliged to give an exact account.

“After a small break, having read two Jane Kenyon poems.

“You can’t expect much help there. Better write while you can. You could have spent the time in the necklace of Vaishnava verses. You are on the section of *guru-tattva*, the qualifications of a guru, and so on. You can savor them a little at a time. They mean something to you. It is not easy. Nothing is as easy as falling off the log. Chanting, etc. Even eating. You may think it’s easy, but yesterday I prepared an Ekadasi snack at 5 P.M., just three small slices of *sandesa* (did I already tell this?) and ten raspberries and a small piece of a slightly moldy banana, and a sip or two of water. Somehow this combination revolted in my stomach and I’ve had indigestion ever since. Twice I took Tums, took soda bicarbonate with lemon, took quite a few Hajmolas to battle it. Maybe you should observe Ekadasi with very light food and you won’t have such troubles.

“I’d like to write something nice, I’d like to be able to write a lot like Merton, only more interesting, and have avid followers like Henry Miller’s, yet write in my inimitable way.

“Oh, hey, a Godsister liked (I heard) my just-published *Photo Preaching*. She thought I was in a great mood and shape in that book. I’m glad to hear it, but I also think it was a special inspiration, the fictional character of a man on the lam who writes a make-believe diary and has make-believe ‘photo assignments.’ When I heard the praise of it, I thought, ‘Why not write a sequel. Get some more photos and go for

it.’ But it’s not that easy. Even after I did the first hundred or so pages of *Photo Preaching*, the photographer sent me more pictures of the zoo in Washington D.C. But it was already too late, the inspiration had passed. I was already into and out of the *Hideout Diary* and *A Litany for the Gone*. So it goes, and you are led into and out of adventures. Now sailing in the effortless (not quite) calm like Lough Derg, and whatever comes is not my doing entirely. Krsna is in control.

“L.d.d. thought that when she couldn’t rent a house it must be Krsna doing it. I told her I smiled to hear it. Didn’t mean I was condescending but I just don’t think that way, that He is so close in my life in indicating through the movements and turns, ‘No, don’t try here, I’m making this hard so you’ll give it up and try over there,’ the way you might signal to a dumb animal who can’t take a straightforward command. Well, why not? He doesn’t convey any other way to me. I can’t get it straight from scripture. Why not through the actions of our lives?

“So, if Manu sees in my writing something in my life that he likes, that’s okay. Gensei, the Japanese poet, said that too: morality is the tree of writing, and the literary expression is only the branches. Life comes first and then writing. If you’re a bum, you can’t write virtuously. Srila

Prabhupada says that the basic sins are the tree, so when you stop the four sinful activities all the branches of sin will fall down.

“A Krsna conscious aspiring writer must do that first. Then his writings can be regularly read by others who are practicing KC. In some instance we might want to hear the confession of one who had fallen below that standard. But I think only if he is sorry and is trying to climb up again. We’d want to hear that he took hope and got himself back on the road of recovery. That would be an interesting story.

“Sail on the lake. Now you’ve done five pages. Take another break and see if you have anything left to say. Then later in the day, think of reading more *sastra* or books related to that, books that impel you directly to KC, like the story of Sanatana and his Deity or some verses from *The Vaishnava Necklace*. But for now, pause and take another breath.

“Okay, I guess that’s it. Bring it in, bring the boat in, you know how to bring it in with the sails? Yes. You are a devotee and you wish to be. Your brothers will accept you or not. You can finish this writing and look at it later.

“Today is Ratha-yatra at Gita-nagari, and they are selling my books. I send sometimes two faxes a day, hooked on this rapid communication, but I’m doing it privately, and only with me little news.

Keep me out of the national counsels and political deals . . . keep me out. He's at a writing retreat and still gets headaches. You mean, after all that fight to get your indigestion in order you are still thinking of a five o'clock snack? Sure, why not? It was a nice, innocent cake. Oh, you're incorrigible, you're not austere. You'll have to suffer more. You're not like the Gosvamis. Your Prabhupada *murti* is kind to keep a guy like you. Oh, maybe I will refrain from eating and just sip some water. I can do it. And plan to take rest and get up. Tomorrow more writing than today.

*“(Writing with a few breaks, for almost an hour, on a warm summer day in the hut in Uddhava’s backyard, after struggling with indigestion and headaches earlier in the day. Saturday, July 27, 1996.)”*