

Free Write Journal #95

Free Writes

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Health Report/ Zoom Lecture

I'm exhausted. I'm too tired to do my exercises nicely or completely. Partly this may be due to the change of weather; it's become warmer now. I have also been intensely preparing for my Zoom lecture. This will be the last lecture I'll give because it's too much of a strain on me to prepare and actually deliver it. I am also working strenuously on proofreading two books to be distributed at Vyasa-puja.

I gave a sample to see if I had a urinary tract infection, but it turned out negative. The other day I had a migraine headache, the first time in months. During the day I have a faint halo of pain in the right eye. All these indications prove that after I give my Zoom lecture, I should quiet down on all fronts and not push myself to work, or else I'll be susceptible to more breakdowns. The last time this happened, it took twenty-five days of pain medicines before I broke the cycle. So I have to be really careful now.

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I was well-prepared to give the lecture, having rehearsed it many times. Two hundred people watched it live from Madana-gopala's Zoom hookup. We have yet to find out how many watched on YouTube. The viewers could see me turning the pages in my loose-leaf book. But I wasn't actually reading the text; I had it memorized but was just checking along as I spoke. Viewers who missed the live performance can watch it now on YouTube.

Aside from the four stories I told of Prabhupada and my interacting with him as servant and secretary, I read from two poetry books. One was *Remembering Srila Prabhupada, a Free-Verse Rendition of the Life and Teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*. I read from the section where Prabhupada is crossing the ocean in the Jaladuta and coming to America. (This book is available from SDGLegacy.com.) I also read from *Calling Out to Srila Prabhupada: Poems and Prayers*. I wrote *Remembering Srila Prabhupada* immediately after I finished the *Prabhupada-lilamrta*. I was on a wave of inspiration and happy to make poems even more personal than in *SPL*.

Calling Out follows a format used by the Six Gosvamis in their Sanskrit poetry. They would start a stanza like "O Krsna, who called the *gopis* to Him by playing His flute on a moonlit night in autumn . . . O Krsna, who killed all the demons sent by Kamsa, and Kamsa himself, as if He were breaking toy dolls." I followed Kusakratha's translations, and instead of "calling out" to Krsna, I called out to Srila Prabhupada. For example, "O Prabhupada, whose upraised arms caused hundreds of devotees to jump and dance, whose feet walked over the countless enemies against worldwide *sankirtana* . . ." From this book I also read a verbatim composition by Srila Prabhupada set in the format of a divided-lines poem. I took it from a lecture he gave in Mayapur (22 October 1974). A sample stanza reads:

"So you ask Krsna,

'Sir, my business is *hari-tosanam*.

How can I satisfy You?’

Krsna says directly, ‘Yes, you can satisfy Me,
just think of Me.’

Where is the difficulty?”

In delivering the lecture, my voice was low because I was exhausted from preparing my books and planning the Zoom talk.

Book Production Update

We are making good progress on our proposed production of four books in the year 2020. At the beginning of the year we held a fundraising campaign and collected enough to print two books for the summer meeting of the disciples on July 4th, and two books for the occasion of my Vyasa-puja in early December. John Endler and Lal Krsna are working to make introductory essays and to design the books and create covers. Krsna-bhajana is doing proofreading. But there will be a problem with distribution. I usually give out the books in my summer gathering of devotees and at my Vyasa-puja occasion. The summer meeting is already canceled due to the coronavirus restrictions, and the Vyasa-puja gathering is in question. John Endler has volunteered to mail out the books to devotees. He will ask them for their home address and just as at the gatherings in Stuyvesant Falls, we will ask for a donation. Much effort has gone into preparing to print these books on time, so I encourage the devotees to order them through the mail. The two books intended for distribution on July 4th are already done. They are *Daily Compositions (A Collection of Prose and Poetry)*, and *Meditations and Poems*, which has already been printed and is in my possession at Stuyvesant Falls. The books for Vyasa-puja are *Seeking New Land, A Story*, and *Kaleidoscope* (which both contain stream-of-consciousness poetry). We are excited by these publications and eager to give them to the readers.

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John was in contact with a person who tested positive for coronavirus. So he's in quarantine for two weeks. We scheduled a Zoom phone call, but the Zoom picture didn't work, so we had a regular phone call. We cleaned up the last bits of proofreading on *Kaleidoscope* and *Seeking New Land, A Story* (which tells the story of Hemanta Swami and his assistant, who go on a quest to find a preaching base.) They find a base in the unlikely country of Greenland and meet with modest success. In the book I state that their Greenland place will not be the biggest preaching place in ISKCON, like India or Russia, but Lord Caitanya wanted the holy name spread to every town and village in the world.

Next the finished books will be sent to Lal Krsna for design and covers, which he does so excellently.

John has discovered that the manuscript of mine he's now reading, *California Search for Gold*, was typed originally in extra-large print. The manuscript is 1,000 pages long, but if it's typed the normal size of all the other books, it will be a book of 350 pages. So we're planning now to produce it as a regular book by itself. It's a book about healing, like *Sanatorium*. The main character has chronic migraines and has been unable to chant his quota of sixteen rounds. He has to rest and recover first. The thread or theme of the book is his gradual overcoming of the disease and returning to the quota of sixteen rounds by the end of the book. The silver lining to the Covid lockdown is that John is free to pay his full attention to working on my books, since he can't do his normal sermons and gatherings with his congregation, and he can't visit people during the week to give them counseling. He's very glad to have this extra time for working on my books. He writes introductory essays and oversees the proofreading by our different volunteers. Baladeva encourages me to publish as much as I can. John has another book he's planning for the future. It's a compiling of several books I wrote over the years during the period of Karttika. These books are

Karttika in Exile, Karttika Flame and Shadow, The Karttika Papers, etc., and they comprise a continuous meditation on the Karttika season. Aside from these, there are a number of unpublished manuscripts like *New, Newer and Newer, Love and Hate*, and these are all solid works fit to be published. John has written a nice introductory essay explaining what stream-of-consciousness is.

Srila Prabhupada Lectures on Nrsimhadeva

I daily listen to a lecture by Srila Prabhupada. There is a series of consecutive talks he gave about Nrsimhadeva being very angry after killing Hiranyakasipu. All of the demigods, led by Brahma, Siva, and many others, come before the Lord and offer their prayers. But none of them are able to pacify the Lord's anger. Lord Brahma then turns to the five-year-old boy: "Prahlada, Nrsimhadeva has come *for you*. So you please speak to Him and ask Him to be peaceful." Prahlada hesitates, thinking that by comparison to the great demigods, he is inferior and not qualified to come before the Lord. But he is jolly and not afraid of the fierce form of the half-lion, half-man. He makes full obeisances before Nrsimhadeva, and the Lord touches Prahlada upon his head with His soft palm. Immediately Prahlada receives *jnana-sakti*, which enables him to make suitable prayers to the Lord.

In a similar way, Srila Prabhupada encouraged his devotees to approach Lord Nrsimha and develop a relationship with Him. In the early years of the movement, before the Seventh Canto was even published, he taught them the Nrsimha mantra and told them to take shelter of Nrsimhadeva when they were in danger. So the devotees of ISKCON developed an early attachment to Nrsimhadeva and prayed like Prahlada, knowing they were not qualified but that Nrsimha was kind to His devotees.

Krsna Praises Balarama

I listened to the Govardhana Retreats. Bhurijana was talking about a time (in the *Krsna* book) when Krsna put His arm around Balarama and said, “Just see how all the living beings in Vrndavana are worshipping You; the trees are bending down to offer You obeisances and offer You their fruits and flowers; the birds are singing Your glories; the deer are looking on You fondly.” In this way Krsna was directly praising Balarama about Vrndavana. But actually He was indirectly praising Vrndavana’s glorifying of Krsna Himself. It is not culturally proper to praise oneself and say, “Vrndavana is praising me, Krsna.” So He did it by indirectly praising Balarama. Finally He said, “And best of all, the *gopis* are loving You by embracing You in their arms.” This was intended to be a direct reference to Krsna and the *gopis*, but Krsna said it indirectly to Balarama.

Letter from Ramila

Ramila from New Zealand sent me a letter checking in to see how we are doing at Stuyvesant Falls. She tells me of a Godsister of mine who is in the later stages of cancer. This devotee’s name is Krishna-nandini Devi Dasi, and she has a very broadminded attitude toward religion and love of God in all the different paths. Ramila writes, “The Hare Krsnas definitely don’t have *carte blanche* on loving God.” She enclosed Chapter One of Bhaktivinoda Thakura’s *Caitanya-siksamrta*, which has been a great inspiration for her that she keeps referring to:

“Respect other religions. It is improper and detrimental to argue over these differences. If one goes to someone else’s place of worship, one should think, ‘The people are worshipping my Lord but in a different way. Because of my different training, I cannot quite comprehend this system of worship. However, through this experience, I can deepen my own appreciation for my own system of worship. The Lord is only one, not two. I offer my respect to the form I see here, and pray to the Lord in His new form that He increase my love for Him in His accustomed form.’

Those who do not follow this procedure but instead criticize other forms of worship and show hatred, violence and envy are worthlessly foolish. The more they indulge in useless quarreling, the more they betray the very foal of their religion.”

And a quote from Srila Prabhupada: “Whether you are following the Bible, the Vedas or the Koran, the result must be that you are increasing your eagerness to hear about God and love Him.”

Poem from Mayapur

Ramila also sent me a poem by a twenty-one-year-old devotee who is originally from China but has lived in Mayapur since she was seven years old. Here is her poem:

“May I be quarantined in the heart
of Sri-Sri Radha-Madhava for the rest of
eternity.

“May They have me locked down beneath
Their reddish lotus feet for the rest
of eternity, keeping me safe from the virus of illusion.

“May They increase my immune system
by giving me the vitamins of Their
service.

“This is an order from the government of my heart
to the citizens of my mind, during the lockdown period, which will

extend through the existence of
the soul.’

“Let me use the hand-wash called sincerity
to cleanse me of the germs of superficiality.
(This should be done as many times in the day as possible,
for at least twenty seconds,
as per the time of Lord Brahma.)

“Let me keep great distance from the people called lust, anger, pride
and hypocrisy who
have arrived from a foreign land full of virus.

“Let me at least keep a two-meter distance
of anger from anyone who
sneezes and coughs out harsh words
against You and Your devotees.

“Let me cover my mouth
with the tissue of intelligence,
whenever I cough or
sneeze any complaints
about the service of Your Lordship;

“Let me always keep in my mouth the antivirus
of Your holy names and

pastimes.

Local News

On Sunday morning three devotees arrived to work in the garden: Atindra, his wife Lalita-kaisori and Amit. All came and worked hard. It was a cool day, with breezes and sunshine good for working in the garden. The devotees pulled all the weeds and planted many flowers. Soon we will have a mulch delivery and then the weeds won't grow back, or those that do will be easy to pull up. The garden workers were served lunch outdoors. They honored the *prasadam* outdoors in a picnic style, and they had worked up good appetites from gardening. Amit took home a freshly baked loaf of bread, *maha-prasadam* grapes, and *laddus*, and the couple took another loaf of bread and *kheer*.

Yuga Dharma Sankirtana

Raya Rama's Yuga Dharma *sankirtana* party has moved out of New York City and temporarily relocated to Atlanta, Georgia. New York City is a ghost town. Twelve devotees can't legally gather, and there would be no twenty thousand people passing them when they were outside in the park. There are no tourists, and the passersby would all be wearing masks. In inclement weather they can't go in the subways because no one would be there.

A devotee in Atlanta has offered them a big house in the suburbs. Atlanta is unlocked. People don't wear masks, and they're used to seeing the devotees on *harinama*. Over the years the people of Atlanta have seen a lot of *harinama*, especially when Balabhadra was there, so they'll be glad to see it return. Rama Raya has emotional ties to NYC because he knows that Prabhupada started there, and Aindra too. He made a very serious commitment there as his *prabhu-datta-desa* for eight years. But he has to face the facts: New York is "dead" for the foreseeable future.

So far, the *Yuga-dharma* party has been in Atlanta chanting outdoors for several weeks, and

the experience had been good before they made their decision to move there. Despite the world economic crash, the devotees are still able to distribute many sets of books a day on the Internet. Although Rama's party is having success in Atlanta, the goal is to get back to NYC as soon as possible when conditions are right.

Out-loud Reading

In our group reading we are beginning the Fourth Canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. We are hearing of the *yajna* arranged by Prajapati Daksa to which all the demigods were invited. Lord Brahma, Lord Siva and everyone else was gathered. When Daksa entered the arena, his bright effulgence outshone everyone else's. The demigods got up to receive him except for Brahma and Siva, who are the controllers of the universe and are not required to stand up or worship Daksa. But Daksa became very angry when he saw that Siva did not stand up to receive him. He began an uncontrolled diatribe of angry talking against Siva. Siva was married to Daksa's daughter, Sati, at the request of Lord Brahma. But Daksa did not approve of the marriage. He blasphemed Siva in the assembly, saying he had eyes like a monkey and he associated with ghosts. Siva is actually flawless, but Daksa saw only bad qualities in him. Then he finally cursed Siva not to receive his portion of the offering in the sacrifice along with the other demigods. In a fury, Daksa left the assembly, although everyone begged him to remain. He was an example of the destructive nature of uncontrolled anger.

Lord Siva said nothing to counteract Daksa's attack. But Siva's follower Nandisvara spoke up, insulting Daksa, cursing him to be devoid of transcendental knowledge and to take the face of a goat. There was cursing and counter-cursing, and the harmony of the whole sacrifice was in disarray.

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Although Lord Siva told his wife Sati not to go to her father's house, she went alone. Seeing her leaving, the many followers of Siva hurriedly accompanied her. They made a grand procession, with Sati sitting on a bull. When they arrived at Daksa's house, Sati's mother and sisters, being softhearted, greeted her warmly. But Daksa did not greet her, and this made Sati so offended that she looked at him as if to burn him with her eyes. She then began to speak to her father in the open assembly. She spoke the glories of Lord Siva—partly because he was her husband, and also because he is factually the most powerful of the demigods. This was the real purpose in Sati's coming to the *yajna*. She didn't come to mix and socialize with her relatives but to get Daksa to back down in his offensive, hard-hearted attitude toward Siva. But Daksa ignored her speeches.

Sati was so powerful that she could have killed Daksa, but she didn't want to do it. She decided to give up her own body, which she felt was shameful because it was produced by Daksa. She changed into saffron clothes and faced the north, preparing to consume herself in yogic mystic fire. She assumed the right sitting posture and manipulated her life-air. All the relatives and luminaries present at the *yajna* knew what she was about to do, but they were too afraid of the powerful Daksa to do anything to prevent her in her disastrous course. She finally set herself in flames and gave up her body. It is said she did not attain a spiritual next body, but she was born as Parvati, the daughter of the Himalayas, to be again the eternal wife of Lord Siva.

A great roar went up when Sati destroyed her body. In a mood of retaliation, the followers of Lord Siva prepared themselves to kill Daksa. But Bhrgu Muni created Ribhu demigods with his *brahma tejas* and scattered all the followers of Lord Siva. The news of these events were brought in detail by Narada Muni to Lord Siva.

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After hearing of the death of his wife Sati, Lord Siva angrily snatched a hair from his head and created a giant demon named Virabhadra. The demon circumambulated Lord Siva and asked

what he should do. Lord Siva told him to kill Prajapati Daksa. Virabhadra went to the sacrificial arena with the soldiers of Siva and completely desecrated the sacrificial area. He cut off the head of Daksa and threw it to the southern side. The soldiers of Lord Siva completely desecrated the area, passing stool and urine, pulling down the *pandal*, entering the womens' quarters, breaking bones and teeth.

Just by the presence of Lord Siva's ghosts and goblins. the yajnic area was polluted. The *brahmanas* and demigods were in a state of shock, and they went to Lord Brahma for advice. He told them they should go at once to Lord Siva and ask his forgiveness. He told them Lord Siva was known as Asutosh, which means he's easily pleased and easily made angry. Lord Brahma accompanied the demigods to Mt. Kailash, and there they found Lord Siva engaged in conversation with great saints and sages like Narada Muni. Brahma first made his prayers and asked that Lord Siva bring Daksa back to life. He also asked that the sacrifice be restored so that it could be continued. Lord Brahma's followers like Bhrgu also prayed to Siva and admitted their wrongs. Lord Siva had punished them not like enemies but like children, and so he was willing to rectify things.

The demigods asked Lord Siva to restore all the injuries and deaths that he and his followers had created. Lord Siva responded conditionally. He said that Daksa, who had been beheaded, would have to take the head of a goat; Bhrgu would have to wear the beard of the goat. Persons who had smiled while Lord Siva was being blasphemed would have to remain with their teeth broken, and they would have to chew the food first chewed by their disciples, or, when alone, eat dough made from chickpea flour.

All the demigods prayed to Lord Siva after Daksa made his prayers. When everything was restored, Lord Visnu appeared at the sacrificial arena in an eight-armed form riding on His carrier Garuda. Then the demigods, all in turn, offered their worshipable prayers to Visnu. When Lord Visnu arrived and took His place at the sacrificial arena, everything became sanctified, and they

could begin the *yajna* again.

Journal and Poems Book 1 (January-June 1985)

April 3

“My mind brings many doubts. For example, the proposal put before me is that if I rest for as much as a year, then I can gain twenty to forty years of active service. The headaches have broken down my health so much that if this condition keeps up, I will be too debilitated to serve at all. My program, therefore, is to temporarily remove myself from service so that I can take up full service again. This has been very difficult because I feel there is no guarantee of success. I want a guarantee that if I do rest for a year, then I will definitely get twenty years of active service in return. But of course I cannot get such a guarantee. Physical health is precarious; if it were not headaches it would be something else. However, I have to go forward, even without a guarantee from Krsna. I really have no choice. It is a risk, but it is a sensible risk at this point. If I try to drag on with an exhausted physical system, these headaches will lead to other breakdowns.

“When a devotee-doctor told to me that I have worked too hard over the last twenty years in my devotional service and have exhausted my system, I again had doubts. I have not really worked as hard as other devotees on *sankirtana* and at other activities. Yet the stress and strain I have taken on as a manager is considerable. I have to see it in perspective. I am not a superhuman who deserves rest because he has sacrificed himself like a martyr. Rather, I am a person of limited physical and mental capabilities who has used these capabilities to the point of overload. Even if I regain my health, I have to watch my limitations.

“When my head is not actually throbbing, in my mind I sometimes think, ‘This sickness is just in my mind.’ But it is not just in my mind. It is a physical reality, and I have to deal with it.

“I am not the only one ill, and other devotees are not being given such full facility to recover. But without feeling guilty I should get well and then serve others. The reason I am being given this facility is because I am expected to be in the forefront of those who are spreading Krsna consciousness. Therefore I should recover my health and fully engage myself in Krsna’s service without any distraction or deviation. This should be my program.

“And even if I am unqualified to live and write in Vrndavana, even if I am myself half-dead and living in the deadened West, I may yet be able to think of Krsna. If we can realize that indeed Krsna consciousness of the fullest kind can be experienced anywhere, even in nature, then that will be a considerable victory for all of us.

“Like every Krsna temple, Gita-nagari is special. It is a holy *dhama*, a spiritual abode in a condemned land. This particular location, rural Pennsylvania, is far removed from the land of Lord Caitanya. He never walked here. The countryside freezes for months at a time, and the *mlecchas* use it for cow slaughter. It is a land suffering under the weight of Kali-yuga. Yet Srila Prabhupada came here and established this farm, thus giving a chance to those who would otherwise have no hope.”

“Sometimes I seem to forget my illness and become restless, but yesterday I had a relapse in my condition and was again dragged down to the platform of physical pain. I wanted to read, hear and write, but the veins in my head expanded,

and there was pain. I tried wishing it away, ignoring it, reducing my activities in one way or another. I tried hearing a tape of my disciples reading *The Teachings of Lord Caitanya* while I walked slowly outside, wearing sunglasses against the light. But the invader-headache had its way. Eventually I had to lie down. But I felt satisfaction in the midst of the growing headache: ‘Yes, now I can see clearly my proposed stay here at Gita-nagari is not an overly cautious plan. It is sensible; it is necessary. I *cannot* do otherwise. But my perspective is that of a less-intelligent person who suffers some pain and then one hour later forgets the cause of the pain and acts in a way to bring it on again.’”

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“April 20

“Today Advaita Acarya came to give me a medical checkup and consultation. He’s coming again on Lord Nrsimhadeva’s appearance day in a couple of weeks, and bringing with him a busload of fifty members of the Hindu community. Although Advaita Acarya has been very strict that I not give any classes, he asked if I could speak to the group when he comes on May 4th.

“A few devotees with terminal diseases have gone to live in our Vrndavana temple in order to pass their last days in the holy *dhama*. After seeing these devotees, a young boy in Vrndavana *gurukula* wrote me a letter saying he realizes death can occur at any moment.

There were other reminders of death in the same batch of mail. One girl died in a car accident. A *gurukula* teacher wrote a letter to me saying that this girl often used to inquire about what would happen at the time of death and how we could

continue our devotional consciousness. Another letter described how devotees performing *harinama sankirtana* at the beach in Miami were attacked, but some friendly nondevotees defended them. In another letter, I heard how my disciple Gaura-Nitai dasa was attacked while distributing *Back to Godhead* magazines in a parking lot. He went into the hospital with a concussion but is now out. Hearing on all sides of danger and death, no one can seriously think that he will be spared or that his way will be simply peaceful. But we can help ourselves and help others by soberly acting in Krsna consciousness.

“My disciple gave a class which I heard over the speaker in my cabin. He stressed that devotees should not be afraid to wear *dhotis*, shave their heads, and have some contact with the public. He said even if they get laughed at, that's good for their false ego, and out of compassion they should preach. Although he presented these ideas in a gentlemanly, humble way, the lecture was also provocative and pushy. I thought of my own present situation, how retired I am, hardly ever leaving the *dhama*. (Of course, I'm preaching through my writings, and my daily exercises and rest are a form of preaching, since I need health and strength to travel.)

“I don't want to be criticized by our super-preachers for just talking about the birds, the changes of season at Gita-nagari, and about seeing Krsna, yet we all have to learn to be Krsna conscious *wherever* we are.”

Reading Reform: Srila Prabhupada's Plan for the Daily Reading of His Books

“Street chanting must go on; it is our most important program. Lord Caitanya's movement means the *sankirtana* movement. You may simply take two hours for chanting sixteen rounds daily, two hours for reading congregationally, and balance of time go out for *sankirtana*.

We must do both, reading books and distributing books, but distributing books is the main propaganda. Reading and class for two hours is sufficient, and other reading can be done in spare time if one has got it; it is not as though one has to be always reading. One hour in the morning for *Bhagavatam* class, and one hour in the evening, either *Bhagavad-gita* or *Nectar of Devotion*. That is sufficient.’ (Letter to Bali Mardana and Pusta-krsna)

“COMMENTARY: While traveling through the New York temple, one of Prabhupada’s newly-initiated *sannyasis* expressed the view that devotees should read Prabhupada’s books for five to eight hours every day. A controversy arose, and the devotees placed an urgent call to Prabhupada. In response, Prabhupada wrote the letter above.

“In this letter, Prabhupada rejects the extreme program of reading for up to eight hours daily. He instead advocates what some devotees call the ‘ISKCON Sandwich’ plan. According to this program, devotees begin the day with congregational chanting and hearing. Then, after engaging in various preaching activities throughout the day, the devotees again meet for more hearing and chanting in an evening program. However, because there are advantages to performing *kirtana* during the evening hours, most temples find it hard to have a steady evening program.

“As a result, the ‘ISKCON Sandwich’ has become an open-faced sandwich with only one piece of ‘bread’—the morning program. Yet the daily *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class does not by itself provide enough opportunity for the devotees to hear from the *sastra*. It is not enough to hear for only one hour in the morning and not read the

books. As Prabhupada states in this letter quoted above, ‘One hour a morning for *Bhagavatam* class, and one hour an evening, either *Bhagavad-gita* or *Nectar of Devotion*, that is sufficient.’ Moreover, as Prabhupada points out in his letter to Madhudvisa quoted earlier, if one were to study but one verse from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* every day (as one would do if he were to attend class regularly), it would require not less than 50 years to finish. Nor is it possible that one can hear all of Srila Prabhupada’s books simply by attending *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class. Therefore, only by reading on a regular, daily basis can the devotees read all of Prabhupada’s books and also hear from the scriptures for the minimum of two hours every day as Prabhupada requires.

“Beyond reading and hearing for two hours daily, Prabhupada instructs the devotees to read his books in whatever spare time they may have. Few devotees may feel they have any spare time to speak of. After all, ‘Distributing books is the main propaganda,’ as Prabhupada states in his letters, and every devotee has full engagement in maintaining and expanding this Krsna consciousness movement. Yet as Prabhupada also states, ‘We must do both, reading books and distributing books.’ And if one does not somehow find the time, how will he ever read *The Nectar of Devotion*, the *Caitanya-caritamrta* and the many volumes of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*? It is, therefore, incumbent upon every devotee to find time to read, regardless of how full his schedule may be. One symptom of a devotee on the *bhava* platform is that he is always anxious to utilize his time for Krsna. Out of transcendental anxiety, therefore, we should minimize the time we spend eating and sleeping and engaging in material activities, and we should find more time for reading Prabhupada’s books.”

From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About: Writing Sessions While Reading Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Saranagati

“Next Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes thirteen songs called "Bhajana-lalasa," hankering for divine service. The first nine are based on Srila Rupa Gosvami's *Upadesamrta*.

“Again he is writing as a fallen soul. He says he doesn't deserve deliverance from *samsara*, but he appeals to the Supreme Lord's compassion. ‘Therefore, although I am certainly destitute, I solicit Your causeless mercy.’ (Saranagati , 7.1.2).

“The powerful ‘*vegas*,’ the pushing agents, cast him adrift on the sea of the world. Rupa Gosvami's verse states that one who can control these urges is a *gosvami* and is capable of accepting disciples all over the world. But Bhaktivinoda Thakura doesn't claim he is such a *gosvami*. ‘After great endeavor to subdue these material demands, I have completely given up all hope. O Lord of the destitute, I call upon Your holy name, for now You are my only shelter.’ (Saranagati 7.1.4). He has turned the verse into a personal prayer. Let us remember the *Upadesamrta* text in that way.

“We sometimes quote it as evidence of who is qualified to be a spiritual master Or we assert, ‘I am following the rules. I control these urges. So consider me as a *gosvami*.’ But we cannot ultimately control ourselves; we can only endeavor and pray, because our minds, tongues, bellies, and genitals are banded together against us. Our tongue speaks nonsense. Please, Lord of the poor, give us Your shelter.

“Similarly, Bhaktivinoda Thakura takes the statement of items which are unfavorable for devotional service, and he turns it into his personal prayer. ‘I have not been able to give up any of these attachments. Thus my own faults have been my downfall.’ It is nice to study these faults from an objective distance: ‘One should

avoid these.’ But it is also powerful to come close to them and openly admit, ‘I have these and they are spoiling my life. I want release from them.’ The list of entanglements comes alive and we confess. We have been giving a lecture on unfavorable items to one's execution of service. Now we admit our own wrongs.

“O Lord Hari, what am I to do now? I am indeed fallen; but Your holy name is the savior of the fallen. Clinging to that holy name, I have taken shelter at Your lotus feet.’ (*Saranagati* , 7.2.3-4)

“Wait a minute, why so freely say that you are guilty? Who has proved you wrong? Do you actually commit *atyaharah prayasas ca, prajalpo niyamagrahah? jana-sangas ca laulyam ca?* Yes, sometimes greedy, sometimes eating more than necessary and collecting more funds than necessary. I definitely practice the rules only for the sake of following them. These items are not only a list of what the fools and nondevotees do. Srila Prabhupada writes, ‘Every intelligent man should purify his consciousness and rid himself of the above-mentioned six hindrances to devotional service by taking wholehearted shelter of this Krsna consciousness movement.’ (*Nectar of Instruction*, Text 2, purport). ISKCON can rescue us. So you—I mean I—are we taking shelter?”

Memory in the Service of Krsna

“*Who is Krsna?*”

“In these Western countries, when someone sees the cover of a book like *Krsna*, he immediately asks, “Who is Krsna? Who is the girl with Krsna?” etc. The immediate answer is that Krsna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. How is that? Because He conforms in exact

detail to descriptions of the Supreme Being, the Godhead. In other words, Krsna is the Godhead because He is all attractive.’ (Preface to *Krsna*, 12th edition, p. xi)

“Some devotees said that lecturing in college classes was ‘Krsna conscious sense gratification.’ By that they meant that it was a very pleasurable exercise for the preacher. I liked classroom lecturing because it was a polite setting, unlike book distribution on the streets or airports, which seemed to require the efforts of a gladiator against lions. For some devotees it was scary to face a room full of smirking, bored, distracted American students. But once you got used to it, it was a gratifying challenge to pit your wits and whatever devotion you had against the combined forces of the audience. Your presentation had to be couched in an academic way, not like a sermon to the faithful. Step by step you proceeded into transcendence.

“I usually started by describing the *Bhagavad-gita* as the authoritative Sanskrit text of Indian spirituality. I avoided saying bluntly, ‘It’s five thousand years old’ because I knew that would turn off the professor. I continued by saying ‘You’re not this body,’ giving the usual examples. Although those examples had become quite tired out for presentation to fellow devotees in the *Bhagavatam* class, they were nevertheless brilliant and strong analogies, and I never refrained from repeating them before a new audience. (‘If I ask you who you are you will say, “I am a man,” or “I am a woman,” or “I am an American,” or you will give your family name. But these are all false designations. They are like coverings of the real self. The real self is called *atma*, eternal spirit soul.’) I would proceed describing the soul and the Supreme Soul (‘Krsna is a name of God, and it means all-attractive’)—and all this had to be done

within twenty-five minutes, leaving fifteen minutes for questions. If I was bold, I might end the session with a demonstration of the *maha-mantra*, writing the words ‘*man*’ and ‘*tra*’ on the blackboard and asking the class to join me in the singing meditation.

“Another subtle but bold act by a lecturer was to place a large picture of Lord Krsna on the ledge which usually held chalk and erasers to be viewed during their lecture. One time when I had lectured with the picture of Krsna behind me, the college instructor asked me, ‘What’s with all the jewelry on Krsna?’

“He went on to say that jewelry symbolizes the opposite of what we expect in a spiritual person, who is supposed to be humble and renounced. I was struck because no one had ever asked me before about Lord Krsna's jewelry. I had learned whatever I knew of Krsna from Srila Prabhupada in the controlled atmosphere of his ashram. When I or others raised doubts before Srila Prabhupada, he always overpowered our skepticism by his great devotion and scholarship. Now here I was being asked to explain Krsna to a recognized intellectual and his students. Did I myself have doubts? I glanced back to the picture of Lord Krsna and especially noted His necklace, pearls, and gold-and-bejeweled helmet. I replied that Lord Krsna was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and so the jewelry on His body could not be considered as something that Krsna used to increase His prestige. He didn't need it. In some of His incarnations He also appeared as a poor mendicant. Lord Krsna’s body is *sat-cid-ananda*, completely transcendental, and His jewelry is also spiritual. It is not that the jewelry makes Krsna's body more beautiful, but the jewelry becomes more beautiful by being put on His body. That question was a hard one for me to answer, but my conviction created at least a standstill to any further debate as to why God wore jewelry.”

Shack Notes--Moments While at a Writing Retreat

“Today, while I had my eyes shut and we were all hearing Baladeva reading "The Prayers of Lord Brahma to Krsna," it started thundering. Lightning flashed ominously. We continued reading and I didn't notice how dark it was getting. I said, "Brahma's description of Krsna at the beginning of this chapter is one of my all-time favorites. Yellow *dhoti* glittering like lightning, helmet with forest flowers, bodily hue like a fresh rain cloud, a morsel of food in one hand, a flute tucked in His belt, small lotus feet—and yet He is the inconceivable Personality of Godhead, the source of all.”

“Then it started to rain. Usually, you don't get wet in the shack, but this was a heavy downpour. We moved to a dry corner and continued. Brahma's glorious speech resonated louder than the thunder. I imagined Lord Brahma beginning to speak, his voice low and quaking, and then gathering volume as he said: *Jnane prayasam udapasya namanta eva*. I could hear the strength in his voice, see his chest filling out, his intelligence flowing. It is one of the most Krsna-triumphant speeches ever made by any devotee in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. He does not just praise God, not just Visnu, but specifically Krsna as the source of all incarnations. And he describes His Vrndavana pastimes as the sweetest of all. We cheered Brahma on, listening as best as we could. He who had made a fool of himself before Krsna was now used by Krsna to speak wondrous and strong Krsna conscious prayers.”

The Wild Garden: Collected Writings, 1990-1993

“WRITING

“A poet should find something Krsna conscious to write about, saying, ‘I am a

poet' is like saying 'I am a guru,' or 'I am a Vaisnava.' It's something we shouldn't claim. But I am writing this for myself. I need to make the claim and to assert this side of myself. Why do I write so much? Why do I work to make poetic statements?

“Being a poet does not mean writing pretty or flowery words. It means translating feelings from the writer to the reader. A poet wants to share tears and yearning, the nature of being. A poet doesn't always want to polish his expression, and he never wants to polish it to the point where it becomes divorced from the reality from which it sprang. Poets can write poetry within their prose.

“We can't sit around waiting for poetic moments to occur. They occur when we write. The more we write, the more likely they are to occur. We can write after Prabhupada's disappearance, but we cannot write without the inspiration he gives us. Srila Prabhupada can transfer Krsna consciousness from his heart to ours.

“Let me write from that transference. Let me be a poet and struggle with the poverty of spirit. Let me find my theme and pray to Prabhupada for mercy.

“These are some of the thoughts I had last night. Now I sit facing myself toward the photo of Srila Prabhupada on my desk. Can I get deeper? Can I find my own expression and then dive into the fresh streams of Krsna conscious expression? 'Just writing' is like emptying stores, like fasting and working at the same time. It needs to be complemented by reading Prabhupada's books.

“Writing and Krsna conscious life go together. Our lives are flowing—preaching, *sadhana* and writing. Writing, preaching and *sadhana*.

Every Day, Just Write, Volume 2: Search for the Authentic Self

“December 4

12:45 AM

“I say the predictable. When reading, I also feel, ‘Oh, here it is—the same thing I read not long ago.’—where King Prataparudra inquired from Sarvabhauma about Lord Caitanya. Same old things? I stop, sigh, pause and then go forward with some effort—and awareness—that there is nectar here. I have to work at finding it. I certainly haven’t milked Prabhupada’s books dry.

“In this age of Kali, there are no genuine religious principles other than those established by Vaisnava devotees and Vaisnava scriptures. This is the sum and substance of everything.’

“The pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu are just like an unfathomable ocean. It is not possible for me to enter into them. Simply standing on the shore, I am but touching the water.’

“The more one hears the pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu with faith, analytically studying them, the more one attains the ecstatic riches of love of Godhead.’ (*Cc. Madhya* 9.362-64)

“I complain, I read in cycles, I rejoice. I repeat, I do the loop-de-loop and pass through familiar country. It’s my poverty, but also my richness.

“It’s like where I am living nowadays. I’m not traveling, so every day I see the same shed, the same path, wet leaves, lake and island. I don’t grow tired of the view—especially at dawn—or the seasons (spring and early summer are especially nice). I know I can’t live here forever, so whatever I see and repeat has to become an act of devotion. Whatever I read, familiar as it is, also seems to be come an act of devotion because I won’t be here forever. The reading experience can be transformed from restlessness to love of Krsna from such an attempt.”

WRITING SESSIONS

Wicklów Writing Sessions

“Session #4

“3:02 P.M. July 28, 1996 (Uddhava’s hut)

“Trying to go for a whole hour; start each page like a new round of japa; want to flow and not dynamite rocks; go on without interruption; repeat Prabhupada as you recall; the psychic who saw the energy of GNP.

“I’m in the hut and it’s raining. I gave a lecture this morning on *bhakti-lata bija*. It was a satisfactory *yajna*, and I don’t have to do any other group function for a whole week; now please take to the Writing Session. Sir, I allow you. I decided to adjust my schedule so the writing can be increased. Schedule a half-hour reading and Cc. aside from the WS time. But then try to clear one-hour sessions in which you don’t stop for reading. And don’t be ashamed that it is not repeating *sastra*. It is what it is.

“Kdd told me a psychic healer went to Gita-nagari and met with the leader, BT Swami. She told him she envisioned the trailer of Kdd and saw that from there (she was impressed how much writing was coming forth) ancient knowledge is turned into an accessible form for the people of this age and especially for the future. She dwelt on this and wanted to impress upon BT Swami the importance of this. Far out. Kdd writes that she doesn’t know what BT Swami actually thought when he heard this, but he acted graciously.

“I might like to settle there some day in a corner without much attention and just be allowed to write? Not possible. You would be bothered. Hide out elsewhere

on the move, but write, write. And here is a very good place, for now. So, relax as you lumber out like a horse that can run a long distance, and who likes to run, and who has on his back a man he loves who doesn't abuse him.

“Therefore, you can schedule the increase to an hour long. But let's see how you can actually take it with your health limits, and so on. Potentially it can be done. You move along with the rhythm of it, not afraid of what comes. So, at other times you may read in Prabhupada and also books you might want to look at like NG (Natalie Goldberg) on writing. You can put hints on index cards to keep you going.

“You had a steady partner along with you in the *Pada-yatra*, the critical voice. He makes pithy remarks, he creates attention that makes you never take yourself too seriously. And that is good. He makes us laugh. He points to others indirectly and makes his parody and songs. I don't say I can get rid of him. I do say he may not be so necessary in the free-writes. We shouldn't feel that unless we're always carping, especially at ourselves, that it's not honest and down to earth. After all, the psychic said...

“‘There you go again.’

“‘Well, what do you expect?’

“Miniscule drops of water, drops of water coming down. So, I spoke on the metaphor of the *bhakti-lata* and gave enough instructions for six essays if one wanted to follow it up. The weeds look just like the plant. The weeds are watered when you chant and hear. How is that? The main danger is mad-elephant, not obeying the orders of the spiritual master. I make clear the tenets of that section of *Cc.*, having gone over it a number of times. The talk was in SP *sampradaya*. Oh, I do like to speak in his line. I heard him say, ‘Don't be like a *sahajiya* and speak of

Radha and Krsna as if it were mundane sex affairs. Lord Caitanya didn't speak of these things except with confidential followers.' So, we must be very careful about this. Later we thought, 'Yes, Prabhupada said that to us then, but now, maybe under the right circumstances and with the right guru, we can hear about Radha-Krsna and it is not abused by us.' Srila Prabhupada says if by hearing it increases your lust, then stop it. It does not increase my lust, but my lust still remains when applied to ordinary women of the world. Then you'd better do the needful and follow your guru to remove that lust.

“But I heard that if you hear about Krsna and the *gopis*, that will remove lust. Yes, so it is said.

“But hear from him, your chosen doctor, the expert. He tells you about it bit by bit. He knows how.

“Cows out in all weather. Writing not for effect, drifting off. I look down and see the light on the typewriter keys. I hope they don't wear out. I hope it lasts, the body; the body feels okay when you walk, but there are so many things that can go wrong. Paul Blackburn wrote a list of countries that he could not visit now that he had cancer, and then he added jokingly that he gave a reading in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania and they loved him. Clever poet, dying man facing 'the inevitable.' 'I have cancer;' he said it matter-of-fact in his poem, where he made expression and dedication to the modern art of poems.

“Man, what if I get tired and thirsty? Do I have to keep writing? You can stop for a drink of water. When I go to write I turn to the most recent lectures of His Divine Grace and put down what I recall, just as I did with my typewriter in 1966 in the First Street apartment. Now it's raining harder, it rained hard then too (rains,

rains, I'm not afraid of you.)

“M. and I don't speak of Steve V. more than is necessary. I want to flow in the time that is left and we will churn out the books in *BAF* and *GNP*. The more the better: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare.

“The Divine Light Guyana Society for Hindus. I can hardly hear the typewriter under the louder sound of the rain beating on this flimsy wooden hut. At least it is dry in here so far, but I wouldn't trust it after a prolonged downpour. Therefore, after an hour we will retreat to the stone house. Hare Krsna. The sound of the machine can become hypnotic, and you allow it to carry you somewhere.

“I've been a little bashful to say I'm typing, as if it's better to be wielding the pen. With the pen you are more of a writer? Either way. You dictate onto the machine and it gets typed.

“Why not put up some of your pictures on the wall here? Yes, I could do that. But I won't take the time to do it now. I've been doing many things instead of writing and now I want to write instead. Hare Krsna. There was once a man from Quince. He attempted suicide in Pence. These are ordinary sentences of no meaning.

“Rain pouring down, the clouds present an all-white sky. It is good to rain in Ireland. You don't think however that it's good for the crops. Rather it is raining more than needed. I guess they could use more sunshine. I'm not interested in the form of this writing but in expression in writing.

“Sir, can we take a deep breath?

You may.

Can we take a giant step?

You may, and you may also take a little step backward.

You may breathe, sigh out. You may make a poem line and adore
 Sri Krsna and Radha by saying Their names
 in Hare Krsna mantra and in the morning say,
 O Lord, O Energy of the Lord in the Hare Krsna mantra
 in the dark. I asked for a little lamp, if one could be found, that would shed
 just enough light on my altar, like the lights you see in Catholic homes, where they
 have one under the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The heart of Prabhupada who worked for
 the deliverance of the whole world. He said, ‘Don’t keep Lord Caitanya locked up
 within a room but let the Caitanya moon spread out to all.’ Find that excerpt and put
 it with the others. He wanted a temple to Caitanya-candrodaya to cast light over all
 the world. That also means that preachers should speak the message by chanting
 Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare. This is the truth.

“The psychic saw the energy like an aura or something or relocated it in her
 radar scene where the manuscripts are arriving and being edited and being given to
 the world. All glories to the Lord of the universe. It is being noticed not by obvious
 forces of the world but on a subtle plane, by people who see inner workings, see it
 and want to help it. Don’t get in the way of this writing, which is working to deliver
 the world. It is all right. O Swami-brother, maybe you could even welcome me to
 come there and live and work in peace by the creek. Let no one disturb me. Let an
 old man churn out his free-write. Or I can do it my own way, as is happening now
 and nicely.

“Sri Krsna Caitanya, Prabhu Nityananda. There is no way to fight the thieves
 but to run from them. Or get your gun and fire back into the night. Protect your
 money and passport. Protect you heart. Then you die and you have to take a next

life. Ask a man where does he go in his next life and he replies, ‘Rawl! Rawl!’ barks like a dog, or says, ‘Don’t bother about that.’

“You could make a quota of one hour, or maybe eight pages, which is a little short of that. We used to write timed books in that way. Often, they were striving to breakthrough manfully. As in the George Harrison song:

“Got a lot of work to do

Try to get a message through

And get back out of this material world.’

“Now I am more looking to just flow along and let the process take me, not dynamiting the mountain. I want to flow with the creeks, come down like the rain here. Let me work through.

“Get some air in this place, open the window. The buttercups are drinking in the rain and surviving somehow. Flowers battered by the rains. I have no qualms about that, being a human and I can get shelter. But there are 8,400,000 species, and we wander from one to another. It is very rare and fortunate that one comes to the human form. It was a relief to talk about the philosophy in a strong manner. Not cozy jokes about the community or about myself and my travels, but I gave examples to illustrate the philosophy. I turned to the *gurukula* teacher, Prabhupada dasa, and said, ‘You encourage students and show them that you love them sometimes by touching them, but if you are displeased, don’t hit them.’ So, God shows us that He loves us and we need those signs. It is very encouraging. But in the advanced state one is so attracted by the Lord that he just loves Him and doesn’t ask that Krsna show He loves us.

“I don’t want to sound condescending toward the natural desire to have Krsna be affectionate and reveal it to us. It is very nice and we should yearn for it. Krsna is our beloved, best Friend. I was actually thinking of Therese of Lisieux’s Carmelite sainthood and how they emphasize love. Love is what encourages them, not duty or fear. ‘Show me love and I race to you, teach me duty and I drag my heels,’ she said. And she asked Him to drag her to Him by love. I am influenced by that but didn’t bring it up, not wanting the Christian example to enter the room at that particular time. Yes, love, love and even if You make me brokenhearted, I will still love You, I’m attracted by You. I love You. You have captured me and I have captured You. You cannot remove yourself from my heart even if You tried. My love for You is so strong.

“A typed page is something like a chanted round of *japa*. It may take about the same length of time or a little longer. And in your mind, you go through various words, but always you want to be engaged in KC and thinking of the Lord. You are attracted to nice things for the taste of the tongue, and so you want a snack at 5 P.M. even if your belly and body really don’t need it. And other thoughts come and go that really are not pure devotional service. Anyone can love the Lord. It doesn’t matter what rank of social standing or intellect one is. The thing the Lord wants is our love for Him. It is not fixed up in a certain kind of service, but anyone can please Him. Prabhupada said that and I recently read it. Krsna wants to see your love. So, be encouraged and go on writing, seeking that inner circle where you feel release. That means detached from trying to create an effect as a writer, like a novelist or essayist. Let the effect take care of itself. Yet he is churning out literature for the future. Take note of it and help him.

“But sometimes he just chants and chants...Don’t keep Lord Caitanya for yourself in a room. Allow the rays of His light to go all over the world.

“Does he write personal books other than the ones that we use in the *bhakta* program about chanting the holy names?

“Yes, he does. He wrote in *Shack Notes*, a book about writing to be yourself. At the same time, you approach the Lord. There is nothing like it in ISKCON but there will be. He tells of some poems by Gary Snyder called ‘Robin’ and tells of his attachment for T. Monk and his childhood, and he sits with his friends and discusses the *Krsna* book. That was just the beginning. He then went on to other and better things, as in *The Wild Garden*. The truth, man, is in the fiction of the fat man, the thin man and the third man. Oh, I liked it when I didn’t accommodate for the reader but wrote what you had to.”

(To be continued)