

Free Write Journal #97

Free Writes

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Quoted Out of Context

Giriraja Swami sent me a letter by his disciple Kalachandji which included a Facebook posting by Dr. Graham Schweig. As is well-known, Dr. Schweig has attacked the BBT second edition of *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, edited by Jayadvaita Swami. Jayadvaita Swami has defended his editing in a booklet called “Responsible Publishing” and in two videos. I do not appreciate Dr. Schweig’s quoting my statements about not wanting changes in the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* and comparing this to the changes Jayadvaita Maharaja made in *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. I allowed the *Prabhupada-lilamrta* to undergo considerable revisions, but I have now said that I don’t want any more changes. I don’t want my disciples or readers to be confused by Dr. Schweig’s statement, trying to use me as an example of someone who is against Jayadvaita Maharaja’s changes. Mine is a different case.

Book Distribution

Earlier in the year I made an announcement that I wanted to conduct a fundraising campaign to acknowledge my 80th year and publish four books in the year 2020. I anticipated distributing two books at my summer meeting of disciples and friends, and two books at the Vyasa-puja occasion in early December. But now the Covid epidemic has canceled my July 4th meeting, and my Vyasa-puja meeting is in question. To facilitate distribution of these four new books, John Endler has volunteered to mail them out to prospective readers. He will be posting announcements about this. He needs the mailing address of the person, and we are asking the readers to pay for

shipping charges. When the devotees receive the books, they will see what the postage amount is on the package, and they can make their donation according to that. I am very sorry our meetings are being canceled; other than the occasion to gather together, these meetings are also an occasion to distribute the books. So please cooperate and order the books by mail.

Prabhupada's Lecture

I'm listening to a series of lectures by Prabhupada on Prahlada Maharaja's prayers to Nrsimhadeva. He asks the Lord to please not be angry, and he says even a saintly person is happy when a poisonous snake is killed. Prabhupada tells an incident when he was a newcomer to the Gaudiya Math. He was at their Mayapur headquarters when a big snake came out. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was on the balcony, and he said that the snake should be killed. Our Prabhupada was a little surprised that his Guru Maharaja had ordered like that. It became a doubt in his mind. But then when he read a *Bhagavatam* verse that says even a saintly person is happy when a snake is killed, he became very, very satisfied. Prahlada Maharaja goes on to glorify Nrsimhadeva, and tells Him how He has made all the demigods happy by His action of killing Hiranyakasipu.

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Prahlada says that all the great demigods, even up to Lord Brahma, could not pacify Lord Nrsimha's anger, so it was he, the son of a great demon—he was not at all qualified, yet he asserted that he could offer prayers if they were done with actual devotion for the Lord. Prabhupada said it doesn't matter what one's position is, anyone can pray to Krsna. Prabhupada writes that this is applicable to the members of the Hare Krsna movement. They were all unqualified when they first came to Krsna consciousness. But by taking up the rules and regulations and agreeing to chant sixteen rounds of the Hare Krsna mantra, they became eligible to speak authentic prayers to the

Lord. Nrsimhadeva touched Prahlada, and the boy gained *bhakti-sakti*, he was transformed and able to make prayers in choice words (*uttama-sloka*). Anyone who changes his life and submits himself to a bona-fide spiritual master is eligible to pray to Krsna. He doesn't have to be a Sanskritist or learned *brahmana*. He just has to speak his sincere gratitude and devotion to the Lord. The Lord accepts it like a father accepts the broken words of his young child.

Prabhupada in Montreal

In the summer of 1968 Prabhupada visited Montreal. At the end of his lectures he gave lots of time to answering questions. Eighteen-year-old Rukmini asked him, "When you are away, I feel very distant from you." Prabhupada couldn't understand her question and had the temple president, Janardana, repeat it. Then he answered, "Don't think that way. There are two kinds of presence of the spiritual master—*vapuh*, the physical presence, and *vani*, the sound vibration or instructions of the spiritual master. When Krsna left the earth, Arjuna was bereft and grief-stricken and devoid of his prowess. But then he remembered Krsna's instructions to him the *Bhagavad-gita* and he became pacified. So when you are feeling separation from the spiritual master you should remember his instructions and you will be with him and be happy." Prabhupada said, "Is that all right?" and Rukmini acknowledged that she understood. Another young woman asked Prabhupada, "How could Prahlada Maharaja pray to Nrsimhadeva that you are 'my God?'" Prabhupada replied that, "You are thinking that he is monopolizing God, but it is not that way in spiritual relationships. If you say of my spectacles that they are 'my spectacles,' that is wrong. But if you say, 'my God,' it is quite all right because Krsna is everyone's God. In the material world, when a man says 'my wife,' no one else can make that claim. But in spiritual life, all of Krsna's parts and parcels can pray to Him as 'my God.' He is everyone's God and there is no monopolization. Therefore one says, 'my God.' These important answers went deep into the hearts of the young devotees, and they remembered them for the rest of their lives.

Govardhana Retreat

Bhurijana spoke on the Krsna-Kaliya pastimes. For a long time Krsna wanted to kill Kaliya, who was destroying the Yamuna with his venomous poison. The cows and boys had gone ahead and drank the water from the poisonous river, and they had all fallen dead. Krsna brought them *back to life* with His glance and told them to keep clear of the river. He then climbed a surviving kadamba and dove into Kaliya's lake. He made a tremendous sound, and water from the river overlapped to the land. He started swimming around, and the serpent Kaliya became angry and disturbed. He went to bite Krsna, and he enwrapped Him in his coils. This looked very bad for Krsna. The residents of Vrndavana saw ill omens in the sky and land, and they worried for Krsna's safety. They traced Krsna's footprints to the edge of the Yamuna, and then they saw the ghastly sight of Krsna enwrapped in the serpent's coils. Mother Yasoda first tried to go into the water; the ladies held her back, and then she fainted. Everyone feared that Krsna may die. Only Balarama was not worried because He knew of Krsna's supernatural power and how He could not be defeated by an ordinary serpent. Balarama held the residents back from entering the water. When Krsna saw that the Vrajavasis were so sad, seeing the whole world as void, He broke loose of the serpent's hold and began dancing on his many heads. Kaliya would lift up a head to bite Krsna, and Krsna would stomp on that head with artistic dancing skill. He also stomped on the serpent and weakened his strength. The beings from the upper planets came down and showered flowers on Krsna and accompanied His dancing with music and song. Krsna continued pounding Kaliya's heads until he became so weak that he could fight no longer. At this point he surrendered to Krsna and accepted Him as his Lord. The Nagapatnis, the serpent's wives, came forth with their children and prayed to Krsna to spare their husband's life. They presented Krsna with valuable gifts. The residents of Vrndavana came back to life, and their mood changed from despair to celebration. When Krsna came out of the water, the Vrajavasis surrounded Him and embraced Him with joy.

Krsna told Kaliya that he would have to leave the Yamuna and go, along with his wives and children, into the ocean. Krsna told him that he didn't have to fear Garuda any more because Krsna's footprints were marked on his heads. Kaliya and the Nagapatnis made their prayers to the Lord and then left the Yamuna. As soon as they were gone, the poisonous waters turned back to nectarean, clear water. The commentators state that Balarama took Krsna on His lap and examined His body to see if He had any injuries. When He was satisfied that Krsna was unharmed, He let Him go, and the Vrajavasis returned to their homes, singing Krsna's glories.

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Jagattarini Mataji spoke about being in Vrndavana. She said the first way to be in Vrndavana is to be attentive with your senses and see and taste and smell what is going on. See the monkeys, see the people, hear the sounds. Let these make an impression on you. Another level of being in Vrndavana is to hear and discuss the pastimes of Krsna. The *sastras* state that hearing about Krsna (from the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, from an authorized speaker) is very powerful and can transport you out of the bodily concept of life. Jagattarini also spoke briefly of Rupa Gosvami's poem *Hamsadutta*, where Radharani is experiencing extreme pains of separation from Krsna, who is in Mathura. Lalita leaves Radharani to go fetch some cool water for Her. Lalita sees a swan and engages in conversation with it. She knows the swan is going to fly to Mathura, and she asks it to bring a message to Krsna telling Him about the extreme condition of Radharani in hopes that He would come to Vraja."

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I was listening to the Govardhana Retreats when suddenly the batteries went dead. I gave the device to Baladeva to recharge, but he couldn't make it work. I had to go the afternoon without my Govardhana Retreat juice. I'm very attached to hearing the speakers, and I listen for hours each

day. It's my main *sadhana* in the afternoon during the pandemic lockdown.

It's playing again, but recording the year 2015, which I already heard several times. I'm going to go to Krsna dasi and Manohara and see if they can update me to the year 2016.

This is the material world, where everything breaks, especially electronic devices. They appear to give you a wonderful advantage, but then they break down and you can't hear the lecture.

Local News

Bala from Trinidad is back. Every day at 11:00 he is in the kitchen preparing the lunch. He also works in the garden by his house. Bala helps out with the out-loud reading, but he's still in quarantine, so he has to wear a mask. This makes his eyeglasses fog up, and he's not able to read comfortably for so long. We look forward to next Saturday when he is off quarantine and we can resume our full group effort in reading, morning and lunch.

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We had a new delivery of mulch yesterday, and Lalita-kaisori and Atindra came to help mulch the newly planted flowers. They have planted many kinds of flowers for the Deity. Bala has completely mulched his property and planted marigolds and a vegetable garden. Baladeva Vidyabhusana has been "deadheading" roses so they will bloom in September. Our garden is the most attractive on the block. People often compliment us. We do it as an offering to Krsna, but when they praise our garden it's indirectly praise of devotional service. When neighbors ask us how and why we keep the yard so beautifully, we reply that the flowers are offered to God.

Baladeva has to spend hours each day watering because it hasn't rained in two weeks and the temperatures are in the nineties (°F.)

We had a dead tree leaning over our shed. The professional tree-cutters were working on a tree next door, and we asked them for a price for cutting down our dead tree. They did it for a reasonable cost, and now our tree is more a live bush than a tree. There are many new branches coming up from the bottom of it. The dead part of the tree was removed, but it wasn't killed.

Out-loud Reading

In our out-loud reading we are hearing about the appearance of Maharaja Prthu. When the evil King Vena was killed by the curses of the *brahmanas*, there was no strong leader, and the thieves and rogues preyed upon the people. The *brahmanas* did not intervene because they did not want to get too much involved in politics. But then some of them churned the arms of Vena, which were preserved in drugs and herbs by his wife. Out of the churning came effulgent beings named Prthu and his wife Arci. They were *saktyavesa avataras* of the Supreme Lord and the goddess of fortune, respectively. They restored law and order in the world and gave the citizens protection. But then some of the citizens approached Prthu Maharaja and appealed to him that they were starving because the earth wasn't producing grains. Prthu Maharaja considered what could be the underlying cause of this calamity. He concluded that it was due to the earth not producing sufficient grains for the populace. In anger, to protect the citizens, Maharaja Prthu prepared himself to kill the earth. But the earth took the shape of a cow and ran away from Prthu Maharaja, appealing to him that he should not kill a cow or a woman. Prthu was aware of religious principles, but in this emergency, with his subjects all starving, he was determined to take action and punish the earth. The earth appealed to the king that she had hidden the grains because they were not being used for sacrifice to Visnu, and thus she was not to blame. The earth argued that the Lord as the incarnation of Viraha had saved the earth on His tusk and lifted her from the ocean. But Prthu persisted in his anger out of a desire to save his starving *prajas*.

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Now we are hearing of Maharaja Prthu and his dealings with Indra, the king of heaven. Prthu wants to perform one hundred *asvamedha-yajnas* (horse sacrifices). He performs ninety-nine, but then Indra becomes envious of him and prevents him by stealing the sacrificial horse and dressing as a pseudo-*sannyasi*. Prthu's son sees Indra fleeing and catches him and brings back the horse. But again Indra manages to steal the horse by introducing, in disguise, the dress of a pseudo-*sannyasi*. Finally Brahma comes and asks Prthu not to attempt the one-hundredth sacrifice but to let Indra remain as the performer of one hundred sacrifices. Prthu agrees, and he and Indra reconcile, Indra bowing down to Prthu, and Prthu embracing him.

Prthu is so powerful he levels the earth with his bow without the help of King Indra. The earth informs Prthu he could produce desirable rain. Then Prthu and the higher beings come forth and make an offering to the earth and milk the earth planet in the form of a cow. Prthu comes forward to offer milk and is rewarded with all the herbs and grains from the earth. The great sages come forward and also offer milk to the earth in the shape of a cow and receive Vedic knowledge. The demigods offer milk and receive soma nectar, which brings them long life and sensual strength, while the demons come forward with milk and receive liquor and beer, etc. Thus the sacrifice was performed successfully, and everyone received what they wanted to serve Lord Visnu in *yajna*. Lord Brahma speaks on *varnasrama-dharma* and says there are two ways to practice it. One way is to get the results of material desires, and the other is to serve with unalloyed pure devotion. Prthu Maharaja is performing his sacrifice as pure devotional service.

Journal and Poems, Book 1 (January-June 1985)

Staying at a Hotel in Calcutta to Recover from Jet Lag before Driving to Mayapur

“I want to make a confession about my *sadhana*. In one sense confession involves something you don’t want to admit to others. It exposes your weakness. It damages your reputation by making the hard truth known. Yet weakness and difficulties exist, and a sincere devotee wants to confront them and rout them out. He desires, therefore, to confide to someone, especially if by doing so he can rectify his mistakes and purify himself.

Some of my lacking in chanting *japa* as well as in reading scripture has to do with physical weakness. Chanting takes lots of energy. Sleepy reading is partly due to a poor physical condition. That’s not a terrible thing to have to admit, although it should be rectified.

But mental weakness, lack of spiritual taste—these are hard to confess, and it is imperative to overcome them.

1) Defeating doubts about the Vedic literature by putting them aside—this is done not only by logical debate but by an internal meditation and by submissive attention to the points Srila Prabhupada makes.

2) An attentive and seeking attitude: in a word, appreciation. For example, in a narration about the Lord as Varaha-avatara, the narrator suddenly changes subjects and begins describing the Lord’s rescue of Gajendra, the king of the elephants. Prabhupada then follows with a short but enlightening comment, which helps us to understand why this verse suddenly appears. It is a sign of good reading to study such verses and purports with care and attention.

3) Another good sign is when reading in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* leads one to write straight Krsna consciousness. And a sign of poor reading is when your head slumps to your chest.

Chanting

1

Slow-start *sadhana*

when your life for it is gone,

your mind's focus off,

then where is your improvement?

The answer is "Press on."

2

To a patient one, it comes—

the urge to be a devotee,

the energy to do it,

the blessings of Krsna.

These things I feel while chanting.

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*Submissive Reading:**Face to Face with the Bhagavatam Sage*

1

Kardama Muni,

did you want to marry from material desire,

or because you were asked by Brahma

to create at the beginning of the world?

Both reasons are stated,

and we study the subtle case,

guided by the purport.

2

In pure mind's eye we see you,
great yogi, and we admire you—
even from our tiny place in Kali-yuga.

How you could concentrate for ten thousand years!

Two hours of chanting
is difficult for us!

3

Kardama, you advise us

to give up the world

and take shelter at His lotus feet. And Prabhupada confirms, "One has
to take shelter

by chanting and hearing
the activities of the Lord."

4

This lowly *sadhana-bhakta* prays,

"O Lord Krsna, let me read and chant *japa*,

under the umbrella of Your feet;

there is no need of wife or home;

Your service is my all."

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"May 29

“The duck couple who I have been observing for a few weeks has now successfully produced offspring. I used to see the full-grown male and female feeding, bathing, and preening, and sitting in the sunshine. But yesterday I saw the female, now a mother, swimming with her seven ducklings lined up behind her. It was during the rainfall, and they were all swimming expertly against the stream. When I pointed them out to Baladeva, he said that probably the ducklings would soon be reduced to six, then five. He has personally seen a snapping turtle rise from the bottom of the creek and pull down an unsuspecting duckling to its death.

“As I write this, it is almost dawn and dozens of nearby birds are playing on their natural flutes, pipes, and whistles. Their happiest moment is but a fleeting song between struggle and death. And we also may descend to that.”

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“I have described in *Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta* Volume Three how I was once talking to Prabhupada when suddenly there sprang into my mind the images of iron nails and a bull. I thought of these things not in any offensive way, but they sprang to my mind as symbols of virility and vital presence. We have heard how in the past centuries Madhvacarya combined a manly physical strength with saintliness and mental power. So the combination is not incompatible. And although Prabhupada was seventy years old, he had this kind of strength and presence, especially in the early days. After his stroke in 1967, it became obvious to all his disciples that they also had to work to spread Krsna consciousness. The waning of Prabhupada's physical strength acted to make the devotees mature quickly. Prior to that, we had a tendency to look with glee upon Prabhupada's pastimes, as if we were just little

children watching the adventures of our father-hero without a thought that we were supposed to follow in his footsteps. And from the time of Prabhupada's '67 illness, for the first time his disciples approached him to do the more tender loving services of nursing and caring for him, and sometimes trying to caution him from too much work. In the beginning, the disciples were indifferent to Prabhupada's doing even menial duties in his apartment, such as cleaning up after a sacrifice, housecleaning and cooking. But gradually they began to realize that they had to do these things for Prabhupada. His sudden delicate health helped to impress this on them.

Prabhupada was to be served. He was not someone to take service from. Prabhupada continued to show physical strength even in his last days, and he continued to travel by plane. And in his last years he showed even further opulences of spirituality, driving himself despite physical maladies and continuing the work of a healthy person, although his health was diminishing.”

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“Go on faith. I want to start walking around more. The main thing is to do something that will help me get well. So if leisurely walking doesn't hurt, why not? And I will come to know Gita-nagari more.

“Sometimes I want it to be as quiet as possible, no sounds, no trouble . . . I know such peace will be interrupted, yet I seek it even for a little while. It is a way of healing, and afterwards I can more willingly enter needful exchanges with people. This solitude has its attractions. And it is not harmful, as long as I am ready to give it up when Krsna asks. Krsna gives us so many nice things, and by certain tendencies we are drawn to some more than others—either quiet forest settings, hearth and home and family, or the excitement and glitter of the city. But whatever it is we like,

we have to be ready to give it up when Krsna's service sends us in a different direction. Therefore, I am not here at Gita-nagari in this mood for my enjoyment, but to rest and regain health. And I am willing to go as soon as I am able to travel and preach.

“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 a 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.”

Begging for the Nectar of the Holy Name

“By minimizing bodily necessities, one can primarily devote his time to the cultivation of Krsna consciousness through the chanting of the holy names of God.’ (*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, p. 31) Why should I doubt it? I *am* doing the most important thing. Lord Caitanya said to Sanatana Gosvami,

‘Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead.’ (*C.c., Antya 4.70-71*)

“Commenting on this verse, Srila Jiva Gosvami writes, ‘Chanting the holy name is the chief means of attaining love of Godhead.’ I am neither too advanced for this instruction nor too fallen. Everything is attainable even for one such as me, if I simply chant the holy name of the Lord offenselessly. And the rectification for offensive chanting? To chant without ceasing.”

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“The tenth offense in chanting is to not have complete faith in the holy names and to maintain material attachments even after receiving so many instructions on this matter. Bhaktivinoda Thakura says this is the worst kind of offense. It means that although you take initiation and begin to chant, you don't change your life. In a very central way, you still maintain your bodily designations—you think of yourself as a member of a certain family, and a member of a certain race, and you make your commitments based on these limited designations. What is the use of all your endeavor to become a devotee and to chant if you don't change in this basic way?

“When we think about this offense, we realize that chanting Hare Krsna has to become a whole life's endeavor. It is not limited to the two or three hours of fingering our beads. We are meant to change our perspective and our goals and to surrender to the holy name. That is faith in chanting.

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura tells us that the only way to rectify ourselves is to completely surrender to the holy name. The tenth offense is the sum total of all *namaparadha*. If we are committing it, it means we need a total overhaul. Chanting is not a light activity. It is not meant to be a relaxing meditation. It is not something to be dispensed with quickly so we can get on with our lives. This offense is the final statement on the *aparadhas*; total surrender to the holy name is the final remedy.

“Bhaktivinoda Thakura explains that the ten offenses are, in one sense, just a negative way of expressing things. We have to go beyond merely avoiding the ten offenses. He then quickly turns around each of the ten offenses and expresses them in their true positive light. We should not only avoid offending Vaisnavas, we should love them and serve them. We should not only theoretically understand that the holy name is the same as Krsna and that Krsna's name is supreme, we should always chant it with joy and surrender. We should not only avoid disobeying the order of the guru, but he should be our best friend and we should dedicate our lives to him. We should read the Vedic literature with faith in the transcendental word of *sastra*. We should forever rid ourselves of the whole concept of sin and lead a saintly life. We should never think of the holy name as pious activity, but serve it wholeheartedly. And we should preach the glories of the Lord to the faithful.

“In a word, Bhaktivinoda Thakura is telling us to *get serious*. He almost seems to be telling us to give up all material responsibility, take voluntary poverty, and chant from morning to night. If we cannot do that, then we have to work for the essence of it. We have to free our lives from as many material entanglements as possible, depend on Krsna, and chant His holy names. This was the life recommended to Mrgari by the sage Narada.”

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“The ten offenses are severe handicaps, so we have to be serious to overcome them. The prescription is surrender. Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes, ‘If one is sufficiently greedy for attaining pure devotion, he will chant free from the ten offenses. He must diligently avoid each of the offenses with feelings of deep repentance for having ever committed them. He should pray sincerely at the lotus feet of the holy name and chant with determination. Only then will he be blessed with the mercy of the holy name, which will destroy all his offenses. No other activity or penance can possibly exculpate his offenses.

“Offenses to the holy name of the Lord are dissolved solely through constant chanting. When they are thus destroyed, they can never reappear. Constant chanting means, apart from a minimal time for rest and other bare physical necessities, one should chant throughout all hours of the day with intense contrition. No other penance or ritual is as effective as this. When the offenses are destroyed, the pure holy name blossoms within the heart. The pure holy name of Krsna delivers *bhava* and finally *prema*.’ (*HNC*, pp. 91-92).

“Of course we thrill to Bhaktivinoda Thakura’s statement that we should chant with intense contrition. Perhaps we have the right idea when we are feeling sorry about our inattentive chanting and think that we are not making any progress. Now let’s just go deeper into our feelings of unworthiness. We should not complain about our poor chanting just for the sake of complaining, but with a willingness to get

beyond the dryness and the inattention. To go deeper, we have to be willing to plunge into our feelings of inadequacy and approach intense contrition. Then we will be able to chant constantly.”

The Wild Garden: Collected Writings 1990-1993

“One of the contentions of this writing is that a book doesn't have to have a conventional form or a specific subject matter. This is also the contention of much modern poetry and art. For example, the old idea was that poems had to be either couplets, sonnets, or rhyming in some other pattern. At least they had to be in iambic pentameter. Since free verse poetry came into being, a poem doesn't have to conform to such models. You don't have to sing while wearing chains. As for subject matter, you don't have to decide, 'I will write a series of poems on farms. The first poem will be about the chickens. Then I'll do a portrait of the farmer.' Better to write about whatever is touching the heart. The first line may be about a farm, but then it may go on to life in the city or a remembrance of Krsna's Vrndavana pastimes. I subscribe to these theories that writing needn't be in conventional forms or according to strict subject matters. Whatever is most favorable (*anukula*) may be used as the form. Choose any, or create your own.

“The subject matter should always steer to Krsna; it should be aimed at Krsna consciousness. It should be aimed at going deeper into spiritual life. Find it where you are and yearn for it. The subject matter doesn't have to be a thorough analysis of the 'nine principles of devotional service.' What if, while writing of principle number four, you suddenly remember something urgent about principle number one? What's the harm in digressing or telling it when it comes up—while it's alive in your heart? Just tell me what you believe and what you think and who you are. Help me to be

honest as you are, to admit failures, and to put my life in order so that I can serve Krsna. This is what I want to get from reading a book.”

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

“Let’s look again at Song Six. Sometimes I think the English translation isn’t giving enough. We lose a lot when we translate from Bengali to English. We end up with only an approximation or a remnant of the actual song that arose from Bhaktivinoda so purely. His songs are like the sun’s rays (*tivra*), so his potency survives the translation.

“At your feet, soft as new-grown leaves, I offer this humble prayer.’ I remember one naturopathic doctor I was seeing years ago discouraging me from listening to the laments of Narottama dasa Thakura and Bhaktivinoda Thakura. He thought they were pessimistic, and my reading of them would work against my recovery. I used to explain to him about the ecstasy of the pure devotees and of the humility and feelings of separation from Krsna. But he pushed it away. He was horrified that anyone would induce such a state in themselves.

“Of course it’s not pessimism. I’m trying to get beyond official reverence with these songs. I feel so distant from them. I want other things—I don’t have the spiritual fixedness to understand Him properly. I want peace, productivity, good digestion. I want a better desk lamp, beautiful things to see, fresh strawberries, good writing paper, creamy and thick. I want to adjust the angle of the sun so it doesn’t shine straight into my eyes. I want to be thoughtful, but are these my thoughts?

“I am in process as a writer and as a *vaidhi-bhakta*. I cling to Prabhupada’s

instructions, but as for feeling . . . Prabhupada was once asked how we could find quality in our chanting? He replied that first we had to have quantity before we can experience quality. It may take many lifetimes. It comes automatically, not by force. For now, we can chant out of duty. I also write out of duty. I consider Bhaktivinoda Thakura's songs and hope a few crumbs fall on me.

“I find no strength to go on, and thus I spend my days lamenting. My only desire now is for Your lotus feet, O Lord of the meek and humble.’ (*Dinajana-natha*)’ The verses are progressing, growing more religious. This is a new mode, more hopeful than his previous lament.

“He asked the Lord to show him mercy by giving him the association of devotees, ‘for by tasting the pleasure of hearing your pastimes, I shall give up all evils.’ The same truth is found in the scriptures.

Nastha-prayesu, by hearing the *Bhagavatam* from the *bhagavatas*, almost all the dirty things from within the heart are removed, and devotional service to Uttamasloka is awakened. *Srnavatam-sva-katha krsna, punya sravana kirtana*, hearing about Krsna is pious activity. When we do it, Krsna personally cleans our hearts.

“One hope in an otherwise lamentable life: to spend day and night in Your divine abode, singing your holy name. Your tiny servant, Bhaktivinoda, begs a place in the delightfully cooling shade of Your feet.’

“How could a sinner be so presumptuous? One minute he says he has no good qualities and is sunk in the defeat of worldly existence, and in the next he's praying to attain blissful *param dhama*. Doesn't he know only a rare soul attains Goloka? Even good devotees have to return to the material world to continue the path of perfection.

Yes, he knows, but he cannot help but hope. His soul is moved by spiritual

desire. We could say that such a hope is beyond him, that he is not entitled to it, but what is the harm if a blind man prays to see? If he calls to Krsna and guru to be lifted to their feet, what is the harm? Dinanatha can do anything.

“This is *asa-bandha*, described in *The Nectar of Devotion*. It is a hope against hope, a symptom of *bhava*. Who is so cruel as to deny a dying man this hope? Neither can we take it away from him if we try.”

Soul Eyes

“I Heard a Guarantee

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

“Because I am so fallen,
 such a neophyte.
 I think the guarantee

means you hear and
you transform yourself,
you work hard at your
sadhana because of
once hearing from a pure devotee.

“The guarantee is not for
laggards and miscreants.
It’s for one who becomes a pure devotee.

“The guarantee is for me,
it’s for you. It’s for those who have
causeless devotional service
toward the Lord.
I want the guarantee,
I want to turn in the ticket and be admitted.

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

“Oh, give me the guarantee!
If You want to, I will

take whatever
You give. I'll have to be
satisfied with
whatever You give me.

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

“I guarantee . . . I hereby
pledge and accept
the guarantee that
comes upon

my death, to live with
it in blissful surrender.”

Srila Prabhupada Samadhi Diary

“Prabhupada’s Room

“It was dark in here when we entered. We are the first to come after your afternoon rest. I hope you are not unhappy to see us. We sit in a corner so as not to disturb you.

“The letter on your desk is to Sudama, January 1972. You say to him, and I quote, ‘You have always served me very faithfully.’ You pray that Krsna blesses him with a long life to open many temples, ‘and that in this very lifetime you may return back to home, back to Godhead.’

“Srila Prabhupada, you asked Sudama to arrange your *pandal* in Tokyo and speaking engagements in universities where English is understood. You said that his learning Japanese was of first importance. ‘If you remain patient and determined ...’ Good advice for all of us. To have an order like that from Srila Prabhupada!

“Srila Prabhupada, you liked it cool and dark like this. Soon you would ask that we let the guests come in. Some of them would not be important people. You get into management, temple construction, restaurant, Guesthouse, book printing . . . Your mail would be read to you by your secretary. It wasn't easy to be the head of a worldwide organization and always have to hear cases, like a judge on the bench, but you were *eka-nistha*, Srila Prabhupada, always serving guru and Krsna without deviation.

“You installed Deities all over the world. Then you traveled all over the world to preach and keep company with your disciples. Do you remember all that, Srila Prabhupada? The whole world was your preaching field, and still this world has value for your devotees because you taught us how to preach your message and to encourage one another. Radha-Gokulananda, Radha-Rasabihari, Radha-Londonisvara, Radha-Damodara. I think of you on airplanes and in waiting rooms, in temple rooms and in your quarters around the world, where you were offered a low desk, a water pitcher, a Dictaphone. You walked in those rooms in your bare feet. Some of those temples were only rented houses, but you were always interested in the facility and how the preaching was going, and you always gave ambitious suggestions like the one to Sudama to organize a *pandal* in Tokyo for thousands.

“Now a few guests are coming in. They are quiet. The four ceiling fans are rattling as they create a breeze. It’s another sweet day of routine. I didn’t know what to write before I came here, but your presence always allows me to say something.

“Gradually, I’m learning in a simple, relaxed way to think, ‘I am with Srila Prabhupada in his rooms.’ I simply state this fact and write a few notes like, ‘Straw mats on black marble floors. Curtains closed and sunlight seeping through. Memories of you here.’ I hope to be able to recapture it even when I’m not here.

“There is one relaxation exercise that tells you to remember a peaceful place where there is no stress. I’d like to remember being here in your rooms, jotting notes and looking up to see you always there, assuring me of your presence. When you were here and I was here with you, it was sometimes tense. I was nervous that I wouldn’t do the right thing or anxious about my own bodily or mental needs. It’s different now.”

Here Is Srila Prabhupada

“I Remember

“I remember so many things not related to Srila Prabhupada. I guess I can’t change my past, but I hope that as my pre-Krsna conscious past grows more and more distant from my present life, my memories of it will also fade.

“I do have memories of Prabhupada too now, although some of those are also a little faded. I remember being on a porch somewhere. I stood with Prabhupada waiting to get into a car. He was supposed to meet someone, but I can’t remember who. I remember being outside temples with him, being in public with him, getting into cars. I remember coming into his room in Vrndavana. The room was dark and cold, and he wore a big wool hat. Even in the dark, you could see his eyes shining—he was so mystical in Vrndavana.

“I remember him in rooms with bright lights too. He wore wool sweaters. Once on a walk on a cold Australian winter morning, he wrapped his entire body in a gray wool *cadar* against the gripping wind. Another time, in a small room in Melbourne, I remember him greeting boisterous guests. Prabhupada entertained them and read out sections of his books. ‘Your Divine Grace,’ they said, ‘what about this, and what about that?’ He gave them each a *gulabjamun* and asked that they eat it right away. ‘Don’t save it for later.’

“I remember walking with him on Juhu Beach and talking with his disciples at Misra’s country estate in New York—who *is* Swamiji? What *is* he? No one knew enough to answer that question. I remember signing ISKCON into existence under naked light bulbs. I remember being with him when he started taking morning walks.

“I don’t remember all his sarcasms, loving gestures, important arguments against doubts, moments he hurt my pride, moments I was inspired and touched and deeply resolved to always be his disciple. I can’t remember who was there and what they said. Did I go with him to a lecture in Italy or did I miss them all because of illness?”

“Snila Prabhupada, big stretches of life with you are erased from my consciousness. I say I don’t remember, and yet I do. A tiny spark lights up, and I see the outline of our association together. It’s separation—the outlines are making the details dimmer, so we cling to the few main points. I *do* remember to serve you every day; I don’t forget that for a moment.”

WRITING SESSIONS

Wicklou Writing Sessions

“Session #5

“12:10 midnight, July 29, 1996

“You do what comes, humble soldier, a record of your times. It can come out in twenty installments. The hand flies off more than the thoughts. Are you not then ‘responsible’ for what you write?”

“Are you responsible if you eat a snack when you are not hungry and wake at 8:30 P.M. in the middle of a dream where you are seeking a digestive product? Karma says you are responsible. If not, who is?”

“Oh, it’s too late, let it go to the printer. No, let it go to the Merton legacy and Kdd and Co. to decide. The guru has a right to print what he chooses.”

“It takes a long time in India to become accustomed to the slowness of the printer and all other things. The India factor.

“I’m writing this to let you know how we feel. We feel we have been cheated. We want to let you know that. Hare Krishna. I used up material, but it generates more material when I lecture on what I have read. A classic presentation, he said, of the best things I have written.

“He developed a critical eye and could stand down the fears in his poems. Did she want to become a critic? Fault-finding in a respectable prose? Better to love what you write. Tell us one more time. Tell him to love as he reads. I read like that. It’s noncritical. But on the other hand, I’ve been editing poems with the critical eye and improving them.

“Love, love, love.

“Maybe I should dispense with the little sub-headlines to the Writing Sessions. It’s just another thing to worry about and tends to shape what we write. Drop it and go for the real thing. I don’t need markers to induce me to read number five. I read and I swim out. Past the barrels and the rope, my father used to go. Why did he go far out? What was he trying to prove? Something about life or death. He went beyond us at times like that. And then came back, and we were awed at what he’d done. Maybe it was a way to keep in physical shape. Each has his own heroes. Probably in my ‘kid’s eyes’ it seemed a greater feat than it actually was. It was as if he was *leaving* his wife and family. She sat worried under the beach umbrella with us and the sandwiches wrapped in cellophane and the cooler with the juice drink (or was it iced tea?). If he didn’t come back, how would we function or live? We couldn’t even drive the car. Car keys. The house. It would all have no meaning. I ‘should’ be grateful (they often told me) that our family was so steady with such a strong head

as your father, Steve, to give it meaning. He was better than others, stronger, more moral yet a down-to-earth fireman, son of Italian immigrants.

“Better your father is better.

“You are fortunate, not like starving people or minority races. We are accepted in the Great Kills community. Have our own house. He fought WW II and came home alive. Now we have our own house. Mother brings us to church. *I don't know what's happening except what they tell me.*

“What does that add up to, Mr. and Mrs. Psychiatrist?

“Well, it's obvious you are a case of...

“McStorkle took a last look
at the galley proofs before it
went to the printer.

Cost them an extra hundred bucks,
but it was worth it to satisfy his mind
and catch his last errors.

O Smith and Wesson
Decker and Black

“and dream of a digestive product, was it painted on the side of a boat, and were you looking for it in reality to put into your stomach? And then more serious dreams which I just don't remember, but I put them on the tape.

“Krishna worship. Defend the faith. Hear about Sanatana. Stories of the miraculous. Latter-day saints of ISKCON, stories told by disciples of a guru. He did this, he intimated that...He knew he would die...He saw the future of the human race...He returned to Goloka for sure. He left us with all this work to do. The young

man writes to me no more. So he went to other counselors. Came to me for spiritual advice. Burned him out and he burned me out. Found his niche in ISKCON. Got too familiar with me.

“Oh, I’m god-like (here we go, parody again, that’s okay).

I’m god-like so be careful

how you approach me.

“Got solvents and pungents in your pockets and radioactive gear for your soul before you get near to me. I’m dear to Krishna, so be careful who you mess with. Every living entity could say that, not just a guru-Vaishnava in saffron. And just a husband to his wife. Each is dear, so watch out.

“But we see it from our point of view.

“‘Why are you writing?’ To work out kinks. To get my rounds done. I write to reach the apex and come down again.

“Because the alarm went off and I had to get up and do this.

“‘But why write this way?’

“Because I dimly see, in prophetic trance, the smell of an old (bad odor) granny hangs on my clothes.

“I see in the haze of the future, the fog lifting an ordinary sacred life in the Irish countryside.

“Why not write an essay with stick and stones and publish it?

“Why do you want so many pages and books? Aren’t you trying to write a life or why and why not? Because, because, because, because.

“The wren, the tanager, the speckled, deep-brown indistinguishable colored bird looks out at the world this summer. And next winter he has plans he is not yet aware of, probably fly south to Spain and return via animal intuition next spring. Birdwatchers have it all figured out where they go and when they come out. Maybe they just hide out somewhere like I do, in a rented house, and they write at that time.

“An art retreat away
 from police and terrorists
 another chance to get our pictures
 before you leave the world.

“Your funny pictures. Improve the camera so we can take pictures I can live with. You paste a page of newsprint on the board and then smear it with paint and be happy with the result. A. Miller let her childhood come through, painted rapidly. I did that too. Quotes on the life I’m leading as expressed by others.

“Express train. Slow down and live. God allows all. We give you references to them rather than speculate. Don’t believe it because I say so but because it’s in scripture.

“Yeah, yeah, that’s enough. I will respect your right to be a prig, he said.

“Read Merton at your own risk. You’ll start imitating. H. Miller too. So then what must I be, lonely and have no writers in my life? Oh, you can look at them from time to time. Merton wrote observations of life, didn’t seem to play with words or allow them to flow as far as they can, beyond the control of intellect. The intellect

was always marshaling the thoughts and words and putting them in order, even if for a little moral observation.

“His secret dialogue or line of thoughts, which is the diary.

“This is more than that. Immediate print down on paper of ink allowing it to come.

“Not only me. God, God, God, the word *bhagavan* is more common in India. No one is God.

“I’m convinced that Mayavadi and *nirvisesa* doctrines don’t hold up. We read *sastra*. Thank you for this, Srila Prabhupada. And the best *sastras* are the *Vedas*, and in the *Vedas* it’s *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Bhagavad-gita*, and *Caitanya-caritamrta*. Read’em. I do each day a little, and prepare lectures to the faithful who are often too busy to read them. I read a little at least, and say here we have another example of the syndrome of Ramacandra. There’s a limited amount of material and you can rework it, keep hearing it through your last days. I don’t need more new stuff but to stay fresh with what we’ve got.

“Then let me look one more time at poems – *Gentle Power*.

“I could use another look through to satisfy myself that these are the words and not an embarrassment. Of course, you can overdo it. But I haven’t looked that much. You wrote them that way and it’s okay.

“Krishna Krishna. When you write and select quickly, it’s mostly right. You see through. I’ve been reading my poems and my sense of what I want is heightened. You could say the critical faculty. So, give me that satisfaction. One more time. Fax or email? Talk it over.

“Now give this fifteen more minutes. Childhood memories of my father on the beach. Don’t recall what else I wrote here. Practical life. Said ‘I’ in the lecture. Best scriptures.

“Sanatana Goswami lived in a cave, in a *kuti* in Govardhana in Syama-kunda. The Vraja Mandala *parikrama* started by him. He was the most respected leader of the Gaudiya Vaishnavas. Today we recall him. You will go to Vrindavan and see his Madana-mohana temple again? Yes, if I can live so long. Plan to see those places when possible. But it’s hard to get around. And when you do it’s often lacking. But you could try. Bundle up warm and go out once a day to some place and see it by foot or by car. Choose the best places. Kamyavan is a two-hour car ride. And Nityananda’s birthplace, Ekacakra, takes a whole day, two days.

“I’m not up to it, bouncing around in a car, taking headache pills...Give me an easy life. Something more sedentary, but at least get out to some basic places.

“Find yourself making plans in this writing. That’s all right too. You desire to write, and if you keep at it some days will be ‘better’ than others. You are not able (I observe) to stick to any topic for long.

‘You lose interest
your restless pen
wants to move on to another topic.

“Poets write like that, and R. Hugo says it’s good so it doesn’t bore readers. But in the extreme, it’s like a darning needle flying over the water, alighting here and there.

“The mind gets no rest
never does anyway.

Krishna's lotus feet. Dictate this and then go to chant.

Practical management I don't do.

“Do, do, do,

I'm in love with

you, you, you.

“If I could write in black ink I'd stop and give you a doodle, but it would have to be done very fast. The man with a beak is replaced with a more normal man—a revision? No, it's working out the full story you want to tell. It doesn't appear right away. More lines, and it starts to come out. Give myself a little time and be patient; with words and drawings we may tell our story

of surrender to guru and Krishna.

SP was saying at least get to know Krishna first in an official way, as God in *Bhagavad-gita*, before you go to Krishna in intimate family relations.

The reality of Krishna is Janmastami

in Mathura jail of Kamsa

transferred to Gokula.

“Read it again. In a month or more it will be Janmastami, and the next day you get a chance to praise Srila Prabhupada, but you are expected to say something special. At least the Centennial is over and we can be normal? I'll say he was born and then I get exhausted. Prepare some talk in advance, and the whole month of September I'll track in my writing in the van. At last a European travel book of honest adventure. You'll write it diary-like, very honest, as best you can.

“Okay, don’t be sorry this one is over, and we’ll see you again for a short one soon.

“Yes, this one is over, and now dictate it. You didn’t run wild but more smoothly at an ordinary level, and bring it down to ground. Safe landing, not a madman or desperate. *(45 minutes, eleven handwritten pages, quiet midnight at black-stained desk, good lamp, Wicklow attic, July 29, 1996)*