

Viraha Bhavan Journal

September 26, 2017

About a month ago I became physically exhausted with weakness and illness. Mentally and spiritually I lost my inspiration. As a result I gave up my practice of daily writing which I have been doing consistently for many years. I even stopped doing my *japa* for a week. Because I was attached to having people read my writings, I began posting short excerpts from the books I had written over the years on Facebook and the new website satsvarupadasagoswami.com. But no new writings; I was retired, and with no regrets. But last week in a phone conversation with my secretary, she advised me to keep writing “anything and everything, the things going on in your life and your mind.” Her suggestion didn’t set off a big light within, but enough to start this pen moving without any plans.

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Rama Raya is here visiting for a few days. He is the leader of the *harinama* party in NYC. He is about to go on a pilgrimage to Vrindavana, India. There was a rumor (started by Madhumangala) that RR said if Krishna gave him indication to stay in India, he would do it. I spoke with him about it today. I said if he stayed in India, the NYC *harinama* will fall

apart. He assured me that he is committed to the *harinama* in NYC. I was relieved to hear it.

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Sucandra and his wife, Uttara, arrived here from Spain for five weeks of service in the *asrama*. They are both in their 70s but fit to render service: Uttara by cooking and cleaning, and Sucandra by outside work in the yard and garden.

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September 27, 2017

Many devotee friends, and even my personal doctor, do not seem to comprehend the crippled condition of my left foot. It all began in 1964 when I was 24 years old. Under the influence of LSD, I jumped out of a third-floor window and broke both my heels. I was in casts for six weeks, and when I came out my right foot was healed, but my left foot and ankle were deformed and painful. I was able to walk and even dance, but as the decades passed, my condition gradually worsened. I could no longer take the long morning walks I so much loved. By the beginning of the 21st century I was limping at every step, and my ankle and shin were obviously misshapen. I went to a foot surgeon and asked him if he could splice two of

my bones together. He asked me where I had heard of this practice, and I answered vaguely, "From various sources." The doctor was reknowned in his field, and I underwent the operation. He said I might expect an 80% improvement in my foot. There was a long recovery period. I had to wear a black boot and stay in bed for weeks. When I came out of the boot, I felt no relief. I complained to the doctor, and he said he would perform a second operation where he would take out the metal pieces he had inserted in my heel in the first operation. He did this, but there was no improvement. Months went by and I had several more appointments with him. Then one day he told me there would be no more appointments; he had done all he could for me. I was now on my own. I was disappointed that his treatments hadn't helped me.

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After this, I had a physical therapist visit me a few times to teach me exercises to build up the strength in my legs, which had been weakened by so much sedentary life. I am still doing the exercises and they have helped, but I still cannot walk any significant distance. I go outside every other day with Baladeva beside me and I push a four-wheeled walker. I walk slowly for a few yards and stop and rest. Then I walk some more and rest again. I continue this for 15 minutes and that is all I can do. I have no prospects for more improvement beyond this.

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That's why I become impatient and feel misunderstood when I'm pushed: *When are you going to Vrndavana and Mayapur dhama in India?* Can't they see I'm unable to even walk across the street? Rama Raya sympathized with me. He said, "You don't have to go. You've gone many, many times to Vrndavana and Mayapur." The last time I went was 2009. Since then I've heard that there has been tremendous expansion in building and an influx of many devotee residents from many countries; in particular, Russia and China. What was once a deserted field, Ramana-reti or "the Enchanted Sands" where Krishna and the cowherd boys played, is now filled with buildings, including a "Russian house" right near the ancient Krishna-Balarama tree. The monkey population has increased considerably, and they are more aggressive. Of course, the secret spiritual heart of Vrndavana is still present and available to submissive and determined devotees. I am like one of those persons who Maya keeps away by a *mayic* covering, because they are not really sincere. That is why I keep my *ashrama* as "*viraha bhavan*" – separation from Vrndavana. We have many *arca-vigrahas* downstairs and upstairs to keep the place like a *mandhir* or *bhajana kutir*. Rama Raya said, "Where you are, that is Vrndavana." I sit in my chair like a sentinel and keep a *darsana* of Radha-Govinda, Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada. Downstairs, the first plates

of the offering are made to the large Gaura-Nitai and then brought up for the Deities here. It is service in separation, but isn't that the highest form of *bhakti*?

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I can't travel and I don't need to as long as I am rendering active service and trying to share it with others.

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What is Viraha Bhavan? Baladeva challenged me to expand on it. "Take it up a notch – the inner nature." It's me chanting all 16 rounds of *japa*, starting first thing in the morning (no later than 2:30 A.M.) Sesa Prabhu said it was unusual that I got so much out of *darsana* of the *arca-vigraha*. He reads my poems to Radha-Govinda and was impressed by one where I wrote "*while gazing at You, I am ready to move on to my next life.*" I deliberately and thoughtfully say my Gayatri mantras. After saying them in Sanskrit, I repeat them in English. For the confidential *sannyasa* mantra, I say, "I offer my respects to *gopi bhava*." Then I add in my mind, "Bhanu Swami says this specifically refers to Srimati Radharani." Sometimes my mind wanders to mundane thoughts. I interrupt them and repeatedly say, "Please forgive my offenses." I'll try more to raise the notches in the Journal and go purely inward.

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Question from SDG to Nandarani: I am reading a book titled *The Introvert Advantage* by Marti Olsen Laney, Psy.D. When I first read it, it made a real impact on me. At this time in your life, do you consider yourself an introvert? A recommendation for the book printed on the back cover reads: “In a world of shock jocks, screaming rock stars, and sensational journalism, this book dispels the myth that only the loud and flamboyant get ahead. Its clear step-by-step advice will help introverts recognize and capitalize on their unique strengths.” Does this description resonate with you? Tell me how you feel about it.

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September 28, 2017

Question: “Elaborate on whether or not you feel you spent your life trying to live up to the expectations of others, or whether you lived up to your own expectations.”

Answer: I think I spent much of my life trying to live up to others’ expectations of me. As a dependent child, I lived strictly to please my parents. My older sister and I had a very confidential conspiracy in which we did not comply with all our parents’ wishes, but we did not express this openly. In high school, I did not try to satisfy the teachers or the honor roll students. I sought the approval of the rowdy children who did not strive to

make high grades and who made trouble in the classrooms. I didn't dare to overtly imitate them, but I wanted them to know that I secretly admired them. I followed their example of not studying for exams, and this resulted in me getting mediocre grades. In my senior year, I woke up and realized my poor academic grades would prevent me from qualifying for entrance into a quality college. My parents did not have money to send me away to college, but there were about four city colleges that were free but accepted only students with good high school records. My sister had been an honor roll student and was accepted at Hunter College in Manhattan. By graduating time, my attitude had changed and I very much wanted to attend college. I applied to Brooklyn College but was rejected because of my mediocre high school record. I even applied to various state colleges around the country and was accepted by some, but my parents had no inclination or sufficient money to pay the tuition.

Finally an alternative turned up. A small, two-year community college had just opened a year before on Staten Island, where I lived. They demanded no tuition and did not require an entering student to have a high-grade record. After two years, if you received good grades, you could transfer to a quality city college. It was humiliating for me to enter the community college, which was half technology and half liberal arts, but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Two of the professors, a male

history Ph.D. and a female Ph.D. teaching English, were brilliant, dynamic intellectuals, better than any I had when I later transferred to Brooklyn College. I had completely changed from my high school years. I was no longer indifferent to my teachers and trying to win the favor of the rowdies. I wanted to please my charming professors. I wanted them to give me an “A” for my essays. I was becoming a wanna-be intellectual.

After graduating from Brooklyn College, my father, who was a reserve naval officer, deliberately lied or bluffed me into thinking I had to enlist in the Navy or I would be drafted into the Army. Later I found out that if I had stayed in college and pursued graduate studies I would have been exempt from the draft. But I was naïve and very much under the influence of my father, so I let him enlist me for two years of active service in the U.S. Navy. I immediately hated it, but I had to fulfill the expectations of the Navy, living like a prisoner on an aircraft carrier. I survived by inner resources and smoking smuggled marijuana at great risk. When I finally got out with an honorable discharge in 1964, I went straight to the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where hundreds of hippies were sharing slum conditions with the Puerto Ricans, smoking marijuana, swallowing LSD and living with their girlfriends. I was poor. I lived according to my own expectations, but I was lonely and unhappy.

In 1966 I met Srila Prabhupada, and he completely lifted me out of my misery and made me into a new person. From the first night I attended his *kirtana* and tried to understand his lecture, I gave up my bad habits of intoxication, illicit sex, meat-eating and gambling. I surrendered to him and wanted to dedicate myself to his expectations. The Movement was very small and just starting. It was intimate. He was kind and warm to me and gave me personal attention. I typed his manuscript and donated money from my job at the Welfare office. That year, 1966, at 26 Second Avenue, was the happiest year of my life. When Prabhupada left New York for San Francisco and later India, I moved to Boston and opened the first ISKCON center there. I wrote to him weekly and he answered right away, satisfying all my questions and guiding me. I was tasting personal service in separation, and it was sweet.

Prabhupada visited our Boston storefront and stayed for a month in May 1968, and that was very special. In 1969 we purchased a big house and ISKCON Press moved in, and the population rose to 60 devotees. Prabhupada visited us there immediately after installing Radha-Krishna in the new temple in London, but it was snowing and icy in Boston, and he left for Los Angeles after two days. Prabhupada was traveling widely now, opening new centers. He was doing a lot of management through personal correspondence. I stopped writing to him weekly and wrote only once a

month, eagerly awaiting his reply. Things were less intimate, but he regarded me as a senior devotee and respected me. The years went by and I didn't see him so often, but I worked on his behalf. My essays were frequently published in *Back to Godhead* magazine. I continued to fulfill my expectations and obligations.

In 1972 Prabhupada formed a governing body commission of about twelve male devotees, and he put my name on it. I had to supervise about half a dozen temples in the United States, while I continued to be temple president of Boston. The management was stressful, but I did it as duty. The Movement continued to grow, and Prabhupada turned his attention to India. The annual GBC meetings were tumultuous and argumentative. I did not like them. Outspoken devotees dominated the meetings, and I was mostly silent. When the book distributors started using scam tactics to sell books in the airports, I was disturbed and alienated, and feared we were getting a bad reputation. This continued for some time, and Prabhupada used the increased income for printing books and building temples in India. After Prabhupada passed away in 1977, I assumed guru duties and accepted many disciples – too many. A “formal” guru system was in place, but it turned out to be dysfunctional and unfair. By 1986 a grassroots movement of devotees protested the zonal guru system, and it was disbanded. For some time I had been suffering chronic migraine headaches, and because of

this, attending the GBC meetings and managing my zone became intolerable for me. In 1986, at the GBC meetings in Mayapur, I handed in my resignation to the GBC. It was barely accepted, by only a slim vote. I actually retired because of the headaches, but also as a gesture in response to being a guilty party while functioning as a zonal guru.

Schisms began to appear in the Movement, such as the “*Ritvik*” schism and the schism created by Narayana Maharaj and his followers. I felt disenchanted and didn’t think my most personal aspirations were being fulfilled. I took more to personal writing and fulfilled myself in that way, but I was no longer on the front line of the preaching. I did not want to fulfill the expectations of the mainstream Movement any more, but I stayed in it and was loyal.

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September 29, 2017

I am reading *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* again. In the Introduction, Prabhupada writes that an American lady asked him to recommend an English translation of the *Gita* that she could read. He told her that although there are many editions of the *Gita* available in the market, none of them are true and faithful to Krsna's actual message. So Prabhupada made his own translation and commentary, *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, and it has become the best seller in all the world, translated into many languages.

Thousands of devotees love Prabhupada's book and follow its tenets. Still, some people are annoyed that Prabhupada repeatedly focuses on Krsna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supreme Being, the Cause of all causes and the dearest Friend. But that's what Krsna actually is! Most people misinterpret Krsna's words. When Krsna says, "Bow down to Me," the learned university professor comments, "It is not the person Krsna we have to serve but the undying principle within Him." In this way, they become great offenders to the Lord. So we should be all grateful to Prabhupada for insisting that Krsna is always a Person and not impersonal or a myth. I will keep you posted on my reading *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*.

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I was first-initiated on September 23, 1966, and it's fifty-one years later. I'm still following the rules and regulations and chanting sixteen rounds. I feel the years were well-spent and fulfilling. Sometimes I did assignments that weren't so appealing, and sometimes I made ignorant mistakes, but I'm deeply grateful to have served Prabhupada all these years. Now I'm 78 years old and I'm slowing down and somewhat retired. I've written over 120 books, and now I'm keeping this Journal. I estimate I have maybe less than ten more years to live in this body. Then where do I go? Do I transfer to the

eternal spiritual world or do I come back, in another temporary body, to this material world? Do I join up with Prabhupada wherever he is?

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I've been living at this *ashrama* in Stuyvesant Falls for over eight years. The first few years I traveled occasionally, but now not at all. I've got a crippled left foot and I can't walk at all. Besides, I'm not inclined to go anywhere. I mostly sit in my chair. I do some physical therapy exercises. Dhanurdhara Swami asked, "Doesn't he get bored?" My answer is, "No."

September 30, 2017

I have briefly written about major themes in my life. I want to return to them and expand on them. A couple of months ago I had a health breakdown. My legs went rubbery with weakness, and I could only walk a few steps. I was exhausted. I stopped my longtime practice of daily writing, and even stopped *japa* for a week. Someone sent me a handwritten note by Prabhupada. It stated the priorities in a devotee's life: "First health, then chanting, then doing service, and then reading books, in that order." I embraced this statement and made maintaining health my first priority. I had a physical therapist visit me twice a week. He taught me a series of exercises which partly strengthened my legs. I continue to do them today, although the therapist no longer visits me.

Recently, at my secretary's suggestion, I resumed writing in the Journal. I am attempting to make it different than my long journal series of years ago, *Every Day, Just Write*. *EJW* was more “newsy.” Now I am trying to go deeper and more inward. I am asking myself questions that will provoke intimate, serious answers.

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I mentioned that I thought I had less than ten years to live, although it was only a guess. Srila Prabhupada stated, "Philosophy means to always keep death in your front." I don't do this. I live for the day. I like to say *japa*, to express myself in writing, to honor lunch *prasadam*, to sleep. I get frequent headaches, but I obtain relief when I take medicine. I am not deeply repentant that my mind wanders away from Krsna. When death comes closer, I may become more serious. Nowadays I don't cry out to Prabhupada and Krsna, "Please save me!--All I want is your causeless devotional service life after life!" I confess I am struggling, and in this way I render service to my readers, who can see that a fellow senior devotee admits that he has not reached perfection--just like them. We commiserate and are kept humble.

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How can you keep Vrndavana consciousness while living in the West? Mahanidhi Swami writes that you have to maintain a Tulasi plant. We are doing that--we have a half-dozen plants--but it takes more than that. You have to keep your consciousness on Vrndavana, you have to remember Krsna's pastimes in Vraja and feel the separation. I have Radha-Govinda Deities on an altar four feet from my chair. The *sastras* (*arce visnu siladhir. . .*) and Prabhupada state that the *arca-vigraha* is not a statue of metal or stone but is nondifferent than Radha and Krsna in the spiritual world. The Deities are surrounded by a *kunja* of plants and flowers like a forest in Vraja. We change Radha-Govinda's dress weekly with beautiful, perfect-fit outfits made in Vrndavana. Govinda's lotus feet are exposed, and Radharani wears an expansive skirt. We gaze at Them in *darsana*, and am I not in Vrndavana?

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Arjuna addresses Krsna as Acyuta (the Infallible) and asks Him to drive the chariot forward so he can see who has gathered to contend with him in war. When Arjuna observes that the opposing party is made up of his close relatives, teachers and kinsmen, he becomes compassionate and loses his desire to fight. At first, Prabhupada praises Arjuna's compassion, citing it as the quality of a kindhearted devotee. But as Arjuna continues to describe his unwillingness to engage in warfare, Prabhupada criticizes him, saying

he is acting out of material fear and cowardice. Krsna also speaks up and condemns Arjuna's attitude. After all, he is a *ksatriya*, a warrior, and his duty (*dharma*) is to fight.

Many people misunderstand the *Bhagavad-gita* and think that Krsna is inciting Arjuna to violence. They do not understand the *Gita* in the context of the much-larger *Mahabharata*. Arjuna and his brothers, the Pandavas, were the rightful heirs to the worldwide kingdom, but they were cheated out of their position by the intrigues of the blind King Dhrtarastra and his sons, led by the evil-minded Duryodhana. The Pandava brothers did everything to compromise and make peace, but Duryodhana told them he wouldn't give them as much land as could cover a pin. War became inevitable. Millions of men gathered on two sides at Kuruksetra, to engage in the biggest battle in the history of the world. Arjuna turned to Krsna and admitted he had lost his composure and didn't know what to do. He surrendered to Krsna and asked Him to accept him as His disciple and tell him what to do.

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October 1, 2017

Free Write

May I tell you more about Radha-Govinda? They are shiny and sensuous. They are the topmost, original Conjugal Couple. All other lovers and their consorts, transcendental and mundane, emanate from Them. Every evening, in the last half-hour before I go to bed, I stop all activities and observe the *arca-vigrahas* on my altar. I am relaxed, and my eyes feel no strain. At the same time, my brilliant *siksa* disciple John Endler (who is also a Baptist minister) is sitting in his study admiring his Radha-Madhava Deities. John used to like to read my Radha-Govinda poems which I posted every day on the website. He especially liked the first line which I used to use to begin the poem: "Radha-Govinda reciprocate with me." He was thrilled that I didn't write: "Radha-Govinda, please will You reciprocate with me," or "Radha-Govinda, will the day come when You will reciprocate with me?" No, I boldly asserted it as an existential fact. In Their lovely poses, They look out at me and I look back at Them. They are the Supreme Worshipable, and I am the worshiper. They are Bhagavan and His dominating Consort. I am Their *bhakta*. Devamrta Swami published a collection of his lectures, and in there he advised the devotees to go into the temple and *stare* at the *arca-vigraha*. I liked that. Prabhupada remembered that when he was a little boy in Calcutta, he used to enter the Radha-Govinda temple which was owned by the Mullik family and stare at

the Deities with Their slanty eyes "for hours." He was honoring *darsana* even before he may ever have understood the meaning of the word.

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Radha-Govinda reciprocate with me.

You stand together on the granite-marble altar.

Innumerable *sakhis* serve Radharani and unlimited

gopas serve Krsna without

awe and reverence. They

see Them as the bucolic

King and Queen of Vrndavana.

The *sakhis* would give their

life-airs just to spare

Radha from a drop of perspiration

and stress. The *gopas* are ready

to give up their lives to

protect Krsna from a demon.

But Govinda crushes the

asuras like child's play.

All glories to Radha-Govinda

and Their intimate friends!

I pray for the day

when I can take my turn.

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October 2, 2017

Question: Regarding *japa*, is there any perceivable change while chanting in the clearing stage of *japa*?

Answer: Yes. The ten offenses against the holy name are mostly cleared away, and one feels relief from this. The pernicious offense of inattentive chanting is mostly conquered, and no mental wandering—it’s “Just hear!”, not wandering all over the universe.

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Question: Is silent *japa* a good practice to learn—not just for everyday focus but for the time when you have no more energy to chant out loud?

Answer: I can’t answer this for everyone, but for myself. I chant my first twelve rounds silently in the mind and the last four vocally. I am afraid if I chant out loud, I will create pressure and eventually a headache. My head is so sensitive that any stress, either ecstasy or grinding labor, is likely to bring a headache.

When I chant silently and attentively the rounds get better, not worse. When I chant vocally it’s better but risky. Maybe the day will come when I lose my “anticipatory anxiety” and will be able to chant my rounds vocally.

But I don't feel guilty about my present silent chanting. Yes, the silent chanting could become an advantage if I reached a stage where I was too weak to chant out loud.

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Free Write

My Godbrother H.D. Swami has published a book, *Mahabharata*, which outside reviewers praised as “a page-turner.” He is a genius, and I am going to get a copy of his book. Ulysses S. Grant pounded the city of Richmond, Virginia with dogged determination and great loss of lives. Raghunatha dasa Gosvami is a favorite Gosvami because of his humility, austerity and *gopi-bhava*. He wrote *Vilapa-kusumanjali* in the mood of a *manjari* of Radharani. I am writing this instead of taking an outdoor walk. It would be better for my health and longevity if I took the walk, but I am dedicated to free writing. If you look at a map of Africa, you could see where Jayadvaita Swami is staying, working for the BBT. Our car has a number of dents in it and a broken muffler. It has 190,000 miles on it; Baladeva wants to drive it until it has 300,000 miles. Laulyam dasi of Hawaii wrote me that she chants sixteen rounds but has no love for Him. She says I once wrote to her that because she is trying, that's a proof of her love. She distributes Prabhupada's books every day. What is my position? Do I chant with love? As the teachers used to write on my report cards, “Could do better.”

Mandalesvara, a longtime Godbrother, recently wrote me and said, “I am a neophyte.” We are neophytes, and we chant without deep, spontaneous love for Radha and Krsna, and it keeps us humble. Jayadvaita Swami wrote in his homage this year that when he was just a new devotee, a Godbrother visited New York from Germany and said Prabhupada told the devotees that when they are doing *japa*, they should hear themselves chanting with sincerity. That statement stuck with Jayadvaita, and he practiced it for some time. Then he began to see letters from Srila Prabhupada (which he quoted) where Prabhupada wrote that a devotee should also remember the pastimes of Krsna while chanting. So Jayadvaita concluded we should both “Just hear,” and think of Krsna’s pastimes while chanting. I tried it the other day, not with much success. As I write this, I’m starting to develop a headache. I had one twelve hours ago before breakfast. Truthfulness is the last leg of religion, but the big politicians are breaking that, too. I don’t like riding in a car with a broken muffler; it makes too much noise. I said we sound like “yahoos speeding by with their unmuffled hot-rods.” Baladeva corrected me: “We are a family car with a broken muffler.” I was yellow with jaundice in 1974, when I was traveling with Prabhupada in Europe as his servant and secretary. I was lying on the floor and not attending his classes. He remarked that if I didn’t get better, he would leave me behind in Rome. When I heard that, I quickly recovered.

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The *sastras* state that in the Age of Kali, no other sacrifice is possible except *sankirtana yajna*. Although the age is full of vices, there is one great quality: simply by chanting the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra*, one can become rid of all impurities and attain love of God. Most people identify just with the body. They have no knowledge that their real self is the imperishable spirit-soul, and his constitutional position is to be the eternal servant of Krsna. One has to learn this from Vedic scriptures like *Bhagavad-gita*. And by inquiring from a bona-fide spiritual master.

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While resting in bed, I thought of beginning topics for a Vyasa-puja lecture. Vyasadeva is sitting in despondency despite having compiled so much Vedic literature. Just as he's beginning to get a clue what is wrong, his spiritual master, Narada Muni, descends before him and is ready to enlighten his bewildered disciple. Narada says, "In all the books you have written so far, you have not directly glorified the Supreme Personality of Godhead or devotional service to Him." I plan to pursue their conversation, including Vyasadeva's delight in preparing to write a new *Purana* in his mature stage of spiritual development. Then I may quote Lord Caitanya's famous verse:

*kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya
yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya.*

Whether one is a *brahmana*, a *sannyasi*, a *grhastha*, a *sudra*, or from a lower social order, he can qualify to become a guru *if* he knows the science of Krsna.

I will wait for more topics regarding the relationship of the spiritual master and the guru to include in a Vyasa-puja lecture.

I have a beautiful portrait of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu drawn by an artist (being ordered by King Prataparudra) while Mahaprabhu was staying at the Gambhira in Puri. The picture must be over 500 years old, and it appears to be an accurate likeness to Lord Caitanya. How wonderful it is!

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October 3, 2017

Question: “How do you feel about the humbling aspect of the fact that the more you feel like you should be advancing, yet at the same time you are further away from the ultimate goal of life?”

Answer: I feel realistic about my distance from the ultimate goal of life. I don't manifest physical emotions of ecstasy like tears, though I have

been chanting 51 years. It's my reality, and I humbly accept it: this is who I am. I can't force myself to advance.

Question: “Is it better to remember Vrndavana as it was, with Prabhupada and fewer coverings (going back to when Krsna and Radha were visible)? Isn't it better to hold onto the 'romantic' past than face the madness now? It used to be that you had to love the pigs and monkeys, but now it is car horns and loudspeakers.”

Answer: Yes, I prefer to remember Vrndavana the way it was, when there was less covering. I have no desire to go back and face the crazy buildup, noise, crowds and car speed. I visited Vrndavana and Mayapura about twenty times, and I have fond memories that I cherish.

Question: “Do you see your life as a dream or a reality?”

Answer: I see my life as reality, not dream (except for the many dreams I have when I sleep). I am actually a neophyte *vaidhi-bhakta*, not a nondevotee. My main interests are chanting Hare Krsna, hearing *sastra*, taking *darsana* of my Deities, associating with like-minded devotees, honoring Krsna *prasada*, writing, and other Krsna-conscious activities. I don't “dream” that I am an advanced *raganuga* devotee. But I don't think my life is unsubstantial or a void. I am serving my spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, and accruing good “*bhakti* points” for a better transcendental

next life.

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October 4, 2017

Question: You were “paying your dues” being on a ship at the beginning of Vietnam. You joined a Movement with *Bhagavad-gita* as the main book, and it promoted righteous war. Could you stand up with full conviction and “explain away” the martial setting in which Krsna was encouraging Arjuna to fight?

Answer: I have already written in the Journal of Krsna’s inciting Arjuna to fight. It was a sensitive issue for Prabhupada to preach to young nondevotees who mostly protested against the USA’s involvement with war in Vietnam. Before meeting Prabhupada, I was in favor of Arjuna’s unwillingness to fight and was disturbed by Krsna calling Arjuna “a non-Aryan,” “a coward” and “ignorant.” But as I learned about the war in the context of the *Mahabharata* and became Prabhupada’s submissive disciple, I gave up my misgivings and accepted Krsna and Prabhupada’s conclusions. I was able to explain to the nondevotees how pacifism wasn’t always an application in war, and there was such a thing as religious war. There was a difference between Vietnam and Krsna’s supporting the Pandavas at Kuruksetra. I couldn’t convince the nondevotees, but I didn’t give up my Krsna conscious convictions.

Question: “Do you remember your counselor’s questions, in what context they were asked and what your answers were? Would you change anything? It was a revolutionary time in your life.”

Answer: When the doctors couldn’t find anything wrong with me—no infections, diabetes under control—Baladeva suggested psychological counseling. I exchanged letters with a Godbrother-counselor. At this time Baladeva became ill with heart palpitations, and he entered the emergency room of the hospital. He stayed there three days and was discharged as “healthy.” But this put me in anxiety, and my counselor noted it. He said we should make an effort to get devotees to come and help Baladeva in his services. Fortunately we received a string of householders who came to help out. Ananda Kisora and his wife Linda came and stayed three months! Krsna-Balarama and his wife Syama-mayi came for two weeks. Sucandra and his wife Uttara came for three weeks. During this time I had a health breakdown. I couldn’t walk, and I was exhausted. I stopped writing daily and even stopped my *japa*. I clung to Prabhupada’s instructions regarding priorities: “First health, second chanting, third, doing service, and four, reading books, in that order.” I had a physical therapist visit me twice a week for a while, and he taught me exercises and how to strengthen my legs. Gradually I began to chant again and resumed writing—this journal.

Question: “Can you give time, place and circumstances of revolutions in your life?”

Answer: The first revolution was when I entered Junior College, ceased being a “ne’er-do-well” and became a wanna-be intellectual. There began my desire for a vocation as a writer. After I was discharged from the Navy, I didn’t return to my family home as my parents expected, but I went straight from the ship in Florida to the Lower East Side of New York. I was wearing my Navy pea coat, and it was snowing. I went to a realtor and found a slum apartment on the Lower East Side in the neighborhood with thousands of hippies. I took to smoking marijuana and swallowing LSD, and I spent my time in writing while high. The biggest revolution was in 1966 when I met Srila Prabhupada, surrendered to him and my life changed completely for the better, for the best.

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Free Write

This journal is my lifeline to Prabhupada, Krsna and the world. People expect me to write, and I want to keep up the practice. But it is sometimes difficult to continue the flow. I have no story-plot or essay-theme. I am not, like Ravindra Svarupa, writing a book on the *Siksastakam*. I am not, like H. D. Thoreau, taking afternoon walks and keeping a journal on nature in Concord, Mass.-- the trees, the animals, the birds and the plants and

flowers. I write about my life as a devotee in Krsna consciousness. I am in the autumn or early winter of my life, age 78 years old. Most of my life and work is done. I have already written briefly what it feels like to have practiced devotional service for 51 years and to still be far away from the ultimate goal. I am somewhat complacent in my sunset years, taking it easy and nursing my aches and pains. That's why I say this journal is my lifeline. It is my only literary output after many years of making books.

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October 5, 2017

I have been writing only about myself. I want to write about Radha-Krsna, Lord Caitanya, Srila Prabhupada, etc. In "The Love Locket" by Visvanatha Cakravati Thakura, Krsna, disguised as an angelic woman from heaven, descended and approached Srimati Radharani in *Bhauma-Vrndavana*. Radharani is charmed by the angelic lady and asks Her what She can do for Her. The heavenly woman says, "I have been watching You from the sky, and I feel very compassionate towards You. I am saddened by how You give Your pure love to Krsna and He doesn't treat You faithfully. He meets in rendezvous with other *gopis* and sometimes stands You up all night, not appearing to You in Your lonely waiting. Then when He finally comes to You in the morning, He bears marks of smudged cosmetics and nail- scratches from lovemaking with another *gopi*. You manifest jealous

anger and don't want to talk to Him, but later, when He entreats You and plays His mind-enchanting flute, You become soft-hearted and forgive Him. O Radha! Why don't You reject Him? That blackish Boy is just a lusty debauchee!"

Radharani became quiet and thoughtful. She took the angelic lady by the hand and brought Her to a solitary place. Radharani said, "I am attracted to You. You seem to be a sincere and compassionate person. I want to open My heart to You and tell You My confidential feelings about Krsna, but don't disclose it to anyone else."

Krsna, beneath His feminine disguise, felt goosebumps. He was going to hear Radharani's actual feelings toward Him without Her usual coyness and concealment!

Radharani told the heavenly woman, "As far as I am concerned, Krsna can do no wrong. My only desire is that He be happy. If Krsna derives satisfaction embracing another *gopi* in front of Me, that brings Me bliss. If a *gopi* is reluctant to go meet with Krsna, I say, 'Let a thunderbolt fall on her head.' Certainly when We are together I feel great joy, but when We are separated, I find He is still with Me, and that produces a greater ecstasy."

Radharani went on disclosing Her pure confidential love to the angelic lady. Finally Krsna disbanded His disguise, and Radharani was not at all embarrassed or angry with Him. They embraced in conjugal love and

retired to a Govardhana cave for further amorous play.

Krsna was extraordinarily happy that Radharani had shown Him Her “love locket,” Her pure, unconcealed feelings for Him. Radharani was also satisfied to share it with Her Beloved.

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I don't “dream” that I am an advanced *raganuga* devotee. But I don't think my life is unsubstantial or a void. I am serving my spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, and accruing good “*bhakti*-points” for a better transcendental next life.

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In “The Story of the Pearls” by Raghunatha dasa Gosvami, Krsna and His cowherd friends go to observe Radharani and Her *sakhis*. They find the girls stringing a few pearls on a thread. Krsna asks Radharani to please give Him some pearls. He says He wants to make a garland of them to put on His cows. Radharani flatly refuses Him and mocks Him for wanting to put pearls on animals. Krsna is scorned by the *gopis*. He and the boys go away angry and disappointed. Krsna then goes to Mother Yasoda and asks her if she will lend Him some of her pearls to play with. At first she is hesitant, but seeing the smile of her son, she gives in and lends Him some precious pearls. Krsna and His friends then cultivate a patch of land near their house and plant the pearls in the ground. Within a few days, some small plants

come up. Within a week, the plants turn into beautiful bushes bearing many beautiful valuable pearls. Radharani and Her girlfriends come to see Krsna's pearl garden. They ask Him to please give them some pearls. He adamantly refuses and reminds them of how they rejected Him rudely the other day. The *gopis* continue to linger and beg Krsna in many ways, flattering Him and promising Him rewards. Krsna is deaf to their pleading. He says to them, "Why don't you grow your own pearl garden like I did?" The *gopis* finally go away frustrated. At home they beg their mothers to lend them some of their pearls. The mothers give their daughters some pearls to play with, and the *gopis* cultivate a plot of land and plant the pearls. But after a few days, nothing comes up. The *gopis* wait, but then they become grief-stricken and frightened. They have lost their mothers' pearls and have nothing to show for it. Radha and Her *gopi* friends return to Krsna, who is tending His pearl garden. They beg Him again to give them some pearls. Krsna chastises them and refuses to give them any pearls. There continues a long dialogue of argument and pleading by the *gopis* and refusal and mocking by Krsna and the boys. Finally, the girls go home downhearted and sad.

After the *gopis* leave, Krsna begins to pick bunches of pearls from His plants, and He puts them into individual boxes. He puts the biggest collection into a box and writes on it the name "Radha" and ties a ribbon on

it. He then proceeds to put pearls in many boxes and writes on them the names of *gopis* like “Lalita,” “Visakha,” “Syama,” and so on. He then has the boys deliver the gifts to the individual *gopis*. Thus the story ends in a happy mood.

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Free Write

I had a dream that our devotees were starting to gather in a room where there was a row of rooms. The room we tried to enter was occupied by a group of German men wearing uniforms and carrying flags. They said they occupied this room and we couldn't use it. Sesa Prabhu approached the leader of the Germans, put earphones on his head, and played a CD. After listening to it for a while, the German surrendered and said they would vacate and let us use the room. Our devotees then began to file into the room. In an excess of nervous energy, Sesa knocked over my picture of Radharani, and it crashed to the ground. I went to retrieve it and the frame was broken, and the picture was lost. A disciple of mine made a poster stating that I had lost my picture. He described the frame and the picture of Radharani and asked someone to donate a new one to me. Sesa looked different. Instead of appearing like his usual gentle self, he appeared to be a sharp commando, a brave *ksatriya*. Then Bhagavan arrived. He was

wearing a stylish suit, shirt and tie. He asked me if I knew of Mt. Athos and mentioned other Greek places. He said he had to go there right away. I gestured to him that this is what he should expect since he had enlisted for such high-profile GBC service. He agreed, but showed me that his hands were trembling. I consoled him. He then blew me a kiss, flashed a brilliant smile, and went off—presto!—to catch his plane.

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October 6, 2017

In “The Box” by Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, Krsna wanders into Mother Yasoda’s room to see what she is doing. He finds her packing a large trunk with gifts for a girl. She is putting in *chadars*, *saris*, ornaments, cosmetics, jewelry, etc. She is filling it up to the top. Krsna asks her, “Who is this for?”

Mother Yasoda replies, “This is for a *gopi* girl who is just as dear to me as You are. She has many wonderful qualities. She is the daughter of Maharaja Vrsabhanu and Mother Kirtida. I have heard that Radharani rendered excellent service to Durvasa Muni, and he granted Her a boon that whatever She cooked would taste like nectar, and whoever ate it would gain a long life. I am giving Her these gifts because I love Her and because I want to persuade Her parents to let Her come to Nandagram every day and

cook Your lunch for You.” Krsna was already in love with Radharani, and He was thrilled to hear this. Mother Yasoda stepped out of the room for a moment, and Krsna immediately began taking the gifts out of the trunk. He handed the items to Danistha, the *gopi* who was favorable to Him, and to her friends. He told them, “Bring these gifts to Radharani. Carry them in your arms without the box.” Krsna then jumped into the big empty box and shut the latch. He did it just in time. Mother Yasoda then re-entered the room along with Radharani’s so-called husband, the dull-witted Abhimanyu. Mother Yasoda said to Abhimanyu, “I have packed this trunk with valuable gifts for Radharani. You please carry it to your home in Yavat on your shoulders and present it to Her.” Abhimanyu was glad to receive the gift, but he worried that the trunk would be too heavy for him to carry. He thought that the gifts must be very valuable, and maybe he could sell some of them to purchase more cows for his herd. Abhimanyu struggled and lifted the trunk to his shoulders. He then left the house and started his journey to his home. Krsna was delighted that He was being carried to the home of Radharani in secret.

After a long, arduous journey, Abhimanyu finally reached Yavat. His mother, Jatila, ordered him to bring the trunk into the inner rooms of the house, which were the private quarters of Radharani and Her *gopi* friends. Abhimanyu staggered in, placed the trunk on a bureau in the room and

exited. This was the private quarters of the girls, and no males were allowed to enter here.

The girls heard that the trunk contained a gift to Radharani from Mother Yasoda, and they looked at it with keen anticipation. They opened the latch, and to their great surprise young Krsna leaped out and proudly glanced at Radharani and Her friends. The girls giggled with a mixture of joy and embarrassment. Some of them weren't clothed properly, and they adjusted themselves. Krsna looked like the all-charming Prince of Vraja. He was dressed in brilliant yellow cloth, a broad chest and a peacock feather in His hair. The girls almost swooned with delight. Krsna told them He had come to them with a great yearning to be with them and He would stay for three days. He was within the house of Abhimanyu and Jatila, who hated Him, yet He was protected by staying in the confidential girls' quarters. His was an outrageous stroke of genius. Thus Krsna celebrated a love festival for three days in the very home of His enemies.

Later Dhanistha and the *gopis* arrived and presented Radharani with all the valuable gifts. When Jatila saw them, she was very pleased. Jatila agreed to Mother Yasoda's request that Radharani go daily to Nandagram and cook Krsna's lunch. Thus began the daily spontaneous ritual where Radha cooked in Krsna's presence and They exchanged loving glances. Krsna accepted the blessing of Durvasa Muni that He would live a long life,

and He enjoyed the nectar-meals prepared by Radharani. They managed to have many intimate meetings, and Their love grew stronger every day.

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Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta begins immediately with powerful verses from Svarupa Damodara's diary. *Adi-lila* 1.5:

“The loving affairs of Radha and Kṛṣṇa are transcendental manifestations of the Lord's pleasure-giving potency. Although Radha and Kṛṣṇa are one in Their identity. They separated Themselves eternally. Now these two transcendental identities have united, in the form of Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. I bow down to Him, who has manifested Himself with the sentiment and complexion of Srimati Radharani, although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself.”

How much esoteric philosophy and nectar packed into one verse! Radha and Kṛṣṇa are one in Their identity, but They separated Themselves eternally. Now They again are united in the form of Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. “Bow down to Him, who has manifested Himself in the sentiment and complexion of Radharani, though He is Kṛṣṇa Himself.”

That hits the transcendental jackpot. This is the Ph.D. of Vedic wisdom. Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, but He is Radha and Kṛṣṇa

combined: *sri krsna caitanya radha-krsna nahe anya*. He is Krsna, in the mood of Radharani feeling separation from Krsna. This is the highest ecstasy in transcendental mellows.

Later in the *Antya-lila*, Caitanya Mahaprabhu displays transformations of transcendental madness. His body contorts into elongations of the joints and His limbs withdraw into His body like a tortoise. He falls unconscious and sees Himself taking part in pastimes with Krsna and the *gopis*. He sees a sand dune on the beach, mistakes it for Govardhana Hill, and runs after it. He falls into internal consciousness. His devotees bring Him back into external consciousness by chanting Hare Krsna loudly into His ear. He is disappointed that He has been taken from the pastimes of Radha and Krsna. With His confidential associates Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya, He laments in separation from Radharani. All night they pacify Him by songs and reciting verses supplementing His mood. He dives into the ocean, mistaking it for the Yamuna River. He floats downstream for miles, taking part in the *lila* in His mind. A fisherman captures Him in his net, and His devotees discover Him and revive Him. His feelings of separation are too extreme to keep Him remaining in the world. He has completed His mission of successfully spreading love of God by chanting the Hare Krsna mantra. Finally, He merges His body into the Tota-*Gopinatha* Deity in Puri and winds up His pastimes, but not before teaching

the world the sublime *Siksastakam* verses glorifying the chanting of the holy names. The *sastras* declare that *sankirtana-yajna* is the only sacrifice possible in the age of Kali.

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When Krsna observes the disc of the full moon in Autumn, He is aroused with amorous feelings, and He wants to enjoy the *rasa* dance with the *gopis*. In the forest He plays His melodious flute. As soon as the *gopis* hear the flute they come rushing out of their homes, dropping all their occupations and the prohibitions of their husbands and fathers. They run to the spot where Krsna is standing in the forest, and He greets them with formal, polite words.

“Welcome, My dear ladies,” He says. “Why have you come out in the middle of the night like this? Have you come to observe the beautiful autumn scenery in the forest? If so, observe it quickly and then return to your homes. A chaste woman should not be away from her husband and children.” When the *gopis* hear these cold words from Krsna, they become very disappointed, scratch their toenails in the sand, and tears run down their cheeks. They become so angry with Him that they reprimand Him. They say, “O Krsna, why are You speaking so cruelly? How can You refuse beautiful girls who have come to You in the night seeking loving pastimes with You?” Krsna finally relents and addresses the *gopis* with warm

affection. He embraces and kisses them, and they become enlivened. Krsna walks with the *gopis* to the *rasa* dance arena. Because there are so many *gopis*, He expands Himself into many forms and holds hands with each *gopi* so that she thinks Krsna is with her alone. Radha and Krsna stand alone in the center of the circle. They begin the *rasa* dance. Krsna compliments particular *gopis* for their expertise in rhythmic dancing and singing. When they perspire from fatigue, He wipes the perspiration from their faces and they become rejuvenated. After a while, Radharani becomes jealous that She is not getting all of Krsna's attention, and She leaves the *rasa* dance. After She leaves, Krsna also exits and searches Her out. The other *gopis* are disappointed and stop the dance. They say among themselves that this *gopi* whom Krsna has gone to find must have worshiped Him better than any of us, and therefore He is seeking Her company alone. They go off in search of Krsna and the special *gopi*. Krsna finds Radha and gives Her His complete attention. They sit together and He braids Her hair with flowers. The mass of *gopis* follow in the forest and discover the footprints of Krsna and another *gopi*. They discover where the two have sat down together and Krsna braided Her hair. They discover footprints which are half-indented, where Krsna stood on His toes to reach flowers high on the tree. Radharani is aware that the *gopis* are searching for Her, and She is compassionate; She wants them to find Her and Krsna.

Radharani tells Krsna, feeling some pride at His special attention, that She is tired and can walk no further. She asks Him to carry Her. Krsna asks Her to climb onto His shoulders, but as She does so He disappears. Radharani then laments and calls out to Krsna in separation. Then the *gopis* find Radharani crying alone, and they commiserate with Her. Radha joins all Her *gopi* friends, and together they search out Krsna in the night. They keep going until it gets darker and darker and they cannot see at all. They sit down on the bank of the Yamuna and begin singing the holy names of Krsna.

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October 8, 2017

Free write

My disciple Sankirtana dasa, the jazz guitarist devotee from Dallas, sent me a CD by a tribute band led by Chick Corea titled *Remembering Bud Powell*. Powell played in the 1940s and '50s, but his music is not outdated. It is classic, and his tunes are played by musicians today. He was a unique genius, as great a bop musician as Charlie Parker. The CD Sankirtana dasa sent me has all original compositions by Powell. The tribute band includes modern jazz saxophonist Joshua Redman, who juices things up, while Corea faithfully improvises and plays the tunes, sounding like another Bud Powell. Powell was a little insane, the result of multiple beatings on the

head by policemen's billy clubs for a minor infraction. He was a victim of police abuse because of being black. He even wrote a tune, "Un Poco Loco" ("A Little Crazy"). His social behavior became erratic. But he did not lose his grace and rhythm in playing the piano. I used to borrow his records from the New York City Public Library when I was a teenager. One of the records was called *The Amazing Bud Powell*. I loved him as much as Jack Kerouac loved the white saxophone player Lee Konitz. Both musicians were intrepid improvisers, but Powell composed many accessible jazz compositions. *Remembering Bud Powell* is a wonderful "Thank you, Bud Powell!" homage to the great pianist and composer.

How does my appreciation for jazz fit into Krsna consciousness? I have become detached from jazz over the years since I've become a devotee, and I don't listen to it much. But I appreciate that it is quality music emanating originally from Krsna's energy. The claim that it is "soul music" is justifiable. It may be one of those attachments that I will ultimately have to let go of, but I am grateful for how it has nourished me.

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I dreamt I daydreamed that Rama Raya was swimming in Radha-kunda in an *avadhuta* way. Suddenly something grabbed him from below in the water. He cried out to Bhagavata Purana on the shore. Bhagavata replied, "It's probably a turtle. Shake it off. Don't panic." Rama kicked his leg, freed

himself and paddled to the shore. He was a little frightened but felt blessed to be touched by a creature in the *kunda*.

Krishna-kripa Brahmacari travels quickly from city to city all over the world, taking part in public *harinama* with the local devotees. He loves *sankirtana-yajna*. Some senior devotees have advised him not to travel so widely but to stay longer in one place. He has now joined the New York City *harinama* party and will stay with them for three months. He visited us yesterday for lunch and talked constantly about his *harinama* adventures. He posts a blog on the Internet about his activities and association with the devotees. Individuals send him donations, and this enables him to travel. He laughs frequently and is enthusiastic and optimistic. Baladeva prepared wraps, thick *chapattis* rolled around vegetables. Krishna-kripa had three of them along with *dhal* and potato chips with sour cream and ginger beer. He always dresses in his full *brahmacari* attire.

Many persons in this neighborhood own very small dogs, which they take out on a walk with a long leash. There is a youngish man with tattoos who is tall and manly-looking. He looks somewhat ridiculous walking his tiny dog. He greets us with a neutral, low voice. Some of the men are older and squat, and they obediently walk behind their little dogs. Some middle-aged women own mongrel poodles which resemble their owners. The owners don't always stop to pick up the dogs' poop. Our immediate next-

door neighbor has a big black dog named Shadow who has a deep, menacing bark. He is kept confined within a big yard that is encircled by a steel fence that he cannot jump over. He is actually a bit of a sissy, because he barks and whines mainly because he wants his owner to take him back inside the house. The same neighbor has another dog, which we call Tripod because he lost a rear leg when a car ran over it. When Tripod is let out in the yard, he barks fiercely, and when I am on my walk, he follows me from inside the yard and threatens me with his bark. I don't know why all these people are so attached to their dogs. Prabhupada has said that if a person is very affectionate to his dog and thinks of him all the time, then at death he may take his next body as a dog.

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. Sacinandana Swami wrote a short novel, *Broken Names*. It is engaging, suspenseful in story form and profound about the holy name. In his introduction, he writes, "I did not want to write an egocentric book about my own little world. I am an insignificant person. I do not think it's important to write about what happens to me. Sacinandana Maharaja was recently here in Stuyvesant Falls holding a three-day *japa* retreat. He asked for my autobiographical books, and he gave me a generous donation. But when I read these lines in his introduction, I felt bad that I had given him my books. They are four big volumes, and they are self-centered. I wrote

him a letter, quoted what he wrote in his introduction, and apologized for my own books. I wrote that his one small volume was superior to all my self-centered books. I said that he did not have to read them if he didn't find them useful. I have written in many other genres to round out my *oeuvre*, but autobiography is prominent—and biography of and homage to Srila Prabhupada. I like Kerouac's advice: "Unrehearsed confessions about what actually happened." And the statement by Robert Lowell: "Why not tell what really happened?" It seems like an honest approach, as long as you always "steer to Krsna."

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October 10, 2017

Free Write

Question : How were you affected when you first "discovered" the poems by the Gosvamis? How has your appreciation improved? Do you think of them during *darsana*?

Answer: At first, I was hesitant to read the poems of the Gosvamis of Vrndavana. I worried that they might be too advanced for me. Some devotees have vowed to confine their reading to Prabhupada's books only. But I gradually began to read the Gosvamis' poems. After all, Prabhupada has quoted them profusely in books like *Caitanya-caritamrta* and *Nectar of Devotion*. I did not find that the Gosvamis' books were too intimate in

amorous descriptions. They did not agitate my mind in that way. Kusakrata Prabhu is a qualified translator from Sanskrit to English. Gopiparanadhana Prabhu and his editors have produced an excellent authorized translation, with commentary, of Sanatana Gosvami's masterpiece, *Brhad-bhagavatamrta*. My appreciation for these translations have improved by re-reading. I have posted Rupa Gosvami's *Padyavali* on my website in excerpts, *two times*. I don't confuse the Gosvamis' poems with mundane writing about material sexual affairs.

Question : Can any advanced soul see "new" stories in their heart's meditations and be confident they are real and shareable? Is that what advanced *krsna-kathah* is?

Answer: It is best to be safe and read the *lila* stories that Prabhupada has presented. An ordinary devotee should not imagine "new" pastimes of Krsna and expect other devotees to accept them as authorized pastimes. But it's a fact that "new" pastimes are going on in the spiritual world. Krsna is ever-fresh, newer and newer, and He is always inventing new pastimes. Great souls like Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami have experienced these pastimes; Rupa Gosvami has presented them in his dramas *Lalita-madhava* and *Vidagdha-madhava*. Sanatana Gosvami's narrations about Gopa Kumara and how he persistently chanted his mantra until he attained Goloka Vrndavana, are as good as authorized scripture. But only pseudo-

devotees like the *prakṛta-sahajiyas* imagine they are taking part in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. They take things cheaply and mislead innocent persons on the devotional path.

Question : Do you ever get tired of chanting *japa*?

Answer: I stop chanting after sixteen rounds. Ever since Srila Prabhupada set that minimum quota, I don't do more. Occasionally, I take a three-week *japa* retreat and increase to thirty-two rounds. I hardly ever chant sixty-four rounds. Today, just to test myself, I chanted four extra rounds in the late morning. It wasn't difficult. Maybe I could keep up the increase. Many *sadhus* recommend numerical strength. Some spiritual masters require their disciples to chant sixty-four rounds. That seems too much to me. I have other services to do. But maybe I could keep a little increase.

Namacarya Haridasa Thakura chanted 300,000 Names daily, and Raghunatha dasa Gosvami chanted 100,000 Names. We cannot imitate them, but we can adore their example. We should chant our limited quota nicely, with ardor, as they did.

Question : What about your *Gayatri* mantras?

Answer: I think I do a pretty decent job with them. I take my time and do not rush. I go slowly. I touch my thumb on the spots of my right hand. I correctly pronounce the memorized Sanskrit, and in the background vaguely think of the meaning in English. I look at my Deities while I say the

mantras, looking appropriately at Srila Prabhupada for the guru mantras, at Lord Caitanya for the Caitanya mantras, and Radha-Govinda for the last two *Gopala-* and *Gopi-bhava* mantras. When I am finished the Sanskrit, I recite in my mind the English translation of each mantra. For the mantra to the sun, I look at my Lord Nrsimha *murti* because He is shining brightly in His golden form and Sudarsana disc. My Prabhupada *murti* is perfect for looking at while I recite the English to the mantras to the spiritual master. And then Lord Caitanya, not rushing, and finally, Radha-Govinda, ending with the *gopi-bhava* mantra, which I have learned specifically refers to Srimati Radharani. I don't want to be complacent; I enjoy saying my *Gayatris* and look forward to the time when I say them again.

Question : When you are trying to think that Vrndavana is everywhere, do you have to “stretch it” to fit the fact (philosophically), or does it come naturally, even in the midst of so much *maya*? Are some places easier, say, like New Mexico or Boulder or Hawaii because of their natural spiritual power to bring out feelings of love?

Answer: As far as some places other than Vrndavana in India having spiritual power, I am not attracted to going there. Because of my crippled foot, I cannot walk, and the thought of traveling anywhere is too daunting for me. I find that my *bhajana-kutir*, Viraha Bhavan, in Stuyvesant Falls, New York, is ideal and practical for me. I am close to my worshipable

Deities here, and I have a lot of solitude, mixed with association of a few like-minded devotees. I am content to stay here and practice *bhajana* in separation of Vrndavana.

Question : When you want to chant extra rounds, is that the time to test/try out more interesting methods such as speeding up or slowing down to become more attentive than the regular sixteen? Is it a good time to add in *sastra* reading or *vrndavana-lila* meditation that you would not ordinarily do during a “regular” *japa* period?

Answer: This is a good question. I have only been doing extra rounds for one day, and when I did them, they were the same as my minimum sixteen. But even in my sixteen I have started to mix in thinking of *krsna-lila*. I haven’t thought much about experimenting with different methods during the extra rounds. I mainly want to do them in a regular fashion.

Question: Really, now, how do you think of Krsna twenty-four hours a day? I mean while shopping or talking about worldly business or doing menial tasks out there. Are you faking it with your other stuff and really trying to figure out what the conversation has to do about Krsna? Do you have to completely withdraw and let others do the “dirty work,” or does Krsna just test you to see if you would really rather be engaged wholly and solely in His service?

Answer: I get annoyed and bored when devotees talk *prajalpa* at the dinner table after we have finished our *sastric* reading. I usually drop out, become silent and feel impatient, waiting to go upstairs. Yes, I think I have to withdraw and let others do the “dirty work.” I believe Krsna is testing me to see if I really would rather be engaged wholly and solely in His service.

Question : Is it okay to admit that you actually do miss Goloka Vrndavana, or does “going public” with that desire, even in like-minded company, spoil those feelings? Are the feelings even real? How do you find out if you are just kidding yourself?

Answer: I think it is all right to admit that I actually do miss Goloka Vrndavana.

But I admit it’s not very conducive to talk about it with others. The best way to discover that the feelings are real is to read about Goloka in *rasa-sastras*. When I read the last part of Sanatana Gosvami’s *Brhad-bhagavatamarta*, where Gopa-kumara (his name now changed to Sarupa) went back finally to Goloka Vrndavana—by reading that, I felt moved, felt I was really there with Krsna and the Vrajavasis. Reading *rasa-sastra* is an excellent practice. It makes me convinced I’m not just kidding myself about the reality of Goloka Vrndavana and about my sincere attraction to go back home, back to Godhead. Even looking at devotional paintings of the spiritual world brings out the realized feelings.

Question : Can you tell me more about your feelings for Goloka Vrndavana?

Answer: I am attracted to Goloka Vrndavana in the spiritual sky. I am not so attached to Vrndavana in India as it is “progressing” or “degrading” into the 21st century. I like Vrndavana as it is described in the *Krsna Book* and other Gaudiya Vaisnava books, when Radha and Krsna were present there, and even less than 500 years ago, when the Gosvamis of Vrndavana lived there and performed their *bhajana* and writing. It was clean, calm and peaceful, with many peacocks, birds and lotus flowers. Nowadays the enchanting sands of Raman-reti have disappeared and been replaced by building development. The air is filled with the noise of racing car-traffic, speeding dangerously, the sounds of car horns and blaring loudspeakers at all times of the day. The monkey population has increased to epidemic proportions and they are more aggressive, attacking and stealing from the humans. The dhama is overfilled with visiting pilgrims from countries all over the world (an auspicious sign). But they jam into the Krsna-Balarama Mandira for the programs, with no space to move. There is an “underbelly Mafia” that threatens and rules Vrndavana, although many people are not aware of it. Sincere, dedicated devotees go to Vrndavana despite these *mayaic* coverings and obstacles, but this cripple-footed camper keeps away. He has stayed in Vrndavana many times in its better days, and he cherishes

his memories. He lives in an *ashrama* called Viraha Bhavana (“Separation from Vrndavana”) and worships Radha-Govinda, who stay in a *kunja* of plants and flowers.

Question : Did you come away from Sacinandana Swami’s book *Broken Names* with any “nuggets” of wisdom that you may hold onto. Try to think of the hundreds that you have gotten from books, movies, authors, speakers, or devotees like Bhurijana’s “one mantra at a time.” Scroll back through your life. Don’t try to do it all at one time or every day, but occasionally go one-at-a-time and gather them up to share. You must certainly have some personal memorable goodies from Prabhupada also always worth repeating, and they could be tied to similar other worthwhile quotable thoughts of the day?

Answer: From Sacinandana Swami’s book *Broken Names* I was inspired by the teachings of the elevated *babaji*, “the Son.” In his speaking to the doubtful Visvambhara, Visvambhara thought that the statements of praise and power of the holy name were theoretical. He hankered for reality of experience in his chanting. “The Son” kept speaking to him with great wisdom and devotion. In the Introduction, Sacinandana Swami says these answers came from the sacred scriptures. So they are not Sacinandana Swami’s personal realizations, but scriptural evidence. Visvambhara makes a gift of gray Radha-kunda *tilaka*, with the name “Radha” stamped on it, to

“the Son.” The *babaji* is very grateful for the gift. He takes it as a direct sign from Radharani, and it deepens his *prema* in chanting the holy name. Finally, he gets through to Visvambhara, who clears his doubts and becomes a spontaneous loving chanter of the holy names. Then there is Bhurijana’s process: “One mantra at a time.” He advises that we disregard the mantra that we just chanted, and forget the one that we are going to chant in the future—just concentrate on the one immediate mantra we are chanting at present. He has found great success in this method and teaches it to others. As for Srila Prabhupada, he taught me to chant rapidly but always clearly, and to “Just hear.” He also wrote in letters that we should not only hear but think of the pastimes of Krsna when we do our *japa*. I will give more “nuggets” as we go along.

Question : Can you tell a few interesting “How I came to Krsna consciousness” stories that caught your attention?

Answer: One time, only a couple of weeks after I had joined the Swami, I went to him and asked permission to visit my parents over the weekend at their summer home in Avalon, New Jersey. It would mean I would miss a couple of his classes and *kirtanas*, and I didn’t want to do it unless he approved. Swamiji pleasantly said I could go visit my parents, and I told him that I didn’t want to do it without his approval. He acknowledged my faithfulness. I took the bus to Avalon and arrived there at night. After

greeting my parents I went into the backyard, where there was a canal you could swim in. I went into the water and floated on my back. I looked up at the distant stars. Suddenly, into my mind phrases from Prabhupada's lectures and conversations came flooding in. I could hear his voice. I was astonished and thought to myself, "Oh, how deeply he has gone into my life!"

One time I was sitting on the curb outside 26 Second Avenue on a Sunday morning after Swamiji had finished his lecture. I was thinking what to do with the day. Then a boy came up to me and said the Swami wanted to see me. He was still sitting on the *vyasasana* in the temple room. I went up to him and he asked me if I was working in the welfare office today. When I said no, he asked me if I would attend a Sunday Love Feast in his room. I knew about these feasts but thought they were only for intimate devotees. I happily agreed and attended—and kept attending. I needed that personal attention, or I was slow to surrender. That is why I missed the first initiation. After the first initiation, I was present in his room when the phone rang. It was Mukunda calling to make arrangements for his marriage the next day. Prabhupada talked briefly and then hung up. Then he turned to me and said, "I personally invite you to come to the marriage. We will hold it in the storefront tomorrow." I happily agreed to come and was delighted that he personally invited me. Without gestures of personal

attention, I would not have been able to make it. But he knew my need and gave me that attention.

One time, early in my relationship with Prabhupada before I was initiated, I came to see him alone and told him that I was enjoying reading his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* volumes that he had brought from India. I said I particularly liked the story about Narada Muni coming to his disciple Vyasadeva when Vyasadeva was feeling despondent despite writing so much Vedic literature. I considered myself a dedicated writer, yet I also felt despondent, so I identified with the *Bhagavatam* story. When I was talking like this to Swamiji, he opened his eyes wide in appreciation. He liked the fact that I was referring to a section in the *Bhagavatam* which he hadn't even lectured to us. We both became enlivened.

Question : What are the new *bhaktas*, now and in the future, to do when faced with a whole wall full of books—Vedic *sastra*, Prabhupada's books, your books, Godbrothers' books, Bhaktivinode Thakura, etc., etc. How do they deal with it responsibly? Many of us had the good fortune to read things as they became available. Then there is chanting, tapes, videos, etc., etc.

Answer: A devotee can't expect to read all the books available. There is only so much time in a day. Prabhupada's books are the priority, and it's natural that a devotee will read the books of his spiritual master. There is

even a statement in the *sastras* that one should not read too many different books. My *siksa* disciple, John Endler, describes himself as a “book nerd.” But he mainly concentrates on Prabhupada’s books and my books. Books by Prabhupada’s disciples are nourishing, so you can read what you can, as recommended by devotees you respect. As for chanting and tapes, we are required to chant sixteen rounds, and it is good to hear a recorded lecture by Prabhupada every day. These are the minimum quotas.

Question : What am I or anyone doing “another service” supposed to think when the *harinama* party has such a strong *sastric* case for carrying out exclusively the *yuga-dharma*?

Answer: There are a limited number of devotees going out every day in public for *harinama*. If you are not on a *harinama* party, you can support them by encouragement, donations, and sometimes joining them when you can. Also, *sankirtana-yajna* has a wider application than going out with a group of devotees and chanting. Public congregational chanting is the ideal example, but a servant of the spiritual master, or the book distributors, are also performing *sankirtana*. Any authorized service supporting the Hare Krsna Movement is part of *sankirtana-yajna*.

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I just woke from a sweet dream and thought, “I don’t want to die, I want to live.” I want to keep having happy dreams. My Aunt Mary was an

affectionate, beautiful woman. She used to call me “*Lover Boy*” when I was a toddler. She was kind to all our family. So I was pleased to dream of her. But Prabhupada says although there is immense happiness on the heavenly planets, it is nothing compared to the happiness in the spiritual world. So I want *that* happiness. Living in the material world cannot bring me substantial happiness.

I just read a long medical article that was published on the *Dandavats* website. *Dandavats* said that it was “urgent and serious.” The doctor who wrote the article was advocating taking vitamin B47. He said that a B47 deficiency, especially in elderly devotees (he was familiar with the Hare Krsna Movement) brings on Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, shrinkage of the brain and other horrible life-shortening diseases. I took it seriously and wanted to talk to Kirtan-rasa about vitamin B47. They say it’s not enough to take it in supplement pills because they are too big to absorb quickly into the system. They advise you to take it in injections or in a spray under your tongue. Am I too fanatical to be interested in vitamin B47? They included an exchange between Prabhupada and Tamala-Krsna where Prabhupada said he wasn’t interested in taking supplements. He and TKG exchanged a laugh and said, “We will die taking *prasadam*.” I take many pills, but should I add B47 vitamin pills or vitamin injections? I must find out more about it.

But I shouldn't be so anxious about longevity and hanker for sweet dreams, like the one about Aunt Mary Sessa. Concentrate on your *japa* and pray to go where Prabhupada is, either in Goloka Vrndavana or wherever he is now.

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October 14, 2017

Krsna has blessed me to live in a peaceful neighborhood, with a few exceptions. The worst is the neighbor right next door. A young woman lives there with her two parents. The girl is white and weighs about 290 lbs. She is frequently visited by her boyfriend, who stays for a few days at a time and is black. He is strongly built, and the rumor is that he is a boxer. We speculate that they have sexual intercourse in her room, but then they come out on the porch or in the yard and have tumultuous verbal shouting fights. They are a "love-hate" couple. They shout obscenities at one another, and the girl's voice grows hoarse and she sobs. When the shouting reaches a peak in volume, the neighbors call the police. The police arrive in their car and quiet down the couple, but then they go away without taking any further action. The fights are frequent and the pattern is repeated: neighbors call the police for "disturbing the peace," the police come and quiet down the couple but don't make any arrests. Most of us would like to see the police take them away in handcuffs. This family also has two

medium-sized dogs. Both of them are fierce barkers. The family lets them out in the large fenced-in yard, and they bark vociferously and threaten passers-by. More reasons for disliking those neighbors.

The rest of the people in the neighborhood are quiet, friendly and helpful. The man and wife who live across the street, next to Saci-suta's house, are alcoholics. They are almost always half-drunk. But they are quiet, humble and helpful. We sometimes hire them to do handyman jobs, such as painting our white picket fence. Saci considers them ideal neighbors. Halfway down the block, a man has hung out a confederate flag on his porch. During the election he pasted a Trump bumper sticker on his car. Most of the neighbors are rascal Republicans, but they accept us Hare Krsnas, and we are friendly with them. Baladeva distributes to them his famous chocolate chip *prasadam* cookies, which they love. The woman next door on the other side of our house is a Jehovah's Witness. She goes out all day every Saturday and stops door-to-door, trying to convince people to become Jehovah's Witnesses. She is a good-looking woman, and on her invitation Baladeva attended a couple of Jehovah's Witness meetings.

There is also a sprinkling of Krsna-conscious devotees in the neighborhood, and we get together for small festivals on prominent Vaisnava holidays.

Heavy trucks roll by on the road in front of our house. Aside from the eruptive fights of the love-hate couple, “all is quiet on the Western front.” There are no other noisemakers or nuisances. I am happy in my *bhajana-kutir* room taking *darsana* of Radha-Govinda, whose clothes are frequently changed, making Them look always beautiful.

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I am rehearsing my Govardhana-puja lecture. Keli-lalita will be away on a yoga teaching program, so we won't be able to use the big yoga hall. We will hold a small ceremony in our *ashrama*. Every year, I give more or less the same talk, a summary of the chapters from the *Krsna Book*. I do not get tired of doing it every year. I think it is ever-fresh.

Krsna and His cowherd friends saw that Nanda Maharaja and the elderly cowherd men were preparing for a big sacrifice. Although Krsna was omniscient and knew that the sacrifice was for Indra, He inquired with great submission and honor from Nanda Maharaja. He asked, “My dear father, what is this huge sacrifice you are preparing? Who is it for, and what is its purpose? I am very curious, so please let Me know.”

At first Nanda Maharaja remained silent, thinking that his little son would not understand the intricacies of the sacrifice. But Krsna was persistent. He told His father, “You cannot withhold any secrets from Me.” Krsna asked if the ceremony was a Vedic injunction, or was it just a popular

ceremony. Nanda Maharaja then replied, “My dear son, this ceremony is more or less traditional. Because King Indra is the controller of the rains, we are expressing our gratitude to him by holding this sacrifice. Rainfall is very important. Without rain we cannot grow grains, and without grains we cannot live. So we are very thankful to Indra for sending us sufficient rains for our agriculture. By performing this ceremony, one can get success in religion, economic development, sense gratification, and ultimately liberation. If one does not hold this sacrifice to Indra, it does not look good for him.”

In the presence of all the cowherd men, Krsna spoke in a way that made King Indra angry. He said, “There is no need to worship Indra. One will get good results if he simply follows his duties. In this way Krsna was speaking the *karma-mimamsa* philosophy. The advocates of this way do not believe in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They say that if you simply do your duties, you will get the good result. Speaking of *karma-mimamsa*, Krsna said that, “Even if there is a God, He cannot award good results unless the performers do their duties. So there is no need to worship Him.” Nanda and the other men made a counter-reply to Krsna. They said, “One cannot simply get results by performing activities,” and this is correct. For example, a diseased patient may have the care of the best physician, but without the sanction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the patient

may die. Similarly, children may have the best care of loving parents, but without the sanction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the children may go bad or succumb to death. Krsna refuted this statement by saying that the gods cannot award any benediction to persons who do not do their duty. Krsna went on to say that all the cowherd men had to do was to simply perform their duty. They were all *vaisyas*, and their duty was to grow grains and protect cows. Everyone comes to this life with the results of the karma from their past life. Their present life's results are determined by their past activities, and their next life will be determined by the karma they enact in this life. Krsna asked His father to forego the Indra *yajna* and hold a sacrifice for the local *brahmanas* and Govardhana Hill.

Nanda Maharaja replied, "Because You are asking, we will perform a separate sacrifice for the *brahmanas* and Govardhana Hill. But first let me perform this sacrifice for Indra."

Krsna replied, "Father, don't delay! The sacrifice for the *brahmanas* and Govardhana Hill will take a long time. Better that you use the paraphernalia that you have already gathered for this sacrifice, and let us have nothing to do with Indra."

Nanda Maharaha finally relented. Because he so much loved his son and because he was so much convinced by His arguments, he agreed to His proposal. The cowherd men then inquired from Krsna exactly how He

wanted this sacrifice performed. Krsna said, “Use all the paraphernalia you have gathered for this sacrifice and prepare a sacrifice for the local *brahmanas* and Govardhana Hill. With the grains and ghee, prepare *dhal*, rice, *pakora*, and with the milk products prepare sweet rice, *sandesa*, sweetballs and *laddus*. Bring forth all the cows and clean them and decorate them. Call forth the *brahmanas* and have them chant Vedic hymns. Have the *gopis* dress luxuriantly and seat them in ox-driven carts. Then circumambulate Govardhana Hill. This festival, called *Annakuta*, which Krsna performed long ago, is still observed. In the temples of Vrndavana or outside of Vrndavana, huge quantities of food are prepared. They are offered to Krsna and then distributed to the whole population.

When everything was prepared, the devotees began circumambulating Govardhana Hill. Krsna then manifested a huge form on top of the Hill, and He began eating all the offerings. He called out “Aniyor! Aniyor!” (“Give Me more! Give Me more!”). This huge form of Krsna was manifested separately from Krsna Himself. He Himself bowed down before the form, and all the devotees followed Him. Thus He showed that this form is nondifferent than Govardhana Hill. This identity of Krsna as Govardhana is observed even today. Devotees in Krsna-consciousness collect rocks or even small pebbles and worship them at home just like they do the Deity in the temple. Krsna was very pleased with the *puja*, and so were all the residents of Vrndavana.

But when Indra saw that his sacrifice had been stopped, he became angry. He cursed Nanda Maharaja and Krsna (who was only seven years old). Indra vowed to punish the Vrajavasis. He called forth the Samvartaka clouds, which are used at the time of annihilation. He ordered them to go place and destroy the cows and people. He said, “These cowherdspeople have become too puffed up in their wealth and in their faith in Krsna, who is just a talkative boy who does not understand the cosmic order.” After some hesitancy the clouds went forward and poured down water incessantly on Vrndavana. The water fell like pillars. There were also chunks of ice, and it became excessively cold. The higher portions of the land became the same as the lower portions. The situation became very dangerous, especially for the animals. The cows came forward, keeping their calves under their bodies, and approached Govinda’s lotus feet. The people of Vrndavana also approached His lotus feet and prayed to Him to save them from this calamitous condition created by Indra. Krsna knew that the rains were sent by Indra, who had become mad in his pride. Krsna decided to save the residents of Vrndavana who were so dependent on Him and whom He so much loved. He said, “I will reduce Indra’s false prestige and show him that he is not independent in the universe.” Thinking in this way, Krsna lifted up Govardhana Hill on the pinkie of His left hand and held it aloft. He then addressed the residents, “My dear Vrajavasis, please

come under this umbrella I have created out of Govardhana Hill. Do not be afraid that it will fall from My hand. I think this is a suitable arrangement to keep you safe and dry.” The cowherdspeople trusted Krsna and came under the Hill with their carts, animals and valuables. They were astonished to see Krsna standing there holding the Hill so effortlessly. He continued to do this for seven days, and the people felt no discomfort and no need to eat or drink. When Indra saw what Krsna had done, he was dumbfounded. He called off the dangerous clouds and fled away. The rains stopped, and soon the waters went down and the sun came out. Krsna told the residents, “I think you can now come out from under the Hill.” The residents slowly left the Hill, and Krsna carefully placed it back where it had been. His intimate devotees then came forth and embraced Him and blessed Him. Thus Krsna became known as the Lifter of Govardhana Hill.

The next chapter in the *Krsna Book* is called “Wonderful Krsna.” The cowherdsmen come forward and demand to know the actual identity of Krsna. Previously they had dismissed all the miracles He had performed, thinking they were interventions by Lord Visnu because the little boy was so pious. But now they had actually seen Krsna standing before them holding up Govardhana Hill for seven days. Nanda Maharaja replied, “I can only tell you what Gargamuni told me at my child’s name-giving ceremony.

He said, “This boy will perform many miraculous activities. He is nondifferent than Visnu or Narayana in all respects.” When the cowherdsmen heard this, they became elated. They said, “Let us always be happy and take shelter with wonderful Krsna.”

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October 15, 2017

Question: Is it good enough to just have “nice” relationships with the neighbors, even though they might not even take *prasadam*? Is it lazy or “offensive” to not try to make a greater impact by giving them books whether they want them or not? Is the *ajnata-sukrti* principle real in casual encounters?

Answer: It is beneficial to just have nice relationships with the neighbors. It is not offensive if we refrain from giving them books whether they want them or not. Our situation is different than that of a book distributor/preacher, who is briefly approaching people and trying to convince them to take a book and give a donation. We are living permanently with our neighbors, and we want to get along with them by friendly and helpful exchanges, things like mutually mowing our lawns and keeping our properties clean. We’re mutually helping each other out, sometimes hiring a neighbor to paint a fence or accepting vegetables they

offer from their garden. The *ajnata-sukrti* principle means the nondevotee renders service to the devotee indirectly or accidentally and without knowing that it is a Krsna conscious exchange. Any favorable dealings are counted as devotional service. Krsna is pleased with a nondevotee if he renders service to a devotee, even without knowing that he's a devotee. These acts fructify and are beneficial to the nondevotee in his next life.

Question: Can you tell about your preaching to the group in the Santa Cruz mountains, shortly after you took *sannyasa*?

Answer: Myself as the only *sannyasi*, with a small group of *brahmacaris*, rented a house in Santa Cruz and advertised meetings in the *Bhagavad-gita*. We stayed for about a month, and one group in particular, three sets of boyfriends and girlfriends, and a single man, regularly attended our programs. They were all free-living hippies. They were attracted to the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* stories I gave in my lectures, and they liked the *kirtanas*. Over the weeks, we became friendly and intimate. They told us their life stories, and we told them about Prabhupada. They were not so keen about following rules and regulations but were enthusiastic in their newfound interest in Krsna consciousness. After a month we told them we were leaving, and we invited them to join us and ride down to the Los Angeles devotee community. We advised them to join the Los Angeles temple and told them they would enjoy the association of the devotees, the

rhythm of the activities there and the likelihood that they would meet Prabhupada in one of his frequent visits to Los Angeles. They all agreed to leave Santa Cruz and come with us to Los Angeles. They all succeeded in joining the temple and taking up service. They met Prabhupada and eventually got initiated. One of the girls dropped her boyfriend and got married to the great book distributor Vaisesika. I tried this program in other hippie communities in the United States, but I never met with such success as I did in Santa Cruz.

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At lunchtime one of us reads from the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. When the meal is finished, we stop reading and talk freely. The talk usually degenerates to *prajalpa*, or Sucandra tells a long story about his life. I do not enjoy these long loose talks. Baladeva suggested I could lead a talk from the *Krsna Book* or *rasika* pastimes stories. I am going to start it today. I will begin by telling a pastime and asking a question to Uttara. She only speaks Spanish, so her husband Sucandra will translate for me.

Once when Krsna was a small child, Mother Yasoda placed Him under a cart which was loaded with pots, pans and other paraphernalia. There was a demon residing within the cart. Krsna touched His foot to the wheel, and the whole cart collapsed, scattering the pots and pans and killing the demon. Krsna's cowherd friends witnessed it all. When the older

cowherdspeople came running to see what caused the noise, the boys told them exactly what had happened, how Krsna touched the wheel and it fell apart. But none of the cowherdspeople believed the version of the boys.

When Krsna was a little older, He was behaving naughty and Mother Yasoda tied Him up with ropes to a large wooden mortar. She placed Him between two big *arjuna* trees and left Him surrounded by His cowherd friends. Krsna crawled around, but the mortar became stuck between the two trees. He tugged at it, and the huge arjuna trees became uprooted and crashed down from the sky. Two beautiful men came out of the trees and made prayers to Krsna, who blessed them and allowed them to return to the heavenly planets. When the older cowherdspeople came running in fear of the great noise the trees made, the boys told them exactly what had happened. They were eyewitnesses to Krsna's activities, and they told how He pulled down the two trees. The cowherdspeople did not believe the boys. One or two men said, "He just might have done it," but the vast majority of the people disbelieved the boys.

After telling these pastimes, I will ask Uttara why the older cowherdspeople disbelieved the reports of the children even though they were eyewitnesses to the miracles. How did the older cowherdspeople think the miracles actually happened?

After that, I will direct a pastime and question to Baladeva. When Krsna

was seven years old, He lifted up the Govardhana Hill, and all the Vrajavasis gathered around Him and saw Him actually do it. They could not dismiss the fact that Krsna Himself was performing the miracle. After the rains stopped and Krsna allowed the residents to come out from under the Hill, He set the Hill down carefully just where it had been. The cowherd men then all came forward to Nanda Maharaja and demanded to know the actual identity of Krsna. He was a seven-year-old boy, but how could He lift Govardhana Hill and hold it on the pinkie of His left hand for seven days? They said, “Maybe He is a demigod, or perhaps He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

I will then ask Baladeva what Nanda Maharaja replied to the cowherd men about Krsna, and I will ask him how the cowherd men responded. I think this will elevate our lunchtime conversation.

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October 16, 2017

Question:

Can you comment on this poem?

Incredible Prabhupada

Prabhupada once said.

Prabhupada gave the example.

One time Prabhupada said.

On a morning walk,

once to a room full of guests in New York.

One time I went to see Prabhupada,

and once Prabhupada told a devotee.

Once he told a reporter.

Prabhupada says; he wrote.

I don't count how many times I say them,

but it is plenty. You can overdo it,

but when the examples come

just to the point,

it is nectar for all.

Thank God I can remember them.

I don't strive for them, but they come.

Just as birds start chirping at dawn,

these references come to your mind, in words.

A lady said, "I heard that Krsna consciousness

breaks up families. Is it true?"

Prabhupada said no, and he gestured

to half a dozen grhastha disciples in the room.

Answer: I think this is a sweet poem of remembrance of Prabhupada in conversation. We live by these reminiscences. They are *brahma-sabda*, absolute sound vibrations. They are Vedic truths, *sastra-pramana*. They bring us close to his wonderful personality. We can go on “forever” remembering what Prabhupada said in the time and context to make it complete. Sometimes he was stern, and sometimes he was soft. Often he was humorous. His audiences were large or small. He was always thinking about Krsna. If someone were talking about something else, Prabhupada would bring the topic around to Krsna and the *acaryas*, what they said and did. He quoted their songs, poems, and *sastric slokas*. The person who asked, “What would please you the most?” was a dedicated book distributor. He was fishing for an answer. He wanted Prabhupada to say, “Distributing my books pleases me the most.” But Prabhupada answered in the most inclusive, ultimate way—“If you love Krsna.”

Question: “If you ever get money, print books.” How did this manifest in Prabhupada’s expansion of the Movement? Did the temples (rented apartments, storefronts or houses) just burst to the seams before getting a bigger one, or was the thinking that, ‘You get a bigger place and then Krsna will fill it?’ How did Prabhupada direct the devotees (or not) on this delicate decision? What drove the devotees to performing so many austerities? Youth, idealism, real freedom from desperation, etc.? Was it a colorful way

to revolt against the status quo? When did “Them and Us”—the mentality that all the materialists are demons and all devotees are saints—set in? (No compassion)

Answer: There are many questions in this one “question.”

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura’s statement, “If you ever get money, print books,” was spoken on a walk around Radha-kunda. Some of his disciples were present. Prabhupada took the statement personally; it went deep into his heart. Prabhupada followed this instruction in his expansion of the Movement. Once the devotees learned the art of approaching people, giving them a book and asking for a donation, the book distribution expanded rapidly. Prabhupada asked the devotees to “double it” every year. In our tiny Boston storefront, we weren’t bursting to the seams with devotees, but when our lease ran out, we got a much bigger house and waited for Krsna to fill it—which He did.

The devotees were driven to perform austerities out of love for Prabhupada.

An attitude that all materialists were demons and devotees were saintly set in eventually. It did not come directly from Srila Prabhupada. Prabhupada had compassion for the nondevotees and wanted us to try to uplift them by teaching and giving them Krsna consciousness. He reminded us that we too were recently “drug-addicted hippies,” etc., and we should

not forget our previously fallen condition. We should extend our hands to the fallen and pick them up out of the material pool.

Question: The other day you saw yourself putting a garland on Prabhupada. Do you remember where you were and how you felt about this honor? Were you the most senior devotee there, or did you have to scramble to get it? What was the whole garland “*rasa*” among devotees? Did you drop out of the race? Did you ever have to make a garland and give it to Prabhupada?

Answer: I was occasionally given the honor to put a garland around Prabhupada because of my seniority—initiated in 1966. I never dropped out of the race. Even toward the end, I was occasionally given the honor. I felt deeply satisfied, and it stirred up love in me for him. I never made a garland and gave it to Prabhupada. The ladies made the garlands.

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October 18, 2017

Free Write

Lalita-devi is one of the chief *sakhis* of Srimati Radharani. She is very beautiful. She is fierce, and in her loyalty to Radharani, she reprimands Krsna, argues against Him and calls Him harsh names. Sometimes she urges Radharani not to make peace with Krsna when She is angry, and

sometimes she advises Radharani to make up with Krsna and not deny Him. Rupa Gosvami, in his inner identity, is Rupa-manjari. Rupa-manjari serves in the camp of Lalita-devi. We Gaudiya Vaisnavas are *rupanugas*, followers of Rupa Gosvami, so we serve under the protection of Lalita-devi .

When you inhale, you do so through the mouth; when you exhale, you do so through the nostrils. When you press one nostril and breathe out the other, you are practicing *pranayama* .

Women wear lipstick to attract men. It is very sensuous. When they kiss, some of the lipstick gets stuck on the mens' lips. *Brahmacarinis* do not wear lipstick or perfume Using mouthwash is a healthy practice for the gums, but it has a bitter aftertaste. You slosh it around your mouth, gargle it at the back of your throat and spit it out.

The war in the *Bhagavad-gita* was righteous and *dharmic*, fought for a religious cause. Krsna ordered Arjuna to fight against the Kurus, even though they were His relatives, and it was his holy duty to obey. . . . Today's wars are not fought for religious causes. Even if the participants belong to different religions, their motivation is sectarian and material. They are politically motivated by *asuric* politicians for unworthy, illusory causes.

Trump is one of the most unqualified presidents in the history of the U.S.A. Often I mention the topic of my mortality, but I don't take it seriously. Every night when Baladeva turns out the light and puts me to

bed, he says, “Good night, Guru Maharaja,” and I reply, “Good night, Baladeva.” At that time it passes through my mind whether I will live through to the following day. But I am confident that I will survive.

Prabhupada said, “Philosophy means to keep death in your front.” But I don’t do it. I am too cocky. I walk around like a person intoxicated, unaware of reality. I hope that I will get more philosophic, sober and serious when I get more obvious signs that my end is about to come.

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October 23, 2017

Free Write

Karma

To explain karma is too long and complicated for a free write. We come into this world with the karma or reaction through our past lives' activities. The activities we perform and accrue in this lifetime form our karma in the next life. Thus the chain of action and reaction continues. A devotee cuts the chain of repeated birth and death by engaging in devotional service. He reaches the stage of akarma, no more actions and reactions. He goes back to home, back to Godhead.

Pure devotees are different than *karmis*. Karmis work hard for fruitive reactions. They aspire for material goals, such as attaining the higher heavenly planets where life is thousands of times more happy than life on

earth. But the pious activity that earns one the right to reside on a heavenly planet, runs out, becomes exhausted and one has to return again to the material middle planets, where one has to go through birth, childhood, maturity, giving off bi-products, sustaining for a while and then dying again--up and down like on the Ferris wheel. The devotees don't work for fruitive gain. They act to please Krsna, nothing else.

When they are free of all ulterior motives except love of God, He welcomes them to His abode, where life is *sac-cid-ananda vigraha* with Radha and Krsna and Their innumerable intimate *sakhis* and *sakhas* and Their loving parents, elders and cows.

I don't meditate frequently on the pastimes, nature and qualities of Krsna. I don't make obeisances to Him and worship Him as He asks us to do in *Bhagavad-gita*. This does not bode well for my chances of going back home, back to Godhead immediately after this life is finished. I have had all the greatest opportunities in my life, being a disciple of Srila Prabhupada, chanting the maha-mantra, following the regulative principles of devotional service and thus avoiding the major sinful activities, but I don't take full advantage of my fortune.

Lord Caitanya

(What does the mind say right now?) As a little child He was very naughty and created trouble with the neighbors and at home with His

mother. Later He became a Sanskrit scholar and opened a local school (and later closed it). Then He became an ecstatic devotee of Krsna after He took initiation from Isvara Puri. He started the *Sankirtana* Movement in Navadvipa. When the student community criticized Him, He took *sannyasa* so they would give Him respect. After taking *sannyasa* He met with His Navadvipa devotees and His mother at the house of Advaita Acarya in Santipura. At the request of His mother, He made His *sannyasa* headquarters at Jagannatha Puri so He could be near enough to Navadvipa, and His mother could hear news of His activities. At Puri, He delivered the impersonalist scholar Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya. He later went on a tour of South India and converted everyone He met into a Vaisnava. He returned to Jagannatha Puri, and every year the devotees from Navadvipa would visit Him and stay for four months, observing the Ratha Yatra and other festivals. In the last twelve years of His life, He intensified His mood of feeling separation from Lord Krsna, just as Radharani had done. He stayed in the room known as the Gambhira and revealed His heart to two intimate associates, Svarupa Damodara and Ramananda Raya. He manifested extreme states of ecstasy and physical transformations that are not even mentioned in the scriptures. He would stay up all night, and His two associates would guide His ecstasies by singing songs and reading from select scriptures . . . (This is what my mind says right now.)

For over ten years, I painted prolifically with acrylics on canvas, especially while living in a cottage in Wicklow, Ireland. Now I have lost all inspiration to paint. I have invited a great artist to come and visit me. If I stay near him I may regain my inspiration and take up brushes and paint sticks again. I am feeling a little tired of doing the primitive mode "outsider art" on Krsna-centered things. But the spontaneous art teacher Michele Cassou advises one not to indulge in totally abstract work but dare to do figures. So what are my options? Maybe the great painter-sculptor Yasoda Dulal can guide me and give me new life.

Vaisnavas eat *prasadam* to their full satisfaction." When Krsna initiated the *Annakuta* festival at Govardhana Hill, the cowherdsmen asked Him what He wanted served. He said, "Take the paraphernalia you have already corrected and prepare rice, *dhal*, *pakor*s and *halavah*. From the milk products, prepare sweet rice, *rasagullas*, sweetballs and *laddus*. Rupa Gosvami says if one rejects material things that can be used in Krsna's service, his renunciation is incomplete. One should take the best things, offer them to Krsna, and eat His remnants as *prasadam*.

Sweet *kirtana* and *bhajana* sung by Srila Prabhupada, his disciple Madhava, my disciple Rama-Raya, are favorable sound vibrations. Car horns, nondevotional loudspeakers, songs by "beautiful" Bollywood actresses are all annoying noise.

Big billboards along the highway are a nuisance for the eyes. I once saw a billboard with the Hare Krsna mantra printed on it. If the powers that be were transcendental, we could have billboards filled with Krsna and Caitanya-*lila*, and the highways would be like the spiritual world.

Beezlebub is another name for Satan, the personification of evil and the enemy of God. Satan came before Jesus Christ and offered all the opulence of the world if Jesus would only bow down to him. Jesus said to him, “Get thee behind me, Satan!” In the Vedic literature, there are powerful Satanic demons like Ravana, who had ten heads and kidnapped Sita, and Hiranyakasipu, who was so powerful that he conquered the whole universe. But Lord Rama and Lord Krsna killed them both. We are tiny and vulnerable compared to these gigantic demons. But if we take shelter at Krsna’s lotus feet and say, “Get behind me, demon!” we will be protected from the *asura*, who is many times more powerful than one of us. Taking shelter at the lotus feet of Krsna gives one protection from all evil forces. Beezlebub is just a fig compared to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the conclusion of *Bhagavad-gita*, Krsna says, “Just surrender unto Me, and I will protect you from all sinful reactions. Do not be afraid.”

Nanda Maharaja tells his seven-year-old son Krsna that they need rain for raising grains, and without grains they cannot live. He says there is a necessity to worship the controller of the rains, King Indra. At that time,

Krsna was diplomatically talking like a *karma-mimamsa* atheist just to diplomatically avoid the sacrifice to Indra. But elsewhere Krsna says sacrifice to Visnu has to be performed. Without sacrifice to Visnu, the rains won't come automatically just by doing one's duties. There has to be *yajna* to Visnu. In this age of Kali, the only sacrifice that is possible and is recommended is *sankirtana-yajna*, the chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra. By congregational chanting of the holy names, there will be no drought but sufficient rainfall to grow grains.

Prabhupada gave an analogy about light bulbs. The bulbs have different voltage power according to their needs—forty, sixty, one hundred, one hundred fifty. Similarly, different individuals are invested with power from the Supreme Powerhouse according to their needs. The *jivas*, demigods, Lord Visnu expansions, have increasing power according to their needs. Krsna is the original, all-powerful source of light.

Kalachandji is the name of the powerful-appearing Krsna Deity installed by Prabhupada in the Dallas temple, along with pure white Radharani, who is delicate. Kalachandji means “black moon.” I was located in Dallas ISKCON for several years, and I became very attached to Kalachandji. Our worship standard was simple. He did not even have an elaborate *sringhasana*. When Tamala Krsna Goswami took over the Dallas temple, Kalachandji's worship standard increased by leaps and bounds. He received

many beautiful dresses and crowns, and the entire temple room underwent a vast improvement, decorated with *krsna-lila* paintings by the famous Indian artist Sharma. The Deity received an ornate throne from India. But I still have fond memories of the simple days in the beginning, when we came each morning at *mangala-arotika* and beheld the all-attractive, powerful Kalachandji.

Hundreds of years after Krsna's disappearance, it remained a deserted field, filled with peacocks, fluffy birds and roaming mongrel dogs. It was a peaceful, quiet place to come and sit and chant Hare Krsna on beads. Ramana-reti was translated into English as "enchanted sands," and it was filled with sparkling, soft sand. In the beginning of the 21st century, the field underwent a tremendous transformation of building development. Almost every foot of the sands became places of several-story residences. This was part of the overall radical building development, car traffic, and population increase of Vrndavana. Ramana-reti lost its charm and its essence of an idyllic pastime-place and playground for Krsna and the *gopas*. Two ancient trees, known as the Krsna-Balarama trees, supposedly existent since Krsna's appearance there, are still there, but they are surrounded by new buildings, including a nearby "Russian House" for the many devotee-pilgrims who come to Vrndavana from Russia.

According to the *Brahma-samhita* and other Vedic sources, the *brahmajyoti* is the effulgent rays emanating from the body of Sri Krsna, the original Personality of Godhead. The *brahmajyoti* rays light up the universe. The impersonalist yogis and speculators, who are not attracted to devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, aspire as their ultimate goal to give up their spiritual individuality and merge into the rays of the *brahmajyoti*. There they gain eternal life—although with the risk of falling back down into the material world—and they miss out on the superior experience of bliss in rendering devotional service to Krsna.

There are many hogs in Vrndavana. By human standards, they are a disgusting species. A large group of them will lie close together in the mud. They enjoy sex intercourse, but they have no discrimination whether one is a mother, a sister, or a daughter. Maharaja Rsabha tells His sons not to waste their lives like the stool-eaters, the hogs, but to practice *tapasya* in the human form of life, become purified and attain *brahma-sokhyam*, a life of eternal bliss. But the hogs are satisfied with their life. When Indra was cursed to become a hog, he soon became so attached to that way of life that when his sentence was up and Brahma called him back to the heavenly planets, Indra did not want to go and leave his pig family. Prabhupada says the hogs are happy, and that is why they are fatty. Stool actually contains many nutrients for their health. But the human being finds the hog so

obnoxious that he doesn't even want to touch him.

The associates of Visnu in Vaikuntha exactly resemble His form; they also have four arms. They worship Him with awe and reverence.

All the universes emanate from the inconceivably gigantic body of Maha-Visnu. They float in space like footballs. After one exhalation, Maha-Visnu withdraws all the universes back into His body with one inhalation. He is so great, and the universes by comparison are so small, that a universe is compared to the size of a tiny mustardseed in a big bag of many mustardseeds. This is the greatness of Maha-Visnu.

Caves are mentioned throughout Vedic literature. Powerful demons used to capture innocent royalty and chaste princesses and keep them imprisoned in caves, blocking the entrances with large stones. Lord Brahma kidnapped Krsna's cowherd friends, put them into mystic slumber, and hid them in a cave. Throughout history, solitary ascetics have stayed in caves and practiced penance and meditation. *Namacarya* Haridasa Thakura stayed in a cave and chanted 300,000 names of Krsna every day. For a while, a big snake also resided in the cave with Haridasa. Haridasa's admirers were afraid of the snake and kept away from visiting him. When Haridasa Thakura learned of this, he decided to move out from the cave, but the Supersoul in the heart of the snake informed it, and the snake immediately left the cave for good. In the time when Radha and Krsna lived

in Bhauma-Vrndavana, They used to have rendezvous in special caves on Govardhana Hill. The caves were made comfortable with flower beds and decorations on the wall. The conjugal Couple would meet there and have amorous pastimes. In the modern age, especially since the time of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, Vaisnavas no longer stay alone in caves meditating.

They come to populous cities, where they can not only save themselves by meditation but try to rescue all fallen souls by administering congregational chanting, *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita*, and *krsna-prasadam*. The Vaisnavas are *para-dukha-dukhi*, concerned with the welfare of others, and they do not stay in secluded places like caves.

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October 24, 2017

Free Write

In his pastime treatise, “Meeting in the Disguise of a Girl Doctor,” Visvanatha Cakravati Thakura tells a delightful tale. It begins with Jatila being very envious of Krsna’s dealings with Radharani. She decides that Radharani should be protected by being kept indoors at all times. She cannot even go and cook Krsna’s lunch at Nandagram. But she allows

Radharani to make some sweets at home and have them brought to Nandagram for Krsna.

All of the *gopis* and *gopis* give up their laughing and joking and feel completely lost, but Danistha has a secret plan that she whispers into the ears of Lalita and Radhika.

Later on in the evening-time, Visakha suddenly rushes before Jatila and loudly cries out, “Unseen by others, a snake has bitten Sri Radhika!” Jatila rushes into Radha’s quarters and beholds Her sprawled out on the floor, trembling and gasping for air. Jatila tells Kutila, her daughter, to go fetch the snakebite doctor. Radharani says that She feels as if Her body is burning alive, but if any male doctor were to set his hand on even one of Her toes, She will give up Her body.

Jatila and Kutila go to see Purnamasi for a solution. Purnamasi inquires of Gargi, the daughter of Gargamuni, who happens to be visiting, whether she has learned the snake mantras from her father. Gargi answers, “No, I haven’t learned them, but my little sister has.” Purnamasi asks more about the little sister. Gargi replies that, “Her name is Vidyavali, and even as we speak She is in my house visiting.” Jatila begs Gargi to bring her little sister Vadyavali to Yavat and save Radharani.

Just prior to this, Danistha and others had already dressed up Sri Krsna in the disguise of the young girl Vidyavali. Vidyavali consents to go and

leaves the house in the company of the others to walk on the path toward Yavat. On the way there, Vidyavali says to Jatila that snake poison is destroyed both by mantra and medicine. “The mantra is in My throat, and the medicine that I will administer is My chewed betel nuts that have been sanctified by the mantra.” Jatila agrees and says, “Radharani will be submissive to this.” Jatila escorts Vidyavali into Radharani’s room. Seeing Radharani’s body covered by Her *sari*, Vidyavali tells Jatila that She will have to remove Radharani’s clothes. Vidyavali will move Her hand slowly from the soles of Radharani’s feet right on top of Her body. They remove Her clothes, and Vidyavali’s hands move gradually from the divine lotus feet of Radharani up to Her breasts . . . and somehow or other they cannot go higher. Vidyavali repeatedly chants the mantras intensely and begins to vigorously massage Sri Radhika’s breasts. The She exclaims to Jatila, “There seems to be no way I can check the spread of this poison!” Then Vidyavali comes up with another plan. She tells everyone to go out of the room and remain there for forty-eight minutes. “Locking the door from the inside, I will chant the special snake mantra. This will bring the snake here and I will speak with him.” Everyone leaves and goes to another part of the house. Forty-eight minutes later, they return and wait outside of Radhika’s bedroom. Then Vidyavali calls to them from inside the room. “All of you please listen attentively to the conversation between the Snake and Me.” Sri

Krsna then makes His voice sound both like Vidyavali and the Snake. On inquiry, the Snake says that he has come from Mt. Kailasa on the order of Lord Siva. Siva's order is to go and bite Abhimanyu. Vidyavali asks the Snake, "What is the offense committed by Abhimanyu?" The Snake answers, "There is none, but his elderly mother Jatila has committed two grave offenses unto Durvasa Muni. By striking her son instead of Jatila, I will be able to burden her with extreme, miserable suffering." Vidyavali asks the Snake why he has bitten Abhimanyu's wife Radharani. The Snake answers, "Durvasa Muni's boon was 'May You live perpetually in chastity.' Jatila's offenses are, first, that she insinuated that Durvasa Muni's boon of chastity given to Radhika was ineffective. The second offense is that Jatila shows envy and malice towards Nanda-kumara, who is the all-in-all of Lord Siva's life." The Snake goes on to say further offenses committed by Jatila: "She has deliberately confined Srimati Radharani, preventing Her from going out to cook for Krsna." Because of these two great offenses, the Snake says he will take both her son and daughter-in-law. "May Jatila perpetually cry miserably here in Vraja along with her daughter Kutila. Hearing this, old Jatila bursts out grievously weeping in the other room. Jatila then addresses Vidyavali in the other room: "Please pacify the King of Snakes somehow or other. I promise that I will never, ever place any more obstacles before Radhika. I will personally see to it that She freely goes to

Nandagram every day just to cook Sri Krsna’s meals.” The Snake says to Jatila, “I want you to put your hand on the head of your son Abhimanyu and swear, ‘NOW I HAVE COMPLETE ABSOLUTE FAITH IN SRI RADHIKA.’” Jatila takes the oath. The Snake is satisfied and says that He will return to Mt. Kailasa. “But if Jatila ever again charges her Daughter-in-law with false accusations in relation to Sri Krsna, then I will come and furiously bite both Radhika and Abhimanyu.” Vidyavali then happily calls out to all the ladies and girls outside the room. She unlocks the door, and everyone enters and asks Radharani how She feels. Radharani says She feels no pain at all. Krsna—disguised as Vidyavali—becomes decorated by Radharani on Jatila’s order. Then Vidyavali says that She should return quickly home because it is late. Jatila replies, “Dear Vidyavali, why are You so hasty to return home so late at night? Won’t you be pleased to rest happily at my house? Please sleep in my Daughter-in-law’s quarters. This is my prayer submitted at Your feet.” Vidyavali accepts this offer and rests together with Sri Radhika upon Her own bed of flowers under the rooftop canopy.

Visvanatha Cakravarti concludes,

“In this way, Radha-Krsna, who are expert in relishing fun pastimes, manifest so many expansively surging waves of

artistic sports which just billow over the ocean of pure divine
amorous love.”

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I dreamt I was attending college
and it was the beginning of a new
semester. I peeked into the room
where the poetry class was scheduled
and saw my favorite professor.
She was elderly but dynamic and
had a passionate love for poetry.
When she saw me
she called me,
“Steve!” I was thrilled that she
remembered my name. I had taken other courses
with her and she liked my
essays and poems. I was
blissful when she gave me an “A.”
She gave me some money and told me
to get five Coca-colas.
I could not find that many, but

brought back what I could. I
sat with the other students
and we discussed our favorite
poets.

Then she began the class.
When I awoke, I had an
aspiration to write poems
again and thought of the
recently-published book, *A Collection of
Contemporary Vaisnavi Poetry*.

I could write like them.

I can do some
free writing, which is fun.

But I want to steer to Krsna
or it would be useless.

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John Endler read to me
from one of my books.

I stated I looked out
and saw all desert,

not even hills and sand,
just void. But I was
sure that Prabhupada would
come to me in wisps
of memory. And they began
to appear. He was seated
with his servant and he
told him what he wanted
for lunch: rice, *dhal*, *subji*
and a few *capatis*. And
a couple of *sandesas*.
The poem continues for
several pages, with random
memories of Prabhupada. John
loved the fact that
Prabhupada came to me and
I had such confidence
in the wisps of memory.
He said it reminded
him of the opening
line to my poems

unto the Deities:

“Radha-Govinda reciprocate with me.”

I want to return

to that confidence

and matter-of-fact realization.

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I have a confession to make. In *japa* I chant silently
in the mind, using a metal clicker.

My head is very sensitive.

If I chant vocally, I am very
likely to provoke a headache.

It has happened many times. As for
not using beads, I have trouble
coordinating my fingers. I start going
in one direction and without
finishing the round, I find myself
going in the other direction.

Or I get tangled up in knots.

I know it's unorthodox but

I find the clicker more efficient.

(Visvambhara Goswami advised me to

glue a Tulasi bead onto the clicker so I
 would be constantly touching sacred
 Tulasi instead of metal.) As for
 chanting in the mind, I have learned
 to do it attentively and with
 devotion. Some references even
 say it is an advanced method.

Namacarya Haridasa Thakura chanted one third
 of his three hundred thousand names silently.

So I am not proud of myself.

I am basically working with
 handicaps of headaches
 and a discoordinated hand. I'm making the best
 use of the bad bargain
 and I love my *japa* session.

I have a long way to go
 to improve.

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I was in a bar with a girl so I must
 have been 18. I told her of my secret love:
 Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel*.

She said, “Oh, he’s self-indulgent,”
and that hurt me to the core.

He was too precious to defend, and she
was more sophisticated than I.

I said, “J.D. Salinger.” She
was lukewarm to him. I felt
like hiding under the table.

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Last night I dreamt I was
carrying a toddler nephew
in baby diapers. We were
outside and his Aunt was there.

We got separated on
the elevator and the Aunt panicked.

I went by myself to a cranky secretary
at her desk and she said
rudely,

“Oh, we have a lot of
angels like him buried in the
basement cemetery here.” The Aunt showed
up and she was distraught. I

saw a painting by Marc Chagall
and I wanted to buy it for my
nephew. I opened my wallet
and it was filled with odd-shaped
unauthorized currency. What
has all this to
do with Krsna? The angels!
He has angels in His domain, and they
are in goodness, and some are
transcendental. There were forces
against me in the girl in the bar
and in the secretary in
the dream and in my inability
to purchase a reproduction of
an angel by Chagall. It was an unfriendly
world, unlike the realm
of Krsna.
O Hare, O Krsna
please engage me in Your service.

November 13, 2017

Dream

I wanted to get home as soon as possible from college so that I could have hours for writing. I planned to rent a small plane. The bell went off indicating that school was out. I ran outside. I saw a small Piper Cub, but someone already had use of it. I realized I should have rented ahead of time, but then I found out that the cost was \$27.00, which was more than I had. I looked for a bus but there was none. I grew greatly frustrated. Girls my age were around, and I was incredibly shy and intimidated by them. In response, they were resentful and mocked me. The dream ended in utter frustration, I was so anxious to get writing time. But come to think of it, I had no idea of what I would write about once I got home.

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Let's Call the Whole Thing Off

“You say, ‘Potatoes’
and I say, ‘Potatoes,’
You say, ‘Tomatoes’
and I say, ‘Tomatoes,’
‘Potatoes,’
‘Potatoes,’
‘Tomatoes,’

‘Tomatoes,’

Let’s call the whole thing off!

“But Oh! If we call the whole thing off

then we would have to part,

and Oh! If we had to part,

it would break my heart!

“So you say ‘Potatoes’ and I’ll say ‘Potatoes,’

You say, ‘Tomatoes’ and I’ll say, ‘Tomatoes,’

‘Potatoes,’

‘Potatoes,’

‘Tomatoes,’

‘Tomatoes,’

Let’s call the calling-off off!”

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**(“Prayers Proclaiming 108 Names of the Queen of Vrndavana
and bearing the title**

‘The Sacrificial Offering of the Nectar of Pure Love’”)

Verse 1

Understanding that grief-stricken Radha

had renounced the jealous anger in Her heart,
intelligent Tungavidya
spoke to Her the following words.

Verse 2

“O Beautiful One, give up this jealous anger.
Calmly hear my words, which were formerly spoken
to Kandarpa-sundari, who was also anguished in heart.”

Verses 3-4

“Friend, these Names of Yours
were taught by Purnamasi to Kandarpa-sundari, who desired
to attain Your friendship. Vrndadevi,
aware of all this, wrote down these Names
in red *sindura* ink
and gave the writing to Your life-friend Krsna.
When He is anguished by not
being able to see You,
He chants these Names and becomes pacified.”

Verse 5

- “1. Radha is the empress of Krsna’s forest.
2. The *madhavi* flower blossoming in the Krsna-springtime,
3. The first of Govinda’s beloveds,
4. The Queen of Vrndavana
5. She whose fame is a crown of the universes
6. The presiding Deity of the month of Karttika,

7. Dear friend of Lord Damodara,
8. His greatest worshiper,
9. The daughter of King Vrsabhanu

These lines were written by Sri Rupa Gosvami, who loves to praise Srimati Radharani, the lover of Krsna. In Sri Rupa's eternal spiritual form, he is known as Rupa-manjari, the *gopi-manjari* who is the intimate servant of Srimati Radharani. Rupa Manjari is so pure in her love for Radha that she is allowed to enter the Govardhana cave even when Radha and Krsna are engaged in amorous sports.

Srila Narottama dasa Thakura writes in his poem *Prarthana*:

- 1) The lotus feet of Sri Rupa-manjari are my treasure, my devotional service and my object of worship.
- 2) They give my life meaning, and they are the life of my life.
- 3) They are the perfection of *rasa*, and they are the perfection worthy of attainment. They are the very law of the Vedic scriptures for me.
- 4) They are the meaning of all my fasts and penances, and my silent utterings of my mantras.

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The Catcher in the Rye

Holden Caulfield, sweet, irreverent sixteen-year-old of rich parents, flunked out of three prep schools. The audio book I had was abridged. They left out the scene where he rented a room in a cheap hotel. The elevator man asked him if he would like a prostitute. He agrees, but when she comes to his room he has no sex desire. He says he can't make it with a woman unless he really likes her. He decides to sneak into his parents' apartment and wake up his kid sister Phoebe and talk to her without waking up his parents. He does so, but Phoebe says, "Daddy will kill you" for flunking out of prep school. Holden tells her it was a terrible school; it was full of phonies. He hates phonies. He leaves the apartment but arranges to meet her the next day when she gets out of school. At first she won't talk to him, but then he convinces her to go for a walk with him in Central Park and says he promises he will go home the next day. He invites her to take rides on the merry-go-round, and he sits and watches her from a bench. It starts to rain and he gets wet, but he is suddenly very happy watching Phoebe go round on the carousel. It's probably the best part of the book . . . It's one of my favorite books, along with Salinger's *Seymour: An Introduction*. I wrote about *The Catcher in*

the Rye in *My Search Through Books*. Satyaraja read my book and said he was shocked that I didn't write about Salinger's story *Franny and Zooey*. Franny takes to chanting the Jesus Prayer nonstop and becomes very aloof to her family members. The Jesus Prayer is similar to constantly chanting Hare Krsna *japa*, and *japa* is even mentioned in the story. So Satyaraja expected me to write about *Franny and Zooey*. But the point is I hadn't read *Franny and Zooey* before I became a devotee, and so it wasn't a part of my true story of *My Search Through Books*.

In *Franny and Zooey*, her brother convinces her that her vocation is to be an actor, which she is devoted to and very talented at, and that will be her way of serving Jesus. So he convinces her to stop the constant silent chanting of the Jesus Prayer and to serve Jesus through her service of acting.

Seymour: An Introduction is written in the first person by a college instructor. He writes about Seymour, his deceased kid brother. He says that Seymour was a natural Zen genius, a truly self-realized soul. The anecdotes about Seymour are very touching, and the autobiography of the teacher has a lot of heart in it. I liked *Seymour: An Introduction* very much.

I'm reading Jack Kerouac's *Desolation Angels*. I finished Part One. Part One is him living alone in a shack high on a mountaintop in the Northwest, where he signed on for three months as a lookout for forest fires. He sometimes writes that he hates the solitude up there. But at other times he rhapsodizes about it. In Part One there's absolutely no liquor, no women and no rowdy buddies. He's just alone with his mind and the surrounding sky and the forest. He writes descriptively of the full moon, describes all the features of its face. He tells of how he "murdered" a mouse. The little rodent looked up at him pleadingly, but he hit it on the head and killed it. He almost killed a second one but then let it go, and a rat got it later. He really feels bad about killing the mouse and writes about it for pages. He feels he's lost his wings, his angelic aura, and that he's become a murderer and will have to pay for it. He says he's never done anything like that before, and he doesn't do it again. He doesn't write about seeing rats except to say he hears them scratching on the roof. One day he finds bear turds near his garbage can outside. The bear found a can of cream and punctured it with his big tooth, but he couldn't get at it to drink it. Jack becomes wary of the bear.

He talks in Buddhist terms about the "Golden Eternity" and the Void. Everything is void. But he also writes about God, and in one place states his love for God. It's a hodge-podge mixture of spiritual views, but at least

there's a lot of spirituality in his meditations. He quotes the ancient Chinese poet Han Shan, who wrote the collection *Cold Mountain*, and he inserts quite a few haikus of his own. He talks about the food he's preparing from the canned goods they've left him. Apparently he's got enough to eat, but it's nothing fancy like in civilization. He sometimes daydreams of eating better food. The Buddhistic/God-conscious meditations are nice, and it's good to read Kerouac without a lot of drinking of liquor and running after women. I've finished Part One, and he's back in the United States, hitchhiking in Oregon bound for San Francisco—and his “desolation” friends.

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From Rupa Gosvami's *Stava-mala*:

Verse 7

10. Radharani is expert in worshipping the sun god,
11. She is the daughter of King Vrsabhanu,
12. The dear granddaughter of Mukhara,
13. She who brings forth the fame of Kirtida,

Verse 8

14. The *makhari* fish in the ocean
of pure love for Krsna,
15. She who Krsna's mother loves

as her own daughter,

16. The life and soul of Her *gopi* friends

17. She who Lalita considers more dear than life,

Verse 9

18. Visakha's everything,

19. Flooded with the nectar of compassion,

20. The object of Purnamasi's great love

21. Pleased with Subala

Verse 10

22. The Queen of Vrndavana's King

23. She who enjoys pastimes

in Vrndavana Forest,

24. Famous as Visakha's friend,

25. She who is made playful by Lalita's love

Verse 11

26. Eternally young,

27. She who enjoys transcendental pastimes

with Vraja's Prince,

28. Who expanded to become a Gandharvika

(Candrakanthi) to teach

others how to love Lord Govinda,

Verse 12

29. She who observes a festival of dancing
to glorify Lord Krsna on the sacred Prabhodhati night
30. Who became the Gandharvika Candrakanthi,
31. Who became the purifier
of all the Gandharvas,

Verse 13

32. She whose birth decorates the noble dynasty
of King Vrsabhanu,
33. Who bathes in the art of graceful
dancing,
34. The original cause of the *rasa* dance.

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These are some of the qualities of Srimati Radharani as given by Srila Rupa Gosvami. He is Radharani's *gopi-manjari* known as Sri Rupa-manjari.

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November 25

Free Write

I dreamt that I was fraternizing with outstanding devotees from different ISKCON temples. I was at New Vrndavana, where Paramananda was the leader. He had many, many devotees there. There were many visitors, and I was with them, waiting for the bus to take us away. We saw how New Vrndavana operated, and it was excellent. Everyone was devoted and hardworking, men and women. Some of the guest devotees were jealous of Paramananda and the New Vrndavana devotees criticized them for being unorthodox. The New Vrndavana devotees went right ahead and did things their way. They were concentrating on making their *gurukula* first class by giving lots of attention to the children. Anyone who was fair-minded had to give them credit for fine work. Then I saw the Baltimore temple, which was a small temple but was run very first class under the inspired and dedicated leadership of Mahakrama. He was content to stay in charge of a small temple and give it all his energies. He gave many interviews to each of the devotees and took care of their needs and counseled them. He liked the New Vrndavana model but was satisfied to do it on a small scale--not seeking big-time fame for himself or climbing on the social institutional ladder--just taking care of his small temple and the devotees in it. I saw other examples of outstanding personalities who were doing active excellent service in their *prabhu-datta-desa*. Then I started dancing in happiness, thinking of what I would do for my devotional

service. I would write straight autobiographical. I wouldn't put any fictional edge on it but would write just who I am and the things I did and the people I saw and my thoughts and adventures. I was very happy to have this self-discovery of mine. I did not need to have a more outgoing service which might be more noticeable and attractive in the Society. But on the other hand, it could be admired as a very honest contribution, my autobiographical writings. I think my attitude in this dream about my service of writing autobiography might have been influenced by reading Jack Kerouac's *The Desolation Angels*. But mine was not an imitation of his adventures. In the "beat generation," it was my own style, my own life, and I was enthusiastic to do it this way.

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November 26

Free Write

I went into the bank and showed the confidential clerk my papers. He accepted them without any suspicion. I was so advanced in the process that this was just a last stage, and so he passed me automatically. I had already gone through years of scrutiny and waiting. I was having my legal name changed to Lizst Blossom from Stephen Guarino. He made his signatures on a few places on the piece of paper and then stamped it several times and then produced a plastic card for me with a recent photo and my new name,

Lizst Blossom. He welcomed me to the United States of America with a cordial smile. I knew there was still many difficulties ahead to guarantee that I would think of Krsna at the time of death, but this was a crucial stage in my favor. I looked at the bottom of the plastic card he gave me, and it had, typed in secret code, “Lizst Blossom is code name for Sudama Dasa, the cowherd friend of Krsna.” My hairs stood on end when I read this! I was being taken into the confidential eternal service of Krsna, the Supreme Controller and dearest friend of all living beings. I could hardly contain my joy. The clerk also went beyond businesslike formality and gave me a hug. He gave me a “free pass” for lunch at Govinda’s Restaurant around the corner. I went there immediately and helped myself, buffet-style, to a wonderful lunch. It was pure vegetarian and already offered to Gaura-Nitai. I found a little private table to sit down at, said the prayers for honoring prasadam and began to honor it. It was plain wet *kichari* and was delicious. It dawned on me that my chances had markedly improved for entering the spiritual world at the end of my body, and that would be only in a few years from now. At that moment, some devotees known casually to me came by. There was not enough room for them to join me at my little table, but we exchanged friendly words. I did not tell them about my recent receipt of a private code name, Sudama Dasa. I thought it was better to keep it confidential. They were all sincerely friendly and went off and sat at similar

small tables and ordered dishes of prasadam. I promised to meet them at the scheduled *kirtana* upstairs in the Bhakti Center, after we had all eaten. We would need some time to eat, rest, and digest. But I looked forward to the *kirtana*. Before eating, I took out my new identity card and looked at it with wonder.

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I've been stuck attempting to keep a flow of free writing. The reason is I haven't been doing it in the pure way--"Keep the hands moving"--"Refrain from thinking"--etc. I will try better.

Two devotees I know are reading the Eleventh and Twelfth Cantos of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. When I heard it I attempted it, but I couldn't connect with the reading. We have a tendency to shy away from these cantos because they weren't written by Srila Prabhupada. But they're actually wonderful. I have read them a couple of times. But just now I couldn't find the key. I'm enjoying reading the 20th-century poet Bernadette Mayer, but she is not Krsna-conscious, so I cannot use her in the Journal. But she is very talented, open, accessible, original, and so I can learn from her and dovetail it in *bhakti* prosody.

Hrdayananda Gosvami writes that the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is the greatest literature in the world. He is right. I have my favorite sections. Some parts are too technical for my taste. I like the pastimes of the devotees

and Krsna best. Hrdayananda humbly says that *Srimad-Bhagavatam* is Prabhupada's opus, that he is his faithful servant. A free writer tells his truth. For devotees, that means writing about the Absolute Truth. In Srila Rupa Gosvami's *Namastakam*, he declares that even when one chants the holy name inattentively, with offenses, chanting the Names but intending something else, doing it in jest, doing it without love, etc.--it is still effective and beneficial. The holy name is so powerful that it overcomes our inadequate performance. Just chant with the tongue and the lips: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare. All the Vedic truth is contained in the *maha-mantra*. Radha and Krsna are pleased when we utter Their Names. We gain more advancement by this sacrifice in *sankirtana* than by any other method. It is the only *yajna* possible for persons in the age of Kali, the age of quarrel and hypocrisy. I write books about *hari-nama* and pray to the holy names to purify me and deliver me to the stage of pure chanting. My chanting is still flawed, but I go on performing the quota of minimum sixteen rounds daily; I am a *vaidhi-bhakti* practitioner, chanting without spontaneous love but following the rules and regulations given by my spiritual master.

Anuradha and Visakha went for a neighborhood walk. Anuradha praised the quiet and peacefulness of the area and how the houses were spread out with ample yards, and there were no fences or walls. But Visakha said, "Yet

if you take one step into their yard, they can--bang!--shoot you with a gun." I acknowledged this contradictory nature of American life. The two ladies had a peaceful one-hour walk. They came back enlivened. Every day during breakfast and lunch, one of them reads aloud from the *Bhagavatam*. They say they are getting more reading done this way than at home. Again and again the *Bhagavatam* repeats about the *purusa-avatars*, creation, maintenance, and annihilation. It is repetitious. But if you listen with submission and attention, it is not boring but instructive. My favorite sections are episodes about great devotees, such as the chapters about Markandeya Rsi in the Eleventh Canto. Best of all is the Tenth Canto, which tells the life of Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, which Prabhupada has exquisitely rendered in his book *Krsna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*. The *Krsna Book* is filled with colored illustrations by devotees and is written in a storytelling way based on the actual verses of the Tenth Canto chapters. Ramila devi dasi told me her favorite book by Prabhupada was *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. I tended to agree with her. It is so emphatically, undeniably Krsna conscious, spoken directly by the Supreme Lord. I tended to agree with her, but then I thought of the *Krsna Book* and couldn't decide which was my favorite. One of those two. The Free Write Club of the Earth speeds on an axis in inner space. I ride on a chariot pulled by dappled horses. The writer is a petty servant of the thoughts that race

through his mind. Is it possible? To hold onto the reins while all the "voices" speak?

The Christian Lenten season has begun. John, the Baptist minister, is preparing a series of sermons with references from the Bible alongside quotes from *From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About*, and direct translations of songs from Bhaktivinode Thakura's *Saranagati*. John said that lent is usually presented in the church in a "down" mood. But while Bhaktivinode Thakura begins with songs of lamentation, he rises to praises of the Lord's mercy.

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I woke up from my post-lunch nap, came to my chair, and turned on the light. I had been having a strange dream. I was traveling with my mother and father, and my mother had become very ill. They phoned to tell me that they had gone back to Brooklyn to see the doctor. They had acquired a gift horse for me, and I was to go to New Vrndavana to pick him up. I found it hard to believe, in terms of dream experience, that my mother and father could suddenly disappear. I wasn't too unhappy because I liked the devotees at New Vrndavana. I went there and a husband-and-wife devotee couple had hooked up a large horse on a trailer. He smiled and indicated he was mine. I was puzzled and went up to them. I told them I didn't know how to handle a horse—could they teach me how?

In the light of the big lamp, I saw Radha-Govinda in *darsana*. They were pleasing to behold. Their Tappan Vrndavana outfits were beautiful (yellow with hand-painted flowers) and they fit Them well.

Mayer is difficult to comprehend, but parts of it I understand. I go on reading. It's a long poem, and it's not finished. I closed the book. I hear raindrops falling on the roof. I have chanted sixteen rounds today, and that is the most important thing. In *Namastakam*, Rupa Gosvami writes that even if your chanting is faulty or in jest, it will be beneficial. Prabhupada writes (in the purport to *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.6.33):

“It is a natural psychology in every individual case that a person likes to hear and enjoy his personal glories enumerated by others. That is a natural instinct, and the Lord, being also an individual personality like others, is not an exception to this psychology, because psychological characteristics of the individual souls are but reflections of the same psychology in the Absolute Lord. The only difference is that the Lord is the greatest personality of all, and absolute in all His affairs. If, therefore, the Lord is attracted by the pure devotees' chanting of His glories, there is nothing astonishing. Since He's absolute, He can appear Himself in the picture of His glorification, the two things being identical. Srila Narada chants the glorification

of the Lord not for his personal benefit, but because the glorifications are identical with the Lord. Narada penetrates into the presence of the Lord by the transcendental chanting.”

I am sorry to say that my chanting is not qualitatively pure like Srila Narada’s. I chant without pure devotion. But I take solace in Rupa Goswami’s statement that any kind of chanting is absolutely good for the chanter. And here is the statement by Prabhupada that Krsna likes to hear His Name chanted. Of course, Prabhupada refers to the chanting of the pure devotee. But the Lord is pleased by any chanting, isn’t He?

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December 7

Dream

I dreamt that a baseball team of Hare Krsna devotees was playing in the World Series against the New York Yankees. It was the seventh game and the last inning being played at the Hare Krsna Stadium. Suddenly, the Hare Krsna team moved a little shack from the first base side to the third base side, closer to home plate. The Krsnas had a man on third base, but they had the weak part of their lineup at bat. Their team had strong hitters like Bhavananda and Brahmananda, but the “weak sisters,” the section from Baltimore, was at bat. I was the senior devotee of the Baltimore devotees. At

bat was a fifteen-year-old girl. She managed to put wood on the ball and hit a little blooper that no one could reach. Then the shack door opened, and the player on third base made a short dash to home plate and slid safely home. The Hare Krsnas had scored the winning run and won the World Series! Pandemonium broke loose. Hundreds of flash cameras went off, capturing the action of the boy sliding safe into home plate and the girl hitting the ball out of the infield. It was late at night, and we all rushed off to the showers and to bed. Early the next morning, I was in euphoria. I put on my baseball uniform. I heard that the manager of our team, Paramananda Prabhu, wanted to see me. I ecstatically waited for him, expecting him to congratulate us on our victory, and in particular on the “weak sisters” winning the game.

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December 15, 2017

Dream

I had a dream about Prabhupada. All the devotees were down in a valley and he was up on a hilltop. He was ill. But then the devotees all became excited. We heard he was coming down to the valley. He came down and we all gathered around him. He had long white hair, and some of it was falling out. He was in a lighthearted mood. He was doing lighthearted avant-garde movie acting, some of it in mime, and all the devotees were convulsing in laughter. He turned to me and saw me. He gave me a big smile and an embrace. He said, “You made this black hoodie sweatshirt for me years ago.” He showed a video of his activities. We didn’t know if they were long ago or just recently . . . He said his time was long over for doing that anymore. He led a *kirtana* and everyone joined. He then spoke. He turned in my direction and recognized me. He gave me a big smile and embraced me. He said, “You are wearing this black hoodie sweatshirt that I’m wearing now.” It was a wonderful occasion. We went outside and started to dance.

Although there were some odd elements in the dream such as Prabhupada’s long white hair and his joking, I count it as a genuine Prabhupada dream. His essence was authentic. His warm transcendental smile was just like in the photographs of Prabhupada, and his recognizing me and embracing me touched my heart.

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December 29, 2017

Questions and Answers

Question: When you say Deity *darsana* (or for that matter, *japa*) are “intense,” what does that mean to you, and how does one develop that intensity?

Answer: The repetition of the Names, the constant gazing at the transcendental forms, is intense. It is a physical and spiritual act. One keeps up the intensity out of devotion and determination. At first it is done in the mood of *vaidhi-bhakti*, following of the rules and regulations, and later it becomes spontaneous. But always, steady *bhajana* is done intensely. Practice makes perfect. Success comes to the sincere practitioner.

Question: I have been getting migraine headaches every day from October up through December. Starting at the beginning of December, my doctor put me on a prescription of Prednisone taper. My external activities are reduced to nil. If I read or write or listen to music, I feel fragile and eventually get a headache and have to take medicine and completely lie back and rest. How do I occupy my mind? Can I shut it off somehow?

Answer: It is impossible to stop the mind’s activities. I try to remain calm and to let the mind “chill.” If possible I sleep, otherwise I let my mind rest and don’t occupy it with controversial, agitating thoughts. I become as quiet as possible. This usually reduces headaches, along with medicine. But external activity is not possible.

Question: Bhakti-marga Maharaja, the GBC secretary for Cuba, wrote me and asked if my disciple Yadunandana Maharaja could perform initiations in Cuba.

Answer: I referred to Prabhupada's policy that he did not allow his disciples to initiate until he passed away. I said that I would waive that policy if Yadunandana Maharaja wanted to initiate in Cuba and Bhakti-marga Maharaja wanted him to do it. But Yadunandana Maharaja could not divert his main attention away from New Vraja Mandala in Spain, where he is temple president. He knows well how much they need his presence there. A devotee has to follow priorities. For example, I'm following priorities for my health limitation. I've had daily migraine headaches from October to December. At the beginning of December my doctor put me on a prescription for prednisone taper. I am following Prabhupada's regimen for devotees with health issues: "First health; then chanting; then doing service; then reading, in that order." Yadunandana Maharaja's first priority is tending to his duties at New Vraja Mandala. Anything he does in Cuba has to come after that, and be rationed. I have full faith in Yadunandana Maharaja; he is very dear to me and is qualified. In general, I don't like disciples to initiate their own disciples.

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December 30, 2017

Questions and Answers for Srila Prabhupada

Question: After this life, will I go home, back to Godhead?

Question: After this life, will I earn the right to join Srila Prabhupada to render eternal service wherever he is?

Question: What can I do before I die to avoid returning to the cycle of birth and death?

Question: Will I ever get past the clearing stage of chanting?

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Free Write

“Of all the aquatics, the shark is one of the biggest and is certainly the most dangerous to man. Thus, the shark represents Krsna.”

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J-L d.d. writes me a nice homage every year. Several months ago, her ex-husband, whom she stopped living with six years ago, died in a motorbike accident along with his brother. She was still friendly with him, but she was getting over the loss. She considers herself a strong woman. She loves to distribute *krsna-prasadam* in the neighborhoods. She was doing it in cooperation with a devotee named B. dasa, but he moved to the USA and

now she does it alone. She recently distributed 200 boxes of *krsna-prasadam*. She chants sixteen rounds. She lives too far away from the temple to attend daily services.

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My disciples, Baladeva and his wife Krsna-dasi from Trinidad, already have green cards and are in the country. Saci-suta has bought them a house, and they plan to stay here permanently and assist Baladeva Vidyabhusana in duties in our *ashrama*. Their daughter Rasesvari has been in the U.S. in Houston, Texas for several years attending the university there. Her brother has also entered on a student visa and is planning to apply for entrance to Rochester Institute of Technology, which has the exact career course he wants to follow. Although Rochester is very cold in climate for a Caribbean boy, the academic situation is ideal, open to foreigners, and he and his sister will go to Rochester tomorrow to apply.

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January 1, 2018

Free Write

There is a jazz group from Russia who features a trumpeter and a black American saxist. They play one upbeat tune, "Escape from Gorky Park." It is exciting, with revolutionary tones, as in escaping from the Communistic

regime. You imagine them running away from the police and at the end actually making a safe getaway. Free jazz.

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1. Celestial weapons—They are not empowered by mechanical means but by subtle mantras.

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2. Lord Indra—He bears the *vajra*, the club that can smash demons to death and break up mountains.

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3. Visnu carries a club in one of His four hands. He kills the demons with it.

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4. The sun planet is the most brilliant planet in the material world. It bears light for all the other planets, including the stars.

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5. The Sudarsana Cakra is Lord Visnu's personal weapon. It has many sharp spokes. He killed Sisupala and other demons with His Sudarsana Cakra, which moves very swiftly.

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6. Sita's father Janaki had a gigantic bow which the competitors in her marriage ceremony had to break. But none of them could even pick it up.

Rama came, quickly strung it up and broke it in two. Thus He won the hand of Sita.

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7. Lord Rama, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, had to build a bridge by floating stones and transporting His army to reach the island of Lanka. But Hanuman was able to jump to Lanka in his own body without a bridge or army.

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8. When building the bridge, Rama was able to defy the law of gravity by floating gigantic stones. The stones were carried by huge monkeys. A little spider tried to help Rama, but the gigantic monkeys chased him away. Rama told the monkeys, “Leave the spider alone. He is doing as much with his sincerity as you big monkeys are with your physical strength.

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9. Indra killed the demon Dantavakra by cutting off his head with his thunderbolt. Dantavakra was actually a better devotee than Indra because Dantavakra only wanted to go back to Godhead, whereas Indra wanted to gain the rule of the heavenly planets. Dantavakra’s neck was so strong that it took Indra a year to decapitate him.

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10. *The Very Best of Dizzy Gillespie* starts off with the bassist striking hard

opening chords to “Night in Tunisia.” Then Dizzy gets into high bebop trumpet and they “really get into somethin.” (J. Hendricks of Lambert, Hendricks & Ross.)

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11. Yo-yos are fun, letting them hang down at the bottom and spin. But when you can concentrate on *japa*, that is a higher taste. One who understands that Krsna is nondifferent than His Name is at the highest stage.

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January 3, 2018

Free Write

Lord Caitanya and Srila Prabhupada recommend constant chanting of the Hare Krsna mantra. *Sankirtana yajna* is the only sacrifice possible in the Age of Kali, which is filled with vices. *Harer nama, harer nama, harer namaiva kevalam/ kalau nasty eva nasty eva nasty eva gatir anyatha.*

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I mistakenly called nineteen-year-old Dhanvantari “Gautama.” His father and sister had a laugh over it. I will show him the picture I have of Dhanvantari on my wall. I put Him there when I was ill and prayed to Him for protection. He is the *avatara* of Visnu who brought the Ayur-vedic

medicine from the ocean of milk. The demons snatched the chalice from Him, intending to use it for themselves and cheat the devotees. But the beautiful woman Mohini-Murti appeared, bewildered the demons and made them submissive. She had the demons and devotees sit in two rows and agree to how She would distribute the nectar. She gave it to the devotees to drink, cheating the demons.

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January 7, 2018

Free Write

Sankirtana dasa has been preparing a pizza for our group (offered to Gaura-Nitai), starting with the crust with great care, since early in the morning. He has been trained personally how to do it by Gunagrahi Maharaja, who is now residing in the hospice building in Vrndavana. We understand the devotees sing nightly to Maharaja in his room. We would like to send him a short *kirtana* from the devotees in Stuyvesant Falls, New York, under the direction of Satsvarupa dasa Goswami. Meanwhile, Rasesvari baked two pecan pies and offered them to Gaura-Nitai.

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January 15, 2018

Free Write

Free writing is a fun way to go. You write whatever comes to your mind. Another variation of this is “directed free writing,” where you choose a subject but then you just write whatever is on your mind about the subject without any particular order or organization.

Say I have chosen my subject as Ratha-yatra. Malati devi dasi stole a small *murti* of Jagannatha from a store in San Francisco and brought it to Prabhupada. When he saw it, he bowed down and said, “He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” He asked her if there were any other Deities, and she brought Subhadra and Balarama. He made a small sketch of a truck and drew the Deities on it, and instructed them on how they could hold a Ratha-yatra procession. When Prabhupada first saw the Deities and instructed the devotees, he was too ill to attend the procession. But the devotees held it under his direction, and after the procession they brought the truck out to where he was staying in a cabin at Stinson Beach. In subsequent years, Ratha-yatra became bigger and more organized.

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January 16, 2018

Free Write

The Vedic planetarium. We trust in Sadaputa (Richard Thompson), who outdid the mechanistic scientists by knowing all that they knew but

submitted to *brahma-sabda* for things we cannot understand by hearing from the faulty imperfect senses but from beyond that—the *omkara*.

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January 24, 2018

Free Write

I was alone again in Mayapura. I was keeping to myself. It was the end of my pilgrimage time, and I was getting ready to leave. I was impatiently waiting for the ferry to arrive to take us away. Then the ferry came. I was \$.25 short on money, but I would beg for it. Just as I was about to leave, Adi-kesava caught me by the hand. At the same time, Lt. Commander Richardson, my C.O. from my Navy days in the Public Information Office, came up by my side. It was a very tense moment. I very much didn't want to confront him, but I wanted to get away and go home. I wanted to get into writing. Before I had a chance to talk to Lt. Commander Richardson, Adi-Kesava immediately began talking to me. He said Hridayananda Maharaja and other members of the GBC weren't satisfied with my behavior. They said I was expressing myself purely in a musical way in my devotional service. I replied to him that isn't this what the Vaisnava *kavis* did in their poetry? I was ready to stand up for my expression. Adi-Kesava was being fair, and he was ready to stand up for me too. (This dream was a combination of Hare Krsna and the U.S. Navy).

Then Lt. Commander Richardson began to speak to me. He said I couldn't leave. He said I was needed on *Back to Godhead* magazine. He said the present old and new writers were deficient. I was a crucial contributor. I had to stay in Mayapura and write for *BTG*. Then Adi-Kesava stood up for me. He said it was a very complicated situation. The editor of *Back to Godhead* magazine was not publishing my articles, and there was no indication of when he would do so in the future. He was angry with me because of my behavior. They weren't treating me fairly. Plus, I had lost my touch for how to write essays that were suitable. It would take me some time and practice to get back to writing acceptable *BTG* articles yet keep my integrity. Adi-kesava said I should be allowed to leave Mayapura and go home and practice intently on writing. I was grateful that A.K. had the "balls" to speak on my behalf in this way to a senior Naval officer who was in charge of the magazine. That was the end of the dream.

I have come directly to write down the dream. I don't know what else was to come. But I liked the ending. I would write somehow in my own way, but I would try to make it acceptable to *BTG*.

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Mr. Fiorelli, the short, thin
Italian barber confronted me
in the road where the cars would go

in Great Kills, Staten Island.
He reprimanded me
because he heard I had gone to the
“other” barber in
the Village. They were the
same in quality and both ended
the haircut with drops of perfumed oil.
I apologized to Mr. Fiorelli
and went back to him.
It has been over
52 years
since I first went
to a barber on the Lower East Side
and asked him to shave
the whole head
except for a small patch on the back.
I went
to Swamiji and bowed down to show him.
He said, “Thank you very much,”
and I was blissful with that.

January 27, 2018

Free Write

She told me the squirrels
mate with rats; since
then I don't like the
species but we avoid
running them down with
our car. Mukta told
me a temple president from Washington, D.C.
asked me for advice
and I said, "Love them."
He smiled and said as acting temple president
he tries to do that, but he cannot love them all.
He sees to it that
everyone attends the
morning program; I used
to do that by force for six years.
Now I have my own
morning program: sixteen
rounds of *japa* trying
to avoid a headache--

I wipe my face
with a wet rag and
take a nap.

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Trump is unfit but they say he has
excellent physical health to
mislead the country for
three more years. His lawyer
paid off a porno prostitute
to be quiet about his affair
with her. Can nothing be
done? The *harinama* party
in public is averting the
worst. They cry
out to Radha and Krsna
and Their Lordships
respond. They answer
your desires: ask for devotional service. Not
five or six lukewarm
singers but
a hundred heart-and-soul

singers like Rama-raya
inspired by Aindra Prabhu
and staying out six hours every day.

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Hooey-balooey, I can't
dance with you,
my left ankle has been fused
two times in surgery.
The metatarsal
bone is number four on a
pain scale. I claim
I can't travel on planes
to Mayapura and see the Vedic
Planetarium; it will
have to come to me. They
clinched my ankle-bone
and I have little balance.
I don't pray for physical
recovery but to
focus on the holy name.
If you try to travel

they take off your
 shoes and search
 for bombs. I don't
 have the balance
 to go through that.
 So I stay here and write free-write
 poems to Radha-Govinda
 and Gaura-Nitai.

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January 28, 2018

Free Write

My clothes are freshly dyed,
 off-orange, socks and tee-shirts
 are orange, ink stains
 disappeared (the proud emblems
 of a writer). These new clothes
 make me feel happy, not
 gay, and anyway I'm 78
 and can't get it up anymore.

The clothes are like
 tropical fish in an

aquarium; specifically they
are the Hare Krsna
renounced uniform.

And I even have a
long piece of hair
on the back of
my head, called a *sikha*

In my new duds
I am a spiffy *sannyasi*.
Don't have much
money but I'm
purifying myself
chanting the *maha-mantra*.

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In a dream, I was
just out of the Navy
on honorable discharge.
But it was worse
than being enlisted. People
did not live by any code. They

took my pants out of my
suitcases and I couldn't
get anyone to help me
retrieve them. "Tough
luck," they said.

"There is no military
law to protect you." It was like ants were
overrunning me.

After five minutes, I awoke
but I was
uneasy. Now I'm hearing Baroque
symphony music. I want to play
Mingus but the MP3 player
is out of control. It's like
my dream; I'm harassed.
I'll turn off the music
and chant four rounds
on my beads.

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January 29, 2018

Free Write

Bernadette Mayer writes
in almost all her December
poems that it's gloomy
and snowy in Massachusetts.

But she says it
with finesse and
perkiness. She had
a fight with Phil.

She can't stand being ordered around
not to drink so much wine
for health and not to
smoke cigarettes.

Their poverty is the real
bone of their contention.

They really love
each other and they
like the snow
although it brings gloom.

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January 31, 2018

Free Write

Manohara and Visakha are here
from Italy and Mayapura.

I haven't been with them
in ten years. Manohara said
he felt "something was missing."

It was our guru-disciple
relationship. Now we are
renewing it. But what
can we do together?

They can clean and
cook and change the
Deities' dresses. Manohara has
fevers and I have headaches.

Visakha is strong, healthy and smiling.

Baladeva is
an ideal servant
and caretaker.

We wear *tilaka*
while honoring *prasadam*

and read *Srimad Bhagavatam* out loud.

Gradually we will bond.

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Today the County Wastage

truck comes by to pick up the garbage.

First he stops at houses

across the street, going west.

Then he comes back and

arrives at our house.

Every Wednesday we have yesterday's

lunch warmed up for

him in the microwave.

Phil is very receptive to

receiving the *prasadam* and

a bottle of root beer.

Baladeva goes out to

give him the lunch and

they talk a little.

He knows it's Hare Krsna food

but he can't imagine

the *ajnata-sukrti* benefit

he's receiving from eating
krsna-prasadam. We have
 a friendship based on
 this exchange, and he's
 willing to pick up extra
 garbage when we have it.

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February 3, 2018

Free Write

Maharaja Pariksit asked Sukadeva Gosvami in the right way. Some persons want to go immediately to the internal energy and hear about the *rasa* dance with the *gopis*. It is equally important to hear about the external energy, the creation, maintenance and annihilation. I have an itching sensation on my *tilaka*, but I don't want to scratch it and ruin the design. Visakha is bathing and changing Govinda's dress. She is probably finished now and ready to bring Them up. I'll call Baladeva on the radio although he still may be taking a nap. If I call him, Visakha will come up also with Radha-Govinda. It's 10:20 A.M. There is ice on the road, but the trucks have dropped salt. The sun is out, but it is still cold. Visakha read the *Bhagavatam* during breakfast, and it was nectarean and interesting, but I

can't remember it. Something about the high quality of Maharaja Pariksit's inquiries and Sukadeva Gosvami's replies. They were not like materialists seeking sense gratification by discussion of the *Bhagavatam*. Sukadeva's replies were in parampara from Vyasadeva and could purify the whole world.

Radha-Govinda are back on the altar. They are wearing a green-blue outfit with lots of silver trimming. They are very beautiful, and I am honored to behold Their *darsana*.

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The interesting thing about him is confidential. I promise not to tell, but non-confidential things are myriad. We both read the same weekly news magazine, so we know all about President Trump's paying off a porn star to keep quiet about her affair with him. The exposure has upset Trump's beautiful wife, and there are rumors that she is distancing herself from him. As a supposed, aspiring devotee of Krsna, I should not even be thinking of this. It is not that it's confidential, but it's forbidden, polluted material. Still, I keep reading about Trump. You think it's not hurting you? I try to say it's all right to know about worldly affairs as long as I don't invest myself in them, but that's not the right attitude. I'm risking my next life, my chance to be in pure Krsna consciousness at the time of death. It's like not

giving up smoking cigarettes. I'm going to stop writing here, but I haven't concluded this.

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February 4, 2018

Free Write

These free writes fall like snow, and the orange plow truck comes and noisily scrapes them off the ground. The road is bare and black for a while until more snowflakes fall and the truck makes another pass, dragging its plow in front. I keep hearing the *Bhagavatam* read to me during meals. I am attentive, but I cannot retain later what was read. I know it is a discussion between Sukadeva Gosvami and Maharaja Pariksit, and it is all-perfect and transcendental. There are frequent mentions of unqualified readings. No one should pose himself as a spiritual master if he doesn't know the science of Krsna.

In *One Thousand and One Nights*, from Arabia, the prisoner Scheherezade has to tell a new story every day in order to save her life. But imaginary made-up tales won't do. We read from the *brahma-sabda*, the absolute truth, stories and histories originally breathed by Narayana. It has no faults, imperfect senses, illusions, cheating, etc., etc. My free writes are a mixture; I confess and write what comes to my mind, so they wouldn't save Scheherezade's life, except, like hers, that they are continual every day. I

don't remain silent before my captors, and "I keep steering to Krsna." I take the zig-zag path. This is the journal of a neophyte. He cannot pretend that he is a *maha-bhagavata*.

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I'm mixed up with voices
 in my head, envious
 and fault-finding. I
 don't lecture anymore
 or attend another's
 lecture. And this brings some
 low self-esteem. But when she asked me
 do I like it here, I
 said, "Yes!" enthusiastically.
 How long have you been
 living here? "Eight years.
 Saci-suta bought this
 house for me and said
 I can stay here for
 the rest of my life."
 He's very generous.
 How many years do I

have to go? Hemagaura
is about eighty-five and has
difficulty walking. He
and his many relatives
say he won't live much longer,
so they take him on cruises
and vacations. I'm content
to stay in this house and
go to bed early with my head
on a comfortable pillow.

I rise at 1:00 or 2:00 A.M. and chant
my rounds. Today is the
appearance of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.

During lunch we read
from his biography. He
ordered his disciples
to chant sixty-four rounds.

I was grateful and
felt blessed that Srila Prabhupada
has given us the quota
of sixteen rounds. Recently,

because of headaches, I
allowed myself to do
less than sixteen. But I have recovered again
and I am pleased to
be meeting my quota.
Especially since I know
Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati
ordered sixty-four rounds,
I feel righteous and
protected to be
back meeting Prabhupada's minimum quota.
While writing this poem
I was twice interrupted
by a phone call and
by a devotee coming
to my room. On
the phone Haridasa told me
his college is giving him
funding to attend a
writing conference.
I congratulated him and

said, “I love to write.”

He laughed. I said,

“I am not happy when I’m

not writing.” So these

lines have made me

grateful to Prabhupada and Krsna.

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February 5, 2018

Free Write

John, the Baptist minister,

came by today to learn

how to make curly pasta

and lasagna from Visakha.

He watched her closely,

took three and a half pages of notes,

and some photographs.

They liked him because

he’s so enthusiastic and open

and he liked them

because they are humble

and authentic. It was
 a wonderful *prasadam* lunch!
 After dinner, I took *darsana*
 of the Italians' "*Patita-*

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Pavana," their colorful Lord Jagannatha
murti, dressed in yellow
 and twelve inches high. They
 carry Him everywhere.
 Before honoring *prasadam*
 I read my Journal poem about chanting
 sixteen rounds on Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's
 Appearance Day.
 I think they
 liked it; I was in my element,
 reading poetry to the devotees.

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February 8, 2018

Free Write

Visakha will be cooking
simple meals on alternate
days and special days.

We don't want to
eat like Italian kings
every day. John's
turn on Friday
will be simple because
that's all he can handle.

Joe Palizza, the physical therapist
comes by today.

He makes us do strenuous exercises.

It will strengthen us
up but I
don't enjoy doing them.

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Krsna is the greatest
secret; He won't reveal
Himself to everyone. To those
who have the ointment of love

of God, He is visible everywhere. They
can see Him in the heart.

But if I fail to see Him
it's because I am the lowest
of men. Narottama dasa
Thakura, the Vaisnava *kavi*,
laments that he has
wasted his life
by not worshiping Radha and Krsna.

I am like that.

But I have my
Radha-Govinda *murtis*. They
are kind to me.

I can see Them
in Their personal forms
on the altar. But I didn't see
the complete *darsana*.

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Words like “cunt” and “fuck”
are illicit, censorable
coming from the external energy.

They throw us away
 from Krsna and cover Him
 up from our pure mind.
 By staying with the pure
 devotee and always reading
 the *sastra* (by regularly
 chanting and hearing the
 Hare Krsna mantra) we can avoid
 the dirty *mayaic* thoughts
 and purify the mind.

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Krsna is the Supreme Person. He is sac-cid-ananda vigraha.

Srila Prabhupada ordered Syamasundara to ask George Harrison to donate \$19,000 to print the *Krsna Book*. Syamasundara didn't want to do it. He was afraid that George would think the devotees were trying to exploit him. Syamasundara was at George's house, and he "bit the bullet" and told George what Prabhupada wanted. George looked displeased. At that moment lightning struck the house, and all the lights went out. A few minutes later, the lights came on again. George appeared shocked and

changed. He took it that the blackout was “a sign from God,” and he submissively agreed to pay for Prabhupada’s book.

Another wonderful story that happened in England is how Prabhupada obtained large Radha-Krsna Deities:

One day a wealthy Indian man representing a large Hindu society phoned Prabhupada. He heard the devotees wanted Radha-Krsna Deities, and he had a pair he would donate. Prabhupada went with several of his disciples and arrived at the man’s home. Prabhupada entered the living room and sat down. The Deities, covered by a cloth, stood on a table in the corner. Tamala-Krsna was about to unveil Them when Prabhupada checked him: “No, that’s all right.” Prabhupada sat and spoke with the man, asking him about his work and where he had come from in India, and he met the man’s family. “Swamiji,” the man said at length, “I want to show you my Deities.”

“Yes, Prabhupada replied, “I will see Them after some time.” Prabhupada began to speak about his Krsna-conscious mission, and after a while the man requested again, ‘Please take a look at these Deities.’ And with that, he walked over and unveiled Radha and Krsna.

“Oh, yes,” Prabhupada said, folding his hands respectfully. The man explained that he had ordered the Deities from India for his own use, but in transit a tiny piece of Radharani’s finger had chipped off; therefore, according to Hindu tradition, the Deities could not be installed.

“Tamala-Krsna,” Prabhupada said. “See how heavy these Deities are.”

“Tamala-Krsna, placing one hand at Radharani’s base and the other around Her shoulder, lifted Her. “Not so heavy,” he said. “Syamasundara,” Prabhupada said, “See how heavy is Krsna.” The Deities were actually heavy for one man to carry, but the devotees understood Prabhupada’s intention.

“Not bad,” Syamasundara said, holding Krsna a few inches off the table.

“Yes,” Prabhupada said conclusively, “I think They are all right. Let us take them. We have our van.” And suddenly Prabhupada was leaving, with his disciples following, carefully carrying Radha and Krsna. Prabhupada thanked the man.

“But Swamiji! Swamiji!” the man protested. He was not prepared for this sudden exit. “Please, we will arrange to bring Them. Our Society will bring Them.” But Prabhupada was

already out the door and leading his men to the van.

Prabhupada assured the man and at the same time directed his disciples. He opened the door of the van and Syamasundara and Tamala-Krsna slowly entered, cautiously sitting Radha and Krsna within. Tamala-Krsna knelt in the back to hold the Deities secure, while Syamasundara got into the driver's seat.

“Now drive,” Prabhupada said. And off they went, with Prabhupada smiling from the window to the man and his family, who stood together on the curb.

Syamasundara had driven but a few blocks when Prabhupada asked him to stop the van. Turning around in his seat, Prabhupada began offering prayers: *Govindam adi purusam tam aham bhajami . . .* He looked long at Krsna, who was white with a slight bluish-cast, and at the exquisite white Radharani by His side. “Krsna is so kind,” he said, “He has come like this.” Then he had Syamasundara continue driving safely back to the temple.

Prabhupada had the Deities placed in a curtained-off section of his own room, and then he sat at his desk. Prabhupada smiled. “Krsna has played a great trick.” Prabhupada then related from *krsna-lila* different transcendental tricks that

Krsna played. “. . . So this chip on the Deity’s hand is just
Krsna’s trick. And we have caught Them.”

*(from Volume One of Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta: A Biography
of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada,
Founder-Acarya of The International Society for Krsna
Consciousness)*

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It’s getting close
to time for bed.
Before you sleep, stop
a moment for a
serious thought: I
don’t know whether
I’ll live through tomorrow.
That’s up to Krsna.
It’s especially up to Him
where I’ll go in my next life.
I lived a certain way,
that’s *karma*, which places
me in a particular next body. But
it’s actually the
Lord who personally sanctions

your destiny. So surrender
to Him!

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February 9, 2018

Free Write

Krsna dasi is returning today from
her month of shopping and taking
Deity worship courses in Mayapura.

We'll see what she's got.

I mentioned to her that

I'd rather see Govinda wearing turbans

than crowns. A turban

is more like Vraja; a crown

looks like Vaikuntha.

But Radharani can always wear

a *chandrika*

with the jewel pointing eastward.

I have gained two pounds

in two weeks. Visakha's cooking is

“too opulent,” she admitted

but most devotees prefer it that way. Ravioli, lasagna, fusilli pasta, what's wrong with that? I don't want to spoil her fun and enthusiasm but I'm getting overweight.

Good dream:

There was a GBC meeting in America. TKG held up one of my recently-published hardbound books. He declared it was good. Then he became grave and said, "As I have praised this, I could also criticize it."

I wasn't afraid of his opinions.

Some of the GBC men began discussing that I had recently visited an out-of-the-way Midwestern ISKCON temple. I worried that they might want to assign the

temple to my zone and make
me go there for weekly visits.

I told them the temple president was a very dynamic leader and
everyone loved him. There would
be nothing I could add to
the *sanga*. They disagreed.

I finally submitted to the GBC body.

I thought if I could only
convince the leader and
members of the Midwestern temple
that I was not out to interfere,
I could go there weekly,
stay in the background and
do my writing. Sometimes
they had poetry readings
in the temple, and I could
contribute to that as long
as they didn't think
my poems were bizarre,
mundane, or trying
to push myself forward. I really liked Bhakta-

dasa, the undisputed leader
of the temple and I
didn't want to compete
with him. I just wanted
to add my voice
as a small bird praising Krsna.

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February 10, 2018

Free Write

I told Manohara and Visakha
how much I liked their company.
It has been ten years since
we've been together.
But I feel intimate
with them, relaxed
and loving. They
said they feel the same;
“You are so open
and transparent.” So we have bonded again.
I asked Visakha
to make a nice sweet on Sunday

when the extra guests
 come. I will take it too, despite my “weight-watcher’s”
 dieting. “Of all the
 senses, the tongue is the
 most voracious and difficult to control. But Krsna is very
 kind to us. He has given us this nice *prasadam* just
 to control the tongue.”

Do not eat too much
 or too little “. . . and
 glorify Their Lordships Sri-Sri Radha and Krsna
 and in love call upon
 Lord Caitanya and Nityananda to please help us.”

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Whatever you do, whatever
 you sacrifice, whatever you
 renounce, do it for Krsna.
 If you do it for some
 other purpose, you will
 have to come back next life
 for conditioned birth,

death, disease and
old age. Not *you*,
but your body goes
through the miseries
of material life.

It's February 10th and
too cold to go outside.

Take a plane and go
to a warmer clime.

But don't go there
for sense gratification;
it's a waste of time.

Stay or go, only
for Krsna's mission.

He wants to deliver
all His parts and parcels
back to the spiritual world.

But you have to develop
the greed to go there.

The greed is called *laulyam*.

“Purity of heart is
to will one thing.”

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A threat to the Journal: for three or four days I was having an experience of raw coughing. I finally decided to go to the emergency room of the hospital. I thought it might be a repeat of pneumonia, which I’ve had several times over the years. They took various tests and diagnosed me as having flu. I had taken a flu shot in October, but they tell me that the flu shots this year have a significant ineffectiveness in preventing flu. They wanted me to stay in the hospital, but I persuaded them into letting me go home by telling them that I could rest better in the privacy of my home and not contact people. So now I’m home, but I’m mostly coughing and resting. I don’t have much strength to do free writes or write poetry. They say the flu goes away in about a week. That seems like a long time to wait. I hope I’ll be back here soon.

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February 14, 2018

Free Write

A threat to the Journal: For three or four days I was having an experience of raw coughing. I finally decided to go to the emergency room

of the hospital. I thought it might be a repeat of pneumonia, which I've had several times over the years. They took various tests and diagnosed me as having flu. I had taken a flu shot in October, but they tell me that the flu shots this year have a significant ineffectiveness in preventing flu. They wanted me to stay in the hospital, but I persuaded them into letting me go home by telling them that I could rest better in the privacy of my home and not contact people. So now I'm home, but I'm mostly coughing and resting. I don't have much strength to do free writes or write poetry. They say the flu goes away in about a week. That seems like a long time to wait. I hope I'll be back here soon.

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February 17, 2018

Free Write

I have had a case of the flu for over a week now, and I have not been writing the Viraha Bhavan Journal. I am disoriented, constantly coughing with a deep, dry, crackly cough, and not inspired to do my chore. But they say it's only supposed to last a week, so I'm looking forward to a recovery soon and a return to writing down my thoughts. It has been fun so far, and I have accumulated a number of pages, but I want to do more and give it a feeling of closure.

[From a news report]:

“The flu and the pneumonia cases it causes are killing 4000 Americans a week and are responsible for one in ten of all U.S. deaths in the first week of February. The number of flu-related illnesses being reported now is as high as at the peak of the swine flu epidemic in 2009.” (*Bloomberg.com*)

I am one week into my flu illness, but I don't think I will die from it. My fever is gone away. I have a dry, deep, hacking cough, but even that has diminished. I am taking medicines, but not heavy ones. I have lost my touch to do Krsna-conscious-related free writes. I am anxious to get back into it. The light touch, steering to Krsna—I yearn for it again.

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February 20, 2018

Free Write

I was recovering gradually from the flu. I was attending a huge festival of devotees, yogis, seekers, artists and scholars. It was 2:00 A.M. in the morning, and we were all still sleeping. I was awake, deeply contemplating my future. My university studies were complete. All my grades had come in, and I had passed all my subjects and graduated with the highest honors. There was no more academic work for me to do. Now, normally one would go out into the world. But my plans were different. I wanted to follow my

solitary vocation of writing. But who would financially support me? As I lay in my sleeping bag at the festival, I thought of going to my parents and making a proposition, although it was unusual and not likely that they would be pleased with it. I wanted to ask them to buy a small house for me and be pleased to finance me as I spent my time entirely devoted to writing. They knew for a long time that I was a dedicated and talented writer and that it was my sole interest, but could I persuade them to support me? Over the years I had shown them my writings, and they were in favor of them, but they may have wanted me to take up a different, paying career. I wanted to show them my recent writings and enthuse them that they were worth supporting. All I wanted was a little cabin to stay in and minimum money for food, etc. I would live very frugally. If my parents didn't want to support me, I thought of finding a patron who would do it. There were people who liked my writing, but I had to find one who was enthusiastic enough to pay for me to live alone and write and try to promote my writing. If someone were enthusiastic enough, they could share my writings and help me to publish them. There were a few people I knew who were inclined like that, and I had to persuade them to actually do it. If I couldn't find a patron, then there was nothing I could think of but to get a part time job and support myself and write part-time. That was not a very favorable idea to me, and I looked at it that way. Writing deserved full time, and I had full-time plans

for it, just like the classic prolific writers of the past who made writing their only vocation, somehow or other.

I have been having frequent dreams of wanting to devote the rest of my life to full-time writing. Of course, I have been a prolific writer, but with my duties in the Hare Krsna Movement I have had to do managing and preaching and participation in the missionary institution in addition to my own writing. Now I am almost 80 years old, and I feel I should be allowed to use my remaining years burning the flame that still remains for writing. But what will I be able to write? I have tried so many genres. I don't think I can write more "straight" *sastric*-directed instructional books in Krsna-consciousness, teaching the dogma directly. I don't know if I want to keep up autobiographical works. For now, I am doing this Journal.

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February 21, 2018

Free Write

I was in my room and Baladeva was in his. I began singing aloud the last line of "Twas the night before Christmas": "And I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight, 'Merry Christmast to all, and to all a good night!'" I paused and then sang the lines again. I varied the vocalization. I enjoyed myself. I sang it three times. Then Baladeva came into the room and asked

me, “Do you believe in Santa Clause?” His question took me by surprise. While singing I wasn’t thinking of “believing in Santa Clause.” I was just having a good time with the old song. But his question made me think. I said, “I can remember the exact moment. I was walking on a dirt path leading from my house into Great Kills Village. I was with my friend Alvin Galter. We were the same age, but he was bigger than me physically and something of a bully. He said, ‘Do you still believe in Santa Clause? It’s just a story, you know. There really isn’t any Santa Clause.’ I didn’t say anything to argue back, but I went home to my parents and asked my mother and father about it. Reluctantly and gently they told me that actually there was no real Santa Clause, it was just a story. I was sorry to hear that Santa didn’t actually exist. I mourned a little, but I wasn’t that broken-hearted because I still had my parents, and it was because of their love for me that all my presents were spread out under the Christmas tree.

Baladeva said to me, “Why didn’t you argue back when Alvin told you there was no Santa Clause?”

“Because he had never seen Santa Clause.”

“That’s not enough proof,” said Baladeva.

“But I trusted my parents when they said there was no Santa Clause.”

“That’s not enough proof either,” said Baladeva.

“Anyway, now I’m a grown-up man and I believe what’s stated in the

Vedas. Santa Clause isn't in the *Vedas*, so I don't believe in him." That seemed to satisfy Baladeva.

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Lately I've been having frequent dreams—or snatches within mixed dreams—where I am trying to meet my father. We are in distant places and trying to reach each other. I want to see him because I want to propose that he give me financial support so that I can spend my full time writing. I have my presentation prepared and my yearning to write, but in the repeated dreams I never get to meet my father.

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February 22, 2018

Free Write

My official week of flu is over, and I am feeling better. I don't have a deep crackly cough anymore. Upendra wrote me from Boise and said he is beginning the last course of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (Bhaktivedanta: Cantos Eleven and Twelve, under the guidance of Hanumatpresaka Swami. In his Sunday class, Ravindra Svarupa is speaking on the Twelfth Canto. I would like to read from those Cantos too. We have a tendency to shy away from them because it is not Prabhupada's writing, but I have read it once. John,

the Baptist minister, is coming tomorrow. Because of the remnants of my flu, I won't have my private meeting with him. He will have his conversation with Ravindra Svarupa and then come here and meet with Anuradha- and Visakha-devi-dasis, and Visakha will give him a cooking lesson. Then I'll join them for lunch. Maybe we will talk during lunch instead of reading the *Bhagavatam* — or maybe we will read. John will like to talk to Anuradha about her Oxford Centre preaching. Either way, I'll let them provide the entertainment. John is so enthusiastic about his Vaisnava studies. He places three books on a broad dining room table. On the far right, he places my book *From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About*. In the center he places a blank notebook which he is filling with quotes and comments from his reading. On the far left he has placed a direct translation of Bhaktivinode Thakura's *Saranagati*. He goes from one to the other and loves it. He is planning a Lenten season of Sunday lectures at his church based on Bhaktivinode Thakura's *Saranagati*. Each lecture will have a reference from the Bible but will also have a reference from my book or Bhaktivinode Thakura's *Saranagati*.

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I woke up from my post-lunch nap, came to my chair, and turned on the light. I had been having a strange dream. I was traveling with my mother

and father, and my mother had become very ill. They phoned to tell me that they had gone back to Brooklyn to see the doctor. They had acquired a gift horse for me, and I was to go to New Vrndavana to pick him up. I found it hard to believe, in terms of dream experience, that my mother and father could suddenly disappear. I wasn't too unhappy because I liked the devotees at New Vrndavana. I went there and a husband-and-wife devotee couple had hooked up a large horse on a trailer. He smiled and indicated he was mine. I was puzzled and went up to them. I told them I didn't know how to handle a horse—could they teach me how?

In the light of the big lamp, I saw Radha-Govinda in *darsana*. They were pleasing to behold. Their Tappan-Vrndavana outfits were beautiful (yellow with hand-painted flowers) and they fit Them well.

Mayer is difficult to comprehend, but parts of it I understand. I go on reading. It's a long poem, and it's not finished. I closed the book. I hear raindrops falling on the roof. I have chanted sixteen rounds today, and that is the most important thing. In *Namastakam*, Rupa Gosvami writes that even if your chanting is faulty or in jest, it will be beneficial. Prabhupada writes (in the purport to *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.6.33):

“It is a natural psychology in every individual case that a person likes to hear and enjoy his personal glories enumerated by others.

That is a natural instinct, and the Lord, being also an individual

personality like others, is not an exception to this psychology, because psychological characteristics of the individual souls are but reflections of the same psychology in the Absolute Lord. The only difference is that the Lord is the greatest personality of all, and absolute in all His affairs. If, therefore, the Lord is attracted by the pure devotees' chanting of His glories, there is nothing astonishing. Since He's absolute, He can appear Himself in the picture of His glorification, the two things being identical. Srila Narada chants the glorification of the Lord not for his personal benefit, but because the glorifications are identical with the Lord. Narada penetrates into the presence of the Lord by the transcendental chanting."

I am sorry to say that my chanting is not qualitatively pure like Srila Narada's. I chant without pure devotion. But I take solace in Rupa Goswami's statement that any kind of chanting is absolutely good for the chanter. And here is the statement by Prabhupada that Krsna likes to hear His Name chanted. Of course, Prabhupada refers to the chanting of the pure devotee. But the Lord is pleased by any chanting, isn't He?

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February 24, 2018

Free Write

I slept during my designated *japa* time, compensating for the flu. I will try to make up on the remaining rounds later. But I can't promise it will be with a flame of concentrated devotion. I am wearing winter "Naga" socks. They have a snake sewn into the embroidery. I like my life with my few assistants, peaceful routine in the *ashrama*. But I would like to write faster and in the wake of Krsna. Krsna is everything, so anything you write has a connection with Him. But you want to make it conscious and devotional. That way, the writing is transcendental.

I have asked Baladeva to stock up on some art supplies for when Yasoda Dulal comes. I have lost all inspiration to paint. I haven't done it in a year, although I used to do it so intensely. Yasoda is an expert artist, and if he makes art while he is here, he may encourage me to do something. But I have a desire to go beyond the childish forms I've done in the "outsider art" genre. I don't know if I'm capable of anything else.

It's 7:20 A.M., and the geese are honking in the sky.

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The odor of marijuana drifted through the crowd at the Ratha-Yatra festival in California. I was able to turn down my olfactory senses and not be disturbed.

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February 25, 2018

Free Write

The demon Salva had a mystic iron airplane. He flew to Dvaraka and began dropping bombs. The citizens were in a panic. Krsna was away from Dvaraka, but when He heard the news He rushed to the city to give protection and fight Salva. Krsna shot arrows in the sky. But the plane was capable of disappearing from the sky in one place and reappearing in another place. Finally, Krsna hit the plane and made it crash to the ground. Salva jumped out and continued fighting on foot. Krsna smashed him with a mighty blow on the chest, and blood flowed from Salva's heart and he died. It was not an easy task defeating Salva.

Krsna also had hard task in defeating the thousand-armed demon Bhaumasura. Bhaumasura was a devotee of Lord Siva. Bhaumasura kidnapped many princesses and put them in a cave and covered it with a huge stone. He kept them for his carnal desires. Krsna went there and began chopping off Bhaumasura's thousands of arms. When the demon had only two arms left, a representative of Siva came and pleaded to spare Bhaumasura. Krsna left him with his two arms. Then Krsna entered the cave and freed all the princesses. They were like withered lotuses in their

captivity. When they saw Krsna, their faces blossomed and they became joyous. Of course, because these demons were personally killed by Krsna, they were delivered to the spiritual world.

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In Northern Ireland there is a small island called Inis Rath. It is a forest filled with many rare tall trees planted by the former owner. It is now owned by the Hare Krsna devotees, who also own an adjoining peninsula named Geaglum. On Inis Rath there is a good-looking building which is the home of beautiful Deities Sri-Sri Radha-Govinda. They have a dedicated *pujari* who chose many new outfits for Them. Not many devotees live there. But there is a dedicated group who maintain Radha-Govinda on Vaisnava holidays. Devotees from all over Ireland gather at Inis Rath for festivals.

I spoke on the phone with my Godbrother Haridasa from Maryland. He is a counselor on the faculty of a community college. He is attending a writing conference at the University of Arizona. Everyone did some writing, including Haridasa. The poet laureate of Arizona attended. He is legally blind and is guided by a seeing-eye dog. He read a piece that he wrote about being in Grand Central Station, New York with his dog. Another woman read from from her book *Sonata*.

When she was young, she was planning a career of being a classical

pianist, but she developed severe arthritis in her hands, and her memoir is about her struggle to contend with her handicap. Haridasa brought one of my books with him for the airplane journey, *Vraja-mandala Parikrama: A Writer's Lament*, and he said he enjoyed it very much.

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February 26, 2018

Free Write

I'm looking again at Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*. She says you may have to write whole notebooks of junk before you break through. It is the practice school of writing . . . composting. But I do not want this Journal to be junk. Should you write some and omit the weak parts? Go to the heart. I chant mechanically. Every mantra counts.

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How do you respond to a headache? You take two Excedrins. How do you deal with writing resistance? You write through it, to an honest place. How do you keep going? You don't stop. You think of Krsna. When Brahma appeared on the lotus, he didn't know what to do. He heard the sound vibration of two syllables, *ta pa*. He practiced austerity for a thousand years. He saw Krsna within his heart. Then he wrote *Brahma-samhita*, each stanza ending with *govindam adi purusam tam aham bhajami*. Krsna was pleased with him and shook his hand. How do you continue? You chant the Hare Krsna mantra silently in your mind. How long can you keep that up? If you chant humbler than a blade of grass . . . you can chant the holy names constantly. Partha Sarathi Maharaja chants many more rounds than I do. He has many pictures of his Godbrothers and Godsisters,

and he offers a prayer to each one. Visakha just came to offer milk and fruit to the Deities. In half an hour Baladeva will come up, and I'll take night pills and then go to bed. I usually sleep well until around 1:00 A.M.

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February 27, 2018

Free Write

N.G. says we all have obsessions and we should give them space and attention in our writing, but not too much. Some of her obsessions are her Jewish family and chocolate. I have an obsession with struggling to improve my *japa*. I chant mechanically, and I can't seem to do it better. But I am always aware of it and try to make progress. Another obsession is writing. I want to do it prolifically, in Krsna consciousness, but spontaneously and humanly.

Write with details: your maroon Nike shoes, a column of smoke from the incense stick, the flowers on the altar. I exercised six minutes on the bike, and I am perspiring. An illustrated children's book, *Krsna, the Dearest Friend*—it's all *parampara*. Krsna is bluish and all-attractive.

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February 28, 2018

Free Write

Yesterday, after lunch, we all sat around the dinner table and talked about the many games that Krsna plays with His friends. They throw fruits back and forth. They imitate

the movements and sounds of the forest animals and birds. Krsna goes off to a distant part of the forest, and the boys run after Him, shouting out, “I shall be the first to touch Krsna!” A boy will steal another boy’s lunch bag, and it will be tossed to another boy. The owner of the lunch bag will cry, and it will be returned to him. Wrestling is a favorite sport. The boys are so intimate that they don’t treat Krsna with reverence. They challenge Him and brag that they can defeat Him. In one game a boy will climb upon another boy’s shoulders and the two pairs will have a “chicken fight.” Sometimes Krsna loses, and for a penalty He has to carry a boy on His shoulders for a considerable time. The evil King Kamsa sends demons to kill Krsna, and this becomes another playful sport. The demons assume frightful, gigantic forms like giant ducks, a serpent, donkeys, and they attack Krsna. He casually plays with them for a while and then breaks them as if they were toy animals.

Krsna teases the *gopis* when they come in a group carrying pots of yogurt on their heads. Sometimes He spills the yogurt or has His cowherd friends build a tollgate and order the *gopis* to pay a fine. This results in long arguments between Krsna and the girls. Krsna usually finally lets them pass, but sometimes they first have to pay a fine.

Talking about Krsna is the best thing of all. When we stray off that subject, the conversation deteriorates. We drift into *prajalpa* and come under the spell of the external energy. But it is possible to come back under the shelter of Krsna. Krsna is everything, and we just have to dovetail ourselves to Him. For example, we can talk about the lunch as *krsna-prasadam*.

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It’s so nice to be home. Enjoy looking at the painting of Mahaprabhu commissioned by King Prataparudra. Glance over to Radha-Govinda in Their blue outfits with silver

trim. Visitors arrive on the Amtrak; they stop at Hudson and we pick them up in our car. I dreamt my mother was ill, lying in bed in a foreign neighborhood. She was being worshiped by Oriental spirits. At first I felt sorry for her not being in her private room in her own bed. But then I thought it was better she was in an exotic situation surrounded with protective spirits and cats and people—in the action. My Prabhupada *murti* is stern, but he is not angry with me. He looks out gravely from the center of his being. Brahma prayed to Krsna for creative energy. He requested that he not become contaminated by associating with the vicious creatures he had to create. He prayed to remain humble and subordinate, and that he not take credit for himself as the Creator. Anuradha said that Brahma’s prayers to Krsna were like me approaching Him as an artist and writer. I became aware and afraid that I might think I wanted to take credit for some quality in my writing and not realize it was all coming from Krsna.

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The painting of Mahaprabhu commissioned by King Prataparudra is unique. It has photographic accuracy to the person of the Lord but a supernatural presence. He wears a light *cadar* over His bare shoulders; He fingers *japa mala* in His hand. He has a mild, beatific look in His eyes, and His mouth is beautiful.

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March 1, 2018

Free Write

They say you should not write in the same house but go out to restaurants or cemetaries—anywhere for variety. But I can’t walk, so I stay in Viraha Bhavan. I don’t

become dull. I can write of many places and moods. Don't stop when it isn't finished, but keep going. The chapters in the *Krsna Book* are not that long. You can read one after another. My feet are cold and my eyes are heavy, but I keep writing.

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The devotees are celebrating Gaura Purnima, the appearance day of Lord Caitanya. He is Krsna Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not a mere expansion of Lord Visnu. In His original form, Krsna appeared five thousand years ago. In *Bhagavad-gita* He explained why He descends: "Whenever there is decline in religion and an increase in irreligious principles, I descend Myself." Lord Caitanya appeared for the same reason, in addition to some confidential reasons. The external reason was to rescue the devotees and slay the demons. His internal reason was to associate with His dearest devotees, the residents of Vrndavana. The external reason Lord Caitanya descended was to deliver the fallen souls in Kali-yuga by spreading the congregational chanting of Hare Krsna in love of God. Only Lord Caitanya and His associates could do that. But He had internal reasons also. When He appeared as Krsna with Radha, there were some desires that He could not fulfill. Being the male Lover, He could not fully understand the position of His feminine counterpart, Radharani. He also could not comprehend His own personal beauty, which so much attracted Radharani. When They were together, They experienced unlimited bliss. But the happiness Radharani felt was millions of times greater than than what Krsna felt. In order to taste the mysteries of Radharani, Lord Krsna took the form of Lord Caitanya, who is none other than a combination of Radha and Krsna. *Sri-krsna-caitanya,radha-krsna nahe anya*. Lord Caitanya appeared in the golden complexion of Radharani, and He was always immersed in the ecstatic mood of Krsna in separation from Radharani. He shared these

confidential states with His closest associates, Svarupa Damodara, Ramananda Raya and a few others. In the last twelve years of His life, He intensified these moods so that He acted like a madman, talking directly to Krsna and transforming His body into physical shapes of ecstasy. By displaying intense separation from Krsna and spreading widely love of God by chanting the holy names, Lord Caitanya revealed the highest peak of *krsna-prema*. His influence has spread worldwide in the form of the Hare Krsna Movement, with millions of advanced devotees chanting Hare Krsna and performing the highest welfare work as given by Lord Caitanya.

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March 2, 2018

Free Write

The ladies clap their hands in rhythm and chant Hare Krsna, and Krsna dances. When they stop chanting, He cries. When they chant again, He stops crying and resumes His dancing. Thus they find a way to keep Krsna happy, by always chanting Hare Krsna. These are Krsna's wonderful pastimes with the elderly *gopis*.

Krsna's dealings with the younger *gopis* are different. Their relationship is boyfriend and girlfriend. Some of the girls are already married, but they treat their husband as a *mayaic* husband and do not allow him to touch them. Krsna and the *gopis* are always looking for rendezvous in the *kunjās*, where they engage in amorous pastimes.

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He began another paragraph in his notebook. Would it be a good one? Could he cut through to the truth? Will he re-read it later and find out what it actually was? Can you cut out the weak parts? I want to keep it all. “The demon Vrkasura touched his hand to his head, and his head fell off. The demon had received a boon from Siva that whosoever head he touched would fall off. He tried it on Lord Siva, who ran for his life. Lord Visnu intervened, and in the form of a small boy tricked Vrkasura into touching his own head.” That was a good paragraph because it came from the Source.

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March 5, 2018

Free Write

Beautiful Diti was overwhelmed by sex desire. She pleaded with her husband Kasyapa to have union with her. Her co-wives had children, but she had none. However, it was nighttime, and Siva was traveling abroad with his ghosts; it was an inauspicious time for conception. Kasyapa was in trance of yoga, and he should not have been disturbed. But Diti was insistent and tugged at Kasyapa’s clothes. She told him it was the duty of the husband to satisfy his wife’s desires. But Kasyapa was not a strong yogi. He should have spoken to her in uncompromising words, but he treated her gently and said he would fulfill her desires. They lay down together, and he consigned his destiny to fate. It was an irreligious act, and the result was the conception of the twin demons Hiranyaksa and Hiranyakasipu. Varaha killed the younger brother Hiranyaksa, but Hiranyakasipu performed extreme austerities to Brahma to become almost immortal and to gain control over the whole universe and harass pious beings. Hiranyakasipu was so physically powerful that he had control over all the demigods and powerful living entities. The only person he could not intimidate was his own five-year-old son,

Prahlada. Prahlada learned Krsna consciousness when he was still in the womb of his mother while she was being protected at the *ashrama* of Narada Muni. Prahlada came out a pure devotee and could not be persuaded or frightened by Hiranyakasipu. When asked by his father, Prahlada gave him Krsna conscious instructions which made his father very angry. In the end, Hiranyakasipu attempted to kill Prahlada. But he was saved by the half-man, half-lion *avatara* of Visnu, Lord Nrsimhadeva. Prahlada Maharaja's prayers to pacify Lord Nrsimha are some of the most beautiful and profound poems in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.

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March 7, 2018

Free Write

There is supposed to be ten inches of snow today. We don't have a snowblower like some of our neighbors do. Baladeva will have to shovel and strain his back. The snowfall is beautiful to behold but a pain to remove. Krsna can make it snow in Goloka Vrndavana, but in a moment He can remove it.

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Maitreya was pleased to answer the inquiries of Vidura. Maitreya was qualified because he had been present when Krsna spoke confidential information to Uddhava just before His disappearance from the earth. Vidura was a pure devotee of Krsna. Krsna used to dine at Vidura's home, and Vidura massaged Krsna's feet. Vidura learned that Krsna thought of him just before He departed from the world, and this made Vidura cry. Vidura was Yamaraja in a former life, and Yamaraja is one of the twelve authorities in

Krsna consciousness.

Vidura was not satiated by Maitreya's speaking; he wanted to hear more and more about Krsna and the spiritual world. Maitreya spoke to him about Lord Narayana in the Vaikuntha planets and the all-spiritual nature of life there. All the residents are four-armed and eternal, just like Narayana. The trees and flowers, animals, birds and bees are *sac-cid-ananda vigraha*. Of all the plants and flowers, the Lord is most fond of Tulasi, and He wears Tulasi garlands. The male residents are present with their beautiful wives, but they are not the slightest bit interested in sense gratification. They only want to glorify Lord Narayana.

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March 8, 2018

Free Write

We are deep in snow, March 8th. When will spring come? The two Vaikuntha doorkeepers who blocked the way of the Four Kumaras were terrified that the *brahmanas'* curse would put them into bodies where they would be forgetful of Narayana. Just as the curse was being delivered, Lord Narayana and His eternal consort Laksmi arrived on the spot. Lord Narayana looked kindly on everyone, including the offensive gatekeepers. When the aroma of the Tulasi on the Lord's lotus feet entered the nostrils of the four sages, their minds underwent a change. They had been worshipers of the impersonal *brahmajyoti*, but when they smelled the Tulasi and saw the Lord's superexcellent form, they changed from *brahmanandis* to pure devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then the Lord dealt with the gatekeepers. He said they could be banished from Vaikuntha for seven lifetimes as ordinary souls. Or, if they chose to be His enemies, their banishment could be reduced to three lives. The gatekeepers said,

“We shall be Your enemies, Sir.” (The Supreme Lord has a fighting spirit. He likes to exercise it as a kind of sport. But He won’t fight with an ordinary *jiva*. He only fights with His pure devotees who take the roles of enemies or demons.) The gatekeepers fell from the spiritual world, but they did not forget Visnu.

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Lord Narayana said the offense committed against the *brahmanas* was actually committed by Him because the master is responsible for the behavior of His servants. He said that for His servants’ wrongdoing, He was prepared to lop off His arm. After becoming angry and cursing the gatekeepers, the Kumaras became guilty and felt that they too had committed an offense. After all, the gatekeepers were residents of Vaikuntha, and *any* offense to a devotee is taken seriously. The Kumaras spoke to the Lord and said whatever punishment He would give they would accept. But they prayed they would not forget His lotus feet. The Lord spoke some words to them, but [those words] were so deep and profound that the sages could not understand them. They could not comprehend why the Lord said He had done some wrong.

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March 9, 2018

Free Write

John Endler, the Baptist minister who is deeply devoted to Krsna consciousness, is preparing a Lenten sermon series. He showed me a wonderful sermon today. He begins with a long passage from the Biblical Psalms. The fallen soul is lamenting to God about his sinful condition. In repentance, he prays to be purified so that he can speak the

glories of the Lord to others. Then John quotes from the songs of *Saranagati* by Bhaktivinode Thakura, which resonate closely to the lamentation and pleafull prayers of the Psalmist. Then John quotes from my book *From Imperfection, Purity Will Come About*: “Bhaktivinode Thakura’s songs are disturbed laments. They make us uneasy. Maybe that’s why we tend to become preoccupied with asking whether he is really talking about himself in those songs. It diverts our attention rather than focusing it where it belongs. That would be too hard to take.”

John is planning more sermons drawing from the Bible, the Vaisnava *acaryas* and my contemporary commentaries. He is getting good response from his congregation. He is enthusiastic, I am glad for him and satisfied that he is using my books in his sermons.

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March 11, 2018

Free Write

Keep the hand moving. Write what you heard in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Varaha, the Boar Avatara, was lifting the planet earth out of the bottom of the ocean. He carried the planet on His tusks. The demon Hiranyaksa came there and began harassing Him. He challenged Him to fight. Varaha was hurt by the demon’s words, but He kept concentrated on the task of lifting the earth. Hiranyaksa called Him a coward and challenged Him to fight. Varaha rescued the earth and balanced it on the water. The two enemies then began to battle with heavy maces. They were both expert and dodged each other’s blows. Lord Visnu was actually immortal, and so He played with the demon as a boy fights playfully with a toy. After exchanging blows for a while, Varaha finally dealt a death blow to the mighty demon, who collapsed unconscious and bleeding. Lord

Brahma and the other demigods celebrated and showered flowers from the upper planets.

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March 12, 2018

Free Write

Often they see a dead body being cremated on the banks of the Ganges at Mayapura, and this gives them “temporary renunciation at the burning *ghat*.” Yasoda-Dulal and his wife Ramila are here from Mayapura. He says Ramila performs an important function by associating with and guiding the second-generation women. They are relaxed with her, but she provides a serious example. Mayapura is so crowded, I am not attracted. I am inclined to *Bhagavad-gita*’s statement that yoga should be practiced in a solitary place. Writing on the banks of the Ganges because you like to do it. Your last page starts to burn up because your time has run out. But you have accumulated enough pages to make a book.

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March 13, 2018

Free Write

I am waiting for breakfast in fifteen minujtes. It is Ekadasi. I have an appointment with the dentist if it doesn’t get cancelled by the predicted snowstorm. Think of Krsna, the Cause of all causes. Gaze at Radha-Govinda in the dim light. I have non-intensive connections with the Divine, but I am keeping my hand on the rudder, steering in Their direction.

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Writing is hard work. My father died of a heart attack at seventy-eight years old. He was a Battalion Captain (retired) in the New York City Fire Department. I found out about his death ten years after the fact. My mother lived into her nineties. I called her on the phone.

“This is Stevie, your son.”

“Where have you been?”

“All over the world. With the Hare Krsna Movement.”

“As long as you are with them, we don’t want anything to do with you.”

She’d said the same thing on the phone about fifteen years previous. I said something about children growing up and choosing a path, and their parents not rejecting them. She didn’t have anything else to say. The last thing I said was, “God bless you.”

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March 14, 2018

Free Write

Yasoda-Dulal showed me a collection of his recent paintings (2017-2018). They were done on inexpensive material purchased in Vrndavana. Mahaprabhu, the director of MOSA (Museum of Sacred Art), bought his series on the *asta-sakhis* and his paintings of each member of the Panca-Tattva. He promised him a one-man exhibit in 2020. Mahaprabhu appreciates Yasoda’s art as taking a place between the “polished realism” of the BBT illustrations and the “outsider” art. Yasoda spends only an hour on a painting but he is very talented, with forty years’ experience. We plan to do art together in the

basement, maybe creating a topic from the same *lila*. I have done no art for a year, so it will be a challenge for me. But the association of a superior artist could be an inspiration for me. Yasoda is certainly leaps ahead of me in talent. Yasoda says he admires my naïve art, but I am not sure I want to continue in that style. What else can I do?

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March 15, 2018

Free Write

I have a simple drawing from last year that I plan to copy as a warmup. It's a man and woman dancing. Yasoda's *asta-sakhis* are more sensuous. But he has them enacting the actual service they render Srimati Radharani. One is sitting all alone in the forest at daybreak. Krsna has failed to make His rendezvous. The *sakhi* is lying on the ground, sobbing. When Krsna finally shows up, He bears the marks of lovemaking with another *gopi* on His body. Lalita is furious and forbids Radharani from talking to Krsna. Visakha is smiling triumphantly because She has Krsna under Her control. The *asta-sakhis* express joy and despair according to their various services to Radharani. I doubt I will attempt to draw the beautiful female forms of the *sakhis*. I am not so qualified as

Yasoda-Dulal. *

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March 18, 2018

Free Write

I am going to start writing in a bound notebook instead of the legal pad. I won't attempt finished pieces for the Viraha Bhavan Journal, but I'll try for freer "writing practice," as Natalie Goldberg teaches. I'll re-read and select excerpts for Viraha Bhavan

Journal that appeal to me. The idea is to loosen up the prose and find the roots of expression. I don't remember what Yasoda-Dulal read out loud from the *Bhagavatam* at breakfast. There was a discussion between two sages. Kardama Muni received a boon from Svayambhuva Manu to have his daughter as a wife, a boon greater than he had hoped for. In the ancient days, the parents picked out the boy, and they had a horoscope made and compared other qualities. In that way the husband and wife were well-matched, and there was no question of divorce. After I wrote that the system existed in "ancient days," I remembered Prabhupada saying that it was in place as recently as one hundred years ago. Nowadays, a girl searches for a boy "in the streets," and the main attraction is sex desire.

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March 19, 2018

Free Write

The President says, "Make America stronger." He has no conception what stronger means. It doesn't mean more smart bombs, missiles and nuclear weapons. Stronger means surrender and depend on Krsna. "Just give up all forms of religion and surrender to Me. I will protect you from sinful reactions. Do not fear."

When Krsna wants to protect someone, no one can kill him; when Krsna wants to kill someone, no one can save him.

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March 20, 2018

Free Write

I dreamt that Jayapataka Maharaja kept his strength in his *sikha*, like the mythical Samson. Maharaja's *sikha* was so long it reached down to the floor. Ramila remarked that my *sikha* was long. But it is not *that* long. Hippies used to join ISKCON and keep their extra-long hair as a *sikha*. That is not the convention anymore. Well-built bodies are admired, but who has the time in devotional service to spend many hours in body-building? If the devotees are attacked, the stronger ones will defend, but someone will dial 9-1-1.

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I am getting two hours extra rest in the morning. I have trained myself to do it. I get up at 2:00 A.M. instead of 12:00 A.M. The doctor is pleased and thinks it will go a long way toward recovering my health. But it won't help my crippled left foot. For ten years, it was misshapen with arthritis, and it was painful to walk any distance. Then about four years ago I went to a surgeon, and he fused two of my bones together. The result was that my condition got worse. Now I walk in my room pushing a four-rubber-wheeled roller. When I go out (mostly to see a doctor), I stumble along, tightly grasping Baladeva's hand. In other words, I don't travel to another city or ride airplanes. I am doing daily exercises taught to me by a physiotherapist, but I don't think it will bring major changes in my immobility. I mostly sit in my chair all day and read or write or rest. Saci-suta said I will "be walking like a lion" by summertime, but he doesn't realize the severity of my condition. I feel it in my bones.

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March 21, 2018

Free Write

Baladeva is watering the potted Tulasi plants. Too much water is not good for her. But he knows just how much she needs. “The healthful state of the Tulasi is the barometer of your devotion.” We offer her incense and sing the Tulasi prayer. We pick off from her leaves and spray her against harmful bugs. Tulasi is Lord Visnu’s favorite plant in Vaikuntha.

I drew a picture of *tala-lila*, Krsna and Balarama killing the ass demons and throwing them onto the tops of the tala fruit trees. Yasoda-Dulal painted a spectacularly colorful Lord Nsrimha tearing apart Hiranyakasipu. There are so many subjects one can draw of Krsna. So many pictures of Krsna’s pure dealing. So many pictures of Krsna’s pure devotees interacting with Him in love. And so many *asuras* fighting with Him. The pictures of Krsna sporting with the *gopis* are the highest, and only rare devotees are qualified to see or paint them.

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March 23, 2018

Free Write

Baladeva is undergoing an operation on his back tomorrow. It will require stitches. He won’t be able to lift more than five pounds for two or three weeks. Under B.’s supervision, Yasoda-Dulal will do the lifting of my body. We rehearsed today, and it went all right. Yasoda said there are not many Godbrothers who are in as good shape as I am, but considering my maladies I disagree. I’ve had two debilitating headaches within six hours, and my crippled left foot is my “old friend,” a constant companion. But I have

Krsna, so I am very fortunate. I have pain, but I am not suffering. The Lord is in my heart as Syamasundara and in all my activities. “. . . Though I walk in the valley of death, I fear no evil . . . The Lord is with me.”

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Kardama Muni and Devahuti conceived in her womb Lord Kapila, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who descended to teach devotional service as *sankhya-yoga*. But Kardama had taken a vow that after the birth of the first child, he would leave home and live as a *sannyasi*. How odd it appears! God had taken birth in his home, but he was leaving. Why? Because Kardama was strictly following the *varnasrama* system. He would wander alone and preach and always think of the Supreme Lord. This sets the scene for Lord Kapila’s teaching *sankhya* to His mother and to the whole world.

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March 24, 2018

Free Write

Radha and Krsna sometimes fought. When Krsna met in a private rendezvous with another gopi, this aroused Radharani’s *mana* (jealous anger). She removed, repainted, or covered up everything black from Her home so She wouldn’t think of Him. Krsna had no access to His beloved. He disguised Himself as a beautiful female barber and entered the presence of Radharani and Her *sakhis* and begged some service. Radharani was attracted to the astoundingly beautiful girl and agreed to have Her hair cut and receive a pedicure. Krsna was in a high state of ecstasy, but He managed to control His hands and successfully cut some of Her hair and gazed at Her beauty. Then He proceeded to trim Her toenails and apply red lac to the soles of Her feet. He became carried away in

ecstasy and wrote the words “Syam, Syam, Syam” on Srimati’s soles. When Radharani discovered what the “female barber” was doing, Krsna was exposed. Radharani’s jealous anger flared up, and She banished Krsna from Her house.

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March 26, 2018

Free Write

Yasoda-Dulal has three more incarnations to do in the “*Dasa Avatara*” series. Today he is working on the full painting of Baladeva threatening to drag Yasoda-devi with His plow. He is standing on His carrier, Ananta-Sesa. Beautiful Yamuna-devi is standing on her carrier, the tortoise, and, on the approach of Balarama, she is melting in ecstasy. I did a small drawing with felt pens of baby Krsna hanging onto the tail of a calf and being dragged over the ground in Vrndavana. He is surrounded by Vrajavasis who are smiling. My drawings are primitive and I’m not so inclined to do them, but it makes Yasoda-Dulal enthusiastic when I work beside him. He is a highly-talented, spontaneous artist.

My neck hurts as I sit in my chair and attempt to write. It is difficult to sustain the Journal.

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March 28, 2018

Free Write

This morning I’m going to play John Coltrane’s “A Love Supreme” and work with oil sticks beside Yasoda-Dulal in the basement. He’s on his third day of Balarama dragging

Yamuna-devi, and he's not fully satisfied with it. I'm going to let go and do more than one abstract drawing. They may not be recognizeably Krsna-conscious in subject matter, but I'll avoid sexual innuendoes. After hundreds of pages of letters to women about her pregnancy, Bernadette Mayer sends a telegram on the last page stating that she has given birth to a baby boy and that she seems joyous.

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March 30, 2018

Free Write

Free writing necessitates keeping the hand moving and writing down first thoughts. Today is "Good Friday" on the Christian calendar. Jesus cried out on the crucifix, "Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" When Rev. John Endler heard Ravindra Svarupa speak these words, a light went off in his brain. John is passionately interested in Gaudiya Vaisnavism, and in particular, separation from Krsna. Jesus's calling out to his Father created an analogy in John's mind through the mood of Radha and Lord Caitanya crying out to Krsna in the spirit of *vipralamba* (distress of wanting to be with Krsna). John will use this in a short sermon he will give along with the other Christian ministers. He will hint to the feelings of *viraha* in Krsna consciousness: "Where are You, Krsna? How can I live without You? We maintain 'hope against hope' that we will see You in our lives."

"You may crush me roughly in Your embrace or make me brokenhearted by not being present before me, but You are my worshipable Lord unconditionally."

(*Siksastakam 8*) The devotee praises the holy names even though he cannot taste the nectar—because he commits offenses to the Names. He goes on chanting regularly a prescribed number of rounds. Even constant offensive chanting will bring one to the

clearing stage, and finally the offenseless stage. There he will experience the highest bliss, selflessly serving the Name-form of the holy name.

The Bhakti Center is located half a block around the corner from 26 Second Avenue, Prabhupada's first temple in New York City/USA, opened in 1966. The devotees obtained the Bhakti Center shortly after Prabhupada's disappearance. The Bhakti Center reminds me of Charles Mingus's jazz composition "Bugs." "Bugs" is fast-paced, mostly improvisation, where the

musicians blow the bugs and spider-webs out of their instruments. Similarly, the Bhakti Center is intently alive with rhythmic *kirtana*, dancing, lecturing, art galleries, informal *krsna-kathah*, *prasadam* distribution, book distribution, dramas, etc. It is a favorite New York base of Radhanatha Swami, Dhanurdhara Swami, Jayadvaita Swami, Vaisesikha Prabhu, and other leaders. They worship full-size marble *murtis* of Radha-Krsna and one of Gaura with His right arm upraised. The Bhakti Center is guaranteed to blow the bugs out of anyone who visits.

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March 31, 2018

Free Write

My Gauranga at Viraha Bhavan has both arms raised and His legs crossed, dancing. A GBC representative asked Mahanidhi Swami to give up his residence near Radha-kunda and come live in New Delhi, but he refused. Yasoda-Dulal asked me if he could visit Mahanidhi Swami, and I said yes. He is very renounced and aware of esoteric *bhakti* knowledge. But he has some irregularities. I heard he took initiation from a *babaji*. Still, I consider him an old friend. I believe I gave him *sannyasa* initiation in

ISKCON. He served as temple president in Baltimore for several years when Baltimore was in my GBC zone. It was a congenial relationship.

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April 1, 2018

Free Write

Kowit opined that “First thoughts, best thoughts” was nonsense. He insisted on planning and structuring the poem. But there’s something to be said for “Don’t think.” I have lived most of my life. I’m in old age, and I have maladies. It is Easter Sunday. Haridasa phoned me. He said he had many people over his house. I asked him if there was any talk of the Resurrection. He said no. But he quoted Sri Krsna, “Of seasons, I am flower-bearing Spring.” Come to think of it, we didn’t talk about Jesus at our lunch gathering today. Tomorrow John, the Baptist minister, will visit, and he will certainly tell us about the Good Friday and Easter sermons at his church.

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April 2, 2018

Free Write

Now it’s Monday and it’s snowing, and some is sticking to the road. This changes our plans. Yasoda will go shopping for a pair of shoes with Baladeva, and he won’t be painting in the basement. Neither will I. I may do free writing if I can keep my hand moving. I consistently dream of different ways to write. I dreamt I had an intuition of writing a series of columns about baseball with a Krsna-conscious theme. Tattva-vit challenged me that it wasn’t a good idea, was redundant and mundane. I thought he didn’t understand my intended approach. It would be high literature, yet relaxed free-writing. The repeated dreams indicate that I am grasping (even in my unconscious) for a new way to write. Like the music that Ornette Coleman and his men produced in the

1950s and 1960s. Break down the hinges! Break down the doors themselves! The dreams tantalize me, the intense desire to write but not knowing the way.

Maybe this “free write journal” is the writing I am looking for, if I can just keep it up, expand and improve it. Yasoda wants to paint a picture of a tiger who ate a saintly person who had just honored rice *prasadam*, and the tiger is going back to Godhead. I said I doubted the authenticity of the story. But he said it’s from the *Narada-pancaratra*. Yasoda knows many stories from outside Prabhupada’s books. I began a preliminary sketch of Krsna and the cowherd boys blocking Radharani and the *sakhis* with a toll gate.

Natalie Goldberg wrote a novel and showed it to her friends and editors. Many of them praised the fine writing, but most of them threw up their hands and exclaimed, “It has no plot!” One of her friends encouraged her and said, “Plots are not so important. Plots are unzen-like, aren’t they?” She went back and reworked her book, taking some of the advice she received, but she kept her zen-like heart, regardless of demand for a plot.

Balarama is older, but He is just as eternal, youthful, and as strong as His younger brother. Sometimes They disagree, as when Krsna favored Arjuna’s kidnapping Subhadra. Balarama befriended Duryodhana, who was Krsna’s enemy. But Krsna and Balarama teamed up against any attacking demons. Jayadvaita Swami worships Krsna-Balarama Govardhana Silas. Krsna and Balarama were at an 800 ft. mountain peak when the demon Jarasandha set fire to it. The two Brothers easily jumped to the ground.

Krsna’s *gopa* friends don’t treat Him with awe and formality. If they did, it would cripple their playful, intimate relationship in the *vatsalya-rasa*, where they wrestle with Him, climb on His shoulders and call out, “What kind of a big man are You?”

April 3, 2018

Free Write

I had just finished writing a book and was looking for a publisher. Gaura-purnima approached me and said he had just finished a book. He offered to give me the cash advance when he found his publisher. I told him, “Don’t you know how hard it is to sell your book?” He replied that his book was special, and it was sure to find a buyer. It was about military science. He said in World War II, the ships, planes and submarines had difficulty in locating the enemy’s shore from a distance, but he offered evidence that by the modern advanced technology it was easy for an attacker to locate and strike at an enemy’s shore. I was curious, but I didn’t want to take Gaura-purnima’s money for his own book. What was my book about? Was it steering to Krsna?

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Yasoda-Dulal and Ramila leave tomorrow after a three-week stay. Yesterday was Ramila’s birthday. I made her a birthday card with colored felt pens. At the top, I wrote, “Happy Birthday Ramila! April 3, 2018.” I made a big heart extending from her body. Inside the heart, I began with the words: “Mayapura/Yasoda-Dulal/Jnananivasa/ the Deities/the Ganges/the devotees.” Underneath, I wrote the words: “Viraha Bhavan/Satsvarupa Maharaja, Baladeva/(Yasoda-Dulal, Ramila).” And at the bottom of the heart, I wrote, “A.Z./Ramila’s mum.”

For lunch, in honor of Ramila’s birthday, Baladeva served her and the other devotees mixtures of deluxe ice cream, including raspberry and “cow patties,” connoisseur chocolate. Everyone loved it! At 5:00 P.M., after my nap, I had the bright idea to continue the party, and I sent Baladeva out for more deluxe ice cream. Ramila had posted my birthday card on her Facebook website, and her three children phoned her

from New Zealand. They were happy to hear she had two servings of ice cream because they know she is an ice cream addict.

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Suta Goswami says it is better to meditate on the Supreme Lord's transcendental body rather than attempt to meditate on the whole body, which may lead to impersonalism. Begin by meditating on the lotus feet, then up to the knees, and higher. Meditate on His navel, which is the source of all the universes. Meditate on His hips, which are covered with a yellow dhoti. Meditate on His broad chest and His nipples. Meditate on His strong, graceful neck, which has lines in it like those of a conch shell. The most beautiful feature of His body is His smiling face, with His beautiful pearl-like teeth, His raised nose and His lotus-like eyes. Meditate on His blue-black hair and His valuable helmet. Then reverse the process and meditate on the parts of the Lord's body in a descending order. This is the process of *arati*. In the round, all is perfect.

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April 6, 2018

Free Write

Don't write more than you absolutely have to. Two males ride on the front of the horse. Behind them, two young people ride facing in the opposite direction. Behind them, two more youngsters ride, facing forward. Behind them ride two grown-up men on a second horse, facing forward. Behind them, on the same horse ride two young boys, facing forward. It is complicated to see. Even more complicated and inconceivable is to

see a group of gopis in the shape of elephants attached all around Krsna's body, and He is riding them. You have to see this to believe it.

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April 7, 2018

Free Write

It's April, and I am reading a book (but not the *Bhagavatam*) to inspire my journal. It's poetry, and it's not Krsna conscious, so how can it help me? "The perfect person is a Vaisnava," said Lord Kapila to Devahuti, who was inquiring about that. This other book is nonsense by Bernadette Mayer, but I keep reading it.

Jayadvaita Swami is coming in May. He can police some of the books I'm reading, but some I will hide, like Kerouac, Clark Coolidge, Mayer. Some will be so obscure, he won't understand. But he'll see it as gibberish. I won't hide *everything*. Let him see what his crazy, deviant friend is up to.

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April 8, 2018

Free Write

I dreamt that Prabhupada was very ill. He was sitting in a room in New Vrndavana, and many devotees were in the room with him. He said he decided he would pack this body with mud. It was not a final burial, but something temporary. I left the room to do something. But when I came back, all the men were gone with Prabhupada. Only the women remained, and they were decorating the room. Bhagavan and Dhananjaya had volunteered to cover themselves with mud and go into a hole with Prabhupada. I asked what clothing they were wearing. Palika devi dasi told me they were wearing white

gamsas and burlap leggings. I was impressed with how brave and intimate these two devotees were to go with Prabhupada, and I wanted to go too. Previously when I was in the room Prabhupada had recognized me. I bowed down, full *dandavats*, in front of him and cried tears. He said the tears were a good symptom. But Palika advised me not to go out to where they were putting mud on Prabhupada. She said I was delicate and it was very cold outside, and there would be many Bengali nondevotees there. It would be a rough scene. I considered what she said and hesitated in going. I could stay indoors and meditate in devotion on what they were doing with Srila Prabhupada. They would notice I was missing, but they could know I was sincere. Later I heard that Prabhupada had been covered with mud and had left his body. We all became very sad in separation.

Prabhupada was not cremated but put into a pit and covered with mud and lime. And then the pit was filled up with dirt. A *samadhi* would be built later over the spot.

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There is so little time to write in the afternoon. I usually wake up from my nap at 4:30 P.M. Then I exercise five minutes on the bike. Haridasa phones from Maryland and takes up twenty-five minutes. A devotee comes up with an offering for the Deities at 6:00 P.M., and that's an interruption. And then the day starts to wind down. Baladeva comes up at 6:15 with pills and a shake. Time is up. I start my evening rest at 6:30 P.M. No time to stretch out or find a subject.

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April 9, 2018

Free Write

Your dentures are so loose, it's better to use adhesive, as when you're giving a lecture. If you try for short periods without adhesive, they would just fall out. But somehow when you eat without adhesive the dentures don't fall out. You can eat breakfast without dentures. The famous yogi Karoli Baba was toothless, but it didn't seem to curb his popularity or charisma. I'll eventually have to stop using dentures and be a toothless devotee, eating soft food. As for the social aspect, I can take advantage of the senior citizen privilege and not give a darn what other people think.

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April 10, 2018

Free Write

"President Trump attacks Amazon." A loss of huge sums of money. How will they be able to carry on? I just glanced at the article, the photos and cartoons. I don't know what the argument is about. I went to the trash pail to re-read it, but Baladeva had taken the magazine out.

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A full *Bhagavatam* chapter about the hellish planets and how one comes to them. The impersonalist/ atheist doesn't believe they are real. The hellish conditions are present even on this planet.

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April 11, 2018

Free Write

It is still cold, two weeks into spring. I can't go out riding on my four-wheel roller. Siva took the water from Visnu's lotus feet onto his head, and therefore he is glorious and beautiful. Ordinary people think Siva is ghastly because he is covered in the dust of the crematorium and he wears a necklace of human skulls, and snakes encircle his limbs. But his attractive wife Parvati sees him as powerful and handsome, and also the ghosts who travel with him see him that way.

Siva is known as *Asutosa*, one who is easily pleased and easily angered. He is the friend of the most fallen. But Krsna is known as all-attractive. He is especially appealing to all the beautiful young women in Vrndavana. They love His sidelong glances, His ever-fresh garlands and His perfect male form. Krsna is more beautiful than thousands of Cupids, and all the inhabitants of Vraja love Him more than their own lives.

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I started out on the first four.

I started my rounds

and rested at 230

I went up to 238

I paused at 2:36 AM

Then I stopped at 286 and then at 296.

I paused again at 300

and at 350.

I went all the way to 2:40 AM but not further than that.

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April 17, 2018

Free Write

When he was here several weeks ago, Muktavandhya prepared *kichari*, but it wasn't to my liking. He made it with many beans. He added some vegetables. I preferred the way Jayadvaita Swami takes it every day. He asks his cook to make it yellow, with no beans or vegetables added. He adds salt. Muktavandhya will be making *kichari* today, and I will give him directions.

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Later I spoke to him in my room. I asked him how he liked the Boston temple. He said it was smooth. He likes the temple president, Vanamali Pandita, who is a disciple of Radhanatha Swami, and who is approximately 35 years old and married. Mukta then said he wanted to go downstairs and get his notes. Somebody told him we have to read Prabhupada's books in a certain order: first *Bhagavad-gita*, then *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, then *Caitanya-caritamrta*, etc. He said that in the days when Prabhupada was here, we didn't read the books in any order. He is an "old-school" man and likes to do things as we used to do. He said there is a tendency in the Indian congregation now to ask questions for which they want orderly, analytic answers ending in anagrams—and "B" means *bhakti*. I wasn't sure what he meant, and I didn't want to pursue it. Once, a *sannyasi* was glorifying Lord Caitanya and he said, "Krsna doesn't want anything to do with us." We both agreed that sounded too extreme. He had about twenty minutes of questions. Then I told him that I liked the *kichari* that he made today and asked him if he would cook it tomorrow. He said he's not a cook and doesn't know many preparations. I know he can make *upma*. I asked him if he could do it tomorrow. His face lit up, and he said positively, "Oh yes, I can make *upma*." He said he would discuss with Baladeva as to who would cook tomorrow.

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April 19, 2018

Free Write

Madhumati is researching Trump's attempt to put a question on the 2020 Census: "Are you or family members U.S. Citizens?" As soon as he made this proposal, over a dozen states sued against it. Madhumati said he is mostly aiming at immigrants who are here illegally. I don't have to worry about the two devotees who are coming here from Trinidad with cards printed "Permanent U.S. Resident." So I will stop being in anxiety about what Trump is trying to do with the 2020 Census questionnaire.

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I asked Madhumati whether she is bored here. She resolutely replied, "I am never bored." For example, she said she is reading Bhaktivinode Thakura's translated songbooks, which are in our library. Today I am going to remind her of what she said and refer it to Dhanurdhara Swami. He is always busy giving lectures at yoga centers and other venues. He asked Baladeva about me, "Does he ever get bored?" (always sitting in my room, not giving lectures). But the answer is no, I am not bored. I am either writing or reading or chanting, answering email, taking darsana of Radha-Govinda or occasionally coping with a headache. I am alert and not bored, like Madhumati.

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April 20, 2018

Free Write

Dream: I had a small gray notebook. Every time I wrote in it, I was residing in Mayapura. Sometimes I had life-changing realizations. Each time was new, and I had just arrived in Mayapura. One time I had been there for quite a while and I hadn't written in my notebook. Yet there were urgent things I had to say. I was anxious to write. The other devotees in Mayapura were not anxious. They just went about their duties. Though I had no time in which to write, I sketched down some questions and answers: "Why do the dogs and hogs look so disgusting, fornicating in a pile?" "Bharadraja began to put some order to posters and paintings, and devotees applied themselves to cooking." "Why am I here?"

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April 22, 2018

Free Write

Sati decided to give up her body because she was ashamed she was connected to a father who cursed her husband, Siva, in so many ways. Especially when Sati went to the second sacrifice, where she was ignored, and Siva was not offered any mantras or sacrifices. Daksa didn't offer a greeting to his daughter Sati. Sati spoke angrily to her father. She sat down and raised the life-air from her navel up to her stomach, then up to the neck, and then to the breasts . . . Then the embryo shifted after nine months. In the womb, the baby develops consciousness and prays to the Supreme Lord to get a better body next time. In Sati's case, she burst her body into flames and took another body as the next wife of Lord Siva.

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April 24, 2018

Free Write

We have had wintry weather for the entire month of April. There has been frequent snowfall, and it has been too cold for me to go out and take a walk (which I need for exercise). In Goloka Vrndavana, the weather is always ideal. Flowers are always blooming. Fruits are always available, and the many birds are singing melodically. The real perfection of the dhama is that Krsna lives there, and He and His associates are *sac-cid-ananda vigraha*. Everything is spiritual and not subject to destruction. Prabhupada titled his magazine, “back to home, back to Godhead.” He and all the pure devotees desire and work for the liberation of all living entities and their return back to Godhead. It is not easy to attain, but Lord Caitanya has made it as easy as possible. One can give up all material attachments and attain the spiritual world simply by chanting Hare Krsna.

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April 25, 2018

Free Write

I’m going to end the Journal now. I don’t think it has to have a closure or plot solution. After all, it was done mostly as free writing, the practice of unpremeditated composition. I just wrote what came to my mind. I was in weak health, and it was the best I could do to “keep the hand moving.” But I am not ashamed of it. It has a spontaneous quality and regular Krsna conscious content. It is accessible *krsna-katha*, mixed with the vagaries of my mind. Given my old age and debilitated physical health. I think I will do more of these journals, as they do not demand sustained discipline, and

they give repeated chances at *krsna-katha*. I hope readers will like this and want more.

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Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare