

## *Free Write Session #2*

August 20, 2018

We're going back to home, back to Godhead. Not "May we all meet in Heaven Café/Writing for Eternity." Or we may not go back to Godhead after this lifetime. But it is our goal, or devotional service life after life, joining up with Prabhupada.

We talked on Skype with Ishana and Arjuna in Moscow. Baladeva described them as "small-minded." They don't know how to expand the distribution. It was nice seeing their faces from so far away. They are challenged by many obstacles, but they are fully devoted.

Harold Kushner, in *When Bad Things*

*Happen to Good People,*

speculates that God is

not all-powerful and

cannot be expected

to stop terminal diseases that tragically kill

children or stop big airplane

crashes. He says we should  
forgive God for not being able to stop  
bad things from happening but be grateful  
to Him for all the wonderful  
solace He brings. Kushner  
writes nothing about the laws of *karma* or the minute  
free will a *jiva* has that enables  
him to commit sins and face  
the reactions. Kushner allows  
himself to personally speculate  
on the profound  
mysteries of God's nature  
without strictly adhering  
to words of scripture,  
such as the Vedas  
wherein all the secrets  
are revealed  
and should be accepted  
in faith and without  
interpretation. Scripture

is the science of God  
 and may be relied on  
 in all circumstances.

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What are you going to do tomorrow? I don't think I can keep this up, but it is the "no-fail" process. I just have to keep the pen moving. Bow down to Prabhupada. How is Narayana Kavaca doing with his novel? I am not even a writer any more, except I want to do my daily practice. I have been negligent in my physical exercises, so I am out of shape. But I keep in shape by free writing. I sacrifice the body for the mind. What am I doing to cultivate the soul in devotional service? I am creeping along. I am offering four sticks of incense to the Deities in the early morning while I silently chant my *japa*. *Na dhanam na janam na sundarim*. I don't aspire for material assets. "All I desire is Your causeless devotional service birth after birth."

"This Is SDG's Personal Library. Not For Sale or Borrowing. Don't Touch Books." He's putting a label on the binding of each volume of *EJW* and keeping them in order. I am compiling the poems from each volume with the intention of publishing a book, *POEMS from EVERY DAY, JUST*

*WRITE*. I like how the poems, written in the late 1990s, are coming out.

Write . . . it is not artificial, it is religious. The Catholic rituals from childhood. The priest wearing vestments and waving a frankincense burner--a metal pot hung on a frame containing burning coals and plenty of smoking incense, heavily aromatic . . . reciting prayers in Latin. Baladeva told me that when he attended Sunday school, his mother would give him a quarter to place in the basket when it was passed. He would hang on to the quarter, dip it into the basket, swish it around with the other coins and pull out his hand still hanging on to the quarter. Later that morning he would spend it in a soda shop, buying himself a vanilla shake.

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The closest I felt to God was when I was with Srila Prabhupada. Krsna is the worshipable God, and Prabhupada is the worshiper-God. Then why did I want to leave his service when I was his permanent servant? It was because as his personal servant, I didn't get to preach. I saw the other *sannyasis* coming to report to him about their preaching service, and I envied them. I wanted to serve Prabhupada in separation, giving college lectures, heading up a party of *brahmacaris* who distributed books all over the United States by going to the universities and approaching the

professors disguised as BBT book salesmen. I was a young *sannyasi*, and I was too restless just doing the domestic and menial duties of a servant for my spiritual master. So I left his intimate *vapuh* service, but fortunately he was very pleased with the results of our library party, where we gave him news of professors buying sets of his books and writing congratulatory letters praising the books of Prabhupada. He liked those letters and sales very much.

Ghanashyama told me I was too honest to be effective as a salesman of full sets and standing orders of Prabhupada's books. After a while, I stopped going out, and as a *sannyasi*, I took the role of controlling the fierce competition of the devotees on the party for who wanted to go see the best, most likely professors. Subhananda was scholarly, and he knew the reputations of the professors and could talk on their level. But he couldn't clinch a sale for a standing order. I mostly picked Ghanasyama and Mahabuddhi to go to the best professors because they were clearly the most successful salesmen. And each Saturday I would meet with the devotees individually and find out how they were doing, what problems they sensed.

We mostly stayed away from the temples, sleeping overnight in campgrounds. When we did get a chance to visit at a temple, it was special. One time we arrived at the Los Angeles temple just when their *sundara*

*arati* was in progress. We ran into the temple and saw that the wonderful *kirtaniya* Agnidev was leading the *kirtana*. We gathered tightly around him and supported his *kirtana*. We saw how attractive it was to sing in a temple with a lead *kirtaniya* and many devotees and beautiful Deities. But as soon as the long, riotous *kirtana* was over, we showered and shaved and got ourselves organized for driving to the next nearest university to continue our vocational service, book distribution to the libraries of the colleges. UCLA was sprawling with thousands of students and many professors, and Ghanasyama and Mahabuddhi sold separate standing orders of all of Prabhupada's books in two separate departments. They showed the letters praising Prabhupada's books from other prominent professors we had visited, and this was very effective. We felt so joyous after leaving a campus after having sold standing orders. California was filled with colleges, and we didn't want to miss any of them.

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Prabhupada wrote the purports to the prayers of the elephant Gajendra, who was losing in his fight with the crocodile, who was growing stronger in the water. Prabhupada states that we should stay in our natural element so that we can be strong to fight against *maya*. (The crocodile was

a creature at home in the water, whereas the elephant is an animal of the land.) Then Prabhupada makes a digression and discusses *sannyasa* in ISKCON. He says he has awarded *sannyasa* to many very young men, but it has often turned out unsuccessful. The young men have broken the vows of celibacy and fallen down to sex affairs. Prabhupada, however, is encouraging. He says if one has found it too difficult to live without sex life, he should not give up the fight against *Maya* but transfer to the *grhastha ashrama*, where sex is allowed. Then, like the crocodile in the water, he will be in his natural element and will be strong to fight against *Maya*. This is a compassionate and encouraging message offered by Prabhupada while commenting on the fight between the elephant and the crocodile in the Eighth Canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

At breakfast and at lunch I have a devotee read aloud from *Srimad Bhagavatam*, and the rest of the devotees do not engage in conversation. Each meal's reading lasts about half an hour. I get in an hour of attentive aural reception of the *Bhagavatam* every day, while reverently honoring *prasadam*.

I go to bed at 7:00 P.M. and ring the cowbell at 2:00 A.M. to wake up Baladeva. We go through about 25 minutes of wake-up rituals, taking pills and drinking medicine. Then I go into the other room and begin my *japa*. I

usually finish sixteen rounds before going to shower at 6:00 A.M. and dressing for the day. Then I say attentive *Gayatri* mantras and read and write before breakfast at 7:30 A.M. At 8:00 A.M. I take a nap and then prepare myself to do physical exercises at 10:30 A.M. But I have been neglecting the exercises, and instead I do reading and writing. I say noon *Gayatris* and go down to share lunch with the devotees in the *ashram* at 1:00 P.M. In the afternoon I do more writing and reading, or I talk with a devotee. I answer correspondence. I like my quiet, creative life.

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Just write and let words come out. I was with Srila Prabhupada in 1977 several times. I was with him in the very last days, including his disappearance. I was not one of the few devotees who served him physically in his upstairs room. But in the very last days he came down and laid on his big bed. He was now completely inward, not talking to anyone, not even Tamala Krsna Goswami. Starting in the morning, I stationed myself standing at the foot of the bed. He had his eyes closed, but I had a perfect view of his form, his emaciated face and thin limbs (from fasting), his nobility, his lonesome--(or was he already communing with the spiritual beings in the next life?). I hadn't eaten anything, and I developed a



headache. But in the light of what Prabhupada was going through, I considered my pain insignificant and tolerated it without even taking a painkiller. The hours passed slowly, and I chanted on my beads and watched my spiritual master seeming in trance. I had made my heartfelt goodbye to Srila Prabhupada the day before while massaging talcum powder on his feet. I had felt grief then and prayed to Prabhupada for the strength to follow his *vani* with other disciples. Now at the foot of his bed, on his last day, I just felt numb. In the early afternoon the *kaviraja*, who was Prabhupada's attending physician, called several of us GBC members aside. He told us that Prabhupada had four more hours to live, but if we rushed him to the emergency room in the hospital, maybe they could prolong his life. We disciples had been well-trained by our spiritual master. Many times he had told us, "Don't take me to the hospital." We told the *kaviraja* what Prabhupada wanted and he honored it. We went back to our vigils around his bed. His sister, Pisima, placed Tulasi leaves on his forehead and sprinkled him with drops of Ganges water. Around 6:00 P.M. they opened the doors and allowed all the devotees of Krsna-Balarama Mandir to enter, including women and children. The room filled up with those who loved Prabhupada. Some of them were weeping, but they began a Hare Krsna *kirtana*, which grew tumultuous. Prabhupada remained inward

with his eyes closed. Around a quarter after seven his body moved, and his legs did a little dance. Then just as the *kaviraja* predicted, at 7:30 P.M. (November 14, 1977), his mouth fell open, and we could all understand that Prabhupada had passed away. Crying broke out here and there.

Bhavananda stood on a chair and requested that everyone should leave the room so that they could prepare the body for funeral (cleaning him and changing him into fresh garments). I didn't cry; I was still numb. I went apart from the crowds of mourners and retired to a room in the guesthouse. There I opened a notebook and began writing of the day's events and my feelings, which were mainly non-emotional and frozen. Later in the evening, they placed Prabhupada's body sitting up on his *vyasasana*, and some of us were allowed to offer *aratika* articles while Narayana Maharaja, from the Gaudiya Matha in Mathura, sang *Ye anilo prema dhana*: the lament for the departure of the Vaisnava. Most of the devotees stayed awake for the night, and at sunrise they placed Prabhupada's body sitting erect on a palanquin and carried him in a procession, stopping at the seven major temples, where the leaders came out and offered garlands and other gifts. It was a sad procession, and some of the devotees were still crying tears. We returned to Krsna Balarama Mandira by midmorning and prepared to bury Prabhupada. A deep, narrow ditch had been dug by the

workers. With the help of Narayana Maharaja, Prabhupada's body was anointed with mantras, and he was lowered into the ditch, where he sat upright. He was covered by protective white lime. The devotees then began throwing in handfuls of dirt until the ditch was filled up. These are my sketchy notes, written some 40 years after the fact.

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I want to include my readers in this journal, readers now and in the future. I keep this journal for my readers that they may learn of the path ahead, that we may traverse it together, though I may have gone many years before. I offer this to you that you may bear witness to these final years of my life in this world. A journal; a journal that serves as my weekly communication with my readers and disciples. A journal which includes and addresses the greater aspects of who I am. A journal that presages another message in whatever way I am inspired: a poem, a prayer, a memory, a free write, etc.

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**August 23, 2018**

26 Second Avenue. Will we be able to keep that precious spot, or will the owners tear it down? I met Swamiji there, fell in love with him and

became his initiated disciple on Radhastami. I saw him every day from July through December 1966, sang in response to his lead in *kirtana*, listened submissively to his lectures (half-understanding them), and gathered around him in his room on the nights when he wasn't giving lectures. I gave him money from my welfare job, and typed his manuscripts in my apartment. He said to me as I left his apartment after delivering a stack of my typing of his *Introduction to Gitopanisad*: "This typing isn't mechanical. If you love me, then I'll love you." These words broke through all my obstacles to loving. They made me ecstatic, and I left his room a very happy boy. Here he was, giving his disciples transcendental bliss and eternal wisdom, and what did he want back? "If you love me, then I will love you." (In his Radhastami lecture to his initiates, he mentioned *guru daksine*. I hadn't heard the word before. *Guru daksine* is the debt the disciple owes the guru for being initiated. But the *sastra* says one is a joker if he thinks he can pay back the guru for the enormous gift he has bestowed on his disciple. The spiritual master has freed the disciple from the karmic reactions to his sins, and made him sinless. That's worth more than any number of billions of dollars). In the Radhastami lecture, 1966, Prabhupada said the disciple could pay back the *guru-daksine* by dedicating himself to

preaching the knowledge he had received from his guru. Hearing this opened a whole new vista and responsibility to my initiation.