Awake, Atman, Return To Vaikuntha

An Assortment of Creative Writing & Poetry from Behind the Razor Wire

by Michael L. Bonic

"Awake, Atman, Return To Vaikuntha" is a collection of creative writing & poetry written during my incarceration in 2004 and 2011-13. Reflecting my return to Krsna Conscious spiritual life, my writing reflects the Vedic perspective and links my life before, during and after incarceration.

Creative Writing & Poetry
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Prisons Foundation  
P.O. Box 58043  
Washington, DC 20037

To: Prisons Foundation, Attn: Dennis Sobin  

Dear Dennis,

Thanks for the encouraging letter, Dennis. Here's my “Awake, Atman, Return To Vaikuntha: An Assortment of Creative Writing & Poetry from Behind the Razor Wire”. Hopefully the cover page is in order. Creative writing has indeed been therapeutic, and has allowed me to review my entire life – before, during, and after – prison. Through returning to my spiritual philosophy (Hare Krsna, ISKCON), I’ve sorted through all the chaos of my former reckless life, and have restored order back to my life, guided by spiritual knowledge. I’m more centered than ever, and I hope my writing reflects how uplifting eternal love for Krsna and Radha are and inspires others how one can use his time of incarceration responsibly and resourcefully to get his life back on track.

The second half is poetry, and the first half is “creative writing”.

I’m now editing my nonfiction manuscript “Prisoners Of Samsara”. I hope to send you 300 of its 400 pages of it by summer. Hopefully I’ll be able to point literary agents or publishers (besides family and friends) to the website, who’ll be able to read ¼ of the book and decide if they want to publish it.

Enclosed is a SASE.

Thanks for the amazing opportunity to get my writing recognized online!

Peace, Truth & Love!!

Michael L. Bonic
Awake, Atman, Return To Vaikuntha

Islanders Adrift: Creative Writing (2011-12)

Where Were You?
The Need for Magic in our Lives
Autobiography In 5000 Words
Returning To Vancouver Island
Circles/Lifestyles
Planning For Dummies
I Get High With a Little Help from Cannabis
The Allure of Corporeal Beauty

Vaikuntha Rays: Poems


Jet Set Headset/Bruised Hearts
Real Dream
Looking Forward Into Yesterday (Japanese perspective)
Hope

Part II: Vaikuntha Rays: Returning to Spiritual Life (2011,13)

Driftwood
Awaken From This Dream
Untitled
Five Acres
The Grave Of Fantasy
In The Brahman Effulgence
Happy Just To Be Alive
Take Refuge In The Wilderness (A Message To Myself)
Before And After
Cut Down The Banyan Tree
Tame The Wild Horses
Dream World Of Samsara
Wild Horses Of Free Will And Independence
Where Snow Falls Into Surf
Window To Another World
At The Edge Of Space

Dedicated to Sri Sri Radha-Krsna
Where Were You?:

Where were you when The Beatles broke up? When Woodstock went down? Where were you when the waves were breaking 4-6 feet at Number Threes and we were surfing Town breaks after school? When the last Diamond Head Crater Festival played? When Fleetwood Mac & the Bee Gees were topping the charts and the Led Zeppelin stoners split from the coke-addled craze of disco dancers worshipping John Travolta? Where were you when “The Dark Side Of The Moon” topped Billboard’s charts and Blondie, The Cars, The Ramones and The Police of New Wave transitioned into Madonna and Billy Idol? Where were you when John Lennon was shot?

Do you remember the day you met the girl who was buying a stairway to heaven? Whose love teleported you over the rainbow into her Japanese world? Do you remember the magic of worshipping Radha and Krsna in the temple, bowing down to the lotus feet of Govinda? When you were overjoyed to have found God in His true form, to love Govinda and Radha and be drawn into Their Eternal Love? Do you remember trying to navigate through the higher octave of enlightened spiritual folk, but, blundering big-time, you left the lady of your dreams? Yeah, I do.

I pinch myself but Today doesn’t disappear. I’m in prison paying for my karmic dues, then pinch myself again. Apparently, through experiencing this avoidable “fate”, my wayward heart and drifting mind have returned to Radha and Govinda. As Bo Lozoff says, there’s “spiritual purpose behind every situation we face”. Now, spiritually-centered, I want to worship the Deities in the temple again and chant the holy Names of the Lord to be free. Seeing how out of touch with friends and family I’ve been I’ve been writing from behind the razor wire to pass the time, getting my head getting stronger everyday, listening to Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young over and over. The 1970s seem like yesterday. The waves are still breaking at Number Threes and Diamond Head; they’ve not changed a bit. Once an islander, you’re always an islander - especially when your home was on the side Diamond Head Crater, or just a few blocks away. Maybe I’ll return one day. But not before moving to the far north of America’s last frontier - Alaska. This city boy’s gotta get back to the garden, dial into the slow pace of rural living and get grounded in Spiritual Life.
The Need for Magic in our Lives:

Hiba and Kika talk about the need for Magic in our lives in “Off The Map”. Before getting to the excerpts from their book, bear with my perspective on Magic. Who needs magic in their lives? I, for one, certainly do. Senses of magic include: [2a] an extraordinary power or influence seemingly from a supernatural source; b) something that seems to cast a spell: ENCHANTMENT [= 1a] the act or art of enchanting; b) the quality or state of being enchanted]. Enchant means: [vt] 2] to attract and move deeply; rouse to ecstatic admiration <the scene *ed to the point of tears>. ENCHANT means to draw another by exerting a powerful influence and stresses the appeal of the agent and the degree of delight evoked in the subject <hopelessly *ed by her beauty><*ed by the experience of greeting the Deities Radha and Govinda in the temple before dawn].

I thought taking a trip on acid with my good friend in 1979 would spark some Magic in my life, but I wound up freaking out in a rabbit hole of paranoia and doing a stint in the psych ward (where the real crazy folk are) till my nervous system recovered. Since I didn’t have the right frame of mind & knew I wasn’t ready, but I took it anyways, I deserved this. Instant karma: You reap what you sow. No probs: “What doesn’t kill makes you stronger...” So I left Hawaii with Rock Fever and found the girl buying a stairway to heaven. She could’ve been one of the Japanese girls in Pink Floyd’s “The Final Cut” music video. She was a living, breathing, walking beauty with eroticism flowing through her Japanese blood, 5 years my senior. A modern dance student on a 2-year visa living life to the fullest in Hollywood, a lover of Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin and Jim Morrison who wanted to live in America. Magic happened. We connected, and in NYC got married at City Hall, 60 Center Street, with our friend Jazz as our Best Man. What could be better than mind-numbing, nightly erotic sex with your spouse who’s got the quintessential perfect hot bod? Getting her pregnant and having a baby so that [in theory] she’ll live with you for the rest of your life.

[CUT]
Magic may also enter our lives through departing from conventional paradigms and taking to a Spiritual Path. Exercise your religious freedom and follow a religious or spiritual path in search of God, Love, Peace of Mind & Eternal Truths. It's like sampling and selecting different flavors at Baskin-Robbins 31 Flavors until you find the one that's just right. Your religious freedom puts you in the driver's seat - it's you who decides. There are no "rights and "wrongs" in choosing a Spiritual Life to navigate through this material world so full of suffering. Consider: there's only One Supreme Lord/Deity who created the material and spiritual universes. Who is/are He/She/They? Yahweh/Jehovah, Jah, Allah, Kransa? The answer is - all of the above. They're really all manifestations of Kransa, including the Buddha: Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism...In God's House all the paths going up the mountain of God/Deity lead, ultimately, to the summit of Kransa - the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If you want to know Him better, read the Vedic literature and follow the path of Bhakti Yoga - the Way of Eternal Love. The Magic of Bhakti Yoga derives from perceiving the relationship between Kransa (the Supreme Lord) and His Eternal Consort & Conjugal Lover, Radharani. LOVE goes that deep - eternal conjugal love is enshrined in the Deities, in the relationship between Radha and Govinda. Their eternal conjugal love makes Romeo & Juliet's earthly love pale in comparison. Don't settle for the "God is love" advertisement in Christianity that doesn't deliver on its promises. Lose yourself in the ecstatic spiritual love between Radha (the embodiment of beauty and spiritual understanding and the personal Object of Kransa's Love) - and God! Worship Them in the temple, greet Them before sunrise, chant the holy Names of the Lord to be free and desire that Kransa enters your life - as George Harrison entreats in "Awaiting On You All" & "My Sweet Lord" on "All Things Must Pass". Breathe in the scent of the flowers & the incense offered to the Deities, taste the prasadam, sip the nectar and be sprinkled with the water that bathed the Deities. Your senses will be spiritualized and transcendentalized, your mind cleansed, your heart purified, your love awakened and your relationship to the Creator of your eternal spirit brought into play. Follow this path that'll take you out of this samsaric place of misery, suffering, birth, death and rebirth and return you to
your eternal home in the eternal Spiritual Realm – Krsnaloka. There, spiritual love, in all its forms and manifestations (that makes the Peace & Love of Woodstock pale in comparison), is the program 24/7.

We’re bunglers & “earth-bound misfits”. I know a person who left the one person he loved most when she was pregnant because he valued getting his own peace of mind over fulfilling his roles as husband and father. If we lose the Magic, we’ll need to find it again. When we don’t find it, we can end up hurting the ones we love the most, saying things that should never have been said. It’s never too late to find the Magic – but to find it we must CHANGE. We must overhaul our lifestyles, get rid of the poisons, get our minds out of the gutter and bad spaces/places, acquire a spiritual perspective and steer our lives in a positive direction. Then Magic will come to us – even during prison life. Magic, really, is the Energy of God’s Love entering and transforming our lives when we let God’s Love enter our lives. To let the Magic happen, open your heart and let God in!!
Autobiography In 5000 Words

What A Long Strange Trip It Is: [1957 →]

You’re blessed with good parents who met in college and stayed married for 13 years. You grow up on the East Coast, move to California, then the “dream” – of living happily ever after - ends in divorce in 1969. Still, you can’t complain. Your Mom’s an artist and you, your sister and her move to Hawaii, a teenager’s paradise, to live with your grandmother. The past lap dissolves into waves, mountains, waterfalls, new friends in school and annual visits to see your Dad and step mom in New York City. You attend the perfect University, NYU, for a year, return to Hawaii and a year later are at a crossroads in your life. Struggling to find purpose, uncertain of the future and no longer a minor, you fly to California where, months later, you meet an insanely hot Japanese modern dance student in Hollywood who’s 4 ½ years older than you, on a student visa and is hip to getting married. The reality between the lines that’s never discussed is that she gets a Green Card and becomes your conjugal lover with whom you’ll enjoy nightly erotic sex. What red-blooded guy who’s already partial to American Japanese girls can refuse an opportunity to marry such an amazing close female associate from Japan? Especially when your relationship with her will take you over the rainbow? Joining your lives in marriage is a no-brainer, a logical decision based on conjugal necessity.

Marry Your Close Female Associate From Japan: [1980]

An adventurous, thrilling new life begins that’s filled with conjugal bliss and a future invested with a baby on the way. At 22 and 27 the two of you are married. You enter her world, meet her friends and she initiates you into mind-numbing erotic sex and the ABCs of being in a relationship with her. Rough circumstances force you to leave the comforts of a New York City loft and take shelter in the midtown Manhattan ISKCON temple where your marriage becomes subsumed in community spiritual living. Greeting the Deities Radha and Krsna before sunrise becomes a sublime experience as you both engage in devotional service in spiritual life. They transfer you to the Long Island temple for married couples while your baby’s growing in her womb, then betrayal hits from without and within. ISKCON politics trumps marital relations and you’re misled by the temple commander: “Leave her, go to our farming community to serve God.” The two of you should leave, find your own place in Manhattan somehow. But you’re truly an “earth-bound misfit” who, confused, errrs. You leave on a train for W. Virginia on the same day she visits her lawyer in Manhattan to finalize her Green Card papers. Your future life of family, fatherhood and nightly erotic bliss comes to a screeching halt as you fail miserably to complete your own plan of waiting out her pregnancy. After your baby was born you were going to resume mind-numbing sex and the conjugal bliss that you envisioned with her from the moment the idea of marriage came to you. Like a drunk staggering at noon you tilt in the wrong direction, an action that changes the fates of 3 people - her, you and your daughter. She’d guess that you “needed peace of mind” - and was right. Still, abandoning her (and running from marriage and parenthood) to take off on a 2-year hiatus to focus on physical and spiritual health for
peace of mind/heart (which, true, you lacked - and she knew you lacked - because the 2 years prior to marriage had been an insane trip to the edge of the abyss that had left your body and nerves frayed/shot), and then return with a “Hey, I’m back!” attitude was selfish and irresponsible. When you’re leaving the spiritual farming community 2 years later, however, instead of returning to her you’re a transient drifting across the country, riding the rails, living on Reagan-era food stamps, dumpster diving, staying at rescue missions and camping out in decommissioned boxcars in a train yard in Eugene, Oregon. You’ve become disconnected from the one person who was grounding you in liberating, mind-bending physical sex and the joy of creating your own family. The loud clanking of steel wheels rolling over railroad tracks through the night under a full moon reverberates through your head, shattering the fantasy of returning to the cool Japanese woman who’d become your soul mate, but whom you abandoned for “peace of mind”. Zigzagging through the years in a fog of purposelessness, living in the Land of Blunderville, you visit parents, get onto SSI and slowly return to your senses. Then one day you resolve to get back to your Japanese lover on the other side of the rainbow to see your daughter. Like a wish coming true, your paths re-cross at the North Carolina Rainbow Gathering, but as you see your daughter for the first time on her 7th birthday in 1987, you’ve become the “rejected lover”. She’d waited, but eventually had given up on you. It would’ve been different if you’d returned after 2 years. (If only you could go back in time to change the past – such is the nature of regret.) Since you didn’t, she survived without you, raising your daughter alone, hooking up with hipsters for support. You feel out-of-sync, like a square peg unable to fit back into the round hole of your former lover’s life that was supposed to revolve solely around you. (You abandoned her, what could you expect?) So close, you’re still so far away from that life you had with her 7 years earlier. Now you envy the man who’s her present lover, since it’s impossible to forget how she can drag a man over the rainbow through mind-bending physical sex wherein her body is transformed into an altar for love-making. Man, did you fuck up! Still, it’s a magical time, since you can see your daughter and her each summer at future Rainbow Gatherings.

Goin’ To California: [1987]

You drive across the country to Chico, California, where you turn a new leaf in the summer of 1987, 30. You attune to a laidback lifestyle of living on SSI, becoming a member of the Health Food Co-Op, driving to the coast in the fall (Oct. – Nov.) to beach-camp at the State Beaches near Arcata, taking art classes and guitar and stained glass workshops. The years pass, you see your daughter at summer Rainbow Gatherings and as you enter your mid-30s, your body has regenerated from the bad drug experience from 1979. With your physical health restored, you ponder whether you should quit SSI. You drive up to Vancouver Island (arriving on your 35th birthday, Sept., 1992), camp along the West Coast around Tofino, then enter Cape Scott Provincial Park again (your favorite place on the planet) to hike the Cape Scott Trail to do some soul-searching. After 3 days of camping (you hiked to Hansen lagoon and the Lighthouse), you’re washing clothes in a Tofino Laundromat where a hippy couple (she’s Japanese, he’s white) are sorting out their clothes. Seeing signs of the same interracial sexual happiness that was meant to be your destiny as well (but which you undid by sabotaging your own plan), your soul is flooded with the resolution
to find another mega-hot Japanese woman with whom to hook up in a relationship that secures you the benefits of continuous sex. Like a lone wandering bird relating to two lovebirds who'd found each other, you tell them, out of the blue: "I'm going to drive across the country to New York City, find a job and get an apartment." Although they concealed your true feelings, your words are absorbed by them and, looking up from her laundry she says: "Have a good trip. Good luck!"

*New York City: Into The Vortex* [1992]

You leave Vancouver, B.C., playing Madonna's "True Blue" and listening to The Cars "Drive": "Who's gonna drive you home tonight?" as you embark on the adventure of driving across the country again (for the 3rd time) to begin a new chapter in your life. You've entered the next leg in your journey by returning to the City where you got married, where your daughter was born, now 35 and willing to work like other people to support yourself and live independently. You move into an SRO on the Upper West Side where 8 years pass slowly, during which you pull the plug on SSI and work continuously as a bike messenger. Seasons pass, the years meld one into the other, as a low-budget cosmopolitan lifestyle in the "city that never sleeps" gives you the stability of a workingman's life. Your 4th floor City Room overlooks the street, and through the years undergoes as many interior changes as your moods. Cats reenter your life, becoming friends and family, growing, living and learning just like you. Without long-term goals, however, you're living day-to-day, paycheck to paycheck...
Returning To Vancouver Island

I arrived to the Colorado National Rainbow Gathering in the summer of 1992 on July 7, the last official day of a week-long celebration where approx. 5000 like-minded people (hippies, Deadheads, Earth lovers and other free-spirited folk) temporarily left civilization (or the “rat race”) behind to camp peacefully for 30 days close to nature in a national forest. My goal was to meet my ex-wife and daughter (whom I saw last at the 1990 Minnesota National Rainbow Gathering) again. Arriving late, I’d just missed them: they’d already hit the road for Oregon. I’d spent the last 2 years living at JPUSA (Jesus People USA, a Christian community in Chicago) and back in Chico.\footnote{After staying in Boston for 6 months visiting my Dad (who was passing away), I went to the Minnesota National Rainbow Gathering (summer 1990) where I met people going to JPUSA. Having visited them before for 8 days (summer 1978 when I was 20), I knew how spiritually-minded people help you maintain equilibrium following a deep personal loss, so I revisited their community for a year (8/90-9/91) before returning to Chico.} Word was that folks were caravanning to the Cougar Reservoir in Eugene, Oregon, a popular hot springs located just above a dam. As we were leaving the Gathering I met David (who was at JPUSA for a month when I was there) who had his own bus and was surprised to see me. When a small group of us decided to travel to Eugene, I took passengers in my dark brown Honda Accord Hatchback, including Quanzo, a free-spirited person with dreads whose family had political connections.

After a few days of road-tripping we arrived to Cougar Reservoir outside of Eugene, spent the day at the hot springs and then drove to a nearby river where Rainbow folks had parked their vehicles and set up camp. There must have been 20-30 people there throughout July and August. People came and went, friends met up with one another and everyone kicked back, living on “Rainbow time”. I was playing my Pink Floyd’s “Meddle” and “Obscured By Clouds” cassettes. A dude with dreadlocks down to his waist was standing with his wife and baby daughter by their tiny Honda Civic that was dwarfed beneath a mountain of personal belongings they’d strapped and tied down to the roof. I recognized something about him, and as he looked my way he said, “Mike? Prita’s Dad?” It was Keith, Prita’s friend from the Nevada National Rainbow Gathering from 1989. Although it was 3 short years ago, Keith had transformed from a lean, clean-shaven youth into a genuine Rastafarian with a wife, baby and dreadlocks down to his waist - a testament to his down-to-earth LOVE for people and life. Keith had known the back-story between Mauri and I - how I’d left her when she was pregnant with Prita and returned 7 years later hoping to get back with her but was too late since she’d already hooked up with a cool hipster from Peru, whose
first daughter with Mauri was her second. I was a Virgo unable to "fit in" to this hippy-gypsy lifestyle of free love, a single guy without a "lady" and living on SSI – an issue of growing concern. I’d been on SSI since June, 1984 because I’d developed a "protein deficiency" and "chemical imbalance of the blood" after living as a transient from 6/82 – 11/83 during which I abstained from eating meat.¹ By 1992, however, my physical health, body, mind and spirit had been restored to 100%. They say that because of cell regeneration, every seven years there’s not a cell in your body that was there 7 years before. During my year in Chicago with JPUSA I had my blood tested (as I also did later in NYC), and the results were the same both times: no chemical imbalance or protein deficiency. My healthy lifestyle and diet of meat and natural foods (granola, yoghurt, tofu, sprouts, rennetless cheese...) and membership to a Natural Foods Coop since 1987 had dialed my physical health back to healthy. Mauri said I’d feel better if I got a job, started working and quit SSI. And as any Christian knew, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." [2 Thessalonians 3:10]. So changing my lifestyle to work like most people do had begun to weigh upon me.

As Keith took a hit on a fat blunt and offered it to me (I refused since I tended to freak out and get paranoid when high on pot), he said: "I hope that what happened to you and Marui NEVER HAPPENS TO ME." Those were fair words - and I hoped he’d be spared this fate too! The magic Keith found (a wife and daughter - a family of his own rooted in love and lasting for life) was the same magic I’d found – except that I let the magic slip away!! Perhaps knowing Marui and Prita - and seeing me in 1989 - inspired Keith to go for what I went for but with a greater determination to succeed where I’d failed. As Keith waved while they were driving slowly away, I marveled at what an amazing journey this life is.

After a month camping along the river near Cougar Reservoir people had begun trickling out. Those of us remaining decided to visit Olympic National Park in northwestern Washington state, so we road-tripped north on the I-5 and Highway 101 into the Olympic Peninsula where, on an early September morning, as our small band was sitting around camp trying to decide upon a traveling itinerary, I shared an idea I’d been contemplating: "Let’s cross the border into Canada and go to Vancouver Island. I’ve been there before. It’s a cool place and Canadians are cool people.” When my suggestion fell flat (no one shared my enthusiasm), Quanjo do remarked in jest: “Didn’t you hear? Canada’s closed.” I was the only one with all

¹ I lived as a devotee at New Vrindavana, West Virginia (an ISKCON farming community) from June, 1980 to June, 1982. When my separation from Mauri and Prita was too much to bear, however, I left, and having been a vegetarian for 2 years I was reluctant to return to eating meat.
his legal documents in order - drivers' license, Birth Certificate, SS card and money in a savings account. Even if anyone wanted to go, as a group it wasn’t possible. Somehow during that night I decided to go into Canada alone. Why follow others or depend on a group if I had the means and resources to travel into Canada by myself? It was September, 1992, and with my thirty-fifth birthday days away, I felt a sense of adventure contemplating how easy it’d be to revisit Cape Scott by driving up there in my Honda Hatchback Accord. I’d been to Vancouver Island fifteen years before with my cousin Laine in the summer of 1977 when we hiked the Cape Scott Trail at the northwestern tip of the Island. That part of the globe - the wild, rugged Pacific coastal wilderness that’s been battered by waves for centuries - had been my favorite part of the globe ever since. I wouldn’t be hitchhiking from Seattle as Laine and I had done in 1977; I’d drive right up to the gravel lot at the trailhead. Would I hike the 10 mile trail solo despite possible encounters with bears? Sure I would!

I drove up to Customs at the Canadian border, showed my documents and was asked: “Business or pleasure?” I was never more appreciative of my personal freedom than right then. If you’re just traveling and camping in Canada’s parks and wilderness you answer “Pleasure”. Cleared to cross and given a 6-week Visitor’s Permit, I drove on through. Deciding to catch the ferry out of Horseshoe Bay to reach Nanaimo on Vancouver Island before nightfall, I stopped first at a supermarket in Vancouver to stock up on food, then at Mountain Equipment Cooperative to buy some things and become a lifetime member. I drove onto the ferry, parked below deck, walked up to the passenger deck and stood alongside other passengers who were leaning on the railing and watching the water zipping by below and the passing forested scenery. How nice it was to be an American, incognito, amidst other passengers on a Canadian ferry! Suddenly America had fallen off the radar. I was in Canada, in another country where everywhere you looked nothing was American except for the occasional American visitor. It felt liberating - but why, exactly? Was it that now, at least temporarily, surrounded as I was by Canadians and the Canadian lifestyle, I was no longer held to the social norms, rules and standards of the American lifestyle? A weight seemed to have lifted that, until then, I hadn’t even realized had been hanging over me. Driving off the ferry into Nanaimo as late afternoon turned into dusk I was hungry, so I stopped at a Pizza Hut to buy a pizza, then drove up the highway till I found a lakeside parking area to pull in for the night. After polishing off the entire pizza I went to sleep without pinching myself - I knew this was no dream. I’d returned to Vancouver Island on my own, in my own car, by myself. It was September 17, the eve of my thirty-fifth birthday.
I awoke on my birthday to a cacophonous sound of giant-sized ducks surrounding the brown Honda Accord and honking sonorously. Peering through the foggy windows from inside my sleeping bag after spending another night in the Hatchback stretched out over the back seat that I’d folded down, their loud honking became more incessant, and they seemed to be pressing me in on all sides. Their enormous size baffled me. Not knowing they were Canada geese, enormous water fowl that grew to 3 ¼ feet in length, I thought they were giant ducks. An absurd thought - the attack of the killer ducks – made me laugh. Were they welcoming this newly arrived American visitor, or wishing me Happy Birthday? As my eye caught the empty cardboard pizza box it dawned on me that the aroma of the pizza crusts had wafted outside the Accord and drawn this gaggle of geese. I tossed them all of the crusts, which they gorged ravenously. Not wanting to run over any of my fine feathered friends, I shooed them away before driving off. When they dispersed, appeased by the paltry crusts I’d fed them, I felt as if I’d earned the right to be back here on Vancouver Island.

I’d decided to drive across the island to the West Coast town of Tofino, a cool place that, at the time, was the hub for turning Clayoquot Sound into the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Reserve that’s now managed by the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust. Driving along Highway 19 northwest to Parksville, I veered onto Highway 4 and drove due west, passing amazing scenic forests on the way to Port Alberni where I filled up on gas and bought ice to keep the smoked ham I’d bought in Vancouver cold. Passing MacMillan Park (Cathedral Grove) without stopping, my goal was to reach Tofino before dusk to camp at one of the beaches in Pacific Rim National Park or just south of Tofino at Chesterman Beach or MacKenzie Beach. Driving along the roads of Vancouver Island I was filled with a sense of adventure and felt spiritually invigorated. The future had suddenly acquired the sense of being an open book. I’d returned to Vancouver Island to camp in the wilderness again, recharge my spiritual batteries and do some soul-searching. I had to decide if I was going to pull the plug on SSI and work like everyone else, or stay on SSI for life. Living on $600 a month was enough to live on if your lifestyle was scraping by on a shoestring budget and traveling around nomadically without any real purpose. I knew that besides feeling better about myself by working full-time, I’d also be better off financially as well. With six weeks on Vancouver Island to acquire inner resolution, peace of mind, heart and spirit and to psyche myself up to turn the page to enter the next chapter of my life, I was also supercharged by memories of hiking the Cape Scott Trail to the Lighthouse with Laine in the summer of 1977.
My friend Erik from Brittany Dorm during my freshman year at NYU from 1975-76 had exhorted me to hike the Cape Scott Trail on Vancouver Island if I ever had the chance, which he hiked the year before. As destiny would have it, a year later he'd be taking summer classes at the U.H. Manoa right after I finished my sophomore year there. Since I'd convinced my cousin, who'd just completed his psychology degree at S.F. State U., to hike the Cape Scott Trail on Vancouver Island with me, Erik and I flew over to Frisco to meet up with Laine. After a day in Frisco, we drove up to Seattle in a rented car and dropped in on some friends of my Mom's. Laine, Erik and I went backpacking on a trail in the Northern Cascades, came back a few days later, Erik flew back to NYC and Laine and I began to hitchhike north up to Canada. Spending our first night in Canada at the Vancouver Youth Hostel, the next day we took the ferry from Horseshoe Bay to Nanaimo in the company of some Canadian hippies, one of whom (apparently tripping on LSD) was walking along a handrail maintaining his balance like a tightrope walker while his square, fellow Canadian travelers looked on with disapproval. On Vancouver Island we caught a few rides with local loggers and reached the gravel lot at the Cape Scott trailhead in late August. Right away we began slogging our way along the Cape Scott Trail, passing the old Emergency Cabin at the Donaldson Farm Homestead which was later burned down in 1999 by careless hikers and subsequently demolished.

Hiking for miles, we came to a large tidal meadow with old, weathered fence posts stretching toward Hansen Lagoon. We crossed the marshy meadowland to the lagoon and stood there watching the tide receding to expose mudflats covered with rocks and seaweeds. This was where a Danish settlement, conceived and founded by colonists Rasmus Hansen, Y. Chris Jensen, Peter Thomsen, and Nels C. Nelson, attempted to endure the elements from 1896 to 1907.¹ Waiting for the Provincial Government to fulfill their promise of building a road to their colony, they'd built a dike to keep the high tide at bay, a schoolhouse, farmed the tidal meadows at Hansen Lagoon and fished the sea for salmon, halibut and cod. The government failed to build the road, however, so they eventually abandoned their settlement. There, we met a long-haired hippy who was maintaining the Lighthouse at the end of the

¹ "In 1894, a Danish immigrant, Rasmus Hansen, aboard a small schooner, the Floyborg, was fishing out of Seattle, on the then newly-discovered fishing banks off the north end of Vancouver Island. On one of these cruises, Hansen went ashore while his vessel lay anchored in Goose Harbor and, in search of ducks or geese, explored the lagoon that lay at its head. There he found a great stretch of tidal meadows, through which ran two streams, both filled with salmon. Rasmus Hansen conceived the idea that the head of this lagoon would be a desirable spot to start a Danish colony, similar to the Norwegian settlements at Quatsino and at Bella Coola..." from Chapter Two: The First Settlement.
trail; having run out of rice, he was hiking back out to Holberg to buy eighty pounds of the brown grain and return. When he pointed out that the high tide trail went around the back of Hansen Lagoon to points further, Laine and I stashed our backpacks and hit the trail. We arrived to the Lighthouse, signed the guestbook and returned to our backpacks at the Lagoon just as the sun was setting.

Laine, exploring the shoreline, came across a cabin built in the 20th century, situated where one of the forks of the Fisherman River emptied into the Lagoon. In the cabin there was a picnic table by the front window, a wood stove in the back, a narrow utility table along one of the walls and a bookshelf filled with books. I tossed a drop line I’d brought along into the river at dusk and within seconds had a fish. Within five minutes I’d caught five fish which we fried over an outdoor fire and ate with white rice. Going over our maps in the cabin that night we decided to return to San Josef Bay through a more adventurous circuitous route by hiking three miles along the southeastern edge of Hansen Lagoon out to Hansen Bay, then turn left (south) and hug the coast where old trails leading through the rugged coastal hills above Lowrie Bay would bring us down to Sea Otter Cove at sea level once again and eventually back to San Josef Bay. In the morning we packed our gear, began hiking along the edge of the Lagoon and came to a stream, thirty feet across and five feet deep. Since the water was cold, about 45 - 50°F, we used a discarded inner tube and plywood board to ferry our packs over while we waded through the stream. Halfway through, however, hypothermia set in, so I retreated to the near bank where I shivered convulsively for a half hour until I slowly warmed up. After Laine crossed with ease tugging the backpacks, he pulled me over on the raft and we continued hiking along the edge of the Lagoon to the mouth of Hansen Bay. As the sun was setting, we set up camp on a small patch of sandy beach with only the last of our rice to cook and eat. In the morning we left the Bay, hiked up a rugged coastal bluff on an overgrown trail and veered south along the coast. The sunny day passed slowly and the views of the wild coast were amazing. As we trudged through the coastal thickets above Lowrie Bay we picked our way slowly through the overgrown bush towards the saddle that would take us down to Sea Otter Cove. Arriving to the Cove in the mid-afternoon, we steamrolled up the trail leading to the summit of Mt. St. Patrick, hiked over the top and descended back down to sea level and eventually came to an Emergency Cabin to the left of the trail. It was getting late and we were out of food and worn down, so the cabin was optimal shelter for the night. Inside, cabinets were stocked with canned goods and other provisions that we happily availed for ourselves. In the
morning we hiked out to San Josef Bay, and without skipping a beat, hitchhiked back to Nanaimo and ferried back to Vancouver. Laine had decided to travel to New York City, and I flew back to Hawaii.

Where Highway 4 hit the West Coast I turned right and headed for Tofino, twenty miles up the road, west by northwest. Driving through the Long Beach Unit of Pacific Rim National Park I realized I'd entered a beach lover's paradise. Campers, vans, surfers in full-body wetsuits and local and international travelers were ambling up and down the road, arriving to or leaving any of the numerous beachside campgrounds, some of which were free while others required cash payments of $6 to $10 in an envelope deposited through a slot in a metal box. I stopped at the Park Information Center to stock up on maps and brochures, then began checking out the beaches. As I settled into three weeks of camping at MacKenzie and Chesterman Beaches (sleeping in the Accord) just south of Tofino and exploring the Long Beach Unit of Pacific Rim National Park, hiking the Cape Scott Trail receded to the backburner. Driving into Tofino each morning, I passed untroubled, carefree days absorbed in the Vancouver Island experience, sitting in the Common Loaf Bake Shop for days on end ordering buttered cinnamon rolls and drinking coffee, feeling like I was living in a dream I didn’t want to wake up from. I attuned to current environmental issues (e.g., the drive to protect and preserve Clayoquot Sound as an International Biosphere) and came across a few old comic strips of "Melvin Smud From Van", relics of the 1970’s Vancouver hippy scene. "Why aren’t we as laidback, mellow, peace-loving and environmentally concerned in the USA as Vancouver Islanders?", I wondered. What I didn’t realize was that by trusting my instincts and focusing on sating my hunger for wilderness experience, I’d brought myself right into a hub of Earth-conscious, wilderness-loving folk whose energy and dedication to preserving Earth and indigenous culture was/is at the cutting edge of planetary environmentalism. I was lucky to get this solid dose of Vancouver Island experience at a time when I really needed it. One day, sitting in the Common Loaf Bake Shop eating perhaps my thirtieth buttered cinnamon roll, sipping coffee and watching the rain coming down in buckets, I was pricked by that familiar sensation the transient knows too well – of becoming a tad too familiar to an establishment - and, not wanting to wear out the courteous welcome mat, I resolved to quit postponing the inevitable. It was time to hit the road, drive up north to the Cape Scott trailhead and follow through with what I’d challenged myself to do - hike the Cape Scott Trail again, but this time solo!
I left Tofino energized, in good spirits and stoked to be back on the road. Cruising through Port Alberni I stopped at the post office to mail a package (material on the environmental movement in Tofino) to my ex who, then, was living in Maine. I drove up Highway 19 that hugged the northeastern coast of the Island, passed Campbell River and Port McNeil and came to Port Hardy where gravel logging roads took me through Holberg (16 km from the Cape Scott trailhead and the Park’s nearest settlement) and to the gravel parking lot at the Cape Scott and San Josef Bay trailheads on Western Forest Products land. Parking in the empty lot, my Honda Accord was the only vehicle there and, since the sun was setting, I settled in for the night. I awoke the next morning to a torrential downpour outside my hatchback and, sitting high and dry in my sleeping bag, restrained a train of thought that begged release: “Anyone would be CRAZY to start hiking in the rain like this!” A white sign with large, black letters blared at me: “WARNING!!! Watch out for bears. It is highly recommended that you do NOT hike the Cape Scott Trail alone.” I felt that all that was missing on the sign were the words: “and that means YOU in particular, Mike!” I had the perfect excuses to back out at the last minute: it was raining relentlessly, there were bears, I was alone, and even the Park sign advised against hiking the Cape Scott Trail alone. I could’ve said, “Oh well, maybe another day,” turned around and left. But I also knew such excuses led to lifelong regrets, and that such an excuse/rationalization may just as well have ended with: “maybe another day, maybe in another lifetime”! As the rain continued falling I began to sense the peacefulness of this wilderness place. The floodgates of heaven had opened up and were pouring a storehouse of rain down on ME! This was Nature in her raw, pure element of magical wildness that drew me into the mountains in Hawaii, into the ocean to surf the waves, and back to Vancouver Island’s Cape Scott Park!! I read through Bear Awareness pamphlets to grapple with my own amorphous fear of bears and was surprised to learn that bears are more afraid of us than we are of them. The best precaution against bear encounters is to constantly make noise while you’re hiking on trails – such as banging a spoon against a tin cup. Having bought a stainless steel drinking cup at Mountain Equipment Cooperative, I tied one end of a string to its handle and the other end to my spoon – my defense against bears that would warn them: “WARNING TO ALL BEARS: a human is coming down the trail!!” By announcing yourself while on a trail, bears will hear you and bolt, making it relatively safe even for backpackers hiking solo in the wilderness.¹ Once I

¹ The three instances to be avoided in bear encounters are: 1) NEVER get between a mother bear and her cubs;
wrestled down my fear of bears with survival knowledge, I thought, “No problem”, and as the rain continued to fall incessantly outside with no sign of letting up, I surveyed my gear and food that would sustain me for three days of wilderness camping: a rain poncho, sleeping bag, sheet of plastic, daypack, fanny pack with instamatic camera and rolls of film, extra shirts and socks and a 10-lb bag of gorp. Despite my long hiatus away from the wilderness, my love for it hadn’t diminished, and had anyone seen me hit the Cape Scott Trail with such minimalist gear in that torrential downpour, he/she would’ve undoubtedly scratched his/her head and thought: “Shouldn’t he be starting out with a large external- or internal-frame backpack with at least sixty lbs of food and gear??” Indeed, that was how Laine and I had set out fifteen years earlier in 1977, but this journey of life had taken me through years of living on a low budget, SSI and Food Stamps, a lifestyle that instills in you a mindset of considering it a success when you’re simply able to accomplish an important goal you set out to do. Hiking the Cape Scott Trail and reaching the Lighthouse with an economy of food and gear gave such lightweight travel the benefit of being able to hike faster and move with greater energy efficiency. When your lifestyle has conformed to such Christian verses¹ as: “Listen, my beloved brethren: has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” [James 4:6], “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” [James 4:6] and “Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we should live and do this or that.”” [James 4:15], goals acquire a sense of doability when you have faith you can accomplish them despite your humble financial means. Leaving the gravel parking lot and disappearing into the trees with my rain poncho keeping me dry from head to my knees, joy was overflowing within me. My love of the wilderness, the stoke of having conquered my fear of bears and my being undiscouraged by the incessant rain, my low-budget camping gear or the sign warning against hiking alone simply fueled my faith that I could hike the Cape Scott Trail solo and kept my engine running smoothly. Within twenty minutes of hiking, before Eric Lake, I saw a patch of yellow moving through the trees ahead of me. The canopy above caught the brunt of the rainfall, which was still coming down steadily, and soon the yellow shape moving towards me off to the side of the trail came into focus. A female hiker in a full-body yellow rain suit was hiking out alone, absorbed in her thoughts and one with the elements and the wilderness.

¹ At the time I held Christian spiritual beliefs and was inspired by Jesus Christ and the New Testament writers. This would change later during my incarceration when I’d return my heart, spirit and mind to Radha and Govinda, Krsna Consciousness and the spiritual life I once lived at New Vrindavana, WV.

2) NEVER get between a bear and its food source; 3) NEVER let a bear feel cornered or threatened.
Ambling slowly forward in such a tranquil state of mind, she didn’t notice I was standing right there on the trail, and not wanting to disturb her serenity I just stood there, incredulous, watching her continue to hike out, seemingly oblivious to my existence and the entire troubled world we live in. There I was, hiking solo into Cape Scott Park after overcoming my fears and the natural forces that resisted my returning to the wilderness - even self-congratulating myself for making such a breakthrough - only to be unintentionally one-upped by a female hiking solo out of the Park! Alone yet unafraid, dry (despite the rain) and happy, and in a peaceful state of mind on the trail, she made hiking in the wilderness look easy! She was someone whose acquaintance I wish I’d made. I plodded on, knowing I had a long day of hiking ahead of me with rain-soaked miles to cover if I was to reach the cabin at Hansen Lagoon, or Nels Bight, by nightfall. The plan was to camp for three days and two nights, and since I had no tent, if it rained at night I’d wrap my sleeping bag up in the sheet of plastic, or spend a night in one of the cabins. At 1.9 miles I passed Eric Lake and, seeing no reason to stop, kept going, aiming for Hansen Lagoon where I’d reassess my situation. After passing the Donaldson Farm Homestead Emergency Cabin (on the right side of the trail) at 5.8 miles, I came to the T-junction on the main trail where continuing straight takes you to Nissen Bight and Fisherman Bay (9.3 miles), but turning left takes you to Hansen Lagoon (9.1 miles), Nels Bight (10.4 miles), Experiment Bight (11.7 miles), Guise Bay (12.8 miles) and to the Cape Scott Lighthouse (14.6 miles). It was getting late in the afternoon and it had been raining all day, and as I stood there reading the brown and yellow National Park Information Board that described the history of Cape Scott Park and the Danish settlement attempt, studying the map and the trails leading to the beaches, bights, Hansen Lagoon and the Lighthouse at points further ahead, my attention came to a star on the Board indicating exactly where I was standing at the T-junction on the trail. Suddenly I was infused with a magical sense of being surer of where I was on trails in the Canadian wilderness than I was in the concrete jungles of civilization! I was hiking the Cape Scott Trail solo (“the place to go if you really want to get away from everything and everyone.” [a guidebook’s description]), standing in the rain in the heart of the wilderness in front of this Information Board that made me certain of exactly where I was in the universe at that precise moment in time! It was impossible to get lost here! In reality I’d been here before (though this sign might not have been here in 1977 since the Park was established in 1972), and all seemed right with the entire universe. Turning left, I slogged on ahead in the rain towards Hansen Lagoon 1.8 miles away, saving Nissen Bight and Fisherman Bay for tomorrow. Coming to a clearing I stopped in my tracks and looked
across the same tidal meadows Laine and I crossed fifteen years before. Standing there in the pouring rain I surveyed the still-standing weatherworn rickety fence posts running across the meadowland in parallel lines, converging on a tiny square white sign on the high earthen embankment that had been built to keep high tides from entering the meadowland – a testimony to the unchanging nature of this wild place. As I began crossing the tidal meadows I soon found myself knee-deep in a maze of streamlets and watery channels that permeated the marshy meadowland. It was high tide and the embankment was keeping the seawater out, but with the torrential rains flooding the Fisherman River, its forks and its tributaries until their banks were overflowing, the meadowland was being inundated with freshwater. As I began wading through the meandering channels at a snail’s pace, the water level seemed to be rising. The trail had altogether disappeared into water, so I began hopping across tufts of meadow grass, trying not to land in water up to my thighs. Halfway across the tidal meadows the square white sign on the embankment had become only slightly larger, making the prospect of reaching the cabin on the fork of Fisherman River bleak. The water was getting deeper, slowing my progress, and daylight was fading fast. Alone, cold and almost soaked to the bone, I trudged through this meadowland the Danish settlers had farmed almost 100 years earlier and finally reached the embankment. Turning left, I searched for the trail that led to the cabin and, not finding it, tried to spot it through gaps in the trees. When I came to a wide stream flowing into the Lagoon that had to be swum across to get to the other side, I realized there wasn’t enough time to find the cabin. I couldn’t risk not finding it and being stranded without shelter, cold, wet and exposed to the elements. The only choice was to hike the 1.3 miles through the rain to Nels Bight and set up camp. If I were a settler living in the cabin, and Hansen Lagoon was “home”, the wildness of this hour would’ve been savored inside the cabin as a woodstove cranked out heat and sent up trails of smoke into the wind and falling rain. Plan A had failed, so I had to make for Nels Bight, Plan B. I was humbled, however, by Nature’s natural power and awed by the majestic energy of her rains, tides and wilderness. Not finding the cabin that day wasn’t defeat, it was the planting of a seed that’d later grow into the purposeful goal of returning to Cape Scott again, for a third time (later on, in the future, after my incarceration), whether through kayaking or hiking the North Coast Trail. Upon arriving to Hansen Lagoon once again, I’d find that cabin and live in it for a months at the junction of the fork of Fisherman River and the Lagoon, watching the tides ebb and flow, the moon wax and wane, the seasons pass and winter storms and torrential rains come and go while living on a diet of fish and rice, coffee, oatmeal and
pancakes. When nature changes your course, you humbly accept her redirection, respect her and proceed accordingly. I sensed the finitude of my own earthly goals (such as reaching the cabin that day), and how they paled in comparison to God’s love and His goals for me. It was important that I remembered how much I loved the wilderness. Looking up, feeling the pouring rain splashing on my face, I whooped joyfully. Despite being alone, I felt the magical sense of this wild place that a community of Danish settlers knew as “home”. Following the high tide trail around the head of the Lagoon, I continued hiking to reach Nels Bight, 1.3 miles away, before sunset. The rain finally began letting up as the clouds broke up in the sky above, as a series of recently constructed boardwalks with railings took me through the final stretch that opened onto Nels Bight. Patches of sky appeared through the trees, and as I emerged from the forest onto the sandy beach of Nels Bight, two black bears were foraging in the bushes fifty feet away from me. I froze, but seeing smoke from a campfire one-hundred feet away and two old-timers sitting by their tent, my fear was dispelled. The bears moseyed along without noticing me, and I soon joined the campers, happy for human company at the end of a long, rain-soaked day of hiking. I dried out my wet clothes and damp sleeping bag on a line near the fire, ate half my gorp and drank the coffee the old-timers offered me. The sky had cleared, the stars were out and I was exhausted, so I turned in early, huddling near the coals in my dried out sleeping bag with my poncho for a ground cloth and plastic sheet for a wind break. The morning arrived – and what a bright, sunny day it was! I stashed my gear (sleeping bag, daypack and plastic tarp) in a hole created by driftwood logs. A fleet of driftwood was strewn along the mile-long beach at Nels Bight, as far as the eye could see, to Frederiksen Point, an utterly desolate storm-swept strip of beach that jutted out into the ocean and appeared even more desolate the closer you got to it. I hiked to Frederiksen Point, shot a roll of film and returned. The old-timers weren’t going anywhere anytime soon, so I told them I was setting out for the Lighthouse and would be back later. The day passed swiftly as I followed the trail to Experiment Bight, overland to Guise Bay and finally onward to the Cape Scott Lighthouse. Built in 1960, the Lighthouse is comprised of a family house and two guesthouses. A boardwalk leads to the Cape that’s on federal lands, and since the coast guard is liable for anyone who gets hurt on this part of the trail, the Cape has been closed. I signed the guestbook at the Lighthouse and started my return, passing Sand Neck ("a thin strip of sand dune connecting the two beaches [Experiment Bight and Guise Bay – which] basically run together. At Guise Bay, N.P. Jensen attempted to stabilize the sand dune for pasture by building a driftwood fence, which
still remains today.”). I looked at these old fences half buried in the sand feeling a twinge of regret. I’d successfully hiked the Cape Scott Trail all the way to the Lighthouse, solo, but couldn’t even overnight it at Sand Neck, an amazing place, since I was steamrolling through these wilderness trails in such a mad rush that I hadn’t even “time to smell the roses”. Many people have camped at Guise Bay – but I didn’t, not then. Ironically, my choosing such limited food and gear had enabled me to reach the Lighthouse again, but at the same time determined that the duration of my camping in the Park would be brief. Really, to spend more time camping in the wilderness you need to be fully equipped (as real backpackers are) with an external- or internal-frame backpack, tent, forty lbs of food, rain gear, hiking boots, cooking gear, etc.! I couldn’t complain, however – not this earthbound misfit who’d finally got it into his head that living on SSI for the rest of your life was a bad career move. Revisiting the Cape Scott wilderness had indeed succeeded in (among other things) whetting my appetite to return, and returning to the old timer’s camp, envisioning what camping on the beach at Guise Bay for a week would be like, I discovered that the high tide had rolled in during my absence and flooded the vast, stationary armada of beached driftwood. I scrambled to where I’d stashed my gear, looked down into the hole and saw only sand and salt water – the tide had claimed my belongings! Did I anger the ocean in some way such that claiming my possessions was her way of exacting retribution?! Luckily I still had my most valuable possessions on me in my fanny pack - the last of my gorp, and my camera and rolls of film! Taking leave of the old-timers I began to hike back to the T-junction on the main trail again. When I came to the Information Board, I turned left and continued on to Nissen Bight. When I arrived a fog had descended. Nissen Bight looked similar to Nels Bight (just not as large), so I walked over to Fisherman Bay, a place with more history than meets the eye. Fisherman Bay seemed more like a scene from a movie. It was a tiny, perpetually wild niche of wilderness that only native peoples or settlers could have appreciated. If you were just passing through as a visitor, an indelible impression would undoubtedly have been left in your memory. To acquire experience that transcends such shallow impressions, you’d have to read the history of Fisherman Bay, hike into the Cape Scott wilderness and camp here for months or seasons (e.g., Sept. through March) before grasping the experience of this wild Bay being part of your “home”. Aside from diehard
backpackers and some native Canadians, those hardy Danish settlers were the last people to have known this wilderness as their home.9

With just the last of my gorp to eat I had to camp for one more night, then hike out in the morning. Hiking the length of Fisherman Bay (not enough time to absorb the spirit of this place that hasn’t changed since goods and cattle were unloaded from a steamer ship for Danish settlers eighty years earlier) and back, I regretted not being able to camp here longer, and started hiking back along the trail. Passing the T-junction and Information Board again, I reached the Emergency Cabin after 2.9 miles (from Nissen Bight) at the Old Donaldson Farm Homestead just to the left of the trail. A light drizzle was falling as I opened the door of the empty cabin, walked in and laid out my gear on the table. I wolfed down the last of my gorp looking out the window of the cozy cabin and suddenly, for a brief moment, this cabin felt like a “home”!! I was at home in a house in the heart of the wilderness!! I carved “Mike was here 9/1992” in the wood below the windowsill, and, absorbed in the serenity of this cabin that was nestled in the wilderness on what used to be a Danish settler’s homestead, began wondering if we’ve collectively lost our connection to the wilderness because of our modernity. Suddenly there was a loud knocking on the door, followed by a robust, “Hello?!”. The door swung open and two Vancouverites – a couple (a woman and her husband or boyfriend) – trudged in out of the rain, threw their enormous backpacks down onto the floor and, as they were taking off their parkas, were surprised to see another backpacker in their midst. After making their acquaintance, the three of us became a

9 “Almost invariably, the former settlers with fondest memories of Cape Scott were those who had lived there during their childhood or youth. To the young, not yet pressed down by doubts and cares, Vancouver Island’s streams, meadows, wild berry patches, and particularly its sand beaches, presented a natural fairyland. It was summer camp the year round. Memories retained from these golden days involved, not the humdrum three R’s of schooling, but boat day – the one day a month when, during the first few years of the colony, a real steamer called at Fisherman’s Bay. Mrs. Dorothy Petersen, nee Rasmussen, looking back 60 years, recalled the fact that boat day seemed always to be on the 20th of the month. The ship she remembered was the Queen City. It came from Victoria, up the west coast of the island. As it passed the mouth of Goose Harbor [Hansen Bay], the captain would toot his whistle. Its sound would carry throughout the settlement, giving everyone time to walk to Fisherman’s Bay to meet the ship. At the sound of the whistle, Professor Christiansen gave his students the remainder of the day off to take part in this most exciting event...To the adult, life in the colony consisted mostly of serious work. The processes of earning a living, building a home, cutting firewood with saws still quite primitive, tending garden and livestock, hunting and fishing for food, with the innumerable miles traveled on foot carrying out these incessant chores, absorbed almost all of every day for both man and woman...A monthly vessel, with no docking facilities, imposed limitations at Fisherman’s Bay too harsh for survival. The loading and unloading of livestock proved especially difficult, the animals having to be lowered into the water in slings and then forced to swim. Cattle would swim to shore from the anchored vessel, but they would not swim from the shore out to a waiting ship. Since steamers of those days were not equipped with refrigeration, neither fresh meat nor milk could be exported far enough to reach centers of population on the coast. The Cape Scott, although it made trips between Shushartie and Quatsino, could not solve the problems involved in the transportation of perishable exports.” Chapter 2: The First Settlement. p. 28, 33.
cheerful group that night. After they sorted out all the gear in their packs, we cranked up the woodstove, and soon everyone had their socks, shirts and other garments hanging on lines above the stove to dry out as we stood there warming up, drying out, rubbing our hands. They were coming in, I was going out, and my scanty wilderness gear (or lack thereof to be more accurate) had flabbergasted the girl who, in an aside conversation with her partner, I overheard saying: “Look at him! He doesn’t have a backpack! All he has is a sheet of plastic!” Did they have an earlier discussion on how much gear to pack in, and whether the weight of unessential items justified bringing them along? I imagined that if I were *them* seeing *me* with such minimal gear, I’d have felt the same! In the morning I wished them a great time and began the long, rather uneventful hike back out. Emerging onto the parking lot (such a prominent outpost of civilization compared to the trails and wilderness I’d just come out of), and seeing my Honda Accord sitting there intact with another vehicle parked nearby, I got in, sat down and, after relaxing for a while, drove the short distance to San Josef Heritage Park where I decided to spend the remainder of the day. I hiked the trail a short ways along the right side of San Josef Bay, knowing that Laine and I had exited the wilderness along this same route fifteen years earlier. Since bears were ambling through the area, I spent the night in the Accord and, in the morning, drove off. With 10 days before my Visitor’s Permit expired, I returned to Tofino to spend the remaining blissful days road-camping at nearby beach campgrounds, continually playing Bruce Cockburn’s “Nothing But A Burning Light”. Buying cinnamon rolls and drinking coffee again at the Common Loaf Bake Shop, those days passed like the pages of a book you flip through, only now I sensed being on the threshold of a big change in my life. By hiking the Cape Scott Trail for a second time, *solo*, I proved to myself that I could accomplish a purposeful goal that I set my heart, mind and spirit to. What kept me from finding a job, working and getting off SSI? I could make up excuses (as I could’ve done when sitting in my Honda as the rain was coming down in a torrential downpour on the day I set out into the Park), but I couldn’t back down from my own challenge I’d made to myself. I knew what I had to do - shift my lifestyle gears to become a workingman. The only way that I could implement such a plan would be to drive across the country, *again* (for a third time), to New York City where I’d been a freshman at NYU, got married, and where my three-quarters Asian daughter Prita was born. One day I was washing clothes at a Laundromat in Tofino where a hipster couple (she was Japanese, he was Caucasian) were also doing their laundry. Out of the blue I shared my resolution I’d come to after six weeks of traveling on Vancouver Island: “You know what? I
just decided to drive across the country to New York City, find a job and get my own an apartment.” The girl looked up from her clothes and said, smiling: “Good luck! Have a good trip!”

I ferried back to Vancouver and, on the evening I left Vancouver, was playing Madonna’s “True Blue” and The Cars “Drive”, listening to the lyrics: “Who’s gonna drive you home tonight?”. I was entering the next leg in my journey by embarking on an adventure that’d take me across the country to start a new chapter in my life in the City where I’d abandoned Mauri twelve years earlier when she was pregnant to live a spiritual life at New Vrindavana in WV. I was thirty-five now, determined to work like everyone else to support myself and live independently. Just outside of Madison, WI, I visited my Aunt for a night before arriving to New York City, where I stayed with Laine and his wife at their house on Staten Island for a week before moving into an SRO on the Upper West Side near W. 96th Street. There, eight years would slowly pass during which I’d pull the plug on SSI, work continuously as a bike messenger and settle into a New York City lifestyle.
Circles:

Inner Circle: Your Higher Power/God/Deities or Religious/Spiritual Path/Philosophy of Life (or lack thereof) & YOU

1st Circle: Spouse & Children
2nd Circle: Parents, Siblings & Relatives
3rd Circle: Friends
4th Circle: Community
5th Circle: Society/the Planet/World/Globe
Lifestyles:

A) Family Life
B) College Life
C) Professional Life
D) Workingman’s Life
E) Married Life
F) Community Life
G) Street Life/Transient/Homelessness
H) Life on the Road/Traveler/Globe Trekker
I) Criminal Life/ Gang Life/Pimp Life
J) Spiritual Life
K) Prison Life

We generally start out with A & B, aiming for C, D, E and/or F. E is a universal goal & the most essential human relationship that insures conjugal happiness & the creation of a new family that becomes a new social unit. If/When during B, C, D, or F the opportunity of E arises, give it serious consideration. Take to J if at any time it offers you a new direction, perspectives, paradigm or way of life that meets spiritual needs. If you lose sight of goals/direction/purpose and/or the Big Picture, G, H & I may result which (if left unchecked) may lead to K. During K, however, you can return to J (like reaching for a life preserver) to focus on self-rehab & improvement to restore your lifestyle/mindset, reestablish long-term goals, direction and purpose and reconnect to the Big Picture. Through Spiritual Life you can acquire a deeper, eternal perspective on life that cleanses your mind, purifies your heart & puts the material world into an eternal perspective. Who you are, and your eternal purpose in life, becomes defined through your eternal relationship to your Eternal Deities, whose Eternal Love takes you light years beyond your earlier lifestyle that was blind to the light of spiritual truth and eternal reality. When you’re living in J, you can attain E, F, C & D again.
Planning For Dummies:

"In order to dream you've still gotta be asleep." - Bob Dylan

What is success? Senses of success include: (n) 2a) degree or measure of succeeding; b) favorable or desired outcome; also: the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence; 3) one that succeeds. Succeed means: (vi) 2a) to turn out well; b) to attain a desired object or end <students who * in college>. Conventional success is defined by the underlined senses, and the lens through which success is perceived less frequently is defined by the senses in bold.

From a spiritual perspective, success means being centered in one's spiritual/religious beliefs, living a spiritual life and growing in one's relationship to one's Higher Power/God/Deities or in one's religion/spiritual path/philosophy of life (or the lack thereof). What is a goal? Goal means: (n) 2) the end toward which effort is directed: AIM. GOAL means what one intends to accomplish or attain and suggests something attained only by prolonged effort and hardship <worked years to reach her *s>. syn see INTENTION. The long and short of SUCCESS is that you SUCCEED when you ATTAIN YOUR GOALS. Whatever your goals are - to become rich and famous, a rock star, a globe treker, an artist, own a business, dropping out of urban life to become a farmer - the MEASURE OF YOUR SUCCESS will be determined by THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU SUCCEED IN ATTAINING YOUR GOALS. Remember that:

"A GOAL without a PLAN is still a DREAM."

In this world of samsara (material suffering), there's no time to be DREAMING. WAKE UP, GET YOUR ACT IN GEAR, stop DREAMING, create GOALS, make PLANS and EXECUTE YOUR PLANS. Live free & make the most of your life!
How To Reach Long-Term & Short-Term Goals:

1) **STOP DREAMING**
2) **CREATE** realistic, down-to-earth, attainable **GOALS**
3) **START PLANNING**

* Long-term goals are the summits you want to climb in life.
* Short-term goals are preliminary or intermediate stages that, upon attainment, enable you to reach long-term goals. (Example: Work full-time to save money (through financial planning) till you reach your target sum (e.g. $10,000). Then shift gears into executing your plan that will turn your long-term goal into reality. (e.g. pay the $10,000 down payment on 5-10 rural acreage to secure your homestead).

4) When all short-term/intermediate goals are complete, **GO!! MOVE!!** Get the expedition in gear and MAKE IT HAPPEN. **GO FOR THE SUMMIT!!**
I Get High With A Little Help From Cannabis

Getting high or stoned on marijuana/hashish can lift one out of one's usual mindset and raise/elevate one's awareness/consciousness to a higher or deeper level. Anyone can walk/amble along a wild wilderness beach (e.g. along Vancouver Island, B.C., Canada or Southeastern Alaska) to appreciate nature in its element - the beauty of rocky promontories, sea stacks, the waves rolling in to the shore - unstoned. But when stoned/high, the same experience is magnified to a higher octave of subjective experience where emotions, elation, joy and rapture/trance (elevated states of consciousness) can be attained, and one can attune to visions that belong more to the primordiality of place than to our fleeting, transitory 21st century perspective/s of it. The wild* primordial* nature of wilderness beaches and bights (e.g. Nissen Bight, Fisherman Bay, Nels Bight, Experiment Bight and Sand Quose Bay in Cape Scott Provincial Park on Vancouver Island, B.C., Canada) can't be fully appreciated in a 30-minute stroll capped by taking a few snapshots. Although spending more time in wilderness places enables wilderness photographers to discern their moods and capture their essence/s in photographs, camping at them for only moments or days isn't long enough to attune to the primordial spirit of the wilderness. For the fact of a wild niche having remained just so for hundreds of thousands of years to sink in, one must camp (or live) in the area for several moons at least. If our perceptions are bound by the data/information obtained through our senses and are guided/directed by our mind, then the primordial moods and spirit of wilderness beaches easily slip through the mesh of our awareness/consciousness - unless we spend more time there camping for weeks, perhaps even months at a time. We should live in the wild* for some extent of time to fully appreciate its intricacies and complexities, absorb its moods*/aura* and perceive its spirit as the tides ebb and flow, the moon passes through its phases and Earth goes through her seasons. To the primordial wilderness we must be an aberration, a transitory creature of fleeting duration leaving his brief imprint behind on a blue planet. As we pursue materialistic goals, we're susceptible to the delusions and illusions of maya and to becoming blind to our evolutionary history extending back to the Ice Ages. If we get lost chasing wealth and luxury, we'll take Earth for granted and abuse/despoil her wilderness for our selfish ends. But when we're stoned/high on pot or

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10 A footnote from my unpublished book, “Prisoners Of Smasara”. 
hashish, magic mushrooms or LSD we can dial deeply and instantly into self-awareness and acute understanding of our subjective experience and objective environment in ways that conventional thinking and sense perception can’t. Psychoactive drugs access/become windows of perception that enable us to “think outside the box of non-psychoactive reality”, and this resonates with the Moody Blues lyric “Thinking is the best way to travel”. Since certified soft drugs are by definition Schedule II drugs, neither narcotic nor addictive, using them responsibly skirts around the dangers/pitfalls associated with the addiction to illicit/illegal narcotics/hard drugs wherein drug-induced euphoria numbs the harshness of reality and becomes a false haven to which junkies, in the tractions of addiction, flock in subjective flights from reality. While primitive societies venerated certain psychoactive drugs, we live in a time when it’s illegal to be stoned on marijuana while camping on a wilderness beach, watching the sun set and the waves pounding the sandy beaches. In such moments of solitude one could have profound insights and perception into the nature of the human experience and feel less a member of a political nation in the 21st century and more a descendant of H. sapiens that has survived the Ice and Stone Ages, passed through the Bronze Age, dominates the Earth today in the Information Age and looks to the Space Age just around the corner. Such experiential revelations are the antitheses of the alleviation of pain/suffering and search for cure-alls that pharmaceutical/medical prescription drugs aim for. Natural, non-synthetic certified soft drugs like marijuana/hashish can relieve stress, help us to be calm and relaxed, restore balance, harmony and well-being within us and deepen our understanding of the cosmos, who we are and the enigma of the “human condition”. In stark contrast to the panaceas of a modernized world, psychoactive “soft” drugs are lifestyle enhancement drugs. One can camp out in a tent and sleeping bag atop a sea stack islet just offshore, take in the panorama of the setting sun on the horizon as the surf pounds the beach 100 feet below, “travel by thought” (or meditate) while stoned, contemplate the harmony in Earth’s energy and its place in the cosmos in a niche of wilderness that’s changed little since the emergence of H. sapiens. In such a deeply subjective experience one might wonder if others were here before us, in prehistory, camped on this very sea stack, watching our sun setting peacefully. And if they were here, were they, too, stoned? If so, the notion that “soft” psychoactive drugs would later be prohibited would’ve seemed insane and totally ludicrous to them.
The Allure Of Corporeal Beauty

One can perceive and experience the sublime beauty of nature in the mountains, forests, deserts, polar ice caps, where the ocean’s waves break and roll in onto wild beaches, and especially where swells converge on coral reefs and break into rolling barrels that spend their energy until their momentum is dissipated. A surfer riding the pure/raw energy of ocean waves surfs through moving walls of water. Beneath the surface of the water lie shallow coral reefs that determine the shapes of waves breaking overhead. When the falling lip of a wave penetrates the water’s surface at its trough, the force/energy generates underwater turbulence downward to the sea floor. Sand is whipped up and thrown about in an underwater washing machine of aerated white water that can hold a surfer down. Where waves break over shallow reefs, and particularly when the current is receding or the tide is ebbing, coral heads emerge looking like sentinels posting guard against the encroachment of wooden ships of a bygone era. Surfers aware of the dangers they pose risk life and limb to ride fleeting, rushing walls of moving water to get tubed deep in the barrel and experience the thrill, stoke and adrenaline rush of skirting danger and emerging a conqueror. Such a philosophy is: “though nature cannot be tamed, she can be ridden, and her awe-inspiring energy appreciated”. The lesson here is that the allure of immanent beauty (natural, human or in whatever form/shape/appearance it takes) derives from sensory and aesthetic attraction to surface/superficial features/appearances, while at/on a deeper and more fundamental level the illusory aspect of corporeal beauty (in its natural/evolutionary context) is compounded by its having built-in intrinsic dangers associated with it. The allure of getting barreled by fast-moving, charging sick walls of water breaking just off a rocky coast (as at Shipstern’s Bluff in Australia), draws surfers who could wipe out over the shallow reef or get pounded in the shallows or on the rocky coast. In the material world, corporeal beauty is often intrinsically illusory - a trick on the senses, neurophysiology and mind. That physical (human) beauty is “only skin-deep” (i.e. existent within the domain of superficial appearance) means that underneath the skin, the body is blood, pus, urine and stool. If we reach for something beautiful, like a rose, we might, if we’re not careful, get pricked on one of its thorns and bleed. “Padam padam yad vipadam: In this world there is danger at every step.” Fascinated and mesmerized by the music of the singing Sirens that floated in on the breeze, and lured by their enchanting voices,
mariners veered off course, spellbound and oblivious to the perilous reefs and rocks looming in the near distance. Like insects flying into the pitchers of the carnivorous pitcher plant, or moths drawn into the flames, they sailed carelessly to their doom. In this manner the mythical Sirens, through their alluring voices, lured and mislead sailors who, following their corporeal desires and sensual lusts, sailed right into the shallow reefs and rocky coasts and perished. Spiritual life is contingent, then, on discerning between corporeal beauty and transcendental beauty so that one will steer clear of the vortices of sensual lust and sin that mislead people to their ruin. Should one let corporeal beauty (the attractive power of sensory objects) lure one, like iron filings to a magnet, to one's ruin? Or should one see through the veil of maya's illusions/delusions, resist the attraction of corporeal beauty's allure, swim across the rip current of material desire to the channel of the outgoing current of transcendental truth, and activate the spiritual desire to enter a transcendental love relationship with God/Deity? This doesn't mean that a surfer should stop surfing or searching the planet for waves to surf, or that one shouldn't appreciate immanent beauty. The import is that we shouldn't allow our minds/senses, hearts, bodies and spirits to be misled by (or fall under the spell of) today's Sirens. We should be wary of the implicit dangers of the shallow reefs and coral heads that lie in wait in the currents of corporeal attraction, and of the rocky coasts that await those who wipe out, or veer off course, in the thrall of corporeal desires and carnal/sensual appetites. Just as the waterman has expertise with the ocean, is intimately familiar with its dangers, knows the extent of his/her abilities and cautiously/circumspectly pushes the envelope of his/her skills to further his/her experience, so should we act in our temporal sojourns in a material world that's askew to the transcendent reality of God/Deity and the Spiritual Realm. Those who are enamored of maya's illusionary corporeal pleasures and don't have spiritual purpose or transcendental direction will wipe out over the shallow reefs and coral heads, or get pounded on the rocks, of material nature. If we shed the chrysalis of material consciousness, acquire eternal purpose/objectives and begin spiritual life, we can dovetail our temporal lives to the sublime calling of eternal love and life in the Spiritual Realm in a relationship/rasa with the Lord. A surfer who lives a spiritual life and continues to surf should demote surfing contests, money and fame to a lower position on the totem pole of this life's priorities, and promote the deepening of one's premalove for God/Deity to the top of this life's priorities. Since the dazzling/tantalizing flowers of corporeal beauty
in this temporal world attract conditioned souls, who are enamored of corporeal beauty, in droves, like moths drawn to the flame, it’s wise not to reach for them. Otherwise one might get pricked by the thorns and bleed. Living a spiritual life doesn’t mean one can’t pursue personal, social, community, national and planetary projects, goals and visions. One should engage with members of the community to stay abreast/attuned to what’s happening around the globe while navigating the obstacle course of the samsaric material world without the baggage/luggage of the cares, material concerns and anxieties the world experiences. If one works for planetary sustainability and a greener planet, he/she should collaborate with like-minded people in/on various projects, goals and visions, tackling the issues/problems and searching for the right solutions, while staying aloof from the unconcerned majority of people. They you let be, as the refrain in The Beatles song “Let It Be” emphasizes: “Let it be, let it be: Let it be, let it be. There will be an answer. Let it be, let it be.” Is this what John means in his exhortation: “Do not love the world or the things in the world...And the world is passing away, and the lust of it...but he who does the will of God abides forever. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world.” [1 John 2:15-17]? Conspicuously absent in this clear-cut, black-and-white, separatist Christian command is the transcendental knowledge providing the perception, experience and/or understanding that helps one to follow it. (One with spiritual understanding, however, realizes the wisdom of this command. Since the world in general is opposed to the eternal love, mercy and will of God/Deity, and is a place of suffering, what’s there really to “love” (especially when we can take nothing out of this life/world and into the next life/world) in the material world? By contrast if we read the Vedic literature, chant the maha-mantra and engage in devotional service, we’ll perceive, experience and understand material nature, resist corporeal desires and sensual lusts/appetites, see through maya’s illusions/delusions and the darkness of ignorance, forsake the false ego, return to our original spiritual nature, bury pride and sing its eulogy, taking the position of the servant of the servant.
Vaikuntha Rays: Poems


Jet Set Headset/Bruised Hearts

Pop in the disc,
  Pump up the volume,
  Dancing in my head,
  Jet set headset.

In my head
  In my head
  In my head.
  Everything is in my head.
  So many things that I got lost.
    But I fly when they’re on -
      They’re going to Altair,
        Climbing up by stairs.

I fail too many times.
  Like boring reruns, who wants to watch?
    I shout, “Is there anyone out there?
      Who loves me?”
        I listen to the stillness,
          The peaceful quiet
            Of this big void of a Universe.
              I hear no one, but –

It’s funny, and I laugh.
  Silly me. Dumb me. Stupid me.
    I fail too many times.
      Mystical love can pick me up.
        But she already did,
          In our earlier lifetime.
            Now only broken promises are left
              Of our mystical love.

Real Dream

Dreams are real but dissolve to nothingness.
Reality can become a nightmare that must be lived through.
Flowing through sleep and wakefulness,
Like water in a stream, we pass our lives.
In my head
  Is this nightmare
    That no one should experience.
      The sanest man may not be fazed
        By such temporal phenomena,
          Can make it look easy.
            But it isn’t easy for me.
I'm mesmerized by the sound of her musical voice.
She's from Japan, intelligent and very hot,
Making men's heads turn, unfazed by reality.
She's a weaver of dreams,
Dancing, singing, leading me
On a stairway to the heavens,
Taking me to Altair.
I hear her voice getting louder
Inside my head.

Looking Forward Into Yesterday (Japanese Perspective)
Our eyes gaze through star-filled nights,
To beautiful sunrises of new days,
As earth spins like a top. We who've survived are here,
Today, but I look forward as the sun
Rises, thinking of myself and my friends and
All we've been through -
Nuclear bombs, radioactive death clouds
And rebuilding. Looking across
The Pacific Ocean to the United States,
I see my friends in Hollywood living in our yesterday,
Where Tokyo time is in their tomorrow.
We live in their future, always ahead of them,
And now they're catching up to us.
We've learned from them, imitate them,
Create fantasies and make them dream.
What we do they'll slowly come to realize -
How we rock our house and get it on -
Maybe. My islands are in the land of the rising sun,
Where the day begins on
This amazing blue planet Earth.

Hope
Sometimes the only thing that keeps you sane
Is hope -
Hope you'll once more accomplish
Something you've already done.
Hope you'll once again be
Who you once were before,
But this time without
Screwing everything up.
The will to reach the goal may be there,
But how do you reach it?
How do you find the perfect Japanese girl and get her to marry you?
You try your best,
Even though it might be against the odds,
And all you can do is
Hope.
Part II: Vaikuntha Rays: Returning to Spiritual Life (2011)

Driftwood

In the city in another life,
    I was disconnected, adrift, lost.
In the city in another life,
    I was chasing paper, dreaming, accumulating karma.
    The present slipped further away from the past
    Where reality is preserved
    In tree rings, air bubbles in ice cores,
    Insects in amber.

In a temporal revelation,
    You discover that the truth lives in the past,
    In the Ice Ages out of which we emerged,
    In how we got here,
    In who we are.

In fogs of self-obfuscation,
    Atman (True Self) is separated
    From Paramatman (Supreme Self).
    Lives in delusions of freedom and independence
    Enjoys selfishly,
    Not for God’s enjoyment.
    Chases desires, pleasures and dreams,
    Enamored by maya’s illusions and
    The darkness of ignorance.

Journey through time into the past,
    To your roots to find,
    Waters of transcendence.
    Return through time to the present day,
    To these branches and leaves
    Of objective and subjective realities,
    Whole, sane, sound,
    One with God like rainwater
    Mixing with the ocean.

Behold fleets of driftwood
    Floating adrift in the ocean,
    Just as you once were in the ocean of nescience.

Awaken From This Dream

I was a dreamer but now I’m awake.
    I’m not the body, mind, intellect or ego.
    I’m Atman, a Universal Self, “I”,
    Attuning my spirit-soul to Paramatman, the Supreme Self,
    Like a raindrop merging with the ocean.
The world slumbers to maya's lullaby:
   "Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream.
   Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream."
   But Krishna enters this prison house of material existence,
   This dream world full of illusions,
   Enters our hearts and minds and speaks to us:
   "Walking through a dream, I see you."
   Calls us to awaken from our spiritual slumber,
   To seek transcendental truth and eternal love
   Through serving Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha-Govinda -
   Whose love emanates from Goloka Vrindavana.

Peel back the layers of this onion,
   Go deeper than the roots of the banyan tree,
   Through the core of this material universe to hear
   "OM" resonating on a transcendental frequency.
   If we choose external happiness over inner tranquility,
   Use freedom and independence to
   Pursue desires, material enjoyment and carnal pleasures,
   We become locked in to the merry-go-round of samsara,
   The endless wheel of birth, suffering, death and rebirth
   That perpetually turns in endless temporal cycles
Obeying to the law of karma.

Who chooses to leave the merry-go-round
   To seek God's eternal, transcendental love?
   To align his will to the Supreme Lord's?
   To discover the Absolute truth of the Vaikuntha Spiritual Sky?
   To see how our suffering, obstacles and tribulations,
   Are meant to teach us,
   And help us grow to become stronger until
   We realize that misusing our independence and free will
   Is the reason we're here in the material world?
   Trapped within the layers of this onion,
In the roots and branches of the banyan tree.

By going our own way to enjoy on our own terms
   Instead of serving Krsna for His enjoyment,
   We've come to the crossroads
   In the material universe,
   On Bharatavarsha (Earth),
   (A place perceived to be better than heavenly planets)
   With a chance to make spiritual progress
To return to Krishnaloka
At the heart of the Spiritual Universe.

Will you rise or fall? Transcend or sink?
   Will you awake from the darkness of ignorance and nescience,
   Or continue dreaming in the matrix of materiality?
Karma’s arrows fly,
    Driven by the actions of our past and present lives.
    Will you realize your true, spiritual nature -
    Sac-cid-ananda-vigraha -
    “The transcendental form of the Lord (or of the living entity),
    Which is eternal, full of knowledge and bliss”?
    Will you serve Krsna and Radharani to experience Their eternal love?
It’s you who decides.

7-29-2011

Untitled
What’s enduring and permanent in the material world? Nature’s constant change, waves breaking and rolling onto wild desolate beaches, the melting of mountain snow in spring, the passing of the seasons, the journeys of suns, moons, planets and stars, suffering through karma in samsara, the singing, dancing and chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord and the eternal love of Krsna and Radha.

Five Acres
Buy five acres or rural, forested land,
    Convert a barn into a home,
    Worship Govinda and Srimati Radharani.
Replace nightmares, fantasies and illusion
    With music and bhajans, Spiritual Sky incense and puja,
    Hiking, trekking, kayaking, camping on wild beaches
    And riding the waves.
Life proceeds slowly like the setting sun,
    Rising moon and changing tides,
    Just as eternal love kindles slowly
    In the heart to shine forever.

7-29-2011

The End Of Fantasy
Here lies fantasy laid to rest by the calm dhira’s mind.
    No tears do I shed for you,
    No encomium, eulogy or tribute.
    I only have inner tranquility and peace of mind
    With which to celebrate your demise.

In The Brahman Effulgence
Unplug and detach from the whirlwind of urban city living,
    Dial into rural life and to attune to nature’s seasons.
    It’s hard to tune into Earth’s energy
    Surrounded by concrete buildings.
    Sing, dance and chant the Holy Names to spiritual music
    As we’re move through
    The Brahman Effulgence.
Behold the cities plunged in fogs of paper-chasing,
Drugs, pleasure, pain, violence, fame, greed...
If posterity remembers the famous ones,
What's it like being just one who
Greets the Deities in the morning before sunrise,
Chants the Holy Names of the Supreme Lord,
Hears about the pastimes of God -
Who, in order not to be alone,
Created the host of living entities,
Each endowed with a drop of “I” – Atman, True Self.
Each of us must liberate his/her Atman,
Become one with Paramatman -
The Supreme Self, the Supreme Lord God.
Krishna will not be alone;
Solitude is the burden of Atman.
So slow down to keep pace with the sun,
Watch the moon, the changing tides and seasons.
Experience earth’s harmony and natural energy.
With a heart like a yolk broken over divine love,
How sublime it is to feel attuned to the universe,
And experience Krishna’s and Radharani’s eternal love in your heart,
To feel the sacred syllable “OM” resonating through your being,
And know that Krishna is the Supreme Lord,
The source of Eternal, Transcendental Love,
And that Radharani is his Eternal Consort.
8-1-2011

Happy Just To Be Alive
I’ve resided in a dormitory,
Been to several hospitals for short stints,
Dwelled in a couple of lofts,
Lived on a farming community for 2 years,
Been a transient for 2 years,
Resided in studio apartments,
In an SRO for 8 years,
And in prison for 13+ years.
I remember what kept me going
When I was alone
With nothing and no one:
“Just be happy to be alive.”
This (then and now) keeps my engine firing.
People you love but who ignore you -
Do they deserve your continual focus and attention?
Look within yourself.
Remember them but move onward to pursue your own goals.
Sing and chant the Holy Names of the Lord,
Merge Atman (True Self) with Paramatman (Supreme Self),
Live close to nature and the wild in the “country”.
Harmonize with the planet’s energy,
Perceive unity in the universe
   In the middle of nowhere,
Far from the urban din of the “rat race”,
   Knowing the world envies those
Who find tranquility in solitude,
   Harmony in the universe and oneness with God.
Establish permanent residence in a trailer or cabin,
   In Sitka or Prince of Wales Island, Alaska.
Kick around on your own pieces of ground on a farmstead in a converted barn
   In the White Mountains near Fairbanks.
Know that as counterpoint to the depths you’ve sunk,
   And the fogs of obfuscation you’ve subjected yourself to,
You can rise just as high into the mountain peaks of experience,
   Greeting the Deities Radha and Krishna,
Whether passing through valleys
   Or rising to summits.
   Pain and sadness
Precedes finding truth and inner peace.
   You undergo external turmoil and hardship
Before perceiving transcendental beauty.
   You enter solitude to harmonize with nature’s energy
   Before finding unity in the universe
And desiring to perceive Krsna’s and Radha’s transcendental conjugal love.
   When the jiva-atma desires to serve the Supreme Lord,
One experiences the Eternal Love that transcends material existence,
   That makes you confident of yourself,
   And supremely happy just to be alive.
   8-2-2011

Taking Refuge In The Wilderness (A Message To Myself)

In the solitude of wild places
   In the rural countryside, nature and the wilderness,
You find peaceful refuge
   In a sojourn from the concrete jungle,
Relinquishing the paper chase.
   Getting back to the land,
Attuning to nature,
   Renouncing city ways
   For rural life.

Penetrate maya’s illusions and nescience’s darkness,
   Pierce the darkness of ignorance with rays of spiritual light.
Purify your mind, senses and heart,
   Chant the Holy Names and experience
Rain, wind, storms, snow and passing seasons
   On this Earth that keeps a wary eye
   On the civilization of man.
Greet the Deities before sunrise,
   Watch the moon rise
   And the tides change.
Can you attune to your inner nature – Atman, your True Self -
   If you’re far from nature – the wild beaches, tidal rapids,
   Mountain peaks, rivers and alpine meadows?
   A culture based on money can leave you
      Spiritually bankrupt, hungry and in need of
   Transcendental knowledge.

Awaken and spiritualize your senses,
   Walk for miles along wave-battered wild beaches,
   Listening to the sound of the waves rolling in.
   Hike the trails and camp in the mountains,
      Paddle a kayak through islands and waterways for weeks
   To get away from it all,
      To perceive wildlife up close
         (Instead of on television),
         And renounce city life.

Move to the heart of the country,
   Live on the doorstep of the wilderness.
   Find tranquility in rural life that’s hardly found in big cities.
   Resist the gravity of urban living,
      The allure of illicit pleasures and greedy scheming.
   Escape the downward spirals of greed, fame,
      Pride, prestige and selfishness.
      Caution: Danger lurks at every step.

Shun the visions prized by humanity’s lofty pride,
   The multimillion dollar skyscrapers and towering high-rises
      That stands proudly, far away and aloof from nature.
   As you let the world deal with it’s own karma,
      Pray it’ll learn the way of peace, service and surrender.
      Acquire transcendental knowledge in spiritual life,
         Living in harmony with the seasons,
         Taking shelter from the storm.

8-2-2011

Before And After

You realize the value of nothing
   Before comprehending the meaning of everything
      And discerning the value of something.
You venture into your heart
   Before venturing out into space or to the stars.
      Travel within, through your heart to reach Atman,
         Your True Self, the seed of Eternal Truth.
You learn through failing the value of success.
   Zero balance is an absolute measure -
      From whencwe ascend or descend,
         Rise or fall – who’ll transcend the material world?
You understand your limits
   Before comprehending the limitless, infinity.
      You experience emptiness
         Before experiencing being full.
You experience being no one
Before realizing that you’re someone.

Your course will deviate
Before it undergoes course correction.
You lose your way before reaching for the lifesaver to be rescued.
You lose self-control
Before realizing the need to acquire self-control.
You learn how to resist before you develop the ability to attract.
You’re a single person before you enter into marriage.
You’re break dependency before you become independent,
And in independence you understand your utter need
To depend on Govinda, the Supreme Lord.

We’re separated from God
Before we ache to return to the refuge of His eternal Love and Mercy.
We pass our lives in this material world
Before we return to the Vaikuntha Spiritual Sky.
If God is a magnet we are steel,
And the attractive force is His Eternal Love.
You renounce the clinging of the body, mind, intellect and ego
To allow your Atman to transcend mundane corporeality.
You sing, dance and chant the Holy Names of the Lord,
To purify your senses, mind and heart
Along the path of bhakti yoga and devotional service.

But before you do any of these things
That ultimately lead you back to Godhead through spiritual life,
You desire to enjoy separately from God on your own terms,
And use your independence and free will to go your own way
Rather than to serve the Supreme Lord with love.

We fall from the Spiritual Sky
Before we desire to return to it.

8-4-2011

Cut Down The Banyan Tree

What I want or desire, perhaps I don’t need,
But with independence and free will
I’m free to pursue it if I choose.
Will I use my option to refuse it?
Or will I let the corporeal wants and desires
Of this material body, mind, intellect and ego
Overrule the spiritual needs of my Atman (True Self),
Without using self-control, restraint or discipline?
Will I capitulate so readily to the Sirens’ song of material desires?
Each one’s a relentless pursuit of material pleasure,
A root descending from a branch of the banyan tree that,
Taking root in the ground,
’Holds one more securely to the prison house of material existence,
And perpetuates the karmic cycle of suffering in samsara.
Or will I cut down the banyan tree
With the weapon of detachment,
And detach myself from the unruly desires
That inflict body, mind, intellect and ego?
In the banyan tree of material existence,
Mankind’s collective and individual desires,
Through maya and nescience to anchor him to samsara.
Innumerable roots drop from its many branches,
Tentacles of human desire, hankering and craving
That fasten conditioned souls to the immovable trunk of karmic existence,
Binding them more firmly to material ground.
8-6-2011

Tame The Wild Horses
Purify your thoughts studying the Vedic literature,
Bring them into focus, direct them with laser-point accuracy.
Refine, manage and tame them
Like wild horses tamed in the corral.
When horses run wild and free,
No one crosses the dessert of materiality
To reach the Spiritual Sky;
No one rides the horse with no name
To escape samsara’s pain.
Tame the wild horses of free will and independence
Until they obey your will.
Ride them through the desert back to Godhead,
Without sinking roots of material desire deeper into the ground.
8-6-2011

Dream World Of Samsara
Are we passing through these real, corporeal worlds
In the dreams of butterflies
Dreaming they’ve become people?
If the soul is eternal then it originates not in conception or birth,
But from God in the Spiritual Sky.
We’re jiva-atmas, living entities,
Parts and parcels of the Supreme Lord Krsna.
Will we take the blue pill to wake up
From these illusions of Samsaric existence?
Or take the red pill to continue in ignorance,
To perpetuate these pleasurable experiences
Of sense gratification and enjoyment
That further entangled us in maya,
And keep us comfortably numb and distant
From God and the Vaikuntha Loka?
Walking through our dreams Krishna sees us,
The Supersoul dwelling in each of our hearts,
Witnessing our experiences at every step of the way,
As we choose to enjoy on our own terms
And pursue illusory goals relentlessly and recklessly,
Or as we grow weary of these material illusions
And desire to return home, back to Godhead.
Krishna is ever patient, waiting for the conditioned souls
To awaken from these dreams of material illusions,
To come to our senses and desire to serve Him in bhakti yoga and devotional service.
Passing through this dream we can taste the divine nectar of Eternal Love and
Glimpse Radha’s and Krishna’s Transcendental Conjugal Relationship,
Even as we’re here today and gone tomorrow,
    And the wheel of samsara continues turn ever so slowly.
Within the continuous flux of cyclical change temporal life,
    Fleeting as wisps of smoke carried on a midnight breeze,
Appears, transitory and transient,
    In momentary intervals of sentient intelligence
To awaken to spiritual consciousness,
    Or drift back into sleep, succumbing to the allure
Of these dream worlds of material existence.
As we’re passing through these material worlds,
    Of sentient, higher intelligence.
    (Like Jake Sully in Avatar: Return To Pandora),
On different planetary systems scattered throughout
    The stars and galaxies of the material universes,
Who awakens from this material Dream?
Who returns to the Vaikuntha Spiritual Sky?
Will you?

8-7-2011

Wild Horses Of Free Will And Independence

We choose what we want to do with free will and independence,
    Where to live and travel, in whose company to keep.
    I know that when I pursue pleasure or desire
    (Perhaps to inordinate excess), it’s because of my inability
    To use restraint, self-control or discipline
    That one more prudent or wiser than I would use.
    My conscience carries the scars of repeated failure,
Yet I don’t give up, I choose to persevere.

Today we’re each is free to succeed or fail
At ruling over our material desires with spiritual discipline.
    Transcendental knowledge and spiritual life surpasses
    Blind religious indoctrination and ideology that rejects
    The beneficial fruits of modern science, technology, medicine
    And the culture of university and higher education.
    While blind reason lassos free will into blind obedience,
    Sane rationality helps one confront the innumerable challenges
    Implicit in taming the wild horses of our free will and independence.

“Wild horses are coming to drag us away” -
But how do you ride them unless you break them in?
    Tame them and bridle them?
    Employ these horses to control your senses and mind.
    I’m on the journey back to the Spiritual Sky
    Beyond the material creation.

8-7-2011
Where Snow Falls Into Surf

I'd like to live somewhere that brings me peace of mind and heart,
Where I can watch the winter snow fall into the surf and onto the driftwood
    And sand of wild beaches that receive the pounding waves.
Where our breath mists and snow blankets Cedars and Western Hemlock,
Falls on our heads during temperate winters in Southeastern Alaska –
In Sitka, Yakutat or on Prince of Wales Island.
    I'd like to kayak-surf the waves in summer or autumn
As the sun sets over the watery horizon,
And watch falling snow mixing with the winter waves,
Feeling one with the planet and the Universe.
    I'd like to go home to fix dinner in a trailer or A-frame cabin:
Curry? Peking Duck and fried rice?
Through the speakers music from the 1960s and 1970s sounds:
Tangerine Dream, William Ackerman, Yes, Lee Michaels, Honk, CSN&Y,
    Pink Floyd, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin...
Or spiritual music from devotees – joyous kirtans and bhajans
Of singing and chanting the Holy Names of the sweet Lord Govinda,
Drawn into Krsna’s Transcendental, Eternal Love.
    I'd like to sleep in the loft in the cabin warmed by the woodstove,
And feed the dog, cats and parrot in the morning,
Then e-mail Nagi, Mira, Rena, Hitami and Hotaru in the afternoon.
Which one of them will come over to spend the night?
    Share my close-to-nature, slow-paced, off-grid spiritual life?
Where the snow falls into the surf,
Blankets the forest and tops the roof.
I'd like to finally do what I really want to do
    With the woman who is my conjugal lover (and wife) whom I really love.
Sleeping with our heads on our pillows,
Dreaming of Krsna, Radharani and Lord Caitanya.
Isn't this material world is just a dream?
    A material illusion into which we've fallen -
And I for one wish to make amends for my errors with a close, intimate friend
In our “home in the heart of the country” in Southeastern Alaska
Where the snow falls softly the wintertime,
    And the wounds of my fractured heart will heal as the seasons pass,
In Krsna’s and Radha’s Eternal, Conjugal Love.
     8-7-2011

Window To Another World

Down by the Northwestern Pacific ocean,
Up near the coastal mountains and waterfalls,
    Hiking and camping on the trails,
Gardening like a farmsteader,
    Living like an expatriate of the Treadmill,
Getting closer to nature,
    On my way back home to Godhead,
As I'm distancing myself from the big cities,
By myself or with a close friend and partner,
I'm happy to live closer to nature.

Independent and self-sufficient,
Off the grid without a trace of hate, greed or envy,
Void of selfishness or animosity,
Attuning to the sacred transcendental vibrations
Through chanting the Holy Names of the Lord,
Singing devotional songs for Krsna, Radha and Lord Caitanya,
Greeting the Deities in our puja room in our home
Before sunrise each morning,
Offering incense, flowers and water to the Deities,
And playing bhajans with caryatals and mridangas,
We look through a window to another world,
The spiritual world of the Vaikuntha Spiritual Sky
Where Krsna, the Supreme Lord
Dwells in Eternal Love in Krsna Loka.

Taking prasadam at Krsna Sunday Feasts,
I'll be happy to contemplate making a pilgrimage to India,
To lose a little of my 'American-ness'
And attune a little more to Krsna's and Radha's Eternal Love,
Through which I can look back to this experience -
These 13+ years of incarceration
As a prisoner in the prison house of material existence -
And thank my Deities for awakening me from this dream -
These material illusions created by maya and nescience -
And causing me remember the Krsna prema,
I once had for Them with my best friend
So long ago when we were married.
Hare Krsna Hare Krsna
Krsna Krsna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare.

At The Edge Of Space
At the edge of space near the Viraja River,
Darkness dissipates into eternal light,
And fear is erased in transcendental love.
Look to the Supreme Lord Krsna,
Behold the transcendental blue eternal body of Govinda.

Look within yourself,
Into the magic mirror of time,
Behold Srimati Radharani's Eternal Love for Krsna
Radiating like the sun,
Showing us the way
Back home to Vaikuntha.
Earth travels around the sun,
Orb of oceans blue,
Spinning to Bhumidevi’s tune.
Who awakens to Eternal Spiritual Truth?
Shrugs off maya’s illusions?
Will it be you?

2/7/2013