The Nectar of Book Distribution

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To
the sacred memory of
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
who went to America with books
and to
his followers in ISKCON
whose staunch faith in the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda
and tireless dedication to book distribution
keep him vividly present among us.
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PREFACE

Manuals on many topics are entering the ISKCON market: cooking, teaching, communications, Ayurveda, home schooling, Deity worship, tulasi care, the āśramas, the dhāmas, studying śāstra, Ratha-cart construction. Now, also, a manual is available that will help devotees become proficient in the art of distributing books: The Nectar of Book Distribution. This book consists mainly of statements by pioneers, leaders, and other experienced devotees in the field of book distribution. Fearing that the wisdom of their years of experience might be lost, we compiled this book as a service for the present and future generations of ISKCON devotees. It systematically presents for the first time both philosophical explanations of the mission of book distribution and practical guidelines.

ISKCON has only a few books about book distribution. Distribute Books, Distribute Books, Distribute Books, by Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami, gives inspiring accounts of the early years of book distribution, the development of large-scale book distribution, Srila Prabhupada’s great pleasure in seeing book distribution increase, and the invention of the Christmas marathon (now called the Prabhupada marathon). If You Want to Please Me is a compilation of Srila Prabhupada’s statements on book distribution and publication. And several other books mention book distribution, for example, Prabhupada Siksamtra, Srila Prabhupada-lilamtra, Preaching Is the Essence, ISKCON in the 1970s, Servant of the Servant and A Transcendental Diary.

Because the books just mentioned already recount the history of book distribution and reproduce every one of Srila Prabhupada’s statements on the topic, The Nectar of Book Distribution has another purpose to serve. First of all, space limited our selection of Prabhupada’s statements to passages relevant to the context. (Whoever desires to read the complete quotations can do so easily nowadays with the available source material.) In selecting statements, we were on guard not to present a one-sided view of Srila Prabhupada’s preaching mission. Rather, the statements we used show how Srila Prabhupada taught that all of ISKCON benefits from successful book distribution. Therefore this publication is important not only for book distributors but for ISKCON at large.

Second, book distribution has unlimited aspects, so we had to be selective, and thus this book does not cover all the possible topics in detail. The Nectar of Book Distribution is simply meant to be an outline of basic points, illustrated by a selection of statements by Srila Prabhupada and his
followers on the philosophy and practice of book distribution. Because it is a limited, basic outline, not all of ISKCON’s authorities in the preaching field could be quoted, and we apologize for that deficiency and trust it won’t be misunderstood. Another reason for that deficiency is that the book was compiled in the North European BBT zone, and that naturally entailed quoting devotees from North Europe, one of the leading areas in book distribution, and including excerpts from lectures given here. But this is definitely not the last book about book distribution. More books will be published under the new BBT imprint, BBT Sankirtan Books, and therefore in the books to come, devotees not interviewed for this volume, or quoted only briefly, can continue addressing the growing league of book distributors world-wide.

Usually book distributors don’t like to talk about themselves because they follow Kṛṣṇa’s motto: “Those who are actually heroes do not talk much; they prove their prowess by a practical exhibition of chivalrous activities.” But for this book they took the time to answer many questions, and therefore this book is unique. It records in detail what they said about their realizations, techniques, secret ecstasies on the street, and methods of overcoming difficulties on the paths of preaching and spiritual progress.

I am grateful to all the devotees who helped with this book. I am especially indebted to Śrīla Harikeśa Swami, my spiritual master, whose initiative and organization brought the book about. Although I am most unqualified and have only brief, direct experience of book distribution, he mercifully engaged me in the purifying service of compiling The Nectar of Book Distribution and continually inspired me and helped me to complete it. I thank Śrīla Dāsa for preparing much of the interview material; Tattva-vit Dāsa, who put a lot of energy into editing the manuscript; Cetanārahita Dāsa for reading the first draft and offering his advice; Ramākānta Dāsa for proofreading the Sanskrit; and Rañecara Dāsa and Bhakta Miro for their help in the computer department. We hope that the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who inaugurated the world-wide mission of book distribution, and the words of the great souls dedicated to his mission will inspire all devotees to think about book distribution and to continue distributing books if that is their service, to distribute books as often as possible if they have other services, or to join the mission wholeheartedly if they are newcomers and wish to taste what’s described in this book— the nectar of book distribution.

Zurich
Ātma-tattva Dāsa
1993
PART ONE

BOOKS ARE THE BASIS

The Eastern Side of the Nectar Ocean of Book Distribution

“My first concern is that all my books shall be published and distributed profusely all over the world. Practically, books are the basis of our movement. Without our books, our preaching will have no effect.”

—Śrila Prabhupāda
Introduction to Part One

“If there are ample books,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “everything else will succeed. Practically our Society is built on books.” He often said books are the basis, and The Nectar of Book Distribution is dedicated to elaborating on that point. Part One explains how books are the basis of preaching, ISKCON, and a devotee’s spiritual life.

Chapter One reminds the reader that Śrīla Prabhupāda called book distribution ISKCON’s “most important activity.” This chapter explains that book distribution is intrinsically part of the saṅkīrtana-yajña, because it engages the largest number of people in active devotional service and thereby introduces the yuga-dharma on individual and global levels. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Wherever our books are being distributed, our movement is established on a firm basis. Therefore I came to your country with books.”

Chapter Two discusses book distribution philosophically: why it is a transcendental activity, a direct manifestation of Lord Caitanya’s mercy upon all conditioned souls, and why it is also called saṅkīrtana.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books contain the words of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotees, and therefore whoever comes in contact with them benefits eternally. But the benefits are especially reaped by the devotees who distribute these books. Chapter Three explains that by accepting book distribution as the basis of their spiritual life, devotees become most dear to guru and Kṛṣṇa and thus are blessed with spiritual realizations and qualities.

Editor’s note:

All the statements taken from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lectures, letters, and conversations are footnoted. The excerpts from Bhaktivedanta purports are labeled “p” after the text reference number.

Devotees are identified by country or city the first time they are quoted, and information about them is given in a glossary. Sannyāsis and gurus aren’t identified like that because they are well known and are active internationally.
1

Book Distribution: “Our Most Important Activity”

“There is no doubt about it: to distribute books is our most important activity. The temple is not a place for eating and sleeping, but a base from which we send out our soldiers to fight with māyā. ‘Fight with māyā’ means to drop thousands and millions of books into the lap of the conditioned souls. Just like during war time the bombs are raining from the sky like anything.”

1.1 Three premises

Book distribution refers to disseminating the transcendental knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and delivering the conditioned souls from nonsense. Specifically Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books have within them all of the information and understanding necessary to lead everyone throughout the world to Lord Kṛṣṇa’s devotional service; his books will relieve people of material suffering and guide them back to Godhead, back to their constitutional position and ultimate happiness in an eternal life of bliss and knowledge. Consequently book distribution refers above all to distributing the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is empowered to fulfill the prediction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu that the Lord’s holy name will be known in every town and village world-wide.

“There is no doubt about it: To distribute books is our most important activity.” Śrīla Prabhupāda made this point unmistakably clear by his spoken instructions, his practical management, his lectures, and especially his letters. Because book distribution is the top priority, Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted every member of ISKCON to be taught how to distribute books:

I like your program of sending out your best book distributors to teach the others. That is the actual process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: to train others. Continue this program so that
in the future every devotee in our movement will know the art of distributing books. 

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission of writing books, establishing ISKCON, and saving the conditioned souls presents a great challenge to his followers: to apply the instructions in his books for our own advancement and to make his instructions available to others. Thus preaching and distributing books are ISKCON’s prime duties.

Preaching is the best way to save ourselves and others, and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is the best preaching. Therefore this book is based on the following three premises:

1. Preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the prime mission of ISKCON;
2. Book distribution is the best and most important preaching;
3. Prabhupāda wanted every devotee to know the art of distributing books.

“Anyone who tries sincerely to present Bhagavad-gītā as it is will advance in devotional activities and reach the pure devotional state of life. As a result of such pure devotion, he is sure to go back home, back to Godhead” (Bg. 18.68p). This definitely applies to book distribution. Kṛṣṇa says that His instructions may never be explained to those who are not austere or devoted, nor to one who is envious of Him. According to these conditions, most of the people that book distributors encounter are not fit candidates for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But Lord Caitanya does not take into account these conditions, and His devotees are so merciful that they give everyone many opportunities to engage in devotional service. Eventually some of those people become purified enough to accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and become devotees, and finding those devotees makes the book distributors most dear to Kṛṣṇa. “For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in the world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear” (Bg. 18.68–69). Kṛṣṇa’s declaration that preachers are His dearmost servants was emphasized by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda, who taught that preaching—especially distributing transcendental literature—is the fundamental duty of the sankirtana movement.

Preaching is a devotee’s duty, and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is the best preaching. How any devotee can do that according to his particular capacity will be his best preaching, whether he does it directly as a book distributor or indirectly by performing the other activities of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Although all devotional service is transcendental
and absolute, naturally this book advocates that devotees distribute books full-time, part-time, or any time. It is most desirable that somehow or other all members of ISKCON individually taste the unique nectar of distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Let the devotees go out more often with increasing enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise! Let the transcendental distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books expand all over the world!

1.2 Saṅkīrtana and book distribution

Congregational chanting: the spiritual process for this age

“O son of Mahārāja Nanda, I am Your eternal servitor, yet somehow or other I have fallen into the ocean of birth and death. Please pick me up from this ocean of death and place me as one of the atoms at Your lotus feet.” (Śikṣāṣṭakam 5)

In this verse Lord Caitanya hints at the real purpose of the material world: It’s created to give the fallen souls a place to reform. That’s why Śrī Kṛṣṇa descends and why He sends His representatives and why the scriptures are there: to show the way back to Godhead. Lord Caitanya descended to introduce the yuga-dharma, the process of spiritual life for this age, which is the sankīrtana-yajña, the congregational chanting of the holy names of the Lord. This will now be illustrated with statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda; and additional statements will demonstrate that book distribution is the means to establish the yuga-dharma. All this will serve to explain why Śrīla Prabhupāda called book distribution “our most important activity.”

Let us invoke auspiciousness by reading the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder-ācārya of ISKCON, which convey the ideal mood of book distribution and provide a common ground for deepening our meditation on accomplishing Lord Caitanya’s saṅkīrtana mission.

(a) Purpose of the material world

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.24p: The Lord wanted to create the cosmic manifestation to give another chance to the conditioned souls who were dormant in forgetfulness. The cosmic manifestation gives the conditioned souls a chance to go back home, back to Godhead, and that is its main purpose. The Lord is so kind that in the absence of such a manifestation He feels something wanting, and thus the creation takes place. . . . The whole process is to enliven the sleeping conditioned souls to the real life of spiritual consciousness so that they may thus become as perfect as the ever-liberated souls in the Vaikuṇṭhalokas. Since the Lord is sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha, He
likes every part and parcel of His different potencies to take part in the blissful rasa because participation with the Lord in His eternal rāsa-līlā is the highest living condition, perfect in spiritual bliss and eternal knowledge.

(b) Why the Lord descends

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.34: There are innumerable material universes, and in each and every universe there are innumerable planets inhabited by different grades of living entities in different modes of nature. The Lord (Viṣṇu) incarnates Himself in each and every one of them and in each and every type of living society. He manifests His transcendental pastimes among them just to create the desire to go back to Godhead. The Lord does not change His original transcendental position, but He appears to be differently manifested according to the particular time, circumstances and society. Sometimes He incants Himself or empowers a suitable living being to act for Him, but in either case the purpose is the same: The Lord wants the suffering living being to go back home, back to Godhead. The happiness which the living beings are hankering for is not to be found within any corner of the innumerable universes and material planets. The eternal happiness which the living being wants is obtainable in the kingdom of God, but the forgetful living beings under the influence of the material modes have no information of the kingdom of God. The Lord, therefore, comes to propagate the message of the kingdom of God, either personally as an incarnation or through His bona fide representative as the good son of God. Such incarnations or sons of God are not making propaganda for going back to Godhead only within the human society. Their work is also going on in all types of societies, among demigods and those other than human beings.

(c) Importance of the scriptures

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.122: The conditioned soul cannot revive his Kṛṣṇa consciousness by his own effort. But out of causeless mercy, Lord Kṛṣṇa compiled the Vedic literature and its supplements, the Purāṇas.

Purport: A conditioned soul is bewildered by the Lord’s illusory energy (māyā). Māyā’s business is to keep the conditioned soul forgetful of his real relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Thus the living entity forgets his real identity as spirit soul, Brahma, and instead of realizing his factual position thinks himself the product of the material energy. . . . Out of His causeless mercy and compassion, Kṛṣṇa has compiled various Vedic literatures in His incarnation as Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva is a saktyāveśa-avatāra of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He
has very kindly presented these literatures to awaken the conditioned soul to his senses. Unfortunately, at the present moment the conditioned souls are guided by demons who do not care to read the Vedic literatures. Although there is an immense treasure house of knowledge, people are engaged in reading useless literature that will give them no information on how to get out of the clutches of māyā. The purpose of the Vedic literatures is explained in the following verses.

Text 123: The forgetful conditioned soul is educated by Kṛṣṇa through the Vedic literatures, the realized spiritual master, and the Supersoul. Through these, he can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He is, and he can understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is his eternal master and deliverer from the clutches of māyā. In this way one can acquire real knowledge of his conditioned life and can come to understand how to attain liberation.

Purport: Being forgetful of his real position, the conditioned soul may take help from śāstra, guru, and the Supersoul within his heart. Kṛṣṇa is situated within everyone’s heart as the Supersoul. . . . As the śākyāvēśa-avatāra Vyāsadeva, Kṛṣṇa teaches the conditioned soul through Vedic literatures. Kṛṣṇa externally appears as the spiritual master and trains the conditioned soul to come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When his original Kṛṣṇa consciousness is revived, the conditioned soul is delivered from the material clutches. Thus a conditioned soul is always helped by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in three ways: by the scriptures, the spiritual master and the Supersoul within the heart. The Lord is the deliverer of the conditioned soul and is accepted as the Supreme Lord of all living entities.

(d) Lord Caitanya’s descent

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.9p: The Lord is very kind to the forgetful souls. He therefore comes Himself and leaves behind necessary instructions and also sends His good sons as representatives to call all the conditioned souls back to Godhead. Recently, within the memory of everyone, Lord Caitanya also appeared for the same purpose: to show special favor to fallen souls of this age of iron industry.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 3.223–226: Advaita Ācārya was always absorbed in thoughts of how to deliver the fallen souls of the entire world. “The entire world is full of nondevotees,” He thought. “How will they be delivered?” Determined to deliver all the fallen souls, Advaita Ācārya decided to cause Kṛṣṇa to descend. With this vow, He began to offer Ganges water and tulasi leaves to worship the Lord. Similarly, Haridāsa Ṭhākura chanted in his cave on the bank of the Ganges with the intention to cause
Krṣṇa’s descent. Because of the devotional service of these two persons, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu descended as an incarnation. Thus He preached the holy name of the Lord and ecstatic love of Krṣṇa to deliver the entire world.

(e) Saṅkīrtana is the yuga-dharma

krṣṇa-varṇam tviśākrṣṇam sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṣadam
yajñāṇāṁ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasāṁ

“In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the name of Krṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Krṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.32 and Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.52)

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.19–29: “I shall personally inaugurate the yuga-dharma, the religion of the age: nāma-saṅkīrtana, the congregational chanting of the holy name. I shall make the world dance in ecstasy, realizing the four mellows of loving devotional service. I shall accept the role of a devotee, and I shall teach devotional service by practicing it Myself. Unless one practices devotional service himself, he cannot teach it to others. This conclusion is indeed confirmed throughout the Gītā and Bhāgavatam. ‘Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion, at that time I descend Myself. To deliver the pious and to annihilate the miscreants, as well as to reestablish the principles of religion, I Myself appear, millennium after millennium. If I did not show the proper principles of religion, all these worlds would fall into ruin. I would be a cause of unwanted population and would spoil all these living beings. Whatever actions a great man performs, common people follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.’ My plenary portions can establish the principles of religion for each age. No one but Me, however, can bestow the kind of loving service performed by the residents of Vraja. ‘There may be many all-auspicious incarnations of the Personality of Godhead, but who other than Lord Śrī Krṣṇa can bestow love of God upon the surrendered souls?’ Therefore in the company of My devotees I shall appear on earth and perform various colorful pastimes.” Thinking thus, the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Krṣṇa Himself, descended at Nadia early in the age of Kali.
Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.40: (kali-yuge yuga-dharma—nāmera pracāra) The religious practice for the age of Kali is to broadcast the glories of the holy name. Only for this purpose has the Lord, in a yellow color, descended as Lord Caitanya.

Purport: In this age of Kali the practical system of religion for everyone is the chanting of the name of Godhead. This was introduced in this age by Lord Caitanya. Bhakti-yoga actually begins with the chanting of the holy name, as confirmed by Madhvācārya in his commentary on the Munḍaka Upaniṣad: “In the Dvāpara-yuga people should worship Lord Viṣṇu only by the regulative principles of the Nārada-paṅcarātra and other such authorized books. In the age of Kali, however, people should simply chant the holy names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is specifically mentioned in many Upaniṣads, such as the Kali-santarāṇa Upaniṣad, where it is said:

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma hare hare
iti śoḍaśākamaṁ nāmnāṁ kali-kalmaṇaṁ
nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṣu drṣyate

“After searching through all the Vedic literature one cannot find a method of religion more sublime for this age than the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa.”

Sāṅkīrtana includes chanting and preaching

Kīrtana is practiced in all four yugas, but in Kali-yuga, kīrtana is the yuga-dharma—not only solitary chanting or ritualistic chanting but sāṅkīrtana, congregational chanting for all classes of people, with no hard and fast rules. Therefore sāṅkīrtana includes preaching, because without inviting people to take part, there is no question of congregational chanting. It is the duty of every follower of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to preach or support the preaching, because preaching is an integral part of the sāṅkīrtana-yajña.

(a) Sāṅkīrtana is a special concession for Kali-yuga

Elevation to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness (Ch. 6): According to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, there are different processes for different ages, but the principle of each process remains valid in all ages. It is not that the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is effective in this age and not in Satya-yuga. Nor is it that the people
were not chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa in Satya-yuga. In Satya-yuga meditation was the main process, and great munis meditated for periods extending upwards of 60,000 years. But in this age perfection by that means of meditation is not possible because we are so short-lived. Consequently in this age it is especially recommended that we all sit down together and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa (sankirtana). There is no necessity of education, nor are any previous qualifications required. Caitanya Mahāprabhu introduced the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare as a great means of propaganda for spreading love of God. It is not that it is recommended only for Kali-yuga. Actually it is recommended for every age. There have always been many devotees who have chanted and reached perfection in all ages. That is the beauty of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. It is not simply for one age, or for one country, or for one class of people. Hare Kṛṣṇa can be chanted by any man in any social position, in any country and in any age, for Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord of all people in all social positions, in all countries, in all ages.

(b) No hard and fast rules: everyone can chant

Śikṣāṭakam 2: O my Lord, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda, by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for remembering them.

_Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya_ 23.76–77:

\[
\text{hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare}
\]
\[
\text{hare rāma hare rāma rāma hare hare}
\]
\[
\text{prabhu kahe — kahilan ei mahāmantra}
\]
\[
\text{iha japa giya sabe kariya nirbandha}
\]
\[
\text{iha hai-te sarva-siddhi haibe sabara}
\]
\[
\text{sarva-kṛṣṇa bala’ithe bidhi nāhi āra}
\]

Lord Caitanya said: “I am giving you this mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Go and chant with sincere enthusiasm. By chanting this mantra you receive all the perfections of life, so chant incessantly, for there are no rules or regulations for chanting the mahā-mantra.”
(c) The chanting must be spread by preaching

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 7.25–26: The flood of love of Godhead swelled in all directions, and thus young men, old men, women and children were all immersed in that inundation. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will inundate the entire world and drown everyone, whether one be a gentleman, a rogue or even lame, invalid or blind.

Purport: When the contents of the storehouse of love of Godhead are thus distributed, there is a powerful inundation which covers the entire land. In Śrīdhāma Māyāpura there is sometimes a great flood after the rainy season. This is an indication that from the birthplace of Lord Caitanya the inundation of love of Godhead should be spread all over the world, for this will help everyone, including old men, young men, women and children. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is so powerful that it can inundate the entire world and interest all classes of men in the subject of love of Godhead.

*Srimad-Bhāgavatam* 9.11.25p: Many of the Lord’s devotees residing in Vṛndāvana have taken the vow not to leave Vṛndāvana to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But the Lord says that Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be spread all over the world, in every village and every town. This is the open order of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *prthivīte āche yata nagarādī grāma sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma.* A pure devotee, therefore, must execute the order of the Lord and must not gratify his senses by remaining stagnant in one place, falsely proud, thinking that because he does not leave Vṛndāvana but chants in a solitary place he has become a great devotee. A devotee must carry out the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa.* Every devotee, therefore, should spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by preaching, asking whomsoever he meets to accept the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaḥ śaranāṁ vraja:* “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.” This is the order of the Lord, who speaks as the supreme emperor. Everyone should be induced to accept this order, for this is victory (*dig-vijaya*). And it is the duty of the soldier, the devotee, to impress upon everyone this philosophy of life.

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 16.64p: Spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission; therefore His sincere devotees must carry out His desire.
The devotees of Lord Caitanya must preach Krishna consciousness in every village and town in the world. That will satisfy the Lord. It is not that one should act whimsically for his own personal satisfaction. This order comes down through the paramparā system, and the spiritual master presents these orders to the disciple so that he can spread the message of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. It is the duty of every disciple to carry out the order of the bona fide spiritual master and spread Lord Caitanya’s message all over the world.

Books as a means to propagate the yuga-dharma, saṅkīrtana

Saṅkīrtana, or congregational chanting, can’t be separated from preaching, as shown by Lord Caitanya and His followers. Preaching means engaging others in the saṅkīrtana-yajña of hearing and chanting the holy name or rendering service (knowingly or unknowingly). The most effective means of spreading the yuga-dharma is book distribution. Why this is so will now be explained in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s own words.

1.3 Brhad-mṛdaṅga

Without literature, how can we enlighten the people at large? My Guru Mahārāja used to say that the printing press is the brhad-mṛdaṅga. Brhat means bigger, at large, bigger mṛdaṅga. Just like we are playing mṛdaṅga. This mṛdaṅga can be vibrated in the neighboring quarter, but our mṛdaṅga, Back to Godhead, that will go far, far away. So therefore this press was considered by my Guru Mahārāja as brhad-mṛdaṅga. . . . So this press propaganda, this literary propaganda, is required because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not sentiment. It is not that some sentimental people have gathered here and are dancing and chanting. No. There is background. There is philosophical background. There is theological understanding. 6

“Sales of literature, that is our great saṅkīrtana”

After Prabhupāda planted the seeds of bhakti and founded ISKCON, increasing numbers of devotees went out, directed by Śrīla Prabhupāda to
perform harināma sankirtana in parks and streets. Soon, as an addition to the chanting party, they began selling magazines. Later, when book distribution started, the book distributors went out without the chanting party. But still the book distribution was called “going on sankirtana.”

In this way sankirtana in ISKCON became practically synonymous with book distribution. But this was nothing new to the paramparā. Prabhupāda’s spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, had introduced the production and distribution of spiritual literature under the name brhat-kirtana, or brhad-mrdanga, and Śrīla Prabhupāda continued using that expression as seen in the following quotations.

Please increase the sales of literature. That is our great sankirtana—brhad-mrdanga.7

So the books are selling and we are expanding. This book distribution is the brhad-mrdanga.8

My Guru Mahārāja used to say that these literatures are the brhad-mrdanga, that is to say, the big mrdanga, because like the mrdanga which can be heard from a long distance, simply a few words can have a tremendous effect on millions of people if they are propagated widely. So it is our duty above all to print these words for the general benefit of mankind. Therefore if you can assist me in this manner then that will be the greatest service.9

Oh, your intense love for me. I am living for you. All over the world everything is going on. Money is coming and being spent, and I don’t have to worry. I am so much indebted. And I am taking much service from you all. That is a brhad-mrdanga; I am beating from this room and the sound goes ten thousand miles away.10

“For wider kirtana, book distribution is better”

The following excerpts from letters compare the congregational chanting with book distribution:

Regarding sankirtana and book distribution, both should go on, but book distribution is more important. It is brhat-kirtana. In Tokyo airport one boy had come up to me asking if
he could speak with me. I said yes, and then he asked me:
Swamiji, where do you get all that knowledge in your books?
Of course it is Kṛṣṇa’s knowledge, not mine. But the effect is there. So for wider kirtana book distribution is better. Book distribution is also kirtana.  

Saṅkīrtana, if it is not possible, never mind. Try to organize a meeting and impress upon the people Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam philosophy by explaining. This is also saṅkīrtana although not singing. So where sanātana is hampered, we can go on with kīrtana and distributing magazines; that is more important than sanātana. That is brhad-mṛdaṅga.  

Here at Māyāpur my Guru Mahārāja was printing one paper. It was selling for only a few paise. Sometimes whenever one brahmacāri would go to Navadvīpa and sell even a few copies, I would see my Guru Mahārāja become very much pleased. Even if the brahmacāri was not a very important member, my Guru Mahārāja would become very, very pleased with him. He personally instructed me that books are more important than big temples. At Rādhā-kuṇḍa he told me that since constructing the big marble temple at Bāgbazar, there had been so many difficulties. Our men were envious over who would live in which room. I think it would be better to take off all the marbles and sell them and print books, he told me personally. So I am always emphasizing book distribution. It is the better kīrtana. It is better than chanting. Of course chanting should not stop, but book distribution is the best kīrtana.  

The following letter (seen by Śrīla Prabhupāda) was written by one of Prabhupāda’s secretaries and circulated in ISKCON to clarify some misunderstandings:

There have been two letters from GBC men to Śrīla Prabhupāda regarding street chanting and book distribution . . . Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that book distribution is more important than street chanting. Book distribution is brhat-kīrtana. It is literally kīrtana in the sense that the books are spoken and therefore, anyone who reads a book is hearing. Because his books are recorded and transcribed Śrīla Prabhupāda calls his books spoken kīrtanas,
or recorded chanting. So book distribution is also *kirtana* and should not be considered less than *kirtana*. The reason book distribution is greater than chanting is because the effect is wider. A purchased book goes into a person’s home and will be read by others, whereas street *kirtana* benefits only those in the vicinity who hear. . . . In Portugal one boy, who is only 11 years old, has become a devotee. He offers *prasadam* and is translating *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* into Portuguese with the help of his mother. He got several of our books at a bookstore in Lisbon and has asked his father who is just now coming to the USA to get him all available *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams*. Prabhupāda remarks that our books went there to Portugal but we did not, but still he has become a devotee. . . . So by comparative study, book selling is more important. Śrīla Prabhupāda also pointed out that in the West sometimes the street chanting is considered a farce. Also in India. At first street chanting was tried, but it met with mostly derogatory reaction. Therefore there is mostly life membership preaching in India, which is of course book distribution. But on no account should street chanting be stopped. Prabhupāda has never said that street chanting should be stopped. The chanting can go on for a little while, and when a crowd is drawn, books can be distributed. When I mentioned to Śrīla Prabhupāda that in Los Angeles there was the system of book distribution all week long and on weekend nights full street *kirtanas*, he said that was a good system. Regarding the claim that devotees have difficulties maintaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness by doing only book selling with not enough street chanting, Prabhupāda remarked that if things deteriorate that is another thing, but it is not the fault of book distribution. Book distribution must not be neglected. 14

**Book distribution is “the immediate important business”**

Because book distribution spreads transcendental knowledge and engages people in devotional service, it is part of the *sankirtana-yajña*. Through book distribution Kṛṣṇa consciousness will be established.

Now a question may be raised, Why don’t Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purports mention book distribution as often as preaching, chanting, and *harināma sankirtana*?

First of all, Prabhupāda does mention book distribution in his purports. For example, “In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, all our activities are concentrated upon distributing Kṛṣṇa literature. That is very important” (SB 10.2.37p).

Furthermore, in his books Śrīla Prabhupāda is preaching to generations of humanity for ten thousand years to come, who will see a renaissance of
Vedic civilization based on the śāstras that Prabhupāda translated and commented upon. He said in a conversation:

Literatures are selling. The learned circles are appreciating. It takes some time, but if we stick to our principles and do not make any compromise, and push on in this way I have given you instruction, it will never stop; it will go on. It will never stop. At least for ten thousand years it will go on. [Exciting documentation of this prediction is given in Ch. 12, Sec. 1]

Concerning the next ten thousand years, the chanting and the message will continue as they have for thousands of years. Chanting and preaching are the Vaiṣṇavas’ essential activities, especially now, as they are the yuga-dharma. That’s why Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes them in his purports.

Concerning the development of book distribution over the next ten thousand years, although its form will change according to time, place, and circumstances, Prabhupāda made it clear that large-scale book distribution is the best means of preaching and the most powerful way of establishing the yuga-dharma immediately. He said, “The immediate important business is how to distribute these books all over the world . . . quickly distribute all the books as soon as they are received.” In the following statements Prabhupāda further stresses rescuing humanity through world-wide book distribution.

Krṣṇa consciousness is the absolute need of the present-day society, and there are many people who will come to join us if we simply make these teachings of Bhagavad-gītā and the rest of the Vedic literature available to them.

These books and magazines are our most important propaganda weapons to defeat the ignorance of māyā’s army, and the more we produce such literature and sell it profusely all over the world, the more we shall deliver the world from its suicide course. So your work is the most important preaching work. May Krṣṇa bless you more and more. Thank you for helping me in this way.

I am very glad to hear how the book distribution is increasing more and more. This is our greatest weapon. The more
the books are distributed, the more the ignorance of the Age of Kali will be smashed. The world is feeling the weight of this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, especially in your country. We have to increase this book distribution work more and more to firmly establish this movement, which is the only hope for the suffering living entities.

There’s a great plan behind ISKCON’s book distribution mission: the establishment of a God-centered society directed and protected by the Vaiṣṇavas. Already Vaiṣṇavas are preparing to enact this plan. Their main duty now is the distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

Harikēsa Swami: Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas have a great responsibility to people suffering in the forest fire of material existence. They must disseminate transcendental knowledge to give people the impetus and understanding to reconnect with the Supreme. The most important method for disseminating transcendental knowledge is distributing original texts of Vedic spiritual knowledge. In the present period of the earth’s history, the books of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda are the absolute foundation upon which all individual and collective spiritual progress depends. . . Therefore the profuse distribution far and wide of these transcendental books is now the primary and essential activity of the Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas.*

In summary, book distribution is an urgent need. Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed it, and the perilous situation of the world demands it. So we should recognize the importance of distributing books now. And now means today, without delay. Why procrastinate? Why wait? The world won’t improve by itself. At every moment people die and miss the chance of getting a book. What is their fate?

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 3.255p: A yuga, or mahā-yuga, consists of 4,320,000 years, and one thousand such mahā-yugas constitute one kalpa.

*This statement continues: “Coupled with the distribution of spiritual literature, a simultaneous effort must be made to increase the number of Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas throughout the world. When people have understood their real position in relation with the Supreme, then automatically they will become disenchanted with their present demonic social systems that are organized by atheists dedicated to destroying spiritual principles. Thus more and more people will enter the Vaiṣṇava fold, until gradually enough enlightened people exist to form a varṇāśrama society.” (From Varṇāśrama Manifesto for Social Sanity, p. 132)
The author of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* says that if one does not take advantage of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he cannot be delivered for millions of such *kalpas*.

### The necessity of going to the people

Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, *anādi bahirmukha ṣiva svataḥ kṛṣṇa naḥ jñāna*. We are so foolish, influenced by the material energy, that automatically we cannot understand Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Kṛṣṇa conscious propaganda is required. Not that automatically they will come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There is need of spreading. If you are actually benevolent to your countrymen, to your society, to human society, you must spread and preach this Kṛṣṇa consciousness, otherwise they are going away, carried away by the influence of māyā. Therefore the most valuable, important welfare activity is to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world.  

People won’t come to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement on their own. Therefore the devotees have to go to them—not only once, but again and again—and gradually bring them to the point of accepting Lord Caitanya’s mercy. Devotees do this by directly approaching the people with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. This contact does not depend on their interest or invitation. At the very least they make their first contact with sādhu (a devotee), śāstra (scriptures), and guru (Śrīla Prabhupāda), which is *ajñātasukṛti*—they unknowingly come into the possession of good fortune leading to devotional service. Some day they will do more devotional service. So just imagine the benefit they receive if they agree to buy Prabhupāda’s books and respectfully keep them on a shelf in their home. This is why Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed book distribution so much, even more than street *kirtana* and temple worship. People are dull and materialistic, and most of them would never want to chant in a *kirtana* or visit a temple. So our selling them a book is the quickest, most direct way to engage such unwilling human beings in the *sankirtana-yajña*.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa (Germany):** Brhadbhānu Prabhu met one man in Dresden who had had an accident and had his head smashed and cracked. Somehow it was repaired, and he had screws all over his skull, and he walked like Frankenstein. Brhadbhānu thought he’d definitely be frustrated and take books; he’d understand that life is problematic. But the man said, “I’m fine.
I have no problems. I’m satisfied.” He was content with his life even though he was in such horrible circumstances.

**Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa (Germany):** People are quite lazy and foolish as far as understanding philosophy goes. Who’s interested in philosophy nowadays? If we hold a public program and invite people to hear the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, who will come? Who’s a candidate? Maybe not even 5% of the people we ask. So what do we do with the rest, the 95% who can’t be approached philosophically, who aren’t capable of directly taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness? They can be approached with books, *prasādam*, and the holy name. And if they accept, they are actually saved from the worst. Especially if they can take a book, that’s best, because it means they actively render devotional service. And that’s glorious. They talk to a devotee, surrender to him, and do what he asks them to do. They give a donation. Most people will have a hard time listening to the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and grasping it well enough to come to the point of doing devotional service. But if they are approached by a devotee who sincerely presents Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, they immediately get a chance to do devotional service even though (or because) they aren’t aware of it.

I myself was aggressive in coming to your country. No one invited me. Even you boys and girls did not invite me. But I came and I preached aggressively, and therefore you are now my disciples.²¹

When approaching people disinclined towards spiritual life, a devotee may encounter difficulties. Still a devotee will continue distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books because “our business is to satisfy the ācāryas and Kṛṣṇa,” as Śrīla Prabhupāda said in the following letter (of May 16, 1977) to the devotees in Germany, who faced many problems because of police repression and bad propaganda.

I know that over the past years you have suffered so many tribulations to push forward Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Germany. But this has not stopped you from your determination to serve the cause of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. A devotee is pleased when there is difficulty, for in these difficulties he is forced to remember Kṛṣṇa. We cannot expect that the people of Kali-yuga will welcome our attempt to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is just like a lunatic asylum: The patients are running around madly and when the doctor tries
to give them treatment, they insist that they are not crazy. Sometimes the patient even strikes the doctor. So our task is like that. We cannot stand to see people suffering from ignorance. What is that ignorance? They do not know that they are not their body. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant to deliver people to the proper understanding that they are not their body, that they are pure spirit soul. We may or may not be appreciated, that is not our concern. We must execute the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, which is:

\[
yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa
amāra ājñāya guru haṇā tāra' ei deśa
\]

“Whomever you meet, instruct them to follow the orders of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. In this way by My order become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land.”

So our business is to satisfy the ācāryas and Kṛṣṇa. If they are pleased, then we know our work is successful. Go on spreading the sankīrtana movement more and more. I am only one person, but because all of you have kindly cooperated with me, this movement has now become a success all over the world. Be assured that there is no more direct way to preach than to distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious books. Whoever gets a book is benefited. If he reads the book he is benefited still more, or if he gives the book to someone else to read, both he and the other person are benefited. Even if one does not read the book but simply holds it and sees it, he is benefited. If he simply gives a small donation towards the work of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he is benefited. And anyone who distributes this transcendental literature is also benefited. Therefore sankīrtana is the prime benediction for the age—

\[
krṣṇa-varṇam tvīṣākṛṣṇam sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pāṛṣadām yajñaiḥ sankīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasah.
\]

**Book distribution cannot be stopped**

Śrīla Prabhupāda often reassured the devotees that nothing and nobody could stop book distribution. The external form may change according to time and circumstance, but the devotees will always preach and distribute books.
Do not worry, in spite of war, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam will be distributed. We don’t care for war. Our preaching business will go on.

This rumor that within a few years there will be police repression and people will have no more money to buy books and sankirtana will stop is completely bogus. Whoever told you that is a rascal, saying it in my name. I never said that. Rather the sankirtana movement will expand, continuing so long as we are sincere. When I came in the beginning I began to expand it, and it is now going on and there is no question of it stopping. Therefore go on with your lifetime plans secure in distributing books. There is no cessation. This movement is eternal.

Our first business is this book distribution. There is no need of any other business. If this book distribution is managed properly, pushed on with great enthusiasm and determination, and at the same time if our men keep spiritually strong, then the whole world will become Kṛṣṇa conscious.

These books are specifically meant for the intellectual class of people in your country, and I have great hope in the results of this preaching at the universities. I received one rumor that the sankirtana parties in the US would soon be stopped by political repression and lack of money by the people. Some so-called devotee was thinking like that, but you can assure all your men that I have great hope for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America, more than in any other place. And there is no question of repression provided we go on sincerely.

You have asked whether nuclear devastation on this planet would affect the sankirtana movement. No, there is nothing that can stop the sankirtana movement because it is the will of God Himself, Lord Caitanya, that His holy name be heard in every town and village. Neither can the demons devastate this planet independent of the will of Kṛṣṇa. Nothing happens without His sanction. If Kṛṣṇa wants to kill someone no one can save Him, and if Kṛṣṇa wants to save someone no one can kill him. For our parts we should just be determined
to carry out our mission against all opposition, demons, nuclear war, whatever. The whole universe is finally subject to certain annihilation by the will of Kṛṣṇa, but devotional service is eternal and is the only certain way one can save himself from devastation. We can preach all over the world that the only way to be saved from collective and individual devastation is to take to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. In short, this material world is a very precarious place, therefore we should always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and seek Kṛṣṇa’s protection.

Some day people will come to understand what valuable knowledge they have received. It is transcendental literature. Nobody can challenge it. It is done so nicely, without any spot, the spotless Purāṇa. Please continue like this, to print books in all the languages for the benefit of suffering, misdirected humanity.

1.4 The best preaching: let Śrīla Prabhupāda preach

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire to preach

My special mission is to complete the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in sixty volumes, so the most important thing on the part of the International Society is to organize the sales propaganda.

Our book distribution program is most important work. Anyone reading our Kṛṣṇa book, TLC, NOD, and Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, is sure to become a Kṛṣṇa conscious person. Therefore somehow or other we must push on this literature distribution program, either through schools, colleges, libraries, life membership programs or ordinary sales.

That is the real preaching: selling books. Who can speak better than the books? At least whoever buys, he will look over. If you have to sell books, do it by hook or by crook. The real preaching is selling books. You should know the tactic how to sell without irritating. What your lecture will do for three minutes? But if he reads one page his life may be turned. We don’t want to irritate anyone however. If he goes
away by your aggressive tactics, then you are nonsense and it is your failure. Neither you could sell a book, neither he would remain. But if he buys a book, that is the real successful preaching. That is the certificate of my Guru Mahārāja. If some brahmacārī would sell a one-paise magazine, a few copies, he would be very, very glad and say, “Oh, you are so nice!” So distribution of literature is our real preaching. 30

Make this your important task: to print our books in French and other languages and distribute widely, and that will please my Guru Mahārāja. Never mind it takes a little time to make progress. Our process is slow but sure, and we are confident that if we continue in this way we shall go one day back to home, back to Godhead. 31

Yes, that is nice that you are distributing many books. I do not want money, or buildings or anything else. I simply want to see that my books are being distributed, and because you are doing that I am quite happy. 32

We are preaching internationalism. Everyone is welcome. Come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Here is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Here is Christian, Hindu; here is African, Muhammadan—everything. That is real United Nations. If my students were thinking that they are American, then why are they after a poor Indian man? Indians are known outside of India as poverty stricken. And that’s a fact. But actually we are not poverty stricken. If we cultivate our own standard of knowledge, Bhagavad-gītā, then we are the richest. We can give the whole world these gifts. 33

The statements above are a few examples of how preachers and book distributors were instructed by Śrīla Prabhupāda to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness: by their sincere endeavors to sell books on the order of the spiritual master, their preaching would be efficacious.

But our realizations are not without shortcomings; that has to be admitted. When we distribute books, however, we give people Śrīla Prabhupāda’s realizations, which are inconceivably higher than our own. Usually the people we meet don’t have much time or aren’t in a frame of mind to receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but when they buy books, and later in some
quiet moment begin to read them, they directly hear Śrila Prabhupāda, and that changes their lives.

“What will your three-minutes preaching do?” is not a prohibition on preaching. By this statement Śrila Prabhupāda is obviously referring to the front-line book distribution that prepares the field for others to follow. It does not refer to the situation of book distributors meeting people who have questions, or to preachers visiting favorable people who already read Śrila Prabhupāda’s books. In those cases, preaching in person has to be done, as Śrila Prabhupāda demonstrated when visitors came for his darśana or when he and his disciples visited life members. But compared with the billions of people we must reach, how many sincere people are inquiring from us or inviting us into their homes?

“We have to see how books are being distributed”

In scores of letters Śrila Prabhupāda defined ISKCON’s most important activity as book distribution.

Distribution of books and magazines is our most important activity. Without books, our preaching has no solid basis.  

There is no doubt about it: To distribute books is our most important activity. The temple is a place not for eating and sleeping, but a base from which we send out our soldiers to fight with māyā. “Fight with māyā” means to drop thousands and millions of books into the lap of the conditioned souls.  

Let us continue in the rented house and see how things develop. If local people come and join, and take initiation, then we can consider developing. Simply lip-sympathy will not do. They must be regular disciples, following the regulative principles, and they will develop it themselves. Besides that, book distribution and preaching is our most important activity. Opening temples is subordinate. We have to see how books are being distributed and how people are joining wholeheartedly. That is actual development.

Distribution of my books is the most important thing. . . . I want that my books be distributed in huge quantities, and thus we will be able to thoroughly convince the majority of the population especially there in America.
A consideration for thoughtful devotees: Prabhupāda wanted that “every devotee in our movement will know the art of distributing books.” We pose this as a point for contemplation, as an appeal to devotees to ask themselves, “What keeps Prabhupāda’s desire from becoming a fact? What is my role in this mission?”

We are supposed to have faith in the words of the spiritual master. Thus the question for a disciple is not, “Shall I distribute books?” but “How can I distribute books?”

Faith in the spiritual master’s words and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the secret of success [see Ch. 3, Sec. 5]. That was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s success formula:

\[Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adi-līlā 7.95–96\]: We believed in the words of our spiritual master and started in a humble way—in a helpless way—but due to the spiritual force of the supreme authority, this movement has become successful.

So to perform “our most important activity” of distributing books, first we must understand the “most important and essential” principle of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—\textit{acāryopāsanam}, the principle of accepting a spiritual master (Bg. 13.8).

The spiritual generations of devotees following Śrīla Prabhupāda are receiving the same order from guru and Gaurāṅga that Lord Caitanya received from His spiritual master, Īśvara Puri, and Śrīla Prabhupāda received from his spiritual master. The guru’s order challenges us internally (to overcome our doubts and attachments) and externally (to practically engage in the \textit{saṅkīrtana} mission). The strength to meet those challenges especially depends on our faith in Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, as the testimonies of faithful and successful \textit{saṅkīrtana} devotees will verify.

**Earning Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy**

It’s up to the leaders, like capable generals, to decide on what fronts to fight māyā and where to administer supplies and help: festivals, Food for Life, preaching programs at schools and colleges, life membership, Pada-yātrā, and other fronts. All devotees, members, and Friends of Lord Kṛṣṇa can use their talents to distribute books and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But the central thrust of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must be book distribution. This understanding will unite everyone, and that unity of purpose will bring about all success, both in everyone’s spiritual life and in the preaching work, as the following letters indicate.
Satisfaction of the spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life. The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his sincere disciple. We cannot manufacture our own process, therefore mental speculation does not at all help us in spiritual life. One simply has to surrender himself to his guru, and everything will be revealed to him.  

After all, following the instructions of the spiritual master will please him, and his pleasure is the key to his mercy. And, as we sing daily, “by his mercy one receives the benediction of Kṛṣṇa. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement—yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto ‘pi.”

We will conquer Europe with these books. I can only thank you again and again in sincere gratitude for producing this literature, and pray to Kṛṣṇa to bless you with all spiritual advancement.

You have taken seriously the publishing and also the distribution of these books, and that is the success of our mission. You have taken seriously this work, and I know that my Guru Mahārāja is pleased with you because he wanted this. So by this endeavor you will all go back home, back to Godhead.

You are working so hard for broadcasting the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, and thus my Guru Mahārāja will be so pleased upon you. Certainly my Guru Mahārāja will bestow His blessings a thousand times more than me, and that is my satisfaction. All glories to the assembled devotees! N.B. Everyone should go with the sankirtana party as soon as possible.

1.5 Book distribution is the basis of all preaching

Book distribution is the best preaching because it allows Prabhupāda to preach. A book is substantial. Buying books is devotional service. It rewards the buyer with true spiritual progress. Apart from that the books
are very beautiful and impressive; more and more people will appreciate ISKCON’s translating and printing such wonderful classics.

By book distribution many, many people can be reached who by themselves would never endeavor to know Kṛṣṇa. There will be sincere souls among them who begin devotional service. Thus book distribution acts like a very powerful magnet to attract new devotees in this iron age.

Book distribution is the basis of all preaching because it plants the seeds of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and then it waters the seeds. The more books are distributed, the more an auspicious atmosphere is created. Book distribution cultivates receptive audiences for all other preaching programs. Book distribution itself is preaching, and it simultaneously prepares the way for other steps in the preaching strategy, especially the construction of Māyā-pur. Above all, book distribution pleases Śrīla Prabhupāda, and pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda is the real basis of success.

Those were the main points mentioned by book distributors when asked why book distribution is the best preaching. What follows are some of the statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the book distributors.

**Realizations: Book distribution is the best preaching**

Our literatures are unique in the world . . . and someday the world will realize and appreciate these transcendental literatures. 42

My first concern is that my books shall be published and distributed profusely all over the world. Practically books are the basis of our Movement. Without our books, our preaching will have no effect. 43

I was just writing to our European centers that for so many years they have been there and nothing has been printed in European languages. This is not a very good sign. How can there be preaching without books? 44

Your plans for increasing book distribution are very good. . . . Distribution of all these books is making a firm basis for our movement. 45

This quote by the head of their religion department of Oberlin is very important: “I think the best feature of the Hare
Kṛṣṇa Movement is that it is providing scholars with authorized translations of the rarest books on kṛṣṇa-bhakti.”

Rohiniṣuta Dāsa: Preaching is successful if we can give people books. Then when they get back home, they will feel they had a nice experience with the devotee they met. They will feel that the person who approached them was completely special and never forget that impression even if many years pass and they don’t read the books. The devotees are so fully inspired by Lord Caitanya’s influence and the spiritual master’s blessings that people also become inspired and enlivened by our enthusiasm. But as soon as we leave them they forget everything. Māyā comes to them with sense gratification, and when they are at home, they forget whatever we told them. But at least they have the books as a souvenir. They always remember the encounter they had with the devotee. They have never seen such a special person. Then one day, Kṛṣṇa, who is in their hearts, will give them inspiration to read the books. After many years maybe, the Supersoul will dictate their thoughts: “Oh, I remember that person who gave me this book; maybe I should read the book now.” They feel an impulse in the heart. So the point is that they will remember our preaching whenever they look at the shelf and see the book there. And then our preaching has had its effect. Otherwise we can be so nice, but if there is no book, then they will forget us and whatever we said.

Indranīlamanī Devī Dāsī (USA): In preaching the most important thing is to see the books as the basis. A temple is not required for preaching. Prabhupāda was ordered by his spiritual master to write and publish books, not to build temples. But when devotees started joining, he needed to create a society. By distributing books, he created a need for other programs: temples, farms and varnāśrama-dharma, but he always made book distribution the foundation. The temple is meant to support and expand the preaching, and all other forms of preaching aim at helping increase book distribution, which is the most permanent and far-reaching preaching.

Sarvātmā Dāsa (USA): Book distribution purifies both the audience and the book distributor. What could be a better form of preaching than that? No sound is as sweet as the sound of one’s own voice, and when one is distributing books, he has no choice but to listen to himself talking. And the more he speaks about Kṛṣṇa, the more he becomes purified. By distributing books, he becomes enthusiastic. Just like a cow seeking its food. A cow doesn’t need to be fed. If you let a cow loose in a field, she will feed her-
self and produce milk. In the same way, book distribution will nourish the devotee who does it and motivate him to continue doing it. And the result is fantastic. You can see that the period when most books were distributed was the period when most devotees were made and most devotees remained in the movement. When they were doing book distribution, the index of blooping was very low. But when we changed engagements, then the statistics changed dramatically. What could be better preaching than Prabhupāda’s own words?

Śaṅkara-paṇḍita Dāsa (USA): Without book distribution what is the meaning of preaching? Preaching means presenting the siddhānta. Therefore first we have to make the śāstra available. Of the three authorities, guru, sādhu, and śāstra, śāstra is considered the most important. Every preaching effort must be based on Prabhupāda’s books. Books are the basis.

Lilāvatāra Dāsa (Italy): Distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is definitely the best preaching because Prabhupāda is Kṛṣṇa’s pure devotee, and his books are authorized, sacred, and nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. They’re meant to elevate the consciousness of the conditioned souls to bhakti-yoga, the path that leads to love of Kṛṣṇa. The translation and purports of a pure devotee are essential for understanding the Absolute Truth, for it is only through a pure devotee that we can realize God. The pure devotee is the best preacher, and through his books one can be in touch with him constantly. In the books there is so much wisdom that no other form of preaching compares to them. That huge labor of translating and commenting on thousands of verses can’t be synthesized in a few minutes or hours of preaching. A book has no admission hours and never gets tired.

Jīva Dāsa (Germany): Book distribution is a transcendental activity that bestows special mercy because it especially pleases Kṛṣṇa. Unless you’ve distributed books, that may be a little difficult to accept. But Kṛṣṇa states as the conclusion of Bhagavad-gītā that a devotee who preaches His message is most dear to Him and never will anyone be more dear. And Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed it again and again. Also, Prabhupāda’s books will be seen and read by other people besides the purchaser. So that is doubling, tripling, and quadrupling the preaching connected with distributing books. Śrīla Prabhupāda also stressed that these books are not just his words; they are the words of Kṛṣṇa and all His associates and unalloyed devotees. Devotional service begins with hearing, and hearing from pure devotees is the most powerful way to advance. The ultimate value of our preaching is
how much we can convince others to accept these words in their hearts, not just in their hands. But first things first—get the books into their hands and homes.

Realizations: Books prepare the preaching field

I am encouraged to see your report of books sold, because it proves that you consider it your responsibility to see that more and more people are reading our literature. Actually this is the solid basis for our preaching work—no other movement has got such profuse authority for preaching, and if someone reads our Kṛṣṇa philosophy he becomes convinced. So try to increase the effect of preaching by distributing many books and magazines, and this is the basis of all your success.  

I am very much pleased to hear from you that you sold 100 sets of paperback Kṛṣṇa book in one day and that you have reordered from Dai Nippon. Gradually we shall replace the literature which is currently popular with our own style of transcendental literature. I have tried it: any page you open, that is wonderful reading matter. My ambition is to spread these books far and wide all over the world so that everyone shall read at least one of our books, and that will change his life. If only 1% become devotees, that will change the world. 

I am especially happy to hear from you about the huge distribution of books in the Canada Zone. That is the most auspicious sign. You are making good progress, that I can understand. As soon as I see that there is such increased book distribution figures, I take that to mean that all other programs are successful as well.

It is very good that our books are being appreciated by the learned circles. If our books are distributed more and more in this way, there will be unlimited scope for spreading this movement of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world. And personally I become very much encouraged when I get the report of my books being distributed.
Whatever progress we have made, it is simply due to distributing these books. So go on, and do not divert your mind for a moment from this. 51

_Hṛdayānanda Dāsa Goswami:_ It is book distribution which makes our movement grow quickly, which brings many new devotees, which makes and maintains the temples and which therefore creates engagements for all kinds of people. Prabhupāda said to sell books, and then everything would come. We simply have to have faith in Prabhupāda’s order: “Just preach, don’t worry about money!” We don’t have the policy: Go out and make money, and preaching will automatically follow. That’s a material formula, and Prabhupāda criticized us for material formulas. Prabhupāda gave us the spiritual formula: Go out and preach, and Kṛṣṇa will supply! That’s a spiritual formula. What does it mean to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if not to learn how to depend on Kṛṣṇa? Otherwise we don’t get anything. _Varnāśrama_ is revolutionary if it’s part of a powerful preaching movement. By itself, it’s impotent. By itself, it’s called Hinduism. _Varnāśrama_ linked to a powerful Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is revolutionary. Without powerful preaching and book distribution, it is just Hinduism. Hinduism isn’t going to change the world or start a spiritual revolution.

_Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:_ Śrīla Prabhupāda used the temples to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. People could visit them and hear about Kṛṣṇa. Devotees can be trained in temples to become soldiers who fight _māyā_ and destroy the demoniac, materialistic mentality by distributing books. Temples are places to hold ecstatic _kīrtanas_ and teach devotees to think about Kṛṣṇa, hear about Kṛṣṇa, speak about Kṛṣṇa, and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then devotees go out and bring people to the temples through their preaching and the distribution of books, _prasādam_, and the holy names. So the people come to the temples. The temples are _tīrthas_. Prabhupāda made a _tīrtha_ out of every place. _Tīrtha-kurvanti tīrthānī_: pure devotees are themselves places of pilgrimage because they purify even places of pilgrimage. But although we have many nice temples, or _tīrthas_, not many people come. Most of the people are now in _māyā_. Therefore we go out and bring people books to help them establish a _tīrtha_ in their flats and homes. When they don’t come to the temple, we bring Prabhupāda to their houses. That is our duty.

_Harināmānanda Dāsa (Switzerland):_ The more that books go out, the more the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will influence society. The people will become less interested in illicit sex, meat-eating, and intoxication. Many
people are becoming frustrated with this materialistic society, and if they
read Prabhupāda’s books they’ll appreciate them very much. By the influ-
ence of the sankīrtana movement, people hear about transcendental knowl-
edge and get a chance to practice spiritual life. That can be achieved only
by constantly giving out Prabhupāda’s books every day, every week, every
month, and every year, until the influence of the books pervades the whole
society. If we distribute Prabhupāda’s books, Prabhupāda is preaching to
millions of people. Kṛṣṇa in book form is everywhere, and everything be-
comes more auspicious. Everything becomes purified, and Prabhupāda is
able to preach like anything.

And there are a lot of by-products of book distribution. Here in Switzer-
land, where over the last fifteen or eighteen years books have gone out
without interruption, many other preaching successes started to manifest.
For example, Swiss TV invested sixty thousand francs to film our temple
here in Zurich and made an hour-long production that will be shown the
week before our Christmas marathon. On several TV programs in Germany
millions of people saw devotees on stage with Boy George and heard the
mahā-mantra. Kṛṣṇa is becoming more and more famous. And in the East
European countries suddenly the books are going out by the millions. On
radio and TV there we can preach to 150 million people simultaneously.
These are successes for the sankīrtana movement, and many devotees are
required to perform these services. But as book distributors, we have to
know that this is all Kṛṣṇa’s reciprocation for the auspicious atmosphere
that has been created by book distribution. This point has to be stressed:
book distribution is extraordinary and transcendental because it means we
are letting Kṛṣṇa appear in society. We give Kṛṣṇa to human society. This
is a very intimate service, and nobody else can or will do the service ex-
cept the devotees. Therefore Kṛṣṇa reciprocates, and helps and inspires the
devotees. (From a national sankīrtana meeting in Zurich on September 29,
1991)

Guru-carana Dāsa (Italy): Pure souls want to preach and glorify Kṛṣṇa. The
more advanced we are, the more we will want to preach. We won’t be able
to live without preaching. The more purified we are, the more we will enjoy
giving Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to people. If we are Kṛṣṇa conscious, then
it doesn’t matter where we are. I’ve seen a good sankīrtana devotee preach
everywhere, and not only during the hours he was out. When he buys gaso-
line, he preaches; when he is on a bus or going to see a doctor; everywhere;
on the road, in the house, in the shop; he brings books with him and tries
to distribute them. You are always preaching. On Saturday and Sunday,
not only when you go on *saṅkīrtana*. You speak about *Kṛṣṇa* naturally in any condition, and Prabhupāda’s books are the life-giving force in all your preaching efforts.

**Festivals: “Do you sell many books there?”**

Preaching takes many forms, but Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that preaching must be linked to distributing his books and inspiring people to read them.

I am especially glad that you are having so many festivals in the colleges and schools. Do you sell many books there? That is the success of your festival—if people buy many books. At our Delhi Festival we sold more than twelve thousand BTGs.

It is very encouraging to note that the work on our BTG and other books is going on. Actually producing and distributing books is our most important engagement. All other engagements culminate in this one end: distribution of books.

It is so much encouraging to hear how you are introducing this *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness movement in the schools and colleges there. Especially this is an ideal opportunity for distributing our books also, so you should make all serious endeavor in this connection. These books are so potent that anyone who reads them is sure to become *Kṛṣṇa* conscious. So it is a very valuable service to distribute our books.

I am very pleased to hear that you are increasing your distribution of our books and magazines. This is a good sign that your preaching work is also strong. The more you increase your strength in preaching, the more you will go on selling books. I want especially that my books be distributed wide-ly.

Wherever there is preaching strength, there is also success, no matter it may be *pandāl* show, or making members, traveling *saṅkīrtana* party, whatever it may be—just maintain our strong position of purity of routine work, and preach and distribute literature, that’s all.
Books go everywhere

Rohiniôsuta Dasa: These books and this mantra go everywhere. We simply have to be their servants. They can push themselves into places we cannot even imagine going. When we go through the streets, the sound of the Hare Krsna mah mantra goes into offices and private apartments where we could never enter, and people hear it. The books also go to all kinds of places. They remain here and there, and they find people to read them. The books and the Hare Krsna mantra are nondifferent from Krsna. They are persons. They have intelligence. They will find their customers, their devotees. If we want to become instruments, we should have faith in Krsna’s name and Krsna’s books. Srímad-Bhágavatam and Bhagavad-gitâ are nondifferent from Krsna. And when we realize that, we become purified. Then we can say there’s faith, śraddhā. Without śraddhā, there’s no progress. So the first thing we need is śraddhā, faith in the instructions of Krsna and the spiritual master, faith in the power of their words, faith in the power of the books. Above all, preachers must have that faith in all circumstances.

1.6 Śrila Prabhupāda’s books make devotees

Prabhupāda’s guarantee

Please try to popularize this book throughout England as much as possible, because if these books are read, there is no doubt that many sincere souls shall be attracted and will join you in your work for Krsna. So please try to sell these books. It shall be considered the greatest service. 57

If anyone simply reads our Krsna book, TLC, NOD, or Bhagavad-gitâ As It Is, he is sure to become a Krsna conscious person. So somehow or other, either through the schools or colleges, libraries, life membership program or ordinary sales, we must push this literature distribution program. It is so important, and a most valuable service to Krsna. 58

So these books will supply a clear idea of God. Not only that, but anyone who reads this Krsna book, Nectar of Devotion, and if possible Teachings of Lord Caitanya, I’m sure he cannot go away from becoming a devotee of Krsna. 59
These books are so potent that anyone who reads them is sure to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. So it is a very valuable service to distribute our books.  

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the absolute need of the present-day society, and there are many people who will come to join us if we simply make these teachings of Bhagavad-gītā and the rest of the Vedic literature available to them.

Distributing the books will make devotees. To make a devotee means to make someone purified. Reading the books will purify the intelligence. A purified heart and mind means Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Examples of books making devotees

**Sarvātmā Dāsa:** A devotee who passed away recently, Kalpataru Dāsa, from Guatemala, distributed books for many years. Here’s the story of how he joined: He became disinterested in material life and went to Ecuador to live in the Andes. He built a cabin far away from trails and people, and he ate berries and leaves like a yogī for almost a year. Meanwhile one hiker going to Ecuador through the Miami airport got a Kṛṣṇa book, and by Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement he started climbing where Kalpataru was living and discovered him there in the wilderness. So they became friends. When the hiker left, he wanted to leave a present, so he left the Kṛṣṇa book with Kalpataru, who read the book and came down the mountain and looked for a temple to join.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** One boy was watching me distribute books. When I approached him, he said, “I have these books. I wondered where these books came from.” He worked for the municipal public works, and a friend of his who collected garbage found some of our books in a garbage container and brought them to the public works hall, where this boy had found them. Being curious, he took them home and started reading the picture captions and then the books themselves. He told me his story and was happy to meet me. He was seventeen years old. He bought ten books on the spot. I invited him to come to visit our temple, said goodbye, and walked away. But somehow or other I was not yet satisfied (Paramātmā!). Suddenly I realized, “He could be a book distributor.” I turned around and called the boy back. “Hey, what are you doing tonight? Because it’s Saturday, I will
go to the temple tonight.” We made an appointment for the evening, and when I came, he was there waiting for me, with his sleeping bag, all ready to stay for the weekend. He became a regular visitor, and now he is a full-time book distributor. His name is Jagadvasu, and he’s gone out steadily for the last five or six years. Very often he travels with me, and he custom-builds the interiors of our sankirtana vans, which are equipped with mini-kitchens, hot-water tanks, and huge book-storage compartments. Simply by distributing books, we get such valuable men.

**Ujvala-nilamani Dāsa (Switzerland):** In 1977 we were on a marathon because Śrīla Prabhupāda was very sick, and we knew that he derived the greatest pleasure from hearing the book distribution scores. One day I was distributing in the subway in Lucerne. A young boy, about fifteen years old, who looked like a student came by and was quite interested, but he didn’t buy a book because he had to do some shopping first and didn’t know how much money he needed. But he promised to come back. I thought, “One of those guys again,” and since it was the afternoon I soon took my break. Then two days later, I was going door to door in some village. At the first door I knocked this same boy opened the door and exclaimed, “Oh, here you are! I came back but could not find you.” That morning one of his teachers was ill, he told me, and that’s why he was still at home. He gladly took a book, *The Nectar of Devotion*, which had just appeared in German. I was struck by Kṛṣṇa’s amazing timing.

Three years later I met him again—in the temple! We came back from sankīrtana one weekend, and there he was. He immediately recognized me and said, “The book you gave me marked a turning point in my life. Suddenly the devotees and the mahā-mantra started crossing my path again and again.” After three years, he had decided to visit the temple. He immediately left high school and came back the same week to join. And now he’s the devotee compiling this sankīrtana book, Ātma-tattva. Kṛṣṇa’s arrangements for getting Prabhupāda’s books to the conditioned souls are intricate and beyond our control. The time will come when thousands of people will show up at the temples, just like that boy, because they got a book and the association of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is the purest and most patient preacher. We simply must have faith in the books and distribute them.

**Nirguṇa Dāsa (USA):** One person was driving his car and ran over something. He stopped to see what it was, and when he opened his door, he saw a book there, and he picked it up. It was a Kṛṣṇa book, and he became a devotee.
Another time, when we returned from book distribution, a carpenter was working in the temple. He saw the ecstasy on the faces of the returning devotees, and he began wondering what we were doing out there. So he developed a desire to go out with us, and he actually became a book distributor. The first day he did huge. So I think that this enthusiasm is the best way to make new devotees. Bring them out on book distribution. Discuss book distribution, which is so much nectar that it feels exhilarating. Every book that goes out is like a big punch of ecstasy. It’s really wonderful, what to speak of how purified you feel at the end of the day. It’s by preaching about the nectar of book distribution that we create an atmosphere that naturally attracts new devotees.

**Why don’t more people join?**

Perhaps the most nagging doubt is: If book distribution is the most important activity, actually the best preaching, why don’t more people join? Who really reads our books?

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection, hardly one knows Me in truth.” He said that in Dvāpara-yuga, so what can we expect in Kali-yuga? “In this iron age of Kali, men have but short lives. They are quarrelsome, lazy, misguided, unlucky and, above all, always disturbed” (SB 1.1.10). In other words, it is always just a few people who achieve Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and nowadays people are most disqualified. But thanks to Lord Caitanya, devotional service is manifest in this Kali-yuga, and His empowered representative, Śrīla Prabhupāda, attributed his success in making devotees to book distribution: “Whatever progress we have made, it is simply because of distributing these books. So go on, and do not divert your mind for a moment from this.”

Without book distribution, who would join ISKCON at all? What other methods of preaching would be more successful? According to Śrīla Prabhupāda and history: none. Therefore if we feel dissatisfied with the number of new devotees joining, the practical solution is to distribute more books. After all, in most countries we haven’t yet distributed that many books. Doubting the efficacy of book distribution on the grounds that it doesn’t produce more devotees is (1) to not see the results achieved already, (2) to forget that no other programs would yield comparable results, (3) to not understand what the further results of book distribution will be, and (4) to lack faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda, who had the vision to see the future of book distribution and therefore stressed it repeatedly.
Harikeśa Swami: Sometimes the sankīrtana devotees become frutitive, and they ask, “We’ve distributed so many books, so why isn’t the place filled with devotees?” The answer is because that’s not the way it works. The way it works is that you have given a book about Kṛṣṇa to a completely conditioned soul who has been wrapped in ignorance since time immemorial, and he’s given you a donation and his spiritual life has started. But he may not complete it in his lifetime. In the beginning people should understand they are committing sinful activities. That is the first stage. They should at least understand that they are doing something wrong. They don’t even understand that. They think that slaughtering animals, eating them, and getting drunk is fine. They are steeped in ignorance. They don’t know what is right and what is wrong. But once they get in touch with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their spiritual lives will gradually begin. They’ll start to understand they have to make a change. They’ll understand that the material world isn’t a nice place to live. Maybe they will visit Kṛṣṇa’s temple. But guaranteed in the next life or some lifetime, they’ll again do something Kṛṣṇa conscious and gradually advance further. Even if it takes one hundred lifetimes, this is nothing compared to the millions and millions of lifetimes they have undergone searching for Kṛṣṇa. They don’t know they are searching for Kṛṣṇa, but that’s what they are doing. Therefore sankīrtana is glorious because it gradually attaches all these people to the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Maybe they will take it now, maybe they will not. We cannot say. But what we can say is, they will become devotees some time, whereas before we met them and gave them a book they had no chance. Book distribution is a long-range program to bring all conditioned souls back to Godhead. (From a class in Germany on June 30, 1990)

Rohiniśuta Dāsa: Some people say the books are too difficult to read. I tell them that’s quite true; otherwise they would have joined already. You can’t understand Śrila Prabhupāda’s books deeply if you don’t chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and render devotional service. Only devotees can understand the books in truth. The books require the association of devotees. Therefore the duty of the preacher is to visit people who are nice, to see them again and again, and that will encourage them to read our books. In Kali-yuga what do people read except literature for crows? So it’s already a miracle that they buy the books. That’s the only thing many people can do. They’d never visit the temple, and even if they did, they’d hardly understand anything. They’re all suffering, but it takes a little good intelligence to learn from suffering. Animals are also suffering, and they cannot end it. So if those with some good intelligence meet devotees, they’ll understand that to stop suf-
ferring, the only solution is surrendering to Kṛṣṇa. For all others, we should be very happy if they can buy a book. That is already something wonderful.

**Lilāvatāra Dāsa:** The first distribution of transcendental literature in Italy took place in 1973–74, and 1977 marked a big step forward in distribution because devotees began selling 80 to a 100 big books a day. Fifteen years have passed since then, and we’ve distributed many, many more books. Many times we were on a marathon for four months in the winter and two months during the summer. Because of that distribution we expanded our movement in Italy. We increased the number of devotees and created a favorable public image. People understood that we study these books, which are profound, holy, and pure. Religious and political leaders often mentioned our books. The character of Śrīla Prabhupāda awakened the interest of scholars in Italy. Now many people read our books, more than we imagine. Some chant without ever having been to a temple. Schools use our books, and some students write a thesis on them. It’s impossible to describe the great effect of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. *Sankīrtana* is changing people world-wide, and a Golden Age is arriving in Kali-yuga that will manifest peace and harmony between people.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Who can assert, “We have distributed lots of books, but the people don’t read them”? Can we say for sure that no one reads the books? At least according to my experience that statement is patently false. People are reading the books and appreciating them as well. The Swiss devotees, for example, say that people on the street are commenting on the books and buying more books. This is also happening in other countries. Maybe it has something to do with the way the books are distributed. The distributors are preaching about the books, and people are becoming attracted to the books. They bring the books home. They don’t throw them away. People accept the books when they buy them from devotees who are trained how to sell the books by preaching about them. They should feel that they are paying for the book. That will help them become attached to it. Donating for a charity or the like does not foster attachment to a book. Changing the attitude of the book distributors may decrease the immediate results, but it will increase the long-term results. People will be more inclined to read a book they purchased.

As for not sowing new seeds, that’s impractical. Every year you have to sow seeds in the fields. After the planting there should be care for the fields, so that they produce. Similarly, the book distribution should continue forever, more and more. But there should also be programs to encourage
people to study the books and make a spiritual change in their lives. Nāma-
haṭṭa centers should be started, and people should be cultivated through the
mail. All these programs are required simultaneously, but on no account at
the cost of book distribution.

1.7 **Book distribution is the foundation of the house in
which the whole world can live**

The most important aspect of our preaching is *kīrtana*. Induce the people to chant, that is the only thing. Then everything else will follow. The goal is to make devotees and books. Both are required. Distributing the books will make devotees. ⁶⁴

The first business should be to preach to the devotees. It is better to maintain a devotee than to try to convince others to become devotees. . . . Your first job should be to make sure that every one of the devotees in your zone of management is regularly reading our books and discussing the subject matter seriously from different angles of seeing, and that they are somehow or other absorbing the knowledge of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy. If they are fully educated in our philosophy and if they can get all of the knowledge and study it from every viewpoint, then very easily they will perform *tapasya* or renunciation and that will be their advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. . . . What good are many, many devotees if none of them are knowledgeable? ⁶⁵

**Book distribution: the basis of a big plan**

*adbhuta mandire eka haibe prakāśa*

*gaurāṅgera nitya-sevā haibe vikāśa*

Nityānanda Prabhu predicted, “In the future Śrī Māyāpur will again appear, and the devotees will build an astounding temple from which the preaching of the *sankirtana* movement of Lord Gaurāṅga will be spread everywhere.” *(Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma Māhātya)*

**Harikeśa Swami:** When we analyze Śrīla Prabhupāda’s plan for spreading this movement world-wide, we can see his wonderful, transcendental vision. The first phase is to produce his books in all languages, and book pro-
duction is going on thanks to his sincere disciples and granddisciples who accept this work as their life and soul. The next stage is book distribution. By Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy that is also going on thanks to his sincere and determined disciples and granddisciples who distribute his books with great enthusiasm. Now it is also going on throughout the Eastern Bloc, although just a few years ago we thought it would never happen. There seems to be no limit to the number of books that can be distributed in the world, and this mission satisfies the heart and soul and makes us want to serve Prabhupāda more and more. The third stage is to build a transcendental city in Māyāpur based around a wonderful temple. The project is now going on, and it is sure to gain momentum. Although we are in the first stages of planning, by Prabhupāda’s blessings we shall be able to complete the initial plans and then begin the construction of the temple and city. Now we are building housing and guesthouses, and this makes us eager to begin work on the main temple. May Śrīla Prabhupāda bless us to accomplish this stage of his plan so that we will have this great legacy to hand down to the generations of devotees to come. All devotees should want to be part of these historic efforts.

“Ours is a cooperative movement”

Ours is a cooperative movement, with Kṛṣṇa and the advancement of Kṛṣṇa’s movement at the center. We must continue to sell as many books as possible, but discuss everything among yourselves and do it nicely without irritating anyone, that is the art. 66

Because I am stressing one thing (book distribution) especially, does that mean that everything else is not important? No. Everything must go on. Please consult with your temple president or your GBC for direction as to what is your best engagement. 67

It is this sankīrtana which is the life and soul of our movement. Saṅkīrtana and book distribution should go on together side by side. I am always glad when these activities are increasing, and my pleasure is always increasing. 68

Cakṣu Dāsa (Austria): I can say frankly that whatever results I’m getting are coming only by the mercy of the other devotees, because they support us and free us from having to worry about this or that problem. We can
just go out with a clear mind. If I had to go out and my mind was dwelling on what’s not working or what’s going wrong because the devotees in the temple don’t care, then I wouldn’t have the power to convince people, because I would not really be convinced about the beauty and the power of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and how nice it is to be in the association of devotees. But because devotees all work together there is a dynamic spirit both in the temple and among the book distributors. Strong cooperation makes it easy to be convincing. And that’s what the people feel when you’re on the street: “This guy is convinced.”

Nirguṇa Dāsa: Book distribution spreads Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the other departments both benefit from it and support it. It all works together, but there has to be responsible management and cooperation among the devotees. For instance, if the temple isn’t kept clean and devotees aren’t following the program, then it’s practically hypocrisy to go out and preach an ideal lifestyle or invite people to the temple. It’s not enlivening or encouraging to live and work in such a situation. Everything must be first class, and the emphasis on book distribution has to be there from the top manager on down. If book distribution is the focus of the temple, it will bring everything to fruition. Everything will be balanced, and there will be no problem of book distribution acting against all the other things we have to do.

Harikeśa Swami: I see my role in the book distribution mission as making sure that all the activities of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in all the temples are directed towards getting out as many books as possible and making sure that all the devotees understand that this is the main goal: we have to bring more and more people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness by giving them Prabhupāda’s books. To do this we have to create an atmosphere in which book distribution is seen as very, very important work. Actually, from the material point of view, nobody wants to go out and sell books. It is strenuous. It is difficult meeting adverse conditions and people. This is an important consideration. Unless one is Kṛṣṇa conscious, he will want to do things according to his material inclinations more than anything else. Therefore inspiring the devotees to go out isn’t easy if the atmosphere in the temples is unfavorable to book distribution. If all the devotees are busily engaged according to their propensities, a potential book distributor might think, “Why should I struggle to distribute books?” Therefore one has to create an atmosphere in which everyone can understand with his transcendental intelligence that book distribution is the most important activity, that
it’s going to get the supreme results and please Śrīla Prabhupāda and bring us all back to Godhead. It’s the primary purpose of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and Prabhupāda said that enough times so that everyone can understand it. Yet it’s important to preach in such a way that devotees who don’t distribute books can feel they are connected to book distribution. Our managers have to help everybody understand this. For example, the pūjārī department worships the Deity and assure us of the Lord’s mercy, and we aspire to please the Deities and want to distribute the books for Their satisfaction. Therefore at the end of the week we read our book scores to Them. And the cooks prepare prasādam to give everybody strength and enthusiasm. Especially in December practically all of us simply engage in book distribution just to make sure we keep up the spirit of understanding what the topmost part of the preaching is.

**Navinā-nīrada Dāsa (Switzerland):** The cutting edge of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is book distribution. There are big tankers in the Arctic Sea that are ice-breakers, and they have a very sharp edge in the front. Similarly, book distribution is the front edge, the cutting edge, of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and the power of the preaching and all other arrangements depends on it. If there’s no cutting edge in front, you can’t cut through the ignorance, the materialistic vibrations that cover this planet. So there has to be continuous book distribution and harināma sankṛtana and prasādam distribution to break through the massive ignorance of people; otherwise we won’t reach their hearts. If we’re not purifying ourselves by the process of sankirtana, we will not have the force of purity behind our preaching.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa (Sweden):** Sometimes management and sankirtana seem to be like two worlds. One is here, the other is over there. I think that’s a serious problem. If we want to keep our preaching spirit, we have to connect the two very strongly. Actually, managing means pushing the cause of book distribution. We are supposed to achieve good results in the field of book distribution, and therefore it has to be our priority. Otherwise it will be de-emphasized. Things merge, and we lose the main point, like māyāvādis who say that Kṛṣṇa is everywhere and you don’t need to go to the temple. But if Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, then He’s in the temple too, and actually He is especially there. Sometimes we end up saying, “Prabhupāda gave us so many instructions; Prabhupāda is everywhere.” So we intimate that he’s not in sankṛtana. It’s a indirect, subtle thing. But if he is everywhere, he must be in sankirtana too, and actually, as he said again and again, he is especially
there. If someone is qualified to perform another service he should do that. But he shouldn’t declare his service as the all-in-all or something better than book distribution and use that against book distribution.

Rohiniṣuta Dāsa: In Kṛṣṇa consciousness everything is important. That includes book distribution. So we don’t forget it, we emphasize it. Otherwise we say, “Everything is important but book distribution.” Then who performs book distribution? The tendency is always to go the easy way, the way of the least surrender. In book distribution there is no personal enjoyment. When you are surrendered, you get enjoyment, but in the beginning when you’re not surrendered, it is the most difficult thing to do. Sankirtana makes you or breaks you. It makes you advance, or it breaks your false ego. On book distribution you can’t be static. You cannot avoid the advancement, and that is good. You may perform other activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but they are not as obviously purifying as book distribution, which is like a rocket taking you back to Godhead. It is guaranteed perfection. Nowadays you can do many activities in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but often you cannot see your false ego. Sometimes it isn’t apparent, and you begin to think you’re advanced. But on book distribution when you have that mentality, it’s sure that you’ll immediately get a reaction. Immediately. And then you realize once more where you actually are. That’s the challenge of book distribution: it forces you to give up your false ego.

Book distribution is stressed for other reasons, too. Śrīla Prabhupāda said books are the basis. In the beginning devotees chanted and distributed prasādam because they had no books. But when they produced some books, Śrīla Prabhupāda told them, “Distribute the books. It is more important.” Of course, we still do harināma-sankirtana and prasādam distribution and invite people to the temple. And because the books are distributed, harināma and prasādam distribution become very useful. These programs are useful even without books, but if many people have books, then prasādam distribution and harināma have special power because they purify the people and remind them to read the books. The people will think, “These are the same people who gave me that book I have at home, and now they’re singing and dancing on the sidewalk and distributing nice sweets. They are bright and happy.” Thus they become curious about the book and the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda said to do everything simultaneously if we have the manpower. But without book distribution, preaching will not be as successful. When book distribution is going on and the devotees who distribute the books become convinced about its importance and don’t deviate to other activities, then the other devotees
can go out on *harināma* and *prasādam* distribution. We also need preachers. We need so many things. It is a movement. But this movement is based on book distribution. The foundation is the most important part of the building. The foundation workers have the most important duty, but they shouldn’t be proud. They should be humble and work together with the other workers. A servant of Kṛṣṇa is never proud. As soon as you become proud you cannot distribute books, and you become powerless. Therefore Kṛṣṇa gives special mercy to the *saṅkīrtana* devotees. He makes them humble. Because Kṛṣṇa wants the books distributed, He helps cut down our pride. Kṛṣṇa always arranges new lessons that enable us to go on distributing books.

“Prabhupāda, what pleases you the most?”

Go on preaching and making life members and distributing books as much as possible. This is exactly the meaning of Lord Caitanya’s teaching, and by carrying it out, surely you will receive His blessings, which are to achieve love of Kṛṣṇa.  

Śrīla Prabhupāda never stressed book distribution to the diminution of other services. Stressing the priority of book distribution with unbalanced argumentation is counterproductive: the other devotees feel offended and lose enthusiasm for book distribution. Sometimes it has provoked a subtle rebellion against book distribution or thrown book distribution into question. Therefore one has to be careful not to prove a right thing with wrong arguments and spoil the right thing. *Book distribution is our most important activity,* because it is our broadest preaching instrument for accomplishing our goals of establishing the *yuga-dharma,* engaging people in devotional service, and awakening the Kṛṣṇa consciousness of the conditioned souls. In that light, all devotional services become fully potent and inspiring, and all the members of the *saṅkīrtana* movement will naturally derive encouragement from hearing about book distribution and develop a desire to taste the nectar of book distribution themselves. The following exchanges with Śrīla Prabhupāda impressively illustrate this.

**Nirantara Dāsa (USA):** In the spring of 1975 all the American *saṅkīrtana* devotees had gathered around Śrīla Prabhupāda in Atlanta: the Rādhā-Dāmodara devotees, the airport distributors, and *saṅkīrtana* parties from around the States. The atmosphere was intensely surcharged with the mood
of book distribution. One morning [March 2nd], towards the end of the lecture, I felt impelled to ask Prabhupāda a question, which I didn’t know would go down in history; you can listen to it on the BBT tape. I asked, “Prabhupāda, what pleases you the most?” I anticipated Prabhupāda answering, “If you distribute books,” to encourage all of us book distributors. Prabhupāda paused thoughtfully, then said, “If you love Kṛṣṇa.”

Instead of wanting to know what really pleased Prabhupāda, devotees sometimes held preconceived ideas of what they wanted to hear. Prabhupāda’s responses in these cases caught devotees off guard, but they could see that Prabhupāda was catching them. Prabhupāda could understand what his disciples were driving at by trying to put words in his mouth, and he left no room for anyone to maintain false pride: if you’d learn to love Kṛṣṇa by distributing books, that would please Prabhupāda the most. Still, Śrīla Prabhupāda made it clear that if you did distribute his books sincerely you were dear to Kṛṣṇa and his Guru Mahārāja, and your love for Kṛṣṇa would grow.

Śivarāma Swami: Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed book distribution, and I like to do it, and I push it. But we should not forget that he also stressed other programs. Once, when Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Montreal, I asked him what was most important—book distribution, harināma, or prasādam distribution. I was a zealous book distributor and wanted him to say book distribution. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “They are all equally important.” I thought that Śrīla Prabhupāda was just emphasizing each of them but was not really answering my question. So when I had another opportunity some time later, I put the question to him again. This time I made some introductory statements to induce him to say book distribution, but he did not do that. He said that book distribution, harināma, and prasādam distribution are equally important. This is one of the few instructions that Śrīla Prabhupāda directly gave me, and I clearly remember it. So Śrīla Prabhupāda did stress book distribution more, but not to the exclusion of other programs.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: When Śrīla Prabhupāda made his last visit to London in 1977, he called the whole German yatra into his room. We were all thinking it was because Germany had become famous for big sankirtana results, and we were thinking, “Now he is rewarding us: ‘You can come.’ And now we are coming—the Germans! Here we are, Prabhupāda! You called for us, and here we are!” We all dashed into his room and paid dandavats, and Śrīla Prabhupāda sat in the corner completely silent. It became very quiet, and everyone cooled down. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “You are distributing books
very nicely, but do you know our philosophy?” It was the last thing anyone expected. He repeated, “Do you know the philosophy?” Everyone looked desperate and bewildered. Nobody said anything for three minutes. “What is the essence of our philosophy?” Prabhupāda asked again. Some devotees shyly answered, yāre dekha, tāra kaha and sarva-dharmān parityajya, but we could understand that those weren’t the points Prabhupāda wanted to hear. Then he said: “The essence of our philosophy is that we are eternal. That is Kṛṣṇa’s instruction.” Shortly afterward, we left his room. We all bolted out again, the whole crew, completely puzzled. “What was that? He just asked if we know the philosophy. He didn’t say anything about our sankīrtana results.” It was very instructive, because Prabhupāda knew that the Germans are known as hard workers. There was no lack of enthusiasm, hard work, and dedication. But philosophically something was missing in those days. So in this way, and through realizations I got on the street over the years, I have learned that unless I have a good foundation of knowledge, I won’t last on sankīrtana.

“Devotional service is absolute, but . . .”

Kṛṣṇa becomes more and more pleased by the increment of book distribution. Devotional service is absolute, but Kṛṣṇa is especially pleased to see someone preaching His glories.⁷⁰

Here Prabhupāda says devotional service is absolute, and in the following letter he says the same in the words: “In Kṛṣṇa’s service, there is no inferior and superior.” But because “Kṛṣṇa is especially pleased to see someone preaching His glories,” book distribution is most important, and it is emphasized by Prabhupāda:

Regarding your question about the controversial talks going on, this kind of talk is not befitting my advanced students. This is childish. In Kṛṣṇa’s service, there is no inferior and superior. Deity worship is just as important as book distribution. It is not material. It is mentioned in the Bhāgavatam:

śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ smaranaṁ pāda-sevanam
arcanāṁ vandanaṁ dāṣyaṁ sakhyam ātma-nivedanam

Śravaṇaṁ kīrtanam is the beginning—to chant and hear. Book distribution is under this category of śravaṇaṁ kīrtanam. The next item is smaranam. If somebody simply remembers the Supreme Lord, that is as good as śravaṇaṁ and
kirtanam. Then there is arcanam. That is also as good as the others, but one who simply becomes engaged in arcanam and does nothing of śravaṇaṁ kirtanam, his position becomes in the material field. Any one of the nine processes is as good as the other. There is no question of inferior or superior. But out of all of them śravaṇaṁ kirtanam is very important. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu while instructing Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has said how the seed of devotional service sprouts and increases by watering the root by the process of śravaṇaṁ kirtanam. So these two items are very important in devotional service, but that does not mean that the other items are inferior. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has stressed kirtanam especially in the age of Kali. Even if there is arcanam for sanctifying the contaminated mind, it must be accompanied by śravaṇaṁ kirtanam.

So, you are all advanced students. You should understand the importance of each and every item of devotional service. Do not make any misunderstanding by devaluing any of the spiritual activities. You are one of the advanced students. One who distinguishes a particular type of service as inferior or superior, he does not know the value of devotional service. It is all transcendental. Whatever item is suitable, that is accepted as very elevated. Just like Mahārāja Parikṣit. He simply listened to Śukadeva Gosvāmī. That is śravaṇaṁ. And Śukadeva Gosvāmī simply narrated Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. This is kirtanam. Prahlāda Mahārāja simply contemplated—smaranaṁ. Pṛthu Mahārāja simply did Deity worship—arcanam. Arjuna only remained as friend of Kṛṣṇa—sakhyam. Hanumān remained only engaged in carrying out the order of Lord Rāmacandra—dāsyam. And Bali Mahārāja surrendered everything to Kṛṣṇa—ātma-nivedanam. So any devotee executing any one of the nine is transcendentially glorious. One devotee may be proud that his process of service is the best. That is not inglorious. This is called transcendental competition. Everyone should feel proud of his particular type of devotional service, but that does not mean that other types of service are inferior. Everyone should feel proud of becoming a sincere servant of Kṛṣṇa, but the pure devotee never minimizes the importance of other devotees. Kṛṣṇa is the enjoyer of varieties of service. It is not stuck up with any particular type of service. Kṛṣṇa takes pleasure
with devotees even by fighting service. When Grandfather Bhīṣma was trying to injure the body of Kṛṣṇa by sharpened arrows, in full devotion in the mellow of chivalry, Kṛṣṇa was feeling the piercing of the arrows as good as worshiping him with soft rose flowers. The conclusion is that everyone should be very, very sincere. There is no more the question of inferior or superior. 71

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.14.39p: In Satya-yuga, every person was spiritually advanced, and there was no envy between great personalities. . . . but after Satya-yuga there were symptoms of disrespectful dealings among Vaiṣṇavas. . . . When great saintly persons saw this contamination, they introduced worship of the Deity in the temple. This began in Tretā-yuga and was especially prominent in Dvāpara-yuga. But in Kali-yuga, worship of the Deity is being neglected. Therefore chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is more powerful than Deity worship. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu set a practical example in that He did not establish any temples or Deities, but He profusely introduced the saṅkīrtana movement. Therefore Kṛṣṇa consciousness preachers should give more stress to the saṅkīrtana movement, especially by distributing transcendental literature more and more. This helps the saṅkīrtana movement. Whenever there is a possibility to worship the Deity, we may establish many centers, but generally we should give more stress to the distribution of transcendental literature, for this will be more effective in converting people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Distribution of my books is the highest kind of preaching, and thus the best engagement. 72

“See to it that the trains are always running”

Regarding printing our books and literatures, I may inform you in this connection that I saw one bulletin of Indian Railways in which it was specifically advised that every railway servant must see to it that the wheels of the carriages or vehicles should always be moving, which means that the railway is going nicely. Similarly, all of us should see that our literatures are profusely distributed. That means that our missionary work is going on nicely. Otherwise we are simply sleeping and eating. 73

This is our most important work. All the leaders should tax their brains for increasing the sales of our books. I have
always said that if we simply rely on book distribution all our needs will be met.  

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.37p: In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, all our activities are concentrated upon distributing Kṛṣṇa literature. This is very important. One may approach any person and induce him to read Kṛṣṇa literature so that in the future he also may become a devotee.

Cakṣu Dāsa: If nothing is going on but book distribution, the other services will come. But if all the other things go on except book distribution, they will not go on for long—and everything will decrease. We have seen it. If there are enough people to distribute books, then we can have the other programs. But if the devotees are doing everything else but book distribution, they should reconsider what the basis is and go on book distribution. That is the main thing. That always has to go on. That can’t be neglected.

Śairṣi Devī Dāsī (Germany): If we go on traveling sankīrtana, we develop a lot of appreciation for the temple devotees dedicating their lives to Kṛṣṇa. We feel like a family. There’s always this example of war: some are at the front fighting; some are in the back providing everything for the soldiers at the front and taking care of the wounded. We’re one army, the army against materialistic, conditioned life. One shouldn’t be a separatist. One should have a broad vision and understand how everything works, because we all have the same goal. As an army we’re all dependent on each other. And just like in a war, the ones who go to the front will get the honors, medals and awards. Fighting face to face with māyā isn’t easy. You have to confront Kali-yuga’s influence. You are much safer in the temple serving the Deities in a spiritual and calm atmosphere. But we are all one family working hand in hand. If we try to see things like that, then there will be no problem having some relationship to the different services and there will be no envy or separatism.

Harikeśa Swami: The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is so nice that however you serve the sankīrtana mission, you get the benefit. The whole movement is a sankīrtana mission. We have our front lines and our back lines. The book distributors are going to the front lines, delivering Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the people face to face. And devotees in the back lines are supporting them, enabling them to do more and more preaching. You may be in the front lines or the back lines, or you may work at the top of the line, but whatever you do, always understand the bottom line, which is to serve Kṛṣṇa with love and devotion. That is the best way to go back home,
back to Godhead, the best way to bring others with you, the best way to serve Kṛṣṇa, the best way to be happy. (From a class in Zurich on August 29, 1991)

“Please assist me to your best capacity”

We are trying to push on this movement on many fronts, one of the most important being the production and distribution of our Kṛṣṇa conscious literature for the upliftment of mankind. My Guru Mahārāja particularly gave me this assignment, so please assist me to your best capacity in this regard.  

More than anything I want that my students should distribute my books and literatures profusely all over the world, and this should be our foremost concern, how to do it properly.

In Caitanya Mahāprabhu's movement everyone is a preacher, whether man or woman, it doesn’t matter. . . . Everyone should go out.

Actually it is a fact that ultimately everyone should preach and distribute books if they want to please me in the best way. Book distribution must be given stress always. . . . If you do this sincerely, it is a fact that Kṛṣṇa will supply everything else required.

Let us humbly remember Śrīla Prabhupāda and always make his books the basis of ISKCON’s activities and our individual spiritual lives. Prabhupāda wanted his movement to be pushed “on many fronts, one of the most important being the production and distribution” of books. Of course, not everyone can be or is qualified to be engaged in book production. Similarly, not everyone can distribute books full-time. We all have different services, responsibilities, and inclinations. But as a practical and reasonable conclusion to all these clear instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the members of ISKCON should take time whenever they can, either regularly or at least once a year during the Prabhupāda marathon, to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. (This point is elaborated upon in Ch. 9, Sec. 1.) The more good examples we have of that, the more book distribution will become a tradition, and the more Kṛṣṇa consciousness will spread as it did when Prabhupāda was physically present.
Conclusion

To construct a house in which the whole world can live, a strong, permanent foundation is required. Therefore every temple needs book distribution. To dedicate themselves to this pioneering work, the book distributors need encouragement, support, and the faith that theirs is the most important service. Book distribution is a permanent necessity, just as the foundation of a house is always needed to support the superstructure. Nobody says, “The house is standing. Now we don’t need the foundation anymore.”

Book distribution as the topmost priority not only has to be acknowledged and established but also maintained and expanded. By our faithful execution of this order of Śrīla Prabhupāda, everything else will come.

Yes, try to encourage book distribution as much as possible. Books are the basis of our movement. Whatever appreciation we are getting on account of our books, it is because we are following the path chalked out by exalted devotees. 79
Saṅkīrtana Philosophy

Prahlāda Mahārāja said, “May there be good fortune throughout the universe, and may all envious persons be pacified. May all living entities become calm by practicing bhakti-yoga, for by accepting devotional service they will think of each other’s welfare. Therefore let us engage in the service of the supreme transcendence, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and always remain absorbed in thought of Him.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.9)

2.1 The mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.2, 4: I offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, who are like the sun and moon. They have arisen simultaneously on the horizon of Gauḍā to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and thus wonderfully bestow benediction upon all. . . . May that Lord, who is known as the son of Śrīmati Śacīdevī, be transcendentally situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation ever offered before: the most sublime and radiant spiritual knowledge of the mellow taste of His service.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.85–89: Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the Person- nalities of Godhead, who formerly appeared in Vṛndāvana and were millions of times more effulgent than the sun and moon, have arisen over the eastern horizon of Gauḍādeśa, being compassionate for the fallen state of the world. The appearance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Prabhu Nityānanda has surcharged the world with happiness. As the sun and moon drive away darkness by their appearance and reveal the nature of everything, these two brothers dissipate the darkness of the living beings’ ignorance and enlighten them with knowledge of the Absolute Truth.
No one is more merciful than Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 25.268–270: All sane men within these three worlds certainly accept the conclusion that no one is more merciful (kṛpālu) and magnanimous (vadānyā) than Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and that no one is as kind to His devotees (bhakta-vatsala). All devotees should hear about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s pastimes with faith and love. By the grace of the Lord, one can thus attain shelter at His lotus feet. By understanding the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one can understand the truth about Kṛṣṇa. By understanding Kṛṣṇa, one can understand the limit of all knowledge described in various revealed scriptures.

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 19.51–53: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu embraced Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrī Vallabha, and out of His causeless mercy He placed His feet on their heads. After receiving the Lord’s causeless mercy, the brothers folded their hands and in great humility offered the Lord the following prayer.

\[
\text{namo mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te}
\]

\[
kṛṣṇāya kṛṣṇa-caitanya-nāmne gaura-tviṣe namaḥ
\]

“O most munificent incarnation! You are Kṛṣṇa Himself appearing as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. You have assumed the golden color of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and You are widely distributing pure love of Kṛṣṇa. We offer our respectful obeisances unto You.”

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 14.16 p: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mercy is so powerful that it acts automatically. If a person renders loving service to Kṛṣṇa, it never goes in vain. It is recorded in a spiritual account, and in due time it will fructify. This is confirmed by *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.40). \(Sv-alpam apy asya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt\): “In this endeavor there is no loss or diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has particularly bestowed upon all fallen souls in this age the most potent method of devotional service, and whoever takes to it through the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is immediately elevated to the transcendental position. . . . Even a little of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mercy serves as a great asset for spiritual advancement. Therefore the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must be spread through the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. . . . Śrī Cai-
tanya Mahāprabhu’s special mission is the deliverance of all fallen souls in Kali-yuga. Devotees of Kṛṣṇa must persistently seek the favor and mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to become fit to return home, back to Godhead.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 5.88: The activities of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are just like an ocean of nectar. Even a drop of this ocean can inundate all the three worlds.

Purport: To inundate the three worlds with nectar is the purpose of the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. How this could be possible was exhibited by Śrīla Raghunātha Gosvāmī and later by Ṭhākura Narottama Dāsa and Śyāmānanda Gosvāmī, who all represented the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Now that same mercy is overflooding the entire world through the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is nondifferent from the pastimes performed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu when He was personally present, for the same principles are being followed and the same actions performed without fail.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.6p: To release a conditioned soul from material bondage is very difficult because the spell of māyā is so strong. Even when the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself descends to deliver conditioned souls, asking them to surrender unto Him, the conditioned souls do not agree to the Lord’s proposals. Therefore Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī said, “Somehow or other, if one helps another gain release from the bondage of māyā, he is certainly recognized immediately by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” . . . The greatest service one can render to the Lord is to try to infuse devotional service into the heart of the conditioned soul so that the conditioned soul may be released from conditional life. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has said that a Vaiṣṇava is recognized by his preaching work—that is, by convincing the conditioned soul about his eternal position. It is the living entity’s eternal position to serve the Lord; therefore to help one get release from material bondage is to awaken one to the dormant understanding that he is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’.

In the following letter Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how devotees can serve the Lord’s mission and gain His appreciation.

As a father is always sorry for the son who is out of home, similarly Kṛṣṇa is not very happy on account of so many
bewildered fallen souls in the material world. He therefore comes personally to ask them to surrender again to Him. But the conditioned soul is so much illusioned that it is very hard to make him surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore each and every one of us, if we can give service to Kṛṣṇa by making another man surrender to Kṛṣṇa, then He will very much appreciate that service, and that is our gain.¹

Śacīnandana Swami: In the spiritual world everything is present but one thing: the pleasure of saving the conditioned souls through sankīrtana. Therefore even Kṛṣṇa descends, in the form of Lord Caitanya, to perform sankīrtana and taste this pleasure. So who can doubt that sankīrtana is the real source of our joy and happiness? We must be happy to perform sankīrtana. Happy means that we have no doubts about Kṛṣṇa consciousness and about spreading it. Prabhupāda writes in this connection, “The cause of distress of a living entity is forgetfulness of his relationship with God. And the cause of happiness is knowing Kṛṣṇa. Because one in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is happy, he tries to distribute the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa everywhere. He is the best philanthropist in the world, and he is the dearest servitor of the Lord” (Bg. 6.32p).

Starting another person’s devotional service

Regarding your questions: Is there any particular reason why some spirit souls become directed towards Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the first place? How does one get on the progressive path of elevation to Kṛṣṇa consciousness? The answer is that it is by the mercy of the Lord that one comes in contact with a spiritual master who can revive the dormant Kṛṣṇa consciousness of the conditioned soul. Kṛṣṇa is always merciful, and He comes Himself, He leaves behind the Bhagavad-gītā, and He sends His representative, the spiritual master. In this way the merciful propaganda is going on.

Every individual soul has got the power of discrimination. So those who are pious take advantage of this opportunity of the mercy of the Lord. But both pious and impious souls are being convinced by this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The human being is supposed to be more intelligent than the animals, so intelligent persons or pious persons come in contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.²
In *Harināma-cintāmani* (Ch. 7), Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura explains the effect of serving Vaiṣṇavas: “Māyā-devi forces atheists to perform sinful activities and in this way deprives them of the nectar of chanting the holy name. But if she becomes appeased by an atheist’s rendering service to saintly Vaiṣṇavas, she showers him with her grace and connects him to the Lord’s lotus feet.” ³ Buying books from book distributors is definitely “rendering service to saintly Vaiṣṇavas.” Even touching a transcendental book or sacrificing a few seconds to hear the words of a devotee is considered devotional service. A materialist’s life will change even if he doesn’t immediately do more devotional service but remains under māyā’s spell, because he has begun appeasing Māyā-devi, who will inspire him to surrender more to God. Her inspiration may manifest initially as continued or increased suffering, but it is no longer merely a karmic reaction. Rather, it is karma administered in such a way that the materialist becomes disillusioned. Thus in the beginning he experiences Kṛṣṇa’s mercy through māyā. Now it is just a question of time before he comes into contact with devotional service again and makes further progress. The end of his material suffering has come into sight.

**Harikeśa Swami:** By the extraordinary mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead the conditioned souls get the seed of bhakti-yoga: guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bijā. How fortunate such souls are, we cannot imagine—especially nowadays when we’re distributing so many books. We give the seed of bhakti-yoga to someone after he has been in the material world for millions of lifetimes. He may not know it, and even we may not know it, but when he agrees to take a book about Kṛṣṇa, for him the whole process of bhakti-yoga begins. The seed is planted. We don’t even think about it when we distribute books, because it’s just too amazing—it’s the most wonderful thing. The book distributors are the most magnanimous souls because they plant the seed of bhakti-yoga in the hearts all sorts of people who otherwise never would have a chance of going back to Godhead. Totally unfortunate souls become totally fortunate by the mercy of the sankirtana devotees. (From a class in Germany on June 30, 1990)

**Nirguna Dāsa:** Some of these people may never get another chance to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Of course, we don’t take that to the extent of distributing books in a disturbing way. But in a genuinely pleasing way we try our best to reach everyone. Sometimes we can’t take a break because people are dashing in and out of the parking lots, and we have to give them books because it may be their last chance. That enthusiasm is always there.
For many people, books will be their only link with this movement for a long time or throughout their lifetime. We know many people who received books and have since died.

**Greatest welfare work**

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.8.9p: When a person is advanced in spiritual consciousness or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he naturally becomes very sympathetic towards all living entities suffering in the material world. Naturally such an advanced person thinks of the suffering of the people in general. However, if one does not know of the material sufferings of fallen souls and becomes sympathetic because of bodily comforts, as in the case of Bharata Mahārāja, such sympathy or compassion is the cause of one's falldown. If one is actually sympathetic to fallen, suffering humanity, he should try to elevate people from material consciousness to spiritual consciousness. . . . As far as the material body is concerned, we cannot do anything for anyone. However, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, we may raise a person to spiritual consciousness if we ourselves follow the rules and regulations. If we give up our own spiritual activities and simply become concerned with the bodily comforts of others, we will fall into a dangerous position.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.11p: Anyone who misunderstands this perishable body to be the self and who works for it in the name of sociology, politics, philanthropy, altruism, nationalism or internationalism, under the false plea of the bodily conception of life, is certainly a fool and does not know the implications of reality and unreality. . . . Unless people are attracted by kṛṣṇa-kathā, they will never be liberated from the bondage of material existence. Kṛṣṇa-kathā is the only remedy for all people of the world because it can situate one in pure consciousness of the self and liberate one from material bondage. To preach kṛṣṇa-kathā all over the world, as recommended by Lord Caitanya, is the greatest missionary activity, and all sensible men and women of the world may join in this great movement started by Lord Caitanya.

In order to change this materialistic society and prevent people from gliding to hell, the first thing is to educate them. All decent men want to give service to humanity, but the only thing is that they do not have information what that service really is. Hospitals, feeding the poor, Red Cross—these are service to the body only, not to the man. Service to humanity
means jñāna. By giving people knowledge, jñāna, we render the highest service to humanity. So we are performing the actual welfare work for society by informing everyone through our literatures who is God, who they are, and what the relationship is. In this way everyone who hears our message gets the opportunity to fulfill his actual position as a human entity and become delivered from the clutches of mâyā. So you may understand it that by disseminating our Kṛṣṇa consciousness propaganda anywhere and everywhere by selling books, by making publicity in the newspapers and on television—there are so many ways to spread Kṛṣṇa conscious information—by utilizing our energy in this way to give everyone access to the Absolute Truth, that is the real understanding of the desire to serve humanity. 4

“Make all the unfortunate fortunate”

Devotee: Prabhupāda, before this movement came here we were caught up in sinful activities. How were we so fortunate to get the benediction of this great Hare Kṛṣṇa movement?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to give you Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Take advantage of it. Caitanya Mahāprabhu is kind to everyone. He has no discrimination that this cult should be spread only in India or among the Hindus or among the brāhmaṇas. No. He wanted to spread this movement to all living beings. Never mind. Prthivīte āche yata nagarādi. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission. So now He has come. If you want, accept Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s order: “Simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.” That is sufficient. But if you want to know more, through philosophy, through science, we have already got thirty or fifty books. Read them. Everything is there. Either you accept it directly, or if you want to accept it through science, through philosophy, through knowledge, there are books. Both ways, Caitanya Mahāprabhu is ready to help you. Now you take advantage of it. And we are glad that you are taking advantage. . . . The sooner you take advantage of it, the better. 5

By Lord Caitanya’s mercy, the unfortunate have become most fortunate. That good fortune was brought by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the devotees, in turn, as a sign of gratitude and responsibility, should make the rest of the unfortunate fortunate:
This is our duty: to make all these unfortunate creatures fortunate. That is our mission. Therefore we go in the street and chant. Although they say, “Can’t,” we go on chanting. That is our business. And somehow or other we push some literature into his hand. He’s becoming fortunate. He would have spoiled his hard-earned money in so many nasty, sinful ways, and if he purchases one book—never mind what is the price—his money is properly utilized. The beginning of Krṣṇa consciousness is there. Because he is giving some of his hard-earned money for this Krṣṇa consciousness movement he is getting some spiritual profit. He is not losing. He is getting some spiritual profit. Therefore our business is, somehow or other, bringing everyone to this Krṣṇa consciousness movement.⁶

We are making them fortunate. We are giving them service so they become fortunate. We are spending our blood, gallons of blood, to make them fortunate. This is the sacrifice of the devotee. Suppose you are poor and some rich man comes and says, “Oh, all right, take one million dollars from me.” You become rich immediately. So it is by the devotee’s sacrifice that they are becoming fortunate.⁷

2.2 The glories of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books

We can say that all these big so-called philosophers are simply mūdhas. Perhaps I am the first to do it. Our philosophy is perfect, and we cannot be defeated by anyone. So it is up to you to learn it and be able to present it nicely. Now you have everything: respect, philosophy, money, temples, books—all these things I have given—but I am an old man, and my notice is already there. Now it is up to you how to manage it. If you cannot increase it, you should at least maintain what I have given you. You cannot accuse me that I have not given you anything. So it is a great responsibility you now have.⁸

Prabhupāda’s books are the words of bhagavān and bhāgavata

Never was the mercy of Kṛṣṇa as easily accessible as it is now through the saṅkirtana movement, and never was there as merciful a way to attain
Krṣṇa consciousness as by distributing it in the form of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. This is because the words contained in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are the transcendental words of bhagavān (God) and bhāgavata (God’s devotee). The very appearance of his books was mystical—it happened in such a short time that it surpassed the limits of ordinary writing and publishing—a mystical, direct manifestation of the entire guru-parampara’s knowledge, power, and will.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Concluding Words: Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda passed away from this material world on the last day of December 1936, I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his vānī, his words. There are two ways of association—by vānī and by vapu. Vānī means words, and vapu means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but vānī continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the vānī, not the physical presence. Bhagavad-gītā, for example, is the vānī of Lord Krṣṇa. Although Krṣṇa was personally present five thousand years ago and is no longer physically present from the materialistic point of view, Bhagavad-gītā continues.

In this connection we may call to memory the time when I was fortunate enough to meet His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, sometime in the year 1922. Śrīla Prabhupāda had come to Calcutta from Śrīdāma Māyāpur to start the missionary activities of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. He was sitting in a house at Ulta Danga when through the inducement of an intimate friend, the late Śrīman Narendranātha Mallika, I had the opportunity to meet His Divine Grace for the first time. I do not remember the actual date of the meeting, but at that time I was one of the managers of Dr. Bose’s laboratory in Calcutta. I was a newly married young man, addicted to Gandhi’s movement and dressed in khadi. Fortunately, even at our first meeting, His Divine Grace advised me to preach the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in English in the Western countries. Because at that time I was a complete nationalist, a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, I submitted to His Divine Grace that unless our country were freed from foreign subjugation, no one would hear the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu seriously. Of course, we had some argument on this subject, but at last I was defeated and convinced that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s message is the only panacea for suffering humanity. I was also convinced that the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was then in the hands of a very expert devotee and that surely the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu would spread all over the world. I could not, however, immediately take up his instructions to preach, but I took his
words very seriously and was always thinking of how to execute his order, although I was quite unfit to do so.

In this way I passed my life as a householder until 1950, when I retired from family life as a vānaprastha. With no companion, I loitered here and there until 1958, when I took sannyāsa. Then I was completely ready to discharge the order of my spiritual master. Previously, in 1936, just before His Divine Grace passed away at Jagannātha Puri, I wrote him a letter asking what I could do to serve him. In reply, he wrote me a letter, dated December 13, 1936, ordering me, in the same way, to preach in English the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as I had heard it from him.

After he passed away, I started the fortnightly magazine Back to Godhead sometime in 1944 and tried to spread the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu through this magazine. After I took sannyāsa, a well-wishing friend suggested that I write books instead of magazines. Magazines, he said, might be thrown away, but books remain perpetually. Then I attempted to write Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Before that, when I was a householder, I had written on Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā and had completed about eleven hundred pages, but somehow or other the manuscript was stolen. In any case, when I had published Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, First Canto, in three volumes in India, I thought of going to the U.S.A. By the mercy of His Divine Grace, I was able to come to New York on September 17, 1965. Since then, I have translated many books, including Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Teachings of Lord Caitanya and many others.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s emotional ecstasies

We read the scriptures again and again, and it is still fresh. When there is time, I go on reading my own books. 9

Tamāl Krishna Goswami: Śrīla Prabhupāda once said to me, “My books are better than me, because the best of me is in the books. I sit there, and every word that comes out is the very best of me.” (From a class in Belgium on August 1, 1989)

Harikeśa Swami: Śrīla Prabhupāda’s day began sometime between 12:30 and 1:30 after he inexplicably rose from bed without assistance. There was no alarm clock, and certainly no one went in to remind him that it was time to rise, but almost as if he were never asleep he rose of his own accord to sit behind his desk and chant the holy name. Perhaps one hour or more later after sitting peacefully without moving, chanting in complete concentration, he opened his books, the red Bengali Bhāgavatam and the green
one from Varanasi with the Sanskrit commentaries by the great ācāryas. He turned on the dictaphone, picked up the microphone, and began dictating: “Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Seventh Canto, Third Chapter, verse fifteen, purport continued.” And then with great care and deliberation he chose each and every word as if the whole creation depended upon the perfection of his word selection.

Factually it did, for he knew that for the next ten thousand years these books would be the standard of knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda understood his audiences perfectly well, although he might be in Bombay, Sydney, Rome, Tokyo, Hawaii, Los Angeles, or New York. Sometimes those places and audiences were very small (only three or four devotees and a few members), and sometimes very large—thousands all waiting anxiously to hear him speak even a drop of nectar. He never disappointed them, giving them a full share of his mercy. People would come to his room all day and even all night, but he would never neglect them. Often he would chastise me, “Why do you prevent them from coming? Let them come.”

But in the wee morning hours, no one could even think of rising, what to speak of going to his room and bothering him. Śrīla Prabhupāda could read the minds, feel the hearts, and see the faces of the people he was writing for, and with great compassion and mercy he chose each word most deliberately, to persuade the reader to discard his material desires and enter into the spiritual realm of devotional service. One day perhaps he would do two verses, and another day perhaps twenty—it depended on his own transcendental desire. Sometimes two verses took longer than twenty to compose, for this was not a material occupation bound by a mundane schedule.

Often we tried to inspire him to translate more. We thought that he needed our encouragement to go faster, but he would chastise us for that: “Do you think this is an ordinary activity? It is not simply moving the fingers on the typewriter. I have to compose these words with great deliberation. This is the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. It is not an ordinary activity.” And so we would feel like fools for trying to interfere with the transcendental, emotional outpouring of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s ecstasies into his purports. He told us his purports were his emotional ecstasies. So filled was he with pure love of God that his love in these purports remains ever fresh. Anyone can have direct contact with Śrīla Prabhupāda by reading his purports and accepting the instructions in them as his life and soul. If people read only one line, even one word, he told us, they can experience a complete change of heart and become eligible to go back to Godhead. If they even touch a book or see it, their lives are changed, he said. Who could have imagined these wonderful, magnificent opulences of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, and who could have conceived that during the wee morning hours he would write
his books, day in and day out? Although sometimes he was extremely sick, he still managed to write. It is certainly a modern wonder that Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote more books in ten years than anyone else in history, and now they are appearing in many different languages. But the materialists are so bewildered that they can’t understand what Prabhupāda has done. Later they will understand, when the seeds of these books become fully manifest. Now they are simply seeds—a few have sprouted to become creepers—but when the seeds become fully manifest as trees, people will understand what he did. Millions of these seeds are everywhere, and they are the unbreakable, indestructible, eternal assets of human society. How that manifestation of mercy will appear in the future only he knows. We can’t say. We have very little idea of what can develop simply from massive book distribution.

After two, three, or even four hours of the most intensely concentrated writing in history, Śrīla Prabhupāda somehow decided to come to an end. The translating ended, even in the middle of a sentence sometimes—inexplicably. No one understood where the nectar flowed from or why it stopped. Now the flow and tide of his ecstasies were being channeled into other directions. If no one disturbed him, he might take a twenty-minute nap and recover from the great mental strain of writing. Then the time just before dawn would come, and all the sannyāsīs, temple presidents, and other important devotees would assemble at his door, breathlessly awaiting his departure from his room. His servant hurried to organize the morning clean-up: who would change the sheets, sweep the floor, wash whatever they could, and replace the flowers. The servant carefully placed Prabhupāda’s sweater and chadar over his shoulders, his cap on his head, his lotus feet firmly and softly within his shoes, and his cane directly into his hand without making Prabhupāda break his stride. The perfection was to do it in one sweeping motion, while holding the door open, so that Śrīla Prabhupāda wouldn’t need to waste one precious moment as he strode out of his room, having just solved all the problems of the world within the lines of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The devotees immediately offered dāndavats, and Śrīla Prabhupāda stood patiently as he was duly garlanded and praised with nice words. He laughed or looked at us sternly according to his desire, and then off he would march on his morning walk to once again tear to pieces the rascal scientists and foolish atheists of the world while constantly showering his most merciful compassion upon all of his devotees.

Śrīla Prabhupāda considered book-writing his most important activity and wished to retire from the work of managing ISKCON just to concen-
Prabhupāda’s books contain the Absolute Truth

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.2 p: The impersonal aspect of the Absolute Truth is not the highest. Above the impersonal feature is the Paramātmā feature, and above this is the personal feature of the Absolute Truth, or Bhagavān. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam gives information about the Absolute Truth in His personal feature. It is higher than impersonalist literatures and higher than the jñāna-kāṇḍa divisions of the Vedas . . . because it aims at the Supreme Truth which is the substance or the root of all categories. From Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam one can come to know the substance as well as the categories. The substance is the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Lord, and all emanations are relative forms of energy.
(a) **Defining the Absolute Truth**

In Kali-yuga demonic and *māyāvāda* propaganda has infiltrated the field of philosophical inquiry and made the world bereft of the most important topic of human thought, the inquiry into the Absolute Truth. Practically all philosophers in the West do not treat—or do not dare to treat—the topic because to do so would be to invite the ridicule of their colleagues, if not suspicion and threats of expulsion from professional circles. At the least, they would have great difficulty finding an audience. Due to demonic influences, people are averse to inquiring into the Absolute Truth. Even the liberal-minded philosophers from the esoteric and New Age groups, who like to talk about cosmic consciousness and self-realization, frown at the mention of “the absolute truth.” The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* says: “Those who are averse to Transcendence realize the Absolute Truth differently through speculative sense perception, and therefore, because of mistaken speculation, everything appears to them to be relative” (SB 3.32.38). A modern ideology goes: “Everything is relative. What is true for you is true for you, but never try to convert others. Who are you to claim that what you consider true is true for everyone? Nothing is absolute. Everyone has to find his own truth.” Thus people firmly believe that everything is relative; but their belief itself is a negative, incomplete form of absolute truth.

So people always accept an absolute truth in some incomplete, relative form, or as a theistic truth, or as an atheistic dogma like agnosticism that declares that nobody knows what the absolute truth is. Therefore the issue is not “Is there an absolute truth?” but “What is the absolute truth?” And that question is going unasked. But that’s where Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books start. *Ātātha brahma-jijnāsā*: “Now, having obtained the human form of life, one should inquire into the Absolute Truth” (*Vedānta-sūtra*, 1.1.1). This is the most important question of life, because only by knowledge of the Absolute Truth does our relative existence gain value and meaning.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are the only current source of serious inquiry into the Absolute Truth, which they conclusively explain as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda’s preaching is glorified in the words *nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tārine*: he delivers the world from impersonalism and voidism. That is the mission he inherited from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvāti Thākura, and he expressed it in his famous Vyāsa-pūjā poem of 1935: “Absolute is sentient, thou hast proved. Impersonal calamity thou hast moved.” Śrīla Prabhupāda called “the absolute truth” not “it,” but by His name, Kṛṣṇa, and thus he challenged all the fools, rascals, demons, and speculators, who cause calamities by their pro-
paganda. Śrīla Prabhupāda, in India and the West, attacked whoever distorted or covered the Absolute Truth, and he wanted the world-wide distribution of his books to replace their literature.

When one book is published I think I have conquered an empire. So try to publish as many books as possible, and that will enhance the beauty and prestige of our society. The Ramakrishna mission has nothing substantial to say, but because they have money and have published so many rubbish literatures, they have become very cheaply popular. You can just imagine how powerful our society will become when we have as many substantial literatures published. We should not only publish in English but in other important languages such as French and German.  

Many fanatical spiritual movements have come and gone, but without the flawless philosophy of Kṛṣṇa, they cannot stand. Therefore I want especially that my books should be distributed profusely. This is our substance—real philosophical information, not some weak sentiments. So try for this—to give all men this Kṛṣṇa philosophy—and many real devotees will come with us back to home, back to Godhead.  

I am very much pleased to hear of your increased book distribution, and it gives me great pleasure to hear of your increased eagerness to distribute my literature. Through the distribution of this literature we can completely annihilate all the bogus yogi groups in the world. Of this fact I am sure. Therefore there is no need for us to directly attack these charlatans, but simply by this distribution of books the sunlight of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will prevail.  

(b) *Undefeatable, flawless science*

We can challenge any nonsense philosophy: Socrates, Plato, Kant, Darwin—all of them—so many mental speculators and word jugglers who have misled so many people. Now it is your task to find them out and expose them, so that people may appreciate the real philosophy. We must now become very serious to save the people of the world from this very
dangerous situation. Become very convinced yourself of our philosophy and then your preaching will act. And try to sell as many books as possible at all the schools and colleges. This is scholarly information, flawless science. Kindly assist me in this great work, and know it for certain that by your sincerely working in this way, you shall very soon go back to home, back to Godhead.  

Let our philosophy be challenged by anyone, and we shall defeat them. I want that you distribute our books widely, as many as possible, then people will get the right information. We show people by the results: so many centers, happy devotees, big books, strong conviction—like that. Let people judge who is better by the results. 

I do not know how you are selling so many books. There is no instance in history where religious books were sold with such enthusiasm and success. Is there any such history? The Christians have spread their teachings all over the world, and they have only one book. We have already got forty big books published in English. Therefore if we distribute as you are distributing, we cannot even imagine the result. 

Practically speaking there is no religion in the world. The only true religion is bhagavata-dharma. That is the original religion of the human society. Whatever else there may be passing as religion has come after Vedic literature. The whole world is in darkness, so we are bringing it light in the shape of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Therefore this is the best service one can render to the human society, to give knowledge how to go back to home, back to Godhead. 

We are not afraid to challenge every mundane philosopher and defeat them because they are simply operating on the mental platform, which is constantly changing, so they cannot have any real authority. But because we are hearing from the source of all knowledge, Kṛṣṇa, through His representatives, the saints and ācāryas in disciplic succession, we have got a solid basis for understanding. If we are very much convinced to preach in this way, the intelligent class of men will
respect and join us, and this will be your success in Germany. If a Marx can change so many men’s minds to follow his imperfect philosophy, what can Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Perfect, accomplish! If we remain pure and teach others purely, then we will achieve all success and the whole world will listen to us and be delivered from its very dangerous condition. Thank you very much for assisting me in this great endeavor.  

(c) Books for the benefit of the people in general

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.12.7: The secret of success is unknown to people in general, and therefore Śrīla Vyāsadeva, being compassionate towards the poor souls in this material world, especially in this age of Kali, has given us the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Śrīmad-bhāgavatam purāṇam amalam yad vaiṣṇavānām priyam (SB 12.13.18). For Vaiṣṇavas who are somewhat advanced, or who are fully aware of the glories and potencies of the Lord, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is a beloved Vedic literature. After all, we have to change this body (tathā dehaṁ-prāptih). If we do not care about Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, we do not know what the next body will be. But if one adheres to these two books—Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—one is sure to obtain the association of Kṛṣṇa in the next life (tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so ‘rjuna). Therefore, distribution of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam all over the world is a great welfare activity for theologians, philosophers, transcendentalists and yogīs (yoginām api sarvesām), as well as for people in general.

I’m especially pleased to hear that your distribution of our books and magazines has increased. Go on in this way, increasing more and more. Each time someone reads some solid information about Kṛṣṇa, his life becomes changed in some way. These literatures are the solid ground upon which our preaching stands, so I want that they should be available to everyone, as many as possible. So please try for this.

I am very glad to hear all the good news, especially that you want to sell books more and more. That is the best preaching work. Each book sold means there is some practical effect of preaching. There is some tangible progress. So try to sell books as many as possible in your country. . . . We are the only movement in the world which is preaching the real
fact or secret of success, and outside our movement everything else will fail. So try to convince people to join us and be successful in their lives. That will be to your credit.  

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: Only after many, many lifetimes a rare person comes to the point of surrendering to Kṛṣṇa and serving Him. It’s rare because that’s exactly what the conditioned soul doesn’t want to do. Therefore he comes to the material world. So being a devotee is the culmination of a long transmigration through many species of life—many lifetimes on many planets since time immemorial. If someone surrenders to Kṛṣṇa and then comes up to the point of going out on sankirtana to distribute the mercy, it is guaranteed that he will go back home, back to Godhead. Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed it many times. Book distribution is not an ordinary activity. We should not take it for granted.

As good as Deities

Formerly there was no press. These important śāstras, Vedic literature, were kept in handwriting. I copy from your book. My other friend copies from my book—in this way, those who were interested. The literatures were not so cheap. Only highly qualified brāhmaṇas used to keep handwritten books. . . And it was worshiped in the temple as a Deity, śāstra, not that it is available everywhere. Now the press has made it cheaper. But we should always understand that grantha, or the scripture, should be worshiped as God. It is the sound incarnation of God. It should not be neglected. Don’t neglect Bhagavad-gītā or Bhāgavatam as ordinary books. You must be very careful. As you take care of the Deities, you should take care of the books also.  

Tamāl Krishna Goswami: Kṛṣṇa acts for the benefit of others, and it is stated that human beings are also meant to benefit others. The human body is valuable because it can be used to promote one back to Godhead, and at the same time it can be used to help others also go back to Godhead. And this is also Kṛṣṇa’s mission. What business does Kṛṣṇa have coming within this world? He is self-satisfied and absorbed in His eternal pastimes with His spiritual potencies. Therefore when He comes, He comes only to benefit others. For this reason the Deity form of the Lord appears. Thus it is said that anyone who sees the Deity as stone or wood is possessed of a hellish mentality. Similarly, anyone who sees Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books as or-
ordinary has no understanding of transcendence, because his books are worshipable Deities. Deity worship requires adhering to many rules, but what possibility is there, for those who have no training, to worship Deities in this age? Ordinary materialists have no idea of the Deity’s existence, and they don’t come to the temple to offer obeisances and certainly cannot perform the worship. Therefore Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda made transcendental literature the most accessible worshipable Deity. Books don’t require that people come to them like temple Deities do; the books go to the people. They can go everywhere. They can be passed from person to person. They can enter the hands of scholars who ordinarily may reject Kṛṣṇa consciousness as sentimental. They can enter the hands of materialists absorbed in sense enjoyment. They can enter the hands of someone who has no idea at all of spiritual life—a housewife, a schoolboy, anyone. Practically anyone can get a book. So these books are Deities who can be appreciated by all. And the simple method of worship is that people simply have to pay something in return, just as when someone goes inside a temple and drops a few coins in the Deity’s donation box. By paying something and taking home books and putting them on their bookshelves, people have begun to worship these Deities. If these books are kept respectfully in the home it is considered as good as seeing the transcendental form of the Deity in the temple. (From a class in Zurich on December 4, 1991)

Books sanctify us, our preaching, and human society

Books are the foundation stone of our movement. Whatever we are is resting on these books. Reading them and distributing them—this should be our only motto. 22

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that Kṛṣṇa consciousness will become a predominant influence within the next ten thousand years of Kali-yuga. Then his books will be standard knowledge in the fields of religion, culture, education, justice, and so on. For as long as devotees practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books will establish the spiritual standards, guide the devotees’ lives, and serve as a basis and impetus for scholarship. Above all, his books are the sum and substance of spiritual activity, the source of inspiration and illumination for all sincere souls desiring to hear and chant about the Absolute Truth, Lord Kṛṣṇa, and go back to Godhead.

The three following sections discuss these glories of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in the context of the devotees’ individual lives, their preaching, and the respirtualization of human society.
(a) Books are the basis of the devotees’ spiritual lives

Bhagavad-gītā 4.38p: When we speak of transcendental knowledge, we do so in terms of spiritual understanding. As such, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Ignorance is the cause of our bondage, and knowledge is the cause of our liberation. This knowledge is the mature fruit of devotional service, and when one is situated in transcendental knowledge, he need not search for peace elsewhere, for he enjoys peace within himself. In other words, this knowledge and peace culminate in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is the last word in the Bhagavad-gītā.

The books are being written specifically for my students, and I am so glad to learn that you read them so carefully. The words are ambrosial because they are not my personal words, they are instructions of my predecessors, and I am just trying to administer them to the best of my knowledge. That is the way of the paramparā system. We manufacture nothing but simply carry the message as a faithful peon. That will be effective. One should be very sincere to his spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa simultaneously. Then everything comes out successful. That is the verdict of the Vedas and Lord Caitanya. 23

I am very much stressing at this point that all of my students shall be very much conversant with the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and that they should read our books very diligently at least one or two hours daily and try to understand the subject matter from varieties of angles. 24

Our advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is made possible in two ways, by knowledge and renunciation, jñāna and tyāga, or tapasya. The more we become renounced from this material world, the more we advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But we are able to make such sacrifices and perform tapasya only if we have got knowledge. So the first thing is to become knowledgeable in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then the tapasya, or voluntary life of austerity, will result automatically. So I am requesting all of my students to read my books very seriously every day without fail. In this way, if your mind becomes absorbed at least one or two hours daily in the transcendental subject matter of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhagavad-
gītā, and other books, then very easily you will make your advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is not a matter of changing our engagement or adjusting this or that material condition in order to find our real happiness. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not like that. It can be performed under any variety of material conditions or with any type of engagement. . . . When you are working and you cannot read, then listen to the tapes of my lectures and hear in that way. And never neglect to chant your sixteen rounds of beads daily, rise early without fail, attend mangala ērāti, take bath, and follow the other regulative principles, and everything will come out very successfully, you can rest assured of that.  

(b) Books are the basis of ISKCON’s preaching

The spiritual lives of many devotees began by hearing the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa or tasting prasādam or reading a book or BTG. Those same devotees progressed further by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and studying Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in the association of other devotees. When they became convinced enough to invite newcomers to chant, read books and do other things, the process had gone full cycle: Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books providing a spiritual education empowering people with transcendental knowledge.

We shall base our preaching work on Lord Caitanya’s formula: sankirtana. After all, He is God, and if He recommends, what is the question of failure? That is not possible. If we simply stick to this program as I have done it since the beginning, namely, kirtana, preaching, kirtana, distribution of prasādam—if you do like this only, that will be sufficient. Of course, you may make the kirtana as nice as possible, with dancing, many drums, karatālas, and conches, and if you preach sincerely, anyone will listen and become convinced. The potency of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement does not come from some outward show. No. It is the transcendental sound vibration of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and the words of Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. So now go on and develop the things in this spirit. That will be nice. We are not interested in attracting millions of men to see some show. Better we attract one sincere soul to join us in ecstatic chant-
ing and hearing. That will be of real value. And distribute books, as many as possible. If anyone hears some philosophy from us that will help him, but if he purchases one book that may turn his life. So selling books is the best preaching activity. Sell books, hold the kirtana in public places like schools and colleges, preach—if you practice these things and try to improve them more and more, simply by your practicing sincerely, that simple program will please Kṛṣṇa the most, and you will see that very soon.  

I especially appreciate your attitude towards increasing more and more the selling of our books. That will sanctify all other activities of preaching, because preaching means selling books. . . . Why not go from town to town throughout your entire area, even they may be small villages only, and hold such programs? This is real sankirtana. Because you are making so many new devotees and distributing so many books and magazines, I can understand that your routine work is being kept to the highest standard and that preaching work is going on well. This I can very much appreciate. Now never let it slacken, and never neglect our regular program, and always you will be successful in spreading this sublime movement of Lord Caitanya’s and very soon you will approach the supreme perfection of life.  

So that is the real preaching, selling books. Who can speak better than the books?  

We cannot be convincing preachers without being fixed-up in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and there’s no question of our being Kṛṣṇa conscious without Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. They contain his complete message, as he said himself:  

Whatever I know, I have explained in my books. Beyond that I have no knowledge.  

So there is nothing new to be said. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books. Now you try to understand it and continue your endeavor. Whether I am present or not present, it doesn’t matter. As Kṛṣṇa is living eternally, similarly, the living being also lives eternally—but kirtir yasya sa jīva-
So Prabhupāda’s books are essential at every stage of the devotees’ lives. A devotee starts spiritual life by receiving a book and reading it. Then he studies the books in the association of other devotees, becomes convinced, and develops the desire to share the knowledge by distributing books. Books are thus the basis of spiritual life and education, empowering devotees with transcendental knowledge, and ultimately all humanity benefits, because without a spiritually educated class of men, there would be no preaching in human society.

You cannot ask everyone to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is not possible. It is not so easy. Manusyāṇāṁ sahasre-su kaścid yatati siddhayate tattvāt. It is very, very difficult. But at least there must be one section of people who understand Kṛṣṇa so that people may take advantage of their position. ³¹

**(c) Books are the basis of the respiritualization of society**

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Vol. 1, Introduction to the First Edition (1962): It is admitted even in the higher circles that, in fact, the whole root and background of Indian culture is wrapped in the Sanskrit language. And we know that the foreign invaders of India could break some of the monumental architectural work in India but they were unable to break up the perfect ideals of human civilization so far kept hidden within the Sanskrit language of Vedic wisdom. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the mature ripened fruit of the tree of Vedic literature. We have just begun to give it rendered into English with broader outlook, and it is the duty of the leading Indians to spread the culture all over the world at this momentous hour of need.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Preface: Human society, at the present moment, is not in the darkness of oblivion. It has made rapid progress in the field of material comforts, education and economic development throughout the entire world. But there is a pinprick somewhere in the social body at large, and therefore there are large-scale quarrels, even over less important issues. There is need of a clue as to how humanity can become one in peace, friendship and prosperity with a common cause. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam will fill this need, for it is a cultural presentation for the respiritualization of the entire human society.
I am so much enthused to understand how nicely you are distributing our books. Actually these two books, *Kṛṣṇa* book and *Nectar of Devotion* are revolutionary to your country—not only your country, but all over the world. Nobody has any clear idea of God. In hopelessness they declare that God is dead. So these books will supply a clear idea of God. . . . Try to push our books, especially *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, TLC, *Kṛṣṇa*, and NOD, backed by a regular supply of our magazines and regular performance of *sāṅkīrtana*. Then I’m sure *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness movement will go forward without any hindrance. 32

These books are the life of human society. . . . We are putting these books for deliberation before the topmost thinkers of human society. Therefore I have to see that in all languages all of our books are published. If we strain, and if someone takes one book home, some day people will come to understand what valuable knowledge they have received. It is transcendental literature. Nobody can challenge it. It is done so nicely, without any spot, the spotless *Purāṇa*. Please continue to print books in all the languages for the benefit of suffering, misdirected humanity. 33

2.3 Prabhupāda’s books are nondifferent from the Lord

Śrīvatāṁ sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇah: Kṛṣṇa’s words are given by Kṛṣṇa—*Bhagavad-gītā*. Sva-kathāḥ means His own words. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is also sva-kathāḥ. The *Purāṇas* also, because all these books are given by Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva is an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. We have to hear about Kṛṣṇa what is given by Kṛṣṇa. And the method is taught by Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Prabhu. So everything is Kṛṣṇa’s: Kṛṣṇa directly, Kṛṣṇa as Vyāsadeva, Kṛṣṇa as Caitanya Mahāprabhu—devotee. 34

The transcendental nature of Prabhupāda’s books

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: We especially realize that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are transcendental when we distribute them to conditioned souls because that’s when Lord Caitanya begins to reveal to us their transcendental na-
ture. They’re conscious, like persons, but not ordinary persons—like the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, because they are nondifferent from Him. We’re carrying Kṛṣṇa, distributing Kṛṣṇa, and serving Kṛṣṇa, which is our constitutional position. It’s a confidential service—giving Kṛṣṇa to others and changing their lives from the worst to the best. We always have to remember that we’re Kṛṣṇa’s servants and therefore the servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books as well. That’s the right attitude to have while distributing. Then book distribution becomes the most blissful activity. Actually, I become more absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness while distributing books than I do while I’m chanting. In the conditioned state, one sees a difference between distributing the holy name in the form of books and chanting the holy name. But the more absorbed we are in Kṛṣṇa through book distribution, the better our chanting becomes.

\[ \text{Nāma-cintāmani-krṣṇā caitanya-rasa-vigraha\ḥ pūrṇah śuddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoh:} \]

the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa Himself—it isn’t material—it’s complete, pure, and eternally liberated. And the same applies to the books.

It’s evident when we distribute the books— whoever gets them also becomes spiritually enlivened. And we affect others by our enthusiasm. People take books without any material cause. It’s causeless mercy. People take books because the books are spiritual and directly reach the soul. The soul is hankering for this nectar, but māyā has made him forget. Seeing our books, the soul has a natural reflex to take them, and the book distributor encourages him. Afterward, when the people are alone again, the covering of the mind returns, and their immediate interest may become covered again. They may wonder why they bought the books. But now they will have the association of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, and they’ll become purified rather quickly. We simply have to be thankful to be the servants of the book distribution mission.

Rohinīsuta Dāsa: In 1981, while we produced the Tenth Canto in German, one man employed by the printer, who visited us to pick up and deliver packages, had to come several times to show us the samples of the picture section because there was always something wrong with it. When he came for maybe the third time, there was still some mistake, and our production manager demanded that he take the whole thing back again. This man became so frustrated that he angrily threw the pictures on the floor and stepped on them—the pictures of the Tenth Canto! Nevertheless, the man had to go back and inform his company. While driving back he had an accident and smashed the company’s car. His boss became furious, especially after hearing about the man’s bad behavior, and he was fired immediately.
The moral is obvious: Don’t commit offenses against the books. They are Kṛṣṇa and as powerful as Kṛṣṇa.

The Lord’s sound incarnation

\[ \text{kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra} \\
\text{nāma haite haya sarva jagat-nistāra} \]

“In this age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, is the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Simply by chanting the holy name, one associates with the Lord directly. Anyone who does this is certainly delivered.” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-lilā 17.22)

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-lilā 25.266–267: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has personally preached the transcendental truths and mellow of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the Supreme Personality of Godhead are identical, for Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the sound incarnation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu broadcast the purpose of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He sometimes spoke for the benefit of His devotees and sometimes empowered one of His devotees to speak while He listened.

“Spoken kīrtans”

Regarding sankīrtana and book distribution, book distribution is also chanting. Anyone who reads the books is also chanting and hearing. Why distinguish between chanting and book distribution? These books I have recorded and chanted, and they are transcribed. It is spoken kīrtans. So book distribution is also chanting. These are not ordinary books. It is recorded chanting. Anyone who reads, he is hearing. Book distribution must not be neglected. 35

In Harināma-cintāmani (Ch. 2), Haridāsa Thākura says, “Lord Kṛṣṇa and His holy name are identical; They are one and the same Absolute Truth, the all-inclusive yet supremely independent form of dynamic spirituality, full of emotion, without beginning or end. Always situated in pure goodness, the holy name in the shape of letters descends to this world as the complete incarnation and embodiment of the highest sweetness, rasa.”

Letters of the alphabet that explain the holy name are as spiritual as the holy name Himself. And regarding increasing the number of people who chant the holy name, book distribution is more important than sankīrtana.
(“Regarding *sankirtana* and book distribution, both should go on, but book distribution is more important. It is *bhag-kirtana*. For wider *kirtana*, book distribution is better.”) Spoken *kirtans*—the books—preach and explain the holy name. And they can be heard anytime and anywhere.

**Hariñāmānanda Dāsa:** We have to understand that we have the greatest gift for humanity and the highest knowledge to offer. And we have the holy name to offer. Each book of Śrīla Prabhupāda is simply a purport to the holy name, an explanation why we have to chant. We have the teaching that can give people the highest benefit of life, so I try to give to people as many books as possible. I try to develop this technique. I pray that I can give more and more books to people who are a little intelligent, interested, and still sane in this Kali-yuga.

### 2.4 Book distribution is a transcendental activity

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.2.37p: The word *kriyāsu*, meaning “by manual labor” or “by work,” is important in this verse. One should engage in practical service to the Lord. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, all our activities are concentrated upon distributing Kṛṣṇa literature. This is very important. One may approach any person and induce him to read Kṛṣṇa literature so that in the future he may also become a devotee. Such activities are recommended in this verse. Such activities will always remind the devotees of the Lord’s lotus feet. By fully concentrating on distributing books for Kṛṣṇa, one is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa. This is *samādhi*.

**Are reading and distributing books activities for neophytes?**

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 19.132p: In Vṛndāvana there are *prākṛta-sahajiyās* who say that writing books or even touching books is taboo. For them, devotional service means being relieved from these activities. Whenever they are asked to hear a recitation of Vedic literature, they refuse, saying, “What business do we have reading or hearing transcendental literatures? They are meant for neophytes.” They pose themselves to be too elevated to exert energy for reading, writing and hearing. However, pure devotees under the guidance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī reject this *sahajiyā* philosophy. It is certainly not good to write literature for money or reputation, but to write books and publish them for the enlightenment of the general populace is real service to the Lord. That was Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvati’s opinion, and he specifically told his disciples to write books. He actually preferred to publish books rather than establish temples. Temple con-
struction is meant for the general populace and neophyte devotees, but the business of advanced and empowered devotees is to write books, publish them and distribute them widely. According to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, distributing literature is like playing on a great mrdanga. Consequently we always request members of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness to publish as many books as possible and distribute them widely throughout the world. By thus following in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmi, one can become a rūpānuga devotee.

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-lilā_ 12.8p: One must judge every action by its result. The members of the self-appointed ācārya's party who occupied the property of the Gauḍīya Maṭha are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching. Therefore by the result of their actions one should know that they are asāra, or useless, whereas the success of the ISKCON party, the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, which strictly follows guru and Gaurāṅga, is increasing daily all over the world. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura wanted to print as many books as possible and distribute them all over the world. We have tried our best in this connection, and we are getting results beyond our expectations.

_Jayapatāka Swami:_ Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura wrote in _Vaiṣṇava ke_ that pure devotees of Kṛṣṇa compassionately preach to uplift the fallen souls and don’t desire distinction because they are totally sold out to Kṛṣṇa. Ultimately nirjana-bhajana, or internal worship, is achieved by absorbing oneself in a serving mood. The mood of serving Caitanya Mahāprabhu is to preach His sankirtana movement. If one takes up sankirtana in that service attitude, one can realize his internal relationship with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Kṛṣṇa and be accepted as an eternal associate of Rādhārāṇī. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Work now, samādhi later.” Preach now, samādhi later. By preaching, automatically one will be in samādhi. If someone tries to enter into the internal mood of Caitanya Mahāprabhu without serving Him, that is sahajiyā. It is approaching the internal purpose of Caitanya Mahāprabhu with an enjoying spirit (bhogi-bhāva) instead of a serving mood (sevā-bhāva). What qualification do we have to assist Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His internal līlā? That He already did in His gambhirā-lilā in Nīlācala with His most intimate associates. But He gave us the order to perform His external pastime, which means to spread the ecstasy of the sankirtana movement everywhere, and by doing that we can be brought to the internal or confidential platform. _Caitanya-caritāmṛta_ says that devotees preaching on behalf of Caitanya Mahāprabhu are His confidential devotees. You shouldn’t think, “Preaching is the external purpose.
Better I go and imitate the Gosvāmīs.” We can’t do that. We should carry out His order to us to spread the sankīrtana movement, and that will bring us to the platform of samādhi, or internal worship. Then we will understand Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s internal purpose. We will get a taste for it while we are preaching. (From a class in Māyāpura on March 7, 1985)

Maṇīdhāra Dāsa: Some of Prabhupāda’s Godbrothers and even some of his disciples made the criticism that he preached to the mass of people but not to the high class of devotees. Thus he kept his books simple and repeated basic instructions, they say, and higher realizations—mādhurya-rasa, gopī-bhāva—weren’t explained. Such critics don’t even know Prabhupāda’s books, because in Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and The Nectar of Devotion Śrīla Prabhupāda explains these topics, and they don’t know the process of entering into the Lord’s intimate pastimes. It’s not done through esoteric knowledge or imagination. It is only by satisfying the spiritual master in paramparā that one gains perfection. Āṇukūlyena krṣṇānu-śilanām bhaktir uttamā: only by favorable devotional service do we achieve the causeless mercy of the Lord and His devotees. Book distributors therefore can experience ever-increasing realization and enlivenment. We can constantly get a higher taste and develop detachment from gross and subtle sense gratification. Otherwise we will not be able to continue book distribution. It isn’t a matter of argument; it is a matter of tasting. And the proof manifests in two ways: by the development of divine qualities and by contributions to the expansion of Kṛṣṇa consciousness world-wide. Both are proven by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers. Ānan-dāmbudhi-vardhanaṁ—transcendental life is ever-increasing, and that is the best evidence of ISKCON’s purely spiritual nature. In summation, Prabhupāda’s books not only describe the highest stages of bhakti but actually grant access to these stages. And that is the unique quality of his books, even compared to other spiritual literature. For Śrīla Prabhupāda was empowered to condense the sakti of all previous ācāryas in his own writing. So there is no lack of anything in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

Book sankīrtana and the sankīrtana-yajña

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura says in his purport to the first verse of the Śikṣāstaka prayers that the word sankīrtana means “complete kirtana, for it is unnecessary to perform any other devotional activities if one performs sankīrtana.” He explains that “partial or imperfect kirtana of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s holy name is not the same as sankīrtana,” which he defines as “the complete and perfect chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s holy name.”
In that sense, book distribution can also be called *saṅkīrtana*, complete *kīrtaṇa*, because it includes individual perfection, it engages others on the path of perfection, and it enlists as paraphernalia the complete material energy of Kṛṣṇa. Even material objects not designated as traditional *yajña* paraphernalia can be used, purified, and spiritualized in the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. Therefore in a philosophical sense it is proper to call *bṛhat-kīrtaṇa*, or book distribution, *saṅkīrtana*, for it practically embodies the complete and perfect mercy of Lord Caitanya’s *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person, is nondifferent from the process of *yajña* (*ahaṁ kratur ahaṁ yajñaḥ*, Bg. 9.16). The quality of Kṛṣṇa that is most glorified by all devotees is His mercy. That quality becomes manifest through the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, the complete *yajña*, more than through any other Vedic *yajña*: “A person who is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*brahma-karma-samādhinā*) is sure to attain the spiritual kingdom because of his full contribution to spiritual activities, in which the consummation is absolute and that which is offered is of the same spiritual nature” *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.24).

In his purport Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the meaning of “spiritualization.” “The materially absorbed conditioned soul can be cured by Kṛṣṇa consciousness as set forth here in the *Gītā*. This process is generally known as *yajña*, or activities (sacrifices) simply meant for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa. The more activities of the material world are performed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or for Viṣṇu only, the more the atmosphere becomes spiritualized by complete absorption. . . . The Absolute Truth covered by māyā is called matter. Matter dovetailed for the cause of the Absolute Truth regains its spiritual quality. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the process of converting the illusory consciousness into Brahman, or the Supreme. When the mind is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is said to be in *samādhi*, or trance. Anything done in such transcendental consciousness is called *yajña*, or sacrifice for the Absolute. In that condition of spiritual consciousness, the contributor, the contribution, the consumption, the performer or leader of the performance, and the result or ultimate gain—everything—becomes one in the Absolute, the Supreme Brahman. That is the method of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

No Vedic *yajña* compares to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. According to Lord Caitanya, there are no hard and fast rules for *saṅkīrtana* (neither for chanting nor for spreading the chanting). That’s why this *yajña* is all-merciful. The contributors (the ordinary, unqualified people of Kali-yuga), the contributions (the dirty money of a demonic financial system), the consumption (the buying and selling of books), the performers and leaders of the performance (the book distributors—who before
their contact with the *sankirtana-yajña* were also ordinary and unqualified people), the place (the whole planet but especially homes where our books are kept respectfully on a shelf), and the result or gain (not *karma* or *jñāna* but *bhakti*)—all these material factors when “dovetailed for the cause of the Absolute Truth” become “one in the Absolute.”

**Sankirtana: both the means and the end**

In *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* (Ch. 11), Haridāsa Ṭhākura explains why chanting the holy name is the religion of this age: “In Kali-yuga all other processes except the holy name are incapable of redeeming the fallen souls. Therefore the chanting of the holy name of the Lord is the most efficient religious practice in all the ages. In Kali-yuga, unlike other ages, there is no other religion available; thus the holy name appears as the only religion that can redeem the fallen souls. . . . The holy name is the repository of perfect bliss; He has descended to the material world to become the means by which the summum bonum of *bhakti* is attained. The scriptures praise His divine glories, for Kṛṣṇa’s name is both the means and the end. According to the individual jīva’s degree of spiritual perfection, he considers the Lord’s name to be either the means or the end. As long as he has not attained self-realization, the holy name is the means to reach this goal.”

*Sankirtana*, as already mentioned, engages others in *kirtana*. But obviously not everybody buying a book starts to chant immediately—it’s only the beginning of his path in that direction. Thus for persons buying a book, book distribution is a means to chanting. But for devotees absorbed in chanting and book distribution (the two main, mutually nourishing activities of *sankirtana*), the means and the end become identical. Both are transcendental, as Haridāsa Ṭhākura says: “The path that directs one to the goal is the actual means, and what is gained by the execution of the means or process is the final destination. Receiving the Lord’s mercy is the goal of human life. But *karma* and *jñāna* are not the preeminent means to achieve that highest goal, because although they bring one close to the destination, in the end they suddenly reach a dead end and disappear. However, the process of chanting the holy name is not like that. The Lord’s holy name is always present; therefore it is the most efficient process. When the means become the end, the process becomes identical to the objective, and thus it is easy for the jīvas to attain liberation by Your mercy.”

**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa (Sweden):** The chanting of the holy name is the *yuga-dharma*. It is called the *sankirtana-yajña*. The *yajña* includes reading and distributing Prabhupāda’s books. Kṛṣṇa says in *Bhagavad-gītā* that men and
demigods should be happy by yajña, or sacrifice for Viṣṇu, because it bestows everything desirable for living happily and achieving liberation. Everything we need to know about Kṛṣṇa consciousness is in Prabhupāda’s books, and everything will come from reading and distributing his books. We will become Kṛṣṇa conscious. The world will become Kṛṣṇa conscious. People will start chanting the holy name, and everything will change. Unless we have this understanding, we may become discouraged sometimes. We are small, small people in a huge ocean of ignorance. What can we do against the superior power of māyā and Kali-yuga? But we have the yuga-dharma. As we go out day after day, as more and more books go out, gradually the atmosphere becomes purified. With this understanding, we will not become discouraged.

**Imported from Goloka: books for all seasons**

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 8.60: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu belonged to the spiritual world, and His methods for propagating the *saṅkīrtana* movement were also imported from the spiritual world. Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has sung: *golokera prema-dhana, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana, rati nā janmila kene tāya.* This states that the *saṅkīrtana* movement has nothing to do with this material world. It is imported from the spiritual world, Goloka Vṛndāvana. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura laments that mundane people do not take this *saṅkīrtana* movement seriously.

As Kṛṣṇa is eternal, His name is also eternal: *pūrṇaḥ suddho nitya-mukto 'bhinnatvān nāma-nāmināḥ* — because They are not different. As Kṛṣṇa is everywhere, similarly, *Bhagavad-gītā* can be appreciated in every country, every season, every circumstance. . . . Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, *golokera prema-dhana, hari-nāma saṅkīrtana, rati nā janmila kena tāya.* The medicine is Hari, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa’s teachings, Kṛṣṇa’s names, Kṛṣṇa’s glorification — but we have no attraction for these things. We try simply to counteract the suffering, and we accept this counteraction as enjoying. If we actually want to enjoy life, then we should take Kṛṣṇa’s instruction, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. That will give us relief. ³⁷

**The saṅkīrtana movement: Kṛṣṇa’s present incarnation**

*Srimad-Bhāgavatam* 10.2.21p: Kṛṣṇa has taken birth or taken shelter within the womb of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Men of Kaṁsa’s class,
therefore, are very much afraid and are busy trying to stop this movement, especially in the Western countries. One politician has remarked that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading like an epidemic and that if not checked immediately, within ten years it may capture governmental power. There is, of course, such potency in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As stated by authorities (Cc. Ṛt 17.22), \textit{kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra}: in this age, Kṛṣṇa has appeared in the Hare Kṛṣṇa \textit{mahā-mantra}. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading like wildfire all over the world, and it will go on doing so. Men who are like Kaṁsa are very much afraid of the movement’s progress and acceptance by the younger generation, but as Kṛṣṇa could not be killed by Kaṁsa, this movement cannot be checked by men of Kaṁsa’s class. The movement will go on increasing more and more, provided the leaders of the movement remain firmly Kṛṣṇa conscious by following the regulative principles and the primary activities of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa \textit{mantra} regularly.

\textit{Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam} 10.3.22: Kṛṣṇa appears in this world for two purposes, \textit{paritrāṇāya sādhūnām vināśāya ca duskrām}—to protect the innocent, religious devotees of the Lord and to annihilate all the uneducated, uncultured asuras, who unnecessarily bark like dogs and fight among themselves for political power. It is said, \textit{kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa avatāra}. The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is also an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in the form of the holy name (\textit{nāma-rūpe}). Every one of us who is actually afraid of the asuric rulers and politicians must welcome this incarnation of Kṛṣṇa: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

This is a very important verse. \textit{Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata, abhyuthānam adharmasya tadātmānam srjāmy aham}. When God or His representative comes, or His servant comes, or His son comes, there is some necessity. Because it is God’s kingdom, as soon as there is too much violation of the laws of God, there will be an appearance of God. So in the present age, Kṛṣṇa has descended at the present moment in the incarnation of His holy name. In other ages God comes to kill the demons. . . Of course, at last, Kalki will come, long, long after. But at the present moment, God is compassionate. Taking consideration of the people’s most fallen condition, there is no process of killing, but a process of reclaiming them simply by chanting. We should take it seriously that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is also an in-
carnation of God in the simple form of the holy name, and people may take advantage of it simply by chanting. 38

By book distribution Kṛṣṇa appears in human society

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.43: The Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared before us just a little prior to the beginning of Kali-yuga, and He returned to His eternal home practically at the commencement of Kali-yuga. While He was present, He exhibited everything by His different activities. He spoke the Bhagavad-gitā specifically and eradicated all pretentious principles of religiosity. And prior to His departure from this material world, He empowered Śrī Vyāsadeva through Nārada to compile the messages of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and thus both the Bhagavad-gitā and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are like torch bearers for the blind people of this age. In other words, if men in this age of Kali want to see the real light of life, they must take to these two books only, and their aim of life will be fulfilled. The Bhagavad-gitā is the preliminary study of the Bhāgavatam. And Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the summum bonum of life, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa personified. We must therefore accept Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam as the direct representation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. One who can see Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam can see also Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in person. They are identical.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Kṛṣṇa manifests through these books. He wants to manifest through them because that’s how He is going to appear in the present society. Yādā yadā hi dharmasya glānir bhavati bhārata. Obviously this verse also refers to the present day. Sometimes people ask why Kṛṣṇa doesn’t appear in this time of war, cruelty and injustice. But Kṛṣṇa is appearing—in front of our eyes—in the form of these books. There is no doubt about it: book distribution is Kṛṣṇa’s appearance in these days, no less powerful than the appearance of Lord Nṛśimhadeva, or Lord Kṛṣṇa, or Lord Caitanya. The same effect is there: paritrāṇāya sādhūnāṁ vināśāya ca duskr̥tām dharma-saṁsthāpanārthāya. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are establishing the true dharma. The sādhus are pleased and relieved and gladly engaged in distributing books under Kṛṣṇa’s personal protection, but the demons, the miscreants, flip out because they are becoming exposed and their plans are baffled more and more. Therefore all these sham religions, theologians, scientists, atheists, and mūḍhas are attacking us. But that’s nothing new. Whenever Kṛṣṇa appears the demons are opposing. This is simply natural, and it is the proof that book distribution is Kṛṣṇa’s manifest appearance. It is pushing. It is provocative, like Nārada Muni’s going to Kaṁsa, pushing him, saying, “You know that the child who will kill you
is going to take birth soon.” Kaṁsa tried to defend himself by making demonic arrangements, but that only accelerated Kṛṣṇa’s appearance.

**Prabhupāda’s books purify the atmosphere**

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.5: The sound incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Soul [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam], enters into the heart of a self-realized devotee, sits on the lotus flower of his loving relationship, and thus cleanses the dust of material association, such as lust, anger and hankering. Thus it acts like autumnal rains upon pools of muddy water.

Book distributors responded in many ways to our question, What is the spiritual influence of book distribution? The following is a summary of their answers. (This topic is dealt with extensively in Ch. 12.)

Book distribution, preaching, and harināma purify the atmosphere. Sound is manifested in the ether pervading the universe. Spiritual sound vibration transcends material limits. It rises through the universe directly to the spiritual world. The demigods on the higher planets are well aware of spiritual developments on earth, and they appreciate the saṅkīrtana movement so much that they want to take part in it. The millions of demigods in charge of the universe are all devotees—viṣṇu-bhakta smṛto daivaḥ (Padma Purāṇa). They definitely support the devotees, as they supported the Pāṇḍavas.

The saṅkīrtana-yajña bestows auspiciousness upon everyone in the universe. The more people know about Kṛṣṇa, the more they will speak about Kṛṣṇa, and the more the ether will become pervaded and purified by spiritual sound vibrations. By our preaching and chanting, spiritual vibrations are going into the ether, and there they combat the material sound vibrations. Chanting never goes in vain, especially when the devotees assemble in the holy dhāmas, Vraja or Navadvīpa: the sound vibrations of chanting in the dhāmas are pervading the entire universe. From this point of view, also, books are most powerful because they are permanent sound vibrations, “recorded kīrtana.” They stay in people’s homes and radiate spiritual energy. In this way the saṅkīrtana movement is purifying the planet and the universe.

**The confidential understanding of saṅkīrtana**

The explanation given by Rāmeśvara that saṅkīrtana is Lord Caitanya’s līlā, which he compares to the gopīs trying to engage others in Kṛṣṇa’s service, is the correct understanding. 39
Tamāl Krishna Goswami: The Lord enjoys the bliss of His spiritual energy, so what can He gain by our performance of offerings to Him? People ask, “If God is self-sufficient, why is He anxious for us to serve Him?” The answer is that we benefit by serving Him, and it is due to His love for us that He encourages us to serve Him. The supreme father loves everyone. Just as a father becomes especially pleased when his children’s happiness increases, so the Lord becomes pleased when He sees His loved ones pleased. The Lord’s pleasure is increased when He sees the pleasure of His devotees increase. This is the most wonderful feature of God—bhaktavatsala—He is very kind to His devotees. Actually, the Lord’s experience of happiness is made possible by the love of His devotees. In fact, He says He cannot live without the association of His devotees. He says that He most likes to hear the sweet words or even the chastising words of His associates in Vṛndāvana.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu came especially to relish those loving mellows and to offer them to others: moods of natural, spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa, free of awe and reverence. So although Kṛṣṇa does without the karma-kāṇḍa offerings of priests, Caitanya Mahāprabhu cannot do without the sankirtana-yajña. When the yajña brāhmanas were asked by Kṛṣṇa’s friends for some food, they turned their backs on Kṛṣṇa, and He didn’t care for them either. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu came to taste the sankirtana yajña and cannot stop Himself from taking part in it. Caitanya-caritamṛta says He came to break open the storehouse of love of Godhead. The more He sang and danced, the more He wanted to sing and dance. That singing and dancing and beating on the mrdanga has been explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda: When the glories of the Lord are vibrated, the whole world becomes submerged in a great flood that sweeps away all material desires. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in one letter that for expanding the kirtana, book distribution is required. Book distribution is therefore called byhad-mrdanga. When kirtana expands, the great devotees of the Lord—Nārada Muni, Lord Brahmā, and Lord Śiva—lose themselves in ecstatic devotion. All the members of the disciplic succession fall into trance when the big mrdanga is beating loudly. Prabhupāda wrote to Harikeśa Mahārāja in 1977, when The Nectar of Devotion came out in German, “I think that you are the most important grandson of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura.” Why? Because the heart and soul of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura was book distribution. Prabhupāda, as a sincere disciple of his Guru Mahārāja, took this order as his life’s mission. And therefore when his disciple understood this order completely and dedicated his life to fulfilling it, Prabhupāda said that surely Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura
was seeing him as the most important grandson. So following in the foot-
steps of such great personalities, if we embrace this order we can also taste
the benediction coming through the disciplic succession. Kṛṣṇa is not diffe-
rent from devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, and the saṅkīrtana-yajña is unlimi-
ted, blissful existence.

Rohiniṣuta Prabhu gave me some indication of the blissfulness that
comes from saṅkīrtana. He described a mātājī in the Ural Mountains who
had set up her book table in a market selling foodstuffs. She had sets of all
of Prabhupāda’s books in Russian on display. She told everyone, “Now line
up and have your money ready. Unless you have your money ready, I will
not sell any books to you. And no one will be able to take more than one set
of books because too many people want these books.” So the people eager-
ly took out their money and got in a long line and began to buy one set of
books at a time. She sold more than two hundred books in one hour. Then
he described another devotee at a big fair, but at that fair nothing was for
sale. Everything was exhibited, but nobody could buy anything. The devo-
tee had his books on a big table, and he was the only person selling. Every-
body had come with money, but there was nothing they could buy except
our books. So in two hours he sold five hundred books. Then he described
another devotee who approached a man in Moscow that had just bought a
big sausage. The devotee said to him, “You must not have read our books.
Don’t you know what happens when you buy a sausage?” Then the devo-
tee opened a book and showed him that you will go to hell for eating meat
and suffer in many ways. So the man walked away very depre-
essed because he had spent his last money for the sausage. But about thirty minutes later,
he came back and said, “I’ve sold the sausage, and here is the money,” and
he took the book.

These activities in which saṅkīrtana devotees are becoming empowered
to transform people’s lives are an indication of the unlimited mercy of Śrī-
mati Rādhārāni in the form of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Kṛṣṇa has come
in the mood of Rādhārāṇī to distribute love of God to everyone. This is
Rādhārāṇī’s right alone, because it is She who has the greatest love for
Kṛṣṇa. In Vṛndāvana everyone is Her follower. All the pastimes there are
meant to bring Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa unlimited pleasure. She is the personified
pleasure potency of Kṛṣṇa. Without Rādhārāṇī, Kṛṣṇa cannot be happy. So
it is She who gives the greatest pleasure to Kṛṣṇa.

In order to distribute the ability to give pleasure to Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī
has come as Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Kṛṣṇa wants to know the mood of
Rādhārāṇī. Indirectly, it is Rādhārāṇī’s desire to see Kṛṣṇa more satisfied.
The more pure devotees there are, the more pleasure will come to Kṛṣṇa,
and Rādhārāṇī wants to please Kṛṣṇa. Therefore Kṛṣṇa comes in the mood of Rādhārāṇī to bestow love of Godhead upon the conditioned souls. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s sankitana movement is meant for fulfilling that desire of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. So the sankitana devotees are performing the most confidential service to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. They are actually giving pleasure to all of the members of the disciplic succession and to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Lord Kṛṣṇa. The result will be that the pleasure potency of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī will expand more and more. The opulences of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhārāṇī and Her associates are expanding unlimitedly. Therefore the expansion of book distribution is a direct manifestation of the increase of the unlimited opulences of Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī. These books are Her potencies, because they are bhakti-sāstras. She is Bhakti-devī, so Her potency is in these books. When the books are increasingly distributed, Her potency is increasingly going out.

And what will be the result? Anyone who touches these books, anyone who sees these books, comes in contact with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. And what does that mean? They begin to desire to serve Kṛṣṇa. Unless one is blessed by Rādhārāṇī he cannot get the idea of how to serve Kṛṣṇa. The books fulfill this purpose in a way that nothing else can do.

When you distribute books, you should be meditating on doing the bidding of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. This is the purpose of the disciplic succession. These mahā-bhāgavatas all come with the idea of being maidservants of Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī. We are praying to Vṛndā-devī only for that purpose. We are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa with that attitude. And the sankitana mood is not different. It is coming through Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is directly the way to enter into the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It is nothing else but that.

So karma-kāṇḍa persons have no idea of all these things. They are simply praying for material results, and this is the same business going on in all the religions of the world today. But our ācāryas are praying to remain in a very humble, meager position. Let us pray only that we become the followers in disciplic succession of Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī. And let us understand that going out on sankitana is the best way to show Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī and all the members of the disciplic succession the sincerity of our desire. We go out and work hard to make sure that our words are genuine and real. Prabhupāda said that he didn’t like it if someone simply says something but does nothing. Prabhupāda did not sit in India and simply think, “Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that this message will spread to every town and village.” He went out, and he carried the message to every town and village. The proof of our love will be shown by how selflessly we go out and spread this sankitana movement. That will be the proof to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and to our spiritual master that we are trying sin-
cerely to get some drop of mercy from all of them. The marathon is a wonderful opportunity to pull out all the stops. If sometimes we are a little careful—‘Well, I better get a little extra sleep or eat a little more or take a day off’—now is the time we don’t watch any of these things. And as the marathon progresses, we take a little more risk and a little more risk until we are practically risking our lives for Kṛṣṇa. And when that happens, Caitanya Mahāprabhu takes you and He embraces you in His arms, and you will not be the same anymore. (From a class in Zurich on December 3, 1991)

2.5 Selling books: the work of vaiṣyas or brāhmaṇas?

Devotee: When we are distributing books, Śrīla Prabhupāda, and we are not doing so well, and we are in anxiety, is that also spiritual?

Prabhupāda: For selling books, anxiety is Kṛṣṇa anxiety. If you become very anxious how to sell more books, that is Kṛṣṇa anxiety. That is not trade anxiety; that is Kṛṣṇa anxiety. 40

Your school programs and other programs are very good. As long as preaching work is going on, somehow or other, that is a first-class program. One thing, you say that literature distribution is low; actually, the test of the strength of our preaching work is that we sell many books and magazines. So what is the difficulty? Simply preach very sincerely to anyone and everyone, and go on in this way preaching more and more, and the demand for our books will increase. 41

Hari-śauri: He’s asking how our saṅkīrtana activities relate to God consciousness—selling books and collecting donations.

Prabhupāda: So if I sell a book to you, you read it because you have paid for it. Then you’ll get the benefit.

Interviewer: How does it benefit the person who does the selling?

Prabhupāda: He is giving service to Kṛṣṇa. He’s not charging anything. If we appoint some bookseller, we have to pay him. But we haven’t got to pay. Out of his love for Kṛṣṇa he’s doing that. Spiritual realization means the more you give service to God, the more you become spiritually profited. 42

Book distribution and varṇāśrama

Harikeśa Swami: Is book distribution a vaiśya activity? That is nonsense. It may be, if somebody goes out and says, “I collect for the little ants in Mesopotamia.” Then it turns into a vaiśya activity, because you cheat somebody to get some money and then throw a book at him. But when you distribute
books the way you are supposed to—you hold the book in your hand, you present the book: “My dear sir, this book says this and that. And it is good for you because of this and that. Please take one and give a donation”—that is brahminical activity; straight preaching and giving people the book. That’s the way it should be done. Of course, Prabhupāda said by hook or by crook. That implies you can also do it in a vaiśya mentality. If you are strong enough, you can sell the book on its merits by speaking philosophically. That’s very good. But if you can’t do that, and you start some hooking or crooking, then a vaiśya mentality may enter into it. If you are actually selling books on the basis of the books, it is a brahminical activity, and if you are doing it to make money, it may be a vaiśya activity. But book distribution itself is a purely Vaiṣṇava activity.

Nirguṇa Dāsa: Book distribution is beyond varṇāśrama, and simultaneously it produces varṇāśrama. Kṛṣṇa says, “I am the source of all the modes of material nature, yet I am beyond the modes.” This is also the transcendental position of book distribution, which is Kṛṣṇa. It is Lord Caitanya and His sankīrtana movement, so it is beyond varṇāśrama. It isn’t only for vaiśyas, certainly not. Book distribution is a brahminical activity. At the same time it can be done by devotees with the nature of vaiśyas. A devotee is transcendental, but he acts in one of the four varnas and āśramas. Book distribution can also be a kṣatriya activity because you fight the māyā covering people in this wacky society. Ultimately it is beyond varṇāśrama, but the varṇāśrama system will be brought about by book distribution. As for who can distribute books—anyone sincere and surrendered enough to please Śrīla Prabhupāda.

“No business begging”

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-lilā_ 8.39: It is the general practice of all saintly people to deliver the fallen. Therefore they go to people’s houses, although they have no personal business there.

Purport: A sannyāsī is supposed to beg from door to door. He does not beg simply because he is hungry. His real purpose is to enlighten the occupant of every house by preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A sannyāsī does not abandon his superior position and become a beggar just for the sake of begging. Similarly, a person in householder life may be very important, but he may also voluntarily take to the mendicant way of life. Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī were ministers, but they voluntarily accepted the mendicant’s life in order to humbly preach Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s message. It is said about them: _tyaktvā tūrṇam aśeṣa-maṇḍala-pati-śrenīm_
sadā tucchavat bhūtvā dīna-gaṇešakau karuṇayā kaupīṇa-kanthāsritau. Although the Gosvāmīs were very aristocratic, they became mendicants just to deliver the fallen souls according to the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahā-prabhu. One should also consider that those who engage in the missionary activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness are under the guidance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They are not actually beggars; their real business is to deliver fallen souls. Therefore they may go from door to door just to introduce a book about Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that people can become enlightened by reading. Formerly brahmacarīs and sannyāsīs used to beg from door to door. At the present moment, especially in the Western countries, a person may be handed over to the police if he begs from door to door. In Western countries, begging is considered criminal. Members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement have no business begging. Instead, they work very hard to introduce some literatures about Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that people can read them and be benefited. However, if one gives some contribution to a Kṛṣṇa conscious man, he never refuses it.

On making propaganda

Both materialists and māyāvādis tend to criticize the Vaiṣṇavas’ missionary work. Materialists consider it an imposing impertinence, and māyāvādis an act of immature transcendentalists who don’t realize that all paths lead to the same goal. But Vaiṣṇavas understand that such arguments against preaching, which are spread by subtle, atheistic propaganda, urgently necessitate preaching. It is a Vaiṣṇava’s legitimate right to make spiritual propaganda, because that is everyone’s means of spreading his ideas. Devotees should not yield to atheistic or māyāvāda propaganda and think that there is anything materialistic about Saṅkīrtana.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.11p: Systematically there is propaganda by a section of people to stop glorification of the name and fame of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, there is a great need for disseminating the message of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam all over the world. It is the duty of every responsible Indian to broadcast the transcendental message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam throughout the world to do all the supermost good as well as to bring about the desired peace in the world. Because India has failed in her duty by neglecting this responsible work, there is so much quarrel and trouble all over the world. We are confident that if the transcendental message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is received only by the leading men of the world, certainly there will be a change of heart, and naturally the people in general will follow them. The mass of people in general are tools in the hands of
the modern politicians and leaders of the people. If there is a change of heart of the leaders only, certainly there will be a radical change in the atmosphere of the world. . . . The atmosphere is already polluted with corruption of all description, and everyone knows it well. There are so many unwanted literatures full of materialistic ideas of sense gratification. In many countries there are bodies appointed by the state to detect and censor obscene literature. This means that neither the government nor the responsible leaders of the public want such literature, yet it is in the marketplace because the people want it for sense gratification. The people in general want to read (that is a natural instinct), but because their minds are polluted they want such literatures. Under the circumstances, transcendental literature like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam will not only diminish the activities of the corrupt mind of the people in general, but also it will supply food for their hankering after reading some interesting literature. In the beginning they may not like it because one suffering from jaundice is reluctant to take sugar candy, but we should know that sugar candy is the only remedy for jaundice. Similarly, let there be systematic propaganda for popularizing reading of the Bhagavad-gītā and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which will act like sugar candy for the jaundicelike condition of sense gratification. When men have a taste for this literature, the other literatures, which are catering poison to society, will then automatically cease.

These books and magazines are our most important propaganda weapons to defeat the ignorance of māyā’s army, and the more we produce such literature and sell it profusely all over the world, the more we shall deliver the world from its suicide course. So your work is the most important preaching work. May Kṛṣṇa bless you more and more. Thank you for helping me in this way.  

Regarding the book distribution, apart from our books, the Communist Party has become popular simply by distributing their literature. I know in Calcutta the Communist agents were inviting friends and reading Communist literature. The Russians never came to India, but by distributing literature in every language they get a pretty good number of followers. So if it possible for ordinary third-class mundane literature, why should our transcendental literature not create devotees all over the world? I see practically how our books and magazines are becoming popular in your country. So there is good potential for pushing literature very vigorous-
ly. Organize this propaganda work very carefully. Our move-
ment will become very much successful by introducing liter-
ature from village to village. Lord Caitanya wants this, so
carry out His order. 44

We must make a large propaganda program for Kṛṣṇa con-
sciousness by distributing these books everywhere, all over
the world. Just like the communists—they are very expert in
distributing their literature, their propaganda. At the present
moment they are distributing their literature here in India in
nine different languages, and it is quite effective. Therefore
we must print hundreds and thousands of books and distrib-
ute them at the same speed, and thus we will have a great
effect on the mass population of Europe and America. If we
can get the masses in the Western countries like Europe and
America to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, then all the rest of the
world will follow. That is a fact. So please, I beg you, con-
tinue distributing my books in this way, and Kṛṣṇa will pour
His blessings upon you all. 45

Rāmeśvara: They say that if we claim our members are gentlemen, then
why is it they go to the airport and bother so many people?
Prabhupāda: They are not bothering. They are educating. When a thief is
advised, “Kindly do not become a thief,” he takes it as botheration. But it
is good advice.
Rāmeśvara: They say that it is an invasion of privacy. Every man has the
right to think the way he wants.
Prabhupāda: Yes, therefore I have got the right to think like this and sell
books.
Rāmeśvara: But if I do not want to hear your philosophy, then why do you
impose it?
Prabhupāda: It is not imposing. It is good philosophy. We are canvassing:
“Take it. You will be benefited.” And they are being benefited. Those who
are reading, they are being benefited. And why are you advertising—big,
big signboards: “Please come and purchase.” Why you are imposing your
so-called goodness on us? Why are you doing that? 46

2.6 Distribution influenced by the modes of nature

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.29.10p: Pure devotional service as described by Rūpa
Gosvāmī is free from all material desires. Anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam. There can
be no excuse for personal or material interest. Devotional activities should be transcendental to fruitive activities and empiric philosophical speculation. Pure devotional service is transcendental to all material qualities. Devotional service in the modes of ignorance, passion and goodness can be divided into eighty-one categories. There are different devotional activities, such as hearing, chanting, remembering, worshiping, offering prayer, rendering service and surrendering everything, and each of them can be divided into three qualitative categories. There is hearing in the mode of passion, in the mode of ignorance and in the mode of goodness. Similarly, there is chanting in the mode of ignorance, passion and goodness. Three multiplied by nine equals twenty-seven, and when again multiplied by three it becomes eighty-one. One has to transcend all such mixed materialistic devotional service in order to reach the standard of pure devotional service.

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** Śrī Kapiladeva describes how devotional service is performed under the three modes of material nature. This also applies to saṅkīrtana. You can perform saṅkīrtana in ignorance, passion, goodness, or transcendental ecstasy.

The modes are always mixed. The impurities of one mode mix with those of another to form combinations, just as there are mixtures of the three primary colors—red, yellow, and blue. By mixtures we get an unlimited spectrum of colors. According to the variations you can get eighty-one forms of devotional service within the modes of material nature.

Knowledge, duty and activity can be analyzed according to the modes. Knowledge by which one is attached to a certain kind of work as the all-in-all is knowledge in the mode of ignorance. Duty performed in a lazy, stubborn way is duty in the mode of ignorance. Activities performed under illusion, without considering the scriptural injunctions and without caring for the future reactions, is action in the mode of ignorance. We can also identify these qualities in devotional service. Sometimes we don’t act according to the śāstras, and we maintain material desires and habits. We remain attached to sense objects and detached from devotional service. Or we distribute books to fulfill material desires, not to please the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. For example, there is the desire to become unique, distinct, or famous. This is pride, and it leads to envy. These are all symptoms of the mode of ignorance. We try to fulfill our desires by hook or by crook, and we do whatever we want to give people the books. We create our own saṅkīrtana philosophy to justify our way of acting. Sometimes we cheat people. Or we cheat the devotees and say we distributed more than we did just to become famous. While cheating and lying are normal techniques among salesmen, the devotees should not do that. Someone who is in ignorance
or attached to the result will do it. But every week he will have a problem with the police or get into fights with people or have heavy arguments. The books he sells are sent back to the temple with complaints. Those are symptoms that a book distributor is influenced by his false ego and attached to the result.

Under the influence of the mode of ignorance, a devotee offends and insults others: “These karmis are attached and useless.” As soon as he meets somebody he doesn’t like, he offends him, and if the other person is also in tamo-guna, then cursing and countercursing will go on. Devotees should avoid that in all circumstances. Lord Kapila says that a devotee must learn how to see all living entities spiritually. One who doesn’t see spiritually can be lethargic one day and attached to achieving immediate results the next, and then once again lazy—sleeping all day in the van. Such a person becomes morose, whimsical, and hesitant in his activities: “Shall I go out? Shall I not go out?” He can’t get any bliss or satisfaction. Such a devotee is always attached in one way or another. He is not really fixed. On this platform you cannot perform real devotional service. It doesn’t please Kṛṣṇa, the devotees or the other living entities. It is the mode of ignorance.

Someone who thinks his service is the best, because he’s doing it, is also in the mode of ignorance. For example, a devotee who thinks that book distribution is the only service that exists and everything else is māyā is in the mode of ignorance. To arrogantly think that my service is the only one that counts and I can disregard all others is in the mode of ignorance.

Someone who is in the mode of goodness or on the transcendental platform is always humble, and he doesn’t think he is performing the greatest service. He always thinks that it is due only to the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas and the spiritual master that he can perform his service and be a part of this glorious mission. He always thinks that everybody does better service than he does, and he never thinks he is great. And he makes arrangements for others to come to Kṛṣṇa and perform devotional service. He inspires all other devotees in their services. He’s inspiring everybody. This is a real sāṅkīrtana devotee. Once a Christian said to Prabhupāda, “Swamiji, I give you the benediction that you will become a lover of God.” Prabhupāda said, “Thank you very much for this benediction.” One shouldn’t think, “What do you know about God? You cow-eating hypocrite! You don’t know anything.” No, Prabhupāda was genuinely polite and grateful. So a devotee will try to see the good even in persons who lack purity or goodness. And what to speak of his dealings with other devotees engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service!

He finds something good everywhere. One sannyāsī came to the house of a grhamedhī. When the woman saw this mendicant, she became very envious. She went to the fire and picked up some ashes and brought them to
the mendicant. “Here, that’s our donation for persons like you,” she said. The sannyāsi replied, “Thank you very much. I bless you that this shall be the beginning of your devotional service.” That’s the attitude of a non-envious devotee who wants to see the good in everyone. A preacher has to learn to understand the platform of the conditioned souls, and he has to know how to elevate them to a higher platform. First we should try to inspire everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, and all the rules and regulations will come later. We can see this in Prabhupāda’s life. And he served everyone. He didn’t expect service for himself. We can learn from his example how to help the conditioned souls by inspiring them to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Seeing the love and devotion of Prabhupāda, people accepted him. And then they also accepted the rules and regulations, the do’s and don’t’s, which they wouldn’t have accepted in the beginning. So one shouldn’t be proud of his position, even if he has an important position like a sankīrtana leader. One should always try to be a humble servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa’s servant. In this way one can render service to Kṛṣṇa without interruption.

Then there is the mode of passion: The knowledge by which one sees all beings as separate living entities is knowledge in the mode of passion. Activities which are performed with a lot of endeavor, out of false ego, are under the influence of passion. Those persons attached to the fruits of their activities, who are greedy and unclean, are in the mode of passion. A devotee in the mode of passion may be a good sankīrtana devotee for some time. He is attached to achieving a certain position, or he may even be attached to pleasing the spiritual master for the sake of being recognized. But only if he is worshiped by others will he continue to act like that. He may perform a lot of service and get a certain result, but if he doesn’t transcend this platform, he may come down again and do very little because he is attached to the results. Such a devotee is in danger. He may become overwhelmed by attachment, greed, and envy. He begins seeing the books as a means to achieve results, money or worship. One doesn’t see the people as spirit souls. That’s why his results will be unsteady, always up and down.

Then goodness: Activities that are regulated and performed without attachment, without hate or lust, are activities in the mode of goodness. Someone performing his duty without false ego, with great determination and enthusiasm, who is steady in success or failure—he is in the mode of goodness. Someone in the mode of goodness is dutiful and is attached to sādhana. He is not influenced by false ego, and he never gives up his duty. He knows the goal of life, Kṛṣṇa, who is the origin of everything. He knows the scriptures, and although he may not have fully realized the knowledge,
he knows how to act according to the injunctions. He performs his duty as a service to his spiritual master. This is the platform for a successful sankirtana devotee. One has to at least act on the platform of duty without being indifferent, lethargic, proud, unsteady, and influenced by happiness or distress.

One problem with the mode of goodness is that those in goodness can distribute books only in places where they think, “Here are nice people. They can understand the books.” He preaches only to a certain type of people who also tend towards goodness. He is attached to being blissful, to being satisfied in his service. He experiences a certain bliss by going out dutifully, and that is a nice platform. But if some problems arise—he is challenged or it doesn’t go as it should—he will become uncertain whether or not to go somewhere better or stay where he is. He always looks for a nice place. He avoids the difficult places because he prefers the mode of goodness.

Someone in goodness may also become attracted by material welfare work. Thus illusioned, one no longer understands that spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the best and only welfare work that is really helping everyone. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is meant to connect the spirit soul with Kṛṣṇa. Welfare work is inferior to devotional service, or it is a by-product of devotional service. Welfare work is not the main purpose of a devotee. His main goal is to perform his duty based on the instruction of his spiritual master.

If a devotee reaches the transcendental platform, he will act out of spontaneous attraction to Kṛṣṇa, therefore he will no longer be influenced by duality. Free of attachment and lamentation, he is steady in his service, independent of his likes or dislikes. Lord Caitanya prays, “Except Kṛṣṇa, I have no other Lord. He is my Lord forever. He may break my heart or embrace me, He can do whatever He likes, but He will always be my Lord, whatever happens.” That is the transcendental platform. Kṛṣṇa may give me pain or pleasure—it may go well or not—but I will never deviate from His service. There may be so-called hellish places or heavenly places, but we will go anywhere and everywhere and give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to everybody without discriminating. A book distributor is just going to everybody. He sees everybody as spirit soul and tries to give everybody Kṛṣṇa in the form of Prabhupāda’s books. He is very enthusiastic and very determined to reach this goal and flood the world with Prabhupāda’s transcendental books. Even in his dreams, even while standing under the shower, during the program, if he takes prasādam—his thinking, feeling, and willing are always engaged in books, books, books. He never forgets the mission of his spiritual master for a minute. Not that he is remembering one.
minute and forgetting the next. He experiences spontaneous desire to go out and give the people books. Nobody needs to push him. In the beginning the sankirtana leader or temple president will have to push us, and whether we like it or not, we have to go out. Sometimes we like it, sometimes we don’t. Sometimes we just have to surrender. That’s all right, because in the beginning nobody has a taste. But if we surrender to our authorities and develop some faith in them and engage in devotional service and read Prabhupāda’s books and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in the association of advanced devotees who already have a taste for devotional service, then we can also come to a higher platform.

We must have the association of those who are enthusiastic and transcendental and follow them. If you want to come to the transcendental spontaneous platform of sankirtana, just follow in the footsteps of the transcendental sankirtana devotees. Act as they act, hear from them, see their example, meditate on them, pray to them, and you can also become like them. This we should do. One should not think, “I meditate only on Kṛṣṇa and my spiritual master.” We should also meditate on devotees constantly engaged in sankirtana. If it is our service to perform sankirtana, we should meditate on the sankirtana devotees. First we meditate on the spiritual master, because he is the best sankirtana devotee, and everything comes from him. We should always meditate on him, pray to him, and hear about him and the previous spiritual masters, who are all eternal sankirtana devotees—Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śyāmānanda, Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the six Gosvāmīs, Nārada Muni. We should always meditate on all these great liberated souls and pray to them for their mercy. And if we see some living example of an advanced sankirtana devotee, we should not have a grudge against him or envy him, or try to pull him down to our platform. We should try to follow him and serve him and become like him. If you see that somebody is successful in his service to the spiritual master, then you should try to become like him. In this way, you will also become successful and make advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (From a sankirtana class in Zurich on September 28, 1991)

2.7 Conclusion

All these books are the ultimate source of knowledge. If you simply reproduce what I have tried to explain in these books, surely you will come out victorious, even in the midst of so many great mundane scholars. The descriptions given
in these books are not mundane speculations, but they are authorized versions of liberated souls, presented by our humble self. So the strength is not in us, but the strength is in the Supreme Lord. And we simply have to present them without any adulteration, in a humble service spirit. That is the secret of success. 47
3

Qualities of a Book Distributor

“Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared five hundred years ago, but it cannot be said that now the potency of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra is less powerful than it was in His presence. By hearing Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu through the paramparā system, one can be purified. . . . It is not that everyone is able to see Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu physically, but if one hears about Him through books like Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta and through the paramparā system of pure Vaiṣṇavas, there is no difficulty in becoming a pure Vaiṣṇava, free from mundane desires and personal motivations.” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 17.51p)

3.1 What is a book distributor?

There are gosṭyānandī and bhajanānandī. A bhajanānandī is interested in his own welfare, or he thinks that he is not competent enough to preach. Therefore he does not go for preaching work. Sva-vimukti-kāmā: let me look after my own affairs. “Oil your own machine.” The other stage is a devotee taking all risk preaching for the benefit of the whole human society. He is called gosṭyānandī, increasing the number of devotees. That is preferred by Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavad-gitā says, ya idam paramam guhyam mad-bhakteśv abhidhāsyati: “Anyone engaged in preaching this confidential science is most dear to Me.” So if you want recognition by Kṛṣṇa very quickly, go on preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if it’s imperfectly done—because you are sincere, whatever capacity you have got, if you preach, then Kṛṣṇa will be very much pleased. I have seen practically. In my Guru Mahārāja’s day the paper, Dayinika Nadiya Prakash, was pub-
lished daily, just like I was later publishing *Back to Godhead*, and if a small *brahmacārī* would go to Navadvīpa and sell a few copies, one paisa a copy, that would be taken as great preaching by Guru Mahārāja: “Oh, you have sold five copies? Very good.”

Because people are so reluctant—they are not at all interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—therefore we become very much gladdened when we see that some of our books are sold. They will read and be benefited. This is the mission of a high-class Vaiṣṇava—how to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness among the suffering humanity. That is the purport of this verse [SB 7.9.44] spoken by Prahlāda Mahārāja, and we are following in the footprints of Prahlāda Mahārāja. Never mind. Even it is imperfectly done, we must execute the orders of Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa*. I may not be expert in delivering the message of Kṛṣṇa, but my duty is to try my best to distribute this knowledge to humanity.  

**Preachers render the best service**

We have to learn some toleration although there will be some pain. That is called *titikṣa*. At the same time you have to become *kārunikāḥ*, compassionate on the fallen souls. You have to go from country to country, town to town, city to city, village to village, to enlighten them to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is a sādhu’s duty. Those who are preachers are better sādhus than those who have gone to the Himalayas. The sādhu who has gone to the Himalayas for his personal benefit is also good. But sādhus who are preaching and facing many opposing elements are better sādhus. They are fighting for Kṛṣṇa’s sake because they are more compassionate. One sādhu has gone to the Himalayas and sits there in a secluded place not to be bothered by any *asādhus*, or non-devotees. That is also nice, but that is personal interest. But those sādhus who have not gone to the Himalayas, and have left the easy life of Vrindāvana and gone to fight with the world, they are better sādhus. That is the opinion of Kṛṣṇa: *ya idam paramam guhyam mad-bhakteśv abhidhāsyati na ca tasmān manusyeṣu kaścin me priya-krīttamaḥ*. Those who are
preaching the message of Bhagavad-gītā, facing many difficulties—Kṛṣṇa says, “Nobody is dearer to Me than he.” So if you want to become very quickly recognized by Kṛṣṇa, then every one of you become a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is such an important movement. We should take it very seriously and try to spread it all over the world. That will be the best service to human society.²

If your stomach is supplied nutritious food and is clear of all disturbances, then you keep good health. And if you pour water on the root of the tree, then you take care of all the branches, leaves, flowers, and twigs automatically. So if you take care of Kṛṣṇa, then you do the best service to all others automatically. These boys are going on the sankīrtana party because they are Kṛṣṇa conscious. It is not that they are sitting idly in this temple. They are going outside preaching this philosophy so that others may take advantage of it. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person cannot sit idly. He thinks, “Such a nice philosophy of life—why should it not be distributed?” That is his mission. A yogī may be satisfied with his own elevation to transcendental life. That is his personal concern. But a devotee is not satisfied simply elevating himself. We offer our respect to the Vaiṣṇavas: vāṇcha-kalpatarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca patītāṁ pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ. A devotee is very compassionate to the conditioned souls. Kṛpā means “mercy” and sindhu means “ocean.” A devotee is an ocean of mercy. He wants to distribute the mercy. Just like Lord Jesus Christ—he was God conscious, Kṛṣṇa conscious, but he was not satisfied in himself. If he would have continued his God consciousness alone, he would not have met crucifixion. But he wanted to take care of others also and make them God conscious, Kṛṣṇa conscious. He was forbidden by the king to do that, and at the risk of his life he did it. That is the nature of a devotee. Therefore a preacher is the dearmost devotee of the Lord. They go outside, they preach, they meet opposing elements, sometimes they are defeated, sometimes disappointed, sometimes able to convince. Not that every devotee is well-equipped. There are three classes of devotees. But that endeavor to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the best service
to the Lord, because they are trying against opposition to elevate people to the highest standard of self-realization. One who has seen, who is in the trance of self-realization, cannot sit idly. He must come out. ³

You can go to the forest. That is in your interest. But if you try to distribute Kṛṣṇa’s name, that is more valuable work. Kṛṣṇa wants you to take interest in others also. That is greater service. Just like a soldier is a patriot, and another man is a patriot. But the soldier who goes forward to fight for the state—his service is greater because he has to face so many dangers for the country. Therefore during a time of war, the government takes care of the soldiers first, and the civilians’ eating supply is controlled. But a soldier’s supply is never controlled because he gives better service to the state. So you can go to the forest for your own interest. That is also good. But better work is to push forward Kṛṣṇa’s name. That will please Kṛṣṇa. Na ca tasmān manusyeṣu kaścit me priya-krītamaḥ: those who are in the preaching work are very much recognized by Kṛṣṇa. He says, “Nobody is dearer than he who is preaching.” Those who have stopped preaching work—easy-going imitation bhajanānandī—that is not very good. How far has he advanced? He goes to the forest, and he’ll think of women and money. What is the use? By his action it will be proved. The same way, taking rest, sleeping, and doing everything whimsically. So Kṛṣṇa knows everything. How can you cheat Kṛṣṇa by so-called forest-going? Your enemies, your senses, have gone with you. You cannot escape these enemies. They’ll force you again to perform material activities. So what is the use of going to the forest? It is simply a show. It has no value. ⁴

Realizations

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: A book distributor has to be transcendental all around. He has brahminical qualities. He’s learned, religious, clean, regulated—śamo damas tapaḥ śaucam. And a few kṣatriya qualities—determined, sometimes a little aggressive to make the people take the books. And a sāṅkīrtana devotee has to be a little bit of a salesman, and he has to be practical. But that doesn’t mean that he belongs to these categories. He is transcendental. He performs his activities for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction.
**Nirguṇa Dāsa:** Being a book distributor means first of all to understand the mission of book distribution—how important it is—and to give yourself to that mission. It means taking every opportunity to distribute books and endeavoring to perfect your book distribution. It means being attentive to the details of that service by your regulation, resting, rising, śādhanā, chanting, praying, eating, studying—everything that goes on. It means to cultivate the qualities of determination, humility, steadfastness. It means to distribute as many books as possible in the best possible way. It means how to learn how to do it better and to endeavor to do it better.

**Vijaya Dāsa (USA):** A book distributor most importantly has to be tolerant and compassionate. And these qualities gradually become manifest because after many years of going on sanātana, Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased and these qualities eventually develop within the devotee. One way to develop these qualities is by reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, because he possessed all the qualities of a Vaiṣṇava, and he transmitted them through his books. Simply by hearing about Kṛṣṇa every day from Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Caitanya-caritāmṛta—every day—these qualities become manifest.

**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa:** The most important quality of book distributors is that they are linked with their spiritual master. The devotees who continue year after year are those who feel that they are doing the service to please their spiritual master. Therefore when people take books, the devotees become happy. By that desire of pleasing the spiritual master, automatically a devotee manifests all other good qualities—yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ. It’s quite appropriate to apply this verse to sanātana. The desire to please the spiritual master, to center their desires around his, is the active principle of fixed-up book distributors. When it’s not there, the other qualities they have will not make it. But if they are intimately connected with the spiritual master’s desires, they will always be in a dependent position and feel meek and humble and as insignificant as a beggar, a beggar for the spiritual master’s mercy. To achieve that goal, determination is important. To please the spiritual master, book distributors cannot be lazy. He is not pleased if we stop distributing books because of bad weather, difficult circumstances, weakness, or other things. Determination comes naturally if we try to have the attitude, “I want to do this for his pleasure.” This is the most important quality.

**Gīta-govinda Dāsi (Japan):** Śrīla Prabhupāda said: “By serving the servants of the Lord, one gradually gets the quality of such servants, and thus one
becomes qualified to hear the glories of God. The eagerness to hear about God is the first qualification of the devotee eligible for entering the kingdom of God” (SB 1.2.16p). The most important quality is to dedicate our whole life to the mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda with great determination. If we can absorb ourselves in his mission with firm faith in our hearts, making his mission our life and soul, then we can serve as instruments of guru and Kṛṣṇa. But if we are envious and on the mental platform, then we can never become empowered. Kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana: we cannot distribute books without being empowered by guru and Kṛṣṇa. The power comes from following the regulative principles and the guru’s instructions and from reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books regularly. In that situation we can take shelter of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra properly. We have to cry to guru and Kṛṣṇa. There’s no other way. When we take shelter in this way, mercy is always available.

Premārnava Dāsa (Sweden): To become a book distributor you have to become empowered by Kṛṣṇa or get the mercy of Kṛṣṇa by surrendering to a spiritual master. The most important quality is that you fully surrender to your spiritual master. From your spiritual master you will get all the power to continue distributing books. Everyone knows that Prabhupāda’s mission is to produce and distribute as many books as possible. Many other things are related to that mission, but the basis is book distribution. Book distributors have to be fully surrendered to the spiritual master, and by that surrender you will get all the mercy and śakti you need to distribute books. Just by distributing books you gradually purify your consciousness more and more. To go on despite all difficulties you must desire both to please the spiritual master and to try to deliver the conditioned souls from illusion. Material qualities can be used in book distribution, but a person may not be materially qualified. Yet if he is surrendered to his spiritual master, he will definitely be able to distribute books.

Cakṣu Dāsa: Being a book distributor means having a strong desire to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. That doesn’t necessarily mean one goes out himself. If the spiritual master has no time to go on book distribution, it doesn’t mean he’s not a book distributor. Or the BBT devotees, who are busy producing books— they’re book distributors in some sense. They play a vital role in book distribution. Everybody who has the desire to distribute books, even though he may not have the ability, is a book distributor. One can quite easily see and feel whether or not a person is a book distributor. If he’s not able to distribute books, he will assist the saṅkīrtana devotees by asking them for service or by doing whatever is necessary. And just by his
appreciation for their service, he will get the same spiritual results as book distributors.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Is it unfavorable to identify yourself as a *sāṅkīrtana* devotee? I don’t think so. It’s a lot better than identifying yourself as a *brāhmaṇa* or a *grhastha* or a this or a that. We are all *sāṅkīrtana* devotees in Lord Caitanya’s eternal *sāṅkīrtana* party. To identify yourself like that is quite good. But, of course, if you become proud and think other devotees are something else more lowly, then you fall down from the platform of purification and become contaminated. Proud devotees usually fall away from the *sāṅkīrtana* mission and can’t do it for a long time.

But one who knows, “I’m a *sāṅkīrtana* devotee, and I had better stay a *sāṅkīrtana* devotee,” and who therefore prays, “Kṛṣṇa, please give me Your mercy so I can remain a *sāṅkīrtana* devotee, and all you devotees, please bless me so that I can perform this service all my life”—then it is a good identification, because that makes one humble.

Being a *sāṅkīrtana* devotee means being a servant of all people. It doesn’t mean you are something great, glorious, and wonderful. Of course, the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees are glorified on the weekends. Someone will get all the roars and rahhhs from all the devotees. “Rahhh! You’re the greatest! You’re number one! Pound the drums! Pound the floor! This guy’s the greatest!” Of course, five minutes later everyone forgets it. But, at the time, one is thinking himself the greatest. That is an identification which also destroys everything. You’re not the greatest, you’re not the smallest. You are just Kṛṣṇa’s humble servant. You are supposed to go out and distribute the books and not get hung up on all these things. In a humble state of mind one can perform *sāṅkīrtana* continually. But as far as the identification itself, it’s quite good to identify yourself as a *sāṅkīrtana* devotee. It is better than any other identification. But ultimately we know we are just Kṛṣṇa’s servants. We are nothing but the servants of the servants of the servants of the *gopīs*. Lord Caitanya taught us this, and He is the supreme *sāṅkīrtana ācārya*. So we should follow in His footsteps.

### 3.2 Books are distributed by spiritual potency

With great happiness I have read your figures of the amounts of books sold during the three-day period, December 22–24, 1972. It is scarcely believable that more than 17,100 books could have been sold by one temple in three days. That indicates to me that people are at last becoming a little serious about this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in your country.
Otherwise why should they buy our books? But they can see that our boys and girls, devotees, are so much sincere and serious to distribute the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are at once struck by seeing them and therefore they appreciate and purchase. This is unique in the world. Perhaps we are the only sincere persons on this whole planet. At least our books are not to be seen anywhere else.  

The importance of pure consciousness and motivation

If you really have learned the essence of Vedic knowledge, automatically you will be inclined to preach it. Śravaṇam means to receive the knowledge, and kīrtanam means to distribute or describe the knowledge. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is just like the lamp to see Kṛṣṇa in the darkness. And for whom is it meant? Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is not meant for the street boys accustomed to reading so many nonsense books. They want to waste their time. They have no engagement. They purchase some fictitious book and read it—not only them, even elderly men. But this book is different from those books. It is meant for persons desiring to get out of this world of ignorance, those who are actually serious to go from darkness to light—for them this is the lamp. In darkness you are helped with a lamp: “Please come this way. Come this way, so you can come out of the darkness.” Similarly, for those who want to get liberation from this material darkness, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is given by Śukadeva Gosvāmī. This is the business of saintly persons. They are very much compassionate to these materialistic men.

Prahlādānanda Swami: There’s no way to be purely motivated without spiritual knowledge. One has to follow the directions of Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda. But one needs training to evaluate and understand circumstances and constantly check whether one is in Kṛṣṇa consciousness or material consciousness. And one has to be willing to sacrifice material desires for spiritual desires. The results we get aren’t as important as our developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When we realize that Kṛṣṇa is the doer, we can just be His servants. I like doing sankīrtana because there’s so much spiritual realization to be gained. We develop our Kṛṣṇa consciousness by doing sankīrtana. Book distribution has to be seen as a service that helps us go back to the spiritual world. That means it has to be done with ever-increasing spiri-
tual knowledge and constant endeavors to improve the way we’re doing it, so that Kṛṣṇa is more and more pleased. If Kṛṣṇa gives us realization about what we are doing and why we are doing it, then things become much simpler to understand. But then we can’t become complacent and think we know everything. Nor can we just wait until Kṛṣṇa gives us realization. We have to try very hard and try to understand what we are doing — what the mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is, why we are doing it, and how to improve what we’re doing. If we’re serious about our service and our spiritual motivation — simply trying to please guru and Kṛṣṇa — then they will encourage us by giving us realization and bliss. And it is through this advancement that devotees will become more and more apt to continue distributing books.

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** Purity is the force, and purity comes from chanting. We have to be very attentive while chanting our rounds. We should follow the regulative principles, read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books every day, and acquire knowledge in this way. Then we can go out with great conviction. We have to represent Śrīla Prabhupāda and the whole disciplic succession and Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi. We are emissaries of the spiritual world.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** To make book distribution one’s life and soul and to surrender to book distribution as a servant of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam one has to develop the desire to preach continually. To distribute Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam for a long time one has to learn the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and realize it. This works best by understanding that we are coming from the lowest level — we’ve been not only yavanas and mlecchas but also cow-eaters, simply the foulest kind of persons. And we have been taken out of that swamp only by the grace of guru and Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. We should always consider this and compare what we would be if we had not gotten the opportunity to engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. For example, I would have continued working like an ass as a mechanic in a workshop with other śūdras and would have destroyed my body and mind, and in the end I would have died like an animal and at the maximum become an animal. That is the fate of everyone who does not become Kṛṣṇa conscious. One always should keep this in mind. If we were in the material world we would simply work for a materialistic boss, slave like an ass, and just become ruined. Now we can work for the spiritual master and gain the highest benefit. We should always consider how, because of this causeless mercy, we can now become happy and achieve an eternal life of knowledge and bliss by leaving materially conditioned life forever. Therefore I say to myself, “Why shouldn’t I sacrifice my life and my body to book distribution for the pleasure of my spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa?” I understand that at
least in my case, there’s no possibility of being engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness other than by hard physical work. And every day I am inspired by that—to go out for as many hours as possible, to meet as many people as possible, to leave a friendly impression on them whether or not they take the books, to take up the renunciation of tolerating the many difficulties of going out even if I’m not so fired-up mentally or physically. One has to go out as a matter of duty, with the vow, “I will do this forever, for as long as Kṛṣṇa gives me the opportunity to do it and for as long as my spiritual master wants me to do it.” This is the proper motivation—simply meditating on the order of the spiritual master. Then we can continue. Because in the order, the power to execute it is included.

Gītā-govinda Dāsī: When the sunshine is reflected on a clean mirror, the power of the sun is brightly reflected. But if the mirror is covered with dust, the reflection of sunlight is not as effulgent. It’s only weak. Similarly, if our hearts are contaminated, we are weak in power. But if we are pure, then we reflect the power of the pure devotee.

Śaiṛṣi Devī Dāsī: The main factor is that we are Kṛṣṇa conscious and convinced about what we are doing. In the beginning, when you are not strong in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you have faith in the process and see that it works because others are doing it, and you just try it. And the fact that Kṛṣṇa wants it is enough. If we don’t do it, someone else will. It is supposed to happen, because Lord Caitanya said it would happen. We’re just tools.

Spiritual qualities make a devotee attractive

I understand from your letter that people have been well impressed. So this is a good opportunity for advancing our missionary activities. Actually we are creating the most peaceful persons in the world. Kṛṣṇa is so nice that anyone who takes to Him becomes a first-class peaceful man. You can know from the example of Arjuna how much peaceful he was. He did not mind foregoing his claim, and he remained non-violent and peaceful. Personally he was not in favor of fighting, and whatever he did was only to satisfy Kṛṣṇa.  

Prahlādānanda Swami: The more we can teach devotees to distribute books with an intense desire to please Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, the more people will become attracted. Who else works with sincere determination like that in the material world? If there are people who work with that kind of determination, they are generally successful. Similarly, if devotees work with
full determination to distribute Prabhupāda’s books, they will be the most successful.

**Gaurī Devī Dāsī:** Book distribution has nothing to do with material qualities. Over the years I’ve seen many different kinds of persons enter into *sāṅkīrtana* and become expert and deeply committed. I’m convinced that it has absolutely nothing to do with material qualities. I don’t even think in the beginning it has anything to do with that. Kṛṣṇa may give big results in the beginning or tiny results. He’s got His plans. He’s controlling everything. He’s controlling every moment. Who knows what all His reasons are? He has so many reasons for doing everything. And you see it on *sāṅkīrtana* so often that it’s really impossible to understand why one devotee will do huge and another devotee won’t. But that’s really not important. What matters is that the devotees have the confidential desire to have a relationship with Lord Caitanya and the spiritual master.

I’m sure it is hard to believe, because I talk to people a lot now, and I’m outgoing now, but before I never was. I was introverted, and it was horribly difficult for me to approach people. I couldn’t even speak loud enough for them to hear me. When I was a child, no one could ever hear what I said. When I started doing *sāṅkīrtana*, it was a grim duty to approach people because I was in a bodily conception of life. Composing myself to approach somebody was almost like closing my eyes and counting to ten and just doing it out of sheer determination, but I didn’t have the slightest desire or determination or understanding. It was the most painful thing in the world. And I had no ability to smile or be charming or in any way give up my false ego. My false ego made my personality heavy, morose, serious, grave, intellectual, and just about everything that was completely the wrong way to be with people to get them to stop. So what of speak of carrying on a light conversation, which is what you need to do—to talk about nothing for a couple of seconds before shaking their hand. To get somebody to stop you have to be nonthreatening. You really have to be completely light. The presentation cannot threaten them. It’s like a good doctor administering medicine. He knows just how to insert a hypodermic needle in such a way that you feel the slightest amount of pain. In the beginning it was like I was just jabbing the needle in. I didn’t want to do it, and they didn’t want me coming after them, and I knew I was hurting them, and they knew I was hurting them, and the whole thing was horrible. But I kept on doing it, because I saw the other devotees. What kept me going was seeing that some of the other devotees were getting a real taste. And they weren’t having the same problem I was having at all. I never considered that a material thing. I knew it was coming from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was helping them. So I figured if
Krṣṇa will help them, Krṣṇa will help me; somehow or other, I just have to get Krṣṇa’s help.

One particular day was a turning point in my sankirtana career just a few months after I’d started sankirtana. I suddenly found it easy to approach people and smile and be completely free of my heavy, clouded personality. And it’s not that I became free from it entirely. I kept it, and the minute I went back to the temple I was immediately into it again. But when I approached conditioned souls, I was always free of it after that. Krṣṇa gave me that benediction. After that I never had the slightest bit of trouble approaching anybody and talking to anybody. I knew that on that particular day Lord Caitanya had blessed me. For some reason I couldn’t understand, He had given me a benediction to do this. I really knew that. And from that point on I never had the slightest trouble meeting anybody, talking about anything, or being lighthearted and jolly and friendly and actually meaning it.

One thing I learned was that even if you don’t feel like it, if you feel sick and you just want to stay home and sleep—there were many times I felt like that, for many years—I learned quickly that if I just approached people, if I could just bring myself to the point of starting to approach them, after a half hour or so, whatever it was that bothered me, whatever it was that hurt in my body, would be gone. I remember Prabhupāda saying again and again that if you just do sankirtana, it cures everything. I firmly believe that, and I can see how it works. But you have to do sankirtana, and that means you have to give your heart and soul to doing it. You can’t just do it mechanically. That’s why book distribution is wonderful, because it forces you to give everything you can. And the more you do it, the more you can give. You become more and more surrendered, more deeply aware of who you are and where you’re at. Then you can give more and more to the conditioned souls, and then there’s more love coming from you, and Krṣṇa is able to use you and give you more cleverness. You can be much more quick-witted. The dullest stone can become the most brilliant poet and philosopher and joker. You can be a complete comic. Anything can happen on sankirtana. It’s amazing.

Vijaya Dāsa: If a devotee has developed some spiritual qualities, the people he meets will automatically respect and appreciate that and reciprocate with the devotee presenting Krṣṇa consciousness to them. People want to hear from someone who has the qualities of God consciousness. The more we develop our Krṣṇa consciousness, the more people will want to receive books from us. The more intense our desire to spread Krṣṇa consciousness, the more Krṣṇa will send people to receive Krṣṇa consciousness. But if we
have material desires, then He will give us difficulties to purify us. That is also His mercy. We become purified, and we change our desire just to the desire to serve Kṛṣṇa. Then Kṛṣṇa can send us more and more people to receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**Gīta-govinda Dāsī:** We have to preach from the heart. Of course, it is possible simply to be engaged on the bodily level. But then it remains a mechanical service, and we won’t get a taste for book distribution. In that way one can’t go on for long. If we have a fruitive mentality, we will push people around. We will be like mundane salesmen. But if we are enlivened from the heart, people will recognize it. If our heart is enlivened there’s no need for artificial things like psychological techniques. *Guru* and Kṛṣṇa will enliven our hearts naturally. We can affect people by our purity. If we’re pure, we can be empowered by *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, and we will be able to serve them as their instrument. Kṛṣṇa distributes the books through such devotees.

**Sarvātmā Dāsa:** Book distributors should strive to be strong, determined, enthusiastic, and at the same time, patient and gentle—so people can actually trust us. Book distributors are teaching people. Therefore we should impart the feeling to everyone that if they want spiritual advice, then we’re the people they should come to, because we are trustworthy.

Persons with spiritual qualities are rare and uniquely attractive. Out of the many thousands of people a person meets, a devotee is striking, and he may create an unforgettable impression, as the following example illustrates.

**Śacinandana Swami:** People we visit in their homes say they always remember the *sankirtana* devotees. Meeting them was like meeting a shining person from another dimension. I have a strong impression of this from my own experience. When I was thirteen, I saw Tamāl Krishna Goswami chanting on the street in Hamburg. I was in Hamburg with my mother, but then I lost her while shopping in a department store. I went to the store’s entrance, and there I met the devotees who chanted in the street and distributed magazines. I immediately became interested and went closer. Then Tamāl Krishna came toward me. I asked him what they were doing, and he said they were singing the holy names of God. As children we visualize many things before we go to sleep, and for months I would see the shining face of Tamāl Krishna Goswami like a full moon within my dark life. I saw him in my mind when I watched horror films, when I felt perplexed, when I heard doors opening and shutting in my house, and when I was thinking...
of Frankenstein. When I was completely fearful, I simply remembered his
moonlike face and always became pacified. So the sankirtana devotees who
are meeting people for the first time are important. Maybe you underesti-
mate it, but people remember it for a long time. (From a talk in Zurich on
January 1, 1991)

3.3 The qualities of a devotee

Krṣṇa Consciousness—The Topmost Yoga System (Ch. 7): Arjuna surren-
ders: “So far we have been talking as friends, but now I accept You as my
spiritual master.” Anyone following the principle in this line accepts the
guru as Krṣṇa, and the student must represent Arjuna. Krṣṇa is speaking as
the spiritual master of Arjuna, and Arjuna says, “Whatever You are saying
I accept.” Read it like that—not: “I like this, so I accept it; this I don’t like,
and so I reject it.” Such reading is useless nonsense. The teacher must be
a representative of Krṣṇa, a devotee, and the student must be like Arjuna.
. . . In the Upaniṣads it is stated: “To one who has firm faith in God, and
similar faith in God’s representative, all the imports of Vedic language will
be revealed.” We must have the qualification of being a devotee. Become
dear to God. My spiritual master used to say, “Don’t try to see God. Act in
such a way that God will see you.” We have to qualify ourselves. By your
qualification God Himself will come and see you.

Verses describing a devotee’s qualities

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.78–80: Devotees are always merciful,
humble, truthful, equal to all, faultless, magnanimous, mild and clean. They
are without material possessions, and they perform welfare work for every-
one. They are peaceful, surrendered to Krṣṇa and desireless. They are in-
different to material acquisitions and are fixed in devotional service. They
completely control the six bad qualities—lust, anger, greed and so forth.
They eat only as much as required, and they are not inebriated. They are re-
spectful, grave, compassionate and without false prestige. They are friendly,
poetic, expert and silent.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.21: The symptoms of a sādhu are that he is tol-
erant, merciful and friendly to all living entities. He has no enemies, he is
peaceful, he abides by the scriptures, and all his characteristics are sublime.

The Nectar of Instruction 1: A sober person who can tolerate the urge
to speak, the mind’s demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the
tongue, belly and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world.
Bhagavad-gītā 13.8–12: Humility; pridelessness; nonviolence; tolerance; simplicity; approaching a bona fide spiritual master; cleanliness; steadiness; self-control; renunciation of the objects of sense gratification; absence of false ego; the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age and disease; detachment; freedom from entanglement with children, wife, home and the rest; even-mindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events; constant and unalloyed devotion to Me; aspiring to live in a solitary place; detachment from the general mass of people; accepting the importance of self-realization; and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth—all these I declare to be knowledge, and besides this whatever there may be is ignorance.

Bhagavad-gītā 16.1–3: Fearlessness; purification of one’s existence; cultivation of spiritual knowledge; charity; self-control; performance of sacrifice; study of the Vedas; austerity; simplicity; nonviolence; truthfulness; freedom from anger; renunciation; tranquillity; aversion to faultfinding; compassion for all living entities; freedom from covetousness; gentleness; modesty; steady determination; vigor; forgiveness; fortitude; cleanliness; and freedom from envy and from the passion for honor—these transcendental qualities, O son of Bharata, belong to godly men endowed with divine nature.

The Nectar of Devotion (Ch. 18): Rūpa Gosvāmī next describes the characteristics of a person who has actually developed his ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa. The characteristics are as follows:

1. He is always anxious to use his time in the devotional service of the Lord. He does not like to be idle. He wants service always, twenty-four hours a day, without deviation.
2. He is always reserved and perseverant.
3. He is always detached from all material attraction.
4. He does not long for any material respect in return for his activities.
5. He is always certain that Kṛṣṇa will bestow His mercy upon him.
6. He is always eager to serve the Lord faithfully.
7. He is very much attached to the chanting of the holy names of the Lord.
8. He is always eager to describe the transcendental qualities of the Lord.
9. He is very pleased to live in a place where the Lord’s pastimes are performed, for example, Mathurā, Vṛndāvana or Dvārakā.

The primary quality and secondary qualities of devotees

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.12: All the demigods and their exalted qualities, such as religion, knowledge and renunciation, become manifest in the body
of one who has developed unalloyed devotion (bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā) for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva. On the other hand, a person devoid of devotional service and engaged in material activities has no good qualities. Even if he is adept at the practice of mystic yoga or the honest endeavor of maintaining his family and relatives, he must be driven by his own mental speculations and must engage in the service of the Lord’s external energy. How can there be any good qualities in such a man?

_Harināma-cintāmani_ (Ch. 4): The sādhu’s qualities are as follows: he is merciful, tolerant, and equal to all; he performs penances without excessively inflicting injury on the body; he is truthful, pure-hearted, compassionate, free from lusty intelligence, and is the master of his senses; he voluntarily accepts material impoverishment; he is gentle, clean, regulated in eating, peaceful, apathetic to materialism, patient, and steady; he takes Lord Kṛṣṇa as his only shelter; he is free from illusion and grave; he conquers hunger, thirst, lamentation, envy and old age; he does not expect honor from others; he offers all respects to others; he is expert; he is not a cheater; and he is knowledgeable.

These qualities can be divided into two categories: _svarūpa-lakṣaṇa_, or the direct and indigenous qualities, and _tatāstha-lakṣaṇa_, qualities that are ornamental. The sādhu’s acceptance of Lord Kṛṣṇa as his only shelter is his _svarūpa-lakṣaṇa_, and all the other qualities are _tatāstha_. . . . One who has taken complete shelter of the pure devotional process is considered a pure Vaishnava. Four faults (low caste, accidental falldown, the last traces of previous sins, or his sinful activities prior to his surrendering to Lord Kṛṣṇa) may be present in him, but he is totally free from all the shortcomings. Hence criticizing him spells doom for the offender. The glories of the holy name are propagated by this Vaishnava; Lord Kṛṣṇa does not tolerate any criticism against him. One may discard all other activities like religiosity, yoga, sacrifices, fruitive activities, empirical knowledge and so on; if one simply chants the holy name [what to speak of spreading it] that is the quintessence of spiritual culture.

Śrīla Ṭhākura Haridāsa explains (in the same chapter) that a devotee dedicating his life to chanting and spreading the holy name is not acting just for his own benefit. Rather, he also has the potency to elevate others to devotional service. “Someone who gets the association of a Vaishnava for some time can feel Kṛṣṇa’s potency exuding from this person. This potency enters the heart of a faithful person and impregnates it with bhakti. Thus he experiences immediate ecstasy. Just by a moment’s association with a Vaish-
nava, bhakti is invoked in the heart of a pious person. Immediately he’ll be inspired to chant Lord Kṛṣṇa’s name; and gradually the holy name will offer him all the spiritual qualities.”

In light of this description by the nāmācārya, the glories of book distributors are further elucidated. Most people we meet on book distribution are not even aware that the book distributor is a Vaiṣṇava, a honorable sādhu dedicated to spreading the holy name. Still, by the mercy of the book distribution mission, such unfortunate souls can begin their devotional service, which “gradually will offer them all the spiritual qualities.”

While those who buy the books are benefited, the mercy showers down even more on the book distributors. The four above-mentioned faults inherited from previous sinful lives and low births may still be present in them, and the stage of pure devotional service in unalloyed absorption may not have yet been reached. But because “the glories of the holy name are propagated by this Vaiṣṇava,” he becomes so dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa that Kṛṣṇa “does not tolerate any criticism against him.” That is the glory of sankirtana: even imperfect people can be engaged in this perfect activity. Accepting this engagement is the book distributor’s primary sign of surrender (svarūpa-lakṣaṇa, devotion and surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s mission). By this one quality (bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcana), he is supplied all other good qualities by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.

3.4 Book distribution is a practical symptom of surrender

Secondary qualities develop from a book distributor’s primary quality of surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s mission. Surrender to Kṛṣṇa is generally characterized by six symptoms, and it is a dynamic process that is spiritually absolute, or nondifferent from the goal. Thus an imperfect person can surrender to distributing books, an activity that is absolute, and perfect himself. Distributing books means surrender, and that is a book distributor’s primary quality, from which all secondary qualities manifest. Simply staying in the book distribution mission guarantees this perfection. There are six symptoms of surrender and many secondary qualities related to each of the six symptoms. Several secondary qualities will be highlighted along with each symptom of surrender in each of the following sections.

The six symptoms of surrender

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 20.100: The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service, the rejection
of unfavorable things, the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will give protection, the acceptance of the Lord as one’s guardian or master, full self-surrender and humility.

Purport: One who is fully surrendered is qualified with the six following characteristics. (1) The devotee has to accept everything that is favorable for the rendering of transcendental loving service to the Lord. (2) He must reject everything unfavorable to the Lord’s service. This is also called renunciation. (3) A devotee must be firmly convinced that Kṛṣṇa will give him protection. No one else can actually give one protection, and being firmly convinced of this is called faith. This kind of faith is different from the faith of an impersonalist who wants to merge into the Brahman effulgence in order to benefit by cessation of repeated birth and death. A devotee wants to remain always in the Lord’s service. In this way, Kṛṣṇa is merciful to His devotee and gives him all protection from the dangers found on the path of devotional service. (4) The devotee should accept Kṛṣṇa as his supreme maintainer and master. He should not think that he is being protected by a demigod. He should depend only on Kṛṣṇa, considering Him the only protector. The devotee must be firmly convinced that within the three worlds he has no protector or maintainer other than Kṛṣṇa. (5) Self-surrender means remembering that one’s activities and desires are not independent. The devotee is completely dependent on Kṛṣṇa, and he acts and thinks as Kṛṣṇa desires. (6) The devotee is meek and humble.

These six symptoms are also listed in the preface of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, where Śrīla Prabhupāda describes them as follows: “A pure devotee is a soul who is forever surrendered to the Lord, just as a child is surrendered to his parents or an animal to its master. In the surrendering process, one should: (1) accept things favorable for discharging devotional service, (2) reject things unfavorable, (3) believe firmly in the Lord’s protection, (4) feel exclusively dependent on the mercy of the Lord, (5) have no interest separate from the interest of the Lord, and (6) always feel oneself meek and humble.”

Accepting what’s favorable, rejecting what’s unfavorable

Being steady, not whimsical; remaining faithful and perseverant

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.21p: The Lord in His form of Śrī Caitanya Mahā-prabhu wanted the cult of devotional service to the Lord to be preached all over the world, in every nook and corner, and therefore a pure devotee’s duty is to discharge this order as far as possible. Every devotee should be
very enthusiastic, not only in performing his daily rituals of devotional service, but in trying to preach the cult peacefully by following in the footsteps by Lord Caitanya. If he is not superficially successful in such an attempt, he should not be deterred from the discharge of his duty. Success or failure has no meaning for a pure devotee because he is a soldier in the field. Preaching the cult of devotional service is something like declaring war against materialistic life.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Steadiness is most important for every devotee in our movement. Prabhupāda always wanted devotees to be steady so that they could be trained and become expert in a particular service. That way they start to have very nice results. If they are changing from this to that, then nothing can be done properly. Imagine if you had different cooks every day—they’d never learn how to cook. The preaching department also requires steadiness. Because book distribution is a difficult service, it requires the maximum steadiness. (From a class in New York on June 17, 1990)

**Gaurī Devī Dāṣī:** The first time I distributed a lot of books it was inconceivable to me. So many people took the books. That day I began to realize that it could happen every day if I just had enough desire. I had that crystal-clear realization: “Kṛṣṇa could do it any day because Kṛṣṇa is doing it now. Kṛṣṇa is all-opulent. This is just a drop of Kṛṣṇa’s opulence. But I don’t have the desire. I just happen to have the desire today.” I could see how unlimitedly opulent Kṛṣṇa is and how puny we are and how we could be doing so much more service for Kṛṣṇa if we had more desire. It’s not easy. What makes it hard is that we’re impure and conditioned and distracted by material things. But it’s just a question of becoming determined to undergo the process of purification every day—chanting, following the sādhana, and going out and trying to do sanākritana faithfully.

**Lilāvatāra Dāṣā:** Book distributors need steadiness in their service and in their spiritual program. Even if the mind is creating some difficulties, one always has to go out on sanākritana. The practice of going out every day is training us to control the mind and to subject it to the directives of spiritual intelligence. We have to take this activity as a mission and duty even if there are difficulties created by the body and mind. To reach high levels of book distribution we have to be sober, profound, serious, and moderate in eating and sleeping. We have to lead the lives of yogis; otherwise we will not last.

**Cakṣu Dāṣa:** Our service is our duty. We accept or reject things according to the demands of our service. This is yukta-vairāgya, real renunciation.
Devotees don’t exploit material objects for their sense gratification like the materialists, and they don’t reject them as false like the Buddhists or māyāvādīs. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a golden middle way in which we accept all things for the service of the Lord. Devotees never act whimsically. Their minds are always absorbed in their duties. Therefore in all circumstances they know exactly what to do.

Yadunandana Dāsa (Spain): Traditionally, sādhus, rṣis, yogīs, and devotees never mix with karmīs or materialistic people. Yet on the order of Śrī Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda, we are in the cities to distribute books and preach, and we encounter all the sense objects we wanted to renounce. The danger is that they might influence us again. But a devotee is protected—daivīm prakṛtim āśritāh. In clear Kṛṣṇa consciousness a devotee knows how to deal with material sense objects without being deviated. He accepts things only for devotional service and in that way remains steady, neither jubilant if he gets something nice, nor depressed if things don’t go the way he wants. A devotee simply continues looking for nectar, like a bee. A bee is a good example. He is always in contact with nectar, but he doesn’t enjoy it himself; he simply brings it to the hive. Bees are famous as steady, diligent workers who simply accept nectar and reject all flowers that are useless or already occupied by other bees.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: By steadily going out on book distribution we can become empowered. In the beginning we get a certain result, and we cannot imagine doing more. Just to give out ten or twenty books is a big struggle. But if we persevere then Kṛṣṇa sees we are sincere and not fruitive. In this way we can gain the faith of Kṛṣṇa. If Kṛṣṇa can actually trust us not to misuse anything we get, He will give us unlimited results. He gave Śrīla Prabhupāda many disciples and temples and so much fame, influence, and money. But because he never even thought of enjoying those things for himself, Kṛṣṇa gave him more and more. So if we become more and more purified by book distribution and don’t become puffed-up or complacent by big results, then Kṛṣṇa will give us more and more results, because whatever we get we will simply use for glorifying Kṛṣṇa even more.

Firmly believing that the Lord protects His devotees

\textit{Detached; fearless}

The peaceful devotees are disturbed by the demons, but the devotees are always victorious by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. In \textit{Bhagavad-gītā} Kṛṣṇa ordered Arjuna to declare to the whole
world that His devotees would never be vanquished. And in the last verse of the Gītā, Sañjaya says wherever there is Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna there will also be opulence, victory, extraordinary power and morality. But because we are engaged in warfare with the forces of māyā, there will be casualties. Even Arjuna’s son Abhimanyu, a sixteen-year-old boy, was killed in the Battle of Kurukṣetra. We should be prepared to protect the Deities and always expect Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, because we are always dependent on Him and we cannot do anything on our own without Him. 8

Śacīnandana Swami: Śrila Prabhupāda’s name is Abhaya Caranāravinda, he who is fearless, having taken shelter of the Lord’s lotus feet. If we take shelter of Śrila Prabhupāda’s lotus feet, we can also become fearless.

Guru-carana Dāsa: In the list of divine qualities in Bhagavad-gītā, the first quality is abhaya, fearlessness. This applies perfectly to a book distributor. So often a sankirtana devotee finds himself protected, and he realizes, “That was Kṛṣṇa!” By practical experience of Kṛṣṇa’s protection, the devotee becomes convinced that Kṛṣṇa exists and is the supreme, omnipresent, and omniscient Personality of Godhead. Kṛṣṇa is the protector of His devotees, so we have to be devotees, devoted to Kṛṣṇa. When we surrender to Him and agree to execute His mission, we can practically realize the protection of Kṛṣṇa’s divine energy, and that makes us fearless. Unless we faithfully depend on Kṛṣṇa, which is the basis of fearlessness, we cannot succeed in book distribution.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: Lust, anger, and greed are the three doors to hell, and they serve to distract the mind from Kṛṣṇa and devotional service. The addition of lust, anger, or greed to devotional service turns it into frustrational service, just as milk touched by the lips of a serpent becomes poisonous. We must be detached, really look at the person, accept what he is able to give to Kṛṣṇa—lakṣmi, only a smile, or a breath—and offer it to Kṛṣṇa.

Kalpavāsinī Devī Dāsī (Germany): Material life is always full of problems. At every step there’s danger. We always need the special protection of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore it is nice on sankirtana. You always get the opportunity to realize these points every day, because you are face to face with material nature. You see people suffering. You see people struggling and working hard for a little bit of money and sense enjoyment. If you see this, then you accept the austerity of sankirtana, you surrender to Kṛṣṇa, and you depend
on Kṛṣṇa’s protection and mercy. Then there is no more risk or special austerity. Because if you keep these points in your heart, you know that these books are the solution for all their problems. Then Kṛṣṇa will take away all fear. Then you no longer see danger at every step but Kṛṣṇa’s mercy at every step.

**Accepting the Lord as one’s maintainer and master**  
*Merciful; compassionate*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.36: The self-effulgent Vaikuṇṭha planets . . . cannot be reached by those who are not merciful to other living entities. Only persons who constantly engage in welfare activities for other living entities can reach the Vaikuṇṭha planets.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** The pure devotee, the spiritual master, is full of compassion for all the fallen souls. I remember one day on *sankṛtana*. In the morning I was listening to a tape of Śrīla Prabhupāda lecturing on the appearance of Lord Nṛṣimhadeva. When the Lord put His paws on Prahlāda’s head, He said to him, “My dear Prahlāda, don’t worry. The demon is finished. I am now here. Everything is all right. You are protected.” As I heard Prabhupāda say that, I was eating breakfast prasādam and looking at the karmīs outside. I suddenly felt the kind of protection this movement is offering to the conditioned souls. Prabhupāda, with his gentle, deep voice, was saying, “My dear son, don’t worry. Everything is all right. The demons are finished.” I became so affected that I started to cry like a kid, and I went out on *sankṛtana* fully determined that I was just going to give out his books whatever happened. I simply remembered Śrīla Prabhupāda saying, “My dear son, everything is all right. I am here. The demon is finished.” So it is a matter of having confidence and faith in the order of the spiritual master.

**Jīva Dāsa:** We cannot just walk into a situation and distribute mechanically. We have to be sensitive. These are conditioned souls who are suffering in the material world. If you observe them you’ll see that 99% of them are completely frustrated. We can help them only by offering them a book. As soon as we approach someone we can see his heart, his hands. We see what kind of person he is—big hands, one finger missing. We watch his face—very old although he is only thirty. You see how people suffer. You see their problems written on their faces. You ask them what they do and what their problems are. It’s not easy for people to exist in the material world. We have to present them with an alternative—the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda.
It’s natural that people will accept the books. If you give them something nicer than what they have, something that is not causing more entanglement or suffering, they accept it. We have to cultivate this desire simply to help others by offering them something nice. Then we will never stop. We will never even think of stopping.

**Having no desire other than the Lord’s desire**

*Determined; convinced*

*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.56p: For the service of the Lord, he is always daring and active and is not influenced by attachment or aversion. Attachment means accepting something for one’s own sense gratification, and detachment is the absence of such sensual attachment. But one fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness has neither attachment nor detachment because his life is dedicated to the service of the Lord. Consequently he is not angry even when his attempts are unsuccessful. A Kṛṣṇa conscious person is always steady in his determination.

*Rohiniṣuta Dāsa*: Determination is what is lacking in the material world. Faith in something—that people don’t have. Someone who is wishy-washy, spongy—whose determination is sucked-up by material desires—cannot have single-minded determination. Therefore, when you go to people with full determination in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you can convince them to take books even though they don’t want them. If you have purely motivated determination, you can pierce through their layers of ignorance and convince them to take the books.

Śacīnandana Swami: Śrīla Prabhupāda said that without determination it will not be not possible to maintain one’s life of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That’s how important determination is. A moving passage in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* wonderfully describes the kind of determination that will win us the mercy of the Lord. It is the description of Mahārāja Pratāparudra, the King of Orissa. Determined to get the association of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, although he knew that Lord Caitanya had a strict rule not to see any women or materialistic persons, Mahārāja Pratāparudra said, “If Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is determined not to see me, then I am determined to give up my life.” In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “A devotee with Mahārāja Pratāparudra’s determination will certainly be victorious in advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thus Mahārāja Pratāparudra’s determination is very exalted, and it is called dṛḍha-vratāḥ. Because of this determination,
he was finally able to receive Lord Caitanya’s direct mercy.” This is a very deep understanding. If we do not become successful in this lifetime, we will again have to enter the womb of a mother, go to school, fall in love, cry out in pain, and so on. We should avoid this trouble. We should be determined to get the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prabhupāda said that a devotee should make it a point to go back home to Kṛṣṇa in this one lifetime. We should be encouraged by the prospect that we can go back in this lifetime.

When the associates of Caitanya Mahāprabhu saw that Mahārāja Pratāparudra was prepared to renounce everything for the Lord’s mercy, they were amazed. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya was particularly astonished, because such determination is impossible for a worldly man attached to material enjoyment. When one engages in devotional service, he must maintain this firm determination. Then Kṛṣṇa will be pleased with his service. The spiritual master can show the path of devotional service. If the disciple follows the principles without deviating, he will certainly receive the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. The formula for everyone determined to make his life fully successful is understanding that devotional service is the only thing we really need, because by executing devotional service we can please the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. Then we can be really determined. (From a lecture in Zurich on January 2, 1992)

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: Ātma-nikṣepa means full surrender. I’ve seen that as soon as you sincerely pray, “Kṛṣṇa, I belong to you,” or, as a saṅkīrtana devotee, “Please, Kṛṣṇa, engage me in Your saṅkīrtana mission for my whole life,” then from that day on saṅkīrtana becomes nectar. If we continue to think, “I could also do this or that,” we will never become fixed. We should become expert in our activity. As soon as we surrender to Kṛṣṇa in a certain way and pray, “Kṛṣṇa, I want to do this service my whole life,” then one becomes fixed, and devotional service becomes ecstatic. And people will feel it. A devotee is a happy, satisfied person, and therefore people take the books.

Always feeling meek and humble
Humility; tolerance

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.43p: “One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige and should be ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state
of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.” Following the orders of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one who preaches the glories of the Lord all over the world or all over the universe should be humbler than grass and more tolerant than a tree because a preacher cannot live an easy-going life. Indeed, a preacher must face many impediments. Not only is he sometimes cursed, but sometimes he must also suffer personal injury.

All conditioned souls are under illusion. Suppose a doctor goes to a patient who is having convulsions and talking nonsense. That does not mean he’ll refuse to treat him. He treats him as a friend, although the patient calls him ill names. Still he gives him the medicine. Just like Lord Jesus Christ said, “You hate the sin, not the sinner.” Not the sinner. This is very nice. Because the sinner is in illusion. He’s mad. If you hate him, then how can you deliver him? Therefore those who are devotees, those who are really servants of God, they have no hate for anyone. Lord Jesus Christ, when he was being crucified, he requested, “My Lord, please excuse them, they do not know what they are doing.” This is the position of the devotee. Because they are mad after the materialistic way of thinking, they cannot be happy—anyone. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is so nice that there is no question of hating. Everyone is welcome. “Please come here. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Take Kṛṣṇa prasādam. And hear some philosophy from Bhagavad-gītā. And try to rectify your conditioned life.” This is the program, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Lord Caitanya introduced this, yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa: “Whomever you meet, wherever you meet him, simply try to teach him Kṛṣṇa consciousness, kṛṣṇa-kathā, words from Lord Kṛṣṇa.” You’ll be happy, and they’ll be happy. ⁹

Śacīnandana Swami: We are praying to the spiritual master with the words nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale. The word namah has an interesting literal meaning. The syllable ma refers to the false ego, and na is a negation. So the word namah indicates abandonment of our false ego. Offering obeisances to the spiritual master means putting aside our false sense of independence, and humility means accepting whatever he orders. Jiva Gosvāmi explains that this is the meaning of ātma-nivedanam. Abandoning the false ego and offering one’s life to the mission of the spiritual master signifies the acceptance of the Lord as master, as the supreme goal
in one’s life. Thus one can truly become meek and humble, which makes a Vaiṣṇava attractive.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** A book distributor cannot engage in too many things, otherwise his intelligence becomes *bahu-śākhā*, many branched. He has to fix his concentration, but at the same time he isn’t narrow-minded. Book distributors should have a great appreciation for the other services going on in ISKCON. If we don’t appreciate them, we will lose the mercy of the other devotees. And by that we will lose the ability to go on *sankirtana*. By their mercy we can go out and distribute books. If we were just on our own, we wouldn’t be able to distribute books. For example, I cannot produce a book, I cannot translate a book, and working in a temple all day is out of the question. So I depend on the other devotees performing those services. It is important to have a high appreciation for the other devotees and their services.

**Yadunandana Dāsa:** We have to avoid false pride and envy: “I distribute books because it is the best service, and I am very proud of it. I undergo much austerity, and the others don’t. Why don’t they go out?” Like this an immature book distributor may criticize others. But the truth is that if we look deep into the heart of that person, we see the *anartha* of wanting to have the easy life that he thinks others have. If someone is envious of others who are not doing full-time *sankirtana* and criticizes others unnecessarily, then that person will have difficulty doing *sankirtana* in the future. Why is it important to be humble if one is doing this important service of book distribution? Because if one is not humble, Kṛṣṇa will smash him. Obviously, to continue doing book distribution is a great privilege, for we see that just a few devotees do it for many years; the privilege to continue distributing books can be received only by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. So it is important to be humble.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** Because the service is great, one starts to think of himself as great. This is a danger and an austerity of book distribution—that one is often the center of attention. This is a trick of māyā to stop us. It is the exact opposite of humility, the very quality absolutely necessary to continue book distribution. *Amāninā mānadena kirtaniyāḥ sadā hariḥ*. One could also say: *saṅkirtaniyāḥ sadā hariḥ*.

**Gīta-govinda Dāsī:** Our tolerance changes people’s hearts. We have to be nice even to the people who are nasty to us. They never forget our nice at-
titude. I experienced many times that someone who didn’t accept a book accepted it later because they changed. We have to be friendly to all living entities. If we don’t have this quality, people won’t take books. Without this quality we tend to push people around too much and force people to take books. But if you are friends, everything comes naturally. If you have a relationship in which there is no suspicion, people exchange things happily.

3.5 Faith in the order of guru and Kṛṣṇa

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.32p: One may ask why highly educated persons do not take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The reason is that unless one takes shelter of a bona fide, fully Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master, there is no chance of understanding Kṛṣṇa. The educators, scholars and big political leaders worshiped by millions of people cannot understand the goal of life and take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, for they have not accepted a bona fide spiritual master and the Vedas. Therefore in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (3.2.3) it is said, nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena: one cannot become self-realized simply by having an academic education, by presenting lectures in an erudite way (pravacanena labhyah), or by being an intelligent scientist who discovers many wonderful things. One cannot understand Kṛṣṇa unless one is graced by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only one who has surrendered to a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa and taken the dust of his lotus feet can understand Kṛṣṇa. First one must understand how to get out of the clutches of māyā. The only means is to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. And to become Kṛṣṇa conscious very easily, one must take shelter of a realized soul—a mahat, or mahātmā—whose only interest is to engage in the service of the Supreme Lord.

What does it mean to have faith?

Bhagavad-gītā 4.39p: Knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be achieved by a faithful person who believes firmly in Kṛṣṇa. One is called a faithful man who thinks that simply by acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness he can attain the highest perfection. This faith is attained by the discharge of devotional service, and by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, which cleanses one’s heart of all material dirt. Over and above this, one should control the senses. A person who is faithful to Kṛṣṇa and who controls the senses can easily attain perfection in the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness without delay.
**Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-lilā 12.8p:** We took up the mission of Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura and Bhaktivinoda Thākura to preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world, under the protection of all the predecessor ācāryas, and we find that our humble attempt has been successful. We followed the principles especially explained by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura in his commentary on the Bhagavad-gītā verse vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana. According to this instruction of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura, it is the duty of a disciple to follow strictly the orders of his spiritual master. The secret of success in advancement in spiritual life is the firm faith of the disciple in the orders of his spiritual master. The Vedas confirm this—yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau, tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakăśante mahātmanah: “To one who has staunch faith in the words of the spiritual master and the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead the secret of success in Vedic knowledge is revealed.” The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is being propagated according to this principle, and therefore our preaching work is going on successfully, in spite of the many impediments offered by antagonistic demons, because we are getting positive help from our previous ācāryas. One must judge every action by its result. The members of the self-appointed ācārya’s party who occupied the property of the Gauḍiyā Maṭha are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching. Therefore by the result of their actions one should know that they are asāra, or useless, whereas the success of the ISKCON party, the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, which strictly follows guru and Gaurāṅga, is increasing daily all over the world. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura wanted to print as many books as possible and distribute them all over the world. We have tried our best in this connection, and we are getting results beyond our expectations.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission: his guru’s mission**

Somehow or other it has begun by the blessings of Bhakti-siddhānta Thākura . . . I am not very expert, educated, or anything extraordinary. But the only thing is that I believed in his words. You can say that is my qualification: I believed cent percent in his words. So whatever success is there is due to my firm faith in his instruction. I am trying to follow. And by his grace, you are helping me. . . . When I first came to Boston, I was thinking, “Who will accept these Vaiṣṇava rules and regulations? These people are after meat and wine and illicit sex. How will they accept it?” And I was hope-
less how they would chant. So by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu at least I am hopeful this movement can be accepted by anyone. It is not as hopeless as I thought.  

This book distribution was my Guru Mahārāja’s purpose. He said, “I have got so many temples, and now in Calcutta I have got a marble temple, but I wish that by selling the marbles I could publish and distribute books.” Now by the mercy of His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda I am doing both by the cooperation of my American disciples. I am constructing so many marble temples, and I am distributing so many books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This does not mean that I am excelling my Guru Mahārāja. But it is the mercy of my Guru Mahārāja that he is giving me the facility for doing both.  

The report of the book printing is both encouraging and surprising. Every time I see this I remember the words of my Guru Mahārāja when he told me that if there was ever money it should be used to print books, not that we shall have big, big temples and then fight in the court. He asked me to do this, and I am trying my little bit, that’s all. It is all by his blessings, for without his blessings this wonderful thing would not have happened. He said personally to me, “If I could sell this Gauḍīya Matha building, that would be better.” He predicted that there would be fire within the walls. So I took it, “His Divine Grace wants some books.” So I accepted it, “Yes, I shall do it.” It is all by his blessings. Mūkam karoti vācālam pāgum laṅghayate girim: by his mercy a dumb man can speak and a lame man can cross a mountain.  

Faith in guru and Kṛṣṇa is the secret of success

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.95–96: Believing in the words of His spiritual master, Lord Caitanya introduced the sankirtana movement, just as the present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started with belief in the words of our spiritual master. He wanted to preach, we believed in his words and tried somehow or other to fulfill them, and now this movement has become successful all over the world. Therefore faith in the words of the spiritual
master and in the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the secret of success. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never disobeyed the orders of his spiritual master and stopped propagating the sankirtana movement. . . . We believed in the words of our spiritual master and started in a humble way—in a helpless way—but due to the spiritual force of the supreme authority, this movement has become successful.

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā_ 12.10: The order of the spiritual master is the active principle of spiritual life. Anyone who disobeys the order of the spiritual master immediately becomes useless.

**Tamāl Krishna Goswami:** Our life’s goal is serving our spiritual master in unalloyed devotion eternally. What does that mean? It means that now we serve him with this body, and if one day we are fortunate enough to attain the kingdom of God, then our spiritual master will be there in his eternal form, and we will have our eternal forms, and we will go on rendering service with his guidance. So the service we are doing now is directly connected to eternity. Through our service we will become near and dear to our spiritual master. We will be able to understand his heart—understand which things are dear to him. As far as the spiritual master is concerned, things are dear to him which make him dear to his spiritual master. And Prabhupāda made it abundantly clear that the thing most dear to his spiritual master was this book business: producing books, printing them, and distributing them. So if we assist our spiritual master in the service to his spiritual master, then we get the mercy of the entire paramparā. And this is all going into our eternal spiritual account in the spiritual world. Therefore do not think that the distribution of books is less a part of our sādhanā than chanting our rounds or worshiping the Deity. It is in every way the most vital part of our sādhanā, because it is that part which directly touches the heart of our spiritual master and invokes his blessings upon us. And it is by his blessings that we are able to make advancement in spiritual life. (From a class in Zurich on December 4, 1991)

**Harikeśa Swami:** We have to please the spiritual master perfectly. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us many times that we will please him by going out and distributing his books, and we know that we should preach and bring new people to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. But, above all, Prabhupāda wanted us to become pure, to love Kṛṣṇa, whatever activity we perform. Of course, we become pure lovers of Kṛṣṇa by engaging ourselves fully in the service that our spiritual master gives us, whatever it may be. Not every-
body is able to go out on full-time *sankirtana*, but if those engaged in other services perform their services perfectly, with love and devotion, they will please their spiritual master, and he will bestow his blessings upon them more and more. Then we can attain *Kṛṣṇa*, because when the spiritual master is satisfied, everything is perfect. (From a class in Zurich on July 10, 1991)

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** Lord Caitanya gives the knowledge how to perform *bhakti-yoga*. No other incarnation of the Lord has made it as simple. The process became easy by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. But we have to have faith. Without faith we cannot claim even to be *kaniṣṭha adhikāris*. We should understand that *Kṛṣṇa* is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and have full faith in Him and in Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is *Kṛṣṇa*’s pure representative, and we should have faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. And we need to have faith in the spiritual master’s instruction. Book distribution doesn’t mean I always have to do it the same way. Śrīla Prabhupāda or the spiritual master gives us an instruction but doesn’t say how to do it down to the last detail. We have to take the first steps and go into action. And we have to use our intelligence and simultaneously depend on the spiritual master’s mercy and *Kṛṣṇa*’s mercy. Then they will give us real power and the intelligence to go to all kinds of places and always distribute more and more books. Often the spiritual master gives some instruction, but he doesn’t specify how to do it. That we have to find out. *Kṛṣṇa* and *guru* will give us the power and the intelligence to do it. But if you always run to the spiritual master for help, then he has to go out with you and tell you everything. The power is in the instruction. It is not a material thing. Maybe the spiritual master will show you how to do it, but if you have no faith in his instruction you will fail, even though he is showing you everything. Therefore, become convinced about the power within his instruction. Then you become successful.

**Anirdeṣya-vapu Dāsa (CIS):** The spiritual master is distributing the books. The spiritual master is praying to Paramātmā so that He acts through his disciples. I think that this is the way it happens. Paramātmā is driving the chariot of the body, and He directs you to the proper person. The distributor is fully dependent on the spiritual master. Even the simple fact that we are getting inspired—we know who is inspiring us. We are simply listening to the lectures of the spiritual master, and the spiritual master is giving us realization, strength, and enthusiasm. Otherwise we could not go on day after day.
The greatest opportunity to please guru and Kṛṣṇa

I thank you for following the order of your spiritual master. This is the motto of our spiritual life: yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo. My other Godbrothers are concerned with litigations, politics, and diplomacy... As far as I am concerned I have the blessings of my Guru Mahārāja. I do not need anything else. That is how I went to your country, just to try to carry out his order. By his blessings it has come out successful. 13

You have been my student for some time, and I consider that you are one of the big men who are assisting me in this vast work, so I am naturally concerned for your well-being. I want that you should give up this idea of living and working outside and regard it only as a temporary trick of māyā. I need such strong men as yourself to stick with me, and together we shall go back home, back to Godhead. If you have no other engagement, I would be greatly pleased if you could take up this work of selling my books everywhere, as many as possible. 14

You have asked me what I feel is the best engagement for you at this time, and in response I kindly request you to continue distributing my books full-time. You are very expert in this matter, and you can also teach others how to do it. At the present moment the plays are not as important as our book distribution. So my desire is that you increase your book distribution more and more and be blessed by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. 15

Yes! Your present engagement is more important, and managing Calcutta temple is not as important. I am pleased that you are selling my books. This is the superior engagement, so please continue and increase it more and more. 16

Please offer all the devotees my blessings. Their enthusiasm for distributing my books will please me very much. Not only will I be pleased, but my Guru Mahārāja will also be pleased, and they will all be blessed. This is very good news. Prthiv- vīte āche yata nagarādi-grāma sarvatra pracāra haibe mora
nāma—this is the way of preaching, to spread the news of Kṛṣṇa in every town and village all over the world. Thank you very much. 17

Your letters are a great pleasure for me to read. You are always broadcasting the glories of the saṅkīrtana movement in the shape of ISKCON’s book distribution, and surely you will be recognized by Lord Caitanya for your unbounded enthusiasm and expertise in seeing that my books are distributed all over the world. 18

I was very happy to receive the new edition of Bhagavad-gītā. The make-up is very nice. Every time I see a new publication of my books it gives me so much enthusiasm that my life is increased by one hundred years. Thank you for helping me so much. 19

I beg to acknowledge the new publication in Swedish. Of course, I cannot read Swedish, but looking through this book has given me unlimited bliss. After all, this is my prime duty, to publish books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The printing of the book appears excellent, and that you are profusely distributing the book all over Sweden is the crowning success of our movement. We will conquer Europe with these books. I can only thank you again and again in sincere gratitude for producing this literature and pray to Kṛṣṇa to bless you with all spiritual advancement. 20

Intense association with the spiritual master

I wish to remain with all my disciples together, but we have to do preaching work and therefore have to remain separate. But actually there is no question of separation for one engaged in Lord Kṛṣṇa’s service. 21

Svavāsa Dāsa (USA): Once, I was with Prabhupāda on a morning walk in Detroit, Michigan. Wherever Prabhupāda went there were many devotees—hundreds would come. At this time, in 1975, I was doing book distribution at the Chicago airport. On the morning walk many devotees were asking Prabhupāda questions about the gopīs and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda would answer, but he wouldn’t elaborate. This went on for half an hour, and
Prabhupāda didn’t seem to want to discuss it a lot. Then we turned around, and we went back towards our cars. I was thinking, “There’s no way I can be on this walk with Śrīla Prabhupāda and not say something to please him.” Everyone around me was thinking the same way. We were walking, and we could see the car waiting for Prabhupāda, and I was getting nervous. I was starting to sweat, and I couldn’t figure out what to say to show some appreciation for Prabhupāda. I was scared and shy, but in my eagerness, I finally screamed, “Prabhupāda!” I was so eager that I didn’t consider how loud I was speaking. Everybody stopped—like “Wow, who’s this madman?” Then Prabhupāda stopped and turned around, and when he looked at me, suddenly, I think all the blood in my body ended up in my ears. I think I had elephant’s ears, and my face turned red, and I couldn’t say anything. Prabhupāda was just looking at me. Then Prabhupāda said, “Yes?” And I said real loud, “Prabhupāda, we are distributing a lot of books for you in the Chicago airport. We all want to do a hundred books a day each just to please you. Please help us.” Prabhupāda looked at me, but he didn’t say anything. And I was staring at Prabhupāda as if to say, “Please say something.” Then Prabhupāda smiled and said, “Just see, this is my real disciple. My real disciple is always thinking how to please the spiritual master, and he realizes that the way to please me is by distributing my books. He is my real disciple.” When Prabhupāda said that, my heart was pounding and I felt overwhelmed by ecstasy. Then I went back to Chicago and distributed one hundred books just to please him. I couldn’t do it every day, but on the weekends sometimes.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** Śrīla Prabhupāda said that by reading the *sankīrtana* results he felt like a young man. When we heard the reports of how ecstatic Śrīla Prabhupāda would be hearing the book scores, book distribution became our life. I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda only three times, and each time only briefly. I experienced my relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda more on the street. But the third time I saw Śrīla Prabhupāda, which was the last time he came to the West, I got a vivid impression of what book distribution meant to him. One morning a few of us book distributors were in Prabhupāda’s room, and Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja was opening letters, showing Prabhupāda the mail and pictures of Ratha-yātā. Śrīla Prabhupāda was in an incredible trance, far beyond our ability to comprehend. He was departing from the world at that time and was displaying inconceivable ecstasy. One envelope contained a Spanish TLC, or something like that, a softbound book. Prabhupāda took the book, and his eyes widened. He put it on his lap. He was so moved seeing this book that within those few seconds it be-
came obvious to us that his real ecstasy was his books. As book distributors, we got a lasting impression from this.

Navina-nirada Dāsa: I feel very close to my spiritual master when I’m distributing books and getting others to distribute books. Of course, when there is an opportunity to be in his presence, only a fool or a madman would miss it—to hear his classes, to get some personal association, or to fight for the mahā-mahā-prasāda. But it’s not that we’re always knocking on his door to ask him petty questions. We should just try to serve his mission and live up to his desires. If we always try to be around the spiritual master, we will only become an annoyance. Rather, we should understand his mission by hearing from him, and then carry it out.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: To become a humble servant of this mission and make book distribution my life and soul, it’s very important that I strictly follow my spiritual master, hear from him, become inspired by him, and strictly carry out his orders without speculation. I hope that all the devotees give me their blessings to do that.

Are book distributors fanatics?

I blindly follow my Guru Mahārāja. I do not know what is the result. So I am stressing on this point of book distribution. He told me this personally. 22

Harikeśa Swami: A saṅkīrtana fanatic is one who dedicates his whole life to the saṅkīrtana mission. He is totally immersed in saṅkīrtana and has no desire to perform any other activity. He rejects the thought of changing his service and considers the saṅkīrtana mission to be the life and soul of Śrīla Prabhupāda, ISKCON, and the whole disciplic succession. He has given up the thought of trying to enjoy the material world, and he accepts only the bliss derived from saṅkīrtana. As for elitism in the minds of the saṅkīrtana devotees, this can be seen from two points of view. From the viewpoint of the temple devotees, the saṅkīrtana devotees are the elite group on the front lines in the war against māyā. They are taking the most risks to preach Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s message on the streets, and therefore they are glorified by other devotees who are honest. Other devotees should be happy seeing saṅkīrtana fanatics and consider their enthusiasm and determination a blessed relief from the troubled consciousness of the material world. They should pray to get the mercy of such devotees. But the book distributors will naturally feel humble and not want special treatment if
they are performing their service without desire for name and fame. They respect all devotees and all living entities, but for themselves they want only to perform sankirtana. There might be a tinge of feeling special in their hearts, but one should feel some pride in his service, for that helps him to maintain over a long period of time. But false pride is certainly a bad thing, for it will cause disturbances in one’s spiritual life and will lead to an offensive mentality towards devotees who don’t achieve big results in their services. And Krṣṇa will personally cut down that pride of His devotees when it is detrimental to their spiritual advancement.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** To be a sankirtana fanatic means thinking that for the rest of my life I want to distribute books—it’s my service. And the other devotees should appreciate that such people are still around, because it’s clearly such determination for book distribution that pleases Śrīla Prabhupāda the most.

**Purūravā Dāsa (Finland):** It’s good if a book distributor knows how to do other things. Not that a full-time book distributor has to become expert in performing fire yajñas, but knowing how to give classes, sing bhajans, and worship the Deity will help him establish nice relationships with the other devotees and enable him to cultivate a mature determination for book distribution. If someone is a sankirtana fanatic and never wants to do any other activities, it could also mean he is lazy and using sankirtana as an excuse. Or sometimes someone thinks that other services are māyā. So that is false fanaticism.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa (Prague):** Fanatic. Although the word can mean an enthusiast, from the objective viewpoint of an outsider, fanatic usually means something negative: a person possessed of excessive or irrational zeal. Actually, Śrīla Prabhupāda always uses this word in a negative context.* If there ever was a necessity for such a term, I think it arose out of the need to protect a book distributor’s identity in an ISKCON environment of decreasing book distribution. But if distributing books becomes the norm, what is the need of sankirtana fanaticism in the sense of elitism? If such fa-

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*“The science of learning a subject matter seriously is different from the sentiments of fanatics” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.7.53p). “Your position is first class, but you have to maintain it. Otherwise they will say ‘religious fanatics.’” 23 “The whole world is full of fanatics and atheist classes of men, so sometimes we have to face difficulties.” 24 “There are some religious fanatics, but they do not understand what religion is.” 25
natics project a negative impression of book distribution to other devotees or the general public, it would be better they continue book distribution in a more inconspicuous fashion. In the long run such fanatics are seen to go from one extreme to the other and stop book distribution or stop being devotees altogether.

Young devotees who distribute books should be protected from the false pride that may induce them to think they are important: “Yes, I deserve all the honor and distinction the other devotees are giving me. And who are those senior devotees who don’t go out compared to me?” This is another danger. But if it is properly understood, it is a desirable quality. We like fanatics, those who go out every day with full determination, who try to win the war on māyā and who think of nothing but the spiritual master’s instruction. We may call that fanatical, or ekeha, faithful, advanced. To be like that is the goal. To achieve it, a book distributor always has to cultivate transcendental knowledge along with distributing it to others. Thus he will see himself as the humble instrument of a cooperative mission and avoid hampering the overall saṅkirtana mission, which includes congregational chanting and all types of preaching.

3.6 Energy, enthusiasm, and enlivenment

Our success is our enthusiasm. So everything we do should be done with enthusiasm: the chanting, reading, and following the rules and regulations. 26

In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement the first qualification required by the devotees is enthusiasm. Then work out the process patiently and with conviction that it will surely be done. But at the same time we must be very, very strict in following the regulative principles and completing the sixteen rounds chanting. Our dealings should be very clear with others, and we must always keep company with devotees. 27

The five factors of action

_Bhagavad-gitā_ 18.14–16: The place of action [the body], the performer, the various senses, the many different kinds of endeavor, and ultimately the Supersoul—these are the five factors of action. Whatever right or wrong action a man performs by body, mind or speech is caused by these five factors. Therefore one who thinks himself the only doer, not considering the
five factors, is certainly not very intelligent and cannot see things as they are.

Bhagavad-gītā 18.14p, 16p: He who is acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness under the direction of the Supersoul situated within the heart is naturally not bound by any activity. Those in complete Kṛṣṇa consciousness are not ultimately responsible for their actions. Everything is dependent on the supreme will, the Supersoul, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. . . . A foolish person cannot understand that the Supersoul is sitting as a friend within and conducting his actions. Although the material causes are the place, the worker, the endeavor and the senses, the final cause is the Supreme, the Personality of Godhead. Therefore, one should see not only the four material causes but the supreme efficient cause as well. One who does not see the Supreme thinks himself to be the doer.

The more a book distributor realizes he is not the doer, the more he can do, the more he becomes empowered. Being empowered depends on a devotee’s desire and enthusiasm inasmuch as that induces the Supersoul to be responsible for the other factors of action so as to fulfill a devotee’s pure desire. (Ch. 11 thoroughly presents this point; here only an introductory understanding is given.)

Regarding your question, “Should we become detached from the results of our activities, or should we simply become attached to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa?” the answer is that both of these philosophies are right. One should not be attached to his personal achievement. But if one is attached in order to please his spiritual master, then it is all right. Unattached to my benefit, attached to Kṛṣṇa’s benefit—Kṛṣṇa consciousness means attachment for Kṛṣṇa and detachment for personal benefit, that’s all. 28

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: What’s the difference between an ignorant person, or a materialist, and a devotee? A devotee is supposed to know the Supreme and surrender to Him. A devotee has full faith in the Supersoul and depends on Him in every action, especially on book distribution. A devotee is guided by the Supersoul provided he does not maintain material or ego-centric desires. If a book distributor has a pure Kṛṣṇa conscious attitude, then he no longer depends on material factors, and the Supersoul can use the book distributor as a tool to do things that materially speaking are com-
pletely extraordinary. I remember a Christmas marathon in Basel. I was distributing with Rohiñisuta at a Christmas concert at the Opera House, because it was evening and the streets were almost empty. There he was, with his big bag of sixty hardcover books, wearing a woolen cap, old shoes, and wrinkled jeans, when suddenly the doors opened and the people came out. All of them looked puffed-up, dressed in the most expensive and sophisticated clothes. Just imagine! You go to a high-class Christmas concert at the Opera, then you come out, it's already dark, and here's a guy selling you a book about Indian philosophy on the day before Christmas Eve. It was one of the most unusual situations, but Rohiñisuta transcendentally transformed the entire place. Hardly anyone refused a book, and within no time his book bag was empty. In this situation even I could realize that this had been a transcendental performance by the supreme concert master, the Supersoul.

Navĩna-nirada Dāsa: The Supersoul, obviously, is the most important factor. But if someone doesn't take a book, you cannot blame the Supersoul, because the other factors are there, and we have to see all of them in connection with Kṛṣṇa, especially our endeavor and desire. Our desire to give a person a book has to be stronger than a person's desire to refuse it or his desire for sense gratification. If we are cultivating this strong desire, pushing ourselves and not the people, then the Supersoul will help us convince them. Therefore, although we are not the doer, we, as the instrument, are an important factor, because success depends on our understanding that we are not the doer. Only then can we give up our false ego and depend on the Lord within the heart.

Meditating on the Supercause

Bhagavad-gītā 6.29–31: A true yogī observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere. For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me. Such a yogī, who engages in the worshipful service of the Supersoul, knowing that I and the Supersoul are one, remains always in Me in all circumstances.

Jadurāni Devī Dāsi: Not only are we giving people Kṛṣṇa, but also when we approach people, we are in one sense approaching Kṛṣṇa. We are going from Kṛṣṇa to Kṛṣṇa to Kṛṣṇa, because the Supersoul is within them. How are we going to relate to Kṛṣṇa at that time? Am I going to see that the
Supersoul is really there? Am I going to be respectful to Him and humble? Or will I just see the body of the person I'm talking to? When we go out, we don't think that we are going out to meet bodies. We think we are going out to meet Kṛṣṇa. And when we say we met one hundred people that day, that means we got one hundred opportunities to relate to Kṛṣṇa in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way. And if I cannot relate to Him properly (when I approach one person) because of lack of strength in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then I get a chance the next minute to relate to Kṛṣṇa in a more proper way (in the heart of the next person). So this is a great opportunity to develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Also, there’s the meditation Kṛṣṇa describes in Bhagavad-gītā—that the soul is dwelling within the body. By this meditation one will not be afraid of the particular material conditioning of the person: “Oh, this person is a big businessman. He’s in a better position than me. He’s just going to look down on me and make me nervous and afraid.” If we just see a tiny soul and the Supersoul, or Kṛṣṇa, and that’s all we are dealing with, then we become enthusiastic rather than afraid.

It’s not a question of having to become advanced to see this in the mind’s eye. It’s just a question of making a graphic impression in the mind. If I ask you right now to think of a tree, you can think of a tree. If I ask you to think of a little spark, it just means putting the impression in the mind. This does not mean we are actually seeing the soul. That will be revealed to us not by our own mind’s picture. It is revealed by the Lord’s mercy when He is pleased. But this is practice. We can think of whatever picture of Kṛṣṇa or the Supersoul we like best from Prabhupāda’s books. Just put that in the mind. Or you can think of your Deities. And then you can picture surrounding the soul a mountain of pus and globs of blood and bones and all those other things that the scriptures say the body is made of. It can be a good exercise, and it is not difficult to do. That’s how we’re supposed to see anyway. Bhagavad-gītā says that one who sees in all bodies the soul and the Supersoul does not degrade himself by his mind, and he achieves the supreme destination. This is an order from Kṛṣṇa to see like that. So book distribution is a good opportunity to follow Kṛṣṇa’s instructions in many different ways.

**Desire as the crucial factor**

Śrimad-Bhāgavatam 3.27.37 p: By the grace of the Lord, a devotee can achieve wonderful success simply by willing, but a real devotee does not like that. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu has taught that one should not desire ma-
terial opulence or material reputation, nor should one try to enjoy material beauty; one should simply aspire to be absorbed in the devotional service of the Lord, even if one does not get liberation but has to continue the process of birth and death unlimitedly. Actually, however, to one who engages in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, liberation is already guaranteed.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.19.7p: Those who are puffed up by a high birth, wealth, education, and personal beauty (janmaiśvarya-śruta-śrī) unfortunately do not care for developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, nor does the Supreme Personality of Godhead care about all these material qualifications. The Supreme Lord is achieved by devotion (bhaktyā mam abhijñānātī). One’s devotion and sincere desire to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead are the only qualifications. Rūpa Gosvāmī has also said that the price for achieving God’s favor is simply one’s sincere eagerness to have it (laulyam ekaṁ mūlyam).

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-lilā 8.70: Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price—that is, intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.

Prahlādānanda Swami: The more books one distributes and the more one absorbs himself in that service, the more Kṛṣṇa will give him the intelligence to do it nicer and nicer. The more he concentrates on what he’s doing for Kṛṣṇa, the better he wants to do it, and Kṛṣṇa will give him more and more intelligence. The whole material world moves on desire. According to the desires we have, Kṛṣṇa makes arrangements. So if we desire to please Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda by preaching and distributing books, then they become very merciful and give us all the intelligence we need.

Rohinīṣuta Dāsa: Wherever an endeavor is made, the result will also be there. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that in a letter to Manidhāra and me, and he quoted the verse, ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham. Kṛṣṇa likes to see His glories spread. Therefore devotees cooperating with that desire of Kṛṣṇa—who try to become one with Kṛṣṇa’s desire and endeavor in that way—their desire will be fulfilled by Kṛṣṇa. In whatever way a human being desires, Kṛṣṇa reciprocates. As we surrender, Kṛṣṇa will reveal Himself accordingly. This is the secret. We connect ourselves with the desire of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master. The desire of Kṛṣṇa is that His
message of *Bhagavad-gītā* be spread. Therefore someone performing this activity becomes most dear to Kṛṣṇa, and never will anyone be more dear to Him than such a devotee. Those who are fixed on this goal of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere become very dear to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa cannot be conquered with material things; you cannot bribe Kṛṣṇa. But devotees know the method of conquering Kṛṣṇa—through devotional service. Śrila Prabhupāda said there is nothing higher in this world than preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This has to be understood. It is higher than temple worship or other services—higher even than personal service to Kṛṣṇa. No other service is higher than going out voluntarily and spreading His glories all over the world. (From a class at the marathon festival in Zurich on January 1, 1991)

**Nirguṇa Dāsa:** A book distributor has to be really determined to distribute the book. He really has to want the person to take it. He may sometimes pray to Kṛṣṇa that the person take a book. We’ve heard that if the devotee who is trying to distribute has this desire, and if his desire is stronger than the person’s desire not to take the book, then Kṛṣṇa will inspire the person to take it. So the most important factor of all is our desire. If a devotee is completely desirous, then everything else will be taken care of. Ultimately it’s the consciousness that is higher than everything. We realize that the person is a spirit soul, he needs Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, he is lost in the darkness of ignorance, he needs to get this book somehow or other. All the intricacies, what to say, how to react, how to deal with the person’s doubts, what he needs to hear, what you shouldn’t say—this will all be taught during *sankīr-tana*. But it begins with desire. One has to be attentive. One can’t be slow or sleepy. One has to be very sharp and alert. One has to understand things with spiritual vision at every moment. Above all, one shouldn’t see the person materially. The devotee has to see the person as a spirit soul.

**Positive thinking**

My request to you is to go on in this way with more enthusiasm. This is the key. Always remain enthusiastic and inspire others, and your life will be glorious, and at the end you are sure to go back to home, back to Godhead.  

Long, long ago when I was alone, I was thinking of printing like this, but there was no way to do it. Now you American boys and girls are helping me, so I thank you in this regard.
I pray to Kṛṣṇa for your continued enthusiasm in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 30

Harikeśa Swami: Fearlessly, enthusiastically, and optimistically one should go about his devotional service. I have seen that these qualities are sufficient to completely transform a place. When I first came to Germany [1976], all the devotees would walk around the temple, saying, “It’s hopeless. What’s the use? It’s finished.” Then I made a campaign, simply walking around the temple, saying: “It’s hopeful. It’s definitely good and getting better. It’s excellent.” And then I got one or two others to make the same propaganda, and after a while the devotees began to think, “It’s not so bad. Actually, it’s pretty good.” Then they started distributing ten times more than anybody in the world simply because they started thinking that it was quite possible.

If you spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, everything becomes auspicious, everything can work, everything becomes blissful. It’s a question of positive thinking. Simply by thinking like that, wonderful things are done. And if you think you’re finished, then you’re finished. Sometimes a devotee goes to a bogus astrologer and gets some chart. Then he is informed that he will be in a lot of difficulties at one point. So when that point comes, the devotee arranges his life in such a way that he will have many troubles. It’s called a self-fulfilling prophecy. But even if it were true, an intelligent devotee would arrange his life to make sure it didn’t happen.

Therefore we have to have some positive thinking. If you think you can do it, then you can do it. If you think you can distribute a thousand books a day, somehow you’ll figure out how to do it. A thousand books is about thirty full sets a day. That means you just have to meet thirty people who take a full set. If you think about it, it’s quite possible. You might be able to do that. At least if you think that way, then maybe you’ll start doing five hundred books a day. And that’s not so bad either. It is simply a question of having the right attitude. And that means that one depends on Kṛṣṇa. If He wants you to do nicely, then you will. Therefore we are requesting everybody to think positively. In other words, have some faith in Kṛṣṇa! It isn’t too much to ask. (From a class in Zurich on October 23, 1984)

3.7 Divine austerity

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.1: Lord Rṣabhadeva told His sons: My dear boys, of all the living entities who have accepted material bodies in this world, one who has been awarded this human form should not work hard day and
night simply for sense gratification, which is available even for dogs and hogs that eat stool. One should engage in penance and austerity to attain the divine position of devotional service. By such activity, one’s heart is purified, and when one attains this position, he attains eternal, blissful life, which is transcendental to material happiness and which continues forever.

Purport: Human life is meant for tapasya, austerity and penance. By tapasya, one can get out of the material clutches. When one is situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotional service, his happiness is guaranteed eternally. By taking to bhakti-yoga, devotional service, one’s existence is purified. The living entity is seeking happiness life after life, but he can make a solution to all his problems simply by practicing bhakti-yoga. Then he immediately becomes eligible to return home, back to Godhead.

_Bhagavad-gītā_ 17.14–17: Austerity of the body consists in worship of the Supreme Lord, the brāhmaṇas, the spiritual master, and superiors like the father and mother, and in cleanliness, simplicity, celibacy and nonviolence. Austerity of speech consists in speaking words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial, and not agitating to others, and also in regularly reciting Vedic literature. And satisfaction, simplicity, gravity, self-control and purification of one’s existence are the austerities of the mind. This threefold austerity, performed with transcendental faith by men not expecting material benefits but engaged only for the sake of the Supreme, is called austerity in goodness.

**Tolerating difficulties**

I am so much pleased upon all of the boys and girls in Los Angeles and all over the world who are understanding and appreciating the unique quality of our transcendental literature and voluntarily going out to distribute books despite all circumstances of difficulty. By this effort alone they are assured to go back to home, back to Godhead. 31

_Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa (Austria):_ Austerities are both physical and mental. It is a great austerity to go out in the freezing cold or the blazing heat, or when it snows or rains. Weather conditions create a lot of austerity for book distributors. And regarding mental austerities, the people are sometimes dull and stupid. I think the greatest austerity is tolerating the foolishness of the people. And, of course, we have to tolerate our own minds. There is also the austerity of tolerating bodily pain, because as we go on distributing
books, it strains the body, and we get pains in the back and feet. In the beginning all this austerity appears difficult—just like poison, Bhagavad-gītā says—but because we are going out on the order of the spiritual master, out of duty, by doing it we can please the spiritual master, which awakens many Kṛṣṇa conscious realizations. In this way we can understand that all this austerity is meant for our purification, for our own benefit, and at the same time many other conditioned souls benefit from this merciful sankīrtana mission.

Purūravā Dāsa: On book distribution one has to surrender every day. In some other services, one may do something mechanically. Of course, Kṛṣṇa is not as pleased, but at least one has done it. But on book distribution, if one wants to give out the books, he has to surrender. So the special austerity—and special bliss—is that he has to surrender every day. He has to give up the concept every day that he is the enjoyer and the controller, and he just has to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Also, on the physical platform it is austere, especially in Scandinavia, where it is very cold. In Norway it is always raining. Elsewhere it is sometimes too hot. Sometimes a devotee meets nasty demons who want to beat him up. But the physical austerity, compared with farm work, is not as great, and he has quite a few opportunities for comfort in one sense. So the austerity is that he has to control his mind and senses and be tolerant when he meets all kinds of foolish or nasty people. He has to be humble. Those are special austerities, but there are also special rewards in the form of special mercy from the spiritual master. Because it is such a difficult service and one has to surrender a great deal, the spiritual master is always pleased with a disciple who is doing that service nicely.

Tapas Dāsa (Norway): Even if someone is nasty you have to be detached: “Okay! Maybe next time.” This is tapasya—you’re always nice, even if other people are not. Prabhupāda explains in the purport to the verse titikṣavaḥ kārūnikāḥ suḥṛdah sarva-dehinām that the devotee has the thankless task of giving people what they don’t want. But that is also what makes sankīrtana ecstatic and funny. If you are really into it, you can feel that it is Lord Caitanya who wants to give them what they don’t want. He wants to give it anyway, and you are just an instrument. And it is ecstatic to do the impossible on behalf of the spiritual master. But if you get puffed up, then you cannot do anything.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: I think it is more austere to stay in the temple all day because you are attacked by māyā in subtle ways. There is much more of
a danger. If I were in a temple all day, I could fall into māyā and not know about it. But on the street you know about everything straightaway. So that’s the wonderful thing about sanātana.

A means to purify and restrain the mind

*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.5p: In the yoga system . . . the mind should be trained so that it will not be attracted by the glitter of material nature, and in this way the conditioned soul may be saved. One should not degrade oneself by attraction to sense objects. The more one is attracted by sense objects, the more one becomes entangled in material existence. The best way to disentangle oneself is to always engage the mind in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. . . . The mind which is always engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the cause of supreme liberation.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** The Bhāgavatam says, “First the mind should be engaged at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa very steadily and naturally. Because the mind is the master of the senses, when the mind is engaged, all the senses are engaged. That is bhakti yoga. Yoga means controlling the senses” (SB 3.25.44). When we do not control our senses, lust agitates the senses and mind. When lust develops, intelligence is lost, and we fall from devotional service into māyā and suffer. From that point we must drag ourselves up again, which is tough work that may take some time. Easier is to forgo all the suffering and just meditate on the lotus feet of the Lord, your service of book distribution, the goals of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and the comparative worth of all other activities.

**Lilāvatāra Dāsa:** Book distribution is a transcendental activity full of unending nectar. A neophyte devotee will see it as an austerity because he has not yet qualified himself for this divine activity, but the expert devotee is feeling a great continuous joy. He would never want to stop doing sanātana. Kṛṣṇa is arranging tasty and mystical experiences that tie the book distributor to this activity in a lasting way. Sometimes, before going out, the mind is still our enemy, but as soon as we distribute the first books, everything becomes easy and auspicious, so much so that in the evening the devotee does not want to stop, so high is the taste. We must try to do sanātana until everything becomes easy and joyful. We must always work on our consciousness, on our own standard, in order to be fully absorbed while distributing. The mind has to be in a position of constant prayer, and then one will no longer see it as an austerity.
Haripāda Dāsa (Spain): The austerities in spiritual life are nectar compared with the austerities of the material world. Some of the special austerities are having to take cold showers sometimes, maybe taking prasādam on the highway, and not having much time to yourself. There are subtle austerities, too: you have to control your mind, fix your attention. This is explained in Bhagavad-gītā. In the beginning Kṛṣṇa consciousness is like poison for the attached mind, but then it becomes nectar. I always relate this understanding to sankirtana. Every day the mind tries to play tricks on us so that we don’t go out or go out late. Everything except going out—the mind avoids that like poison. But as soon as you go out, you realize it’s nectar, and by experiencing it every day, you stop paying attention to the protesting mind, and you just do it. And you know from the very beginning that it will be nectar, and then the mind loses its fears, and sankirtana becomes natural and blissful.

Vijaya Dāsa: It becomes austere for us only when we get on the material platform; otherwise it’s no austerity. Therefore the austerity is controlling the mind. When we understand that we are the soul within the body, servants of Kṛṣṇa, then there is no austerity. But because we are conditioned souls, controlling the mind by fixing it on the desire of Kṛṣṇa is the austerity. Eventually it becomes blissful to control the mind and bring it back to Kṛṣṇa.

Forced surrender

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.113: One may sell books or enlist life members or render some other service, but these duties are not ordinary duties. These duties serve as an impetus for remembering Kṛṣṇa. When one goes with a sankirtana party or sells books, he naturally remembers that he is going to sell Kṛṣṇa’s books. In this way, he is remembering Kṛṣṇa. When one goes to enlist a life member, he talks about Kṛṣṇa and thereby remembers Him. Smartavyah satataṃ viṣṇur vismartavyo na jātucit: the conclusion is that one must act in such a way that he will always remember Kṛṣṇa, and one must refrain from doing things that make him forget Kṛṣṇa. These two principles form the basic background of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The special quality of book distribution is that it forces one to think of Kṛṣṇa. One can’t forget Kṛṣṇa for a long time and keep on distributing, what to speak of continuing the service for years or a lifetime. This steadiness (niṣṭhā) is more than the external execution of duties. It is a
constant meditation on Kṛṣṇa that is possible only when one’s heart has been cleansed of anarthas (anartha-nivṛtti). If one is not on that platform, the saṅkīrtana-yajña is a means of bringing him to that platform, because the means and the end are nondifferent. The process of remembering Kṛṣṇa is meditation, and he becomes purified by it:

\[
\text{oṁ apavitraḥ pavitro vā sarvāvasthām gato 'pi vā yah smaret puṇḍarikākṣam sa bāhyābhhyantaraḥ śucih}
\]

“Whether pure or impure, or having passed through all conditions of life, if one can remember the lotus-eyed Personality of Godhead, he becomes clean externally and internally” (Garuda Purāṇa). This mantra is traditionally chanted at Vedic fire ceremonies (yajñas). How applicable then it must be to the saṅkīrtana-yajña of book distribution, which demands one’s active participation on all levels—on saṅkīrtana one has to think of Kṛṣṇa, or he cannot go on.

**Gaurī Devī Dāsī:** Sometimes saṅkīrtana devotees become entrapped by a false complacency, but Kṛṣṇa is always working to show us that this is not what He wants. I could have been complacent. I had just won all the awards, and I got a little citation for being a nice devotee. Then Kṛṣṇa told me I had two months to live. Kṛṣṇa is taking care of all of us in one way or another just to make sure we really take life seriously and understand what we’re doing here. We’re fallen, and we have to work very hard to become purified. We may think we’re doing great preaching and doing a lot of service, but we always have to be reminded how insignificant we are. Kṛṣṇa could make the whole planet Kṛṣṇa conscious in a minute if He had wanted to, just as He could have killed everybody in the Battle of Kurukṣetra if He wanted to. But He used Arjuna. And He’s using us. He wants to give us the opportunity to become purified by engaging in service to Him. Our getting the opportunity to distribute books is Kṛṣṇa’s causeless mercy upon us. Sometimes we may get a big result, sometimes we won’t. If we get a big result, we should understand even better that we should really examine our hearts and be sure that we’re appreciating how opulent Kṛṣṇa is and that He has actually done it. He’s giving us the credit for some ridiculous reason—just to see how puffed-up we are going to get over it. Imagine you go out and distribute one or two hundred books a day. It is a big test. Definitely you think you’re the doer for a while. But after a short time it dawns on you that
Krṣṇa had something to do with it. However He deals with us is just His mercy to help us come to our senses and realize who we are—the humble, menial servants. We can’t do the slightest thing on our own. Whatever we do is to Krṣṇa’s credit. You may then think, “Well, what’s the point? What am I doing it for?” Because all a materialist wants is name and fame, honor and distinction, and society, friendship, and love. So, if you’re not working for that, what are you working for? Every devotee, sooner or later, will reach the point where he really has to cut himself off from that motivation and gradually transfer his energy to a much deeper motivation. Deepening our motivation can come from experiencing the nectar of book distribution, which means relishing the spiritual relationships you have, both with conditioned souls, which is really exciting, and with Lord Caitanya. This can free you so much from the desire to be number one or to be anybody. You’re satisfied just getting a higher taste, and you want to do as many books as you can and engage as many conditioned souls as you can. But it’s in a very detached, natural manner, like a surgeon. When he performs an operation, he wants to do a good job. He doesn’t want the patient to die. Similarly, we know that book distribution is our service to Krṣṇa, and naturally we want to be first class.

**Jiva Dāsa:** Being a book distributor means that one wants to be a sincere devotee or disciple of his spiritual master. Our disciplic succession is rooted in *saṅkīrtana*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His followers like the six Gosvāmīs spread Krṣṇa consciousness, and they left us this part of the world to continue their work. We become self-realized by doing this service, we’re purified, we develop love for Krṣṇa and deep spiritual understandings, and others are also benefited. We can change the material society by distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, as the history of our movement shows. The *saṅkīrtana* devotees should follow the example of their spiritual masters. And we should aspire for all the sublime characteristics of a devotee described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. That is not technique. It develops out of devotion, and Krṣṇa reveals these qualities to us. That’s the nice thing about *saṅkīrtana*: We have to prove our spiritual motives, our spiritual desires to go on with book distribution, every day. By simply working on this point, we attain all other qualities automatically.

**Nṛsimhadeva Dāsa (Switzerland):** Through association with the spiritual master and all the other empowered *saṅkīrtana* devotees, one feels so purified from all material impurities that one takes the vow: “I want to satisfy my spiritual master, even though I have many egoistic desires, even though
I may be a blockhead. But by his mercy, because he enlightens me in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I want to give this to others and serve his mission. I want to try this for the rest of my life.” Then one goes out again and again. And one likes to suffer a little bit for the spiritual master, because one understands that the difficulties one has to face are actually purification. Sometimes people are slamming their doors on us, and we have to force ourselves to the ultimate degree to continue. These are the purifying moments, because we want to come to the platform of serving Kṛṣṇa without any selfish motives.

An opportunity to make the quickest advancement

Devotee: We’re becoming happy by distributing your books.
Prabhupāda: Thank you. It is Kṛṣṇa’s book.
Tripūrā: Just by distributing your books, we can become self-realized.
Prabhupāda: You are already self-realized. Otherwise how can you push on the books? You love Kṛṣṇa; therefore you are taking so much labor for pushing on. And that is self-realization. If anyone tries to establish that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, that is self-realization.
Tripūrā: Sometimes the devotees ask if they can take birth again distributing books for you.
Prabhupāda: Very good. That is real devotion. Devotees do not want to go to Vaikuṇṭha or get any liberation. They are satisfied with service. That is pure devotion. And distributing books for the benefit of going to Kṛṣṇa, that is selfishness. But if one thinks, “I simply want to distribute the books without any remuneration”—that is a pure devotee. Just like Prahlāda Mahārāja says, “I do not wish to go to Vaikuṇṭha unless I take all of these rascals with me.” That is a pure devotee. He is always under the protection of Kṛṣṇa. What is the use of going to Vaikuṇṭha? Wherever he stays, that is Vaikuṇṭha. That is pure devotional service. *Mama janmani janmanīśvare bhavatād bhaktir ahaituki*: life after life I may go on with this business—I don’t want anything. That is pure devotion. 32

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Book distribution is most pleasing to the spiritual master. It’s the quickest way to advance because it demands the most surrender. Kṛṣṇa reciprocates with anyone who surrenders in devotional service, but book distributors are forced to surrender. Moment by moment, day by day, they have to be conscientiously determined, whereas in other services there appears to be a greater allowance to slack off. But on *sāṅkīrtana*, any slacking off results in decreased book distribution and painful kicks from māyā. Kṛṣṇa lets you know immediately that you’re in māyā and need to surrender more. Doing so is a sign of sincerity and is most pleas-
ing to the spiritual master. And through his mercy, all perfection can be attained.

I am in due receipt of your weekly *Saṅkirtana Newsletter*. I am always happy to hear of increasing book sales. These reports are very encouraging to me. Our real business is to print and distribute books. By doing this business you are all becoming recognized by Kṛṣṇa. Please try to continue working so nicely for Kṛṣṇa, following the rules and regulations, chanting sixteen rounds, and studying my books, and you will finish your business in this material world in this life and enter into the spiritual world to live with Kṛṣṇa eternally. Don’t become discouraged by any so-called problems. Make your program simple, that is to say, always make sure that you are somehow or other engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service, and the best service is preaching or engaging others in Kṛṣṇa’s service. So continue in this way and be happy.  

I read your *Saṅkirtana Newsletter* with great relish. Europe and America are in great danger—this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is enveloping them. The saṅkirtana devotees are very, very dear to Kṛṣṇa. Because they are doing the field work of book distribution, Kṛṣṇa has immediately recognized them as true servants. Just like during war time, a farm boy or ordinary clerk who goes to fight for his country on the front immediately becomes a national hero for his sincere effort. So Kṛṣṇa immediately recognizes a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness who takes all risks to deliver His message. It is called *drḍha-vratāḥ*, determination. These boys and girls are *mahātmās*. *Mahātmānas tu māṁ pārthā daivīṁ prakṛtim āśritāḥ, bhajanty ananya manaso jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam*: “O son of Pṛthå, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible.” This verse is applicable here. If these boys were under material nature they would not take so much risk. They are *mahātmās*. They are real *mahātmās*, not that long-beard-and-saffron-cloth *mahātmā*. They are unswerving in their determination, *drḍha-vratāḥ*. All glories to the American devotees!  

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### Qualities of a Book Distributor

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3.8 Sources of inspiration

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā_ 25.264p: A Vaiśṇava is especially interested in _para-upakāra_, doing good to others. Prahlāda Mahārāja was also interested in this. He did not want to be delivered alone; rather, he wanted to deliver all fallen souls, who are bereft of knowledge of _bhakti_ and who misuse their intelligence for the temporary benefit of the material body. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu also wanted His mission spread all over the world. _Prthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma_: “In every town and village, the chanting of My name will be heard.” Following in His footsteps, we are trying to broadcast His message throughout the world. By His mercy, people are taking this movement very seriously. Indeed, our books are extensively distributed in the Western countries, especially in America and Europe. Even the ecclesiastical orders in these countries are appreciating the value of this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and are ready to unite for the highest benefit of human society. The followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu may therefore take this movement seriously and broadcast it throughout the world, from village to village and from town to town, just as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself did.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda made book distribution the top priority**

_Rohinīsuta Dāsa_: What has been my inspiration to continue? It is Prabhupāda, seeing how Prabhupāda took book distribution as his life and soul. There are so many inspiring letters in which he pushes it—you see Prabhupāda’s life was his books. And he is emphasizing that you go out and distribute the books. That is the most important thing. All the inspiration comes from the spiritual master, from Prabhupāda. The other thing is reading his books. That is such an inspiration. When you read the philosophy, you learn that everything is in his books. I read many books before I joined, many Indian philosophy and _yoga_ books, and when I was in the temple, I was very attached to all these books, and I had them with me. But as soon as I threw them away and read Prabhupāda’s books more and more, I felt so much advancement. If you actually read Prabhupāda’s books carefully, you find whatever good ideas all the bhogīs and yogīs may have in their books and much more. In Prabhupāda’s books everything is in the right way. Whatever good ideas one may find in the Bible, Buddhism, and Taoism, I found in Prabhupāda’s books. In the _Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam_ and _Bhagavad-gītā_ everything is there. Therefore I feel obliged to give these books to people. Everyone is confused today. They read so many books, but they just become more confused. Prabhupāda’s books are the only hope and the
only help, the only philosophy for all seekers and all people. So we have to
give his books to people, and that’s a big inspiration.

When you go out with Prabhupāda’s books to encounter all these people
and to present Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda, it’s such a nice feeling, such a nice
realization, although they may take or not take. Many people, you can see,
change on the spot and become attached to the books. All of a sudden, by
the devotee’s inspired words and by touching the books, they become so
enlivened that you can see that they are not the body, but spirit soul. They
are really eager to get these books. They look for these books. They want
Prabhupāda’s books. Maybe they don’t tell you on the spot, but they want
these books. The sankṛtana devotee can feel this, and it inspires him fur-
ther to go out every day. He doesn’t want to miss one day. Even one day
missed on sankṛtana is a big loss and frustration to the sankṛtana devotee.
I have seen that when you stop sankṛtana for some weeks or months to do
something else, it is so hard to begin again. Therefore it is better never to
stop. Although sometimes it goes well and sometimes it goes bad, you sim-
ply have to continue.

Vijaya Dāsa: A great impetus for me to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books
comes from my spiritual master. He inspires me to become Kṛṣṇa conscious
and to distribute Prabhupāda’s books. His purity, his understanding of the
importance of book distribution, his classes, his analogies, and his Kṛṣṇa
consciousness have given me great impetus to remain a devotee as long as I
have and to go out and distribute Prabhupāda’s books for as long as I have.
Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed it as our number-one mission. Śrīla Prabhupāda
came to give us Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to help us understand how to serve
Kṛṣṇa, and numerous times he said that the most important service is dis-
tributing his books. So to me that is also important. And I also enjoy doing
book distribution. I go out because it’s so nice, and it helps me come to the
spiritual platform and transcend the illusory energy. When we go out and
distribute books, undoubtedly there will be many difficulties. This gives one
impetus to pray to Kṛṣṇa. It helps one become Kṛṣṇa conscious and enjoy
life.

Encouragement from the authorities

Śaiṛṣṭi Devī Dāsi: The main point is that the ācārya is giving this mission.
If it weren’t for Śrīla Prabhupāda, we wouldn’t have the books. And if he
had not told us how important it is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by book
distribution, then we wouldn’t do it. And we also have to hear it from our
spiritual master. Then we will be inspired to do it. Because it is not that you
come to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and you immediately understand what the mission is. First you are concerned with your own spiritual welfare. After a while you understand you should also give it to others. The spiritual masters give this direction. Then encouragement must come from the temple authorities. The instruction passes down. There must be a special mood of book distribution and preaching in the temple. Then everything else will take place. All of us need this inspiration. Who of us is a book distributor by nature? None of us. As a matter of fact, before I was a devotee, the worst thing I could ever imagine doing was selling something on the street or door to door, especially something connected with religion. I was thinking that this was the lowest type of employment, but now I’m doing it. The spiritual master and the temple authorities stress this point, and Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed it. If we didn’t hear it from the authorities, then maybe we wouldn’t draw it out of the books immediately, because Śrīla Prabhupāda explains many different topics in his books. Therefore, if we learn it in this way, then we can get a very deep understanding of the philosophy, and that spiritual understanding makes our attitude on book distribution mature. And book distribution keeps a temple healthy on many different levels, spiritually and economically.

**Haridāsa Thākura Dāsa:** For me, the most important inspiration is the order of the spiritual master. Because he told me to distribute books, I’m doing it. And the second most important inspiration is the association of other devotees who have dedicated their lives to the book distribution mission and go out every day. Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda always stressed book distribution as our most important mission. When I read this in Prabhupāda’s letters, I become very inspired to go out myself and do it. Then reading his books is inspiring. And the service itself. Sometimes I have the taste and sometimes I don’t, but not having a taste on book distribution is due to my material desires, not the service itself. The service is always blissful. Sometimes I’m not enjoying this bliss because of my attachment to material nature. But by seeing how book distribution will purify and liberate the world I become inspired. Just from the practical point of view, this is an intelligent way of getting donations, and from these donations, Māyāpur will be built. When I first joined ISKCON and started book distribution, this idea inspired me very much: by giving knowledge to people, one can earn one’s livelihood and maintain the whole temple. I found this inspiring—that just by giving people knowledge, you can maintain yourself and everything else.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** When one joins, one doesn’t have direct association with the spiritual master. One doesn’t even know what a spiritual master is.
At least in my case it was like that. But after some time, after some months of sankīrtana, the significance of the spiritual master and of Śrīla Prabhupāda gradually became revealed. The real inspiration for continuing on sankīrtana is the order and the example of the ācāryas and the spiritual master. This is what inspires me totally. From the biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda I know how he fought to start the movement at an advanced age and underwent many hardships and struggled to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. Now to see those who are strictly following him is inspiring me. For example, my spiritual master’s mission is to translate Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books into all the languages of the world and to produce them and to organize the distribution so that everyone gets an entire set of books. For the disciple, it is most inspiring to see the determination of the spiritual master. If everyone else would give up, he himself would go out to distribute books. He once said in a lecture that if the BBT went bankrupt, and if everybody else walked out, then he would go to a construction company and earn money, and with that money he would again produce books and sell them himself. We could understand that he meant it, and this again made us very serious. Seeing this steel-hard determination of the ācāryas and the spiritual master is what inspires me the most. When I see my authorities, who have dedicated their lives entirely to this mission, and who give the example how to fight and accept great hardships, then within me some desire grows to work hard for the book distribution mission and to surrender my life.

Kalpavāsinī Devī Dāśī: Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Whoever distributes books for the rest of their life will go back to Godhead.” So I will also have the chance to go back to Godhead at the end of this life if I distribute books. I will become free from repeated birth and death.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: I really know that I’m an impractical person, and I can’t think of any other service I could possibly do. It is simply the mercy of my spiritual master that he is engaging me in this way. That’s an inspiration to stay in this service.

Reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books

If you read these literatures carefully you will realize the topmost science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and be more inspired to spread the same to all persons as their real welfare benefit. 35

From your letter I can understand that you are reading my books nicely and understanding our philosophy. This is
wanted. By reading my books carefully you will become encouraged to distribute them more and more in greater quantities. If you continue in this way being very much determined to achieve success in this lifetime, following all the rules, chanting at least sixteen rounds, and reading my books, then all of your desires to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness will be fulfilled, and you will surely attain spiritual perfection and be able to go back to Godhead very soon. 36

**Harikeśa Swami:** In South Africa in 1975, we were in Prabhupāda’s room, and he had just been given the Fifth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He was very happy to get this book. But as he was looking at the book, and as everybody left, he said, “In America they are thinking these books are for others, that they are simply for distribution. They don’t know that I have written these books for my disciples to read. Now I am authorizing you to read my books twenty-four hours a day. I want all my disciples to become expert in this philosophy and then distribute it with great power and potency.” (From a class in Māyāpur on March 22, 1982)

**Vijaya Dāsa:** Every day before I go out on book distribution, I read from *Bhagavad-gītā*. This gives me incredible encouragement to go out.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** To become more inspired it is very important to read properly. Sometimes if I’m feeling really uninspired on the street, I go back to the car and read, especially out loud, to make sure the transcendental vibration is really entering my ears and making some vibration in my head. This is a good way to become inspired.

**Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa:** By reading, you fill yourself with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The whole day your consciousness is charged-up, and you can do *saṅkirtana* without any problems. The consciousness must be fixed on Kṛṣṇa and on this mission. For me, reading the books is the way to imbibe the Kṛṣṇa consciousness to do book distribution the whole day.

**Navīna-nīrada Dāsa:** Especially the *Bhāgavatam*—you can go deep into it and get so much understanding and realization from Prabhupāda that after reading for one or two hours, you cannot stay in the van any longer. You have to go out and distribute the books. Because that’s what it’s all about. Nārada Muni is preaching, and this *mahājana* is preaching, and Śiva is preaching—so why I am staying at home? I have to follow in their footsteps. Therefore daily reading is important.
Enjoying book distribution

**Nirguña Dāsa:** The nectar of book distribution is acting as a spirit soul, as a servant of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, as a savior of the fallen living entities. One is not acting on the material platform. So that is nectar—being removed from the modes of material nature. Another nectarean thing is seeing Kṛṣṇa act or allowing oneself to act on His behalf. Kṛṣṇa helps the jīvas take the books. Seeing people transformed is also wonderful. This is their opportunity. Now they have a link.

**Gaurī Devī Dāsī:** The deepest experience for me was learning to take more and more shelter of sankirtana—to see it as a shelter, as a place where I was experiencing my relationship with Kṛṣṇa. I was praying to Kṛṣṇa the whole time or as much of the time as I could remember to pray when I was out there. Thus it became more and more clear to me that whenever I was on sankirtana trying to distribute books and preach to people about Kṛṣṇa, I was safe in the sense that I was with Kṛṣṇa. I could experience that I was doing the best I could to serve Kṛṣṇa at that point. And another thing that has made sankirtana enlivening to me and a deeper experience and something I relish a lot is that I gradually began to experience a real, increasing exchange with the conditioned souls. The more I was praying and trying to become externally steady, the more Kṛṣṇa allowed me to concentrate and experience a real rapport with conditioned souls. You know, the more you let go of your material personality and conditioning and you really try to see where somebody is coming from and you just fully concentrate on engaging them, you can’t help relishing it. The whole experience is so sweet, you feel some love from the conditioned souls. They are so appreciative. It is the soul itself, whether or not they consciously realize what’s happening to them. But you can see what is happening. And you’re feeling love for the conditioned soul, and you’re realizing that this is coming from Kṛṣṇa. It is not something just from you, although it’s your feeling, too. Two things are happening simultaneously. You are realizing that they’re getting Kṛṣṇa’s mercy—it is not that you’re giving them the mercy independently of Kṛṣṇa—and you’re being allowed to witness it and experience this love. That is what I experience when I distribute books, and it’s so relishable that I always want to go out and do it.

**Tapas Dāsa:** I find it helpful sometimes to write a few lines in the evening. I just try to recollect the day and find out what happened or what I did wrong. Then the next day I try to improve on that. Because you are being taught how to become a devotee while you go on sankirtana. It is an education. Not
that we are being directly instructed by the spiritual master all the time, and we know everything. We can’t often see our spiritual master in Norway. We are far off, and it is very difficult even to go to Sweden. So we are taught on the street. And Lord Caitanya tells you where you’re at. You think you are humble one day, but Lord Caitanya knows you are puffed-up. So He will teach that you are puffed-up. Someone will come and smash your false ego. Or if you are helpless or desperate, Kṛṣṇa will give you some nectar. In this way there is a very intense exchange. Therefore those who are on traveling sankīrtana want to stay out. They feel Kṛṣṇa’s presence more on the street than in the temple. Sometimes it is amazing how His presence can be felt.

The example and association of other book distributors

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu stressed that the most important thing for a devotee is the association of other devotees. That association is the source of all forms of inspiration: from first learning about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to learning how to chant and perform devotional service, and to understanding the philosophy, the spiritual master and his mission. Even when we don’t have the direct association of devotees (when we are out alone distributing books), we know that the strength and inspiration we feel derives from their association. We can always feel their presence.

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: An important source of inspiration is the association of devotees, not only their direct association but also through meditation. In the last Prabhupāda marathon, for example, Arjuna Prabhu came to the house where all the devotees stayed during the marathon. He had been entangled with management, and he came to try to enter into the mood of book distribution. In the sankīrtana house he got the association of Jiva, who was distributing 2,500 books a week. This inspired Arjuna so much that he started meditating on Jiva and went to the train station and started distributing one stack of books after another. It worked immediately. He just took up the vibration and distributed a lot.
PART TWO

PURITY IS THE FORCE
The Southern Side of the Nectar Ocean of Book Distribution

“Our unique asset is our purity. No one anywhere can match it. That will be noticed eventually and appreciated as long as we do not diminish or neglect the highest standard of purity in performing our routine work. Not that we require to display or announce ourselves in very clever ways to get attention. No, our pure standard is enough. Let us stand on that basis.” ¹

—Śrīla Prabhupāda
Introduction to Part Two

Book distribution is ISKCON’s most important activity. So how does one practically distribute books? What techniques are there? What are the personal qualifications needed? Because book distribution is a transcendental activity, both techniques and qualifications depend on purity, as Śrīla Prabhu-pāda impressed upon his disciples again and again: “The standard of purity that I have introduced in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will give you the real spiritual strength needed to preach. If you will simply stick to your principles, you will gain the respect of the whole world and our preaching work will be successful.” 2 “Purity is the force, and if the people in general notice that we are clean both inside and outside that is to our credit.” 3

By virtue of transcendental strength and purity even material techniques become effective means of accomplishing spiritual purposes. Chapter Four describes methods for the mass distribution of Śrīla Prabhu-pāda’s books, especially distributing books while wearing Western clothes. This has proven to be the most successful method for distributing a large quantity of books, but to match the quantity with quality (purity) demands that distributors be mature and sensitive. If purity is missing, people feel disturbed and offended. That must be avoided by all means; otherwise book distribution suffers, as history has shown—these negative lessons are included in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five mentions a variety of other methods of book distribution: selling door to door; in shops, offices, and industrial areas; by mail order, home programs, and other ways.

To fulfill Śrīla Prabhu-pāda’s desire to see many books distributed, it is most important to distribute for a long time. That’s why Chapter Six discusses long-term book distribution: how to continue book distribution for a lifetime or at least remain connected to the sāṅkīrtana mission. Śrīla Prabhu-pāda especially desired that devotees remain happy and steady in their services; therefore even beyond achieving big day-to-day results, developing purity is most important.
4

The Mass Distribution Of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Books

“We are the only hope for the human society to receive real knowledge, and our books are the only real thing. It may take some time, but one day all this rubbish literature, rubbish philosophy, rubbish culture will be replaced. . . . This is my only ambition—that so many people can become enlightened. But they are being deprived of the chance. One day the whole world will appreciate how we have changed the face of the world from darkness to light. This year, book distribution must increase more than double. We have so many plans; we are building Māyāpur city, so Kṛṣṇa must increase our books sales more and more. In the future it will be history how the Vedic culture was introduced in America. We are introducing a new style of life and civilization. Everything should be ideal. Others have never dreamt of such a civilization—free and happy life, no anxiety, and hope, great hope, that we are going back home, back to Godhead. By increasing the selling of books, America, and then the whole world, will become Kṛṣṇa conscious. All the world is in darkness. The scientists, Darwin, Freud—all in darkness. This is the only institute giving some light. You must be convinced of this in order to preach effectively.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted in Distribute Books, Distribute Books, Distribute Books, by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami, p. 107)

4.1 Śrīla Prabhupāda on mass distribution

The mass distribution of books most effectively fulfilled Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desires that book distribution increase continually. Therefore this chapter stresses mass distribution, and the next chapter is dedicated to other forms of book distribution, although many points (especially in the section “Unlimited ways to praise Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books”) also apply to the other types of book distribution described in the next chapter.
Each book we distribute, regardless of its being part of a large or small result, has the potential to change the lives of conditioned souls. If we are empowered, we can give more books to each person and convince even more persons to take more books. A bigger number of books means a greater quantity of mercy for the conditioned souls. That’s why Śrīla Prabhupāda so much emphasized mass distribution.

In the past the forceful mass distribution of books sometimes increased in quantity at the expense of quality, as devotees relied on improper and irresponsible means, which are briefly discussed in this chapter. ISKCON received bad reactions, and that made devotees suspicious of mass distribution techniques. But irresponsible mass distribution taught ISKCON a lesson. It made the point that we cannot maintain quantity without quality. Kṛṣṇa will not tolerate it.

However, as we have seen recently and in the past, if book distributors have pure motives to distribute huge quantities of books, Kṛṣṇa empowers them to do so with high-quality methods. Then people are attracted and sometimes watch amazed as such book distribution takes place. Why? Because Kṛṣṇa conscious book distributors are appealing. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s plans were so big that he explicitly desired huge quantities of book distribution, and therefore his followers’ duty is to find the most pleasing means to distribute increasing quantities of books for his pleasure.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted mass distribution

Somehow or other, we shall overflood the market with Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. That will create our prestige. And being cheap distribution, many people will learn our philosophy.  

We want to flood the world with our books. So go on in this way and Kṛṣṇa will surely bless you.

I want that my books should be very widely distributed, as many as possible.

I’m especially pleased to hear that your distribution of our books and magazines has increased. Go on in this way, increasing more and more. Each time someone reads some solid information about Kṛṣṇa his life becomes changed in some way. These literatures are the solid ground upon which our preaching stands, so I want that they should be available to everyone, as many as possible. So please try for this.
This regular reporting is very encouraging for every one of our devotees, and I have faith in your words that next year the figures will be far beyond what they were last year. It is the nature of the spiritual energy. It is always increasing if we just apply our energy.  

Regarding Macmillan: For our missionary work, we want to distribute more books and at a lower price; if they want to increase the price, then terminate the agreement. . . . Regarding sales figures: Please endeavor in this way. The sales figures—this is the only solace in my life. When I hear that my books are selling so nicely, I become energetic like a young man. It is a very good report that the printers are surprised at our sales figures.  

Regarding the book distribution, somehow the distribution must be doubled and tripled as far as possible. Do it.

Distribution of my books is the most important thing. These other things such as selling incense and records are not as important as this. . . . I want that my books be distributed in huge quantities, and thus we will be able to thoroughly convince the majority of the population, especially there in America.

I am in due receipt of your telegram dated Dec. 17, 1974 reading as follows: “Great success. Book sales for weekend of Dec. 13 through 15: Tripurārī's BBT Party—1,346 big books; L.A.—1,002 big books; N.Y.—over 950 big books; Atlanta airport—over 650 big books in one day. Distribution definitely doubling in USA.” This kind of wonderful news is very pleasing to my heart, and I thank you all again and again. I think this is the first time in history that so many religious books have sold so popularly. Keep distributing as many as possible in huge quantities. This is my pleasure. We must make a large propaganda program for Kṛṣṇa consciousness by distributing these books everywhere, all over the world, just as the communists are very expert in distributing their literature, their propaganda. At the present moment they are distributing their literature here in India in nine different languages, and it is quite effective. Therefore
we must print hundreds and thousands of books and distribute them at the same speed, and thus we will have a great effect on the populations of Europe and America. If we can get the masses in the Western countries to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, then all the rest of the world will follow. That is a fact. So please, I beg you, continue distributing my books in this way, and Kṛṣṇa will pour His blessings upon you all.  

Your book-sale statistics are astounding. I am so much pleased. Please continue distributing such nice quantities, and try to enthuse others more and more. You are sincere, so Kṛṣṇa will give you all intelligence, strength, and everything else you may need to distribute millions and millions of books.  

Please go on every month breaking the records . . .  

Go on selling books. My Guru Mahārāja was very much anxious about selling books and preaching, so you are pleasing him by this flood of books all over the world. Thank you.  

The bombastic distribution of Kṛṣṇa trilogies in New York is wonderful. I have read the report given in the Saṅkīrtana Newsletter . . . All the leaders should tax their brains for increasing the sales of our books. I have always said that if we simply rely on book distribution, all our needs will be met.  

Aggression  

Śrila Prabhupāda knew well that materialists would feel disturbed by devotees approaching them, yet he sanctioned “being aggressive on saṅkīrtana.” To Prabhupāda that simply meant approaching someone without an invitation, in no way imposing oneself, harassing anyone, or being callous.  

Regarding the problem of how to be aggressive on saṅkīrtana and submissive in the temple, my request to you is that you should go on being aggressive on saṅkīrtana. I myself was aggressive in coming to your country. No one invited me. Even you boys and girls did not invite me. But I came, and I preached aggressively, and therefore you are now my disci-
Book distributors must find the proper balance between respecting people’s free will and inducing them to buy books. Devotees know that by sometimes applying force, people get the lasting benefit of this one devotional service—accepting a book. It is compared to administering medicine, which helps a patient even though he is forced to take it. The Viṣṇudūtas gave that analogy in regard to Ajāmila, and people nowadays are more sinful than Ajāmila, who lived his first twenty years as an exemplary brāhmaṇa: “If a person unaware of the effective potency of a certain medicine takes that medicine or is forced to take it, it will act even without his knowledge because its potency does not depend on the patient’s understanding. Similarly, even though one does not know the value of chanting the holy name of the Lord, if one chants knowingly or unknowingly, the chanting will be very effective.” (SB 6.3.19)

Books should not be given free

Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want books to be given away, even to libraries or VIPs, what to speak of people on the street. But he approved of leaflets and pamphlets being sent free by mail or distributed with books [see Ch. 8, Sec. 7].
Regarding sending books free to a library: The system you can adopt is to send the books and tell them to look them over for one week. If they do not like the book, they should send it back at our cost. If they like it and want it, then they can send the money to us. But we cannot give books away free to anyone. They must be paid for. 18

4.2 Devotee clothing, Western clothing

When the Krṣṇa consciousness movement began in America, harināma-saṅkīrtana was practically the only preaching devotees did, and they chanted in devotee clothing. When pamphlets and magazines were available, devotees distributed or sold them to the people gathered around the harināma group. Hardcover books, also, were first distributed by devotees dressed in devotee clothing. But the devotees discovered that by changing into inconspicuous Western clothing, new methods of distributing books and magazines were possible. Eventually Śrīla Prabhupāda approved the adaptation and pronounced it bona fide even in his purports.

Statements (in chronological order) by Śrīla Prabhupāda

Yes, if it is enhancing our distribution of books to wear warm clothes like coat and pants in winter, I have no objection, you may wear them. 19

Regarding our saṅkīrtana party members dressing as hippies in order to increase book distribution, this is not a very good plan. . . . this should be stopped—we should not give anyone cause to call us hippies. But the devotees can dress in respectable clothes like ladies and gentlemen to distribute my books under special circumstances, but even this program should not become widespread. 20

There is no objection to going in Western clothes to distribute my books. It is not necessary that we always wear the robes, but we should always keep śikhā and tilaka. However, a wig or hat may be worn as you describe. We have to take whatever is the favorable position for executing Krṣṇa consciousness. Do not forget our principles. But sometimes we may adapt such means in order to help distribute books.
Somehow or other distribute books, and if you can impress people a little to chant, then it does not matter about your dress.  

Regarding selling books in *karmī* clothes: Yes, it may be done, there is no harm.  

I am glad to hear of the book distribution success of Tripurāri in Chicago. It is reported that he did it dressed in *dhotī*, but Karandhara says that *dhotī* is an impediment. So if he can distribute 105 *Gitās* and 105 *Śrī Isopaniṣads* in one day in *dhoti* in Chicago, why not try for this in other places as well?  

Regarding the techniques for book distribution, it is all right if the devotees dress like the young people they are selling the books to. The main thing is that the innocent are given the books and the chance to become Kṛṣṇa conscious by reading them. You have to see that our book distributors are also reading my books and following all the regulative principles, then it is all right selling in public in that way.  

It is nice that you are continuing to distribute BTG. If *karmī* dress is favorable, then go on with *karmī* dress. We have to execute missionary activities; dress is not fundamental.  

Letter of November 26, 1976, from Hari-Śauri Dāsa, approved by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

The following is an extract from a class on SB 5.6.3, delivered on 25/11/76. Śrīla Prabhupāda requested that it be sent to all temples and G.B.C.

“If you pat your subordinates, it will increase their faulty habits, and if you chastise them, they will improve. Therefore it is advised that you should always chastise either your son or disciple—never give them leniency; a little leniency, and immediately many faults will grow. Now for our practical life we are known all over the world as shaven-headed, is it not? Now we are becoming hair-headed. We are forgetting shaving. Because there is a little leniency, immedi-
ately faulty things are creeping in. So we should be known as shaven-headed, not hair-headed. This is a discrepancy. At least once a month you must be clearly shaven-headed. On the bright fortnight, on the day of pūrṇimā, four days after Ekādaśī, once a month, we must be shaven-headed. It is not desirable that in grown-up age also you be chastised. That is not desirable. That is also difficult, because when the disciple or son is grown up, if he is chastised, then he breaks. So before being chastised we should be conscious that these are our rules and regulations which we must observe. . . . So, with folded hands, I request that you don’t become hippies again by growing hair. Keep your head cleansed at least once a month. That is my request. Neither I can chastise you—I am an old man, and you are young men.”

Conversation after the lecture:

Devotee 1: We usually shave every two weeks because even after two weeks it looks a little dirty.

Devotee 2: You can get good wigs.

Prabhupāda: No. There is no need. That is also mental concoction. Nowadays you can go with coat, pants, and shaven head. No one will criticize. It has become a fashion. Russians, they use; Krushchev, I have seen—shaven head.

[P.S.] Kindly send a copy to each center as soon as possible. His Divine Grace especially requests that the system of shaving the head on the fourth day after Ekādaśī, the Pūrṇimā, be introduced immediately in all centers.

What is the use of a wig? Keep regular gentleman’s hair. There is no need of saffron dress. If by ordinary dress you can sell more books, there is no need of saffron dress. 26

You can go dressed as a gentleman because it will be easier to travel in this part of the world. 27

Statements from Bhaktivedanta purports

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.7 p: In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, the tactic of dressing oneself like an ordinary karmī is necessary because everyone in the demoniac kingdom is against the Vaiṣṇava teachings. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not at all to the liking of the demons of the present age. As
soon as they see a Vaishnava dressed in saffron garments with beads on his neck and tilaka on his forehead, they are immediately irritated. They criticize the Vaishnavas by sarcastically saying Hare Krishna, and some people also chant Hare Krishna sincerely. In either case, since Hare Krishna is absolute, whether one chants it jokingly or sincerely, it will have its effect. The Vaishnavas are pleased when the demons chant Hare Krishna because this shows that the Hare Krishna movement is taking ground. The greater demons, like Hiranyakasipu, are always prepared to chastise the Vaishnavas, and they try to make arrangements so that Vaishnavas will not come to sell their books and preach Krishna consciousness. Thus what was done by Hiranyakasipu long, long ago is still being done. That is the way of materialistic life. Demons or materialists do not at all like the advancement of Krishna consciousness, and they try to hinder it in many ways. Yet the preachers of Krishna consciousness must go forward—in their Vaishnava dress or any other dress—for the purpose of preaching.

SrImad-Bhagavatam 7.13.9p: For paramahamsas, or sannyasis in the Vaishnava order, preaching is the first duty. To preach, such sannyasis may accept the symbols of sannyasa, such as the danda and kamandalu, or sometimes they may not. Generally the Vaishnava sannyasis, being paramahamsas, are automatically called babajis, and they do not carry a kamandalu or danda. Such a sannyasi is free to accept or reject the marks of sannyasa. His only thought is “Where is there an opportunity to spread Krishna consciousness?” Sometimes the Krishna consciousness movement sends its representative sannyasis to foreign countries where the danda and kamandalu are not very much appreciated. We send our preachers in ordinary dress to introduce our books and philosophy. Our only concern is to attract people to Krishna consciousness. We may do this in the dress of sannyasis or in the regular dress of gentlemen. Our only concern is to spread interest in Krishna consciousness.

Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila 14.5p: Sometimes members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness—especially in the Western countries—find it difficult to approach people to distribute books because people are unfamiliar with the traditional saffron robes of the devotees. The devotees have therefore inquired whether they can wear European and American dress before the general public. From the instructions given to King Prataparudra by Sarvabhauma Bhattacarya, we can understand that we may change our dress in any way to facilitate our service. When our members change their dress to meet the public or to introduce our books,
they are not breaking the devotional principles. The real principle is to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and if one has to change into regular Western dress for this purpose, there should be no objection.

**Advantages of distributing books in Western clothing**

**Harikēśa Swami:** One may dress in any fashion that facilitates book distribution. If a devotee can do ten books a day in Vaiṣṇava dress and thirty books a day in Western dress, then he should go in Western dress. But if there is only a slight difference in his results, he should go in Vaiṣṇava dress because that is more conducive to the people’s development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and their appreciation of ISKCON. But in most of the North European zone it will be difficult in the winter to distribute in Vaiṣṇava dress, which is made for a warm climate. One could wear a dhoti or sari over thermally lined pants, but it looks impractical to the people on the streets. We judge something by the results.

**Śaṅkara-paṇḍita Dāsa:** The adoption of Western dress is based on engaging those who are unfamiliar with Vaiṣṇava dress. It’s an individual matter, and a book distributor should have the encouragement of others to dress according to his desire. But while wearing Western dress, devotees should never deny their identity as Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees. I don’t think wigs should be used because years ago we received many complaints that wigs were fraudulent. It’s better that devotees wear a hat.

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** Wearing karmī clothes doesn’t mean we’re hiding. Such clothing is practical because we’re on the street. Indian clothing is meant for the temple or chanting in the street. Our wearing karmī clothes makes it easier for the people. Imagine you are talking to a shaven-headed monk on the street, and your neighbor sees you—people have such fears, so we have to be discreet. But even in karmī clothes we can present ourselves openly. I speak many times about Hare Kṛṣṇa, about the books, about the philosophy. I open the books and show people the Sanskrit, the pictures, the index and the glossary. If people ask us whether this is Hare Kṛṣṇa, we should not deny it. They will find out anyway. Just admit it: “Of course, it’s Hare Kṛṣṇa. Do you know Hare Kṛṣṇa? It’s a kind of yoga, bhakti-yoga.” Tell them it elevates the consciousness to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and that we have centers all over the world—and one nearby—then you can give them an invitation. Some devotees have picture books that they flip through and show people our activities and projects. People become impressed. They al-
most never read these things in the newspapers. They hear that Hare Kṛṣṇa is bad. But when they meet an enthusiastic devotee who preaches to them, they like it. So they take a book and read it.

**Navina-nīrada Dāsa:** We should dress in a respectable way. You don’t have to wear a suit and tie. You can dress casually, but your clothes should be nice. You can’t go around in worn-out blue jeans, a half-open shirt with no buttons, with smudges of *tilaka* on your forehead, your *śikhā* sticking out in some direction, and your *brāhmaṇa*’s thread wrapped around your neck beads. These things really look ridiculous or even suspicious. People may give something, but only one or two dollars; maximum five. But your appearance can be that of a hundred-dollar person. People won’t hesitate to give you a hundred dollars when they think it’s your standard, that it’s the right thing for the right person. This is especially important going shop to shop or office to office or in the airport where you meet many cultured, high-class people. Your appearance must not be low class. You should have a personal style. I always dress in usual pants, white socks and a normal T-shirt, no hat, no wig, just short hair and a *śikhā*, no *tilaka*. In this dress I go everywhere and anywhere, and people like it. I enter big businesses and offices where they usually throw you out immediately—provided they catch you. If you would come in wearing a *dhoti*, you would never even be able to talk to people because the secretaries would throw you out.

**Advantages of devotee clothing**

**Guru-carana Dāsa:** When you go out dressed like a *karmī*, you tend to mix with them a lot. If you start to look at something, nobody is going to say, “What are you doing?” But if you’re dressed as a devotee, you cannot mix with the *karmīs*. If you are shaved-up, dressed as a devotee, the tendency is different. Everybody understands you’re a monk, and you’re obliged to behave accordingly. You cannot look in shop windows or whatever. On the whole, of course, it depends on the place where you preach and do *sankirtana*. We should learn to practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness in any condition, even if we’re obliged to wear *karmī* clothes. But then the danger is that our consciousness can become contaminated easier. So it’s good if the devotees learn to distribute books while dressed as devotees, especially the new devotees. Even if they don’t distribute as many books dressed as devotees, it makes their distribution pure and convincing, and they will become nice distributors even if they change to *karmī* clothes in another place, time, and circumstance.
Lilāvatāra Dāsa: Devotees are traveling fast and moving everywhere. If they are dressed as devotees, millions will see devotees in one day, and they will see that the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is alive, and they will help, because there are many devotees going around with books. In some countries devotees wear wigs, pants, and jackets just to shop for milk. That is wrong. There’s no problem in going to a store in devotee clothes. Just remember how the first devotee in Russia was made. Śyāmasundara walked around Moscow shaven-headed and in a dhoti, and a young Indian and young Russian saw him and approached him. If Śyāmasundara had gone out in Western clothes, he would have missed them. And in New York people saw Prabhupāda in sannyāsa dress, and they were attracted.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: It is definitely helpful if the devotees have experience distributing in a dhoti or a sari. We have introduced the system in Switzerland that every new distributor must go out for some time in devotee clothes to learn to represent the movement without fear or attachment. In this way, the devotees can taste different aspects of book distribution and get many realizations that strengthen their spiritual lives. The basic training of new book distributors includes dressing in both karmī clothes and devotee clothing, and they can decide what suits them better. But in either case every temple needs a core of devotees fixed on mass book distribution who will keep up the spirits, support the temple, and fulfill Śrila Prabhupāda’s desires that many books are distributed.

4.3 Quantity and quality

Maṇḍhāra Dāsa: In the long term, quality is always victorious. Quantity for a short time we’ve seen again and again. But the quality is the real test of sankārtana. Everything depends on our Kṛṣṇa consciousness, long-term Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we can have quality and quantity, that’s ideal.

Jadurāni Devī Dāśī: We don’t have much control over the quantity. The result of our effort is up to Kṛṣṇa. Even the biggest book distributors experience going for some time without distributing books. There is nothing you can do. The quantity is not so much under our control, but the quality is. So it’s our responsibility to work on the quality at every moment. For the result we depend on Kṛṣṇa.

Vijaya Dāsa: If the quality of one’s service is good, that pleases Kṛṣṇa. But if the quantity is not big, that is not so important in Kṛṣṇa’s eyes. Still, if the quality is there, generally the quantity is also. Good qualities are immedi-
ately sensed by the person we approach. But if a devotee wants a big quantity and is passionate and not really thinking of Kṛṣṇa, then Kṛṣṇa is not as pleased, and this lack of quality will lead to a decrease in quantity. Kṛṣṇa doesn’t need anything, but when He sees devotion, He very much appreciates that. So quality means devotion. If we perform our service in a very devotional way, then Kṛṣṇa is pleased. But if we perform our service for our own gratification, out of false prestige, then Kṛṣṇa isn’t much interested. So we should always meditate on increasing the quality and devotion of our service.

**Gīta-govinda Dāsī:** Quality means always remembering who the doer is, who you are doing it for, and who the enjoyer of the result is. If you always meditate on book distribution in this way, you will see who the doer is, who the enjoyer is, and that the results don’t belong to us. We go out to satisfy guru and Kṛṣṇa, not ourselves. Therefore quality means to remember that you are doing it for Kṛṣṇa always. We shouldn’t go out for ourselves. We go out and distribute books even to those who don’t want them. So we must have the right motive and satisfy guru and Kṛṣṇa. Then quality will come automatically. For us, being in Kṛṣṇa consciousness doesn’t necessarily mean meditation on Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Rather, it means concentration on helping the conditioned souls. How can we connect these people with Kṛṣṇa? We should hand them these books. When we go out with this motive, Kṛṣṇa will enlighten us from within and give us the right intelligence, the right words, and the right consciousness. He enlightens us according to the time, place, circumstance, so that people take books. Quality doesn’t mean distributing less, but more. Quality and quantity run parallel.

**Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa:** In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, *karmāṇy evādhikā-ras te mā phaṭalṣu kadācana.* One should make a big endeavor mentally and physically. But the big result depends on Kṛṣṇa. So that means one has to be detached. One is attached to his service, but detached from the result. The proof of this attitude is that we are not disappointed if the result is not there—we still continue to endeavor.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** As shown by the example of Lord Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa consciousness is for everybody. So if one begins to think, “I care only for special people—the rich or cultivated people,” then this is a sign that one is covered with some false concepts, and thus one cannot dive fully into book distribution. If one really wants to distribute a big number of books or wants to be engaged in book distribution forever, then one has to learn the art of presenting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to all people in an attractive and
nice way. In order to keep the taste on saṅkīrtana, one should try to distribute the books on a brahminical platform, presenting the books directly for what they are, as directly as possible and in a clever and expert way. This one has to learn. In other words, one should not think that he just has to raise the quantity, but he should also raise the quality, the way of distributing. Thus one has to be engaged in the service of book distribution not only with the body but also with the mind and intelligence. Such dedication, without false motives, without material desires, is ahaṅkāra apratihatā. The result is yayātāṁ suprasīdati: one automatically becomes satisfied and will never lose the taste for book distribution and preaching.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** Personally I believe 100% that the quality of distribution is the most important factor, because when the quality is there, the quantity will be there automatically. If somebody is burning the people out, forcing them to take the books, or using dishonest tricks, then that devotee will suffer the reactions and at some point discontinue his service. If someone does big and does it over a long period of time, not just a few years, you can understand that this is an example of quality and quantity, because without the quality, he could not continue. Fortunately we have such examples.

### 4.4 Saṅkīrtana transcends mundane salesmanship

The results show that there is no limit to our book distribution. Our books are qualified to be distributed unlimitedly. We are not fiction writers. It is a fact that no expert book salesmen can compete with our men. The librarian has noted the difference between our men and other publishers’ men. We are working heart and soul, not for money. Such expert salesmen would have to be paid at least $1,000 per month.

**The limits of mundane salesmanship**

In many places an apprenticeship to a book-seller in a shop lasts two or three years, and special qualifications and a certain standard of education are needed. What to speak of becoming the representative of a publishing house! It takes years of practice and training before someone is able to sell his publisher’s books to the bookstores or door to door, as encyclopedia salesmen do. But, in ISKCON, devotees from all backgrounds sell Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to people who ordinarily wouldn’t be interested at all in buying spiritual literature from India. They do this without the support of
media advertising and without receiving any training in sales psychology—
and they achieve amazing results. What are the secrets of this transcendental book distribution?

**Harikeśa Swami:** Superficially people don’t want these books. Therefore we are creating their desire to have these books. We get them to want something they don’t want. They don’t want our books because they don’t want to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. But we are giving them the books anyway. It’s amazing that you can give a book to a person who doesn’t want it. The mundane salesmen can analyze our techniques, but they will not be able to duplicate them. Why do people take books they don’t want? Because they are fascinated by the persons distributing them. They’re impressed by meeting a nice person beaming with transcendental consciousness. They are seeing somebody special, somebody unlike the ordinary people of this world. And that special person is asking them, “Just take one of these books. That’s all.” And that’s not much to ask. “Take one or two or twenty.” That’s a simple thing to ask of someone. When they meet a devotee, they start becoming enlivened. All day they meet mundane salesmen with artificial smiles, which are completely bogus. But a devotee mildly smiles, just like Kṛṣṇa, because he is confident. He approaches people and knows, “I’ve got something you really want.” He knows that deep down this person really wants Kṛṣṇa’s book; only on the surface he doesn’t want it. Because deep down he wants to be happy, and this is the way to be happy. So the devotee is confident that people are going to take books even though they don’t want them, and the people surrender and agree. (From a class in Germany on November 25, 1990)

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** In Austria the devotees once hired one of the best book salesmen in the country. Many big companies hired him. We asked him to sell books to the bookstores. We gave him six months to see what he could do, and after the six months, he was completely embarrassed. He couldn’t distribute a single book. Yet even a new, inexperienced devotee can distribute one hundred or more books a week, because selling Prabhupāda’s books is not simply a matter of mundane expertise.

**Maṇīdhāra Dāsa:** Sometimes devotees discuss sales techniques but forget that behind every technique is a person. A person is distributing the books. People buy books because a person is standing there presenting them. And that person is encouraging them to take or not. We are playing an important role, not as the doers, but as the representatives. What I see again and again is that people don’t respond completely from a rational point of
view. It is more spontaneous and emotional—either they like you or not. I was never convinced that you can increase your distribution by rational approaches. The more important thing is becoming their friends. That is a spiritual science. One cannot become a friend on the mundane platform. That is artificial. That kind of friendship the people know: smiling people selling them vacuum cleaners or thirty-volume lexicons. They may be in māyā, but they know, “This is a cheater, and he simply wants money from me.” If a devotee is not materially motivated, then people will trust him. Of course, if one sees them as their bodies, then immediately they are disgusted because there is no real friendship on the bodily platform.

**Techniques aren’t the most important thing**

Our only technique is to be very devout followers of the rules and regulations.  

**Prahlādānanda Swami:** As for techniques, Prabhupāda wrote to me, “What do you say? You say the same thing to everyone. This is on the spiritual platform. Just like an old man and a young boy if they hear a clap of thunder, then no one has to explain to them what they heard; they automatically understand. So if you simply repeat what you heard from the bona fide spiritual master, that will have its effect even if the understanding is not there at first.” In preaching, you only repeat what you’ve heard in disciplic succession, and this will act. The sound vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa and the bhāgavata philosophy will act on everyone, regardless of whether or not they understand it at first.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Mantras [rote lines] are a crutch if you don’t know what you are doing. Once you know what you are doing, there are no mantras. For specific types of distribution you need mantras—if you go on buses or subways. But if you are meeting people individually, mantras are practically worthless, because people immediately know they are just robotic speeches. It has to be very natural. Then it is much more successful. No big distributor uses mantras. They may say something similar as a come-on, but they change in a moment according to the response of the person.

**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa:** Book distribution is completely on the spiritual platform, on the platform of consciousness. Techniques or external factors are subordinate to the consciousness of the distributor. The point is that one cannot compensate for low consciousness by good techniques. But when the distributor is surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and trying his best, Kṛṣṇa from within
will give him the inspiration, the right technique, to handle any situation. Therefore we don’t discuss so much the techniques, but we emphasize developing purer hearing and chanting—surrendering to Prabhupāda’s books and reading them. In this way we increase, and techniques also develop.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** One has to understand that book distribution is unlimitedly manifold and there are no limits on how to distribute the books and increase the book distribution. There are so many techniques one can learn, but only if one actually goes out and tries. When I’m asked to demonstrate how I distribute the books, usually it’s impossible. I cannot artificially imitate it, because when I am confronted with the actual situation, I feel myself simply being the instrument through which the message comes and through which the books are distributed. One can easily realize that one is not the controller but just the tool. Of course, the endeavor must be there. But I see that whatever I say is not the deciding factor. Kṛṣṇa is the deciding factor. It’s Kṛṣṇa giving me the intelligence to say the right thing at the right time to the right person. One can realize that these books are the most important thing for the conditioned soul to get. They must get them, and I have to give them these books. If one has that desire and goes out helplessly, just trying to fulfill his duty, then Kṛṣṇa will give all intelligence. He will give the force, the power, the strength, and the intelligence. And He sends the right persons to get those books. Sometimes, when we forget Kṛṣṇa and are attached, people are not at all attracted, and they refuse to take any books. One hears his own voice, and one starts to listen to his own voice. One can hardly stand to listen to his own voice. But when one is connected with Kṛṣṇa, that same voice that was material before becomes spiritual again and the words directly reach the soul. And then Kṛṣṇa reciprocates, and we’re just riding on a wave of ecstasy. Then one is watching all the books simply flying out. No one can understand how it goes on. It’s overwhelming. One understands that the voice speaking is not me but is Kṛṣṇa talking through me, and I am simply the instrument. Kṛṣṇa, the Pañca-tattva, the entire paramparā are behind me arranging the whole scene. I am simply allowed to watch how they are distributing the mercy, and I am fervently praying not to be in the way of this flow of mercy.

### 4.5 Practical techniques of mass distribution

The fact is that we have to adopt the same tactics as ordinary salesmen adopt, but the difference is we do it for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, and they do it for sense gratification.
Techniques means ways of distributing books to dissimilar people in various circumstances. The book distributor endeavors in different ways, and although the techniques aren’t the decisive factor, it is enlightening to see how the conviction of top distributors manifests in action. What are they saying? How are they presenting the books? Or as Arjuna asked: “What are the symptoms of one whose consciousness is thus merged in transcendence? How does he speak, and what is his language? How does he sit, and how does he walk?”

Preaching while distributing

Rohinīsuta Dāsa: These books are all-powerful—nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. We should have full confidence in their power. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books can change the world and the consciousness of people. What we say, our preaching, should inspire people to take and read the books. That is our duty. What’s the use of preaching for a long time if in the end they say, “Thank you, that was interesting. But I don’t want the books. Maybe another time. I want to meditate on what you said. I like speaking more than reading. I like personal contact. Books I don’t like.” They say this many times. A devotee should never make this compromise of just speaking. Our goal is to make them take the books and associate with Śrīla Prabhupāda directly. That makes the change. If they don’t take the book, they’re not serious, and they will forget everything. They’ve cheated you and wasted your time. Many people are good at asking a lot of questions and appearing interested, but they simply don’t dare to say no right away. When you realize this at the end, you become frustrated, because you were thinking you had met an interested person. Therefore our approach in the beginning is always short and direct. Present the books in a nice way. Then you will immediately understand how interested they really are. When they have bought the book and given a donation, then you can preach a little more and explain how to read the books. Now they are purified, and maybe they will become so inspired that they take even more. And when they get back home, they feel they had a nice experience meeting you. They never forget that impression, even if many years pass. The devotees are inspired because of the power of Lord Caitanya and the mission and blessings of the spiritual master. Because of this enthusiasm, people become inspired and enlivened. But as soon as you go away, they forget everything. Māyā offers them sense gratification, and they forget whatever you told them. But if they have the books as a souvenir, they always remember the situation and their encounter with a devotee. Then one day Kṛṣṇa from within their heart gives them inspiration to read the books.
Jaya Gurudeva Dása: If one is not a mahārathi, one can consider preaching a little to interested people. But if one is a mahārathi, if one can distribute a lot of books, then one shouldn’t spend too much time. One should just distribute books. The books speak for themselves. Because if one is empowered by Kṛṣṇa to distribute hundreds of books a day, Kṛṣṇa will not send certain types of people. Such a distributor has a deep conviction about distributing the books—has a different kind of śakti—and he often just gives out books, and people don’t ask questions. Harināmānanda can give out a whole set, and the people don’t ask any questions. They just take the books, and they say they’ve bought the best books in the world. They know it, they are sure, but they don’t ask any questions. But in the case of another devotee, they ask, “What kind of book is this?” and the devotee explains. There’s nothing bad about that either, if we don’t spoil the person with our explanation. We’re all individuals. Every devotee has a specific way of distributing books.

Gauri Devī Dāsi: I started distributing books in 1971 or ’72 in New York City in the Port Authority bus terminal. We distributed big Bhagavad-gītās directly by approaching people and shaking hands, introducing ourselves, and presenting the books. It was a pure approach, and we experienced much satisfaction and reciprocation from the conditioned souls. We learned quickly that not only were people interested but they also became fascinated by Prabhupāda’s books when we really began preaching about them. We soon became so enthusiastic that we kept a big selection of books in the lockers at Port Authority as well as prasādam, japa beads, and pictures of the temple and the Deities. And we would introduce all these if we found somebody interested—right on sankirtana. We would send people away with ten books and a bead bag and some prasādam. Everything, all at once, and they would begin. Many of them later became devotees. We used to distribute books quickly and efficiently, and when we found somebody receptive, we would spend much longer preaching.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: It’s much more satisfying for the distributor if people appreciate the books, and therefore we should take the time to explain to them the importance and the contents of the books. This is important. After selling the books, if we open the books and talk about them, people see that we’re not simply interested in selling the books and getting the money. They think, “He wants me to understand these books. He already has gotten the money. He doesn’t need to spend any more of his time with me, but he’s taking the time.” So they are positively inspired. They see that we also read the books, know them, and are convinced. They don’t expect
a book salesman to know all of his books so well. This attitude is important for everyone desiring to distribute books for a long time. In a small country like Switzerland where one always meets the same people it is especially important. Then people are not deceived or burned out. Even if the people aren’t interested and don’t take a book, we should avoid burning them out. We should always remain friendly. It is important to come to the platform of giving people brahminical instruction. I meet many people who have our books, but they buy again and again. It is mystical. The people become purified through the association of these books. Kṛṣṇa in the form of these books does not expect gorgeous worship. The spiritual master explains that the Lord is satisfied to sit on the shelves of people’s apartments. It is better than lying in a cold storehouse. Thus the books start to diffuse transcendental radiation, and all those people become purified.

The psychology of mass distribution

Gaurī Devī Dāsī: I don’t present Kṛṣṇa consciousness so much as a religion but as a great science handed down through thousands and thousands of years and totally unknown in the materialistic West. And people become interested. Here they are in the midst of their material work, working hard for the most part. Most people are passionate workers, totally fruitful, totally absorbed, running to get to their jobs or running somewhere to do something, simply making money and maintaining their family members and paying their bills. They are wound-up in their situations just like in cocoons. When we meet them, we have to concentrate and present our books in such a way that for a minute they forget all their entanglements on the mental platform. All these things worry them: “I have an appointment, and this money is going for this and that, and I haven’t got time in the first place, and who the heck are you anyway, what are your credentials, and what is this you’re giving me?”

Question: Where do you get the intelligence to cut through all that and present Kṛṣṇa in a way that they become attracted?

Gaurī: Most of it comes from having an intense desire, eagerness, and enthusiasm. I think that the principal difficulty the younger devotees have is learning how to be intense enough to stop somebody and how to concentrate and be clear-headed enough to engage each individual soul, because everybody is completely different. You can’t do this mechanically at all. You have to analyze the person and see in a few seconds what his situation is. What modes of nature are influencing him? Through experience you know immediately and instinctively—and through Kṛṣṇa’s revealing it to you—
how you can deal with such a person and attract them. A book distributor attracts a person in many different ways. First, try to attract them to the book, because the first thing you do is hand them a book: “Here, sir, this is a special book we’re giving out in the neighborhood today, and I’d like to have you take a look at it.” Then if the guy says, “Listen, I’m not into religion,” you have to try some other platform. “What are you doing, sir? Do you have a family?” Start over from another angle completely, until he’s totally forgotten that he’s still holding the book. And then you come back to the book. You have to do many things with each person. But it doesn’t have anything to do with how uninterested they are or how much they’re in māyā or how far away they are from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. At least 99% of the people I talk to are so far away that they couldn’t be any further away if they tried. They couldn’t be more forgetful of Kṛṣṇa if they wanted to be. So it’s really the devotee’s intense desire and enthusiasm that count.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: An empowered devotee is able in a few seconds to cross the barrier of false ego and defensiveness that people always maintain. Every karmī is like a fortress, with a full-defense system, and there is the conditioned soul somewhere at the bottom of his heart covered by material elements and a false ego. If a saṅkīrtana devotee is empowered, he can cross the defense system, break into the fortress, and approach the soul. They are entrapped in two ways—by the gross body and subtle body. So a saṅkīrtana devotee, being a scientist, tries to engage their senses and mind simultaneously. First the senses: they have the book in their hands. It’s practical. By the spiritual power one gets on saṅkīrtana, a book distributor can engage a person completely—it’s like a space bubble—so that he forgets everything else. His eyes are looking at you, and you are like a sense object for him. This is the gross platform. Then one has to be spiritually strong enough to engage his mind, which is flickering, always spinning around. This is done mainly by speaking—sound is very important. If the devotee is spiritually inspired, the sound vibration—whatever he says—can be charged with spiritual energy. Then a person stops thinking about his sense gratification, and he just thinks about you. Then it becomes even more subtle, as his sneaky intelligence plans excuses not to take the book. All these obstacles must be overcome in a few seconds. This is done by having a strong desire and by understanding that one has a big support from within, the Supersoul. Even the most ridiculous people take books. Their decision, “Okay, I am going to take it,” is something completely spiritual. Because of material conditioning, they would never take a book. There’s no material reason why we distribute these books. They have no reason to take books.
really. But they take them anyway, and that is because of Lord Caitanya’s mercy.

**Navina-nirada Dasa:** A devotee should learn how to distribute books in all situations so that he masters the art. He must be able to deal with all kinds of circumstances. For example, even while going door to door, it may happen that he has an opportunity to ask someone in a car. Then there are shops, offices, industries. Generally, devotees should concentrate on one thing and think, “Today I’m distributing on the street, and I’m not going to switch.” Otherwise one gets mental about the place and will change all the time. But every book distributor should learn how to work in different situations. Sometimes it’s good to change the style of distribution to get new points of view. The devotee has to know how to be brief and to the point without allowing the other person to deviate his attention, and how to explain the contents of the books in an attractive, convincing way. But whatever the situation, from the first eye contact up to the point of shaking hands at the end, everything has to be in the right place, every sentence properly said, so that the person feels good about it. Otherwise we’ll leave doubts in his mind, and then he’ll begin feeling unsure about the whole thing and lose his inspiration to take the books. Then people make excuses: We have no time, no interest, no money, and so many people pass by here asking for donations. These excuses don’t arise in the minds of people being dealt with nicely by an inspired *sankirtana* devotee. These people will be caught up in *Krshna* consciousness by the mercy of *Sr Caitanya Mahaprabhu* and enjoy the wonderful spirit of *sankirtana*. They’ll just smile, and their lives will be changed, just like gloves turned inside out.

**Indranilamani Devi Dasi:** More important than the words I say is that I forget the rest of the world. Dronacarya asked his students as they were aiming their arrows at a bird target, “Tell me, what do you see now?” One said, “The sky, the tree, and the bird.” Another said, “The bird.” Arjuna answered, “I see just the eye of the bird.” Similarly, when I’m talking to someone, it is just me and the other spirit soul. I’m not concerned if there are people watching us or if nicer-looking people walk by. I direct all my energy to the other person so he can also forget everything else for a few minutes and concentrate on what I’m saying. It’s a personal experience, and they feel I really care for them. That personal exchange is almost more important to them than all the things I’m telling them about the book. At the end of the conversation what stays with them the most is the devotee’s charm and sincerity. That charm is actually the mercy of *guru* and *Krshna* coming
through the devotee. It’s definitely not one’s own quality. I’ve experienced this. Sometimes I can say the same lines with enthusiasm and get rejected by one person after another because something is missing. My meditation is wrong. I’m thinking of the cigarette smoke and seeing material bodies instead of spirit souls and thinking I’d rather be somewhere else because I’m hungry and my feet and back hurt. I’m forgetting my guru’s instructions. I’m forgetting the Deities. I’m not praying for mercy. I’m not connected to the disciplic succession. Finally I surrender and begin to think of my spiritual master and all the other ācāryas, what they sacrificed for the preaching mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and how I want to be of some service to them by helping to bring conditioned souls to the Lord’s lotus feet. I think of the beautiful forms of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda, the sankirtana heroes, and I pray to Them to use me as an instrument so that I may plant unlimited seeds of bhakti in the gardens of people’s hearts. As soon as I become humble and reestablish the connection, the mercy begins to flow again and people become attracted to Śrila Prabhupāda’s books in a magical way. So it’s not really what you say or how you say it. More important is one’s internal, prayerful mood and one’s connection with guru and Kṛṣṇa. When that connection is there, it becomes a mystical experience, and then we can begin to realize that book distribution has no limits.

**Techniques vary according to time and place**

Cakṣu Dāsa: The way we distribute books depends on certain practical circumstances, such as when people are out shopping or in their homes. That’s why Śrila Prabhupāda said we have to tax our brains to find new ways of bringing the books to people. It’s also implied by the verse yajñaiḥ-saṅkīrtana prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasah. Good intelligence (su-medhasah) is needed to make adjustments in our methods of distribution. We consider the five factors of action. Of course, the spiritual aspect always remains the same. I mean to say, one’s awareness of his dependence on the guru and Supersoul. That dependence awakens utsāha—transcendental enthusiasm, determination, and intelligence. On that basis we can handle the relative aspects of book distribution, especially time, place, and circumstance.

The circumstances vary from country to country and continent to continent. I realized that during my recent visit to America in July 1993. The methods we use in Europe can’t be imitated in America, because in Europe we have different circumstances. For example, the whole set-up of the U.S. cities is completely spread out, with no real city center or downtown like in Europe. And the opening times of the shops in America allow people to go
shopping almost around the clock and even on Sundays, which means that the flow of customers is not as concentrated as in Europe, where people have to go shopping within a limited period of the day and week. But I am convinced that the U.S. also has advantages for the mass distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. We just have to link up with the desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda and pray to Kṛṣṇa that He shows us new ways. To sell Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to materialists is hopeless everywhere, not only in the U.S., but by trying with full faith, we attract Kṛṣṇa’s special mercy. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the situation is always unfavorable, but by preaching, it becomes favorable. Thus the seemingly impossible becomes possible, as Śrīla Prabhupāda explained by the example of the sparrow (Bg. 6.24p), wherein he concludes: “God helps those who help themselves.”

The stack method

Since 1983, Harināmānanda Dāsa, and since 1985, Nāvīna-nīrada Dāsa have amazed the world with their scores, which for years uninterrupted were double the results of any distributor in the world. Following the example of Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa, they developed a technique that allowed them to dive into the nectar of unlimited book distribution whether distributing in the street or going door to door.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: The stack method has proven to be the most successful for distributing many books. You can use it everywhere, wherever there are many people, and even while distributing door to door in flats or villages. We prepare stacks of seventeen or eighteen big books and two or three mahā-big books, alternating them to have as much variety as possible. These stacks are all identical. During marathons they are prepared by the devotees of our temple so that we can pack them right into our van’s book compartments. This makes things simple, and it is easy to count the amount distributed in the evening. You distribute the whole day without thinking of numbers, and you count the stacks at night. During the marathons we are distributing from the van. During the year while going door to door our stacks are smaller, because there is more distance to walk between the people we’re meeting. If we are distributing in big blocks of flats, then it’s practically like doing the street. For this kind of distribution we have two-wheel carts like the postmen and housewives use. But they are specially constructed and can handle up to 150 books. We are going to people with big stacks of books and trying to give them as many books as possible. So the point is very simple: If you want to distribute many books, you have to have many books with you, and then the people become inspired to take many books.
**Rohinišuta Dāsa:** From the material point of view twenty books are very heavy. But from the spiritual point of view, those books on your arm are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, and you feel ecstatic. It doesn’t matter how old you are. You can be forty or fifty and take fifteen or twenty books by the mercy of Śrila Prabhupāda and Gaura-Nitāi. If we cannot take twenty, we take ten. We can also have assistance. When new devotees join, they can help the sāṅkīrtana devotees. Many of the successful sāṅkīrtana devotees began as servants of other book distributors. They became so inspired seeing the books going out that although in the beginning they did not plan to distribute books, after two or three weeks during the marathon they got the desire to go out themselves.

During the marathon I once thought, “I will take only half the amount I usually take. They’re too heavy.” After some days of constantly carrying twenty books, it becomes tough. Pain is attacking the back and the muscles, and the mind is flipping out. So I took just half of the stack because the car was nearby. But then I distributed only half as many as before. He who takes half, distributes half. That I have realized. Whether you have ten books in a stack or twenty, it takes you the same amount of time to distribute the stack. Kṛṣṇa wants to see our endeavor and our surrender. When I changed back to twenty-one books in a stack, people began to take six or seven books at a time again. When I was taking only ten, they took only one or two or maximum three. So the more books we take, the quicker they go out. This tapasya has to be accepted during the marathon. One should not try to do it in a lazy way. If you approach people with three or five books, they might suspect you are criminals who have stolen the books and are selling them now for a cheap price. But if you come with a big stack, they are not suspicious anymore. They think, “He seems to be authorized. He has a lot of books. He looks quite systematic.” There’s a system—three times seven books in the stack. And we tell them, “We have seven books in our collection. You can choose whatever you like or you can take all seven.” So we have to take up the burden. People don’t buy books; they buy you. If the devotee is inspired, and if the devotee desires that people take seven books at once, or even a set, then people will come who take.

**How to approach people in public**

**Rohinišuta Dāsa:** Between each person I chant or sing the Pañca-tattva mantra, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, and other things. Then when I’m with the people I only think how I can convince them to take a book. First I always give them a book. “Hello. We’re distributing these books today. Did you get one yet?” Then I see their reaction.
**Question:** What if you want them to take the book, but they don’t?

**Rohiniṣuta:** I just give them the book without forcing them. I look in their eyes and say, “Please, this is for you.” I don’t look at their hands. If you look in their faces and speak to them, then they automatically react. “These are nice books about ancient Indian culture and philosophy. We’d like to make them a little more well known, and that’s why we have this special offer.” *Special offer* (*Aktion* in German) implies from the beginning that it is not free. This word makes it clear that it is not the normal price, it is cheaper than in the store, but still they understand that they will have to pay something although you never mention money directly. Then I usually ask some questions about where they’re from and what they like to read.

**Question:** Don’t a lot of people hesitate to take the book, or say, “I’m not interested”?

**Rohiniṣuta:** Yes, many. But I try two or three times. “Maybe you can give it as a present.” Or “You can read it later, when you’re sick or on holiday.” Or “You can keep it for casual reading or reference.” These reactions have to be immediate and spontaneous. You think, “This person has to take the book,” and you act at the same time. Immediate action. Thinking and acting at the same time. This requires strong determination and conviction. But you have to be sensitive whether or not to insist or just let them go. Sometimes you feel that insisting just once will agitate them and they won’t take a book anyway, so why agitate them? Sometimes people are just superficially negative, so you need to insist, and then they take. They even forget that they said no in the beginning. But sometimes devotees don’t know when to stop. They push and push and push until the people become angry. Sometimes it’s good for the people’s minds to give them a logical reason why we are there passing out books as a special offer. Often I just tell them we are having a special book week here in town, and on this occasion we are passing out these books to make them known. Often you can see that people accept this kind of logic, because it sounds authorized. It’s not problematic, and it’s not wrong. I tell them “We are making it,” so there is no need of anything official going on. And nobody ever complained.

**Haripāda Dāsa:** In general the mantras, the things we say during the presentation, can be divided into a circle of four parts. The first part is to get the person’s attention. Generally the person wants to know who you are, and then comes the second part—we introduce ourselves. And the third part is presenting the books. The last part of the circle is the donation. More or less, these are the guidelines of a mantra, depending on time, place and circumstance. The sound vibration of the devotee is so important and basic that we call it a mantra. It’s no less effective than the *mantras* chanted by
brāhmaṇas to rejuvenate sacrificial animals. Our words and consciousness must be as powerful. Then our activity becomes so beneficial that we can liberate the people we meet through the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda and his books.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Basic techniques must be there, but it is important to know that one cannot imitate the techniques of other devotees. One must understand that book distribution is completely individualistic and one should distribute according to one’s capacity and nature. In my case the first point in approaching people is my appearance. I always have a lot of books on my arm so when the people see me, they immediately know that something is going on. They realize that we are not a sect with just small booklets we give away. They see a person carrying an entire encyclopedia. If we contact the people in that way, they are impressed. They understand something is going on, and they want to see what. And nobody ever thinks that it is for free. You don’t even have to mention it. They ask, “What can I give you?” I can see that when one is going around timidly, without life and enthusiasm, then people are not attracted. Although he seems to be humble and unimposing, no one is attracted. No one is ready to listen to him. They are not even inspired to stop and listen to him. But if you’re vivaciously representing something and standing behind what you’re doing and saying, then the people are impressed that you know what you’re doing. A lame and fearful attitude, without faith and determination, simply attracts the demons and other envious people, and they will try to stop you completely. But when there is power and conviction, Kṛṣṇa is very pleased, and He gives all protection, and one can completely explode and go beyond oneself.

When I approach people, I don’t make a distinction between people. I don’t distinguish based on the external appearance. Of course, there are two different cases. While going door to door or shop to shop, one is forced to approach all the people. The other possibility is that on the street or in public places, many people are coming at the same time. Then one has to select whom one wants to approach. If I have to choose between an old man, a housewife, or a young person who looks sane and together, then I obviously go to the young person. But if there are only a few people, then I don’t make any distinctions. I approach them all, even the oldest people and the sūdras. This is important because our philosophy is not to make distinctions.

As I approach people on the street, I try to surprise them a little. When I am on an open street or on a parking lot, I try to approach them from an angle in order to surprise them. I try to avoid being seen from one
hundred meters away, selling something. Otherwise the defense systems in their minds start to function. One has to be clever and surprise the people, but not shock them, especially the ladies. In this way, people are confronted with a completely new situation, and the mind is surprised. They don’t know how to classify the new situation. Then one tries to encourage them. “Are you from this city, too?” “Yes.” “So we have something nice for you.” Or “No.” Then, “Oh, nice that you’ve come because we’re passing out these books today.” During that time I hand them two or three books so they have something to hold. If one can do this with some enthusiasm then the people themselves become enthusiastic about the whole thing. The most important point is that people take the book in their hand. I can say from my experience that 90% of the people who don’t take the book in their hand will not buy it. One doesn’t need to invest much time—one can immediately go to the next person. One doesn’t waste any time with people. Of course, there are exceptions, and you have to be alert to sense them.

Another point is that whenever one approaches someone, there is some suspicion due to seeing a stranger. And if you just mechanically hand them some books and start asking personal questions without establishing a personal relationship, you will bite on granite. They will always say no. “Are you from this city?” “No.” “Do you have a family?” “That’s none of your business.” “You could take the book for your wife.” “Get lost!” Or they say, “I don’t need your books—I buy books at a bookstore.” Those reactions are natural. As soon as somebody who wants something comes to them, their reaction is immediately, “No! No! No!” So generally I do ask questions, but not the kind of questions that they can answer with no. One should not give them the opportunity to say no. One should trick them so that they have to say yes. One asks simple questions that are easy for them to answer yes. You get the people to say yes, and continue presenting the books so that at the end they are open and are ready to take the books. “Do you like these books?” “Yes, yes.” And then, “I should have some contribution for the books.” “Yes, yes.” And then you can continue, “Why don’t you take this one also? Take these books also to make the series more complete.” “Yes.” And sometimes you can give them the whole set.

You often meet people who instinctively say no in the beginning. But there is no need to give up. They are programmed to say no to things they don’t know. So you shouldn’t immediately ask them if they are interested in Indian philosophy or whether they believe in life after death. If these are the first questions, then all the people will say no, for these are very personal questions. People usually have a defensive attitude about this personal approach. Of course, if the devotee himself is on the platform of false ego,
he will not have the humility or patience to counter their arguments. He will react in a frustrated way and tend to become angry, “If you don’t like the book, that’s your fault. I feel sorry for you.” But one should think, “He is saying no, but that is just his mind talking, which is a complete madman, programmed by the material energy. Now he is spitting out his frustration, but afterwards he may be a very nice person when his frustration is gone. And if all the problems are gone, then the real person comes out.” If you try again, completely humble: “Please, take a look; these books aren’t expensive,” and if you completely depend on Kṛṣṇa, then sometimes you can really approach the soul, the living entity himself beyond the mind. That is the secret of how to convince unwilling people to take the books.

One could say much more about this point. Until now I described only the externals. But if one analyzes the situation with the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then one understands in what sense it is that ultimately the soul decides to take a book and the Supersoul gives the sanction. So the secret is that one is simply trying to cultivate this attitude and then taking a stack of books and going out to distribute. Then Kṛṣṇa will give all the intelligence. Even if it takes some years, one should not lose patience or faith. One should understand that this service is the most elevated service and to execute it is not a cheap thing. Book distribution is unlimited, and all different kinds of transcendental activities are included in this service.

**Navīṇa-nīrada Dāsa:** You have to approach people and hand them the book in a respectful and gentle manner. Sometimes devotees, especially new devotees, just throw the book at them or push it into their stomach or chest, which agitates people. But if somebody is friendly with them and handing them the books, then every gentleman will take the time at least to look at the book to find out what it is all about. If we are falsely humble, fearing that we are cheating the people or not doing the right thing, they will pick up the attitude that you’re projecting and also feel unsure. But if you are completely sure of yourself, sure about the mission and the order of your spiritual master, sure about the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and Caitanya Mahāprabhu—that is real humility.

When you approach the people, the first thing is, the eye contact. By this eye contact already so many things are accomplished. You can see what kind of person he is by looking at his physiognomy. You look in his eyes, then you see if he wants to avoid you or if he is really brilliant or sharp or if he is just a lazy person. This you can see from the person’s eyes and from his face. In this way a devotee gets much information. So one should not think that these things are external, because they tell the distributor what kind of
covering the spirit soul has and how he can conquer over that covering and
get the spirit soul to take Kṛṣṇa consciousness and appreciate it. You have
to look out, because you can say things that are true, but say them at the
wrong moment and completely turn people off or spoil their interest.

You make eye contact, you speak one or two sentences with him, you
give him the books in his hand. You tell him what it’s all about, you indicate
that he has to give something, and then you can ask him what he’s inter-
ested in and what he likes, and then you let him choose what kind of books
he likes. Or you just give him three books because many people don’t have
any special interest. You just give him those three books that he has in his
hand, and you tell him that these are the best books to begin with. Then you
tell the price in such a way that he feels he is getting a good deal. From the
first meeting until you say goodbye, wishing him good reading and a good
day and maybe giving him an invitation card, it’s one harmonious, clear
thing. There’s a whole structure. And you are completely sure of what you
are doing at every second while you’re doing it. This really impresses the
people.

You must give them books at the proper time and at the proper speed.
Don’t throw the book at them so that they think it is for free or some-
thing cheap. If you make them think you come from a sect, they will refuse
point blank. You must be fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then the people will
think, “Oh, he wants to give me something? He may be an interesting per-
son to talk to. Let’s see what he has.” Then you give them the books, and
then you can explain. But then again you can wait too long. You may get
them to stop, you may shake hands, give them a smile, begin to talk to
them and then, after a few minutes, try to give them a book, but it turns
out that they are not at all interested in your books or in reading, and they
say, “Well, it was nice to meet you, but, thanks, I’m not interested in buying
these books.” There was too much free space for their mind, and they could
already decide internally that they won’t buy anything. There are people,
of course, who refuse to take the book—some even simply ignore the fact
that you try to hand them a book. This indicates that they will not be will-
ing to make any commitment and give a donation. Still you can try it. “You
look like a respectable gentleman. If you are interested in philosophy and
history, please take a look at these books.” And if he says, “No, thanks,”
then you say, “Have a nice day. Maybe next time.” So you respect their de-
cision. Some people think they know what’s going on, know the trick. Any-
way, you hand everyone the book towards his chest or stomach (never push
it too high, towards his head; more towards his waist or mid-section so that
he can take it comfortably), and when you see his hand is not stretching out
to accept the book, then don’t push it or try to force them to take it any-
way or make some arrogant statement. You slowly take the book back and
say in a humble and detached way, “It’s only for people who are interested
and don’t mind reading. I don’t know if you appreciate books like these.”
Whatever you say, you’re detached, but still you want to give them another
chance, although they already said no. And then many people immediately
stretch out their hand and say, “What did you say it is about? I’m interested.
I like such things. Let me see!” And then you can give the book. So you are
not attached, you don’t think you’re the doer, and they can see that these
books are something unique. And we also tell them that.

Cakṣu Dāsa: I present myself as a brahminical monk and the books with as
much philosophy as possible because the philosophy is nondifferent from
Krṣṇa. It’s all-attractive. The more the people can understand the philoso-
phy, the more I try to tell them. It is important to see their nature. If some-
one can understand more, we should say as much as possible so that he
becomes attracted by the books. If he appreciates the books, he will pay a
good price for the books. I try to put the books in their hands, but not im-
mediately as the first thing. First I check out whether or not they are inter-
ested. Sometimes people are too skeptical to take the books immediately in
their hands, so I prepare them a bit, just for a few seconds, by one sentence,
one question. Then it is much easier for them to take the books, because
you’ve already spoken with them and that is the most important contact.
If someone doesn’t take the books, there is no need of entangling yourself
much further because usually they will not buy.

Indranīlamanī Devī Dāśi: I distribute in Western clothes at the Dallas air-
port. There are lots of restrictions, so I stay in a spot against a wall and
call people over. I make eye contact and say, “Excuse me, I want to ask
you something.” Intrigued by what I want to tell them, they stop and come
to me. I ask, “Where are you from?” As they tell me, I shake their hands
and tell them where I’m from. I say, “Look, we’re distributing these books.
I want to show you one.” As I say this I try to make them take the book.
I always distribute the hardcover Bhagavad-gitā first. Then I talk about the
book. People at the airport are always rushing, and under time pressure I
speak fast and keep it brief.

Cakṣu Dāsa: I don’t even try to stop the really passionate people, and some-
times it’s better if you wait a little before you approach the others. If some-
one arrives in his car, you should wait until he has stopped the engine and
gotten out. And if a person doesn’t want to stay—so anyway, let him go. What can you do? You cannot force him. Not everyone is interested. That’s why I often just stand in one place, not running after them. I let them come. The moment you’re running to the karmā, the karmā runs away. You have to be on the transcendental platform; otherwise they run away. So one thing that I do sometimes is just stand in one place and call them. They see my stack of books, and those persons who come are definitely nice.

**Asking for donations**

**Navīna-nīrada Dāsa:** You always have to make it clear that books like these are costly in a shop—they cost four or five times more in the shop. We are giving them out almost at the production price. You must clearly say how much you expect. People really hate it, after they give their donation, if you start asking them for more. I think it’s better to leave them with just two or three books and get a bad donation. Let him think that he made a good deal. Go to the next person and sell the books for a little more. That’s better than getting entangled and hassling people for a few more coins, because that is what really burns them out. They thought they were being generous, and you go, “Give more. I want more.” They think you’re ungrateful and impertinent, and they may drop the whole deal and want their money back.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** One thing about the book prices: In the beginning one may be a little attached and not dare to say clearly that the books cost something. This hiding is coming from attachment. So we should say it straight: The books are not presents. We just tell them frankly how much we have to get for the books. This will also separate the sincere from the insincere. Those who are not interested will leave immediately, and those who are interested won’t mind—because who assumes that such books are for free? Otherwise they are disturbed: “First you said it’s for free, and now you want money.” We depend on Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa lets someone stop, so why shouldn’t Kṛṣṇa inspire him to give a good donation? We hand them two or three books in the beginning. Maybe they’ll take only one; maybe the entire set—why not? So we better have the set with us. In other words, we hope for everything, but don’t expect anything.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** I continue the presentation in such a way as to answer their mostly unspoken doubts: What’s it all about? How much does it cost? Usually I say I’m studying Sanskrit literature with my friends. I ask them whether they know about Sanskrit or know something about India.
Then I say that I’m a student of this subject and that this is the oldest language in the world; these books were compiled five thousand years ago. Usually, I show the picture of Śrila Prabhupāda and tell people that he was an Indian monk and a great saint. By that I also indicate that he passed on, because then people tend to have more respect for his accomplishments and no suspicions about him as a guru. I go on to say he translated these books into English, and now we’re translating them into German. And today there’s a special offer. Later on, in the book stores, these books will cost a lot—I mention both the bookstore price of books like these, which is high, and our price for each book. I mention it clearly so that they know what minimum price I expect. And I say, “Whatever you give above that supports the translation work.” Or I simply say, “Whatever more you give is my earning.” People want to know where the money goes. Most of them are quite fed up giving money to welfare institutions that misuse the money. They appreciate our honesty in admitting, “Yes, it’s for me.” I don’t speak about our organic farm or this or that. Later, of course, if they show further interest, I also mention that we have a temple, a farm, and other projects. But at this point I simply say that the money is covering the production expenses, and any extra is for me and my friends. Then people are always generous and no longer fear misuse of the money or some bogus guru in the background raking it in.

**Giving many books at once**

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** I use the same technique everywhere: putting two or three books in their hands, and when they start looking at a book and showing just a little interest, immediately showing them more books. And then I tell them what all these books cost together in the shop and what I’m expecting. Of course, the people don’t always take all of the books, but they often take two or three, and that’s also a success. Everything must be done with alertness and energy, because people appreciate it if one is natural and dynamic—not artificial.

**Navīna-nīrada Dāsa:** Giving many books at once doesn’t mean giving a person one book, he pays for it, and then you give him another book and let him pay again, and so on. I always give two or three books as an introduction, and then I see how they react. I explain what the books are and show them one or two more. This I do whenever somebody takes the books and looks at them, before they pay anything. Very quickly you can find out how much they’re interested. If they show some interest, then I give them two
or three books more, and I mention the production price we pay. What I say is about double the BBT price, which is a good yet reasonable price. Everyone who knows what books cost in a bookstore can understand that our prices are fair and cheap. And just when they are about to pull out their wallet, you can give another two books and say in a detached way, “If you give a little more, then I’ll also give you these two books to make things more complete.” Then you see how they respond. And you see what the donation is. If he is really into giving, then you give one or two books more, and the person will understand that a further donation is expected. In this way you can pile up, pile up, and keep inspiring them. From that point it is not a big step anymore to the set.

When it gets into many books, you have to give people confidence in what they’re buying and assurance about who we are and what we do. Generally I’m saying we’re bhakti-yoga teachers from Zurich or wherever the nearest temple is. Then people know that it’s a bona fide thing. You can’t be just some idealist from an alternative farm—although mentioning the farm is not bad—and then expect that you can get into many books and good donations. The people sense it immediately when you’re not together or just timid and small-time, having only a few books with you, talking about a farm or some welfare work. They wonder what this has to do with your books. People will wonder where you come from and where your books come from—“Maybe he’s stolen them, and that’s why he’s timid.” They become suspicious and don’t know if it’s legal, or what consequences buying something from you will bring. Or you may just be nice, and they may think you’re nice, but you won’t get into distributing many books and getting good donations with that style.

Preaching to the faithless — the ninth offense

Kavicandra Swami: There are some people to whom you cannot even mention the idea of God. You must present what they can take. If we present more than they want to hear, they just become offensive and change their minds and return the book. This is the immediate reaction to the ninth offense. A book distributor therefore has to be careful in presenting the philosophy. The main point is that they must get the books, and we should not spoil that by our overdose of preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda was convinced about Kṛṣṇa and expert in dealing with people. When you listen to the tapes of Śrīla Prabhupāda preaching to people, many times they start out saying they don’t believe this and that. They are doubtful, suspicious, and critical, but at the end they say, “Thank you very much. I’m glad I met you.” Śrīla
Prabhupāda wasn’t arguing with them. He had compassion for these people and wanted to give them Kṛṣṇa. And they would change in his association. We aren’t as expert. We sometimes get angry and impatient because they don’t immediately see things the way we want. Our immature preaching can turn off people and stop them from buying the book, so we have to learn to say only as much as they can take. For most people, taking a book is all they take of the Absolute Truth.

**Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa:** Someone asked, “Is it offensive to preach without distinction or give books to the atheistic?” We have to understand that only a devotee can read these books. A demon or atheist will throw them away. Generally he won’t even buy them. Sometimes an atheistic person may take one because he is curious, and then he becomes purified. So there is no offense. But still he doesn’t really understand what it’s all about. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that although Kṛṣṇa states that this knowledge is only for devotees, the spiritual master and the devotees of the Lord are more merciful than the Lord, because they also approach the nondevotees and try to give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the palatable form of books. That is the devotees’ mercy.

### 4.6 Unlimited ways to praise Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books

These books are so nice that anyone who reads them is sure to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. You can show them Kṛṣṇa books and ask them to read any part, and if they like what they have read, they should purchase, and if not, you will walk away. Who could resist? Kṛṣṇa book is so nice that everyone will like it, either as a story book or history or philosophy or whatever. They are sure to be attracted. Simply it depends on your presentation. So do it nicely and Kṛṣṇa will help you.  

This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s blessings that every one of us should become a sādhu and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As far as Kṛṣṇa consciousness is concerned, we have got new and sufficient number of books, and if we read them carefully and reproduce the purports in our own language, that is perfect preaching.

There is sufficient merit in our books that if you simply describe them sincerely to anyone, he will buy. That art you
must develop, not the art of lying. Convince them to give by your preaching the Absolute Truth, not by tricking. That is a more mature stage of the development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ³³

I am convinced that if you simply glorify Kṛṣṇa and our books in the best descriptive manner, anyone and everyone, no matter—even an atheist or otherwise, can be convinced to purchase. ³⁴

Jadurāṇī Devī Dāsī: I like to give myself a challenge. Prabhupāda wrote to Karandhara years ago and told him to give the devotees challenging new experiences to enliven them. I try to say new things to new people each time. When I’m talking with people, I’ll open Bhagavad-gītā or Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to a verse at random and read it aloud. Sometimes the verse doesn’t appear to have anything to do with what’s going on at the airport, but I try to purport the verse to connect it to their lives, their work and their nature. Then they can see how the philosophy relates to them. The other day I met a man and asked him what he does. He was a bank teller. I said, “Oh, great! That’s exactly what this book is about. When you’re at work, so much money comes in and goes out, but you don’t get elated when the money comes in and you don’t get upset when it goes out. You’re satisfied with your salary. And you know that if you do get attached, you’ll be in a lot of trouble with the police. So you don’t even bother. Similarly, this book teaches you that no matter what happiness and distress you get in life, you can always be equipoised because you are getting your “salary” from the Supreme, that is, your relationship with Him. From your relationship with Him, you get a much higher pleasure than you get from the ups and downs of material life.” On another day I met a punk college student studying math. I said, “Did you ever hear of this equation? One plus one equals one, and one minus one equals one. If you add everything to God, you still have just God, and if you subtract everything from Him, He remains complete. You believe in God, right?” We talked about it, and he happily took two books.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: I use a straightforward style directly centered on the books. You explain what you want, what the books are—you mention the Sanskrit and other things. People over forty, most business people or educated people, know about Sanskrit and appreciate it. Of course, they see that there is some idealism involved. It’s obvious. We’re young, and we work to spread these Indian classics and study them ourselves. You can
mention the temple or preaching center or farm, whatever fits your presentation. I always say that the address is in the book. Sometimes I give my name. You cannot say we’re pure Indian monks descending from the Himalayan mountains, and we selected this shopping center, and here we are giving out the highest Sanskrit classics in your language. They won’t take it, especially because they see us everywhere. They may even think that we are hiding something by such explanations. I also mention sometimes that our books have nothing to do with religion. They’re universal. This the people can understand easily, because we are bhakti-yoga teachers. We teach everybody—Christians, Hindus, Jews, even nonreligionists—and people know that everybody goes to the yoga schools. The idea of some sect or cult doesn’t enter their mind. When they see that it’s Hare Kṛṣṇa, they naturally conclude that, after all, Hare Kṛṣṇa is bona fide, they know what they’re doing. It’s open and clear: They sell books for a fair price, and they study and teach the wisdom of these Sanskrit books.

**Indranîlamani Devî Dâsî:** I have a basic mantra that I tell everyone; it varies slightly from person to person. I say things like, “*Bhagavad-gītā* is an episode in a huge history five thousand years old. It has transcended time. It’s studied in universities all over the world. Two dynasties are disputing the throne. The best warrior, Arjuna, sees some of his friends and relatives on the opposing side and becomes overwhelmed and decides not to fight. So, the charioteer, Kṛṣṇa, encourages him to perform his duty. It’s very profound. It is the book of metaphysics. They also discuss yoga and meditation. Now don’t worry, it’s not standing-on-your-head yoga. It’s the internal process that encourages us to look into our hearts and bring out our natural spiritual qualities. This is the science of self-realization. They also talk about karma and reincarnation—what goes around comes around. You may have good or bad karma, and this book tells you how to stop it altogether by spiritualizing your activities, thoughts, and words. It teaches how to achieve self-satisfaction by elevating the consciousness to higher dimensions in life than sleeping, eating, working, and paying the rent. It teaches the science of the soul—that we are not the body—and when we realize this, then the miseries of disease, old age, and death won’t affect us anymore. It talks about how we should see the soul in the heart of all, not discriminate because of what color skin we have, what nation we’re from, or what our social status is. There are so many wonderful things, but if I tell you about the whole book, you’ll miss your flight. If there is one book you should read before you die, this is the one. One more thing, and I’ll let you go.” I show them my badge and say, “I’m a volunteer, and we also do food distribution, education, and counseling, so we’re asking for a donation to increase
our projects and cover the cost of the books. Please help us today.” I smile as sweetly as I can. If they give a large donation, I give them more books. All along as I’m presenting the book I’m enthusiastic and expressive—that helps capture their attention. I also smile a lot, because everyone is attracted to someone who’s happy. Smiling from the heart is a great way to attract them and conquer their doubts.

**Haripāda Dāsa:** To hippies I say that drugs and alcohol bring you pleasure now and suffering later; true happiness comes from inner peace with God—but we’re free to degrade or elevate ourselves. Regarding distributing to women, older ladies are less passionate and better established financially than young ladies. I approach them not for material profit but to engage them in devotional service before they leave their bodies. With young women you must be strict and authoritative; frivolity is dangerous and makes you lose concentration and mental power. To office directors and professionals I have distributed many sets in the street. They like praise and appreciation—I tell them that they are elegant and healthy looking and that they will like our books because they have good taste. I present the books in more detail. I mention the purpose of human life and speak about history, art, culture, philosophy, or yoga, because some subject always attracts their interest. Professionals like to be told, “You are always busy, which causes stress, and these books will help you relax and find inner peace, which money can’t buy.” To elderly people I say, “This book is dedicated to you—our later years are meant for inquiry about God and our destination after we leave the body.” The elderly like it if you tell them they’re youthful or that they look ten years younger than they really are. They always agree to take a book. You have to be loving with them and encourage them, and they are very grateful. Some people say, “I already have a lot of books that I don’t read.” And I reply, “You don’t read them because they bore you. Those books have nothing to do with your self-satisfaction. They deal with irrelevant, temporary subjects that go out of style. But a good book is one that is always relevant and can give you something and doesn’t make you tired.”

**Gīta-govinda Dāsi:** Before I was initiated I heard a devotee say that Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is as brilliant as the sun. Then I said it on sankirtana: “This book is as brilliant as the sun,” and suddenly I started to distribute a lot of books. So we have to say something about the books. This is an important point. It can be just one or two lines. “You take these books home, and your house becomes a holy place.” “Just read a line of this book, and your life will be successful.” “This knowledge is confidential. It’s five thou-
sand years old.” “These books are an encyclopedia of the universe. They describe the creation, the heavenly and hellish planets, reincarnation, karma, and various types of yoga.” “The hairs of your body will stand on end when you read this book. You can find all the answers to all the questions that you can think of.” “This book is the medicine for all kind of diseases.” I don’t use the same lines all the time—I can’t list them all. Once, I met someone, and no matter how I explained the books to him, he hesitated. I said, “Krṣṇa explains in Bhagavad-gītā that your mind can be your greatest enemy or your best friend. Now you are letting your mind drag you down. It’s all up to you.” Then he decided to take a book.

**Rohinīsuta Dāsa:** Be careful with the word yoga. Don’t make them think that they’re buying a book of yoga exercises. That’s the only understanding they have of yoga. We have to tell them our book is about bhakti-yoga, a practical form of yoga that we can introduce in our day-to-day life. The same holds true if you mention Gandhi. Don’t say the book is about Gandhi or Gandhi’s wisdom. If you think it’s good to mention Gandhi, you have to say clearly that this was a book Gandhi liked and read a lot.

**Jāhnāvā Devī Dāsī (USA):** I tell people the book is about heightened consciousness. It teaches us how to understand who we are beyond our body and mind. We are the soul within the body—effulgent, blissful, eternal. This book teaches us how to win freedom from suffering, envy, greed, anger, and fear of death—that’s the unlimited potential each of us has. It teaches yoga, or linking with God. So by reading this book you can understand who God is and how to develop your relationship with Him. That’s real yoga. You can experience God’s presence in your heart every day if you want. Bhagavad-gītā is a great book. It describes how we can understand this world and not be bewildered by it. I tell the story of Krṣṇa and Arjuna or, if it’s the Bhāgavatam, the story of Mahārāja Pariśīt. I like to preach directly. Sometimes I read a verse from Bhagavad-gītā, and they love it. Sometimes I tell people I’m doing a survey, and this is the question: “If you are not your body or mind, who are you?” You’d be amazed at the answers people give. They really get into it. That’s another nice way to preach to people—ask them questions, engage them! They like being asked questions. If it’s a foreigner, you can keep it simple. “This book is a gift from America to your country for the sake of peace, prosperity, and friendship.” I always tell them my name, and then I ask them, “What do you do? Where are you from?” Or I try to guess. Doing the New York airport I can pretty much figure out where any person is from. And they’re amazed. “You’re from Nigeria, aren’t you?” “How did you know?” “Well, I have extra-sensory perception”
or “Because you are famous.” Then we laugh, and they’re charmed by anything witty we can say.

**Jiva Dāsa:** I usually say this is a book describing a culture based on self-realization, and I always ask if they’ve heard of yoga, meditation, and things like that, just to get them thinking. And I go a bit deeper when I say that the books explain there was one advanced society in the world thousands of years ago. I say something and then get back to involving the people. All the questions we ask serve a purpose: giving them a book, holding their attention, and getting them to agree with us all the way to the end when they naturally agree to take the book. That’s the point the book distributor has to take them to.

**Sarvātma Dāsa:** Some of the hardest people to sell to are the Born Again Christians, who are pests. In the Bible Belt we have plenty of them coming by the bus-loads and telling us how wrong we are. With others, like young hip people, I’m direct—I frankly criticize materialism and tell them this is real education. I ask housewives when they last read a good nonfiction book. Most never read one; at least it’s hard for a housewife to remember the last time she did. So I recommend this one to read. Regarding old people, Prabhupāda said that old dogs can’t learn new tricks. So we can’t convince them with philosophy. But we can win their hearts with a personal touch. America is depersonalized, and people are polite but cold to each other. They don’t even know who they are or what they want, what to speak of revealing their minds to others or hearing from others confidentially. So we try to behave like the sons they never had and try to listen to whatever they say, and sympathize, and get them to take a book from us.

**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa:** Distributing to old people can be enlivening. I distributed *Prabhupāda-lilāmṛta* for quite some time, and whenever I met old people, I showed them the cover and said, “This is the biography of one of the most famous persons in our time, and he was an old person. Others told him he was an old man, but he’d say, ‘No, I’m not old! It’s my body that is old. I feel like a young man.’” And every old person who wasn’t senile could get the message. They were touched that someone understood their real nature, and they gladly took the books. One shouldn’t think old people are useless, that they don’t have any money or don’t have a brain. If we try to be compassionate, Kṛṣṇa can send many old people with a lot of lakṣmī. Regarding businessmen, they just think, “Who is the better businessman—me or you?” He’ll buy if you are really straightforward and convince him. Be tough. You have to come along with a heavy, clear, crisp sentence and
knock him out of his sophisticated bubble. Businessmen think everything is under their control. You can tell him the book shows more than just how to become a better businessman. It can show him how to put his whole life together, including business.

**Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa:** Many people are interested in alternatives, or they can see that the modern way of living is not satisfying. You can say, “Many people are frustrated despite our material comforts. So you can understand there must be something more to life. That’s what these books are all about—self-satisfaction, happiness that doesn’t depend on externals.”

**Flattering people**

We know that he is a fool, but we have to present it in a different way. We shall say, “There is nobody as learned as you.” In this way just make him puffed up and then say humbly, “My only request is that whatever you have learned, please forget it. Now try to understand Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. That’s all.” This is a different way of saying, “Whatever you have learned is all rubbish.” We simply say, “Kindly forget. Now turn your attention to Caitanya Mahāprabhu.” He will not be angry. If he turns his attention to Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then naturally he will forget all rubbish things. That is the way Prabhodānanda Sarasvatī taught us.

**Harikeśa Swami:** If you want somebody to listen to you, talk about him. It doesn’t matter what you say, but if you talk about him, he’s listening like anything. That is the nature of material life. We love hearing and speaking about ourselves.

**Haripāda Dāsa:** I always ask, “What do you do?” Sometimes I even guess the answer. For example, if I say, “Are you a nurse?” she’ll say, “Oh, you think I look like a nurse?” and feel flattered, because people have the idea that nurses are always young and pretty. And if she says, “No, I’m not a nurse, I’m cleaning,” then I say, “Oh, that is also needed. You can’t make machines clean; you need people to do it. So you’re doing important work. Machines cannot go into the corners.” If somebody says he’s a butcher, formerly I’d have said this is sinful and he’ll get heavy reactions, but now I say, “Really, you’re slaughtering animals? Isn’t that horrible? I could never kill an animal.” I try to get him to speak about it in a friendly way. With everyone I try to be a friend and try to give the feeling that I can appreciate what they’re doing.
Navina-nirada Dasa: Flattery and jokes make people laugh and feel good and break the ice. Sometimes you have to send some jokes across the table that they can catch and that they think are funny. Lightening the atmosphere disposes them towards our message and makes them inclined to give in to our desire, which is to give them these books. Devotees should always be alert to make a point in a spontaneous, humorous way, because that’s what people appreciate a lot. If devotees flatter, they have do it with maturity and not sound artificial or mocking. Flattery comes from the lips; praise comes from the heart. A devotee can sincerely praise someone because he knows all their admirable qualities come from Krishna. And because a devotee is nonenvious, he can always appreciate everyone for what he is—a spark of Krishna’s splendor. A devotee can take nectar from a pot of poison, gold from a filthy place, and find good qualities even when they are insignificant. A devotee ignores the bad and always sees the good. Such praise reminds the conditioned soul that he is meant for something great and glorious—devotional service. And that’s exactly what the devotee is offering them, a wonderful opportunity to engage in devotional service.

Handling special situations

Lord Caitanya’s desire was that this chanting of the holy names be spread to every town and village on the face of the globe, and now His desire is being fulfilled. That is to your credit as sincere servants of the Lord. It is always the difficulty with the karmis that they have no time for attending spiritual functions or gatherings. Sukadeva Gosvami analyzes the situation of the karmis as sleeping and indulging in sex in the night and in the daytime working hard—“Where is money? Where is money?”—and when they have got money, accumulating household paraphernalia and other things. Anyway, by the mercy of Lord Caitanya even such materially absorbed persons can be extricated from their entanglement in maya by contact with offenseless chanting of the Lord’s holy names—the Hare Krishna mantra. If you vibrate these transcendental sounds everywhere continually, it will pierce their ears and enter their hearts, and then their natural attraction for Krishna will be revived. So do not care for the temporary excuses of the unwilling and unfortunate persons, you simply carry forward our program of distributing sankirtana, prasadam and literatures, and the effect will take place. 36
(a) **Countering excuses**

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** During the Battle of Kurukṣetra Arjuna shot down arrows before they struck him. We must also do this. When people on the street say something negative, it is like they’re firing arrows at us, arrows of anger or envy and other things. Our arrows should be made of knowledge, and they are obtained by reading attentively. It’s nice to make a point from what you read. Sometimes educated big-shots say, “No time,” and we should fire back: “You’ll never have time. But time runs out!” Strong words may give them a realization. They think they are the controllers, but they are controlled by time, a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.

**Question:** Certain types of people have standard reactions. Can you remember some and how to reply to them?

**Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa:** Someone may say, “I don’t read.” “It doesn’t matter. It is not a book to read all at once like a novel. It is a book of wisdom, and you can read it whenever you want and however much you want. And there is no need to read it from beginning to end. Just read one page or one line, and it will give you a lot of inspiration.” Or I say: “When you are bored or troubles and anxieties are on your mind, you need something philosophical to give you inspiration, inner strength, and peace of mind.” Sometimes I challenge, “When did you last read a book like this?” “In school.” Then I joke, “It’s time you start to read again; otherwise you’ll forget how.”

**Question:** And if they say, “I’m just not interested”?

**Rohiṇīsuta:** Then let them go. Or try again: “No master ever fell from the sky.” Or, “How can you be interested in the book if you’ve never read it? It’s great wisdom, and we’re distributing these books to make them known. Why don’t you take one?” I keep it simple. A few words—but full determination. You may tap them on the shoulder and laugh, but you don’t take their excuses seriously. You don’t get entangled in their mind. Someone might think I am aggressive, but it’s not an imposing or nasty kind of insistence. It’s a friendly, personal exchange, and the people like it. They’re in bliss. They see you’re determined yet detached—something they aren’t. People look out for ideals. They like seeing someone determined and convinced about what he’s doing.

**Question:** What if someone says, “I already have one of your books.”

**Rohiṇīsuta:** That happens often, and we see that many people take more. You answer, “Really? That’s nice. You know which one you have? Is it the *Bhagavad-gītā*?” I try to identify the book by the cover, and I ask him if he read it. He’ll probably say he read a few pages. Then ask him how he liked it. And he’ll probably say it was interesting. Then you can tell him to go on
reading. Say, “I know from personal experience that you cannot understand everything at once, but the more we try, the more we will understand.” If someone says he read the book but didn’t understand it, I ask him what he didn’t understand, and then I open a book—especially when I’m going door to door. “Can you show me the books you have?” I ask. Then I take one of their books and read some lines or a paragraph. Sometimes I even continue reading, and they see that it’s not difficult after all. It’s important that devotees do this, especially when they meet someone who has the books and is willing to listen. And often you can convince them to take one or two books more. Sometimes when people on the street are nice, I ask them for their address and say, “Then I can send you an invitation.” If they hesitate, say that we have public programs and you can send them some information about them.

**Question:** But what about people who have a book but don’t want any more?

**Rohinišūta:** Then we can give them brochures or invitation cards. I don’t push them. You can immediately feel how much they can take. I always try to give them something—an invitation or a pamphlet—at least a nice impression.

**(b) Distributing to families**

Families, like couples, are units and often make decisions together. It’s a fatal mistake not to involve both partners. At one point you will hear that irreversible pronouncement, “We don’t need any,” from the disapproving partner. Therefore you have to involve everyone in the transaction or at least defuse any negativity. That same attachment which is the cause of material bondage can also be the cause for liberation. Although family attachment is generally the greatest knot binding someone to the material world, by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu book distributors can transform everything for Kṛṣṇa’s service. Here are two stories that illustrate (1) how Kṛṣṇa changed a situation unexpectedly through other family members and (2) how He mercifully used family attachment to force an unwilling member to surrender.

**Navina-nīrada Dāsa:** During the 1990 December marathon I went to the Geneva airport on one of the Christmas holidays when everything was closed. By Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement the books and sets went out like anything. For example, I went to a van, and there were four persons inside—a grandmother, mother, father, and child. Usually such a situation is use-
less. The man was uninterested—“I’m not into reading”—so I handed the
books to his wife. She and the other lady suddenly became interested. I had
only a few books, two *Kṛṣṇa* books and a Second Canto. They said, “The
*Bhagavad-gītā*! We know this. And you say you have the *Vedas*. Please go
and get them” (the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* set). So I went to the van to get the
set. I gave both ladies *Bhagavad-gītā* and showed them the set. The grand-
mother said, “Wonderful! No problem. I’ll take the set.” And then the
daughter said, “No, no! Impossible! It’s already bought. I’m buying it. This
is *my* set.” Then the grandmother said, “I’m taking it. Now is not the time
to bargain.” I told them I’d bring them a second set, and the mother said,
“Fine, I’ll pay for both sets.” And she paid cash for about thirty books.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** I was distributing to a family, and the wife really wanted the
book. She was into self-realization. But the husband wanted them to be on
their way. The wife then walked away upset because her husband wouldn’t
buy the book. At this point their daughter looked up at her father and said,
“I hate you.” Then the man decided to give a donation, and he took the
book to his wife. It’s wise to be cordial to all the family members, even ba-
bies, and make them as favorable as possible. Unless you can satisfy them,
the other family members will probably object at some point. One spouse
won’t be interested, or the parents won’t approve, or the children will de-
mand attention. In order to successfully give them the book, you have to be
the star of the show and keep their attention.

(c) *Applying psychology*

**Purūrvā Dāsa:** In some cases, to cut through another person’s mental “plat-
form, it’s good to be a little forceful and authoritative. Once, I met a man in
a parking lot, and he was going, “Oh, I don’t know. Maybe, but . . .” In Fin-
land the people are often wishy-washy. Then Kṛṣṇa inspired me to be heavy:
“Look, you take this book! Understand? And give me a donation.” Then
he simply surrendered and wasn’t at all disturbed by it. But if one is dealing
with a proud intellectual person, then it’s good to take a humble position,
present the book in a cool, unexcited way and just request him to give a do-
nation. There is some use to these psychological angles, but the main thing
really is being spiritually surrendered. That is what finally inspires people
to take the book. One other psychological technique I use sometimes when
I meet an innocent person who cannot get it together to take the book is:
“I’ll give it to you free.” I know he won’t accept it for free, and he promptly
says, “No, no, I can’t take it for free. I have to give you something.”
(d) Accepting donations from people who don’t want many books

Harināmānanda Dāsa: If someone gives a good donation, he gets more books. But there are also people who give big donations enthusiastically but don’t want ten books or a set; they simply want one or two or three. Then one has to use his discrimination. “I can’t force him to take the set.” Sometimes it is better to give them only one or two. They don’t want more. In such cases it’s not the amount of books that counts but their interest. One book—Īsopaniṣad or Bhagavad-gītā—is enough to make the person Kṛṣṇa conscious or make him join the movement. One can’t be attached to a big score and force the person to take the whole set. We should simply say thanks, and later on, upon meeting some young people who don’t have as much money but who show sincere interest, we can give them the books cheaper.

(e) Guarding against book snatchers

Cakṣu Dāsa: If someone immediately grabs the books, be on guard. Normally people have doubts about taking the books. Those who quickly take the books may have something in mind: “He’s saying these books are for free.” You have to react quick. If you haven’t let the books out of your hand and someone is grabbing them, you can pull the books back. If a book-snatcher sits in his car, I go in front of his car and note his number. Usually he gives the books back immediately. Or he says, “I’ll turn you in to the police.” “No problem, I have a license,” you can say. Even if you don’t have it, he believes you if you’re convincing and cool, and he knows that what he’s doing is wrong. Anyway, if someone steals a book, don’t be disturbed. Just let him go. Becoming disturbed is useless. Then this person is not stealing two books, he’s stealing fifty, because we lose the mood of distributing. Maybe by a fight we will get back two big books, but afterward we’ll be so disturbed that we’ll need a break. We should be careful not to disturb our day by such incidents.

4.7 Learning from past mistakes

Regarding the question you raised about traveling saṅkīr-tana parties and selling books: Yes, we want money. Selling books is the real preaching. Who can speak better than the books? At least whoever buys, he will look over. If you have to sell books, do it by hook or by crook. The real preaching is selling books. 37
I am especially encouraged by your increasing the distribution of books. That is our primary business, to sell these transcendental literatures profusely all over the world. And the methods you have introduced for distributing the books are very much liked by me and approved fully. Whatever we have to do to induce people to take a book, that is nice. We shall judge the thing by its result, not by its means. 38

In the history of the world, especially the Western countries, there is no record of selling so many religious books daily. It is unique in the history. Our men are doing good— that people do not see. They are so blind. But the end justifies the means. We have to give them—even if they do not want it. That is our duty. 39

These quotations will be put into context in the next section (4.8). In these very same letters and in many other letters Prabhupāda clearly explained what he really meant. But devotees in the past sold many books “by hook or by crook,” and justified it by saying “the end justifies the means.” That phase of book distribution is analyzed here to teach an important lesson so that in the future the same mistake isn’t repeated.

Misconceptions that sneaked in

Jadurāṇi Devi Dāsī: Within the history of ISKCON’s book distribution, somehow or other, during a certain period some deviation took place—like it’s said happened in Bhagavad-gītā: “The science as it is appears to be lost.” Gradually we began hiding Kṛṣṇa more and more. And Kṛṣṇa seemed to have said, “Well, if you want to hide Me from people, I’ll also be hidden from you.” In one sense He also hid from us. And now we see that the more we bring Him out again, the more He is manifest to us also. The more we present Kṛṣṇa, the more we get the benefit of His association.

Prahlādānanda Swami: Seeing what went on at the airports, I sensed we were going to have problems. The people wouldn’t tolerate it year after year. And Kṛṣṇa didn’t appreciate it. You may say it was for Kṛṣṇa. Yes, partly for Kṛṣṇa, and partly due to an intense competition. The idea was you could do whatever you wanted as long as you got a big result. We convinced ourselves that Kṛṣṇa would protect us no matter what we did, even if we did the wrong thing. But I think Kṛṣṇa protects us by giving us the intelligence to do the right thing. And if Kṛṣṇa gives us the intelligence how
to do the right thing and we refuse it, then we are no longer under Kṛṣṇa’s protection. We want people to be attracted to Prabhupāda’s books and his devotees, but back then we were inexperienced, and our tactics alienated people. The preaching didn’t have the full or permanent effect that we’re looking for.

**Harikeśa Swami:** The greatest mistake made in book distribution was allowing the evolution of change-up techniques and other deviations. Those techniques utterly destroyed book distribution. Books ought to be distributed on their merits, not by trickery. [One change-up involved asking someone to let you change one of his big bills—as a favor—to help you get rid of some small bills; then giving back less cash and asking him to donate the rest. Other change-ups confused and deceived people about the amounts of money they had given as a payment for books.]

**Vijaya Dāsa:** We made some big mistakes—the change-ups, the stickers, the paintings. These mistakes really hurt our Society. So we should learn from our mistakes. We should present Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the pure way Śrīla Prabhupāda tried to teach us.

**The end justifies the means—but where does it end?**

A book distributor, like a doctor in an emergency, is entrusted with a grave responsibility—saving the lives of fallen souls—and if he becomes negligent and continually misrepresents ISKCON by presenting Prabhupāda’s books in an unfavorable, unfriendly way, like a quack, he’s liable for malpractice and subject to reprobation. It should have been self-evident. But book distribution went through a phase during which, in the name of quantity, the quality of the distribution became second class or disregarded altogether, as evidenced by the old ISKCON slogan “By hook or by crook, distribute the book!” With the sacrifice of quality, honesty, and purity, the quantity of distribution did not remain steady. The resultant bad publicity and the public reaction to underhanded fund-raising and preaching efforts proved repeatedly that quantity must always be accompanied by quality. And that was exactly the desire and order of Śrīla Prabhupāda regarding the way we distribute books. From quality comes real quantity—results that are solid and ever expanding. The quantity achieved by a passionate, fruitlet mentality ultimately burned out the distributors and the public, as illustrated by the following two accounts:

“In the early 1980s American devotees collected money by selling various items (patently labeled *saṅkirtana*) and distributing free magazines in their...
The Mass Distribution of Books

spare time—as many as possible in the shortest amount of time. So one
devotee had the idea of putting magazines on the windshields of parked
cars at a shopping mall, and he once distributed a thousand in an hour. Un-
fortunately, that day it rained just after he did this, and the whole parking
lot became paved with wet pictures of Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa, covered with
mud and tire tracks.”

“By hook or by crook, get out the book’ and ‘The end justifies the means’
were the battle cries as we daily went out to hit up the karmīs in the ’70s at
the Chicago airport. Those slogans were our authorizations for any behav-
ior we chose under the name of saṅkirtana. They were taken to supersede
all other instructions and were grossly misunderstood and misused. But our
methods had the noteworthy effect that after each day of distribution, many
books were found in garbage bins and other places, abandoned by dissatis-
sified, angry people. How did we know our customers were dissatisfied and
not merely disinterested? We knew, because many of them came back to
tell us. But we were so insensitive and sanctimonious that we never con-
sidered changing our ways. “Too bad, brother, you took the book. All sales
are final.” In many sales organizations the motto is “The customer is always
right.” But for us it was “The distributor is always right.” Provided he sold
a book, who cared about the ignorant, sinful karmīs? Any other considera-
tions were considered sentimental. Devotees were glorified for being ruth-
less instead of compassionate. Devotees were nicknamed Shark, Barracu-
da, and Piranha in appreciation of their prowess and styles of distribution.

“Of course, someone may have bought a book and thrown it away, but
someone else would find it; so everything’s cool, right? But people who
find discarded books aren’t the prime focus of our book distribution. Can
we act irresponsibly, as if the initial recipients aren’t our primary concern?
The facts are that our badly distributing books agitated people, and if we
blow away the smoke screen of speculation about what later happened to
discarded books, we’ll realize and admit and feel sorry that offenses were
committed in the name of distributing books.”

If someone preaches and behaves well with everyone (Prabhupāda said
“inducing” them to take books), then the person leaves with a good im-
pression. The good impression left by a devotee is an eternal, positive as-
set. That favorable impression of associating with a devotee makes it likely
that a person will perform more devotional service in his lifetime, and he’ll
more readily take a book at the next opportunity. That we experience again
and again. Conversely, how often have we painfully experienced that some
book distributor was irresponsible, and although a person may have taken a
book, he now feels anger, disdain, or repulsion? The book distributor, who was supposed to be the bearer of light and truth, became instead (at least for the time being) the cause of the person’s aversion to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which will probably follow him for the rest of his life.

We have to decide upon the end before we can choose the means. Book distribution is the means to the end: becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious ourselves and making others Kṛṣṇa conscious. We must constantly examine ourselves to see whether or not our propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness includes substantial book distribution and our book scores reflect sufficient Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Quantity and quality: if both are there, that pleases Śrila Prabhupāda the most. It takes Kṛṣṇa consciousness to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There is no higher end.

**Don’t leave negative impressions**

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** Distributing books in the streets, malls, and parking lots is a successful, blissful way of doing *sankīrtana* because we meet lots of people who couldn’t be reached as quickly by going door to door. We’re sure there will always be people to meet in rapid succession. We distribute huge quantities of books and meet enormous numbers of people. And the streets test our mercy and compassion. But one danger we have to be aware of is that when people are walking down the street, they are generally in a hurry. In airports, they are in a hurry. Generally materialists are always in a hurry when they leave their homes or offices. So we devotees have to use an aggressive approach to get their attention, and I have seen many times that some new or inexperienced devotees who weren’t convinced of what they were doing accidentally created negative situations. Prabhupāda was disturbed when devotees burned out people. Put yourself in the position of the person you approach, for example, on a parking lot. What are you doing? You approach a person sitting in his car and knock on his window. It’s unusual, to say the least. Then your blissful face appears in his window, and as soon as he opens it, you hand books through the window in front of his face, and he has to take them. It’s fun for us, but let’s not forget the conditioned soul. To them, we may be intruders. Even without your desiring it, people may become agitated by the aggressive approach. If a devotee isn’t careful in dealing with people, they may get the wrong impression of what we’re doing. On the street we can achieve our biggest results, but we have to invest the greatest awareness and care. If both are there, the results and good impressions, then Śrī Caitanya is most pleased.

Once I was going to my bank, and I saw a devotee distributing in front of the bank, so I sat down and observed him. He went to one car where
two gentlemen were sitting dressed in black suits and nice ties, and he tried
to give them books. They were talking, and they flatly refused. Apparently
this devotee was rather annoyed that nobody had taken any books for some
time, and he told them, “You must be from the Mafia.” Then he saw me,
walked up to me, and repeated, “Those guys are from the Mafia.” Then I
went into the bank, and suddenly one of the men from the car approached
me and asked, “Do you know that guy selling books? You can tell him he
can keep his insults to himself. I am the director of this bank.” Then I had
to try to make excuses. I explained that the devotee didn’t mean it—he felt
frustrated, because no one was buying from him. Sometimes such people
understand, if we meet them at a time when they are ready to listen; but
most of the time they become fried and remain burnt out for life, which is
sad and tragic, because they came in contact with the sankirtana
movement but were turned off by our behavior.

Beware of offending the conditioned souls

Mañidhāra Dāsa: I was somehow never able to be pushy with the people on
the street. Germany, where I distributed, is a place where any aggressive
way of distributing books really doesn’t pay off. In the early days of sankirtana
there were such techniques, but they caused lots of trouble finally to
the devotees. One time the sankirtana was even divided into two groups:
Nṛsimha League, the heavy ones, and the Govinda League, the soft ones.
But finally this division collapsed, and ultimately what remained was only
the Eternal Servant of Kṛṣṇa League. In the long term all mundane passion
fails, and when it’s finished, the only thing that is left is the mercy of guru
and Kṛṣṇa.

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: Prabhupāda once wrote a letter telling a devotee
something like this: If by your aggressive method you agitate a person,
and he walks away and doesn’t take a book, then you are a nonsense and
a failure. I am doing almost all my book distribution door to door—of-
ices, industrial plants, lawyers, and doctors. Only once or twice a year I
distribute in the street. I’ve been confronted many times by people feeling
mistreated by our quick method of selling books. We call it the sell-and-
run method. I have seen many Godbrothers and Godsisters leave the mis-
sion of book distribution. It’s a tragedy. One reason for the tragedy is that
they weren’t extremely careful. If you agitate people, you are displeasing
the spiritual master, and your determination decreases to go on sankirtana.
Sometimes devotees say, “I don’t want to go on sankirtana anymore. It’s
too heavy.” But it’s too heavy only when our methods are wrong. We aren’t
nice to people, and we treat them like dirt. Then our consciousness also becomes like dirt, and we can no longer go on *sankirtana* because we see dirt everywhere. All our inspiration becomes dirty. The spiritual master wants people, including us, to appreciate Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement and his books. If we can achieve that, we will taste nectar and enjoy unlimited inspiration.

**Why not apologize?**

**Jāhnāvā Devī Dāsī:** We have to guard against the mentality, “They’re demons, we’re devotees. They’re in *māyā*, we’re not, and we’re going to save them.” We really need to cultivate a more open, honest, and compassionate mood. When I meet people who put down the devotees, sometimes I have to admit, “You’re right. Some of our distributors with a lot of enthusiasm but not enough proper training went out and made mistakes.” I can’t hide that, and I can’t lie. But I also assure them we’ve learned our lesson, and I let them know we’re sorry. Those things don’t change the purity of our philosophy. We have to be human and personal and see people in a more loving way for book distribution to improve. Here in America I know a lot of devotees who don’t distribute books because they’re afraid of the comments and reactions of the public. We don’t have to defend ourselves as if we were always right—we weren’t right. Sometimes we have to acknowledge our mistakes. That will convince people of our honesty and will definitely change public opinion. If we simultaneously improve our public relations and continue book distribution, then more American devotees will be inclined to distribute Prabhupāda’s books and not be as intimidated or fearful to meet people and hear what they think or say about devotees.

**The role of managers**

**Indranīlamani Devī Dāsī:** Even though devotees desired to please Śrīla Prabhupāda in the past, and that’s praiseworthy, they used many methods that turned a lot of people off. The animosity thus created made it impossible to distribute in some places, and for years not much book distribution went on in America. Now it’s reviving, and we’re experiencing that the ground is fertile, people are receptive, and lots of seeds are being planted. I don’t meet that many people who had bad experiences, but when I do, they appreciate how much more mature and sensitive devotees have become to the public, and how their approach is more straightforward and without pressure. They leave with a good impression, and sometimes they even decide to take a second look, and they buy a book. A few problems still slow
down book distribution in America. One is that different leaders have varying opinions about what is important for preaching. There’s no unified effort to make book distribution the priority. Another problem is that success in book distribution comes from having faith in the spiritual master and following his instructions, and the faith barometer here still needs to rise, but devotees are improving and going through a healing process. It’s gradually getting better again here in America, as temples put new devotees into book distribution and become sankirtana-oriented.

The call to purity and responsibility

Nirguṇa Dāsa: A book distributor should be determined to get out as many books as he can and convince as many people as he can, even if they show no interest, because sometimes, by his expertise, by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, by his determination, by his surrender and sincerity, he can get many people to take a book who would normally not show the slightest interest. Generally people aren’t interested in the book, but we see that the books make devotees whether the persons are interested or not, even whether they read them or not, as long as they take the books with them. The books are out there making devotees. Of course, we don’t want to be seen as ruffians or hustlers. Devotees should be mature ladies and gentlemen and exhibit the good qualities that are found in a devotee: humility, tolerance, determination, and honesty. By exhibiting the qualities of a devotee, we won’t fall into the crazy things that went on in the ’70s and ’80s that gave us a bad reputation. If we are simply out there, humbly but methodically trying to spread this movement with great determination, then we will be respected. Saṅkīrtana devotees have been told many times, “I don’t believe in what you are doing and what you say, but I admire your determination and your endeavor and sacrifice.” We have to have many devotees out there distributing books. If devotees are trained properly, and the book distribution and saṅkīrtana are being monitored by the leaders of the movement, then we can present the proper image of ourselves as sincere, religious persons endeavoring to enlighten people and to relieve humanity of ignorance and suffering.

Harikeśa Swami: Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we had a taste of love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead? Then we wouldn’t need the saṅkīrtana leader and many outside forces convincing us to go out. We would simply be completely and independently motivated to follow the order and please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Not only would we be distributing books everywhere, preaching everywhere, but we’d also love Kṛṣṇa. And
then after somebody met us on the street, he’d say, “I met a lover of Kṛṣṇa, and he gave me a book.”

On the plane from Los Angeles some people talked with us, and ultimately what they said is, “We don’t like you guys.” We are everywhere, and everybody knows about us, and the books are everywhere, but somehow or other we have to change that “Oh, no! The Hare Kṛṣṇa people!” to “Hey! They’re here! We like them!” We have to make this change. When we start preaching to people, they ask, “What is your goal?” And we say, “To develop love of God.” And they wonder, “What’s the connection between that and what you’re doing?” Then we have to explain about the books. They say, “O.K. That’s the books, but what about you?” So we have to become pure lovers of Kṛṣṇa. There is no way around it. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is firmly entrenched here in America, and no one can break us. The sankirtana will go on, we’ll be inspired, we’ll continue because we want to love Kṛṣṇa. But we have to become pure lovers of Kṛṣṇa so that people will welcome us into their homes and lives. Because we are loving Kṛṣṇa, they will love us—that is the principle. We will be able to continue our activities to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there’s no doubt about it. It will go on, and we will expand. But we have to become lovers of Kṛṣṇa. Then automatically we will expand more and more. We simply must do one thing only, and that is surrender to Kṛṣṇa, love Kṛṣṇa, and follow the order of Kṛṣṇa. Then Kṛṣṇa will make everything happen perfectly. Kṛṣṇa has a plan, and the only reason that plan is not being carried out is because I am getting in the way, because I don’t love Kṛṣṇa and see His plan. I can’t hear the Supersoul telling me how to act, and I can’t hear the spiritual master saying, “If you do it like this, it will work nicely.”

When we surrender to Kṛṣṇa, everything will work perfectly. Moves will be made that no one can understand. Money will come, and no one will know how it came. Devotees will come, and no one will understand from where. And book distribution will increase unlimitedly. It is simply a function of our surrender to Kṛṣṇa and nothing more. (From a class in New York in December, 1978)

4.8 What Śrīla Prabhupāda really said

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā_ 7.37 p: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was an ideal ācārya. An ācārya is an ideal teacher who knows the purpose of the revealed scriptures, behaves exactly according to their injunctions, and teaches his students to adopt these principles also. As an ideal ācārya, Śrī
Caitanya Mahāprabhu devised ways to capture all kinds of atheists and materialists. Every ācārya has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement with the aim of bringing men to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, the method of one ācārya may be different from that of another, but the ultimate goal is never neglected. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmi recommends:

\[
yena tena prakāreṇa manah kṛṣṇe niveśayet
sarve vidhi-niśedhā syur etayor eva kinkarāḥ
\]

An ācārya should devise a means by which people may somehow or other come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. First they should become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and all the prescribed rules and regulations may later gradually be introduced. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we follow this policy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

**On “cheating”**

As for the meaning of the word *cheating*, there are only three things to be known: Kṛṣṇa is the supreme enjoyer, the supreme proprietor of everything, and the supreme friend of everyone, and we say that honesty is acting upon the knowledge of these three facts. So if one is always acting upon these three facts, knowing Kṛṣṇa to be the supreme proprietor, enjoyer, and friend, then he is truly honest, and if one is not acting in this knowledge, then he is always cheating or being dishonest. So if you apply this to your techniques for selling literature, then you will understand the meaning of the word *cheating.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda upheld a system of values completely different from the West’s. For example, by the standards he represented, drinking black tea is a vice. But in America, when Prabhupāda arrived, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, consuming drugs were advertised throughout society by films, art, and music.

Preaching, as Prabhupāda knew it in India, meant appearing as a sādhu and speaking directly about Kṛṣṇa and the śāstras. In Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta’s Gauḍīya Matha, devotees preached openly, and they sold books when the opportunity arose. Faced with the immense task of broadcasting Kṛṣṇa consciousness world-wide, Śrīla Prabhupāda had to adjust the means of preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda, by adopting amazing preaching strategies,
acted as a perfect rūpānuga and genius yukta-vairāgi. He understood the essence of the paramparā’s desire—saving the fallen souls. Thus he engaged imperfect people (both his young disciples and the fallen souls) in a perfect activity, the sankīrtana-yajña. His disciples’ selling books in the airports in Western clothes and not necessarily speaking directly about Kṛṣṇa consciousness was one of those adjustments he made. Prabhupāda mentioned a few times that “the end justifies the means” and that selling books should be done “by hook or by crook.” By that Prabhupāda simply referred to the devotees’ stressing material topics (e.g., vegetarianism, health, world problems, or stories) over the spiritual contents of the books (renouncing and surrendering). That sort of camouflage served as both “hook” and “crook”: what the devotees said caught someone’s interest, and what they didn’t say prevented the person from becoming put off by the news of radical spiritual transformation. For a traditional Vaiṣṇava preacher, such compromises are already a form of lying or cheating, but according to Western business standards, they were nothing but common sales tactics far removed from moral and legal transgressions. Śrīla Prabhupāda illustrated this by the analogy of a mother’s “cheating” her child by promising him a sweet if he would take his medicine, but not delivering the sweet. “That is tactics. But that is not cheating,” he explains in the following conversation:

Devotee: We’ve been trying more and more, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to make our techniques of distribution more honest and straightforward—not to cheat as much as in the past.

Prabhupāda: No. The thing is that Kṛṣṇa’s service is so sublime that even if we cheat, we are not culprits. But because we have to deal with the worldly man, we have to go according to their rules and regulations on cheating. Otherwise, a devotee of Kṛṣṇa never cheats. He never cheats at whatever he does. Just like a mother says to her child, “My dear child, if you take this medicine, I will give you this lugloo.” The child is diseased. He will not be able to digest the lugloo, but the mother sometimes cheats him, and when he takes the medicine, the lugloo is not delivered. Similarly, sometimes we have to say so many things very pleasing to him, but our business is getting him to take this medicine. That is a tactic, but that is not cheating. If the mother helps the child in drinking medicine and then afterwards she does not supply the lugloo, that is not cheating. Some way or other—that is the instruction of Rūpa Gosvāmi—yena tena prakāreṇa manah kṛṣṇe nivesāyet: somehow or other, let everyone be Kṛṣṇa conscious. There is no question of vidhi-nilēdha. Sarve vidhi-nilēdha syur etayor eva kinkarāḥ: the other rules and regulations will act as servants, but the main business is to bring one to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is the main business. We are not meant for
cheating anyone. We have no business cheating. But to lead one to Kṛṣṇa consciousness we may say something sometimes. So that is not cheating.  

Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami: Heard a tape where Śrila Prabhupāda says your spiritual master is stressing book distribution by any means, the end justifies the means. When the father lies to the son to get him to take medicine, a big moralist may object that the father is cheating the son. But actually he is benefiting him—somehow get him to take the medicine. So it is with book distribution. If you don’t follow the spiritual master’s order because you are a big moralist and do not like that they are pushing sales, then you make as if you are greater than the spiritual master. He laughed and appreciated how Tripurārī Mahārāja sells a book by saying, when a lady asks, “Is this about the power shortage?” “Yes, it is.” A big moralist may object, but the devotee is thinking: let me give her a book on Kṛṣṇa. (From ISKCON in the 1970s, p. 240)

Guru-kṛpā: Śrila Prabhupāda, some of our men, when they sell our books, sometimes have to say things in order to get people to take the books. So that’s actually not misleading?

Prabhupāda: No, that is not misleading. Let him take, some way or other. Why do you think this was done by Lord Buddha? Because the atheist class, they did not believe in God: “There is no God.” So Buddha said, “Yes, there is no God. You are right. But what I say, you accept.” “Yes, sir.” But he’s God. Keśava dhrta-buddha-śarira jaya jagatīśa hare—we know that Lord Buddha is Kṛṣṇa. But he says, “No, no—there is no God.” “Yes, you are right. But what I say, you accept.” “Yes, sir, we shall do that.”  

What you think is bad, that becomes good when applied to Kṛṣṇa. Just like Kṛṣṇa advised Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, “You go to Dronācārya and tell him that his son is dead”—because Dronācārya would not die unless he heard that, unless he got the shock of his son’s death. His son was living. Dronācārya would not believe anybody. Yudhiṣṭhira was truthful—Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira. So Kṛṣṇa asked him, “You go and tell this lie: Your son is dead.” But Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja hesitated and said, “I’ve never spoken lies. How can I say that?” So this was a mistake by Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, because the so-called truthfulness or untruthfulness of this relative world is not applicable to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has got a plan; if we execute the plan of Kṛṣṇa, that is the highest truth. But we should not imitate unless we are actually ordered to do
such a thing—just like Kṛṣṇa was personally asking. So unless we are ordered by Kṛṣṇa or Kṛṣṇa’s representative, we cannot violate the morality of this world. That is not possible. 43

Obviously, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s understanding of “cheating” and “lying for Kṛṣṇa” was pragmatic and innocent, and had nothing to do with the misinterpretations of his Western disciples.

“By hook or by crook” in context

Regarding the question about traveling saṅkīrtana parties and selling books: Yes, we want money. Selling books is the real preaching. Who can speak better than the books? At least whoever buys, he will look over. If you have to sell books, do it by hook or by crook. The real preaching is selling books. You should know the tactic how to sell without irritating. What will your three-minute lecture do? But if he reads one page, his life may be turned. We don’t want to irritate anyone however. If he goes away by your aggressive tactics, then you are nonsense, and it is your failure. Neither you could sell a book, neither he would remain. But if he buys a book, that is the real successful preaching. That is the certificate of my Guru Mahārāja. If someone, a brahmacārī, would sell a one-paise magazine, if one of our brahmacāris would go and sell a few copies, he would be very, very glad and say, “Oh, you are so nice!” So distribution of literature is our real preaching. Now, if you cannot handle the matter nicely, that is your fault. But the success of your preaching will be substantiated by how many books are sold. Anything you want to sell, you have to canvass a little. So he gives some money for the service of Kṛṣṇa, that is his good luck, and he gets the chance to read some transcendental knowledge. But if you only irritate, and he goes away, that is your less intelligence.

The fact is that we have to adopt the same tactics as ordinary salesmen adopt, but the difference is we do it for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, and they do it for sense gratification. Actually we have experienced that sometimes out of sentiment someone gives to ISKCON and then laments and wants it back, but that does not mean we should give it back. Our policy is that his money, which would have been used for
purchasing cigarettes, liquor, sex literature, and meat, will give him the opportunity to gradually become purified. So if by tactics we save that money from being spent on cigarette packets, that is good. If we can take some money and give some literature, that is a good service. So far irritation is concerned, a child is also irritated when he is given instructions, but that does not mean that we should stop. Invite them to our feast, that is a better indication.

So if the *sāṅkīrtana* parties in Satsvarūpa’s zone are irritating the public while selling so many books, that is one thing, but by their selling books they are doing the greatest service. What will your one hour of preaching do? They will hear and go away. But if they have one book at home, they will read it, their friends will read, and some solid work is done. So the art is to sell many, many books and not to irritate the public. So you may instruct all the others how to do this successfully.  

**“The end justifies the means” in context**

I am especially encouraged by your increasing the distribution of books. That is our primary business, to sell these transcendental literatures profusely all over the world. And the methods which you have introduced for distributing the books are very much liked by me and approved fully. Whatever we have to do to induce people to take a book, that is nice. We shall judge the thing by its result, not by its means. But at the same time, we must avoid irritating anyone or disappointing anyone later by cheating them or telling big lies which become detected. Your program for approaching businessmen in their offices is especially liked by me. Now tax your brain to create programs for engaging wider and wider classes of population in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.  

They are forgetting the aim of life. Somehow or other we have to give them the real thing. Why should this one man [a journalist writing about book distribution in the airports] be envious? In the history of the world, especially the Western countries, there is no record of selling so many religious books daily. It is unique in the history. Our men are doing good—that they do not see. They are so blind. But the end
justifies the means. We have to give them—even if they do not want it. That is our duty. Actually what is our aim? Our aim is to create men of ideal character. And if our men are distributing books on this account, they are doing the best service to the society. Because someone has said something in the airport, that is not very important. What we are doing, that they must see: see their sacrifice, what is behind their life, how they are living, how they have sacrificed everything for the welfare of society. In our society there is no distinction between black or white, Hindu or Muslim. Every living being is welcome to take to this cult and make his life a successful affair.  

Instructions on quality, quantity, and honesty

In one sense everything depends on one’s level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, for no one can be benevolent without being Kṛṣṇa conscious, and if one is Kṛṣṇa conscious, then he can use anything in Kṛṣṇa’s service. Until that advanced stage is reached, it’s better to use restrained tactics when distributing books. Not everyone is able to catch a big fish without becoming wet, as Prabhupāda cautioned his disciples about telling lies. His conclusion was that it’s better to develop goodness and honesty; otherwise we will degrade ourselves and ruin our public image, too:

We may take money for Kṛṣṇa using any method—beg, borrow or steal—but a more advanced understanding of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness process is that telling the truth in a very palatable way is the most successful system. Your mentioning Bangladesh and our feeding refugees—of course, we are sometimes feeding the local inhabitants, up to a thousand persons on some occasions, but there is no organized program of feeding the refugees at Māyāpur; in fact, so far I have seen, all the refugees from Nadia District have gone back to Bangladesh, and there are no more refugee camps. So it will not be the truth to say that to people, but I have no objection if they give more hearing such a thing. Let them say; who will check us? We may tell any damn thing to induce people to give us money on Kṛṣṇa’s behalf, that is not the point. The point is that by saying lies, the less advanced, neophyte devotees may become entangled or disturbed in their minds by it. Of course, by their collecting more money
and giving it to Kṛṣṇa, He will relieve them of all the anxiety of telling lies. But not everyone is able to catch the big fish without themselves becoming wet. 47

As for this making up some story for collecting money or selling a book, of course we may do anything for Kṛṣṇa, but that is supposed to be reserved for very advanced experts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness—they know how to catch the big fish without themselves getting wet. So it is not very much advisable to tell lies just to sell a book. If we simply stick to describing how wonderful Kṛṣṇa is, then whatever we may lie or exaggerate, that will not be a lie. But other things, lies, they will not help us to train ourselves in truthfulness. Lie to some, not to others, that is not a good philosophy. Rather the brāhmaṇas are always truthful, even to their enemies. There is sufficient merit in our books that if you simply describe them sincerely to anyone, they will buy. That art you must develop, not the art of lying. Convince them to give by your preaching the Absolute Truth, not by tricking—that is the more mature stage of the development of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 48

I am convinced that if you simply glorify Kṛṣṇa and our books in the best descriptive manner, then anyone and everyone—even an atheist or otherwise—can be convinced to purchase. Of course, that is a great art and not everyone can do it, but gradually by practicing preaching in this way, striving to so much present a wonderful picture of our books to the people, gradually you will master the trick how to do it. Being the senior devotee there, you may give the younger students all good instruction and advice how to do this, but not for any reason shall we decrease the book sales and collection monthly over some small lying about Bangladesh or other things. 49

Regarding dishonest means being used, I have never advised or taught anyone like that. That is not my idea. This record distribution has caused havoc. It should be stopped immediately. I have also asked Hamsadūta to stop it. Book distribution is our real business. If we give them a record, they simply hear some magical sounds and take it for sense
gratification, but if they receive one of our books and read even one page, they get eternally benefited. Therefore I am stressing this book distribution, not other things. Stop record selling completely. This is my order. 

If we simply speak nicely to a person and try sincerely to get him to take the book, he’ll take it. Why should we adopt unfair means? We should not do anything which will create a bad impression or make us unpopular. People are after these books. They are hankering for them. We don’t need to use a cheating method. I never had to use any cheating method when I first began. I simply presented the real thing. Basically, and practically speaking, everything that is done sincerely for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction is perfect. But we have to be very, very careful in our dealings with others so that they will not take the wrong view. Just like the gopīs. They left their homes in the dead of night to go and meet this young boy Kṛṣṇa for kissing and embracing. To the ordinary person, this is sinful, but to the devotee, it is worshipable and it is considered the highest form of devotion even by Lord Caitanya, who was Himself a very strict sannyāsī. Therefore we are very careful not to discuss this rāsa-līlā in the presence of ordinary men because they will only misunderstand and commit offenses. While dealing with the ordinary men, we must spread this movement in such a way that they will not misunderstand us and take offense. Try to sell as many of my books as possible to your best ability.

My general request is that you all distribute as many books as possible and at the same time be very careful in your dealings with others so that they may not become irritated with us. Your book-sale statistics are astounding. I am so much pleased. Please continue distributing such nice quantities and try to encourage others more and more. You are sincere, so Kṛṣṇa will give you all intelligence, strength, and everything else you may need to distribute millions and millions of books. I have written letters to Rāmeśvara and Rūpānuga in regard to the recent controversies about book distribution methods to be used by our men. You may refer to those letters if you like.
Regarding the controversy about book distribution techniques, you are right. Our occupation must be honest. Everyone should adore our members as honest. If we do something which is deteriorating to the popular sentiments of the public in favor of our movement, that is not good. Somehow or other we should not become unpopular in the public eye. These dishonest methods must be stopped. It is hampering our reputation all over the world. Money collected for feeding people in India should be collected under the name ISKCON Food Relief. Not any other name. And every farthing of that money must be sent to India; or better yet, buy food grains there and ship them here, and we will distribute. But every farthing collected for that purpose must be used for that purpose.  

Why is it that money that has been collected on behalf of ISKCON Food Relief has not been sent to India? Where is that money? This is not good. If you are not intending to send for food distribution, then do not collect in the name of food relief. Whatever is collected for food distribution in India must be sent as soon as it is collected, to India.  

“First impressions are lasting”

In all our dealings we should be above suspicion. They say first impressions are lasting. If someone feels cheated by our men because they are using dubious methods of distribution and collecting money, our purity may be doubted and reputation spoiled.  

Do everything conscientiously and my blessings are always with you. However, don’t create any awkward situation that may be criticized. Caesar’s wife must be above criticism. Up to now, I have got a respectable situation. I wish that all my disciples will have a similar respectable position in society. That will keep my name good. Like father, like son.  

Stop disturbing, but don’t stop distributing

Hari-śauri Dāsa: When you were saying, “Go out and distribute books profusely,” one group was going out and distributing, and they had various
means of doing it. Some were not so good, but still the books were going out. Then part of the group split away. They were saying, “You’re disturbing the public by these methods of book distribution. We don’t want that.” This is what happened in Australia at the temple in Brisbane. They became very much opposed to the *sankirtana* methods, and as a result they gave up the *sankirtana* program altogether and then went to live on farms. They left the temple, and the temple was finished. They were saying, “We’re still following Prabhupāda’s instructions.” But they were saying that the devotees distributing the books were not following instructions.

**Prabhupāda:** His Divine Grace has said “You distribute books,” so why do you say that?

**Hari-śauri:** Well, their idea was that because the public is sometimes becoming disturbed by the book distribution, it’s not being done correctly. So it should be stopped.

**Prabhupāda:** The public may be disturbed, but we are following our own course of action. It is not obligatory. We are requesting you, “Take this book.” That is not obligatory. “If you like, you can take. If you don’t like, don’t take.”

**Hari-śauri:** So their idea was that we should build some public relations to try to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness—give a good impression, and then people will come.

**Prabhupāda:** Then you are dictated by the public, not by the dictation of your spiritual master. The spiritual master has ordered you to distribute books; you shall do that. That is obedience. Now, the public may take or not take, that is the public’s option. But my duty is—because the spiritual master has said—I must try my best. The spiritual master has not said that “You must sell so many books daily; otherwise I will reject you.” He has not said that. So everyone may try his best, that’s all. The public may take or not take, it doesn’t matter. And if you want to please the public, the public says, “You dance naked, and I will be very happy with you.” So I’ll have to do that. Then what is the use of taking a spiritual master? The public—they have got their whims how to become pleased. Are we to follow all these things? We have to follow our instruction of the spiritual master. Why manufacture? “The public will be pleased like this.” The public may or may not give you—what can you do?

**Hari-śauri:** Our success is in the spiritual master’s pleasure, not the public’s pleasure.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes, that is bhakti. Otherwise, why does Kṛṣṇa say, *sarvadharmān paritvājya māṁ ekaṁ saṅanaṁ vraja:* “You haven’t got to please so many religious instructions; you simply please Me.”
Siddha-svarūpa: I don’t think the devotees who formed a faction and left the temple were against book distribution. It had a little bit to do with some of the devotees using very, very forceful tactics and trying to give people books and take their money, and people were becoming very offended. That is not what you want.

Hari-śauri: That’s all right. But don’t give up the book distribution.

Siddha-svarūpa: Yes.

Hari-śauri: The ones who were distributing the books went on and distributed more books, became more expert, so that the public was not so much disturbed, and still they’re distributing books. But those people who formed a faction and went off are not distributing books even now, two or three years later. So it was simply a question of fault-finding more than an earnest desire to please the spiritual master.

Prabhupāda: Yes. 57
5

Other Forms of Distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Books

“I am so glad to note that your saṅkīrtana program is improving and that you are preaching directly from Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. Śravanam kirtanam—this is the process. It is beneficial for the reciter as well as the hearer. Also, book distribution is a very important program, and you should give much attention to developing it. If anyone simply reads our Kṛṣṇa book, TLC, NOD, and Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, he is sure to become a Kṛṣṇa conscious person. So somehow or other, either through the schools or colleges, libraries, life membership program or ordinary sales, we must push on this literature distribution program. It is so important, and a most valuable service to Kṛṣṇa.”

5.1 Śrīla Prabhupāda on selling sets to universities

Besides the mass distribution of books, which creates an auspicious atmosphere furthering all preaching programs, Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized placing his books systematically in the hands of the learned sections of society. When he heard of the success of the BBT Library Party and other campus preachers, Śrīla Prabhupāda became greatly pleased.

I am so glad to learn that you are having nice success in placing my books in the libraries and in schools and colleges. That is very much to my satisfaction, so please continue your program of placing these Kṛṣṇa consciousness literatures in all the libraries and schools and colleges. I am sure this will revolutionize the thinking of the thoughtful men of your country as well as the students and professors, and the ultimate end will be to save the world from the clutches of material illusory activities, which are now causing havoc everywhere.
Our literatures are unique in the world, and we want to introduce our philosophy in learned circles, so your report of library distribution is good news for me. Keep trying to place my books in auspicious places such as libraries, universities, and clubs, and someday the world will realize and appreciate these transcendental literatures.

It is very good news that you are introducing courses in Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the universities and yoga institutes. As you know, this is the only real yoga—bhakti-yoga—and it is the only practical means for God realization in this age. So you are doing the greatest good for your countrymen and the world at large by introducing this sublime movement for regaining our lost position as eternal servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

Your report on the temple activities in your zone is very encouraging. In all those centers you should especially emphasize the book distribution program in schools, colleges, and libraries. That is a most important program, so tax your brain how to increase it more and more, and Kṛṣṇa will surely help you.

It is so much encouraging to hear how you are introducing this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the schools and colleges there. This is an especially ideal opportunity for distributing our books also, so you should make all serious endeavors in this connection. These books are so potent that anyone who reads them is sure to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. So it is a very valuable service to distribute our books.

I am very pleased that your preaching work is going on nicely. That is the test, that you are making devotees. Especially I want this school and college program. If only the intelligent class of men understands our Kṛṣṇa philosophy, then our mission is successful. So try to attract these students with profuse prasādam and nice philosophy, and they will appreciate more and more. Slow but sure—that is our motto, and—class, not mass. So never mind that some other Christian movements are getting many followers. The competition is beneficial for us. Everything is beneficial for Kṛṣṇa.
consciousness if it is utilized properly. That is the art. Anything without substance will not last, so just demonstrate sincerely that we have got solid ground beneath us, not that we have only some sentiment, that's all. Many fanatical spiritual movements have come and gone; but without the flawless philosophy of Kṛṣṇa, they cannot stand. Therefore I want especially that my books and literature should be distributed profusely. This is our substance—real philosophical information, not some weak sentiments. So try for this, to give all men this Kṛṣṇa philosophy, and many real devotees will come with us back to home, back to Godhead.  

It is very encouraging to learn that you are preaching in the schools. If you do this nicely, then you will have no end to your success because these students can understand our Kṛṣṇa philosophy and become convinced by it more easily than others. So if they join you, then our movement will grow like anything.

I think your proposal for seriously organizing the college programs is first class. If this program is conducted in the proper fashion it can be our biggest book distribution outlet, I am convinced of this. You are an advanced devotee, and you should use your intelligence to convince the professors that they should use my books in the colleges. This will be the greatest service.

It is very encouraging that many professors have purchased books for themselves and are considering ordering them for their students. I very much like this program of the standing orders. Try to increase it to fifty thousand such orders from the libraries. . . . Regarding the remark that distributing a book to a professor is one hundred times better than to an ordinary man, I never said that. I said it was very important.

Regarding sending books free to libraries: The system you can adopt is to send the books and tell them to look them over for one week. If they do not like the book, they should send it back at our cost. If they like it and want it, then they can send the money to us. But we cannot give books away free to anyone. They must be paid for.
5.2 The history of set distribution

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself started set distribution in India. He translated, produced, and published three volumes of the First Canto of “Srimad Bhagwatam” and placed sets of those books in Indian libraries. He also visited politicians and industrialists and maintained his publishing by the sales.

In 1965, Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled to New York on the Jaladuta. He had few possessions, but two hundred three-volume sets of “Srimad Bhagwatam.” The only money he had when he arrived in New York on September 19th was forty rupees—and twenty dollars that the captain of the ship had paid for a three-volume set.

In America, one of his main initial goals was selling “Srimad Bhagwatam” sets to bookstores and interested people. Later, when ISKCON became well established, Prabhupāda concentrated on translating and empowered his disciples to sell his books world-wide. The devotees began set distribution in California in late 1971. Dressed in dhotis, they sold the three-volume Kṛṣṇa book door to door. Later book distribution exploded on the streets and in the airports, and naturally the program of set distribution declined. But in 1974 Hṛdayānanda Goswami began sending brahma-puruṣas to universities in New England to sell sets and standing orders of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to the professors and libraries, and from the outset they met with great success.

Then in 1975, Śrīla Prabhupāda astounded the world with a masterpiece, most of which was produced and published by the BBT in Los Angeles in only two months: the seventeen-volume Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. His achievement challenged book distributors to find methods of selling sets. The BBT Library Party formed, and by 1977 it had succeeded in obtaining standing orders from most college and university libraries and numerous professors throughout North America.

Encouraged by its success, the Library Party branched out to Europe, Australasia, and India. Guided and inspired by a flow of nectarean letters from Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Library Party expanded to include hard-working and efficient devotees in other countries. They obtained standing orders in Europe, for example, from many universities in Great Britain, France, Benelux, Germany, Switzerland, and especially Yugoslavia. They also went to Czechoslovakia, Poland, and even Moscow. At that time they were li-
mited to distributing books in English and therefore had to concentrate on universities—practically their only customers for sets in English. Since then, fifteen years have passed, and now the BBT produces books and complete sets in many languages. Set distribution is becoming relevant again. In every town and village there’s at least one library, and if devotees make intelligent plans it should be possible to place a set of Prabhupāda’s books in every local library.

The devotees have tried several methods of selling sets of books. An inspiring description of the methods they’ve developed in different parts of the world follows.

5.3 Methods of set distribution

Rūpānuga Dāsa: I once asked a visitor at the Washington temple how many devotees he thought we had, and he said he couldn’t even guess. I said, “Take a guess.” He said, “Well, I think maybe two million.” I laughed and said, “Three thousand. Just see the potency of Hare Kṛṣṇa. You’re thinking we’re two million, and we’re only a handful.” People think we’re millions because of our books.

Prabhupāda: Push book distribution. Then our movement is successful. All Americans should have at least one set of books. That is not very difficult for them, to purchase one set of books. But it will be a good asset for them if they keep them and sometimes see them. Any line they read, they will get transcendental knowledge.

Devotee: One wealthy man in Atlanta invited us to his home, and we held a nice program. We distributed prasādam and had bhajana and kīrtana. Afterward he bought a set of books for a hundred dollars.

Prabhupāda: Yes. For an American gentleman one hundred dollars is nothing. I have heard you’re making plans for a very large order of my books from the BBT to be sold door to door like encyclopedias. If you can do this, it will revolutionize our book distribution and afford greater spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness than any book distribution thus far. I want that every respectable person has a full set of Bhāgavatams and Caitanya-caritāmṛtas in his home.

The BBT Library Party

The Library Party started the important mission of selling complete sets of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. They concentrated on academia (universities,
libraries, and professors) and obtained many favorable book reviews and standing orders. A standing order consisted of all of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s available books and a subscription to the forthcoming volumes of the then incomplete Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

The devotees wore first-class suits and wigs, carried briefcases and business cards, used customized order forms and special color catalogs, and offered professional business terms of payment and delivery.

As the campus sales representatives of BBT, the world’s largest publisher of books on Indian philosophy, culture, and religion, they first met the person in charge of purchasing books for the library. Devotees would obtain from him or her the forms that professors were required to submit when recommending that the library purchase books. Only then would they go to the professors. Acquisitions librarians often have the authority to order books themselves; therefore meeting them first was important. Even if the professors didn’t order or recommend, the librarians could purchase. So it would have been psychologically awkward to approach the professors without contacting the librarian and then surprising him with recommendations collected without his knowledge.

Often the professors ordered BBT standing orders for themselves and on behalf of their departments requested the library to acquire its own set by signing the library’s recommendation form. Their recommendations did not automatically mean the library would purchase the set, but usually the libraries depended on professors’ recommendations. To sell BBT books, professors were approached in the departments of religion, philosophy, history, Sanskrit, and South Asian studies, and the more recommendations there were from any department, the better the chances were that the library would place an order.

Generally two devotees went to the same campus for a couple of days, split up, and visited all the professors who might be interested. Then they put all the forms and recommendations together and returned to see the librarian.

They were not selling books on the spot. Rather, they persuaded professors and libraries to sign contracts or simply to process the requests. Down payments were made when the orders were approved. The BBT offices in Los Angeles and Geneva handled the paperwork in North America and Europe, which included weekly field reports, and these offices mailed the initial shipments of books and the regular installments.

The Library Party made a cultural presentation of the books equipped with appreciations written by Humboldt, Schopenhauer, Emerson, Thoreau, Einstein, Gandhi, and contemporary academicians. But mainly it was pure preaching—glorification of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, “the cream of all
Vedic literatures.” Often devotees had to argue that Vyäsadeva compiled the Vedas or the Vedas are represented by Bhagavad-gïtã and Srïmad-Bhâgavatam. Many lively discussions took place during special speaking engagements in front of college students, when the professors invited a speaker from the BBT’s Center for Vedic Studies to their classes. Out of necessity came BBT’s own book on Indology, Readings in Vedic Literature—The Tradition Speaks for Itself, by Satsvarupa Dasa Gosvami. The Library Party members and BBT representatives also began attending scholarly conventions and book fairs, which reinforced their good reputation and successful image.

Financially the Library Party required BBT investments because it was not receiving cash payments and had to meet the expenses of long-distance travel, but funds were also collected by ISKCON devotees traveling with the Library Party. Nowadays, set distribution can be conducted locally, which reduces the cost and allows closer networking with schools, universities, and libraries.

**Contract sales**

Contract sales, developed in Australia in the early 1980s, were a type of standing order. Devotees obtained lists of people to call on from the sankirtana devotees and Friends of Lord Krsna, or by using telephone directories and targeting, for example, all the doctors. Devotees made appointments and dressed in respectable business clothes. The set of fifty-four books in English was sold for an extremely high price. The contract sale included a down payment, and books were mailed weekly. The program lacked flexibility inasmuch as it’s bad business practice to lower your price, once you have demanded a high price. Not only will a particular customer find it suspect, but when he hears from his neighbor that he had to pay more than him, he will feel let down. So people had to pay that expensive price, or they didn’t get the books. Anyone buying the set appreciated it, but many people were excluded from the beginning by the high price.

**Follow-up programs**

In the follow-up program, books were not sent later against a down payment but were simply sold on the spot for cash only. This program was developed in Italy. The book distributors would collect the names and addresses of interested people. Another preacher would visit them with a whole set, sometimes after phoning first, or occasionally dropping by and saying, “I got your address from my friend who met you.” Because the devotees in this program usually dressed in devotee clothing, they sometimes sold Ra-
jasthani paintings and devotee-made grape juice and other paraphernalia, either together with the set or when they visited their customers again later on.

**Single books and sets combined**

During the 1983 December marathon, two Swiss devotees, Puruṣottama Dāsa and Ānanda-vardhana Dāsa, devised a record-breaking method of book distribution. They carried stacks of books, which included a set of twelve Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams, and tried giving out seven books to each person they met on a parking lot. When people take that many books, it’s convenient if their cars are nearby. (The stack method is described in Ch. 4.)

When someone gave a large donation, he received a full set. Ānanda-vardhana was the first devotee in ISKCON to sell a full set (forty books) on the street for cash. (Later the purchaser became a devotee—Bāla Kṛṣṇa Dāsa.) Because this was an experimental program designed to gain experience in distributing many books to one person all at once, the devotees didn’t stress a fixed price. Records were set: Puruṣottama dāsa sold five hundred books, including ten Bhāgavatam sets, in one day.

This all proved to be an historic breakthrough. After placing first and second during the first two weeks of the marathon, these two devotees taught their method to young Harināmānanda Dāsa. The following week he broke Puruṣottama’s record by selling 512 books in one day, and he won the marathon, even while improving the average donation given for those large numbers of books.

Using the Swiss model, devotees now give sets everywhere to interested people making large donations and willing to take many books. To create the idea of buying many books, devotees must carry them. People see the entire set, not just one or two books. One advantage of this method is the flexibility a person has in choosing how many books to take—one, two, five, a small set, or a full set.

**Selling sets door to door**

Going door to door and office to office in Austria, Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa, Haribolānanda Dāsa, and Cākṣu Dāsa developed this program. Haribolānanda was the most successful set distributor. He set records—ten to fifteen Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam sets a day. Carrying a boxed set, he often visited doctors, physiotherapists, and masseurs, either dropping in or phoning for an appointment. Later these devotees switched from offering a set or nothing to the flexible Swiss model of giving out sets or single books in a variety of combinations.
The nāmahaţţa model

This model is based on cultivating sympathizers and friends, life members, and former members of ISKCON. With friendly cultivation, they can be inspired to buy sets for their friends and their friends’ friends, what to speak of their own. Śacīnandana Swami pioneered this program in Germany over the past fifteen years and proved that the nāmahaţţa model produces many friends, supporters, donors, and bhaktas, and that new centers develop around the nāmahaţţa core groups. It’s an unlimited field for new preachers and preaching programs, especially during marathons, when large numbers of books and sets are distributed through these outlets.

5.4 Distributing door to door

Visiting private offices, shops, and homes

I am so glad to hear that you are beginning door-to-door san-kīrtana. This door-to-door san-kīrtana is the mission of Lord Caitanya. Even if there is a language barrier, this door-to-door san-kīrtana will fulfill your mission, and you can introduce our literatures to the higher circles as you have done by presenting Kṛṣṇa book to the prime minister.¹⁵

We want to distribute our books as far as possible to all classes of men, because anyone who reads them is sure to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, they are so nice. You should distribute the books to schools, colleges, libraries, bookstores and wherever else you can imagine they will be received. Also continue your program of door-to-door san-kīrtana. That is certainly Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s movement, and He will bestow upon you all blessings.¹⁶

You have complete capacity to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. That is a fact. So work enthusiastically and with patience, and your attempt will be successful by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. And continue this door-to-door program. It is very nice. Lord Nityānanda used to do that; Haridāsa Thākura used to do that; all of Lord Caitanya’s close associates used to do that. So we must follow in their footsteps.¹⁷
Haribolānanda Dāsa (Austria): I was distributing in a little town and had a whole cart of books. I struggled the whole morning and couldn’t give out more than three or four books. I thought, “I have to take a break.” I still had books in my hands when suddenly a man walked by and looked at the books. He asked, “What is this? They look like books about India. I’m really interested in yoga, but, sorry, I have to go to my office now.” I told him, “No problem, I can come and see you in five minutes. You’ll be there?” I gave him the books I had—a set of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams—and he carried them to his office at the bank where he worked. Meanwhile, I dug out a set of Caitanya-caritāmṛtas and then went to see him. He took all the books for a good donation. Then he volunteered to phone a friend also interested in yoga. I told him to do that and said I’d return in one hour and find out about the meeting. He arranged a meeting for that evening, and by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy his friend also took a full set. This was instructive: Why not ask those buying our books to supply us addresses and recommendations and build a network of friends and supporters?

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Shopkeepers are sometimes stingy because so many people pass by selling things, but they are willing to buy if they see something useful. Before entering, one has to make sure that not many people are in the shop, and best is when nobody is there. If I see that the situation is not favorable, I go to the next shops and return later. Usually just one or two people work in the shop, the owner or a manager, and if they’re busy, you can’t just take over the situation. But when you approach them at the right moment, they are always disposed to take a few books. At least they always have some money, so there is a good opportunity. They are pretty open-minded and businesslike. So they can appreciate a straightforward presentation by someone inspired to present his ideas and philosophy.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: During the marathon I was dropped at a shopping center with a full cart of books. After an hour I was thrown out of the lot and had to take a taxi to the next city. Although the day started tough, in the evening I had only one set left and some time remaining. I didn’t want to give the books out one by one, but altogether, as a set. I saw an international hotel frequented by VIPs in fancy cars and went there and presented the set to two or three people, but nobody took interest. Then I met a middle-aged man driving a Maserati sports car, and he told me he was a surgeon. The doctor happened to be slightly drunk. He admitted it to me. He told me that dealing with diseased and lamenting people all day made him drink a little in the evening; otherwise he wouldn’t be able to stand seeing
people anymore. I thought, “Here’s one of those guys who likes to talk and will tell you the story of his whole life, but he’s not interested in the books.”

But I just got right to the books and put the set on his car. This changed him somehow or other, and he became more personal and explained to me that he had studied a lot and heard of Sanskrit and read some *Upaniṣads* and parts of the *Vedas*. He really liked it that I was a straightforward monk who traveled all over the country and presented books of wisdom to people. “I’ll take one book,” he said, and gave a big donation. Wondering how I could give him the set, I tried saying, “You and your family should have the whole encyclopedia. You cannot have a dictionary from A to M, missing N to Z. It would be ridiculous for me to sell you something incomplete like that.” But that didn’t convince him. Coaxing him, I told him, “You’ve paid enough. These books are yours. You can keep them. If you give a little more, then that will be a donation for our work.” That got him, because he really liked it that I was a traveling monk talking all day about spiritual knowledge to materialists and nasty people. He liked meditation and practiced it himself. He opened his briefcase and gladly gave a much bigger donation. So my day ended successfully.

But we have to understand that some people will want to give a good donation for only one or two books and will be disturbed if we give them a whole set for the same price, even though their donation pays for the set. We can push them, and they will surely give more, and they will have the set. But they won’t feel happy afterward, and they might even send the books back. By the mercy of the spiritual master and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, book distributors have some special power, but it should not be misused to overpower people for the sake of our personal results or to show them that we’re superior or more clever. It always falls back on us. They will bring the books back or change their minds as soon as we think, “Now he takes. Now I convinced him. By my expertise and cleverness it was done.”

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** Going door to door is the traditional style of preaching. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Prabhupāda writes that devotees are preaching and selling books going door to door. I was wondering about it, because I had hardly ever done it except for three months in Germany. There were times when we had a lot of trouble with the police, and that’s why we went door to door for three months. We went to the villages, and our distribution declined severely—only one third as much as usual. Meeting people in their homes must be completely free from economic pressure. But even though the results appear diminished in the beginning, from that platform one can launch an entire preaching strategy. Once a devotee is in the home of some-
one really interested, he can immediately plan how to cultivate and engage him further. On the street this is much more difficult to do. Of course, one trouble is that the people often aren’t home. But in Sweden at four o’clock in the afternoon almost everyone is home, and in Switzerland the devotees go door to door most of the time, and their results are excellent. In other countries it is undeveloped, and in the long run it will be a powerful form of book distribution. Going door to door, we cannot run around like we do on the street meeting thousands of people. We are forced to depend on Kṛṣṇa, to pray to Kṛṣṇa while ringing the doorbell. We don’t know who will open the door. So it shows another aspect of book distribution, and I think it would be helpful if devotees also learned this method.

**Distributing in offices**

Your program for approaching businessmen in their offices is especially liked by me. 18

**Navīna-nirāda Dāsa:** In street distribution everything goes quick. People take a few books and donate, but in industries and large offices, you need a more sophisticated presentation. You sit and talk to the boss, convincing him to buy ten, twenty, or thirty books, telling him about the kind of books you have, who you are, and what you want. To avoid wasting time, you always have to be sure you’re speaking to the right person—the owner, the boss, or the cashier who can authorize expenditures even if the boss is not there. Generally you meet three types of bosses: (1) he wants the books for himself and will probably pay a good price, so you have to respect that; (2) he takes many books for his employees, so you discount the books; and (3) he simply wants to donate to your cause, and according to the amount he gives, you give him a few books. You can give a receipt, too. If no responsible person is there, you can try to sell books to the secretary or telephone operator or someone in charge. Kṛṣṇa only wants to see our sincere desire, and He will send appreciative persons. Avoid double-talk or tricks, but at the same time be fearless and sure of what you’re doing. They like that. If a secretary asks you whether you want to sell something, you shouldn’t be afraid to say no, just to get to the boss. Then present things straight. When you tell the boss what these books would cost in the stores and that you’re offering them at a low price to industries and offices, he’ll like it because they’re used to getting things cheaper than the people who have to go to shops. Be friendly, tell some good jokes, but stick to the point of getting him to take the books.
And even if they throw us out, we can live with that. We should never insist too much or agitate people, because if he doesn’t take the books now, he’ll take them later. In Switzerland we come by every year or every second year. And if we’ve left a good impression, next time they will take books for sure. We should always work in combination with the Supersoul. He’s ready to inspire these people. When it’s not possible to see a responsible person, you have to pass by another time or make an appointment with him. Or you just leave it up to Kṛṣṇa, and they will get the books in another way. We must have that faith that maybe it is not our turn to give him the mercy. Maybe Kṛṣṇa has some other plan. We cannot be attached and invest too much time for appointments. Never become discouraged in this process of sankirtana, even though sometimes no books go out. For example, today for one hour I could not get to one of these bosses. Everybody threw me out, or they had the books already, but still I went on and on until I found someone to take books. I met a boss who had taken five books two years ago, but this time he didn’t want any. Still he allowed me to see the cashier, who took some for the business. He took ten books for all the workers, and he felt inspired. Kṛṣṇa will always send people who like what we’re doing.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** We have some basic lines, but you can’t always speak the same way with everyone. One thing I never say when entering an office is, “Excuse me” or “Sorry to disturb you.” You have to be more dominant. Usually it is a line of someone who is fearful or unsure about what he’s doing, and people in the office get the feeling that you want something from them. First you should say, “Hello. I am so-and-so from such-and-such.” You identify yourself. If you say, “Excuse me, I’m a Hare Kṛṣṇa monk,” many people will ask you to leave. They don’t know what the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is.

When you enter a factory, the best trick is knowing the name of the boss. The receptionist will never tell you; rather, she immediately recognizes that you aren’t invited. So I walk around outside the factory building to see if a worker is outside, and I ask him: “Is the boss’s office in this building? Is the boss here? Do you know him?” Workers are talkative and like to impress others, so they gladly tell you everything. When I finally meet the secretary, I may bluff to make her think I’m important or that I know the boss and he’s expecting me, but in this way I stand a good chance of meeting him. I sometimes say, “I have a delivery for the director . . . Mr. . . . what’s his name?” That’s another simple trick. You have to be a little bold and astute. This is wanted. We cannot miss the boss just because one lady at the reception counter wants to stop us.
People may say we’re encouraging our members to be dishonest, but that isn’t the case. We use a gentleman’s trick to fulfill our duty. The victim may feel outwitted, but he cannot in all honesty feel cheated. If we get to the boss, he’s often impressed by our clever determination, because he never meets salesmen like that—they’re all brushed off by the receptionists and secretaries, who admittedly may be offended by our method. What can be done? Their business is to keep out solicitors, and our business is getting in. They think they have the best interest of their employer in mind, but the devotee has his higher interest at heart. Secretaries are also notorious for lying about the whereabouts and availability of their boss. It is simply a matter of who is more determined to execute his service more successfully. In business it’s an unspoken truth that you have to be a little tricky. A devotee’s business is to deliver the highest truth, and generally he will be truthful. But according to the circumstances, one may have to use some smart or clever means to deliver the truth. Actually, the sankirtana devotees report that it’s fun to be tricky—a transcendental adventure. Mundane moralists may not accept this point, but they’re bad candidates for becoming transcendentalists anyway.

Gaurāṅga-premānanda Dāsa (Holland): “I’m Mr. Prema, and I have something to give the director.” “What is it?” “It’s a personal gift. Don’t worry about it.” I don’t let them know any more than they absolutely have to. I say, “He knows I’m coming.” In Dutch the words for “appointment” and “I came to deliver something” are more or less the same. When I’m asked whether or not I have an appointment, I correct them: “I came to deliver something,” and they usually accept it. But when they don’t, I say that we phoned all the companies in this industrial area, and this one is on our list of those who told us to come; I just don’t know who it was, but here I am, the order carrier. Then they can’t find any fault in me. In this way I get in. If the boss is in a meeting and comes out to meet me, I say, “I won’t take much of your time. We visit all the companies and phoned a few here, and this one is on our list. If you are too busy I will come back, but I can show you quickly what we’re doing.” And I make an appointment if he looks interested; if he’s not I give him a prasādam sweet and say good-bye. If he’s just in his office, and if there’s no meeting or phone call, I sell the books immediately. But if he gives you an appointment, that’s also nice. Then he will have time for you, and he knows you’re coming. Still one has to ascertain whether it’s worth coming back or whether he’s asking you back later to get rid of you. What qualifies him is that he listens. When he lets me speak, I know he’s interested. I even ask a friendly question: “Do you really want me to come back? Do you like these books?” I see how they react. When
they give me their card, I give them a sweet. If he takes the sweet and eats it, I know he’s a good contact. In this way I make useful appointments, with a good success rate.

5.5 Industries

Now tax your brain to create programs for engaging wider and wider classes of the population in Krṣṇa consciousness.¹⁹

In the former Soviet Union a special distribution method is “engaging wider and wider classes of the population,” even unfortunate śūdras working in heavy industries or the mines of Siberia and the Ural Mountains. Astounding results have been achieved. During the 1992 Prabhupāda marathon Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa distributed eight thousand books in one week and several times distributed more than one thousand books a day—new daily and weekly world records. We spoke to him by phone:

**Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa:** We visit factories and industries, gather the workers, and explain to some twenty or thirty people at once what these books are. In a short time we manage to meet a lot of people. We have a special payment system. They put their names on a list that mentions what books they took and how much they owe, and they sign, stating that they want the authorities of the factory or mine to hold back that money from their wages. It can even be done in rates over two or three months. The advantage is that the person doesn’t feel the expense. He doesn’t give money personally, he just signs. But the factory immediately advances the entire amount to us. As soon as the money is transferred, we deliver the books, and they distribute them among those who are on the list.

**Caller:** We heard you live in the mines.

**Anirdeśya-vapu:** Factually, it is so, because mine workers have four six-hour shifts. They start at six o’clock in the morning, change at twelve and so on. Devotees can meet them only during their shifts. We are there practically twenty-four hours a day. We stay one or two days in one mine and then move on to another.

**Caller:** Where are you now?

**Anirdeśya-vapu:** I am in Karaganda, Kazakhstan.

**Caller:** Do you have a center where you keep books?

**Anirdeśya-vapu:** We rent a flat and store our books in the Culture House.

**Caller:** How are the temples supporting book distribution?
Anirdeśya-vapu: Almost every temple here has enough books by the mercy of the BBT. Now many devotees are traveling to far distant places. In our case, a group of five devotees came from Moscow to Kazakhstan. The devotee in charge of sankīrtana in the temple sends a large number of books, maybe twenty tons of books, by train. When devotees reach a city, they usually rent a place to live that’s big enough to hold the books. From those bases the sankīrtana devotees go out to different places all around. In the group are a couple of book distributors, a driver, a book packer, and other helpers. If they run out of books, they get more from their temples—by train or by plane if it’s urgent. Sometimes up to one ton of books is sent by plane.

5.6 Book tables

Sarvātma Dāsa: Sometimes I do book tables with dioramas, and many people are fascinated by them. You preach about the diorama. For example, with the Changing Bodies diorama you might say, “Do you see any connection between our changing bodies in this life and again at the time of death?” Because you’re preaching from Bhagavad-gītā, it’s easy to sell books.

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: One effective technique that we haven’t gotten into is the way devotees distribute a lot of books in India—by setting up book tables. Then you just wait, and people come. It’s ideal. The people come to you and take books. No misunderstanding is possible. But, of course, it’s Kali-yuga and not everybody will stop, and that’s why this method will not produce huge scores. But in Europe we could use it to engage older devotees or those with health problems or devotees who’d like to try another style of book distribution.

Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa: After the CIS opened, book tables were our main method of distribution because the country was poor, not many things were for sale, and people were eagerly buying whatever they thought was extraordinary. People just lined up to get our books. Hundreds of books could be sold at a table, and we had many tables in Moscow and other cities. That’s how we did big in the beginning. Now the country is becoming more Westernized and more Western commodities are available, and everything is commercialized. Book tables don’t work as well anymore. Formerly when many books were distributed in the underground, the average people and even poor people had the opportunity to get at least one or two books. Rich people didn’t use the underground. But now they’re getting the books, too.
5.7 Harināma saṅkīrtana — by bus or padayātrā

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā_ 7.82: Upon seeing the chanting and dancing of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord Nityānanda predicted that later there would be dancing and chanting in every village.

Purport: This prediction of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu is applicable not only in India but also all over the world. That is now happening by His grace. The members of the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness are now traveling from one village to another in the Western countries and are even carrying the Deity with them. These devotees distribute various literatures all over the world. We hope that these devotees who are preaching the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu will very seriously follow strictly in His footsteps. If they follow the rules and regulations and chant sixteen rounds daily, their endeavor to preach the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu will certainly be successful.

In the 1970s in the U.S.A. the Rādhā-Dāmodara party at its height consisted of six buses, twenty vans, and 150 members who competed with and defeated all other temples in book distribution. It also preached powerfully and attracted new bhaktas. A similar smaller program has formed in North America—KrishnaFest—a traveling party of men. In Germany the Spiritual Skyliner bus uses the same method. The world-wide Padayātrā is traveling _saṅkīrtana_ in its original form. Rādhā-Dāmodara and other groups simply exchanged the bullock carts for buses. Wherever Lord Caitanya’s _saṅkīrtana_ parties arrive, they attract many people, and a lot of books can be distributed to curious readers, who will always remember the extraordinary scene where they purchased the book. As shown by the following statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda (in chronological order), this program can be developed unlimitedly according to time, place, and circumstance.

The moving _saṅkīrtana_ party was programmed long, long ago, even when I was in India. When there was talk about preaching among our Godbrothers, I used to say to my Godbrothers that when I would begin preaching I would take two trucks, one for the _saṅkīrtana_ party and one for carrying requisites, and I would go from village to village throughout the whole world preaching Lord Caitanya’s message. So the time has come as per my dream, and by the grace of Kṛṣṇa you are carrying on this program. Please therefore organize this moving _saṅkīrtana_ party as you are already doing from one school or college to another. If we can rightly impress the
Krṣṇa consciousness idea in some intelligent student’s heart, it will be of great service. 20

The traveling saṅkīrtana and teaching in the schools and colleges which you are organizing are excellent proposals, and I think that they are the best programs for pushing on Lord Caitanya’s movement: simply traveling and preaching and infiltrating the schools where young boys and girls are interested to learn something which will satisfy them. In both activities you may distribute many of our literatures, and that will please me very much. 21

I am very much joyful to hear that you are enjoying your preaching activities there in America. Actually, this is our real business: preaching, chanting, distributing prasādam and book distribution. This book distribution is especially an important program, and it is first-class preaching work. So I encourage you to work with all the senior men there in America and encourage them to distribute more and more of this transcendental literature. . . . If the facility for serving the Deities is not there, then we should not be discouraged. That is real detachment. When Caitanya Mahāprabhu was touring all over India He did not bring the Deities with Him. So in our traveling and preaching, Deity worship is not essential, but if it is done nicely it can be a very attractive aspect of our preaching work. 22

Your plan to get a large vehicle for traveling, with built-in shower, kitchen and other things, is approved by me. But you should try to get new, because the old ones are always needing repair. We have seen by practical experience. 23

When I hear about the saṅkīrtana buses moving all over the world, then I think that we are becoming a gigantic guerilla warfare movement fighting with māyā. This traveling in buses is the best means to drive away māyā and establish Krṣṇa consciousness all over the world. After all, the whole world is the property of Krṣṇa, but temporarily it is being illegally occupied by māyā’s agents. Flood them with kīrtana and books, these are the best weapons, and increase the number of buses — that will be your success. 24
I was extremely pleased to hear your report from your traveling buses. It sounds as if your program is very, very wonderful, and I am very encouraged to hear that such a program is coming along so nicely. I am glad that you have understood the importance of my books. Therefore I am stressing it so much. Let everyone take these books. If he simply reads one page, then he is getting something substantial, a real eternal benefit. Or if he hands it over to his friend, and he reads one page the same result is there. So continue these festivals constantly and make them all Kṛṣṇa conscious. Overflow the whole country by this preaching work. Let the whole United States become Vaiṣṇavas, then everyone else in the world will follow. That is my real ambition. Therefore your program is very glorious. This is really preaching. 25

I am very glad to see that you are enthusiastically pushing forward with this preaching work and the young Indians are coming forward to join our saṅkīrtana party. It is very encouraging to me. Anyone who has life, he can preach—so go on very enthusiastically and there will be all facility given by Lord Kṛṣṇa. . . . When I return to India, I shall surely try to travel with your buses. It is a very nice program, and I want to see it go on very enthusiastically. 26

Oxen can be used for driving carts and preaching village to village. What is the question of killing them? Here in India our Lokanātha Mahārāja has successfully organized such a program, and it is a great success. He has traveled all over India, and everywhere they distribute books and prasādam and perform kīrtana, village to village. Each night they stop at a different village. We can introduce many millions of such carts all over the world. 27

5.8 Magazine distribution

Each center should take the responsibility of contributing some money towards the publication of Back to Godhead, instead of depending upon each center for selling Back to Godhead. For example, if a center contributes $100, we send them copies at cost price to the amount, and it doesn’t matter whether they sell it or not. But we must have the monthly
contribution. The copies which are not sold may be distributed free to schools, libraries, and influential gentlemen. This will greatly further our propaganda, and I am thinking in these terms. 28

BTG is my life and soul. Please therefore try to distribute as many BTGs as possible. I started this magazine in 1947 in my householder life. I was spending Rs. 300 to 400 at the time ($300 to $400 in U.S. exchange), and I was distributing this magazine without any consideration of how much I was getting in return. Practically the whole money was spent without any return. But ten years after, from 1954 to 1959, the struggle was very hard because at that time I had no money, and I was alone editing, publishing, and securing money for publication. So it was a great struggle. My ambition was that I would publish BTG in huge quantity so that people may understand the transcendental blessings of Lord Caitanya. Now, since I have come to your country, I have entrusted the matter to my beloved American boys and girls, and I wish to see that this magazine is published and distributed in the American way like Reader’s Digest, Life, etc.—published in millions and distributed all over the world. Actually the position of BTG should be more important than any mundane magazine because it contains the quintessence of human necessities. 29

The BTG No. 12 is nice. In India the biggest circulated spiritual magazine is Kalyana printed by Gita Press at 95,000, so you have far surpassed them. Thank you, the magazine is very nice. 30

Jayadvaita Swami: When Śrīla Prabhupāda first met his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in 1922, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta suggested that Śrīla Prabhupāda spread the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahā-prabhu in the English language. Shortly before passing away from this world, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura again gave Śrīla Prabhupāda this same instruction—that whatever Śrīla Prabhupāda had learned from him he should now teach in English, for this would benefit both him and those who would hear him. It was in pursuance of this order that Śrīla Prabhupāda, in 1944, started Back to Godhead magazine.
Srila Prabhupada personally wrote the articles for the magazine, edited and typed the manuscripts, raised the funds to publish the magazine fortnightly, checked the galley proofs, and personally distributed copies hand to hand. As he later wrote to one disciple, “This paper is the beginning of my spiritual life.”

In 1966, after coming to the United States, Srila Prabhupada directed his first disciples at 26 Second Avenue in New York City to spend practically all the money in their small treasury to purchase two second-hand mimeograph machines. With these machines, Srila Prabhupada continued to publish Back to Godhead. The first American edition appeared in 1966. Under Srila Prabhupada’s direction, Back to Godhead later appeared in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Hindi, Bengali, and other languages.

The publishing and distribution of Back to Godhead is one aspect of the eternal devotional service rendered by Srila Prabhupada to his spiritual master for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. Srila Prabhupada’s followers have the opportunity to assist him in this service, following in the paramparā system.

One can take part in the mission of Back to Godhead by reading the magazine, by working on the magazine staff, by contributing to the magazine through writing, photography, and art, or finally by distributing the magazine.

Srila Prabhupada, of course, set the ideal example of writing about Krsna, and this example we are meant to follow. “You must all find time to write some articles for publishing in Back to Godhead,” he wrote to Yamuna Dasi (March 2, 1970). “That is culture.”

In another letter, Srila Prabhupada explained, “Actually, if we are engaged in writing and speaking on behalf of Krsna, this is the best process for advancing in Krsna consciousness. Such activity forces us to think very clearly on the subject matter in order to speak or write on it to convince others. So I think that you should develop your ability for writing and spend some time writing articles for Back to Godhead.” (letter to Ranadhir Das, May 21, 1972)

“By writing regularly, what you read will become realized,” Prabhupada said in another letter (January 6, 1972). “As much as possible read, chant, and preach. This is our life and soul.”

Srila Prabhupada wrote to Giriraja Das (August 12, 1971), “Writing articles means to express oneself how he is understanding the whole philosophy. So this writing is necessary for everyone.”

And again, to Satsvarupa Das (January 11, 1971), “I want all our students to write articles for our transcendental magazine.”
Srila Prabhupada intended that BTG play a powerful central role in the spreading of Krsna consciousness. “BTG must be improved to the fullest extent,” he said, “because it is the backbone of our society.” (letter to Rayaräma Dasa, March 23, 1968)

Srila Prabhupada said that this would always be so, and he gave a simple reason why. “This Back to Godhead will always remain the backbone of our Society, because the more the magazine is popular the more [the] Society becomes popular.” (letter to Rayaräma Dasa, January 30, 1967)

Srila Prabhupada therefore directed the BBT trustees, “I cannot stress this point enough that we must handle this publication of Back to Godhead nicely, for it is one of the most important aspects of our society.” (letter to the trustees, February 17, 1973) Some years ago, a survey conducted by Amita Dasa for the BBT in Great Britain found that although the form of Krsna conscious literature by far most widely distributed in the British Isles had been small books, the publication that had outstripped all others in bringing devotees to the movement was BTG.

Publishers distribute magazines mainly in two ways—by subscription and by single-copy sales. (“Single-copy sales” refers to sales at stores, markets, and newsstands, at people’s doorsteps, or anywhere else people can buy copies one by one. Though the publisher sells the copies in bulk, the final customer buys copies one at a time. Hence the name “single-copy sales.”)

Some magazines are distributed only by single-copy sales. An example is TV Guide (circulation: 7,226,000). Other magazines are distributed only by subscription (within America), like National Geographic (circulation: 9,921,000). Most magazines are distributed both ways.

When Srila Prabhupada began Back to Godhead in India, he distributed the magazine both by enlisting subscribers and by approaching people to purchase copies one by one. In Srila Prabhupada-lilamrta, His Holiness Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami tells how Srila Prabhupada sold Back to Godhead in New Delhi offices and tea stalls and nearly collapsed in the heat of the summer while personally delivering copies to various addresses. As Srila Prabhupada later wrote, “I had no money, and alone I was editing, publishing, and securing money for publication. So it was a great struggle. My ambition was that I would publish BTG in huge quantity so that people may understand [the] transcendental blessings of Lord Caitanya.” (letter to Guru Dasa, April 16, 1970)

When Back to Godhead began in America, at first it was distributed only at the temple, at Lower East Side shops, at occasional public kirtanas, and by devotees as they moved about here and there. Later, when chanting parties became the main form of preaching, distribution of BTG became a
natural part of the program. As the parties flourished, so did the distribution of BTG.

“Any gentleman will give a quarter,” Śrīla Prabhupāda had said. So when the devotees with the kirtana party asked people for donations, anyone who gave twenty-five cents received a BTG.

But although BTGs were getting distributed, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s large books were not. Soon, therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda began emphasizing the importance of big books. And once devotees discovered ways to get the books out, big book distribution took off. Distributing big books became ISKCON’s most important way of preaching.

Chanting on the streets and distributing books were both important, Śrīla Prabhupāda said. But the distribution of books was the “greater kirtana.” The chanting party might be heard for a few blocks, but through book distribution the message of Kṛṣṇa could spread all over the world.

Along with large books, devotees profusely gave out medium-sized books, small books, and BTGs. Gradually, however, though distribution of big books kept climbing, sales of BTG began sliding. Later, a surge in small-book distribution further eroded the sales of BTG. In the beginning, BTG had practically been our only sankirtana publication. But now we had strong competitors—ourselves. Our own books, big and small, were taking over from BTG.

At this point we’d do well to ask ourselves what role BTG is supposed to play. When Śrīla Prabhupāda said that BTG would “always remain the backbone” of ISKCON, what did he mean? Is BTG basically another kind of book—smaller, perhaps more colorful—or does it have some unique capabilities of its own?

Books and periodicals are fundamentally different. And, yes, BTG has a unique contribution to make. How so?

We might compare books and magazines to earth and water. The earth is solid, steady, always the same. Pick up your foot, and when you put it back down, the earth is still right where it was. Water, in contrast, flows, moves, and changes. As the Greek philosopher Heraclitus pointed out, “You can’t step into the same stream twice.” And so it is with books and magazines. Books stand the same for eternity. Magazines move with the times.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are rock solid. They give us the steady basis of our philosophy, true and the same for all time. Back to Godhead, however, is always changing. Each issue differs from all the ones that came before it, and all the ones to come next.

In Back to Godhead, ideas grow and develop. Readers and writers interact. Kṛṣṇa’s eternal message speaks directly to the events and ideas of the times.
In BTG, the movement moves.
The books tell us how Lord Kṛṣṇa’s philosophy applies forever. Back to Godhead shows us how it applies right now.

But books and magazines differ in another way that’s perhaps even more important. When you receive a book, you get it once, but when you receive a magazine—a periodical—you can get it periodically. Books are a powerful one-time encounter. Magazines are a series of encounters.

If we’re like most people, we typically read any given book once or maybe twice or three times in our life. Perhaps, as with reference books or scripture, we’ll consult the book from time to time. But magazines we read regularly, again and again and again.

Each issue that comes to me is new. Each issue gives me new information, or tells me things in a new way. Each issue shows me something I haven’t seen before.

To regard Back to Godhead, therefore, simply as another book—smaller, perhaps more colorful—is to miss the point, to miss what a magazine is all about. Yet there’s still another feature of a magazine that may be more important still. And to use Back to Godhead to full effectiveness, we ought to take this into account: In a way a book never can, magazines provide ongoing contact—an ongoing relationship—between the publisher and the reader.

When a person shows interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you want to cultivate that interest. You want to take that spark and fan it into a flame, and then fan the flame into a fire. But to cultivate that interest, to fan that spark and that flame, you have to keep at it. And so, first of all, you have to know who’s got it.

Selling a book doesn’t tell you that. Okay, maybe sometimes it does. You may sometimes write down someone’s name, and from time to time you might even write someone a letter, or call, or send a temple flier. But not usually. Not systematically. Not regularly or reliably.

But those people are your best customers. They’re your best prospects for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Who are the best customers for any product? The people who are already buying it.

Who are the best people for buying more of our books, buying full sets, supporting the movement, becoming devotees?

The people already finding knowledge and realization in our books.

And what do we do to collect the names of such people and cultivate them?

Most often, virtually nothing.
This is a tragedy.

In America, the biggest days of huge book distribution went by, we distributed millions of books, and we had no idea who was reading them or how to get in touch with those people again. What a terrible waste!

The best way to get someone’s name and cultivate that person is through the magazine—*Back to Godhead*.

Through BTG we can bring people Kṛṣṇa’s message again and again. Through BTG we can awaken them, train them, and enliven them in devotional service.

As we spread the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement through our magazine and our books, BTG provides the way for us to stay in touch with our readers. Through BTG we can motivate these people, mobilize them, and bring them together into a broad, strong worldwide community of spiritually enlightened souls.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to me personally (November 18, 1972), “These books and magazines are our most important propaganda weapons to defeat the ignorance of māyā’s army, and the more we produce such literature and sell them profusely all over the world, the more we shall deliver the world from the suicide course.”

For the conditioned souls, it’s *Back to Godhead* or back to endless birth and death. And so Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “BTG is my life and soul. Please therefore try to distribute BTG as many as it is possible. . . . I wish to see that this magazine is published and distributed in the American way like Reader’s Digest, Life, etc., published in millions and distributed all over the world. Actually the position of BTG should be more important than any mundane magazine because it contains the quintessence of all necessities.” (letter to Guru Dāsa, April 16, 1970)

As mentioned before, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that BTG was the beginning of his spiritual life. And therefore distribution of BTG is dear to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s heart. “I consider sale of BTG so valuable because in the beginning I worked for BTG day and night, alone in India. I still remember the hardship for pushing on this BTG. In the beginning, when I was householder, I did not care if somebody paid or not paid; I used to distribute liberally. But when I left my household life and I was living alone, sometimes in Vṛndāvana and sometimes in Delhi, or sometimes traveling for pushing on BTG, they were very hard days. Therefore, when BTG will be published not in hundreds of thousands but in millions, that will give me great solace.” (letter to Madhudviṣa)

In conclusion: “We want to distribute as many issues of BTG as possible, so the more you can print and distribute, the more my Guru Mahārāja
will be pleased to see His Great Dream being fulfilled.” (letter to Brahmānanda, July 16, 1969)

**Rohiṇiṣuta Dāsa:** In the beginning of the movement Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed the distribution of *Back to Godhead* magazine. Of course, when the devotees began distributing big books, that became the priority. We know that in India one gentleman told Śrīla Prabhupāda that it’s better to produce books because people keep books, but they may throw magazines away. If people subscribe, that’s another thing. This means they like the magazine, they keep it, and they are contacted and inspired regularly to read the books. But for regular distribution Prabhupāda said books are most important. But still magazines can be distributed, especially by new devotees who want to learn how to distribute transcendental literature. They can get a taste for *saṅkirtana* this way. Or temple devotees who go out only for a short time can distribute magazines and invitations. But I’ve seen that devotees who distribute books cannot concentrate on magazines even from the practical point of view because they already carry many books. Generally we should not give out magazines free, otherwise people may throw them away. People should always give something so that they value it. At least they have to pay for the paper and the printing.

*Saṅkirtana* is for everyone—full-time devotees, part-time devotees, even Friends of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Devotees living with their families can go out with magazines or books one or two hours every evening after work if they are really determined. One can go out part-time, even while holding a job, if he’s convinced. We should be convinced. We have the supreme religion, devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**Lilāvatāra Dāsa:** Here in Italy book and magazine distribution go hand in hand. Every book distributor carries Italian BTGs in his bag and gives them out. Usually the more expert devotees present books first, then they also give a magazine. Those distributing only magazines are few. Sometimes the magazine can be used as a first approach to giving a book. We also give magazines if the donation is too small to cover the cost of a book. There have been special times during marathons when many devotees concentrated on doing many subscriptions, and each devotee averaged ten to fifteen subscriptions a day.

### 5.9 Mail order

I am very pleased that you have taken over responsibility for our ISKCON Books mail order department. I consider it
one of the most important posts in our society, so you must be very diligent to perform this immense work very nicely. I especially want that my books and literatures should be distributed profusely, but as far as I understand this is not being done very perfectly. So I want that all my students very vigorously try for this book distribution. Do not hesitate to use your American and European brains to increase it—that is Kṛṣṇa's special gift to you, now use it. Any activity that will please Kṛṣṇa should be accepted favorably, this is our guiding principle. Now apply it in this way, by doing everything and anything for spreading this Kṛṣṇa conscious literature, and this is really pleasing to Kṛṣṇa, know it for certain. Especially you must always be eager to supply all our branches all over the world with whatever literature they require, not that they must pay and then get books like in an ordinary mundane business. It is not that they shall not pay for books, but that payment must come gradually and in regular installments. We have to be prompt and gracious in this business of mail-order books, and I am very encouraged that you are enthusiastic to do everything required for increasing in this way. 

General strategy of a mail order service

Amita Dāsa (UK): Through a systematic mail order and correspondence development, thousands of books can be distributed, people can be cultivated, and devotees can be made. Here in the U.K. I think we have ISKCON’s largest, most successful mail order operation. But there’s no reason why any country could not have the same thing to follow up all the publishing and distribution activities. The addresses of temples are listed in the books we distribute, and interested people can write to a temple. But what is the systematic development of that response?

In England we send to those who write to us a sixty-four-page catalog offering all the BBT publications and cookbooks, music books, literature, and science books written by Vaiṣṇavas throughout ISKCON. There is more available in English than in other languages, but in other countries there are people who speak English or some other language. We can also offer books for children, videos, audio cassettes, incense, altar paraphernalia, posters, āyurvedic items, japa beads, neck beads, kurtas and other things. The principal activity is not commercial but preaching. Because the resources of our Society are limited it makes sense to have a strong cor-
respondence and mail order service in each language. Of course, temples would have full access to all names and addresses for cultivation or festival preaching. If we can get all the contacts on a computer, promote items to them, and cultivate them spiritually, that will give us a strong congregation. Membership and fund-raising drives can be organized, accompanied by newsletters, Vaiṣṇava calendars, and correspondence. But the most important thing is having the required system, resources, and inventory to follow up on the feedback resulting from this churning ocean of possibilities. Setting up a mail order service starts with a devotee who ideally has saṅkīrtana and preaching experience and a stable nature. Such a responsible and philosophically aware person (male or female) could develop a powerful extension of the preaching by correspondence (invitations, information about new publications, BTG subscribers). This person can also remain in contact with nice people met by the book distributors and can cooperate with the preachers by arranging home programs. These are just some ideas how we can take further advantage of our widespread book distribution.

**Nṛśimhadeva Dāsa:** In Switzerland our mail order service printed a business reply card that the book distributors give along with the books. This idea came up because often we could see that people who gave us their addresses were difficult to contact afterward. People become skeptical if they buy a book and then are contacted by a preacher, who for them is just another person they don’t know. Some devotees were suggesting that the book distributors themselves contact these people again, but this proved to be too big a distraction from book distribution. Now we have the card, and people can request information: Please inform me about new publications, programs (festivals, lectures); please send your catalog or contact me. Giving out the card is no entanglement for the book distributors, and the answers we get provide addresses of people who are sincerely interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**Further aspects of mail order**

I thank you very much for so seriously helping me fulfill the order of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness literature to the whole world. What strength our movement has now got is due in large part to the enthusiasm we have had to distribute our literature profusely throughout the world. . . . You have got a very important duty to see that all the branches are kept fully stocked with all my books.
And I know that we are getting many mail orders daily, so you must see that these orders are all filled promptly. If we take the public’s money and then delay too long in filling the orders, this will give us a bad reputation. So be very conscientious and hard working and Kṛṣṇa will give you the ability to do everything nicely.  

I am very much pleased to hear that our mail order department for books and BTGs is increasing steadily. You now have a good American brain by Kṛṣṇa’s grace, so the more you go on thinking of ways to increase in this way, the more Kṛṣṇa will understand that you are sincere to serve Him as a dearmost friend by preaching His message of Bhagavad-gītā, and the more He will attract you to come back home, back to Godhead.

**Amita Dāsa:** Prabhupāda emphasizes in these letters that mail order is important and that it should fill orders promptly and increase book distribution. Prabhupāda regarded mail order as an essential part of book distribution. Every language should have its own mail order; otherwise we’re limiting the potential of our customers and readers to follow up their interest. Naturally people are engaged in their work and family lives, and it’s up to us to go to them instead of waiting for them to come to us. The more facility we give them to approach Kṛṣṇa, the more they will take advantage of it. But if we’re too slow in dealing with them or we’re not trying to expand their interest, then they’ll simply lose that interest and go elsewhere.

**Question:** How do you find customers?

**Amita:** Saṅkirtana devotees hand out large quantities of books all the time, and in the books we try to perfect the response mechanisms. At the front of the book we invite correspondence, and at the back we advertise BBT books. Lately we’ve used six pages specifically to promote books, and we’ve added a fourteen-page section to describe ISKCON’s Vaiṣṇava history; the Hare Kṛṣṇa life; how our philosophy is for everyone and can be practiced at home; how to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, set up an altar, and offer food; what the regulative principles are; how to render service; and how to study our books and associate with devotees. We include two pages on the membership program and invite the reader to “stay in touch” and become a member of ISKCON. We explain the membership: For a fixed annual fee they get a Vaiṣṇava calendar, a subscription to Back to Godhead, and a local newsletter, plus they receive discounts when they purchase from us. From
these books we now average about forty replies a month from new readers with an interest in membership.

**Question:** Do *sankirtana* devotees bring you addresses? Do you advertise?

**Amita:** Yes, we do, a little, but next year we intend to advertise much more in magazines that have readers who are more likely to appreciate our philosophy—vegetarians, *yoga* students, esoterics, and animal rights people. From a Gallup Poll survey that I sponsored two years ago it is clear that at least 3% of the adults in Britain really want more information on the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. In response to that I’m placing a general advertisement asking people who want information to write to us. The *sankirtana* devotees’ collecting addresses generally has not worked, but it can work with the cooperation of the temple and *sankirtana* devotees. Important here is quality, not quantity. I remember times in Italy when they had sixty thousand names and addresses on the computer but did nothing because it would have cost too much and used too much manpower. We continually weed out inactive customers after giving them a final opportunity to stay on our mailing list.

**Question:** What do you do with the addresses of new people?

**Amita:** New addresses go into our computer. After one month we always send a follow-up letter and ask people whether they’re still interested and what they thought of the books they originally purchased. We send a minimum of three mailings to our customers annually promoting new items, offering sales, and reminding them of the importance of the spiritual side of life.

**Question:** What about loaning your list for other purposes?

**Amita:** We protect customers from devotees who want to exploit them. By “exploit” I include pushing them to buy a set of books, asking for donations, and engaging them in service. If a temple president requests a list, then after checking on the purpose, we provide it, because personal association is always going to be more productive than correspondence.

**Question:** How do you handle the large amount of work—mailing, bookkeeping, and so on?

**Amita:** With a lot of hard work—there’s no substitute. And the best thing is to have stable, enthusiastic devotees. Voluntary labor is guaranteed to fail. You have to pay people and provide a stable situation that they can commit themselves to. This is a perfect engagement for devotees—especially *grhasthas*—who need income. You can maintain yourself by helping with a preaching activity and developing the congregation. Another requirement is training. We should not be afraid to take training in bookkeeping, computer operation, and debt control. With such training anything is possible.
Successful advertising

Sannyāsa Dāsa (CIS): Many devotees wonder how Moscow’s mail order division managed to compete with the world’s biggest temples in 1991 and ’92. It was mainly due to advertising—in newspapers and magazines, on TV and radio, and with posters in the metro and on the streets. Posters were put up in Moscow and a few other cities. It started with one Bhagavad-gītā advertisement in a main newspaper. We averaged five hundred letters a day, sometimes two thousand. Now it’s about one hundred. Also, in our books we have our addresses and telephone numbers for people who want to order more books. Now we don’t advertise as much as before. We set up a mail order department by giving a group of four or five mātājis an office flat, computers, and other things. When they got letters, someone entered the addresses in the computer. Then they sent a price list advertising all the books in Russian, which said that if you are interested, you should send your money first by a post-transfer system and then you will receive what you ordered. This was the only reasonable method given our situation.

5.10 Follow-up or “contact” saṅkīrtana

Your program of door-to-door saṅkīrtana is very encouraging. The more men understand the importance of our movement, the more they will invite us to their homes and clubs, because Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a life-giving ambrosia. So increase this program more and more, and we shall be able to distribute all our books, which is even more important than membership. Of course, if we can do both at the same time, that is best. 34

Cultivating the people we meet

Harikeśa Swami: The way to keep the saṅkīrtana movement going is to always bring new devotees into the saṅkīrtana mission. Therefore the saṅkīrtana devotees must cooperate with the preachers. If you meet somebody nice, a young person not yet entangled in family and home life, get his address. And make sure that the preachers contact the person and gradually develop his Kṛṣṇa consciousness so that he will want to join the temple. The saṅkīrtana men have to cooperate even though it takes five minutes out of their distribution. It’s worth it in the long run. See every person as a potential devotee and gradually develop devotees so that more and more
sankirtana can go on. This is essential, and everyone should be praying all the time for more devotees.

Śacīnandana Svami: The preachers are existing in the dust of the sankirtana devotees, and therefore I’d like to convey the following thought. Devotees in Germany developed the following strategy: Whenever they met somebody interested, they suggest, “If you read the book, then please write to me and tell me how you liked it.” The person will remember that: “The person who sold me the book wants to know what I think of it.” Then there’s a good possibility of some further contact. To facilitate this contact, we give out cards with our names on them because sometimes it’s too awkward and time consuming to ask for their name and address. So you give them yours—either a temple invitation card or a personal card with name, address, and telephone number. In this way, they get the impression that they met a modern and practical person. Whenever someone writes to you, you can write back, or a preacher can write the letter, and you can sign it. In this letter you can discuss further possibilities of staying in contact. If a book distributor meets someone, it’s not good if a different preacher immediately goes to see him. But with this method, the people will be cultivated, and the preacher can be introduced with minimum entanglement for the book distributors. By using such a system of follow-up letters we can sift out those people who are really interested in being visited by the preachers.

Rohiṇisuta Dāsa: You meet many people, and not everyone says, “You’re nice. Give me all the books you have.” You meet many materialistic and demonic people, and that leaves impressions on your mind. If you’re weak, the consciousness of the materialists can influence you. Many devotees can’t take the pressure. So they should not give up the sankirtana mission, but they should not do the front-line work. That’s only for the stalwart fighters. Only the stalwarts should go out every day on the street. The others can do the follow-up work and visit the nice people and sell them sets. All of our programs must include the books. Make sure that people get the books, or that they get more books, or if they have them all already, that they start to read them seriously.

Not everyone will live in our temples

Your home-to-home preaching is very good. The important thing is to make arrangements that they hear and chant. That will make your preaching successful. Once they begin chant-
ing, then automatically they will want to follow the rules and regulations, attend ārati, and take prasādam. 35

Jayapatāka Swami: Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are the basis, and will continue to be, but Prabhupāda’s vision wasn’t just that there would be a few devotees practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He wanted Lord Caitanya’s movement spread in every town and village, and he wanted it to become the world culture. In this regard, I remember an incident that took place in 1970. Śrīla Prabhupāda had called me to Los Angeles just before he sent me to India. We were on a morning walk, and he was chanting japa. But suddenly he stopped and said to me, “Don’t think that everybody is going to live in our temples.” Pointing to a church, he explained that just as there are many churches and communities, there will also be many ISKCON temples and communities. People will come to the temples on weekends or for some functions, but they will practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness in their homes. He didn’t say anything more. He just kept chanting japa and walked on.

(From a class in Māyāpura on March 7, 1985)

Citraka Dāsa (Italy): I couldn’t continue going out and facing the difficulties on book distribution, and I switched to the follow-up method of sankirtana. But from practical experience I see that it is directly connected to book distribution. Mainly we visit people who received more than three of Prabhupāda’s books. The book distributors had collected their addresses, but they hadn’t been contacted, so Durgama and I decided to go and visit them. We tried convincing them to complete their set and cultivated them to increase their interest. At the least we established a good relationship, thanked them for buying the books, and found out whether there was any way for us to help them come closer to Kṛṣṇa. People said that reading the books presented some difficulties, and therefore we gave them inspiration to read. We also encouraged them to be favorable and arrange gatherings of family members and friends, and we would cook prasādam, chant, and explain the philosophy. Don’t forget, their buying books had been their only contact with us. This engagement is easy for any older devotees with experience on book distribution. You don’t have to undergo bodily or mental austerity. It’s inspiring, and the book distributors are also inspired because they see that their addresses are taken care of. It’s connected to Prabhupāda’s desire, because it encourages people to read his books, and therefore I think it’s a natural development for devotees coming off book distribution. It’s a long-range program. Sometimes we don’t get donations or immediate results, but many fruits will grow in the future. Like any preaching program, the goal is
to bring people to the platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Most of them won’t come to our temples to become devotees. We have to try to transform their homes. Eventually we set up altars, offer food to Kṛṣṇa, get them to chant, and elevate them to the platform of wanting to follow regulative principles. We then tell them that another step is giving donations for Kṛṣṇa conscious activities.

Initially, if they have only three or four books and we want to go there to give them a set, then we don’t call them, we simply go. And when we introduce ourselves and develop a nice relationship, then we see how much we can sell them. Establishing a lasting relationship is always our first priority. Although on book distribution the first priority is giving them the books, in this program you want to develop lasting personal relationships. If you give them the feeling that you’ve come again simply to sell them something, you risk ruining everything. Our long-term plan is to get them to take a set of Prabhupāda’s books. Later we call them. We revive the relationship. Here in Italy we have printed some letter with nice expressions of gratitude. Most devotees send such people some cards for Christmas, birthdays or other occasions. In this way we maintain nice, personal relationships. Then it becomes like a nāmaḥaṭṭa program, and you see how you can engage everyone. Many nice people come forward, willing to do service or support us, or they invite friends and other people to a feast in their town, and thus the local Friends of Lord Kṛṣṇa get to meet.

So this is another dimension of life-long book distribution. The older devotees, instead of getting involved with the administration or becoming involved in disputes with leaders and feeling dissatisfied, can engage in this type of program and have ample opportunities to be Kṛṣṇa conscious. Preaching solves all problems. Otherwise they give up saṅkīrtana and think the perfection is to get a desk and a position. But that is not necessarily the sign of spiritual advancement. Advancement depends on chanting and hearing. The program of visiting favorable people interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness offers us many opportunities to increase our preaching. And it’s easy. It can help many devotees, especially older devotees, retain the taste of preaching.

How many people can we reach?

Śacīnandana Swami: We can clearly realize that book distribution is the basis, especially we preachers depending on the addresses collected by the front-line distributors. Wide-scale book distribution spiritualizes the bloodstream of society by injecting increasing doses of books into the system.
That will change the values of large groups of people and provide the necessary basis on which we can build our preaching. The sankirtana devotees know that our duty as a movement is not over when we give out books. Of course, the book distributors should be fixed in their service and should not become entangled by cultivating people. But there should be some devotees, usually older devotees, who do it. They will further cultivate the people, give them more books, inspire them to read and to distribute books to their friends, and take care of the bhaktas so that the sankirtana groups will get new men and women. This program increases the enthusiasm of the book distributors, because we can present them with the fruits of their work and they can be assured that their contacts are well taken care of.

The book distributors can simply continue with book distribution, the most important front-line preaching. They should always be convinced that directly distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is the most important and the most powerful preaching. If preachers visit favorable people and sell them the set by preaching about the books, that is certainly powerful, and it has to be done. But how many people can we reach like that? Only a few. With that kind of preaching alone, we could never have a real impact on society. Therefore book distribution should never be criticized as a superficial or quick-business method of preaching. It is the most direct, most personal, and by far the most effective preaching. You engage a person in substantial devotional service. The transcendental distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is reaching the world and will change the world. We can judge by the results; by how many people are getting the books. Hari-nāmānanda was telling me that he was distributing directly in front of the parliament building in Berne. He could talk to many parliament members openly about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and they all took books and were paying for them. The preachers who had tried to meet these parliament members by writing to them for an appointment received no response or only a negative response. But Harināmānanda was meeting them, giving them books, and getting a good price for the books they took. It was not just a quick handing over of a free Bhagavad-gītā as a P.R. gift at a public event, which they immediately forget about because they meet thousands of people and always get free books.

The book distributors make themselves dependent on the Supersoul, so it is by the will of the Supersoul that they meet important people. They simply act as instruments. Therefore the book distributors are empowered to give them Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, which is the best introduction to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Imagine what trouble it would be for us to meet such people by appointment. And, after all, we aren’t interested only in VIPs.
We want to reach everyone—influential as well as ordinary citizens. Every day the book distributors meet so many more people than the preachers—all kinds of people we would never reach otherwise. In other words, a book distributor has many powerful preaching engagements each day, and each meeting leads to the point of a person’s taking a book by Śrīla Prabhupāda. So the preachers should never lose the vision of book distribution as the topmost feature of preaching.

5.11 Bringing books to the top ranks

“Getting top-ranking men to read my books is real preaching”

The best process for selling books is to get them reviewed by various important papers. There are hundreds and thousands of influential papers in your country, and if the books are reviewed, they will be quickly sold. 36

The methods you have adopted to approach reviewers and convince them to review our books—how much has this attempt been successful? Reviewing is the only way for pushing on any publication. 37

Now you and all of your men are experienced in distributing books to the libraries. If you can get our books placed in the public libraries it will be a great victory. Do whatever you think best to make this possible. Yes, the reviews you are getting are very important. Many times I am showing them to influential gentlemen. 38

I was very pleased to see how you are getting top-ranking men to read my books. That is real preaching. If all the government officers at least purchase some of our books, it will be a great credit. So do it very nicely. 39

“Getting the support of everyone, not just a select few”

As for your ideas about influencing the leaders of society, yes, that must be done. But political power is not in their hands factually speaking. It is the common people who elect
the leaders of your country. Therefore we must get the support of the common men. What good is the support of a handful of so-called leaders of society? But if leaders of society can be influenced to preach on our behalf and can help us to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in some practical way, that is the best service. But simply supporting, that will not help us. The support of the mass of people will help us. But the mass of people takes direction from their leaders, so if the leaders of society can be persuaded of our beneficial working for the human welfare, and if they help us somehow to spread what they have learned from us to the people in general, that is the point to be considered. By going out for saṅkirtana and selling books to the citizens at large, we are gradually getting the support of everyone, not just a select few. I have heard that during the last presidential election the opposite party to Mr. Nixon was supported by most of the so-called intelligent class of men of your country, but still, what could they do? Mr. Nixon had the support of the common men, therefore he was successful. So we must get the support of the mass of men, and if the leading men can be induced by you to preach on our behalf, then you will be able to speed up the process and actually that is a very great service for Kṛṣṇa. Spending so much time with upper-class citizens to get funds must be judged on this idea, whether their appreciating our movement will have any practical effect in terms of widespread spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and preaching to the mass of men. The program you have mentioned of approaching the professors to introduce our books in their classrooms is the right idea. In that way, if the leading class, just like the professors, can be induced to preach on our behalf—introducing the books to their students is one form of preaching—if they will do like that, then spending time with them is very, very desirable and effective. 40

Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, in several places in the First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam you say we have to get the leaders to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness then . . .

Prabhupāda: Others will follow.

Devotee: . . . the mass will follow. But when Balavanta Prabhu was running for office you were saying it would be very difficult to get our present-day
leaders to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I’d just like to understand further whether the masses or the leaders are important.

**Prabhupāda:** No, we are dealing generally with the masses. But if we can convert one leader, then it is equal to turning many people in the mass. That is the idea. Some way or other we are doing Kṛṣṇa’s service. Either you get the masses or the leader, it doesn’t matter. Your service is recognized. 41
6

Book Distribution
As a Lifetime Mission

“By disseminating our Kṛṣṇa conscious propaganda anywhere and everywhere, by selling books, by making publicity in newspapers and on television—there are so many ways to spread Kṛṣṇa conscious information—and you may know it that by utilizing our energy in this way to give everyone access to the Absolute Truth, that is the real understanding of the desire to serve humanity. Understanding is one thing and the practical application of that understanding is another. But being engaged as devotees of Kṛṣṇa in the practical work of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is already the highest realization. That’s all right, that is our real mission, to deliver the world by preaching Kṛṣṇa’s message to others, but an even higher realization, the highest realization, is to save oneself.”

6.1 What does “lifetime” mean?

The sankirtana movement will expand, continuing so long as we are sincere. When I came in the beginning, I began to expand it, and it is now going on, and there is no question of it stopping. Therefore go on with your lifetime plan-making secure in distributing books. There is no cessation. This movement is eternal.

Who really distributes books for a lifetime?

**Question:** Only a few leaders and sannyāsīs go out regularly to distribute books, and it seems that all of those who really made it in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are managers or preachers. Won’t this discourage book distributors from continuing for a lifetime?
**Harikeśa Swami:** The term *lifetime book distributor* might inspire a lot of devotees, but it isn’t a completely practical concept if we judge by the previous examples of book distributors. I think it means: once a book distributor, always a book distributor. Once one has a taste for this highest service, he always wants to be connected to it in one form or another. The connection will vary in different devotees’ lives. In my life I continue in the mission not directly by distributing books but by inspiring book production in all the languages of the world and inspiring book distribution wherever I can. I also counsel book distributors and constantly write them letters of encouragement (mainly in response to their letters). I also manage in such a way that book distribution remains the highest priority, and I encourage others to do the same. That’s how I engage in lifetime book distribution although I do not go out on the street.

When a book distributor ages, he has more difficulty going out. In one’s later thirties, the body starts to tire, and distribution naturally diminishes. Devotees also change somewhat mentally and realize that they can serve the mission by preaching and creating other book distributors or by managing in such a way that book distribution increases. Those who are successful managers are successful because they can encourage book distribution. So if a *sāṅkīrtana* devotee becomes a temple president, he will still engage in book distribution by training devotees to distribute books and by taking part in the marathons and the regular *sāṅkīrtana*. His *sāṅkīrtana* vision encourages everyone to engage in the *sāṅkīrtana* mission. This is as important as the book distribution itself. Perhaps the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees do not appreciate the efforts of the former distributors who are now temple presidents, but these presidents do great service keeping the book distribution going and perpetuating it. All temples should be managed by former *sāṅkīrtana* devotees or devotees full of the *sāṅkīrtana* spirit. Otherwise the temples will never emphasize book distribution, and it will be dull. *Sāṅkīrtana* gives life, and a temple president should see to it that the life of the mission of Lord Caitanya is always present in his temple. The senior *sāṅkīrtana* devotees will naturally take up managing roles or some other responsible service in their older age. This keeps the mission alive and doesn’t contradict the notion of lifetime book distribution. Actually, this is the more practical understanding of lifetime book distribution, and it should be discussed among the devotees. Managers should consider these points and understand how they are part of the foundation of the *sāṅkīrtana* movement. The preachers are also important for the *sāṅkīrtana* movement because they bring new men into the *sāṅkīrtana* mission. And the gurus especially should give their disciples the mission to engage in *sāṅkīrtana* for their whole lives in one form or another.
Staying connected to book distribution

You are a very expert book distributor, so I do not want you to give it up altogether. If you like, you can also do some painting, but you should still distribute books two days out of the week (at least). Always strictly follow all the rules and regulations, rising early, attending maṅgala-ārati and classes, and without fail chanting sixteen rounds daily. This will make you strong in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is the most essential thing. Always be engaged twenty-four hours a day in the service of Kṛṣṇa and be happy.⁴

Hṛdayānanda Dāsa Goswami: Some book distributors will stop. But, for example, in Brazil, which is so successful, many of our leaders are former sankirtana champions. We naturally trained devotees who were book distributors to become leaders and organize book distribution. Rather than see it as a falldown or copping out, I saw it as an advancement.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: A devotee who distributes books for many years becomes a qualified devotee, and at some point when a qualified devotee is needed to fill a post, he’s the obvious choice. Not that the sankirtana devotees are necessarily falling away from book distribution by their own desire, but they’re becoming qualified and out of necessity they assume managerial roles. If they keep the sankirtana mission within their sights as the main mission in life, then they don’t have to be on the street giving out books to be called sankirtana devotees.

Viśvadeva Dāsa (Germany): I did full-time book distribution from March of 1979 until August 1985. Then another service was assigned to me. As temple president in Heidelberg, I consider it my main duty to organize book distribution in cooperation with the sankirtana leaders. I see to it that new devotees are trained to distribute books, and I offer the facility for book distribution to everyone.

Premārṇava Dāsa: What counts is the order of the spiritual master, and he gives different orders to different devotees. But it’s a pity if those who stop sankirtana give up their connection altogether. Such devotees—and those who have never gone on sankirtana—may become a burden on the sankirtana devotees, who feel the lack of sankirtana spirit in the temple. That has to be changed by preaching and by devotees setting an example of remaining connected with book distribution.
Ma†idhãra Dãša: Kṛṣṇa gives us power, intelligence, and bliss. But what are we going to do with them? That’s our choice, and many tests will come. The most important thing to learn is how to share the bliss, because if we don’t share it, we’ll lose it. That principle applies to any kind of preaching, not only book distribution, and it especially means helping the younger devotees come up. For that, one has to invest time, and then one will not be as big anymore, and others will become big. In other words, one has to be free of envy. Older devotees should be advanced at seeing themselves as the menial servants of the new devotees desiring to take up sankirtana. That’s what gives me the highest taste. It’s blissful seeing someone start to distribute a lot of books. Teaching new devotees by accompanying them on sankirtana takes a lot of energy, and one will not be on top anymore, but in any case one will have to slow down at one point anyhow. This is the test, and if we don’t have the taste for helping others, we will just turn away from Kṛṣṇa: “What? You won’t give me a reward for my austerities? Then I’m not going to serve You anymore.” Therefore when book distributors get tired, they need a strong program for preaching that includes chanting parties and Sunday Feast programs. There must be a strong connection between book distribution and preaching. Preaching is the natural conclusion. Why are we going out to distribute books? To preach, to persuade people to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and to give them knowledge. So naturally a book distributor can also preach. If not, he’s a stereotyped book distributor, grown up in only one way like a tree that has a single big branch and weak roots—a storm will make him collapse. A thorough understanding of sankirtana is better. It’s a very broad mission. It’s philosophy, it’s purification, it’s engaging others. It all has to be there.

What it takes to continue for a lifetime

Only a few devotees may continue doing book distribution for their whole lifetime, and therefore the above statements gave a broader understanding of lifetime book distribution. However, lifetime book distribution also means doing it for an entire lifetime, and the following statements describe the determination required for lifetime book distribution. Book distribution is most pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and that’s one reason to continue. It’s the most demanding service, and those who do it need special inspiration and support.

Prahlādānanda Swami: When I was first distributing in the airport years ago, it was heavy. Sometimes even fights broke out, and I thought I’d probably get smashed or killed. Eventually I thought, “Maybe I will get killed.
So what? I shouldn’t worry about it so much, because I’m going to die anyway. And the best place to get killed is on sankirtana.” So my anxiety went away, and I was able to concentrate more on what I was doing. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness we’re often given practical tests of our surrender, and we must analyze: “What’s taking place here? Am I this body and mind? Am I really Kṛṣṇa’s servant? Am I going to take a risk for Kṛṣṇa and sacrifice something for Him?” When Kṛṣṇa sees we’re sincere, He gives us the intelligence to see things more clearly and helps us directly realize we’re different from the body. Whatever happens to the body isn’t going to affect me. I’ll be transcendental. But I should use the body to please Kṛṣṇa, and then everything becomes as good as Vaikuṇṭha.

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: A sankirtana devotee may or may not do big, but he should always stay on sankirtana. We should count the number of years, not the number of books. We should make sankirtana our life’s mission. We have to become satisfied simply distributing books. Our inspiration must not depend on the big results we get, because one day we won’t be number one anymore, and that will be a big test. Will we continue? Or say, “What’s the use? Better I do something else.” You don’t have to tell a fish to stay in the water; he likes it. So we have to feel at home distributing books. A real sankirtana devotee isn’t always looking at his watch.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: I remember the different stages of consciousness I went through on book distribution. In the beginning I distributed books in a pretty desperate way, because it was like swimming in an ocean full of sharks, and sometimes I’d even cry out loudly, “Hare Kṛṣṇa!” Somehow people never got disturbed, and I learned to depend on the holy name. Now, engaging in managerial service, I miss that helpless dependence. I tend to be proud and take chanting for granted. Sankirtana was so nice because it forced me to chant. Whenever I go out now, I don’t feel that anxiety anymore. I’m engaged with so many things that sankirtana has become a source of relief for me. Again and again, whenever I go out, I always remember that Prabhupāda is nondifferent from book distribution, because it’s easy to remember Prabhupāda on the street. I cannot say I remember Kṛṣṇa all the time—for sure not. But one thing I can say boldly: it’s easy to remember Prabhupāda while distributing on the street. And somehow or other by his mercy it’s also easy to chant the holy name while distributing books.

Harikeśa Swami: After a marathon we feel exhausted and take a little rest to recover our strength. Sometimes a neophyte thinks that rest is māyā: “I
shall never rest. I’ll die on the battlefield.” And then they do! What is the use of that? It’s no use dying on the battlefield. Better to stay alive and fight. We have to take care of our bodies. Eat properly, sleep properly. And read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to absorb the philosophy and develop spiritual understanding so that we can go back to Godhead without deviation.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** It’s necessary to enjoy saṅkīrtana; otherwise you’ll seek some other enjoyment—a position, an office, a secretary, a car, a wife and kid, money and business. If you experience joy on saṅkīrtana, you will not exchange it for anything. Someone may tell you, “Look, man, you have to think of your future. You need money, and you don’t even live in a proper place.” But you will never consider such proposals seriously. You won’t be interested. You’ll remain fixed and go on, because you like distributing Prabhupāda’s books and being used by Kṛṣṇa in this way.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** My most ecstatic moments in Kṛṣṇa consciousness have been on book distribution. I’ve made a vow to continue book distribution as long as my body allows, because I know, by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, that the teachings Śrīla Prabhupāda gave us are the Absolute Truth and only through this knowledge can people be satisfied in life.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** I try to do book distribution on a day-to-day basis. Who can say he’ll go out for the rest of his life and not want to do anything else? That would mean someone is a pure devotee. Therefore I pray to continue on a day-to-day basis, and in that way I hope I can do it my whole life. If I can do it next week, then I’ll be happy. And then I’ll be happy to make it to the week after that, and so on and so on, for a whole lifetime.

**Śaṅkī Devī Dāsī:** Who knows how much longer we can do it? Who knows how much longer we’ll live? Maybe we think, “Oh, for a lifetime—that means until I’m seventy or eighty.” But who knows? A lifetime could also mean that there is just a short time left. That’s why I find it much more realistic to make plans on a daily basis, to work on my Kṛṣṇa consciousness every day a bit more, to develop the awareness that every day could be my last. I’m not on that level, but the examples like Mahārāja Parīkṣit are there. I go on seeing what Kṛṣṇa has in store.

**Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa:** Many devotees burned out because they neglected to cultivate the attitude of giving instead of taking. We’re meant to give people the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. When we forget that, book distribution becomes
mechanical or superficial, and we lose our taste. We can’t allow ourselves to stagnate, otherwise we’ll lose our spiritual understanding of book distribution and won’t be able to go out. I know from experience that whenever there’s some slackening of enthusiasm, then I have to find some means to get into it again. Once I just started distributing cookies along with the books, and I became completely detached and understood again the point of giving instead of taking. People took either books or cookies or both. Everything was personal and blissful, and I could directly say to people that I was Kṛṣṇa’s devotee, because the cookies were labeled and included invitation cards. Sometimes we’re afraid, or we don’t dare admit who we are: “We’re from The International Society for Kṛṣṇa— I mean, we’re from a farm around the corner, and we collect money for children in India. By the way, we give a book to whoever donates.” So the point is that whenever we have problems distributing books, Kṛṣṇa wants to show us something. Then we have to find out what it is, and usually it’s a defect in our attitude. When we cultivate a proper attitude, we can go on for a long time.

**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa:** Book distribution is not a means of pumping out books, it’s a means of purification. Sometimes the mode of passion contaminates us and makes us think we have to do big. Kṛṣṇa may fulfill our desire for some time, but then Kṛṣṇa will take the big result away. And if we’re just into doing big, we won’t be as inspired anymore. But if we realize we’re preaching to please our spiritual master, then we’ll stick it out no matter what. In that way, we’ll always be inspired to go out and connect the conditioned souls to Kṛṣṇa. We’ll never be dissatisfied even if our bodies are breaking down or the results are small. Our bodies will break down anyway, so better they break down while we do *ṣaṅkīrtana*, because there we get the most mercy. With every step we take on *ṣaṅkīrtana*, we’ll be more quickly recognized by Kṛṣṇa. There will never be any loss. Even if the results aren’t there, purification and mercy will be.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** The more one goes out and distributes, the more one gets the nectarean realization that each book is a *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is present in the form of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in Kali-yuga, and He is saving the conditioned souls in that form. One is fortunate to witness it and to be the one carrying Him around and giving Him to others. I pray that I can continue, and even if I can’t, then my only desire is that I can help and inspire those devotees who do that service. I’d like to hear about those devotees and serve those devotees. I’d like everyone to have the opportunity of diving deeper and deeper into the nectarean ocean of book distribution.
Capacity and quantity

I am very pleased to hear that you are putting your full energy into distributing books and magazines very widely all over Canada. It is not so much the numbers of books sold, it is the sincerity which Kṛṣṇa appreciates, and I am encouraged by your determined enthusiasm to increase in every respect.3

A devotee who wants to distribute books for a long time or a lifetime must not be attached to his results. In answering the question, Why can’t everyone do big? Everyone we asked—and even those who do big—said that steadiness is more important than big results. A steady devotee will naturally distribute a considerable quantity of books over the years.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Śrīla Prabhupāda said that everybody should learn to distribute his books. When the spiritual master says that everybody should learn, that means it’s possible for everybody to learn. But for sure not everybody will be able to distribute the same amount of books or distribute them throughout his life on the front lines. That isn’t possible. I cannot imagine that. I think it’s possible only for one devotee in a thousand, maybe not even that. We see this from the past. As far as I am concerned, I can understand that the spiritual master is praying to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya to arrange for his disciples to distribute books. That’s the only explanation why I’m distributing many books. I cannot see that I have any special qualities. Obviously, it’s due only to the causeless mercy of the spiritual master. I can feel that he simply meditates with full consciousness, with heart and soul, only on this. He is praying to Kṛṣṇa that the fallen conditioned souls will get the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda and that his disciples are able to distribute the books. By the mercy and the association of the devotees, we are trying to satisfy the spiritual master and serve him, and therefore we’re distributing books. But to distribute books for a lifetime is possible only for a few devotees, and from what I’ve seen, only a few can distribute a huge number of books. The reason for that I don’t know. But something else has to be understood: for some devotees, distributing less than five hundred books a week is complete māyā, while for other devotees, distributing one or two hundred books means that their consciousness, body, mind, intelligence, and words have been engaged properly with no room for māyā. There are different capacities. It’s not correct to say that everybody who doesn’t distribute many books is in māyā. Rather, everybody according to his capacity is able to distribute books or is able to learn
how to distribute more books. This is the desire of Śrila Prabhupāda—that every serious student of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement study his books and learn to present them to others, whether at a book table, to guests in the temple, at homes, by mail, and at the airport or on the street. It will be different for every individual. Everybody has the capacity to give books to conditioned souls. But you have to learn the art.

Śairṣi Devī Dāsī: Everyone should do as much as he can, like the example of the spider and the big monkey in Rāmacandra’s army. The Lord accepts everyone’s service. The point is not how much one distributes, because some have bigger capacities, provided one is giving 100% to Kṛṣṇa. Maybe we have the same desire as someone else to distribute books and satisfy our spiritual master, but still we don’t distribute the same amount as another devotee because the difference may be one of millions of lifetimes. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try. If you give 100%, then Kṛṣṇa is 100% pleased. On that level it’s equal. But we should always think we don’t do enough—to much energy for māyā and not enough for Kṛṣṇa. We should always look for challenges. For example, sometimes we hear that mātajīs cannot distribute as many books because they are weak and their bodies aren’t made for sankīrtana, what to speak of their minds, but my experience has been that if we have the desire, we can transcend the conditions of a weak body. Kṛṣṇa reciprocates.

Gīta-govinda Dāsī: It is up to Kṛṣṇa how many books we distribute. Someone may be engaged by Kṛṣṇa to distribute a lot, and someone else not as much. If we’re engaged in the service with love and devotion, with pure motivation, then both the quality and quantity will increase. Kṛṣṇa always wants to give everyone His power, but we can’t take it, because as soon as we are empowered by Him, we get puffed up. Kṛṣṇa is protecting us so that we don’t become puffed-up and leave ISKCON. He can give unlimited power to a Kṛṣṇa conscious devotee to distribute many books or to inspire others to distribute many books.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: I was traveling with a devotee who had said in a lecture that you can judge a person’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness by how many books he distributes. So I asked him, “Can you please explain then how it is that Śacīnandana Swami was going out all day and distributing only a few books? You must be more Kṛṣṇa conscious than he is.” The mentality that Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be measured by numbers is an improper understanding. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is measured by how much one develops love for God, and that’s something we can’t measure in numbers of books. Time
is showing us this. Maybe one reason that some sankirtana devotees fall away is that they think, “Devotees who don’t do as big as me must be in maya.” This attitude is an offense that I’m really afraid of committing because I know it would mean inevitably the end of my book distribution.

**Responsibility to Śrīla Prabhupāda**

Don’t spoil it. Now it is up to you, my senior men. I may part from you. My health is not good. I am an old man. It is not surprising. Now you GBC, young boys, you are expert. You have intelligence. So don’t spoil it. Let the movement go forward more. You have a lot of nice places. . . . And even if I go, what is the harm? I have given my ideas and directions in my books. Just you have to see to it. I think I have done my part, is it not?  

I am very pleased by your attitude to surrender yourself completely by engaging cent percent in Kṛṣṇa’s service. Somehow or other always to be thinking about Kṛṣṇa, that is the goal of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness process. So now you please help me spread this information all over this planet, especially by helping to distribute my books and literatures, as many as possible. Then you will get the credit, and know it for certain that very soon you will go back to home, back to Godhead.  

**Nirguṇa Dāsa:** It’s Prabhupāda’s order. Therefore we should do it if we’re really sincere disciples. In the beginning many of us run through the lots and the streets selling books, but if we can’t go on like that for many years, there are so many other methods: preaching centers, scheduled talks, libraries, school programs, festivals, and programs at churches and organizations. We can sell books anywhere and everywhere. It’s simply a matter of desire, training, broadmindedness, and patience. Prabhupāda did it, and we can do it following in his footsteps.

**Tapas Dāsa:** Prabhupāda wanted everyone to have a set of his books, and many conditioned souls don’t have even one book. There’s enough for us to do for a lifetime. Prabhupāda once said that until one is forty-five, he’s considered a young man—he said that when he was eighty. We’re young and energetic. If we don’t distribute books in some way, we’ll have a difficult time; giving up book distribution doesn’t mean getting an easier life—that’s an illusion.
We’re weak in Kali-yuga, and the shelter that we get on book distribution is Lord Caitanya’s mercy and protection. It’s like a bubble that He puts around us while we distribute, and the people we distribute to are also in that bubble, and thus they forget the Kali-yuga around them during the time we meet them. If we have that understanding, we’ll feel, “I need book distribution and the mercy and purification it offers. The people also need it.” We’ll get a special taste for going out: “Yes, temple life is very nice, but going together with other devotees on *sankirtana* is special nectar.” We can feel Kṛṣṇa’s presence clearly. We experience Vaikuṇṭha on the parking lots. Kṛṣṇa easily manifests on book distribution, more so than in the temple. This reciprocation with Kṛṣṇa will make us very eager to go out all the time to help people and to reciprocate with Kṛṣṇa ourselves.

We’ll have to slow down at one point, but we will never quit the book distribution camp. We can train new devotees and share our experience. Śrīla Prabhupāda organized the book distribution mission in such a wonderful way. We can completely dive into planning how to fulfill Prabhupāda’s mission. There’s no limit to applying our desires and intelligence and minds and bodies to giving everyone more and more books.

### 6.2 Book distribution is a constant challenge

I can well appreciate how things are going on nicely in your center. I am very glad to hear all the good news, especially that you want to sell books more and more. That is the best preaching work; each book sold means there is some practical effect of preaching, there is some tangible progress. So try to sell as many books as possible in your country, and in this way, so long you remain active but not for your personal sense gratification, so long you remain active only satisfying Kṛṣṇa’s senses, then this movement will be successful without any doubt. As soon as someone wants to satisfy his own senses, then he fails at everything. We are the only movement in the world which is preaching the real fact, or secret to success, and outside our movement everything else will fail. So try to convince people to join us and be successful in their life.

**Every day means new surrender**

_Hrdayānanda Dāsa Goswami:_ One may either go out or do another service, but he should not give up his connection to *sankirtana*. And that is a
question of surrender. When devotees are young, they like to travel around, sleep in the van, and do book distribution, but when they grow older, they become concerned with security, money, and settling down. So as one gets older, he has to surrender again. He has a middle-age crisis and has to surrender again to Kṛṣṇa. That’s spiritual life—many times coming to a point where we again have to surrender and again give up sense gratification. Just like impurity accumulates on the teeth—once a year you go to a dentist and have it removed. So, as we practice devotional service, material desires will come, and periodically we have to clean our house. Not that you say, “I surrendered to Kṛṣṇa in 1972.” That’s nice. But did you surrender in 1973? ’74? 1987? It’s a surrendering process. That’s how Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of it, a surrendering process. (From a class in Zurich on July 20, 1987)

Rohinīṣuta Dāsa: Every day is a new day of surrender. Surrendering once is not enough. Every day requires new surrender. You can distribute two hundred books one day, but the next day you have to surrender again. You should not think you are the master, you did it yesterday, you’ll do the same today. It’s not a mechanical process. By surrendering we can see that it is really Kṛṣṇa who distributes the books. But we can become empowered instruments if we are free from desires for name, fame, glory, or distinction. We should never think, “I am the doer. I can do it every day.” Every day is a new day, and we have to be humble and feel helpless. A child is always helpless and dependent on the father and mother. Similarly, we have to depend on the mercy of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. Otherwise we have to suffer because of forgetting Kṛṣṇa. And then while suffering, we start thinking, “I want to do something else. I have to leave book distribution.” But we don’t need to change our service, we need to change our attitude. Then we will always find a way to stay connected to book distribution.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: The deepest impetus for me to continue distributing books is that I always felt completely protected on the street. I felt more protected there than anywhere else. I realized that what I was doing pleased Śrīla Prabhupāda. That I knew for sure. I wasn’t too sure about my relationship to Kṛṣṇa. This I knew from the books, but it seemed far away. But very soon I started to understand that book distribution is something Prabhupāda really likes. Just by my going on the street and distributing books, suddenly it was easy to remember Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa. It was mysterious. As soon as I started to distribute books, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra became easy to remember. And later it became more obvious to me that I received immense spiritual help on the street.
On sankirtana there is no other choice than to surrender. That is forced surrender, and it makes life easy, because as far as we’re concerned, we’re hesitant to surrender. But on sankirtana there’s no choice. It’s like walking on a rope over a lake full of crocodiles—one doesn’t consider taking a swim. One just looks at the crocodiles, and that’s enough. This deep realization about the actual nature of mâyā is Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, and thus surrender becomes easier or at least more natural.

Kalpavāsini Devī Dāsī: Sankirtana forms our personality. It teaches us how to fix ourselves in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, beginning with chanting. If you have to face a big challenge during the day, like going out on book distribution, then you will endeavor to hear your rounds better in the morning. On book distribution you quickly understand that without chanting nothing will happen, and that forces you to concentrate more. Also, while you are out, you’re forced to concentrate as you go from person to person, hour after hour, day after day. This is definitely forming your personality. Sankirtana is like a mirror, and it does not mean only that you distribute books. You have to cook, learn the treasury work, and live closely with others and learn about psychology. You always know where you’re at. You see the people react, you see how much you have to improve, you always have to be alert. Kṛṣṇa shows you when you are in mâyā. In this way you’re forced to cultivate your inner Kṛṣṇa consciousness and control your motivation, and you have unlimited opportunities to fix your mind on Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is personally training you, Kṛṣṇa is correcting you, and you can experience Kṛṣṇa’s presence. You are personally dealing with all the parts and parcels of Kṛṣṇa. In this way you learn that you’re a person, not your body, and that these people are not their bodies—we’re all spirit souls. If we sincerely endeavor on sankirtana, Kṛṣṇa will give us this realization.

Taking shelter in book distribution

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.1.19p: A devotee is never affected by material influences. The devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are preaching all over the world in accordance with the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They have to meet many karmis, but by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they are unaffected by material influences. He has blessed them, as described in Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya 7.129: kabhu nā bādhibe tomāra viśaya-taraṅga, punarapi ei thāñi pābe mora saṅga. A sincere devotee who engages in the service of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by preaching His cult all over the world will never be affected by viśaya-taraṅga,
material influences. On the contrary, in due course of time he will return to the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and will thus have perpetual association with Him.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: I have a strong feeling that Kṛṣṇa is taking care of me just because I went on the street to distribute books as much as I could. I had plenty of opportunities to go off the line of devotional service, but somehow Kṛṣṇa never allowed me to do that. Whenever, even emotionally, I was going in the wrong direction, I got the right advice from the right person always, and I got straightened out again and again. Definitely there was protection. So I can trace it back to book distribution, which is the real, supreme shelter. It is so dear to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Gaurī Devī Dāsī: Kṛṣṇa is certainly going to engage you if you’re really ready. Why wouldn’t He? Do you think Kṛṣṇa isn’t going use you if you’re trying to be pure and free of impediments, if you’re out there with enthusiasm and determination? If He doesn’t engage you as much as you want, then you must look deep in your heart and see what Kṛṣṇa is trying to make you see. Fruitive desire? Attachment to honor and fame? Pride? You really have to get into it and see what it is. What is your motivation? And then you can easily see why Kṛṣṇa is doing what He’s doing. The problem is that we’re deceptive. We cheat ourselves, and we cheat everybody else. We’re cheating ourselves, because we have so little idea who we really are; we’re in illusion about ourselves and our eternal identity as the servant of Kṛṣṇa. It’s a deep thing. We just have to work on it every day—when you go on sankīrtana, when you chant japa, when you perform every devotional activity. See yourself accurately and be honest with yourself. You need the help of the devotees. The association of devotees is invaluable because with the help of Godbrothers and Godsisters and the deep friendships that one forms, one has a kind of mirror to get some feedback. We always want guidance. Any sincere devotee always wants to be reprimanded and guided and corrected and shown in any way possible how he’s not digging deep enough into his heart and getting out all the weeds. We want not only to be pure instruments and to do unlimited service in terms of sankīrtana and preaching, but also to be qualified to join Kṛṣṇa, which is what Kṛṣṇa really wants. Even beyond our preaching, Kṛṣṇa wants us to become His pure devotees. Preaching is the process He’s given us to develop love for Him. That’s how I see it. The preaching is the process Lord Caitanya arranged to purify us, and in the process we purify others, and they’re going to purify others, and so on. Ultimately the goal is to love Kṛṣṇa. And then Kṛṣṇa can play with
us and dance with us and have fun with us. Right now, we’re just a drag, you know? He cannot even be around us very much in one sense. He’s always with us in our hearts, but we can’t really reciprocate that much with Him because we’re slow and dull.

Stopping full-time book distribution

Viśvadeva Dāsa: Someone may give up book distribution because of physical problems, other desires, or the practical necessity to do a specific service. As long as a devotee continues serving the spiritual master’s mission, he or she is still a sankīrtana devotee, a part of the sankīrtana movement. We’re individuals, and not everyone can distribute books, at least not on the street. There are different reasons for that—different capacities, services, and desires, or maybe it’s even Kṛṣṇa’s plan, who knows?

Premārṇava Dāsa: I distributed books full-time for eight years and part-time for two. Now I hardly go out. It’s the situation I’m in. But I judge the perfection of what I do by whether or not I can somehow serve the sankīrtana mission. Maybe I can join it again without all the different anarthas that make it difficult to continue for a whole lifetime. One reason I stopped is that I had been quite fanatical. I went like a madman all those years, not considering the winter cold or my bodily maintenance in general, until my body was finished and going out was difficult. I’d lie in the sankīrtana van trying to gather some energy to go out, but the periods in the van became longer and longer. When not properly engaged, the mind starts to speculate and become lusty, and in that way māyā takes over.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Lifetime plans for book distribution—this statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda is a great, great challenge. And for me it’s like making lifetime plans to remain Kṛṣṇa conscious. They’re the same, because it’s not possible to keep distributing books without developing mature Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We can follow the regulative principles and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, but to maintain our determination to distribute books we must become free of the fruitive attachments that ruin our broad preaching vision. We’ll face hard times when only small results come out of our preaching. But that is also part of our lifetime plan for book distribution. Our bodies will have problems, or we’ll change āśramas. But the challenge is still to find ways to distribute books despite the impediments and entanglements. It’s all part of our war on māyā. Our lives are very, very short—but from the material point of view, there’s plenty of time to fall into māyā.
**Premārṇava Dāsa:** I like seeing the book distribution mission as nondifferent from Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya, a completely transcendental affair totally free from any material contamination. But we have to purify ourselves of many contaminations before we reach the perfection of book distribution. Impurities may sometimes lead us to the point of stopping book distribution. Of course, the most effective purification is book distribution itself, but not everyone can immediately distribute books in full surrender. Someone may stop book distribution, but if he continues serving the mission (like me) in the association of devotees, I would see him as being simply in a period of purification, gaining the spiritual strength to finally go back out on *saṅkīrtana* again.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** If we are rude or impertinent, we’ll agitate people, and the reaction may be that they become angry. “Who cares?” you may say. But any conditioned soul is part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, and if you cheat him or mistreat him and he becomes angry, and Kṛṣṇa is dissatisfied, you’ll gradually lose your taste for book distribution or even spiritual life. It will affect you because you turned him off. He lost an opportunity to begin Kṛṣṇa consciousness because of you. That can very well be a reason why devotees lose their taste for *saṅkīrtana*. Sometimes that reason is underestimated.

**Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa:** There’s never a point when you don’t have to surrender to Kṛṣṇa anymore. One day we will realize that Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to surrender. By reminding us of this, Kṛṣṇa is churning the nectar. But first the poison comes out. We are swimming around in our poisonous lakes like Kāliya, and Kṛṣṇa is dancing on our hoods until we surrender. Kṛṣṇa is dancing and pounding our minds until we understand we’re not the mind. The mind may be inspired or not, but we have to do our service anyway. We know it’s nectar because we experience it. We know, “At this point I experienced nectar, and I was convinced that book distribution is the best thing for me and everyone else.” So we have to strive for these nectarean experiences and realizations and then imprint them deeply on our mind. In that way we can pass all the tests that come to us, and they come in all the services, not only in book distribution.

### 6.3 Overcoming problems in spiritual life

Engaging in devotional service means declaring war on māyā, and it especially applies to book distribution. Book distributors leave the shelter of the temple and confront māyā on the front lines. They go out five or six
days a week—alone for hours—and have to confront mayā in many forms: sense objects, internal weaknesses, and danger from opposing elements.

Becoming more and more fixed in book distribution is a constant challenge. Taking up the challenge means making quick advancement and doing the most powerful preaching. Therefore one has to be prepared to face seductions and hard tests. When Hanumān jumped to Laṅkā, many obstacles presented themselves to stop him. Hanumān defeated them gloriously, but as far as the book distributors are concerned, there’s a casualty rate. Therefore it’s important to discuss the dangers to be avoided.

*The Nectar of Instruction*, 2: One’s devotional service is spoiled when he becomes too entangled in the following six activities: (1) eating more than necessary or collecting more funds than required, (2) overendeavoring for mundane things that are very difficult to obtain, (3) talking unnecessarily about mundane subject matters, (4) practicing the scriptural rules and regulations only for the sake of following them and not for the sake of spiritual advancement, or rejecting the rules and regulations of the scriptures and working independently or whimsically, (5) associating with worldly-minded persons who are not interested in Krishna consciousness, and (6) being greedy for mundane achievements.

**False ego and a fruitive mentality**

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.31: The senses are certainly products of the mode of passion in false ego, and therefore philosophical speculative knowledge and fruitive activities are predominantly products of the mode of passion.

Purport: The chief function of the false ego is godlessness. When a person forgets his constitutional position as an eternally subordinate part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and wants to be happy independently, he functions mainly in two ways. He first attempts to act fruitively for personal gain or sense gratification, and after attempting such fruitive activities for a considerable time, when he is frustrated he becomes a philosophical speculator and thinks himself to be on the same level as God. This false idea of becoming one with the Lord is the last snare of the illusory energy, which traps a living entity into the bondage of forgetfulness under the spell of false ego.

A book distributor experiences the influence of false ego in the form of a fruitive mentality, or attachment to the results of his endeavors. In the case of success, pride arises, and in the case of failure, frustration, and anger. Under its influence he “thinks himself to be on the same level as God,”
an independent enjoyer, controller, master, and recipient of service. Therefore, one of the first lessons a book distributor learns is to be free of fruitive attachments. He must “fight for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat” (Bg. 2.38). Book distributors must be detached from the results, big or small. They shouldn’t be detached from doing big (out of indifference, lethargy or lack of surrender), nor should they be attached to doing big (out of pride), only to be frustrated if the results don’t come. Both are symptoms of the same mentality: fruitive attachment.

Kṛṣṇa explains the proper attitude: “You have the right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty” (Bg. 2.47). A book distributor should be attached to doing his service as well as possible; that will naturally bring good results, increased endeavors, and, most importantly, happiness and real self-satisfaction. Pride or frustration are signs of material motivation, whereas increased surrender and humility are signs of spiritual motivation.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to distribute millions of books, but he wanted them to do it for their whole lives, not like comets streaking through the air—running around without really understanding what is going on. One cannot distribute books thinking of big results alone. One can do that for some time. We have personally seen that the motive to be on top of the charts is inspiring, but it doesn’t last. One must have transcendental knowledge, vidyā. If it’s simply done for fruitive results, the results will gradually diminish. Or we may maintain big results, but our idea will be, “I can also get big results in the material world. Why do I need Kṛṣṇa consciousness?” Therefore we’ve been losing some devotees through the years. Prabhupāda told us not to be attached to mundane fame, profit, or distinction. Even if nobody knows what you do, or nobody cares, what’s the difference? The spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa know. We may somehow or other distribute by a material arrangement, but that will ultimately go down, down, down, and we will lose so many men. In 1970, when there were 450 devotees in this movement, Prabhupāda announced that we now have enough men and we should teach them to become first-class Vaiṣṇavas. “First class” means titikṣavah kāruṇikāh suḥrdaḥ sarva-dehinām ajāta-śatra-vah śāntāḥ śādHAVAH śādu-bhūṣanāḥ. The symptoms of a devotee are that he is tolerant, merciful, and friendly to all. He is peaceful, he abides by the scriptures, and all his characteristics are sublime. (From a class in Māyāpur on March 22, 1982)
Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa (Germany): There are always traps. One may think, “I’m advanced because I’ve distributed books for many years.” That attitude checks his progress. He’ll lose his eagerness to surrender and attain the transcendental platform. Without great eagerness it isn’t possible to make spiritual progress. But a devotee with transcendental eagerness turns to Kṛṣṇa and thinks of himself as helpless and devoid of good qualities. When he sees that he has a lot of bad qualities, then he can really approach Kṛṣṇa. We book distributors always have to depend completely on Kṛṣṇa and our spiritual master, and it is our duty to perform our service with great eagerness. Otherwise, we’ll fall back. If we depend on our spiritual master, who is an ocean of mercy, then we can cultivate the proper attitude. But when we think we’re advanced because we know many verses or have distributed many books, then we’re unnecessarily complicating our lives. When we understand that all the books we distribute are distributed by the mercy of the spiritual master, then everything becomes easy, and we’re thankful just for being allowed to engage in devotional service.

Navina-nirada Dāsa: We shouldn’t try to force Kṛṣṇa or blackmail Him: “If You don’t give me the same results You gave the other devotees, despite my hard endeavors, then I will endeavor only half as much, and that will be the standard of my book distribution for the future.” Then again if someone feels satisfied by going out for five hours and distributing fifty or one hundred books, but after that enjoys himself although he could distribute more, Kṛṣṇa will not like his attitude. It will cause him many problems. Such a devotee will be corrected, and that may be painful. It’s much better to correct oneself from the beginning. We hear the lectures of our spiritual master and other devotees, we read the books, we see good examples, so we can easily find out where we must start the correction.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: During Śrila Prabhupāda’s vyāsa-pūja marathon there was one public holiday, and I was distributing on the parking lot of a tourist site. It was really tough—in the afternoon hardly anyone was taking books. One guy told me he didn’t like my books because his sister is into yoga and meditation. I asked sarcastically whether she is still alive, and he said we were lazy guys and didn’t want to work. I became angry and told him that carrying fifteen books around in the heat isn’t exactly a holiday. But he said I had never worked a day in my life and that I was lucky I was wearing my hat or the straw would start coming out of my head. And you’re lucky I’m a monk, I said, or I’d break every tooth in your head. I was really angry. But then I realized I was a fool to waste time with this idiot and walked off.
was disturbed and thought I’d have to read a little to calm down. I kept repeating to myself, “You’ve never worked a day in your life. You don’t know what hard work is.” But then, amid the outrage, I realized that was my spiritual master speaking to me. That person was purposefully targeting my false ego. I was used to people criticizing the books, but this guy was going at me. He was sent to kick me, to snap me out of illusion. When I realized that, I became blissful and continued with new life. In the next half hour I distributed ten books. Then the police came and threw me out, called by the man because of my wrong behavior, no doubt.

**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa:** The only thing blocking us from getting Kṛṣṇa’s mercy is ourselves. We either surrender to Kṛṣṇa and let Kṛṣṇa control us, or we surrender to māyā and let māyā manipulate us. We have experience that if we’re on sankīrtana and don’t feel surrendered, then māyā immediately starts taking us over. She says, “Look in the store window.” And we look. Then we start spacing out, and we have no potency to accomplish anything. We are actually puppets in Kṛṣṇa’s hands—that is the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It’s not a cheap platform. It requires constant, sincere endeavor. The puppet master moves the puppet according to his will, and the puppet is connected by hooks to the strings that are pulled by the master. But to the untrained eye, it appears as if the puppet moves on his own. We have to be hooked up with Kṛṣṇa through the orders of the spiritual master. If we want to continue performing sankīrtana, we must learn how to do this steadily. We must give up all our ideas for selfish independence, which is an illusion anyway.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** Sometimes we become attached to the results. We want to do big, and then what happens is our consciousness switches from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, or pleasing Kṛṣṇa, to getting a big result. Immediately the non-devotees we’re approaching see in our faces that we want something from them. Therefore a sankīrtana devotee must develop a sincere desire to please Kṛṣṇa, and in this way all the obstacles that māyā presents are overcome.

**Self-centeredness**

Self-centeredness is a subtle form of māyā. Since time immemorial we’ve thought of ourselves first. Our plans, pleasures, and enjoyment have always been the center, and our mental ideas have been the guidelines of our activities. The living entity is supposed to think of Kṛṣṇa (man-manā), but he refuses to do so because he came to the material world to forget Kṛṣṇa. Taking up Kṛṣṇa consciousness means changing the mind’s deep-
seated desires. But even after joining the devotees, the living entity has a hard time giving up his self-centeredness. The mind continues its egocentric meditations in another fashion: “Nobody will believe that I’m the best or extraordinary, as I once convinced myself when I was in material life. Actually, even then I was deluded because no one believed me anyhow. I’m really weak. I’ll never be able to become fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, what to speak of distributing books and becoming a spiritually attractive person or an empowered instrument. I will never make it. What shall I do?” In this way an immature devotee is tricked again by his old enemy, the mind. His thoughts revolve around himself once again, and still he forgets Kṛṣṇa. A devotee must transcend his egocentric mentality by his endeavors to reach the spiritual platform, free from hankering and lamentation. A mature book distributor doesn’t succumb to it because he meditates on what he can do to fulfill the mission of his spiritual master. Being fixed in this way, he remains detached from success or failure. But an immature devotee will be overjoyed by success and depressed by failure, and thus fall victim to meditating upon himself as the doer. Ahaṅkāra literally means “I [aham] am the doer [kāra].”

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** I once asked Bhaktibhūṣaṇa Mahārāja a question about my feeling defeated or discouraged sometimes, and he said that was because of a self-centered mentality. He compared it with driving a car—one doesn’t look simply at his hands on the steering wheel or only a few meters ahead, but he looks ahead the whole distance. So we always have to focus on the goal. If we come to a slump in our devotional service—and we all have our ups and downs and highs and lows—if we get into one of those lows, then we should look to the future and keep our broader vision of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not just look at our problems and see with our tiny mental speculations.

**Discouragement due to bad propaganda**

Challenges always arise, and they must be answered. But as long as the devotees are following the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, behaving properly, and preaching straightforwardly, they have nothing to worry about because Kṛṣṇa will give them protection. A book distributor never arouses the public’s displeasure by misbehavior or fraud, and when there is a protest in the media against the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, justified or not, he is not discouraged by the bad publicity.

**Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami:** Prabhupāda heard of negative news articles. He said they were a good sign; it shows they are feeling pressure from us. I
said, you mean we shouldn’t worry about bad publicity? Why worry about news articles, he said. The day will come when they will fire on you. You have to be prepared for it. . . . Someone asked me what I thought at the time when Prabhupāda said this. I remember that I was shocked to hear it. It was over my head, and yet I accepted that it might actually come to that one day. I was worrying about bad publicity and the inconvenience it might cause me, but Prabhupāda was ready to face death on behalf of Kṛṣṇa. Did I think it would not come to that? But the essence of the meeting in which Prabhupāda predicted that we would be fired on was not to prepare us for battle with the news media; he had called us together to talk about the bliss of chanting the holy names. (From *ISKCON in the 1970s*, pp. 206, 192–3)

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, 218, 224: “This is the beauty of Vṛndāvana,” said Prabhupāda. “When Kṛṣṇa entered the Yamunā to fight with Kāliya, it was not at all good news for mother Yaśodā, Nanda, the friends, and family. Not at all. Their life was lost. But still Kṛṣṇa was the center. This is Vṛndāvana. In everything Kṛṣṇa is the center. So our situation is just like that. They are making bad propaganda against Kṛṣṇa—this is the opposition—but I am happy that Kṛṣṇa is the center. This is the beauty of our movement. Although we are put into some difficulty, yet the center is Kṛṣṇa. . . . Even when there is difficulty, we have to do this as Kṛṣṇa’s business. Let the dogs bark on. We don’t care. If we remain sincere to Kṛṣṇa, that is our victory. The external result is not so important. We have to act according to the direction of Kṛṣṇa. Of course, we want to see good results, but even if there is no good result, we don’t mind. We must be sincere to Kṛṣṇa, that we have done our best without cheating. That is our duty. As servants, we shall not cheat the master—result or no result. The devotee is not sorry if there is no result: ‘Never mind.’ Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, ‘I have brought to Benares the hari-nāma, but here they are all māyāvādis. So if it is not accepted, all right. I shall take it back.’ But we must do our best canvassing work: ‘Please take it.’ That is our mission.”

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: I had many, many encounters with demons and the police. During one particular time in Germany we sometimes ended up in a police station three or four times a day. The police were taking our pictures and fingerprints. In those days the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement was considered a criminal organization in Germany. Still we kept on distributing, and we preached in the police stations, saying that “The only thing you can take from us is our fingerprints, but how do you know they are really us?” And we found that some policemen were interested. I wouldn’t like to go into detail about what people were able to do once they were brainwashed by
the newspapers or media, but we experienced times that were nondifferent from the Jewish persecution. Our cars got kicked and demolished. We got spat upon, kicked, and beaten—all those things were going on. Those were heavy times. Nowadays that’s all over, and we can see that such things were temporary. Finally Kṛṣṇa is always with His devotees. Prabhupāda said that everyone was thinking Germany is finished, but Kṛṣṇa said, “No, let it increase.” After our temple got raided by the police, a few months after that, we had the biggest book distribution we ever had in Germany. We got a wonderful letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda [May 16, 1977—see Ch. 1, Sec. 3] that shows that as long as we have the books, nothing can happen to us. Amazingly enough, even though our movement was persecuted in a severe way, the demons in Germany never touched the books. The psychology of a demon is that he will never read such books, and therefore he thinks no one else is going to read them either. And that’s good. That gives us the peace to keep on distributing these books. So I consider this part of Kṛṣṇa’s plan. He covers their vision and gives us time to distribute books. The time may come when they try to collect them and burn them. But it will be too late, because there are too many out there. So I think we should use the time and thankfully appreciate the peace we have for book distribution.

Brhadbhānu Dāsa: The more books we distribute, the better the atmosphere becomes. I remember in the beginning it was very heavy to distribute. I was almost convinced that I was part of a sect, and I was always paranoid on the street. I was afraid of the police. Whenever I saw something green, like a tree, I was immediately reminded of a police uniform. But the more books we distributed, the better it became. Nowadays we can tell everyone that we are from Hare Kṛṣṇa. Or they ask, “Are you from Hare Kṛṣṇa?” in a skeptical way, but we answer, “Yes, Hare Kṛṣṇa, do you know it? Have you been to India?” This completely exposes them, and they change simply by our positive attitude. Or sometimes they come and say, “Ah ha! This is Hare Kṛṣṇa. I have read about you in the newspaper.” Of course, you know it was a bad article, but you’re not impressed, and you immediately reply with innocent enthusiasm, “You read about us? Was it good?” And they change, because they cannot remember what they read. And they take books because of our positive attitude.

Mental rebellion

Manidhāra Dāsa: I was going out with Rohiniṣuta, and he had a slogan: Einfach weitermachen—Just keep on going! The situation of standing on the street is sometimes horrible. The weather is bad. The people are nasty.
Or the body isn’t in proper condition. We analyzed the situation every day, and it was always the same—the threefold miseries—so there was no use getting hung up in the mind’s frustrations and rebellions. The mind always wants to back out: “It’s too much going out every day! Let’s go to India, or let’s go to the temple.” To conquer the mind we introduced this mantra: “Anyway, let’s keep going!” The real taste for *sāṅkīrtana* is somewhere beyond that platform, beyond the bodily and mental platforms. It’s on the platform of a devotee fully surrendering to the order of his spiritual master. Completely! As Śrīla Prabhupāda says in explaining the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, it’s like the cry of the little child for its mother. There’s no specific mystical thing in distributing Prabhupāda’s books. It’s actually the cry of a child for his mother. Prabhupāda gave us this shelter, *sāṅkīrtana*, and if we fully take it, we will easily realize that it is a very pleasant and safe position.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** Whenever difficulties come, a book distributor must continue. This expression, *einfach weitermachen*—just continue—has a deep meaning, considering what it takes until you are on the platform of steady devotion, surrender, simplicity, and determination.

**Nirguṇa Dāsa:** Māyā throws up many obstacles. As it’s said in the Fourth Canto, the greatest obstacle to self-realization is considering other subject matters more important. In other words, I shouldn’t think that my marriage situation or living quarters or how everyone treats me or whether or not I’m satisfied in temple life is more important than *sāṅkīrtana*. These things commonly come up. Or one may think, “Well, because I’m not doing big, I’m just useless. I might as well not even go out.” But if two or three times as many devotees would go out, each of them selling just a few books, it would increase the sum total. Everyone is important. We want to do as much *sāṅkīrtana* as possible. But there should be training. The mind is the greatest obstacle. One would rather do something else because one is thinking it’s not important. Or one may want to take it easy. These are the mind’s tricks.

**Nṛsiṁhadeva Dāsa:** The main difficulty is the mind’s unlimited speculations. The danger is that one might listen to his mind instead of fixing it on Kṛṣṇa and book distribution. The mind always wants to tell us that we are the most fallen and unable to do *sāṅkīrtana* or that we are the best. These two extremes are there, so we have to find a balance. *Sāṅkīrtana* is the best activity that there is, but we are not the best distributor—Kṛṣṇa is. As long as we think we’re the doer, we cannot distribute anything, and all the power goes away. But if you remember Kṛṣṇa and always try to make
yourself dependent on Kṛṣṇa, always pray to Kṛṣṇa, then the books start to go out. But if you want to be the doer, if you want to think you’re learned and intelligent—that you know all the tricks to distribute the books—then you’ll fail. And you’ll lose your taste. So that is the greatest danger. When things go well, we must understand that it’s simply the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. And when things go bad, that’s my defect, my incapability to surrender. The mind has to be trained to think like that.

Sarvātmar Dāsa: As long as the body is fit, I don’t see any impediment for going on book distribution. The mind may always give trouble, but we should treat the mind like we treat a dog—train it to obey.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: If you want to distribute a lot, you must hear a lot. How you chant rounds in the morning determines how the rest of the day will go. If you manage to control the mind and chant well, then you can control the mind the rest of the day. But if you space out, then you’ll be spaced out and uninspired the rest of the day.

Gīta-govinda Dāsī: When my mind is weak, the tendency is for my thoughts to become worse and worse. I start to recall bad memories. The best thing is to take shelter of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. If I am not together enough to do that, I just keep distributing books. Distributing is also a form of chanting. No matter what my mind says, no matter how difficult it is, I just keep distributing. Then Kṛṣṇa will make arrangements for my thoughts to improve. Book distribution is the best medicine for everything. But if I’m so weak and depressed that I can’t keep distributing, I return to the temple and read the books. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are the best association. They can enliven us and straighten us out. When our mind is weak, we cannot fight on the front lines. The power to fight against māyā comes from strictly following the regulative principles and the guru’s orders and instructions. We can’t go on for many years without faith in Kṛṣṇa’s movement and the guru’s orders. Not only “sankirtana devotee” but “devotee” in general means having faith in guru and Kṛṣṇa, and when a devotee has that faith and distributes books year after year, it means there must be some taste of love of Kṛṣṇa.

Tapas Dāsa: One has to go beyond the mental platform. Don’t ask your mind whether you want to give up the mental platform. Then you’re entering a vicious circle, and you’ll be the loser. Of course, you have to improve your hearing. But if you’re out in the street on the mental platform, you just have to go on anyway, and that can be painful because you are getting kicked in the face all the time by the karmīs. They not only
reject us, but they also give us good kicks and really laugh at us. Pain or pleasure—mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ—we have to be tolerant. If it’s cold in the morning, you still take a bath. So if you’re on the street and you’re not flying in ecstasy, you still have to distribute books. It’s the order of the spiritual master, and if you take shelter in his order, you become purified. Many times when you go on anyway, suddenly you are purified after some time or at the end of the day. The mental barriers are gone. Māyām etāṁ taranti te: Krṣṇa takes away the influence of the material energy. But for that, you have to continue; that is the sign of surrender. If it’s so unbearable that you can no longer continue, you’ll probably have to take some days off to chant more or to take shelter of the devotees. Do something else—but don’t let the anarthas rot.

**Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa:** There’s a danger point when māyā really gets you, and then you should go to the devotees and ask them what to do. Some devotees at that point close themselves up, and therefore they later leave the service because they have so many difficulties stored up within them. At a certain point māyā overpowers them. Rūpa Gosvāmī has given us this principle—revealing one’s mind in confidence and inquiring confidentially. One has to be humble enough to reveal one’s mind, and the other devotees must be sensitive enough to see who’s having problems. Love and trust must be there. The sankīrtana movement is standing on this basis, and this spiritual atmosphere will attract many, many new souls.

**Lust**

Sex is animalistic. It is not love but lust. Sex means the mutual satisfaction of senses, and that is lust. All this lust is taking place in the name of love, and out of illusion people mistake this lust for love. Real love says, “People are suffering from a lack of Krṣṇa consciousness. Let us do something for them so they can understand the value of life.”

You have mentioned the women wearing karmī clothes and going into sex movies and bars late at night for collecting. This kind of canvassing should be immediately stopped.

They are being misled. They are lusty, and they are demons. Our movement is against this. It is really para-upakāra, to help people, and you will be recognized by Krṣṇa. Simply go on working for this movement. Take all strategic points for fighting. There is a declaration of war by us against māyā.
No, not actually māyā, she is a servant of Kṛṣṇa. She would relinquish her grip on everyone, but because they remain demons she cannot. That’s her duty. Actually, we are fighting not with māyā but with the demons.  

**Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa:** While distributing shop to shop, I would come across sex shops and bars, and to my surprise I could sell books in those places, sometimes even quite a few. But the problem was that those places left contaminating impressions on my mind. Fortunately, I told my saṅkīrtana leader, who brought me to my senses in time by analyzing the situation and in a friendly way advising me not to go to such places even if I might sell many books there. It is necessary to stay in the association of devotees and open one’s heart to them so they can help us. Not that we just superficially do service and inwardly sink into māyā. If it’s a serious problem we should consult the spiritual master, not think we will disturb him—because he’s saddened if anyone falls down without even asking for help. It is foolishness to think we can overcome māyā without the help of the devotees and the spiritual master.

**Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa:** Desires can’t be extinguished. One may suppress desires, but they always come up again. Therefore desires have to be redirected. One can conquer material desire by always helping others and inspiring them in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you just think of giving Kṛṣṇa consciousness, that desire will overflood all other desires. The pleasure of seeing people take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness surpasses material pleasure. At such moments you don’t think of any nonsense. Book distribution fully satisfies the mind. Other people become happy because you have given them a book. This is our real relationship, soul to soul.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** Why do saṅkīrtana devotees, after going out for many years and experiencing a taste for book distribution, still think of giving it up?

**Harikeśa Swami:** Usually lust is the main enemy of the book distributor. Because the living entity has a lusty desire, he is in the material world. When you distribute books, you’re in māyā’s kingdom. Māyā reigns supreme in the streets of the cities. There are so many forms of māyā. If you’re not very careful, your dormant lusty desires develop again. You have to be very determined to avoid them. If one makes a vow to be a book distributor his whole life, but māyā says, “Hey, come and enjoy with me,” then he says, “No, because I really want to do this for a long time.” And if one is not fixed in his determination, when māyā says, “Hey, come and enjoy with
me,” he thinks, “Well, why not?” And after thinking like that for a while, he may drop out of the book distribution mission. You can analyze each and every bad quality—lust, anger, greed, madness, envy, and illusion—and show how each one is an enemy of the book distributor. Or sometimes book distributors get entangled in temple politics. That also weakens their determination to distribute books. The material world is very dangerous. A small thing can hook you and pull you along. Therefore one has to be very, very careful. (From a class in Zurich on August 28th, 1991)

**Haripāda Dāsa:** Sense objects are the biggest distraction, especially the form of the opposite sex. To counteract this, one has to withdraw the senses, just as a turtle withdraws its legs and arms and head. If he strictly follows Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions and remembers Kṛṣṇa, there is no risk. If we sincerely follow everything exactly, then we’re protected. The biggest obstacle is the mind, which has the tendency to make its own plans and dwell on the sense objects. Then we become attached, and the greatest danger arises. Therefore the *Gītā* (3.43) advises us to steady the mind by deliberate spiritual intelligence.

**Guru-carana Dāsa:** In Italy generally the people are favorable, and I don’t see many risks from the outside. Of course, the material world is never nice, and there’s always the danger of being allured by sense objects. That’s the risk a book distributor takes. While distributing in town you’ll see many girls, and because *sankirtana* devotees are enthusiastic, effulgent, and friendly, people like to hear from them. Sometimes a devotee meets a girl, and she’ll like his association. If a devotee is not strong, he’ll become enchanted and agitated. But if he sincerely wants to satisfy his spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa will give him the spiritual strength. The same danger is there for the *mātājīs*. We must be quick to respond when we meet someone we feel attracted to. It’s better to go away. The main thing on *sankirtana* is to maintain Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If we allow our consciousness to become contaminated by material desires, then even book distribution, the most ecstatic activity, turns into hellish suffering. It’s so easy to become influenced by māyā, and if we are not careful, we will become attracted or even fall down.

**Yadunandana Dāsa:** Once someone asked Śrīla Prabhupāda why *sankirtana* devotees fall down. Śrīla Prabhupāda answered that his disciples never fall down while they’re doing *sankirtana*; they fall down when they stop doing *sankirtana*. So book distribution is a safe spiritual position. But one has to be careful to remain aloof from māyā. In the *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam* Śrīla Prabhupāda says that Śrīla Śukadeva Goswami, although a liberated soul,
was very vigilant that the illusory energy never cover him. It’s important to be cautious, especially when dealing with the opposite sex. Many times Kṛṣṇa will test us, and all of a sudden māyā appears in the form of the opposite sex to try to attract the mind of a devotee. We think, “Well, the women stop easier and give bigger donations than the men,” or something like that. But I have seen that when I stopped approaching women, my results remained the same or sometimes got better, and at the end I was feeling much lighter and stronger and much more satisfied.

**Doubts**

*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.1p, 2p, 7p: Arjuna wanted Kṛṣṇa to kill the demon of misunderstanding that had overtaken him in the discharge of his duty. . . . deviation from duty does not help one in the progress of spiritual life, . . . the complete system of material activities is a source of perplexity for everyone. In every step there is perplexity, and therefore it behooves one to approach a bona fide spiritual master who can give proper guidance for executing the purpose of life. . . . A person with a bona fide spiritual master is supposed to know everything. One should not, therefore, remain in material perplexities but should approach a spiritual master. . . . Although he could understand that his duty to fight was awaiting him, still, on account of miserly weakness, he could not discharge his duties. He is therefore asking Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme spiritual master, to make a definite solution. He offers himself to Kṛṣṇa as a disciple. He wants to stop friendly talks. Talks between the master and the disciple are serious.

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 7.80p: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as an ideal teacher, shows us how a disciple should deal with his spiritual master. Whenever there is a doubt regarding any point, he should refer the matter to his spiritual master for clarification. . . . Thus in any condition, even when liberated, we should never think ourselves independent of the spiritual master, but must refer to him as soon as there is some doubt regarding our progressive spiritual life.

**Accepting glorification**

*Tamāl Krishna Goswami*: If a devotee is glorified, he understands that glory as Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement. If we perform *sankirtana*, we always know that the result is the work and mercy of our Guru Mahārāja. It is by his order that we have been engaged in Kṛṣṇa’s service and by his inspiration that we gain the strength to perform the service. A Vaiṣṇava never takes the credit himself—*amāninā mānadena. Sādhu-bhūṣanam: a sādhu is decorated*
with wonderful qualities like tolerance, compassion, and friendliness to all. These qualities are bestowed by Kṛṣṇa and His representatives. We never think we can attain these on our own strength. Someone who thinks of himself as opulent or great doesn’t feel grateful to anyone else. But someone who knows he is poor and fallen is in a mood to feel grateful to others. He realizes that whatever he has is the mercy of others, the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, and the mercy of Vaiṣṇavas. (From a class in Zurich on August 23, 1989)

**Harikeśa Swami:** Anybody with a sense of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in his heart will glorify the *saṅkārtana* devotees, but it’s the *saṅkārtana* devotees’ responsibility to understand that all this glorification is for their service, not for them. If somebody says, “Oh, you are doing wonderfully,” it’s because you are doing a wonderful service. The service is glorious, and you just happen to be doing it. Therefore you are being glorified. Somebody else will do it if you don’t, and then he will be glorified. These books are so wonderful that anything connected with them—reading them, distributing them, producing them—makes one glorious. It is the books’ credit, not one’s own credit.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** Kṛṣṇa says, “Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.” Similarly, *saṅkārtana* rests on faith. If we lose it, we lose our enthusiasm and start having doubts: “What will I get out of doing this activity for many years?” Therefore we have to develop sufficient knowledge to understand the value of book distribution. Otherwise we lose our enthusiasm. For example, I was number one for about five years, but then I fell ill, and I was no longer on the top. If you’re no longer number one, the devotees don’t relate to you as they did before. And I saw others become number one. I was forced to renew my inspiration and motivation to go on *saṅkārtana*.

**Question:** All of ISKCON looks at you and Navīna-nīrada. You are glorified wherever you go, and at the same time you have to realize you aren’t the doer. How do you handle that?

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** You have to see that Kṛṣṇa is always number one. When all the *saṅkārtana* scores are read, it’s the total of books that’s interesting. The total number is what the Deities have distributed that week. So They are number one. And there is the spiritual master and *guru-paramparā*, so your individual place is not that important. It doesn’t matter whether you win or lose, it’s how you’ve played the game. One must be careful to play fair and not break any rules and get kicked out of the game. That is actually important. Our motivation should be to do our best, and this will satisfy *guru*, Kṛṣṇa, us, and everyone else. We will not become con-
taminated by the consciousness that we’re the ones who did it. If you have once distributed a few hundred books a day, you know it didn’t come from your strength. If you’ve once distributed a lot of books, then you understand it can’t be done by any material means. There is only one method—depending on Kṛṣṇa, surrendering to Kṛṣṇa. And one has to give the credit to guru, Kṛṣṇa, the devotees, and the people who take the books.

**Navīna-nīrada Dāsa:** Kṛṣṇa has a very big plan, and Prabhupāda has a very big plan, and their plans will be fulfilled. Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda just want some devotees who will play roles in their plans. You can be involved, I can be involved—we can all play a role. It depends on our desire. According to our capacities, we’ll have different results. What counts is not the results, but that everybody gives 100%. Results vary because there are different capacities. For someone, distributing five hundred books a week may be big. For Harināmānanda or me in a marathon, one thousand or even two thousand books in a week is māyā. We should just accept whatever role we get from Kṛṣṇa, without being morose or envious or puffed-up, and we should perform our service to Kṛṣṇa as perfectly as possible. We may be number one or number 201, but in any case we should always feel that we’re in the same army under the same general, Śrīla Prabhupāda. We are just trying to win this big war. So many battles have been won. And sometimes small fights may be lost. But there is no loss, because in the long run we’re going to finish off this whole materialistic society. Under the weight of Prabhupāda’s books, it will crumble to its knees. That’s what Śrīla Prabhupāda predicted, and that is our conviction.

**Other services: diversity or diversion?**

What about doing other services in addition to book distribution? Many book distributors desire to round out their lives and deepen their dedication to the sankīrtana mission. In that sense, diversity doesn’t need to be included in this section dealing with spiritual problems. But book distributors know that diversion from their main mission may manifest from initial diversification. They feel there is no devotional experience missing in the book distribution service. If someone is fully engaged in it or desires to be so, he should carefully distinguish between diversity and diversion.

**Harikeśa Swami:** A book distributor needs to know the art of distributing books and, to a certain extent, how to clean and cook and how to manage money. If later, unfortunately, he has to give up book distribution, he can quickly learn the art of any service, because his mind is purified and he can
easily dedicate himself to any service required. I have seen many examples of sankirtana men and women learning other devotional arts within a short time and doing them well. Therefore there is no need to learn anything other than sankirtana while one is immersed in the mission.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Somebody who is a brahma-vāc book distributor should renounce all other plans and just concentrate on distributing books. Other devotees can conduct the other preaching programs.

Vijaya Dāsa: As for the importance of getting into other areas such as bhajan, cooking, and Deity worship, this is an individual thing. If a sankirtana devotee feels he’d like those services, that’s perfectly all right, but he should not be pressured into them. Saṅkirtana devotees should have a schedule that doesn’t interfere with book distribution. If they want, they can do an ārati sometimes, but mainly they should just concentrate on distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

Sarvātmanā Dāsa: A devotee should know how to cook, how to preach (that includes giving class and distributing books), how to lead kirtan (sing and play instruments), and how to manage. To manage is simple—you make more money than you spend. To cook, you cook palatable dishes with devotion and good ingredients that Kṛṣṇa will accept. To sing, you have to carry a tune, and somehow or other you can play karatālas or mṛdaṅga or harmonium or just clap your hands. And to preach, you have to be prepared. A book distributor has to preach, because some people dare to open the books when you sell them and sometimes ask you questions. You have to have read the books and be ready for questions. A preacher can and should perform all other activities. Preaching is the most important. Preaching is the essence of this movement. Therefore one should be interested in learning all the other skills. A preacher is a leader, and eventually he may be in charge of some other program. He should know how to manage a place, keep it clean, cook good prasādam, and chant for the Deities. A book distributor should take advantage of doing some of these other services when the opportunities arise.

Cakṣu Dāsa: One should know how to do bhajan, worship the Deity, and cook. All these things are important for rounding out devotional life—for making it bloom more fully. But I am quite a crook. I hardly know how to play karatālas or how to cook, what to speak of worshiping the Deity. I feel that I lack experience, and I want to increase my knowledge and abilities. Book distribution is an ecstatic service, the big thing, but when you add
Deity worship, cooking, and bhajan, your devotional service as a book distributor becomes even more attractive. It’s like adding whipped cream and a cherry to ice cream. That’s the way I understand these other services. And I want to know how to do them, too, but somehow I’m missing them. On the weekends, if one has time, I think one can take part in these services. Even if we don’t do them every week, just to be able to do them is important. And getting the association of the devotees who are devoted in these fields is also important.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: We can see that some book distributors get tired after some years. They also like to preach. They want to be more involved in the Sunday Feast and other programs. They should be given the opportunity to do so. And they should always understand that book distribution is nothing but preaching. Preaching means book distribution. These two things are completely interrelated. Sundays shouldn’t be used by saṅkīrtana devotees just to eat the feast and then go back on the road to fulfill quotas. This is a narrow-minded vision of saṅkīrtana. Book distributors should be encouraged and even pushed to take part in preaching so that they learn how to express the philosophy to guests. Even then and there they can distribute books. It requires a more mature understanding of book distribution and preaching. A preacher should always be fired up to distribute a book, and a book distributor should always be fired up to preach.

6.4 Psychological dimensions of book distribution

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.33 p: Anyone can become successful in devotional service provided he displays no duplicity. It is explained here that one must be very frank and open-minded (āmāyinaḥ). To be situated in a lower status of life is not a disqualification for success in devotional service. The only qualification is that whether one is a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra, he must be open, frank and free from reservations. Then, by performing his particular occupational duty under the guidance of a proper spiritual master, he can achieve the highest success in life.

Considering the individual’s needs

There is no question of leaving our society. One may think like that, but I cannot allow you to leave. That is my inspiration. I am always thinking of those who have left the society. Especially for you there is no question of leaving. Stay in Melbourne and preach with steady determination. I
am glad to learn that you are in steady correspondence with Karandhara and am sure he will give you all good direction. So don’t be agitated by anyone’s so-called demand, but stick to your preaching work, husband and wife, chanting and following the regulative principles. Don’t be agitated by trifling things. Remain steady and go on with preaching work. Krishna will help you in every way. I am so pleased with you that you have done so nicely in the service of the Lord to your best capacity. That is required. It is not that everyone should be equally expert. But the thing that is needed is that we should be serious and sincere in our engagement. Nobody can adequately serve Krishna because Krishna is unlimited. But Krishna is so kind. Krishna accepts even a small leaf or flower offered to Him by the poorest man in the world. Krishna accepts such a thing. Krishna is so opulent that He is not even slightly benefited by any presentation, but He is so kind and merciful that He accepts a little bit of leaf or flower or water from His devotees, and because a devotee comes to Him with such love and affection He becomes very much satisfied. As a father is always sorry for the son who is out of home, similarly Krishna is not very happy on account of so many bewildered fallen souls in the material world. He therefore comes personally to ask them to surrender again to Him. But the conditioned soul is so much illusioned that it is very hard to make him surrender to Krishna. Therefore each and every one of us, if we can give service to Krishna by making another man surrender to Krishna, then He will very much appreciate that service, and that is our gain. Try to follow this principle and preach vigorously to your best capacity, and everything will be all right. Don’t worry.  

These ISKCON branches are like the oases in a vast desert. In the desert there is no water, but occasionally if one is fortunate he may come in contact with an oasis, and he is saved. Similarly, in this material world we are drying up due to a lack of spiritual knowledge. Our ISKCON centers are meant to give relief to the dried-up conditioned souls searching after the nectar of joyful life.  

Various reasons can lead devotees to stop full-time book distribution, and they shouldn’t be condemned for that. After all, many devotees stopped
book distribution, and the majority of ISKCON’s members aren’t book distributors. In the sankīrtana mission many needs must be considered—collective needs (diverse duties have to be discharged) and individual needs (desires, conditioning, phases in one’s life). Personalism within a society harmonizes collective and individual needs. A society cares for its members, and the members voluntarily sacrifice for the society. Personalism especially applies to ISKCON, Lord Caitanya’s sankīrtana movement, which propagates the congregational glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Maṇīdhāra Dāsa: Every sankīrtana devotee has ups and downs. This happens to everyone. Sometimes periods of difficulties and reduced results last a year or more. So there should be good arrangements to help such devotees. My understanding of the temple’s purpose is that it’s a place to train young devotees and it’s also a shelter for sankīrtana devotees needing the facility to recharge and find some balance, maybe by engaging in pūjā or reading and so on. They must feel protection by getting the full support of the temple management. This, of course, implies that the temple managers must not put financial pressure on the sankīrtana devotees and make the relationship difficult. Expert management means properly taking care of the sankīrtana devotees, not torturing them with heavy economic demands. We want to expand, but we cannot expand at the cost of a sankīrtana devotee, who is, after all, a person. Sankīrtana devotees are people who dedicate everything for years to book distribution, and sometimes they get hurt by māyā. Therefore, there should be scientific treatment to reinforce or properly situate them. I consider this important because I’ve seen such devotees suffer a lot.

Nirguṇa Dāsa: Every devotee should be satisfied. Of course, everyone should learn to be satisfied with what is easily available, and we should easily make everything available that is required for rounding out an individual’s character and expression of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. Some devotee may be completely satisfied by simply distributing books, and he may perfect that service so much that he can greatly inspire and teach hundreds and thousands of other book distributors. Another devotee may need to do a few other things, or he may be fully satisfied in what he’s already doing. If his particular absorption and service suffice to make him a well-rounded devotee in terms of personal qualifications and devotional attributes, then that should be enough diversity. It’s an individual consideration. No opportunity should be denied a devotee if he needs to or wants to serve Kṛṣṇa nicely in a particular way. Of course, we should emphasize book distribution, but as
Prabhupāda said, this movement runs on two tracks, bhāgavata-mārga and pāñcarātrikī-vidhi, or preaching and Deity worship. Both have to be there, and that spiritual variety is the beauty of our movement.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** Sometimes a devotee is weak-minded, and when he is confronted by Māyādevī, he immediately goes berserk. Then there are devotees who don’t care about māyā and are fixed on Kṛṣṇa—like real ksatriyas, they just go out and fight for Kṛṣṇa. So one should consider one’s personality and not try to be somebody one is not. These things need to be discussed, and the temple president and the saṅkīrtana leader must have an eye for them. They have to detect when a devotee starts having problems.

**Being properly situated**

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.2.30p: In the fighting between the elephant and the crocodile, the difference was that although the elephant was extremely powerful, he was in a foreign place, in the water. During one thousand years of fighting, he could not get any food, and under the circumstances his bodily strength diminished, and because his bodily strength diminished, his mind also became weak and his senses less powerful. The crocodile, however, being an animal of the water, had no difficulties. He was getting food and was therefore getting mental strength and sensual encouragement. Thus while the elephant became reduced in strength, the crocodile became more and more powerful. Now, from this we may take the lesson that in our fight with māyā we should not be in a position in which our strength, enthusiasm, and senses will be unable to fight vigorously. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has actually declared war against the illusory energy, in which all the living entities are rotting in a false understanding of civilization. The soldiers in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must always possess physical strength, enthusiasm, and sensual power. To keep themselves fit, they must therefore place themselves in a normal condition of life. What constitutes a normal condition will not be the same for everyone, and therefore there are divisions of varṇāšrama—brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, brahmacarya, grhaṇṛtha, vānaprastha and sannyāsa.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** Those who are able to remain brahmacāris and distribute books are the most fortunate people on the planet. Few persons will do it, and they should get everyone’s full support and encouragement. If a person has a sincere desire and is trying hard, we should encourage him as much as possible and try to follow his example.
Vijaya Dāsa: A big obstacle is the form of the opposite sex. One can easily be deviated from sankīrtana. I know many good sankīrtana devotees who were completely devoted to book distribution and then became attracted to grhaṣṭha life, and their preaching practically stopped. Only a few married devotees here in America still distribute books. So if one wants to remain a book distributor, if at all possible one should remain brahmacārī. It becomes difficult for a householder because he has to take on many responsibilities, but a brahmacārī has a simple life. He just goes out and preaches, comes back, takes some prasādam, and enjoys the association of devotees.

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: Definitely devotees who sell books are facing dangerous situations. They are going into the den of the lion. Of the six factors that destroy devotional service, one is jana-saṅga, association with worldly people. On sankīrtana we cannot avoid worldly association. All the people we meet are simply attracted to sense gratification, and the epitome of sense gratification is sex. Therefore when devotees associate with worldly people, they may become infected with desires for sex or sense gratification. If this happens, it’s a dangerous situation. But we should not forget that by their taking that risk, they get the special mercy and protection of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He keeps their desires for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness intact, despite the contaminating and dirty things coming from the materialistic world and the materialistic mind. A sankīrtana devotee may become contaminated especially if he’s not inspired or happy to sell books. As soon as there’s some frustrating circumstance on sankīrtana, such a devotee tends to weaken and take the association of the karmīs. One has to pray to Kṛṣṇa to counteract these influences. And one should always try to be happy on sankīrtana. That means learning to be detached from the result—just being happy to preach about Kṛṣṇa. And it also means chanting and hearing properly and reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and maybe remembering verses during the day. Devotees who have difficulty remaining brahmacārīs should not cheat themselves and others but should accept the grhaṣṭha-aśrama and continue going on sankīrtana. One shouldn’t plan to marry in order to retire from sankīrtana. Rather, one should be determined that by making this one adjustment, it will strengthen his situation and enable him to go on with sankīrtana.

Householder life also provides facilities for book distribution. Because householders form a large part of ISKCON’s membership, they should especially be encouraged to do book distribution or support it. Book distribution by householders is elaborated upon in Chapter Eight, Section Five.
Social pressure

Don’t try to become big fast. That is not possible. Go slowly.  

Viśvadeva Dāsa: If someone goes out simply on the basis of social pressure, he’ll never experience the higher taste necessary for steady book distribution. Someone lazy may be pushed to go on saṅkīrtana, but then he must be further trained and cared for so that he can surrender to it and taste the nectar. But each case is different. Some devotees have to have changes—maybe two weeks of pūjā, then two weeks of book distribution. It is a great art to see who can be pushed how far and who needs to be offered another service. But I would never push someone out on saṅkīrtana by force or social pressure.

Cakṣu Dāsa: Prabhupāda is quoted in Just As I Have Shown You as saying, “My Guru Mahārāja pushed me, I am pushing you, and you are pushing others. It is like a train.” So there’s nothing wrong with being pushed. On our own we’d never have gone out to distribute books. But the pushing has to be a natural inspiration. Just like in the beginning when we got a lot of mercy in advance—everything was new, and we saw everything as nectar. That initial enthusiasm was not our own asset, but was Lord Nityānanda’s special mercy. Otherwise we’d never have joined, what to speak of going out to distribute books. We were pushed to surrender more, but we didn’t perceive it as a push, because it was nectar. But after some time Kṛṣṇa wants to see more. It’s our turn, so to speak. We have to develop our own maturity, which means recognizing and overcoming our anarthas. So we’re confronted again with our own conditioning. Then what are we going to do? The worst thing is to suppress our problems—hide them and not counteract them. Then we may continue artificially in response to social pressure, but it will not last, and the problems will show up again in one form or another. This state is critical. The devotees shouldn’t be forced by social pressure. Rather, the leaders should recognize the hidden problems of a devotee and talk with him. If he keeps up a show of book distribution, thinking, “If I admit my problems with book distribution, I will be criticized or ridiculed,” at some point he’ll just stop anyway out of frustration, or he’ll bloop. In the beginning, despite the enthusiasm we display, our motivations are mixed, our understanding is immature, and often we do things based upon the desire for recognition or in response to social pressure. But at some point these things won’t suffice—or won’t even be there anymore. In my case, no one is pushing me anymore. My mind tells me,
“You’ve done your part, you’ve distributed books for almost ten years, and you’ve done big.” Nobody would be surprised if I expressed a desire to do something else, to slow down or even to get married. In fact, they expect that I will. So the external push is no longer there. That means the push has to come from within. I have to change gears. Kṛṣṇa is challenging me to deepen my motivation. If you deepen your motivation, you go into deeper waters, into the ocean of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you do that in your service of book distribution, you open up a completely new experience. Then you distribute simply out of a desire to please your spiritual master. You have no plans for yourself. You’re convinced and satisfied, and distributing books becomes natural. The people can feel the depth of your Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They’re impressed by your silent conviction and bliss. On this platform, you simply present Kṛṣṇa. And if you present Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is present. Then you experience book distribution in a completely different context. It becomes dynamic, like a bird’s flying in the air, knowing how to use the wind to be carried by the currents. Then flying is no big deal, even if there are cross-currents. It’s simply natural, and the same is true of book distribution. You don’t need external pressures any more. So the point was social pressure. ISKCON is emphasizing book distribution, and you may call that social pressure. But it should never be the kind of social pressure that leads to suppression of problems or doubts. It should simply be a push that induces us to work on ourselves, to purify our motives, and to deepen our conviction. But I wouldn’t call that social pressure. It’s inspiration, a challenge, the voice of surrender.

The highest ideal and the gradual process of reaching it

A person reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and living in the association of devotees soon learns about the perfect ideal of bhakti-yoga, full surrender in unmotivated devotion. If a devotee tries to achieve the perfect standard without sufficient realization, either because of social or self-imposed pressure to live up to the perfect ideal, he may end up with psychological problems. Imitation can cause frustration or identity problems and lead to doubts or falldown. Devotees encountering their material desires and personal needs are advised to reveal them in confidence to a devotee they trust. But a devotee may not dare to admit his problems to others or even to himself, and as history has unfortunately shown, he may suddenly give up his service and leave. “Everything or nothing” isn’t the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa says that there are different options for engaging in devotional service. A devotee must find out where he stands and what it means for him to be properly situated. Once satisfied and convinced about
his own situation, he will be strong enough to take up challenges, pass tests, and continue for a lifetime without deviating from the principles of devotional service.

Premārṇava Dāsa: In Bhagavad-gītā (12.8), Kṛṣṇa says that full absorption in Him is the best. We can apply this instruction to book distribution, because book distribution is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. That would mean that the highest platform would be just to fix our minds upon Him (or book distribution) and engage all our intelligence in Him (or book distribution). In the next verse Kṛṣṇa says, “If you cannot fix your mind upon Me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga. And in this way develop a desire to attain Me.” In the purport Śrīla Prabhupāda says that by the process of sādhanabhakti one ultimately reaches the stage of attachment to Kṛṣṇa. Does this mean we should all sit down and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and wait until we’re paramahāṁsas before we go out and distribute books? Certainly not. Distributing books is also one of the principles we follow to attain attachment for Kṛṣṇa and His mission. We want to come to the highest stage of absorption in book distribution, because in the long run that will result in the most books being distributed. We get there by following the process of sādhanabhakti. Thus the practical advice for devotees who cannot maintain full-time book distribution is to continue the process of sādhanabhakti in some other service where he can find a steady position. In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all activities are connected to the distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Sometimes we forget that, and in our minds we become separated from book distribution. But we should remember that our goal is to distribute books, and we should continue our service in that consciousness. Maintaining this understanding is important, and therefore anything that keeps our consciousness connected to book distribution should be accepted. A list of a few simple things to do might include: associating with the sankīrtana devotees when they’re in the temple, serving the sankīrtana devotees prasādam, baking bread for them, washing their laundry and cars, appreciating their wonderful service, considering oneself their servant, distributing books once a week or during the marathon, preaching about book distribution, and praying to Kṛṣṇa that He will bless us to distribute books. If we follow the principle of maintaining a connection to the book distribution mission in our service, then whatever we do has the right perspective, and we will find ourselves as happy as a person can be without going out to distribute books.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: Śrīla Prabhupāda called book distribution our most important activity. For preaching it is most effective, and for our spiritual
life it opens unlimited possibilities of surrender. Therefore it is good if devotees who join the movement learn the art of book distribution. This challenge is healthy. We can understand what the goal is and what we are supposed to strive for. Not everyone will remain in this demanding service, but if we have done it, we can always do it again, and we will continually benefit from the experience. It will be much easier to see our connection to the book distribution mission. Without that experience, how can we ever know what book distribution is or why Prabhupāda stressed it so much or why it is most pleasing to him? So, if a devotee first strives for the highest, he will understand his own position much better. Then he can naturally direct his devotional service towards this goal and make sure that he is reaching it by the end of his lifetime. Some people may say that our movement has a tough and narrow standard—that there are only basic temple activities and book distribution. But that’s not a fact. Everyone can engage in devotional service according to his capacities and abilities. Prabhupāda picked us up from our fallen position, and he showed us the entire way up to the perfection of surrender. Prabhupāda revealed the highest platform of spiritual life, but at the same time he said that we cannot expect everyone to come up to this standard immediately. Thus he built a house in which the whole world can live. Still there must be some determined sankirtana devotees. And devotees who join ISKCON should learn this most important activity and perform it at least for some time. Of course, they should not be forced by social pressure to continue. Book distribution is voluntary. You cannot force anybody to do it. If those devotees who go out are happy and convinced, then they will naturally attract young devotees to book distribution. This tendency should be furthered by instruction and by management.

Varṇāśrama: individual and collective progress

Bhagavad-gītā 8.28p: One has to study the Vedas under the guidance of the spiritual master and undergo many austerities and penances while living under his care. A brahmacārī has to live in the home of the spiritual master just like a servant, and he must beg alms from door to door and bring them to the spiritual master. . . . After the student studies the Vedas under the master for a period from five to twenty years, he may become a man of perfect character. Study of the Vedas is not meant for the recreation of armchair speculators, but for the formation of character. After this training, the brahmacārī is allowed to enter into household life and marry. When he is a householder, he has to perform many sacrifices so that he may achieve further enlightenment. He must also give charity according to the country, time and candidate, discriminating among charity in goodness, in passion
and in ignorance, as described in Bhagavad-gītā. . . . By carrying out the orders of brahmacārya, householder life, vānaprastha and finally sannyāsa, one becomes elevated to the perfectional stage of life.

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: In Vedic society it was a brahmacāri’s duty to collect alms for the spiritual master. Then after offering guru-dakṣīṇa, most brahmacāris got married. Obviously there are parallels to book distribution, although becoming a grhaṣṭha does not necessarily mean stopping book distribution. But the principle is there: as a brahmacāri, one has to be trained to become austere and humble. Going from door to door is a perfect method to develop these qualities. As for book distribution, it’s a transcendental activity that’s not limited to a certain varṇa or āśrama. For example, grhaṣṭhas are supposed to give in charity, and one can give nothing better to the conditioned souls than Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. In Vedic times only a few brahmacāris became sannyāsīs right away. Nowadays we also see that only a few devotees remain on traveling sāṅkīrtaṇa as brahmacāris. If you remain fixed in book distribution, it’s as good as sannyāsa. So we can compare full-time book distribution to the brahmacāri’s training or military service. In this way we can understand why not many devotees do it for ten or twenty years. If the proper brahmacārya is there, then there will also be strong grhaṣṭhas who continue book distribution.

Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa: If we cultivate the sāṅkīrtaṇa spirit of cooperation between all the departments of our temples, as in a varṇāśrama society, then more new people will be attracted, and there will be more book distributors and also more devotees to engage in all the other services. Such a powerful team is inspiring to everyone, even newcomers and visitors. It’s also practical: we want to build Māyāpur, and for this we need for a strong BBT, which can be strong only if book distribution is going on dynamically world-wide. There are many other things that need to be done to realize that project. If there is the proper basis—surrender to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire for book distribution and the resulting purified consciousness of sāṅkīrtaṇa—then there will always be enough participants in book distribution and the other departments.

6.5 Sādhu-saṅga

Bhagavad-gītā 18.78: Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality.
Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-lilā 4.79p: If the preachers in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are sincere devotees of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa will always be with them because He is very kind and favorable to all His devotees. Just as Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa were victorious in the Battle of Kurukṣetra, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will surely emerge victorious if we but remain sincere devotees of the Lord and serve the Lord according to the advice of predecessors (the six Gosvāmīs and other devotees of the Lord). As Narottama dāsa Thākura has stated: tāndera caraṇa sevi bhakta-sane vāsa, jana-me janame haya ei abhīlāsa. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness devotees must always desire to remain in the society of devotees. Bhakta-sane vāsa: they cannot go outside the Kṛṣṇa conscious society or the movement. Within the society we must try to serve the predecessors by preaching Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s cult and spreading His name and fame all over the world. If we attempt this seriously within the society, it will be successfully done. There is no question of estimating how this will happen in the mundane sense. But without a doubt, it happens by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-lilā 22.83: The root cause of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is association with advanced devotees. Even when one’s dormant love for Kṛṣṇa, awakens, association with devotees is still most essential.

**Association with devotees as the life of spiritual life**

On the authority of Lord Caitanya and my spiritual master, I am requesting my disciples to always stay in the association of devotees and to propagate the saṅkīrtana movement all over the world, so that others may also get a chance also to become liberated from the material condition. Prahlāda Mahārāja prayed, “I am not satisfied to go back to the kingdom of God alone, but I must bring back with me all these poor fools who have no alternative ultimately than to surrender to You.” This form of worship, called goṣṭanānandi, is superior to the bhajanānandi, or the holy man who lives alone in meditation on the Lord within the heart. This is the estimation of the scripture. ¹⁴

The very definition of saṅkīrtana makes evident the importance of sādhu-saṅga. To perform saṅkīrtana one has to be in the association (saṅga) of devotees; otherwise there is no question of congregational chanting. (The syllable saṅ- is contained in saṅga and saṅkīrtana). While at all times,
in all the śastras, the association of devotees is stressed as the key factor in spiritual progress, this is especially true in Kali-yuga because sankirtana is the yuga-dharma. Therefore it’s to be expected that māyā tries to attack the devotees on this level. If she manages to infiltrate and cause dissension among devotees and lure devotees away from the association of devotees, then these illusioned devotees may stop sankirtana (chanting and preaching). Sankirtana devotees always stress that they owe their steady inspiration to association with devotees. Thus association has to be sought out and cultivated.

Gaurī Devī Dāśī: If you keep reading the books and you’re really trying to associate with the other devotees, you begin to realize that when you think you’re the greatest or you’re the queen of the sankirtana party or whatever it is, you can’t have any friends, because you’re superior to everybody. You don’t have anything to learn from anybody. So what’s the point of associating with anybody, anyway? Life becomes miserable, because the real nectar:an confidential experience of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is associating with devotees in a loving mood of being a humble servant. And to do that you have to understand that you are Kṛṣṇa’s humble servant.

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: Between the devotees there should be a real attitude of helping each other. A sankirtana leader, for example, should not bring another devotee to a place which he himself doesn’t like or tries to avoid. Once I had an interesting experience. I was on sankirtana with Ujjvalanilamaṇi. One day it started to rain and snow, and I saw that Ujjvala had left his winter shoes in the car. I thought of Ujjvala standing in the parking lot without his winter shoes, and I was distributing in a warm underground parking lot. So I drove to him and gave him his shoes, although it took me two hours back and forth. And then this amazing thing happened. I distributed sixty books in one hour. I had a lot of power. And I had the realization that nobody is as dear to Kṛṣṇa as the book distributors, and we should simply try to be their servants. We should always try to help them and give them the feeling that we are here for them. Often it requires only a little thing. Somebody may bake some bread if there’s no bread, although it may take all night. All these services and exchanges of genuine spiritual love are pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that our love for him will be shown by how we cooperate. This doesn’t refer only to his disciples but to all the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. All of us in this movement love Śrīla Prabhupāda. We worship and dress his mūrti and read and distribute his books. The proof of how we worship Prabhupāda is how
much we cooperate within the sanākirtana movement. Sometimes it’s better to consider the results secondary and give more stress to pleasing the Vaiṣṇavas. One should try to encourage Vaiṣṇavas by speaking nice words of appreciation to them, or we should take our time to speak with a devotee if he has some problems. We should go to them, not wait until they come to us. Maybe we will wait too long. We should remember the point that no one is more dear to Kṛṣṇa than those who preach His devotional service to the devotees.

Navina-nīrada Dāsa: For sanākirtana devotees especially it’s important to chant together and have kīrtana like mad to purify all of the material contamination that’s come into their hearts during the week or is there from previous bad activities. We have to become purified. Just bathe every day in the holy name, just bathe the eyes in the divine form of the Deity and bathe the ears in the holy name and purify the tongue and the whole body through prasādam. In this way we will remain fit for the biggest austerity of all, to push on book distribution. Spiritual austerity doesn’t mean to fast unnecessarily and then be unable to go out.

Nṛśinahadeva Dāsa: It’s ecstatic to be in the association of the sanākirtana devotees. It’s said that the most wonderful thing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is association. So what we need is the association of devotees. By having kīrtana together and taking prasādam together we can blissfully spread the sanākirtana movement. These activities are the perfection of life. One doesn’t have to become a great personality, he just has to be thankful to be with the devotees and engaged in spreading the sanākirtana movement. There are no persons in the material world like the devotees. You realize this if you associate with the book distributors. Chanting and dancing in kīrtana with them is really ecstatic, and it gives you the proper understanding, because sometimes you may not really understand how fortunate you are to be engaged in book distribution. You have to enjoy their association. If you have the mercy of the devotees, then everything becomes easy.

Preaching: giving our association, not taking theirs

People interested in materialistic life are called asat. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was asked, “What is the behavior of a Vaiṣṇava?” He said: asat-saṅga tyāga, ei vaiṣṇava ācāra. He said, first of all, a Vaiṣṇava’s business is to avoid the company of asat—those with materialistic interests. This is a very im-
important thing. We have established this Kṛṣṇa consciousness society to avoid the *asat-saṅga*. Of course, we are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness among the people who are interested in material subject matters, but we are not associating with them. We are associating with Kṛṣṇa, because we don’t talk about anything except Kṛṣṇa. We are not interested in their business. Everyone is interested in his own business, and similarly, we are interested in our own business, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if we go to a materialistic person, we canvass, “Kindly become our member. Kindly read this book. Purchase this book.” We are not going to them to take part in their activities, we are trying to bring them into our activities. So, *asat-saṅga tyāga, ei vaiṣṇava ācāra*. A Vaiṣṇava should always be careful not to intermingle—not to take up their ideas and thoughts. No. That is *vaiṣṇava ācāra*. Why they should be avoided? Who is *asat*? *Asat* means those very much attached to sense gratification, and the culmination of sense gratification is sex life. Those who are too attached to sex life, *stṛ-śaṅgi*, and *kṛṣṇa-abhakta*, nondevotees, they are *asat*. Those actually serious to make advancement in spiritual life should avoid *asat*. *Asat-saṅga tyāga ei vaiṣṇava ācāra asat stṛ-śaṅgi kṛṣṇa abhakta āra*. So if we discriminate like this, then we shall be advancing.¹⁵

“The only difficulty is the fighting”

Now we are getting literature published all over the world. I just received very nice books in Swedish and also Italian, and our *Bhagavad-gītā* is being prepared in Dutch. And also our literatures are being received very nicely. Our *Bhagavad-gītā* in French language is being received very enthusiastically by the people, libraries, and schools. All other reports are also very good. Tamāl Krishna is also distributing many big books and also magazines and holding many college engagements. Here in India the government is beginning to give our men facility to remain here. I am in Bombay, and I am supervising the construction of our temple here. It is a very large project. The temple is larger than our Vṛndāvana temple. We are trying to get it done as quickly as possible. I have just received a report from Mukunda in London that the *Encyclopedia*
Britannica wants to carry my biography article in their publication. So this is all welcome news. So I am very pleased by all of the progress, how you boys and girls are working very sincerely to push on this movement of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The only difficulty is the fighting that is going on. Why there should be fighting in our society? This is not a good sign. I hope this meets you in good health.  

Everything should be done cooperatively. “Ours” and “yours” are material conceptions and have no place in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. If the members of our movement are unable to cooperate it will be very difficult to spread the mission of Lord Caitanya.

Now all of you work cooperatively. I was very pleased to see how you were working so hard last year to distribute so many books. There is no instance of religious books of philosophy being distributed in such magnitude in history. Now go on enthusiastically and increase this book distribution unlimitedly.

Your love for me will be shown by how much you cooperate to keep this institution together after I am gone.

6.6 Spiritual life for a lifetime

Mām anusmara yudhya ca. Kṛṣṇa never said, “Simply fight” or “Simply chant,” because in the material world that is not possible. Therefore chanting must be there, but at the same time, you have to work to continue this movement. The movement requires energy. We are printing so many books to spread this knowledge. They must be distributed. Home to home, place to place, man to man—this literature must go there. If one takes a book, at least some day he’ll read it: “Let me see what this book is I have purchased the other day.” And if he reads one line his life will be successful—if he reads one line only carefully. This is such literature. So therefore I am giving book distribution so much stress. Somehow or other—small book or big book—if it is given to somebody, he’ll read it some day, and he’ll derive eter-
nal benefit. *Sv-alpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat.* 20

**Importance of sādhana**

*The Nectar of Devotion*, p. 21: There are certain prescribed methods for employing our senses and mind in such a way that our dormant consciousness for loving Kṛṣṇa will be invoked, as much as a child, with a little practice, can begin to walk. . . . When we wish to develop our innate capacity for devotional service, there are certain processes which, by our accepting and executing them, will cause that dormant capacity to be invoked. Such practice is called *sādhanabhakti*. . . . which means to offer *maṅgala-ārati* in the morning, to refrain from certain material activities, to offer obeisances to the spiritual master and to follow many other rules and regulations.

Please continue to distribute our books. That is a very important business. Your idea for film distribution is also good, so do it nicely in cooperation with the GBC. I am very much anxious that at the same time as you carry out all these outside activities, you are maintaining a strict schedule of temple activities. Regular activities such as attendance of ārati, chanting of rounds, and study of literatures in the class will keep you fit for effective preaching work in the outer field. Our standard of purity must be kept, otherwise there will be a loss of spiritual strength and subsequent falldown. Every one of you should be thoroughly convinced of the power of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* to protect you in all circumstances and chant accordingly at all times without offence. Then advancement will be swift, and you will gradually come to see everything clearly so that you may act for the pleasure of the Lord without uncertainty. 21

Tamāl Krishna Goswami: You have to be enlivened. “One who has life can preach,” Śrila Bhaktisiddhānta said. If you’re not enlivened, then you don’t have any reason to preach. It’s impossible not to be enlivened if you take a full dose of Kṛṣṇa consciousness every day—that’s the morning program. The morning program is scientifically arranged so that every single thing you need in your spiritual life is contained in it. It is exactly in pursuance of Śrila Rūpa Goswami’s instructions. Our Gauḍiya-Vaiṣṇava ācāryas have made the morning program, and you’ll see that everything necessary for the performance of spiritual life is contained in it. So if you miss *tulasī-pūjā*, if
you miss offering obeisances to the Vaiśṇavas, or you miss guru-pūjā, then something will go wrong. If you miss those programs, it’s like having an unbalanced diet, which causes diseases like rickets or scurvy.

**Nirguṇa Dāsa:** Although sankīrtana is nectar, not everyone spontaneously tastes it. It’s easy to be affected by the modes of nature because we have to deal with materialistic people, what to speak of all the other material influences confronting us. But our steadily performing regular sādhana will give us strength, determination, sense control, and whatever we need for our service. The temple program bolsters our book distribution. This is the way to become inspired to think of Kṛṣṇa throughout the day. And book distribution encourages us in our sādhana as well. For instance, when we read a book after going out on sankīrtana, it is much more relishable.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** I owe all my success to good sādhana. I wake up at 2:30 A.M. and chant my rounds. I usually read Bhāgavatam for about an hour before guru-pūjā. I attend the whole morning program. Then I also read from the Bhagavad-gītā and study verses before sankīrtana. That charges the batteries for going out and approaching the nondevotees. By good sādhana one becomes strong in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and empowered to distribute the mercy.

**Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa:** Some book distributors think it’s only the rules and regulations that make them strong. They follow everything fanatically, getting up before everyone, taking a cold shower, and other things, but afterward they aren’t inspired to go out. Rather, they are wiped out and can’t concentrate. Yet sometimes you’ve chanted bad rounds or had to take extra rest, and you think you’re completely in māyā, but you know that you must go out to distribute books. You expect the worst, but because you feel humble and dependent, the mercy comes, the books go out, and you meet nice people all day. So the rules aren’t everything. We’re always dependent on Kṛṣṇa’s causeless mercy. Nevertheless we have to try our best. Sometimes we may not be regulated, but that doesn’t mean that we give up regulation and say it goes better without regulation—“I will always get the mercy, and I can distribute more books if I cut out the sādhana.” No. We must always endeavor to do our best to follow the rules and regulations. Don’t become lazy. Otherwise we think, “Now I’m a book distributor—I can neglect everything and get the mercy of Lord Caitanya. Prabhupāda said that book distribution is the most important activity; therefore I don’t have to improve my sādhana.” For sure, in due course of time, we will lose power, and then as soon as a test comes, we are finished. Sometimes a devotee will
have to make compromises for the sake of book distribution. But if he does that day after day, it becomes a bad habit. Then he’ll meet difficulties. Demons will come, weakness will manifest, material desires will rise. Therefore we need shelter, and there is only one shelter—the mission and the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda, which include both sādhana and preaching.

Proper chanting and hearing

The secret of preaching work is that one must keep himself fit and spiritually strong by always maintaining the highest standard of purity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Our process is simple and practically experimented everywhere. Simply by vibrating sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra daily one advances to the stage of sadācāra, or good habits, and when he is pure in consciousness by devotional service, he advances to the stage of ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa. We should always pray to Lord Caitanya simply to be engaged in His confidential service by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra always. That will purify us and give the strength needed to infuse others with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śvavāsa Dāsa: During a darśana with Śrīla Prabhupāda in the Atlanta temple we asked, “How can we increase our devotion and our desire to distribute more books?” We were sitting there eagerly awaiting some special formula to expand our book distribution. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat there and didn’t even look at us. He was looking above us, and we kept waiting. Finally he said, “If you want to increase book distribution, if you really want, I have only one recommendation.” We were holding our breath. He wouldn’t say it immediately. Then he looked at us and said, “If you want to increase, then you must chant your rounds uninterrupted. After beginning your chanting, you do not stop until you finish.” Śrīla Prabhupāda said that this is the key for increasing book distribution, because if you win that fight, you will win all day. If you lose and let your mind carry you to another thing, it’s obvious you will have a difficult day.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: I’ve never experienced such intense hearing as I have among the sankārtana devotees, because they chant and read with the idea of going out and facing māyā. Therefore they prepare themselves by chanting and reading with concentration. Of course, if one isn’t facing such a
challenge, one may take chanting and reading seriously, too. If one is intelligent, he can understand that māyā is everywhere and it’s better to surrender now. But usually whenever the circumstances are comfortable, we tend to take it easy. On sankīrtana we’re forced to become sincere because we face the realities of material nature.

**Tapas Dāsa:** For a book distributor, proper hearing and chanting is most essential. If you’re not hearing the holy names, it’s like you’re inviting Kṛṣṇa, but you’re somewhere else when He comes. You can feel it. If you neglect the holy names, then people neglect you.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** There’s no material secret for success on sankīrtana. The secret is to hear your rounds. But this can be done only when you are convinced about serving your spiritual master, because it takes a lot of surrender to hear. The mind is addicted to speculation and jumps from one thought to another, and you have to force your mind. If you hear your rounds, your sankīrtana improves, because you become spiritually enlivened. You become natural. You get off the mental platform. And if you don’t hear your rounds, obviously you’re on the mental platform. And because the people you meet are also on the mental platform, there will simply be a fight on the mental platform. But if you are spiritually enlivened, then you’ll be able to reach the heart and the soul, and the soul wants Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Then people will take the books. They will look for reasons to take the books even if there are no material reasons. The Paramātmā will give them a reason, and they’ll accept it. We need this deep vision to avoid seeing people as dirty, sinful karmis or animals or just good enough to help us get good results. I personally try to see people as future devotees, the only difference between us and them being the knowledge in Śrīla Prabhu-pāda’s books. If that person begins reading these books, he’ll be a more sincere devotee than me. Why not? It is just a difference of time and knowledge.

**Daily reading Prabhu-pāda’s books**

It has been brought to my attention that some of my students are not studying. I do not know if this applies to you or the devotees under your care, but I must stress again that we must have our classes one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening and the devotees must also chant regularly their sixteen rounds and follow the principles. The rest
of the time they may go on distribution of my books. So I hope you will do the needful in this regard. 23

In order to remain steadily fixed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness there must be a sound philosophical understanding. Otherwise it will become only sentiment. Whenever you find time please read my books. Shortly we shall be introducing the system of examinations for those students who are ready for second initiation as well as sannyāsa. According to the degree, devotees will be expected to read and assimilate our different books. Our first business is this book distribution. There is no need of any other business. If this book distribution is managed properly, pushed on with great enthusiasm and determination, and at the same time if our men keep spiritually strong, then the whole world will become Kṛṣṇa conscious. 24

I am pleased to hear that you are chanting sixteen rounds daily and reading my books regularly and following the four rules. In my books the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is explained fully so if there is anything which you do not understand, then you simply have to read again and again. By reading daily the knowledge will be revealed to you, and by this process your spiritual life will develop. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not a hackneyed thing, but it is something which is our natural and original consciousness. Presently our consciousness is clouded just like a mirror becomes covered with dust. So the cleansing process is this chanting and hearing and doing some service and trying to please the spiritual master. By this process our consciousness becomes clear, and we are able to understand everything. 25

As far as studying my books is concerned, I have already given the order. One hour in the morning class and one hour in the evening, and if there is extra time during the day it may be used for studying but we cannot expect everyone to be studious. If someone has a desire to distribute books all day he may do this, but he must always follow the principles of rising early, chanting sixteen rounds, and so on. Just as some rich men have no inclination for studying, but still open many schools for others to study at, like this, all of my
students may not be inclined to study, but they are very much eager to give others the opportunity to read my books, and this should not be discouraged. All programs must go on, but it is a fact that this book distribution program is very, very important. It is real preaching work. 26

Devotee: On saṅkīrtana I read only a little. When I read, maybe for half an hour, the mind says, “Now you have to go out and distribute again.” Is this due to passion or compassion?

Harikeśa Swami: It takes the mode of goodness to sit down and read the books. When one is influenced by passion, he thinks, “Reading is nice, but I have to do something.” That’s not bad in one respect, because by reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books you realize you have to do something. But you should understand that unless you read the books, you will not be fixed at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore you should always want to read in order to remain situated in the service of His lotus feet with full knowledge. That is very important. Many devotees have left Kṛṣṇa consciousness because of insufficient knowledge. They just did not read the books enough to become purified of all doubts. If you read these books, how can you have doubts? These books are wonderful. Everything is there that we need to know. So please read. And when the mode of passion screams at you, “Get out!” just say, “Wait a minute, please. Now we’re reading. Calm down and listen.” (From a class in Zurich on July 10, 1991)

Cakṣu Dāsa: I read two hours a day. We always have a program in the morning. We sing the prayers, have a class, take prasādam, and go out as early as possible, the earlier the better, from about 9:00 to 12:30. Then we take a break, take prasādam, and read. By four o’clock or so, we go out again, until seven, then we count the lakṣmi, and again there is time for reading. Reading in the evening is nice because the day is done, and the mind is more peaceful, so you can concentrate. It’s a simple program. Simple living, high thinking.

“Not that we are simply meant for selling books”

Without becoming a learned scholar, nobody can become a brāhmaṇa. We are also giving our student a position as brāhmaṇa, but if he remains a fool number one then we are misusing our attempt. He should be a very learned scholar. That should be the aim. And there is no difficulty becoming a learned scholar because we have got so many
books. You simply read and digest what we are speaking. Not that we are simply meant for selling books. We are reading. We must read. Then our position as brähmana will be fulfilled. Because brāhmaṇas are teachers. Anyone who can teach, he is a brähmana. So unless you read thoroughly, what you are going to speak to the world? How you can become a brähmana and pañḍita? . . . First of all, one must know what Kṛṣṇa is. That is explained by Kṛṣṇa Himself in the Bhagavad-gītā. And when he understands Kṛṣṇa, then he can hear further about Kṛṣṇa. The books are there, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Nectar of Devotion, Teachings of Lord Caitanya. We are teaching the science of Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya: anyone who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa can become guru. That is our mission. That is not my mission; that is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mission. So it doesn’t matter—you Europeans, Americans; although not born in a brähmana family, it doesn’t matter. If you try to understand the science of Kṛṣṇa, and if you behave properly, you can teach about Kṛṣṇa all over your country, all over the world. That is my mission. And that is approved by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Try to understand the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then you will be able to preach nicely and people will be benefited. 27

Simply take a little trouble to understand Kṛṣṇa—that tapasya is required—to read Kṛṣṇa’s instruction, Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and try to understand Kṛṣṇa. It is not painful. It is very pleasing, but we avoid it. We think it is painful. “Ah! Who is going to read the books? We are meant for selling books, not for reading books.” This is not good. We should read also. That is tapasya. Don’t think that our books are simply meant for selling. No. They are meant for reading also. If we read regularly, at least two hours, three hours, that is tapasya, tapo divyam. 28

6.7 Bhāgavata-mārga and pāñcarāтриka-vidhi

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.13.3p: There are two different ways of approaching the Supreme Lord. One is called bhāgavata-mārga, or the way of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and the other is called pāñcarāтриka-vidhi. Pāñcarāтриka-vidhi
is the method of temple worship, and \textit{bhāgavata-vidhi} is the system of nine processes which begin with hearing and chanting. The Kṛṣṇa conscious movement accepts both processes simultaneously and thus enables one to make steady progress on the path of realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This \textit{pāñcarātrika} procedure was first introduced by the great sage Nārada.

\textbf{Running on parallel lines}

\textit{Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam} 6.3.26p: Especially in this age of Kali, \textit{sankīrtana} alone is sufficient. If the members of our temples in the different parts of the world simply continue \textit{sankīrtana} before the Deity, especially before Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they will remain perfect. There is no need of any other performances. Nevertheless, to keep oneself clean in habits and mind, Deity worship and other regulative principles are required. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says that although \textit{sankīrtana} is sufficient for the perfection of life, the \textit{arcana}, or worship of the Deity in the temple, must continue in order that the devotees may stay clean and pure. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura therefore recommended that one follow both processes simultaneously. We strictly follow his principle of performing Deity worship and \textit{sankīrtana} along parallel lines. This we should continue.

\textit{Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā} 7.165p: For preaching, construction of temples is also necessary. The Gosvāmīs not only engaged in writing books but also constructed temples because both are needed for preaching work. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted the cult of His \textit{sankīrtana} movement to spread all over the world. Now that the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness has taken up this task of preaching the cult of Lord Caitanya, its members should not only construct temples in every town and village of the globe but also distribute books which have already been written and further increase the number of books. Both distribution of books and construction of temples must continue side by side in parallel lines.

We should follow two important lines, namely the \textit{pāñcarātrikī-vidhi} and \textit{bhāgavata-mārga}. The \textit{bhāgavata-mārga} is preaching work and \textit{sankīrtana}, and the \textit{pāñcarātrikī-vidhi} is temple worship of the Deities. The temple worship will keep us sanctified, and when we preach in sanctified, pure heart, the preaching will be immediately effective. So we have to follow the two parallel lines simultaneously for successful execution of devotional service. 29
As I have already said many times, we have to maintain two parallel lines, namely, the path of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the path of pāñcarātra. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the path for paramahārājas, and the pāñcarātra path is for the neophytes. So the temple worship is necessary for the beginners so that by following the regulative principles such devotees become more and more purified and thus gradually come to the platform of understanding Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. So we shall always keep these principles in view and maintain our centers on this standard.  

In your country hundreds of temples like this should be opened town to town, village to village. I am very pleased. Another temple opened, another book published— that is the success of this movement. Without book distribution, the temple worship standard will also diminish. Therefore both of them should go side by side.

“Bhāgavata-mārga is more important”

Book distribution is bhāgavata-mārga, and temple worship is pāñcarātra-vidhi. Both are important for cultivating Vaiṣṇavism. But comparatively speaking bhāgavata-mārga is more important than pāñcarātra-vidhi. As far as possible both should go on in parallel lines, but still bhāgavata-mārga is more important than the other.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.14.39p-40p: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu set a practical example in that He did not establish any temples or Deities, but He profusely introduced the saṅkīrtana movement. Therefore Kṛṣṇa consciousness preachers should give more stress to the saṅkīrtana movement, especially by distributing transcendental literature more and more. This helps the saṅkīrtana movement. Whenever there is a possibility to worship the Deity, we may establish many centers, but generally we should give more stress to the distribution of transcendental literature, for this will be more effective in converting people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

[Nārada Muni said.] “Sometimes a neophyte devotee offers all the paraphernalia for worshipping the Lord, and he factually worships the Lord as the Deity, but because he is envious of the authorized devotees of Lord Viṣṇu, the Lord is never satisfied with his devotional service.”
Deity worship is especially meant for purifying the neophyte devotees. Actually, however, preaching is more important. In Bhagavad-gītā (18.69) it is said, na ca tasmān manusyeṣu kaścin me priya-kṛttamah: if one wants to be recognized by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he must preach the glories of the Lord. One who worships the Deity must therefore be extremely respectful to preachers; otherwise simply worshiping the Deity will keep one in the lower stage of devotion.

Balanced life

Saṅkīrtana and distributing BTG and our other literatures is the field work of this movement. Temple worship is secondary. People are invited to come to the temple to see the behavior of the devotees specifically in the matter of purification. There are two kinds of purification methods, external and internal. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, Deity worship helps to keep us externally purified, and saṅkīrtana helps to keep us internally purified. So as far as possible we shall execute both of these processes simultaneously. And by your exemplary character, the general mass of people will be benefited. Our hearts in the material condition are filled with all dirty things, and this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the cleansing process. 33

Book distributors must be encouraged and given both moral and practical support, individually and collectively. Temples, for example, can adjust their programs during marathons to facilitate the book distributors’ leaving early. Sometimes book distributors don’t follow the full temple program (in order to get enough sleep or to gain some distribution hours). Although this is not the ideal example for the temple devotees, they still should appreciate how book distributors are dedicating their lives to the most important and demanding service. Although performance of saṅkīrtana (and book distribution in particular) is bhāgavata-mārga, which is the more important line, Śrila Prabhupāda says in The Nectar of Devotion that even someone on the spontaneous platform should execute the regulative principles of devotional service. “The idea is that he should always continue to act as a neophyte devotee as long as the material body is there” (p. 126). In order to be elevated to the stage of ecstatic love, “one should execute devotional service rigidly in the association of devotees so that there will be certainty in raising oneself to that ecstatic position” (p. 132). The
conclusion is that a *sankirtana* devotee must consider himself like any other devotee, a neophyte in great need of following the full *sadhana* program. Devotees, as *rupanugas*, are advised to practice spiritual life on two parallel tracks, and all of them should practice both. Doing that means we fulfill Prabhupada’s desire that all devotees know the art of distributing books. *Sankirtana* devotees are expected to take part as much as possible in the temple programs, and temple devotees are expected to take part in book distribution. In this way, the temple devotees will be able to understand and appreciate the *sankirtana* service, and the *sankirtana* devotees will be able to understand and appreciate the temple service. If unity of purpose is cultivated in this reciprocal way, then there will be no misunderstanding. Each devotee should cultivate both lines of devotional service. Devotees are expected not only to preach and distribute books but also to study the books, perform *kirtana*, and worship Deities in the temple. That will promote balanced spiritual life and internal and external purity. Lifetime book distribution means a lifetime of devotional service: lifetime chanting, lifetime association, and a lifetime of preaching. Saving oneself is devotional service, *the most important devotional service*:

> Our real mission is to deliver the world by preaching Krsna’s message to others, but an even higher realization, the highest realization, is to save oneself. I hope this meets you in good health.

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

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*The Nectar of Book Distribution*
PART THREE

UTILITY IS THE PRINCIPLE

The Western Side of the Nectar Ocean of Book Distribution

“I want all my students to try very vigorously for book distribution. Do not hesitate to use your American and European brains to increase—that is Kṛṣṇa’s special gift to you, now use it. Any activity which will please Kṛṣṇa should be accepted favorably—this is our guiding principle. Now apply it in this way, by doing everything and anything for spreading Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. This is really pleasing to Kṛṣṇa, know it for certain.”

—Śrīla Prabhupāda
Introduction to Part Three

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted book distribution to increase in quantity and quality. Parts One and Two focused on a philosophical understanding of book distribution, personal qualities needed for success and endurance, and methods of distribution. Part Three is about organizing and expanding book distribution: practical management (providing facility and strategy), training (implementing the preaching spirit), and manpower (engaging everyone possible).

To guide ISKCON in accomplishing all these purposes, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that utility is the principle: “Anything that can be utilized in advancing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service should be accepted. For instance, we are using many machines for the advancement of our present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, machines like typewriters, dictating machines, tape recorders, microphones and airplanes. Sometimes people ask us, ‘Why are you utilizing material products if you condemn the advancement of material civilization?’ But actually we do not condemn. We simply ask people to do whatever they are doing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the same principle on which, in Bhagavad-gītā, Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna to utilize his fighting abilities in devotional service.” (The Nectar of Devotion, Ch. 14)

Managing includes finding ways to establish book distribution under any circumstances; legalizing it; organizing the temple’s departments cooperatively; and making book distribution the economic basis of a temple. Those are the topics of Chapter Seven.

Chapter Eight deals with three main strategies of book distribution: temple devotees distributing books (at Sunday feasts and various programs); traveling sankirtana (full dedication to book distribution); and distribution by grhasthas living outside the temple. This chapter also describes how all book distributors benefit from regular sankirtana meetings, strong spiritual standards, and the maintenance of health.

Chapter Nine discusses marathons—that’s when all available manpower distributes books. Everyone should have practical experience distributing books, including new devotees; therefore this chapter also mentions training book distributors, although that is a main topic of Part Four.
Managing and Supporting Book Distribution

“We have no other business than to make people happy. By book distribution your country will become happy and prosperous. No cheating, no politics, no personal ambition, not a tinge of personal sense gratification—this is our mission. There are no such things in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Our only ambition is to live among the devotees and execute the mission of our predecessors, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Kṛṣṇa. You are responding. Your responding means America is responding. If one-fourth of America becomes Vaiṣṇavas, the whole world will change. Kṛṣṇa has given you all facilities—good land, education, fabulous prestige. Take this opportunity. This is our ambition. I went to America with this ambition, that the American people would take this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. My Guru Mahārāja is not here physically, but in every action he is there. So I am not going to die. You are my bodies. By your words, book distribution will double.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted in Distribute Books, Distribute Books, Distribute Books, p. 108)

7.1 Prabhupāda’s books can be distributed everywhere

Please offer all the devotees my blessings. Their enthusiasm for distributing my books will please me very much. Not only will I be pleased, but my Guru Mahārāja will also be pleased, and they will all be blessed. This is very good news. Prthivite āche yata nagarādi-grāma sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma: this is the way of preaching, to spread the news of Kṛṣṇa in every town and village all over the world. Thank you very much. 2
Temples, books, and chanting in every town and village

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.165_ p: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted the cult of His _saṅkīrtana_ movement to spread all over the world. Now that the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness has taken up this task of preaching the cult of Lord Caitanya, its members should not only construct temples in every town and village of the globe but also distribute books which have already been written and further increase the number of books.

Your program for extending your _saṅkīrtana_ party activities to the nearby towns and cities and universities is very welcome. I have received similar good reports of such extended _saṅkīrtana_ party tours or trips from many other centers in Europe as well as America. Lord Caitanya’s desire was that this chanting of the holy names be spread to every town and village on the face of the globe, and now His desire is being fulfilled. That is to your credit as sincere servants of the Lord. ³

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Book distribution can go on even under the most oppressive circumstances, as it did in Russia or other East European countries. Everywhere, somehow or other, we can find ways to distribute books. Of course, there are some Asian, African, and South American countries where people don’t have much money, but they appreciate our books, so things just have to be adjusted accordingly.

Vijaya Dāsa: In Australia there was a lot of difficulty with book distribution, and for many years the devotees couldn’t distribute there, but now they are distributing books there. Books can be distributed everywhere because Kṛṣṇa wants this to be done. We may think that in one place it can’t be done, but that simply means we have to surrender and depend on Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa will help us. It is simply a question of sincerity of desire.

Dayānidhi Dāsa (Italy): Some places may have tremendous financial problems, but still book distribution cannot be neglected. It is a matter of faith, yet faith is something practical, and we apply it in our daily activities. This means we should take the order of the spiritual master and use our intelligence to find the way to fulfill his order. If people aren’t able or inclined to take the books on the street, then we should try other ways to give them books—festivals, conferences, or other programs. The basis of all our preaching is book production and book distribution. We should use our in-
intelligence to distribute books when we preach. Maybe not right away—maybe the situation will be difficult at first for different reasons—but we should work it out and use our brains to find ways to print and distribute books. We cannot neglect this order of the spiritual master. Otherwise our spiritual lives cannot be successful.

Lilāvatāra Dāsa: Books can be distributed everywhere, because everywhere there are souls who are candidates for receiving Kṛṣṇa’s message through authorized books. From my sankīrtana experience I can see that in some places you feel the burden of karma more heavily, and if you want to get some results there, you have to pray to guru and Kṛṣṇa more intensely. I don’t agree with those who say there are places where distributing books is impossible. I think it depends on the consciousness of the distributors. If the devotees have strong traits of purity and humility, if they’re surrendered to guru and Kṛṣṇa, and if they’re expert in dealing with people, it’s impossible not to distribute books. Even in the most difficult areas Kṛṣṇa will send them some souls ready to take the books. Kṛṣṇa is always rewarding serious distributors willing to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Navīna-nirāda Dāsa: The point is to go out and be everywhere. People are especially struck with wonder if they meet a devotee in one place and then meet another devotee or the same devotee later in a completely different place. Always the same books wherever they go! What to speak of meeting the same devotee! I recently met people in the Geneva airport coming back from holidays, and afterwards I met them in their office during business hours and then again in their town when they were shopping. When people meet you two or three times, they buy books just because they think it’s mystical to meet this funny guy wherever they go. It looks like you’re everywhere. When you do more and more years of sankīrtana in the same area, many people say, “I bought a book from you five or six years ago.” When they see the devotees every year passing out books in a nice, steady manner, they become convinced that it’s something more than simply people running around and peddling their products. Recently, I met a man who had just been in Russia for twenty days. He is a sales agent and lives in Geneva. His company produces ships and tankers in Russia and sells them in Geneva on the international market. He said, “Bhagavad-gitā, of course, I know it. I bought it in Russia two weeks ago.” I said, “Wonderful! Those must have been my Russian friends selling books just outside the Metro station.” He became amazed to hear that I knew what was going on in Russia. He just bought the Gitā in Moscow, then he comes over to Geneva, and
here we are with the same books. Many people travel all over the world and see us everywhere, and ultimately all of them will buy our books. We simply have to be out there to meet them.

Where there’s a will, there’s a way

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, Vol. 6, pp. 248–9: “Śrīla Prabhupāda,” Śatsvarūpa asked one evening, “you have been speaking of how Kṛṣṇa consciousness would rise to power in the United States, and I find it hard to have that vision, since now it is just the opposite.” “It is true,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda, “but now it has only taken its roots. You have to water and protect it, then you will get fruit. You have to give it protection. People must hear about us by our books, and we have to talk about the books.” “So it is not that it will happen overnight?” “No,” said Śrīla Prabhupāda. “Gradually it will grow. The seed is there. Now protect it by introducing more and more books in every house.”

Harikēśa Swami: Where there’s a will, there’s a way. Local devotees from any area on this planet can figure out ways and means to distribute books. They can understand the mentality of the people and preach to them nicely to accept the books. Wherever the sankirtana spirit exists, book distribution can thrive. It is simply a question of desire and consciousness. The example of the Soviet devotees—printing and distributing books despite the severest forms of persecution—shows that it’s always possible. Everyone should understand that it’s possible to distribute books in every situation. One simply has to find out the ways and means to do it. I think that all the changes in East Europe and the USSR came about because Kṛṣṇa saw that the seeds of a great sankirtana mission were planted and He wanted it to increase. So if one just tries to increase book distribution, he’ll attract the attention of Kṛṣṇa, who will make some changes in the area to increase the distribution even more. One cannot say how long he will have to wait for the Lord to act. But be certain that Kṛṣṇa wants the book distribution to increase more than we want it to. After all, it is the primary means of liberation for people. Kṛṣṇa is eager to see the conditioned souls liberated, and therefore He’ll help us if we’re sincere and devote our lives to His mission.

Book distribution must be cultivated

Harikēśa Swami: Book distribution is something that has to be cultivated because it’s new to our tradition. In Vaiṣṇava history there has never been mass distribution of books. Hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa have gone
on since time immemorial, and therefore devotees can easily perform these activities. In the beginning of ISKCON everyone easily did traditional activities like that—washing the dishes, taking *prasādam*, offering to the Deity, chanting in *kīrtanas*, and even preaching on the street—without any difficulty. It was simple to get devotees engaged in these activities. But book distribution was different. It had to develop in a special atmosphere among a special group of devotees. They had to protect their creepers of book distribution carefully, because nobody even knew about book distribution. Therefore cultivating book distribution took a lot of effort, and they constantly had to pull up weeds that would have stopped it or deviated it or replaced it by some offshoot like making money. Book distribution means bringing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to all the people of the world, and that’s why we have to cultivate it. We find that it’s the perfection of the preaching mission. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words go in the hands of the conditioned souls and change their lives. Therefore we emphasize it so much. All other services are fine and wonderful. If you sit in the temple and eat *prasādam*, that’s good for you, but it may not help anyone else. Śrīla Prabhupāda said there’s no better way to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness than through book distribution. So we’re eager to cultivate this Kṛṣṇa conscious process. It gives the greatest benefit to the people of the world. Don’t be disturbed because I am a gardener who is eager to cultivate the garden of book distribution. You’re not disturbed when someone cultivates the garden of temple cleaning, for instance. Why be disturbed when someone cultivates the garden of book distribution? Just surrender to it and be happy. (From a class in Zurich on August 28, 1991)

### 7.2 Harmony between devotees

Because I am stressing one thing (book distribution) especially, does that mean that everything else is not important? No. Everything must go on. Please consult with your temple president or your GBC for direction as to what is your best engagement.  

**Śrīla Prabhupāda on cooperation**

I am especially happy to hear from you about the huge distribution of books in the Canadian zone. That is the most auspicious sign. You are making good progress, that I can understand. As soon as I see that there are such increased
book distribution figures, I take that to mean that all other programs are successful as well.  

In your country hundreds of temples like this should be opened, town to town, village to village. I am very pleased. Another temple opened, another book published—that is the success of this movement. Without book distribution the temple worship standard will also diminish. Therefore both of them should go side by side. 

Have sankīrtana. All Europeans, Americans, Africans—United Nations under Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s flag. Do everything just as I have shown you. It is possible. You try, under the protection of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and things will be successful. 

Don’t you see that this printing is my life? Then do it; otherwise you are killing me. If you don’t arrange this, then you are half killing me. Either kill me full or give me peace. How do you expect me to have any peace if you don’t organize this? I want to immediately spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere. Our unique contribution is Deity worship and the large-scale distribution of India’s cultural tradition. This is the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. If you love me you will not fight—stay united. (Prabhupāda quoted in Distribute Books, Distribute Books, Distribute Books, p. 108)

Creating a team spirit

Many things have been said about book distribution being the main, front-line work of our movement and everything else being meant to support it. But some of the book distributors we interviewed said that in practice managerial support isn’t always there. This chapter explains what it means to support book distribution morally, philosophically, and managerially; and how temples should rely financially on book distribution.

Jāhnavā Devī Dāsī: I’d like to see more encouragement and inspiration from the temple authorities here in America and see more facility given to book distributors. For example, it would be nice not having such a hard time getting books, prasādam, and vehicles. I’m not expecting someone to do my laundry or serve me hand and foot. But sometimes I spend an hour and half getting things together. So I’d say more support and assistance is
needed. And I’d like to get more of a philosophical or devotional understanding of book distribution. Not just “It’s the best. It’s important. We need lakṣmī. Do big!” When seasoned book distributors give classes, I derive great inspiration. Understanding how book distribution is a wonderful way to cleanse the heart, and seeing it as an internal process that connects us to the mood of Lord Caitanya and the six Gosvāmīs and the spiritual master, would help me feel less isolated and more empowered to be part of this movement. That’s what makes the Māyāpur festival so wonderful. All the devotees get together and discuss book distribution. We need to get together more often in this spirit and deepen our realizations.

**Maṇīdhāra Dāsa:** The temple devotees should feel that book distribution is something they should try out, too, once a week or during marathons. There shouldn’t be a split—temple devotees and saṅkīrtana devotees. I’d never encourage saṅkīrtana devotees to develop an elitist spirit. Once I heard a statement, “A pūjārī is the devotee who eats all the mahā-prasādam.” I’ve always opposed such attitudes. From the beginning as a saṅkīrtana devotee, I always greatly appreciated the pūjāris because I knew they were doing a service I could never could do. Aśṭāratha Prabhu, for example, really inspired me, but he hardly ever went on book distribution. Just by his devoted pūjā he always showed me, “This is the Kṛṣṇa you are distributing the books for.” It became obvious because of his service, and that’s what I needed. Similarly, we may shout for half an hour, “Saṅkīrtana, kī jaya!” but that doesn’t inspire me as much as a devotee giving a class and explaining to me, for example, some realizations about how to protect myself from the modes of material nature. That is something I can apply on the street. The saṅkīrtana devotees should always try to deepen their motivation.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** We book distributors perform a service that takes all of our concentration, but we shouldn’t become narrow-minded. We should have a broad appreciation for the other services going on in the temple and for everything going on in ISKCON. If we lack appreciation, we’ll lose the mercy of the other devotees and thereby lose our ability to go on saṅkīrtana. We live by the mercy of the other devotees; in many regards, we’re depending on the mercy and service of others.

**Purūrava Dāsa:** Everything in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a source of inspiration for book distribution. Of course, the most important aspect is the order of the spiritual master, or the mission of the previous acāryas. Also, when the book distributors return to the temple on the weekends and the Deities are dressed nicely, that’s inspiring. Good prasādam is inspiring, and
nice association is inspiring. When there’s a nice atmosphere in the temple, and everyone is fully engaged, that’s most inspiring. If the *sāṅkīrtana* car is kept clean, when someone bakes bread for us to take on *sāṅkīrtana*, if we are being looked after nicely by the authorities, it’s inspiring. It obliges us book distributors to be sincere in our service, and it convinces us to bring others to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**Tamāl Krishna Goswami:** If you are a *pūjārī*, you can meditate on all the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees. You have other meditations on the Deity—His service and His pastimes—but you should also constantly pray to the Deities to empower the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees to distribute Their mercy. Just as Nṛṣimhānanda Brahmacārī built a road made of jewels on which Lord Caitanya could travel, you can meditate on making many paths for the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees and on how the Deities will reach out to the people the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees meet. (From a class in Zurich on December 4, 1991)

**Bhakti Charu Swami:** We should always try to please other devotees. If we please the devotees, Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased. Sometimes we think that we have to please only the big devotees and that small devotees aren’t important. That’s a mistaken concept. All devotees are dear to Kṛṣṇa. Often we see that a father is more concerned about his little children than his grown sons. That’s why we always have to be concerned about all the devotees and try to serve them as much as possible. The society of devotees is a sweet society. The affection is flowing from the senior devotees to the junior devotees, and respect rises spontaneously from the junior devotees to the senior devotees. Everyone is wonderfully related to each other through bonds of love, in the forms of affection and respect. Everyone is connected through love and trust. In a letter to Upendra, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “Now all my disciples must work combinedly to spread the *sāṅkīrtana* movement. If you cannot work together, then my work is stopped. Our Society is like one big family, and our relationships should be based on love and trust. Now we have to give up the fighting spirit and use our intelligence to push ahead” [August 6, 1970]. So we, the members of ISKCON, must have that spirit. Then people will automatically become attracted, and ISKCON will spread its influence more and more throughout the world. (From a class in Zurich)

**Serving the sāṅkīrtana devotees**

In the *varṇāśrama* system the *brāhmaṇas* were the most important and revered class, because their main contribution was giving scriptural advice and preaching. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to train his disciples to be *brāh-
manas, and he gave them the best form of preaching—distributing his books. It follows that book distribution should always be given priority and book distributors should receive all necessary facilities. But they should not demand them.

**Rohinīṣuta Dāsa:** Sometimes saṅkīrtana devotees tend to become arrogant towards other devotees. But this is wrong. Taking part in the saṅkīrtana movement means fighting a war on māyā. The book distributors are the front-line soldiers, but they cannot succeed without backing. They need prasādam, supplies of books, and a properly maintained temple. Without that support, the soldiers cannot live or fight for a long time. And without the saṅkīrtana devotees, the temple devotees cannot live long either. When there’s a war, but no soldiers on the front, then the enemy can enter at any time and finish you off. ISKCON has many nice buildings, but without book distribution, māyā comes in and takes over. Therefore pride is never good. When you’re inattentive in a battle, you get hit. There’s a saying: the lull before the storm. As soon as we take it easy—whatever we do, saṅkīrtana or any duty—there’s a chance māyā will attack.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** If book distributors feel mistreated, they won’t be inspired to go out. The temple presidents and managers and everyone else in the temple should be careful how they deal with the book distributors. If the book distributors feel unwanted, it will discourage them, and any discouragement can weaken them to the point that when they go out, they lose vigilance and then māyā strikes them. It’s a war on māyā, and the main soldiers should be taken care of by the other devotees. If devotees aren’t educated by the authorities how to respect the book distributors, then book distributors will soon become rare, and the temple will suffer. Some book distributors are exceptions—they don’t need anyone’s inspiration except their guru’s to go on and on and on. But that doesn’t change the principle. On the contrary, such special devotees should be especially supported and served.

**Jīva Dāsa:** Every devotee in the temple or anywhere else who cannot always be on saṅkīrtana should seek out the association of the saṅkīrtana devotees—for togetherness and to serve them or cook for them. That’s how one becomes infected with the desire to do saṅkīrtana. It was always most fascinating for me to see how the book distributors remained determined in their service and made advancement. That’s why I always want to go out, because I don’t want to miss any opportunity to associate with the saṅkīrtana devotees.
Śaṅkṛṣṭa Devī Dāsī: Trṇād api sunīcena: one should never consider oneself better than others. One should show respect to others without expecting respect in return. Kirtaniyayah sadā hariḥ: that attitude is the basis of kirtana and saṅkirtana. Then powerful cooperation is possible. For example, during marathons, girls from the kitchen help us make stacks of books or cook for us in the morning and go shopping. They do all the entangling work that would take a lot of our time away from distributing books. It’s inspiring, and it creates wonderful relationships between devotees. Then there won’t be any misunderstandings.

Guru-śakti Dāsa (Switzerland): When the saṅkirtana devotees return to the temple on the weekends, they should not be segregated. Everybody should be able to get their association and become inspired in devotional service. The saṅkirtana devotees are inspiring persons. When they come to the temple, everyone should associate with them. Of course, it’s nice to give them their own rooms where they can sleep and read in peace. But they shouldn’t isolate themselves. They should give their association freely so that others become inspired to go on saṅkirtana. It’s nice if they receive the mahā-prasādam. Someone might wash their clothes or their cars. Those things show appreciation. The younger devotees especially should enjoy serving the saṅkirtana devotees—and feel they’re getting special mercy.

Tamāl Krishna Goswami: You may not feel like serving other devotees. You may feel it’s artificial. Should you continue anyway? Yes. It’s just like a sick person’s not wanting to take medicine, but knowing it’s good for him, so he keeps taking it, and someday he feels better. If you serve the Vaiṣṇavas, one day it will come naturally. Then you’ll realize that it’s their mercy and their blessings that help you advance. Just imagine if you were the only devotee here in Zurich. Suppose that for one year no devotees were in Zurich and you had to stay here alone, and then, after a year, the devotees came. Wouldn’t you feel like serving them? Yes. And you’d say, “Without all of you I almost died. Now please let me serve you.” Sometimes we take the association of devotees for granted. But how difficult it is to become Kṛṣṇa conscious when we’re alone! As soon as we’re with devotees, we get strength. They help us—so shouldn’t we serve them to reciprocate with them? (From a class in Zurich on August 22, 1989)

Special treatment for book distributors

Sometimes devotees are promised a plate of mahā-prasādam for the biggest distributor. There is no harm. Actual-
ly one should try to serve Kṛṣṇa to his or her full capacity without thought of reward—service is itself the reward. But this takes time to actually realize, and until that platform is achieved some pressure or inducement is required. 8

**Harikeśa Swami:** All devotees are dear to the Lord because they engage in His devotional service, but the *saṅkīrtana* devotees are especially dear because they instruct people to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. *Saṅkīrtana* devotees should be specially cared for, because they support the temple economically and spiritually. The temple president should give them the best paraphernalia, and the cooks should be extra careful to make the *prasādam* so nice that the *saṅkīrtana* devotees will be inspired to go out and increase their distribution. Of course, everyone will benefit from the nice *prasādam*, because the devotees are eating it together. But if the cooks think that the *prasādam* they’re preparing will help the *saṅkīrtana* devotees, their elevated consciousness will make their cooking nicer. The cooks will also feel more a part of the *saṅkīrtana* mission. Now, one might argue that the temple cannot supply good *prasādam* to all the devotees—only the *saṅkīrtana* devotees—because the temple is poor. If that’s true, it makes sense to give better *prasādam* to the *saṅkīrtana* devotees, because they support the temple. But if the cause of poverty is the poor performance of the *saṅkīrtana* devotees, then it might be good to have the *saṅkīrtana* devotees eat the same poor *prasādam* as everyone else so that they understand they have to distribute more to support the temple.

**Sarvātma Dāsa:** Special *prasādam*? Why not? This is our only sense gratification, practically speaking, so there should be special *prasādam* for those who go out. When I stay back, I fast or eat simply. But after I go out, I feel encouraged by having a nice meal when I come back. *Saṅkīrtana* devotees should be encouraged in that way.

### 7.3 Temple and saṅkīrtana organization

It engladdens me to see our literature very widely distributed. This was the subject matter of my Guru Mahārāja’s satisfaction. He liked distributing books more than constructing temples. He personally advised me to print books if I have got some money. So by his mercy we are printing books and constructing temples as well. Although in the beginning we had no such opportunity, still I brought some books from
India, and that was the foundation stone of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. So I want all our centers to give very much importance to the matter of book distribution.  

**Each temple independent**

Each temple must remain independent and self-sufficient. That was my plan from the very beginning. Why you are thinking otherwise? . . . Do not think in this way of big corporation, big credits, centralization—these are all nonsense proposals. The only thing I wanted was that book printing and distribution should be centralized, . . . Otherwise, management, everything, should be done locally by local men. Accounts must be kept, things must be in order and lawfully done, but that should be each temple’s concern, not yours. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is for training men to be independently thoughtful and competent in all departments of knowledge and all types of action—not for making bureaucracy. Once there is bureaucracy the whole thing will be spoiled. There must always be individual striving and work and responsibility—competitive spirit—not that one shall dominate and distribute benefits to the others, and they do nothing but beg from you, and you provide. No. Never mind there may be botheration to register each center. Take a tax certificate for each and become separate corporations in each state. That will train the men how to do these things, and they shall develop reliability and responsibility, that is the point.  

Regarding several smaller temples being dependent upon the central temple of Washington, D.C., that is up to you to decide, but so far I am concerned, I have not got much stock in such centralized management or organization. I never wanted that any of my temples shall be dependent upon the other temples. Rather, our main business is to train men to be self-sufficient and competent in many ways to carry on the preaching work, not to make them into specialists or to minimize their responsibility by centralizing everything. If each center must rely upon its own strength to stand, that will be a better training ground for the devotees. We must learn how
to perform all varieties of engagements in Kṛṣṇa’s service, not that we shall expect anyone else to act for us and thus avoid something ourselves. But for reasons of spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we may sometimes centralize, just like the books and money for BBT . . . if that were left for each temple to manage, there would be great difficulty and the books would neither get printed nor be paid for nor distributed widely. So in that case, centralized management is preferable. But in the case of new temples, it is better if they have to struggle a little while to establish themselves in their cities. Devotees become familiar with the local city officials and leading citizens, and elicit support from all quarters of the city, like that, otherwise these things will be neglected, and there will be false dependency upon the outside supplies. This will deteriorate everything. The purpose of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to create first-class servants of Kṛṣṇa. That means they know how to do everything. I am especially encouraged by your increasing the distribution of books. That is our primary business, to sell these transcendental literatures profusely all over the world. 11

Temple management

The saṅkīrtana movement is based on a decentralized management scheme. Śrīla Prabhupāda set up a simple, straightforward system: a GBC representative, the temple president, temple commander, and treasurer. In a large temple a secretary can assist with the office work, correspondence, and legal work. The Governing Body Commissioner is the ultimate authority, but usually supervises only major decisions (choosing the president, buying new property, and other things). His main duties are supervising the temples and inspiring the devotees to take part in the saṅkīrtana mission. The president is the main manager, or if he is more intellectually inclined, he can manage in cooperation with the temple commander or a temple committee. The temple president is in charge of all the heads of the departments. He’s responsible for their cooperation. Above all, a temple president should push the book distribution far and wide. For this purpose there is also a saṅkīrtana leader, who sees that all the book distributors regularly go out, distribute books systematically, pay for the books, follow the spiritual programs, and maintain their health. He’s responsible for the daily requirements of the distributors and must make sure they’re happily engaged.
He informs the president of the activities and results of the department and confers with him about manpower and direction. The book distributors go out in small groups assembled by the saṅkīrtana leader, and thus there have to be group leaders who perform duties similar to the saṅkīrtana leader’s on a smaller scale.

Harikeśa Swami: All temple presidents should make it their top priority to distribute Prabhupāda’s books, and all the devotees in the temple should keep book distribution their top priority. If everybody is dedicated to saṅkīrtana, management becomes easy. Books are the life and soul of this movement, both economically and spiritually. The basic managerial principle is that everyone who can distribute books, should go out; and whoever can’t, should do everything else there is to do in the temple. The pūjārī and cook and cleaner should be those who cannot do full-time book distribution. Or they should perform their services so quickly that they are also able to perform saṅkīrtana. In 1974, I was put in charge of the kitchen of the New York temple for some time. We arranged the temple schedule in such a way that everyone ate a large meal in the morning and then went on saṅkīrtana throughout the day. We also prepared box lunches for the saṅkīrtana devotees. In this way we had to cook lunch only for the Deities and later prepare a fruit offering for Them. So one or two cooks stayed back to take care of the Deities. The other devotees working in the kitchen chanted their rounds right after the morning offering at eight o’clock, and by eleven they would take their book bags and enter the subways of New York City. Although generally only eight kitchen devotees went out, we’d defeat the rest of the temple departments on book distribution. This is practical proof that having other services doesn’t necessarily stop devotees from going out on saṅkīrtana. If they want to distribute, they can. In summary, everything has to get done, but the most important thing to do is book distribution. Organize the temple around the book distribution requirements, and it will be a fired-up temple, and everyone will be happy. That’s not to say there won’t be problems, but the problems will be minimized and easier to solve.

Inventory and bookkeeping

The best thing will be to keep a daily count of your stock and how many magazines and books were sold. Then regularly, on Sunday of each week, the sales proceeds may be totaled for issuing a check in the amount owed to my book fund and the Back to Godhead accounts. Then each Monday the
check may be sent to Los Angeles. So you do this regularly, and it will be very nice. 

Harikēṣa Swami: Every temple is responsible for paying the BBT immediately after the books are received and sold. In some BBT areas the temples are responsible to pay within thirty to sixty days after receiving books. If a temple doesn’t pay its bill on time, it acquires what is known as a bad debt, or a debt not covered by a stock of books. Temples must keep inventories, and then they can pay the BBT properly. When books are taken out of the storehouse, the number of books should be noted in a log, and then it should be ascertained later that the books are paid for by the distributors who took them. One has to keep the book distribution results and records properly, because those are the most important records of the temple treasury. All the income is made through saṅkīrtana. So the temple president should always know what’s happening in the saṅkīrtana department. A proper account of the sankīrtana results should be done each week. [See the sample forms.] On the basis of that accounting, the BBT must be paid each week or at least twice a month. For example, if a devotee has distributed one hundred Bhagavad-gitās and two hundred Bhāgavatams, the accountant should record that result and multiply the prices of the books times the numbers of books sold. He does this for all the book distributors and calculates the amount that has to be paid to the BBT that week.

Sometimes books get lost or damaged, or the saṅkīrtana devotees give an improper account of the numbers of books they sold. That’s why the inventory is important. One knows how many books were received from the BBT and how many were sold on sankīrtana. The numbers of books in the warehouse should be the same as the numbers of books received minus the numbers of books distributed. In fact, that’s rarely the situation because of loss and damage or devotees not counting properly, so the temple must periodically pay the BBT for the missing books. That’s best done once a month, otherwise a temple falls too far behind.

No temple president can be said to be doing his job unless he pays his BBT bills regularly and on time. Not paying the BBT regularly is sufficient grounds for removal of a temple president, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Going into debt with the BBT is easy to do. Simply don’t pay the BBT for a few weeks, and then the temple is in debt. Cāṇākya Paṇḍita said that three things must be extinguished immediately, otherwise they will destroy one—fire, debt, and disease. Debt is considered as dangerous as fire. Debts to the BBT can ruin a temple. The BBT is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s heart, and the lakṣmī is his blood. When a temple is in debt to the BBT, it is suck-
ing Prabhupāda’s blood. The temple president must carefully determine whether he has the money for the expenditures being made. If one doesn’t have the money, he cannot spend it! This is a simple yet extremely important and often overlooked point, because, at least in the West, it’s easy to get bank loans or credit cards and to manipulate financing and other things. This type of spending leads to carelessness. One can spend much more than he makes, if he is not careful, and soon he will find himself bankrupt. Debt greatly burdens the temple devotees. They lose spiritual enthusiasm if the temple is in debt, and the management has to push them to collect more. Devotees should be able to feel confident that the managers will prevent the temple from going into debt. When they see debts increasing, they lose faith in the management. Therefore the temple president should make it his first rule never to spend money that he doesn’t have and go into debt for any reason. This will keep the temple financially strong and the devotees happy. Such devotees may not have many material things in the temple, but at least they won’t have debts, so they can be spiritually satisfied.

7.4 How to deal with civil authorities

I am very pleased to learn that you have come out successful in stopping the police from arresting our men and stopping our sankirtana activities. Your sankirtana program, the report of the Lord Caitanya festival, and the very nice newspaper article that you have sent are all indications of your sincerity in trying to make full efforts to push on Lord Caitanya’s sankirtana movement.

Legalizing book distribution

The newspaper story, “Kṛṣṇa Followers Freed from Police Harassment,” is testimony of the great victory won by Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Chicago.

The District Court has given us the permission “for as long as the country lasts.” . . . So Kṛṣṇa has given you the chance to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness as long as your country lasts. So try to sell the same quantity of books every day that you are now selling, and that will encourage me. And you can offer your heartiest thanks to the justice because he has given us such a great facility. By the grace of Kṛṣṇa, may your coun-
try last forever, and may the justice also live a long time, and may you go on selling books. That is my desire. In the beginning we have to face awkward situations, but if we stick to our principles and continue to preach, things will come around in our favor. Stick to our principles and be humble even if there is provocation, then things will become successful. That is the instruction of Lord Caitanya.15

I am very much obliged to you and your government that both the people and the government of America do not put any hindrances on our distributing books. This kindness of your nation will cause the blessings of Lord Caitanya to be showered upon it, and the higher section of American people will all become Kṛṣṇa conscious. So many books they are reading, so will there not be any effect?16

The temple president may apply to legalize places for the distributors himself or depute another devotee to do it. One expert devotee or friendly lawyer can find ways to facilitate book distribution. First, the legal possibilities should be looked into—selling books door to door or other forms of business permission. With such a permission one can also try selling books on the streets, even though that’s not one of the areas stipulated in the permit. In lawbooks the distribution of religious books is rarely defined clearly. So civil authorities have a difficult time saying our book distribution is illegal. If we behave correctly, then we may not have a confrontation. But if we do have to fight police accusations and fines, then the authorities will have a hard time pinpointing our doing business for profit. We’re not cheating, because our behavior is good and our prices are fair. The prices we charge, although they include profits for us, are far lower than ordinary book prices. We base our selling prices only on production costs (which are unusually low) because the BBT workers and the book distributors aren’t paid.

When devotees approach police chiefs, mayors, and politicians, it’s a wonderful opportunity to explain what we want and what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is. It’s part of their job to listen to us when we want to legalize distribution or protest unfair restrictions and fines. The devotees must impress upon them that book distribution is not a business. It is religious preaching, our exercise of freedom of religion. We talk to people about God, yoga, meditation, reincarnation, vegetarianism, and other things that are constituents of “Hinduism.” If people are interested and want a book about these ideas, and they voluntarily agree to give a donation, who can call that a
business? But even if the authorities are inimical to book distribution, then the devotees will distribute under the protection of the supreme autocrat, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Even countries in West Europe forbid peddling on the street, but the devotees there still distribute books on the street, and if the police come, the devotees preach and explain the non-businesslike nature of our activity. They never have serious problems. Because Kṛṣṇa wants the books distributed, He is just waiting to reciprocate with devotees who step forward to do it. That’s been the practical experience of many devotees.

**Official accounting**

**Harikesa Swami:** The temple must account for all its financial transactions with the outside world. Most countries require societies to keep accounts. Some countries may not check these accounts often, some not at all, and others frequently. It is best that each temple keep clear records according to the recognized accounting systems accepted by the government. Keep track of all the money coming into the temple treasury by keeping income records, and then keep track of all the funds that leave the treasury by keeping vouchers and receipts. Hand over all the income and expense information to a certified public accountant who will do the bookkeeping in an acceptable format. Of course, if a devotee can be trained and perform the job in a manner acceptable to the government, that will save money. Professional accountants are paid something for each entry that they make in the account books. It’s important that the temple president learn the best way to present the accounts considering the taxation laws of the country. Some countries accept ISKCON as a tax-free religious organization, whereas others consider ISKCON a business. If taxes have to be paid, arrange the temple books in the most advantageous manner to reduce the tax bill. It’s natural that every organization will account in such a way as to legally minimize its taxes. There are legal means to declare deductions and get reductions. Aside from the official need of a bookkeeping system, the president needs to know exactly how much money is in the temple treasury each day. If he doesn’t know how much money he has and how much more is expected to come in, how can he determine what to spend? The accounting system should enable him to understand what is available at any moment on demand. Therefore the temple treasurer must know how much money is in the bank and how much is being held in cash. Furthermore, he should know the bills and the expenses being incurred and when they have to be paid. Then he can present a report to the president. Every temple president should get such a report weekly and also when he’s considering making a major ex-
penditure. Major reports are made monthly for the GBC or regional councils, and yearly statements are made for the GBC, the regional councils and the government. These statements should include all income and expenses as well as a comprehensive list of debts, if there are any.

**Dealing with the police**

I understand that you are feeling some inconvenience due to police interruption, but we have to make the best of a bad bargain. There is a Sanskrit proverb, *sati shatyam samacharit*, and it means if somebody is cunning, we must also become cunning. With a cunning person we must not be a simpleton. Krṣṇa conscious devotees are expected to be very intelligent, so we have to work very intelligently to prove our advancement in Krṣṇa consciousness. I think you should keep a table by the *sankirtana* party, a table with a charity box and our books and literatures for sale. You go on with your work as usual, and when the police come you say you are not canvassing. You have simply kept a table, and whoever wishes to purchase may do so. This is called *sati shatyam samacharit*.  

**Gīta-govinda Dāsa:** Most of our *sankirtana* spots here in Japan aren’t legalized, so we get kicked out quite often. The police and station managers kick us out just as a matter of duty. They get mad artificially, not really. Sometimes I meet them when they aren’t on the job, and they’re friendly to me. Then I preach to them about Krṣṇa consciousness, and they’re interested.

**Haridāsa Thākura Dāsa:** There have been countless situations when the police called me in and asked me questions. This was troublesome for the mind when I was new, and I was always afraid. But now it has become a normal routine. I tell the police we’re propagating principles that are in the interest of the police. So normally I don’t have any problems with the police. I’ve experienced that demons and the police come when I’m in māyā or nasty to people or attached to the result. Krṣṇa is sending them.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** When I am picked up by a policeman, I start to preach to him. “The main problem in the world today, the reason there’s so much crime, is a lack of God consciousness. We’re on your side. When people are God conscious, they don’t commit crimes. Do you believe in God?”
preaching the straight philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness we help policemen understand we’re not businessmen. If they’re religious, they feel bad about disturbing you. And if they’re not, they won’t be able to stand your preaching and then will just want to get rid of you.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** Ordinarily we don’t have any trouble with the police because we are in the airport legally. We always try to be perfect gentlemen, and generally there are no problems.

**Devotee:** Śrīla Prabhupāda, at the airports the authorities aren’t familiar with us, and they see us distributing books, and they don’t like what we’re doing. They get angry, but they’re thinking of Kṛṣṇa all day. We often wonder how they benefit even though they maintain an envious attitude.

**Prabhupāda:** They say, “Here is the Kṛṣṇa man.” So they utter the name of Kṛṣṇa. That’s good for them.

**Devotee:** If they become friendly after a while, then they may stop and listen to us.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes, because they chanted Kṛṣṇa: “Here is the Kṛṣṇa man. Here is the rascal Kṛṣṇa man.” [Laughter]

**Tripurārī:** One policeman always harassed the devotees, and once I saw him in a corner reading Ṣūkṣma-Puruṣottama-Panca-Śekhara and trying to understand it. They know that we have some knowledge; they’re just envious of our success. But they don’t want to admit that they want to know. Actually everyone wants to know about Kṛṣṇa.

**Prabhupāda:** So he read that Ṣūkṣma-Puruṣottama-Panca-Śekhara?

**Tripurārī:** Yes. He tried to understand. Now he doesn’t harass us as much.

**Prabhupāda:** Here everyone is a demon. Everyone. Demon means they are busy for sense gratification. That is a demon. And devotee means he has no sense gratification. He is busy only to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. That is a devotee. Anyway, if you serve Kṛṣṇa sincerely, Kṛṣṇa is with you. You will never fall into danger. 18

**Dealing with customers’ complaints**

I think the article about the book distribution at the airport is indirectly an advertisement. People will come to know about our books and our movement. Here in Bombay they also have the complaint that we are a nuisance. What can be done? The writer of the article calls us Hare Kṛṣṇas. He calls us this over and over again. He does not know that by doing
this he is chanting the holy name and will be benefited. . . . They say that you are all my disciples. So the guru is not on the scene. He has fled away and nobody knows where he is, but the Kṛṣṇa consciousness program is going on. That was also going on during the time of Lord Caitanya. In South India He used to travel, and in a village He would meet some man and induce him to chant, and the man would become a devotee, and Lord Caitanya would go away, but still the man would continue to chant. So I am not personally present, but still things are going on and increasing. The books are selling, and we are expanding. This book distribution is the brhad-mrdanga, the greater preaching. Anyway, you have replied properly to the article that this may have been some isolated incident. 

When people want to give back books

We have experienced that sometimes out of sentiment someone gives to ISKCON and then laments and wants his money back, but that does not mean we should give it back. Our policy is that his money, which would have been used for purchasing cigarettes, liquor, sex literature, and meat, will give him the opportunity to gradually become purified. So if by tactics we save that money from being spent on cigarette packets, that is good. If we can take some money and give some literature, that is a good service. As far as irritation is concerned, a child is also irritated when he is given instructions, but that does not mean that we should stop. Invite them to our feast, that is a better indication.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: When you’re on a parking lot passing out a lot of books, don’t create a big scene, especially in small places where even one person who becomes agitated can mess up everything by telling everybody about it. When somebody wants to give back a book, don’t argue with him. If you see that the person is less intelligent and just wants his money back and that’s all he cares about, then give him his money. Check the book to make sure it’s not mutilated and give him his money. You can even apologize and wish him a good day, and then he’ll be pacified. People can make a big scene, cursing, throwing books on the ground, calling the police, and making a lot of trouble. We should be aware that we’ll come back to the
If we burn out people every time we go there, people will begin to hate us. But when they see that we’re well-behaved, cultured, and friendly to everyone whether or not they take books, sooner or later they’ll also take books.

Now, if someone returning a book is just being influenced by a spouse or a relative or by mental concoction, try to convince him. Speak about what the books say and remind him of the low cost. They have to understand what great fortune it is for them to get these books.

While going from door to door, we meet people who say, “I already got cheated. Once I bought these books.” And they bring two or three books to the door and want to give them back, sometimes even without demanding any money. But when a devotee takes the time to open the book and explain it, the people are persuaded differently and want to keep the books. They tell us that they weren’t informed about the books—somebody just sold them and demanded some money. Then they promise to read them.

A book distributor needs sensitivity when dealing with people who want to give back books or people who have already been contacted. Kṛṣṇa will send many such persons. For instance, I recently met a person I met five weeks ago, who had bought five books. He was ecstatic to meet me again, like meeting a good old friend. He immediately bought a full set of Śrila Prabhupāda’s books. And he said how glad he was to meet me again because previously he hadn’t had enough time—his girlfriend was with him. So that’s the situation. We will meet the same people again and again—all those frustrated people who feel cheated or all those nice people who feel inspired. It all depends upon our sensitivity towards them.

Complaints by phone or mail

Because the temples’ addresses are mentioned in the books, people sometimes call or write with complaints. But Switzerland, for example, which has the world’s highest BBT book rate per capita, receives back not more than twenty books a year. During month-long marathons only a few people call or write to complain, and most of them can be pacified and begin to appreciate the books they got. The devotees receiving complaints have to be helpful, sensitive, understanding, and apologetic. The most important thing is to calm people down. Explain the situation: “Many people sell these books. If you want to know who sold you a book, I’ll look into the matter. Please give me your number and address. Then the person can call you back or write to you.” Usually people calm down or withdraw their complaints because they don’t want to give their numbers and addresses.
Defend the books and the movement while simultaneously understanding their complaints, which usually have to do with a misunderstanding or with the misbehavior of a distributor. You can say: “We’re grateful that people inform us about misunderstandings and misbehavior. It helps us adjust our presentations.” That way they will place less blame on the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees and understand that it was the fault of an individual. “From our side, I sincerely apologize. But as far as the book is concerned, it’s really good. You know, these are ancient books from India. Have you heard of Sanskrit? It’s great that you bought one. We want to reach people personally. That’s one reason we distribute them on the street or door to door. The bookstores would price them too high and can’t appreciate them anyway—they’re mostly interested in profit, aren’t they? They want to carry the best-sellers. So why don’t you read the book?” Do it all in such a way that it’s easy for the caller to change his mind without having to admit he was hot-tempered or superficial. Treat the call as if it were simply an inquiry for more information. Give your name and say, “Whenever you have a question, I’m here to help.” The point is that we need not immediately entertain their complaints and arrange to return their money. Of course, we don’t mind giving it back, but we prefer that they change their minds and keep the books. In case they still want to return the book and receive a refund, have them mail it to the temple and give their bank account number and address. Be cooperative. For us, it’s just preaching. For them it’s an entanglement, and they might decide just to keep the book.

7.5 Temple economics based on book distribution

I am very encouraged by the report of how nicely our books are being distributed. This is our main business all over the world. If you give full attention to this, there will never be any shortage of funds.  

There is no need of accumulating more wealth. You can get more wealth and also spend more wealth. This is brahminism. Get and spend, but not to spoil and squander. This example should be shown to others.

How temples began to rely on book distribution

Here the sankirtana party headed by Jayānanda and Tamāl Krishna is doing very nice. They are selling daily an average
of one hundred copies of *Back to Godhead*. So try immediately to get copies of *Back to Godhead* from New York and try to sell them in large quantities. ... *Kirtana* plus distribution of our books and literature is the basic principle of our success. Even if we do not have our own temple it does not matter, but if we can hold *kirtana* twenty-four hours and distribute our publications, that is our great success.  

Now the price is going to be fixed at fifty cents, so I have asked Tamal to contribute to me $750 against delivery of 5,000 copies of *Back to Godhead*. By selling only 1,500 copies at fifty cents, they cover the whole $750. The balance 3,500 copies left for distribution may be used either for profit or distributed free. In neither case are we losers.

**Prahladana Swami:** In Buffalo I was the treasurer, with no income except whatever little money Rupanuga was earning and giving. I was a student, and my parents were giving me some money. Because we didn’t have enough to run the temple, Rupanuga asked us to get summer jobs. But I was reading letters from Prabhupada encouraging us to go on *harinama san-kirtana*. I thought we could at least try it. So we went downtown to chant, and it was the first *harinama* we ever did. Some devotees went around with conchshells and asked people for donations. Then we went back and counted the money—$27. It was a lot of money at that time, but we still didn’t think we could support the temple. Anyway, we continued going on *harinama* downtown. Then we heard about the Allentown Arts Festival and decided to go there and chant. Bhagavan had a guitar, and he led the *harinama*. I and another devotee collected money in conchshells. People were throwing in quarter after quarter. After two days we had collected enough that we started to believe we could support the temple just by handing out magazines and collecting donations. We did that for years, and that’s all we did. Everything was simple and ecstatic.

**Book distribution is the safest economic basis**

Do not depend on outside help. For financial support depend on Krsna. That is preaching success. People’s appreciation will be practical when they help you financially also. We are maintaining our huge establishment by selling books. That is wanted. In foreign countries they are distributing
huge quantities of books. Money is needed—that you have to collect. You can’t expect money from outside. That is not successful preaching.  

The temples must pay the cost of printing. Then they may sell for whatever price they like.  

In the six-day book distribution, the eastern zone was first. This is our most important work. All the leaders should tax their brains for increasing the sales of our books. I have always said that if we simply rely on book distribution all our needs will be met.  

Harikeśa Swami: Many temples today are maintained simply by book distribution, and they’re the proof that it’s possible. But to do that a sufficient number of devotees are needed. Therefore the bhakta program is essential. The more emphasis placed on the bhakta program, the more successful the sankirtana mission will be. We must make new devotees and bring them out on sankirtana. When there are enough devotees in the temple and on sankirtana, we can easily maintain the temple by book distribution. This is what Prabhupāda wanted, so there is no doubt that it can be done. It is simply a question of preaching and management. Good management maintains the temple on books alone. A good manager understands that you cannot spend what you don’t have and avoids all Kali-yuga credit-spending schemes. He puts a hold on all expenses that are beyond the income provided by book distribution. I have seen that when a temple is dedicated to the book distribution mission, outside people start donating things required by the devotees. We should just distribute the books, depend on Kṛṣṇa, and increase the opulence of the temple only when someone donates for it or the book distribution makes it affordable. And we should avoid increasing the monthly overhead because that creates a great burden on the temple economy and the book distributors. We should live simply. It’s not good for book distributors to feel the burden of maintaining the temple and be unable to concentrate on just giving out the books without encumbrances. If they start to think of money as most important, they might develop a fruitive mentality. We’re not distributing books just to maintain the temples. We are distributing books because Śrīla Prabhupāda said that there is no better way to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And to encourage the managers he said that it’s also a great means of financing the temples. By doing the topmost preaching work, you can also finance the
temples. Book distribution both propagates and maintains the preaching mission. What other financial activity can claim the same?

**Sarvātman Dāsa:** There’s no other way, no other way, no other way than book distribution to maintain our temples—we’re cursed that way. This is the pastime of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. We give Nārāyaṇa to the people, and they give us Lakṣmī. But when we sell other things, then we are dealing with māyā. Not yogamāyā; mahāmāyā. We’re taking from māyā, and māyā happens to be a loanshark. So whatever we take, we have to pay back many times over. As a matter of fact, māyā will always say it’s not enough, and the temple organization will become complicated. So the best way to maintain a temple is by preaching, and the best preaching is book distribution. Actually, honestly speaking, I distribute books because I don’t know any other way to make money, and I don’t want to know any other way. This keeps me very happy. It’s a service I enjoy very much, and I know that the paramparā is happy that I think that way.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** If you stick to book distribution, you really start to value the books. You sell them, read them, live by them, and worship them morning and evening by reciting from them. The *Bhāgavatam* becomes your life and soul. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed book distribution over every other preaching activity. So we should stick to the example of Śrīla Prabhupāda: he started, expanded, and maintained his movement just by selling books.

**Dayānidhi Dāsa:** Preaching means making devotees. And the basis of the preaching is the production and distribution of Prabhupāda’s books. On this simple basis, you can manage a temple in a nice, lasting way. The financial situation of the temple is automatically maintained as a by-product of the spiritual atmosphere. Sometimes a temple is started, and in the beginning everyone is enthusiastic to preach. But the most important thing is to be able to maintain the standard of the temple over the long run. For maintenance you have to base everything on spiritual principles, because matter is temporary and spirit is eternal. So that aspect of eternity in our management is based on books, preaching, and spiritual principles. Through preaching a temple can also be maintained financially, although it may not necessarily be a direct thing. In other words, book distribution is part of the *sankārtana-yajña*, the *yajña* for this age, and as a result of that *yajña*, everything will come. There should be sufficient money for the temple and adequate facilities for the devotees. If book distribution is going on, it should
be understood that corollary activities will also bring in money, as a reward for our carrying out the book distribution as the main priority. It seems that as long as books are going out, somehow or other, some department or arrangement will also bring in money.

**Lilāvatāra Dāsa:** Our temple, Villa Vṛndāvana in Florence, is a big, five-hundred-year-old structure, and it has many needs. And we have many services that absorb a lot of energy—three sets of Deities and a big kitchen for the many devotees. Ninety-percent of all this is financed by the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees. Because of those circumstances, the big books are sold at a higher price than twice the BBT cost. We could distribute more books if the temple was more economically autonomous. Various endeavors are made in this direction, such as distributing cheaper medium books. Those who aren’t regular distributors use paraphernalia, such as prints of Kṛṣṇa. The temple has a restaurant and a shop, and devotees are also developing pottery and cloth activities. Agriculture produces olive oil and, we hope, other products. We have many Friends of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but they don’t contribute substantially or continually. All these facilities are the fruits of book distribution, and we have to develop them to relieve the book distributors’ financial burden.

**Jīva Dāsa:** If the *sāṅkīrtana-yajña* is properly performed, Kṛṣṇa is pleased. Therefore it’s said that from book distribution everything else will come. We can see that practically. From book distribution we get so many contacts, and they are providing us many things. For example, in Norway the devotees were looking for a farm or a restaurant but continued simply distributing books without collecting separately to save money for such projects. Suddenly a nice girl who is wealthy became interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and now they have a huge restaurant in the center of Oslo, which is probably the best run ISKCON restaurant in Europe. On our farm in Germany, the paraphernalia distributors contribute, but they have so many expenses that not much is left for the farm. The biggest contributions come from the book distributors. Prabhupāda desired that books be the basis—even financially—and again and again we can see how Kṛṣṇa responds to the devotees’ serious attempts to distribute Prabhupāda’s books.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Nobody has ever gotten on the case of any temple for distributing books. And the money from distributing books has never become a target of the tax authorities or the government people as long it has been collected in a fairly decent manner. Straightforward book distribution has
never disturbed anybody anywhere in the world, because it’s understood we’re selling our books as part of our religion. Money made that way is secure, because it’s untouchable and usually tax-exempt.

“We will always have customers”

I am very glad to know that your sales of our books are very good and improving more. It is natural that such distribution of literatures should increase as the people hear more about our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Distribution of our books is our major propaganda program.  

The book sales are very encouraging—increasing, increasing. It is very good news. Thank you, I want this. . . . A book sold becomes a permanent matter for enjoyment. We read the scriptures again and again, and it is still fresh. When there is time, I go on reading my own books.  

I have faith in your words that next year the figures will be far beyond what they were last year. It is the nature of the spiritual energy—it is always increasing if we just apply our energy.  

The rumor that within a few years there will be police repression and people will have no more money to buy books and sankirtana will stop is completely bogus. Whoever told you that is a rascal, saying it in my name. I never said that. Rather, the sankirtana movement will expand, continuing so long as we are sincere. . . . This movement is eternal.  

I am very pleased with your activities. Now continue and increase. Everyone will want our books. We will always have customers. This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mercy.  

The results show that there is no limit to our book distribution. Our books are qualified to be distributed unlimitedly.  

Preach and the money will come

My Guru Mahārāja used to say, “Don’t worry about money. Do something nice for Kṛṣṇa and money will come.” So we should always be thinking how to distribute the message of
Kṛṣṇa, and surely he will give us facility. Even an ordinary man, if he wants publicity, then he gives so much money for the propaganda work. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa is not poor. He can supply any amount for the devotees who are engaged in broadcasting his glories.  

**Hṛdayānanda Dāsa Goswami:** We shouldn’t think that we just have to go out and make money and the preaching will happen automatically. No. You go out and preach, and the money will come automatically. The important thing is don’t decide to buy something and then stop book distribution to collect for it. Our principle is to go out and preach, and whatever Kṛṣṇa sends we spend. That’s how we can tell what Kṛṣṇa wants us to have. The problems start if we don’t want what Kṛṣṇa wants us to have. We decide ourselves what Kṛṣṇa wants us to have, and then everyone gets burdened. But the actual challenge is not to tell the devotees to get more donations because we have bills to pay, but to encourage them to learn how to be powerful preachers. It’s a spiritual challenge for the devotees to learn how to persuade people, learn how to take Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books seriously, and get others to take them seriously. This has nothing to do with material pressure. So if we say that we distribute books because Prabhupāda said so, then why not also do it *in the way he said to do it*? If Prabhupāda’s statement is authoritative, then the way to do it is also authoritative. Prabhupāda said to distribute books on their merit. People should give a donation as an indication of their respect for what we are giving them. Therefore the books should not be given away cheaply or along with some paraphernalia, because Prabhupāda said that is nonsense. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “What is this nonsense give-away?” People should understand this is a valuable thing and show their sincerity by giving a donation. You have to get a certain price for the book, but basically you are just going out and distributing books, with no ulterior motives for collecting *lakṣmi*.

The system Prabhupāda gave us—just going out to preach and sell books—meant that the more books we distributed, the more money we had. So the impetus or incentive was always to distribute more and more books. But what started to happen was we began using a new, sophisticated system in which we didn’t get more money by doing more books; we got less money by doing more books; so the tendency was to give out less books. That’s exactly what started to happen. Therefore it’s absolutely necessary to stick to Prabhupāda’s system, namely, the more books, the more money. And not the less books, the more money. We have to understand the brilliance of Prabhupāda’s system. It’s essential to get a certain donation for each book, because that automatically guarantees, the more books,
the more lakṣmī. Then the manager is thinking, “I need more lakṣmī. I’ve got to distribute more books. I’ve got to get more devotees out there. I’ve got to call on the reserves and the veterans, and new bhaktas need to be trained. I’ve got to get more books out. I’ve got to get a certain price for these books.” And that’s exactly what Prabhupāda wanted.

“Deal adequately with all facilities offered by the Lord”

If devotees want to live from the profits of book distribution alone, they must manage the finances carefully, their living standards must be adjusted, and whatever Kṛṣṇa provides has to be dealt with “adequately,” as Śrīla Prabhupāda said in the following letter:

It is my firm conviction that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement of Lord Caitanya will be successful in all parts of the world if our students kindly continue in their enthusiastic endeavors to distribute this message freely to all persons. Our movement is now appreciated all over the world, and it is gradually coming to the attention of the important leaders of the society, so it is incumbent upon us to keep our spiritual strength by rigidly following the regulative principles; then we can deal adequately with all facilities offered by the Lord for expediting His holy mission. I am confident that all our sincere, intelligent, young devotees like your good self will carry this program to a fruitful conclusion, namely the delivery of the holy name to all the fallen souls suffering in varieties of conditional misery and material happiness. Please execute your program for distribution of literatures and saṅkīrtana, therefore, with increased vigor, and may Kṛṣṇa bless your sincere efforts to serve Him faithfully.  

This saṅkīrtana party and our book department are very, very important. They are our right and left hands, so everything should be done very carefully and in remembrance that this is Kṛṣṇa’s business that we are executing. Because we are doing Kṛṣṇa’s business does not mean that we should be less careful, but it means we should be much more careful than someone who is performing activities simply for sense gratification. So instruct the boys in that way.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the best policy is to use money to print books. He warned that if ISKCON accumulates money, it might be taxed.
“Print books and sell and spend. Follow this policy and distribute these books. That is our main preaching. Somehow or other we must take our books door to door and distribute them. Then our preaching will be successful.” (From Śrīla Prabhupāda-lilāmyta, Vol. 6, p. 216)

7.6 ISKCON and the BBT

I am not very much enthusiastic to publish our books by some publication house, including Macmillan and Co. As far as I know, the Ramakrishna Mission has its own publication organization; the Aravinda Asrama has its own publication organization; the Theosophical Society has its own arrangement; the Bible Society has its own arrangement; Ravindranath Thakura group has their own arrangement. So why ISKCON should fail to have its own organization?  

Print as many books as possible, this is my real pleasure. By printing these books of our Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy in so many different languages we can actually inject our movement into the masses of persons all over the world, especially there in the Western countries, and we can literally turn whole nations into Kṛṣṇa conscious nations.

What is the BBT?

The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust account will be used to publish my books and literature and to establish temples throughout the world. Specifically three temples are to be established, one each in Māyāpur, Vṛndāvana, and Jagannātha Puri.

The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust is a world-wide publisher of Kṛṣṇa conscious books. It aims to produce and distribute the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda in all the languages of the world. The BBT also produces new translations of Vedic writings as well as literature in pursuance of the Vedic version. To accomplish its goal of book production, the BBT must continually fill the needs of its customers, the ISKCON temples, which require books for their book distribution. That is ISKCON’s top priority, because the BBT’s ability to produce books depends on the funds received from the temples. Keeping all of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in print is also an essential part of the BBT’s function. He wrote his books for the next ten thousand years, and therefore the BBT must ensure that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s
books stay in print. Another aim of the BBT is to help in funding large Kṛṣṇa conscious projects throughout the world and in the holy dhāmas of India. The BBT was founded in March of 1972 in India and in May of that year in the United States. (Based on The BBT Handbook: An Explanation of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, compiled by the BBT Trustees, 1987)

**ISKCON and the BBT — separate entities**

Śrīla Prabhupāda was concerned that printing and distributing books and establishing and maintaining temples should go on without impeding one another. He considered it inappropriate to combine ISKCON’s day-to-day temple management and book sales with the corporate workings of the BBT’s book production and international temple construction. Concerned that the BBT be protected from any faults arising in the localized management of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda completely separated ISKCON and the BBT.

I cannot at any cost risk BBT if ISKCON goes into liquidation. Why risk the BBT by amalgamating it into ISKCON? Therefore I want to keep BBT separate.  

The BBT and ISKCON are different organizations. Both spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but there is an important difference between them. The BBT manufactures and supplies Kṛṣṇa conscious books, and ISKCON distributes them. The BBT is a corporate trust, centralized for maximum efficiency in book production. The BBT is run by trustees and divided into some half dozen divisions that manage its affairs in different parts of the world. The trustees meet once or twice a year to decide on goals and policies. ISKCON works under the supervision of the GBC body and is decentralized and locally incorporated and managed. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted each center to be legally and financially independent. (Based on The BBT Handbook)

**The BBT protects Śrīla Prabhupāda’s copyrights**

The BBT holds all the copyrights to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books by the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda himself. When Śrīla Prabhupāda created the trust, he expressly endowed it with the power of his copyrights by renouncing his rights in favor of the trust. The BBT is dedicated to preserving the copyrights of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and will warn, and if necessary attack, anyone who dares to usurp them by printing without permission in writing.
Once, it came to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s attention that some ISKCON centers had used BBT materials for their own book production. Śrīla Prabhupāda immediately wrote a letter to the GBC members and ordered a stop to this practice. He clearly established that the BBT is the only authorized printer of his books or spoken words or book illustrations.

Now that our ISKCON is growing into a huge, world-wide organization, it has come to my attention that sometimes centers are printing my literature, taking a collection, and spending—all outside the jurisdiction of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. This must not go on. I specifically formed the BBT to invest in it exclusive rights for the printing of all literature containing my teachings, writings, and lectures. In this way the collections are to be divided, fifty percent for printing new books and fifty percent for construction of temples. The BBT can authorize a center to print, as in the case of foreign translations, with the agreement that when the foreign printing becomes financially solvent the center will pay royalties to the BBT. But all printing of ISKCON literature must be by the BBT or under its sanction and approval. If temples print independently, it will be at the cost of the books I am myself printing and could eventually cause the financial ruin of the BBT, meaning that I could not order new books from the printer or have sufficient funds for construction of temple projects. I trust this is now clear and you will all do the needful. If you have any questions in this matter you can write me directly or consult with the GBC representative.

**BBT, a transcendental collection agency**

If you simply push on this one activity of distributing my books, your all success will be there. I have hatched this “transcendental plot” for getting money by selling my books, and if we stick only to this plan and use our brain for selling books, there will easily be sufficient money. I have recently informed the GBC to allow each temple to keep 25% of the money they collect from direct book and magazine sales for temple maintenance and send 75% to the book fund. Supposing you can sell $800 worth of literature a week (retail price). Will not $200 weekly be sufficient for food and rent?
If not, increase book sales, or, until things are adjusted in this way, supplement in other ways, but try to avoid too much business as this distracts us from our real mission. If Kṛṣṇa sees that we are very active to spread information about Him—He is the master of the goddess of fortune—He will give everything! 42

The distribution of Kṛṣṇa trilogies in New York is wonderful. I have read the report given in the Sāṅkīrtana Newsletter. But one thing is whether they have collected enough to cover all the costs. I have heard that despite all this distribution, now there is a big debt to the book fund. The GBC has to manage so expertly that there will not be debts. This debt to the book fund must be cleared immediately, if possible by the Māyāpur meeting. Now we require so much money for the temple projects in India, but if the temples do not pay their book bills from where will I get the money? 43

The BBT fills an important gap in ISKCON’s organization: a central body capable of collecting funds from all its members for the good of all. The BBT is not in any way a government or superstructure of ISKCON, but it functions as a type of collection agency through its pricing structure, enabling it to construct large projects which could never be financed by the decentralized ISKCON temples. (Based on The BBT Handbook)

Harikeśa Swami: ISKCON as an organization is ill-equipped to handle large projects. Indeed, most temples have a hard time maintaining and can’t be expected to contribute to projects outside their jurisdiction. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda ingeniously arranged for the BBT to act as a transcendental collection agency and create large projects with BBT profits. Still, BBT is a nonprofit organization, because no individual profits. Funds are spent on precisely defined, purely spiritual goals. Of course, the BBT is sensitive to its customers, the ISKCON temples, and naturally supplies books at low prices that are profitable to the temples. It’s able to do this because the devotees work without salaries.

“More books at a lower price”

Regarding Macmillan: For our missionary work, we want to distribute more books and at a lower price. If they want to increase the price, then terminate the agreement. 44
Somehow or other, we shall overflood the market with Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. That will create our prestige, and being cheap distribution, many people will learn our philosophy. 45

Regarding the improvements of gold stamping and gold gilding on the Bhāgavatams, I have already advised that simply to make them fashionable and increase the price may hamper the sales. Rather decrease the price. 46

Yes, try to reduce the expenditures more and more. It is only with great difficulty upon all our book distributors that BBT gets its funds. So those who are responsible should be very frugal to see that not one penny is unnecessarily spent. 47

The price formula: double the BBT price

My books are selling all over the world to universities, libraries, and learned professors, and the public is also receiving my books with great respect. . . . We spend 50% for the maintenance of our different temples all over the world, and 50% we spend for reprinting my books. I do not take any royalty or any profit out of it. 48

50% should go each to the temple fund and to my book fund. 49

Regarding money collected, do not keep this money. Immediately spend it on printing books. Perhaps we may require money for building purposes. This should be strictly followed: 50% for printing and 50% for building. 50

Whenever Śrīla Prabhupāda stated the means by which ISKCON receives income, or is supported, he would say that we are selling our books. (In the early ’70s he also mentioned the incense business.) His formula was based on a 50/50 principle. The books are sold to temples at twice the BBT cost, and half of the book distributors’ collection goes to BBT and half to the temple. The BBT also follows a 50/50 principle; Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted 50% of the BBT’s income used to print books and 50% used for temple construction. BBT charges twice the cost of production (printing and the maintenance costs of its production facilities and staff). The temples meet the obligation to send 50% of the profits to the BBT (and to keep
50%) by selling the books at twice the BBT price or “for whatever price they like,” but at least, or ideally, double the BBT price.

The temples must pay the cost of printing. Then they may sell for whatever price they like. 51

Harikēśā Swami: Prabhupāda established some simple yet sublime principles of temple management. One important, basic principle governs the economics of the temple. Prabhupāda said that half the temple income from books should pay for books and the other half may be spent for maintenance and expansion. If followed, this principle makes economic problems disappear. Following the principle is easy. First, make book distribution the sole economic scheme. Grhaṭhas living outside can devise other schemes if they wish, but the temple devotees should make money only from book distribution. If book distribution is the sole means of income, and they sell the books for the right price, twice the BBT price, then they can use half the money for books and half for the temple. The price might be adjusted by the local GBC if the books must go out as fast as possible or the people haven’t got enough money to pay for them, but the temple will have some economic troubles because of this and will have to adjust. If a temple manages to live on the basis of book distribution by the 50/50 principle, however, then more and more devotees can be induced to sell more and more books because nobody needs to do anything else to bring in money. The BBT will become bigger and bigger, the projects in India will advance more and more, and Lord Caitanya, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and Śrīla Prabhupāda will be very pleased because Prabhupāda wanted the projects like Māyāpur to be built through book distribution. He said that if we keep doubling book distribution every year, we will have enough funds to build a big temple in Māyāpur.

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: The distributors must understand the value of the books, then the people will also understand their value. You can’t be attached to the money or the results. If you depend on Kṛṣṇa without attachment, then people will gladly take books and give good donations. When you think that nobody wants the books, you’ll project that idea to the person you meet. If you walk up to someone thinking, “I have to sell this book, but I know you don’t want it, so I’ll give it to you for any price; just give something, just give anything, please,” then the person will think, “Why should I buy anything from this fool? The book isn’t worth much, so I’ll give as little as possible and get away with it. Or I won’t even take the book.”
Harināmānanda Dāsa: If a distributor understands and presents the book as the most valuable thing, the people won’t mind paying a proper price. In the bookstores such wonderful books would cost five or six times the BBT price. If we’re convinced about the value of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, we won’t hesitate asking the right price. Even if we ask for double the BBT price, people will wonder how we can sell these books for such a low price. But if we are not convinced, or if we subtly think that there’s something wrong with book distribution, or if we think we are part of a sect or cult, then people will be suspicious. Then if you say how cheap the books are, they will think you’ve stolen them and now you want to get rid of them at any price. So it’s by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy, and because devotees aren’t greedy, that we sell the books at such a reasonable and attractive price.

Cakṣu Dāsa: The double-the-BBT-price formula is a mercy formula. It enables us to live by book distribution, and the prices are kept as low as possible so that everyone gets a chance to buy a book. It also enables us, as Prabhupāda said, to double our results. The maximum number of devotees can distribute books because there’s no need for paraphernalia distribution. And the more books we print and distribute, the cheaper the production costs will be. There is enough merit in these books to attract people to buy them. Selling books for double the BBT price doesn’t mean that the results will go down. That’s a material conception, and we should throw it out—the sooner the better. There are many devotees who get this price, and they have even better results than when the books were sold cheaper at times in the past.

Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa: A nice meditation during book distribution is that the BBT money will build the Māyāpur temple and city. Because the Māyāpur project is financed mainly by BBT funds, we must distribute a lot of books to fulfill the huge, transcendental plans. We can meditate that every book distributed will buy a brick in Māyāpur.

7.7 The dangers of immoderate financial management

Yes, incense distribution has been very helpful in many centers for maintaining financially, but we are not businessmen. So producing candles for distribution is not at all necessary. We do not want to increase factories. We want to increase Krṣṇa consciousness, and this can best be done by distribut-
Books are the best paraphernalia

Use your valuable time and energy to distribute our magazines and books. That is real propaganda work. The householders can earn their livelihood by distributing our books also.

Prahladana Swami: Regarding financing a temple, you have to see what is practical. But generally practical means you have to cut the overhead: reduce the telephone calls, the use of vehicles, the maintenance expenses, and then it’s more practical. Get more support from others; make people permanent donors. We have to see that our activities are purifying us more and more. If devotees are satisfied by their services, then we’ll get more devotees joining, who can also go out on sankirtana. Then maintenance becomes easier. If it is impractical at the beginning, then it’s not necessary that everyone give up all paraphernalia. But paraphernalia isn’t the solution. Devotees becomes discouraged because paraphernalia distribution doesn’t enliven them in devotional service. It doesn’t give them sufficient impetus to become pure devotees of Krsna. And there are other problems. One is that you often have to sell to women, which means inspiring them to buy, and that may mean many things. That kind of association with women doesn’t strengthen our spiritual consciousness. It becomes difficult to remain brahma-cari, and therefore the men become householders. Then they stop collecting full-time for the temple, and thus the temple’s income decreases, and the other devotees have to collect more, and the temple becomes even more dependent on paraphernalia.

Jaya Gurudeva Dasa: Lord Nityananda went door to door to instruct the people about Krsna, and if we employ the same method to make money without even mentioning Krsna, it’s a misuse of the word sankirtana. We justify it as ajñata-sukri, but I think that’s a feeble excuse for our inability to base a temple on books as Srila Prabhupada wanted. Srila Prabhupada never opposed business, but we can’t engage the sankirtana movement in business. It is the Vaisnava’s duty to preach about Krsna. If we burn out people by the wrong distribution methods, then we should not blame the books or book distribution: “We give people the books, and they don’t like them. They’re not intellectually inclined. Why don’t we give them things they like and take their money and expand the Krsna consciousness move-
ment in this way?” This idea became prominent after Śrila Prabhupāda left, and obviously it wasn’t approved by Lord Caitanya.

Maṇḍidhāra Dāsa: Marathons undertaken for economic reasons discourage devotees. We should manage to do without “disaster marathons;” or “save-the-temples campaigns.” If paraphernalia sales facilitate book distribution, I have nothing against them. But a temple running simply on paraphernalia is like a desert. Sometimes our selling paraphernalia to survive seems to be a necessity—we’re living in a society that doesn’t care for our maintenance. In Vedic society Vaiṣṇavas were supported by governments, but in our modern society, we’re happy if the governments don’t take our money and don’t persecute us. So sometimes we have to go out and collect to keep the center together. We have to face that reality, but everything must be connected to book distribution. In other words, the goal is to minimize paraphernalia sales. Opulent temples with a lot of income, where book distribution is collapsing, tend to make devotees materialistic, which leads to a lot of problems and eventually to a decrease in income. The beauty of book distribution is that it always forces us to keep to a simple standard of personalism and austerity. These are the spiritual assets we have to maintain if we want to continue distributing books. But if it’s just a matter of staying alive and keeping a center going, then what can we do? Then paraphernalia may be required for some time.

Rohinīṣuta Dāsa: When you’re surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and have a taste for sankīrtana, sometimes you may also sell paraphernalia. Gaurī once said that she gets the same feeling whether she sells books or paraphernalia. I also did it once. I distributed candles during a marathon. It was the same spirit as book distribution. But the big difference was that a candle is only a lump of wax. Over a long period of time—if you do paraphernalia for years and years—it ruins you. You break down. A surrendered devotee can always do the needful for some time. But he knows that his real duty is distributing Prabhupāda’s transcendental books. A sankīrtana devotee can do anything because he is a blissful, surrendered devotee. But he always knows that his real service is chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and going back to Godhead, and he distributes books so that others may do the same. (From a class in Belgium on September 3, 1987)

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: Maintaining a temple or preaching center is a struggle. So you can struggle selling books or paraphernalia, but struggle you must. The difference is that the struggle of distributing Prabhupāda’s books is ecstatic, but with paraphernalia it’s simply a drag. No one becomes
inspired. Everyone becomes polluted by associating with materialists. There’s no opportunity for preaching. And when one becomes well-off, he become lax and develops a tendency to fight with others. I just heard a conversation in which Prabhupāda says, “As soon as they get money, they immediately start quarreling,” referring to his disciples. We risk becoming attached to money. Envy and competition arise, and disagreement about how to spend the money. In Kali-yuga there’s quarreling and hoarding of gold, or money in general, as explained in the First Canto. By selling books, the cash flow might be less, but one will be more careful with lakṣmī. In the beginning it may be a great struggle, but if one just sticks to the principle, year after year, then somehow or other one will get used to maintaining with books, and everything will become easier in the course of time. I’ve seen it.

**Harikeśa Swami:** It’s rare that paraphernalia increases book distribution. If one distributes straight books, in the beginning he may not do so well. But if he continues developing his saṅkīrtana skills in the association of advanced saṅkīrtana devotees, his results will definitely increase. But if he uses a crutch, such as saying he’s collecting for drug addicts, or if he uses paraphernalia and gives out some books only when there’s some profit, then he’s going to be a weak distributor and will never be able to sell the books on their merits. The books are the most perfect product. If one learns to present them philosophically and can tactfully describe them in a relevant manner to various types of people, then he will be successful. But if he’s attached to a mantra invoking people’s sense of charity, or selling paraphernalia and giving out books as gifts, then he’s not presenting the books as they are. That’s not what Śrīla Prabhupāda had in mind. He wanted his books sold on their merits and people to pay what they’re worth.

**Expanding beyond our means**

**Harikeśa Swami:** Expanding the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is one of our aims. We want to expand the preaching and build temples all over the world. But often when a president or temple council decides to expand, it’s far beyond the capacity of the temple finances. That’s one of the most serious problems the temple managers can get into. If the managers are immature in spiritual realization, they equate the temple’s opulence with their success. Sometimes a temple president will even compete with other presidents to increase his temple’s opulence. Such competition isn’t transcendental. Real success means increased preaching, more devotees joining, and more books distributed, not necessarily increased material opulence.
Guru-carana Dāsa: Now we have some big temples with big expenses. We grew too fast, and it has become too heavy to maintain. We cannot give them up, but we have to readjust by solving the problems and planning for the future. We cannot continue collecting for day-to-day expenses without any long-term plans.

The paraphernalia trap

Harikeśa Swami: When the temple managers have fallen into the trap of over-expanding the facilities, when they have expanded far beyond the capacity of the devotees’ ability to maintain by selling books, then they have to create some form of income that yields a high return for a small outlay. That’s what gave rise to paraphernalia distribution. ISKCON leaders induced the devotees to sell paintings, rugs, T-shirts, and bumper stickers to raise funds for over-expanded facilities. Some temple presidents justifiably argued that they inherited the large overhead from the previous administration. Although they used paraphernalia sincerely, it was still an artificial support system similar to the methodology in materialistic society. Prabhupāda wanted his temples maintained by book distribution, for that would best expand the preaching of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and at the same time it was the safest means of creating economic stability. Paraphernalia went a long way towards ruining book distribution in parts of the world. Whereas books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness were hard to sell to opulent Westerners, material goods such as paintings were in high demand and easy to sell. Besides, one can purchase such items wholesale in Asia and make a fantastic profit. Thus temples became opulent on the basis of material goods, and larger temple buildings were purchased. It seemed that now things would be easy to manage. But what happened was that the temples became trapped. Because the temple artificially expanded, it needed to continue selling paraphernalia to meet its expenses. It didn’t really produce extra income to expand the preaching. As the income from paraphernalia increased, so did the expenses, and the net profit remained the same. The devotees doing paraphernalia needed breaks from the hard grind of collecting, and that caused breaks in the flow of income. The collectors grew spiritually weak by wearing karmī clothes, never speaking about Kṛṣṇa, and staying out at night to visit people’s homes. They gradually gave up the essence of spiritual life, the preaching mission, and considered maintenance of their grhastha āśramas (because they all got married) the goal of spiritual life. Some left Kṛṣṇa consciousness completely, and some took up the same paraphernalia business in their material life. Others retired to an inactive life in the temple. Furthermore, people are going to look at this
and laugh at us: “They are supposed to be spiritual, but they engage in all sorts of paraphernalia sales just to make money.”

The net result was that book distribution became almost nonexistent. The devotees lost the strength to present themselves as devotees and sell books to the public. Thus instead of being a panacea, it turned out to be a great disaster. The basic principles of Kṛṣṇa conscious preaching changed to money-collecting, and temples withered away for lack of enthusiasm and devotees. Kṛṣṇa does not want to send new, sincere devotees to temples where material economic development is the dominant daily activity. Those who joined may have been attracted to maintaining bodily comforts and material opulence. Such people sometimes come to ISKCON to solve their economic problems. This is not at all the satisfactory or proper execution of spiritual life. We want devotees to join who are eager to develop their love of God and serve Him through the sankīrtana mission of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. So the paraphernalia trap has to be avoided by all temple presidents who are sincerely interested in prosecuting and preaching spiritual life. This does not apply to householders maintaining their families. Śrīla Prabhupāda authorized an incense business called Spiritual Sky Incense for the sake of the householders’ maintenance. It is not forbidden for a householder to produce and sell paraphernalia. Still, the best means of support for a householder is through the distribution of Prabhupāda’s books. He may take a commission and support himself nicely.

**Business should support the preaching**

Rāmeśvara: Sometimes grhastras join us, but they aren’t strong enough to do sankīrtana, so we encourage them to do business and give some money.
Prabhupāda: That Kṛṣṇa is saying, sva-karmaṇaḥ: “All right, be engaged in your occupational duty.”
Rāmeśvara: If some grhastras would do some business, it would take a little pressure off the brahmacāris, and they could pass out more books. Now the overhead is high in certain temples like New York and L.A.
Prabhupāda: Are they willing to work?
Rāmeśvara: I think so, if we encourage them.
Prabhupāda: Then why not?
Rāmeśvara: We can start some businesses. Just like Spiritual Sky was started.
Prabhupāda: So you can do business. Why don’t you start with this toothpaste? It is very effective. I am using it personally. Toothpaste is a very common thing. It is used by cent percent persons. Simply they should like it.
Rāmeśvara: The taste is all right? In America everything is based on the
tongue.
Prabhupāda: Yes. Everywhere. The taste can be very nice, sweetened. There 
is salt, and you can add honey also. Naturally salty and sweet, plus 
some ingredients like peppermint, wintergreen, and camphor will make it 
tasty. These ingredients are very nice. We can also produce some 
ordinary medications: skin disease ointment, some cough mixture. I have got 
experience in all these things. The gṛhaṇa can do the business. You cannot ex-
pect everyone to be brahminically qualified. We are neither brāhmaṇa nor 
do we belong to any sect, but for Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction, we can do anything. 
Because we are doing some business, we are not vaiśyas. Nanda Mahārāja 
was an agriculturist. That does not mean he was a vaiśya. But professional-
ly, externally, he looked like a vaiśya.
Rāmeśvara: I see that in Los Angeles. Not everyone can follow every pro-
gram. So I’m always telling them, to encourage them, that even something 
is better than nothing. Do whatever you can.
Prabhupāda: Yes, they should be encouraged. They must give some service 
to the institution by making money that is hard-earned money.  

Purūravā Dāsa: If there has to be business, it should be the kind of busi-
ness in which one doesn’t have to associate with karmīs in the wrong way. 
The best business is prasādam business. People become purified. Prasādam 
business is unlimited; that is another great advantage. How many paintings 
can somebody buy? But prasādam you eat again and again. So that’s a good 
way of making business if one cannot maintain himself by book distribution. 
Prasādam business, obviously, is also a part of the sankirtana mission.

Prahlādānanda Swami: I found that the more we tried to increase book dis-
tribution, the fewer economic problems we had. It seems that the economic 
problems came when the devotees weren’t sufficiently absorbed in preach-
ing. By selling paraphernalia and expanding the opulence of a temple, the 
devotees won’t feel encouraged and satisfied. Trying to satisfy someone 
with material arrangements is the same as decorating the cage of a bird 
and not feeding it. If devotees expand materially instead of spiritually, so 
many problems arise. Whatever money we collect is simply used to solve 
the problems that we have created by collecting the money.

I want that our literatures be profusely distributed, so if you 
can assist me in this way by your Spiritual Sky business, I am 
greatly satisfied.  

Regarding the society’s leaders emphasizing business, you should understand what the meaning of business is. Business means to help the preaching. Preaching needs financial help, otherwise, we have no need for business. So far as I understand, our book business is sufficient to support our movement. I do not want the managing to be at the expense of preaching. A manager must also be a preacher, otherwise who will want to follow him? 56

As far as your engagement is concerned I think it is most appropriate for you to consult with the GBC men. But one thing that everyone should understand is that I am not as interested in selling incense as I am in selling books. Distribution of my books is the most important thing. These other things such as selling incense and records are not as important as this. If Spiritual Sky is a separate concern, then what is the need of our own men who are capable preachers to be engaged in that way? I want that my books be distributed in huge quantities, and thus we will be able to thoroughly convince the majority of the population especially there in America. But finances are also needed. Therefore for further direction you please contact the GBC men, and they will give you consultation. The more one preaches, the more expert he becomes and the more he is able to convince others. 57
Saṅkīrtana Strategies

“Preaching is our real business, preaching and distributing books. If your preaching work is strong, then your management of temple affairs will also become automatically very strong. Just like if the head wills it, the hand will move. Preaching is like the head of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness society. If the head is removed, the whole body dies. Managing is the hands, which work nicely if the head is healthy. If the hands are removed, the body will not die, but it will be crippled. So preaching is more important than management, but both must be there if the whole body is to operate nicely.”

8.1 Preaching and book distribution from the temple

Your report of temple activities in your zone is very much encouraging. In all those centers you should especially emphasize the book distribution program. . . . That is our most important program, so tax your brain how to increase it more and more, and Kṛṣṇa will surely help you.

Śrīla Prabhupāda on the temple’s purpose

Actually, we have opened our centers to facilitate the spreading of our literatures to as many people as possible, so please give emphasis to this program and try and introduce my books into all the schools, colleges, libraries, and bookstores.

In this material world, we are drying up for lack of spiritual knowledge. Our ISKCON centers are meant to give relief to the dried-up conditioned souls searching after the nectar of joyful life. So I request you and all other members of
ISKCON to flood the world with Kṛṣṇa conscious centers and realize the prediction of Caitanya Mahāprabhu: My name will be known in every town and village.  

My only point is that simultaneously we must increase our literature production and build Māyāpur temple. But it is not that we have to stop everything else for one thing. The art of managing is to do all things at once in a nice manner. And the guiding principle is to do whatever is practical for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness and at the same time maintain our high standards of routine Kṛṣṇa conscious practices for making progress on the spiritual path.

The temple as a base for book distribution

Temples are bases in the war on māyā: shelters for devotee residents becoming surcharged with spiritual energy; places where new devotees join to be trained; and spiritual embassies relieving conditioned souls from māyā’s clutches. Temples inspire everyone. Inspiration is fundamental for the cultivation of spiritual life, and when inspiration matures, it manifests as the desire to attract others to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, in fulfilling the meaning of the temple as a preaching base, we follow various strategies: inviting people to preaching programs both at the temple and outside the temple and going to people and giving them Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the form of books, home programs, and so on.

Preaching programs should not be underestimated, especially the Sunday Feasts and public classes. The Sunday Feast is a tradition in ISKCON temples, and public lectures have been a Vaiṣṇava tradition since time immemorial. Both are ideal occasions for book distribution because the people attending are interested. Even a critical guest must agree to take a book if he seriously wants to find out about Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But the majority of people visiting temples or attending public programs are favorable. Wherever many people assemble for a Kṛṣṇa conscious purpose, many books can be distributed. If devotees are trained in book distribution, they will never miss such optimum opportunities for distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. As it is a rule that no guest should leave the temple without getting prasādam, we should see that no guest leaves the temple or a public program without being offered books. Of course, guests shouldn’t be harassed, but devotees receiving guests should be in a preaching mood and think of giving them books. Then we will be amazed how many more
books can be distributed at Sunday Feasts and special festivals like Janmāś-ṭami and Gaura-pūrṇimā.

**Harināma chanting parties**

Go on singing kṛṣṇa-kīrtana. That is our program. Caitanya Mahāprabhu used to go out chanting. He never spoke philosophy in public, only among higher circles. The chanting is very effective. Let them chant along with tambura and mrdaṅga played very rhythmically. Perform this musical demonstration and sell books as far as possible and serve feasts. Then everything will be successful.  

**Harikeśa Swami:** Every temple should organize and maintain chanting parties in public. They’re the best way to show people the eternal dharma of harināma kīrtana. Although book distribution is the most important way to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, other forms of preaching are also important. Prabhupāda said that all such programs are indispensable for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Chanting in public is good for the chanters. It gives them a taste of the spiritual bliss of chanting the holy names. We really taste the nectar by chanting on a crowded street in a noisy city. We immediately feel transcendental to the havoc, beyond the modes of nature, secure and protected. Everyone should experience chanting in public firsthand, especially new devotees, who should learn how to chant the holy name in public. Also, old devotees should go out regularly to avoid becoming stale. This chanting, when regularly performed, gives life to the temple and wonderfully unites the temple devotees with devotees living in different parts of the city.

Every chanting party should be organized nicely: devotees dressed properly and dancing in some uniform manner. That will attract people more than if everyone dances his own way. Prabhupāda wanted the devotees to dance in a uniform way and taught them to do the swami step with their hands raised. Also, the melodies should be bona fide, sweet, and melodious, and the karatālas and mrdaṅgas should be played in time. It’s always nice to hold mahā-harināma kīrtana on the best day of the week in your city—Saturday or Sunday—when the most people are on the streets and when the saṅkīrtana devotees are able to take part. When all the devotees get together and chant, it becomes powerful. The sankīrtana devotees bring a special power into the kīrtana that might be lacking during the week, because they’ve been doing the most important yajña all week. While chanting, it’s
nice to give out small sweets or cookies because prasādam always wins over the crowd. We can also distribute books and magazines quite nicely to the people listening to the chanting. A good way to preach to them is to stop the kirtana and give a short talk every twenty minutes. It should be a lively talk and should hold their attention for a few minutes. People appreciate lectures by a devotee who’s good at the art of lecturing on the street. When the devotees chant on the street, they should avoid upsetting store keepers by stopping in front of one business for too long. They can stop in front of monuments or plazas for as long as they like. If possible, procure a permit to chant. It’s often called a parade or demonstration permit. Then no one can stop the chanting. This is especially important for large scale sankirtana in which hundreds of devotees take part.

You should try now to obtain permission for chanting on the streets. This will greatly enhance your activities there in every respect. Sankirtana is our very life and soul, so try to take permission from the authorities as soon as possible.  

Public programs and festivals

Your reports of the devotional progress in San Diego are very convincing; this combination of book distribution and public festivals is very good for bringing the people to an attraction for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Go on holding as many festivals as possible.

Regarding the festival programs, you should not stop because they are not economical. You can earn from book selling and then spend for the festivals. The festivals are very good for attracting the people. Then you can easily inject the Kṛṣṇa conscious poison into them.

Large festivals attract the general mass of people and introduce them to the culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When the people see an organized festival in a public place, they recognize that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is legitimate. Festivals also provide a good opportunity to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Recently, the most impressive public programs in Eastern Europe have been the performances of the Gaurāṅga Bhajan Band led by Harikeśa Swami, Bhaktivibhava Swami, and Śacinandana Swami, which attracted thousands of spectators to big halls (with a high point in Moscow of 32,000 people in July 1992) and where many books were sold. People are impressed by such events, and when they buy books, their good first im-
pression will later be reinforced, and they will gain a lasting respect for the devotees and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. With this same approach, smaller Hare Kṛṣṇa festivals can also be effective. Devotees simply need to print nice looking posters inviting everyone to an evening of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and rent a hall. Usually an admission fee covers the costs. Even if a program is simply done, people will appreciate it, because Kṛṣṇa consciousness has so much to offer.

**Preaching in higher circles**

Selling sets of books to universities was already mentioned in Chapter Five. Preaching to the educated class of men is another important feature of a temple’s preaching.

I am very, very pleased with your program to infiltrate the schools and colleges, especially by introducing our books and classes in Kṛṣṇa yoga. I say one thing: If you can somehow or other turn all of these students and hippies, or even a portion of them, to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then this movement will sweep across the world and save it from the present-day precarious condition when everything has become so much degraded. . . . Now push very tactfully this program of reaching and convincing the student class with our books and philosophy, and that will be your success of life, and for that Kṛṣṇa will very quickly reveal Himself face to face, you may know it for certain.  

Because there is close proximity of many students, the important thing to give them is our books and literature. They are interested in getting knowledge, but the materialistic knowledge will lead them astray from the real goal of their intelligence, and all of their credits in education will add up only to so many zeros.

I like this idea of distributing books and preaching. That is Lord Caitanya’s plan, and because you are doing it so nicely you are already making the greatest contribution, so what need is there for some special instruction from me? But if you want, I must give, because you are serving Kṛṣṇa so nicely. So in that case my request to you is that you enter into the universities and colleges wherever possible and preach there with a view to recruiting some first-class devotees for
helping me manage and push on this movement all over the world. Overall there is a shortage of first-class, experienced men to manage things just to the highest standard, as you are doing. Therefore I am calling upon you big leaders to push this idea forward, namely, to attract some educated men to join us. The idea is that they will agree to join us only if we conduct ourselves intelligently by the preaching approach. The secret will be to engage them as they like to be engaged. That is, suppose I have got some education: I am a business student, or I have some skill or talent; I am a typist or musician or something like that, so I will like to utilize these things for Kṛṣṇa only if I am encouraged in a certain way, very tactfully, and I must not be discouraged by too much forcing me at first to accept everything like shaving the head, rising very early, and going for street saṅkirtana. No, let me come gradually, let me also study Kṛṣṇa consciousness and see how it is practical and sublime. Gradually I may get some taste for these other things and agree to do them voluntarily and intelligently. We are not dogmatic or like an army camp. No. We are servants of Kṛṣṇa. That means that because we understand Kṛṣṇa is our protector under all circumstances, we have no more anxiety, so we become very liberal and tolerate seeing others’ sinful activities. We see them as innocent victims of māyā, and we try to help them understand the real position of life. You know this art, how to attract and engage men, so aim at the top class of men and give them every opportunity and facility to become convinced of our philosophy and engage themselves to their satisfaction. That will be the best contribution. Now spread this idea also to the other leaders. 12

Now I want that we shall recruit more and more our men among the intelligent class of men. Because they are a little educated or they have got some wealth or fame or ability, they will be sometimes a little puffed up, but that is all right, they deserve it. Now we shall have to learn the art how to approach such higher classes of men and attract them to apply themselves to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness process of self-realization. That requires much tact, and we shall have to expect to meet all challenges by sharp minds. But if we remain always absorbed in remembering Lord Caitanya, how
He converted so many intelligent men, even sitting for days and nights to hear them speak without Himself speaking anything, and if we remember how Kṛṣṇa was so much patient to explain everything to Arjuna, even Arjuna was speaking like a fool, in this way, being always tolerant of others and appreciating their points of view, it will be an easy matter for us to convince them gradually to join us.\textsuperscript{13}

I think your proposal for seriously organizing the college programs is first class. If this program is conducted in the proper fashion it can be our biggest book distribution outlet. I am convinced of this.\textsuperscript{14}

Without being God conscious you cannot expect perfection in the human society. It is said in the śāstra that if a person is God conscious, then all good qualities manifest in his person, but without being God conscious no material quality can make anyone a respected gentleman. Therefore it is essential to teach God consciousness in every school, college, and university to revive man’s dormant God consciousness.\textsuperscript{15}

**Preaching to the congregation**

A congregation is a group of people interested enough in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to associate with ISKCON but living at home maintaining themselves. This group is important for the long-term growth of a temple. Such people sometimes join the movement or open centers in their homes, but even when they just remain at home reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and sometimes visit the temple or attend a festival, they can be engaged in service now and then, and all of them are potential donors. Also, they can invite people to their homes for programs when traveling preachers come by. Their names should be on a mailing list, and they should be regularly contacted. When ISKCON has a special project and needs some help, it’s the congregational members who generally help the most. During marathons, the congregational members can take boxes of books and distribute them to friends, relatives, and others. Members are best cultivated by groups of traveling preachers. Each group of preachers can work in a demarcated area and cultivate all the members and meet new people by holding regular programs.

The temple center is started just to present an example to the neighboring residents how they can make a small temple
in each and every home. It is not necessary that hundreds and thousands of people live in our temples, but if we can make effective propaganda, then the neighboring residents and householders will be inclined to be initiated and follow the modes of temple life. So you encourage the visitors, boys and girls, as well as married couples, to understand the value of life and how they can peacefully and happily live if they follow the routine worship method in the temple and establish this in their home to be happy in all respects. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is actually an attempt to make all people happy generally. And becoming liberated in this life from material contamination, they’ll thus be eligible to enter into the kingdom of God after quitting this body.  

I am very glad you are getting many private home kīrtana engagements. That is very encouraging. If each home adopts our method, they will be happy. There is no sectarian consideration. Everyone should be interested in God. The more one understands about God, the more he becomes wise and ultimately he achieves the goal of his life. 

We want every house to be a temple, not that our place should be the only place for the people to come. No. This should be the process: that they learn at our place, then establish the same thing at home.

Your home-to-home preaching is very good. The important thing is to make arrangements that they hear and chant. That will make your preaching successful. Once they begin chanting, then automatically they will want to follow the rules and regulations, attend ārati, take prasādam, and so on.

Introduce this into every home, and that will help them, and if they read our books, then finished—no more material life.

### 8.2 Going out with books

In this section stress is given to the temple devotees going out with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to meet people, without waiting until they come to us. If this is done, the temple will have visitors, and the congregation will grow.
Book distributors are the devotees who meet the most people. They invite favorable people to the temple and can invite even people who don’t take books as a sign of friendship and detachment. Anyone who isn’t inimical can be invited, and he’ll appreciate this gesture. He may not visit the temple, but we may meet him again, and at one point he may take a book. Our continuous sympathy will eventually touch people’s hearts, and then they may even visit the temple, but now with a favorable opinion due to our patience and friendliness. In this way, book distribution will bring many guests to the temple and increase the preaching spirit of the temple devotees, who will gladly present books to the guests. In other words, in order to take care of guests, there need to be guests, and they come if they are invited by the devotees who go out.

**Rohiṇisuta Dāsa:** If people come to the temple, sell them books. Sometimes you can approach them as you would on saṅkīrtana. And even in front of the temple is a special place to sell books. I’ve sold many books just outside the temple. “This is a temple, you know? A Hare Kṛṣṇa temple. We’re monks practicing yoga and meditation. You can come in and have a look.” And if they say, “No time,” I say, “That’s all right; at least take some books on meditation.” They feel the nice atmosphere of the temple. The devotees should profit from these opportunities.

**Harikeśa Swami:** If you can relate nicely with people on the street, then you should have no problem with visitors in the temple. They’re much more important than people you meet on the street because they’ve actually set foot in Kṛṣṇa’s temple. Therefore they are coming much closer to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So preach to them with great enthusiasm. Show them around, answer questions, give them prasādam. Be very aware that people visiting the temple aren’t ordinary.

Three stages that many devotees go through are: going out from the temple with books full-time or part-time, distributing books on traveling saṅkīrtana, and distributing books while living outside as grhasthas. Traveling saṅkīrtana and book distribution by grhasthas will be mentioned in sections 8.4–6. Most things said in this book are directly applicable to temple-based book distribution, but a few additional points will be discussed here before going on to the two other subjects.

**Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa:** Devotees going out from the temple have to avoid becoming entangled and diverted. There’s the telephone, the office, your mail, politics, watching videos, devotees talking long into the evening, and
visiting devotees. Whenever I distribute from the temple, my results go down. That’s not the temple’s fault, but my tendency to be diverted. Therefore traveling *sāṅkīrtana* has many advantages. Everything is concentrated and uncomplicated. You have the books, the van, and one-pointed determination. I don’t mean to say that everyone should go traveling, but those who like to should. Some devotees want to go out from the temple and have a steady program, including morning and evening classes. But there’s a special nectar in traveling and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books throughout the country. You also have a morning program, but it’s molded around book distribution.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** The idea that the temple is *māyā* is certainly *māyā*. I’ve lived in a temple and distributed books for more than fifteen years. There’s no difficulty as long as a devotee living in the temple is sincerely trying to serve Kṛṣṇa by distributing Prabhupāda’s books or performing another service. Many nice devotees have done Deity worship at the temple for many, many years, and they are a great inspiration for me.

**Harikēśa Swami:** Both city *sāṅkīrtana* and traveling *sāṅkīrtana* are good, and both expand the preaching. City *sāṅkīrtana* is usually done where there are many *sāṅkīrtana* spots accessible by public transportation. But traveling not only distributes the mercy more widely, it also increases the distribution results. The only problem with traveling *sāṅkīrtana* is that one must maintain vans and rent hotel rooms. This is costly even if managed properly. Therefore, it may not always be possible to have traveling parties. But if it can be arranged, it’s a wonderful way to spread the mercy far and wide.

**Rohiṁsuta Dāsa:** Ideally each temple should have at least one traveling *sāṅkīrtana* group, with a core of constant members, but also offering other devotees the facility to join sporadically. In this way there’s variety for the book distributors, and in the temple the pure preaching spirit is maintained.

### 8.3 Traveling *sāṅkīrtana*

I note that you have got a nice van. Why not have some traveling *sāṅkīrtana* parties in the surrounding countryside distributing our literature in new places? 21

Regarding your contemplating opening new centers, I have felt the pulse of your country, and that is that wherever we
open a small branch, it will develop. So now you have to train our men so that the possibility for opening centers will be good. As soon as you have the qualified men, then you can open a small branch. But the traveling part is most important, even more so than the new centers. The traveling sāṅkīrtana party must go on. 22

Traveling sāṅkīrtana pleased Śrīla Prabhupāda

Simply go on in this way, stopping in every village and city of England and Scotland or other places like Ireland. Simply stop for some time, distribute books, hold a sāṅkīrtana procession, answer questions, distribute some leaflets or small information freely, distribute prasādam wherever possible—at least some small thing, and if there is genuine interest being shown, then request the townspeople to arrange some engagements for speaking in their schools or someone’s home or a hall. In this way remain always without anxiety for destination and comfortable situations, always relying only on the mercy of Kṛṣṇa for your plan. Just go on preaching His message and selling His books wherever there is interest. . . . I can understand that it is not an easy matter to travel extensively over long periods of time without proper food and rest, and sometimes it must be very cold there also, but still, because you are getting so much spiritual enjoyment from it, it seems like play to you. That is the advanced stage of spiritual life, never attained by even the greatest yogīs and so-called jīnās. Let any man see our devotees working hard for Kṛṣṇa, then let anyone say that they are not better than millions of so-called yogīs and transcendentalists. That is my challenge. Because you are rightly understanding through your personal realization this philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, therefore in such a short time you have surpassed all the stages of yoga to come to the highest point of surrendering to Kṛṣṇa. That I can very much appreciate. Thank you very much for helping me in this way. 23

You are the real representatives of Lord Caitanya. Without caring for any stable home, without any thought of personal gain, you are traveling and distributing Kṛṣṇa consciousness
everywhere you go. I am very grateful to both of you for assisting me so energetically. And I pray to Kṛṣṇa that you both live for at least one hundred years so that you may spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the full extent.  

It is good that the Berlin party is traveling. To be stagnant is not good. Just like I am an old man, but I am always traveling.

Advantages of traveling saṅkīrtana

Śaṅkara-pāṇḍita Dāsa: There’s an old saying, “A rolling stone gathers no moss.” For a brahma-cāri, traveling periodically is a good way to maintain simplicity, detachment, and austerity. It’s good if the temple program allows the men to travel. Traveling is a wonderful, enlivening experience, because the devotees depend exclusively on Kṛṣṇa for everything: distribution spots, places to sleep, and whatever is needed. But if a brahma-cāri has intense and regulated sādhanā, then the temple provides the best facility for increased book distribution. Sometimes devotees say the temple is māyā, but how can it be, if the book distributor arranges his sādhanā around going out? Māyā can be anywhere, even on traveling saṅkīrtana if one isn’t firmly determined to serve Kṛṣṇa. The real point is one’s spiritual absorption. One can be fixed anywhere.

Jiva Dāsa: The temple provides shelter and security. That’s why there may not be much pressure to surrender. But when devotees leave the temple for traveling saṅkīrtana, there’s no shelter other than their service, book distribution, and no scope or facility for one’s determination to become many-branched. Therefore traveling saṅkīrtana is recommended to experience single-minded concentration on book distribution.

Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa: Going traveling is best for most book distributors, as there’s no other engagement and they can fix the mind. After the morning program, everything is clear: “We’re doing book distribution—that’s all.” But for some devotees, one should first see that they remain devotees. So for them, it’s good to stay in the temple because it makes them attached to Kṛṣṇa. We should see in which circumstances a devotee feels better and accomplishes more.

Navina-nīrada Dāsa: In all the three worlds there are no better books than Śrīla Prabhupāda’s; there is no better service than book distribution; there
is no bigger adventure than traveling saṅkīrtana; and there’s no better association than that of the saṅkīrtana devotees engaged in the mission of the spiritual master. If we’re convinced of that, then we won’t look elsewhere for adventure, happiness, or other engagements.

Premārṇava Dāsa: Traveling saṅkīrtana is an extremely regulated program, and that’s the best atmosphere for book distribution. It means a simple life completely fixed on Kṛṣṇa and book distribution. The more regulated the program is, the less one has to think about. You can forget the material world and just think about Kṛṣṇa and Prabhupāda’s books. Especially if you aren’t the saṅkīrtana leader, this program is like Vaikuṇṭha; there’s no anxiety, because you don’t have to worry about anything. In the beginning I didn’t even know the name of the town. I didn’t care. I just had a place to distribute, and I didn’t care about anything except distributing and reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. For my first six years I did nothing but traveling saṅkīrtana, and it has left a lasting impression on my life.

Śairṣi Devi Dāsi: There are many advantages. It’s much easier to be fixed in your service; you can develop deep relationships with the other devotees you travel with; you meet many nice people; and you continually gain a more mature understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness (otherwise you won’t have the power to continue going on traveling saṅkīrtana). At the same time, you always have to face māyā, but you lose your taste for māyā because of seeing how people are suffering. Very often they frankly admit it. And traveling from town to town and visiting temples is a Kṛṣṇa conscious adventure. Everyone likes to travel and experience freedom and adventure. In this way you can fulfill your dreams in a Kṛṣṇa conscious way.

Kalpavāsinī Devi Dāsi: Whenever you return to the temple it’s always more ecstatic than before you left, because you get to see the Deities again after a period of separation, and your appreciation for the Deities and the temple and the devotees increases a lot. Being out in the street the whole day or the whole week and seeing so many materialistic people not at all interested in spiritual life, you really gain appreciation for devotees, because they’re so rare. Where else can you find people who are sincerely surrendering their lives to Kṛṣṇa’s service?

Nṛśimhadeva Dāsa: Often we don’t know where we’ll sleep. We just drive out of town to park the van, and we sleep inside or outside the van. Some nights we stay next to a public swimming pool, and early in the morning we
jump over the fence and take our bath there. Just for the facility to take an ice-cold shower without disturbance, you become grateful to Kṛṣṇa.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Suppose we advertised: “Salesman wanted. Sell books that nobody wants. No salary. Live in a van. Eat cold food and get up early in the morning.” Ordinary people couldn’t conceive of doing these austerities. But after you’re a devotee for a while, you start thinking that living in a van is wonderful. Taking a shower under weird conditions somehow becomes fun. You acquire a taste for austerity, and that taste is nectar. But even though it’s wonderful, the temple president should make sure that the saṅkīrtana devotees don’t become estranged from the temple. Sometimes a traveling party develops a separatist attitude and travels throughout the country independent of any temple. Therefore the temple president and saṅkīrtana leader should be on guard against that.

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** Our real home is the street, and on the street our shelter is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. A saṅkīrtana devotee while taking prasādam in the van sees many people running around on the streets shopping or looking for enjoyment, and he always feels, “I have to finish up. People are out there, and I have to give them the books.” While traveling, you feel the real bliss. You become more and more determined, and you don’t build on artificial foundations that come and go. In Norway and Finland and other places, the devotees cannot return to the temple every Sunday because the distances are too great. They stay out for a month or more. In Norway and Finland they go to the temple only when there’s a special festival like Janmāśṭami. They stay out seven days a week for months in camping grounds. Whenever you get together with these devotees, you become inspired. They’re so simple. You don’t encounter politics or prajalpa, whereas in the temple you may. But when you’re traveling and completely depending on Kṛṣṇa and Śrīla Prabhupāda, you are under their direct shelter and protection. What more do you want?

**8.4 The practical side of traveling saṅkīrtana**

I am very joyful to hear that you are enjoying your preaching activities there in America. Actually this is our real business: preaching, chanting, and distributing prasādam and books. Book distribution is especially an important program, and it is first-class preaching work. So I encourage you to work with
all the senior men there in America and encourage them to distribute more and more of this transcendental literature.  

Don’t be attached to facilities

Rohiniśuta Dāsa: You shouldn’t think you can’t go out unless you have a van and good facilities; or that unless everyone in the temple respects, encourages, and inspires you, you won’t go out; or that you have to get the mahā-prasādam to remain inspired, and you need a private room. That’s all material. We have to go out always, in all situations, with or without encouragement. Then we’ll get the real taste. A saṅkīrtana devotee must be determined. He should just take the books and go. His enthusiasm doesn’t depend on a van. If there’s no car, it doesn’t mean he stays back and does nothing. He may go by foot, bus, or tram. For example, in Yugoslavia the devotees don’t have cars. They walk or take buses and trains, and they distribute a lot of books. They get a lot of special mercy by making that special endeavor. I remember being alone for one year, in 1979 or 1980, in Zurich. I was distributing without a vehicle, and there was no temple, only a small flat. In the beginning my mind was flipping out. But I was just going out every day, and I got the same results I would have with a car. So the results don’t depend on the car or the facility. The only thing we have to manage is to get the books, but then we go out. Naturally, without books it’s a little difficult. Can you imagine one day—no more books? That’s a nightmare. Actually, there were times when no books were available. Guru-gaurāṅga Prabhu told me that in Switzerland in the beginning they didn’t have any books, but still they distributed books. They just went to the people and said, “We want to print Bhagavad-gitā, and you can order it now and pay now, and then we will deliver it to you as soon as it is printed.” And people agreed. In this way book distribution got started in Switzerland, with no facilities, not even books.

Groups and division of duties

Now maintain your status quo. You are in a very good position. To manage a saṅkīrtana party nicely is more precious than all other activities. That is the verdict of Bhagavad-gitā and the mission of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: For a karmī, it is unimaginable how people with completely different mentalities can live together in a van. But the devotees are inspired. They think, “Well, that’s individuality. There is always something
happening.” It works because everybody has the same goal in mind. Together you try to spread this movement and accomplish something for the pleasure of the spiritual master. If you have this goal in mind, then you can understand that only in the association of the devotees can we find such inspiration.

Jiva Dāsa: A saṅkīrtana party must be a nice crew. The younger devotees should respect the older devotees and try to help them distribute more books. A leader has to set a good example by distributing more than the others and by teaching his Kṛṣṇa conscious realizations. If he can do both, that’s ideal. In this way the younger devotees can learn from the older devotees, and the older devotees can take care of the younger devotees. Mutual respect must be there. This is essential when sharing such a small space like a saṅkīrtana van.

Guru-carana Dāsa: The saṅkīrtana leader must be a sensitive person. It’s difficult to get the best from everybody. Some devotees you cannot push, so you just encourage them. But others you can push: “Come on, get yourself together. This is your duty. Do it!” In my case I thought it was nice being pushed. Without the saṅkīrtana leader’s push, I think the distribution and the purification would have been less.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: There must be a system within the saṅkīrtana group; otherwise all the activities will take so much time that you’ll never get out early. The group leader, an experienced saṅkīrtana devotee, can function as a source of inspiration and instruction in the group. He is responsible for everything, but he can delegate responsibilities. One devotee has to guard the lakṣmyī and carefully do the bookkeeping and report the results at the end of the week to the temple devotee assigned to compiling the score sheet and paying the BBT for books. Cleaning the van and cooking must also be managed, and there has to be a condensed yet full morning program. Everything should be there—the songs, guru-pūjā, and a class. Not even during the marathons should these programs be given up; otherwise we become influenced by the modes of passion and ignorance. We save time in the wrong place. Hearing and chanting is the way we get Kṛṣṇa’s mercy and inspiration. The group leader and all the other devotees in the group are responsible for keeping this spirit and maintaining these standards.

Vehicles

Harikeśa Swami: Every temple needs vehicles. But devotees have a bad reputation when it comes to taking care of them. They tend to think that be-
cause the cars don’t belong to them—they belong to Kṛṣṇa—somebody else will look after them. This careless attitude leads to the damage and destruction of many ISKCON vehicles. So the temple president should preach to all the devotees that the cars belonging to Kṛṣṇa are meant for everyone’s use and must be properly maintained by everyone. But practically speaking it’s best to assign one devotee the service of looking after the temple’s vehicles. That helps assure their regular maintenance. The temple president must make sure that the assigned devotee gets the maintenance work done; otherwise the cars will be destroyed, and it will be an enormous waste of Kṛṣṇa’s valuable lakṣmi. The temple president should also see that all the cars are registered and have passed the required inspections. He should make sure that when the devotees use the cars, they have the proper papers with them in case there’s a check by the police. Also, the temple president should insure all the cars. There’s nothing as certain as a devotee’s smashing a car at some time or another. So accident and collision insurance are needed on each and every vehicle. It doesn’t matter if the insurance costs a lot. It’s well worth it in the long run. Some insurance companies in the West do not like insuring our cars because they know that they will lose money on us.

Every car should be regularly maintained. The oil should be changed every 5,000 kms; then there’s a good chance that the engine will last a long time. The water in the radiator should be checked periodically and replaced. Put in anti-freeze to protect the engine. Check the water in the battery regularly and make sure it is kept up to the mark. The vehicles should be regularly cleaned inside and out. Dirty cars mean the heart is dirty. These vehicles belong to Kṛṣṇa and should be kept as clean as the temple paraphernalia. Tires should be checked. When the rubber is worn out, buy new tires. Don’t try to save money by risking the lives of the devotees. To make tires last longer, experts say that every 10,000 kms they should be rotated to even out the wear and tear on them. If the tires are not radials, they’re rotated by switching the front left tire with the rear right tire, and the front right tire with the rear left tire. Then, next time, switching the rear tires with each other and the front tires with each other. Then, next time, the front left with the rear right and so on. Radial tires rotate differently. Radials must always remain on the same side of the car that they were initially installed on. They are simply rotated front to back and vice versa.

One must drive carefully, otherwise he risks smashing the car. When devotees are in the car and the car is smashed, the driver is guilty of harming Vaiṣṇavas, and that’s a greatly sinful act. Most accidents are caused by inattention and poor judgement and can be avoided by the driver’s paying attention and using common sense. Don’t let poor drivers drive. One should
never drive late at night. After midnight, no one can be expected to drive properly. Śrīla Prabhupāda banned all night-driving in ISKCON because many devotees were killed driving late at night. Devotees do not sleep enough to drive through the night. If one knows that he has to drive a long distance, then he should take extra rest so that he can stay awake for the drive. If one is even slightly drowsy while driving, he should pull over to the side of the road and take a nap, even if it means being late. It’s more important to get to one’s destination late than not to arrive at all. If one smashes the car or himself, he’ll neither get there on time nor be able to serve Kṛṣṇa nicely. The sankīrtana leaders should carefully ascertain whether the devotees are properly taking care of their vehicles. They should see that every car is serviced regularly, kept clean, and not missing lights. Every temple president should realize that the vehicles will last for a relatively short time and have to be replaced. Therefore he should save money for purchasing new vehicles; otherwise he’ll have a big bill and not know how to pay it. So save and be happy!

Sāṅkīrtana schedule

One thing is that all the students on the party must strictly follow the rules and regulations. Cleanliness is most essential, rising early, taking bath, etc. It is not that because we are traveling we can neglect our routine work and become irregular in our habits. No. We must make every effort to remain regulated and clean. This is the solid basis for our work. When our routine work, like chanting, reading books, and Deity worship are very nice, then our preaching will have effect. That is the secret. 28

As far as studying my books is concerned, I have already given the order: one hour in the morning class and one hour in the evening; and if there is extra time during the day it may be used for studying, but we cannot expect everyone to be studious. If someone has a desire to distribute books all day, he may do this, but he must always follow the principles of rising early, chanting sixteen rounds, and so on. 29

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: Regulation is best: going out at 9 or 9:30 and distributing until noon or 1 P.M., then taking a break. You can read, take prasādam; perhaps you need a little rest before going out again or before reading. Usu-
ally you take prasādam last, then you go out from around 3 or 4 until 7 or 7:30. While going door to door in residential areas, we distribute until 2 P.M. because many people are home for lunch. Then we take a break until 4:30 or 5. Then with full concentration we work during the evening hours, because that’s when most people are home. Book distributors should not stay out late at night. They can stop around 7 or 7:30. If you’re a preacher with a late-night program, that’s different. Therefore my recommendation is that book distributors should not make preaching programs at night. They should fix themselves on distributing books. The preachers can do the preaching. In this way the book distributors can fix themselves on one type of preaching. You have to concentrate on something if you want to perfect that activity.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** The best medicine for all kinds of problems is reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books two hours a day. In this way we can actually absorb the philosophy, and when we go out, we should take the philosophy with us and remember it, because the philosophy is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. If we take the philosophy with us, we are Kṛṣṇa conscious. If we go out and forget the philosophy, what’s the use of going out? It’s better to stay back a little longer and increase your Kṛṣṇa consciousness by reading Prabhupāda’s books. We want to present Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so we have to be Kṛṣṇa conscious.

### Choosing where to distribute

Just go on preaching Kṛṣṇa’s message and selling His books, wherever there is interest. We shall not waste time if there is no interest or if the people are unfriendly. There are so many places to go.  

If the sankirtana parties in Satsvarūpa’s zone are irritating the public for selling many books, that is one thing, but by their selling books they are doing the greatest service. What will your one hour of preaching do? They will hear and go away, but if they have one book at home, they will read it, their friends will read it, and some solid work is done. So the art is to sell many, many books and not to irritate the public. You may instruct all the others how to do this successfully. That is sannyāsa. That is GBC. There are so many places to go, so why there should be business competition between
Regarding our traveling parties, I have received some complaints from London and other places, so I have given Dhanañjaya this policy, that if any party comes from outside, they must work under the direct supervision and instruction of the local management, not that they shall remain a separate competitor. I want to sell as many books as possible, that is the main thing. Selling books is the best preaching work. But so there may not be any complaint, your traveling parties must cooperate with the local temple officers. And that means your parties shall operate wherever they are allocated; shall sell only books, not collect without selling books; and that, above the wholesale price of the book, at least 50% of any profit must be given to the local temple. Ultimately, it shall be up to the local temple president whether the presence of your party is favorable or not. Everything is considered, and if he agrees, you may stay, otherwise if he judges it is unfavorable at the time, he may order you to go out. But just to avoid these things, it’s better to arrange in advance with the GBC men concerned. Ours is a cooperative movement, with Krśna and the advancement of Krśna’s movement at the center, and we must continue to sell as many books as possible. But discuss everything among yourselves and do it nicely without irritating anyone, that is the art.

Our main business is to distribute books, either here or there, it doesn’t matter. So if there is a transcendental competition for increasing the sale of books, that is good. If he buys one book his life may be turned. That is the best preaching work. But everything must be done in the spirit of cooperation, without any irritation. If one party wants to travel into another zone, that’s all right, but there must be prior agreement between the GBC men and mutual consent. If by going there, the book sales will be increased, what is the harm? But supposing there is any harm, that is to be judged by the local president, and if he has good reason to think that another party will be unfavorable to his temple’s operations, then he may order them to leave, that’s all. So local temple
officers should be the final judge to allow or disallow anyone from outside to sell books there. And if some outside party comes, they must sell books only, no collecting without selling books. They must live in the local temple and not separately, and they must follow faithfully the instructions and directions of the local president. They can purchase books from the temple at the regular wholesale price and sell, and whatever profit there is above the wholesale price they must give at least 50% to the local temple out of good will. That will be nice. So we shall not think that this is my zone, that is his zone, just like the Indian and Pakistan nations are thinking, and then there is war, no. Lord Caitanya has given us the task to spread His message all over the world, and any process useful for facilitating this business, that we shall gladly adopt, never mind his zone or my zone, that is a material designation. But we shall always do everything in a cooperative spirit and avoid any fighting among us. That is the Vaiṣṇava attitude, because Lord Caitanya has advised us to always offer all respects to others, especially to the devotees of the Lord. 33

Deities on traveling saṅkīrtana

To install Deities in a moving vehicle is not very good. There is always the danger of Their falling and breaking. Sudāma already has experience of this. Why is Deity worship being introduced? It should not be introduced because it is very difficult to maintain the standard under such circumstances. If you have pictures of Guru-Gaurāṅga that is sufficient. You are wondering if you did the right thing by giving the Deities to Sudāma, so the answer is no. The Deities may be brought back and worshiped in the temple as before. The idea of traveling saṅkīrtana is to distribute books not to do Deity worship. It is very difficult to maintain the standard of Deity worship in the temple, so how will it be maintained in a truck? . . . Neglectful Deity worship means offense. 34

My sanction for the Deities in the touring van is still there. But I have heard that sometimes the Deity falls down, so these things are objectionable. Touring and book distribu-
tion, side by side, is the main business. The general public will not be very much interested to see the Deity. It is our personal business. When you contact with the mass of people, saṅkīrtana is the main business. 35

You should not take Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa traveling. Better you take Gaura-Nitāi. For serving Gaura-Nitāi there is no offense, but if Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are there, and there is some discrepancy, then there is great offense, and this should be avoided. 36

8.5 Book distribution by grhastras living outside

Thank you very much for your endeavors in book distribution. Please offer your good wife my blessings for her service in this connection. Our preaching work will be measured by the quantity of books we distribute, so continue ever-increasingly. 37

The preaching potential

Both of you are very good souls constantly engaged in the service of the Lord. One who has got a helpful wife at home does not need to accept sannyāsa. If required, both you and your husband can preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We are concerned more for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and if that work is executed more nicely by the cooperation of husband and wife, there is no necessity of thinking of the wife as an impediment to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. 38

Regarding the tour of North Dakota, this is a nice proposal. So if it is practical, it will be very nice for you and your wife. The only thing you have to do is rent a station wagon, so you can travel, sleep, and cook there. Keep with you four or five pairs of cymbals, one harmonium, and one mrdaṅga. One of you play the harmonium, one of you play the mrdaṅga, and some persons in the audience can play the karatālas. In this way you can perform nice kīrtana. 39

Grhastras should not live completely independent. That will be a future danger. I want ideal grhastras like Bhaktivinoda
Thākura. There are many. I was a grhastha also. There was Deity worship; everything nice. I was publishing Back to Godhead as a grhastha. So the aim of Kṛṣṇa consciousness was there. I could not leave family life because of certain circumstances. That is a different thing. But one must be in touch with devotional service, as in the temple. If you live near the temple, it’s easier, or in the temple. But if he remains aloof, that is dangerous.  

The grhastha-āśrama entails taking on financial responsibilities and other entanglements to maintain one’s household. All grhasthas admit this, and it is clearly analyzed in the śāstras. How can one mold his life in the grhastha-āśrama so that it becomes an āśrama, a place of shelter, based on preaching?

Harikeśa Swami: Householder couples will perform many activities together. But a devotee greatly determined to serve the Lord will never associate with a spouse simply to engage in sense gratification. They will work together for the pleasure of the Lord. When the husband and wife have this determination, they become a most powerful team for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. People, especially in the West, are more attracted to the example of Kṛṣṇa conscious householders than to the example of sannyāsīs, because sannyāsa life is foreign or remote to them. A husband and wife are meant to preach from their home or to make their house a preaching center, a base for the assault on māyā. (From The Kṛṣṇa Conscious Handbook)

Practically speaking, in all missionary religions the married people do most of the preaching, organizing, recruiting, and bill paying. In ISKCON, somehow or other, this potential hasn’t yet been realized; in many cases marriage ended both devotees’ engagements in preaching. But rather than condemn the grhastha-āśrama and discourage householders, the preaching potential of this āśrama should be pointed out.

Harikeśa Swami: Husband and wife can definitely distribute together. That’s a very good team. Sometimes husband and wife can also travel together and distribute books. (From a class in Kiev on August 9, 1990)

Antaraṅga-śakti Dāsa (Germany): Grhasthas can open a preaching center or engage in book distribution going out from their apartment. A Vedic wife is called yajña-patnī, the husband’s assistant in performing yajña. So
the wife can be the sankirtana-yajña-patnī and inspire her husband to distribute books and relieve him from as much entanglement as possible. The husband can continue traveling with the temple devotees either full-time or during marathons, and sometimes he can go out with his wife for a change, to inspire her. But familiarity breeds contempt, and this will cause problems. To keep up the preaching in married life, what’s required are compatible personalities and a strong desire to preach.

Brhadbhānu Dāsa: Dāna, charity, is one of the grhastha’s main duties. How can the grhastha-dharma be better fulfilled than by book distribution, which is the highest form of charity? From this point of view, we can say that book distribution is especially the grhastha’s duty. At least those who distributed books before getting married should continue doing so in some form or another.

Lilāvatāra Dāsa: In our temple we have a number of grhastha men distributing books daily. They had good sankirtana training as brahmacārīs, and thus they kept on distributing books. A grhastha who does sankirtana should arrange his family life simply, live in an unpretentious home, and have modest needs. He should follow a good spiritual standard and not be eager for great material comfort. By regular book distribution he can earn enough to maintain a Vaishnava family. Many times these grhasthas go out with their wives. They go door to door or to shops. Sometimes they make appointments, and sometimes they also use paraphernalia. Four of these grhasthas are among the best book distributors in Italy.

Antaranga-sakti Dāsa: From 1979 to 1987 I was a brahmacārī on traveling sankirtana. Then I married, but I continued distributing books. Sometimes I go out with my wife. This is a big challenge to māyā, because her most powerful weapon is the illusion of sex life. Men and women become attached to sense objects, and then the whole mechanism begins to work: from lust frustration arises, then anger and further degradation. So if we try to perform book distribution as householders, māyā tries to stop us in every way. But book distribution gives us the best shelter and protection. Sometimes we go shop to shop in the morning. My wife wears a sārī. The people don’t mind. But I prefer karmī clothes. After our lunch break, we rush to a shopping center or a parking lot for one or two hours. Then in the late afternoon we go door to door in dhoti and sārī. Variety is the spice of life. But the point of our enjoyment is to gratify the senses of Kṛṣṇa through our service. And when the husband has that intention, the wife likes to assist him, and she’s willing to help distribute books.
Viśvadeva Dāsa: By distributing books, grhasthas meet many interested people they can further cultivate. Their program may even include prasādam distribution, like catering, which earns a lot. Couples can combine preaching and earning. There are always birthday or wedding celebrations, some decent parties, and a few concerts where the famous, delicious Kṛṣṇa food is much appreciated. Imagine how many contacts can come from such engagements. This form of preaching—in social circles—is an exclusive privilege of grhasthas.

Guru-śakti Dāsa: Sometimes preachers forget that the brahmācāris in their audience may be future grhasthas. Unbalanced, counterproductive preaching creates problems in devotees’ lives. Thus a brahmācāri thinking of entering the grhasta-āśrama may have trouble admitting it. Someone who remains a brahmācāri through social pressure or out of contempt for the grhasta-āśrama, rather than out of conviction and mature detachment, will be an unqualified brahmācāri and an unqualified grhasta. He may fade away and get married outside the temple or enter the grhasta-āśrama remorsefully, which creates tension between a husband and wife. Preaching shouldn’t be directed against the grhasta-āśrama but against the anarthas, beginning with breaking the regulative principles. History has shown that not even the basic principles can be followed if there’s no higher taste being derived from absorption in preaching. Each āśrama has advantages, therefore the advantages of the grhasta-āśrama shouldn’t be denied or ridiculed but clearly pointed out for the benefit of those who will enter that āśrama. This is important for ISKCON’s future and for preaching to the congregation. The grhasta-āśrama’s disadvantages seem obvious and are naturally experienced by householders, and they should be clearly pointed out. Yet simultaneously the positive features must also be defined and cultivated; otherwise we will spoil the potential for exemplary grhasthas engaging in preaching and book distribution.

Finances

Regarding the departments not contributing to the temple, this is not a very satisfactory situation. The method of contributing should be that those who are not married should contribute all their income to the temple, and those who are married should contribute 50%. 41

Householders can sell books and get 15% commission on the net income. The retail discount schedule will be as follows:
1–2 books, 33%; 3–24 books, 40%; 25–99 books, 42%; and 100 books and over, 50% (wholesale rate).

Harikēsa Swami: Prabhupāda said that book distribution is the best business. He even said that our householders could maintain themselves by distributing books and take a commission, 15% or whatever is required by them to maintain themselves. Of course, that was in Prabhupāda’s time. Today it is more like 50%. In this way they have a personal income and aren’t dependent on the temple. They give money to the temple, and they support the BBT. It’s the best occupational duty for every householder in the movement. And it’s the way all householders can have their own places, do a lot of preaching, and be very satisfied in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Purūravā Dāsa: I think grhasthas should learn how to distribute books, for book distribution is a good way of having an income. If a grhastha or a grhastha couple can do a hundred books a week at double the BBT price, or even less, maybe fifty or sixty books a week, that’s sufficient to maintain the family, provided one is satisfied with the necessities of life. Considering that, it’s a good idea that everyone learns how to distribute books in the beginning, because many devotees become grhasthas, and then they will be able to maintain themselves by book distribution, even if they don’t distribute that many books.

Nṛṣimhadeva Dāsa: In many places in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books it’s mentioned that householders should give in charity. Reading this, I always think of book distribution. The system Prabhupāda set up is so nice that most of what you earn, factually 75%, can be used directly to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You use 50% of your income to buy the books from the BBT. Then you can give 25% to the temple and thus help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness locally. And 25% you can keep for maintenance. It’s a nice formula. So many people are benefited: not only the people you give books, but also the projects that the BBT supports (especially Māyāpur) and the local temple.

8.6 Distributing books and prasādam

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: In Göteborg we conducted a test. The devotees had the idea of giving out prasādam along with books. It seemed to be needed because we had distributed for more than three years in the same town. We started baking cookies and giving them out while distributing books, and it
proved to be a nice experience. Some people didn’t take a book, but got a cookie anyway, and people were surprised to see that we weren’t attached to results. The book distributors met people who got cookies one day and took books the next. Giving out prasādam is something helpful and powerful provided the devotees are mature enough and don’t get carried away simply distributing cookies.

Cakṣu Dāsa: Once I tried distributing sweets along with books, but for me it didn’t work. Prasādam distribution should be done separately in large quantities by devotees concentrating completely on that service. I like to concentrate on distributing books.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Sometimes one sees wonderful reactions from people who get prasādam. Whenever I have prasādam with me and meet nice people who buy books, I give them prasādam and induce them to eat it on the spot. While they accept the prasādam, I try to meditate on the power of Kṛṣṇa’s prasādam, and with that conviction, faith, and meditation, I can go on to present the whole set. Sometimes people miraculously and suddenly change their minds and decide to take the whole set. I met a nice, well-to-do businessman who took three or four books. I gave him a cookie. He walked away, and I had to go back to the van to get more books. Then I saw at a distance how this man took one bite of the cookie, put the rest on a ledge of a wall, walked about twenty meters, stopped, and then returned to the place where he left the cookie and ate the other half. It was ecstatic observing this scene and seeing how prasādam works.

Sarvātmā Dāsa: Prasādam is powerful, and people never forget it, whether they get it from a book distributor or Food For Life or whatever. Once some devotees in Texas needed a bank loan. They didn’t know whether to dress as devotees or karmīṣ, and deciding to depend on Kṛṣṇa, they dressed as devotees. Entering the bank, they asked to talk to a loan officer. A young man led them to a door marked Director, and there sat the director behind his desk, inviting them to sit down and explain what they needed. “Well, we need a loan, but we don’t have any credit.” “That’s all right,” the director said. “But we need $50,000 to $100,000.” “That’s fine. I can approve that.” So the devotees were skeptical and asked him why he agreed so easily. He said, “I was a poor student at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and you served lunch every day at the plaza on campus. I came and ate your prasādam every single day. It was my only meal practically speaking, and you guys saved my life. Thanks to prasādam I finished my studies, and now...
I’m the bank president. I’m just reciprocating with you for what you did for me.”

**Vijaya Dāsa:** *Prasādam* and book distribution go well together. In Miami we were distributing cookies to all the airport workers and developing many good relationships. For instance, one of the responsible men in the airport passed by and noticed me and said, “You know, we’re going to have a meeting in about five days, and I was wondering if you could supply us with some of your cookies to start it off.” When the meeting started, I went in and distributed cookies to all the managers at the airport. That was really nice and important for our public relations. Giving out *prasādam* along with the books creates a good image for our book distribution.

### 8.7 Which books to distribute

**Tripurāri:** Sometimes devotees ask, “What’s the best book to distribute?” We’re thinking that all of them are absolute, and it doesn’t matter.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. It is just like a sugar doll. Anywhere you touch, it is sweet. When I read the books, I open anywhere. Any book I take, and anywhere I open, I read.

**Devotee:** It’s sometimes hard for me to understand *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and I have the feeling that the *karmīs* will open the book, look into it, and become offended because they won’t be able to understand hardly a word of it.

**Prabhupāda:** No, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is not meant for an ordinary person. *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Īsopaniṣad* and other things.

**Tripurāri:** *Kṛṣṇa* book?

**Prabhupāda:** *Kṛṣṇa*. They will read it as a story book. The *Kṛṣṇa* trilogy is selling very nice?

**Tripurāri:** Yes. *The Nectar of Devotion* also.

**Prabhupāda:** *Nectar of Devotion* is very nice.

**Devotee:** And *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams*. They’re attracted to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

**Tripurāri:** Many of the *karmīs* appreciate the Fourth Canto, Part Four, the story of King Puraṅjana. They understand that.

**Devotee:** There are many psychologists at the airport. I would attract them by giving them that particular volume dealing with the psychology of the conditioned self.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes, it is very nice. Puraṅjana, his city, his gates, various manifestations.
Devotee: Sometimes we are encouraged because people come back to us and say, “I’ve got this volume, and I’d like to have the first part,” or “I’d like to have the Second Canto.”

Prabhupāda: Sometimes they come and demand?

Tripurāri: More books, yes.

Prabhupāda: That is good. 43

“Every book is meant for everyone”

Regarding *The Nectar of Instruction*, why not distribute it to the common men? Every book is meant for everyone, but especially for the devotees. Please try to print a large number so that it can be distributed just like Śrī Ṣūkapūrṇa. 44

I am so much enthused to understand how nicely you are distributing our books. Actually these two books, *Krṣṇa* book and *Nectar of Devotion*, are revolutionary to your country. Not only your country, but all over the world. Nobody has any clear idea of God. In hopelessness they declare that God is dead. So these books will supply a clear idea of God. Not only that, but I’m sure that anyone who reads *Krṣṇa* book in two parts, *Nectar of Devotion*, and if possible *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, cannot go away from becoming a devotee of Krṣṇa. So try to push our books, especially *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, TLC, *Krṣṇa*, and NOD, backed by a regular supply of our magazines and regular performance of sankirtana. 45

In my heart I want that *Krṣna* book in small or large form should be distributed in every home where there are English-speaking people. That is the immediate important business—how to distribute these books all over the world . . . quickly distribute all books as soon as they are received. 46

This book-selling is the real preaching of our cult, especially when you sell *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. They will understand what we mean by reading our books. 47

Variety according to time, place, and circumstance

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā*, Concluding Words: After Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura passed away, I started the fortnightly magazine
Back to Godhead sometime in 1944 and tried to spread the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu through this magazine. After I took sannyāsa, a well-wishing friend suggested that I write books instead of magazines. Magazines, he said, might be thrown away, but books remain perpetually.

Generally, the book distributors we interviewed concentrate on the distribution of big and mahā-big books, though not exclusively. For them, carrying small books, BTGs or magazines in the local language may be impractical because they’re busy carrying a big stack of books. Besides, they can distribute a big book to almost anyone anyway. But small books and magazines are suitable for other devotees, especially beginners, who sell only a few big books a day.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: We should distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, not only cookbooks or small books like Coming Back. These smaller books add spice to the distribution and provide variety for people taking a lot of books or for those who already have them. The devotees should learn to distribute the big books. At first, a devotee may like distributing a certain book, but to increase our distribution we should learn the art of giving more than one book to a person. When we distribute mostly small or medium books, the donations will remain small. But by our presenting the mahā-big books people are willing to give big donations. Many people are interested in our books and willing to pay the proper price. So usually I try to sell at least two hardbound books or more, and then I offer a small book or brochure as a gift, which I clearly point out is the introduction to the other books. I also show people which books they should read first. If someone takes several books we shouldn’t mind taking our time to explain how to proceed in reading the books. It just takes a couple of minutes and leaves a nice impression. For people who want to give just a few coins, a small book is the solution. Don’t give people only big books or nothing. But also don’t give only small books or nothing. We should give people a chance to buy big books and make big donations. Of course, in some countries of Asia, Africa, and South and Latin America, small books are much more practical and successful. A good physician knows how to administer medicine perfectly; the dose should not be too big or too small.

Jāhnavā Devī Dāsī: People become devotees by reading Prabhupāda’s books and by becoming attached to the association of devotees. For me, having a relationship with somebody is more important than just giving him a book. I’d rather give someone a small book than a big book if I feel that
that’s all he’s ready for. A lot of Americans don’t like to read big books. Sometimes I meet people who received Bhagavad-gītā or a Bhāgavatam but didn’t understand it and gave up on it. They might have understood a small book. So I give a big book, but I always have a small book ready. And I try to give them both. I say, “If you start with the small book, you will understand the big book easier.”

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Following the instruction of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the BBT wants to translate and print all the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda in every language. That means the saṅkīrtana devotees will distribute different books at different times, depending on what’s printed. In this way a great variety of books will become available as the various BBTs grow strong and gradually produce the entire set in all languages. Of course, a certain number of each book will be kept aside so that full sets are readily available over a long period of time. When all of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books are produced in a certain language, then the introductory books can be printed again in big quantities. For example, in German we have all the books translated, and we have some introductory big books for mass distribution, which are printed in huge quantities. The larger the press run, the lower the book price. But the people pay the usual price, and thus we can also give the mahā-big books along with the big books for a relatively cheap price. With this system there’s not a big price difference between big and mahā-big books, and therefore it’s also possible to mass-distribute the more expensive mahā-big books, the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. In this way many people get more than one book. For example, if a person takes five books, this means he gets two or three introductory books like Science of Self-realization, Life comes from Life, the Prabhupāda-lilāmṛta, or Kṛṣṇa books, and one or two mahā-big books. In other words, when the BBT is strong, we can have up to ten mass-distribution books, including Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, First and Second Cantos.

Cakṣu Dāsa: The main thing is distributing the mahā-big books, Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The Bhāgavatam is especially meant to create a revolution in the godless existence of a misguided society. The Bhāgavatam is the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and nondifferent from Him. Of course, not everyone will immediately understand these mahā-big books, so I start by putting two books in people’s hands, a mahā-big and a big or medium book. I emphasize the mahā-big book, and I present the big book (like Science of Self-Realization or A Second Chance) as the introductory book. I concentrate on giving people at least two books. Our distribution
contains a big variety of books, including brochures and invitation cards. But we experience different types of tastes by distributing different types of literature. If you want to become a transcendental sense-gratifier, then distribute Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Śrīla Prabhupāda on small books, leaflets, and pamphlets

I am especially pleased by your proposal of producing many small leaflets and pamphlets to distribute widely to the public. Karandhara has initiated this program, and his small pamphlets are very, very nice and to the standard, so you may also do that. 48

You are correct that leaflets destined to be thrown on the ground should not contain pictures of Kṛṣṇa and Jagannātha. Such leaflets may only be hung up for people to see. 49

This quote by the head of the religion department of Oberlin is very important: “I think the best feature of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is that it is providing scholars with authorized translations of the rarest books on kṛṣṇa-bhakti.” This should be printed in a pamphlet. Also, the fact should be published that at Colorado Springs Library their eight volumes of the Bhāgavatam have been taken out seven times in the past year. You print a poster, big type, and put the quotation by the Oberlin professor. You can title it: How Our Books Are Being Received. This will be a good advertisement for our books. 50

The quote book, “The Krishna Consciousness Movement is Authorized,” is very important. From each city find out the important persons’ names and post it. You can send it to important members of the government, businessmen, entertainers, sportsmen, and others. Another device is that you can address it to “Any Respectable Gentleman, Post Office..., City..., State....” The postman will then deliver it to some respectable gentleman. Everyone who gets it will think: “I am a most respectable gentleman because he has given it to me.” The best thing is to get the mailing list of some big magazine like Time or Life and post it to those people.
I think the post office can give a concessionary rate for huge postings.  

Regarding “Krishna Consciousness Is Authorized,” . . . regardless of the response, we should distribute this book indiscriminately to selected persons as I have already indicated: renowned businessmen, medical men, government officials, scientists. Your new membership publication should be included with “Krishna Consciousness Is Authorized” in any mass mailing.  

Wherever you deliver your lectures to students, try to introduce at least our small books. If the students purchase these cheaper, smaller books they will get a permanent impression of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.  

This conversation [between Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Professor Verdu from the University of Kansas] can be published as a small pamphlet similar to the one published originally as “The Vedic Way.” You can also include some book reviews from important professors and an advertisement for Caitanya-caritāmṛta. . . . It should be printed so that the temples can give it to persons who offer small donations, even too small for a BTG.  

8.8 Saṅkīrtana meetings

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.25: In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.

Regular meetings

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.29.17p: For a devotee, there is no point in making friendships with ordinary persons; he should make friendship with other devotees so that by discussing among themselves, they may elevate one another on the path of spiritual understanding. This is called iṣṭa-goṣṭhi.
In *Bhagavad-gītā* there is reference to *bodhayantah parasparam*, “discussing among themselves.” Generally pure devotees use their valuable time in chanting and discussing various activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa or Lord Caitanya among themselves. There are innumerable books, such as the *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and *Upaniṣads*, that contain countless subjects for discussion among two devotees or more. Friendship should be cemented between persons with mutual interests and understanding.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** A most important factor for creating a *saṅkīrtana* spirit within a temple is the regular *saṅkīrtana* meeting. Ideally every weekend the devotees should meet in a group, have a small *bhajana*, read the week’s results and discuss *saṅkīrtana* topics. Tell some *līlās* and get fired up for the next week. This has to go on. Furthermore, every few months there should be bigger meetings of *saṅkīrtana* devotees from other cities, the entire country, or nearby countries. On Nṛṣimha-caturdaśī, for example, we have such a meeting on the German farm attended by *saṅkīrtana* devotees from Germany, Switzerland, Austria and sometimes even Scandinavia, England, or Italy. Another good opportunity for a *saṅkīrtana* festival is after the Prabhupāda Marathon. And once a year, the devotees meet in Māyāpur to get the required association and inspiration to continue book distribution the next year. These different kinds of inspiration must be there; otherwise it will be difficult for many devotees to continue book distribution, especially if they live in a temple where the *saṅkīrtana* spirit is not yet prevalent. That spirit has to be created. But it doesn’t come overnight. It must be cultivated, and for that purpose regular *saṅkīrtana* meetings are really essential.

**Navīna-nīrada Dāsa:** Many things need to be heard again and again, and therefore we must have *saṅkīrtana* meetings once every Sunday or at least twice a month. We must remind ourselves all the time about all the points concerning book distribution to avoid falling into the traps of thinking: “I’m the doer and the enjoyer, and I’m supposed get some profit and adoration out of these activities,” or “There are more important things to do,” or “Let’s just give out the books and not worry about how we distribute them,” or “Something is wrong with book distribution.” These are some traps to avoid; otherwise our minds will have a chance to victimize us. Of course, the only things we can interrupt are our own devotional service, progress, and engagement in book distribution. Book distribution itself can never be stopped. But if we are inattentive or foolish, we may stop ourselves, and we will regret it later. So it’s just a question of keeping oneself in the right asso-
ciation. Regular *sāṅkīrtana* meetings give us the opportunity to discuss the pitfalls, protect ourselves, and emphasize the sources of inspiration. In that way we will always keep the right spirit. By associating with the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees, serving them, becoming a book distributor yourself, and satisfying the topmost *sāṅkīrtana* devotee, the spiritual master, we will become joyful performing this most wonderful activity of distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

**Rohiṅīsuta Dāsa:** Prabhupāda wanted big *sāṅkīrtana* meetings, which are an opportunity for all the experts to meet and speak about their realizations of book distribution. Sometimes we cannot speak about *sāṅkīrtana* all the time, although we’d like to, but today we have a book distribution day. At least once a year, one day, we can speak about books, about *sāṅkīrtana* only, and not fear that someone might not like it.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda on sāṅkīrtana newsletters and reports**

I am in due receipt of your letter and the *Sāṅkīrtana Newsletter*, and I thank you very much for it. You can continue sending me these newsletters as you publish them weekly. It is this *sāṅkīrtana* that is the life and soul of our movement.  

I have read this week’s newsletter, and I like it very much. You are doing very nice service. I have got all blessings upon you, and I am ordering all temples to send you regular news. You may send them a copy of this, my letter, . . . It is very nice, and a great service to our cause. But everyone should read it, otherwise what is the use?  

I am in due receipt of your weekly *Sāṅkīrtana Newsletter*. I am always happy to hear of increasing book sales. These reports are very encouraging to me. Our real business is to print and distribute books. By doing this business you are all becoming recognized by Kṛṣṇa. Please try to continue working so nicely for Kṛṣṇa, following the rules and regulations, chanting sixteen rounds, and studying my books, and you will finish your business in the material world in this life and enter into the spiritual world to live with Kṛṣṇa eternally.

This regular reporting is very encouraging for every one of our devotees, and I have faith in your words that next year
the figures will be far beyond what they were last year. It is the nature of the spiritual energy; it is always increasing if we just apply our energy. 58

I am in due receipt of your Saṅkīrtana Newsletter. These statistics are very nice. I like very much receiving the report of my book sales. I think it also gives encouragement to the devotees who distribute the books. 59

Suggestions for saṅkīrtana meetings

Have regularly scheduled meetings and prepare them.

Get devotees involved. Let everyone take part in discussions. Saṅkīrtana meetings shouldn’t be one-way communications. Ask different devotees to lead the meetings.

Discuss realizations and experiences and find out what devotees need to hear and talk about.

Don’t be afraid to examine motivation, enthusiasm, conviction, and techniques: Am I convinced I am Kṛṣṇa’s servant? Why preach? Why distribute books? How can I become attached to preaching? Why take so much trouble to give Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others?

Discuss the glories of distributing books.

Read relevant passages from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

Include Śrīla Prabhupāda’s letters and lectures or excerpts of special interest from previous ācāryas and present ISKCON leaders.

Bring out all the doubts, common difficulties, and problematic situations.

Create a positive, happy mood by being positive rather than negative and grave. Gravity may appear dogmatic and turn devotees off. Everyone should be encouraged to distribute books somehow or other—that’s the mood. And the purpose of the saṅkīrtana meetings is to encourage all devotees to distribute as much as they can.

Encourage all forms of book distribution—traveling, book tables, home programs, preaching to guests, mass book distribution, library and college preaching, FOLK distribution. Heavy, pushy statements or quotes can be used sparingly, like chilies, to create enough heat to activate the digestion. The more devotees derive positive inspiration from saṅkīrtana meetings, the more they will want to have them.
8.9 Maintaining health

This body belongs to Kṛṣṇa, and therefore we must always keep it in a healthy condition to the best of our ability. But if due to some past sinful activities we are suffering some bodily miseries, we should not become discouraged. Devotional service must continue under all circumstances. This material body is actually a bad bargain because it is prone to suffer, but we must make the best use of this bad bargain. That means to always be engaged in the service of Kṛṣṇa without fail.  

Dealing with disease

Keep your health in good condition and work very hard for Kṛṣṇa. That is our motto of life.

Harikeśa Swami: Sometimes saṅkīrtana devotees and saṅkīrtana leaders are extremely austere. When they fall ill, they don’t think that they require special attention, and they go on serving despite their illness. This is not good from two points of view. The first is that the illness may increase when one doesn’t take care of himself, or the disease may become a chronic condition that cannot be easily cured later. The second is that when one neglects his own illnesses he tends to be callous toward the diseases of others. He thinks, “I wouldn’t care if that were happening to me, so why should we waste time treating it?” That attitude is impersonal and will create trouble for others. So one should take care of both himself and others. But sometimes devotees become overly concerned with their bodies. Although we must take care of the body, we know that the problems we face are a product of our past sins and there’s not much we can do about them sometimes. After repeated attempts to cure ourselves, if we find it is impossible or extremely difficult, we should give up the endeavor and simply depend on the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Knowing how much to endeavor for good health requires a lot of maturity. If the temple president possesses that maturity he can nicely take care of the devotees in the temple according to their needs. The temple leaders should try to acquire that experience and maturity.

Devotee: Sometimes I am unable to go out on book distribution because of sickness or weak-mindedness. What should I do in that situation?

Harikeśa Swami: It may be just your foolishness in not taking care of yourself. Sometimes we are labeled as our own worst enemy. Overeating or not
being clean are two good ways to get sick and break down. Being in anxiety is another way to break down. Another way is having *karma* strike you. So if it is due to overeating, eat less. If it is due to uncleanliness, clean up. If it is due to anxiety, calm down. If it is due to your *karma*, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Figure out the cause, attack it directly, and engage yourself in service again as soon as you can. (From a class in Zurich on August 28, 1991)

**Taking rest**

If you are feeling tired, you may take rest. Your body is very valuable. It is dedicated to Kṛṣṇa, so you must take care of the body very carefully.  

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** Sometimes one simply has to take a nap during the day, because too little rest disturbs the intelligence. We should rest enough to be able to concentrate and feel fresh. When you feel foggy, you shouldn’t artificially push on. People will see you and think, “Who’s this nervous guy stumbling and yawning?” So you have to know when to take your break, maybe after two or three hours of distribution in the morning. But not after one hour; then you have to fight and really push on. At noon you can take a little rest, about fifteen or thirty minutes maximum. Otherwise it will go too far—one or two hours. It becomes like a delirium full of heavy dreams, and it will take a lot of energy to get yourself together again. So make it a point: twenty or thirty minutes of rest, then read, take *prasādam*, and go out again with full power.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Taking a nap may be good if you are tired, but if you are just in *māyā*, taking a nap is the worst thing because it throws you further into the mode of ignorance. If you’re really tired, then taking a nap is enlivening. Book distributors may require seven or eight hours of rest. Prabhupāda authorized that in the early days of book distribution because of the heavy physical activity required in this service. They are allowed to take more rest, so they shouldn’t feel bad about that. *Saṅkirtana* devotees should have enough physical strength to do their service throughout the day. But they shouldn’t stay up late and get up late. They should go to sleep early and get up at the regular time after getting the proper amount of sleep. That’s better for Kṛṣṇa consciousness and creates good habits that can be maintained. If one develops bad habits, they tend to remain even when one is not doing *saṅkirtana*.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** In the beginning I was scared to take rest because I thought I would forget Kṛṣṇa and wake up and be a demon. Of course, we
have to be practical on *saṅkīrtana*. When a devotee is just tired, he shouldn’t mind taking a nap; otherwise the mind becomes weak. Then *māyā* can influence him easily and agitate his mind or make him envious of the *karmīs*. If you’re tired, just take a little rest and then go out again.

**Çakṣu Dāsa:** Devotees have different bodily constitutions. On a particular day, one *saṅkīrtana* devotee may take rest at ten o’clock, whereas for another it’s better to go to sleep at eight o’clock, otherwise he’ll still be tired and won’t be able to chant and hear his rounds nicely. For him it may be better to sleep longer and chant his rounds attentively. In that way he’ll get the benefit of chanting and become spiritually enlivened to distribute books. If you take more rest you may have a few hours less to distribute, but if your extra rest was not *māyā* but simply a need of the body, then in those fewer hours you can distribute more books because you’ve chanted good rounds. We’re not machines, and we’re each different. *Saṅkīrtana* is tough on the body. You have to work a lot, you have to carry around many books, and you’re always traveling around, sleeping in the van, tolerating heat and cold. After some time you begin to feel worn down, and different bodies react differently. So if temple devotees happen to see a *saṅkīrtana* devotee taking a little extra rest, they shouldn’t forget these points.

**Eating**

Regarding the temple management, one man can be left behind to take care of the Deity, while the others go out. And you can come home at night and take *prasādam* sumptuously. Once eating sumptuously is enough to maintain body and soul together. In the daytime you may not take, and at night you can take. As a matter of fact, a devotee may take only once in a day either in the day or night, and whenever you eat, you must first offer. But I do not mean you should neglect temple life. Do not misunderstand this. But one man can remain, and as far as the other devotees are concerned, they can eat once in the day or night, after having *kīrtana*, then take six hours of sound sleep, and this will maintain their health properly. 63

**Harikeśa Swami:** *Saṅkīrtana* devotees have to eat properly. They shouldn’t eat just cold yogurt and peanuts that they throw down their throats. They should cook properly. Every *saṅkīrtana* vehicle should have a little stove and a pressure cooker. Then they can cook *kichari* with vegetables. The temple devotees should make bread and give it to them each weekend or
mail it to them so that they always have some fresh bread. The devotees should never have to eat karmī bread, because bread made by karmīs is full of karma and will destroy the enthusiasm for saṅkīrtana. Food prepared by karmīs makes one’s mind wicked. Therefore when the saṅkīrtana devotees return to the temple on the weekends, they should fill up their hearts with kīrtana and devotional association and fill up their vans with enough food supplies to last them a week. Of course, they shouldn’t eat so well that it becomes a sense-gratification party. That’s happened in the past. The devotees ate so well that they just fell asleep and never got out the door after eating. There must be a balance. They must eat enough to get strength, and then they should go out. They shouldn’t hang around in the van, but should get out the door and burn off those calories.

Back problems

Vijaya Dāsa: Book bags can certainly harm a devotee’s back. My back got really messed up carrying a book bag. Now I carry one book with me. Devotees should be concerned about their health because we want to go on distributing books for many, many years.

Premārṇava Dāsa: I was using a book bag during the first two or three years, and now I can carry one or two books. I had to stop, because my back doesn’t work anymore.

Nirguṇa Dāsa: When I work a parking lot, I use a buggy. I roll a personal shopping cart around, which holds the box or bag of books. I also use big paper grocery bags, doubled or tripled, filled with books, and I alternate the arms I carry that in. In this way I’m just holding the books in my arms and I don’t have a bag dragging down one of my shoulders. You can also have a source of books next to you, locked some place on the street, and carry a small book bag or just carry small books in your pockets and big books in your hands.

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: In the beginning I had big book bags. I used to carry around fifty or sixty books. But you can’t go on for long like that, otherwise your back will be finished. Soon we found better methods. The easiest method is driving the van right to the spot and distributing from the van. We also have two-wheeled carts like the shopping carts women use for groceries. We got in touch with the producer of such carts and chose the most solid models, which can carry a hundred or a hundred and fifty books. They
are expensive, about $300, but ideal for devotees who do big but can’t distribute right from the van. You have a big quantity of books with you, but you’re free to move.

**Transcending the body**

This body is called the temple of diseases. As long as there is no disease it is wonderful, but when there is disease it is not wonderful. So this is the temple of disease. Of course, you are all very kind upon me. Whenever I am slightly indisposed, you become concerned, and I thank you very much for such anxiety. But as far as I am concerned, I always wish only to expedite my mission of life to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western part of the world.  

I may live or die. In either case I am with Kṛṣṇa. I asked Kṛṣṇa to give me enthusiasm to continue up to death. A soldier should die fighting on the battlefield.

_Saṅkīrtana_ warriors ask themselves, “What’s the use of investing a lot of time on the body, whose duration can be finished any day? Why should I be attached to dying healthy? Better to live a short life full of intense book distribution than a long, cozy life without real absorption.” For materialists and even neophyte devotees this detached transcendental vision of sacrificing the body in the fire of the _sankīrtana-yajña_ is distant, inconceivable, even frightening. But it is purifying to hear of pure souls sacrificing their bodies for the supreme cause of devotional service.

**Śacīnandana Swami:** The history of the sage Dadhīcī shows us how to surrender the body wholeheartedly to the mission of book distribution. In a fight against the demons, the demigods asked the sage for his bones. Acting upon the advice of Lord Nārāyaṇa, the demigods approached Dadhīcī and explained that his bones were needed to constuct Īndra’s thunderbolt weapon. Prabhupāda says in his purport: “For a devotee there is no difference between living and dying because in this life a devotee engages in devotional service, and after giving up his body, he engages in the same activity in the spiritual world. His devotional service is never hindered” [6.9.55p]. But Dadhīcī joked with the demigods. He said, “Come on! The body is the dearest thing, so how can you ask me for my bones? Don’t you think this is too much to ask?” Then the demigods said to him that a sober person will
always work for the welfare of others. And soon Dadhacı revealed his mind: “Just to hear from you about religious principles, I refused to offer my body at your request. Although my body is extremely dear to me, I must give it up for your better purposes because I know it will leave me today or tomorrow. One who has no compassion for humanity in its suffering and does not sacrifice his impermanent body for the higher causes of religious principles or eternal glory is certainly pitied even by the immovable beings” [6.10.7–8]. So with body and bones, we should surrender to this eternal mission.

The eternally liberated souls also do sankirtana in the spiritual world by praising the glories of Kṛṣṇa. Complete dedication to Kṛṣṇa means learning to surrender body and bones in His service. This dedication is the qualification for going back home, back to Godhead, and we can accept it as the challenge of our human existence. Therefore Śrila Prabhupāda continues: “The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement needs many exalted, learned persons who will sacrifice their lives to revive God consciousness throughout the world. We therefore invite all men and women advanced in knowledge to join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and sacrifice their lives for the great cause of reviving the God consciousness of human society. . . . Instead of wasting one’s life for temporary bodily comforts, one should always be prepared to give up one’s life for better causes. After all, the body will be destroyed. Therefore one should sacrifice it for the glory of distributing religious principles throughout the world” [6.10.6–8p]. (From a class at the marathon festival in Zurich on January 1, 1991)

**Interviewer:** When you go out and distribute and your body is giving you trouble, how do you tolerate it?

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** Is anybody not suffering from adhyātmika-kleśa [suffering caused by the body]?

**Interviewer:** Some people more than others.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** Actually my back is finished. On Janmāśṭamī I was cooking for three or four hours, and I could hardly stay on my legs, because my back hurt a lot. Also, I cannot sleep on my back, and even lying on my side is painful. But when I have a stack of books in my arms, then my back is straight, and it’s supported by the stack, so by Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement it isn’t heavy for the back. Of course, I can’t take forty books at once. That’s too many. There’s a limit. You have to take care of the body. Sleep in a good place, eat properly, and care for your health. But in Kali-yuga, the body is bad. If you think only of your body, you will forget the mission. If you want to wait for perfect health, you will never go out because there is always something wrong with the body. If I thought of my back, I could sell
only corn flakes. Now my spiritual master has instructed me to spare my health and adjust my schedule accordingly. I always try to meditate on Śrīla Prabhupāda. What problems do we have in comparison with him? Prabhupāda was elderly, and he had to tolerate so many pains and diseases, but still he worked hard and traveled all over the world. What’s our austerity? Now we’re young, and we should invest our youthful energy fully in Kṛṣṇa’s service. If we don’t use it for Kṛṣṇa, what are we using it for?

**Harikeśa Swami:** The only problem is you have to go to sleep at night. Isn’t that a problem? All day long you’re absorbed in the ecstasy of book distribution, but finally you have to go sleep. You have to go to sleep, and you want to go to sleep, but when you wake up, it will be miserable. There you’ll be, sunk in ignorance, and you’ll have to somehow or other drag yourself out of your sleeping bag, throw cold water all over yourself, wake the body up and again absorb yourself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Sometimes people say we don’t sleep enough, but any devotee can say that sleeping is the worst part of the day. You have to wake up, and your condition is miserable, because you have to dissipate the clouds of illusion and depression that covered you when you were sleeping. It’s best to jump up and immediately attack the material energy by calling, “Hare Kṛṣṇa! Hare Kṛṣṇa! Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa! Hare Hare!” Then the clouds of illusion start being blown away. One goes to mangala-ārati, and again the spiritual energy erupts like a volcano and pours nectar over everybody. So the point is to connect with spiritual service and thus directly counterattack the material energy by using it in Kṛṣṇa’s service. (From a class in Germany on December 31, 1982)

**Rohiṇisuta Dāsa:** You may have a healthy body, but what’s the use of it if you don’t engage it in the saṅkīrtana mission? Bodily strength is meant for engagement in Kṛṣṇa’s service, especially the distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, which requires a lot of strength. But sometimes we see that precisely those who are strong don’t like to distribute books. Therefore, a good body, as Queen Kunti says, can become a hindrance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Every saṅkīrtana devotee has this realization: In this material world there is nothing good or bad; it’s all bad because everything is subject to birth, old age, disease, and death. In other ages transcendentalists entered the samādhi of nirjana bhajana or yoga trance in solitary places in mountains. Nowadays we have the saṅkīrtana samādhi of distributing Prabhupāda’s books. Someone who is really in samādhi distributing books feels no material pains. Although he may have a bad body, he doesn’t mind because he knows that in the end the body gets worse and worse anyway.
It’s an illusion to think the body will become better. Others are sacrificing their bodies in the fire of lust and sense gratification, and their bodies become burned out.

Carrying Prabhupāda’s books is a burden of love. A saṅkīrtana devotee who accepts that burden becomes protected by Lord Caitanya Himself. He becomes a brāhmaṇa and mahātmā. We should not be kṛpanās, misers hoarding our bodily strength for ourselves. A brāhmaṇa is merciful. He takes a burden of love, and he distributes it everywhere. It is not easy. It can be really heavy and difficult, but a saṅkīrtana devotee accepts it as a sacrifice. We have to sacrifice our body anyway. So why not do it for the saṅkīrtana-yajña? We will never be the loser. The more we give our energy to Kṛṣṇa’s service, the more energy we get. Kṛṣṇa is bhaktavatsala. He wants to help the devotees become more and more energetic. This is described by Rūpa Gosvāmi—ihā yasya harer dāsye karmanā manasā girā: someone who sacrifices his body, mind, intelligence, and words in the saṅkīrtana movement is a liberated person although he has a material body. A devotee who goes on distributing books year after year must be receiving the direct mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Still the fact remains that we have to carry these books; otherwise how will they be distributed? They don’t fly. Kṛṣṇa wants to see our endeavor, our sacrifice. Then Kṛṣṇa becomes pleased, and by His pleasure we get kṛṣṇa-śakti. If there is no one making this sacrifice, how can the younger devotees join and want to help? But if they see the sacrifice of the saṅkīrtana devotees, then many will come forward to help: “Why are you taking such a heavy burden? Give some of it to me.” That is actually the meaning of the saṅkīrtana movement. We should take the burden from the spiritual master. If we make such an endeavor together, Kṛṣṇa will definitely send more and more devotees—hundreds and thousands. Thus more and more books will be distributed.

Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami (From Obstacles on the Path of Devotional Service, pp. 62–65): The most shocking thing for any devotee, and a book distributor in particular, is to not be able to perform his service because of illness. At first, you do not want to accept it. You keep trying to act normal, but the material nature forces you to the floor, and you have to submit. As you lie in your sickbed, you worry that perhaps you are not actually sick; maybe you are a malingering; maybe you are not being sincere enough. You have to deal with your physical illness and not feel guilty about it. . . . The ill person has to accept the fact that he may be losing his popularity. The book distributor who becomes ill is no longer praised daily for his record-breaking feats. People begin to forget about you. You no longer feel the satisfaction that you are doing something worthwhile in Lord Caitanya’s mission.
Of course, the truth goes deeper than this, and yet a diseased person sometimes suffers disappointments because of these changes in his life. You are out of the mainstream of the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Everything continues. The marathon continues, but you are sidelined. You are being humbled.

My list of things to do  
falls to the side.  
All I do is rest.  
But one cry to Kṛṣṇa  
is worth a hundred steps  
of marching in pride.

**Question:** It seems as though when we try to give more to Kṛṣṇa than we have, He enables us to do so. This is wonderful. But I have seen many devotees burn to a crisp giving more than they had after some years. It seems that steady service would be better. Yet when we surrender, Kṛṣṇa gives more power. It must be dangerous to hold back instead of giving everything to Kṛṣṇa. I have bodily problems now because of giving more than I had for five years, but I don’t want to give up book distribution. What is the solution?

**Harikeśa Swami:** One should pace himself if he wants to succeed in service throughout his life. This should be done something like a long-distance runner. For the majority of the distance, he paces himself to run swiftly and steadily, neither jumping ahead nor falling behind. Then just before the end, he starts increasing steadily, till he’s flying at the finish line. Similarly, a devotee should pace himself as best he can and keep up a steady pace. How to do this is an individual decision. It isn’t possible for an outsider to fix your amount of service and enthusiasm. You have to do it responsibly on your own, so that you succeed in serving Kṛṣṇa throughout your life.
9

Marathons

“I think this is the first time in history that so many religious books have sold so popularly. Four thousand books in one day is a unique figure. Keep distributing as many as possible in huge quantities. This is my pleasure. We must make a large propaganda program for Kṛṣṇa consciousness by distributing these books everywhere, all over the world.”

9.1 Every devotee should experience book distribution

You are setting a very good example in that you yourself are going with the traveling party. The Vedic concept of the commander is that he must be in front in the fight, not that he sits back behind the lines.

Once a week and during marathons

Rohiniṣuta Dāsa: Everyone should go out at least sometime. Many religious people are enthusiastic to distribute their literature, so what to speak of us, who have Kṛṣṇa’s absolute knowledge in the form of Śrila Prabhupāda’s books. Our book distribution benefits not only the people but also us. Even if devotees go out and distribute only a few books, they get such a nectarine taste for Kṛṣṇa consciousness and so much preaching spirit that they will do whatever they do otherwise with much more enthusiasm. Reading, chanting, serving, and associating with other devotees all become more intense and ecstatic if we connect ourselves with book distribution.

Gaurī Devī Dāsī: Going out on sankīrtana is the process for killing the deep-rooted enjoying spirit in the heart. Therefore book distribution is crucial because without it, devotees will never understand the process of giving everything to Kṛṣṇa, and the purification will be much slower. If all the devotees could take up just a little book distribution, they’d benefit so much. I’m convinced of it. Prabhupāda said everybody should learn the art
of book distribution, and I can see why he said that. I think we should really strongly encourage everybody to do that. All the older devotees who distributed books but now have other services should take it up again one day a week and help the younger devotees, because without that help the younger devotees will never learn it. That’s what we’re here for. That’s our job. That’s part of our service to Prabhupāda, to purify the whole society. We’re not talking about just getting some results. Now we’re talking about helping people become pure devotees, really serious first-class devotees who have a chance to go home, back to Godhead, in this lifetime.

Purūrvā Dāsa: Maybe it’s better to go out one week a month than one day a week because one has more opportunities to get into it. If one goes out for only a few hours once a week, it may be difficult to get into the mood of book distribution. But if one goes out for a week, then the first day may be difficult, but the next day one is already in the mood and can build up his expertise. Of course, one cannot force everyone to go out. We have devotees who become too disturbed if they have to go out or who just don’t know how to behave and deal with the public. Other devotees are physically weak or have some important service like pūjā or organizing festivals and book production. But the general understanding is that everyone should know how to distribute books. It’s a good principle and healthy for the temple atmosphere.

Haridāsa Thākura Dāsa: By going out regularly a devotee experiences fighting māyā face to face and tastes the nectar of book distribution and encounters the problems involved. By this direct preaching he sees where he’s at. Living and doing service in the temple, we may forget how much we are in māyā and what our position is. But when we go out, we can immediately see our anarthas and consciously begin to counteract them. Book distribution is purifying; you can experience instant purification just by going out and surrendering to the saṅkīrтana-yajña. Regular book distribution straightens one out. It’s like the basic training in an army; everybody needs basic training and afterwards may perform other services. So everybody should experience book distribution because we’re a saṅkīrтana army. It makes the saṅkīrтana army strong if devotees in all departments have sufficient saṅkīrтana experience and can thus cooperate to push on saṅkīrтana.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: At least during the December marathon and even once a week everybody should go out and distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to get the higher taste of book distribution and witness for himself how people need the books, want the books, and appreciate the books.
**Jiva Dāsa:** On *saṅkīrtana* you are immediately confronted with your own reflection—you see people’s reactions to you. If you’re materially attached, you’ll get corresponding reactions. People will reject you, or troubles will arrive. And if you’re pure in heart, people tend to take books more easily, and you don’t even know how it happens. In either case, it’s good for all the devotees to experience book distribution. Then they don’t forget how people are suffering and struggling in the material world. Therefore every devotee should be given the opportunity to go out. And if anyone is hesitant, he should see by our example that book distribution is ecstatic and joyful. Nothing compares to the joy of giving Prabhupāda’s books to a conditioned soul. If we know how pleased the spiritual master is and how the spirit soul gains from the book, we’ll love to go out. Even if we distribute only one book, it’s worth going out. That one book starts a person’s spiritual life, and it doesn’t matter to that person if it was the only book you distributed that day. Even if you distribute nothing, people benefit just by seeing or touching a book, what to speak of buying and reading one. In any case, at least you learn to appreciate this service.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** Saying that everyone should go out regularly doesn’t mean all the devotees have to go to the Berlin shopping street and do battle in the land of passion. It means that for every type of person there’s some method of book distribution. A timid person may go out with a little book table. Someone else might travel with the book distributors and do the cooking or cleaning. Our farm devotees pile up the stacks of books for us to reduce our work when we return on the weekends. And if some devotees aren’t disposed toward book distribution, they can perform *harināma* or distribute magazines. All devotees can be engaged in the book distribution mission and feel part of it. That can develop when we work together to whatever capacity we can.

**Harikeśa Swami:** We have the once-a-week program, but sometimes devotees find excuses not to do it. Those who do it find that it’s blissful and useful. Everybody who comes up in Kṛṣṇa consciousness from the ages of eighteen to twenty should distribute books for two years and get some basic *saṅkīrtana* experience, like going to the army.

**Book distribution — part of a devotee’s training**

**Harikeśa Swami:** Book distribution will benefit the new devotees in many ways. They will become enlivened, ecstatic, and regulated in sleeping and rising. They’ll be able to chant properly and will associate with *saṅkīrtana*
devotees. Those devotees being trained in book distribution will become strong in spiritual life. If all the devotees have a connection with book distribution, they become strong together. They will also become interested in reading the books, because they distribute them.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Book distribution is the best training one can get in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. New devotees can do it without waiting for initiation (unlike cooking or work on the altar). It is a most wonderful austerity, and it gives a spiritual taste. I never had as much time for reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books as I had on saṅkīrtana. We were reading two or three hours a day in our sankīrtana van. Plus you get the blissful association of inspired devotees. So it is the best introduction to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, provided you are given some personal care.

Jīva Dāsa: Book distribution is the best training because it gives us the most intense experience of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Book distribution teaches us what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is all about. In the bhakta program we learn the basics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and hear about book distribution, and then we have to do it. We learn the principle of accepting a spiritual master and following his instruction to preach. So what does that mean? We hear that book distribution is the best preaching, so we follow his instruction and try it. Not everyone succeeds in continuing book distribution, but at least by trying it he will have a deep appreciation for it no matter what service he does later. He will know what it means to go out six to ten hours a day, and he can bring that consciousness to any service and perform it nicely. So book distribution has to be there as the basic training. Everyone should try it for one or two years. Then he will never give up his relationship to the sankīrtana mission, and he will go out again during the marathons or once a week or whenever.

Navīnā-nirada Dāsa: Sometimes we hear the accusation that a saṅkīrtana devotee is rough, unpolished, and misbehaved. But then how is it that he can distribute thousands of books to cultured people, common people, and students? Actually, when you are out on saṅkīrtana you have to become the most sensitive, tolerant, polite, and refined person there is, especially the most humble person, because some people just walk over your face, and you have to accept that. Saṅkīrtana is the best school for developing the twenty-six qualities of a devotee. Therefore everyone joining ISKCON should go on traveling saṅkīrtana for at least one or two years to get some experience and good training. In this way devotees will learn how to preach.
Not that they think, “Saṅkīrtana is for just a few young devotees, the passionate ones who like to run around and talk to everybody.” We should guard against such misconceptions and go out ourselves. One will soon learn how to present this most important knowledge in an interesting, individual way and be able to convince all kinds of people to appreciate and buy our books.

**Sarvātmā Dāsa:** Before you even try doing any service, you should try full-time book distribution. Then your real, spiritual tendencies will show up, not just your material tendencies, and later you will be able to perform any service in a much more peaceful state of mind.

**Jāhnava Devī Dāsī:** There are many nice ways to serve Kṛṣṇa, but book distribution is most effective in a devotee’s life. I know it made a huge difference in my life. At one point I got kidnapped, and my abductors tried to deprogram me. Honestly, I wonder if I’d have managed to pull through that experience if I hadn’t been going out full-time on book distribution. I had been a devotee only a year when they snatched me, but because I had been doing book distribution for a few months, I was fixed up and somehow able to defeat the whole brainwashing trip they threw at me. I don’t know if I’d have been as strong without that training in book distribution. I am very grateful for that.

**Dayānidhi Dāsa:** In the first few years of spiritual life we need good training—brahmacāri training, preacher training, and especially book distribution training, just as Prabhupāda requested. The value of book distribution in our lives cannot be overestimated, because this is the service that brings us very close to Prabhupāda. Printing and distributing books was Prabhupāda’s very life and his most important service to his spiritual master. Of course, if we preach such things we should ourselves try to do them. Leaders should preach to the devotees this way but shouldn’t force every devotee to do book distribution. Some will be able to, others not. But we should have clear minds about these points and set the example, and then devotees will follow. That doesn’t mean everybody will become a book distributor, but there will be a good spirit of cooperation, and everything will go on nicely.

### 9.2 The importance of everyone going out

Regarding the temple management, one man can be left behind to take care of the Deity while the others go out. ³
Why it’s important for one’s spiritual life

My dear boys and girls, you are working so hard for broadcasting the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, and thus my Guru Mahārāja will be pleased upon you. Certainly my Guru Mahārāja will bestow his blessings a thousand times more than me, and that is my satisfaction. . . . Everyone should go with the sankīrtana party as soon as possible. 4

Nirguṇa Dāsa: The reason I distribute books is because Prabhupāda wanted it. That’s what I was taught when I entered the movement, and that’s what most devotees did. I was brought up in that mood, and I kept it even though now practically no one distributes books in some places. Because the training was there, I continued, and because Prabhupāda wanted it more than anything. Also, it’s the best way to stay out of māyā. Sometimes many entanglements and unfortunate exchanges among the devotees become disturbing. The best thing one can do in such a situation is to go on sankīrtana. Book distribution will cure all the māyā because it’s also the greatest nectar. What really keeps me going is I’m greedy for bliss. Sankīrtana elevates me off the material platform. It is the best way to overcome material desires, doubts, and fears, and to achieve the nectar for which we are always anxious.

Śaṅkara-paṇḍita Dāsa: It’s a good opportunity to prove our faith in our spiritual master. We can prove we’re loyal disciples ready to make sacrifices for his pleasure.

Guru-śakti Dāsa: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes that Mahārāja Parīkṣit prepared for death by listening to Śukadeva Gosvāmī. I had a realization about this while I was out during the marathon. All temple presidents know how difficult it is to leave everything behind and just stand on the street and forget everything you usually have to do. I realized that it can be compared to Mahārāja Parīkṣit’s situation. He had to leave everything suddenly. So it is just as if death comes. I had to ask myself, “Will I be able to fix my mind on Kṛṣṇa? Am I ready to do it?” And I realized that I am far from ready, because sankīrtana means full concentration on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master. The results we get are just the by-products of our absorption in Kṛṣṇa. Living in the temple is like going to school, and at the end of the year there is a test—the marathon. As soon as we go out on the street to distribute books, we are able to check how far we’ve advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa:** Those who don’t take part in the Prabhupāda marathon are missing the most ecstatic opportunities of their Kṛṣṇa conscious lives. Even if there’s some struggling, the strength you gain from it will last throughout the year. Who said spiritual life would be easy anyway? At least we can realize that we have to make much more advancement, and that makes us humble, pure, and ecstatic.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** The marathon mood has to be cultivated. It’s not just once a year—then we forget about it. Saṅkīrtana is the yajña of the age. There’s a direct connection between chanting rounds and distributing books. Everyone who goes out on marathons realizes that when he does his most intense book distribution, then he chants his best rounds. That’s the realization we have to get from marathons. They give us spiritual strength, and we begin to long for marathon situations that intensify our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**Why it’s important for ISKCON**

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** Performing the Prabhupāda marathon is a high point for each temple, and everyone should concentrate on distributing books. That solves all problems, which are mostly mental, because everyone unites in the endeavor to please Śrīla Prabhupāda.

**Rohiṁṣuta Dāsa:** Sometimes we tend to become complacent in our spiritual lives. We perform our services routinely and think that’s all we can do or all we want to do. So we may lose our broader vision of the preaching mission and forget that there are higher levels of Kṛṣṇa conscious bliss and nectar. Therefore we need extraordinary situations that push us beyond our self-imposed limits. That special push is the marathon. Regular book distributors must intensify their meditation and try to distribute more books in a more fully absorbed way. Other devotees who don’t go out regularly get to leave their responsibilities and dive into the nectar ocean of book distribution. We all learn to appreciate the same goal, and thus united we can understand that all services are important. Whatever service is assigned to us is meant to be a contribution to the saṅkīrtana mission.

**Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa:** Marathons are important for the BBT because extraordinary numbers of books are distributed. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to double book distribution each year. That also doubles the laksṇī going to Māyāpuri. So at least during the marathons we should double our regular results.
Harināmānanda Dāsa: To go out alone on saṅkīrtana is quite difficult. You have to push yourself. You have to overcome many mental and practical obstacles and do everything alone. Therefore saṅkīrtana devotees go out in groups. Devotees help and inspire each other. So just imagine if everyone in the yatras go out. What an intense atmosphere! That happens during the December marathon. Those who don’t go out perform the services of three or four people in the temple. Saṅkīrtana-yajña is the yuga-dharma, and the more intensely it is performed, the more the yajña-puruṣa, Lord Caitanya, is pleased. During the marathon our meditations intensify. The temple devotees meditate on the devotees distributing books, and the distributors meditate on each other and on the devotees staying back worshiping the yajña-puruṣa on the altar. By the combined efforts of all the devotees, Lord Caitanya becomes pleased, because saṅkīrtana means a combined effort to glorify the Lord. By Lord Caitanya’s mercy miracles can happen. All the devotees distribute more than usual in this intense period of the year. People buy books from whatever devotee they meet. Even a new, inexperienced devotee can distribute fifty to one hundred books a day. Formerly, such results were sensational, but now even a new bhakta can do it on his first marathon. This is due to the purified atmosphere built up through the many marathons that have been performed over the last twenty years.

9.3 Marathons mean extra endeavor

Some day people will come to understand what valuable knowledge they have received. It is transcendental literature. Nobody can challenge it. It is done so nicely, without any spot, the spotless Purāṇa. Please continue like this to print books in all the languages for the benefit of suffering, misdirected humanity.  

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Once a year we make a concentrated effort to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. We focus on this. If you focus the sun’s rays through a magnifying glass and direct them towards a dry object, the intense heat creates a blaze. Similarly, we focus the saṅkīrtana-yajña through the magnifying glass of the marathon, and that invokes the Lord’s presence most effectively in this age.

Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa: Marathon means single-minded determination, no other desire than to please Prabhupāda by distributing huge quantities of his books. When Advaita Ācārya and Haridāsa Thākura were petitioning the Lord to descend, they weren’t going to try for a few days and then quit.
No. They were determined—“Lord Caitanya must come!” They were completely fixed in their understanding and determination. When the devotees are determined to do something wonderful for the pleasure of guru and Kṛṣṇa, they become empowered. We realize that we are helpless and dependent on the Lord to accomplish something extraordinary in the marathon. We have no strength, power, or devotion. But we have one thing—our desire. That every living entity has. When one’s desire is directed to Lord Caitanya’s devotional service, the Lord becomes inclined to His devotee and grants him all the required potencies.

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** After being in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for some time we tend to become content with the way we practice spiritual life. “Well, I’m living in the temple and doing my service.” The mode of goodness settles in. We follow our own program. We take Kṛṣṇa consciousness as an ordinary affair. But Kṛṣṇa arranges to show us that everything is not all right. No one can be happy unless the Supreme Lord is satisfied. And the Lord is always in anxiety over the ignorant living entities rotting in the material world. Therefore we cannot be happy unless we show compassion for the suffering conditioned souls. How can we have peace of mind without caring for them? That’s why Kṛṣṇa created the marathon. For content, complacent devotees it may be a disturbance to go out and meet the conditioned souls. But it’s not only for the benefit of the conditioned souls, it’s also for our benefit. If we go out during the marathon, we witness the miracles of Lord Caitanya. In one sense, we still have doubts. We don’t really appreciate the mercy. To become really convinced we need additional experiences of Kṛṣṇa’s internal energy. The marathon provides the best opportunity for everyone to get the highest realizations and have the most intense experiences of the year. It reconfirms our faith in Kṛṣṇa’s internal energy. It is the greatest effort to push on the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Therefore we put everything else aside, minimize other programs, and channel everything into the marathon effort of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness through transcendental book distribution.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** We try to go out longer and distribute more. It doesn’t mean pushing the people. It means pushing ourselves.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** From the beginning of ISKCON’s book distribution era, when the devotees performed the marathon for only two or three days, it was obvious that this special endeavor was most pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda. And because the devotees pleased Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa so much, they became increasingly empowered. Within a few years Kṛṣṇa
consciousness spread around the world by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy. He was always on a marathon. Therefore we should follow his example and get his blessings. That’s how devotees become miraculously empowered—and not only the devotees but also the people who get the books. Normally they wouldn’t be attracted to transcendental knowledge or be interested in spiritual life, but during the marathon even the most unlikely creatures suddenly buy Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. It’s Śrīla Prabhupāda’s miracle. Through his transcendental arrangement, once a year, the devotees all over the world are intensely meditating on book distribution, and people are affected by the intense, purified atmosphere that’s created, and consciously or unconsciously they tune in, and Lord Caitanya takes over the scene. But it starts with the devotees’ sincere desire to make the special endeavor.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** Caṇakya Paṇḍita says that even the slightest fraction of time cannot be purchased back with millions of dollars. Therefore even a moment lost without absorption in Kṛṣṇa must be calculated as the greatest loss in life (SB 3.10.11). So we cannot afford to space-out on book distribution. Every second is most valuable. “Don’t waste your life. Serve guru and Kṛṣṇa!”—that’s the mood during the marathon.

**Sarvātmā Dāsa:** Marathon actually means running 42 kms. The people running marathons train long and hard every day and sometimes run even longer distances to overcome fatigue and lack of breath and endurance. So we should train for our marathon our whole life by distributing as many books as possible, and we should know that our time is measured. Death is the finish line, and that will be the final measure of how well we did the marathon.

**Purūravā Dāsa:** The marathon is important for devotees who otherwise don’t go out. It’s their chance to set aside normal duties and taste the real nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, preaching and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. For devotees distributing books year round, marathons are their opportunity to surrender more. Sometimes we become complacent and think, “I do forty or fifty books a day.” The marathon forces us to surrender more. So it’s beneficial for all the devotees. Nothing purifies the temple atmosphere and enlivens the devotees as much as a good marathon that everyone takes part in.

**Kalpavāsinī Devī Dāsī:** Marathon means making a special endeavor for the spiritual master. Our strength is limited. We cannot go out for ten hours
each day of the year. But in the marathon we can concentrate our energy and go out ten hours a day for a few weeks. We produce an extraordinary result for the pleasure of the spiritual master. We don’t waste time or energy. And by our special endeavor to please the spiritual master we realize the strength is coming from him. Every day during the marathon there’s a tough period usually around noon. So I sit down and listen to part of a lecture by my spiritual master, only five or ten minutes, even during the marathon, and that gives me the strength to go out for many hours more.

Cakṣu Dāsa: A marathon is the best time to get the higher taste of book distribution. To get more books out, we have to increase our desire to do that. And to increase our desire, we need to intensify our chanting. Therefore the marathon forces us to be more intense in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By social arrangement we voluntarily force ourselves to transcend our usual pace in devotional service and become more intense. Thus we increase our book distribution and get a higher taste for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Haridāsa Thākura Dāsa: Marathons are a special chance to make more advancement in a short time. As it’s said in the Bhāgavatam, “What is the use of a long life if there is no spiritual consciousness?” During a marathon we can make more advancement than we can in years of lazy consciousness. In a marathon everyone becomes intense: “Let me give as much energy as I can to Kṛṣṇa.” We don’t give māyā a chance. As soon as māyā comes we say, “No, forget it! I want to serve Kṛṣṇa now.”

Premārṇava Dāsa: Some may say a marathon means forcing, pushing, and burning out the devotees. It should mean stepping out of the daily routine. I’ve had no bad experiences. But if the word marathon is used all the time, it loses its importance. Of course, we should be on a marathon all the time, but when we speak of marathon, we really mean the special endeavor to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. If every week a marathon is declared for some special reason—like a cleaning marathon or a lakṣmi marathon—devotees might become fed up, and when the real marathon comes, it won’t seem as intense. Aside from that, the marathon is an extremely nice opportunity to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. We have no other idea than distributing books, and by our endeavor we become powerfully determined: vyavasāya-ātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana.

Navīna-nirada Dāsa: If we’d always remember what Śrīla Prabhupāda said about book distribution and how much it pleases him, how much he feels
indebted to devotees who take up this mission, then we’d understand more and more the importance of the book distribution. Time is short. We shouldn’t delay. Otherwise it will be too late. We’ll have an old body before we know it and be incapable of the strenuous activity of book distribution. Economic crises or wars or other difficulties will present themselves. Therefore we should take the opportunity now while we’re young and have enough books and good facilities to distribute the mercy to everyone; and at least during the marathon everyone should try it.

**Jiva Dasa:** Always try to increase, because the mercy of the books is unlimited. Find ways to increase the quality and the quantity of your distribution. Don’t think that what we’re doing is good enough. It’s important to try to increase because the spiritual energy is ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam, ever-increasing. We can’t say, “That’s enough,” because Kṛṣṇa’s potencies are unlimited. We must try to realize that.

**Harikesa Swami:** Everybody has his service, obligations, duty, and mission—everybody knows what has to be done. Now it’s a question of doing it, and I’m sure that will be no problem: we have many mahārathis here. And so many mahārathinīs! New category—mahārathinīs. Formerly there was no such thing, but now we have so many. Now you have to use your great personalities. What’s the use of standing around being a great personality? You have to do something. Now is the time to do it and do it well and do it better and become happy. Why is it that everybody’s happy during the marathon? It’s because we’re surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, finally. After ten months of not surrendering, we’re finally surrendering and becoming blissful. And then māyā returns on January 1st. We think, “Enough surrender,” and everything’s finished. But I remember one year in Germany. We did better in January than in December. Usually everybody thinks, “Now it’s hopeless; there’s no way; it’s impractical—bah!” But that year we forgot to think that way, and everything went better. That is spiritual energy, and everything else is material. So we request everyone to kindly take the marathon seriously, then all perfection will come. We guarantee it. It’s a no-money-back guarantee, because you’re not paying anything. But just go out and try it, and you will be amazed what happens. (From a class in Switzerland on October 23, 1984)

### 9.4 Competition

If there is a transcendental competition for increasing the sale of books, that is good. If a person buys one book, his life
may be turned. That is the best preaching work. But everything must be done in the spirit of cooperation, without any irritation. 

Śrīla Prabhupāda on transcendental competition

You state that you will be the largest distributor of BTG in the world. This statement is very pleasing to me because more than anything I want that my students should distribute my books and literatures profusely all over the world, and this should be our foremost concern, how to do it properly. But one thing, now you must try very hard to live up to your promise of becoming the largest distributor.

Competition and a profiteering spirit are always there in the living entity. It is not that they can be artificially removed in some manner. Factually we saw in Russia that by their removing competition and the profit-calculation from society, the people were not at all happy. So we shall not expect that we are any different. The only difference is that our profit is for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure and our competition is how to please Kṛṣṇa more than someone else. Even among the gopīs there is a competition to please Kṛṣṇa, and there is envy also. But this envy is not material, it is transcendental. They are thinking, “Oh, she has done something more wonderful than me. That is very nice. But now let me do something even more wonderful.” Like that. So I am pleased that you desire a competition with your Godbrothers to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world.

I am greatly pleased to hear from you that you have increased the book selling five times more in the Chicago center. That is very good news to me. Yes, there must always be competition. That gives life. That cannot be separated from life. Sanātana dharma means the strong will utilize the energy of the weak, the weak must serve the strong. That we see everywhere, is it not? Who can deny it? So that competitive spirit makes us strong, otherwise it is a society of weak men only, and what is the good of such a society? But if you ask anyone, “Are you weak or strong?” he must answer that he is weak—he cannot control even his toothache, what to speak of his death. Therefore, in fact, it is a society of weak
men. Everyone is weak before Durgā Devī, or the material energy. If you see her picture, the foolish materialist is being held by the claws of her tiger carrier, while she pierces him to death with her trident weapon. She has ten arms, each with a weapon. She is so strong, but we are so weak that simply by being pierced with her trident—the three-fold miseries—the foolish materialists are all defeated. And before Kṛṣṇa, Durgā Devī is very weak—Kṛṣṇa is the controller of Durgā. So Kṛṣṇa is the strongest—sattvāṁ sattvavatāṁ aham: “I am the strength of the strong.” Therefore—being weak—it is the eternal occupational duty of the living entity to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, that’s all. In surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, if everyone does it, still the brāhmaṇas will be served by the lower castes, the kings will be served by vaiśyas and śūdras, the vaiśyas will be served by the śūdras, and the śūdras will serve all higher castes. There is still utilizing the weak by the strong. But feeling themselves always very much weak in comparison to Kṛṣṇa, the whole society serves the strongest, therefore there will be no envy of the stronger by the weaker class of men. So perfect society, or Vedic society, does not eliminate competition—competition, stronger and weaker, must be there—but it eliminates envy, because everyone is weak before Kṛṣṇa. Is that clear?

Regarding your other question, “Should we become detached from the results of our activities, or should we simply become attached to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa?” the answer is that both of these philosophies are right. One should not be attached to his personal achievement. But if one is attached in order to please his spiritual master, then it is all right: unattached to my benefit, attached to Kṛṣṇa’s benefit. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means attachment for Kṛṣṇa and detachment from personal benefit, that’s all. But in any case, if there is a fight amongst yourselves over these things—book distribution, competition—you should not develop ill-feeling. That depends on the persons. If ill-feeling is there, then stop it, and all together chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Those who are behind should eulogize those who are advanced. If you become envious, that is material. Attachment, detachment—these things are natural. If you become attached to something, you become detached from the other thing. So we can estimate our advancement in this way. This is the test. In the
Kršṇa consciousness movement there is no question of enviousness, hatred, things like that. Material life means hatred for Kršṇa and desire for matter. So we have to convert ourselves. When one becomes Kršṇa conscious, actually, he does not even hate material things because he becomes expert in using everything for Kršṇa. Kršṇa consciousness is so nice. We do not hate anything material because we have learned from our disciplic succession how to utilize material things for Kršṇa’s service. Actually, bhakti means realization of the Supreme, and this means increasing attachment for Him and reforming of detachment, or hating material name and fame. 9

Sometimes we may differ, but Kršṇa is the center. Just like in Vrindaban, there is Rādhārāṇī’s party and there is Candrāvalī’s party. Kršṇa is the center of both parties. So even there is competition between the parties, but they coincide in Kršṇa. 10

The transcendental competition is nice. If Jayatīrtha Prabhu defeats Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja, then Tamāl will have heart failure. Go on selling books. My Guru Mahārāja was very much anxious about selling books and preaching, so you are pleasing him by this flood of books all over the world. Thank you. 11

In competition in the material world one thinks, “My competitor can do so much, how can I bring him down?” In the spiritual world there is appreciation: “He has done so nicely, I could not do as well.” 12

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself took part in competitions

It is Lord Caitanya’s blessing upon you that you are executing His order, prthivite āche yata nāgarādi grāma sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma. You are doing this very nicely. I heard that the western zone distributed more than your Rādhā-Dāmodara traveling sāṅkīrtana parties. Is there a competition between you and Jayatīrtha Prabhu? That is nice. The BBT says that they are publishing at the speed of my translating and that you will distribute at the pace of their publishing. That’s nice. But still I am ahead in my translation
work. They now owe me the Sixth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. I am working on the Seventh Canto already. ⑬

I have been receiving so many reports about how [you] my disciples in the San Francisco temple cannot be surpassed by anyone in distributing my books. Sometimes you are selling as many as seventy Kṛṣṇa books daily. So if this is true then certainly when I return to the U.S., I must come and stay in your temple. By distributing my books profusely you are giving me great encouragement to translate. And you are all helping me to fulfill the order which Guru Mahārāja gave me. So I am so much grateful to you, and I am sure Kṛṣṇa will bless you a million times over for doing this work. ⑭

I am in an especially cheerful mood to hear that our books and literatures are now being widely increased, but I don't think you will be able to approach near to the large amount of books being distributed by our California centers, especially in San Francisco. But if you can, then I shall certainly come there to Detroit and live there and translate there. I want to go and stay wherever they are selling the most books. But I do not think that anyone will become better than San Francisco. ⑮

With pleasure I have noted that you are rivaling the West Coast centers in the matter of selling books. But I do not think that anyone can do better than they are doing. But you may try very hard, and if you are sincere enough then you may be the biggest distributor of my books, and then I shall surely come to your Cleveland center to live there in that new house. When Kṛṣṇa sees that His devotee is sincere, there is nothing He cannot do to help that sincere devotee to advance towards Him. So I am engladdened to understand from your words that you are serving Kṛṣṇa very sincerely, and you may know it for certain that in this way you shall very soon go back home, back to Godhead. ⑯

Realizations about competition

Harikeśa Swami: It doesn’t matter whether someone is capable of doing ten thousand books a day and another person can do only ten. That’s not
the point. The point is that one has gone out—taken his valuable time and tried to distribute some books to the fallen souls. If someone has even tried to do that, Kṛṣṇa is pleased with him. Then he is glorious. Kṛṣṇa is pleased with all His devotees. Not everybody can be number one. Only one man can be number one. And it is difficult. It’s a lot of work. There is a transcendental competition. It’s just as glorious to come in number two, number three, and number four. This is all glorious in the eyes of the Lord and the spiritual master, and he accepts us all equally for the wonderful service that has been done. (From a class in Zurich on December 31, 1989)

**Gītā-govinda Dāsa:** Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “Our competition is how to please Kṛṣṇa more than someone else. There must always be competition. That gives life. That cannot be separated from life. The perfect society doesn’t eliminate competition, but it eliminates envy, because everyone is weak before Kṛṣṇa.” Competition is the thing that pulls me up from the mental platform to the spiritual platform. When I’m on the mental platform and I listen to my mind saying things like “My body is so tired,” or “Time goes so slow,” or “There are no people here,” then the competitive spirit makes me forget all those things and elevates me to the platform where I can just keep chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra while I go from person to person.

**Puruṣāvā Dāsa:** Usually we aren’t purely motivated to do sankīrtana simply for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure and the pleasure of the spiritual master. Devotees who derive their sole inspiration from those sources are rare. And even they cultivate the competitive spirit, so what to speak of us. Competition is important. It pushes the devotees to exert themselves, and ultimately Kṛṣṇa is the winner anyway, because sankīrtana is glorification of Him. Kṛṣṇa is always number one.

**Navina-nirada Dāsa:** Prabhupāda said we have to have competition, otherwise we become lazy. During the Prabhupāda marathon, when everyone is trying to do big, one is forced to surrender more. When one is forced to surrender more to Kṛṣṇa, he automatically thinks of Kṛṣṇa more intensely and begs Kṛṣṇa more sincerely for His mercy. Thus Kṛṣṇa naturally becomes the center. If we try to do something extraordinary, we have to absorb ourselves by praying to Kṛṣṇa for the intelligence and His mercy to do it. Kṛṣṇa says, ye yathā mām prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham. Kṛṣṇa will give us intelligence. We should pray to do a thousand books a day. That seems impossible, but if we sincerely try and pray, then maybe we will start to do five hundred books a day, and that certainly pleases the spiritual master.
**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** From the very beginning I always wanted to know how much the other devotees distributed. For example, I wanted to know how much the leader distributed when he was out the first week, how much after a half year, and how much after one year. I was impressed by these Vaiṣṇavas and wanted to follow in their footsteps. I would tell myself, “If they can do it, why shouldn’t I be able to do it?” I had heard that the most fallen have the greatest claim to the mercy of Gaura-Nitāi. So I thought, “Why shouldn’t I take the opportunity?”

**Jāhnavā Devī Dāsī:** Prabhupāda said “transcendental competition,” and I think that is nice, but only to a degree. I know that I competed with the men; for a time I just wanted to do bigger than any of the brahmacāris. I really thrived on that. But I could see how it was contaminating, and it was such a pathetic reason to go out. Competition should be there, but along with the proper preaching of the philosophy so that the devotees never get carried away by it. I have a competitive nature, so I can easily get carried away. There can be negative effects—attachment, frustration, discouragement. Devotees have to understand that the competition is just a way to encourage everyone.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** No one is forced to take part in the competition. If somebody cannot stand competition, he must not compete. He can just do his distribution and not compare himself with others. But for most devotees it’s an inspiring factor. For example, most devotees are eager to see the sankīrtana list every weekend and look up their positions and the position of the temple. As far as I can see, it’s inspiring. And in the *World Saṅkīrtana Newsletter* we can see how the whole ISKCON world competes. More and more temples report their results, and it’s exciting and contagious. If the mood weren’t spiritual, then not so many temples would take part. They’d say, “It’s material, and we’re spiritual. We don’t want to give our results.” But no, it’s transcendental, ever-increasing bliss.

**Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa:** If one would say, “We don’t have to read the results because the competition is material,” that would be artificial. It requires spiritual vision. One shouldn’t be afraid to compete in Kṛṣṇa’s service, because competition exists on the spiritual plane, too, but in a pure, pleasant form meant to please Kṛṣṇa. And for pleasing Kṛṣṇa you can never do enough. His service is ever-increasing. Therefore we shouldn’t artificially avoid competition or think it will become material. If we see it as material, Kṛṣṇa will help us purify our material conception of competition.
A transcendental competition is a wonderful way to purify such a material conception.

**Tapas Dāsa:** *Saṅkīrtana* isn’t an ordinary activity. Therefore the competition in the marathon isn’t mundane. It’s not competing for a place in the material world. There’s no question that a marathon is mundane; otherwise how is it that everyone feels purified afterward? The purification is the reward and the real success.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** We should be concerned with how much we’re doing and not just be impersonal. “Well, it is all up to Kṛṣṇa. It has nothing to do with me.” We are monitoring our performance of the service so that we strive to do it better. But everybody has his style. Not everybody is competitive. Take me, for example. I just compete with myself, because when I compete against others, I become attached, envious, and offensive. But those with a good spirit become really fired up.

**A case history of a marathon competition**

Prior to the 1989 Prabhupāda Marathon, the North European BBT printed a newspaper called *The Marathon Tribune*, with photos of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the book distributors and statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *saṅkīrtana* leaders about their preparations and goals. One statement was a short article entitled “A Bold Declaration”:

“There is no chance of the Swiss *yatra*’s taking home the victory of this year’s marathon competition again,” says Viśva-deva Dāsa, temple president in Heidelberg. “We will mobilize all possible and impossible forces and all moving and nonmoving distributors to get back the trophy.”

Responding to this statement, Harināmānanda sent the following letter to the German *saṅkīrtana* meeting held just before the marathon:

For your information, Switzerland will have thirty devotees out distributing. That means we are planning to double the results of our *vyāsa-pūjā* marathon in October. This will be the biggest marathon in history. O *saṅkīrtana* warriors of Germany, you seem to have forgotten your territorial dimensions. Your *kṣetra* is ten times bigger than the Swiss and has ten times more inhabitants (GDR not included). That
means ten times as many books should be distributed there. That’s your responsibility. Admittedly, in this marathon you are only sixty devotees, but you have ten times the bigger battlefield, where hardly anybody knows these books. All over the world the Germans are famous as the best experts, fanatics, and fighters. And this is also expected of you in this marathon. That means you have to DOUBLE us. [Until this point, while this letter was read at the meeting, the German saṅkīrtana devotees were laughing. Now, no more laughter.] It is very important that Germany blooms completely. Germany is the country in Europe that the whole world is watching and by which the whole world will become inspired. The Swiss are not taken seriously because “the Swiss are special,” they say. When the German book distribution blasts the borders, then the other yatras will have no excuse. Therefore you have to be conscious that you have the greatest responsibility. No one within the three worlds will be able to stop the overwhelming advance of Germany’s book distribution: no king, no law, no police, no demon, no rakṣasa, nothing and nobody, only the devotees themselves. So we hope that as a start, you will at least win the BATTLE of December, because this year you lost the WAR long ago [referring to both yatras’ total yearly scores].

Viśvadeva Dāsa: It helps if the top book distributor in the world sends a letter and hurls a challenge that would make any self-respecting ksatriya’s blood boil in rage. And it was nothing but a reminder to meet the actual challenge to double it. Interestingly enough, after this indirect blessing, Germany increased drastically and defeated Switzerland in the December marathon, never to be defeated again by Switzerland in December.

9.5 Quotas

Now it is up to all of you how to manage. If you cannot increase what I have given you, you should at least maintain it. ¹⁷

I very much like this program of the standing orders. Try to increase it up to fifty thousand such orders from the libraries. ¹⁸
Harikēśa Svāmi: One should perform *sankīrtana* without fruitive desires. Sometimes the temple authorities think that by giving the devotees quotas, it will increase or maintain their level of distribution. But all results are up to Kṛṣṇa, and despite their having a big quota, they will not be able to fulfill it without Kṛṣṇa’s sanction. Therefore quotas are often counterproductive. They make the devotees fruitive. Devotees think they have to perform in a certain manner for their devotional service to be acceptable. I’ve heard statements like “Don’t return to the temple if you don’t do five hundred books this week.” That isn’t Kṛṣṇa conscious. One should distribute as much as he can and depend on Kṛṣṇa for the results. It’s also a quota—to do as much as you can—but it’s a natural quota that doesn’t create any pain in the heart of the distributor nor disappoint him at not reaching the goal. One shouldn’t think, “I must do so many books this week, otherwise I’m a failure.” One should simply think, “I’m Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant. In this lifetime my service is distributing as many of these wonderful books as I can. Let me fully depend on the Lord’s mercy and pray to the lotus feet of my spiritual master that I can become completely attached to fulfilling his mission to distribute the books.” Then he will gradually increase his distribution naturally and become happy automatically.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Rohiṇīsuta and I used to assign ourselves the quota to empty the *sankīrtana* van each week. One Saturday we were both sick, and we had almost given up hopes of emptying the van because there were many books left. Anyway, we started about 7 A.M. when the first people were coming through the train station. And we had only about half a day, because we had to drive back to the temple. So we were depending completely on Kṛṣṇa. We went to the people in a spiritually desperate way, like begging or praying. “Hello. Please stop.” I will never forget that day. The people had tears in their eyes. Somehow they were overwhelmed. They were giving donations with tears, saying, “Of course, what can I give you?” It was a completely mysterious thing. In five hours we distributed as many books as we usually distributed in a day, about a hundred books. We had many realizations. “Wow, it’s working. Maybe we will really do it.” Then the false ego started puffing itself up, and we had to ring the bell: “Don’t get puffed up, you fool, you’ll mess up everything. Cool down! Depend on Kṛṣṇa. Finally, for the first time in your whole life, you’ve managed to depend a little bit more on Kṛṣṇa. Just go on and struggle to keep this humble attitude and understand really in the depth of your heart how Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller.” That was one of the most relishable *sankīrtana* days I ever had, because I was completely happy. The emptier you are of
material desires, the fuller you can be with spiritual desires. It’s propor-
tional.

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** I used to tell people, “Today we are distributing one hun-
dred of these books.” But at that time I had never distributed a hundred
books, maybe fifty or seventy. But I continued to say, “We’re giving out a
hundred books.” In this way, the day came when I could distribute a hun-
dred books. So we have to have faith in Kṛṣṇa. We have to try—and try
our best. Maybe you will need several years, but you can train yourself to
fix your concentration from twenty to thirty to forty, and so it goes. Don’t
become puffed-up when you reach fifty and think, “Now I’m big.” Oth-
erwise you will start to decrease. None of the top book distributors ever
think, “Now I’m big enough. Now that’s good enough.” If you feel satis-
fi ed with thinking, “Yesterday I did fifty books, and today I’ll just take it
as it comes,” then you’ll be back at twenty. Think, “Fifty yesterday, today
a hundred. Now I can go higher and higher.” In this way you are always
in the proper mood to become steady. That’s how Harināmānanda does it.
He distributes from sixty to a hundred and twenty books a day. He never
wants to come back to the car until he’s distributed sixty or seventy books.
But he’s dependent on Kṛṣṇa. He doesn’t speak about the numbers. It’s his
quota for him. He doesn’t make propaganda. You have to be humble, but
inside you have to meditate on the service of Kṛṣṇa and depend on Kṛṣṇa.
It is not that an authority will tell you, “Now you have to do fifty books a
day.” It doesn’t work like that. It comes through your own realization and
Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** I set a daily quota for myself. Maybe I’m limiting myself, but
that’s how I do it. I’ll go out with a certain number of books to distribute,
but if I spend a long time trying to do those books, and it is not possible,
then I don’t mind stopping, because we have to take care of our bodies and
go on for a long time. So the consideration of a quota should not be more
important than our health. I’ve heard stories of devotees going on till 11
P.M. doing their quotas and burning themselves out. We have to be practical
and realistic. We shouldn’t let the quota override our Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
If we’re simply meditating on doing our quota and we forget Kṛṣṇa, that’s
not good. We judge by the results. If we can distribute many books with a
quota and be Kṛṣṇa conscious, that’s fine. It’s different for each individual.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Do as much as you can. I never saw Śrīla Prabhupāda
give a quota. He gave the quota “as many as you can”—and even more.
That is definitely possible in the marathon. So we expect everything. We
expect more and more and more. We have to do more than last year. That is our quota. Double it! Everything has to increase. The spiritual energy acts by increasing. If we’re increasing all the time, then we know the spiritual energy is acting. Sometimes we give only 50% of our capacity in a day. That’s not good. We should give 100% of our capacity. Don’t think that we will be the loser if we give 100%. Kṛṣṇa will carry what we lack and preserve what we have. He will preserve our strength, and He will give us more strength when we have to overcome material obstacles to continue the saṅkīrtana mission. So we should never hold anything back.

**Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa:** Quotas can be helpful if they are given by an advanced, detached devotee. For example, the bhakta leader can tell new distributors, “You have the potential to distribute fifty books.” Then they can work on it; otherwise they’d become complacent with distributing books. The leader knows that they have to learn to endeavor more. Without a quota they might not do that. But with a quota they’ll endeavor a lot, maybe even coming up to sixty books just to prove that they can do more than fifty. Or you can give yourself a quota and work on that, sometimes going out one extra hour to make it. If you don’t become attached, it can be a nice spiritual challenge.

**Yadunandana Dāsa:** It’s important to have a goal in mind. Meditate on how many books you want to distribute, not as an attachment but as a goal. If you’re thinking you have to distribute, say, fifty books, something more than you usually do, then with this in mind, and meditating on pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya, it becomes much easier to engage the mind.

**Rohinīsuta Dāsa:** We have to be steady and perform uncontaminated service. That will satisfy the spirit soul. Otherwise we’ll hanker and lament about results, and we’ll never be satisfied. Maybe you’ve fixed your mind on fifty, but you have forty-nine. Then you must find somebody to give one book, and you become attached. You’ll run around for an hour to find the person. Normally you do two or three books in five or ten minutes maximum, but now you need one hour because you are attached to a result. The mind always wants round numbers. There is an example of this in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Prthu Mahārāja wanted to perform one hundred aśvamedha sacrifices, but Indra, famous for his one hundred aśvamedhas, stole the sacrificial horse, and a big fight started. Lord Viṣṇu appeared in the sacrificial arena and pacified Prthu Mahārāja, who then remained satisfied with ninety-nine sacrifices. Similarly, we shouldn’t be attached to numbers. We
should perform our duty to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. When Kṛṣṇa is satisfied, what more do we want? Kṛṣṇa is satisfied with ninety-nine, too, not only with one hundred.

Nirguṇa Dāsa: After all that I’ve seen I must say that quotas tend to make a devotee materialistic. The figure becomes the only thing that counts. Of course, in another sense, we need certain quotas. Prabhupāda’s quota was to deliver the world, and the quota he assigned his GBC men was to deliver their countries. Our quotas should be big in those respects. To become pure devotees, to exhibit all the qualities of a devotee, to become perfect in our behavior and pure in heart—these are the actual quotas.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: If you have your quota in mind—“Oh, it would be nice if I could do fifty books today”—then you’re lucky to arrive at thirty or forty. And you slow down. But if you have in mind, “I want to distribute a hundred books today,” then you’ll work hard for it, and if you really work hard, one day you’ll do it. Then you have to stick to it. You have to push yourself continuously until it gets to be your standard. Then Kṛṣṇa will send many people who take many books. The point is not that you give everybody you meet one book, but that you give anybody as many books as possible if he’s interested. In this way we can get into distributing many books, and that is inspiring for the distributors. That makes them detached. But if we are used to giving out only one or two books, then if there is a person who is nice and would take a lot of books or even the set, we will give him only two books. We will not even think of going to the van to get the other books. Therefore not many people will be inspired to take many books, or we won’t recognize them, and we’ll be satisfied giving one or two books: “Oh, nice, he took two books—two more books on my list.” That is the platform of attachment. To fulfill your quotas or to go beyond them, you have to be detached. But the first point is to have the books with you, and then you must have the desire to distribute them. The rest is under Kṛṣṇa’s control.

Quotas as stepping-stones to extraordinary feats

Prabhupāda never assigned personal quotas, but to temples he sometimes assigned quotas of books and BTGs. A personal quota seems to be an individual consideration. Devotees usually prefer self-assigned quotas, not quotas give by an authority who wants certain results. However, devotees aren’t indifferent to results. They want to offer their best possible results to Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave them the guideline of increasing and dou-
bling book distribution, or at least maintaining it. The quota in that sense is distributing more than the previous year or not less. Other possibilities are having a personal weekly quota, a quota for a *sāṅkīrtana* group, and even a temple quota, so that everyone understands that each contribution is appreciated and needed.

But during marathons, when *sāṅkīrtana* ecstasy takes over, naturally and spontaneously one tries to do more and more and go beyond one’s limits. Then quotas become more important because they force a devotee to surrender to the mercy of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa. Without their mercy—by depending on our own strength—we’d never meet our marathon quotas. Competition and quotas help make impossible things possible. Take for example the December marathon in 1990, which was summarized in the *World Sāṅkīrtana Newsletter* as follows:

Harināmānanda: His biggest year ever. And his biggest day: last year 903 books, this year 904 books. Before the last week of the marathon he counted how much he had done for the year and compared it to last year’s total, 55,800 books. With one week still to go, he had roughly equaled last year’s total. But he wanted to break 60,000 books for the year, and to do that he needed to distribute 4,200 books in one week, an unprecedented amount to begin with, and he had to do it the week after Christmas, which by mundane calculations isn’t one of the biggest weeks of the year. It has two holidays, the 25th and 26th; in Europe, on the 26th, everything is also closed. But he did it. He candidly expressed that it was only by the special grace and blessings of the Vaiṣṇavas that such spectacular results were made possible. We might add: and by his incredible desire and determination to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda and his spiritual master, Harikesa Mahārāja.

Rohiṇīśuta: Biggest marathon record for a Prabhupāda disciple. Biggest record day as well, 504 books in one day. In 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda awarded Rohiṇīśuta his silver karatālas for distributing 522 books in one week. This year, thirteen years later, Rohiṇīśuta did almost that many books in one day. Prabhupāda said to make lifetime plans to distribute his books and that book distribution would not decrease but increase. Here’s a rare example of a realized, dedicated, and faithful soul—seventeen years out distributing books and still going strong.
Harināmānanda Dāsa: What is the secret of distributing more and more books, leaving ordinary limits behind and just going into dimensions of madness? After distributing 2,000 books a week, who can think of doubling it? It cannot be done alone. Even if one has the desire, it doesn’t work. It only works when the Vaiṣṇavas want it, and they actually suggested this quota. Only by the special grace and blessings of all the assembled Vaiṣṇavas does such a thing become possible—when one understands that the Vaiṣṇavas will be very satisfied if I can do it and totally happy and in ecstasy. In this way, one can understand every day, “Actually, I have nothing to do with all of this. It is only through the mercy and the blessings of all the Vaiṣṇavas, through their common endeavor and common desire alone, that these books are being distributed. I am just allowed to be the instrument.” With this attitude, under special circumstances, one can get such spectacular results if one is favored by fortune. Now hearing the marathon results, I just want to say that I don’t have anything to do with this result. Everything is simply due to guru and Kṛṣṇa and all the Vaiṣṇavas. When I think of what it takes to concentrate completely on this service, to have everything one needs, the support and inspiration, I understand it needs everyone in the yatra: the spiritual master and his wonderful Godbrothers, wonderful temple presidents, and all the other devotees who do their different services. And only through this proper harmony with the goal to distribute as many books as possible individually and collectively can such things happen. Millions of books can be distributed. Only in this way is it possible—but then, as I could witness in this marathon, it is possible. (From his talk at the marathon festival on January 1, 1991) [He comments further on his record in Ch. 11, Sec. 3.]

9.6 How to organize marathons

When and how often?

Gītā-govinda Dāsi: We’re having three marathons a year: (1) Janmāśṭamī/Śrīla Prabhupāda’s vyāsa-pūjā marathon (two weeks in July); (2) ISKCON guru marathon (two weeks in October); (3) Prabhupāda marathon (four weeks in December). Physically everybody is different, and we all have our limits. But our consciousness can be absorbed all the time. That is possible. We want to be absorbed in guru and Kṛṣṇa at every moment. That’s the sign of health. Otherwise we are spiritually sick. The marathons wake us up to spiritual reality.
Navina-nirada Dasa: We have five marathons: the Prabhupada marathon, the Gaura-purnima marathon, Nrsimha-caturdasi marathon, the Janmashtami marathon, and a vyasa-puja marathon. We’ve arranged the marathons for the vyasa-pujas of ISKCON gurus as one marathon because separate marathons are difficult to do alone and are impractical managerially. A common marathon creates a powerful spirit of cooperation, because we need the strength of all the devotees working together. For many devotees, a marathon means the time when they just go out and distribute books and let everything else wait. And for regular book distributors, it means deepening their meditation, intensifying their dedication, and really increasing their distribution.

Jiva Dasa: We have marathons regularly, not spontaneously. I’ve experienced that if you want to do big during a non-marathon time, it depends on your own capacity. But during marathons, the atmosphere is so strong that it brings everybody up. Everyone eager to take part in the marathon can go out and do incredible things and realize, “This isn’t my power. It’s because of the team spirit arranged by Lord Caitanya’s mercy.” Having regular marathons is important because the special situations force us to do more than usual.

Dayanidhi Dasa: The Christmas marathon was observed by Srila Prabhupada himself, so certainly we should do it also. On special occasions like Srila Prabhupada’s appearance or disappearance days, we should go on a marathon at least for a week. For any important day we should have a short marathon because the best worship we can offer Krsna and Srila Prabhupada is to become Krsna conscious ourselves and to make others Krsna conscious. Therefore we should always look for opportunities for marathons, both to become Krsna conscious ourselves and to help others become Krsna conscious.

Rohinisuta Dasa: We have different marathons. From the strategic point of view that’s good because it means you can build up more and more. From marathon to marathon it becomes more and more intense. During the Janmashtami marathon, normally we don’t go out longer. We increase the endeavor and the desire to distribute Prabhupada’s books, then by Krsna’s and Prabhupada’s mercy, more books can go out. In the guru marathon, we don’t go out much longer, but the mood and the competition become more intense. But the marathon on which we go out longer, and more devotees go out, is the mahar-marathon, the Prabhupada marathon in De-
cember. Normally you go out seven or eight hours, but in December you
go out as much as ten or twelve hours. In Russia during the last days of the
marathon, some devotees went out for eighteen hours. They even went to
the midnight Masses and distributed books when people came out of the
churches. In December there are no limits.

How to create the marathon mood

Yes, try to encourage book distribution as much as possible.
Books are the basis of our movement. Whatever apprecia-
tion we are getting on account of our books is because we are
following the path chalked out by exalted devotees. We are
not writing something whimsical. As for devotees being hes-
itant to distribute books on account of pressure, sometimes
pressure is required, especially when one is not so advanced.
Of course, it has to be applied properly, otherwise there may
be some bad taste. But spontaneous service can be expected
only from advanced devotees. Just like a child by pressure
goes to school and is made to read. Then after some time he
wants to read, even without pressure. . . . But this takes time
to actually realize and until that platform is achieved some
pressure or inducement is required. 19

Harikeśa Swami: We’ve seen practically that a well-organized marathon is
created before the marathon starts. A marathon that is organized during the
marathon is a badly managed marathon. To organize a marathon means to
create the parties properly, to inform all the devotees well in advance that
there will be a marathon and that they are involved, to pick out the places
where everyone will go, to give them vans in proper running order, to give
them a stock of books and supplies and arrange to replenish them from
various points, and to collect scores and laksni. All these things must be or-
organized before the marathon starts. Otherwise there will be confusion, and
nothing is worse than confusion to make a marathon a real flop.

The most important item is getting everyone out. One keeps back only
those few souls absolutely required for running the Deity services and
preaches to them that their austerity is to work as hard as five or ten devo-
tees and thereby allow others to go out. Now, devotees who are not used
to marathons sometimes feel shy or scared to go out. The thought of meet-
ing people on the street sometimes scares them to death, and they would
rather do anything else than go out. Of course, this is due to the ignorant
condition of the mind alone, for when those devotees go out, 80% of the
time they become completely ecstatic within a few days. But the manager has to make their conversion into saṅkīrtana devotees as painless as possible, so he starts preparing the devotees at least a month in advance by dropping statements in class and elsewhere, like “Isn’t it wonderful that the marathon will begin next month? Everyone will be going out, you know.” Also, one has to make a list that mentions exactly who is going out, and one has to post it clearly at least two weeks in advance for all to see. Giving the devotees clear information about what is going to happen is the best way to keep devotees enthused and satisfied. The worst thing is to spring something on devotees in the morning announcements and expect them all to surrender. That is the stupidest kind of management there is, and anyone who does that deserves the chaos that follows. Every devotee has plans for what he’ll do on a given day, and sometimes his plans are made weeks in advance. If the temple president says, “Now we are all going to do this today,” and gives no one a chance to explain why that’s impossible, then he’s a fool number one, without any respect for people. A clever manager will plan everything out a week in advance and post the activities of the next week (starting from Monday) on the bulletin board the previous Wednesday so that all devotees can plan accordingly how they will surrender. A marathon is a perfect example of that. Warn them nicely, prepare them nicely, and help them to surrender. Sometimes make funny comments as if you were also a little worried about having to go out and face people on the street, and in this way they loosen up a bit.

The more marathon information that is posted on the board as soon as it is ready, the better the marathon is. Suppose you are organizing a van or whatever that some nonmarathon party is using beforehand for something else. Best is to have a meeting with all the relevant parties and leaders three weeks before the marathon and work out all the details as to members, vehicles, and supplies. This should be posted for all to see. The effect of this is that everyone gets the point that “The marathon is serious, the managers are already planning it, and I cannot escape.” Another point is that in case there is some objection to the plan, or some sharp soul sees some fault, it can be corrected before everyone goes out. Getting the battle plan perfect before going into battle is the best policy, because lives depend on it. Write down all the duties of those who will stay back, create a temporary authority to run the minimal affairs left to run, create a backup for that temporary authority in case he falls into māyā alone in the temple, and teach all of them exactly what they have to do. Post this. Let everyone know who is in charge of what during the marathon and who they should go to and what they should expect from those persons and what they should not expect (such as a lot of money for anything). Order all required supplies long
in advance. Have a supply in stock before departure and also have a mid-
mara refill if required. Have stocks of books, food, and supplies waiting
at depots around the country and distribute like mad. If you organize every-
thing like this, then there’s absolutely no need for the temple managers to
remain behind during a marathon. In fact, it is māyā if the temple mana-
gers remain behind. In fact, the temple managers should beat everyone else
in the marathon, then everyone will understand their superior spiritual po-
tency.

Prabhupāda said that the best manager is the best preacher. He who is
the most potent devotee is best suited to lead others. He can never tolerate
sitting around watching the walls as the others are out getting the bliss. It
is simply a question of proper management before the marathon. If this is
done, there are no problems. But there may be something from the karmi
world that requires the manager be reached by the temporary authorities.
Therefore each manager should always be accessible by telephone or a
beeper in emergencies. But the normal appointments should be put off till
after the marathon. Usually there’s little that can’t be put off by a phone
call to some other date.

9.7 Marathon Meditations

That so many people are purchasing our literature in Los
Angeles indicates that it is being advertised: “Oh, I have got
a very nice book.” Then their acquaintances want the book
also. The book distribution in Los Angeles during the six-day
period is transcendental samādhi. The devotees are working
in trance, not on the material platform. No common man can
work so hard; it is not possible. Working without sleep means
no death. Sleeping is a dead condition. Jīv jāgo, jīv jāgo, gau-
racānda bole kota nidrā jāo māyā-piśācīra kale. Your book
distribution is really intoxication. 20

Tamāl Krishna Goswami: We should pray in a humble mood. We begin by
praying to our spiritual master and then to his spiritual master and all the
gurus in disciplic succession. We should begin our sankirtana-yajña each
day this month with fervent prayers at their lotus feet. And then we will
pray to Nityānanda Prabhu and to Caitanya Mahāprabhu and ultimately
to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa: “All of You, please use me. I am a puppet. Make me
dance in Your hands so that You become satisfied by this wonderful day of
sankirtana.” That is our prayer, that the sankirtana will be pleasing to guru
and Gaurāṅga and all the Vaiṣṇavas. (From a class in Zurich on December 3, 1991)

**Harikēśa Swami:** The emotional ecstasy of Śrīla Prabhupāda is manifest in the purports of his books, and when people just slightly open their minds and begin to read Prabhupāda’s words, then his great mercy enters their hearts and makes a gradual change. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda’s representatives try to display the same mood as Śrīla Prabhupāda—the transcendental mood of printing his books in every language, never being satisfied, not even being able to sleep at night unless the books go out. In 1976, Prabhupāda said to me, “I have many bank accounts full of lakṣmi. You empty every single account, and you fill up every temple with books. And then the devotees will have no place to live. In order to get a place to live they will have to distribute all the books. And then you just fill up the temples again.” He was serious. He even started making plans to do that. He wanted all his money spent. So we just print the books and fill up the warehouses. We have competitions. The BBT devotees are happy only when the warehouses are full of books, and the distributors are happy only when the warehouses are empty. It is a transcendental competition—one side filling up, the other side emptying out. And this gives great pleasure to Śrīla Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda is pleased when we are just printing and distributing his books in all the different languages. That is his mission. That’s why he descended into the world, just to perform this most ecstatic mission. (From a class in Māyāpur on March 22, 1982)

**Rohinīśuta Dāsa:** The secret of success during the marathon is to go out as early as possible and to put in extra energy. Nothing happens without the endeavor of the individual devotee. *Marathon* means to make a special endeavor to please Kṛṣṇa. This I learned in the beginning in Manidhāra Prabhu’s *sankirtana* school in Germany. When I was traveling with him in ’75/’76, we cultivated that spirit. We concentrated on going out on the street by eight o’clock in the morning. Usually the most books went out between eight and eleven o’clock. At that time the people are still a little fresh and in goodness. By noon passion takes over. If you’re out early, you meet people you’d otherwise never meet. It’s a completely different city. And by eleven o’clock you are already in such an inspired mood that you’re no longer influenced by the modes later in the day.

When I returned to the Geneva temple after being in Germany for two years, there was another mood. There was a long program, a long lecture, and we went out late. Immediately my results went down by ten, fifteen, or
twenty books. Rarely someone distributed thirty books. Then after some time, I went back to my old program of getting up early, chanting all the rounds, reading, taking simple prasādam, and going out by eight o’clock. And naturally the results doubled. From sixty books a day I built up to one hundred books a day, and soon I distributed more than five hundred books a week. Then Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a letter to Mañidhāra Prabhu and me, quoting the verse ye yathā māṁ prapadyante. So the other devotees started to follow. If you make a special endeavor to preach the glories of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa reciprocates. You have a good result, the spiritual master is pleased, and you’re in ecstasy. Therefore it is needed that some devotees step forward, set an example, set the pace, create the spirit, and others will follow.

Cakṣu Dāsa: Usually I go out five or six hours a day. There are other devotees who go out eight hours. If you are strong you can do that. But during the marathons, especially during the Prabhupāda marathon, I put in up to ten hours a day. Then I even start transcending my sādhana. At the beginning of the marathon, I still read. Usually I read two hours a day, but in the course of the marathon it becomes less. In the evening, I just drop over tired, and then in the morning I get up, chant my rounds. I’m not cool enough to read anymore. I have to go out. It comes naturally. But it has to be natural. You don’t say, “Now I won’t read anymore because I want to do big, and for that I need more distribution time.” You don’t even know that you don’t read anymore. You just forget about everything. You chant, eat, distribute, and sleep. Nothing else. Maybe you read a verse or a page, but it’s completely satisfying. In this mood, from a few words of Śrīla Prabhupāda, you can absorb the inspiration to go out long hours. You don’t even think about anything else. You just float. All of a sudden at the end of the marathon I realize it was a completely spontaneous program.

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: We should concentrate on book distribution and not make any other plans. We can die any day. Suppose you know that you will die in three days. Would you make big plans? No. We’d take shelter in our service, and that is exactly what we are supposed to do. We should take shelter in book distribution, very humbly, because life is short. Sometimes we are sitting in our palanquin like Rahūgana handing down the books to people in a puffed-up way. Or we are even sleeping in our palanquin—just like during the December marathon one afternoon, I was taking a nap on the front seat of my van. All of a sudden, someone was knocking at the window. I leaped up, but it wasn’t the police. It was a man I recognized because
he was very well dressed. He was working in a fashion shop, and I had sold him a book. He was knocking and signaling me to turn down the window. I did, and then he told me, “Hey, man, you have a very important mission to distribute these books. You cannot sleep like that. Look at all these people. You have to give them your books.” In this way Kṛṣṇa told me not to waste any time.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Sometimes we think, “We don’t want to distribute in a place where many books have been distributed.” We prefer going to a place where the people don’t know our books. But when I go to those places, I often find it difficult to distribute, even though the people don’t know the books. If we go to places where they are already purified by the books, we see that it’s better. They say, “We already have so many of these books.” But if we are detached, we can give them more books. It’s amazing to see how all the people who have already received many books again take new books. Book distribution is ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam.

Tapas Dāsa: A marathon doesn’t mean that we become attached to the results. As soon as we are no longer attached but distribute books in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then automatically we get results. In the evening we count the books, and we find that many books were distributed, and we’re amazed that Kṛṣṇa was so merciful to us. It’s because we’ve forgotten the results. Otherwise, if we count our results every half hour, we become attached to distributing a certain number: “This hour I have to do at least ten.” And sure enough, you won’t distribute ten. Then we become agitated, angry, impatient, or lose enthusiasm and check our watch every five minutes: “Three more hours to go—when can I stop?” Especially during the marathons, when we want to surpass our average limits of the year, we go out in a helpless, surrendered mood, and then we are surprised about each book that goes out, and we understand it is only by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy that we can distribute the books.

Kalpavāsini Devī Dāsi: Even if it becomes difficult when we are out, we have to continue anyway. That must be our conviction when we want to do sankirtana for a long time. We must be ready to accept the difficulties for the sake of our spiritual master’s pleasure and Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. Problems and mental suffering will come, there’s no question. It’s a war, and at one point we will be wounded. So we have to be prepared. We can’t think, “We’ll go out, and everything will be calm and sweet,” because at one point we’ll become tired. Or no books will go out, and the mind will flip out. Or
lust, anger, and ignorance will influence us. We have to be prepared. That means we must already have the determination to continue for the pleasure of the spiritual master. We may make a short break to read or chant or listen to a lecture, but it’s simply to prepare ourselves to go out again as soon as possible.

**Antaraṅga-śakti Dāsa:** The Prabhupāda marathon is meant to please Śrīla Prabhupāda. What pleases the spiritual master most is that we make his mission our mission. When we accept that as our life and soul, then Śrīla Prabhupāda and our spiritual master are pleased and grant their disciples a lot of taste. The mission is broad and unlimited, but from time to time the spiritual master express certain desires how to accomplish the mission. That leads to the book distribution marathons. The spiritual master sees all living entities as part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa, as Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servants, and he wants us to approach them. Therefore the more devotees that go out, the more conditioned souls we reach.

**Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa:** We see that it always becomes easier to distribute books. Why does it become easier? Because Kṛṣṇa is more and more eager to appear. He always reciprocates with the endeavors of the devotees who want to distribute His books. Thus the world is seeing how the ISKCON devotees, year after year, are producing and distributing an increasing number of books. *Yadā yadā hi dharma sya:* nowadays Kṛṣṇa appears through the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda.
“By chance or by prediction, as you think,
I was taken to Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura by one of my friends.
I did not want to go there, but he forcibly took me there. Yes.
And Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura ordered me,
“You preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the English language.
This is very much essential.”” ¹
—Śrīla Prabhupāda
Introduction to Part Four

Books are the basis, purity is the force, and utility is the principle—of what? To accomplish what? Śrīla Prabhupāda founded ISKCON and stressed book distribution to preach: “The essence of the Vedic culture is the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Lord Caitanya instructed: yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa/āmāra ājñāya guru haṁ tāra’ ei deśa (Cc. Madhya 7.128). One should simply instruct everyone he meets regarding the principles of kṛṣṇa-kathā, as expressed in Bhagavad-gītā As It Is and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 12.73 p).

Preaching is the essence of ISKCON and of its rescuing the world from godlessness. Only for that reason devotees strive to increase book distribution. “Book distribution is preaching, it should not be thought of as done for money. It is executed as a preaching purpose. With these guidelines in mind, try to distribute as many books as possible.”

ISKCON’s duty is teaching mankind, and especially its members, about the basis, the force, the principle, and the essence of spiritual life. As described in Chapter Ten, the cultivation of the preaching spirit begins with the proper bhākta training, which depends in its turn on the mood of the temple and the leaders. Usually people don’t join ISKCON to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Their enthusiasm has to be channeled towards book distribution. If temples are organized around preaching, naturally many new friends, members, and bhāktas will be attracted. Furthermore, Chapter Ten also describes how new devotees are trained to join the book distributors, thus taking up the fight with their minds and the dualities of material nature.

But book distribution is not only a struggle. The more a devotee surrenders to it and transcends the mental platform, the more he or she can be empowered, as described in Chapter Eleven. The testimony of empowered devotees will give everyone an insight into the higher, nectarean dimensions of book distribution, where impossible things become possible and people change directly in front of one’s eyes because of the direct presence of Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi. Such devotees, blessing the earth with their service, cannot go unnoticed. People will become more and more aware of the power and impact of Lord Caitanya’s sankirtana movement, which will illuminate the next ten thousand years—a Vedic prediction that has started to come true. That is the topic of Chapter Twelve, “A World Revolution Through Book Distribution.”
Training New Book Distributors

“I am very glad to hear that you are taking so many steps to improve things and spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness more and more to the citizens at large. The main thing is to somehow or other create first-quality preachers on Kṛṣṇa’s behalf. So many boys and girls are simply wasting their time in many frivolous ways, but if we are sincere and serious to attract them to Kṛṣṇa’s fold, very easily we shall be able to persuade them to join us. That means simply let them get a taste of something higher than their present-day sense pleasure. Of course, that will not be so easily done, but it will be your credit for doing it.”

10.1 Importance of the mood in the temple

I was very glad to see that your temple is now among the big leaders in book distribution. This is a sure sign of spiritual strength, for where there is preaching there must be life. Please go on increasing the book distribution more and more. You are working in the right direction.

The sankīrtana spirit

Harikēṣa Swami: The results aren’t necessarily the barometer of the quality of a temple. A temple may be operating under restrictions due to external circumstances, and the results of book distribution may be diminished. Rather, it is the sankīrtana spirit that is the real indication of spiritual health in a temple. Without it, a temple is dead. But with the sankīrtana spirit, there is great life and hope that we will make a change in the rotten material world.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: We have seen again and again that when there is a fired-up sankīrtana spirit, there are no problems. Of course, we may face economic problems or problems from the demons. But if the sankīrtana is fired
up, there’s no danger, because when the devotees are internally strong, externally nothing can harm them.

Rohiniisuta Dasa: When there’s a healthy preaching spirit in the temple, only sincere people will be attracted, and those who join will be enlivened because they see how simple and ecstatic Krishna consciousness can be. But if a temple has no ecstatic sanªkirtana meetings and no kirtanas that can go on for hours, that will create more and more doubts and moroseness, and nobody will join in that situation. When I joined, people were joining because the atmosphere was simple, austere, and ecstatic. We would be waiting for the weekends, when the sanªkirtana devotees came back from book distribution. They were so brilliant, with effulgent smiles, and their enthusiasm infected us. By their association we quickly developed the desire to go out. We wanted to become like them. There was no envy or doubt about the priority. So that mood has to be there. We often speak about varna±rama-dharma, but it starts with the brahma±as. A brahma±a preaches and distributes books and teaches others how to read the books. There’s no question of varna±rama-dharma if there are no Vaishnava brahma±as distributing books and preaching.

The sign of a healthy temple is people joining

You have to create devotees by your preaching work and train them according to your needs.  

Sarvatma Dasa: I started distributing books in Brazil in 1980 after staying in the temple for a few days. I asked what was the fastest way to become purified, and the devotees told me the magic word, sanªkirtana. They said, “Get a bag and fill it with books and go distribute them. Who can preach better than Prabhupada?” That made sense, and I did it right away. I still had long hair and a beard, but I put on a pair of white yogi pants and a white shirt and went to a supermarket. I distributed books for several hours, and I thought it was great.

Harinamaandana Dasa: When I entered the temple in 1982, I joined the bhakta program run by Ujjvala-nilamani. I saw the sanªkirtana devotees going out in the morning and returning in the evening, and I heard their lectures. By training and association I became eager to take up book distribution. I became totally inspired by Rohiniisuta and Guru-śakti. They were doing big every day, and they distributed several hundred books every week. I wanted to learn from them. I’d almost force myself into their association. I desired to become like them, successful in spiritual life and active
for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. After one month of bhakta training I started to go out with the saṅkīrtana devotees. For the first few months I was distributing records made by my spiritual master. I felt quite satisfied being able to go out and do something substantial for Kṛṣṇa. After two or three months I got the opportunity to go out with books for a day with Rohiṇīsuta, who arranged for all the bhaktas to go out on Prabhupāda’s disappearance day. Rohiṇīsuta prepared a stack of books for me—fourteen big books and one thick mahā-big book on the bottom of the stack, a Seventh Canto. I hadn’t read this book yet, so I didn’t know what to say. Rohiṇīsuta said, “Anyway, just walk up to people and show them the books. The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is special. You don’t need to say anything. It speaks for itself.” And it was a fact. That day I distributed thirty-five books. I still remember it—the first person I met took a book. It was in a restaurant. I simply went up to the lady in charge, who was sitting there at a table with her son. He was about twenty-five years old and immediately took an interest. He looked at the books, saw the Bhāgavatam, and removed the plastic. I thought, “Oh, no. Now he will see all the Sanskrit and the picture of Lord Nṛśimhadeva.” He saw it—and was inspired. “Yes, this one looks interesting. This one I’ll take.” He paid for it, and I was completely astonished how simple it was. The whole day went more or less like that.

Navīṇa-nīrada Dāsa: When I was twelve, I moved into an international boarding school. I had a schoolmate who visited the Hare Kṛṣṇa temple in Zurich and liked it immediately. He bought Bhagavad-gītā and started chanting. He related everything to me, and it sounded a little strange to me. But there were some books about Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the library, and I started to read the First Canto with fascination. I counted on each page how many times the words transcendental, spiritual, or Kṛṣṇa appeared—all far-out words and names I had never heard before. I was fourteen years old. My friend explained that even though I may not understand the books, if I just went on reading, I’d understand more. During the next vacation we went to visit the temple on a Sunday, and I felt enlivened and inspired. I started to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and follow a vegetarian diet. I became friends with certain devotees, and I phoned them and exchanged letters with them. In school I began to study the books intensely, and the books convinced me to chant sixteen rounds every day and follow the principles. I’d learn ślokas in the ten-minute breaks between classes. And during vacations I’d visit the devotees and take part in their festivals. I also attended the saṅkīrtana meetings on Sundays. I became more and more inspired to join the movement. Then the 1984 Christmas marathon was approaching, and the temple atmosphere intensified. The saṅkīrtana devotees invited me to come on tra-
veling *sāṅkīrtana* and learn the art of book distribution. So I wanted to join the marathon and discontinue school, which lasted until February. My mother wasn’t against Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but she felt I should at least finish my last school year, although I had already fulfilled my quota for school. But at some point it became too much for her, because it’s not easy to have somebody at home who practices full-time Kṛṣṇa consciousness and boycotts the family’s materialistic activities. So at one point my mother just let me go, and I was very happy. The devotees had given me a list of all the things one needs for traveling *sāṅkīrtana*: a suitcase, clothes, shoes, winter jacket, and so on. Because my birthday is in December, I collected those items from my parents and relatives as birthday gifts in advance. Then I went to the temple. It was a Tuesday, so I stayed in the temple until the weekend. Then on Sunday I was picked up by a *sāṅkīrtana* party, and I left for traveling *sāṅkīrtana*. Thus from my own experience I know how important it is for devotees to get the taste for *sāṅkīrtana* and book distribution right from the beginning so that they can take it up immediately and enthusiastically, while everything is fresh and exciting.

**Harikeśa Swami:** How do *bhaktas* come to the temple? They come through preaching programs. Therefore many preaching programs should be arranged. One or two expert preachers can go around and attract people to visit the temple. The whole purpose of preaching programs is to make new devotees. And when new devotees are around, we should gradually bring them out on *sāṅkīrtana*. When the *sāṅkīrtana* party increases, we can have really successful *sāṅkīrtana*. Therefore the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees have to cooperate with the preachers. If you meet someone who looks nice—I don’t mean an old housewife with a bag of groceries, I mean a seventeen- to twenty-five-year-old who isn’t entangled yet with a family, house, job, and all of that—get that person’s address and make sure the preachers contact him or her. The *sāṅkīrtana* devotees have to cooperate and collect addresses even though it takes five minutes out of their distribution. It’s worth it in the long run. One has to see every person as a potential devotee and gradually develop the base of devotees so that more and more *sāṅkīrtana* can go on. This is essential, and everyone should be praying all the time to the Lord to increase the number of devotees.

### 10.2 Importance of the leaders’ mood

The future of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is very bright as long as the managers remain vigilant that sixteen rounds are being chanted by everyone without fail and the
devotees are all rising before four in the morning to attend *mangala-ārati*. Our leaders shall be careful not to kill the spirit of enthusiastic service, which is individual and spontaneous and voluntary. They should always try to generate some atmosphere of fresh challenge to the devotees, so that they will agree enthusiastically to rise and meet it. That is the art of management: to draw out a spontaneous loving spirit of sacrificing some energy for Kṛṣṇa. But where are so many expert managers? All of us should become expert managers and preachers. We should not be very much after comforts and become complacent or self-contented. There must be always some *tapasya*, strictly observing the regulative principles. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must always be a challenge, a great achievement to be gained by the voluntary desire to do it, and that will keep it healthy. So you big managers now try more and more to train up some competent preachers and managers like yourselves.  

**Pushing the priority**

The most important aspect of our preaching is *kīrtana*. Induce the people to chant, that is the only thing. Then everything else will follow. The goal is to make devotees and books—both are required. Distributing the books will make devotees. To make a devotee means to make someone purified. Reading the books will purify the intelligence. A purified heart and mind means Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**Harikeśa Swami:** The most important way to increase book distribution throughout the world is to make new devotees who can be sent on *sāṅkīrtana*. This can be done only by increasing the preaching in the temples and gearing it toward making new devotees. The temples must be fit places for new devotees to enter. We need a preaching spirit in the temple, along with an attitude on the part of the existing devotees that’s congenial for the development of the new devotees’ spiritual lives. For example, a new devotee must be groomed to accept a spiritual master as a guide. If there is no interest in a temple in the principle of spiritual master, then new devotees will not be trained to accept a mission in their life. Furthermore, those acting as spiritual masters should instill within their disciples the mission to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement through the distribution of books. If each and every spiritual leader, from *guru* to temple manager, preaches the
message of book distribution, then we stand a chance of reestablishing book distribution as the basis of ISKCON. If the leaders of the movement have the pure desire to increase book distribution, then surely Kṛṣṇa will send more devotees to help fulfill that desire. The increase of book distribution is based on desire, as is everything within this creation. If all the devotees sincerely want to increase the distribution of books, then Kṛṣṇa will reciprocate. But if we are satisfied merely maintaining our temples and ourselves, then why should Kṛṣṇa send more devotees?

Svavāsa Dāsa: What impresses me most in North Europe is the relationship between gurus and disciples. It’s ecstatic. In America there have been many problems, and that may be one of the reasons why book distribution is not big there anymore. The guru–disciple relationship is most important. When Prabhupāda was present, we knew what Prabhupāda wanted, and we became completely absorbed in book distribution day and night. I can see the same thing here. The relationship between gurus and disciples is so good that it generates a lot of enthusiasm, sincerity, and desire—and many phenomenal things are being accomplished. (From a class in Zurich on June 6, 1992)

10.3 Example is better than precept

I am very glad to note that you are seeing that the devotees are maintaining the devotional practices. This is the secret of success. Therefore I am stressing it. And if you also stress it and show yourself as an ideal Vaishnava, then you are my representative in fullness. We are not after titles and designations. Lord Caitanya made it a principle that we must teach by personal example. This is what I have tried to do. So if all of you, my disciples, do this, then the future of our movement will be glorious. ⁸

Continue to go out on sankīrtana. Example is better than precept. ⁹

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.21: Unless one practices devotional service himself, he cannot teach it to others. This conclusion is indeed confirmed throughout the Gītā and Bhāgavatam.

Harikeśa Swami: We have to create an atmosphere in which the book distribution mission is seen as very, very important. From the material point
of view no one wants to go out and sell books. It’s physically strenuous and sometimes difficult. Therefore it’s not pleasant from the material point of view. And this is an important consideration, because unless one is Kṛṣṇa conscious, he’ll want to do things according to his material inclinations more than anything else. Thus leaders have to learn to inspire the devotees to go out. But that isn’t easy if the atmosphere or mood in the temples or zones goes against that. Then the potential book distributors might think, “Why should we struggle to go out and distribute books when we can also lay back and do something according to our inclinations?” It’s no one’s inclination to go out and distribute books. Therefore we have to create an atmosphere in which everyone can understand with his transcendental intelligence that book distribution is the most important mission. That has to be understood as the primary purpose of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Book distribution should be based on the understanding that our books are the highest contribution to human society. Spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be based on book distribution. Other kinds of preaching are important, but distributing books is the foundation of our preaching. A devotee can reflect, “I joined by reading a book by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Someone distributed that book, and I read it. Similarly, others can also become devotees by reading Prabhupāda’s books.” Encouraging someone to distribute books requires lots of preaching, and setting an example is absolutely necessary. Sometimes I’ve had five, six or even seven bhaktas in the van. New devotees are usually fearful of going out. That’s natural. But if they see the leader doing it, and he’s blissful, their fear subsides, and they’ll try it, too. Therefore, it is valuable to have devotees who set the example, who not only preach and manage saṅkirtana and analyze saṅkirtana but who also do saṅkirtana.

Navina-nīrada Dāsa: By Kṛṣṇa’s grace, you can increase. Even if at some time your quantity may not increase anymore, then you have to inspire others to distribute many books. But there’s never a real need to change your service, because the best way to keep the right mood is by distributing books. You shouldn’t think that if you’ve distributed books for four or five years, then you’re meant to become something superior like the saṅkirtana leader or temple president. We have the wonderful example of Harinām-ānanda. He is the saṅkirtana leader, manager, and inspiration all in one person. And he goes out every day at least five or six hours. Usually the different saṅkirtana services are performed by various devotees, so they should all try to go out as much as possible, because only then can they have the proper understanding of what is to be done and what kind of
support and preaching the *saṅkīrtana* devotees need. Only a general who is out there fighting on the front lines can be taken seriously by the soldiers.

**Jiva Dāsa:** Book distribution must be supported by encouragement from the temple authorities. In places where book distribution is not in good shape, the temple atmosphere is unbalanced. I saw that recently while visiting a big temple. No one waited for the *saṅkīrtana* devotees on the weekend. The *saṅkīrtana* devotees don’t have big meetings, and their results are insignificant in proportion to the great size of the temple and the size of the area where they preach. Of course, there are historical reasons. Anyway, book distribution should be encouraged by the temple authorities. Every temple should see book distribution as its priority. In the *bhakta* program, *saṅkīrtana* and book distribution should be included. Then the devotee has to decide which service to do. If he likes *saṅkīrtana*, he should definitely go on *saṅkīrtana*. And if he doesn’t like it, he should do it anyway for a while, a year or two, to get deeper realizations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and also to gain respect for those who do the service of book distribution. In this way the temple maintains a good spiritual balance. Everyone should have the understanding that *saṅkīrtana* is the best means to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed in his letters and lectures again and again.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** Book distributors have to be protected from distractions. Those who can do book distribution should be given full support. Everyone else can do everything else.

**Rohinīsuta Dāsa:** Śrīla Prabhupāda said that we should send our best men to different places to train up other devotees. So if in a temple there are no devotees setting the example of book distribution, the leaders should invite someone to come and preach about *saṅkīrtana*. They can stay there a few weeks, and then maybe some devotees will step forward to form a *saṅkīrtana* party. That gives a temple life and spirit. Therefore in every temple new *saṅkīrtana* devotees should be trained up. We should find those who are ready to go out, even though in the beginning there may be only two or three. That’s enough. If they are fired up, they will inspire others. The more that devotees go out regularly, the more readily financial problems can be solved, guests will come, and *bhaktas* will join. The temple will always be full of people who were contacted by the book distributors. If you cannot find a devotee to come to your place, then you should go to a place where such devotees can be found. This should be the determination of a temple leader to establish book distribution as the main priority in his temple.
10.4 The bhakta program

There is no doubt about it: To distribute books is our most important activity. The temple is not a place for eating and sleeping, but a base from which we send out our soldiers to fight with māyā. ‘Fight with māyā’ means to drop thousand and millions of books into the laps of the conditioned souls. Just like during war time the bombs are raining from the sky like anything. . . . I like your program of sending out your best book distributors to teach the others. That is the actual process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness— to train others. Continue this program so that in the future every devotee in our movement will know the art of distributing books. 10

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not sentimental or impersonal

Our movement is a declaration of war against māyā, that you can understand very well, so we have to recruit many fighting soldiers— do it vigorously. 11

A widespread misunderstanding of spiritual life is that it means love, peace, harmony, and meditation in relaxing postures at a secluded camp near a river or lake in the country or mountains— and that everyone has to find his own way to God, so no one should impose his view on others or try to convert them, because that’s artificial and causes dissension and disharmony. Newcomers to ISKCON may expect that Kṛṣṇa consciousness will correspond to their impersonal ideal of a divine cosmic consciousness, but they soon realize that Prabhupāda’s temples aren’t places for eating, sleeping, and impersonal meditation. They hear the clanging of weapons and the striding of soldiers, and they realize that joining Kṛṣṇa’s camp means a declaration of war on māyā. Peace and harmony are illusions without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, empty promises māyā makes to sentimentalists. In ISKCON new bhaktas meet the topmost transcendentalists, who are finished with material compromises, who want to cut the attachments of false ego, and who want to save as many others as possible. “What!” the new recruits say. “We have to go out again to meet materialists, to confront the sense objects, to confront all the agitations we wanted to flee from?” Many fears may arise, and to some, sankīrtana will appear as the nightmare of a “horror test,” like that in some boy scout troops when a newcomer has to spend a night alone in a cemetery to be accepted as a member.
**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** Sometimes young devotees are afraid to go on *sāṅkṛtana* because they’ve heard threatening descriptions like “It makes you or breaks you,” which they understand to mean that either you make it a grand success or you’ll never be accepted as a devotee. *Sāṅkṛtana* should never be presented like that. *Sāṅkṛtana* is not a terrible austerity that one must go through to join a “cult”. New devotees should be given a positive impression that *sāṅkṛtana* is a nice service that every devotee can try to do. It’s inspiring, a way to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and it’s something that pleases Śrīla Prabhupāda the most.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** Sometimes new devotees say, “I don’t have the skill to sell books. I can’t just walk up to people on the street and sell them Hare Kṛṣṇa books. It’s impossible for me. It’s not my nature to preach and convert others.” But whoever reads and understands Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books will become eager to give the books to others. Every devotee can taste the nectar of the books, and he should be completely convinced that the books are the only hope for the whole world—for the people in Kali-yuga and for him. Furthermore, there is the instruction of the spiritual master to go out and distribute the books. Therefore, following the instruction and his own conviction, a devotee goes out and works hard to sell books to please his guru and Kṛṣṇa. It’s not as difficult as it may sound. But if we try to distribute Prabhupāda’s books in an indirect way, without direct preaching, then it becomes difficult. Every book is a struggle, a big fight.

However, Kṛṣṇa gives one intelligence and the association of experienced devotees, and in this way one learns to distribute books on a spiritual platform. It’s a practical experience. Distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books in a direct way is much more satisfying and powerful, because Kṛṣṇa is satisfied and the people who get the books are satisfied. It’s pleasing to Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, and thus we get more and more taste to accept the mission.

**Proper training**

You mention you like to speak now very often, but the first business should be to preach to the devotees. It is better to maintain a devotee than to try to convince others to become devotees. . . . Your first job should be to make sure that every one of the devotees in your zone of management is reading our books regularly and discussing the subject matter seriously from different angles of seeing and that they are somehow or other absorbing the knowledge of the philosophy of
Krṣṇa consciousness. If they are fully educated in our philosophy and if they can get all of the knowledge and study it from every viewpoint, then very easily they will perform ta-pasya or renunciation and that will be their advancement in Krṣṇa consciousness. . . . Don’t be too much concerned for the time being with nondevotees. Now we must fix up the devotees we have in the knowledge of Krṣṇa consciousness. Then we will succeed. What good are many, many devotees if none of them are knowledgeable?

If new men are coming, they may not be expected immediately to take to our regulative principles cent percent. Therefore we should not be too anxious to induce them to live in the temple. Anyone who lives in the temple must agree to follow the rules and regulations without fail. So if some new men move in with us they may become discouraged if they are forced in this way. Therefore let them live outside and become gradually convinced in the class why they should accept some austerity. Then they will live with us out of their own accord and follow everything nicely. It is very difficult to give up very quickly as many bad habits as you have in your country, so educate them gradually, first with chanting, and do not be so much anxious to count up so many numbers of new devotees—such devotees go away later being too early forced. I want to see a few sincere devotees, not many false devotees or pretenders. So my point is that the regulative principles must be followed by everyone. Otherwise their enthusiasm dwindles, and they again think of sex and become restless, and so many problems are there. There is some symptom of missing the point. The point is to be engaged in doing something for Krṣṇa, never mind what is that job, but being so engaged in doing something very much satisfying to the devotee that he remains always enthusiastic. He will automatically follow the regulative principles because they are part of his occupational duty—by applying them practically as his occupational duty, he realizes the happy result of following the regulative principles.

Dayānidhi Dāsa: Some pressure is always there, either from Krṣṇa or from the material nature. As leaders we should be able to pressure and push
devotees in ways they’ll accept. Each devotee is an individual, and we have to be expert in pushing a devotee in a spiritual way. Sometimes we cannot push immediately; we cannot send a devotee on *saṅkīrtana*, so we should be tolerant, wait, and be really careful to understand that he needs to chant better, to relax and study, or to change his service. But we have to push in a spiritual, attentive, careful way. A push is always there—so better to be pushed by Kṛṣṇa.

**Harikeśa Swami:** Devotees have to be purified, and one becomes purified by austerity. That’s why new devotees do things that aren’t their propensity. Whose propensity is it to wash pots? We all did it because it’s purifying. We had 120 people in the temple, and I had to wash all the pots. This was in fact very purifying, washing pots and listening to tapes by Śrīla Prabhupāda. After some time, of course, you do something else, but first you have to be purified. Not that you walk in the door of the temple, and you do exactly the same thing you were doing as a *karmī*. You’ll have a hard time becoming purified, and in fact you may fall down because you have a material conception of what you’re doing. Material conceptions have to be overcome. Therefore we learn to surrender to washing pots and other services—like book distribution.

**Preparation for *saṅkīrtana***

Please continue to use your intelligence to find out how to distribute my books more and more. I am especially pleased to learn that you are introducing my books as textbooks in the colleges. We especially have to try to attract the educated young men and women in your country so that in the future there will be many strong leaders to keep our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement strong.¹⁴

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** I joined the German *yatra* when there was nothing but *saṅkīrtana*. I walked in the door, and because I was an artist the devotees said I could go to an art school, become a great artist, and paint for Kṛṣṇa. But just as a matter of trying it out, the next day they put me in a *saṅkīrtana* van. The first day I shaved, and the next day I was in the van. That’s how it was in those days. And they had a slogan that I wouldn’t like to recommend to anyone: *saṅkīrtana* makes you or breaks you. Many people got broken. I somehow or other survived. There was no *bhakta* program, so on my second day I ended up on the street in a *dhoti*, with a shaved head and a stack of magazines. That’s how I started, and I continued for twelve years without interruption. I had difficult times in between because devo-
tees weren’t that good at helping me or preaching to me, nor did we have a deep philosophical understanding. In the beginning everything was quite sentimental. But when I got initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in person, everything became clear. Just by seeing Prabhupāda for the first time, I could understand: “Going out and distributing his books—that’s what Prabhupāda likes most. And in this way I am not going to give him any trouble and he doesn’t have to worry about me.” Nowadays, of course, I’d completely oppose the type of introduction that I had to sankirtana. It is better for a new sankirtana candidate to go out when he is mature enough. In those days there was no other choice. In one sense I was lucky I didn’t have another service. All of us—we simply talked about sankirtana and Prabhupāda.

Harikeśa Swami: To increase the sankirtana movement we must always be on the alert to make new devotees. But that doesn’t mean new devotees should go out on sankirtana immediately after joining. Those who join the temple must undergo a period of purification and training in devotional life. When they are qualified as devotees and trained in the spiritual principles, then the temple president should consider sending them out on book distribution. The temple president should see that new devotees receive regular training in all areas of devotional life. The bhakta program must train devotees to follow the temple program, to chant and hear, to study the basic philosophy, to keep the temple clean, and, above all, to understand that the main mission of ISKCON is to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness by printing and distributing the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda. If the bhaktas are continually pointed in that direction, they will learn the goals of our movement and the mission of Śrīla Prabhupāda. This should be preached in the temple classes, in special bhakta classes, and in individual instruction. If the traveling preachers occasionally preach about the importance of book distribution, all the temple devotees will gradually learn to take up the mission themselves.

Rohinīsuta Dāsa: New devotees should stay in the temple at least for two or three months to get trained up in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The best sankirtana devotees are those who have been trained in the temple. The devotees who immediately go out in the beginning may do big initially, but they often go down again like shooting stars because they don’t have a strong philosophical understanding of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore training in the temple is necessary. The bhakta leader has to see when a new devotee is ready. At first, a new devotee can go out one day a week with other devotees, and when he becomes stronger and gets a taste for sankirtana, he can go out with a regular book distribution party.
Guru-śakti Dāsa: Śrīla Prabhupāda told us to double book distribution every year. With the available manpower, that can be done perhaps once or twice. Therefore not only the book distribution must be doubled but also the number of devotees. If we make plans to double book distribution, doubling the number of devotees has to be included. When the number of devotees is doubled, the number of books distributed is doubled. And in this way the number of devotees will be doubled again. If we try to double it, Śrīla Prabhupāda will not only give his blessings, but double his blessings and double his benedictions.

Nṛsiṁhadeva Dāsa: A new devotee should stay in the temple for some time to learn Vaiṣṇava culture and etiquette. He should be given the opportunity to develop the desire to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When he develops the desire on his own, then when difficulties come, he will feel strong and be able to maintain his desire. When I joined, I was only fifteen. If I had been forced to go on saṅkīrtana, I wouldn’t be in the movement any more. First I stayed in the temple for several months and did services such as cleaning the temple and helping in the BBT. At the same time I heard the devotees and my spiritual master preach about book distribution, and thus I developed the strong desire to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. I was never completely satisfied in the temple. Something was always missing. At first I didn’t know what it was. But when I saw the saṅkīrtana devotees returning on the weekends, I noticed that they had the connection with Kṛṣṇa’s mission that I wanted. They were really happy. So I developed the strong desire to do that service, and I prayed to the Deities every day to be allowed to go out with a saṅkīrtana party.

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: I remember Schloss Rettershof when all the saṅkīrtana devotees returned on Saturday evenings—their roaring kīrtanas sometimes lasted till midnight. Harikeśa Swami, Bhaktivaibhava Swami, Śacīnandana Swami, Rāma-śraddhā and others were there. We bhaktas would stand on the veranda, drooling with the desire to be part of the kīrtaṇa, but the bhakta leader, Bhaktibhūṣaṇa Swami, would say, “Time for bed—it’s nine o’clock.” We wanted to get the nectar, and we were frustrated when we couldn’t. Then one bhakta got to go on saṅkīrtana, and we all wanted to sneak out the door also, but our bhakta leader would close it and say, “No, no, you stay here.” In this way our desire was cultivated.

What convinces you? Nectar. Pratyaksāvagamāṁ dharmyam [Bg. 9.2]. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “If one engages not only in hearing but in trying to broadcast the message of devotional activities as well, . . . he gradually feels spiritual progress.” And the saṅkīrtana devotees display that progress.
It’s a direct experience, and you can invite bhakta candidates to visit the temple and get that experience. It so much depends on the bhakta leader.

10.5 Points to know before going out

Book distribution is a transcendental activity and not just a salesman’s art or an innate ability. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that every devotee could learn the art of book distribution. He said that to distribute books “we have to adopt the same tactics as ordinary salesmen adopt, but the difference is that we do it for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, and they do it for sense gratification.” 15 If by learning such tactics one can increase book distribution, then avoiding them is false renunciation. Book distribution is a transcendental activity based on pure desire and surrender. Part of that surrender is learning some tactics, because they are effective and will increase the quality and quantity of book distribution as desired by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and new devotees should be systematically introduced to this transcendental art.

Basic book distribution techniques

Chapters Four and Five explained many features of sāṅkīrtana psychology and techniques. Many things must be learned by practice, but this doesn’t mean that devotees should start distributing books without any theoretical introduction. General points are summarized here.

Attitude—To give people books and ask for some money in return, you must be convinced about what you are doing and be enthusiastic. If you have no doubts about Prabhupāda’s books, you can convince others.

Approach—Take command of the situation, but take control in a detached way. You’re there for a purpose. Put the books in their hands and tell them what you want. While inducing them to buy the books, be sensitive to their feelings and reactions.

Concentration—If your mind isn’t working for you, it’s working against you. Therefore while talking to a person, fix your mind and his mind on the books. That means presenting the books on his level of understanding and elevating his interest. Don’t let his concentration wander off.

Make friends—You don’t sell a product, you sell yourself. This universal principle of salesmanship applies especially to devotees. Devotional service can be distributed only by devotees. To get people interested in the books, you’ve got to get them interested in you, and they become interested in you when you’re interested in them. Once they like you, they’ll naturally be inclined to accept what you have to offer them.
Getting people’s attention—Introduce yourself and the books. Ask questions. No one minds answering relevant questions, and everyone likes to talk about himself. Ask questions that can be answered yes. If you ask a person whether or not he likes to read and he says no, then it will be difficult to reverse the negative energy and save the sale. Don’t be afraid to ask, “Have you ever heard of Kṛṣṇa?” or to mention topics related to our books—reincarnation, karma, and so on.

Communication—Words are meant for people; look at them when you speak. Suppose you’re selling a book to a man and you’re looking at him, but you forget about his wife. If she says no, there’s nothing you can do about it.

Speaking—Talk like a real person. Be natural. Vary your volume, pitch, and rate of speaking. People don’t want to hear a robot. If you are a little nervous, you tend to speak quickly. So slow down at the beginning. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. Avoid going over a person’s head. Don’t use ISKCON slang or preach like a tape recorder, which can’t discriminate who’s listening. A window lets in light but doesn’t draw attention to itself, so be transparent; let Kṛṣṇa come through, according to your knowledge and realization.

Representing ISKCON—The book distributors are the most prominent representatives of ISKCON within society. ISKCON’s reputation depends to a large extent on the behavior of its book distributors. The impression people have of you is what they will think of ISKCON. Don’t cheat. Don’t be arrogant. You’re not a businessman nor a worker driven by the pressure of a quota. If people already have books and have questions, take your time to answer them.

Association—To ensure the most effective development of your book distribution, guidance from experienced devotees is indispensable. In the beginning it’s sufficient just to imitate the senior distributors or do as they instruct until you develop your own style. You have to act according to the instructions to realize them. “Activities performed in full knowledge [jñā-\(\text{na}\)] strengthen one’s advancement in real knowledge [vijñāna]” (Bg. 5.2p).

Basic sales psychology

Harikeśa Swami: Every distributor should know basic sales techniques. They have to learn them by practical experience because in every country people will present themselves in a specific manner. With some experience a distributor will be able to keep a person’s attention. He has to figure out
more or less what the person does by guessing or by questioning—“What
do you do? Where do you come from?” That forces a person to relate to
you. But questions can also annoy a person, because he doesn’t have any
particular commitment to the situation he’s run into. If you can guess a per-
son’s occupation, then he becomes amazed. A book distributor with good
intuition or good at physiognomy will understand what a person does by
how he dresses or the way he looks. At least one can understand whether
someone works in a factory, an office, or is a well-paid big shot. A book dis-
tributor develops a second sense for it, and when he gets better and better
at it, he can understand a person’s mind and mood. At least if he under-
stands the mood, then he can say things that the person relates to. A devo-
tee has to see from the other person’s point of view. If the weather’s enjoy-
able and people are in a good mood, you can say to someone, “It’s really
nice out, isn’t it?” You don’t say, “Lousy day, isn’t it?” because he’s not go-
ing to relate to that. For him, today is fine, and for a karmī, if it’s fine one
day, it’s fine forever. You capture his mood, and he reciprocates with you
immediately.

But sometimes you have to be real straightforward with somebody and
dive directly into the business. People like it if you’re businesslike when
they’re in a hurry. So you have to adjust. Don’t start asking questions. Jump
into selling the book, and the person will appreciate that. If you’re standing
in the rain or it’s very cold, don’t get into a long discourse about the books,
because the person simply wants to move on. It takes a little common sense
and a lot of experience. You must discriminate intelligently and judge situ-
ations according to the time, place, and circumstance.

10.6 Joining a saṅkīrtana party

Every one should go with the saṅkīrtana party as soon as
possible.\textsuperscript{16}

The first days on saṅkīrtana

\textbf{Maṅidhāra Dāsa}: During my first year on saṅkīrtana I hardly had time to
go to the lecture, even on Sunday, because I was helping in the kitchen. Go-
ing to a lecture was a big experience. The traveling parties were really wild.
There were no lectures and hardly any time to chant my \textit{japa}. I was the
driver, and I chanted while driving. Starting at four o’clock in the morning,
I had to drive one or two hundred miles to the day’s distribution spots, and
when we arrived, everyone was well rested and had finished his rounds. But
I’d collapse behind the wheel, and I was supposed to go out. After half a year we got a bhakta leader. He was a mellow devotee, not pushy, and he’d ask me, “Where do you want to distribute?” and we’d go there. He had a big altar, and we made nice offerings. That was such a new experience that soon I doubled my book distribution. And I was so satisfied and happy I couldn’t believe it. Sometimes in the summer we went to a lake to swim. By such experiences I learned that the most important thing is taking care of new devotees. Of course, we should not support their sentimental attitudes too much. But in the beginning those are the only attitudes they have, and sentimentalism is better than impersonalism. It’s something to start with.

Navina-nirada Das: At one point the new sankirtana devotees have to go out for the first time. The devotees training the newcomers should be very easy on them. They should explain to them what they have to say, tell them where to go, and even go out with them to give them an opportunity to hear and listen and see how to distribute books to people. After the preparation, they have to start themselves. You have to throw them in the water, so to speak, but you can stay nearby to help them if the need arises. And also later, you may have to take the time to preach to them or encourage them before they go out. Older sankirtana devotees must have sensitivity. Sometimes a devotee may need to read or take a nap before going out, or he’ll need some form of inspiration like listening to a tape or having a personal conversation. One shouldn’t just throw them out of the van and say, “OK, see you at eight tonight. So long.” Because sometimes it’s tough outside. The devotees have to feel comfortable in the association of other sankirtana devotees so that they can develop their faith in book distribution and their taste for the service. We don’t go out simply to suffer. We perform the activity for the welfare of the people, and we relish the wonderful taste of Krishna consciousness that is found only by staying out and distributing Srila Prabhupada’s books. In this way even young devotees will be inspired to accept the challenge of book distribution. Although they will know that success won’t come overnight, they’ll see that there’s a good future in this service.

Indranilamani Devi Dasi: After ten years of selling paintings, it took me some time to adjust to book distribution. I was good at making up excuses not to go out. I’d daydream about what I’d like to do to become spiritually happy. Then one day while reading Servant of the Servant, by Tamal Krishna Goswami, my spiritual master, I read a passage that struck me: “If my disciples actually love me, then let them engage in distributing Srila Prabhupada’s books profusely. Thus they will keep me always as the leader
of the saṅkīrtana party, the service which Śrīla Prabhupāda preferred for me above all others. . . . If they will help me in this way, Śrīla Prabhupāda will certainly bestow his unlimited blessings upon us all.” Then I realized it wasn’t a question of whether or not I liked doing it. The point was to do what most pleased my spiritual master and his spiritual master. And the more I did book distribution, the more I realized it was a pure service. There’s no material motivation for sense gratification. Our hearts become enriched with an understanding of what it means to be the servant of a servant. I have no special qualification. People reject me as often as they do any other distributor. Christians try to convert me, and demons attack me. But I hold tightly to the instructions of my spiritual master as my protective shield, and I keep shooting the arrows of transcendental knowledge that Śrīla Prabhupāda left us in the form of his books. I fervently pray that I hit the target—people’s hearts. I also pray that the compassion of my spiritual master manifests in my words and overcomes people’s fears and illusions and that they will appreciate and understand this message of love of God.

**Gīta-govinda Dāsī:** In the beginning I had to go out by myself because there were hardly any mātājis in the temple. I didn’t know what to say to people, but somehow or other I could go out every day. When my mind was weak, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave me his association. By reading the *Lilāmṛta*, I realized how merciful he was, and I felt my fearfulness go away completely. Thus I was able to get up and go out again. And at other times the senior devotees enlivened me. At the same time I tried to help as much as possible in the temple. By serving devotees I received the mercy that helped me to go out every day. And by hearing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class regularly and reading Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books every day, I gradually fixed my mind on distributing books.

**Śairṣi Devī Dāsī:** When you first start to distribute books it’s like a game. You go out to see how people will react and what they’ll say and what kind of people you’ll meet. Sometimes it gets tough, and the mind can’t take it anymore. Sometimes I had to go to the car, and I’d sit down and cry, or else I read a little.

**Guru-caraṇa Dāsa:** I remember the first time I went out. I was quite afraid and embarrassed to meet people. I felt sure that book distribution wasn’t my service. Still I did it, and eventually, whenever I was distributing, I was in ecstasy. But every morning it was difficult to get out. I thought, “Yes, it was enlivening, but that was yesterday. I’m sure this isn’t my natural service—I’m too shy to meet people.” Yet by doing it, I started to find plea-
sure and satisfaction in it. There was a natural change in me. Now I like it. I really feel happy when people take books, and I sometimes visit them and find that some read the books. Now I don’t feel that it’s difficult to go out and preach. I like it. Sometimes I can go almost naturally. I don’t have to fight much with my mind. Now I don’t even mind going out by myself. When most of the devotees go to the Māyāpur festival and the remaining devotees are fully engaged, there’s nobody to push me to go out, but I still like to go out.

**Distributing books with older book distributors**

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** Distributing books is ecstatic, but my greatest ecstasy is distributing with a younger devotee and seeing how a bewildered, doubtful newcomer turns into a completely determined saṅkīrtana devotee. I see how saṅkīrtana is Lord Caitanya’s mercy, and it gives me great confidence in the process. On saṅkīrtana you can observe how it works.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** I got to know Kṛṣṇa consciousness and the devotees while traveling through India. In Vṛndāvana I got a book by Śrīla Prabhupāda for the first time. After returning from India, I joined the temple, and after some weeks I began to distribute books. At that time there were only two or three devotees on traveling saṅkīrtana in Austria, and they introduced me to the art of book distribution. They always spoke about Harināmānanda, and they mentioned that he’d soon visit Austria to travel with us for a week. I was curious to see how he distributed so many books, because I liked book distribution and also wanted to distribute more. When he came, I brought him to all the places where I used to distribute, and he distributed three or four times the number of books that I did. It was the first time I realized that book distribution is transcendental. It doesn’t depend on the place, but on my consciousness. After a week of association with Harināmānanda, I doubled my results and gained great faith in book distribution.

**Jāhnavā Devī Dāsī:** I distributed books for the first time with another bhaktin, and she took me to Kennedy airport. We wore Western clothes, and we distributed small and medium books. I pretty much copied her. I wasn’t afraid of the people. Then Jādurāṇi came to New York to train women in book distribution. I followed her around for seven or eight hours a day for quite a few days in a row. I watched every move she made and listened to every word she said. She was personal in her approach and wouldn’t always say the same thing. I’d watch her for an hour, then go practice what I had learned. And I’d mess up, say the wrong thing, or forget what to say. So I’d go back and watch her again, and I began to develop a technique. In the
beginning I copied her like a robot, but it really worked. In a short time everything became more natural for me. Jadurani preached to me philosophically and wasn’t much concerned with big results, although she did more than all of us. She was detached, and she’d preach to me in that mood. She really trained me well. I got a real taste and loved it from the beginning.

**Tapas Dasa:** The most difficult thing is to get out on the street. Every day it is the same kind of experience, especially for new devotees. Māyā somehow or other tries to stop you from going out. When you are in the saṅkīrtana van, you feel, “Oh, I’m very tired. Maybe I should take rest. Or maybe I should chant more rounds or read a bit. Maybe I should take prasādam.” The mind is trying to cheat you. On the mental platform saṅkīrtana becomes as difficult as rising in the morning—the longer you wait, the more difficult it becomes. It’s said that one conquers sleep by rising. The same thing applies if one wants to do saṅkīrtana. One simply goes out and does it. Determination is the only thing we need, and we get it by associating with determined devotees who take us out on saṅkīrtana.

**Navina-nirada Dasa:** One way of introducing new devotees to book distribution is to engage them as servants of experienced book distributors. Especially during marathons they can help by driving, shopping, cooking, and preparing the book stacks. Or going door to door with the book distributors—that’s the way I began saṅkīrtana, and it helped me a lot.

### 10.7 Lessons to improve the distribution

**Never quit**

**Nṛśimhadeva Dasa:** When difficulties arise, a book distributor must continue. Rohinīsuta used to tell us again and again, “Just continue no matter what.” If you never give up, you overcome all difficulties.

**Quantity rests upon quality**

**Jaya Gurudeva Dasa:** Once, the devotees asked Śrīla Prabhupāda whether they should be concerned about how fast they chanted japa. Prabhupāda said that at first they shouldn’t worry about speed and should just do it nicely; then, as they practiced, naturally and automatically the speed would increase. So this principle also applies to book distribution. In the beginning the stress should always be on quality. That doesn’t exclude quantity. There are examples of distributors doing a large quantity of books qualitatively
well from the beginning. Even if big results don’t manifest initially, they will come, provided the distributor gets a solid foundation and does not give up his service when the first test comes.

Avoid indifference — it’s a battle of wills

Harikēśa Swami: Sometimes devotees may think, “We’ll go out and distribute books, and if Kṛṣṇa wants, the people will take them. Otherwise, what can we do?” So they just say, “You want a book?” And the person says, “No.” And they think, “Kṛṣṇa doesn’t want him to take a book. Next person.” This is an impersonal attitude. A book distributor has to have a strong desire because the people don’t want anything except sense gratification. Therefore one’s desire has to be stronger than the materialist’s desire for sense gratification. The materialists may say no, but a devotee doesn’t accept that. He gives them reasons to take the book, and he strongly wants them to have it. Then the Supersoul may tell them, “Look how strong his desire is. Even though you’re not interested, how can you refuse him? His reasons are good. Take the book.” That’s the way to convince others. Determination must be there, not that the book distributor just thinks, “It’s up to Kṛṣṇa.” It is up to Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa is waiting for a devotee’s desire to manifest. Then Kṛṣṇa will help his desire become realized. The devotee has to endeavor. And if he desires and endeavors, Kṛṣṇa will reward him. A devotee should try his best, and he shouldn’t be disappointed if after doing his best it didn’t work. (From a class in Zurich on August 13, 1990)

Determination

Harināmānanda Dāsa: When I go out on sankirtana I cannot meditate on Kṛṣṇa in an artificial way or visualize the form of Kṛṣṇa in front of me. When I take fifteen or twenty books on my arm, then I see only the conditioned souls. I know it will be like a battle. I know what my duty is—just to contact the people in such an attractive way that they will find no good reason not to take the books. That’s my meditation on sankirtana. We should carefully avoid a sentimental understanding of book distribution or else our so-called enthusiasm will not last, because the karmīs won’t be sentimental with us.

Avoid small talk

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: Sometimes people want you to listen to their philosophy or life story. Or they want to know things about you. When I meet someone from Australia, I’m asked how I came to Germany from Austral-
ia. He doesn’t really want to know about the books. He’s simply looking into my life as a form of sense gratification. This is a test of māyā because it’s an opportunity to speak about myself. Of course, we have to talk about such things sometimes, but we ought to avoid falling into the trap of gratifying our senses by thinking, “I’m interesting, and my life is important and worth hearing about.”

Impersonalists

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: One kind of useless person is the māyāvādi who has his own books and philosophy. If you meet one and argue with him, it contaminates you. Recently, I spoke to one for forty-five minutes, and for several days after I was struggling like anything. That happened when I was doing bigger than ever before, but this guy finished me off because I was foolish enough to bother to argue with him. We should be potent enough to directly confront people like that with the books or avoid the conversation.

Be concise

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: I met a man who had heard about Bhagavad-gītā, and he took one and gave a nice donation. Then I decided to tell him more about the book, but my speech did nothing but remind him that he’s a Christian. Soon we had an argument and then he wanted his money back, and I had to give in, taking it as a lesson not to talk so much.

Don’t talk over people’s heads

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: If our minds are uncontrolled, we confuse the urge to speak with preaching. We talk and talk, and even if it is Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy, it turns people off because it is egocentric. We like hearing our voice, or we’re attached to an instant conversion. Lord Caitanya showed the perfect example when He preached to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. He listened for seven days. Of course, Sārvabhauma was a big fish, and Lord Caitanya wanted to catch him. The Lord spoke only when Sārvabhauma showed some interest and asked, “Why aren’t You saying anything?” If there’s no interest, what’s the use of preaching? We give them the books, which are nondifferent from Lord Caitanya, and the books are very patient. They wait even longer than seven days.

Be aggressive, but . . .

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: Streets, parking lots, shopping centers, and airports are places where people are under pressure. They want to get to the next
place—quick, quick, quick. So when they meet an inexperienced devotee eager to sell a book, they might misunderstand that he wants to cheat them. “How dare he stop me to sell something?” Or “How dare he knock on my car window while I’m sitting in my car.” We are quite aggressive, and that’s required. There’s nothing wrong with that. Prabhupāda said that if he hadn’t been aggressive, we wouldn’t have turned to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But we have to be intelligently aggressive and must avoid agitating people. Prabhupāda said that if by our aggression we make people angry and they walk away without a book, then we’re a nonsense. So we have to learn to be aggressive and humorous and detached and friendly all at the same time. It’s especially difficult for young devotees. They tend to be attached to the results because at the end of the week everyone glorifies their good results. And if they don’t bring in big results, they fear that other devotees might think they were in māyā. We should be eager to please the devotees by our sincere endeavors, but not at the expense of burning people out. An aggressive way of distributing books isn’t the method, anyway, to get good results in the long run.

Let Kṛṣṇa help

Jāhnava Devī Dāśī: As I started to develop the art of distributing books, I retained what Jadurāṇī taught me. I had a foundation on which I could build—using my personality and life experiences—and I’d meet people on their level. Spontaneously I’d always find things to say. I tried to be myself. Kṛṣṇa is the source of remembrance and forgetfulness. He gave me the power to say things I didn’t even know I knew. And sometimes He took away what I thought I knew, depending on my consciousness.

Every person is an individual

Navina-nīrada Dāsa: The intelligence has to be alert like anything. “Who am I dealing with? Does he already have books? Did he read something? Does he like the books or not? Does he feel bad about the way he got the books?” We should be friendly and emphasize the value of the books, try to pacify the person if he got upset the last time, even apologize, and we shouldn’t foolishly push anyone to buy more books. Only then, if at all, can we expect him to take another book. Start a dialogue. Find out what interests he has. History? Culture? Psychology? It doesn’t require making a speech. Rather, we have to be sensitive. Every person is different. We can’t start a conversation by asking artificial, useless questions. Book distribution isn’t mechanical. We have to be absorbed in the service, then a few
words are enough to touch the soul. If we just try to find a way to give the
nectar to people, Kṛṣṇa gives all facility, all knowledge, and all strength to
be straightforward, and then we immediately see what kind of explanation
a person needs. We cannot force people to take books in their hands with-
out making a nice approach. We have to gain their confidence. If they feel
they're being forced by someone, they'll never accept anything.

Be personal

Cākṣu Dāsa: It’s important to deal with an individual personally, not like a
machine: You put in the mantra, shake him up a bit, then the money comes
out and you have one more book point. That’s not the way. We have to be
personal. By being personal, we see the nature of a person. If we deal with
someone according to his nature, he'll feel inspired to give in to our desire
that he take the books. And by seeing his nature we also see how far he
can be engaged—whether he can take only one book or all the books. If
devotees are personal in dealing with people, the people will also feel fa-
miliar with the devotees and have a higher appreciation for them and the
books they get. And seeing the books in their homes, they will remember
the devotees’ instruction that they should read the books.

10.8 Dealing with weakness

What is this alone? A Vaiṣṇava is never alone. When I first
came to the United States I was seemingly alone for one year.
But I never felt alone. I always felt the presence of my Guru
Mahārāja. I was cooking, I was printing books, I was selling
books—everything seemingly alone. But I did not lose my
determination. Actually you should know this: You are never
alone. 17

Harikeśa Swami: Sometimes devotees feel weak on book distribution, and
during the day they think, “I can’t go on. It’s too difficult. I don’t have any
strength left. What shall I do?” Sometimes they go to sleep, sometimes they
sit down to read, sometimes they eat prasādam, and sometimes they just go
crazy. In such a situation I advise: First, stop and get yourself to some place
where you can just chant Hare Kṛṣṇa on your beads and sit down or walk
up and down and chant rounds until you get your head together. There is
nothing better than chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa to get your head together. Some-
times we just have to chant a lot of rounds in one day. Then after you chant
a lot, you’re ready to read a bit. So you sit down to read. And when you’re
finished with that, then you may have enough strength to go back out and face the cruel material world again. But when you feel, “Here I am facing the cruel material world, and I’m doing all right, but I am gradually weakening again,” then you can try the technique of chanting between persons. As you approach people, you can chant. Of course, you don’t do it within earshot of the person. But in between people you can chant. What is more powerful for a saṅkīrtana devotee than the holy name of the Lord? It is an important technique to just chant more. There is no better technique.

The saṅkīrtana devotees should take care of themselves physically and spiritually. They have to eat properly and get enough sleep. During the day they can take a break to finish their rounds, and they have to read Śrila Prabhupāda’s books to keep themselves Kṛṣṇa conscious. I’ve been requesting our saṅkīrtana devotees to read two hours a day because they have to learn the books. If they simply sell them, sell them, sell them, and never read them, it’s not good. Prabhupāda told me in South Africa, “They think the books are just for selling, but actually I have made them for reading. They should read the books, not just sell the books.” The point is that the books are especially meant to help us develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So if one falls into māyā during the day, he should chant more and read a little and then get himself back on his feet and immediately strike back at māyā again. Don’t let māyā get the upper hand. But if you become so weak that you can’t go on, then go back to the temple and tell the president. Then get some other service, maybe harināma or helping in the kitchen or doing some Deity worship. Don’t worry, it’s not bad. Every warrior on the battlefield becomes a little weak and needs to return to the camp for a rest. After a short period the saṅkīrtana spirit will well up, and you will want to go out again. The other devotees should understand this and give you support.

10.9 Dealing with hostile people

Rohiniṣuta Dāsa: As Lord Caitanya says, tṛṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahis-ṇunā, amāninā mānadena kirtaniyāḥ sadā hariḥ: only when we’re tolerant and humble can we perform kīrtana and saṅkīrtana, chanting the holy name and giving it to others. We have to give respect to others. That’s a heavy thing for most people in Kali-yuga to accept; even for devotees it’s hard to follow. It’s much easier to be a demigod or a kṣatriya, because they can immediately kill anyone who’s against Kṛṣṇa and religious principles. But devotees cannot kill anyone. Lord Caitanya’s and Lord Nityānanda’s mission is to kill people’s demoniac mentalities. Therefore we cannot chastise them. When someone says something against you, the best way to kill them is to ignore them. If our consciousness is pure and detached, we won’t even
meet such people because we’ll be working on a completely different level and be attracting only nice people. But when we do meet such people, we don’t become agitated or angry or entangled in useless arguments. We always find ways to get rid of them and continue with a pure consciousness.

Maṇīdhāra Dāsa: We had many encounters with demons because they’re common in Germany. In a dangerous situation we can realize how Kṛṣṇa protects us and gives us intelligence and prowess. The demons I knew considered me brainwashed anyway, so I didn’t mind acting in an even crazier way than they expected. That came as a shock for them, and they preferred running away from the “crazy” Kṛṣṇa guy “before he goes completely nuts.” Sometimes I bowed down in front of them and opened their shoes or produced a strange sound. The demons were perplexed and panic-stricken: “He’s mad or epileptic. Who knows what he’s going to do next!” But that type of behavior is only for the full-time demons. One evening after dark a man pulled out a revolver instead of money and pointed it at me. But I just put my finger in the hole and said, “Pull the trigger, friend, and you’ll get yourself in trouble. The whole thing will shoot back at you.” He started to laugh, and me, too. Then he put the gun back in his pocket.

Purūravā Dāsa: If people become offensive or ask stupid questions just to entangle me, I take the book back and end the whole thing. They want to waste our time, and we have to be clever enough to get away without offending them. That’s especially true of Christians and so-called religious people who seem interested and ask questions but only want to make the point that Jesus is the only way. Talking with such people pollutes our consciousness. But when they ask relevant questions and are sincere to hear something, we can speak with them, especially after they’ve bought a book. Generally they’re not on the level of grasping philosophical points, and we should say no more than required to give them a book.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: In Dresden I met a young lady who was curious, but hesitant to buy a book. I was explaining the Kṛṣṇa books when suddenly a woman passed by and said, “I don’t know much about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but I got that book yesterday. It’s really good, and you should buy it.” Kṛṣṇa’s mercy! The young lady was just opening her purse when a man came over and said, “Be careful! He’s from a dangerous sect!” The young lady listened as he started to explain. I realized it was out of my control. I was astonished at the unusual situation that Kṛṣṇa had arranged. I said to her, “Well, you can believe me or him. Do what you want.” The man continued, “Don’t take the books.” Soon the girl became annoyed with his ha-
rangue and said, “I don’t have to do what you say. I do what I want. I’ll take this book.”

**Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa:** Sometimes people ask, “Is this from a sect?” One way of responding to this programmed doubt is to ignore it and explain that the books are ancient India’s most famous books of wisdom. If people are really heavy and insist, “No, this is from a sect,” then I defend the books: “I know the German culture is nice, but it’s not the only culture in the world; just because it’s not from Germany doesn’t mean it’s from a sect.” I repeat that the books are from the most ancient culture of the world. “Have you heard about Sanskrit?” Or sometimes I pretend not to know what sect means, and then they have to try to explain it or shut up. So that opens some new ground for preaching and clarifying their misunderstandings.

**Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa:** Once a bhakta in my group was being harassed by a Christian who followed him and disrupted his book distribution. So our Bhakta Johann finally got fed up, went up to the guy right in front of all the people, and began to chant loud into the demon’s face: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The so-called Christian started screaming, “No, no, no! Stop, stop!” He began to flee, and Johann followed him, chanting the holy name. The man screamed as if he were being violently attacked and ran off, never to return.

**Śaīrṣi Devī Dāsī:** Don’t agitate a demon. Don’t agitate anyone. Demons are agitated in any case. It doesn’t matter what you do or say or how nice you are to them. If you notice a demon, try to go out of his way. And don’t distribute in front of city bookstores, because often the store owners will become envious and call the police. Keep moving, like a bee looking for nectar, and never waste time in dry situations.

### 10.10 First realizations of a higher taste

**Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa:** If a saṅkīrtana devotee fears going out, this is a sign that he’s weak in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Fear exists only on the surface. In the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there is no fear. Fear comes from attachment to the body, from thinking, “I’m the enjoyer and controller.” You’re afraid of seeing your attachments frustrated or losing your sense gratification. But if you have nothing but Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s books to distribute, what can people take from you? Why do you have anything to fear? They can only take a book from you. This is no reason for fear. They can’t steal anything
better than a Kṛṣṇa conscious book. That is perfection for a thief. You should fear only a falldown. Māyā you have to fear, and that fear brings you to Kṛṣṇa. Even if you give up the body on book distribution, it’s no reason for fear. Lord Caitanya Himself will bring you back. Or you may become sick, but Lord Caitanya will protect you. Gaurī passed away in Vṛndāvana after distributing books for many years, and Lord Caitanya protected her from all anxiety. She was chanting and reading in Vṛndāvana, and she left her body chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. You could not have a better situation for leaving your body. So a book distributor need not fear anything because his life is in the hands of Kṛṣṇa. And Kṛṣṇa cares for you, don’t worry. Kṛṣṇa even takes care of your body.

Prahlādānanda Swami: When I started to distribute books, five of us devotees did saṅkīrtana every day. I drove them to their spots and dropped them off, and then I’d go out myself. But immediately māyā would hit me: “Oh, my dear sir, you are tired. You can’t go out now. And the people are nasty. You should take some rest, and you will feel better. Then you can go out.” I thought like that, and I took rest, but then I’d wake up sweating, tired, anxious, and still not ready to go out. Every day māyā did the same thing to me, so I started to analyze the situation: “When I feel the mode of ignorance rising, I think I will get relief by taking rest, but actually the result is always more anxiety.” So then I decided that as soon as I had dropped everyone off, I’d just fly out of the van and start distributing books with full determination. As soon as I did that, the modes of nature disappeared, and it was like a different world.

Indradyumna Swami: One winter in Paris we wanted to prepare a big program for Prabhupāda, so we printed thousands of pamphlets called On Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. We wanted to distribute all of them in the Metros, and we started a marathon, going into the Metro early, about 7:30 A.M., before it became light outside. We’d stay there all day, eat our lunch on the benches, and come out in the evening at 8 P.M. Day after day, week after week, for about a month and a half, we didn’t even see the sun. When Prabhupāda came we had his darśana. I was a neophyte, and I wanted to complain to my spiritual master. When Prabhupāda asked if there were any questions, I raised my hand and asked, “It’s difficult going into the Metros all day. We don’t even see the sun.” Prabhupāda interrupted me by asking, “When did I ever say that preaching was easy?” So I began to understand that all the discomforts and austerities are like nothing when they’re meant to please the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes we lose sight of that goal. If we make a nice arrangement, if our devotional service goes on in
nice circumstances, then we think we are doing well in devotional service. But where does our real pleasure come from? What is the Vaiṣṇava’s happiness? Even at much risk, at much pain, his real happiness is when he sees another person take to devotional service.

**Gaurī Devī Dāsī:** The first time I distributed a lot of books, I was at the New Jersey airport. A thick fog grounded all the planes and kept the military men there all day. So I wandered around with my Kṛṣṇa books in a state of what was for a neophyte devotee some kind of ecstasy. Somehow I wasn’t feeling any special pride or an ambition to distribute a lot of books. What I felt was awe at Kṛṣṇa’s potency. I was simply awed by how Kṛṣṇa could arrange for the books to go out. And it just went on all day long. I distributed seventy books that day, which was the biggest that we had ever done in New York at that time.

**Jadurāṇī Devī Dāsī:** Sometimes you really want to do sankīrtana, but when you get out, you don’t have a strong desire to go through all the austerities and difficulties. Then you should desire to have the desire. Prabhupāda said to pray to Kṛṣṇa for whatever you want. The living entity is totally unable to achieve anything on his own. He can do something only by the grace of the Lord. So even if you don’t have a desire, then you just go through with it as a duty, and the desire comes if you simultaneously pray for it. It’s like when you’re almost drowned and the lifeguard administers artificial respiration. It’s artificial, but because the breathing is somehow going on, it eventually returns and becomes natural again. Similarly, in the scriptures it is said that acts performed in knowledge strengthen knowledge. I may not have the knowledge, but if I act like a person in knowledge would act, then knowledge comes. Enthusiasm comes. A lot of times when I used to do sankīrtana as a younger devotee and I didn’t feel enthusiastic, I’d smile and put on a big show of enthusiasm: “Hi there! What’s your name? How are you?” And it soon became natural, because Kṛṣṇa saw that I was trying. I knew intellectually that it was the right thing to do. By personal experience we know, and therefore we do it, even if initially we do it by force, by habit, by duty, or just fake it. At least intellectually we have to understand what is right—that the person should get a book and I should help him. If I can’t do it naturally, I have to do it somehow.

**Bhaktavatsala Dāsa:** At a certain point I gave up the idea that some day I would become a big sankīrtana star, especially when I got the chance to travel with Harināmānanda. And when I gave up that idea, I felt my saṁ-
\textit{kirtana} drastically improve. I decided that I should just dedicate myself to going out every day and doing what I can. Immediately I felt relieved and free from many mental attachments and fears.

\textbf{Śacīnandana Swami:} During the marathon even our “professional” actor and social critic, Bhakta Cedric, went out on book distribution for the first time, with some reservations, we have to admit. But he came back completely blissful. “What’s the matter with you, Bhakta Cedric?” we asked. “What has happened? Tell us what kind of miracle happened!” And he said, “Someone came up to me and asked, ‘Do you know Rohiṁisuta?’ I didn’t know what to say; maybe he wanted to give the book back, and I would have to return the money. So I hesitated and said, ‘I’ve heard of him. I know him from a distance.’ Then the man replied, ‘Wonderful. He sold me the \textit{Bhagavad-gītā} yesterday, and I couldn’t stop reading it. I want ten more copies to give to my friends.’” Bhakta Cedric could hardly believe it. Completely in bliss, he went back to the car and got the ten books. So even the skeptic Cedric distributed eighty books that day. (From a class in Zurich on January 1, 1991)

10.11 Becoming steady

Let our philosophy be challenged by anyone, and we shall defeat them. I want that you distribute our books very widely, as many as possible, then people will get the right information. We show people by the results: so many centers, happy devotees, big books, strong conviction—like that. Let people judge who is better by the results. ¹⁸

\textbf{Purifying our motivation}

\textbf{Guru-carāṇa Dāsa:} I was never a star, but I tried to be steady. If we continue to go out, a nice result accumulates in the course of time even though the daily results aren’t that big. Whenever my results went down, I understood that I had done something wrong; maybe I had offended a devotee or I was too attached to the results. At that point I tried to concentrate more on chanting and reading. I wanted to be careful. What helped me a lot was chanting. For a \textit{sāṅkīrtana} devotee it’s important to chant his rounds all together before 7 A.M. if possible, or at least before going out. Chanting and reading when you aren’t tired, with a clear mind, is really the most important thing, because it gives us the strength to remain steady.
Rohinīṣuta Dāsa: Sometimes new devotees think, “I want to perform the supreme service. Therefore I have to become a book distributor. At least I have to become a preacher or a BBT devotee. Everything else is second, third, or fourth class, and that’s too low for me.” But that’s the wrong motivation. We shouldn’t perform sankīrtana because we want to belong to an elite. Still, sankīrtana is so nice that even if we have that motive, we’ll be purified by all kinds of tests. We should never question why Kṛṣṇa always tests us and gives us such a hard time. Tests are meant for our purification. Kṛṣṇa doesn’t like to make it easy because He knows us. If He makes it easy, we’ll be inclined to enjoy and forget Him. So He gives us a hard time, but even hard times are nice times if we surrender to Kṛṣṇa. (From a class in Zurich on August 7, 1991)

Maṇīdhāra Dāsa: It’s like driving a car. You can’t drive safely if you’re watching your feet on the pedals or looking only two meters ahead. You must look at the whole stretch of road ahead, and then all the short-term dangers are included, and you can easily deal with them. To reach your destination you must never lose sight of it. You know what the goal is, and despite discouragements and difficulties, you don’t become distracted.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: I’ve often seen new bhaktas distributing more and more books until they realized, “If we continue like this, we will end up as book distributors our whole lives.” On that basis, unfortunately, they decided to give up book distribution. But sankīrtana is the most important service one can do for the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. That firm faith has to be instilled into the hearts of the new devotees, beginning from their bhakta training and continuing throughout their first months in the temple. Otherwise new devotees will never be willing or able to take part wholeheartedly in book distribution.

Tests are Kṛṣṇa’s mercy

Rohinīṣuta Dāsa: Tests are Kṛṣṇa’s mercy because He wants us to become free from the clutches of māyā. Therefore He doesn’t allow any spot of materialistic desire to remain. So when Kṛṣṇa gives us a hard time, that means we’re getting Kṛṣṇa’s favor. We’ve seen many times that if we go on at a crucial point when we’re about to break, and pray to Kṛṣṇa to be allowed to continue our book distribution for the pleasure of our spiritual master, then Kṛṣṇa will suddenly send a nice person who buys the whole set or ten books and gives us a big donation. Then we’re in ecstasy. Then we’re running to the next person, almost ready to embrace him, and he also takes five books. And somebody else takes a few books. Then we become puffed
up and forget our position. We think we have become an incarnation, and we become attached to the fruits of our activity. So Kṛṣṇa will again change the scene and make us struggle. We may think we know the tricks how to do it, but this time we go on for two hours without doing anything. Sometimes devotees have a hard time for days or even weeks. But we have to be willing to go on despite bad results. That means we have real compassion and understand why we’re going out. We’re not going out for our sense gratification. We perform our service because our spiritual master told us to do it. We have to stick to our duties despite our liking or disliking them. When we pass the tests, then we can enter new dimensions of spiritual life.

**Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa:** When I started to distribute books, I had an experience that increased my faith in Kṛṣṇa and book distribution. I was trying to distribute books near a post office, and after two hours of not selling one book, I said to myself, “I can’t do it anymore.” It was about 12:30, and I made the plan that if I didn’t distribute a book before one o’clock, I’d stop distributing books for the rest of my life. At one o’clock, I distributed one book. Then another. And then another and another. And after one hour I had distributed almost twenty books. For a new bhakta that’s a lot of books. From that experience I could understand that Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller and, if He wants, I can distribute a lot of books—but I’m so inexperienced and unqualified that He cannot use me as a tool. That was a great realization.

**Sarvātmā Dāsa:** There are many tricks that māyā can use to stop your sāṅkīrtana. For example, you may have a Bhagavad-gītā in your hand for an hour, and nobody will take it, and then the mind will say, “That’s enough—I can’t take it any longer. I can’t be humbled like this.” But that’s simply a trick. Māyā will never give you a test you cannot pass, because she is Kṛṣṇa’s devotee. You are meant to pass all her tests, and—as Queen Kuntī said—tests are a great aid in remembering Kṛṣṇa.

**Overcoming dualities and fighting the mind**

*Bhagavad-gītā* 8.7p: *Yoga* practice is meditation on the Supersoul within; similarly, by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa one fixes his mind always on the Supreme Lord. The mind is fickle, and therefore it is necessary to engage the mind by force to think of Kṛṣṇa.

**Prahlādānanda Swami:** Sometimes I would be in anxiety because people wouldn’t take any books. Then I’d sit down and read, but I couldn’t understand what I was reading. So I’d read the same thing over and over again
until I finally understood what it said: Everyone is Kṛṣṇa’s servant, and we are meant to please Him. So what was there to worry about? I’d go out with new enthusiasm. Sankirtana became nectar again. As soon as I controlled my mind and understood the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I became free from anxiety, and many people reciprocated accordingly. Even if some people didn’t reciprocate, it didn’t matter as long as I remained detached from the results.

Gaurī Devī Dāsī: Somehow people recognize our purity. Their reactions are a response to our purity. A devotee may not talk to them about Kṛṣṇa, or God, right away. So I don’t mean purity in the sense that we are directly preaching, but just that our friendliness is unmotivated. We’re not hustling them for anything. If we aren’t fruitive and don’t think of them in terms of lakṣmi points or book points, that really gets communicated to them on some level. We keep our minds fixed on that platform by being determined. I don’t mean passionately determined, pushy; I mean sensitively determined to concentrate our whole self on the person for a few minutes and try to grasp what the soul of the person is going through, what kind of ego he has, and what’s preventing him from taking the book. It comes from constant practice. Kṛṣṇa rewards us with the intelligence and intuitive realization. But you definitely have to practice. You have to go out and try. You have to show Kṛṣṇa that you want it. And it requires a lot of austerity on the part of a devotee. It’s an austere service in that sense. But the taste is so deep. Once you begin to taste it—and gradually you do—you become steadier and steadier if you remain steady in your attempt to get it.

Jadurāṇī Devī Dāsī: How do you avoid becoming angry when people are mean? Well, when you ask a baby, “Do you like Prabhupāda? Do you like kirtana?” usually he says no. But you don’t get mad at him. You keep offering him Prabhupāda and kirtana and Kṛṣṇa. You know that he doesn’t know what he’s talking about because he’s a baby, and babies never give any good reason for anything. Another example Prabhupāda gave is that a doctor doesn’t take a patient’s delirious kicking and cursing personally. The doctor just goes on with his serious business of helping the patient.

Realizing your dependence on guru and Kṛṣṇa

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Sankirtana forces us to surrender. At least we should be surrendered enough that we never stop our devotional service. Even with some doubts and difficulties, we have to keep going. The real taste for sankīrtana is beyond the mental and bodily platforms. The sincere disciple is
fully surrendered to the order of his spiritual master. As Śrīla Prabhupāda explained about chanting, it’s like the cry of the little child for its mother. There’s no mystical power involved in distributing Prabhupāda’s books. It’s like a child’s cry for his mother. Prabhupāda gave us the shelter of saṅkīrtana, and if we fully take it, we will easily realize that it’s a pleasant, safe position.

**Gaurī Devī Dāśī:** I had an unforgettable experience with Śrīla Prabhupāda. I was painting for his books. I had just had an operation that made it impossible for me to go out on saṅkīrtana, and Kṛṣṇa was letting me work on some paintings. I knew that sooner or later I was going have to deal with Prabhupāda on the issue of book distribution. I knew I hadn’t gotten off the hook. I had already distributed 108 books and pleased Prabhupāda with that score, and I had already done well on saṅkīrtana again and again. I had a taste, but I just had the idea I wanted to be a book artist, and I couldn’t get it out of my mind. It was like wanting to get married. It was a totally material idea, and Kṛṣṇa let me do it for a while. Then Prabhupāda came to Los Angeles and held a darśana for the older artists and some managers. I wasn’t invited, but because I knew the person that was Prabhupāda’s secretary pretty well, he let me sneak in. I snuck into Prabhupāda’s bedroom, to the side of the darśana room. I was sitting almost next to Prabhupāda, so I was closer than a lot of the devotees. I could watch his expressions carefully. The devotees were presenting their different preaching programs to Prabhupāda one by one. I remember a big preaching program they were doing on college campuses and a newspaper they had printed. He leaned back on his pillows, looking very tired, and just nodded. Then they described how hard the artists worked, and he also nodded to acknowledge that. Finally, they presented what was going on in book distribution, and the minute the words *book distribution* were mentioned, Prabhupāda sat up as straight as an arrow, put his elbows on his desk and his chin in his hands, and smiled from ear to ear. All of a sudden he looked just like a boy. It was a totally different thing, and it went to my heart. Hearing the reports, Prabhupāda beamed and smiled and experienced ecstasy, because he clearly knew what Kṛṣṇa wanted so much—that many books have to be distributed to the conditioned souls. And I realized that Prabhupāda had me. Now I’d never forget that the thing dearest to his heart was book distribution. Whatever anybody would say could never change my realization after that.

**Kalpavāsinī Devī Dāśī:** We have to remember the words of our spiritual master. We can understand that when the spiritual master emphasizes an activity so much, it must be the most important activity even if we don’t un-
derstand it completely. Whenever I go on the street and really concentrate, I feel fully connected to my spiritual master, and it’s blissful. Of course, it can sometimes be a struggle. People are nasty and mean, and the mind creates troubles. But I know that if I just go on, I will get a breakthrough. Sometimes you go around for several hours doing almost nothing. At that point, one alternative is to give up and sit down to read. But I’ve experienced many times that if I decided to pray to Kṛṣṇa and just continued trying to please my spiritual master, some nice person almost always came along and bought a lot of books, and from that point on it became easy. It’s like reaching a barrier; you have to surrender. If you do, everything changes, and you get a clear vision again.

**Nṛsiṁhadeva Dāsa:** Every day is a fight. Book distribution is a hard austerity for the body and the mind, but the bliss that you experience is so great that you gladly accept all these things: no results, people slamming the door, the mind freaking out, and so on. Those things happen because we’re still too impure to be used as instruments by the spiritual master. But at least theoretically we know, “I’m not doing this for my sense gratification, but for the pleasure of the spiritual master.” And we’re taking the vow: “I want to satisfy my spiritual master. I may have so many doubts, I may be such a blockhead, but by his mercy I want to continue my service of distributing books and thus become purified.” Thus we go out again and again, despite setbacks and discouragements. And we like to suffer a little bit for the spiritual master. We understand well that by Kṛṣṇa’s grace the difficulties we face will purify us.

**Kṛṣṇa trains the devotees on saṅkīrtana**

**Jadurāṇī Devi Dāsī:** Determination is required because people repeatedly say no. When this happens to me, it just makes me smile because I can see that I’m not the controller, and that gives me a feeling of real relief. Kṛṣṇa can give us a totally zero day if He wants to. If we surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy, we lose our anxiety. In the beginning when there was a total “No!” the whole time, I would be in a little anxiety. But then I realized that if Kṛṣṇa wants to do something like that He can. And He knows what He’s doing. After having that realization I became happier and could continue to distribute with freedom and detachment: “What’s the use of anxiety? Kṛṣṇa can do with me whatever He wants.” And people could feel my state of consciousness. All of a sudden they took the books, and the tide turned. Or even if the tide doesn’t turn, we just keep going until Kṛṣṇa wants to turn it.
Maṇidhāra Dāsa: Sometimes Kṛṣṇa uses the people to encourage us or rectify our behavior. A few times when I was spacing out on the street, someone in the middle of the crowd patted me on the shoulder and said, “Keep going, keep going.” I always took it as Kṛṣṇa’s advice. Or someone would come up to me and say, “Why are you speaking in such a low voice?” Or “Don’t speak that fast. I can’t understand anything you’re saying.” At first the false ego protests, “What do these karmīs know?” But then I’d adjust: “Maybe he is right. I’m speaking too fast.” These things happen during sankīrtana. There are so many signs that Kṛṣṇa gives us through the karmīs. Then sankīrtana becomes fun, because one begins to experience that everything is under Kṛṣṇa’s control, and that’s really exciting to see. I wonder what Kṛṣṇa is going to do next. We cannot control Kṛṣṇa, so we don’t know what He is going to do next. Therefore the exciting thing is to discover Kṛṣṇa on the street, and we will see that He acts in wonderful ways.

Tapas Dāsa: Sankīrtana is a school. Lord Caitanya is teaching us on the street. There are many experiences during the day that are clearly His arrangements. We should remember the details of those personal exchanges between the Lord and us. I find it helpful to write them down in the evening. We can feel Lord Caitanya’s presence more fully on the street than in the temple. Sometimes it is amazing how His presence can be felt. I like to remember the incidents, and I write them down.

Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa: Once, while distributing in Belgium, I had a hard time. I was completely uninspired, I didn’t want to go out, and when I did go out, I couldn’t distribute many books. So I was praying to Kṛṣṇa to help me. After another tough day, I was dragging myself through the streets. I presented the books to one guy who said he would take a book and asked me whether I could change five thousand francs. I said yes and started to count the money. Then this guy just grabbed the money and started to run. Of course, I didn’t want to let him get off like that, and I tried to stop him. Then the guy took out an electric rod and hit me, and two other guys came to help him. But while they were beating me down, I clearly understood that it was Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement. After that, I had to take a week off. I had a light brain concussion, and during the first three days I could hardly drink water without vomiting. Kṛṣṇa arranged a week off for me just to correct me. Although physically I was suffering, my mind was peaceful, and soon the desire to go out sincerely manifested again. That was just two weeks before the December marathon. The marathon went well, thanks to the special lesson Kṛṣṇa gave me. Unfortunately, the lesson cost some money, but it was very obliging to see that Kṛṣṇa considers the training of a devotee
more important than the loss of some francs or a reduction in the number of books being distributed because I couldn’t go out for one week.

Kalpavāsini Devī Dāsī: Kṛṣṇa is often teaching us on the street. Once I was distributing in front of a train station, and one man reacted angrily when I approached him. He went into the train station and came out again, but I didn’t recognize him and asked him a second time to take a book. He flipped out, grabbed two books, and started walking away with them. I ran behind him and asked him to return the books. Many policemen were around that evening because there was a big football game in town. So we approached a policeman, and the man angrily related his version of the story. He said I was pushy, imposing, and bothering a lot of people. I showed them my permit and said that the man should give back my books. He said, “Arrest her.” But the policeman didn’t want to get involved. He told the man to return the books, and he told me, “Just continue, but be nicer to people.” I understood that Kṛṣṇa was talking through that man. I had been attached and pushy. So I continued, and suddenly everything went well again. Soon after that one dirty-looking man came by. Just for fun I approached him and showed him the books. He was interested in India, and he took many books. He told me he sells houses—surprise! I gave him our invitation card, and I heard later that he phoned the center the next day and then visited us and gave a good donation. He left his address and showed interest in supporting us further. In this way we experience extreme situations within short periods of time. Kṛṣṇa is teaching us to become detached.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: When you begin to do big, it can be like sense gratification. You think that you’re really expert in manipulating people because everybody takes books and does what you say. But as soon as this enjoying mood comes up, Kṛṣṇa immediately takes the results away. Sometimes the devotees glorify you, and even the karmīs come up to you to offer you well-paying jobs as a salesman. When māyā begins to test you, you have to be cautious not to forget that it’s only Kṛṣṇa’s qualities that make you attractive. If you can simply be the medium manifesting Kṛṣṇa’s will, then you’re attractive. But if you become proud and think you’re the one doing those things, then Kṛṣṇa immediately takes your results away, and the struggle starts anew. This is also a feature of Kṛṣṇa’s direct reciprocation with you. The process of purification is strong on sankīrtana. As soon as you become proud or puffed up, Kṛṣṇa sends somebody to smash you, and in this way Kṛṣṇa protects you from further deviation. But you have to be humble enough to take His tough lessons.
The fundamental religious system in the age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the saṅkirtana movement.” (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-lilā 7.11)

11.1 Transcending the mental platform

Bhagavad-gītā 6.18: When the yogī, by practice of yoga, disciplines his mental activities and becomes situated in transcendence—devoid of all material desires—he is said to be well established in yoga.

From intelligence to action

Bhagavad-gītā 6.25–26: Gradually, step by step, one should become situated in trance by means of intelligence sustained by full conviction, and thus the mind should be fixed on the self alone and should think of nothing else. From wherever the mind wanders due to its flickering and unsteady nature, one must certainly withdraw it and bring it back under the control of the self.

Harikeśa Swami: A devotee is simply desiring Kṛṣṇa’s satisfaction, and therefore he doesn’t have to waste any time with the mind. He is not thinking all day, “Shall I do this, or shall I do that?” Kṛṣṇa just tells him, “Do this.” That’s all. Such a person, fully guided by Kṛṣṇa, is successful in his activities. Everybody else thinks that he is intelligent, but he just awaits indications from Kṛṣṇa and acts in that way. He’ll never think he’s intelligent.
But because he simply thinks, “I’ll do whatever Kṛṣṇa wants,” he’s the most intelligent. Real intelligence means you act only in full surrender to Kṛṣṇa. In fact, intelligence is measured by the degree that you can surrender to Kṛṣṇa. The more you surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s desire, the more intelligent you are. The really intelligent person is he who simply surrenders. Such a surrendered soul’s speaking, acting, and book distribution all become empowered.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: To become steady, dedicated book distributors, we require knowledge. Sentiments will not help us much. Sentiments are there, but they have to be based on knowledge. That is the most important ingredient on sankīrtana, and that knowledge is what the sankīrtana devotees naturally get. We find that many sankīrtana devotees aren’t big scholars in the material sense. They cannot express themselves in sophisticated rhetoric. But they clearly know what they want, and they’ve made up their minds to get it. Vyāvasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha. Their hearts are in the right place, and that makes everything else less important.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: After a lecture somebody asked Śrīla Prabhupāda, “How can I control my mind while chanting?” Prabhupāda replied, “What? Control your mind? Don’t control your mind. Just listen. Just hear.” If one concentrates on hearing, the question of controlling the mind doesn’t even come up. The mind is automatically controlled. Similarly, on sankīrtana, if we’re fully absorbed in distributing books, going from one person to the next, then we’ve already fixed our intelligence, and the mind doesn’t even get a say in anything that’s going on. If we are fully fixed on service, the mind is automatically controlled.

Gīta-govinda Dāsī: In the morning, when we start distributing, it may be a little hard. In fact, distributing each book seems like a big struggle. But as soon as we transcend the mental platform, arguments are no longer needed. People just come and take the books. We see at a certain point how Lord Caitanya takes over and does everything. We simply have to be out there to meet all the people, and on that level we forget about results. Nothing is as disturbing as the mind counting the books while they go out. We may be attached to a quota, but we’ll never reach it in this way. Even if we distribute the quota of books, we aren’t really satisfied because it was done out of attachment. But if we can transcend the mental platform, books start to fly out of our hands, and in the evening we’re completely happy because we’ve had a purely transcendental experience.
Navīṇa-nirāda Dāsa: As soon as you step out of the van, you cannot allow yourself to think of sense enjoyment. You must be fixed on what you’re doing because the people you meet are also fixed on what they’re doing. If you aren’t fixed on your mission, it won’t be possible for you to stop them for a few minutes and talk to them about deep philosophical matters, what to speak of giving them a book—a book stands for authority, information, knowledge—and at the end making them pay for it. For street distribution, you have to be absorbed in the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness on all levels. Otherwise you will run out of strength. On your own, you don’t have any strength. You can keep up the standard of determined book distribution only by staying firmly connected with the spiritual master’s order. Then you get mercy, inspiration, and intelligence. Otherwise you’ll stand there like many other spaced-out people who just look in shop windows, or those sectarian people who hang around the train stations or on the streets waiting for other spaced-out people to convert. If you approach people and you’re timid and imposing at the same time, then you’ll always have problems. You’ll attract Christian fanatics or demoniac troublemakers, and the police will become suspicious of you and check you out. But when you’re straightforward and convinced, you can easily separate nectar from poison, and the demons will avoid you. Even if a troublemaker shows up, Kṛṣṇa will give you all the intelligence and power you need to cool the person down or get rid of him.

Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa: Don’t meditate too long on a person who bought many books. Put it out of the mind and try to find the next person who still doesn’t have any books. Otherwise you’ll get hung up on that one success, and you’ll think, “I am the doer,” and then you’ll become attached to the results.

Vijaya Dāsa: Reading Bhagavad-gītā means worshiping Kṛṣṇa with one’s intelligence, and when one’s intelligence is purified and focused on Kṛṣṇa’s instructions, it easily transcends the mind’s influence. By reading the Gītā every day before I go out, I stay fixed on distributing books. Our intelligence and experience tell us that distributing books is the right thing to do, so we do it without discussion with the mind.

Distributing without mental discrimination

Bhagavad-gītā 6.8–9: A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called a yogī when he is fully satisfied by virtue of acquired knowl-
edge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and is self-controlled. He sees everything—whether if be pebbles, stones or gold—as the same. A person is considered still further advanced when he regards honest well-wishers, affectionate benefactors, the neutral, mediators, the envious, friends and enemies, the pious and the sinners all with an equal mind.

Maṇidhāra Dāsa: People can feel our state of mind. They know whether we take them seriously as persons or see them just as karmīs. They appreciate our personal approach on the spiritual level. That’s precisely the pure power that Śrīla Prabhupāda manifested. He made us feel that we were nice devotees, even though we weren’t. He gave us the faith that we were the right persons for Kṛṣṇa. And therefore we all felt appreciated and inspired and immediately became useful. Prabhupāda, of course, knew of the contaminations and horrible qualities we had, but he didn’t take them too seriously. He fanned the sparks of good qualities—not sentimentally, but practically. He always pulled the best out of us. That’s a principle we have to apply on sankārtana. We can try to take the best out of every person we approach. Everyone has nice, useful qualities, unless he’s a demon.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Once during a December marathon I had a hard time. For several hours I couldn’t distribute much. But suddenly the atmosphere on the parking lot changed, and in the next two hours I distributed more than a hundred mahā-big Śrīmad-Bhāgavatams. A tall, elderly man watched me the whole time. I thought it better not to approach him. I always deliberately circled around him. But as time went on and the parking lot became emptier I decided there’d be no loss in asking him, too, because it was too late to spoil anything. With a new stack of books I tried to approach him with all humility but at the same time with all determination. I was surprised how gently he reacted. He seemed surprised and pleased and even honored that I finally came to him. He showed great interest. It wasn’t necessary for me to say much. He had been waiting there to buy all the different books I had on my arm, about fifteen books, including the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam set. He gave a good donation, and I said, “Wait a moment. I can complete your encyclopedia.” I gave him a prospectus on both sets to keep his mind engaged, and I ran back to the van to get the Caitanya-caritāmṛta set also. When I returned, he decided to take the Caitanya-caritāmṛta set, and he gave another good donation. Then I asked him, “Don’t you want to put the books in your car?” The whole time—about two hours—that he’d been standing there, he’d been leaning against a car. “But this isn’t my
car,” he said. “My car is parked 400m away in another parking lot.” Then I realized that this man had stood there just to buy the books and, idiot that I was, I allowed him to wait two hours before I understood that he was a fit candidate for getting the books. So how can we judge a person according to his external appearance? Sometimes we think a person is a fit candidate because he arrives in a Mercedes and looks sophisticated and interested, but then he reveals himself to be envious and inimical. And sometimes it’s exactly the opposite, like in this case. I thought the guy was useless, suspicious of me, and likely to call the police. And then precisely that type of person will get the mercy.

**Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa:** Every person has many disqualifications. So why should we even start to make distinctions? Once, I went out at 6 A.M. to distribute in front of a hospital, and a fat old woman arrived and put up her booth to sell sausages. I talked to her, and she immediately showed interest. “Oh, yes, wonderful books, and so early in the morning!” she exclaimed. We talked for some time, and she emptied her heart. She talked about her son, who had been a big man in the communist secret police in former East Germany. Now after the big change in Germany he didn’t know what to do. He was reading a lot, but only Marx and Engels. She became so inspired that she took the whole set for her son and herself.

**Navīna-nīrada Dāsa:** A *saṅkirtana* devotee should never become mental about a place. Every *saṅkirtana* devotee has a *saṅkirtana* leader or a group leader who tells him where to go and in what spots to distribute. The leader has to decide where to go in the morning and in what places to distribute that day. Sometimes it happens that a devotee must change his spot. For example, you change when somebody was going around collecting for some welfare work just a half hour before. Then it may be better to go somewhere else. But the best thing generally is to stay at a place and keep distributing. Once you fall to the mental platform, you’ll want to change places again and again, and it usually never becomes better, because the mind always follows you. So you just become more and more defeated. You start to listen to the mind’s “hopeless tape”—“Hopeless. Hopeless. It’s all hopeless.” The mental tape player has to be smashed. If you want to continue *saṅkirtana*, you have to become situated on the platform of steady intelligence and firm, fixed-up faith. We have received the spiritual master’s instruction, and we have to act directly from the platform of intelligence. We don’t ask the mind whether or not it feels inspired. Bypassing the mind is the secret of success on *saṅkirtana*. 
Manidhāra Dāsa: We can distribute anywhere, if we want. We shouldn’t make mental distinctions: “I like this place and not that place. That place is burnt out because many books have been distributed there already.” I have a funny story in this connection. When I traveled with Rohiṇīsuta, we were really fanatics. We started distributing books while chanting our rounds. We slept in our van in the woods. In the morning we went on japa walks in separate directions and took some books with us. Sometimes I’d meet a farmer in a field at six o’clock, and he had a Bhagavad-gītā lying on his tractor. He had already met Rohiṇīsuta. Even in the winter we slept in the van. That was the standard in those days. We had no heating, and the only place to take a shower was in a motel on the highway. So in the morning we took showers in turn between the truck drivers. Then we chanted our rounds in front of the toilets because it was too cold outside. We always had a box of books with us, and as we chanted our rounds, sometimes a bus load of people arrived to use the toilets, and they were always curious about us. They saw these two strange fellows chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, and when they were standing there next to us, we started selling them Bhagavad-gītās. I don’t recommend this as a standard, but it was pretty ecstatic. Sometimes after we parked in some parking lot in the middle of the woods for the night, Rohiṇīsuta would ask me how many books I had distributed that day. “Seventy-one.” Then he would slowly get out of his sleeping bag, grab two books, and disappear for half an hour. When he came back from the woods, he’d smile big and say, “Seventy-two!” And I was defeated. I don’t know where he distributed those books in the woods, but he did. Anyway, on that platform saṅkīrtana really starts to be fun. Actually, saṅkīrtana is not a big austerity. We can have a lot of fun once we want to do it wholeheartedly.

Satisfaction in service

Bhagavad-gītā 6.21–23: Situated in boundless transcendental happiness, realized through transcendental senses, one never departs from the truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty. This indeed is actual freedom from all miseries arising from material contact.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: One secret is we have to become determined to go back to the spiritual world and have firm faith in this goal. Where do we get that determination, strength, and inspiration? We don’t have to look far for it. It’s right there in the books we carry and distribute every day. They are the source of all faith, strength, and inspiration. That’s where the power
comes from. Everything is there. We simply have to understand the power and influence of these books. Reading the books, we will understand that Kṛṣṇa consciousness goes very deep, and we will understand the eternity, knowledge, and bliss of the books. That gives us the strength. And when we understand this, we will understand that the books are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa appears in the form of these books, and therefore we are carrying Kṛṣṇa and giving Kṛṣṇa to people. When we realize that, we are already back home, together with Kṛṣṇa. (From a talk at the marathon festival in Zurich on January 1, 1991)

Navina-nirada Dasa: You have to invest your energy somewhere. If you aren’t putting 100% of your energy into your service, then you need an additional engagement to use the rest of your energy. A brahmacārī engages 100% in his service and collapses in the evening until he wakes up for maṅgala ārati. A brahmacārī can do a lot of service for his spiritual master because he doesn’t divert his energy into other activities. That’s needed for book distribution. By always hearing and speaking about book distribution, reading the books, and associating with sankirtana devotees, we can make the sankirtana mission our life and soul and get the higher taste for book distribution. Then there’s no scope for thinking of anything else. Even while dreaming, we are somewhere in a shopping center passing out books. In this way you can go on distributing books day and night.

Rohinisuta Dasa: I joined in Amsterdam, and from the beginning the sankirtana devotees attracted me most. Several weeks passed before the temple president dared to send me on sankirtana for the first time. At that time we were distributing records because there were hardly any books in Dutch. After some time I returned to Switzerland, where I did some door-to-door distribution, and then, by Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement, in 1975 I went to Germany, where I met Manidhāra. He was already legendary. He was a real fanatic. Sometimes he was so sick that Harikesa Mahārāja had to lock him in his room to keep him from going out. But Manidhāra would suffer unbearable separation from sankirtana, and he’d go through the window, without anyone knowing and without eating. He took his van and went out alone to distribute books until he broke down, then he returned and went back into his room through the window. Sick or healthy, he always went on book distribution. He was my first sankirtana guru. He gave me the taste of not desiring anything except pleasing the spiritual master by book distribution. That’s the simple secret of book distribution. You have to associate with advanced sankirtana devotees who have the taste for going out
and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Through their association you can become inspired and empowered.

**You’re never alone**

*Bhagavad-gītā* 6.29–32: A true yogī observes Me in all beings and also sees every being in Me. Indeed, the self-realized person sees Me, the same Supreme Lord, everywhere. For one who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, I am never lost, nor is he ever lost to Me. Such a yogī, who engages in the worshipful service of the Supersoul, knowing that I and the Supersoul are one, remains always in Me in all circumstances. He is a perfect yogī who, by comparison to his own self, sees the true equality of all beings, in both their happiness and distress, O Arjuna!

If you actually remain with *sankīrtana*, that means you are with Kṛṣṇa. *Abhinnavān nāma-nāminoh*: Kṛṣṇa is not different from Kṛṣṇa’s book, Kṛṣṇa’s words, Kṛṣṇa’s name, Kṛṣṇa’s fame, Kṛṣṇa’s glory, and Kṛṣṇa’s entourage. Everything in relationship with Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa. If you have that perfect knowledge, then you are living with Kṛṣṇa always. You are already in Vaikuṇṭha.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** By going on book distribution year after year, one can realize his intimate connection with Kṛṣṇa more and more. By the mercy of the guru and Kṛṣṇa, as soon as one goes out and surrenders to book distribution, Kṛṣṇa’s presence is so closely felt that there’s no room for any māyā or speculation. All confusion, illusion, laziness, and tiredness disappear. It’s my experience that the longer I’m out, the more addicted I become. In the evening I don’t want to leave the battlefield. And the longer one is out on the street, the more one can realize that it’s Kṛṣṇa distributing the books. I hope that one day I will realize 100% that Kṛṣṇa alone controls everything and nothing can happen without Kṛṣṇa’s sanction. We understand this theoretically, but we also want to realize it through practical experience. And it is a fact that we can get the most realizations on *sankīrtana*. By executing the order of my spiritual master, I feel Kṛṣṇa’s presence. When the spiritual master is present on the *vyāsāsana* lecturing about Kṛṣṇa, everything becomes clear beyond any doubt, and the way back home, back to Godhead, is open in front of us, and we realize that actually Kṛṣṇa isn’t that far away. And when the spiritual master goes away, one wants to keep up that spirit and clarity of mind. At least in my case the best way to do that is by going on book distribution.
Harikēsa Swami: As wind whips through the alleys and catches pieces of paper here and there, the last horizontal rays of the sun wash down the street. The saṅkīrtana devotee on the street adjusts his cap or tightens his belt, preparing to meet the material nature head on in a ferocious battle, just as Kṛṣṇa adjusted His belt before battling Arīṣṭāsura in Vṛṇḍāvana. What comparison is there between the transcendental realm of Gokula Vṛṇḍāvana and the streets of Berlin, Stockholm, or Moscow? We cannot find any similarity by seeing with material eyes. But if we understand with the heart of a saṅkīrtana devotee, we can feel spiritual energy surging through us as we move down the street, guided by the Lord within the heart. Because of the devotee’s connection with the Lord, the streets become a blissful place, although they are dark and disturbed. The devotee isn’t at all in anxiety because he’s connected to the source of all power and potency, Kṛṣṇa. What more can I say? Just be satisfied in yourselves, knowing well that you’re engaged in the most important service for millions of suffering people in this world. Do not be fooled by any ideas born of self-interest. The means to please Kṛṣṇa is saṅkīrtana. Our strength is born of our conviction that the saṅkīrtana mission is topmost. Perform that mission with enthusiasm, intelligence, conviction, and determination, and clear out the piles of material problems crowding into your consciousness by the influence of māyā. (From a message to the saṅkīrtana devotees on December 12, 1992)

11.2 Beyond attachment and false ego

Kṛṣṇa was Arjuna’s most intimate friend. He could have brought victory to Arjuna without any endeavor by Arjuna; but neither was that principle advised by Kṛṣṇa, nor did Arjuna follow it. As a military man Arjuna fought his best, but the victory was brought to him by Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, we should endeavor to the best of our capacity, and victory will come from Kṛṣṇa. We should never sit idly and ask Kṛṣṇa to do everything. That is the teaching of Bhagavad-gītā: yudhya ca mām anusmara. So ordinarily we have to try our best to achieve something, and by Kṛṣṇa’s grace, all of a sudden we see everything is there. This sort of help from Kṛṣṇa is transcendental happiness. Our principle should be, therefore, that we should work for the mission with great enthusiasm, with certainty of its success, and patiently follow the regulative principles and associate with pure devotees and work,
being completely in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That will make us happy and successful.  

**“Please distribute books” — the spiritual master’s order**

There is no literature throughout the universe like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. There is no comparison. There is no competition. Every word is for the good of human society—every word, each and every word. Therefore we stress so much the book distribution. Somehow or other, if a book goes in someone’s hand, he will be benefited. At least he will see, “Oh, they have taken so much price. Let me see what is there.” If he reads one śloka, his life will be successful—one śloka, one word. This is such a nice thing. Therefore we are stressing so much, “Please distribute books, distribute books, distribute books.” A greater mṛdaṅga. We are chanting, playing our mṛdaṅga; it is heard within this room or a little more. But this mṛdaṅga will go home to home, country to country. 

_Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 16.64:_ The devotees of Lord Caitanya must preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in every village and town in the world. That will satisfy the Lord. It is not that one should act whimsically for his own personal satisfaction. This order comes down through the paramparā system, and the spiritual master presents these orders to the disciple so that he can spread the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is the duty of every disciple to carry out the order of the bona fide spiritual master and spread Lord Caitanya’s message all over the world.

**Endeavoring to fulfill the order, although we are powerless**

If you feel at all indebted to me then you should preach vigorously like me.

_Kuṭṭalī Dāsa (Vṛndāvana):_ Everything depends on the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa, but still the disciple must exert himself. The jīva can be compared to a man fallen into a well and the guru to one who throws him a rope. The man down there cannot come out on his own. He needs mercy. Mercy is given by the guru who throws him the rope. Now suppose the disciple begs, “O my guru! Kindly come down here and put my hand around the rope. I’m waiting for your mercy.” This has nothing to do with humility. That’s foolishness. Vaiṣṇavas don’t become inactive and wait for everything to be
accomplished by God’s mercy. Yet they know well that they are completely dependent on Kṛṣṇa, and they pray to Kṛṣṇa for help. So endeavor and dependence together lead to the result. God helps those who help themselves. Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a nice example. The child has a propensity to walk, but he will fall down and sometimes hurt himself; still the child doesn’t give up the walking process. What kind of useless child would do that? The propensity to walk is there, so he falls down a thousand times and gets up a thousand times. And the excited adults see the struggling child and come to his aid. So if we don’t try to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, what can the Vaiṣṇavas and spiritual master do? Will they force us? No, they simply look for somebody else more eager, that’s all. The person who makes an effort gets the mercy. But don’t think that just by talking about the effort and endeavoring in the mode of passion it will work. No. Your sincere prayer must be there. We pray for Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, and we endeavor. It all starts with hearing. If you don’t hear, how will you act? To the degree we are hearing without the intervention of the mind, to that degree Kṛṣṇa consciousness hits us in the heart, and to that extent we respond with the willingness to serve. (From a class in Berlin on August 19, 1992)

**Harikeśa Swami:** If you endeavor to get a result, that pleases the spiritual master. And when you actually get the result, that also pleases him. So you should go on trying. Kṛṣṇa says, *karmaṇy evaṁ kāras te mā phalesu kadācana:* you have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but not a right to enjoy the results. So go on trying hard to fulfill the mission of the spiritual master. This endeavor pleases him. And then by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa you will succeed. So both are pleasing—the endeavour and the success. The spiritual master doesn’t really expect that you will try hard and accomplish nothing. He expects that you will go out, try hard, and accomplish something. Naturally. And even if you can’t do much despite trying hard, still he appreciates the sincerity. (From a class in Zurich on August 31, 1991)

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** Everything is dependent on Kṛṣṇa, but this has to be properly understood. Kṛṣṇa is a person, the Supreme Person. He may send people who gladly take the books, or He may send nasty people to smash our false egos. But through the endeavor of a devotee, the Supersoul may arrange that even an uninterested person becomes interested. Sometimes we see it clearly when two different devotees approach the same person. Once during a marathon I was together in the same street with Maṇḍalibhadra, who is now the head pujārī in Zurich. I had the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam set of twelve volumes on my arm and Bhagavad-gītā and other books—
altogether more than twenty books. I approached a person, and he was in a hurry. “I have no time. I have to run to the barber shop and get a hair cut.” But somehow or other he started to listen. He became increasingly interested and took the set and the other books. I thanked him, and then, as he walked away, I realized that Maṇḍali-bhadra was standing nearby watching me with amazement. He said, “That was the same person I approached five minutes ago, but he just ignored me. And you sold him the entire set!” So we cannot say that it’s always Kṛṣṇa sending the people to take the books and it doesn’t depend on our endeavor. That is clearly illustrated here.

Navīna-nīrada Dāsa: A small result can also be considered the mercy of the Lord because it’s part of our purification. We can’t do big every day, otherwise we’d become puffed up and intolerable for the other devotees. Therefore Kṛṣṇa mercifully smash our false ego, which induces us to think of ourselves as controllers and enjoyers. We have to be thankful when the Lord sends difficulties that look like defeat—people insulting us, throwing us out, and refusing to take books. A devotee appreciates even such a situation because he knows that it is purifying him of pride and false ego. The possibility of making this kind of advancement wouldn’t be there if everything always went well and everybody took books.

Realizing that Kṛṣṇa is the controller

Who God is can be summed up in only five words: Kṛṣṇa is the supreme controller. If you become convinced of this and preach it enthusiastically, success is assured, and you will be doing the greatest service for all living entities. So continue more and more to serve Kṛṣṇa, and He will help you.  

Bhagavad-gītā 11.34p: Every plan is made by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but He is so kind and merciful to His devotees that He wants to give the credit to His devotees who carry out His plan according to His desire. Life should therefore move in such a way that everyone acts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and understands the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the medium of a spiritual master. The plans of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are understood by His mercy, and the plans of the devotees are as good as His plans. One should follow such plans and be victorious in the struggle for existence.

Harikeśa Swami: Just pray to Kṛṣṇa and try. We are helpless. This is the first thing we have to understand. “Without You, my Lord, I am nothing.
Unless You help me, unless You inspire me and direct me, I can get nothing accomplished.” One who prays to Kṛṣṇa like that can do anything. That is not an idle boast. It’s a fact. “Kṛṣṇa, I have no strength. But let me be a receptacle of Your energy. I promise that all day long I will do nothing but spread Your mission.” Until you surrender to Kṛṣṇa fully, māyā is going to give you trouble. Therefore if you want to become a big success, you have to become very humble and surrender totally to Kṛṣṇa so that Kṛṣṇa’s energy completely protects you. There is no way to succeed in the material world unless one fully throws himself at the shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord. Unless one does that there’s no possibility of success, happiness, or peace.

Cakṣu Dāsa: Many devotees think you have to push the karmīs to accept the books. But that is not true. The only way to distribute a lot of books is to distribute on the level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If you distribute on the Kṛṣṇa conscious level then everything becomes easy and natural, because on that level you’ve understood that you aren’t the doer, and everyone is in bliss. Therefore I say it’s easier to distribute many books than a few books.

Vijaya Dāsa: While approaching a conditioned soul, the devotee must meditate on the Supersoul within the heart of the person. Then he becomes transcendental to the material surroundings. People can feel it, and they become receptive to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The face is the index of the mind. If a devotee meditates in that way, his face and mind will reflect his transcendental situation, and it will be easy for him to exchange with the conditioned souls—give them books and receive donations.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: Going out with a stack of books is like taking off in an airplane. Below, the ground is dark. We fly into the clouds disoriented. But we keep climbing. Through meditation on the mission of the spiritual master, we go above the clouds, and there the sun is shining. It is warm, bright, comfortable, and beautiful. We must be determined to stay up and go from one person to another, as humble as a straw in the street and more tolerant than a tree. We must control the senses, and not think that because the books are going out we are great. We’re only instruments of the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. We’re not even that surrendered. We’ve simply slackened our hold on māyā for a minute.

Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa: It is Kṛṣṇa’s strong desire that the books are distributed, and there is a direct relation between His desire and our desire. When they are the same, miracles start happening. Many books go out. Everyone
takes sets of books. We know only that it’s Kṛṣṇa distributing the books, not us.

**When Kṛṣṇa begins to drive His devotee’s chariot**

*Srimad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.43: The māyāvādī philosophers aspire to become one with the Supreme Lord, but a devotee surpasses that position. Not only does a devotee become one in quality with the Supreme Lord, but he sometimes becomes the father, mother or master of the Lord. Arjuna, by his devotional service, made Lord Kṛṣṇa his chariot driver; he ordered the Lord, “Put my chariot here,” and the Lord executed his order. These are some examples of how a devotee can acquire the exalted position of conquering the unconquerable.

A devotee is meant to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. By a voluntary decision he allows Kṛṣṇa to take the reins of his chariot. The devotee has to prove his surrender by following Kṛṣṇa’s instructions and engaging in His service, just like Arjuna. Arjuna engaged all his energy in fighting because Kṛṣṇa wanted him to, and he became the battle’s hero. But again and again situations came up that clearly showed who was actually in control. Arjuna’s protection and victory depended on Kṛṣṇa alone. Therefore Arjuna surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and fought for the sake of fighting. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa can take over the reins of any devotee’s chariot, and then wherever the devotee goes, he will experience miracles. “For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached” (Bg. 6.7). He will be in the right place at the right time and say the right thing to each person. It becomes obvious that it is all Kṛṣṇa’s arrangement, and seeing Kṛṣṇa’s omnipresent mercy, the devotee surrenders even more.

**Cakṣu Dāsa:** During the marathon I approached a young man standing at the Bankomat getting money. I talked to him, but he argued and said he wasn’t interested. He didn’t read books about philosophy and India. I told him, “So give a present to someone.” He said, “I don’t know anyone interested in such books.” I told him, “Give yourself a present. Tomorrow is your birthday anyway.” He felt completely shocked because it was true. I don’t know why I said it. Flabbergasted as he was, he forgot that he wasn’t interested. Suddenly he was open to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and I showed him one book after another, and he took the whole set.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** By Kṛṣṇa’s grace everything is possible. Lord Caitanya can make all the arrangements for countless persons to get the mercy
even though they seem unqualified. The same goes for us. Sometimes we think we’re too fallen to distribute books. But it’s Lord Caitanya’s desire that they get Śrila Prabhupāda’s books. Therefore we can pray to Him, “Please give the mercy to me, too, to be able to go on with my service and be an instrument in Your hands and distribute books to the conditioned souls. Please intensify my desire to distribute books.” Then, by the arrangement of Śrila Prabhupāda, one can witness many souls getting Kṛṣṇa’s mercy within the shortest time.

**Pūrṇa-tattva Dāsa (Belgium):** During a marathon, after quite a big day, not many people were on the street in the evening, and I was looking for more people. I saw many cars outside a hotel, and many people going inside. So I entered the building with a stack of books. As I walked through a corridor I saw someone from the hotel staff coming my way, and to avoid being checked I opened a door to disappear. But it was the door to a big hall, where many people were standing at a long table playing a bingo game. The door I had entered happened to be located near the person who was announcing the numbers of the winners. I went up to him, and he asked me if I had brought the prizes. I quickly presented the books, and he bought all of them and used them as prizes. When I asked him what sort of meeting it was, I found out it was a meeting of the butchers in the area.

Jaya Gopāla had a similar thing take place. He saw people entering the back of a theater. He went in, opened some doors, and found himself backstage. A man said, “There you are! We’ve been waiting for you.” The man then brought him on stage and opened the curtain. Jaya Gopāla was now standing in front of an audience of parents and children at a Christmas show. So he shook off his confusion and started his presentation. The show was good, and he distributed a full box of books directly from the stage.

**Rohiṇīsuta Dāsa:** Once, nobody wanted to take books. It was really heavy, and my mind was completely frustrated. Usually one would just take a break, but somehow or other I spontaneously changed my approach. I approached people whistling in a special manner, and the whole situation changed, and everyone took books. In one hour I distributed all the books I had. Sometimes you have to do something far out. Otherwise the mind works like a machine. Everything becomes ritualistic, whatever you say. “Please take the book and give a donation.” Then people ask, “What are you saying?” And we become angry: “Don’t you even understand your own language?” There’s no spiritual power. Our words don’t penetrate the hearts of the conditioned souls. Sometimes, by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, everyone
takes books. But when you try the same thing the next day, nobody takes them. The same words, the same smile, the same books—but those external things aren’t what make people take books.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** I remember one devotee who’d just stand on the corner and wave people down. Out of the masses of people floating by, he just picked some out. It was special. We have to be fearless and convinced, because people will reflect our consciousness. If we think they’re going to take books, then they think, “We have to take them.” Another devotee used to have the attitude that everyone should have a book. He’d run around asking, “Do you have a book? No? Well, here’s your book!” People were saying, “Yes, sure! How much do you want? Thanks for the book.” People were practically coming up to him saying, “Excuse me, I don’t have a book.” That shows what kind of power Kṛṣṇa consciousness has. If you think, “What is this, you don’t have a book?” then people can’t help but take the book. People will come right up to you. And you know it’s only Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. That’s what makes *saṅkīrtana* relishable. You’re a person guided by the Supreme Person, afloat in an ocean of persons, and you can approach people as persons. And they begin to tell you personal things.

It’s difficult to get people to that platform because people are drowning in an ocean of impersonalism. The lives of the *karmis* are just empty exchanges of sense objects. Even the relationships between parents and children are cruel and impersonal. Even the closest relatives don’t know each other, because they don’t know the real identity of the self. But we devotees know. It’s like we know them all. “Hello, you’re a spirit soul, part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa.” And people respond because naturally they don’t like to be impersonal. They love to be personal. But they have all sorts of defense systems that a devotee has to break through. Therefore you sometimes have to act a little “transcendental” just to break through the Kali-yuga craziness and approach the soul, which is covered by many layers of impurities.

Once, for example, in Heidelberg, a tourist town, all the well-to-do people were parading down the street as proudly as could be. To break through the facade was difficult. They didn’t even look at me. So I tried the German way: “HELLO! FOR YOU!” Immediately everyone was on my case. An ocean of demons rose in front of me. I went back to the car, and when I saw the little offering bell, I had an idea. I went back to the street and rang the bell. People were going, “Huh?” It created a spontaneous sound reflex. They just stopped and started listening to me. No one asked why I was ringing a bell. That’s the people’s material consciousness. They just go to the shopping street and respond to sound, form, and lights. Ad-
vertising is arranged like that. “Drink this!” “Smoke that!” It’s crazy, insulting, and unreasonable. In Germany they have one advertisement now that shows smokers stating, “I don’t care. I love smoking.” That’s finally what it comes down to: not caring. That is the demoniac philosophy penetrating the whole society. That’s what we’re facing on sankirtana, and it takes a lot of transcendental strength to cut through that wall of illusion.

11.3 How to become empowered

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 2.3–15: In His incarnation as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa descended to deliver all the living beings in the three worlds, from Brahma-loka down to Pātālaloka. He caused their deliverance in three ways. The Lord delivered the fallen souls in some places by meeting them directly (sāksāt-darśana), in other places by empowering a pure devotee (āvesa), and in still other places by appearing before someone Himself (āvirbhāva). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered almost all the fallen souls by directly meeting them. He delivered others by entering the body of Nakula Brahmacārī and by appearing before Nṛśimhānanda Brahmacārī. “I shall deliver the fallen souls.” This statement characterizes the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was personally present, anyone in the world who met Him even once was fully satisfied and became spiritually advanced. Every year, devotees from Bengal would go to Jagannātha Puri to meet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and after the meeting they would return to Bengal. Similarly, people who went to Jagannātha Puri from various provinces of India were fully satisfied after seeing the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. People from all over the universe . . . would go there in the forms of human beings. Having seen the Lord, they all became Vaiṣṇavas. Thus they danced and chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra in ecstatic love of Godhead. Thus by direct meetings, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered the three worlds. Some people, however, could not go and were entangled in material activities. To deliver people in regions throughout the universe who could not meet Him, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally entered the bodies of pure devotees. Thus He empowered living beings [His pure devotees] by manifesting in them so much of His own devotion that people in all other countries became devotees by seeing them. In this way Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered the entire three worlds, not only by His personal presence but also by empowering others. . . .

Purport (*Antya* 2.14): As stated in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya* 7.11):
Unless one is empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one cannot spread the holy names of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra throughout the world. Persons who do so are empowered. Therefore they are sometimes called āveśa-avatāras, or incarnations, for they are endowed with the power of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

How Lord Brahmā became empowered

A classic example of a living entity’s becoming empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead is Lord Brahmā, the head of our saṅkīrtana devotees to analyze the phases of his spiritual development. At first Brahmā was confused about his position and duties. He tried to understand them on his own strength until he got the Lord’s merciful instruction to undergo tapasya, or renunciation. But there were no sense objects created yet, so what was Brahmā supposed to renounce? His independent attitude. Book distributors know how painful it is to try be independently successful, without surrendering to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore “... even the greatest of all living beings, namely Brahmāji, admits,” as Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “that the best thing for us is to surrender unto the Supreme Lord. Therefore only those persons with a very poor fund of knowledge claim that they themselves are lords of all that they survey. ... The living entity, by his constitutional position, is not independent. He must surrender, either unto the Lord or unto material nature. ... We must be ready to undergo the prescribed devotional duties, following the path shown by the predecessors in the disciplic succession from Brahmā, Nārada and similar authorities. ... No one can know the Lord by any puffed-up material process of challenge, but the humble devotee can please the Lord by his earnest devotional activities. Thus the Lord reveals Himself proportionately before the devotee.” (SB 2.6.36p,38p)

(a) Brahmā’s confusion

“Brahmā, born out of the lotus flower, could not see the world, although he was situated in the whorl. He therefore circumambulated all of space, and while moving his eyes in all directions he achieved four heads in terms of the four directions. Lord Brahmā, situated in that lotus, could not perfectly understand the creation, the lotus or himself. At the end of the millennium the air of devastation began to move the water and the lotus in great circu-
lar waves. Lord Brahmā, in his ignorance, contemplated: Who am I that am situated on the top of this lotus? Wherefrom has it sprouted? There must be something downwards, and that from which this lotus has grown must be within the water.” (SB 3.8.16–18)

“Beginning from Brahmā down to this age, the living entities are struggling with the forces of material nature. . . . Such control of the material energy, however, can be most successfully carried out if one is a soul surrendered unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead and carries out His order in the spirit of loving transcendental service.” (SB 3.10.6p)

(b) Brahmā attempts to resolve his confusion

“Lord Brahmā, thus contemplating, entered the water through the channel of the stem of the lotus. But in spite of entering the stem and going nearer to the navel of Viśṇu, he could not trace out the root.” (SB 3.8.19)

“If anyone desires to seek perfect knowledge of everything, he must seek the mercy of the Lord, and there is no other means. To seek knowledge on the strength of one’s personal attempt is a sheer waste of time.” (SB 2.9.5p)

(c) The invisible Lord speaks to Brahmā

“Lord Brahmā, the first spiritual master, supreme in the universe, could not trace out the source of his lotus seat, and while thinking of creating the material world, he could not understand the proper direction for such creative work, nor could he find out the process for such creation. While thus engaged in thinking, in the water, Brahmāji heard twice from nearby two syllables joined together . . . [tapa, tapa].” (SB 2.9.5–6)

(d) Brahmā surrenders

“. . . Lord Brahmā heard this transcendental vibration from the sky, and he accepted it as divine. . . .” (SB 2.9.8)

“Being unable to achieve the desired destination, Brahmā retired from such searching and came back again to the top of the lotus. Thus, controlling all objectives, he concentrated his mind on the Supreme Lord.” (SB 3.8.21)

“Controlling the senses means engaging them in the transcendental service of the Lord. The Lord’s order descends in disciplic succession through the
bona fide spiritual master, and thus execution of the order of the bona fide spiritual master is factual control of the senses. Such execution of penance in full faith and sincerity made Brahmāja so powerful that he became the creator of the universe.” (SB 2.9.8p)

(e) Brahmā’s penance: renouncing his false independence

“. . . Thus he concentrated his mind and senses, and the penances he executed were a great lesson for the living entities. . . .” (SB 2.9.8)

“To cease from personal sense endeavors and to concentrate on the supreme cause is a sign of self-surrender, and when self-surrender is present, that is a sure sign of devotional service.” (SB 3.8.21p)

“At the end of Brahmā’s one hundred years, when his meditation was complete, he developed the required knowledge, and as a result he could see in his heart the Supreme within himself, whom he could not see before with the greatest endeavor.” (SB 3.8.22)

“The disciple must be ready to execute the order of the bona fide spiritual master as Lord Brahmā executed the instruction of his spiritual master, the Lord Himself. Following the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the only duty of the disciple, and this completely faithful execution of the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the secret of success.” (SB 2.9.8p)

“Kṛṣṇa asks that one always be mindful of Him, always be His devotee, . . . give up all other engagements and fully surrender unto the Lord without hesitation. And the Lord will give such a devotee all protection. These are the secrets of attaining the highest perfectional stage. Lord Brahmā exactly followed these principles without any superiority complex, and thus he attained the highest perfectional stage of experiencing the abode of the Lord and the Lord Himself with all His paraphernalia.” (SB 2.9.22p)

(f) The Lord is pleased by Brahmā’s surrender

“O sinless Brahmā, you may know from Me that it was I who first ordered you to undergo penance when you were perplexed in your duty. Such penance is My heart and soul, and therefore penance and I are nondifferent. I create this cosmos by such penance, I maintain it by the same energy, and I withdraw it all by the same energy. Therefore the potential power is penance only.” (SB 2.9.23–24)
“The penance by which one can see the Personality of Godhead face to face is to be understood as devotional service to the Lord and nothing else because only by discharging devotional service in transcendental love can one approach the Lord. Such penance is the internal potency of the Lord and is nondifferent from Him. Such acts of internal potency are exhibited by nonattachment for material enjoyment.” (SB 2.9.23p)

“The Personality of Godhead, being very much pleased with Lord Brahmā because of his nondeceptive penance in bhakti-yoga, presented His eternal and transcendental form before Brahmā. And that is the objective goal for purifying the conditioned soul.” (SB 2.9.4)

“Anyone preaching the mission of the Lord in the line of the Brahmā-sampradāya is always dear to the Lord, and the Lord, being satisfied with such a preacher of the authorized bhakti cult, shakes hands with him in great satisfaction.” (SB 2.9.19p)

(g) Brahmā’s eligibility for receiving the Lord’s energy

“The Lord saw that Brahmā was very anxious about the planning and construction of the different planetary systems and was depressed upon seeing the devastating water. He could understand the intention of Brahmā, and thus He spoke in deep, thoughtful words, removing all the illusion that had arisen: O Brahmā, O depth of Vedic wisdom, be neither depressed nor anxious about the execution of creation. What you are begging from Me has already been granted before.” (SB 3.9.27–29)

“Any person authorized by either the Lord or by His bona fide representative is already blessed, as is the work entrusted to him. Of course, the person entrusted with such a responsibility should always be aware of his incapability and must always look for the mercy of the Lord for the successful execution of his duty. One should not be puffed up because he is entrusted with certain executive work. Fortunate is he who is so entrusted, and if he is fixed in the sense of being subordinate to the will of the Supreme, he is sure to come out successful in the discharge of his work.” (SB 3.9.29p)

(h) Brahmā is guaranteed the power to render his service

“O Brahmā, when you are absorbed in devotional service, you will see Me in you and throughout the universe, and you will see that you yourself, the...
universe and the living entities are all in Me. You will see Me in all living entities as well as all over the universe, just as fire is situated in wood. Only in that state of transcendental vision will you be able to be free from all kinds of illusion. . . . Since you have desired to increase the population innumerable and expand your varieties of service, you shall never be deprived in this matter because My causeless mercy upon you will always increase for all time. . . . O Brahmā, the prayers that you have chanted praising the glories of My transcendental activities, the penances that you have undertaken to understand Me, and your firm faith in Me—all these are to be considered My causeless mercy. . . . I grant you all benedictions in your desire to glorify all the planets by your activities. Any human being who prays like Brahmā, and who thus worships Me, shall very soon be blessed with the fulfillment of all his desires, for I am the Lord of all benediction.” (SB 3.9.31–32, 34, 38–40)

Agreeing to become Kṛṣṇa’s instrument

The verdict of the śāstras is that bhagavad-bhakti does not depend on any kind of material qualification. Simply you have to become very sincere and serious. That is the only price. Rūpa Gosvāmī also recommended like that: tatra laularyam ekaśām mūlyam. Rūpa Gosvāmī says, “You purchase at any price.” But what is that price? Tatra laularyam ekaśām mūlyam. Laularyam, eagerness, that is the price. That is the only qualification. You must be very, very eager to see the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa in this very life. You must be very eager to talk with Kṛṣṇa in this very life. But not to become sahajiyā—by service . . . teṣāṁ satata-yuktāṁ bhajatām. Bhajatām means in service. You must find out always some opportunity how to render service to Kṛṣṇa. That is the qualification. 6

Tamāl Krishna Goswami: During the marathon it may happen that some devotees feel not yet empowered, although everything is here—the books, the devotees, the preaching about the marathon, the Deities, everything. So what to do? They can pray. Kṛṣṇa says that all prayers to Him will be answered if the person prays sincerely. They can pray to the empowered devotees for their help and blessings. They can pray to the Deities and to the books. They can try harder, and then they will become empowered. Actually, they are already empowered. It is simply that some persons realize it more than others. But the order and thus the power are already given. With the order comes the power to fulfill the order. The order has been coming
down in disciplic succession. So how can we say that someone isn’t empowered? We can say only that they are not conscious of that empowerment. If they associate with those who are conscious of the empowerment, then they will become empowered. (From a class in Zurich on December 4, 1991)

**Rohinīṣuta Dāsa:** One should always think, “I am not empowered, I am useless. But still I’ll try my best.” As soon as the books are going out and we think we’re empowered and we become elated, then we become attached. We think, “Now I’m in bliss. Everything is going well, and I’m flying in ecstasy. I’m empowered.” We must never forget that we’re instruments. We’re just trying to give our best and forget ourselves. It’s most important that we don’t think of ourselves, but think of Lord Caitanya and His mission to give mercy to everyone. Then Lord Caitanya can use us as His instruments. An instrument can never think it’s special, because it lies around uselessly unless it’s used. And when it’s used, that’s the glory of the user, not the instrument. But in our case, our willingness is an additional factor. We have to want to be an instrument of the Lord. It is in our interest that we take part in the *yajñā*. It is for our purification. We become more and more purified—not only us but also the people. Prabhupāda said in a letter that the more books you distribute, the more you are purified and make advancement. That’s why everyone shines with effulgence after the marathon. (From a talk in Zurich at the marathon festival on January 1, 1991)

**Navīna-nīrada Dāsa:** By Lord Caitanya’s mercy we get a taste of the nectar of book distribution when we surrender to the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. Throwing our hands in the air, we say, “Kṛṣṇa, whatever You like You can do with me. You can kick me, or You can embrace me. I will go on no matter what, and I will distribute books until my last breath. I want to give the books to people even when I’m old and grey and then die on the battle-field.” That determination can be developed. But we don’t go around and tell everybody about it. That commitment to the spiritual master’s mission is made within oneself when one understands he has nothing better to do in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement than to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. And then he resolves to go on doing that whether he achieves big or small results. Sticking to his service like that, the devotee will get many realizations. And thus he will not only distribute books nicely but also preach nicely and be able to inspire other devotees in book distribution. In this way he gets the spiritual master’s mercy.

**Vijaya Dāsa:** The way to become empowered is to get the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Only someone who has Kṛṣṇa’s mercy can go out and distribute Śrīla
Prabhupāda’s books. And we can receive that mercy by following the program that Śrīla Prabhupāda set up for us. We must do whatever helps us to go out day after day. By that endeavor alone we’ll draw Kṛṣṇa’s attention to us, and if He likes He will invest some energy in us. We cannot demand that reward, but we have to try to deserve it by following the instructions every day. Śrīla Prabhupāda once said that following the rules and regulations is our only technique. That is an important hint, which is further explained in Bhagavad-gītā (10.10): “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” If one wants to become empowered by Kṛṣṇa—dadāmi buddhi-yogam—he has to be always engaged and has to serve Kṛṣṇa with love. “Always engaged” means regularly, every day. A book distributor proves his sincerity and love by molding his life so that he always goes out, and Kṛṣṇa invests His energies in such a devotee.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: Devotees who go on year after year get more and more mercy, and thus they become very satisfied, pure, expert, and determined. When such devotees walk around with a stack of books, the people who see them are naturally attracted, because it is the nature of the soul to look for Kṛṣṇa, and in this moment people somehow feel that the saṅkīrtana devotees deliver Kṛṣṇa.

Tapas Dāsa: The only thing you need is the desire to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Lord Caitanya will provide everything else. Your desire has to be so strong that it overrides all other desires. For example, while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, you have to concentrate: “If I don’t hear, I won’t be able to serve my spiritual master. So I must push away distracting thoughts.” Similarly, when māyā lures you away from book distribution, you also have to push away those thoughts. Desire is the basis of every action. We get the desire to distribute books by reflecting on the desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda, who perfectly understood the desire of Lord Caitanya, the most merciful Supreme Personality of Godhead. The members of Prabhupāda’s movement have to do whatever is necessary to fulfill Prabhupāda’s desires—whatever, at any cost. We must have that determination to remain on saṅkīrtana.

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: Empowerment starts with determination. We have to give up material sense gratification. Of course, the mind is so tricky that it tries every possible trick to cheat us. We shouldn’t trust the mind. We should trust the order of the spiritual master. His instructions shouldn’t be
filtered through the dirty mind. They should be accepted without mental speculation. From morning to evening we just continue. We don’t become agitated or impatient if people say nasty things. Harināmānanda once met a man who reacted furiously, but Harināmānanda waited until the guy lost his breath. Then he cooled down, and Harināmānanda sold a full set to him. Sometimes frustrated people scream at devotees, but if you remain humble and wait until their depressed mind is relieved by their tirade, they will start to feel bad. Then it’s your turn to preach. We have to practice patience. Patience also comes by turning off sense gratification.

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: Prabhupāda liked to quote Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura’s commentary to the verse, vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana. He explained that one becomes empowered by making the mission of the spiritual master one’s life and soul. I can’t claim to be an empowered devotee, but I’ve noticed that when I’m steady in my service, I’ve been able to achieve results that amazed me. The only thing on my mind at those times was book distribution. I wasn’t thinking about myself or what others would think of my results. By those glimpses I can understand that the way to become empowered is to surrender oneself fully to the mission of the spiritual master.

Harikeśa Swami: While arriving in America on board the Jaladuta, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “You are Yogeśvara, the supreme master of mystic powers. Your causeless mercy can make everything possible. The conditioned souls have come under the control of Your illusory energy, and therefore, if You like, they can also be released from that illusion. I wish that You may deliver them. Therefore, I’m begging for Your mercy so that I can become Your instrument. I am powerless on my own. I am like a puppet in Your hands. Please make me dance, make me dance as You like.” Every empowered preacher must develop this mood and mentality of surrendering totally to the control of the Supreme Lord. He just surrenders to Kṛṣṇa and requests Kṛṣṇa to use him as He likes. Then his preaching becomes very powerful, because he is not maintaining any personal attachment. As long as one thinks of himself as the doer in any preaching activity, then usually the preaching is not very potent, because it is something calculated from the material platform. But if one simply depends on Kṛṣṇa for intelligence and knowledge, Kṛṣṇa will inspire him to say the right thing. When he meets somebody, the words will pour out of his mouth. He may not even be sure it’s the right thing to say, but it turns out to be exactly what a person needs to hear. People tell the devotees, “I’ve had a problem for so long, and
you’ve given me an answer. Thank you.” It doesn’t happen because we’re psychologists. It comes because we’re surrendered to Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet and we’ve understood that Kṛṣṇa is the doer. Kṛṣṇa can inspire the person in just the right way by the words we speak. We can learn to grab the hearts of others by simply throwing ourselves in Kṛṣṇa’s arms and praying, “Now I am going to make an endeavor for Your satisfaction. Please use me as Your instrument, because it is only by Your mercy that anything will succeed.” By our surrender the Supersoul will help us distribute, and He’s the best distributor. When we allow Him to help us, everything will be perfect. If we just act as Kṛṣṇa’s representatives, there’s no question of whether or not the people want the books. The Lord in their heart tells them, “You want this book.” But if we miss the connection to the Supersoul and the help He’s willing to give us, everything becomes an uphill struggle, and we never really know for sure what to say or do.

**Depend on the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa**

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.9.38p: When a living entity desires to serve the Lord in transcendental loving service, the Lord helps the devotee in so many ways as the caitya-guru, or the spiritual master within, and thus the devotee can perform many wonderful activities beyond material estimation. Such spiritual perfection is not limited by material qualifications but is developed by dint of one’s sincere endeavor to render transcendental service. Voluntary endeavor is the only qualification for spiritual perfection.

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** There were times when we thought distributing even one book was difficult. We had a book entitled *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, and we thought it would be impossible to sell a book with such a title. Moreover, we used to distribute only magazines and small books, and this was a hard cover book. But somehow we started selling these big books. Later we tried to sell two books at once. Then in 1977, we sold a boxed set of three *Kṛṣṇa* books. It worked. Why? Because the devotees wanted it. Then in 1983 we said, “Why only three? Why not seven? Why only 500 books a week? Why not 500 books a day?” From there it expanded more and more, because the spiritual energy isn’t limited. In a letter Mañidhāra and I received from Śrīla Prabhupāda, he congratulated us for our scores of 521 and 522 books in a week. Now some devotees distribute that many books in a day. From the point of five hundred books a day, we can understand that no material sakti can help anymore. You just helplessly depend on Kṛṣṇa. You must become an instrument, then the impossible be-
comes possible. Then you are hooked up like a dancing puppet. Therefore a devotee distributing five hundred or one thousand books a day is simply dancing. He is directly under the influence of the spiritual energy. He is not thinking of the result anymore, just big stacks of books, and the devotee takes them without attachment and distributes them fearlessly.

Prahlādānanda Swami: In 1971 I went to Dallas, where I did sankīrtana every day with a group of brāhmaçāris. Unfortunately, the other brāhmaçāris gradually fell into māyā one after the other, and by 1972 I was the only one left doing sankīrtana every day. I wasn’t always inspired, but I felt I had to do it because I wanted to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Despite my fears and anxieties I decided to continue. Once, I went downtown alone, and I experienced for the first time how ecstatic sankīrtana really is. I looked around, and suddenly everyone looked like they came from Vaikuṇṭha. It was like I was in the spiritual world. Everyone I approached took a book immediately. Everyone was nice. We were all like friends. I couldn’t believe I was in Dallas. I was there for a couple of hours, and everyone stopped and happily accepted Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. Everyone was happy. Then gradually everything changed, but I never again felt the same anxiety about doing book distribution because I realized that wherever we serve Kṛṣṇa, that is Vaikuṇṭha. In māyā I was dreaming up another reality, but it is Vaikuṇṭha, and everyone is Kṛṣṇa’s servant. Kṛṣṇa is always there with His devotee. Māyā simply covers our vision.

Gaurī Devī Dāsī: If we go out on book distribution we get an intense experience of the presence of Lord Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa, and our spiritual master. It’s unavoidable. We experience their presence on sankīrtana because we constantly feel them empowering us. We are also praying to them, and we are seeing how they reciprocate with us. The changes the conditioned souls go through in a matter of seconds are amazing and mystical. It has nothing to do with any potency we have. We can see that immediately. Therefore it increases our faith and our realization unlimitedly, the deeper we get into it.

Kalpavāsini Devi Dāsī: On sankīrtana I can realize that the spiritual master always meditates on his disciples. He is guiding and training us. I experience that myself, and it gives me great faith. In the morning I always chant in front of a picture of my spiritual master. It isn’t that the spiritual master has to be there personally. By following the instruction of the spiritual master, I’m deeply connected with him. I can feel the exchange personally, and
it gives me great faith and strength. In this way I can go through all difficult situations. When I come back to the van in the evening, after endeavoring the whole day to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, the feeling is inconceivable. I cannot describe it. It is such a satisfaction, such a deep exchange. The spiritual master is manifest in my mind, especially during the marathon. That realization obliges me, and it gives me the strength to go out again and again.

**Jiva Dāsa:** The relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple is confidential. Especially the way it functions on *sankirtana* is confidential. You have to go out and do *sankirtana* to experience it. Then you’ll know what I mean. You’re riding on the waves of the nectar ocean of book distribution by the mercy of the spiritual master. You don’t know yourself how it’s going on, just that it is going on. The books are flying out, and you know clearly that you aren’t the doer. It’s a spontaneous platform that you cannot reduce to any formula except surrender.

**Seeing people change in front of you**

The book distribution in Los Angeles during the six-day period is transcendental *samādhi*. The devotees are working in trance, not on the material platform. . . . Your book distribution is really intoxication.  

**Manidhāra Dāsa:** If you say to people, “This is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and it tells you how to love God and go back to the spiritual world,” people here in Sweden and Germany will simply laugh at you. But I’ve seen devotees develop ways of saying those kinds of things so that people could accept them. It’s a subtle thing that lasts only a few seconds. If you’re floating in the nectar of book distribution, connected with Kṛṣṇa, you don’t see *karmis* or enemies. You realize, “All the people are nice—they’re my friends,” because spiritually that’s a fact. Spiritually, we’re all friends.

**Jāhnava Devī Dāsī:** The nectar of book distribution is to see people change right before my eyes from a state of misery, anxiety, and distress to one of peace and happiness simply because they received one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. For me the nectar is making a difference in their lives by giving them a book of knowledge that they never had before—the knowledge how to become free from material miseries. It’s the greatest gift anybody can receive.
Nṛśimhadeva Dasa: When a devotee is empowered, he can transform people and places, and when I meditate on such a devotee I can feel an immediate change within my heart as well. For example, whenever my enthusiasm to distribute books slackens, I meditate on Guru-śakti, my first saṅkirtana leader, who impressed me so much by his temperament, determination, and distribution style. In marathons, while others were on the streets, he went up to the small villages in the Alps. There Guru-śakti, in a dhoti, distributed 100 to 150 big and maha-big books a day, defeating practically everybody else in the world. He was intense, starting with chanting and the morning program. He knew that he was the first devotee to go to these remote places and it would be many years before other devotees would return. For these people, who were mostly quite old—the younger generation was leaving—this was the only chance to get Lord Caitanya’s mercy in this lifetime. So when Guru-śakti entered such a village of maybe three to five hundred inhabitants, he was loudly singing Hare Kṛṣṇa and Govinda Jaya Jaya to purify the atmosphere, and he was determined to give everybody he met some books. With his spiritual śakti (and Sicilian charm) he was melting people’s hearts. Sometimes he would even get down on his knees to beg grandmothers to please take the books for their eternal benefit. People were so overwhelmed that some were actually crying and giving huge donations. When he left the village, the place wasn’t the same anymore. Everyone had become blessed. And when I went to these places years later, people still remembered him and showed us the books they got from him.

Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa: Book distribution depends on your inner condition. If you aren’t surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, you can hardly induce anyone else to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. The most important thing is that you should desire to please the spiritual master. When you become attached to the results, then whenever some weakness appears, you have to undergo an unnecessary struggle. You think, “I have to distribute such and such number of books. If I distribute that quantity, the devotees will glorify me, and if not, they will say I don’t know what.” That attitude is painful. But if you desire only to please the spiritual master, then of course you feel good. Kṛṣṇa takes over, just like now in the marathon [1992], it’s inconceivable, it’s special surrender. I simply try to become a madman.

The ecstasy of unlimited book distribution

*The Nectar of Devotion* (Ch. 37): Ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa, which is known as anubhāva, is symptomized by . . . engagement in a particular type of service,
as exemplified by Dārūka, a servant of Kṛṣṇa who used to fan Kṛṣṇa with a cāmara, a bunch of hair. When he was engaged in such service, he was filled with ecstatic love, and the symptoms of ecstatic love became manifest in his body. But Dārūka was so serious about his service that he checked all of these manifestations of ecstatic love and considered them hindrances to his engagement. He did not care very much for these manifestations, although they automatically developed.

An empowered servant is the pure servant of an empowered master. The empowered master is an empowered servant of his master, and in this way there is an uninterrupted link to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the reservoir of all power. So the empowered book distributor embodies the desire of the entire paramparā. He has made the desire of guru and Kṛṣṇa to deliver the fallen souls his life and soul, and he has transcended selfish considerations. He wants to serve his guru, that’s all. Such a purified book distributor brightly reflects the desire of guru and Kṛṣṇa. He radiates a spiritual vibration, and the people pick up on it. Suddenly they change on the spot. They had no plan to buy books, especially not seven to thirty books, but still they take them. And not just one person a day, but one after the other agrees to take the books. Because of the devotee’s pure desire, the people also start desiring the books, not so much because of the books themselves but because the devotee wants it.

That pure desire is instilled by the devotee’s spiritual master. In reciprocation with such desire, the Supersoul gives up His neutral position and takes the devotee’s side. He tells people, “Yes, take the books. They aren’t expensive. It’s no loss to you. They’re really beautiful, and just see how much this devotee wants you to have them. How pleased he will be if you take the books that he wants to give you. Take them. Why not?”

The people think, “Why not? It’s blissful. I’ve spent my money many times for silly things. Let me take them. It would be mean to disappoint this nice person.” They may not consciously think like that, but that is their motive or feeling. So to please the devotee, they take the books. Therefore it’s said that they don’t buy the books, they buy the devotee.

On this spiritual platform the impossible becomes possible. Even unqualified, disinterested people start buying Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. And they’re happy seeing the devotee happy. They desire the same thing he desires. All souls are servants of Kṛṣṇa, and serving Kṛṣṇa is the bliss they’ve been hankering for since time immemorial. These people are the living proof of this, as they take a stack of books, overwhelmed with ecstasy, laughter, and warm emotions. They sincerely thank the devotee and hope to meet him again.
But the empowered book distributor doesn’t allow himself to be carried away by the ecstasy at the cost of stopping his service. Just like Dāruka, he considers ecstasy a distraction, and controlling it, he simply approaches the next person. Will the Lord and the spiritual master hesitate to pour unlimited mercy upon such a surrendered devotee? Who can imagine how dear such a devotee is to them? The empowered devotees confirm that only on the platform of such surrendered service does book distribution really start. *Samāha śarvasvad bhiṣeṣu mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām*: one who is equally disposed toward every living entity attains pure devotional service unto Kṛṣṇa (Bg. 18.55).

When devotees meet those same people years later, they say they still remember the fun and are happy to have the books. Even if they haven’t read the books, they have received causeless mercy. Their buying the books wasn’t their *karma*, and it wasn’t their conscious desire. But they bought them and thus started their spiritual life in a powerful way. Although it may take another lifetime before they fully accept the mercy of Lord Caitanya, that’s nothing compared to the countless lifetimes that were ahead of them because of their *karma*. Now, suddenly, the awakening of their love of God has become irrevocable.

**Harināmānanda Dāsa:** [Speaking about the day he distributed 904 mahā-big and big books] All the devotees were desiring so much that I could attain this impossible quota of 4,200 books in one week. It meant the madness of trying to distribute an average of seven hundred books for six days. It was the week after Christmas, when the people are frustrated and become stingy again. Because of further holidays that week, many shops remained closed. At that point I knew that if it would happen, it would have nothing to do with me. I’d just go out a sufficient amount of time with enough books. The rest was up to Kṛṣṇa. So 500, 600, and 700 books started to go out. But it still wasn’t enough to meet the quota. So I had to try harder. Somehow I returned to the place I had distributed six hundred books three days before. That was another madness, because it’s a small town in the mountains with about ten thousand inhabitants. I started at eight o’clock in the morning. I distributed on the parking lot in front of the post office, where many people also walk by. The first hour was hellish. Envious people were looking out the office windows or standing nearby and watching. It was a poisonous atmosphere. Hardly any books went out. I didn’t know what troubles they were planning to make. They clearly recognized me as the same guy who was there three days before, making a big business for some *guru’s* sect. That place is completely Catholic, and the Maharishi Yogi had lived nearby for about ten years. So the Swiss aborigines were allergic...
to sects, especially Indian, non-Christian ones. After almost one hour of intense struggle against these subtle obstacles—I even considered leaving—I said, “Anyway, just forget these envious people. Distribute as if they were not here. Depend on Kṛṣṇa. Just surrender and forget your fears.”

Then suddenly the vibrations changed. The atmosphere became as auspicious as Dhruva Mahārāja’s battle when he took out his arrow to dissipate the illusory weapons of the opposing Yaksas. All of a sudden everyone started to take books: fat housewives, bearded mountaineers who came down only once a month, sophisticated businessmen, young people, old people who hardly knew there was a country called India beyond their valley, and people who had taken stacks of books three days ago. If they didn’t take more books, they blessed me to have a nice day. Everyone was part of the plan. But it had started so heavy. What can one think at such a moment? One just becomes smaller than the smallest, thanking Kṛṣṇa, thanking the spiritual master, thanking all the Vaishnavas, thanking everyone for allowing him to serve Kṛṣṇa in a useful way. By myself I would be completely useless and unqualified. And I understand that the only way to repay a fraction of my debt is to continue without deviation and pride. I just deliver the books, and—see—people want them. They are waiting for us to make a delivery, and they gladly agree to take it. Why not? The books are wonderful. That they can feel. And Kṛṣṇa wants them to take the books. So the only problem is us, with our mental conceptions and self-imposed limitations. We’re the only obstacle interrupting Lord Caitanya’s stream of mercy. I could see how I am conditioned in that way. I realized it that day. If I had surrendered more, and earlier, that day, it would have easily been possible to distribute more than a thousand books. But there were people I missed or people who could have taken more books than I gave them. Thus I understand that my only way of becoming useful is to continue distributing books.

Navina-niradā Dāsa: One must guard against getting carried away by ecstatic feelings. Sometimes a devotee’s eyes get a little shiny and moist, but in that mood you cannot approach the materialists to sell books. When the books are flying, it’s really ecstatic, but then you don’t even have time to get carried away by ecstasy. You understand that serving Kṛṣṇa is much higher than enjoying the spiritual ecstasy. If you allow yourself to be overwhelmed by emotions or become loose with people, the ecstasy stops or becomes mental, or a demon might appear and throw you out of the place. Therefore a devotee always has the attitude: “I’m doing nothing. I’m just trying to please my spiritual master here.” Of course ecstasy is there, but it has to manifest in the proper place and circumstance. The ecstasy can fully manifest when we come together on weekends or festival days and have kirtana.
11.4 Saṅkīrtana meditations

_Harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam._ We have no new discovery. We don’t manufacture. This is our process: We simply follow the predecessors’ instruction, that’s all. Our movement is very easy because we haven’t got to manufacture something. We simply repeat the words and the instruction given by the predecessor. Kṛṣṇa instructed Brahmā, Brahmā instructed Nārada, Nārada instructed Vyāsadeva, Vyāsadeva instructed Madhvācārya, then Mādhavendra Puri, Īśvara Puri, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then the six Gosvāmīs, then Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Narottama dāsa Thākura, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Jagannātha dāsa Bābāji, Bhaktiśīvānta Thākura, Gaurākīśa Dāsa Bābāji, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, and we are doing the same thing. There is no difference. That is the specific procedure of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. We are receiving the transcendental knowledge through _guru-parampara_ succession. So we simply have to take instruction from the _guru_, and if we execute it heart and soul, that is success. That is practical. I have no personal qualification, but I simply tried to satisfy my _guru_. That’s all. My Guru Mahārāja asked me, “If you get some money, print books.” There was a private meeting. Some of my important Godbrothers were also there. It was at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Guru Mahārāja said to me, “Since we have gotten the Baghbazar marble temple, there has been much dissension. And everyone thinks who will occupy this or that room. I wish therefore to sell the temple and the marble and print some books.” Yes. So I took this up from his mouth, that he is very fond of books. And he told me personally that if I got some money, to print books. Therefore I am stressing on this point. Where is book? Where is book? Where is book? So kindly help me. This is my request. Print many books in many languages and distribute them throughout the whole world. Then the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will automatically increase.

_Rohinīsūta Dāsa:_ If Kṛṣṇa, by His mercy, is empowering you to distribute many books, then you’re in the fire of _saṅkīrtana_, and that fire takes over like wildfire, Śrīla Prabhupāda said. The fire element exists within everything. Everything can turn into fire. Steel can melt. Even stone can melt...
into lava. So the stone-hearted and steel-framed hearts of the materialists can become molten in contact with the sankirtana fire. By the fire of a devotee’s enthusiasm, their fire can be brought out, and people will behave like devotees and appreciate Prabhupāda’s books. Kṛṣṇa is within the heart of everyone, and He can fan the fire. So if we are sincere, Kṛṣṇa will help us, and people will step forward to perform devotional service. That can happen within an instant. Every book distributor has experienced it. Towards the end of the day it’s hard to stop because you’re in the sankirtana fire, and that fire is expanding like wildfire. The more people you set on fire, the more you burn in the fire of enthusiasm and ecstasy. Suddenly nobody can resist anymore. Then we get a taste of what Lord Caitanya meant by saying ānandāmbudhi-vardhanam . . . param vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam.

Nṛsiṁhadeva Dāsa: Every soul has the desire to do a perfect activity. “Perfect activity” means serving Kṛṣṇa, especially giving Kṛṣṇa to others. On book distribution, we get a chance to perform the perfect activity. The non-devotees have no access to perfection, and even we neophytes are helpless. Unless we have Kṛṣṇa, we cannot give Kṛṣṇa to others. That’s why we depend completely on the mercy of the spiritual master, who engages us in book distribution. By distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, which are nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, imperfect people (both those buying and those selling) can engage in a perfect activity. The experience of giving Kṛṣṇa to the conditioned souls is new every day. It is most encouraging and moving. You see other spirit souls become happy because they feel they have done something perfect that will benefit them forever. They’ve wasted millions of lifetimes committing so many sinful activities that caused them endless suffering. And now, by the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, they actively engage in devotional service. This simple action looks like any normal business, but it brings a new hope into their lives. After billions of years, now their path back to Godhead is open. It is the most important moment in the material existence of a conditioned soul. We should always have that vision.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: My only meditation on sankirtana is trying to present the books nicely and convince everyone I meet to take them. Whatever doubts or fears they have, I try to destroy. In that way we can engage the body, mind, and intelligence in book distribution and give everything to Kṛṣṇa just like Arjuna did on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. After Kṛṣṇa spoke Bhagavad-gītā, Arjuna didn’t enter a yogic samādhi. He executed his duty and fought and killed millions of soldiers. At least in my case, that’s the mood. When I leave the van I feel like I’m on a battlefield, and I simply
execute my duty. I fight for the sake of fighting. Whether or not a person takes a book I go on to the next person. I don’t want to lose a second. I don’t want to space out. And when acting like this, there is no time to speculate or think of mâyâ. In this way I spend my days, from morning to night, interrupted only by two or three hours for reading and taking prasâdam. When the evening comes, I am completely addicted. I don’t want to stop. I want to continue. I don’t look at my watch and hope for the end of the day. Just the opposite. When I look at my watch and see that it’s seven o’clock, I think, “Oh no, I have to stop.” By the causeless mercy of Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, we can get that vision, and then saṅkīrtana is very, very enlivening and never boring.

**Jadurāṇi Devi Dāsī:** One nice form of meditation is to think of songs we sing in the temple. Those songs are perfect meditations and prayers, and they apply to saṅkīrtana. We pray, “Right now I am suffering due to serving matter. O my Lord, please lift me up into the spiritual atmosphere and let me serve You, which is the only useful purpose of my life.” That is the meaning of the mahā-mantra, and it is the conclusion of all the prayers of the ācāryas. Then there are songs describing Lord Caitanya’s dancing in Navadvīpa and His calling out to the people to wake up. “Wake up, sleeping souls! Why are you sleeping on the lap of the witch mâyâ? I am your only friend. Except for Me, you have no other friend. I am bringing you the mahā-mantra, the only medicine that will cure your illusion.” Also, we can meditate on the verses from Caitanya-caritāmṛta about the Pañca-tattva, which state that simply by remembering the Pañca-tattva everything becomes easy, and when we forget Them, then even easy things become difficult. Not only are They the Absolute Truth, but They are manifest in this age, and They are even more magnanimous than Kṛṣṇa, because They unconditionally distribute love of God. And the song “Parama Karuṇā” says that Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda are supremely merciful. They made the animals dance and the stones melt; therefore, stone-hearted men will be melted by Lord Caitanya’s and Lord Nityānanda’s merciful saṅkīrtana movement. All those songs and verses are perfectly applicable prayers to help us remember the Lord and call out to Him on saṅkīrtana.

**Tapas Dāsa:** We’re never alone on the street. It’s Kṛṣṇa’s desire that all the embodied souls be enlightened and return back to Godhead. That desire manifests through the parampara. Thus the mission of saving the fallen souls has come down to us. It is most mercifully manifested in the activity of book distribution. When we distribute books, all the great ācāryas inspire
and protect us. The more remote and fallen a place is, the more we can try to invoke their presence. Here in Norway, we travel to the last villages before the Arctic region. Lord Caitanya’s mercy is inconceivable. Whoever thought that such isolated people would get Lord Caitanya’s mercy? What kind and brilliant arrangements Śrīla Prabhupāda has made!

**Haripāda Dāsa:** Any service, even the most insignificant service a person does to please Kṛṣṇa, will have eternal benefits. And buying a book is not an insignificant service. Therefore I meditate on the words of Prahlāda Mahārāja: “Without Kṛṣṇa consciousness one cannot be happy.” There is no hope for people nowadays other than Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and the association of devotees. I meditate on the great responsibility of being a devotee. Here in Spain there are a hundred devotees and forty million inhabitants. So the spiritual lives of forty million people depend on our efforts to distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness. And it’s no easy task, and there’s no time to lose. That makes one sincere.

**Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa:** I usually pray to Lord Caitanya to empower me so that I can do some service that pleases my spiritual master. I also pray a lot to get the mercy of other Vaiṣṇavas so that I can please them and not offend them by my passionate behavior. I pray to the Lord so that I don’t aggravate people, and I ask Him to help us spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world so that many new persons start to appreciate it and also become book distributors. And I pray to Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva to protect us from the demon of our own mind and the materialistic demons trying to stop us. And especially when I become puffed up, I try to remember Him with new concentration. So I have experienced that prayer is a good meditation.

**Nirguṇa Dāsa:** I am a servant of Lord Caitanya, a servant of Lord Caitanya, a servant of Lord Caitanya’s servant. My mission, like that of a kṣatriya, is to go out armed with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and use them as weapons against Kali to rescue as many conditioned souls as possible.

**Maṇidhāra Dāsa:** Our meditations and ecstasies shouldn’t be sentimental, because sentiment comes and goes. It’s better to understand from a philosophical point of view that book distribution is good both for us and the world. Prabhupāda used to say that preaching is good both for the preacher and those he preaches to. So that’s a practical understanding. One shouldn’t go on sankirtana and look for ecstasy just to feel good. It’s better that one
understands rationally and philosophically why *sāṅkīrtana* is good for him and for others. Book distribution is the best preaching because it gives the pure and complete message. We may not be complete, but the books are. We may say things wrong, but the books never say anything wrong. Therefore delivering a book is the best preaching, and our perfection is saying whatever is needed to deliver the book.

**Gīta-govinda Dāsī:** The highest meditation is to concentrate on the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. If our minds are fixed on Kṛṣṇa, we can chant the *mantra* from the heart and always depend on Kṛṣṇa. Only in such a condition can we concentrate our attention on the conditioned soul. With an impure mind it’s difficult to chant. Even if we chant externally, our minds can be somewhere else that has nothing to do with meditation. In such a mental state we can’t concentrate on the conditioned souls. My mind isn’t always fixed, and I can’t always meditate on the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*. Most of the time my mind isn’t fixed, but somehow or other, by the mercy of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, I am distributing books. I try to organize my schedule in such a way that every activity is connected with book distribution and based on the temple program. We have to hear the transcendental knowledge. Then our minds don’t think of anything else. If we are always hearing from the proper source, we get the power to go out again.

**Haridāsa Thākura Dāsa:** While on *sāṅkīrtana* I try to fix my mind on chanting and distributing books. I simply go from person to person and try to convince them and refute their arguments. That keeps my mind nicely engaged. I try not to think too much while distributing books. Thinking means listening to the mind, and thus one falls to the mental platform. The thinking has to be done before going out. We have to remember why we’re doing this. I pray to my spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa to empower me and give me shelter and not let me deviate or think of sense gratification or anything else. In that way I’m setting up my mind, and then I go out. In *Bhagavad-gītā* we see how Arjuna resolved all of his doubts. He surrendered to Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa cleared up everything. Arjuna regained his determination. He circumambulated Kṛṣṇa three times, and then he started fighting. While fighting he didn’t think too much, he just fought, because on the battlefield one has to have very fixed concentration. The same thing applies while distributing books. If the mind is concentrated, we have all the power we need to act. But if we think too much and allow the mind to wander, we lose determination. Therefore I don’t speculate or think too much while distributing. I just keep the mind engaged in what I am doing at the moment.
**Cakṣu Dāsa:** My meditation is that I want to give out the books I’m carrying. Usually I have stacks of about twenty books, and my meditation is a prayer to the spiritual master to find the people who will take them. Book distribution means distributing books, so that’s what I’m trying to do.

**Sarvātmā Dāsa:** The most important service is just the thing you’re doing. When you chant your rounds, you chant your rounds; when you read, you read; and when you distribute, you distribute books. You concentrate on connecting all the people with Kṛṣṇa. That’s a book distributor’s business. Whomever he meets, he connects him with Kṛṣṇa. If the book distributor is serious about his service, then he’ll do everything else with more focused concentration—chanting, reading, or taking prasādam. He always thinks, “Now Kṛṣṇa is giving me the inspiration I need to go out again.” In this way, everything becomes meaningful in a devotee’s life, and he never wastes time.

**Guru-carana Dāsa:** If we’re Kṛṣṇa conscious, then whatever we say is meant to connect the conditioned soul with Kṛṣṇa. In this sense, our mantra on the street is nondifferent from the mahā-mantra. We may speak about many things to inspire the people to take the books or look at them, but it’s still a form of chanting. Thus we can expand our chanting throughout the day. It’s saṅkīrtana, chanting for the eternal benefit of all the people we meet.

**Jāhnavā Devī Dāśī:** I pray to Kṛṣṇa over and over again to give me some compassion for the conditioned souls. Only by having compassion for them will I be qualified to become a devotee. One of the main qualities of a devotee is compassion—so much so that he suffers seeing other living entities suffer.

**Jīva Dāsa:** We are all desperately trying to get the mercy of the Lord, but we can’t expect to get the Lord’s compassion if we don’t show compassion to His parts and parcels. By developing a perspective of spiritual equality we can easily relate to the people we meet on the street.

**Śāirṣi Devī Dāśī:** One good way to keep the mind engaged while doing saṅkīrtana is to learn verses and repeat them during the day. Similarly, while taking prasādam in the morning, we listen to classes, and I try to keep one special point in mind. The same applies to reading. I try to memorize some points and then meditate on them. But the most important thing is to chant, because it’s not that easy to fix the mind on a special meditation while going from person to person. It takes a lot of experience. After a while, a dev-
otee can start to meditate even while speaking to a person. He meditates on how the Paramātmā will inspire the person from within his heart. But that can’t be done artificially. It takes deeper and deeper realizations, which one will get by absorbing himself in book distribution.

**Harikēśa Swami:** Things are breaking down everywhere, and the dream of a better decade after the fall of communism is dissipating quickly. Economies are stagnant, social life is becoming more and more complex, and hatred between people is increasing rapidly. War is commonplace and has even returned to Europe in what was Yugoslavia. Indians are rioting over pseudo-religious issues created by politicians to increase their prestige. AIDS is rampant, and there’s no cure in sight. All in all, there’s no peace, and even devotees are feeling the pinch. Considering the world’s situation and the situation in ISKCON, I can understand that there’s no hope for the world unless we distribute the books of Śrila Prabhupāda far and wide. People in the West are too crazy to listen peacefully to a lecture on Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Indeed, they will not even come. Some may hear, and that’s nice, yet the masses miss the opportunity because they are unfortunate. But you great souls—you *sāṅkīrtana* heroes—you go out every day and give these people great hope. You don’t care for your own comforts, and despite personal difficulties, you’re dedicated to bringing the books of Śrila Prabhupāda to every door in the world and putting them in every hand on all the streets of the world. Never in history has there been such a movement to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world in so short a time. You are part of history in the making. You are making this movement known in Europe, where people are dull, ignorant, foolish, envious, and vicious. If we examine people, we find hardly one person with any good qualities, but every now and then we meet such a person who requires only a little push and then he can become inspired to surrender to Kṛṣṇa. It’s the possibility of such a meeting that inspires you to go on with the book distribution. Seeing the results before your eyes inspires you to continue releasing the rays of mercy over the darkened skies of Europe. May you always be successful in your attempts to open people’s darkened eyes and awaken them from their long sleep on the lap of māyā. (From a message to the *sāṅkīrtana* devotees on December 12, 1992)

I am very much encouraged by hearing from you that the distribution of books and literatures in Vancouver has increased greatly. I am getting the same report from all places in the world, wherever we are working, and this is extremely pleasing to me. I never thought this Kṛṣṇa consciousness
movement would be so successful. Actually the whole thing rests upon these books. There is no such literature anywhere in the world as our books. So go on selling more and more books and magazines, that is our main business. Thank you very much for helping me in this way.
12

A World Revolution
Through Book Distribution

“Please print as many books as possible—this is my real pleasure. By printing the books of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy in many different languages, we can actually inject our movement into the masses of people all over the world, especially there in the Western countries, and we can literally turn whole nations into Kṛṣṇa conscious nations.”

12.1 “Prominent within the next ten thousand years”

In the present epoch people talk about a “turning point” in history, the “new age,” and an age of Aquarius. Śrīla Prabhupāda also talked about an imminent change in the world’s history, and being tri-kāla-jñā (knower of past, present, and future), he clearly pointed out what that means—to the amazement of his disciples and guests alike: the predominance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness during the next ten thousand years.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 3.50p: It is said that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will be prominent within the next ten thousand years, but after that people will all become mlecchas and yavanas. Thus at the end of the yuga, Kṛṣṇa will appear as the Kalki avatāra and kill them without consideration.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Kalki’s nature is described in the Bhāgavatam. He will come just like a prince, with royal dress, sword, and on horseback, simply killing—no preaching. All rascals killed. No more preaching. [Laughs] That is the last. There will be no brain to understand God. They will be so dull. It requires a brain to understand God.

Allen Ginsberg: Do you think of this in terms of an historical event that will occur in the lifetime of your disciples?
Prabhupāda: No. This will happen at least 400,000 years after. At that time my disciples will be with Kṛṣṇa.

Devotees: Haribol!

Prabhupāda: And those who will not follow them will see the fun, how they are being killed. [Laughter]

Ginsberg: Will people still be chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in 400,000 years?

Prabhupāda: No. Hare Kṛṣṇa will be finished within ten thousand years. There will be no more Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Ginsberg: So what will be left?

Prabhupāda: Nothing. Left will be that I’ll kill you and eat you and you shall kill me. That will be left. There will be no grain, no milk, no sugar, no fruit. So I have to eat you, and you will have to eat me. Full facility for meat-eating. [Laughter]

Ginsberg: But you see it actually as an historical thing of ten thousand years for the chanting and then the diminishing of the chanting?

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Ginsberg: Well then, do you think more people will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa or fewer?

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes, more people. Now it will increase. People will take advantage of this for ten thousand years.

Ginsberg: And then?

Prabhupāda: Then it will diminish.

Ginsberg: So this is like the last rope, the last gasp.

Prabhupāda: [Laughs] Yes. So the sooner we take shelter of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the better.

Ginsberg: Well then, according to Vedic theory, when did this yuga begin?

Prabhupāda: Kali-yuga began five thousand years ago. The duration of the Kali-yuga is 432,000 years. Out of that, we have passed five thousand years. There is a balance of 427,000 years. Out of that, ten thousand years is nothing.

Ginsberg: Where is all this?

Prabhupāda: Vedic literature—Padma Purāṇa; Purāṇas.

Ginsberg: Well then, within this period of ten thousand years, only those who hear Kṛṣṇa’s name and worship Kṛṣṇa by chanting can attain mokṣa.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Kīrtanād eva kṛṣṇasya mukta-saṅghaḥ paraṁ vraje. That is stated in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. They become immediately liberated and go back to home, back to Godhead.

Ginsberg: And everybody else gets involved deeper and deeper in the yuga.

Prabhupāda: Yes, yes, yes. So if anyone believes in the āsttras, they should take to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is intelligence, to take advantage of the authorized scriptures.
**Dr. Arnold Toynbee:** With more people in politics in India, are they able to keep the Vedic ideal?

**Prabhupāda:** No, no, they have given it up. The politicians say, “These books are useless. Throw them in the water.” They say like that publicly. They are not interested. Everywhere there is more or less the same mentality. But I have begun this movement with my European and American disciples. It is our duty on behalf of Kṛṣṇa to push on this movement. So we are doing it, and we are getting a response. It is not without response. It will increase. That is also stated—that for ten thousand years the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will increase. Yes. Within ten thousand years if they become Kṛṣṇa conscious, then life is successful. After ten thousand years, the gloomy picture of Kali-yuga will come. Still there is time. Ten thousand years is not a small period.  

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**Rāmeśvara:** Śrīla Prabhupāda, you said that this movement will go on unimpeded for ten thousand years.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes, provided we keep it uncontaminated. You should take this opportunity.

**Rāmeśvara:** After ten years we have gotten so many devotees and so many houses that I can’t imagine how big this movement will be after ten thousand years.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. You’ll get the government.

**Rāmeśvara:** The whole world will be delivered?

**Prabhupāda:** Yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas. America will be the best—people will follow. They are already following—skyscraper building, that’s all. All the nations of the world are aspiring to have skyscraper buildings.

**Rāmeśvara:** All the instructions for the future—how to run the government—everything is explained in your books.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. I think like that. [Laughs] Is there mention—the slaughterhouse must be stopped?

**Rāmeśvara:** You’ve given all the major policies for the future government, the Kṛṣṇa conscious government.

**Prabhupāda:** Let us hope.
Prabhupāda: Two things—paritrāṇāya sādhunāṁ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtāṁ: as the duṣkṛta will be reduced, the sādhu will increase. Or, as the sādhu will increase, the duṣkṛta will decrease.

Rāmeśvara: This conflict will be global. It will affect the whole world.

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. That doesn’t matter.

Hari-śauri: We’re already in every country.

Prabhupāda: Yes. That is the Kurukṣetra fight.

Rāmeśvara: So this conflict will take place.

Prabhupāda: Support Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja and kill Duryodhana. This is Kurukṣetra.

Rāmeśvara: It seems our movement has to grow much more before this will take place...

Prabhupāda: It will grow. It is growing. Simply our workers should be very sincere and strict, and it will it grow. Nobody can check. That’s a fact.

Rāmeśvara: . . . because after such a conflict the whole world will . . .

Prabhupāda: Conflict is already there. Just like they’re opposing.

Rāmeśvara: But I mean the actual destruction of their culture.

Prabhupāda: Now they are trying to destroy us. And we are trying to destroy them. The conflict is already there. And this is now a psychological fight. And then there will be actual fight. And we must take part in that fight.

Rāmeśvara: We will be the only ones who have any vision what to do after the war.

Prabhupāda: Yes. We have got clear vision. We are not putting any theory. We are always presenting facts, and that is materializing.

Hari-śauri: Is our goal to reestablish Vedic principles in society at large?

Prabhupāda: Yes. That will be Satya-yuga. Again the Vedic principles will be established after finishing this Kali-yuga. And that is Satya-yuga. That is going on. Just like after summer, there is winter. After winter, there is summer.

Rāmeśvara: But this is extraordinary: Lord Caitanya’s movement, the ten thousand years of His movement, is a special exception for the Kali-yuga.

Prabhupāda: Special for this millennium. But the thing is going on like that, rotating.

Rāmeśvara: But in general, first it gets more and more degraded. Then it’s all finished.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Unless there is degradation, there’s no question of improvement. So this is going on. This is nature’s way, bhūtvā bhūtvā pralīya-te: appearance and disappearance.  

* * *
Giriraja: Your Divine Grace has said that an auspicious atmosphere is being created all over the world because of the saṅkirtana movement. So is it not possible that at least for the time being things will improve?
Prabhupada: Oh, yes, improve. Not for the time being—for ten thousand years.
Giriraja: Yes. Out of 427,000 years I was taking that ten thousand as the time being.
Prabhupada: It is nothing short.
Tamal Krishna: Srila Prabhupada, where is the mention of these ten thousand years?
Prabhupada: That I have heard. Maybe in the Bhagavatam. Such a nice thing. Alone in this world I am struggling, and the so-called intelligent persons—they will not come. They have business. Why? If it is actually beneficial to the human society, why should I try alone? I will go on trying as long as I live. There will be no checking. ⁶

12.2 On the threshold of the Golden Age

You propose to induce the American people to surrender to Lord Caitanya by expansion of book distribution. That is wanted. When you come to that, that is success. Then you can take charge of the government. And as soon as in America the Kṛṣṇa conscious boys are in power, the whole world will be changed. The idea is to bring under control all the atheistic classes of men. There are two ways of bringing the opposition under control. One is by logic and philosophy, the other is by force. That was done by Bharata Mahārāja when he was king of this planet. ⁷

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.10.54: When Lord Rāmacandra, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, was the king of this world, all bodily and mental suffering, disease, old age, bereavement, lamentation, distress, fear and fatigue were completely absent. There was even no death for those who did not want it.

Purport: All these facilities existed because of Lord Rāmacandra’s presence as the king of the entire world. A similar situation could be introduced immediately, even in this age called Kali, the worst of all ages. It is said, kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra: Kṛṣṇa descends in this Kali-yuga in the form of His holy name—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Rāma. If we chant offenselessly, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are still present in this age. The kingdom of Rāma was
immensely popular and beneficial, and the spreading of this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement can immediately introduce a similar situation, even in this Kali-yuga.

“\textit{The only hope is this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement}”

\textit{Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam} 10.3.22: O my Lord, proprietor of all creation, You have now appeared in my house, desiring to protect this world. I am sure that You will kill all the armies that are moving all over the world under the leadership of politicians who are dressed as \textit{kṣatriya} rulers but who are factually demons. They must be killed by You for the protection of the innocent public.

Purport: Kṛṣṇa appears in this world for two purposes, \textit{paritrāṇāya sādhū-nām vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām}: to protect the innocent, religious devotees of the Lord and to annihilate all the uneducated, uncultured \textit{asuras}, who unnecessarily bark like dogs and fight among themselves for political power. It is said, \textit{kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛṣṇa-avatāra}: the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is also an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in the form of the holy name (\textit{nāma-rūpe}). Every one of us who is actually afraid of the asuric rulers and politicians must welcome this incarnation of Kṛṣṇa: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Then we will surely be protected from the harassment of asuric rulers. At the present moment these rulers are so powerful that by hook or by crook they capture the highest posts in government and harass countless numbers of people on the plea of national security or some emergency. Then again, one \textit{asura} defeats another \textit{asura}, but the public continues to suffer. Therefore the entire world is in a precarious condition, and the only hope is this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva appeared when Prahlāda was excessively harassed by his asuric father. Because of such asuric fathers— that is, the ruling politicians—it is very difficult to press forward the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement, but because Kṛṣṇa has now appeared in His holy name through this movement, we can hope that these asuric fathers will be annihilated and the kingdom of God established all over the world. The entire world is now full of many \textit{asuras} in the guise of politicians, \textit{gurus, sādhus, yogis} and incarnations, and they are misleading the general public away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which can offer true benefit to human society.

\textit{Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā} 4.79: The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has spread all over the world within a very short time (within five years), and mundane people are very astonished at this. However, by the grace of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we understand that everything is possible
by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. Why does Kṛṣṇa have to take five years? In five days He can spread His name and fame all over the world like wildfire. Those who have faith and devotion to Kṛṣṇa can understand that these things happen so wonderfully by the grace of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. We are simply the instruments.

Nitāi Canda Goswami: Lord Caitanya appeared to distribute love of Kṛṣṇa, but it isn’t meant simply for a few devotees. If the devotees are satisfied staying in the temple and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, how will the fallen souls be delivered? Therefore already in Navadvīpa, Lord Caitanya stressed the need of devotees going out. Śrila Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura says in Caitanya-bhāgavata, prāṇ ache yar sei hetu prachar: “One who has life can preach.” So those who have understood the purpose of Lord Caitanya’s appearance cannot simply sit down, they must go out. Lord Caitanya Himself sent out Nityānanda Prabhu and Ṭhākura Haridāsa (Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-līlā 13.8–10, 16):

\[
\text{śuna śuna nityānanda, śuna haridāsa}
\text{sarvatra āmāra ājñā karaha prakāsa:}
\]

“Hear, hear, Nityānanda! Hear Haridāsa! Go everywhere and make My order known.”

\[
\text{prati ghare ghare giyā kara ei bhikṣā}
\text{bolo kṛṣṇa, bhaja kṛṣṇa, kara kṛṣṇa śikṣā}
\]

“Go from house to house and request or beg everyone to chant ‘Kṛṣṇa,’ worship Kṛṣṇa, and follow Kṛṣṇa’s teachings.”

\[
\text{ihā ba-i āra nā balibā balāibā}
\text{dina-avasāne āsi’ āmāre kāhibā}
\]

“Only this—don’t say or ask anything more. Then at the end of the day, come to Me and give a report about what you have done.”

\[
\text{ājñā pāi’ dui jane bule ghare ghare}
\text{bolo kṛṣṇa, gāo kṛṣṇa, bhajaha kṛṣṇere}
\]

“Having the order, both of them went from house to house, requesting the people to chant ‘Kṛṣṇa,’ sing ‘Kṛṣṇa,’ and worship Kṛṣṇa.”

From these statements we can understand that our saṅkirtana movement is authorized. Sometimes neophyte devotees think our movement
is a commercial enterprise: “As soon as we join, they send us out with big truckloads of books. And in the evening, the saṅkīrtana leader wants to know what we have done.” So don’t feel bad—it is authorized by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Nityānanda Prabhu is the personification of mercy and the original spiritual master, and Haridāsa Ṭhākura is the nāmācārya. They are teaching everyone by their personal example how to distribute Lord Caitanya’s mercy. They went everywhere in Navadvīpa and requested everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and mold his life into Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They boldly approached even Jagāi and Mādhāi, the most fallen persons, and delivered them. So we are following their example. On the direct order of Lord Caitanya, saṅkīrtana devotees go door to door and city to city although the people are fallen and their background is bad. The people have no time to sit down and listen to us; therefore we give them books. The saṅkīrtana devotees represent Nityānanda Prabhu and Haridāsa Ṭhākura. They give up physical comforts and are on the road distributing the mercy with fearlessness and determination. They are doing the same service as Nityānanda and Haridāsa, so Lord Caitanya will especially bless them. Because of such elevated saṅkīrtana devotees, nothing can stop this movement—it will simply grow by the mercy of Nityānanda Prabhu.

Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the highest consciousness

Satsvarūpa Mahārāja: This is Bhakta Doug. He was a personal secretary of Maharishi for two years. He traveled all over with him. And one day Maharishi said, “If you really want to know the highest truth, it’s Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” So then he left and joined our temple.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Maharishi said that?
Doug: Yes, he did say that. It took me a while to make the transition—with Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.
Devotee: Maharishi must have read one of your books, Prabhupāda. One time we were in Orlando, Florida, at the Kundalini Yoga festival, and Maharishi came out. We were chanting and distributing prasādam and some BTGs, and he took a BTG and gave a dollar donation. He patted us on the head and said, “You boys keep chanting the holy names of God.”
Prabhupāda: When were you with Maharishi?
Doug: I joined the Maharishi in 1969, and at that time I was living in Washington, D.C. His national director came and gave a lecture, and he said that they needed help because they didn’t have a center there. So I organized the movement out of my parents’ house. . . . Later on, I started to be with Maharishi for long periods, and I took his courses and did extensive medita-
tions. . . . But when I was with Maharishi, I noticed that a lot of his potency and charisma seemed to diminish over the years. It seemed to me he’d get more and more depressed if people weren’t actually reaching the states that he talked of. It seemed like he wasn’t satisfied with the advancement people were making. And certainly he wasn’t answering all the questions, because all that time I was asking him, “What is the highest truth?” And when he talked about God I would say, “Who is God?” And we’d ask him, “Who is Kṛṣṇa?” and “What about the Kṛṣṇa conscious movement?” But his reply was word juggling. He’d kind of evade our questions, but those questions kept coming up. Somehow he kept us from going into too much detail about it. But once I didn’t see him for a few days. I was in the mountains with him and some other people. He was doing some work on the Brahma-sūtras. When he came out, he was in a very solemn mood. We asked him what truths he had realized from the Brahma-sūtras. And he said, “Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the highest state of consciousness.” So I left shortly after that. I feel that I could have been chanting all those years.

**Prabhupāda:** What is his age?
**Doug:** His age? He’s sixty-eight.

**Prabhupāda:** Old man.

**Doug:** Balavanta suggested that I write him a letter and ask him to have a meeting with you. Maybe some conciliation could be made and he could propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness also, because he has many followers. I think he must have some sincerity.

**Prabhupāda:** Instead of asking him to preach, you preach. He has already enunciated a type of formula, and it is very difficult for him to change it.  

### 12.3 Our movement cannot be stopped

Try to distribute as many books as possible. I can understand your concern about the deterioration of the civilization. Yes, the city will be a more dangerous place as Kali-yuga advances. The modern civilization is so corrupt, and as more and more sinful activities are committed, the people will be forced to face more troubles by nature’s order. Our business, however, is simply to take shelter of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and pray to the holy name to give us protection. We shall be unaffected by all that will happen. Kṛṣṇa will provide us with working facilities. Be assured of this, that the devotees will be protected by the holy name. Others will have to suffer in the days that are coming.
An historical example

Śrīla Prabhupāda-lilāmṛta Vol. 6, p. 259: The sannyāsīs began telling Śrīla Prabhupāda about how a military dictatorship had taken over in Argentina and had officially banned the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Twenty thousand dollars’ worth of books had been seized, and devotees had been arrested. Many other persons were being regularly arrested or shot in the streets. . . Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “So this will give impetus to Kṛṣṇa consciousness—yadā yadā hi dharmasya glāṇih. Don’t be disappointed. Kṛṣṇa will act through His movement and kill them, these demons. How it will be done, that you cannot know now, but it will be done. Let us remain true soldiers. That’s all. And suppose you die in the fight? Fight means with vow, with determination either to gain victory or die. Because it is a fight against māyā. Why shall you be afraid of being killed? When there is a fight, one must know that “Either I am going to be killed or gain victory.” Jīva vā mara vā. Those who are devotees, either they live or die, it’s the same thing. While they live they are serving Kṛṣṇa. When they die they will serve Kṛṣṇa. Jīva vā mara vā. Tyaktvā dehaḥ punar janma naiti mām eti. He goes to Kṛṣṇa. So what is the loss? We are working for Kṛṣṇa, and if we die we go to Kṛṣṇa. What is the loss?”

Rohinīsuta Dāsa: The demons hate our book distribution. They declare war on it and try to stop it. But they cannot stop it. Already so many books are out in society. They may even try to find all these books and burn them, but they will never find all of them. There is a nice story from Argentina. When there was a change of the government in the 1970s, the leaders confiscated all the devotees’ books. Everyone thought, “The books are lost. They burned the books.” But now the government has changed, and things are more favorable again. The new government held an auction to sell all the confiscated goods. And there were all these books from ten years before. But no one was interested. Finally one man came forward who thought, “I can make a good business with these books.” So he bought them for a small sum and then tried to sell them, but no one wanted them. Later the man encountered a sankīrtana devotee, who tried to sell him a book, and the man said, “Oh, these books! I have them already.” “Really—one or two?” “No, I have thousands.” Then he told the whole story and showed the devotee all the books. “I cannot sell them. What shall I do? You can buy them if you like.” So the devotee informed Bhaktibhūṣaṇa Mahārāja, who went to see all the books. But he remained cool. The man asked, “Would you like to take these books?” “Well, maybe,” Mahārāja said. “I have to think about it. I don’t know.” Then the man became desperate and said, “Please,
please, just take the books. Give whatever you like. I can’t stand them any-
more.” So Mahārāja had to pay only a small amount of money for them.
And what’s more, because the books had been confiscated by the govern-
ment before having been paid for, the devotees got all the books practically
for free. And that happened right during the marathon when they were run-
ning short of books. (From a class in Belgium on September 3, 1987)

**Our humble methods will save us and the world**

_Hṛdayānanda Dāsa Goswami:_ We can use everything for Kṛṣṇa. We can use
the most sophisticated things for Kṛṣṇa. But we should not forget that ulti-
mately it is the simple processes that Śrīla Prabhupāda directly gave us that
will save the world. It is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s strategy, it is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s
vision—his order—that will save the world. Śrīla Prabhupāda is the savior
of the Western countries, and because the Western countries are important
for now, at least for a few more years, that includes the rest of the countries
also. So it is by simple, humble devotion that the world will be saved. I was
in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s room once in 1972, and the GBC of New York pro-
posed that Śrīla Prabhupāda come to New York and the devotees would
rent a very nice house for him on Long Island, which is a prestigious area.
They were going to bring highly placed and sophisticated people to Śrīla
Prabhupāda. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s comment was, “No. Actually Lord Cai-
tanya came to save the unsophisticated. The sophisticated people will never
be saved.” So it is amazing to see how humble Vaiṣṇavas, the vast majority
of whom we don’t even know by name, simply go out, live in vans, go door
to door, go out on the streets, and approach people one by one with great
faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya. Actually, all the American
temples were purchased by this process. Therefore we should just get right
back to the basics. Devotees can be the most sophisticated, but the heart of
this movement will always be these humble, loving processes of carrying out
exactly what Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted: approaching people, seeing them
as spirit souls, giving them Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, giving them Kṛṣṇa’s
name, and giving them _prasādam_. These humble processes will always be
the salvation of the world. That is the way the world will be saved.

**We succeed against all odds**

_Tamāl Krishna Goswami:_ Śrīla Prabhupāda translates _vimanyavah_ as “with-
out anger (one must distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness to persons who are
hostile without becoming angry at them)” [SB 5.5.2]. Prabhupāda said that
we have to expect opposition. He said that opposition is arranged by Kṛṣṇa
to promote the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He gave the example that as long as Kṛṣṇa was in Vṛndāvana, very few persons knew about Him, but when Kṛṣṇa went on the battlefield, and particularly the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, everyone in the world took note. Kṛṣṇa arranges opposition to glorify the preachers. So all over the world we find difficulties.

When we started the sankirtana movement, one woman, who looked just like a witch, used to disturb our harināma party. We would sit on the sidewalk and chant, and she would walk up in her high heels and try to kick the spike of her high heel into the mrdanga. People would stand around to see what we were going to do, and we had to swerve to the side with the drum, but we didn’t retaliate. If someone approaches and harasses you, you just have to deal with him, but not react, not become angry.

Then the police passed an ordinance. They thought we were obstructing traffic. So they said, “Now you can’t sit on the sidewalk. You have to stand. And the magazine distributors can’t stand in the middle of the sidewalk. You have to stand with one foot against the wall.” So we would stand with one foot always touching the wall and lean out as far as we could to stop the people walking by and give them BTGs. So this is the kind of thing that goes on all the time.

In another case I heard about today, in Sarajevo, the devotees were storing many books, and because the books were not distributed fast enough, what happened? People broke into the storehouse, took the books, and used them as fuel.

Sometimes people are so bewildered that they want to humiliate the devotees. When I was preaching in India, we were distributing sets of books. We went to a person who owned a big theater, and he said, “It is so hot that I think you need to cool off. You should take this bottle of soda and pour it on your heads.” We said we were all right, that his theater was nice and cool. But he insisted: “No, no. I will take a set of books only if you pour this bottle of soda on your heads.” So we did it. We went over to the sink, poured the soda over our heads, then we gave the man a pen, made him fill out a check, gave him Prabhupāda’s books, and left. Maybe it was humiliating, but we thought it didn’t matter. Why? Because we had the mission of our spiritual master at heart. We poured soda on our heads not for that man’s satisfaction, but for Prabhupāda’s satisfaction. With that type of meditation a devotee can be very tolerant. If you are always thinking on your terms, then you will react.

It is not an easy thing to preach in this age, but it is so special an activity. Śrīla Prabhupāda in his final days took the greatest hope in the sankirtana reports. When the reports arrived, he would just sit and hear them. It was amazing, because he was so ill that he practically could not deal with any-
thing very much, but he had me read every single word and figure. There were a lot of details — how many big books, how many small books, from this temple and that temple, each distributor — and it sometimes took an hour and a half. He listened as if he were hearing the Tenth Canto. In other words, to Prabhupāda it was samādhi, because he got the order to distribute books from his spiritual master. Prabhupāda was seeing the fulfillment of his spiritual master’s words.

In the same way, when a sāṅkīrtana devotee goes out, he has to take shelter of his spiritual master, the Vaiṣṇavas, and Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda wrote in his prayer on the Jaladuta, “Make me dance, make me dance, make me dance.” The sāṅkīrtana devotee prays like that: “Make me speak, and make my hands and legs move, and make my brain work in such a way that people will take these books.” What can be more satisfying then going out at the beginning of the day with a van full of books and then seeing at the end of the day that the van is empty? You know the atmosphere has changed. The books are out there, going their own way.

Every one of the books has somebody’s name on it, because the books are Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa is within everyone’s heart. It’s as if people had beepers, and when the time comes for them to get a book, their hearts start beeping: “I need a book — I need a book — I need Kṛṣṇa — I am ready — I am ready.” And then we put out the books. Lord Caitanya is Himself the book, and He is right there on the receiving side, and He connects the person and the book.

It happens like that. It is not some mysterious phenomenon. It is understandable. Kṛṣṇa is directing the sāṅkīrtana movement. Prabhupāda said that. He said that as far as the people who join our movement are concerned, generally we don’t get the materially successful people, because they have no reason to join. He said we get the failures. He said to me first, “Don’t mind this statement. Don’t feel bad about what I am going to say. But generally we get the failures, because if someone is successful there is no reason for him to join.” Then someone asked him, “How does the movement go on if it is all made up of failures?” And Prabhupāda said, “This proves that Kṛṣṇa is in this movement.” We are successful against all odds, which means that Kṛṣṇa Himself is in charge. (From a lecture in Zurich on July 31, 1993)

“‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ has become a household phrase”

Now they are feeling the weight of this movement. Formerly they thought, “These people come and go,” but now they see we are staying. Now we have set fire. It will go on. It cannot
be stopped. You can bring big, big fire brigades, but the fire will act. The “brainwash” books are already there. Even if they stop it externally, internally it will go on. Our first-class campaign is book distribution. Go house to house. The real fighting is now. Kṛṣṇa will give you all protection. So chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and fight.  

By book distribution the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement becomes firmly rooted. In the letter just quoted, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that it was too late for anyone to stop our movement—too many books were already distributed—and that was in 1976. Simply by book distribution and chanting the holy names, Kṛṣṇa consciousness was spread around the world. Back in 1973 the BBT could state in its introduction to the first volumes of Caitanya-caritāmṛta: “‘Hare Kṛṣṇa’ has become a household phrase in cities, towns and villages throughout the world, fulfilling a prophecy made almost five hundred years ago by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.” Book distribution is preparing the field for many new dimensions in the growth of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. There may not be so many devotees, but because of book distribution people get an impression that there must be millions of us:

Devotee: Everyone knows about Kṛṣṇa now. In the United States they didn’t know before, but when they see this little picture on the book, they all know that it’s Kṛṣṇa. We hand them the book, and they say, “Oh, that’s Kṛṣṇa.” It’s so successful that everyone has learned about Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda: Oh, as soon as they see the picture, they understand it is Kṛṣṇa.

Devotee: Sometimes, Śrīla Prabhupāda, people travel from one airport to another. They’ll get a book in Chicago, and then they’ll come to Atlanta, and we’ll approach them to give them another book. They ask, “How many of you are there in the world?” Because everywhere they go, they are getting books. So they think that there must be millions of us.  

12.4 A change of consciousness

We are walking in this nice park, but at any time there can be revolution. It can all be fire. They do not know. They are dull. Although Kṛṣṇa gives a plain example—baby becomes boy—is there any example of a baby remaining permanently a baby? Therefore our only hope is to distribute books so that someday the people will understand that they are not
this body. And the day will come when these books will be appreciated as very valuable. 12

The change begins subtly

**Question:** How does book distribution change the world? Where are the results?

**Harikeśa Swami:** Relative to the number of people in the world we haven’t distributed that many books. But we have distributed quite a lot of books, and there are quite a few results. Even in a demonic place like Germany (where we have distributed a lot of books) people are gradually changing. We go out and do programs, and we find that people are receptive to all our concepts. People formerly wouldn’t accept reincarnation, vegetarianism, and karma. All these basic sub-religious principles people accept without difficulty nowadays. We see that trend in America especially. So there are places just crying for preaching, and we simply have to go there and do the programs. The people there are prime candidates for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Just go there and preach, and you’ll find all the fruits of book distribution. People have been reading the books, and they’ve begun to like Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Some big people in the entertainment industry have become devotees because they read Prabhupāda’s books. Even political figures and big men in all walks of life are reading Prabhupāda’s books. But they don’t come right out and say, “I read Prabhupāda’s books. I believe in this too.” You have to go out there and get them. And then they get inspired and come forward and support you in one way or another. So the books are already changing the world, but we just haven’t realized it because we are not meeting people day to day. Wherever we do that, we find the people are respectful nowadays, especially when we do programs.

**Question:** But how much can that change in attitude be attributed to us?

**Harikeśa Swami:** About 90% can be attributed to us, because there is nobody else giving anyone transcendental knowledge. Not to us—to Prabhupāda. His books have been behind the scenes preaching all these years. People may not like us because we have funny clothes and hair styles, but they like the books because the books are innocent. They just sit on the shelf and radiate their spiritual energy. And when people walk by, the books say, “Come here, read this.” So some day, somebody walks by, picks up the book, and realizes, “Hey, this is nice.”

**Question:** The doubt that we are not having any results is likely to cripple our enthusiasm.

**Harikeśa Swami:** What kind of results do we accept as results? If we think the results should be bigger, more opulent buildings and thousands of young
people running around the temple, we’ll be discouraged. I don’t think those are the right results. Rather, the result is that we are creating a massive change of consciousness in the people in general. A whole revolution in consciousness is going on. Of course, the demons are also getting stronger, and they control the media. But there’s a large consensus that “I’ve lived before I had this body,” a mentality that didn’t exist before. Therefore gradually people will stop acting sinfully, as we introduce them to the facts of karma. The meat industry is having a hard time because people are giving up eating meat.

**Question:** That could also be because so much research is being done on heart disease and cancer.

**Harikeśa Swami:** But that is also because of piety, because people knew that before. But now some doctors have decided, “We’re going to prove that meat-eating is unhealthy.” They got on a mission. It’s all working in a subtle way. The books out there are emanating spiritual energy and causing a gradual, subtle change in society. And someday we will find out more and more about the people who read our books. It’s not that everyone who reads a book is going to run to the temple. It doesn’t work like that.

**Question:** As you travel, what signs do you see of book distribution working?

**Harikeśa Swami:** It’s not like that. It’s subtle. You just have more and more people out there who agree with what you’re saying. And that is the effect of book distribution, until finally an enormous number of people have the same idea. Then you’ve got success. It’s a subtle thing. Gradually people just agree.

**Global changes**

The populace is suffering from agnosticism. The rascals are suffering, but they do not know why. One ambition I have is that I want to drive away agnosticism from the world. 13

As more and more people are realizing, radical changes of consciousness are needed if humanity’s imperiled course is to change. We know that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the main force for such a change, and in any field where there are pioneers looking for new courses for humanity, they are bound to become more aware of the revolutionary nature of Śrila Prabhupāda’s books. Most of the established scholars and professionals, however, are glued to outdated paradigms. But innovations are not established by converting the old establishment; it just dies off or is left in the dust of innovators. So today’s leaders aren’t necessarily the leaders of tomorrow.
As sociologists have observed, revolutionary changes often are initiated by outsiders, whose pioneering feats and formulas prove successful and change the world. For example, in the watch industry, Switzerland led the world until 1968; it covered 90% of the world market. But when some of its own technicians developed a type of digital watch with batteries, the leading Swiss watchmakers flatly refused to develop it and clung to watches with springs and hands and faces. Texas Instruments and the Japanese just looked at the digital watch, and the rest is history. The Swiss watch industry was defeated and within a few years had to release fifty thousand workers. Therefore in periods of paradigm shifts, everyone has a big chance.

So here is another dynamic dimension to book distribution. It has the potential to shape the next generation. Our books reach all types of people. The leading people are influential, and that makes them attractive to preach to, but who knows how long they will remain leaders if they can’t give up their outdated, materialistic paradigms? So with our books we approach not only them but also the masses, and among them are many ingenious and capable people. They may get their turn to lead in the future. Maybe they don’t know it yet, and we don’t know them. But if they read Prabhupāda’s books and become big successes, they bring into their fields what they gained from Prabhupāda’s books; it has become a part of their world-view. So through widespread book distribution a big universe of interested people is created, and if materially brilliant devotees emerge, they can influence the masses to read Prabhupāda’s books. (Based on a seminar by Śrīdharā Swami)

It starts with a small percentage

Gradually, we shall replace the literatures which are currently popular with our own style of transcendental literature. I have tried it: any page you open, that is wonderful reading matter. My ambition is to spread these books far and wide all over the world so that everyone shall read at least one of our books, and that will change his life. If only 1% become devotees, that will change the world. ¹⁴

*Bhagavad-gītā* 14.17p: Because people have no education in actual knowledge, they become irresponsible. To stop this irresponsibility, education for developing the mode of goodness of the people in general must be there. When they are actually educated in the mode of goodness, they will become sober, in full knowledge of things as they are. Then people will be happy and prosperous. Even if the majority of the people aren’t happy and
prosperous, if a certain percentage of the population develops Kṛṣṇa consciousness and becomes situated in the mode of goodness, then there is the possibility for peace and prosperity all over the world.

Śacīnandana Swami: The chanting and preaching of the Vaiṣṇavas has a great influence that will gradually be felt world-wide. When people get Prabhupāda’s books and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, then transcendental sound—chanted or written—enters the ether, surrounds the globe, and influences everything. We already feel it. People become vegetarians, or they renew their moral standards, or they accept recincarnation. Thus a good basis for social reform is built.

Of course, one may ask how these changes are related to book distribution, because many people advocate vegetarianism and moral principles. Yes, but it’s not by chance that such people step forward. The book distribution purifies the atmosphere, and thus people start propagating these principles. Although they aren’t connected with our movement, they aren’t outside Lord Caitanya’s plan. One result of book distribution is that they are moving according to Lord Caitanya’s plan by propagating principles that prepare the ground for our preaching. The devotees have other duties than preaching moral principles. That preaching can be done by others, but the propagation of the holy name and the distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, which will save the world, can be done only by Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. Therefore we always have to stress book distribution, because that service nobody can do for us, and we don’t expect it, either. That’s why we do it as our foremost duty and why Prabhupāda pushed it.

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: Sometimes we tend to view everyone outside of ISKCON as fools, rascals, and two-legged animals. But most devotees are still out there, and we should pray and hope they join us. It is perhaps not so much that they aren’t ready to join, as that we aren’t well enough prepared to reach them. Of course, we can mention so many disqualifications of the karnis, but a self-critical attitude is healthy and not completely unjustified. Therefore we have to go out to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books to reach those people, because one point is clear: we have not distributed enough books.

It takes spiritual strength

Navīna-nirada Dāsa: One famous German terrorist said, “If you actually understand how much the materialistic society stinks, then you have only two ways to go: you either become a terrorist or a monk.” For a lack of
spiritual knowledge, he became a terrorist. But what’s the use of fighting demons with their own demonic weapons? A much more powerful weapon is required, which works on a higher level. That’s spiritual sound vibration. The demons know that everything is started subtly by sound vibration, and they’ve firmly established their sound vibration in every home in the form of TV, radio, video, and CD. Similarly, we have to establish our sets in each and every home—not TV sets but sets of books. When our set distribution is as widespread as their TV networks it will create a completely new society. In the Ninth Canto, Prabhupāda writes that Lord Rāma’s soldiers recruited in the jungle did not have proper equipment with which to fight the soldiers of Rāvaṇa, for Rāvaṇa’s soldiers were equipped with weapons of modern warfare, whereas the monkeys could only throw stones, mountain peaks, and trees. Only Lord Rāma and Laksmana shot some arrows. There are two kinds of strength—daiva and puruṣākāra. Daiva refers to the strength achieved from transcendence, and puruṣākāra refers to the strength organized by one’s own intelligence and power. Transcendental power is always superior to the power of the materialist. Depending on the mercy of the Supreme Lord, we must fight our enemies even though we may not be equipped with all the facilities of modern technology.

The example of the CIS

Niraṇjana Swami: Regarding global changes in the near future, who are we to speculate about Lord Caitanya’s plan? In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.9.16), Bhīṣma says, “No one can know the plan of the Lord. Even though great philosophers inquire exhaustively, they are bewildered.” Śrīla Prabhupāda comments, “Since time immemorial no one, including such demigods as Śiva and Brahmā, could ascertain the real plan of the Lord. So what can we understand about it?” Still, authorized sources inform us that the Supreme Lord has a great plan to save the fallen souls: kirāta-hūṇāṇḍhra-pulinda pulkaśā—“Śumbhā, Yavana, members of the Khasa races and even others addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, for He is the supreme power” (SB 2.4.18). The purport to that verse is still being written. In the CIS Śrīla Prabhupāda is expanding Lord Kṛṣṇa’s glories to every town and village. His books are changing people’s hearts, kindling new hope, and breaking the barriers that stood here for so long. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s potency to transform people’s lives is overwhelming, and often I find my bodily movements suspended while I’m watching the transcendental līlā unfold around me. Prabhupāda and his books are igniting a spiritual revolution here. The people have known revolutions before, but this one is of a much different nature. It is, as Nārada Muni said,
a revolution in the impious lives of this misdirected civilization, and Śrīla Prabhupāda is its commander in chief. He leads the battles, armed with the sword of transcendental knowledge, and releases one by one those who have been held captive birth after birth. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura predicted that this revolution would start from Russia and Prussia. For those who would doubt these claims, remember what Gopinātha Ācārya told the disciples of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya—he said that the statements of the authorized ācāryas are themselves real proof. Thus we have presented their statements as evidence. But for those who want more, then consider the following letter written by a seventeen-year-old boy from Byelorussia:

Dear BBT Publishers,

I was told that you stopped printing the books that give the people an understanding of another, invisible world, an understanding we need so much in this world of relativity. I am living in a village. My elder brother has a kind of mental disease. I have also a mother, one younger brother, and a younger sister. My mother is ill, and she is working like anything to feed her children. I am working as a locksmith, and I have no way to buy your books or to have a teacher or master in this science. I can hardly leave my village. Actually nobody needs books on the culture and art of India. Who needs their culture? But the books you have been printing instruct the people about a bona fide path, better than the way it is done by other religions. Recently, I tried to order these books on Vedic science, and I came to know that they are not in print anymore. I cannot borrow books like Bhagavad-gītā and The Science of Self-Realization and copy them. I don’t have enough time and strength for that. I don’t have a phenomenal memory either, so I can’t learn them by heart. So, dear publishers, I am appealing to you, I beg you. The spiritual condition of our country is very low. Please don’t stop printing such books, because they give light to the people, and most people will agree with that.

In another letter a Siberian woman writes:

I live in a remote part of the country, but God didn’t forget this place, because your books were distributed here. I’ve read Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and it was like a shock for me. I was overwhelmed with joy, knowledge, and spiritual satisfaction, and it was wonderful. But very soon I realized that people didn’t understand me. And now I’m practically alone. I’ve bought all the books. In my opinion, among all these books Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the best. I’ve started to follow the regulative principles, and everybody is wondering how it is possible not to eat sausage and drink alcohol. I’m sadly smiling at this instead of giving them an answer. Please send me the address
of at least one person—I mean the master of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Thank you for giving out the most confidential knowledge of God and His love.

**Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa:** From practical experience one becomes convinced that people are changing. In every town and village—from Siberia to Vladivostok—there are devotees. Kṛṣṇa is nondifferent from His books, and if the books are distributed, Kṛṣṇa will be everywhere. Wherever Kṛṣṇa is, there is prosperity and victory. Many people have a good attitude towards us. They have seen us and heard about us. The most interesting thing is that in every place, even the smallest place, there is some devotee, and he is looking for others. For example, I met one young man who told me, “I’ve already chanted for one year—what else can I do?” Maybe not everyone is determined to give up everything and move into a temple, but there are many such devotees, just because the books are out there in the society. Prabhupāda is preaching everywhere.

**Revolution in the land of dharma**

What is the difference if a bulldog thinks, “I am a bulldog,” and a man thinks, “I am American,” or “I am brahmana”? What is the difference? The real thing is knowledge. So don’t keep this knowledge locked up in India’s books. But spread it. My only request is the leaders of India should now come forward and join this movement and take advantage of doing good to the whole world. 15

**Gopāla Krishna Goswami:** “The secret of success is unknown to people in general, and therefore Śrīla Vyāsadeva, being compassionate toward the poor souls in the material world, especially in this age of Kali, has given us the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. . . If we do not care about Bhagavad-gitā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, we do not know what the next body will be. But if one adheres to these two literatures—Bhagavad-gitā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—one is sure to obtain the association of Kṛṣṇa in the next life. Therefore, distribution of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam all over the world is a great welfare activity for theologians, philosophers, transcendentalists and yogīs as well as for people in general.” (SB 10.12.7–11 p)

Everybody knows how important book distribution is, in terms of pleasing Prabhupāda and the other Vaishnava ācāryas. Śrīla Prabhupāda once said, “Our business is simply book distribution.” This means that book distribution is the most important preaching activity of ISKCON, and Śrīla
Prabhupāda has emphasized this fact again and again. Countries in North America and Europe churned up a massive book distribution spirit in the early 1970s. Ironically, in India, the land of dharma, there was no mass distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books until 1977. The first large-scale distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books was in February 1977, at the Kumbha-mela in Allahabad.

From 1972 to 1975, most of the BBT books in India were imported. Book distribution was largely confined to giving out English books to life members.

In 1975, BBT India printed its first book, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, First Canto, Part One. In 1976, Gargamuni came to India with twenty devotees and a fleet of six Mercedes buses. They traveled all over India selling Bhāgavatam sets and other books to libraries. At this time there were no hard-cover books in Hindi, Gujarati, or Marathi. Even the small books were not distributed on a large scale.

It was at this time that most of Prabhupāda’s books were translated into Hindi and the other regional languages of India. Śrīla Prabhupāda attached great importance to this service, and every time I would go to see him, he would ask me, “Where is book? Where is book?”

In 1976 we inserted a full-page advertisement in The Illustrated Weekly of India, at that time the most influential, widely read weekly magazine in India. The advertisement was meant to promote sales of Bhagavad-gitā through mail order, and it had a catchy heading. Through this campaign we sold about one thousand Bhagavad-gitās. But the books were sold at double the price of street distribution so that the cost of the advertisement could be recovered.

Also in 1976, we came out with a Diwali gift scheme. In India during the Diwali festival, businessmen give gifts to their important clients and even to their employees. Our scheme promoted giving the Gitā as a Diwali gift. The Gitās were even gift-wrapped.

At the Kumbha-mela in 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to distribute as many books as possible. Accordingly, I had printed 100,000 copies of Kṛṣṇa, the Reservoir of Pleasure, and we distributed 80,000 of these books. The books were priced at Rs.1/- each. We were distributing about 12,000 books every day, a phenomenon unheard of in India at that time. Later, when I met Śrīla Prabhupāda in Bhubaneswar in March, 1977, he told me that the scope for book distribution in India was very big. He was extremely pleased that devotees had distributed 80,000 books in less than a week.

Inspired by the grand success at the Kumbha-mela, several devotees started distributing small books in Hindi. The Bombay temple had a small
group of traveling devotees distributing books all over Maharashtra. Several devotees also began distributing books from book tables.

Later we got many books translated into Hindi and Gujarati. After that, book distribution scores picked up everywhere. At that time (and even today) book distribution was done mainly along the following lines:

1. Book tables: Devotees would load books into a van and go to busy places in the city—railway stations and bus terminals—and park the van. They would then set up an attractive display of books and paraphernalia—incense, laminations, beads, and other items. They’d use a loudspeaker or megaphone and make announcements or play kirtanas to attract crowds.

2. Book bags: Individual devotees would carry a big load of books in their shoulder bags, from house to house and shop to shop, and sell them.

3. Traveling parties: Bombay first purchased a few buses, which were modified so that the devotees could cook prasādam, store books, and take rest inside them, and sell books from the rear of the bus. The buses even had Deities at the back. These mobile temples traveled all over the country, and the devotees performed kirtanas and āratis, held lectures, and set up book tables. Soon Ahmedabad also purchased a few buses and started distributing books along the same lines. Now many temples are successfully sending out devotees in these buses and distributing large numbers of books.

Unfortunately, in India, where the per capita income is so low, street distribution has not been so profitable. Books have to be subsidized to increase sales. People tend to buy paraphernalia—incense, laminations, music cassettes, T-shirts, and other things. The sale of those items helps subsidize the book distribution. In Bombay, for example, the book stall in the temple courtyard makes a huge profit from the sale of paraphernalia. But the profit is used to subsidize the sale of books.

There is also stiff competition from other publishers, such as Gita Press in Gorakhpur. The Gita Press books are heavily subsidized and priced very low. Although the quality of their printing and paper is low, many people go in for their books because of their low prices.

Unlike in the West and Russia, where book distribution is a major source of income for the temples, Indian temples depend more on memberships and straight donations. This is perhaps one reason why book distribution is not as prevalent in India as it is in Russia or Europe.

India started participating in the international book distribution marathons in 1982 or 1983. For two years Bombay won the marathon in India. After that, an intense competitive spirit developed, with temples like Māyāpur and Bombay trying to outdo one another.
In the big temples like Bombay, for instance, virtually all other activities come to a halt during the Christmas marathons. We now call them the Gītā-jayantī marathons, because Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke the Bhagavad-gītā in December. In Bombay even membership programs are halted during the marathon period. Only a team of pūjārīs stay in the temple, while every devotee is out in the streets trying to fulfill a big quota.

In 1990, Bombay came out with a unique distribution program called the Lakṣa Gītā Pracara Śāṅkālpa. The devotees promised Prabhupāda that they would distribute 100,000 Gītās as part of the marathon.

This was done by straight book distribution on the streets, by traveling śaṅkīrtana parties, and, most importantly, by sponsorship programs.

Sponsorship of Gītās meant that a wealthy individual would buy a few hundred Gītās or pay a part of its price and distribute all of them free or at a discount. Sponsorships were of the following types:

1. 100% sponsorship: A person paid the total price of the Gītā and the books would be distributed on his behalf to schools, colleges, and the needy. No lakṣmī would be recovered from the person actually getting the book, because the books were already paid for.

2. Subsidized distribution: A person paid part of the cost of the Gītā. The rest of the cost would be recovered from the person buying the book.

3. Employer to employee distribution: Industrialists and employers were approached to distribute Gītās to all their employees. Normally, half the price of the Gītā is borne by the employer, while the employee agrees to pay the other half. The employer also advances the employees’ half and deducts it on a monthly basis from his salary.

A massive campaign was launched to procure sponsorships for the Gītās. Bombay’s Bhīṣma (computer) department exploded with a gigantic mail-out campaign, wooing all its life members, donors, and patrons. Devotees were given quotas for getting sponsorships and would personally contact all their congregational members and friends to enlist their support for a sponsorship.

Bombay’s initiative and success caused Delhi and other temples to follow in its footsteps from 1991 on. Now most other temples in India have started similar programs.

India is the land of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma. Everybody has heard of Kṛṣṇa, and many people have heard of Lord Caitanya. Most people believe in the existence of the soul and respect the Vedic literature. In spite of all this, very few people understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They blindly perform demigod worship out of sentiment or else become staunch māyāvādis. Book distribution is the only hope for these people because Śrīla Prabhupāda’s association alone will change their hearts.
India faces tremendous problems materially also. The list is endless: terrorism, riots, floods, drought, communal carnage . . . Recently there was even a proposal to open five hundred mini-slaughterhouses all over Bombay so that more cows could be killed. All these problems can be solved only by more book distribution and harināma.

The future of book distribution lies in making Indian devotees more aware of the importance of this transcendental activity. All the temples in India have realized that the sponsorship program has a great potential for increasing book distribution. We are also planning to promote Prabhupāda’s books as a gift item. We have recently printed two thousand sets of the English Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which match the quality of the Western printing. Ten Cantos of the Hindi Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam have been translated and printed. Some cantos of the Bengali, Oriya, and Gujarati editions have also been printed. Caitanya-caritāmṛta has also been translated and printed in Gujarati. All the temples are increasing their scores. Māyāpur topped this year’s list of temples that increased their scores. We are also coming out with a newsletter called Bṛhad Mṛdaṅga, to infuse competition and encourage and inspire all the Indian temples. The feedback we have received so far is encouraging. Bombay, which at one time had the maximum number of devotees doing street distribution, is now concentrating more on sponsorships. The future seems quite bright. Book distribution will soon establish the supremacy of Lord Kṛṣṇa and revolutionize the land of dharma.

The mass of people can become enlightened from within

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.46p: A pure devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always thinking of how fallen, conditioned souls can be delivered. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, influenced by the merciful devotees’ attempt to deliver fallen souls, enlightens the people in general from within by His causeless mercy.

Harināmānanda Dāsa: As devotees we should simply try to become determined to reach the highest perfection in life. That means to be 100% occupied in devotional service. If we aren’t yet occupied in devotional service, we should now make a complete commitment. And we should pray for the mercy of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa that we never fall down. Then, in no time, Kṛṣṇa will be so satisfied by the endeavor of the devotees that millions and millions of conditioned souls will receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Kṛṣṇa appears in the form of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam to start a revolution in the godless Kali-yuga civilization. He will simply kill the demonic mentality of all the contaminated, materialistic people. Now in Kali-yuga, so
much propaganda is being spread—everything except the knowledge how to go back to Godhead. Materialistic propaganda to live a sinful life is spread everywhere, and they tell you that when you become frustrated and disappointed, when things don’t go the way you like, then you should drink alcohol and without restriction surrender to the sex drive. People become bound up more and more in the materialistic conception of life, and madness increases in the forms of useless wars and pollution of the food, air, and water. There’s no end to such problems nowadays, and that’s why we see many people becoming dissatisfied with simply being encouraged by the leaders to produce and consume. People see that their so-called teachers and leaders cannot give them any real shelter or solution, and they are becoming more doubtful about the whole materialistic show. For people who are beginning to wake up, Śrila Prabhupāda’s books are especially relevant. They can see that there must be something higher in life than simply chasing around like animals. One might think that it is very difficult to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in a society where people are so possessed by the ghost of sense gratification, but the devotees, especially the book distributors, must understand that this is actually a good time to distribute books. We should not be discouraged or think that people will not read the books. They will become fed up with this society, especially when their suffering increases. Then we must face the question: How many people did we reach with our books? How many actually got them? Or will they say, “Nobody ever came to me with these books. No one told me!” Actually, this is the worst criticism for a book distributor, and that’s why we don’t want to waste one day of distribution, because that means so many hundreds of people missed. There are so many people on this planet, so we still have mountains of books to distribute.

Cakṣu Dāsa: Kali-yuga is like wintertime, when everything is frozen. We see the workers throwing salt on the frozen streets. Similarly, we have to throw salt to melt the cold hearts of the materialists. The salt we throw is Prabhupāda’s books. Therefore nobody should think his endeavor is unimportant, because every book is melting a heart somewhere. Thus the society becomes saturated. Our motivation has to be to throw a lot of salt, and then we will see the society changed.

Trai Dāsa: We have to preach more about the books, not just ask for donations. People want solutions to their problems, and we can boldly declare we have solutions. The more we realize that, the more convinced we will be to give people books; and the more convinced we are, the more people will
ask us, “Where is that book that I heard about from my friends? It helped them solve their problems. Let me also have one.”

Unifying the world under Kṛṣṇa’s banner

When people are eager for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is our duty to go and enlighten them. Lord Caitanya wanted this mission spread all over the globe. Now you are kindly helping to fulfill His transcendental desire. I am very anxious to see this movement have centers in all the important cities of all the seven continents. That will serve the purpose of unifying the entire world under the banner of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement within a very short time.¹⁶

The entire human society is losing its faith in God, so much so that some of them are declaring God is dead, and some of them in frustration are manufacturing -isms under different names. This state of affairs in the world is not very satisfactory, at least for the advanced and civilized human society. It is essential therefore that scientific God consciousness, which we are preaching under the name of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, should be broadcast very widely.¹⁷

Indranilamani Devi Dāsī: Śrīla Prabhupāda said that if we distribute books we can change the world. How that will be done in detail, we don’t know, but if a war can be prevented, it is because of the devotees chanting, preaching, and distributing books. There may be indirect causes, but the ultimate, direct cause is preaching. Preaching creates auspiciousness. When we distribute many books, we give everyone opportunities to make spiritual advancement. Lord Caitanya predicted that His name would spread to every town and village. We understand that by our following Prabhupāda’s order, Kṛṣṇa will use us and empower us to do extraordinary things. Twenty-five years ago no devotee conceived of distributing even one big book. Now in Europe individual devotees distribute a hundred and more big books a day. Once Kṛṣṇa empowers His devotees, things that seem impossible can happen. Prabhupāda’s instructions culminated in a plan to make the whole world Kṛṣṇa conscious. If together we faithfully carry out his instructions, it will be like taking a direct flight of empowerment. On the way there will be storms of confrontation and opposition, but that will unite and strengthen us.
12.5 Appreciating what we are part of

**Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami:** Śrīla Prabhupāda said we have done only 1% of our work. It is all in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Now we have to demonstrate it. ISKCON is like the appearance of the Varāha incarnation who sprang from Brahmā’s nostril in a small size and suddenly grew to half the size of the universe. Brahman means bigger than the biggest and still becoming bigger. (From *ISKCON in the 1970s*, p. 30)

**Kavicandra Swami:** Those of a demoniac nature don’t want to hear good advice. But that is just a small minority. The majority belongs to those who are innocent in one sense. They follow whoever is in charge, and they don’t mind accepting good advice. We can see it practically. People are happy to get the Bhagavad-gītā and an opportunity to associate with devotees. There are many such people in the world, but they are just lost in the Kali-yuga, which is an ocean of faults. But like a fisherman, Lord Caitanya will pull them out of that ocean with His prema-mahā-jala, the net of love of Godhead. In India you can see how they use these big nets, and they are always full of fish. The fish just swim in, not realizing anything, and then the fisherman pulls the net out. Similarly Lord Caitanya has thrown his net all around the planet in the form of the ISKCON movement, and the books being distributed. People are swimming in the ocean like bewildered, ignorant fish, desperately looking for some sense gratification. And while they’re wandering around like that, they just get caught up by Lord Caitanya’s net, although they don’t realize it. Lord Caitanya, who is supremely merciful, has made this great arrangement to rescue everyone and let him read the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which is the topmost literature, even among spiritual literatures. It is the spotless Purāṇa.

**Rohiniṣuta Dāsa:** Once I sold books to a lady who analyzes the character of a person just by seeing his signature. I didn’t know that, but later I met her again, and she was completely moved. She made me open a Bhagavad-gītā and pointed to Prabhupāda’s signature (in the German books his signature appears after the Foreword). She said, “I’ve never seen such a signature. The man who signs like this is so powerful that he can influence the whole world.” So even common people are starting to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda’s unique greatness.

**Jayapatāka Swami:** In the Caitanya-maṅgala, by Locana Dāsa Ṭhākura, it is explained that Nārada Muni visited Goloka Vṛndāvana and met Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Nārada found Lord Caitanya being served on one side
by Śrīmati Rādhārāṇī and Her associates and on the other side by Rukmini and her Dvārakā female companions. When Lord Caitanya learned of Nārada’s anxiety for the conditioned souls in the universe of the four-headed Brahmā, the Lord called all His female companions around and declared that He was going to descend into the material world and personally flood it with love of God. Even the dogs and other animals would get the mercy, what to speak of human beings. Lord Caitanya mentioned that He would personally preach and distribute love of God, but even those places where He would not personally preach would also be inundated, because He would send His senāpati-bhakta (“commanding general devotee”) to preach His sankirtana movement in remote places of the world, inundate them with love of Godhead, and deliver the remaining sinful persons.

Doesn’t Śrīla Prabhupāda fit the description of the senāpati-bhakta referred to by Lord Caitanya? This description gives us a deeper appreciation for the unique position that Śrīla Prabhupāda holds in our disciplic succession. His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda was not a coincidence but was part of the great plan of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu to flood the world with love of God by the transcendental chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda visited all the remote places of the world and went to the fallen souls of those places to deliver them by giving them the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, so what to speak of his books. Prabhupāda is specifically empowered by Lord Caitanya to lead the modern world back to Godhead.

Gīta-govinda Dāsī: Book distribution purifies the distributors, the people, and the whole world. It is by the books that the darkness of Kali-yuga can be dissipated. People are always looking for happiness, but they are just marching toward hell, completely bound by the miseries of material life. It seems that they are enjoying life from the material point of view, but actually they are drowning in an ocean of the darkest ignorance. Therefore we distribute books. Even though I don’t have compassion like a great soul, I want to take part in a great soul’s mission.

Hṛdayānanda Dāsa Goswami: A revolution can take place through the distribution of books because books give information. We don’t want to make a violent revolution but a revolution of values, so that people again know what is important and what is not important. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books contain the best information, and we act on that basis as a movement. Devotees are doing so many things—festivals, prasādam distribution, preaching programs, Deity worship—but book distribution is just like the engine making the vehicle go. By our distributing Prabhupāda’s books, countries are being saved. We can see how the world would be in a much worse situation if it
weren’t for our *sankirtana* parties. Prabhupāda’s books are meant to make a revolution, but above all the books are there for the devotees to purify their own existence. If a devotee is not personally advancing he will always need external signs to keep his faith, but actually he should be fully satisfied with his own advancement, then he will go out to preach with a spirit of giving. A devotee has to conduct a revolution in his heart, then naturally he will want to help others making this transformation within their hearts. Therefore, book distribution is beneficial for everyone. It is Kṛṣṇa’s plan that Prabhupāda revealed to us, to spread the mercy of the Lord and His pure devotee through books. Book distributors must know how much they are pleasing Prabhupāda, and that should be their pleasure.

**Dhanurdhara Swami:** Sometimes devotees question where all the results of our book distribution are. But Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed us not to be concerned with mundane calculations. He told us, “I follow my Guru Mahārāja blindly. I do not know the result.” But then later he admitted, “Actually, I have been surprised beyond my expectations.” So we cannot predict Kṛṣṇa’s plan or arrangement. We must simply execute his order. Ours is not to wonder why; ours is just to do or die. The propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is directly under Kṛṣṇa’s control. It is Kṛṣṇa who makes the arrangements to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We can simply be instruments in His service. Book distribution is not under our control. It is being orchestrated by Kṛṣṇa. It is inconceivable and inestimable. Therefore, if we never give up distributing books, this will be most pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Kṛṣṇa, and the entire *paramparā*.

**Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami:** The faith that Prabhupāda’s books will bring about a cultural revolution, starting with our cooperative endeavor to distribute his books, is not blind faith but is based on positive experience. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he was prepared to distribute books on blind faith in the order of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura, but we fortunately have much evidence that this process works. Many people come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness after reading one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. I recall the revolution which took place within me when I read *Easy Journey to Other Planets* in 1966. To acknowledge the power of Prabhupāda’s books is one thing, but it’s quite another to go to the front lines and distribute the books amid public apathy and hostility. That makes the book distributors very dear to Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Kṛṣṇa. They are Śrīla Prabhupāda’s daring soldiers. They get rejected dozens of times within an hour, and they look deeply inward for the strength to go on. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in a pur-
port (Bg. 11.55): “Why such risk? Because Kṛṣṇa’s devotees want to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and it is difficult. . . . Now, we can imagine how merciful Kṛṣṇa is to those engaged in His service, risking everything for Him. Therefore it is certain that such persons must reach the supreme planet after leaving the body.” The compassion required to preach door to door and distribute books is one of the main symptoms of a sādhu described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.21—kāruṇikāḥ. In his purport to that verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “He is not satisfied with his own liberation. He always thinks about others. He is the most compassionate personality towards all fallen souls.” Book distribution will never go out of style, although its form may change as civilization changes. For as long as there are sincere followers of Prabhupāda, there will be enthusiastic book distribution. And for as long as devotees distribute books, the peaceful cultural revolution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will grow and become the flood of good fortune predicted for Kali-yuga, a golden age of ten thousand years. Once, I asked Śrīla Prabhupāda whether or not this golden age would take place. I said, “Sometimes you say that only a few people will take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as Kṛṣṇa said: manusyāṇāṁ sahasresu. But this morning in your lecture you said that hundreds and then thousands and then millions of people will take to it. Which is it? Will only a few take or many?” Prabhupāda replied, “It depends on your preaching.” So it depends on us. And the book distributors act in this spirit and call on Kṛṣṇa’s mercy to descend on everyone.

“We can explain what God is”

Christianity is now declining . . . because they have no clear idea of God; people are not satisfied with them. But we can explain what God is, so people are appreciating more and more our movement. If you all strictly follow the principles and chant sixteen rounds, your spiritual strength will be ensured, and our movement will become increasingly prominent.  

The Christians have spread their teachings all over the world, and they have only one book. So we have got already forty big books published in English; therefore, if we distribute as you are distributing we cannot even imagine the result.  

Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa: In one Austrian village I met a lady who said, “Oh, I already have two or three of these books, and I like them very much.” So
I said, “Why don’t you take the whole set? Why have only two or three of them?” She took the set and said that I should also visit her uncle who lived nearby. He was an old man and had many shelves full of books. Therefore he said, “Well, if my niece bought the whole set, I will take just one or two books.” And he bought two books. The next day I was distributing in the neighboring village. A young man bought the set, and he told me, “I know the old man who bought the two books from you yesterday. Just this morning I visited him, and he told me about these books and asked me to send the book seller back to him if I happened to meet him.” Krishna is really far out. So I went back to the old man, who received me with open arms. “Oh! Come in. Come in.” I followed him into his office. On his desk was the Fifth Canto opened to the middle. He had read half of it during the night, he told me, and then he said, “These are the best books I’ve ever read. The best books! All this Christian junk is useless.” And that was the part of Austria which is super-Catholic! He said, “Your books are what is needed. As long as people are after sense gratification, the world will go to hell.” He used the words “sense gratification” from our books. So we simply have to distribute Sri Rupa Prabhupada’s books, and the people will wake up. By Lord Caitanya’s mercy, people aren’t as foolish as the demons would like them to be. By the Lord’s arrangement, suddenly many people all over the world will start to read Prabhupada’s books, and then just imagine what will happen.

**Book distributors are transcendental teachers and soldiers**

**Prabhavisnu Swami:** Lord Caitanya defined His mission in these words: “I order every man within this universe to accept the Krishna consciousness movement, and distribute it everywhere” (*Cc., Adi-lila 9.34*). Sri Rupa Prabhupada said that serving Krishna in Kali-yuga means serving the sankirtana movement. Now we are witnessing a world-wide explosion of Krishna consciousness. In fact, we are so fortunate that we are actively taking part in it. Traveling from country to country, one meets many wonderful devotees enthusiastically engaged in pushing forward the sankirtana movement. Although many services have to be done to spread the movement, Sri Rupa Prabhupada gave special stress to book distribution. It is the most effective means to enlighten the conditioned souls about Krishna, because the books are nondifferent from Krishna.

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idaṁ bhāgavataṁ nāma purāṇaṁ brahma-sammitam
uttama-sloka-caritam cakāra bhagavān rṣih
niḥśreyasāya lokasya dhanyam svasty-ayanaṁ mahat
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“The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the literary incarnation of God, and it is compiled by Śrīla Vyāsadeva, who is the incarnation of God. It is meant for the ultimate good of all people, and it is all-successful, all-blissful, and all perfect.” (SB 1.3.40)

If a conditioned soul receives a book, he takes Kṛṣṇa home with him, and thus his friends and relatives also get a chance to associate with the Lord through His divine instructions. In this way, even though the devotees are not personally present, the books themselves continue the preaching. I first came across Bhagavad-gitā As It Is in a friend’s apartment. He had never opened the book, but I read it from cover to cover and became convinced to join ISKCON. Śrīla Prabhupāda often quoted the verse spoken by Lord Caitanya to the brāhmaṇa Kurma to emphasize the importance of preaching and to encourage everyone to take part in preaching activities:

\[ \text{yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa} \]
\[ \text{āmāra ājñāya guru haṅā tāra’ ei deśa} \]

“Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in Bhagavad-gitā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. In this way become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in the land” (Cc., Madhya-līlā 7.128). What better way to follow this instruction than to convince people to take the Bhagavad-gitā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam?

In Hyderabad in 1976, while I was a book distributor in the BBT Library Party, Śrīla Prabhupāda was speaking to me, and he cited the same verse as follows, “Yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa. Bas. You become a guru. Actually, you are doing the guru’s work: ‘Here is a message from Kṛṣṇa. Please take it.’ Simple. Yāre dekha—whomever you meet. Tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa—either you speak personally or give him a book.” So the point is that the book distributor is doing the guru’s work. This means not only that he is representing his spiritual master and all the previous ācāryas, but it also means that he is acting as guru by giving Kṛṣṇa to others. That is, after all, the secret of the paramparā—to transmit to others what one has heard from his spiritual master in its pure, unadulterated form, and thus the same transcendental potency remains. Distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books is clearly the most effective means of doing this.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also told me once that the book distributors are like soldiers on the front line of a battle. Because such soldiers have to take the greatest risk, they are accorded the most credit and glorification. So book distribution is the most glorious service—to go out day after day and week after week and release thousands and millions of transcendental bombs. That is possible only for empowered devotees. So how do we become
empowered? We do that by developing individual purity and full faith in guru and Kṛṣṇa. The empowered book distributor is linked to the powerhouse of Kṛṣṇa by the *paramparā* system, and he gets their full blessings because he is continuing their work. The ācāryas have written about Kṛṣṇa to bless the world and uplift the fallen souls, and the book distributor is the via medium through which their instructions reach those fallen souls.

To be successful, the book distributor must give up all other desires and focus his intelligence, mind, and senses in the execution of his service. Thus he permits Kṛṣṇa and the ācāryas to act through him to convince others to take transcendental literature. In this way, by the dedication and determination of such sincere devotees, the Kṛṣṇa conscious revolution is rapidly gaining momentum.

This is particularly evident in the countries of the former Soviet Union, especially Russia. There, with great enthusiasm, perseverance, fearlessness, and faith, many *mahārāthis* are going out daily on *sankirtana* all over that vast country, like a team of highly trained commandos. They are expert in convincing the conditioned souls to surrender and accept books. Not only one book, but sets of ten or fifteen books; and not only one set, but often hundreds of sets at a time. As more books are translated, the sets get bigger, and still the distributors convince people to take them, because there is no limit to this transcendental activity. In this way, the country is being flooded with millions of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, and year by year thousands of interested people are starting to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and follow the regulative principles. Gradually an army of Vaiṣṇavas is manifesting. This is a particularly exciting stage in the world-wide development of the ISKCON movement. Russia itself is a dull, uninteresting place, where people are really suffering from the miseries of material life. Against this drab background, the liveliness of the devotees and their enthusiasm for book distribution strike a really sharp contrast. In this situation one can especially appreciate the words of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī:

\[ei kali-kāle āra nāhi kona dharma vaiṣṇava, vaiṣṇava-śāstra, ei kahe marma\]

“In this age of Kali, there are no genuine religious principles. There are only the Vaiṣṇava devotees, and the Vaiṣṇava devotional scriptures. This is the sum and substance of everything” (Cc., *Madhya-līlā* 9.362). So we must carry on this transcendental mission until the whole world is inundated with love of Kṛṣṇa. In Moscow a devotee asked Harikeśa Mahārāja what will happen when everyone in the world has a *Bhagavad-gītā*. He replied that we
should then convince everyone to take the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and then the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, and in this way, when everyone has all the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we will have a huge kirtana, and the whole planet will float right back to the spiritual sky. This is the mission given to us by Lord Caitanya—to transform the planet into a spiritual realm where everyone is ecstatically engaged in devotional service.

\[
\text{ataeva saba phala deha' yāre tāre}
\text{khāiyā ha-uk loka ajara amare}
\]

“Distribute this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. Let people eat these fruits, and ultimately become free from old age and death” (Cc., Ādi-līlā 9.39).

So let us work together to achieve this transcendental goal by unlimited distribution of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books, and let us especially offer our obeisances, encouragement, and praise to those transcendental soldiers and gurus—the ISKCON book distributors.

**Concluding words**

When I was alone in your New York, I was thinking, “Who will listen to me in this horrible, sinful place? All right, I shall stay a little longer. At least I can distribute a few of my books, that is something.” But Kṛṣṇa was all along preparing something I could not see, and He brought you to me, one by one, sincere American boys and girls, to be trained up for doing the work of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Now I can see that it is a miracle. Otherwise, your city of New York, one single old man, with only a few books to sell for barely getting eatables, how he can survive, what to speak of introducing a God conscious movement for saving humankind? That is Kṛṣṇa’s miracle.  

I may stay or go, but in my books I will live forever. If book distribution increases, I will be living for centuries.

This is a new historical renaissance. Historians will note this period, how the world was changed.
CONTRIBUTORS

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Dhanurdhara Swami: gurukula headmaster in Vṛndāvana

Gopāla Krishna Goswami: GBC member; BBT trustee

Harikeśa Swami: GBC member; BBT trustee; world monitor of book production and distribution

Hṛdayānanda Dāsa Goswami: GBC member

Indradyumna Swami: traveling preacher

Jayādvaita Swami: BBT trustee; editor of Back to Godhead

Jayapatāka Swami: GBC member

Kavicandra Swami: GBC member

Niraṅjana Swami: GBC member

Nitāi Canda Goswami: traveling preacher

Prabhaviṣṇu Swami: GBC member

Prahlādānanda Swami: GBC member

Rohinīsuta Dāsa: GBC member; distributing books since 1974; world champion in 1976; sankirtana leader in Switzerland from 1980 to 1987

Śacīnandana Swami: traveling preacher

Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami: traveling preacher; leader of the BBT library party in America in the mid-1970s

Śivarāma Swami: GBC member

Tamāl Krishna Goswami: GBC member; leader of the Rādhā-Dāmodara traveling sankirtana party in the 1970s
(Other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda)

**Amita Dāsa:** in charge of the BBL mail order division, U.K.

**Citraka Dāsa:** distributing in Italy since 1974; congregational preaching

**Dayānidhi Dāsa:** distributing books in Italy since 1975; runs a preaching center in Genova

**Gaurī Devī Dāsī:** one of the leading *sāṅkīrtana mātājis* in America since 1972; passed away in Vṛndāvana in 1986

**Jadurāṇī Devī Dāsī:** BBT artist; trains book distributors

**Jaya Gurudeva Dāsa:** world champion in 1977; number-one distributor in Switzerland from 1977–1979; number one in Austria from 1980–1985; now translating Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books into Czech

**Kuṇḍalī Dāsa:** working on a translation of the *Ṣaṭ Sandarbhās*

**Manidhāra Dāsa:** distributing books in Germany and Sweden since 1972; trains *sāṅkīrtana* devotees; runs a center and restaurant in Stockholm

**Nirantara Dāsa:** editor of the North American *Sāṅkīrtana Newsletter*


**Śaṅkara-paṇḍita Dāsa:** distributing books in America since 1974

**Svavāsa Dāsa:** BBT trustee; temple president in Los Angeles for many years

**Trai Dāsa:** distributing books since 1971; in charge of *sāṅkīrtana* in Italy from 1980–1986; runs a preaching center in Palermo

**Granddisciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda**

**Anirdeśya-vapu Dāsa:** distributing books in the C.I.S. since 1991; world champion in 1992

**Antaraṅga-śakti Dāsa:** distributing books in Germany since 1979; the *sāṅkīrtana* leader in Germany from 1988–1990
Bhāgavata-dharma Dāsa: distributing books in Germany since 1987; trains sankīrtana bhaktas in Germany

Bhaktavatsala Dāsa: distributing books in Germany since 1988; one of the sankīrtana leaders in Germany since 1990

Bṛhadbhānu Dāsa: distributing books in Germany since 1979; pioneering book distribution in Iceland since 1986

Cakṣu Dāsa: distributing books since 1985; sankīrtana leader in Austria since 1986

Gaurāṅga-premānanda Dāsa: distributing books since 1980; top distributor in Benelux

Gīta-govinda Dāsi: distributing books in Japan since 1982; one of the world’s leading mātāji book distributors

Guru-carana Dāsa: distributing books in Italy since 1982; president of the temple in Vicenza

Guru-śakti Dāsa: distributing books since 1977; one of the world’s top distributors from 1979–1983; president of the temple in Zurich

Haribolānanda Dāsa: pioneer of set distribution in Austria; passed away in 1988 (car crash)

Haridāsa Ṭhākura Dāsa: distributing books in Austria since 1986

Harināmānanda Dāsa: distributing books since 1982; world champion from 1983–1990; sankīrtana leader in Switzerland since 1986

Haripāda Dāsa: distributing books since 1983; top book distributor in Spain; trains sankīrtana devotees in Spain and Latin America

Indranilamani Devī Dāsi: distributing books since 1991; the number-one sankīrtana mātāji in the U.S.A. in 1991 and 1992

Jāhnava Devī Dāsi: distributing books in America since 1989; trains book distributors

Jiva Dāsa: distributing books since 1985 in Germany; number one in Germany from 1990–1992; maintains his family by book distribution
Kalpavāsini Devī Dāsa: distributing books in Germany since 1989; one of the world’s leading mātāji book distributors

Lilāvatāra Dāsa: distributing books since 1978; one of Italy’s leading book distributors; sankirtana leader at Villa Vṛndāvana

Navina-nīrada Dāsa: distributing books in Switzerland since 1985; number two in the world from 1986–1990; world champion in 1991

Nṛsinhadeva Dāsa: distributing books in Switzerland since 1982; maintains his family by book distribution

Premārṇava Dāsa: distributing books in Sweden since 1982; the world champion in 1982; temple president in Gotenburg for three years

Pūrṇa-tattva Dāsa: distributing books in Benelux since 1978; president of the temple in Antwerp

Purūravā Dāsa: distributing books in Finland since 1985

Śaiṛṣi Devī Dāsi: distributing books in Germany since 1987; number-one sankirtana mātāji in Germany in 1989 and 1990

Sannyāsa Dāsa: BBT manager in the C.I.S.

Sarvātmā Dāsa: distributing books in Brazil, Chile, and the U.S.A. since 1980; runs the Tallahassee preaching center

Tapas Dāsa: distributing books in Norway since 1982; a leading distributor in Scandinavia

Ujjvala-nīlamanī Dāsa: distributed books in Germany and Switzerland beginning in 1977; now involved in the Māyāpur project

Vijaya Dāsa: distributing books since December 1978; number one in North America since 1985

Viśvadeva Dāsa: distributing books since 1979; president of the temple in Heidelberg since 1985

Yadunandana Dāsa: distributing books in Spain since 1979; now regional secretary in Spain

Yaśodā-dulāla Dāsa: distributing books in Sweden since 1979
FOOTNOTES

Chapter One

1. January 20, 1972, to Maṇḍali-bhadra
2. December 28, 1971, to Yogeśvara
3. January 11, 1976, to Kirtirāja
5. August 3, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
7. April 18, 1970, to Bahulāśva
8. December 6, 1974, to Śrī Govinda
9. May 21, 1972, to Niraṇjana
10. Quotation 28 in Just As I Have Showed You (Māyāpur, 1986)
11. October 23, 1974, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
12. December 31, 1974, to Pañcadraśī
13. October 24, 1974, to Śrutadeva
14. May 25, 1974, from Brahmānanda to Rāmeśvara
15. June 21, 1976, Conversation
16. May 17, 1971, to Karandhara
17. July 12, 1969, to Jaya Gopāla
18. November 18, 1972, to Jayādvaita
19. November 23, 1976, to Balavanta
20. September 20, 1972, Lecture
21. July 30, 1975, to Jagadādhibhīrī and other ladies
22. August 21, 1975, to Rādhāballabha
23. May 8, 1974, to Govinda
24. January 5, 1976, to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja
25. May 9, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
27. May 4, 1976, to Puranājana
28. February 20, 1968, to Brahmānanda
29. March 5, 1971, to Jananīvāsa
30. September 30, 1972, to Bali Mardan
31. November 5, 1972, to Bhagavān
32. August 28, 1973, to Prahlādānanda
33. Quotation 19 in Just As I Have Showed You
34. December 26, 1971, to Cyavana
35. August 3, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
36. July 11, 1976, to Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa
37. December 19, 1974, to Vipini
38. November 7, 1974, to Śrīji
39. April 7, 1974, to Ajita
40. September 1, 1975, to Rāmeśvara and Co.
41. April 15, 1973, to the L.A. devotees
42. December 18, 1970, to Bhagavān
43. January 20, 1972, to Maṇḍali-bhadra
44. January 11, 1972, to Bhagavān
45. March 4, 1973, to Trai
46. November 14, 1975, to Rāmeśvara
47. December 17, 1971, to Jagadīśa
48. May 2, 1972, to Karandhara
49. January 5, 1973, to Jagadīśa
50. October 31, 1974, to Amogha

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Chapter Two

1. October 9, 1971, to Upendra
2. July 9, 1970, to Jagadīśa
3. Śrī Harināma Cintāmāni, by Śrīla Bhaktivanoda Thākura,
   trans. by Śrī Sarvabhāvāna Dāsa Adhikārī (Bhaktivedanta Books, Bombay)
5. March 2, 1975, Conversation
6. April 22, 1973, Lecture
7. January 18, 1974, Morning walk
8. August 26, 1975, to Jagannātha Sūta
9. October 1, 1974, to Haṁsadūta
10. May 19, 1976, to the Governing Body Commissioners
11. December 12, 1967, to Brahmānanda
12. November 27, 1971, to Lalit Kumār and Jāmbavatī
13. February 14, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
14. November 24, 1971, to Locana
15. November 22, 1971, to Hiranyagarbha
16. December 18, 1975, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
17. November 27, 1975, to Rāmeśvara
18. December 12, 1971, to Śivānanda
19. December 3, 1971, to Dāmodara
20. November 23, 1972, to Kurūśreṣṭha
21. December 6, 1974, Lecture
22. October 31, 1974, to Hṛdayānanda Dāsa Goswami
23. April 17, 1970, to Jayapatāka
24. June 16, 1972, to Madhudvisa
25. June 13, 1972, to Bhārgava
26. November 5, 1972, to Śūdāma
27. February 21, 1972, to Bhaktadāsa
28. September 30, 1972, to Bali Mardan
29. June 26, 1975, Morning walk
30. May 17, 1977, Arrival speech
32. November 28, 1970, to Jagadīśa
33. May 4, 1976, to Purāñjana
34. August 21, 1972, Lecture
35. October 19, 1974, to Rūpānuga
36. Śrī Śikṣaśāṭaka, by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, with commentaries
   trans. by Śrī Sarvabhadra Dāsa Adhikārī (Harmonist Publications, Bombay)
37. December 7, 1973, Lecture
38. January 6, 1969, Lecture
39. June 9, 1974, to Nandulal
40. April 26, 1976, Morning walk
41. December 17, 1971, to Śrī Galim
42. July 14, 1976, Newspaper interview
43. November 18, 1972, to Jayādvaita
44. October 21, 1974, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
45. December 21, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
46. Śrīla Prabhupāda-liṅgāmṛta, Volume 6, by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami
47. September 27, 1968, to Devānanda

Chapter Three

1. March 26, 1976, Lecture
2. November 24, 1974, Lecture
3. February 18, 1969, Lecture
4. January 19, 1974, Conversation
5. January 9, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
6. August 24, 1971, Lecture
7. April 18, 1970, to Bahulāśva
10. February 15, 1971, Lecture
11. November 14, 1975, to Rāmeśvara
12. August 14, 1976, to Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha
13. October 15, 1974, to Subaladās
14. November 18, 1971, to Badrinārāyana
15. February 2, 1975, to Lokāmaṅgala
16. December 4, 1975, to Gargamuni
17. July 31, 1976, to Hṛdayānanda Mahārāja
18. May 9, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
19. November 27, 1975, to Rāmeśvara
20. April 7, 1974, to Ajita
Chapter Four

1. December 28, 1971, to Yogēśvara
2. November 13, 1970, to Tīrthapāda
3. March 4, 1973, to Trai
5. January 21, 1971, to Śrī Govinda
6. November 20, 1971, to Śrī Gaḷim
7. December 3, 1971, to Dāmodara
8. May 9, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
9. August 13, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
10. November 14, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
11. December 19, 1974, to Vipini
12. December 21, 1974, to Rāmeśvara and the L.A. devotees
13. January 16, 1975, to Tripurārī
14. September 26, 1975, to Kurūśreṣṭha
15. January 3, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
17. July 30, 1975, to Jagaddhāṭrī and other ladies
18. May 28, 1975, to Kirtirāja
19. December 31, 1972, to Bali Mardan
20. February 14, 1973, to Rūpānuga
22. October 12, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
23. August 7, 1973, to Madhudviṣa
24. June 25, 1974, to Jagadīśa
25. February 16, 1976, to Satadhanya
26. May 29, 1977, Conversation
27. June 4, 1976, to Śrīdhara
29. March 2, 1975, Conversation
30. September 30, 1979, to Bali Mardan
31. March 25, 1971, to Śukadeva
32. November 9, 1975, to Tripurārī
33. December 25, 1972, to Śrī Govinda
34. December 31, 1972, to Bali Mardan
35. March 2, 1975, Conversation
Footnotes

36. November 16, 1970, to Banśidhāri
37. September 30, 1972, to Bali Mardan
38. January 9, 1973, to Dāmodara
39. December 6, 1974, to Šri Govinda
40. May 2, 1972, to Bhakta Dāsa
41. March 2, 1975, Conversation
42. May 3, 1976, Morning walk
43. May 6 and June 5, 1973, Lecture
44. September 30, 1972, to Bali Mardan
45. January 9, 1973, to Dāmodara
46. December 6, 1974, to Šri Govinda
47. December 31, 1972, to Bali Mardan
48. December 25, 1972, to Šri Govinda
49. December 31, 1972, to Bali Mardan
50. January 6, 1975, to Ajita
51. January 1, 1975, to Rāmeśvara
52. January 16, 1975, to Trīpurāri
53. January 9, 1975, to Rūpānuga
54. January 17, 1975, to Rūpānuga
55. October 15, 1976, to Kīrtanānanda
56. July 11, 1976, to Caitya Guru
57. May 3, 1975, Conversation

Chapter Five

1. March 5, 1971, to Vāmanadeva
2. September 13, 1970, to Karandhara
3. December 18, 1970, to Bhagavān
4. January 10, 1971, to Dāmodara
5. April 11, 1971, to Jagadiśa
6. April 22, 1971, to John Milner
7. November 27, 1971, to Lalit Kumār and Jāmbavatī
ti
8. December 17, 1971, to Nityānanda
10. August 8, 1974, to Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami
11. May 28, 1975, to Kīrtirāja
12. June 6, 1976, to Amogha
13. March 2, 1975, Conversation
14. January 24, 1977, to Alex, Bob, and others
15. February 16, 1971, to Upendra
16. March 25, 1971, to Rśabhadeva
17. September 2, 1971, to Jagadiśa
18. January 9, 1973, to Dāmodara
19. January 9, 1973, to Dāmodara
20. April 27, 1970, to Rūpānuga
21. February 5, 1972, to Jagadiśa
22. February 16, 1973, to Sudāma
23. May 10, 1973, to Hṛdayānanda Goswami
25. December 28, 1974, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
26. June 12, 1976, to Lokanātha Swami
27. March 16, 1977, to Nityānanda
28. February 15, 1969, to Rayarāma
29. April 16, 1970, to Gurudāsa
30. November 27, 1975, to Rāmeśvara
31. November 27, 1971, to Kirtirāja
32. January 2, 1972, to Kirtirāja
33. February 28, 1972, to Kirtirāja
34. April 11, 1971, to Bhagavān
35. January 9, 1976, to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa
36. June 7, 1968, to Gargamuni
37. September 22, 1969, to Gargamuni
38. January 5, 1976, to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja
39. June 18, 1976, to Tejyas
40. January 9, 1973, to Dāmodara
41. March 2, 1975, Conversation

Chapter Six

1. January 9, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
2. May 8, 1974, to Govinda
3. February 3, 1975, to Gaurī
4. February 5, 1972, to Jagadiśa
5. Quotation 12 in Just As I Have Shown You
7. November 23, 1972, to Kuruśreṣṭha
9. November 21, 1975, to Nalinikānta
10. ISKCON in the 1970s, p. 322
11. October 9, 1971, to Upendra
12. December 18, 1970, to Bhagavān
13. January 11, 1976, to Kirtirāja
14. June 25, 1974, to Yaḍunandana
15. November 25, 1974, Lecture
16. November 13, 1975, to Gargamuni
17. January 5, 1976, to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja
18. May 5, 1976, to the Rādhā-Dāmodara party
19. February 5, 1975, Lecture
20. Quotation 3 in Just As I Have Shown You
21. January 10, 1971, to Dāmodara
22. January 12, 1971, to Vaikuṇṭhanātha
23. February 4, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
24. January 5, 1976, to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja
25. November 22, 1974, to Bahurūpa
26. February 14, 1973, to Rūpānuga
27. June 1, 1975, Lecture
28. October 3, 1976, Lecture
29. March 15, 1970, to Gurudāsa
30. May 8, 1970, to Satsvarūpa Mahārāja
31. December 28, 1976, to Kuruśreṣṭha
32. December 6, 1974, to Śrī Govinda
33. December 15, 1969, to Cidānanda
34. January 9, 1973, to Rāmeśvara

Chapter Seven

1. November 27, 1971, to Kirtirāja
Footnotes

2. July 31, 1976, to Hṛdayānanda Goswami
to Jyotiganeśvara
4. January 16, 1975, to Jagadiśa
5. January 5, 1973, to Jagadiśa
6. December 28, 1976, to Kuruśreṣṭha
7. Quotation 32 in Just As I Have Shown You
8. January 9, 1976, to Tusṭa Kṛṣṇa
9. September 27, 1973, to Karandhara
10. December 22, 1972, to Karandhara
11. January 9, 1973, to Dāmodara
13. April 7, 1973, to Śrī Govinda
14. May 8, 1974, to Śrī Govinda
15. September 26, 1975, to Kuruśreṣṭha
16. November 9, 1975, to Tripurārī
17. June 8, 1969, to Haṁsadūta
18. March 2, 1975, Conversation
19. December 6, 1974, to Śrī Govinda
20. September 30, 1972, to Bali Mardan
21. October 6, 1973, to Mukunda
22. September 26, 1975, to Kuruśreṣṭha
23. October 1, 1968, to Mukunda
24. February 20, 1969, to Mukunda
25. December 14, 1976, to Lokanātha
27. January 11, 1976, to Rūpānuga
28. July 1, 1970, to Tulsī
29. October 1, 1974, to Haṁsadūta
30. May 9, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
31. May 8, 1974, to Śrī Govinda
32. November 20, 1975, to Ghanaśyāma
33. January 18, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
34. November 30, 1970 (in Distribute Books . . ., p. 91)
35. January 10, 1971, to Dāmodara
36. July 16, 1969, to Brahmānanda
37. September 22, 1969, to Gargamuni
38. December 21, 1974, to Hṛdayānanda Goswami
39. July 29, 1979, to the BBT trustees
40. December 8, 1974, to Haṁsadūta
41. March 14, 1974, to all ISKCON centers
42. November 15, 1971, to Lalit Kumār
43. January 11, 1976, to Rūpānuga
44. August 13, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
45. March 20, 1970 to Brahmānanda
46. January 12, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
47. April 6, 1977, to Rādhāvallabha
48. July 26, 1975, to Dīnanātha
49. November 15, 1970, to Jayapatāka
50. August 13, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
51. January 3, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
52. April 22, 1971, to John Milner
53. July 13, 1971, to Śrī Govinda
54. January 13, 1977, Conversation
55. December 9, 1971, to Jayatīrtha
56. August 13, 1974, to Tamal Krishna Goswami
57. December 19, 1974, to Vipini

Chapter Eight

1. December 8, 1971, to Patita Uddharana
2. April 11, 1971, to Jagadiśa
3. January 4, 1972, to Vāmanadeva and Indirā
4. December 18, 1970, to Bhagavān
5. February 20, 1972, to Rudra and Rādhikā
6. October 28, 1976, to Harikesa
7. September 7, 1969, to Jagadiśa
8. June 5, 1974, to Nṛsinha Caitanya
9. October 12, 1972, to Harinsadūta
10. February 22, 1972, to Rūpānuga
11. June 16, 1972, to Tribhuvanātha
12. December 13, 1972, to Śukadeva
13. December 13, 1972, to Balavanta
14. February 14, 1973, to Rūpānuga
15. November 20, 1974, to Professor Judah
16. June 1, 1969, to Tamal Krishna
17. March 24, 1971, to Bhagavān
18. April 14, 1972, to Bhāvananda
19. January 9, 1976, to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa
20. April 6, 1976, to Kṛṣṇa Kānti
21. November 15, 1971, to Lalit Kumār
24. January 4, 1972, to Hanumān and Amogha
25. October 12, 1973, to Harinsadūta
26. February 16, 1973, to Sudāma
27. November 13, 1975, to Tamal Krishna Goswami
28. December 12, 1971, to Kirtānanda
29. February 14, 1973, to Rūpānuga
31. September 30, 1972, to Bali Mardan
32. November 2, 1972, to Bhūtātmā and Keśava
33. November 18, 1972, to Jagadiśa
34. August 15, 1973, to Jagadiśa
35. September 4, 1973, to Sudāma
37. December 11, 1973, to Makhanlal
38. October 29, 1967, to Kṛṣṇadevi
40. Quotation 20 in Just As I Have Shown You
41. February 17, 1969, to Brahmānanda
42. July 7, 1971, to Bhagavān
43. March 2, 1975, Conversation
44. February 6, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
45. November 28, 1970, to Jagadiśa
46. May 17, 1971, to Karandhāra
47. November 12, 1974, to Tripurārī
48. January 11, 1972, to Bhagavān
49. February 14, 1969, to Jayapatāka
50. November 14, 1975, to Rāmeśvara
Chapter Nine

1. December 21, 1974, to Rāmeśvara
3. December 6, 1974, to Śrī Govinda
4. April 20, 1973, to the L.A. devotees
5. May 4, 1976, to Purañjana
6. November 18, 1972, to Jagadīśa
7. November 17, 1971, to Śrīdāma
8. December 9, 1971, to Jayatīrtha
9. December 25, 1972, to Śrī Govinda
10. December 6, 1974, to Śrī Govinda
11. January 3, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
12. January 18, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
13. November 13, 1975, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
14. January 1, 1972, to Keśava
15. January 11, 1972, to Bhagavān
16. January 20, 1972, to Śrī Govinda
17. August 26, 1975, to Jagannātha Sūta
18. August 8, 1974, to Satvārūpa Dāsa Goswami
19. January 9, 1976, to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa
20. January 12, 1976, to Rāmeśvara

Chapter Ten

1. March 2, 1975, Lecture
2. July 23, 1973, to Kuruśreṣṭha
3. January 9, 1973, to Dāmodara
4. January 9, 1976, to Abhirāma
5. December 14, 1976, to Lokanātha
6. September 27, 1973, to Karandhara
7. January 11, 1976, to Kirtirāja
8. October 31, 1974, to Hṛdayānanda Goswami
10. August 3, 1973, to Rāmeśvara
11. May 3, 1970, to Lilāvati
12. June 16, 1972, to Satvārūpa Mahārāja
13. December 22, 1972, to Karandhara
14. April 7, 1973, to Govinda
15. September 30, 1972, to Bali Mardan
16. April 15, 1973, to the L.A. devotees
17. December 27, 1974, to Trivikrama Swami
18. November 22, 1971, to Hiranyagarbha

Chapter Eleven
1. January 19, 1974, Lecture
2. February 20, 1968, to Brahmānanda
3. January 5, 1974, Lecture
4. August 14, 1976, to the L.A. devotees
5. May 5, 1972, to Dānāvīr
6. March 13, 1974, Lecture
7. January 12, 1976, to Rāmeśvara
8. June 20, 1975, Arrival address

Chapter Twelve
1. December 21, 1974, to Hṛdayānanda Goswami
2. May 13, 1969, Conversation
4. June 11, 1976, Morning walk
5. January 21, 1977, Conversation
6. April 5, 1977, Conversation
7. December 20, 1976, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
8. March 2, 1975, Conversation
10. October 30, 1976, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
11. March 2, 1975, Conversation
12. ISKCON in the 1970s, p.136
13. Quotation 30 in Just As I Have Shown You
14. May 2, 1972, to Karandhara
16. January 12, 1971, to Vaikunṭhanātha
17. March 14, 1969, to Malcolm F. Miller
18. January 10, 1976, to Viśvakarma
19. December 18, 1975, to Tamāl Krishna Goswami
21. Quotation 22 in Just As I Have Shown You
22. Distribute Books . . ., p. 109