

Harināma Eva Kevalam



A Manual for Performing Public Harināma-saṅkīrtana

Compiled from the teachings of
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,
Founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness,
by Indradyumna Swami and Śrī Prahlāda dāsa

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Introduction by
Mukunda Goswami

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A.V. Simpson
ul Twarda 66/5
Warsaw 00-818
Poland
simpson@pamho.net

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Dedication

To Śrīla Prabhupāda, who fulfilled Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s prediction that His holy names would be chanted in every town and village of the world.

“I have tested it definitely that melodious vibration of *saṅkīrtana*, if they are performed by serious devotees, can attract people from the very spiritual platform, and it at once makes the spiritual background very smooth, when a spiritual instruction from the *Bhagavad-gītā* can be implemented very nicely. So my first concrete program is . . . to organize such a *saṅkīrtana* party.” [Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to Harikrishnadas Aggarwal, 3 March 1968]



Acknowledgements

We thank all the devotees who over the years worked on this manual and helped bring it to its present form. It was Lokanātha Mahārāja and Pañcaratna Prabhu who initially requested Indradyumna Mahārāja to write this manual as an offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda in his Centennial year, 1996. Mukunda Mahārāja offered great support and encouragement for the project and wrote an excellent introduction. Guṇagrāhi Mahārāja offered suggestions and corrections to the original draft. Bhakta Ken White was the first editor. The late Vilāsī Mātājī also reviewed the text and made many critical comments and suggestions, as did Nṛsimha Kavaca Prabhu. Sundara-nanda Gopāl Prabhu and Braja Sevakī Mātājī further refined the text with their editing skills. Kṛṣṇa Kṛpa Prabhu of the Bhaktivedanta Institute in Alachua added Sanskrit diacritics, as well as the recipes and play scripts in the appendices.

CONTENTS

Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	i
Introduction: “Our Best Foot Forward,” by Mukunda Goswami	1
Part One — The Absolute Necessity of Harināma-saṅkīrtana	2
The Dharma for the Age	2
The Importance of Harināma-saṅkīrtana in ISKCON	3
The Need to Revive Harināma-saṅkīrtana	4
Part Two — Organizing Harināma-saṅkīrtana	4
Official Permission	5
Flags	5
Mahā-mantra Banner	5
Pictures	5
Musical Instruments	6
Sound System	7
Dress	7
Children	7
Invitations and Leaflets	8
Themes for Harināma-saṅkīrtana	8
Time and Place	9
Dealing with Disturbing Elements	9
Part Three — Three Ways to Perform Harināma-saṅkīrtana	9
In Procession	9
Dancing in a Fixed Location	10
Sitting	10
Part Four — Harināma-saṅkīrtana Technique	11
Beginning Kīrtana	11
Emphasizing the Mahā-Mantra	11
Organization of the Kīrtana Party	11
Responsive Chanting	12
Kīrtana Tempo	12
Melodies	12
Dancing	13
Speaking	15
Drama	15
Prasādam Distribution	16
Book Distribution	17
Part Five — Purity Is the Force	18
“Our Technique Is Purity”	18
Pure and Impure Motivation	18
Cultivating Humility	19
“All the Credit Goes to My Guru Mahārāja”	20

Appendix One — Example of a Street Talk by Indradyumna Mahārāja	21
Appendix Two — Deities on Harināma-saṅkīrtana	22
Appendix Three — Drama Scripts	23
The Bird in the Cage	23
The Drowning Man	25
A Fish Out of Water	25
The Frog in the Well	30
The Scholar and the Boatman	31
The Wrong Bank Account	32
Appendix Four — Temple Kīrtana	34
Street Kīrtana Compared to Temple Kīrtana	34
“Sweet and Melodious”	34
Appropriate Prayers vs. Concocted Mantras	35
Singing “Haribol”	37
Singing “Jaya Rādhe”	37
Singing “Jaya Gurudeva”	38
Prayers in Temple Ārati Kīrtanas	38
Melodies	39
Instrumentation	39
“We Are Not Professional Musicians”	40

Introduction

Our Best Foot Forward

By Mukunda Goswami

This book, more than almost any other, should never, I repeat, never be put on the shelf and forgotten. It is in fact the *Bhagavad-gītā* of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. No one should attempt or even think of going out to perform *harināma-saṅkīrtana* without first reading and imbibing its principles. It is short and easy to understand.

More important, this book has been assembled and presented as an offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda by none other than the king of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, Indradyumna Swami, through his enthusiastic associate, Śrī Prahlāda Prabhu, who, at the request of Lokanātha Mahārāja and other senior Vaiṣṇavas, started to compile this work just before Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial. Indeed, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself has surely empowered Śrī Prahlāda to write this handbook.

It was one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's most ardent desires that his disciples organize a world *saṅkīrtana* party. He wrote many letters to this effect, and described how these parties should perform and the various embellishments that devotees could use on *saṅkīrtana*. These include drama, *prasādam*, speaking, book distribution, and follow-up—in other words, the making of devotees.

This work is a most excellent offering to Śrīla Prabhupāda, because it is a great legacy that Indradyumna Mahārāja and his associates have to bequeath upon Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission, even after great souls such as he depart from our material vision. Śrīla Prabhupāda often quoted *paṭhan pāṭhan yajan yājan dānaḥ pratigrahaḥ*. This means that a real *brāhmaṇa* is one who learns how to teach others and give to others what they know. It is a credit to Indradyumna Mahārāja that he has had the vision to pass on his knowledge to the ISKCON world in written form. He also plans to complete an instructional DVD on the same subject.

I urge all devotees in any service in any part of the world, whether you perform *harināma-saṅkīrtana* or not, to read this book and to help those who follow these principles to truly make *harināma-saṅkīrtana* “our best foot forward.”

— Part One —

The Absolute Necessity of Harināma-saṅkīrtana The Dharma for the Age

*nāma-saṅkīrtanaṁ yasya sarva-pāpa praṇāśanam
praṇāmo duḥkha-śamanas taṁ namāmi hariṁ param*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord, Hari, the congregational chanting of whose holy names destroys all sinful reactions, and the offering of obeisances unto whom relieves all material suffering.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 12.13.23)

This is the final verse of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the cream of the *Vedas*. This verse is therefore the *vedānta*, the culmination of all the *Vedas*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* ends by setting the scene for the appearance of the *yuga-avatāra*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and His inauguration of the *saṅkīrtana* movement.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.5.32) Śrīla Vyāsadeva has described the appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the proper way to worship Him:

*kṛṣṇa-varṇaṁ tviṣā kṛṣṇaṁ sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārśadam
yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ*

“In the Age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the names of Kṛṣṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons, and confidential companions.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared as Caitanya Mahāprabhu for three confidential reasons and one external reason. The confidential reasons Kṛṣṇa appeared were to understand the glory of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s love for Him, to taste His own qualities that She relishes through Her love, and to taste the happiness She experiences in Their loving relationship. The external reason was to establish the religion of the age, which is the congregational chanting of the *mahā-mantra*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In His teachings to Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī and his Māyāvādī followers, Lord Caitanya quoted the famous verse from the *Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa* (3.8.126):

*harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā*

“In this Age of Kali there is no other means, no other means, no other means for self-realization than chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name of Lord Hari.” (Cc. *Ādi* 17.21)

He further taught, “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.” (Cc. *Ādi* 17.22)

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on these verses from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: “To emphasize something to an ordinary person, one may repeat it three times, just as one might say, ‘You must do this! You must do this! You must do this!’ Thus the *Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa* repeatedly emphasizes the chanting of the holy name so that people may take it seriously and thus free themselves from the clutches of *māyā*.” (Cc. *Ādi* 17.23, purport)

Till the age of eighteen, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu lived in Navadvīpa immersed in scholarship. After His father passed away He went to offer oblations at Gayā. There He met His spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, and accepted initiation from him. On His return to Navadvīpa Śrī Caitanya was not able to do anything but chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa; He had become mad with ecstatic love of God. Even while



teaching grammar to His students He would simply explain the holy names of Kṛṣṇa. Every night for a full year He engaged in wonderful *saṅkīrtana* with His intimate associates in the house of Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita. Nonbelievers were barred from these *kīrtanas*. Then one day Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed two of His foremost followers, Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu and Haridāsa Ṭhākura, to widely distribute the chanting of the holy name to the common people. Nityānanda Prabhu made this order His life and soul. He would go door to door and request the people, “Please chant the name of Lord Kṛṣṇa.” Nityānanda Prabhu did not consider whether people were qualified to receive the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu or not; He distributed the holy name equally to everyone without discrimination. Nityānanda Prabhu even approached the two sinners Jagāi and Mādhāi and delivered them. The Muslim magistrate Chand Kazi tried to stop the *saṅkīrtana* party of Lord Nityānanda by breaking the *mṛdaṅgas* and threatening the devotees’ lives. In response, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu organized a massive *harināma-saṅkīrtana* demonstration and marched to the house of the Kazi. After speaking with Mahāprabhu, the Kazi promised that the *harināma-saṅkīrtana* would never again be hindered, either by him or his descendants. This is the beginning of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu predicted, *prthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma/ sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*—the chanting of the holy name will spread to every town and village of the world. This prediction is coming true due to the efforts of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s most dear servant, His Divine Grace Oṃ Viṣṇupāda Paramahaṁsa Parivṛājakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. To achieve this end Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is most expert in pleasing his spiritual master, formed the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. In this connection Śrīla Prabhupāda has written:

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has started performing *saṅkīrtana-yajña* in different places, and it has been experienced that wherever *saṅkīrtana-yajña* is performed, many thousands of people gather and take part in it. Imperceptible auspiciousness achieved in this connection should be continued all over the world. The members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should perform *saṅkīrtana-yajñas* one after another, so much that all the people of the world will either jokingly or seriously chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, and thus they will derive the benefit of cleansing the heart. The holy name of the Lord (*harer nāma*) is so powerful that whether it is chanted jokingly or seriously the effect of vibrating this transcendental sound will be equally distributed. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.24.10, purport]

The Importance of Harināma-saṅkīrtana in ISKCON

Literally tens of thousands of people—and often hundreds of thousands—may hear or see a *harināma-saṅkīrtana* party in a single day. From a worldwide perspective, *harināma* presents a unique opportunity to broadcast the holy name to millions of people every year. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda said,

Our advertisement is the *saṅkīrtana* movement. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class, September 12, 1973, London]

The people in general can be reached very well by the distribution of our literatures and by the propagation of *saṅkīrtana* in the streets. These are our two *mṛdaṅgas* for reawakening the sleeping conditioned souls. [letter to Janārdana Dāsa, January 16, 1970]

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all of his followers to go on *harināma-saṅkīrtana* regularly.

Everyone should go on the streets with *saṅkīrtana* party as much as possible. [letter to Madhusūdana Dāsa, January 30, 1970]

At least for one hour you must all go to have *saṅkīrtana* outside on the streets or in the park. . . . Outdoor *kīrtana* must be done. [letter to Rāyarāma dāsa, July 14, 1969]

The Need to Revive Harināma-saṅkīrtana

Despite the importance of *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, since Śrīla Prabhupāda's physical departure from this world the quantity and quality of *harināma-saṅkīrtana* has greatly decreased, as observed in an article by GBC Minister for Communications Mukunda Goswami:

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave great emphasis to distributing three features of Kṛṣṇa's mercy: his books, the holy name through *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, and *prasādam*. ISKCON has excelled admirably throughout the world in book distribution, with the printing and distribution of millions of books in dozens of languages. *Prasādam* distribution has been a pervasive, ever-increasing phenomenon at Sunday feasts, festivals, Hare Kṛṣṇa Food for Life programs, restaurants, cooking classes, congregational and FOLK programs, conferences and seminars, and in dozens of other preaching arenas. ISKCON's daily or weekly *harināma-saṅkīrtana* in many parts of the world, however, has not seemed to keep pace with our generally constant expansions of book and *prasādam* distribution. The number of devotees who participate in *harināma*, and the quality of most of the parties, need addressing.

The purpose of this handbook is to enthuse ISKCON devotees to perform regular *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, and to give them a standard guide for performing *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, based on Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions.

— Part Two — Organizing Harināma-saṅkīrtana

Cleanliness, proper attire, orchestration, and even choreography all have their place in Lord Caitanya's movement. *Harināma-saṅkīrtana* parties need not be massive to make a good impression, but because millions of people see them every year, more frequent and better-organized *saṅkīrtana* parties will have greater impact and elicit a more positive response from the public. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted *saṅkīrtana* to be performed in a systematic and organized way. He wrote:

I shall call you and some other students to assemble there to practice *saṅkīrtana* in a systematic way. Of course, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa does not require any artificial artistic sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music. [letter to Upendra Dāsa, 1 June 1968]

Some devotees are of the opinion that the transcendental sound vibration of *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* will have a positive effect regardless how it is presented. Whereas it is true that the holy name is transcendental no matter how devotees vibrate it, when *kīrtana* is performed to attract the attention of the public, it must be presented in a beautiful, organized manner. It is unfortunate when the public does not appreciate the *harināma-saṅkīrtana* because it is performed improperly.

Who will lead the chanting, and who will play which instruments? Which melodies will be sung? How many instruments will be used, and how will they be played for each particular melody? Who will speak to the public, and who will lead the dancing? Who will distribute *prasādam* and invitations? The devotees should rehearse these services before the *harināma* party goes on the street. In 1968 Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased when Mukunda Mahārāja wrote a letter informing him that the London devotees were practicing *saṅkīrtana* in the temple in preparation for going on the street.



I am very glad to learn that your *saṅkīrtana* party is taking shape, and you hope to inaugurate the program on the streets in a few weeks. [letter to Mukunda dāsa, 17 February 1969]

Official Permission

In some countries one must obtain permission from city officials before performing *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. That usually means writing a letter to the police department. The letter should contain a description of *harināma-saṅkīrtana* and the preferred time, date, and place for the performance.

If it is not possible to get permission for *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, in spite of all efforts, Śrīla Prabhupāda has advised that we not perform *harināma-saṅkīrtana*.

If the police do not allow you to perform *kīrtana* in public places, do not disobey their orders. Try to abide by the law of the State for taking advantage of performing *kīrtana* as far as possible. [letter to Kṛṣṇa dāsa, 13 May 1969]

Flags

In Vedic festivals people often decorate temples, houses, and palaces with flags. When Kṛṣṇa visited Satyabhāmā's palace, "She decorated her palace with various flags, heralding the news of her great husband's presence there." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.14.37, purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to carry flags on *saṅkīrtana*.

You have to take *saṅkīrtana* party . . . take some flags. [room conversation with Satsvarūpa dāsa, Boston, February 24, 1969]

If you carry flags, festoons, and pictures in that procession . . . , that will be a great success. [letter to Śyāmasundara dāsa, February 21, 1970]

The flags can be various shapes, colors, and combinations of colors, and sizes. You can paint them with various designs in the shape of *tilaka*, lotus flowers, conch shells, and other auspicious things. In a purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes the following observation:

The flags mentioned above were all painted with the picture of either Garuḍa or Hanumān, the two great servitors of the Lord. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.11.13, purport]

Following this principle, on *harināma-saṅkīrtana* devotees can carry flags decorated with pictures of Garuḍa and Hanumān.

The Mahā-mantra Banner

One success of a *harināma* party comes when the conditioned souls observing it spontaneously start singing the *mahā-mantra* with the *kīrtana*. Therefore, devotees on *harināma-saṅkīrtana* should carry a *mahā-mantra* banner.

Mahā-mantra banners are easiest to read from afar when the letters are displayed in bright colors on a dark background, or vice versa.

The banner can be supported either by one or two poles. If it is held up on a single pole, one devotee can carry it, thus making it easier for dance choreography. Also, in small *harināma* parties, more devotees would then be available for singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments.

The banner should be displayed either in the middle or at the back of the *harināma* party, never in front, since then it would block the public's view of the devotees, and vice versa.

Pictures

Devotees may also carry pictures of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrī Pañca-tattva, or Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Musical Instruments

In *kīrtana* all musical instruments, including the *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas*, must be played in a mood of serving the *kīrtana*, not controlling it. When Śrīla Prabhupāda first arrived in England in 1969, he told the devotees how, in Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana*, instruments were played softly while accompanying the lead singer, and louder for the chorus, back and forth.

Traditionally, the instruments played on Lord Caitanya's *harināma-saṅkīrtana* were simply *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted only these instruments to be played in temple *āratis*. Otherwise, he said . . .

Attention will be diverted in musical instrument, not to chanting. Our concentration should be hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa. [room conversation, 26 December 1976]

Regarding instruments for temple *kīrtanas*, *karatāla* and *mṛdaṅga* are sufficient. There is no need of other instruments. [letter to Rūpānuga dāsa, 2 February 1975]

However, Śrīla Prabhupāda did allow other instruments to be played in *bhajanas*, in particular the harmonium, which he played himself to accompany his own singing.

The harmonium may be played during *bhajana*. . . . But it is not for *kīrtana* and *ārati*. [letter to Bahudak dāsa, January 1, 1976]

For *harināma-saṅkīrtana* Śrīla Prabhupāda went even further by allowing other musical instruments to be played to make the *kīrtana* more attractive to the common people.

I want to form a *saṅkīrtana* party in which two members will play *mṛdaṅga*, eight will play the cymbals, two will play on *tampura*, and one harmonium . . . [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, January 22, 1968]

Nārada Muni himself plays a *viṇā* to accompany his *saṅkīrtana*, as Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions in his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.5.22, where he quotes a verse from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Gītāvalī*:

*nārada-muni, bājāya viṇā,
'rādhikā-ramaṇa'-nāme*

“Nārada Muni, the great soul, plays a stringed instrument called a *viṇā*, vibrating the sound *rādhikā-ramaṇa*, which is another name for Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda even approved a marching band for Ratha-yātrā:

Pañcadraviḍa: Do we use like a marching band in the Ratha-yātrā? If we used a marching band, a lot of people come, like a parade, like they use in the parades with trumpets and drums and all these things.

Prabhupāda: I think you can introduce in Africa also. (*laughter*)

Brahmānanda: We want to introduce in Mombassa. We've already been discussing it. [room conversation, Māyāpur, February 24, 1974]

Some devotees like to play harmonium on *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. But much more practical for walking *harināma* is the accordion, which is designed to be played while standing or walking. Horns like the trumpet and bugle are also a nice addition to *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that horns were



also played in Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana*: "mṛdaṅga, karatālas and that bugle." (room conversation, March 5, 1967, San Francisco)

The instruments should be cleaned regularly. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." (*Bhagavad-gītā* lecture, November 5, 1973, Bombay)

Karatālas should be shining and have clean multicolored ribbons strung to them, and the *mṛdaṅgas* should be covered with attractive colored cloths.

Sound System

A good sound system is important to pierce the noise of big cities. On small *harināma* parties the sound system is important so that the public can hear the chanting, and on large parties the sound system is also important so that the devotees at the back of the procession, as well as the public, will be able to hear the leader.

A good sound system is also essential for public speaking. Śrīla Prabhupāda approved of using sound systems on *harināma-saṅkīrtana*:

You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa and Himāvati dāsī, March 3, 1968]

In the past, devotees have often used megaphones or bullhorns, but the former are too weak to overcome city noise and the latter generally have poor sound. Better is the portable battery-operated amplifier, which street musicians (buskers) use. These produce good sound and are quite powerful.

Dress

Devotees should dress respectably on *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. Everyone must wear shoes and have *tilaka* and neck beads. The men should be clean-shaven, and if their head is not shaved, their hair should be neat. They should wear *dhoti* and *kurtā*, and the ladies should wear saris. If possible, the ladies should decorate their faces with *gopī* dots. These look very attractive and help create a festive atmosphere.

Devotees can also wear flower garlands. In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 13.30) we read how during the *harināma-saṅkīrtana* at the Ratha-yātrā festival, "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gathered all His devotees and, with His own hand, decorated them with flower garlands and sandalwood pulp."

Another way to increase the attractiveness of *harināma-saṅkīrtana* is to have some devotees dress up as Gaura-Nitāi, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇā, or Sītā-Rāma. Śrīla Prabhupāda approved of this:

The idea of introducing *Pañca-tattva* in the *kīrtana* party was also contemplated by me. Not only that, we have to prepare different dresses for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇā, and Their eight confidential associates, Sakhis. Sometimes you have to dress somebody as Nṛsimhadeva and Prahlāda; in this way, we shall have varieties of show along with the *kīrtana*, and all the varieties will be picked up from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*. We have to teach the *brahmacāris* and the *brahmacāriṇīs* to speak in Sanskrit some of the verses in this connection. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, March 4, 1968]

Children

Children on *harināma-saṅkīrtana* must always be supervised, especially when crossing roads. If they are well behaved and enthusiastic, devotee children are very attractive on *harināma*, melting the hearts of whoever sees these innocent souls chanting and dancing.

Furthermore, if older devotees dance with the children hand in hand in a circle, it is easy for children from the public to join in. And from that point it is easier to get adults to join in as well. If the *kīrtana* progresses in this way, it is even possible to have a group of twenty, thirty, or forty people dancing and chanting with the *kīrtana*.

In 1969, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was staying in London, he described the dancing of Mālatī and Śyāmasundara's small daughter, Sarasvatī:

She is so nice that as soon as there is chanting sound of *kīrtana* immediately she begins to dance and clap. Even the audience becomes astonished and they follow her activities. It is very nice. I think your daughter may now be walking, so she may also be trained for dancing and clapping. [letter to Balāi dāsī, November 15, 1969]

If the children cannot be controlled, it is better that they do not participate, as Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to a *gurukula* teacher,

If there is difficulty for taking the smaller children on public *saṅkīrtana*, there is no need. Unless they are behaving, what is the use of taking them into public? The smaller children can have their *saṅkīrtana* party within the school grounds daily and they will enjoy as much. [letter to Stoka Kṛṣṇa dāsa, June 20, 1972]

Invitations and Leaflets

Harināma-saṅkīrtana devotees should be concerned that the conditioned souls' newly sparked interest in spiritual life continues after the *saṅkīrtana* party has passed. Thus devotees must distribute books, leaflets, and invitations on *harināma*.

On invitations it is nice to display the full Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, either as a border along the top and bottom, or on the back. This way the public has a chance to join in and sing with the *kīrtana* party. *Harināma-saṅkīrtana* parties can also distribute leaflets containing an introduction to the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself introduced such leafleting in 1966 with his printing of a flier entitled “The Peace Formula,” as we read in the sixth chapter of *The Science of Self-Realization*:

Amid the anti-war protests of late 1966, Śrīla Prabhupāda put out a mimeographed leaflet (among the very first of his publications in America) from his small storefront temple on New York's Second Avenue. Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers and sympathizers handed this leaflet out by the thousands on the streets of New York, and later in San Francisco, Montreal, and other cities. [*The Science of Self-Realization*, introductory blurb to chapter 6]

The leaflet can also include answers to questions generally asked, such as, Why do you shave your head? What is the significance of the robes? What is the meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa song?

The leaflet can also include a cut-out section of items to be checked off and mailed to the temple. The following could be included:

- Please send me a free information package about the Krishna consciousness movement.
- I would like to be on your mailing list.
- I would be happy to have devotees visit me at home to tell me more about Hare Krishna.
- Please send me information of Hare Krishna programs in my area.
- Please send me a free catalog of books on self-realization, reincarnation, meditation, yoga, and vegetarianism, as well as music and lecture recordings, beads, incense, and other Hare Krishna items.

You should also provide a section for people to fill in their name, address, age, and interests.

Themes for Harināma-saṅkīrtana

Another way to make *harināma-saṅkīrtana* parties more effective and keep them exciting for devotees and nondevotees—especially in cities where people see *harināma* parties regularly—is by giving the *harināma* party a weekly theme.

Just as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu used *harināma-saṅkīrtana* as a means to bring attention to the issue of His devotees' being disrupted from their preaching activities in Navadvīpa, so modern-day *harināma* parties can be used to bring attention to relevant issues in society. Themes might be “Meat is Murder,”



“Abortion Is Bad Karma,” “Prayer Is Not a Crime,” “A More Natural Way of Life,” or “Hunger: A Spiritual Problem.”

Time and Place

There are unlimited ways of introducing Lord Caitanya’s mercy through *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. The *saṅkīrtana* leader should consult all the involved Vaiṣṇavas and consider all options before scheduling the weekly or daily *harināma-saṅkīrtana*.

If *harināma-saṅkīrtana* is performed at noon, when office workers usually have their lunch break, the literature distributed should be directed to those people. If *harināma-saṅkīrtana* is performed later in the day, when school let’s out, the literature distributed should be tailored more for teenagers.

Dealing with Disturbing Elements

Drunks, religious fanatics, atheists, hoodlums, and similar persons sometimes try to disrupt the preaching on *harināma-saṅkīrtana*. The disruptors use a variety of tactics, but their aim is one: public confrontation. The best way to deal with them is to not play their game. If they attack, retreat. The golden rule is to avoid public confrontation.

When the disruptors start their disturbances, a predesignated devotee should speak with them and try to calm them down. If such incidents are a regular occurrence, the designated devotee should wear *karmī* dress. That way the devotee may have a greater chance of making friends with the disturbed personalities, and if it becomes absolutely necessary to physically defend the *kīrtana* party, it won’t look as bad for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. As far as possible, devotees in Vaiṣṇava dress should never fight opponents in public.

It is an offense against the holy name to preach the glories of the holy name to the faithless, since doing so will likely cause them to blaspheme and commit offenses. By arguing and fighting with the faithless in public, innocent people may become faithless, and then they too will never be able to hear the glories of the holy name. *Harināma-saṅkīrtana* devotees have two very important responsibilities: first, to give faith to the faithless through proper Vaiṣṇava behavior, dress, and appearance, and second, to preach the glories of the holy name to faithful.

— Part Three —

Three Ways to Perform Harināma-saṅkīrtana

In Procession

Harināma-saṅkīrtana can be organized in three ways: walking in a procession, standing and dancing in one place, or sitting.

Walking *harināma* is when devotees walk and dance in a procession through the streets of a town or city. The procession should be formed in two orderly lines so pedestrians may pass by unobstructed. When the group is large and there is room on the sidewalk, it may be necessary to form more lines. In addition, the *saṅkīrtana* leader and one or more assistants may need to direct traffic so the procession runs smoothly.

A *saṅkīrtana* procession moving in orderly lines looks attractive and is also fun. Sometimes the two lines may separate from each other, turn back in the opposite direction, and then meet again and continue down the street. If the footpath becomes too narrow for pedestrians to pass the party comfortably, the two lines of the *harināma* party should merge and form a single line. It is important that the devotees not block the entire sidewalk, forcing pedestrians into the street or onto the grass. We must be humble to attract the Lord’s mercy and the public’s respect. Devotees should also be careful to obey traffic signals and be alert so as not to hinder traffic.

When passing shop windows and pedestrians, the devotees should smile and wave; the *saṅkīrtana* leader may even appoint devotees who are not playing instruments to do this. When the *harināma*

party comes to a busy area of town and a crowd gathers, if possible the *harināma* party should stop for a few minutes to chant and dance in front of the crowd, give a talk about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and make a quick presentation of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. (See "Speaking" in Part Four, and Appendix 1 for an example of a street talk by Indradyumna Mahārāja.) After the talk, the *kīrtana* and procession should resume.

Sometimes the *harināma* party may dance in a fixed location, which sometimes happens when the *harināma* stops to speak to the crowd that has gathered around the *kīrtana*. In such cases it is difficult to leave the people who are eager to hear more chanting and ask questions about the philosophy and way of life of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement.

Dancing in a Fixed Location

While standing and dancing in one place, the devotees should be sure not to block any shop entrances or public access ways. If the shopkeepers complain, the city police will usually listen to them, since shopkeepers pay taxes and *saṅkīrtana* parties don't. One way to avoid these complaints is to approach all the shopkeepers immediately upon arriving in the area and ask, "Do you mind if we sing and dance here?" If they do mind, then move on. Usually they will tell you they don't. Before leaving the shopkeeper, the devotee should reiterate, "If there is any problem, please don't hesitate to come and tell us; we will do the needful." We should also avoid chanting too close to other street musicians, since it will antagonize them and also make our *kīrtana* party more difficult to hear.

In standing and dancing *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, it is important that the devotees dance together facing the public. Sometimes devotees dance with their backs to the public. This is not good. The purpose of *harināma*, as Śrīla Prabhupāda said, is to "Induce the people to chant, that is the only thing." (letter to Kīrtirāja dāsa, January 11, 1976)

Sometimes the leader of the *harināma* party will sit and play harmonium while the rest of the devotees will continue dancing. This was suggested by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

When such *kīrtana* will be demonstrated, only the harmonium player may sit, and all the others may stand up and join the *kīrtana* and dancing properly dressed. [letter to Haṁsadūta dāsa, February 4, 1968]

Sitting

Sitting *harināma* is usually performed by a small group of devotees who all sit and play instruments and chant. Usually more paraphernalia is used than in a walking *harināma*; they may have an oriental rug to sit on, a *samaiyana* (a multicolored cloth backdrop used in Indian *pandal* programs) to hang behind the group of chanters; extra instruments like harmonium, tamboura, and sitar; a microphone stand; and a book table set up beside the group.

In a small town with not so many streets, standing and sitting *harināmas* are more practical; otherwise the party will be going up and down the same street for many hours, which can be annoying for shop owners and boring for the devotees.

In walking *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, more people get the benefit of seeing the devotees and hearing the *mahā-mantra*. In standing and sitting *saṅkīrtana*, more time can be spent preaching and developing a relationship with the people. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted the *harināma-saṅkīrtana* parties to make devotees:

Your program for distributing books and having the street festivals and then preaching and making devotees is very good. [letter to Tamāl Krishna Goswami, September 8, 1974]

The various methods of *harināma-saṅkīrtana* may be combined during the course of one day to reach a variety of people. The party may begin with a walking *harināma* to alert the town to the presence of the chanters, after which they can stay in a fixed location, thereby allowing more people to approach and enquire about Kṛṣṇa consciousness.



— Part Four —

Harināma-saṅkīrtana Technique

Beginning Kīrtana

In Kṛṣṇa consciousness the devotees always approach Kṛṣṇa through the spiritual master and Gaura-Nitāi. Finally they worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Our students are first advised to worship Guru-Gaurāṅga, and then, when they are somewhat advanced, the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deity is installed, and they are engaged in the worship of the Lord. [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 8.31, purport]

This understanding also applies in *kīrtana*. *Harināma-saṅkīrtana* should always begin with the chanting of each of Śrīla Prabhupāda's *praṇāma* mantras and the chanting of the Pañca-tattva mantra.

At the beginning of every function in preaching, especially before chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—we must chant the Pañca-tattva's names and offer our respects to them. [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 8.5, purport]

It is not necessary to sing Śrīla Prabhupāda's *praṇāma* and the Pañca-tattva mantra at the beginning of each new *kīrtana* on the same *harināma*; once at the start of the *harināma-saṅkīrtana* is sufficient.

Emphasizing the Mahā-Mantra

Authorized prayers and mantras other than the *mahā-mantra* are nice, and any passer-by who hears them will derive immense spiritual benefit. But the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the *mahā-mantra*, which means “the greatest mantra.” Thus the public will derive the greatest benefit by hearing this mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

So in this age, this mantra is called *mahā-mantra*, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's all. All Vedic mantras are now gone to hell. You see? Nobody can properly chant Vedic mantras and take the benefit out of it. But this mantra, any way you chant, neglectfully or properly, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and the result is there. [lecture, Los Angeles, November 29, 1968]

Further, if devotees exclusively chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra on *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, the public may learn the mantra and even sing along with the *kīrtana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote:

Give them the chance to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* somehow or other, then very soon good results will be visible. [letter to Harikeśa Swami, October 28, 1976]

Organization of the Kīrtana Party

Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* parties were organized very systematically:

During Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's time, one party was composed of twenty-one men: four people playing *mṛdaṅgas*, one leading the chanting, and sixteen others striking *karatālas*, responding to the leading chanter. [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 17.135, purport]

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted ISKCON *harināma* parties to be similarly organized:

If many men join the *saṅkīrtana* movement, they may follow in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and form different parties according to the time and the number of men available. [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 17.135, purport]



Each party must consist of seven men as follows: two *mṛdaṅga*, four *karatāla*, and one dancer. One of the *karatāla* players is lead singer, and the dancer dances freely up and down between the two lines of players three on each side as in the drawing. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, June 13, 1970]

Another proposal is I want to form a *saṅkīrtana* party in which two members will play *mṛdaṅga*, eight will play the cymbals, two will play on *tampura*, and one harmonium, besides that there will be the leader of the party. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, January 22, 1968]

While it may not be possible for every *saṅkīrtana* party to follow this guide precisely, care should be taken to ensure that the lead singer of the *kīrtana* group can sing well and that the instrument players know how to play the instruments.

Responsive Chanting

When ISKCON started, in *kīrtana* everyone would sing in unison, with no one leading. Later Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced responsive chanting:

Responsive chanting is very nice; one good singer may lead, and the others may join in. That is the system in India. It is very good for two reasons especially: One, the chanter gets to rest, so he does not become tired, and two, you get to chant and hear, that is the process. You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers. Blowing of the conch shell and horns is very nice. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa and Himāvati dāsī, March 3, 1968]

Kīrtana Tempo

The *saṅkīrtana* should start slow and then build up speed. The top speed should be just fast enough so that everyone can respond melodiously and dance gracefully. When the *kīrtana* gets too fast, the dancing gets frenetic and disorganized, the melody gets harder to follow, and the *kīrtana* continually stops and starts because devotees get tired. But *kīrtana* played with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing and melodious chanting, and can continue for hours without stopping. Such *kīrtana* is much more attractive to the public.

Melodies

In temple *kīrtanas*, for the pleasure of the Deities devotees should sing specific traditional melodies according to the time of day. A particular melody is appropriate for the morning and another for the evening. At least once Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped a devotee from singing the wrong tune during *maṅgala-ārati* and said, “Sing the morning tune.” Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted these traditional melodies to be introduced in the West, particularly the Bengali melodies sung in the *kīrtanas* of Lord Caitanya’s day.

The *kīrtana* tune is a specific representation of Gauḍiyā Vaiṣṇavas and this tune is appreciated all over India as unique. They say that the *kīrtana* tune is the specific gift of Bengal, and that is a fact. So why not utilize this tune in the Western countries. . . . [letter to Śyāmasundara dāsa, February 25, 1970]

However, during public engagements it may be difficult for Westerners to respond to traditional Bengali melodies. Śrīla Prabhupāda therefore agreed that other melodies could be sung in such situations.

This Nārada Muni song is in your country tune, and I think it will attract many more of common man to join the *kīrtana*, so you should practice this standard *kīrtana* more conveniently. . . . [letter to Mukunda Goswami, June 6, 1976]

Hare Kṛṣṇa, this vibration you can make in different tune, we are already doing that. [letter to Rāmeśvara dāsa, November 26, 1972]



Any tune can be used. When it is in relationship with Kṛṣṇa, that makes it bona fide. [letter to Ekāyanī dāsī, August 31, 1971]

The melodies used on *harināma-saṅkīrtana* should be simple. Śrīla Prabhupāda said with regard to chanting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā* verses,

Most important is that the melody remains very simple. [letter to Sureśvara dāsa, February 3, 1972]

Simple melodies are most appropriate because the public will find it easier to sing along with the chanting.

Dancing

Śrīla Prabhupāda always encouraged his disciples to dance while chanting in *kīrtana*:

[O]ur magic was simply this chanting and dancing; that's all. [letter to Baṭu Gopāla dāsa, July 8, 1971]

Regarding your dancing in the middle of the *kīrtana*, it is not wrong. It is completely right. If in your *kīrtana* everyone dances in ecstasy it is perfectly all right. That is spiritual enthusiasm. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, October 19, 1974]

The devotees here, they are jumping and dancing very nicely. [letter to Madhudviṣa Swami, April 21, 1976]

Śrīla Prabhupāda taught that dancing to the sound of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is a natural spiritual emotion,

It is already there in everyone's heart. As it is stated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *kṛṣṇa-bhakti nitya-siddha*. *Nitya-siddha*. It is eternally a fact. . . . It is not to be realized, it is already there. *Nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-bhakti sādhyā kabhu naya*. It is not that one has to learn it artificially by some gymnastic. No. Natural. Just like the children here, they are also dancing with their parents. They are offering flower, trying to imitate how to chant. Naturally. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, Los Angeles, June 1, 1972]

If people are simply induced to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra . . . Just see. Even a child, he is taking part. It is natural . . . they are dancing and chanting. So this movement is so important. Somehow or other if you can engage them in chanting and dancing, the whole world will be united. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* lecture, Bombay, December 27, 1974]

However, Śrīla Prabhupāda warns that chanting and dancing performed just for show is artificial.

If one chants the holy name of the Lord just to make a show, not knowing the secret of success, he may increase his bile secretion, but he will never attain perfection in chanting the holy name. [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 7.95–96, purport]

Artificial chanting and dancing may be due to sentiments or sentimental agitation, but this cannot help one advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* 11.102, purport]

In New York City in 1976, Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja read a magazine article about the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to Śrīla Prabhupāda:



Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja: “Often the most rapid and intense chanting is done by a hard-core knot of *dhotied* men before the curtains of the shrine. . . . The rhythm approaches that of an express train, and the atmosphere is apt to remind a lay visitor of an old-fashioned football rally. Some of the onlookers try to keep up with the central group, clapping their hands, swaying their bodies, throwing arms upwards and, among the younger, adapting modern dance steps to the rhythm ...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Who has introduced this peculiar dancing?

Hari-śauri: It just evolved. (*laughs*)

Rūpānuga: We were speaking about that the other day. It’s changed from the original dancing that you showed us to something else. Too much like the modern dancing.

Prabhupāda: Hmm. I think this is not good.

Tamāl Krishna: What way should we dance, Śrīla Prabhupāda? With our hands outstretched? Sometimes the devotees like to jump around. Is that all right?

Prabhupāda: In ecstasy one can do anything, that is another. . . . But artificially to do something is not good.

Tamāl Krishna: But if one feels like jumping, it is all right?

Prabhupāda: Anything artificial is not required.

Rūpānuga: So running back and forth is not.

Prabhupāda: No, no, that should not be an artificial.

Hari-śauri: We don’t dance for show, we dance for the pleasure of the Deities.

Tamāl Krishna: No, we’re not professional dancers.

[room conversation, June 10, 1976]

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want the chanting and dancing of his disciples to be professional or artificial, this does not mean that he did not want their chanting and dancing to be enthusiastic, beautiful, and well coordinated. It was Śrīla Prabhupāda himself who taught the devotees to dance together in an organized fashion.

Yes, I am going to the newly purchased church temple and when I go there by Sunday next, I shall try to teach the local boys in the way of performing *saṅkīrtana* in a circle. I shall send to you the sound production with photographs if possible, and instructions also. [letter to Mukunda dāsa, April 1, 1970]

This party will be so trained that exhibitions of our chanting and dancing along with distribution of *prasādam* will be performed on a stage and for this performance we will sell tickets to the public. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, January 22, 1968]

I shall call you and some other students to assemble there to practice *saṅkīrtana* in a systematic way. Of course, chanting Hare Krishna does not require any artificial artistic sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music. [letter to Upendra dāsa, June 1, 1968]

Devotees should dance together, facing the public, in a coordinated and choreographed manner, concentrating on attracting the public to Kṛṣṇa. When each devotee does his or her own thing, the *kīrtana* loses focus and potency. Such a *kīrtana* is less likely to attract people to become involved, either as participants or spectators. Anything can be attractive when many people do it together, even a bunch of men shoveling dirt, all performing movements simultaneously to the rhythm of music—what to speak of a group of bright-faced, cheerful Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees dancing because Kṛṣṇa consciousness makes them happy. The public will be more inclined to join in and dance with such a beautiful *kīrtana* party. Also, this focus will maintain the purity of the dancing, because when the *saṅkīrtana* devotees concentrate on dancing to attract people to Kṛṣṇa, they will be meditating on following the instruction of the



spiritual master. Such dancing is glorified in the *Padma Purāṇa* as follows:

O king, when the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa dance, their steps crush the inauspiciousness of the earth, their glances destroy the inauspiciousness of the ten directions, and their upraised arms push away the inauspiciousness of the demigod's planets. [quoted in the *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* 20.68]

Speaking

When onlookers gather around the *saṅkīrtana* party, the devotees should stop the *kīrtana* and speak to them. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted the devotees to engage in dialogue with the public.

Dialogue, *kīrtana*; then again dialogue, again *kīrtana*; again repeat; like that. [letter to Madhudviṣa Swami, July 29, 1972]

Our process will remain the same eternally, namely, to begin with *saṅkīrtana* and prolong it at least for half an hour, then speak something from *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Brahma-saṁhitā*, etc., and invite questions and answer them. Then again concluded by chanting. This is my dream or idea. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, February 4, 1968]

Street talks should not be too philosophical, because there are so many distractions in such an environment. Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested the following five points to Mukunda Mahārāja as the content for a public presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The speaker on *harināma* may make a presentation that focuses on any or all of these points, depending on the time, place, circumstances, and the audience's attention span:

1. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a tradition that has been practiced in India for more than 5,000 years.
2. It is based on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is like the Bible of the East.
3. In the tradition of ancient India, God is addressed by the name Kṛṣṇa. He is the same God people address as Allah, Jehovah, Adanoi and other names.
4. Lord Caitanya is a full incarnation of God who appeared in India 500 years ago and popularized the chanting of God's name, especially in the form of the *mahā-mantra* — Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.
5. The chanting of the name of God is a form of yoga or meditation called mantra meditation, through which one can develop love for God and awaken spiritual consciousness.

At the end of the talk invite the people to find out more by buying a book about Hare Kṛṣṇa, visiting a temple, or taking part in a festival. One of the best ways to keep their attention is by asking them questions. For example, "How many of you have seen Hare Kṛṣṇa people before? Do you know where this Hare Kṛṣṇa movement originally comes from? Who knows by what name the people of ancient India addressed God? Who knows why Hare Kṛṣṇa people always sing the same song over and over?" Other things, like the four regulative principles, are also interesting for people to hear. It is also important to give the public an opportunity to ask questions themselves.

If someone in the audience looks particularly interested in what you say, or if someone was dancing during the *kīrtana* or singing with the devotees, it is nice to reward them by calling them up in front of the crowd, announcing what they were doing, and giving them a garland or a book to the applause of the devotees and audience. After a ten-minute talk, the *kīrtana* should start again and continue for another thirty minutes. (See Appendix 1 for an example of a street talk by Indradyumna Swami.)

Drama

On a noisy city street it can be difficult to hold the attention of an audience with philosophical explanations. But everyone enjoys a play.



Everyone enjoys play-acting . . . So this drama-playing is very good presentation for attracting their attention and displaying Krishna consciousness very beautifully. [letter to Nayanābhīrāma dāsa, December 22, 1971]

My idea is, *saṅkīrtana* with some dramatic demonstration, by the members, will be attractive to the people in general. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, July 1, 1968]

I am very glad to learn that San Francisco Temple is doing very nicely in the street *saṅkīrtana* with transcendental plays. [letter to Madhudviṣa Swami, February 14, 1970]

We shall have varieties of shows along with the *kīrtana*, and all the varieties will be picked up from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*. [letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, March 4, 1968]

Dramas based on Śrīla Prabhupāda's books have to be performed seriously.

Regarding the dramas, my point is not to deviate from gravity and compromise or distract from the situation. Keep this point in vision and continue. [letter to Madhudviṣa Swami, July 9, 1972]

The dramas can sometimes be performed elaborately, with beautiful costumes, and sometimes spontaneously, without costumes:

[T]he actors may speak little philosophy, without need for special costumes or other things. [letter to Madhudviṣa Swami, July 9, 1972]

Some suitable dramas are “The Boatman and the Scholar,” “Dr. Frog,” and “A Fish Out of Water.” (See Appendix 3 for scripts.)

The noise on the street may make it hard for the audience to hear everything the actors are saying. A solution to this problem is for one devotee to narrate the drama over the amplifier as the actors mime the various roles. Sometimes when the cast is short an actor or two you can invite members of the audience to play the missing roles. This is a great way to involve the public in the drama.

Prasādam Distribution

In 1976 Hridayānanda Mahārāja wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda and reported on the successful *harināma-saṅkīrtana* and book distribution activities in his zone. Śrīla Prabhupāda was pleased, but requested that he introduce *prasādam* distribution along with *harināma-saṅkīrtana*:

You have written that chanting, dancing and book distribution are going on nicely. *Prasādam* distribution should also be introduced. This will make the program even more effective. [letter to Hridayānanda dāsa Goswami, November 11, 1976]

Śrīla Prabhupāda instructs in his letters and books that *prasādam* distribution and *harināma-saṅkīrtana* are two of the most important activities of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness:

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on this principle: chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra at every moment, as much as possible . . . and, as far as possible, distribute *prasādam* . . . Simply by liberal distribution of *prasādam* and *saṅkīrtana*, the whole world can become peaceful and prosperous. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.10]

So preach like this, very simply, and hold *saṅkīrtana* widely all over the city, and distribute *prasādam* profusely, especially to the young people and the students, and everything will be increasingly successful more and more. [letter to Dānavīr dāsa, August 2, 1972]



Śrīla Prabhupāda taught his disciples that *prasādam* distribution is the secret weapon of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement:

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa: They say, “*Prasādam* is our secret weapon.”

Prabhupāda: (laughs) “Yes. Yes.”

[room conversation, Māyāpur, February 21, 1977]

Some people are so conditioned that it is not possible to approach them with philosophy or the holy name, but only with *kṛṣṇa-prasādam*. By taking *prasādam* people get the benefit of *ajñāta-sukṛti*, or performing devotional service unknowingly. Śrīla Prabhupāda states,

By such unknowing devotional service, one is favored by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Service rendered to the Supreme Lord, knowingly or unknowingly, never goes in vain. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.24.16, purport]

In some countries it is best to distribute *prasādam* nicely packaged in a clear plastic wrapper. Because this is sanitary, people are more inclined to accept it. Over the top of the bag you can fold and staple a label that doubles as an invitation to the Sunday Feast. In this way people who would not ordinarily accept an invitation to the temple receive one when they accept the *prasādam*. The label should also list the ingredients of the sweet, because people are concerned to know what they are eating and often ask what the *prasādam* contains. Listing the ingredients will help clear any suspicion that may arise from being offered a free sweet on the street.

It is nice if the *prasādam* distributed is prepared according to a Vedic recipe. This way the people get an opportunity to taste something exotic that they have never experienced before. *Lāḍḍu*, *lugloo*, and *burfi* are all wonderful Vedic sweets that can be packaged and distributed in a practical way. There are also a number of Western recipes that are easy to prepare in bulk and are economical, especially popcorn.

If possible you should offer to the Deities the *prasādam* to be distributed on *saṅkīrtana*. Thus by eating *maha-prasādam* the conditioned souls will enjoy even greater spiritual benefits.

When approaching a child with a flyer or *prasādam*, it is best to seek the parents’ permission, not verbally but by looking at the parent and nodding your head while holding out the gift to the child. Otherwise the parents may think the devotees are taking advantage of the naivete of the child, who is too young to discriminate between what he should and shouldn’t have. Most often the parents will agree, and when they do and the child accepts the gift, the parents will likely accept the *prasādam* as well.

Book Distribution

Just like we are chanting, this is one vibration. And these books are bigger vibration . . . when we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, a few yards, people can hear, ‘Here is Hare Kṛṣṇa.’ But this, my Guru Mahārāja used to say, that ‘This is *brhad-mṛdaṅga*.’ *Mṛdaṅga*, that drum, you have seen, that is small *mṛdaṅga*. If I beat on this drum, maybe a few yards, people can hear from few yards. But . . . the books are distributed, it can go from country to country, from continent to continent, actually it is so happening. [lecture, September 12, 1973]

Harināma is most effective when performed in conjunction with book distribution. The *harināma* works to attract the initial attention of the public, and the books are the rope that they can literally grab on to. This was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s idea:

The chanting can go on for a little while and when a crowd is drawn books can be distributed.
[letter to Rāmeśvara Swami, October 25, 1974]

Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested that the books be sold from a table alongside the *harināma-saṅkīrtana* party:



I think you should keep a table by the *saṅkīrtana* 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. [letter to Hamsadūta Swami, June 8, 1969]

— Part Five — Purity Is the Force

“Our Technique Is Purity”

During a *darśana* with Śrīla Prabhupāda the following exchange occurred:

Sometimes when we go to the temples they ask us to give class — *saṅkīrtana* class on book distribution techniques. We tell them that before you can take any techniques, first you must follow the principles and study the books.” Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “Yes. That is real technique. Our only technique is to be very devout followers of the rules and regulation. [Room conversation, March 2, 1975]

While this book has emphasized techniques for *harināma-saṅkīrtana*, the foundation of all techniques is purity. This cannot be stressed enough. When the devotees from Bengal first came to Jagannātha Purī to meet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, King Pratāparudra asked Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya to come to the roof of the palace so they could see all of the devotees as they arrived. Sārvabhauma told the king the name of each devotee and described the devotee’s special glories. When he saw and heard the wonderful *kīrtana*, King Pratāparudra was wonderstruck and commented, “This *kīrtana* is so wonderful. Never before have I seen such wonderful dancing or heard such melodious chanting.” Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya replied, “This sweet transcendental sound is a special creation of the Lord known as *prema-saṅkīrtana*, congregational chanting in love of Godhead.” (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Madhya-līlā 11.98) Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this verse:

There are many professional chanters who can perform congregational chanting with various musical instruments in an artistic and musical way, but their chanting cannot be as attractive as the congregational chanting of pure devotees. If a devotee sticks strictly to the principles governing Vaiṣṇava behavior, his bodily luster will naturally be attractive, and his singing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord will be effective. People will appreciate such *kīrtana* without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord’s glories. [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Madhya-līlā 11.95, purport]

Pure and Impure Motivation

A successful preacher does not possess any impure motivation and is not envious of the materialists; rather, the preacher possesses compassion, the desire to help others, to inspire others with one’s own energy. Otherwise, one will not be able to invoke the mercy of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.

In a *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* purport Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes his Guru Mahārāja, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, on how material motivation hinders one’s preaching:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that even though one may become free from the desire for fruitive activity, sometimes the subtle desire for fruitive activity again comes into being within the heart. . . . One’s real desire may be for name and fame. . . . In this way the heart



is again filled with dirty things and becomes harder and harder, like that of a materialist. Gradually one desires to become a reputed devotee or an *avatāra* (incarnation). The word *jīva-himsā* (envy of other living entities) actually means stopping the preaching of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 12.16, purport]

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has stated:

*sarva tyāge 'py aheyāyāh sarvānartha bhuvāś ca te
kuryuḥ pratiṣṭhāviṣṭhāyā yatnam asparśane varam*

“Even if one can give up all other material desires, the desire for fame is very difficult to give up. This desire for fame, which is compared to stool, is the root cause of all *anarthas*. Therefore, one should carefully avoid touching this stoollike desire for fame.” (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*)

Cultivating Humility

Eight days before Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura manifested the concealment of his pastimes on 23 December 1936, he said to his disciples. “We are not desirous of becoming a hero of work or a reformer of religion, but our reality may be identified with the dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa and Raghunātha, for that is our everything.” (*A Ray of Viṣṇu*, by Rūpa Vilāsa dāsa)

Devotees might wonder, “How will I ever preach? My heart is full of so many dirty material desires.” The first step in the process of purification is the awareness and acknowledgment of one’s conditioned nature. Material motivation is sinful; purifying it means first to recognize it, and then to always remain in a humble state of mind and pray to guru and Kṛṣṇa to take that material motivation away and replace it with pure love. Kṛṣṇa killed the demons Agha and Baka, so for Him to kill the demons of our lust, anger, and greed is not at all difficult. Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī prays in his instructions to the mind, *Śrī Manaḥ-sikṣā*:

The highwayman lust and his friends have bound me around the neck with the painful ropes of wicked deeds. O mind, please scream, ‘O Kṛṣṇa! O killer of Baka! I will be killed by these highwaymen!’ Do that and He will save me. [*Śrī Manaḥ-sikṣā* 6]

Sometimes pride is compared to a great mountain that squashes one’s endeavors in devotional service and causes them to become a mere hollow exhibition of spiritual activity, but Raghunātha dāsa reminds us that Kṛṣṇa is the lifter of Govardhana Hill, so our mountain is nothing for Him:

Mind, why do you burn both you and me by bathing in the trickling urine of the ass of deviousness and hypocrisy? You should delight both you and me by eternally bathing in the glistening nectar ocean of pure love for Śrī Śrī Gāndharvā-Giridhārī (Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the lifter of Govardhana Hill). [*Manaḥ-sikṣā* 7]

He compares the desire for fame to a prostitute:

Why should pure love touch me as long as the impudent untouchable woman of the desire for fame dances in my heart? O mind, always serve the leader of those who are dear to the Lord. He will at once kick that untouchable out and allow pure love to enter. [*Manaḥ-sikṣā* 8]

In his *Śikṣāṣṭaka* prayers, which are the basis of the entire Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu teaches how by performance of *nāma-saṅkīrtana* one can cleanse the dust accumulated on the mirror of the heart—*ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam*—and extinguish the blazing fire of repeated birth and death—*bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpanam*—or in other words, achieve liberation. But these are still just minor benefits. The real benefit is that the waxing moon of the holy name will open the white lotus of

the heart and reveal the spiritual nature of the chanter, thus bestowing entrance into the divine pastimes of the Supreme Lord—*śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitaranam vidyā-vadhū-jivanam*.

In the next verse of the *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that although Kṛṣṇa has mercifully appeared in the form of His name for the benefit of all humanity and is readily available to all through that agency, still, Caitanya Mahāprabhu laments, He is not able to achieve the benefits of chanting because of offenses. In the third verse Mahāprabhu teaches how to become free of offenses through humility and tolerance, and thus become able to chant the holy name purely:

*tṛṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

“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 respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.” (*Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka* 3)

Humility is the key to the door of purity—try to cultivate humility, and you will have purity.

“All the Credit Goes to My Guru Mahārāja”

One will be successful only when one always sees oneself as the servant and instrument of guru and Kṛṣṇa, surrendering mind, body, soul, and words unto them.

And when successful, the devotee always offers the credit to guru and Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda is the perfect example: whenever anyone praised him, he offered that credit to his Guru Mahārāja.

I am not worthy of any one of the words spoken by you but all of them are due to my Spiritual Master Who was so kind to me. In fact I am a worthless person because my Spiritual Master ordered me to take up this work in 1922 but I did not carry his order until 1958, when I was obliged to carry out His order by His arrangement only. This means although I was not very enthusiastic to carry out His order He forced me circumstantially to accept it. So this is His special mercy upon me and I always think about this with gratitude to this exalted personality coming directly from Vaikuṅṭha World and we had the great fortune to meet Him. I think that is the only credit on our part that we happened to meet Him by some “*ajñāta-sukṛti*” or unknown auspicious activities. He is so kind upon me that when I came to your country, where I was completely unknown, He sent to me some good souls like you unsolicited. So I accept you all as assistants or representatives of my Guru Mahārāja Who is still helping me because I am so feeble and unworthy. [letter to Hayagrīva dāsa, January 1, 1970]

The kindly words that you have used in this connection are very much pleasing, but all the credit goes to my Guru Mahārāja. He asked me to take up this job as soon as I met Him in 1922; unfortunately I was so worthless that I delayed the matter until 1965, but He is so kind that by force He engaged me in His service; and because I am very much worthless, therefore He has sent me so many of His nice representatives—the beautiful American boys and girls like you. I am so much obliged to you that you are all helping me in the discharge of my duties towards my Spiritual Master, although I was so much reluctant to execute it. After all, we are the eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa, and by the Divine Will of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura we are now combined together, although originally we are born in different parts of the world, unknown to one another. [letter to Candanācārya dāsa, December 3, 1970]

I have no credit. It is all the blessings of guru and Vaiṣṇava, that’s all. I have no credit. I do not know how things are happening, because I am not at all bona fide position. But it is truly *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*. [Room conversation, Vṛndāvana, January 2, 1977]





— Appendix One —
Example of a Street Talk by Indradyumna Mahārāja

“Thank you for staying here and listening to this beautiful singing here today. Did you all like it? We heard that the people of this town love to do three things. We heard that the people of this town love to sing. How many of you love to sing? Raise your hands in the air. We heard the people of this town love to dance. Who likes dancing? Oh, many of you like to dance. And we heard one other thing, the people of this town are famous all over the country because they very much like to eat. Oh, everyone is raising their hands. Some of you have two hands raised.

“Did all of you get one of the sweets that the ladies are distributing? Yes? How do you like them? Delicious aren’t they? No eggs, they don’t have any eggs at all. Why don’t they have any eggs? Who knows? That’s right, because Hare Kṛṣṇa people are vegetarian — no eggs, no meat and, no fish. Why are we vegetarian? Because we don’t like to eat dead bodies, yuk. Does anyone here know the other rules that Hare Kṛṣṇa’s follow? No gambling, that’s right, no intoxication, yes, anyone else? Yes, no illicit sex. Some of you must be thinking, ‘Oh, you poor Hare Kṛṣṇas, you must be so sad.’ But if you look at the faces of these boys and girls, they have such beautiful smiles, so they are getting a much greater happiness by singing this wonderful song composed of different names of God.

“Of course, God has many different names. As many different languages as there are in the world, and more, that many names God has. Just like the sun . . . The sun is called by different names in different languages of the word. Who knows what the French people call the sun? Raise your hands in the air, yes? That’s right, La Sol, and in Spanish? Oh, El Sol, and in India they call the sun Sūrya. But are the different people in different parts of the world talking about different suns? Who thinks there are different suns? Nobody, good. In the same way, different people in different parts of the world are not talking about different Gods. There is only one God. Some people call Him Allah, other people call Him Jehovah. And in India they call God by the names Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.

“So we invite you all to sing this song together with us. This very special song will bring peace and happiness to the whole world. How many people would like there to be peace in the world? Raise your hands. Oh, everybody. All right, so repeat, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa . . .”

“Now if you look at the person standing next to you, you will notice that they are smiling. You see, Hare Kṛṣṇa works. Now we are going to teach you the dance. Don’t be shy of the person standing next to you; they will also be dancing as well.

“This is Kṛṣṇa dāsa. He is an expert dancer, and he is going to show us a dance called the Swami step. Everyone put your hands in the air, and watch how he moves his feet. Follow — one, two, three, four . . . great! OK, now don’t forget to sing as well. If your hands get tired holding them in the air, then you can clap.”



— Appendix Two — Deities on Harināma-saṅkīrtana

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya-līlā* 7.82) we read:

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.

In his purport to this verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda comments that this statement means every village of the world and that this prediction is actually being fulfilled by the *saṅkīrtana* devotees who take the Deities on *harināma-saṅkīrtana* in procession:

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 Krishna Consciousness are now traveling from one village to another in the Western countries and are even carrying the Deity with them.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami permission to take Deities along with the *harināma-saṅkīrtana* procession.

Yes, you can take out the Deities in a cart for *saṅkīrtana*. [letter to Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, July 17, 1975]

He gives further instructions on how this service should be performed,

When the large Deities are installed, the small Deities should be worshipped as Vijaya-vigraha, which means this pair of Deities may go outside the temple in a small car as they have made in LA . . . This Vijaya-vigraha may be taken out with *saṅkīrtana* party, not always, but conveniently. [letter to Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, March 16, 1973]

Śrīla Prabhupāda also instructs,

[T]he system is that apart from the big Deity who is permanently situated in the main area of the temple, there is a set of smaller Deities which are taken in procession in the evening. In some temples it is the custom to hold a big procession in the evening with a band playing and a nice big umbrella over the Deities, who sit on decorated thrones on the cart or palanquin, which is carried by devotees. The Deities come out on to the street and travel in the neighborhood while the people of the neighborhood come out to offer *prasāda*. . . [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 6, “How to Discharge Devotional Service”]

In some countries people may be confused seeing Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees carrying Deities on a palanquin, and so as not to disturb the minds of the faithless it is better to worship the holy name in public without the Deities.



— Appendix Three — Drama Scripts

The Bird in the Cage by Sākṣi Gopāla dāsa

CAST: Narrator, Bird, Antique Dealer, Lady, Lady's Friends.
(Narrator reads the poem as actors act out the play.)

(1) Exquisitely the cage was wrought with pillars carved in jade
And perches made of ivory, all beautifully inlaid
With semiprecious stones and pearls that glittered in the light
Reflected off the marble floor—a truly royal sight.

(2) She saw it through the doorway as she passed by on the street—
Standing in the corner of the shop that sold antiques.
She went inside and asked the man, “That cage is very nice,
But tell me where it’s come from—and I want to know the price.”

(3) “The Queen of Sheba owned it once,” the man replied with haste.
“A very rare and fine antique for people who’ve got taste.
A bit of polish here and there will bring it up a treat—
But don’t forget the bird inside, he also needs to eat.”

(4) She took it home that very day and placed it in the hall,
Beside the walnut writing desk that stood against the wall.
It sparkled as the evening sun shone through the open door,
For she had washed and polished it until her arms were sore.
“Feed me! Feed me!” sang the bird. “Feed me please!” he cried—
But the lady only saw the cage and not the bird inside...

(5) That night when she lay down to sleep, she dreamt of royal cages,
The kind enjoyed by kings and queens and princes through the ages.
She dreamt of Chinese Mandarins, of Rajahs and of Sheiks—
But no one had a cage to match her newly found antique.

(6) When at last the sun arose she woke up from her sleep,
And though she wasn’t washed or dressed she ran to take a peep
And stood there in the hallway gazing at her new possession—
But didn’t hear the plaintive call, so great was her obsession.
“Feed me! Feed me!” called the bird. “Feed me please!” he cried—
But the lady only saw the cage and not the bird inside...

(7) She thought a party would be nice—in honor of the cage.
So, going through her address book, she went from page to page,
Inviting all the people whom she wanted to impress
To come for tea on Saturday— “*Repondez S’il Vous Plais.*”

(8) She hardly could contain herself while sending out the cards,
For thinking curtains would be nice, she purchased several yards



Of silk brocade to make the cage more beautiful than ever,
And stayed up sewing all night long, so great was her endeavor.

(9) On Thursday night she started making all the preparations—
From currant buns to angel cakes—in great anticipation
Of all the guests who said they'd come to see the new antique—
The Vicar, Mrs. Balderdash, and all her social clique.

(10) She cleaned the cage on Friday till it sparkled like a pin,
But never saw the starving bird who begged for food within.
And then—forgotten far too long—he tumbled from his perch,
Yet managed, with his dying breath, a final, feeble chirp—
“Feed me! Feed me!” gasped the bird. “Feed me please!” he cried—
And then, without another word, he breathed his last . . . and died.

(11) On Saturday she cleaned the cage and polished it with pride,
Quite unaware the bird was dead and lying there inside.
But by the time the doorbell rang the smell was growing strong.
She thought, “Although I've cleaned the cage, there's something very wrong!”

(12) In twos and threes the guests arrived and gathered in the hall,
Around the polished birdcage as it stood against the wall.
But all agreed it smelled so bad it really was absurd,
That only one with half a brain would fail to feed the bird.

(13) Shocked at her short-sightedness, they asked her why she'd never
Thought to give the bird some food, enquiring “Is it clever
To only see the cage and not the bird who lives within?
You've killed it with your negligence—it really is a sin.”

(14) “The cage, my dear, is very nice, as anyone can see,
And shouldn't be neglected by the likes of you and me,
But what a dreadful thing you've done—so foolish and absurd—
To think the cage is everything, and never feed the bird!”

(15) So great was her embarrassment she tried to run and hide,
But slipped upon the Persian rug and fell upon her side—
Into the antique birdcage which then toppled to the floor
And broke into a thousand pieces, some say even more.

(16) Exquisitely the cage was wrought with pillars carved in jade
And perches made of ivory, all beautifully inlaid
With semi-precious stones and pearl that glittered in the light,
Until it smashed upon the floor—no more a royal sight.

(17) For those who haven't understood, we'll leave you with a clue:
The pampered cage is flesh and bone, the woman really you
Who think this body all in all, who kill the soul inside,
And waste the chance of human life—misled by foolish pride.



The Drowning Man

A popular play for street theater.

CAST: Man, Wife, Social Worker, Narrator.

(A man is thrashing about on stage as if drowning in the water)

Man: Help! Help! Help! I'm drowning!!! Someone please save me! Help!

Wife: Oh, no! It's Marvin! Someone help him! Please! My husband is drowning!

(Social Worker appears on the scene.)

Social Worker: Don't worry, ma'am! I'll save that poor guy! I'm a social worker! Saving people is my business. Look, when people are hungry, they come to me! If they need a shirt on their backs, they come to me! If the sheriff throws them out on the street, they come to me! If they need a...

Wife: Please hurry—or it'll be too late!

(The Social Worker tears off his jacket, takes off his tie, takes off his shoes and "dives" into the imaginary lake. He "swims" over to the drowning man, grabs him and starts pulling him back to the "shore." The victim struggles, and the Social Worker subdues him with a punch. At this point, the drowning man slips out of his jacket, and the Social Worker "swims" back to land with the jacket. Upon reaching the shore the Social Worker yells:)

Social Worker: Everything's okay, ma'am! I told you I'd take care of him! Here he is, ma'am! I told you! I told you I'd save him!

Wife: Marvin? AAAAHHHHHH!!! You fool! You didn't save Marvin! You just saved his coat! (She cries and wails over the empty coat.)

Narrator: The moral of this story is that while a social worker can alleviate a person's material problems (or save his coat) he can't begin to help the real person living inside the body (the soul). Only by taking up a spiritual process can we do that. Then we can realize our spiritual nature and see the spiritual nature of others. In this age, the easiest and most recommended process of spiritual realization is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra:

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

A Fish Out of Water

by Kalakanṭha dāsa

CAST: Narrator, Big Fish, Little Fish, Māyā, Lola, Boss, Drug Pusher, Yogi.

Narrator: In the realm of illusion, there is almost only suffering. What little pleasure there may be is fleeting and temporary, like drops of water in the desert. The souls covered by the glaring illusory material energy forget their true identity and existence as if experiencing a dream, in which the four pillars of sinful life become prominent. Tormented by desires, the illusioned soul is forced to work unproductively like a beast of burden. He desperately seeks profit and pleasure through countless concocted methods. Therefore he feels frustrated at all times, like a fish out of water . . .

Once upon a time, in a part of the ocean near a beach resort, a perfectly ordinary fish came before the Biggest Fish of All and voiced his dissatisfaction.



(Little Fish swims over to Big Fish.)

Big Fish: Yes, Little Fish, what is it you want?

Little Fish: Pardon me, sir, but you see, lately I've been observing the humans on the beach and, well, they seem to be having such a good time that I've decide to go and join them . . .

Big Fish: So, you think they're having a good time! *(chuckles)* My dear Little Fish, it's not your nature to live on the land. But still, if you think they're having fun, go and join them. Just remember — you're always welcome back here!

(Little Fish pantomimes swimming up onto the beach. He finds he can't breathe. While he's gasping for breath, a mysterious woman appears.)

Māyā: Hello, Little Fish, my name is Māyā. My business is to give wayward fish like you a chance to enjoy pleasures on dry land. So, what is your heart's desire?

Fish: Lungs!! *(gasp)* . . . a human body *(gasp)* . . . *(Māyā waves her hand and Fish breathes easy. He stands up, looking at his hands and legs.)* Wow! Thanks, Māyā! Now I can go into the city and really have a great time!

Māyā: Sure, Fish, but everything costs money nowadays. Even a good-looking Fish like you has to work for a living. You work, then you spend your earnings on enjoyment.

Narrator: So, Fish got a job at the car wash. *(Fish pantomimes washing cars.)* It only paid \$1.75 an hour plus tips, but it sure felt good, he told himself, to be standing on his own two feet.

(Fish washes faster and faster until he starts to reel with exhaustion. Finally, he sits down, but his boss rushes over and in pantomime yells at him and pushes him back to work. He washes cars for a few minutes, then looks at his watch. It's quitting time. He throws down his tools and walks away, looking "burned out.")

Narrator: Then, one day at the beach, Fish met Lola.

(Fish and Lola run to each other as if in slow motion.)

Fish couldn't take his eyes off her. She was the most alluring woman he had ever seen. Sure enough, Fish fell for Lola hook, line, and sinker.

Fish: *(looking moonstruck)* Lola, I know this is sudden, but will you marry me?

Lola: Fish, I want to marry you more than anything else in the world, but not on \$87.50 a week. Goodbye, Fish. *(Lola exits. Fish is heartbroken.)*

Narrator: So, that very night, Fish enrolled in night school. He figured that if he obtained a degree in Marine Biology, he could land a really good job. He dove right into his studies.

(Fish studies until he is bleary-eyed.)

After a couple of years he was offered a job as manager of the car wash, but it would have meant longer hours and Fish couldn't afford to take the time away from his studies. After four years, he received his degree, but he was told that if he wanted a job he would have to go for his master's degree. This business of becoming happy was beginning to look more and more complicated.

(Fish scratches his head.)

After two more years, he got his master's degree — then they said that only a doctorate would do. Finally, after eight long years of working hard at the car wash during the day and studying long hours at night, the Little Fish got his Ph. D. He couldn't wait to get his first job!



(Fish approaches Boss with folded hands.)

But no matter how he pleaded and begged, the answer was always the same: “Sorry, there are no jobs available.” He didn’t give up his studies, however. In his spare time he would study the adaptability of marine organisms to industrial waste water. In due time, he got a raise at the car wash. With his pay raise, he rented a modest home. Then, at long last, he invited Lola to share it with him as his wife.

Lola: Fish! How could you ask me to live in a dump like this!?

Narrator: She flatly refused to marry him until he could find a nicer place. He couldn’t believe it: after eight years of struggle — Lola still wasn’t satisfied. Frustrated, Fish took counsel with his friend, Māyā.

(Māyā enters.)

Māyā: Fish, nothing great was ever accomplished in this world without a struggle. Besides, if you want to please Lola, all you really need is a bank loan.

Fish: A bank loan? Of course, why didn’t I think of that before? At last, I’ve discovered the key to happiness in life — good credit!

Narrator: For once, Lola seemed to be pleased with Little Fish. She actually smiled when he showed her the new house that he had obtained a thirty-year mortgage on. And, when he took her inside, she at long last agreed to be his bride. The next few months were wonderful. Of course, he had to put in a few extra hours each day at the car wash to make ends meet.

(Fish washes cars rapidly until he’s exhausted.)

Before long, he realized that marriage was not all sweetness and light:

Lola: Fish, if you don’t get a new car, I’m leaving!

Fish: But Lola, you know we can’t afford a new car!

Lola: If you can’t afford a new car, then you can’t afford me.

Narrator: Fortunately, Fish was able to get a second job the very next day.

(Boss enters. He looks mad.)

Of course, the new schedule took more than a little getting used to.

Boss: Fish! You’re thirty seconds late for work — no break for you this morning. Now, pick up these boxes and put them over there. Pick up those boxes and move them over here. When you’re done with that I want you to pick up a shovel and start digging. I’ll tell you when to stop. We’re going to fill it up again with the same dirt.

(Fish works frantically.)

Fish, you’re the slowest sucker I’ve ever met. You better not be late tomorrow or I’ll fire you, do you hear?

Fish: Oh, yes sir! I mean *no* sir! Thank you, sir!

(Boss leaves. Fish works with greater and greater effort until he collapses.)

Narrator: Fortunately, Fish could always count on beautiful Lola for encouragement. But one night, he began to sense that the magic had disappeared from their marriage. He sat down to dinner, but felt sick when he saw what she put on the table.

(Fish drags his feet over to the table and slumps into chair. Lola enters in a bathrobe and puts a plate before him.)

Fish: Fish!? Lola, I told you never to serve me fish. Those big eyes remind me of my mother. Lola, how could you be so cruel?

Lola: Fish, I'm tired of sneaking around. You know those bikers down the block? Tomorrow, I'm going to move in with them.

Fish: But Lola, those men can't give you financial security.

Lola: Fish, money isn't everything.

(Lola leaves. Fish looks even more "burned out.")

Narrator: Fish couldn't understand it. He had given Lola everything! How could he go on living without her? In desperation, he turned to his old friend, Māyā.

(Māyā enters dressed as a bartender. She sets up the table like a club's table as she talks.)

Māyā: Such setbacks are common in this world, Fish. It's just luck. All you really need is something to help you forget the pain.

(She leaves and Fish drinks heavily.)

Narrator: But, no matter what the Little Fish did, he couldn't forget Lola. It all seemed so unfair. He loved her with all his heart, but she didn't care for him at all. The band at the club kept playing the same old song:

("As Time Goes By," as sung by Louis Armstrong...)

You must remember this — a fish is just a fish.
No matter how he tries,
He'll never get his wish, as time goes by . . .

(Music. Drug Pusher enters.)

Pusher: Hi Fish! My name's Angel. Angel Dust. Friend, you look like you're trying to forget something. I've got just what you want. It costs only \$40, but I'm going to give you the first experience free. Now, just sit back and relax. This will only hurt a little.

(Pusher injects drug into Fish's arm.)

Narrator: All of a sudden, Fish felt very strange. His heart was pounding, his ears were buzzing, and just when he thought he'd forgotten her, there was Lola. He turned to tell Angel, but Angel wasn't there. He told himself not to panic; after all, none of it was real. He felt his self-control begin to crack. He remembered how Lola liked to eat fish. Then, just as fear began to overwhelm him, he had the most profound sensation that he was different from his body.

Fish: But if I'm not this body, then who am I???

Narrator: In a flash of drug-enhanced realization, an answer came to him.

Fish: I am beyond any material conception, luminous like the sun—eternal, full of bliss and knowledge, and completely transcendental. I know everything. I'm older than the oldest, smaller than the smallest. I am the controller. I am the maintainer. I'm completely free to do anything I want to do. I'M GOD! I'M GOD! I'M GOD!

(Fish swoons and awakens some time later feeling sick. He looks at his watch. He wonders where everyone went. He feels miserable.)

Māyā: Hey Fish, you really know how to party!

Fish: Māyā? Māyā . . . for a little while . . . I was GOD! Now I'm not feeling it anymore. How can I . . . I want to be God all the time!

Māyā: Fish, I've got just the place for you. You should go down to the Center for Human Enlightenment and Transcendence. It's known as C.H.E.A.T for short.

(Māyā leads Fish over to the "yoga teacher.")

Fish: Gurudeva, how can I be God all of the time?

Yogi: Your enlightenment will cost \$400.

Fish: That's too much money!

Yogi: It's nothing. When you become one with everything, you will also become one with those 400 bucks. In this way, nothing is lost. Besides, we promise to show you God in the very first lesson. We take Visa and MasterCard, but we don't take American Express.

Fish: Oh, well, that's different. I'll put it on this MasterCard, here.

Yogi: I never touch money. My beautiful assistant here will handle the transaction. I will handle her later and the circle will be complete!

(Fish gives her the credit card.)

Yogi: Now, close your eyes and chant OOOOOOMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM. The first symptom of God realization is a vision of the White Light.

(Yogi hits Fish in head with a mallet.)

Now, open your eyes!

(Yogi fires a camera's flashbulb in Fish's face.)

Now, do you see the Light?

Fish: I see the light!

Yogi: Now you are fit to understand God realization. God realization cannot be achieved by artificial repression of the senses. Sense control is necessary, but it must be developed by natural methods. For example, to control the mind it is necessary to use intoxicants, because intoxicants quickly relieve the mind of all petty frustrations. Next, the tongue must be satisfied at all costs (gorges on grapes) otherwise it might disturb our concentration. In the same way, our natural sex desire requires thorough satisfaction

(Yogi looks luridly at women in audience.)

Fish: But Swami, I've tried all these things, and they just made me miserable.

Yogi: Fish, this path is not easy. You must keep trying.

Fish: Wait a minute . . . you're . . . you're just like me and everyone else in this crazy world. You wanted so badly to be happy here that when you couldn't find any happiness in temporary, material things you ended up by simply fooling yourself!

(turns to audience)

And Māyā has been helping me to fool myself in various ways ever since I've come to the land of humans! But now, for the first time I can see that this dry land is nothing but a place of misery. Why did I ever leave the ocean? I guess the Big Fish was right after all. He told me that I could never be happy out of water. And he told me that I could always return. So, that's what I'm going to do!

(Fish walks slowly towards the ocean as a soft kīrtana plays.)

Narrator: The moral of the story is that just as Little Fish belongs in the water, so we belong in the spiritual world. Kṛṣṇa (or God) is our best friend and well-wisher, and He wants us to come back and live with Him in the spiritual world. The Little Fish represents the spirit soul — part and parcel of Kṛṣṇa. We are all spirit souls, but, like fish out of water, we have abandoned our real home to try to find happiness in this material world. Māyā is Lord Kṛṣṇa's bewildering energy. Her service to Kṛṣṇa is to test the fallen spirit souls so that no insincere rascals can enter the spiritual world. In essence she asks, "Have you become a serious devotee of Kṛṣṇa, or do you want something else?" According to our desires, she leads us to believe that we can find happiness separate from Kṛṣṇa. Meat-eating, intoxication, illicit sex, and gambling are some examples of the "bait" that Māyā uses to attract our minds to stay in the material world.

Fortunately, for those who want to go back to the spiritual world, there are God conscious alternatives to Māyā's allurements. For example, instead of killing animals needlessly we can enjoy delicious vegetarian food that has been offered to Kṛṣṇa. Instead of taking dangerous drugs to induce temporary highs, we can stay enlivened naturally by chanting the Lord's holy names and serving Him. Instead of unrestrained sex life, we can lead a regulated family life and raise Kṛṣṇa conscious children. And instead of wasting time with watered-down impersonal philosophies, we can associate with devotees of Kṛṣṇa and hear the profound and substantive philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Choosing Kṛṣṇa conscious alternatives will give us the chance to return to our real home and rejoin Kṛṣṇa at the conclusion of this life. If we wish, we can remain in this material world for many more births, but like a fish out of water, we won't really be happy. The first step in becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious is to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra:

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare

Let's bring out the Hare Kṛṣṇa chanters now and all sing it together. Try it yourself and taste the happiness it brings. For more information, just ask one of the devotees later during the festival and be sure to pick up a book or two on your way home. Thank you.

(Kīrtana starts, actors bow.)

The Frog in the Well

CAST: Frog 1, Frog 2.

Frog 1: Ah-h-h. What a wonderful well I have! Who is more fortunate than I am? I have my walls and my water, my walls and my water, my walls and my water, walls, water... waw... waw... waw.

(As Frog 1 turns in all directions, praising the beauty of his well, his babble degenerates into the mere croaking of a frog.)

Frog 2: *(excited—hopping into the well)* My dear friend! Oh, my dear friend!

Frog 1: Hello. Well, where have you been?

Frog 2: I have just been to see the great ocean! And it's so-o-o big—you can't imagine!



Frog 1: What? What is this great ocean? It couldn't possibly be as big as my well, could it?!

Frog 2: Oh, it's much bigger.

Frog 1: Come on.

Frog 2: Yeah!

Frog 1: Is it TWICE as big as my well?

Frog 2: MUCH bigger.

Frog 1: Is it FIVE times as big as my well?

Frog 2: Much, MUCH bigger.

Frog 1: Is it TEN times as big as my well?

Frog 2: It's much bigger than that.

Frog 1: Is it a HUNDRED times as big as my well?

Frog 2: My dear friend. The great ocean is so vast that you can't possibly imagine it. Why don't you go and see for yourself?

Frog 1: Why should I go? (*irritated, begins to puff himself up*) Is it—this big?

Frog 2: No, no. BIGGER.

Frog 1: THIS BIG?

Frog 2: NO, NO, NO.

Frog 1: (*puffing himself up even larger*) IS IT THIS BIG-G-G?!

Frog 2: No, No . . . oh NO!

Frog 1: IS . . . IT . . . THIS . . . B . . . I . . . I . . . (*Frog 1 explodes and dies as a balloon pops offstage.*)

(Purport: Little talk about how Śrīla Prabhupāda compared the modern scientists to such frogs because they foolishly try to understand what is beyond their own experience.)

The Scholar and The Boatman

(Adapted from an essay in *Back To Godhead* magazine, Volume 11, No. 11)

CAST: Scholar, Boatman

(*The Scholar is in a huff as he approaches the Boatman by the side of a river.*)

Scholar: Boatman! Take me across!

Boatman: Yes, sir. Climb aboard!

Scholar: Boatman, the water is becoming rather choppy. While you're out here, have you ever thought about the relationship between total torque and cross-current impact?

Boatman: No, sir, I can't say that I have.

Scholar: For one thing, a more streamlined apparatus should likely yield a greater mechanical advantage. But then, I don't suppose you've studied much about physics, have you?

Boatman: None at all, sir. I just row this boat across the river.

Scholar: *Hmmm.* Boatman, it appears that you've wasted 25% of your life.

(*They proceed on for a few moments.*)

Scholar: Boatman, have you ever looked into statistics and probability? I'm thinking here of Gaussian or possibly Poisson distribution. With all these dark clouds coming in over us, do you have any idea what a graph of storm probability would look like?

Boatman: No, sir, I never have studied whatever it is you're talking about. I don't know what you mean.

Scholar: You mean you've never studied advanced mathematics? Ah, then, my dear fellow, you should know that you've surely wasted 50% of your life.



Boatman: You're probably right, sir. I just row this boat across the river. By the way, there seems to be a big storm brewing.

Scholar: Tell me, Boatman, do you know anything about gauging deviations from the STP—standard temperature and pressure—to forecast wind velocity in a storm center?

Boatman: I'm sorry, sir, I really don't.

Scholar: You're a bit dense, Boatman, aren't you? Are you telling me you've never learned anything about meteorology?

Boatman: I guess I haven't, sir.

Scholar: Well, then, you've wasted a full 75% of your life! What do you have to say for yourself?

Boatman: I just row this boat across the river . . . say, hold on tight! It's really raining and blowing hard!

(The boat capsizes. The Boatman swims and starts heading for shore while the Scholar flails about, thrusting about with his umbrella handle but hooking nothing.)

Scholar: Boatman!

Boatman: Sir! We'll have to swim the rest of the way!

Scholar: But . . . I can't swim!

Boatman: Then it looks like you've wasted 100% of your life!

(The Boatman swims on while the Scholar drowns helplessly.)

Moral of the story: Whatever else we may learn in our life's journey, there's one thing we all need to know: how to cross safely to the spiritual world when our material body "capsizes." Therefore, while the West's technological science can analyze material things and perhaps make our voyage a little more comfortable, we need the East's spiritual science to make it successful.

The Wrong Bank Account

CAST: George, Frank the Teller, Lady Teller.

SCENE ONE

George: *(enters bank)* Good afternoon, sir. I'd like to open up an account in your bank.

Teller: Very well. Your name, please.

George: Millhouse, George Millhouse is the name.

Teller: Very well, Mr. Millhouse. And here's your account number.

George: And here's my deposit. Gotta think ahead now, you know, save for the future. I'm going to get married soon, send the kids to school, and buy that house in the suburbs. "Think Big" is my motto.

Teller: Glad to have your account, Mr. Millhouse. And just to show our appreciation, here's a little something from us to you.

George: Well, thanks a lot. Say, it's a . . . it's a crossword puzzle! I always wanted one of those. Well, I've got to be back at the office. I'll see you next week.

Teller: Good afternoon, Mr. Millhouse.

George: Good afternoon. *(Both exit.)*

SCENE TWO

(It is seven years later. Both men enter dressed differently.)

Teller: Good afternoon, George. On time, as usual.



George: Yes, Frank, it's been seven years now and I haven't missed a week yet. And here's my deposit.

Teller: Wel-l-l!

George: Yeah, I got a raise today. But it's all going in your bank, Frank, it's all going in your bank. I've really got to think of the future now, you know. The kids will be going to college before you know it. And the wife . . . well, she's got to have that fur coat. And the mortgage payments on the house—they have to be met. Come to think of it, I've been planning on getting a second job, maybe work nights.

Teller: Well, I like a man with your ambition, George. You really work hard for your money. But don't worry. It'll all come back to you one day. You'll see. Well, here's your book.

George: Thanks a lot, Frank. Say, that interest is really piling up. That's really nice. (*looks at watch*) Wow! It's really getting late. I gotta get back to work. Say, listen, Frank, I'll see you next week.

Teller: Good afternoon, George.

George: Good afternoon, Frank.

SCENE THREE

(It is twenty-five years later. Both men are middle-aged, with paunches.)

George: Good afternoon, Frank. On time as usual. Haven't missed a week in twenty-five years. (*counts out deposit*) Here you are.

Teller: Thanks a lot, George. By the way, how are the kids these days?

George: I don't see much of them these days. The boy is away on business again, and the girls, they don't write very often. Well, that's life, I suppose. Say, isn't that a . . . isn't that a brand new . . . ?

Teller: It's a gold watch. The company gave it to me for all these years on the job. Why, I'm going to retire soon. Gonna get that little place down in Miami. I'm going to enjoy life.

George: (*starts coughing convulsively*)

Teller: Say, maybe you'd better retire yourself soon, George. Your health hasn't been very good lately. Two jobs must really be rough on you now.

George: Oh, I'll be all right. I'll be all right! I'm going to take that trip around the world like I always wanted to. Besides, if I retire now, what's your bank going to do for money? (*Both laugh. George starts coughing again.*) Well, good afternoon, Frank.

Teller: Good afternoon, George.

SCENE FOUR

(George is an old man. Frank the teller is no longer there, replaced by a brash lady.)

George: Good afternoon, Frank. Am I on time today?

Teller: Frank? Frank? Do you need new glasses, mister?

George: Why, you're not Frank. Where's Frank? I always do business with him.

Teller: You mean that old guy? He dropped dead three days ago. Had a stroke on the way to work.

George: Frank? Dead? I can't believe it. He was going to retire next week.

Teller: (*indifferent*) Well, what are you going to do?

George: Frank! Dead! Just like that. My God . . . Say, wait a minute. Listen. Listen here, young lady! I want to close my account now. I want to withdraw everything—everything!

Teller: What's your number?

George: (*trying to see the small print on his bank book*) It's 9 . . . 9-0 . . . 9-0-3 . . .

Teller: (*snatches the book from George's hands*) 9-0-3-3.

George: Yeah, 9-0-3-3. Poor Frank, he just made that last down payment on that house in Miami. He was going to move in a week and now—finished. I'm getting old, too. I've got to take that trip around the world now. I've got to enjoy life!

Teller: Hold on, mister. Something's wrong here!

George: What's that? What's wrong?



Teller: Your number's not 9-0-3-3. You're 9-0-3-5! (*Teller starts laughing hysterically.*) All these years you've been putting your money into the wrong bank account!

George: What? What? Now, you look here. I've been depositing money in this bank now for fifty years. Do you hear me? Fifty years! And you mean to tell me that all these years I've been putting my money, my money in the wrong, in the wrong . . . wrong . . . (*George keels over and dies instantly of a heart attack.*)

(Actors preach how the analogy of the wrong bank account refers to the materialists' investing so much time and energy accumulating material so-called treasures that are ultimately ripped away by death. But if you steadily make deposits into the spiritual bank account by rendering devotional service, your treasures last eternally.)

— Appendix 4 — Temple Kīrtana

Street Kīrtana Compared to Temple Kīrtana

There is a distinction between street *kīrtana* and temple *kīrtana*. In street chanting, liberties may be taken to make the chanting more attractive to the public, such as additional instrumentation, dance choreography, and attractive dress. The same applies to festivals and Sunday Feast *kīrtanas*. For regular temple *kīrtanas*, however, the need to attract the public is absent, and thus temple *kīrtanas* are stricter when it comes to melodies, instrumentation, and so on.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave his disciples many oral instructions on *kīrtana*. This manual has focused on directives for *harināma-saṅkīrtana* found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, letters, and transcribed conversations. However, in this section on temple *kīrtana*, we include a combination of Śrīla Prabhupāda's written and oral instructions. Thus, some of the themes covered earlier in the manual will be revisited in the context of temple *kīrtana* and Śrīla Prabhupāda's oral teachings.

“Sweet and melodious”

According to two of Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples, on more than one occasion he instructed that *kīrtana* means “sweet and melodious.” Tejiyas Prabhu recounts:

We had a *kīrtana* at the Rāma-līlā grounds, 1976 March, and Dīnanātha was leading, and tens of thousands were attending and chanting. After the program Śrīla Prabhupāda and I were alone in the back tent waiting for his servant and the car. As you know, he would often ask rhetorical questions, and he asked me, “So, what did you think of the *kīrtana*?” Understanding this was just a lead-in to his giving me an instruction, I answered with a bland “It was OK.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda's definition to me then was as follows: “No, it was not nice. It was clanging and banging. *Kīrtana* should be sweet and melodious. Come let us go to the ashram and have *kīrtana*.”

And so we went — Śrīla Prabhupāda, his servant, Baradrāj, and myself. Except for his servant, the three of us sat in his room and Baradrāj played harmonium on the request of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and we had a long *kīrtana*. . . . On Śrīla Prabhupāda's signal, the *kīrtana* ended. He looked at me, smiling, shaking his head a little, and said, “So . . . sweet and melodious.” And then he moved on with the rest of preaching and hearing. I had heard him say, and heard that he also said, sometimes stopping *kīrtana*, “No screaming and shouting.” [remembrance by Tejiyas dāsa, 12 Nov 2002]

Using the same terms, Harikeśa Swami recounts,

We were chanting *maṅgala āratika* within the room of Śrīla Prabhupāda each morning. Some-



times Prabhupāda would appreciate the singing and sometimes not. Later on in the morning, after a particularly bad *kīrtana*, Prabhupāda called me into his room and complained about the singing. He said, again, more or less, “I did not like the singing in the morning. The morning melody must be sung throughout the *maṅgala āratika*, and no other melody should be sung. It should be sung sweetly and melodiously, like this . . .”, and he proceeded to sing the first verse of the *samsāra* prayer in a very sweet and melodious voice, with perfect inflection and musical accent. Prabhupāda was very insistent that the singing should be done in that way only. [Harikeśa Swami, *Vaiṣṇava Journal*, 1988]

Appropriate Prayers n vs. Concocted Mantras

Throughout his teachings, Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that only mantras given by our *sampradāya-ācāryas* should be chanted. Among these, he gave special emphasis to the chanting of the Pañca-tattva mantra and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasized this principle repeatedly:

These prayers [offered by Brahmā to Lord Viṣṇu] were not ordinary concocted prayers. Prayers must be approved by Vedic literature, as indicated in this verse by the words *daivibhir girbhiḥ*. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we do not allow any song that has not been approved or sung by bona fide devotees. We cannot allow cinema songs to be sung in the temple. We generally sing two songs. One is *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*. This is bona fide. It is always mentioned in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and it is accepted by the *ācāryas*. The other, of course, is the *mahā-mantra* — Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. We may also sing the songs of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and Locana dāsa Ṭhākura, but these two songs — “*śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya*” and the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* — are sufficient to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead, although we cannot see Him. Seeing the Lord is not as important as appreciating Him from the authentic literature or the authentic statements of authorized persons. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.5.25, purport]

In our temple, strictly Hare Krishna chanting should be given more importance. There is no harm in this mantra you have heard, but it is not very important. There are many such common songs composed by common devotees out of sentiment. But our principle is to stick to the authorities, and always remember that Hare Krishna is the prime authorized mantra. [letter to Mālatī dāsī, 28 January 1969]

There are *sahajiyās* who, not knowing the importance of the Pañca-tattva, concoct their own slogans, such as *bhaja nitāi gaura, rādhe śyāma, japa hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma* or *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma śrī-rādhe govinda*. Such chants may be good poetry, but they cannot help us to go forward in devotional service. In such chants there are also many discrepancies, which need not be discussed here. Strictly speaking, when chanting the names of the Pañca-tattva, one should fully offer his obeisances: *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*. By such chanting one is blessed with the competency to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* without offense. When chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, one should also chant it fully: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. One should not foolishly adopt any of the slogans concocted by imaginative devotees. If one actually wants to derive the effects of chanting, one must strictly follow the great *ācāryas*. This is confirmed in the *Mahābhārata: mahā-jano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*. “The real path of progress is that which is traversed by great *ācāryas* and authorities.” [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.168, purport]

We cannot follow an upstart, manufacturing some song. What is authorized song, we shall sing. [lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 13, 1972]



Authorized songs means the songs which were sung or composed by self-realized Acaryas. It is an injunction in the Vaiṣṇava regulations that unauthorized songs or statements should never be heard. The comparison is given that milk, although very nutritious food, if it is touched by the tongue of a serpent, it acts like poison. [letter to Śyāmasundara dāsa, 25 February 1970]

One should chant the bona fide songs received from the disciplic succession. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that the chanting is powerful when one follows the disciplic succession (*evam paramparā-prāptam imam rājarṣayo viduḥ*). Manufacturing many ways of chanting will never be effective. However, chanting the song or the narration left by the previous *ācāryas* (*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*) is extremely effective, and this process is very easy. [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.18, purport]

So, in this way if we practice according to the prescription, *śāstra-vidhi*, that is wanted. Not that without *śāstra-vidhi*, you can become liberated. That is not possible. *Yaḥ śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya vartate kāma-kārataḥ na sa siddhim avāpnoti*, Kṛṣṇa says. And if you give up *śāstra-vidhim* and act according to your whims, then there is no question of perfection. *Na sa siddhim avāp..., na sukham*, like that. The *śāstra-vidhim* [*indistinct*]. Rūpa Gosvāmī also advised like that:

*śruti-smṛti-purānādi- pañcarātra-vidhim vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate*

There are so many they have invented. Just like Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is prescribed in the *śāstras*, and they have invented so many. Although there is the name of the Supreme Lord, still you have to follow the *śāstra*. If you say Rāma Rāma Rāma, Rādhe Rādhe Rādhe, Kṛṣṇa, there are so many mentioned. That is also name, but you have to follow the *śāstra*. *Śāstra* says:

*Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*

You have to take that. Not that you can say *nitāi-gaura rādhe-śyāma, hare kṛṣṇa hare rāma*, no. Why? Is there any in the *śāstra*? No, you have invented. What is the value of your invention? You are not perfect. But they like that “It is my guru, I have got some followers, I invent some type of chanting.” This is nonsense. You must follow, *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*. You cannot invent. [lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 2, 1976]

For worshiping the Deities in Bombay, including Sītā-Rāma, there is absolutely no change in worship. Adopt the same method as in our Vṛndāvana center, simply with 3 *pūjāris* just like in Vṛndāvana. They are all Viṣṇu-tattva, Rāmacandra, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gaura-Nitāi. No additional *kīrtanas*, simply do exactly as in Vṛndāvana. [letter to Surabhīr-abhipālayantam Swami, 7 June 1976]

Caranāravindam: Prabhupāda, you wrote in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that the Caitanya *mahā-mantra*, *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda*, there is no offense to that. And so therefore in the Kali-yuga it is actually more beneficial . . .

Prabhupāda: Offense is that what is spoken by the *ācāryas*, if you do not follow, that is offense. *Guror avajñā*. That is offense. To chant Gaura-Nitāi is no offense. But if our previous gurus have chanted *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita-* . . . why should we go beyond that? That is *guror avajñā*. Even there is no *aparādha*, because guru, Kavirāja Gosvāmī, has sung like that and my guru has sung, we should follow that. We should not make any deviation. That is *guror avajñā śruti-śāstra-nindanam*. *Nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhiḥ*. So it comes to be one of the items of the *daśa-vidha-aparādha*. *Guror avajñā*.



Caranāravindam: Should we consider that it's more beneficial for people to hear *bhaja śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya . . .*

Prabhupāda: Why? There is already . . . Why should you go here and there? There is already *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda*. Why you are so anxious to go out of it?

Caranāravindam: No, I'm saying is it more beneficial for people to hear that mantra than the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra? Is it more beneficial for people to hear the Pañca-tattva mantra than the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*?

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. You are going to Hare Kṛṣṇa through Nitāi-Gaura. *Nitāiyer karuṇā habe braje rādhā-kṛṣṇa pābe*. The principle is, Don't try to manufacture. Because you are not experienced. So what nonsense you will manufacture, that will be offensive. Better go on, the simple thing.

[Room conversation, September 6, 1976, Vṛndāvana, India]

Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction not to manufacture new mantras includes not adding anything to the mantras given by our *ācāryas*. Bhakti Cāru Mahārāja recounts Śrīla Prabhupāda's response to a devotee's adding the word *bhaja* to the beginning of the *maha-mantra*:

One devotee was leading the *guru-pūjā kīrtana* in a very ecstatic way. Then all of a sudden this devotee started to sing "*bhaja* Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare . . ." and Prabhupāda became very, very angry and stopped the *kīrtana*. Everyone was so ecstatic that they were jumping three to four feet high, but then Prabhupāda just shouted "Stop that!" and the *kīrtana* immediately stopped. Prabhupāda asked him, "Where did you learn this '*bhaja* Hare Kṛṣṇa'? Did you ever hear me singing '*bhaja* Hare Kṛṣṇa?'" And Prabhupāda just chastised him for about five minutes. He was very heavy. He told him, "Never add anything to the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and never subtract anything from the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. Sing the *mahā-mantra* just as it is." Prabhupāda also explained that "This is how deviation starts. Somebody puts in his own concocted thing, and then somebody else comes and adds some more concoction to it, and with time it becomes a complete distortion." [Bhakti Cāru Swami, personal remembrance]

Singing "Haribol"

Śrīla Prabhupāda was also displeased when the chanting of *haribol* dominated the *kīrtana* in the temple, as Śrīta Kīrti Prabhu and Bhakti Vikāsa Mahārāja recount:

March 18, 1973, ISKCON Māyāpur Candrodaya Mandir: During ISKCON's first international festival in Māyāpur, many devotees demonstrated how they had become influenced by the Bengali form of *kīrtana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed some displeasure about the chanting of so many different mantras. "They can chant their 'Nitāi Gaura, Hari Bols'," he said, "but I will chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and go back home, back to Godhead." Perhaps if we had understood the translation of "Haribol," then we would have known what to do. Śrīla Prabhupāda enjoyed chanting the *mahā-mantra*. [Śrīta-kīrti dāsa, *Śrīla Prabhupāda Uvāca*]

Bhakti Vikāsa Swami: On another occasion, during Māyāpura festival of 1976, devotees were chanting "Haribol, Haribol, Haribol, Haribol!" again and again in a huge, exuberant *kīrtana*. After several minutes of this, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent word down from his room to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that we are not the Haribol *sampradāya*. [Hari-śauri dāsa, *A Transcendental Diary*, Vol. 4, p. 361]

After singing the standard prayers and the *mahā-mantra*, Lokanātha Mahārāja began chanting "*gaura-nityānanda bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-śrī-advaita bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-śrī-gadādhara bol, haribol, haribol . . .*" with a lot of emphasis on the response of *haribol, haribol*.



Śrīla Prabhupāda suddenly signaled him from the stage to stop it; he apparently didn't like it, although he didn't say why. [Hari-śauri dāsa, *A Transcendental Diary* 4, p. 282]

Singing “Jaya Rādhe”

Śrīla Prabhupāda also did not appreciate it when his disciples introduced the singing of Jaya Rādhe into the *kīrtana*,

The next morning I led the *kīrtana* in his room, duplicating the melodious style which he had shown me the day before [for the morning tune]. Prabhupāda was pleased and seemed to enjoy the *kīrtana*. Unfortunately, I fell victim to that demon within the mind and started to speculate a couple of “Jaya Rādhes” at the end of the *kīrtana*. This was one of the bigger mistakes made by me at that time. Although there is nothing wrong with “Jaya Rādhe”, Prabhupāda simply didn't want us to chant it. He once explained that Śukadeva Gosvāmī did not feel himself qualified to chant the name of Rādhā in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and therefore only indicated Her name with the word *ārādhana* while describing the topmost *gopī* friend of Kṛṣṇa.

Anyway, to continue the story, I had just started to chant Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's holy name within Vṛndāvana *dhāma*, Her beloved Lord's abode, within the presence of Her most intimate devotee, during the most auspicious hours of the day, when Her most intimate devotee looked at me with eyes blazing like fire and desirous of initiating my immediate destruction. Voice choked and gagging, I ended the *kīrtana* immediately without further formalities, never again to make the same mistake. Prabhupāda never ended *kīrtanas* with various extra mantras, especially not “Jaya Rādhe,” so why should I? [Harikeśa Swami, *The Vaiṣṇava Journal*, 1988]

Singing “Jaya Gurudeva”

A few devotees recount how Śrīla Prabhupāda also objected to devotees chanting “Jaya Gurudeva” in *kīrtanas*, explaining that it is impersonal.

February 1977, Gaura Pūrṇimā. Before the first *maṅgala-ārati*, Pañca-draviḍa Swami had been chanting *bhaja bhakata vatsala śrī-gaura-hari* for the *maṅgala* offering, before the *ārati*. During the *maṅgala-ārati kīrtana* someone had been chanting—for Prabhupāda, of course—“Jaya Gurudeva.” And Bhavānanda came down after *maṅgala-ārati*, and during the announcements he brought two messages from Prabhupāda, because Prabhupāda was just on the floor upstairs and had heard. So Prabhupāda said, firstly, you don't sing *Bhoga Ārati* for the *maṅgala-ārati* sweet offering; secondly, you do not sing “Jaya Gurudeva.” The word *gurudeva* is impersonal; it can mean anyone. If you want to indicate *your* spiritual master, you call him by name. So it is “Jaya Prabhupāda.” [Kṛpamaya dāsa, as communicated by Jayādvaita Swami]

He objected to the usage of “Jaya Gurudeva,” since it was a direct insertion into our movement from the *sahajiyā sampradāyas* in Bengal, who always say things like “Jaya Guru,” “Jaya Gurudeva,” without referring to any particular guru. Prabhupāda criticized this as impersonal and did not want it chanted by his disciples. “Who is the guru?” he would challenge. [Harikeśa Swami, *The Vaiṣṇava Journal*, 1988]

One thing, on the invitation card you have written “All Glories to Our Guru Mahārāja.” This is impersonalism. As soon as we offer obeisances to guru, the name should be there. We are strictly personalists. The *sahajiyās*, they write “Glories to Guru.” Why you are learning this impersonalism, who has taught you? Daily I am offering obeisances to my guru by vibrating his real name, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī; otherwise it is impersonal. [letter to Bhavānanda dāsa, 14 July 72]



Prayers in Temple Ārati Kīrtanas

Śrīla Prabhupāda also instructed his disciples on which songs they should sing for each *kīrtana* and how many times to sing each verse.

More or less his [Śrīla Prabhupāda's] exact words were: Now I want to establish the standards for *kīrtana*. You may chant as follows; for *maṅgala-ārati*, the *saṁsāra-dāva* prayer, then *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya*, then Hare Kṛṣṇa, nothing else. For the *guru-pūjā*, “the guru-prayer” [that's what he called it], *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya*, Hare Kṛṣṇa, nothing else. For evening *ārati*, the *gaura-ārati* song, *śrī-Kṛṣṇa-caitanya*, and hare Kṛṣṇa, nothing else. For all *āratis* this basic pattern should be followed. The chanting of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya* mantra should only be for three times, not more. No one should sing a *bhajan* unless all the devotees know what the song means. No one should sing songs in Vṛndāvana temple that are in languages which the people do not understand. *Yaśomatī-nandana* may be sung since the people understand that. [Harikeśa continued:] I did not put this section in quotes since it would be highly presumptuous of me to think that I can remember Prabhupāda's exact words after thirteen years have passed, but it is close enough for us to learn from. [Harikeśa Swami, *The Vaiṣṇava Journal* 1988]

Melodies

Śrīla Prabhupāda was also specific about the melodies that should be chanted during *kīrtanas*. Particularly, he gave emphasis to the morning melody, which is technically called *prabhāti*, or predawn melody, in Bengali *kīrtana* tradition, as his disciples recount:

In the morning Prabhupāda came out of his room and sat on a dais in an adjoining room. Śrīla Prabhupāda asked Amogha to sing the *saṁsāra* prayers (*Gurv-aṣṭakam*), but he wanted him to learn the “morning melody.”

Bali Mardan: Prabhupāda spoke to me in his room that he was upset with devotees in India inventing some other melodies to sing. He said morning melody means singing this melody. And he taught me. [Janānanda dāsa, *Prabhupāda in Malaysia*]

Gaura-maṅḍala-bhūmi dāsa: A devotee had begun to lead the chanting of *Gurv-aṣṭakam*—the eight prayers to the spiritual master—in a nonconventional tune. I was feeling uncomfortable because I knew Śrīla Prabhupāda liked us to sing “the morning melody” during *maṅgala-ārati*. Suddenly Śrūta-kīrti entered the temple and stopped the *kīrtana*. He whispered something to the devotee leading, who then started up again singing the correct melody. Later we found out that Prabhupāda had heard the singing from his room and had sent his servant down to make the necessary corrections. [Kūrma dāsa, *The Great Transcendental Adventure*]

Śrīla Prabhupāda was very strict in the melody sung during the *maṅgala-ārati*. He wanted the morning melody and nothing else. He would sometimes stop *kīrtanas* if other melodies were sung in the morning. Of course, he was not *always* doing that, but when he was nearby and there was someone to appreciate the point, he would correct the mistake. [Harikeśa Swami, *The Vaiṣṇava Journal* 1988]

Instrumentation

In temple *kīrtanas* Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted only *mṛdaṅga* and *karatālas* played in a way that supported the chanting of the holy name. Revatī-nandana dāsa recalls:

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a Sunday feast lecture about *kīrtana*, and he said things that I never heard him say at other times, particularly not during a lecture. He remarked that melodic instruments, including the harmonium, are not meant for *kīrtana*, and he explained why. He said that the ear will automatically follow musical strains, and then our attention will be diverted from the



mantra. He said that rhythm instruments are good for *kīrtana* because they make one more inclined to dance, and dancing, in turn, unlocks devotion. . . . Another time he told Viṣṇujana that he did not like melodies that had long, extended notes in them. He liked the melody to be filled with the mantra.

During the lecture he gave that day he also said, “Don’t harmonize during the response.” The leader may sing little variations, but the group should sing a steady response. One person shouldn’t be singing one melody and another doing another melody during the response. “These things,” he said, “will help one pay more attention to the mantra as one is chanting and dancing. That way one will get the maximum benefit, and the *kīrtana* will also become more ecstatic.” [Interview with Revatī-nandana dāsa, *Memories*, Vol. 1]

These memories are consistent with instructions found in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s letters and room conversations:

Regarding instruments for temple *kīrtanas*, *karatāla* and *mṛdaṅga* are sufficient. There is no need of other instruments. [letter to Rūpānuga dāsa, 2 February 1975]

The harmonium may be played during *bhajan* if there is someone who can play melodiously. But it is not for *kīrtana* and *ārati*. [letter to Bahudak dāsa, 11 January 1976]

Prabhupāda: The other musical instrument, if he plays, his attention will be diverted in musical instrument, not to chanting. “We have to see melody, whether it is going on nicely.” But that is not good. Our concentration should be hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa. That is *bhakti*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu, simply this *karatāla*, *khol*, that’s all. In those days. . . of course, there was no harmonium, but many stringed instruments were there—sitar, *esarāja*—but these things were not used. Sometimes we do use to attract, but it is not required. [room conversation, 26 December 1976, Bombay]

“We Are Not Professional Musicians”

Śrīla Prabhupāda cautioned his disciples against becoming professional musicians and forgetting the real meaning of *kīrtana*, which is to glorify Kṛṣṇa:

As I have already written to you, we should not try to become a very popular musical party. Music is one of our items for chanting, but we are not musicians. We should always remember this fact. The best example is that we take advantage of the typewriting machine, but that does not mean we are professional typists. [letter to Mukunda dāsa, 2 July 1969]

I am pleased to note that there is interest in having our Saṅkīrtana Party perform in various public engagements. The same thing is going on here, and they have been invited to such places as Amsterdam and Germany. So if you can also do this, it is nice. But do not change our principles. Practicing is already done by *kīrtana*. It is not required for us to become artists. Our main point is service to Krishna, not to please an audience. We shall not divert our attention too much to adjustment of musical sounds. People should not misunderstand that we are a band of musical artists. They must know that we are devotees of Krishna. Our devotional practice and purity shall be so strong that wherever we chant there will be immediately an impression in the audience for devotion to Krishna. [letter to Tamāl Kṛṣṇa dāsa, 30 Oct 69]

But one thing we must remember that we are not professional musicians or concert party. Our main business is to vibrate the Holy Name of Krishna everywhere so that the people will be benefited by hearing the transcendental sound. The musical training is not so important as it is to keep ourselves spiritually fit in spiritual strength, that we should not forget. If we are in



spiritual strength, there will be no scarcity of money; and the spiritual strength is that each and every one of us must chant the sixteen rounds of beads and follow the rules and regulations with great adherence. [letter to Tamāl Krishna dāsa, 8 Feb 70]

So if you have talent for musical achievement, that is nice; but if you nourish some idea of becoming famous by playing some music, that will be a source of frustration—the end. So it is better if you play your music for Krishna by having very ecstatic *kīrtanas* in your center in Vancouver, and in this way, as I have introduced it, all of the devotees and also the general public as well will be able to join together cooperatively in the glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not that we shall glorify anyone else. Let the materialists operate in their own way, but we have got Vaiṣṇavism stand and we should train the general public to accept it and come up to our platform of process of doing things, not that we should reduce to their standard. [letter to Mahātmā dāsa, 10 April 1972]

My opinion is that it is not necessary for us to utilize these different musical talents for spreading Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. I would rather see people follow strictly the path of Lord Caitanya and His Saṅkīrtana devotees. We are using *mṛdaṅga*, *karatāla*, that is enough. We are not musicians. We are Kṛṣṇa bhaktas. Therefore we do not stress so much importance on these different musical talents. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is God Himself. Had He thought it would have been better to spread Kṛṣṇa Consciousness by another way He would have done so. But no, simply with *mṛdaṅga* and *karatāla*, traveling and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, asking everyone to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, preaching simply *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* philosophy, this is the process. There is no need for us to try and add anything to this simple method. It will only be a distraction. Therefore I request you to follow the simple path of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and help me spread this wonderful mission all over the world. Keep yourself pure and fixed up in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness by following the basic principles that I have given; chanting 16 rounds daily, following the four regulative principles, rising early, attending *maṅgala-ārati* and classes, etc. This is of the utmost importance. [letter to Jagadīśa Paṇḍita dāsa, 28 Dec 1974]

I understand also, there was a Kīrtana performance given by Śrī Pūrṇa. You have rightly remarked whether they are devotees. You are right. These people are professional singers. Krishna Kirtana is not for earning a livelihood. Krishna Kirtana is not meant for entertaining the public for demonstration of arts. It is dynamic service to the Lord. We do not therefore mind so much about the artistic presentation of Krishna Kirtana but we want to see how much a devotee is satisfying the Supreme Will. [letter to Jadurāṇī dāsī, 12 December 1967]

With regard to your question about Bengali style *kīrtana* and *mṛdaṅga* playing, one or two styles is best. To introduce more styles is not good. It will become an encumbrance. If we introduce so much emphasis on style of *kīrtana*, then simply imitation will go on. Devotional emotion is the main thing. If we give stress to instrument and style then attention will be diverted to the style. That will be spiritual loss. [letter to Satsvarūpa Goswami, 30 June 1976]

At one of the ISKCON international festivals in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda rejected the singing of one of his disciples. The devotee had previously been a singer in a band, and his *kīrtanas* were much appreciated by some devotees, especially those from his home temple. But when, with showy professionalism, he began leading the *guru-pūjā* in Prabhupāda's presence, making the tune sound like a rock and roll ballad, Prabhupāda didn't like it. He shook his head and indicated that someone else lead. The “great” *kīrtana* singer was devastated by the rejection, another form of Prabhupāda's mercy. [Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, *Prabhupāda Nectar*]

We also find instructions from Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura that further support Śrīla Prabhupāda's cautioning his disciples against becoming professional chanters:



Regarding a *brāhmaṇa* singer from Śāntipura, Kālīdāsa Lahiri: “Early in life, while still a young boy, experts in the field of Indian classical music had taught him, and he considered that such instruction qualified him to occasionally lead the *kīrtana* sessions of the Vaiṣṇavas. However, when previously he had led some *kīrtanas*, the Vaiṣṇavas were apparently not fond of his typically palace-court classical touch. Nonetheless, he had introduced these classical variations into the *kīrtanas*, oblivious of the Vaiṣṇavas’ feelings. Attempting to parade his musical ability, he had stared at the faces of the Vaiṣṇavas, awaiting a response, hoping for some appreciation. For quite some days now, this had continued. However, quite suddenly, a few days earlier, he had unexpectedly started to feel increasing pleasure in singing *harināma*.” [Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 3]

He [Kālīdāsa Lahiri Mahāsaya] lost all interest in trivial talks, as well as classical music. Thus, a metamorphosis took place in Lahiri Mahāsaya. He was now a Vaiṣṇava. [Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, *Jaiva Dharma*, Chapter 4]



“Let there be all victory for the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone and enables one to taste full nectar at every step.”

(Cc. *Antya* 20.12)

