

Devakinandana das

CONSCIOUS READING



Recommend by ISKCON ministry of education



About the author:

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His parents introduced him Krishna consciousness in his childhood. From the age of 14 he lived in brahmachari ashram and simultaneously received pedagogical education. Since 2015 he is in grihastha status. He conducts various educational courses and programs for Vaishnavas and secular people. He is a member of the ISKCON Examination Board (BOEX), responsible for the development «Bhakti-sastri», «Bhakti-Vaibhava» and «Bhakti-Vedanta» courses in Russia. In 2022, he received the spiritual scientific degree of Bhaktivaibhava.

Devakinandana das writes books and textbooks based on Srila Prabhupada's instructions. He regularly conducts educational lectures, seminars and trainings.

Regular reading or hearing of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is also performance of bhakti-yoga, and one can attain the highest perfection simply by the association of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Both Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Mahārāja Parīkṣit attained perfection through the medium of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.4 purport



Bhagavad-gītā, being spoken by the Lord, is as good as the Lord Himself. When a sincere devotee reads Bhagavad-gītā, this is as good as seeing the Lord face to face in his personal presence, but this is not so for the mundane wrangler. All the potencies of the Lord are there when one reads Bhagavad-gītā, provided it is read in the way recommended in the Gītā by the Lord Himself.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.13 purport



*I offer this book to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Srila Prabhupada, whose priceless books and
instructions inspired me to perform devotional service.*

*I would like to express my special gratitude to my
dear spiritual teacher H.G. Srila Chaitanya Chandra
Charana prabhu, who supported me in this work and
spent precious hours with me, investing in every chapter
of this book.*

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Preface

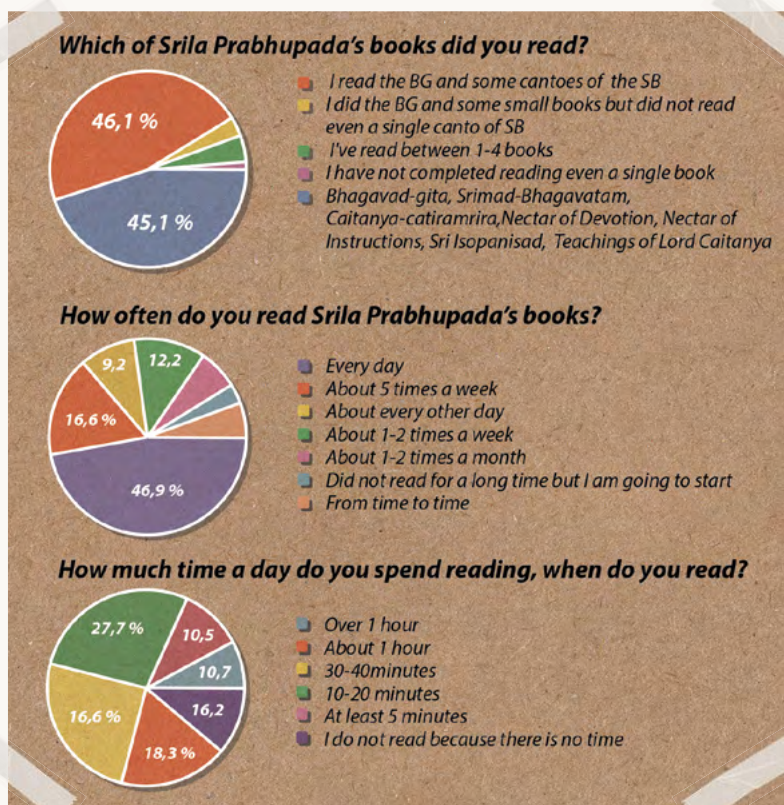
The impetus to compose this book arose after several devotees requested me to discuss the topic of reading Srila Prabhupada's books more deeply and systematically. Recently, we have put a lot of emphasis towards inspiring devotees to regularly read books. One of the important efforts made in this direction was the launch of our online course, "Conscious Reading of Srila Prabhupada's books". As of June 2022, we have conducted two sessions with over 300 students graduating from this course.

In writing this book, I consulted with H.G. Chaitanya Chandra Charana prabhu about the general style and direction of the book. The recommendations of my spiritual master were:

- To present the material consistently and systematically;
- To give a scientific instead of a literary approach;
- The entire emphasis should be on the personality of Srila Prabhupada. In each chapter the book should come to practical conclusions about his special position and power;
- The book should be compiled as a textbook, that will foster a systematic approach to reading Srila Prabhupada's books.

Many senior devotees have often discussed the topic of ISKCON devotees' general lack of regular reading. In the hopes of gaining some insight on this claim, we conducted an anonymous survey in

which approximately one thousand devotees participated. Below we present the results of this survey in the form of a diagram*.



Thus, we can conclude that a majority of the devotees regularly read Srila Prabhupada's books. Nevertheless, forty percent need to increase their reading. This process can be approached from several angles. In this work, we emphasize two areas, namely: education and inspiration.

* The survey was conducted among Russian-speaking devotees in 2020

Materials from the following sources were used in the creation of this book:

- Srila Prabhupada's books (Bhagavad-gita as it is, Srimad-Bhagavatam, Sri Chaitanya-caritamrta, Nectar of Instructions);
- Srila Prabhupada's letter; (any specific letter or letters in general)
- "Prabhupada-lilamrta" by Satsvarupa das Goswami;
- "Srila Prabhupada — ISKCON founder acharya" by Ravindra Svarupa prabhu;
- "Reading Reform" by Satsvarupa das Goswami;
- "The Transcendental Diary" by Hari Shauri prabhu;
- "Sri Chaitanya-shikshamrta" by Bhaktivinoda Thakura;
- Lectures by H.G. Chaitanya Chandra Charan prabhu;
- Lectures by H.H. Bhakti Vignana Goswami.

I intentionally kept the volume of this book small so that this work does not distract you from our real goal of reading Srila Prabhupada's books.

The main objective that I set for myself is to develop within devotees the habit of regularly and consciously reading books. I hope that this work will be useful both for those who want to significantly improve their systematic reading, and for those who already regularly read Srila Prabhupada's books.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

In fact, it would be more correct to say that this is not just a book, but a textbook. Therefore, there are two ways to read it.

- **If you already read books regularly.** In this case, you can approach it just like any other book. Discover something new, interesting and useful.
- **If you do not read books regularly.** Then you should study this material like a textbook, completing all the tasks, and setting the goal for yourself to read regularly.

This book consists of two sections. There are eight lessons in the first section, which are further divided into two parts. The first to sixth lessons focus on the development of reading habits. The seventh and eighth on deepening the taste for reading books. Thematic sections are attached to each lesson. If you use the book as a textbook, it is best to take one lesson every day. If this proves difficult try a single lesson every two or three days, or at least once a week. Also be sure to dedicate time to the workshops that are prescribed at the end of each chapter.

There is a QR code at the end of each lesson. Turn on your phone's camera and point it at the QR code to receive a link to the workshop. You can then print these documents and complete tasks. The QR code for the first lesson contains a reading diary.

There are also parts containing applications after the lessons. Interspersed throughout this work are various facts and stories about the writing and publishing of Srila Prabhupada's books.

A ubiquitous presence in this work are Srila Prabhupada's quotes about reading books. There are 88 quotes in total, of which 44 are from letters, 25 from purports and 19 from disciples' memories. Why so many? Because I have a firm belief that Srila Prabhupada's words are the key to understanding any topic. Through the prism of his instructions, we can explore the many enigmas of his books. The black font in the quotes highlights essential aspects that should be paid special attention to.

Quotes in the book are used in three styles. First—the written thought is confirmed by the quote. Second—a conclusion is drawn from the quotation with further extrapolation underway. Third—a combination of the first and second styles. When reading Srila Prabhupada's quotes, pay close attention to them, meditate on them, and reflect on Srila Prabhupada's mood, and its relevance to yourself.

MANGALACARANA (auspicious prayers)

In mangalacharana, the author uses prayers that invoke blessings for both himself and the reader. Since this work is dedicated to reading Srila Prabhupada's books, mangalacharana will also consist of his instructions. May the transcendental words of our beloved Srila Prabhupada, whom we accept as the most qualified guide on the path of love of God, become our daily prayers.

“When you study very carefully all of the literature which is available, especially Bhagavad-gita As It Is, you will have in your grasp answers to all questions that may be put to you. Please encourage the others to read this Bhagavad-gita at least one chapter every day.”
(from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Upendra, January 6, 1969).

“These books and magazines are our most important propaganda weapons to defeat the ignorance of maya's army, and the more we produce such literature and sell them profusely all over the world, the more we shall deliver the world from the suicide course.” (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Jayadvaita, 1972).

“I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations..” (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Hansaduta, January 3, 1969).

“Similarly, let there be systematic propaganda for popularizing reading of the Bhagavad-gītā and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which will act like sugar candy for the jaundice-like condition of sense gratification. When men have a taste for this literature, the other literatures, which are catering poison to society, will then automatically cease”. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 1.5.11, purp.)

“The secret in a devotee’s writing is that when he writes about the pastimes of the Lord, the Lord helps him; he does not write alone. As stated in the Bhagavad-gītā (10.10), dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te. Since a devotee writes in service to the Lord, the Lord from within gives him so much intelligence that he sits down near the Lord and goes on writing books”. (Caitanya-caritamrita, Adi-lila, 8.39? purp).

SRILA PRABHUPADA’S PRANAMA MANTRA

*nama om vishnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhu-tale
srimate bhaktivedanta-swami iti namine*

*namaste saraswati devi gaura-vani-pracharine
nirvishesa-shunyavadi-paschatya-desha tarine*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who is very dear to Lord Krsna, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

Our respectful obeisances are unto you, O spiritual master, servant of Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Goswami. You are kindly preaching the message of Lord Caitanya and delivering the Western countries, which are filled with impersonalism and voidism”.

Introduction

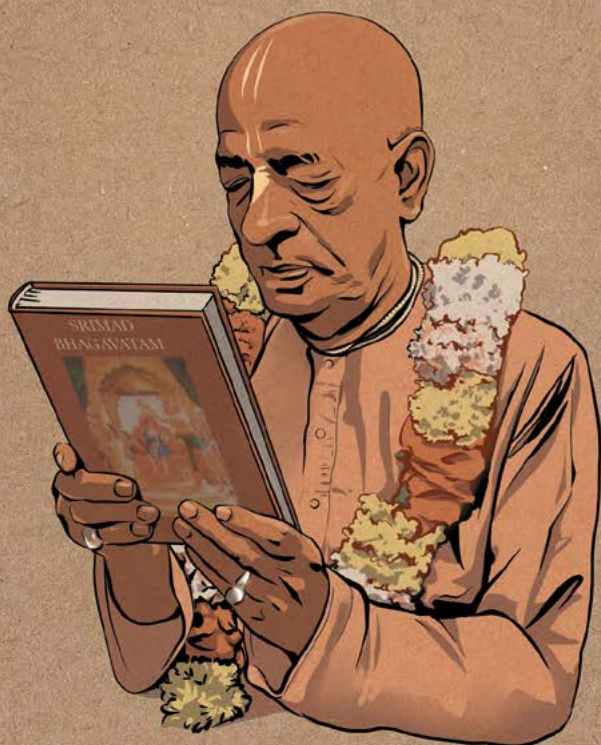
The central tenet of spiritual practice for the Vaishnavas is the chanting of the maha mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, because in this age of Kali, chanting the Lord's name is the only method of meditation, revival of religion and morality, and attainment of transcendental knowledge and love of God. In this age of Kali, the spiritual path is so expedited, that there is no difference between the highest goal and the means to achieve it. The name of God is the highest spiritual goal, and it can be achieved only through the help of the holy name itself. The vibration of the holy name, or maha-mantra, is the most effective medium for the prompt cultivation of all the highest values. However, if a continuous stream of materialistic thoughts and desires is mixed into this environment, then this easy path can become strewn with stumbling blocks. In order to adjust our thoughts and desires to the pure chanting of the holy name, we need transcendental books. More specifically, we need the purports left by the acaryas on those sublime revealed scriptures, which are inaccessible to ordinary material thoughts. The most wonderful feature of Srila Prabhupada's books is that his purports reveal the name of God from the beginning to the end. His purports are the transcendental meditation, and any sincere reader practicing the chanting of the holy names can join it.

Srila Prabhupada illustrates the effectiveness of such a method, stating: “If you ride a bicycle, then the speed of your progress is not very great, but if you connect with a car while sitting on your bicycle, you will travel at the speed of this car.” Thus, our tendencies are not inherently Kṛṣṇa conscious. Only by immersing ourselves in Prabhupada’s books, following his thoughts, the movements caused by the waves of this great soul, we can become fully Kṛṣṇa conscious. Then our chanting of Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare will bear truly amazing fruits, to a degree where we will very quickly attain love of God. This is the causeless mercy of the founder-acharya. Undoubtedly, Srila Prabhupada’s potency is fully manifested in his books. He has claimed that his books would become a guide for mankind for the next ten thousand years. This is because there is complete faith and deep knowledge of the Absolute Truth in his books. These two truths, complete faith and deep knowledge, are sufficient to make his books a guide in any field of human activity. To put something into practice, we need to have knowledge and faith. When there is only scientific knowledge with no faith in the divine nature of the soul, then such knowledge only becomes the cause of new conflicts and civil strife in society. Such knowledge is not capable of uniting all the living entities. And if there is only religious faith, not supported by knowledge, then comes fanaticism and sentimentality. Prabhupada’s books contain both—deep faith and irrefutable knowledge. Therefore, his books are applicable in practice and are able to establish peace in the world. We must only regularly read and systematically study his books.

Chaitanya Chandra Charan das

Lesson 1

The special position of Srila Prabhupada's books



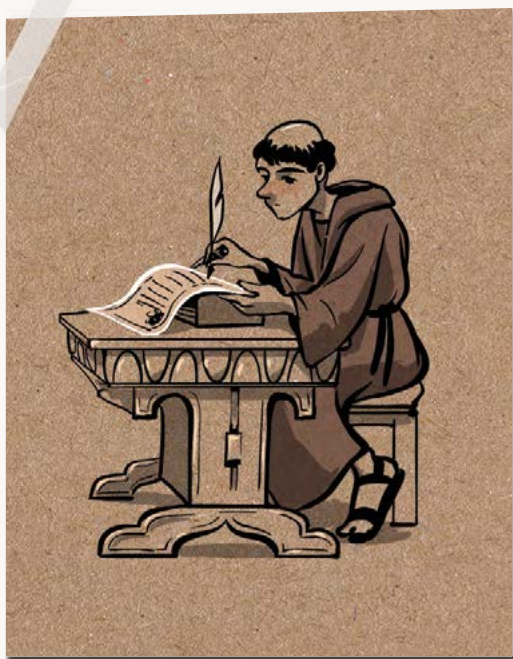
THE HISTORY OF BOOKS APPEARING

In Vedic times, human memory was so refined that there was no need to record information on paper. We find confirmation of this in Srimad-Bhagavatam. With the coming of the age of Kali, people's memory started to deteriorate, and for the benefit of everyone, Srila Vyasadeva recorded Vedic knowledge and divided it into appropriate sections 5000 years ago.

Modern scientists believe that the first written language appeared in ancient Egypt around 2400 BC. The Egyptians used papyrus—made from reed plants. Other civilizations used clay tablets, banana leaves, scroll writing, etc.

What material did Srila Vyasadeva use to write down the Vedas? According to the authoritative scholars, the original Vedas were engraved on gold plates. Later, they were transcribed onto all kinds of materials: wooden tablets, parchment, etc.

The first paper appeared around the XII century. Materialistic people used it to write down laws, keep records, that is—for sensual gratification. Vaisnavas, taking advantage of the modern technological progress, wrote down such scriptures as the Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, and various commentaries of the scriptures. The first books were copied manually. This was most often done by monks in monasteries. By the dim light of a candle, day and night in their small cells, using pen and ink, they copied the sacred books. The most common book in the Middle Ages, of course, was the Bible. At the time of Lord Chaitanya, Vaishnavas were still copying books by hand. Mahaprabhu himself, while visiting the Adi Kesava temple in South India, asked for a copy of the fifth chapter of the Brahma-Samhita to be made for

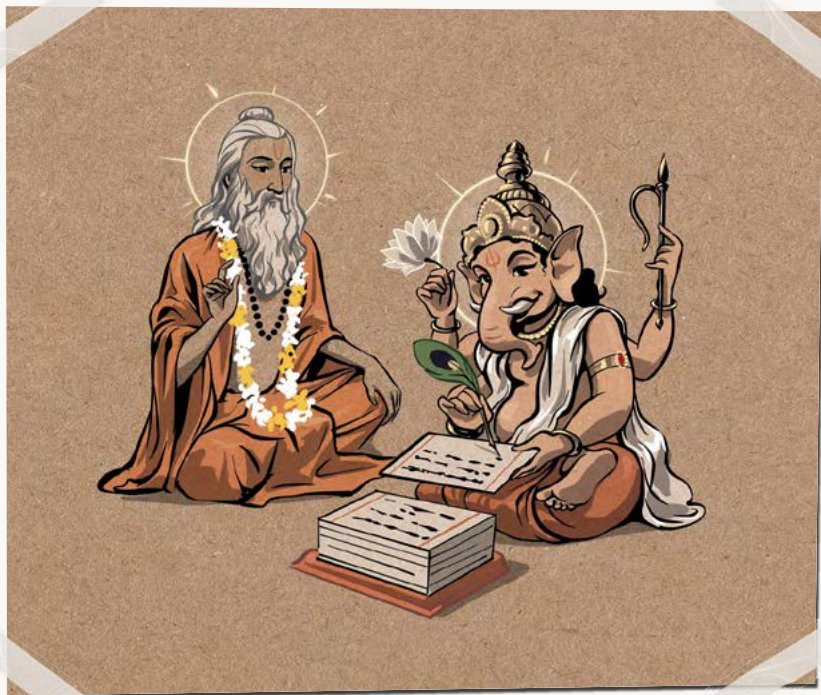


him. During the same trip, on the banks of Krishnaveni river, some Vaishnava brahmins made for Him a copy of “Krishna-karnamrita” by Bilvamangala Thakur.

Naturally, a book rewritten by hand will be cherished and read many times. In the olden days, people valued such books as gold. Now, due to the printing industry, books are far more ubiquitous, and as a result, underappreciated.

If the first books appeared earlier than modern scientists think they did, what did the process of writing the Vedas look like?

Srila Vyasadeva is the literary incarnation of Lord Vishnu. According to Srila Jiva Gosvami, Vyasadeva belongs to the *jiva-tattva* (similar to us), but is endowed with special powers from the Lord. When it became necessary to record the Mahabharata, Vyasadeva agreed with Ganesha that he would dictate and Ganesha would record. Ganesha made a condition that he should record everything without stopping. Vyasadeva agreed, but countered that Ganesha did not start writing until he understood the meaning of the sloka he had heard. So, on the banks of the Saraswati River in the Himalayas, they began to record the Mahabharata. When Vyasadeva needed a respite, he gave a difficult sloka, and while Ganesha was trying to understand it, he had an opportunity to rest.



HOW SRILA PRABHUPADA STARTED WRITING BOOKS

Srila Prabhupada's Spiritual Master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, began the most powerful mission of preaching the teachings of Lord Caitanya—called the Gaudiya-math. Gaudiya-math published several magazines in English: Gaudiya and Harmonist. Alongside these magazines, the newspaper "Nadia-prakash" was published too. Srila Prabhupada wrote several articles and essays for these publications. Many of his spiritual brothers and Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura himself appreciated Srila Prabhupada's writings. Ten years after Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur's departure, everything

stopped. The four printing houses belonging to Gaudiya Math were closed, and the printing presses sold.

During Radha-kund parikrama in 1932, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada said to the then young Abhay, “If you ever have money, print books.” In time, Srila Prabhupada started to work on his first works: “Gitopanishad” and “Lord Chaitanya” while simultaneously publishing “Back to Godhead” magazines.

Srila Prabhupada not only published the magazine, but also personally distributed it, going from door to door. One conductor advised him to print books, because people will read magazines and leave them, and books will be re-read and stored. The first manuscripts of the “Gitopanishad” were stolen from the house. This is what Srila Prabhupada himself writes about his first literary works:

“One thing that I beg to bring to your notice about the printing of my books. In 1954, I left my home, and for 5 years I lived as Vanaprastha here and there, and then in 1959 I took sannyasa. Of course even when I was a householder I was publishing Back To Godhead since 1947. But then my Spiritual Master dictated that I should take to writing books which will be a permanent affair. So after my acceptance of sannyasa I began working on Srimad-Bhagavatam and when the first canto was finished, with great difficulty I published the first volume in 1962, after leaving my home and after taking sannyasa and spending whatever cash money I had with me during the five years of my staying alone. Practically in 1960 I was penniless. Therefore I had to quickly take to publication of the first volume and after this I got some money just enough to pull on. In this way I published the 2nd volume in 1963 and the 3rd volume in 1965. Then I began to think of coming to your country, and somehow or other I was brought here.” (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Brahmananda, January 9, 1969).

So Srila Prabhupada went to the West with three volumes of the First Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam. He distributed the first set of “Bhagavatam” to the captain of the “Jaladuta” ship for twenty dollars.

THE POWER OF SRILA PRABHUPADA’S BOOKS

The power and special significance of Srila Prabhupada’s books comes from his own spiritual power and unique position. Srila Prabhupada is the founding acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. A detailed description of the situation position of the founder acharya is described by H.G. Ravindra Svarupa prabhu in the book “Srila Prabhupada—the founder-acharya of ISKCON”:



“Thus, Srila Prabhupada is the soul of ISKCON and continues to act effectively in this world as long as ISKCON remains a consistent expression and a single instrument of his will. In this sense, Srila Prabhupada is the soul of ISKCON, and ISKCON is his body”. (Ravindra Svarupa prabhu “Srila Prabhupada—the founder-acharya of ISKCON”).



Srila Prabhupada’s unique position is that he is the primary shiksha guru for all ISKCON followers, with his instructions being the ultimate authority. He made an unprecedented contribution to the development of Vaishnava sampradayas, spreading the teachings of Lord Chaitanya all over the world and writing many books and commentaries on the scriptures.



The scriptures predict that although the present age is constantly becoming more inauspicious, unfortunate, and degraded, for a period of ten thousand years from the time of Lord Caitanya’s advent a golden age of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can appear, despite the force of Kali-yuga. Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, prepared his translations and Bhaktivedanta purports on the essential Vaiṣṇava scriptures—Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Caitanya caritāmṛta, and Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu—with

the plan that they would form the foundation of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for ten thousand years.

We cannot limit Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, by describing him only within the drama of his being the guru for one generation of followers. **Śrīla Prabhupāda is jagad-guru, the spiritual master of the entire world.** He is a bona fide spiritual master, faithfully conveying the message of the disciplic succession from Lord Kṛṣṇa, as he received it in paramparā from his spiritual master. But more than that, he was empowered by Kṛṣṇa to do what no other spiritual master has ever done. He is the founder-ācārya for spreading Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana worldwide in the midst of the Age of Kali". (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami "Prabhupada-lilamrita", Chapter 55).

TEN FACTS ABOUT SRILA PRABHUPADA'S BOOKS

1. Srila Prabhupada was a self-realized person, and his purports are based on practical experience.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda went on to describe the special qualifications for translating Sanskrit Vaiṣṇava literature. It would take a realized soul, he said. ‘Otherwise, simply by imitating A-B-C-D, it will not help. My purports are liked by people because it is presented as practical experience. **It cannot be done unless one is realized**’”. (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami “Prabhupada-lilamrita”, Chapter 52).

2. Krishna Himself dictated to him.

“Prabhupada would sometimes show amazement at how Kṛṣṇa spoke through his books. ‘These books are wonderful,’ he would say, to the delight of his disciples. ‘Actually, they are bit written by me They are written by Kṛṣṇa.’” (Satsvarupa das Goswami “Reading Reform”, Chapter 1).



3. Srila Prabhupada himself regularly reads his books.

“Regarding my books, everyone should read. I am also reading. Everyone should be engaged 24 hours. That is the sum and substance. How much you should read and how much you should do other types of service, that has to be decided by each individual devotee.” (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Govardhana, February 15, 1975 .).

He would sometimes read in the quiet of his room, and when in Los Angeles, Prabhupada especially enjoyed sitting in his garden and

listening to the devotees read from Kṛṣṇa book. While travelling on airplanes, he would read from the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and when not reading, Prabhupada would tuck the volume into the pouch on the back of the passenger seat in front of him. Once, after returning home from a serious car accident in which he suffered injury, Prabhupada sat back and asked his servant to read him from Chaitanya-caritamrita (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami “Reading Reform”, Chapter 1).



4. Always and everywhere, every spare minute Srila Prabhupada dedicated to his books.



“Although sometimes Śrīla Prabhupāda would say he wanted to stay in one place and write his books, he regularly felt compelled to oversee personally the growth of his Kṛṣṇa consciousness mission on each continent. His time was limited, he felt, and he wanted to strengthen his disciples in their execution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness so they could continue in his absence. He had to travel. **But even while traveling, he would continue his translation and commentary of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam wherever he stopped.** Despite his advanced age of eighty years, despite the disruptive travel hours, the jet lag, and the inconveniences of waiting in airports and of customs delays, Prabhupāda was determined to maintain his writing schedule wherever he went.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s literary paraphernalia was a dictating machine and reference books. A secretary, Paramahansa Swami, a personal servant, Śrutakīrti, and a Sanskrit student, Nītāi, were Prabhupāda’s traveling entourage. In this way he was prepared to preach and write anywhere and everywhere”. (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami “Prabhupada-līlamrita”, Chapter 65).



5. He got up at one in the morning and wrote books until five in the morning.

“Oh, I can finish very quickly, but I have to present it for your understanding. It requires deep thought, very carefully, to present it for the common man.”

That night around nine, Prabhupāda called for Hari-śauri and said that he would not take his evening massage; he wanted the time for finishing the Seventh Canto. Shutting the door and returning to his desk **he worked all night until five in the morning** (Satsvarupa das Goswami “Prabhupada-lilamrita”, Chapter 50).

6. These books will help the world for the next ten thousand years.

“The scriptures predict that although the present age is constantly becoming more inauspicious, unfortunate, and degraded, for a period of ten thousand years from the time of Lord Caitanya’s advent a golden age of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can appear, despite the force of Kali-yuga. Śrīla Prabhupāda, therefore, prepared his translations and Bhaktivedanta purports on the essential Vaiṣṇava scriptures—Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Caitanya-caritāmṛta, and Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu—with the plan that **they would form the foundation of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for ten thousand years**”. (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami “Prabhupada-lilamrita”, Chapter 55).

7. He carefully studied the purports of other acharyas and verified every word. Sometimes it took him two or three days to make one purport.

“He said that sometimes **he has to think about one comment for two or three days before writing it down**.

Actually, the word translating is incomplete in describing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s writing. Translating involved only the verses and synonyms, but Prabhupāda’s deepest meditations—what he referred to as his ‘personal ecstasies’—were his Bhaktivedanta purports. Composing the purports, as well as translating the verses, came best when he could

think about them throughout the day, not just when he turned on his dictating machine at one A.M. He was translating the extremely grave and complex Vedic knowledge into a modern context, thus making it understandable to Western readers. And it was a great, demanding task.” (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami “Prabhupada-lilamrita”, Chapter 52).

8. The studying of Srila Prabhupada’s books is a direct association with him.

“When a reporter once asked Prabhupada about his successor, Srila Prabhupada, who spoke as a personification of the voice of eternity, replied, ‘I will never die. **I will always live in my books**’” (Mahanidhi Swami “Srila Prabhupada in Radha-Damodara”, Chapter 6).

9. These books represent the essence of the instructions of the entire parampara.

“The words are ambrosial because **they are not my personal words, they are instructions of my predecessors** and I am just trying to administer them to my best knowledge. That is the way of Parampara system”. (from Srila rabhupada’s letter to Jayapataka, April 17, 1970).

10. These books are very beautiful.

Srila Prabhupada personally drew a sketch of the cover to the First canto of “Srimad-Bhagavatam”.

One senior devotee once told me, “I would buy the whole set of Srimad-Bhagavatam just because it is very beautiful.”

“Not only did Prabhupāda carefully prepare the translations and purports, but he also considered the market, the cover pictures. Everything about the book Prabhupāda had considered deeply”. (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami “Prabhupada-lilamrita”, Chapter 65).



Of course, the difference between transcendental literature and ordinary books is obvious. An attempt to compare them with each other is already a disqualification for understanding the spiritual truths. In this regard, we do not conduct a comparative analysis of mundane literature and spiritual literature.

“A human being is inclined to hear good narrations and stories, and therefore there are so many books, magazines and newspapers on the market to satisfy the interests of the developed soul. **But the pleasure in such literature, after it is read once, becomes stale, and people do not take any interest in reading such literature repeatedly.** In fact, newspapers are read for less than an hour and then thrown in the dustbins as rubbish. The case is similar with all other mundane literature. **But the beauty of transcendental literatures like Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is that they never become old.** They have been read in the world by civilized man for the last five thousand years, and they have never become old. They are ever fresh to the learned scholars and devotees...” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 3.5.7, purp.).



Considering all these factors, together with the special position of Srila Prabhupada, it is natural to conclude that the reading and studying of these transcendental books is a unique, live connection with him and his spiritual power.

LIST OF SRILA PRABHUPADA'S BOOKS

Srila Prabhupada's books can be divided into two categories:

1. Books written or dictated by him personally.
2. Books compiled from Srila Prabhupada's lectures or conversations.

Are there any differences between these two categories? It is difficult to answer this question unequivocally. Many books compiled from lectures and conversations are very important, such as "The Science of Self-Realization", "The Teachings of Lord Kapila", etc. Srila Prabhupada's instructions of various categories are very important (books, lectures, letters, conversations). But there is still some distinction between them. Let us turn to an interesting letter written by H.H. Tamal Krishna Goswami to his spiritual brother, Prana prabhu. The letter was written at the request of Srila Prabhupada on July 20, 1977. I will give only the last part of the letter.

“In fact, you should know that Prabhupada's books are better than his speech. This is because he is extremely concentrated and picks up every word when he writes his books. This is not my opinion, but he personally said it to me. Your servant Tamal Krishna Goswami”.

From this, we can conclude that Srila Prabhupada placed more emphasis on the significance of the books he personally wrote, for in the process of writing, he paid close attention to every word and thought. However, this in no way diminishes the significance of the rest of Srila Prabhupada's works.

List of books written by Srila Prabhupada:

- “Bhagavad-gita as it is”;

- Srimad-Bhagavatam (up to and including the fourteenth chapter of the Tenth Canto);
- “Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta”;
- “Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead”;
- “Nectar of Devotion”;
- “Nectar of Instruction”;
- “Sri Isopanisad”;
- “The Teachings of Sri Chaitanya”;
- “An easy journey to the other planets”.

My wife and I somehow counted the total number of pages (not including appendices and introductions) in all Srila Prabhupada’s books. It turned out to be 22,849 pages. To read them all in a year, you would need to read 62 pages every day.

There is another book written by Srila Prabhupada before coming to the West—The Light of Bhagavata. He specifically wrote this book for a religious conference in Japan, which Srila Prabhupada could not attend.



Srila Prabhupada's books compiled from his lectures and talks:

- “The Science of self-realization”;
- “The Teachings of Lord Kapila”;
- “Perfection of Yoga”;
- “Perfect questions, perfect answers”;
- “Life comes from life”;
- “Prayers of Queen Kunti”

among others.

Many senior Vaishnavas often say that first one needs to read all of Srila Prabhupada's books, and then take up reading other Vaishnava books. This is a very good approach in studying the philosophy of Krishna consciousness. A careful reading of all Srila Prabhupada's books will help to build the right sambandha in the mind of a devotee and deepen the understanding of Srila Prabhupada's mood and way of thinking. In other words, one would learn to look through the eyes of Srila Prabhupada. This is a very important quality that will facilitate a devotee's study of great Vaishnava literature from the right angle. Moreover, reading all of Srila Prabhupada's books does not mean that one has reached maturity. Many devotees have read his books again and again, and each time they become more immersed in understanding Srila Prabhupada's mood. Spiritual teachers often say that Srila Prabhupada's books are enough for spiritual development.

In what order should one read Srila Prabhupada's books? It is best to start your acquaintance with Srila Prabhupada with a small book “Perfect questions, perfect answers”. In it you can get answers to many philosophical questions. You can continue with small books, such as “Nectar of Instructions”, “Easy journey to other planets” and “Sri Isopanisd”. Then it is very good to read the “Science of

Self-Realization” to feel the spirit of Srila Prabhupada’s preaching. Then, you may read “Bhagavad-gita”, “Krishna” book, “Nectar of Devotion” and “Teachings of Sri Chaitanya”. And at the end, take up the large works: “Srimad-Bhagavatam”—and finish with “Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita”. It will be very useful to read the biography of Srila Prabhupada—“Prabhupada-lilamṛta” by Satsvarupa das Goswami (it should be read from the beginning).

The following is an excerpt from Prabhupada-Lilamṛta, that very clearly describes Srila Prabhupada’s attitude to his books and the unique significance of his works.



“By December 1968 Prabhupāda was producing his books at double his normal rate. He was writing two books—Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead and The Nectar of Devotion—and both he considered essential to the foundation of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The Kṛṣṇa book was a translation and commentary of the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam containing the stories of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. Wanting colorful illustrations, Prabhupāda turned to the two or three artists among his disciples and challenged them. As fast as they would paint, he would write.

As far as possible, I will require some artist who will paint pictures from the Bhagavatam as I give hints on what to paint. But the artist must be very quick. Two or three pictures must be done every week. These pictures will be used for my new book, ‘Krishna,’ which I will begin as soon as I get the assistance of a quick painter ... The Tenth Canto contains forty chapters about Krishna in Vrindaban, and fifty chapters of Krishna in Dwaraka. So our books will most likely have the first volume of the forty chapters of Krishna in Vrindaban, with one picture for each chapter.

Prabhupāda described each illustration he wanted. For the first picture, pregnant Devakī, the mother of Kṛṣṇa, should be sitting in the palace, and near the ceiling the demigods should be surrounding her, praying for Lord Kṛṣṇa’s appearance. Prabhupāda wanted Devakī in

a different part of the palace for the second picture. Lord Viṣṇu in His four-armed form dressed in yellow appears before her while she and her husband, Vasudeva, bow down before Him. The third illustration would show baby Kṛṣṇa lying happily on the lap of Devakī, like an ordinary child. A fourth painting would show Vasudeva carrying baby Kṛṣṇa across the Yamunā River. The fifth would show Vasudeva at the house of Nanda Mahārāja in Vṛndāvana, exchanging Kṛṣṇa for the newborn child of Yaśodā.

Kṛṣṇa would be a summary study. With translations and commentary blended into a single narrative, the style would be freer in this book than in his presentation of the First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, but essentially it was the same work.

Having set such an ambitious goal as translating and commenting on the eighteen thousand verses of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Prabhupāda was uncertain he would live to complete it. But the most important part of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was the Tenth Canto, because it contained Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes on earth. Therefore, Prabhupāda wanted to render it into English right away. To finish the first nine cantos before beginning the Tenth would take years, and Prabhupāda didn't know how many years he would have. But his disciples should at least have all the Tenth Canto pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

'The purpose of preparing this book,' Prabhupāda wrote in the Introduction to Kṛṣṇa, 'is primarily to induce people to understand kṛṣṇa-kathā, because thereby they can become free from material bondage.' Vyāsadeva, the compiler of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the original speaker of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, had recommended kṛṣṇa-kathā, hearing and speaking about Kṛṣṇa, to clear the heart of all illusion. The transcendental pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead were so powerful that simply by hearing, reading, and remembering them, a devotee would be transferred to the spiritual world.

Prabhupāda's normal working hours were in the early morning, beginning about one A. M., and he daily used this time for writing Kṛṣṇa.

But now he added a second intensive writing period in the afternoon and began another book, *The Nectar of Devotion*, a summary study of Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. This work contained 'the complete science of bhakti-yoga,' as taught by Lord Caitanya to Rūpa Gosvāmī five hundred years ago. Prabhupāda intended *The Nectar of Devotion* to be 'the lawbook' for the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. If one wanted to know the philosophical basis of bhakti-yoga, how to practice devotional service, what the stages of devotional service were, or what its goal was, he could find the answers by reading *The Nectar of Devotion*. Specifically for devotees, *The Nectar of Devotion* would help solidify the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in the Western countries, where *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* was virtually unheard of.

In the Introduction to *The Nectar of Devotion*, Prabhupāda invoked auspiciousness upon his work: 'Let His Lordship's grace be on us so that there may not be any hindrance in the execution of this duty of writing *The Nectar of Devotion*, impelled by His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda.'

Śrīla Prabhupāda worked from the original Sanskrit text and spoke into his dictating machine. Despite his age of seventy-three (Prabhupāda would often speak of himself as an old man, who could not eat like young men or endure a cold climate like his disciples), Prabhupāda now wrote more prolifically than ever before. His literary labors had begun in India as early as 1940, with his *Back to Godhead* paper. Now he had more facility for working—modern equipment for dictating, translating, and printing; personal assistants to tend to his meals and laundry; and energetic, trained disciples to conduct the missionary affairs of his movement. Material things, Rūpa Gosvāmī had stressed, should never be rejected when they can be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda applied this principle to his own situation and noted in one of the early chapters of *The Nectar of Devotion*,

Anything that can be utilized in advancing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service can be used. For instance, we are using many machines for the advancement of our present Kṛṣṇa consciousness

movement, machines like typewriters, dictaphones, tape recorders, microphones, and airplanes. Sometimes people ask us, 'Why are you utilizing material products if you condemn the advancement of modern civilization?' But actually we do not condemn. We simply ask people to do whatever they are doing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the same principle on which, in the Bhagavad-gītā, Kṛṣṇa advised Arjuna to utilize his fighting abilities in devotional service. Similarly, we are utilizing these machines for Kṛṣṇa's service. With such sentiment for Kṛṣṇa, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we can accept everything. If the typewriter can be utilized for advancing our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we must accept it. Similarly, the dictaphone or any other machine must be used.

Day after day, Prabhupāda delved deeper into the Vaiṣṇava literature, rendering the Sanskrit poetry of Vyāsadeva and the realizations of Rūpa Gosvāmī into modern English. Although externally his life may have appeared less eventful, he felt full urgency and satisfaction that he was making his most important contribution to the world. Sitting in a simple room in a small Los Angeles suburban house, he was presenting the foundation for a movement that could grow for thousands of years. He sensed the victory of Vedic enlightenment over the darkness of the age.

Even Prabhupāda's newest disciples understood they should not disturb their spiritual master's concentration on his writing. 'He's really putting it out,' they said, and they were thrilled to hear the rate at which he was translating.

Concerned about printing his upcoming books, Prabhupāda wrote Satsvarūpa in Boston.

I am seriously compiling one book, Nectar of Devotion, about four hundred pages. Therefore I am a little slack in sending tapes of the Third Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam ... As far as the new book Krishna, I will continue to send you the tapes. In this way, the Krishna book will be completed.

And to Hamsadūta Prabhupāda wrote, 'I next wish to publish a new book entitled Nectar of Devotion. So if you can help with these funds it would be very appreciated.'

Although Prabhupāda's book-writing was going well, the book production work by his disciples was not. Unpublished manuscripts piled up. Prabhupāda anticipated he had few years left, and he wanted to publish as many books as possible. Kṛṣṇa was empowering him to write two books simultaneously, but at the difficulty in scheduling the books for publication Prabhupāda became frustrated. Macmillan Company had recently finished printing 1,500 hardbound copies and 35,000 paperback copies of Bhagavad-gītā As It Is. Although Macmillan Company had abridged the original Gītā manuscript more than fifty percent, it was nevertheless a victory for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement—the first authorized, paramparā edition of Bhagavad-gītā in the West. Although Macmillan Company would distribute Bhagavad-gītā As It Is in the bookstores, Prabhupāda asked Brahmānanda to order five thousand copies for the temples to sell. He suggested that Brahmānanda approach as many book reviewers as possible, telling them this book was badly needed in today's godless civilization. 'Try for selling these books,' Prabhupāda wrote to the devotees in London. 'It shall be considered of the greatest service.'

With this most basic book now available, Prabhupāda instructed his students to read at least one chapter a day and discuss it in class. 'If you can simply cram Bhagavad Gita,' he wrote Hamsadūta, 'then you will surely become a very good preacher.'

An examination on Bhagavad-gītā should be held, Prabhupāda said, and those students who passed would receive the title bhakti-śāstrī. When more books were available, he would hold a further exam based on Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and The Nectar of Devotion, and those who passed would receive the title Bhaktivedanta. 'I want that all my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by

1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of generations. That is my program. So we should not simply publish these books for reading by outsiders, but our students must be well versed in all of our books so that we can be prepared to defeat all opposing parties in the matter of self-realization.’

Prabhupāda fretted while his manuscript for Teachings of Lord Caitanya—which was to have been printed at the same time as the Gītā—met with delays at Dai Nippon Press in Japan. When the printers reported that the book would not be completed until next year, Prabhupāda again thought of his own press. Discussing his ideas with disciples, asking their opinions, he could see their lack of expertise and lack of money.

Another cause for concern was the backlog of unpublished Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam manuscripts. Prabhupāda considered Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam his primary work, his life’s masterpiece. The lack of definite plans to publish it discouraged him and diminished his enthusiasm. He had vastly ambitious plans to flood the world with Kṛṣṇa conscious books, and he would be satisfied with nothing less.

So in January 1969, while daily experiencing the most productive period of book writing in his life, he nevertheless expressed feelings of anxiety and disappointment over the unpublished Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam manuscripts. In writing to Brahmānanda, Prabhupāda explained that his life was dedicated to publishing the Bhāgavatam and that, despite having hundreds of assistants and being in a wealthy country, he wasn’t able to do what he had accomplished single handedly in India.

One thing that I beg to bring to your notice about the printing of my books. In 1954 I left my home and for five years I lived as a vanaprastha here and there, and then in 1959 I took sannyasa. Of course even when I was a householder I was publishing Back to Godhead since 1947. But then my spiritual master dictated that I should take to writing books which will be a permanent affair. So after my acceptance of sannyasa I began working on Srimad Bhagavatam, and when the First Canto was finished, with great difficulty I published the first

volume in 1962, after leaving my home and after taking sannyasa and spending whatever cash money I had with me during the five years of my staying alone. Practically in 1960s I was penniless. Therefore I had to quickly take to publication of the first volume, and after that I got some money just enough to pull on. In this way I published the second volume in 1963 and the third volume in 1965. Then I began to think of coming to your country, and somehow or other I was brought here. Now since I have come I have been unable to publish the fourth volume of Srimad Bhagavatam, but with your help and assistance, since 1965 this one book only has been published, and I do not know what this Dai Nippon Company is doing.

Anyway, I am very much anxious for getting my books published. The manuscripts which I presently have may be converted into eight different books of the same size which I generally publish (four hundred pages). But I do not know how I will get them published ...

Whatever is done is done. I am now very much serious about printing my books. There may be three sources for their printing. One source is that if the Macmillan Company is interested to publish my books that will be a great relief. I do not mind for the profit concerned. But I want to see them published. Another source is if Macmillan isn't interested, we can get them printed by Dai Nippon, but the delaying procedure of this company in Japan is not very encouraging. Therefore the next step would be to start our own press. ... I require to have eight books published and on the price of \$6,000 which is charged by Dai Nippon, I will require about \$50,000 immediately. Selling or not selling, I want to see these books published. This is my ambition". (Satsvarupa dasa Goswami "Prabhupada-lilamrita", chapter 61).



Although we have emphasized a certain special position of Srila Prabhupada's books written by him personally, this point in no way shall decrease the significance of all the instructions of His Divine Grace.

QUESTIONS-ANSWERS

Is it possible to read the books of spiritual masters and other Vaishnavas without reading all the books of Srila Prabhupada?

Many senior devotees regularly say that one should first read all of Srila Prabhupada's books, and then take up others. This is done so that the disciple does not distract his mind, and concentrates on our founder acharya, becoming absorbed in his mood. If, without first developing a clear understanding of Srila Prabhupada's position and the role of his instructions, one starts reading other books, there is a high probability that he will find various contradictions and confusion in different categories of the scriptures. On the other hand, there is no strict ban on reading other books. We can offer a practical solution to this problem. Before you read all Srila Prabhupada's books, after perhaps 75–80 % of reading through Srila Prabhupada's books, your reading can be 50–50 % with the other books.

Is there a strict gradation of the importance of Srila Prabhupada's instructions?

There was a quote given above that the instructions in the books have the greatest weight. Then there are lectures, conversations and letters. However, the correct conclusion should be drawn from this gradation. Despite the fact that letters are most often of an individual nature, intended for a specific person at a specific time and under specific circumstances, sometimes, through letters, Srila Prabhupada gave universal instructions for the whole society.

Tirtha Pavana prabhu, in his book on the principles of Vaishnava education, compares Srila Prabhupada's instructions from

Chaitanya-caritamṛta about the possibility of polygamy, and the letters where he strictly prohibits this point for the whole society. In this case, the instruction from the letter has more weight than the instruction from the book.

I would suggest the following conclusion: we should study Srila Prabhupada's books fully, because there he describes all the highest standards, different situations and deviations. After studying all the books, it will be easy to understand how to apply these higher standards through letters or other instructions. It is impossible to exclude the rest of the instructions from the books, just as it is impossible to reject the instructions from the book with one letter. By studying different kinds of instructions (books, lectures, letters, etc.) together, we will be able to see the whole picture and deepen our understanding of Srila Prabhupada.

WORKSHOP

- 1 Write a personal letter to Srila Prabhupada. In this letter, glorify him, thank him for the work he has done for the benefit of the whole world, and ask for blessings to study and regularly read his books.
- 2 Make a list of Srila Prabhupada's books that you have already read. In the list, specify how many times you have read each book.
- 3 Make a plan for reading Srila Prabhupada's books in the coming year. In your plan, roughly indicate the time frame you want to read the books. Over the next year, try to stick to this plan. You can make a list, or gameplan in the form of intelligence-cards. There are a number of creative ways to make this fun!

- 4 Choose one of Srila Prabhupada's books, preferably a small one, which you will read in parallel with this textbook and on the basis of which you will perform workshops.
- 5 Start keeping a book reading diary.



Lesson 2

Motivation to read books



ABOUT MOTIVATION

Motivation is an inner urge, an interest, a desire to strive for something (from the Latin word—to win). What inspires me to move towards my goal?

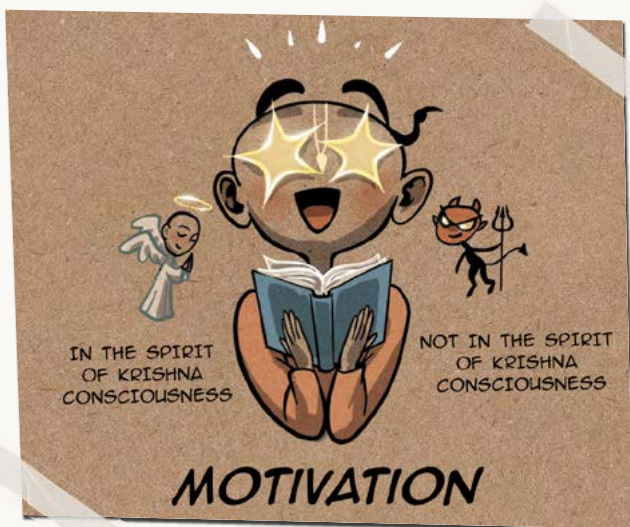
Do I need to motivate myself to read books? Most likely, everyone will be able to answer this question individually. Someone does not need it, it is natural for him to read books; someone needs it, for him, reading books is a tedious process. Everyone has their own technique for motivation; and to someone, this technique will help very much. On the topic of Vaishnavas reading books, I met several types of devotees:

- **The first category read books all their lives.** It was natural for them. They read books from the school curriculum, read fiction, detective stories, scientific articles, magazines, newspapers, etc. Coming to Krishna consciousness, it was not difficult for them to switch their reading habit to Srila Prabhupada's books.
- **The second type did not read books at all, or read very rarely.** When they joined Krishna consciousness, they quickly developed a taste for reading books, and they easily began to read regularly.
- **The third category were not in the habit of reading before Krishna consciousness.** Despite the fact that they have entered into spiritual practice, reading Srila Prabhupada's books is very difficult for them, or they do not read at all.
- **The fourth could belong to the first two types.** But over time, their responsibility in Krishna consciousness increased, their service increased, and gradually they either read books very

rarely or stopped reading altogether (the reasons for stopping may be different).

Many devotees face difficulties in reading books, and they need to motivate themselves properly. Motivation in Krishna consciousness is not such a simple thing. Motivation can be of two types:

1. Motivation in Krishna consciousness spirit.
2. Motivation not in Krishna consciousness spirit.



Motivation in Krishna consciousness spirit

A vivid example of such motivation is one of Srila Prabhupada's letters:

“I am pleased to know that all of you are enthusiastically engaged in distributing our books. In this modern Godless civilization, everyone

is greatly suffering due to lack of the real knowledge of Krishna consciousness, and our task is very great and very important. We must deliver this pure science of God to everyone and give them the chance to make their lives successful. So you continue this book distribution program very nicely, and at the same time take advantage of these books yourselves. Not that you just distribute but neglect reading them yourself. Always read them, especially Krsna Book. Every time you have a spare moment, you should read. This will help you to advance in Krishna consciousness, and will give you the ability to convince others also”, (Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Trai das, May 5, 1972).



From this letter, we can conclude that reading books:

- Is a spiritual benefit;
- Will help advancement in Krishna consciousness;
- Will provide opportunities to convince others.

In other words, we see that Srila Prabhupada used motivation for his disciples to inspire them to read his books. He explained to them what spiritual results they would get by reading books. This is the motivation in Krsna consciousness—to inspire devotees by explaining to them the power of such a method of devotional service as the reading of books. To do this, you can quote Srila Prabhupada, explain the power of the books, as we did in the first lesson, or talk about the spiritual benefits of reading, etc.

Motivation not in Krishna consciousness spirit

It is a materialistic approach to reading and studying books. Such motivation most often comes from one’s own mind or from people who are far from devotional service. Our mind can say: “You need to read books so that the other will think that you are a scientist, so

that you are respected for your knowledge, so that you can always demonstrate your understanding, so that they will ask for your advice.” All these thoughts can be put in the category of fame. There can be other motives that are not in the spirit of Krishna consciousness, but now it is important to emphasize that you need to inspire yourself with pure motives, and to track and expel the desire for fame and other impure motives. People who are far from Kṛṣṇa consciousness may read these books for their own selfish purposes or to look for flaws in them.

“***So the speaker and the audience were bona fide in this meeting where Bhāgavatam was being recited for the second time. That should be the standard of recitation of Bhāgavatam, so that real purpose can be served without difficulty. Unless this situation is created, Bhāgavatam recitation for extraneous purposes is useless labor both for the speaker and for the audience***” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.4.1, purport.).

Although this quote is more relevant to lecturing, it can nevertheless be applied to reading books. If someone reads books in pursuit of some extraneous goals, it will not benefit him. But even he can purify himself by receiving Srila Prabhupada’s association through his books.

TECHNIQUES FOR MOTIVATION

There are many ways to motivate yourself to read books. Above was given an example of how Srila Prabhupada motivated his disciples. But we all need to take the initiative and increase our self-motivation, it is needed for two things: first, to make a breakthrough and start reading, and secondly, to maintain a regular reading habit.



A few examples for self-motivation

1. The benefits that come from reading Srila Prabhupada's books.
- Awakening of Love for God.

“We therefore request everyone to take advantage of this great transcendental literature. One will find that by reading one page after another, an immense treasure of knowledge in art, science, literature, philosophy and religion will be revealed, and ultimately, **by reading this one book, Kṛṣṇa, love of Godhead will fructify.**” (from the preface to the book “Krishna”).

- Gaining the qualifications of a preacher.

“Yes, I am very pleased that you are inclined to read and study our books with such seriousness. Thank you very much. And your conclusion is very nice. So continue it whole-heartedly. We want good preachers also. Preaching shouldn’t depend on me only. My disciples should become all good preachers, and that depends on studying the books nicely so that you can arrive at the right conclusion” (Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Hridayananda, July 5, 1971).

- Protecting the mind from anxiety.

“Without reading books it becomes hackneyed **and such obnoxious ideas trouble us**”. (Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Satyabhama, February 28, 1972).

- Practical application of Krishna Consciousness in life.

“So if you study my books very carefully, then I am sure **you will find out the means for applying this Krsna Consciousness philosophy in all spheres of life**. There is no limitation. Simply, it requires a little common sense practicality”. (Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Amarendra, January 31, 1972).

- Knowledge of devotional service.

“If anyone will read this Nectar of Devotion very carefully, he will have **all guidance in Bhakti cult**. So in the temple class some portions of this book must be regularly discussed”. (Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Advaita, June 18, 1970).

- Experiencing spiritual ecstasy.



“Please continue to read the literature very attentively. Try to understand very soberly and you will feel ecstasy undoubtedly. The more we understand the spiritual literatures the more we become englandened. Lord Caitanya has written ananda ambhudhi bardhanam. This means the ocean of bliss is always increasing. So continue to execute your duties with enthusiasm and patience, and I am certain Krishna will be pleased to make you successful on all accounts”. (Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Aniruddha, December 7, 1969.).



These are just some of the benefits that can be obtained by reading Srila Prabhupada’s books.

2. Practical skills developed as a result of regular reading of books.

- Development of imagination.

When one reads the stories from Srimad-Bhagavatam and Chaitanya-caritamrta, the images of spiritual pastimes are clearly manifested in consciousness.

- Development of thinking.

Reading books, a devotee starts to understand the philosophical explanations and the various structures of books.

- Rich vocabulary.

One constantly discovers new terms and starts to better memorize Sanskrit.

- Increased concentration.

Reading books is a kind of meditation as well. But it is easier to concentrate on reading than on japa, because the mind creates images from the text and follows the narration.

- A good sleep.

Many people sleep better if they read for thirty minutes before going to bed.

3. Ten facts about Srila Prabhupada's books described in the first lesson. These facts also serve as a good motivation for reading books.
4. Additional self-motivation techniques.
 - To keep the book in a prominent place.

Placing it in a prominent place will be a constant reminder.

- To carry a book with yourself.

Just take the book with you in your bag and open it and read when you have free time.

- Make a list of tasks.

It is very good to write about reading books in the important tasks section.

- Set a reminder on your phone.

Let it be displayed on the phone screen every day: "It's time to read books!!!".

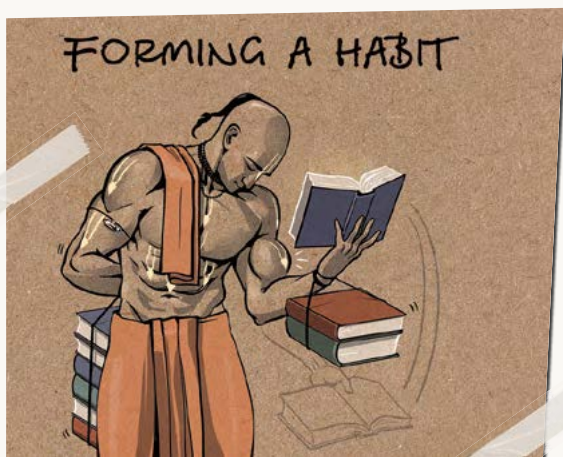
HOW TO DEVELOP A READING HABIT

Reading books can sometimes be a mechanical process that we do in our free time. The purpose of this textbook is to help to develop the habit of reading books. It is ideal to read at least an hour a day. But for those who find the process of reading difficult, it is best to start small—read at least five to ten minutes a day, and gradually increase this time to an hour. Something similar happens to many devotees

with japa. I myself started to chant japa from four rounds and steadily increased the daily minimum until I reached sixteen rounds a day. The main part of this process is stability. **Read every day.** From this lesson, you, as a reader or student, will need to **read books every day.** You can set any minimum for yourself. If you haven't read consistently before, don't take on too much at once—five-ten minutes is enough to develop stability. Ask for blessings, give yourself a mindset to **read the selected minimum every day.**

In the above paragraph, we repeated the phrase “**read every day**” three times, and it is already the beginning of a habit toward daily reading.

“Similarly, you must read Bhagavad-gita at least a few verses every day and think about them throughout the day. The best thing is to read one chapter daily, but if you can meditate upon a few verses of Bhagavad-gita every day, that is better than reading for simply one hour and then forgetting the topics until the next reading”. (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Satyabhama Paramananda, July 29, 1969).



The first thing we draw from this letter is that Srila Prabhupada suggests counting your reading not by time, but by chapters. For example, I count my daily reading not by time, but by the minimum number of pages I set for myself (how to calculate your reading will be described in lesson 5). The second thing that can be seen from the letter is the recommendation to start reading by small degrees. Set for yourself a minimum that will help you to read books every day.


There are three stages in the formation of a habit:

1. **Reminder.** Organize your day so that there are reminders to read books. It can be a sticker stuck in a prominent place; friends, relatives or colleagues who will remind you about reading; a beautifully designed banner; a reminder on your phone, etc. It's important to start reminding yourself that it's time to read books.
2. **Action.** This is already a direct reading of the book. You need to find a secluded place, pick up a book, open it—and you are already reading. Words, moods, ideas, images and knowledge from the text begin to penetrate the consciousness through your gaze. This process always seemed a bit mystical to me. Real deep meditation. Today, most people can read and write, it's a natural process for everyone. But in 1950, in the territory of the former Russian Empire there were 52 % of people who could read, and at the beginning of the 20'th century—22 %.
3. **Reward.** It is a kind of positive result that you get after reading. Earlier we listed the benefits of reading books. It is believed that in order for the case to become a habit, it must be performed regularly for thirty to forty days. It takes the same time to consolidate the habit.

It is very important not just to read, but to link the habit with some kind of stimulus that reminds you of reading books or is associated with it. In modern times, this is commonly called a trigger. It is important

to attach this habit to something: always read before going to bed; always after lunch; always after something you do every day; after japa; after puja, etc. In the Vaishnava tradition, there is a similar concept in Sanskrit—uddipan (one of the two components of vibhava—the basis of the rasa). The uddipan, or stimuli of rasa, are the qualities of Krishna, His youth, His grace, His beauty, the fragrance of His body, His flute, His conch shell, the tulasi trees associated with Him, as well as His devotees. When a devotee comes in contact with such uddipan, he immediately remembers Krsna, and rasa awakens in his heart. Once Mukunda (a doctor, companion of Lord Chaitanya) was granted audience with a king, but when he saw a peacock feather fan, that the king was fanned with, spiritual emotions manifested in his heart, and he fainted from ecstasy. In this case, the peacock feather was uddipan, which reminded Mukunda of Krishna.

Books have always been compared with treasure. Once upon a time, three great devotees from the second generation of Vaishnavas after Lord Chaitanya—Narottam das Thakur, Srinivas Acharya and Shyamananda Pandit—were carrying a big trunk of Vrindavana Goswami's books to Bengal for distribution. One of the kingdoms they passed through was ruled by king Birhambir. This ruler had a court astrologer who could see the wealth of people passing through their country. The astrologer said that three preachers sleeping nearby have in their possession a box of treasures. It should be noted that in addition to ruling the country, Birkhambir ruled all the criminal gangs of the state. He ordered the robbers to steal the trunk and deliver it straight to his chambers. When it was done, the king and the astrologer opened the trunk, and to their surprise, instead of the expected gold, they saw books entitled: "Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu" by Rupa Goswami. So even astrological charts have shown that books are the most precious treasure. Subsequently, Birhambir returned the books to Srinivas and became his disciple.



I WILL READ
SRILA PRABHUPADA'S
BOOKS EVERY DAY

CREATING A DAILY READING SETUP

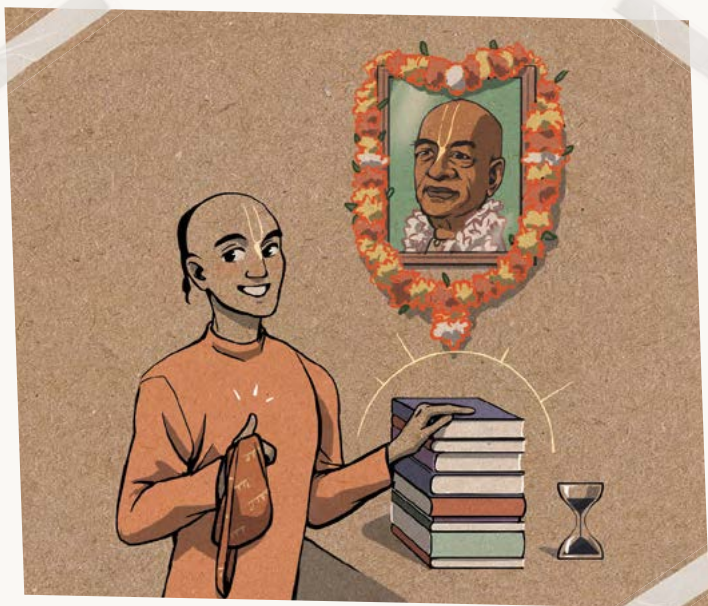
The mindset of reading is also part of motivation, it can be compared to the manifestation of determination. Where does the determination come from? Out of inspiration, out of necessity, out of strong desire, out of austerity and much more.

Modern scientists, studying the functioning of the human brain, concluded that while reading and writing, two neural systems are involved in the work. One recognizes words, and the second evaluates the physical movements by which signs are applied to the page. The occipital and temporal lobes of the brain are involved in this process. In other words, we record the signs and movements of our hands. In their opinion, the brain can fix the settings for reading or writing.

To create a clear reading mindset, you need to have a plan. You can choose the books you want to read. It is necessary to fix the thought in your mind: “I will read Srila Prabhupada’s books every day”—and with this attitude, start reading books.

PEOPLE WHO REGULARLY READ BOOKS

For us, as for people engaged in spiritual practice, the examples of great Vaishnavas are important in order to be inspired and charged from them. Examples of the six Gosvamis who devoted all their time



to studying Vedic literature, writing books, chanting the holy name and restoring Vrindavan; examples of Narottama, Srinivasa and Shyananda, who carefully continued to pave the path started by the Gosvamis; examples of Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, who revived the teachings of Lord Chaitanya from darkness of sahajiya and mayavada; the example of our beloved Srila Prabhupada, who literally flooded the whole world with transcendental books about Krishna; examples of our spiritual masters who are immersed in Srila Prabhupada's mood and mission; examples of those devotees who are close to us and regularly read books.

Below is a list of people from the secular world who regularly read books. This is done not to be inspired by them, but to illustrate that the process of reading itself brings even material success.

- **Warren Buffett**—read up to 1000 pages a day, devoting maximum time to literature, and considered it the key to his success.
- **Elon Musk**—with the help of literature, he learned to build rockets on his own in order to circumvent the issue of huge financial costs for such a service from third parties.
- **Tony Robbins**—he read 700 books in all areas that could change life, was able to achieve success, and become mentally strong, having been born in a dysfunctional family.
- **Mark Cuban**—devotes 3 hours a day to literature, extracting all the best ideas from any text.
- **Bill Gates**—with an extremely busy schedule, allocates enough time to replenish the list of completed goals with 50 books per year.

“But the most unfortunate situation is that the karmis will agree to hear a bunch of newspaper which is ten times more in volume than Bhagavad-gita, but if they are requested to read Bhagavad-gita, they will not agree. So our propaganda is to transfer the taste of the general people from reading rubbish nonsense to reading of Bhagavad-gita, which solves the problems of life.” (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Kulashekhara, January 11, 1970.).

I brought this passage from Srila Prabhupada’s letter specifically to demonstrate that although from a material point of view all these people are very successful, from a spiritual point of view everything they read is of the most asinine subject matter. Such problems of life as old age, illness, suffering and death do not go away. Only the Bhagavad-gita and Srila Prabhupada’s other books can solve them.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I have a habit of reading. I read for several months, then some event happens in my life or I become ensnared by some intense work—and gradually I stop reading. How not to lose the habit of reading?

This situation happens to almost everyone. This is called “ups and downs in reading.” Many things we can do, or we can not do. Like, for example, regular sports: push-ups, pull-ups and squats. No matter how many times I started to do it, managed for one-two months—and that’s it. Pause for six months-a year. It is important that reading books becomes not just your habit, but a need. You should have a need to read books every day. Like the need for food. I need to eat two or three times a day, I can’t do it any other way. In order for a habit to turn into a need, it must become a part of your life. So, for some people, some bad habits become a part of their life: smoking, staying awake at night, wasting time on the Internet, etc. In this case, you need to disclose another topic—how to get rid of a bad habit. Make reading books a part of your daily duties.

It happens that there is an overload from reading. Then you need to pause for a day or two, and then continue reading again. Or reduce the amount of reading for a while. In general, in order not to lose the habit, you need to avoid long breaks in reading. About five to seven days—that’s already a long break. Two or three weeks—this means that the habit is gone, and you must recover it.

Besides Srila Prabhupada's books, I like secular novels and adventures, will it hurt my spiritual practice?

In general, Srila Prabhupada stressed many times that one should not read worldly literature unnecessarily. It all depends on the degree of attachment to it and how long you have been engaged in spiritual practice.

If attachment is weak and is caused by an old samskara, for example, you read a series of novels before Krishna consciousness and did not read the last book, and now you are wondering how it ended there, then just satisfy this desire and the attachment may go. But if your desires are strong and you want to read more and more novels, then this can affect your spiritual practice. Because when you read something, the images, mood and thinking of the author will be absorbed into your consciousness. It's like eating store-bought bread, unfavorably. You don't seem to be violating anything, but it's extremely unfavorable.

If you have recently started practicing, then most likely there is no harm in such reading. One should not rush, but simply develop a taste for reading Srila Prabhupada's books. But if you have been practicing for a long time and you still have a taste for secular literature, then this indicates a weak spiritual practice. There is a gap somewhere in your spiritual life. It is necessary to make an analysis and do something. The Bhagavad-gita teaches us that by developing spiritual attachment, we gradually lose material attachments. And this does not happen immediately, attachments persist for a long time, you need to be patient.



*“viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ
rasa-varjaṁ raso 'py asya paraṁ drṣṭvā nivartate*

*Though the embodied soul may be restricted from sense enjoyment,
the taste for sense objects remains. But, ceasing such engagements by*

experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in consciousness.” (Bhagavad-gita, 2.59).



It is necessary to develop attachment to reading Srila Prabhupada's books—this is the highest taste. And in parallel, you may work on decreasing attachment to secular literature.

Practical tips for working with attachment:

- Don't have secular books at home that distract you;
- Don't listen to the news about your old “novels”;
- Try to realize the futility of such reading.

Is there a danger in professional literature or books on self-development?

There is danger in any secular literature. The question is our spiritual maturity and the need to read such books. Sometimes you need to read professional literature, for example, a book on growing tomatoes. This is necessary because we can use the results in service to Krishna. According to all the rules, grown tomatoes will be offered to the Deities on the altar. But if I read just to satisfy my interest or curiosity, Srila Prabhupada would label this sort of reading as foolishness.

Self-development books are very tempting. Their authors suggest to pump up some skills, abilities, thinking, etc. We can agree that something will be useful and applicable in Krishna consciousness. For example, I read Jeff Petty's book “Modern Education”. A lot from this book has been useful to me in my teaching of spiritual disciplines. There will be instances that because of your work, you may need to read something. In this case, you need to read it because it's part of the job or you need to learn something to do the job. In other cases, there is absolutely no benefit from these books. Just in the process

of studying and reading Srila Prabhupada's books, all these abilities will manifest within us by their own accord.

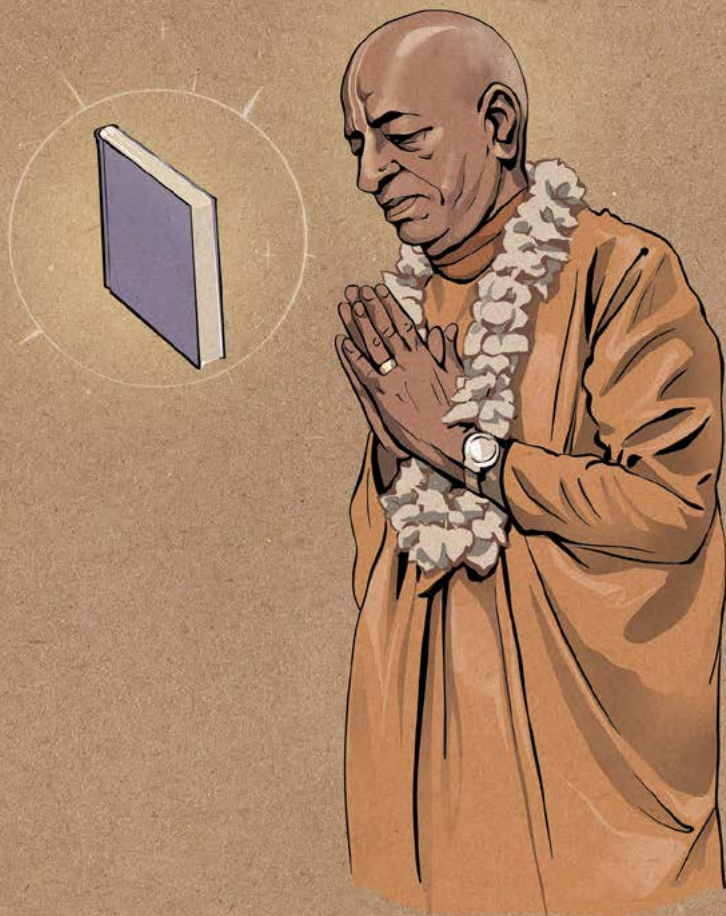
WORKSHOP

- 1 Choose the minimum reading time or the number of pages you will read every day.
- 2 Make a creative banner-reminder that you will read books every day. It can be an A4 drawing, a beautiful printout or any other ideas that occur to you.
- 3 Talk to three to five devotees about the experience of reading books. Ask them what their reading experience is. What helps them to read books regularly? Record the essence of their experiences. Think about what you could use in your reading.



Lesson 3

Building a relationship with a book



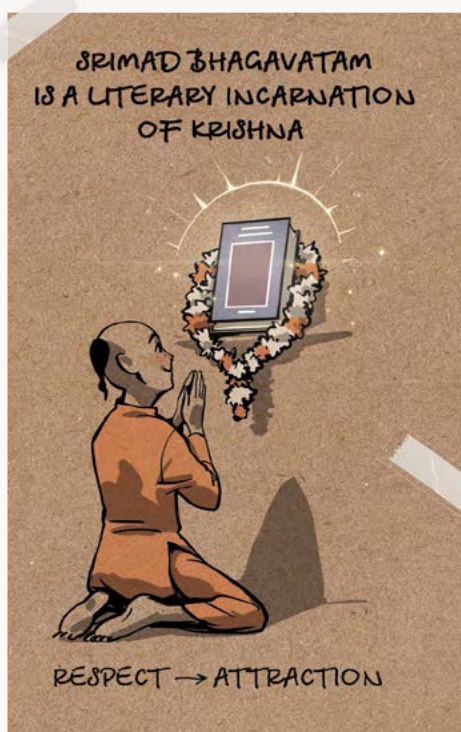
BUILDING A RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE BOOK

We build different relationships with different people. With some people it happens quickly, with others nothing substantial is ever formed.

In many ways it depends on the character of a person, on his mood, on his tastes and preferences, on his appearance. Interestingly, a book may follow the same criteria. A book has

its own character, its own mood, its own fruits, and its own appearance. It is often said that books are alive. Of course, this does not mean that the book is a living being and has consciousness, but nevertheless, there is something alive within it. That life is the consciousness of the

the author, thoughts which are directly conveyed to us. In reading a book, we build a relationship with the author. Hence arises the attitude to the book—respectful. Respect is the



basis of any relationship. A devotee will never neglect books. Respect means to be treated carefully. Following respect, affection may appear. This means that a book can become a favorite, making you want to reread it again and again. Do you have a list of your favorite books? A list of books that are still difficult for you? Or books that turned out to be incomprehensible?

“Here is the remedy for eliminating all inauspicious things within the heart, which are considered to be obstacles in the path of self-realization. The remedy is the association of the Bhāgavatas. **There are two types of Bhāgavatas, namely the book Bhāgavata and the devotee Bhāgavata.** Both the Bhāgavatas are competent remedies, and both of them or either of them can be good enough to eliminate the obstacles. A devotee Bhāgavata is as good as the book Bhāgavata because the devotee Bhāgavata leads his life in terms of the book Bhāgavata and the book Bhāgavata is full of information about the Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees, who are also Bhāgavatas. Bhāgavata book and person are identical.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.2.18, purp.).

I have said above that the books have no consciousness, but Srimad-Bhagavatam is the literary incarnation of Krishna. Devotees can treat these books as a Deity. Before the beginning of the Bhakti-sastri course, our students and teachers always offer puja to all Srila Prabhupada’s books. Many times I saw senior Vaisnavas offering bhoga to the Bhagavad-gita. After distributing a set of Srimad-Bhagavatam, Vaisesika prabhu conducted a ceremony to install the Lord—a set of books, as in the ceremony of installing a Deity—with magnificent worship and bhoga.

“That the Personality of Godhead was not seen but only heard does not make any difference. The Personality of Godhead produced the four Vedas by His breathing, and He is seen and realized through the transcendental sound of the Vedas. **Similarly, the Bhagavad-gītā is the sound representation of the Lord, and there is no difference in**

identity. *The conclusion is that the Lord can be seen and heard by persistent chanting of the transcendental sound.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.6.25, purp.).*

“Therefore, the Srimad-Bhagavatam is, in fact, the consciousness of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna, and along with the Bhagavad—gita, it is the incarnation of the Lord in sound” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 2.9.37, purp.).



We build a unique relationship with each book. Just as with a person, these relationships can be superficial, or they can be deep. Words from a book can penetrate the eyes, mind, heart and soul.

Eyes

This is reading without developing a relationship. I read the book—and immediately forget it. No emotions arise and nothing interesting is found as a result of such reading. In this case, the reader perceived the text with his eyes, and then nothing happened to seal the relationship. This can be compared to the fact that you were introduced to a person, you talked a little, but he turned out to be not at all interesting to you, and you never talked to him again.

Mind

This is a profitable reading. You read a book, perhaps it is even interesting and very useful. The book helps to develop skills or qualities. This can be compared to people with whom you need to build relationships with because they are either your neighbors or colleagues.

Heart

This is reading with emotions. Something attracted you to the book. You have found something useful for yourself, some practical advice. The plot of the book can be very exciting and interesting. You felt emotions after reading it. There is a desire to share with others. For example, when you meet a person, you can immediately feel sympathy for him. You have a lot to talk about, common interests and a similar character. You can become friends and help each other.

Soul

It is reading with God. When deep, intimate relationships manifest themselves. You realize that you cannot describe how valuable this book is. After coming into contact with it, your whole life literally turned upside down. It is as if your eyes were opened and another world was shown to you. The world where Krishna is present and your relationship with Him is eternal. You start to cherish this book, rereading it again and again, and with each new reading, the relationship within deepens, and new facets begin to open up. There is a desire to show this book to others, as many people as possible, and simultaneously a fear of showing it to those who are not ready, who will be unable to appreciate it. Therefore, you reveal the secret of this relationship only to those closest to you, those who understand you. This can be compared to how a young man and a girl fall in love with each other. Intimate relationships arise between them, and if they develop them correctly, avoiding neglect and insults, then their love deepens over time.

Such a deep relationship is possible with Srila Prabhupada's books.



⋮

*“idaṁ te nātapaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana
na cāśuśrūṣave vācyaṁ na ca mām yo ’bhyasūyati*

*ya idam paramam guhyam mad-bhaktesv abhidhāsyati
bhaktim mayi parām kṛtvā mām evaiśyaty asaṁśayaḥ*

*na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priya-kṛttamaḥ
bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyah priya-taro bhuvi*

This confidential knowledge may never be explained to those who are not austere, or devoted, or engaged in devotional service, nor to one who is envious of Me. For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear.” (Bhagavad-gita, 18.67–69).



The intimate knowledge of Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam can penetrate into our hearts. This knowledge can build the strongest relationships that the soul is capable of—relationships with Krishna—bhakti.

SOME PRACTICAL TIPS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH A BOOK

- You need preliminary acquaintance to understand whether you will commit to reading this book right now. You can view the table of contents, read reviews, read individual passages, read the introduction or preface. Usually these actions are enough to understand whether or not you are ready for a book.
- A bookshelf is an altar, not a storehouse of books. Therefore, the shelf or bookcase should be kept in the appropriate condition.
- A book is always a continuation of its author.
- Srila Prabhupada’s books should be treated as an incarnation of Krishna.

- Study books in detail at specially organized courses.
- Glorify books and distribute them.
- Avoid the ten offenses of the books.

TEN OFFENSES OF THE BOOKS

These insults are not a Sastric statement, it is an author's view. I'm sorry for this speculation, but I found some rational points in building relationships with spiritual books.

Just as any relationship can undergo a crisis and end, so the relationship with the book can stop, and spiritual practice can suffer because of this. Below is a list of ten things to avoid in relation to Srila Prabhupada's books:

1. Criticize books and disagree with their content.
2. Consider these books ordinary or consider their power exaggerated.
3. Put books on the floor, sit on them or put various objects on them.
4. Put books in an unclean place or touch them with unclean hands.
5. Tear pages out of books or draw in them.
6. Throwing books or tossing them from hand to hand.
7. Put books on the same shelf as secular literature or leave them upside down.
8. To give or distribute books to people you know are not interested.
9. To give or distribute books, inspiring topics that are not described in them.
10. Do not read books regularly, having already received sufficient instructions on this topic.

And, of course, the root of all these offenses is inattentive reading of Srila Prabhupada's books and disdainful attitude towards them.

“I hope you are chanting your rounds regularly and always engaging in devotional service in our regular Temple program. Please read all our literature very carefully and chant Hare Krsna always and be happy”.
(from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Bhaktajana, November 17, 1970.).

“Please fulfill your all requirements of advancement in Krsna consciousness by rigidly following the rules and regulations, chanting the sixteen rounds of beads daily, studying our literatures carefully and thoughtfully in the company of other devotees...” (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Gunagrahi das brahmachari, February 12, 1971).

Srila Prabhupada often emphasizes the importance of careful and thorough reading of his books. Therefore, the number of pages and duration of time spent reading books is a secondary factor, attentiveness and thoughtfulness are paramount.

CHOOSING A BOOK TO READ

Choosing a book is the first stage in building a relationship with it. Sometimes a book is chosen because of its wide popularity, for example, a lot of people have read Harry Potter, and almost everyone knows who he is. Sometimes a book is chosen on someone's recommendation. When I was about twelve years old, one of my schoolmates advised me to read a fantasy book

“Diamond sword, wooden sword” by Nick Perumov. And he did not just recommend, but for a very long time, in great detail, describe to me the characters of the book, the interweaving of the plot etc. As a result, I became infected with interest and started to read it, not knowing that I was walking into a trap of more than twenty books



connected by a single plot. Sometimes a book is chosen on a whim, a beautiful cover or an interesting title. Many avid readers I knew regularly went to bookstores, spending hours picking books. For example, one of my friends went to the bookstore once a week for three or four hours. He went there, leafed through different books from different sections, read about the authors, until finally choosing a book to read.

How can a secular person choose a book by Srila Prabhupada?

Currently, some of our books, such as the Bhagavad-gita, are available in bookstores. But what are the chances that the reader will choose it? Moreover, many people have switched to ebooks. Yet still, a very large number of people read and appreciate our books.

“No other work of Indian literature is quoted in the West so often and is not loved as much as the Bhagavad-gita. Anyone who undertakes the translation of such a work should not only know Sanskrit, but also very deeply understand both the content and the exquisite verbal form of this book. For this poem is a symphony that teaches to recognize the

presence of God in everything. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada certainly has a deep love for the subject of this work. Moreover, he brings to it the special insight that a commentator should possess who powerfully and convincingly substantiates the tradition of bhakti (devotional service). <...> Swami rendered an invaluable service to the students of the Bhagavad-gita by filling this beloved Indian epic with new content. Whatever views each of us holds, we should all be grateful to the one who created this brilliant work at the cost of great work.

Dr. Geddes McGregor, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern California” (“Bhagavad-gita”, scientists about the “Bhagavad-gita as it is”).

“No work in all Indian literature is more quoted. Because none is better loved in the West than the Bhagavad-gita. Translation of such work demands not only knowledge of Sanskrit but an inward sympathy with the theme and a verbal artistry. But the poem is a symphony in which God is seen in all things. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is, of course, profoundly sympathetic to the theme. He brings to it a special interpretative insight. Here we have a powerful and persuasive presentation in the bhakti tradition of this dearly beloved poem. The Swami’s introduction makes clear at once where he stands as a leading exponent of Krishna consciousness.” (Dr. Geddes MacGregor, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern California)



The essence of Lord Chaitanya’s mercy is that He did not wait for the people to come to Him for the holy name. He personally distributed the maha-mantra to everyone. The followers of the International Society of Krishna Consciousness act on the same principle, they distribute Srila Prabhupada’s books everywhere in the world, offering them to the general public.

As described in the first chapter, Srila Prabhupada’s books are best read in a certain sequence. Below we will give some practical recommendations for choosing a book to read.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING POINTS

Author

Currently, many senior Vaishnavas are writing books, and personal acquaintance with the author can play its role.

Volume

If you do not have the habit of reading regularly, then voluminous works can be very difficult. As a result, the book may end up in your personal “cemetery” of unfinished books. Learn to really evaluate your strength: many devotees started reading the Srimad-Bhagavatam, but never finished it. If you read it regularly, then you can easily read it in a year or two. It is very important that there is an effect of completeness in reading books, it is imperative to read books till the end.

Content

It is very important to understand what a book is about, the topics it describes, etc. To do this, it is sufficient to look at the contents of the book, the title of chapters and subsections. You can read the preface or introduction, open the book in any place and read individual paragraphs.

Reviews

It is always useful to read what dear devotees write about the book you are going to read. They can inspire you.

Decoration

Beautiful books are always more pleasant to read. Look at how the cover is designed, what is the quality of the paper. Some like glossy paper, others like matte. More often, matte paper is easier to read, since it does not give glare, like gloss. The presence of beautiful illustrations is always pleasing to the eyes. After holding some books in your hands, you can get aesthetic pleasure.

Ultimately, choosing a book to read is an individual preference. Many different factors can affect this, and sometimes you don't even have to choose. When I asked one senior Vaishnava how he chooses books, he replied, "I don't know how it happens, but it seems like the book chooses me." In any case, we have to read all of Srila Prabhupada's books.

“And you must all study very scrutinizingly all of the books so that when the need arises you can repeat in your own words their purport. Also I will be very pleased if you contribute articles to BTG. By writing regularly, what you read will become realized. As much as possible, read, chant, and preach. This is our life and soul. If we keep to this simple formula then there is no doubt that we will be victorious wherever we go and very soon we shall become the only religion in the world” (Srila Prabhupada's letter to Hridayananda, January 6, 1972.).

BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Srila Prabhupada's desire was not just to print books and read them in a circle of followers, but to also distribute them to a secular audience. The following is an excerpt from Prabhupada-Lilamrita, which vividly describes how he distributed his books himself.

“Oh, Your Divine Grace, I am very glad I could have the opportunity to speak with you.’ Śrīla Prabhupāda was talking in a very friendly way with him. The man was receptive. It was not an atmosphere of challenge. Śrīla Prabhupāda was very nice to him. Prabhupāda then told the man, ‘We have a lot of books. You are working with books in the government. You are giving books to the schools. So I will be very glad if you can take some of these and read, and then you will see in a more broad way all the topics we were discussing today.’ The man said, ‘Oh, yes. I would like to.’

At that time I was doing book distribution as my full-time engagement. I thought, ‘Oh, I don’t know if Prabhupāda wants to ask him for some money. I think Prabhupāda is not going to ask him for money because he is a guest.’ I thought that Prabhupāda was probably going to say, ‘Yes, keep the books and good-bye. Hare Kṛṣṇa.’ I expected that he would let the other sannyāsīs take care of selling any books.

But I was very surprised that when the man agreed to take the books, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, ‘Please give him some books.’ The devotees then gave some of our Spanish translation books. We only had a few books, but we immediately gave them. Then the man said, ‘Is there anything I have to pay for these books?’ I thought Śrīla Prabhupāda would say, ‘No, just keep it with you,’ and ‘Hare Kṛṣṇa.’ But Prabhupāda said very gravely, ‘If you want to give something for the books, we will accept.’ Then the man took out some money, and Prabhupāda made a sign indicating that he should please give it to one of the devotees.

It was a surprise to me just to see how Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t miss an opportunity. He was the teacher of all of us, an expert at making transcendental saṅkīrtana. I learned from that incident that I will never feel embarrassed in front of anyone just to ask for a donation for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. I felt at that time that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself had a lot of respect for his books, not because they were his books, but because the books—as he told us, and as we could see by

his practical example—the books were his whole life.” (recollection of Hridayananda Goswami from Prabhupada-Lilamrita, chapter 65).



Book distribution, or sankirtana, is a very important service. Srila Prabhupada often stressed that we are at war, and our books are our ammunition. The opponent in the form of maya captures the consciousness of conditioned souls, and only these books are able to purify the world from the influence of the age of Kali.



*“There is no doubt about it, to distribute books is our most important activity. The temple is a place not for eating and sleeping, but as a base from which we send out our soldiers to fight with maya. **Fight with maya means to drop thousands and millions of books into the lap of the conditioned souls**”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Ramesvara, August 3, 1973).*

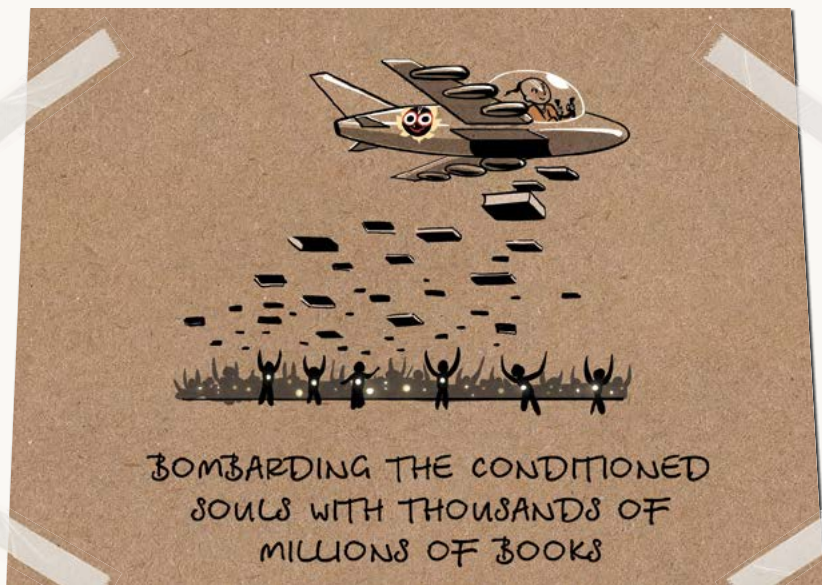


Srila Prabhupada took book printing very seriously. This was the personal instruction of his spiritual master. In 1972, he founded the BBT (Bhaktivedanta Book Trust), a publishing house that publishes his books worldwide, maintaining the highest standard of quality.

Srila Prabhupada was a real commander. There are two primary strategies in war: defense and attack. His Divine Grace always preferred the strategy of attack, which took the form of preaching. As Alexander Vasilyevich Suvorov said, the smaller the army, the braver the soldiers. Srila Prabhupada made us brave by teaching us to fight and giving us weapons, and he led his army to complete victory with complete success, as the army general, senapati-bhakta.

“*These books and magazines are our most important propaganda weapons to defeat the ignorance of maya’s army, and the more we produce such literature and sell them profusely all over the world, the more we shall deliver the world from the suicide course*”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Jayadvaita, November 18, 1972).

Book distribution started with an interesting fact. Two devotees, having refueled their car, decided to pay not with money, but with books. The seller readily accepted their offer. So it gradually became a tradition to distribute books on the streets. Devotees did this wherever it was possible—at busy intersections, near shopping malls—in all places of mass gatherings. One of my favorites was the airport. Vaishnavas wore wigs, secular costumes, and sometimes even pasted a mustache, just for the sake of book distribution. Once, one of the newspapers published a small comic strip.



The devotees showed it to Srila Prabhupada. There were four pictures in the comic. In the first, a gentleman in a suit walks near the airport and a devotee approaches him with books. On the second one, the devotee actively offers books to this gentleman. The third shows a cloud of dust, from which the hands of a gentleman and a devotee stick out, it is clear that they are fighting. On the fourth, the gentleman walks away, holding a book in his hands. When Srila Prabhupada saw the fourth picture, he broadly smiled and said: “Achaa” (keep it up!). When he received reports of book distribution, he often said that it gave him the greatest joy.

“‘I may stay or go, but in my books I will live forever.’ When he heard that forty thousand hardbound books had been distributed in one week, he said, ‘If book distribution increases, I will never die. I will be living for centuries.’ Tamāla Kṛṣṇa remarked that the book distribution reports were one kind of news that didn’t give Prabhupāda a headache, and Prabhupāda smiled broadly. ‘No!’ he said. ‘It is my life!’

<...>

Prabhupāda had said that the only real medicine for him was kīrtana. And kīrtana, he had explained, included preaching around the world. And for Prabhupāda, who was taking so little food, the chanting of the holy name and the kīrtana of preaching reports from his disciples seemed to be not only his medicine but his sustenance as well.

On the evening of the day Prabhupāda received Ghanaśyāma’s letter, he learned that Gopāla Kṛṣṇa had arrived with copies of several newly published Hindi books. Prabhupāda had been lying in bed, but on receiving the good news, he raised his eyebrows and said, ‘Bring them immediately!’ Gopāla Kṛṣṇa entered with the books, and Prabhupāda immediately sat up in ecstasy”. (Satsvarupa das Goswami, Prabhupada-Lilamrita, chapter 52).



Over time, devotees noticed that books are best distributed on Christmas Eve. This is how the December book distribution marathon dedicated to Srila Prabhupada appeared. Subsequently, our books were distributed in such incredible quantities that it is difficult to comprehend. In the territory of the former CIS in the 90s, devotees could distribute books by wagons, at large factories. They made titanic efforts in sankirtana. Srila Prabhupada's books have been translated into more than ninety languages. In fifty years, 559 million books have been distributed around the world!

World results of book distribution by country for 2019:

1. India (88 million).
2. USA (25 million).
3. Russia (20 million).
4. Italy (9 million).
5. Great Britain (8.5 million).
6. Germany (7 million).
7. Brazil (5.6 million).
8. Ukraine (5.4 million).
9. Switzerland (4.2 million).
10. France (2.9 million).

Individual Book distribution results for 2019 (points/books):

1. Harinamananda das, Switzerland (597 thousand / 464 thousand).
2. Navina Nirada das, Switzerland (479 thousand / 391 thousand).
3. Parameshvara das, USA (474 thousand / 578 thousand).
4. Chaitanya Chandra das, Brazil (416 thousand / 592 thousand).

5. Gita Govinda devi dasi, Japan (357 thousand / 545 thousand).
6. Vraja sundara das, Italy (351 thousand / 255 thousand).
7. Bhakti Ratnakar Ambarisha Swami, Russia (331 thousand / 200 thousand).
8. Anakadundubhi das, Italy (294 thousand / 208 thousand).
9. Anirdeshya vapu das, Russia (294 thousand / 223 thousand).
10. Nandanandana Govinda das, India (276 thousand / 344 thousand).

We not only satisfy Srila Prabhupada by distributing his books, but also develop all the necessary qualities for pure devotional service. Sankirtana is the best method to develop love of God.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Some spiritual books are easy to read, and some do not work in any way. Is it worth reading through sheer determination?

Read those books that are easy for you. If you read by force, perhaps the taste will come, but in most cases rejection is the end result. In my practice, there have always been books that were easy to read, and books that I could not read. At the age of twelve, I read the introduction to the Bhagavad-gita. It was an incredible austerity for me. On the other hand, I read the book “Prabhupada” without stopping. I read with interest “Perfect questions, Perfect Answers” and “Life comes from life”. Currently, I have read Bhagavad-gita more than fifteen times, and there is no problem. It was just not the time for it at that age. Ten years ago, I couldn’t even open Bhaktivinoda Thakura’s books. Now I am reading with interest “Sri Chaitanya-shiksha mitra”, “Jaiva-dharma” and others. The taste for various spiritual books develops gradually.

Conversely, I met several devotees who immediately read various books in one gulp and could not stop. There are people with a great inclination for reading. Therefore, someone will read slowly, gradually, and someone will be able to read very quickly. It is all subjective to individual abilities.

Is it possible to make notes with a pencil or pen in a book?

There is also a contrary opinion here. I met a senior Vaishnava who made pencil notes in a book. Other senior devotees say it is insulting to write something in a book.

Often small stickers are glued on the pages—in places that are particularly interesting or important. I never heard that it is prohibited to do so. For myself, I conclude that it is not necessary to write with a pen in a book, but sometimes I use a pencil. Most often, I just take pictures on my phone of a place that I liked or feel might be useful.

I never did sankirtana, but I read regularly. Is it necessary to participate in the distribution of Srila Prabhupada's books?

Sankirtana can occur as a result of carefully reading the books. There is a natural desire to spread this knowledge, and a desire to satisfy Srila Prabhupada. In the 1990's and early 2000's it was quite different. When a person joined the devotees, he was almost immediately taken outside with books. In this case, there was a risk of having a negative experience and, not having sufficient spiritual strength, this person would be discouraged from continuing sankirtana.

At the age of twelve or thirteen, I went to street sankirtana for the first time with an experienced senior devotee in Minsk. About half an hour before we started, he told me about the sankirtana mood

and how to present books. I was inspired. But five minutes after we started sankirtana, the police came and took us to the station. Officers there intimidated me very much. The protocol was sent to the school. I was called to the Council for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency. Then they called my parents. The story lasted about two to three weeks. I was forbidden to go to the temple, so as not to jeopardize the devotees. For the next five or six years, I did not go to sankirtana.

In order to engage in street sankirtana, it is best to undergo special training and understand the law.

It is very auspicious to participate in sankirtana, but due to various circumstances, some devotees cannot do it themselves. In this case, it is good to help sankirtana devotees—to drive them, give donations, clothes, etc. You can also simply buy books and give them away or make donations for books so that the sankirtana devotees can distribute them at a lower cost.

It is hard to read philosophical books. What to read? Do Vaishnavas have their own novels?

I agree, if there was no habit of reading such literature, philosophical books may seem complicated. Again, you need to work well with your motivation to read. Start with small and gradually develop an interest in philosophy. If it's hard to read, you can start studying philosophy in courses, and when it becomes clearer and more interesting, then it will be easier to read. Read Prabhupada-Lilamrita. This is a universal book, in which nectarian stories and a philosophical message are miraculously woven together. The book “Krishna” is full of stories mixed with philosophy.

Vaishnavas have their own novels: “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata”. I have always been interested in reading the “Transcendental Diary”

by Hari Sauri Prabhu and “What is the difficulty?” by Srutakirti prabhu. These are the books of two servants of Srila Prabhupada. They are written in different styles, but they are very easy to read. Vaiyasaki Prabhu’s Radha-Damodara vilasa describes a traveling sankirtana group in three volumes. Gregory Guy’s “Unbending” and Sarvabhavana Prabhu’s “Salty Bread” describe the oppressive time of preaching in the Soviet Union. A large number of interesting books are written by Vaishnavas.

I read ebooks. Is it essential to read only paper books?

It is a matter of taste. Electronic media is practical. In the old days, Srila Madhvacharya used to carry a cartload of books with him, which he read and studied. Nowadays, this whole library can be in a small electronic reader or a phone. Reading from the phone is not recommended, the eyes suffer greatly from the glow of the screen. The e-reader has a special screen that does not affect vision. A paper book is now considered a classic. You can touch it, move pages, look through pictures. For me, our BBT books have a distinct smell that evokes a feeling of nostalgia each time I open one. But for practical reasons, you can use e-books.

WORKSHOP

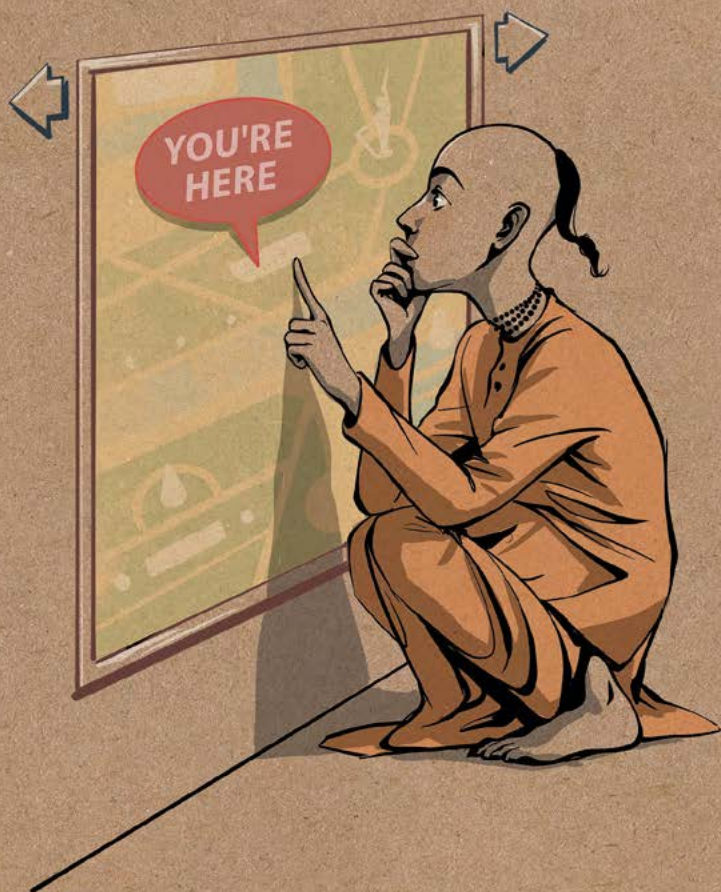
- 1 Divide the books you have read into three categories. The first is the books that you read very easily. The second is books that were difficult. The third is books that turned out to be incomprehensible and that you could not finish. (This exercise will help you analyze your reading and understand which type of books are easier for you and what you should strive for.)

- 2 At home, perform a small puja (worship) to Srila Prabhupada's books. Offer them incense and a flower. Ask for blessings for regular reading.
- 3 During the week, try to participate in sankirtana. You don't have to go outside. You can give the book to someone you know or help the sankirtana devotees. Write down your experience.



Lesson 4

Determining your reading level



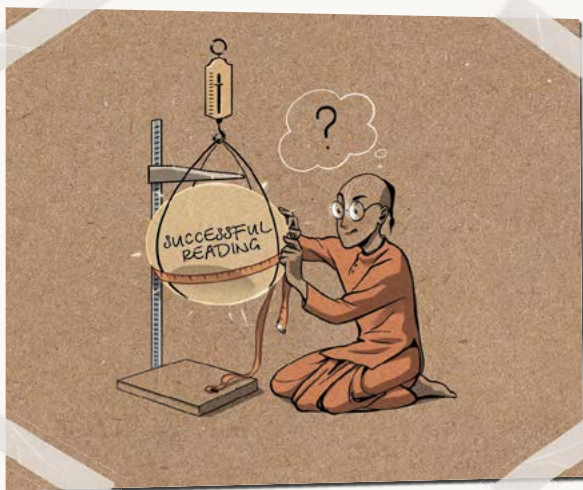
SUCCESSFUL READING PARAMETERS

In this lesson, we begin serious work with the methodology of reading books. Why do you need to understand your level? First, it is the mode of goodness—to understand what is happening in your spiritual practice is one of the most important elements. One can practice Krishna consciousness and not read books for many years. Understanding where I am now always opens up a clear vision of where I should be aiming for. Secondly, it gives perspective. In understanding a situation, you can make a step-by-step plan for your development. Third is inspiration. If you read books regularly, you can easily understand that you are doing very well. Determining the level of your reading is not a prerequisite, you can read regularly without it. But if we talk about education, then any training begins with the determination of your level. When playing a sport, they immediately determine your level to decide which group you should be placed in. For example, when I was a child, I played tennis. A new boy came to us from another city, where he had already been training for several years. The coach asked me to play with him to see his skills and abilities: how he moves around the court, how he reflects the attack, how he pitches, how he hits diagonally and in a straight line, how he works at the net, what techniques he has, etc. After the game, it became clear that he was a little weak, and he was assigned to the junior group. Another example can be taken from schooling. In elementary school we had a similar experience. The teacher sat in a separate office, called the students one by one, timed them and gave them an unfamiliar text to read. She was able to calculate our reading speed and take note of any errors. In these examples, students did not determine their level themselves, it was done by an experienced coach and teacher. When I was studying speed reading courses, the

first thing the teacher did was determine my reading level. The speed was about 1500 characters per minute. He set a goal of 4000 characters per minute and outlined a detailed plan for two months. There were several stages—the achievement of 2000 characters, 3000 characters, as well as the final result—4000 characters.

“Speaking or anything all depends on practice and study. I remember when I was first called for speaking by one of my senior Godbrothers. I felt very much hesitating because I was not practiced to speak. Later on by speaking and hearing or reading I got experience and now we can speak 45 minutes, 50 minutes or one hour at a stretch. So you have to read our books very nicely and gather thoughts, then you can speak for hours without any difficulty. It requires practice. So read your books carefully, especially Nectar of Devotion now published, and practice speaking. It will be alright”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Upendra, June 24, 1970).

Interestingly enough, the ability to talk about Krishna comes from reading books. In the above quote, Srila Prabhupada wants to convey this idea as the main one, not excluding individual practice in developing public speaking skills. If you just develop oratory skills without reading books, you will not be able to preach spiritual science, no matter how sweet and refined your speech may be. On the other hand, if you regularly immerse in the study of the scriptures, then by the grace of guru and Krishna, you can become an eloquent speaker, mukam karoti vachalam, even without taking special courses. One day we asked our spiritual master how he is preparing for lectures? How is he always able to explain the philosophy of Krishna consciousness so clearly? He gave a very clear answer: “If you read Srila Prabhupada’s books every day, you will always have something to say about Krishna.”



We have to determine our reading level ourselves. Different criteria can be used as a basis. We will be using four criteria. Below they are arranged in order of importance, starting with the most important:

1. Stability (regularity).
2. Attentiveness (assimilation of the material).
3. Reading volume (number of pages, time).
4. Reading speed.

Of the four given parameters, the first and second are the most important. Srila Prabhupada emphasizes them in many instructions (quotes were given in previous chapters), focusing the attention of students on the regularity of reading and attentiveness. If we compare these two parameters, stability is more important than attentiveness, for four reasons.

1. In his instructions Srila Prabhupada often speaks about regularity. We have counted Srila Prabhupada's instructions on regularity (stability) and attentiveness from the Prabhupada-Shiksha Mitra,

sections “The Importance of Listening and Reading” and “Srila Prabhupada’s books have everything”. There are 34 instructions about the importance of stable reading, and 19 instructions about the importance of careful reading.

2. By regularly reading books, a devotee disciplines his mind, which in the future will lead to attentiveness.
3. Attentiveness is a variable parameter. A large number of extenuating circumstances can influence our attention: the place of reading, the time of reading, etc.
4. If attentiveness is the main parameter, then it will be very easy to find excuses not to read. Like—today I can’t read attentively, so I’ll wait until I will be able to read attentively.

This does not mean that if stability is the most important thing, then attentiveness is not needed. No. When regularly reading Srila Prabhupada’s books, you need to do it attentively. These two parameters should be the main focus.

“Please continue to read the literature very attentively. Try to understand very soberly and you will feel ecstasy undoubtedly. The more we understand the spiritual literatures the more we become engaddened”.
(from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Aniruddha, December 7’t, 1969).

The volume of reading is the third criteria in rank of priority, since it relies heavily on the individual’s abilities. Most often in Srila Prabhupada’s instructions, the volume of reading is measured by amount of time per day, and not by the number of pages. Quite often, there are instructions that one needs to read at least twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. At the very least, it should be done an hour a day.



“As far as studying my books is concerned, I have already given the order. One hour in the morning class and one hour in the evening and if there is extra time during the day it may be used for studying but

we cannot expect everyone to be studious”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Rupanuga, February 14, 1973.).

“... read Srimad-Bhagavatam at least one hour daily, and in this way without any doubt you will very soon become very happy, and your life will be sublime”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Gangadevi, August 11, 1972.).



The least important parameter is the speed of reading. Srila Prabhupada practically gives zero instructions on this criterion, since it is the most individual and least influential on the spiritual advancement of a devotee.

Stability in reading

Many people experience unstable reading or a complete lack of it. In our case, stable reading can be called reading every day. And we are not talking about the volume of reading. This sentiment has already been repeated several times. You can read for 5–10 minutes a day, or you can read for an hour or two. What’s important is to do this regularly, every day.

It is necessary to consider the reasons why you fail to read books every day.

- Most of us read our first books at school. No one asks children what they are interested in, and the classic stories and novels in school curriculum do not cultivate a love of reading in everyone.
- Parents force children to read, forbidding them to play or do anything else until the specified quota is completed. This approach also discourages interest in reading.

- Children are often not given interesting books that they would find engaging or pleasurable.
- Many people are just too lazy to read. Therefore, in order to introduce such a useful habit as reading, it is necessary to circumvent laziness.
- Modern people are typically certain that time is an exceptionally deficient resource, so they deny themselves the opportunity to read.
- Reading and education are not in fashion today. Nowadays, to look erudite, one needs to know about new movies and read popular public posts on social networks. Today, it is customary to quote not classics, but statuses from the same social networks.
- Overburdened with work, service and other responsibilities. It occurs that there is so much to do that one is busy all day like a squirrel in a wheel.

The above list is actually not reasons, but excuses. It is very difficult to imagine a situation when you do not have even ten minutes a day to read books. My wife, while raising our daughter, always finds time to read books. She reads a little, but regularly. Once, at a brahmachari meeting with a spiritual master, one bhakta complained that there was a lot of service in the ashram and not enough time to read books. The spiritual master replied that the leaders should review the daily routine of brahmacharis, but also added that, most likely, the devotees are not yet able to organize their time efficiently.



"Your first job should be to make sure that every one of the devotees in your zone of management is reading regularly our literatures and discussing the subject matter seriously from different angles of seeing, and that they are somehow or other absorbing the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness philosophy. If they are fully educated in our philosophy and if they can get all of the knowledge and study it from every viewpoint, then very easily they will perform tapasya or renunciation and that will be their advancement in Krishna Consciousness."

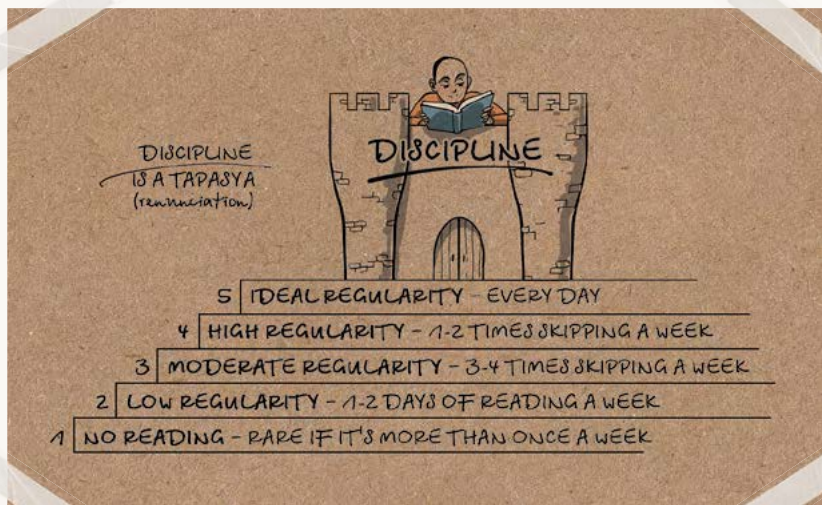
So first thing is to instruct all of your temple presidents and the other devotees to read daily, just as we have done in our morning class in

Los Angeles. <...> Don't be too much concerned for the time being with non devotees, now we must fix-up what devotees we have got in the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness, then we will succeed. What good are many, many devotees if none of them are knowledgeable?"
(from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Satsvarupa das, June 16'th, 1972).



We can conclude from this letter that in order to achieve regular and stable reading, we need discipline. Discipline is a tapasya (renunciation). It is convenient when someone helps us with this. It can be a senior devotee or a peer. The best discipline is self discipline. In this case, it is not necessary for someone to watch you like a supervisor and constantly ask: "Have you read books today?" However, many people need external help to discipline themselves.

Considering this point, in the online course "Conscious reading of Srila Prabhupada's books" we introduced tutoring. A devotee couple



are tutors for each other. Their duties include reminding the partner to read books, as well as sharing what they read with each other every day. Even if there are no organized courses, you can arrange with friends or family members to help and remind you about reading books. Gradually, you need to discipline yourself and get accustomed to regular reading.

How to check your stability? It is very simple. You need to take a calendar, and remember to mark the days when you read books.

You will begin to see a graph before your eyes of how stable you are in reading. Regularity can be divided into five steps:

1. **Lack of reading**—less than once a week.
2. **Low regularity**—once or twice a week.
3. **Average regularity**—three to four days a week.
4. **High regularity**—five to six times a week.
5. **Perfect regularity**—every day.

Our goal is perfect regularity. It may seem that high regularity is enough, because this is already an excellent level. I will now try to demonstrate the inferiority of even a level of high regularity. When I was in high school, our math teacher always came 3 minutes before the start of the lesson. He started the lesson exactly with the bell. Other teachers spent about 2 minutes after the bell to get ready and prepare for the lesson. The math teacher explained that if we lose 2 minutes for preparation at each lesson, then out of 170 hours allocated for mathematics in the academic year, we lose 340 minutes—this is almost six lessons. So our teacher treasured every minute. Now let's apply this example to reading books. If at the level of high regularity, we miss 2 days a week, given that there are about 52 weeks in a year, we lose 104 days a year! How many books can you read in 104 days?

Therefore, in no scenario should one be content with a high level of regularity, our goal is perfect regularity!

Of course, this does not exclude the fact that sometimes you need a break from reading. It is important to understand at what level of stability you are right now, and make an effort to move on to the next one, not immediately to the perfect one. It is better to step from level to level once a month. To do this, you can keep a reading diary and track your stability. Do a reading analysis every week, and eventually you will arrive with the steps to perfect regularity.

“But we are only able to make such sacrifices and perform tapasya if we have got knowledge. So first thing is to become knowledgeable in Krishna Consciousness, then the tapasya or voluntary life of austerity will result automatically. So I am requesting all of my students to read my books very seriously every day without fail. In this way, if your mind becomes absorbed at least one or two hours daily in the transcendental subject matter of Srimad-Bhagavatam, Bhagavad-gita, and other books then very easily you will make your advancement in Krishna Consciousness”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Bhargava, June 13, 1972).

Attentiveness in reading

The level of concentration on the information that is being presented may depend on various factors: on the place of reading, on the time of reading, on the physical state, on the mental state, on individual abilities, and on how interesting the selected book is. Second to frequency, Srila Prabhupada asks his students to read books with all attention. Attentiveness is needed so that the material we read is assimilated in our minds. The result of such assimilation will be a clear understanding of the philosophy of Krishna consciousness.

Following the understanding of philosophy comes the ability to preach in any environment, opposing or favorable.

“...I am glad to see how nicely you are reading my books. Please continue to do this. We need so many preachers who are soundly versed in the scriptures to convince the world to take to Krishna Consciousness. I am glad that you and the others are each writing one hour daily essays. That is parampara. All of our previous acaryas on our line have written substantially on the science of God-consciousness, so I would also like all my students to do this and I am very encouraged by this nice program you have initiated”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Vrindavan Chandra, November 9, 1970).

As already mentioned, the attentiveness of reading depends on many factors. Let’s look at them in more detail.

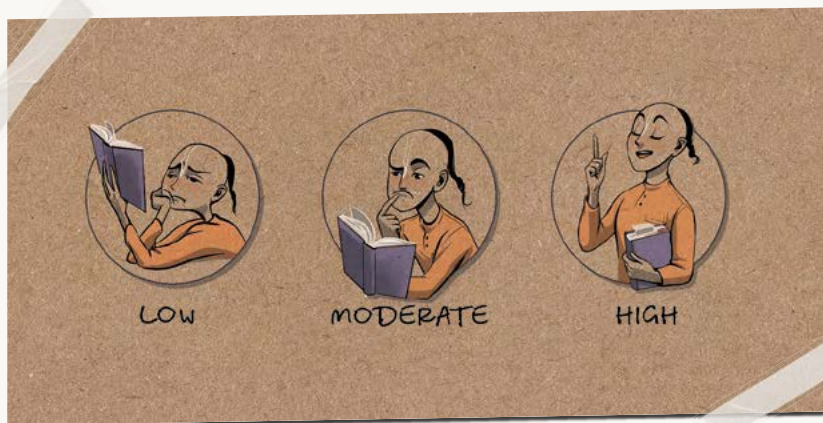
- **Place.** Sometimes it is difficult to find a quiet place where nothing distracts us. Many people when reading have a desire to be reclusive so that they can be alone with a book. If some devotees are distracting you, and you absolutely need to read, then you can either find another place, or engage them to read too.
- **Time.** The morning hours are the best time to read books, since the mind is fresh, well rested, and ready to process new information. During the day, our attention may be more scattered, as there is a lot of other activity. In the evening it is easier to read more attentively, but the duration of concentration may be shorter than in the morning, since it’s time to go to bed. At this period it is better to read not philosophical literature, but some stories. However, there are many who can read carefully at any time of the day.

- **Physical condition.** Severe fatigue or overload greatly affects the ability to concentrate. These factors must be taken into account. It is equally important to plan sufficient time to rest. I have met devotees who could engage in active service all day, and by the evening they fell off their feet. Naturally, they did not have the opportunity to even read, let alone read attentively.
- **Emotional state.** It is difficult to concentrate on a book whilst being emotional. Yet, for some people, reading books helps them calm down and reach equilibrium. In my case, it doesn't work that way. When I am emotional, and if I read a book, my brain starts to work with emotions, ideas and plans in parallel, and my attention is completely dissipated.
- **Interest.** Of course, nothing attracts our attention like an interesting book. This happens spontaneously, and there is no need to research methods of increasing concentration. Attention is very closely related to interest. If the book is interesting, then you will read attentively.
- **Responsibility.** Attentive reading increases when you need to pass an exam or make a presentation, a report, or write an essay. Accountability increases responsibility!

The most distracting factor for me personally are my thoughts. Very often, whilst reading, I start to think about some plans, ideas, and situations in life. Then I catch myself that, after reading a few paragraphs or a page, I don't remember or understand anything. This is because while reading the words, I was thinking about something else. That's how I learned to play mental ping pong. Every time extraneous thoughts come while reading, I quickly imagine a racket in my mind and beat them off. Instead of a racket, you can imagine a rolling pin, a baseball bat, or whatever you want.

It is necessary to figure out how to assess your level of attentiveness in reading. You can determine this on how you apply the knowledge in life, and how much you memorized of what you read. The first criterion is very difficult, since it takes a lot of time, so we will focus on the second one—the ability to remember. Everyone's memory is different, so we will reduce the criterion to memorizing and understanding the meaning of what we read. There are three levels of attentiveness:

1. **Low attentiveness.** After reading the book, you remember almost nothing, only some basic themes and conclusions.
2. **Average attentiveness.** After reading, you remember a lot of the main themes, understand the essence, and recall several points that you especially liked.
3. **High attentiveness.** After reading, you remember the finer details. You've got the essence. You can recall names, events, terms, etc. You can clearly articulate in your own words the main message of what you have read.



It's not about memorizing all the terms, events, names, dates, etc. To assimilate such information, you need not just to read, but to deeply study, write out and memorize the material.

Next time after reading the book, try to retell to someone everything that you read the day before. There can be different levels of attentiveness on different days. We shall strive to regularly read at the third level of attentiveness.

Techniques that will help to increase attentiveness:

- To make notes in a special notebook or reading diary;
- Write out quotes or inspirational moments
- Write out questions that you didn't understand;
- Clarify these questions with your elders;
- Retell your friends what you have read;
- Write essays on what you read;
- Apply techniques of concentration while reading. For example, the technique of a tennis racket;
- Motivate yourself to read;
- Read what is very interesting;
- Read with someone and have discussions about what you have read.

Volume of reading

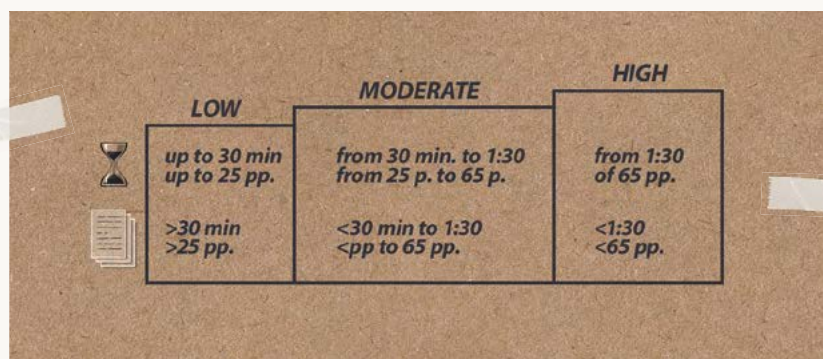
The third parameter of reading books is the volume of reading—how much you read per day. There are two ways to measure this parameter. The first way is the duration of reading each day. The second method is the number of pages read per day. You can choose either metric.

I prefer to count pages. My daily minimum is 100 pages. If you read a little, then it will be more convenient to count the time. But if you have been reading for more than an hour a day, then it is probably more convenient to count the pages. This parameter is very closely related to the speed of reading. If you have a high reading speed and you can read a large number of pages in a short time, then it would be practical to count your reading time.

There are levels in the volume of reading:

1. **Low reading volume**—about half an hour a day or up to 25 pages a day.
2. **The average reading volume**—about half an hour to an hour and a half a day or from 25 to 65 pages a day.
3. **High reading volume**—Anything more than one and a half hours a day or more than 65 pages a day.

It is not difficult to determine your real volume, so we will not describe in detail how to do this, you just need to see how much you read per day. It is better to increase the volume of reading in small steps,



adding at least 5–10 minutes or several pages at a time, gradually moving towards a high volume of reading. Not everyone can reach the high volume given above. For some people, reading 30 minutes a day is already a high volume. One of my spiritual brothers asked our guru a question: “I’ve been trying to read books for an hour every day for several years, but it doesn’t work out. I can’t concentrate.” The spiritual master replied: “You don’t have to read an hour a day. You need to read for half an hour. That’s enough for you”. Gurudev saw the individual abilities of a disciple and gave him appropriate instructions in accordance with them.

It is very important to truly assess your strength and fix a minimum for yourself. Let it be small and sustainable, as it will help you achieve the first parameter to read Srila Prabhupada’s books regularly.

Reading speed

This is a very interesting parameter for measuring your reading level. It is quite individual, so it is last in terms of importance. The speed is very closely related to the second parameter—assimilation of the material. Some devotees like to read one book for a long time, as if savoring it—it is easier for them to penetrate the meaning of the book. Conversely, others read very quickly, and do not like to read one book for a long time. However, some can do both. If you really like the book, why not stay on it longer. I consider myself in the second category. I don’t like to read one book for a long time. I need new ones all the time. But when time passes, I can easily go back to a book I’ve already read again. Sometimes, I did marathons and read one book several times in a row. For example, in “Reading School” we held a five-day marathon on reading “Sri Isopanisad”. I have read this book five times in five days. One student read it very

thoughtfully and slowly for five days. Which one of us understood it better? Who knows.

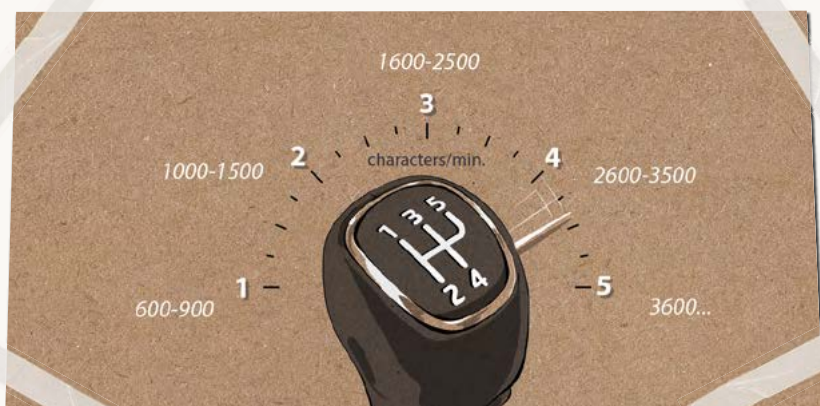
Being mindful of the individuality of this reading parameter, I still came to the conclusion we need to gradually speed up. There are several reasons for this:

- If you read slowly, then reading Srila Prabhupada's books can take a very long time.
- The danger of losing the enthusiasm to finish the book increases.
- You may not want to improve your level, and will be content with what you have. This is not a good trend. There should be a desire for professional development. The basis of such reluctance may simply be complacency.

Let's make an analogy between reading books and driving a car. If you drive slowly, it's safer, but it will take longer to reach the goal. If you drive faster, the time to reach is reduced, but the danger increases. In the car of our reading there is a transmission. It has five speeds. You can calculate your reading speed in different ways: using pages, words, or characters per minute. We will count in characters.

- **First speed:** 600–900 characters per minute. This is a very slow speed, typical for reading aloud.
- **Second speed:** 1000–1500 characters per minute. This speed is typical for many when reading to themselves and is considered average.
- **Third speed:** 1600–2500 characters per minute. People who regularly read books usually read at this speed. It is characterized as above average.

- **Fourth speed:** 2600–3500 characters per minute. Only by those who consciously make efforts to increase their reading speed. This speed is considered fast.
- **Fifth speed:** 3600–5000 characters per minute. This is already the initial stage of speed reading. To achieve such a result, you need to attend special courses. At this rate, the approach to reading itself changes.



An interesting point is that the ability to understand the material at all speeds remains the same. There is also a speed from 5000 to 10,000 characters per minute and above. This is in the realm of “speed reading”. People with speed reading do not read like us. They perceive the whole text at once with a broad perspective, not line by line as we do. They can read diagonally and from right to left. At such a super-speed, the approach to reading itself changes. It is best to set a goal of the fourth speed or at least the third. But if you already read 3000–4000 characters per minute, why not try speed reading?

Two ways to speed up.

1. Read without returning to what you have read. Even if some word or sentence is not understood, do not read it again, read on. Over time, the mind will get used to reading everything correctly and carefully the first time.
2. Read with a finger or pencil. You read with your finger, gradually moving your finger faster, and you then start to read faster.

To determine your speed, just mark a minute and read. When the minute is over, count the lines read, the number of characters in the line, and multiply the number of characters by the number of lines. Once again, we will focus on the fact that the reading speed is a very individual parameter. Srila Prabhupada did not talk about speed. He emphasized stability and attentiveness.

ADDITIONAL READING PARAMETERS

In addition to the main parameters of measuring the reading level, there are several secondary ones too.

Application of what you read

Srila Prabhupada did not write an empty theory, he wrote a living practice for the development of Krishna consciousness. You can track how you apply what you read.

Multi-vector reading

This is the ability to read several books at the same time. I used to practice this kind of reading, reading three or four books simultaneously. But at the same time, the attentiveness of my reading suffered

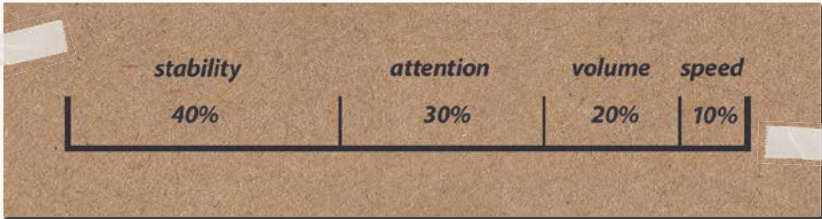
greatly, and I often did not finish some books. I had to stop multi-vector reading and read only one book at a time. I know several devotees who can easily read two or three books in parallel. You can independently check how many books you can read. Some say that they read one book in the morning and another in the evening.

Satisfaction of reading

See how satisfied you are after reading, and whether you experience positive emotions. If after reading books you feel weakness, discontent or irritability, then you need to compromise—either read less, or read something more interesting.

WHAT RESULTS SHOULD WE STRIVE FOR

So, we have described four parameters for measuring your reading level: stability, attentiveness, volume and speed. Each of these criteria has its own weight, its own levels, with each having the potential to be improved. If we distribute them by importance, I would propose: stability—40 %, attentiveness—30 %, volume—20 %, speed—10 %. We can't say that it is necessary to achieve perfection everywhere, in this case, the internal desire for improvement and the overall positive tendency are more important. If we worry that our reading is not good



enough—it is already a positive indicator. The main task of this book is to achieve results that reinforce our stability of reading. Therefore, as mentioned repeatedly, you need to read Srila Prabhupada's books every day. H.G. Chaitanya Chandra Charan prabhu recommends reading at least 15 minutes at a time. An hour of reading can be divided into four or two parts, 15 or 30 minutes portions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I want to read faster. I tried to speed up my reading. I immediately lose attention. How to read quickly and attentively?

Perhaps you are starting to read too quickly. With fast reading, attention is lost for a while, but the main thing is to continue, and eventually you will notice that your concentration returns to normal. You can try using the two reading acceleration techniques given in this lesson, or sign up for speed reading courses. There is one problem—all these courses are conducted by materialists. So far, I have not met any devotees who would teach speed reading. When you start speeding up your reading, remember the techniques that enhance the understanding of your reading.

What is the best way to read—aloud or silently?

You can do both, it depends on your preferences and circumstances. You can read aloud with someone in turns, or you can read to yourself alone. As a teenager, I had problems with diction. A speech therapist told me to read aloud, exaggeratedly slow. I read Srila Prabhupada's books out loud, but the goal was to improve diction. This is what Srila Prabhupada wrote to one of his disciples regarding this issue.



“So far as reading scriptures out loud, this depends upon the circumstances. If you can understand by reading silently, there is no need to read out loud, because this may make others feel disturbed”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Jayapataka, January 30, 1969).



Isn’t it insulting to read Srila Prabhupada’s books with speed reading?

Not if attentiveness doesn’t suffer. We talked about the fact that speed is the least important factor.

WORKSHOP

- 1 Determine your reading level according to each of the four criteria. Write down a plan for the next three to six months on how you can improve at least the first two parameters.
- 2 During the week, recall what you read to your tutor or someone close to you.



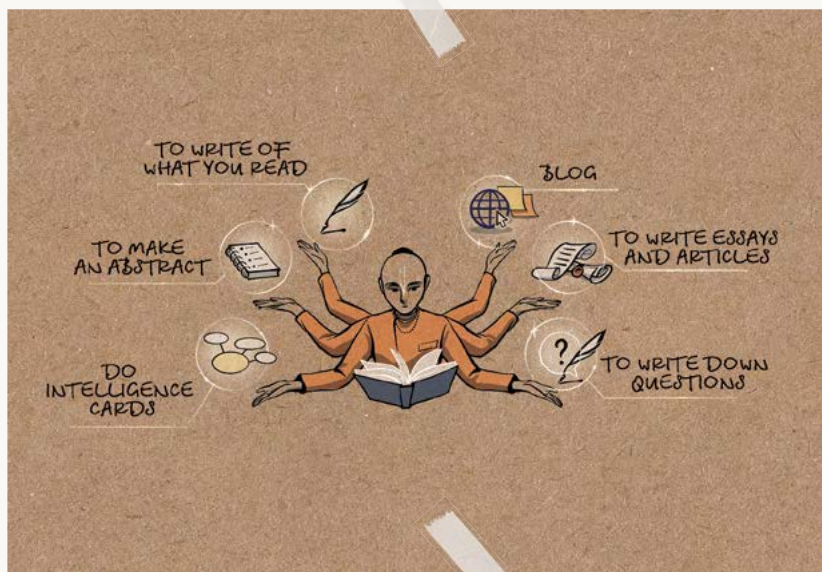
Lesson 5

Reading Techniques



DIVERSITY IN READING

Lesson after lesson we spoke about the importance of regular reading. The whole textbook is built around this principle. Many people can just read without any problems. However, you can diversify your reading with various techniques. What is meant by reading technique? It is absolutely any technique that helps you improve your stability, attentiveness and other criteria of reading skill. There are so many that it will be difficult to describe them all. They can be divided into different groups and categories. We will simply list the various techniques, and you can apply the ones you like.



TECHNIQUES, RELATED TO TAKING NOTES AND WRITING

Write about what you read

This technique includes many different methods. You can record in different ways, depending on the goal. In typical reading, you can write down thoughts that you liked or inspired you. To do this, it would be good to have a special notebook and creatively arrange it. You can accompany thoughts with drawings, and various quotes. One of my friends at the brahmachari ashram in the early 2000's wrote in a separate notebook the various stories that he read or heard.

Making a synopsis

The difference between this technique and the previous one, is that here you must keep a clear summary or structure of what you have read. Not only the thoughts that you liked, but also the main and important points of the narration. Synopsis are most often taken at various courses and classes. In my teaching experience, I have come to the conclusion that the less printed material you give to the students and the more you inspire them to write notes, the better they learn the material. Of course, when you write something down, it is very important to go back to your notes and reread them. There are different styles and methods of taking notes. Most people keep their notes simply, according to their feelings. However, thoughtful techniques will help better structure it, highlight the main themes, and make them easier to understand.

Drawing up intelligence cards

Intelligence cards are a powerful tool for self-education. With its help, you can structure the material very clearly, make a plan-summary of your lecture or lesson, make a beautiful advertisement, review

what you read, keep a synopsis and much more. You do not need to study this technique separately. It is enough to find 20–30 minutes to master this technique. The intelligence cards become clearer and more beautiful if you add various symbols and small drawings to it. I will not describe in detail the entire methodology of compiling these cards, as I am leaving it for another book.

Blog Notes

This technique is very similar to the first one. A slight difference is that here, you use the Internet. You can make short notes about what you read in your social networks. If it is difficult to write, then record short videos or audio reviews, and put them in stories. I know several devotees who blog and talk about what they read. I myself try to post about what I've read. The advantage of this technique is that you get feedback from those who read your notes.

Write essays and articles

This may be a bit more tedious. Not everyone has experience in writing essays or articles. For instance, at Mayapur Institute, we thoroughly try to teach our students to articulate their philosophical understanding of the subject in writing. We conduct two or three classes on how to write an essay. Students then write their first essay and receive detailed feedback from teachers. Detailed materials on writing an essay can be found in the textbook “Bhakti-sastri”. This does not mean that in order to write an essay, you need to know all the techniques. Just start and try it out. Make an introduction, the main part and a conclusion. Perhaps you will discover an aptitude for writing within yourself.

Write down questions

Every day you have to write down one or two questions on what you have read. Then, throughout the day, ask these questions to one of your elders or a mentor. Such reading greatly helps to deepen the understanding and application of the books.



*“The two essays which you have sent are very nicely written. It appears that you have good talent for writing, so kindly continue to develop in this way and **write more and more of your realizations based upon our books**. There is no need to concoct anything new. **You simply have to study our books carefully and then in your own words try to express what you have read.** This will automatically make you a very successful preacher”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Dasanudas, Hrisikesa, May 13, 1977).*



METHODS USED IN JOINT READING

Read in turn

This technique is most often used on nama-hatta or bhakti-vriksha. The devotees take turns while reading. You can read by paragraphs or verses. It is a very useful technique that engages everyone present.

Commenting

This technique is the same as the previous one, only in addition to reading, each participant shares several of his thoughts on what he has read.

Reading with accompaniment

Typically one person reads, and the rest listen to him. But he does not just read, he accompanies the information with some actions, emotions, sounds, etc. One devotee from Mayapur was lecturing on the Srimad-Bhagavatam, and during a part where he was reading about birds singing, he mimicked birdsong. All the devotees listened with rapt attention to Srila Prabhupada's entire purport. One day, my spiritual master, reading descriptions of Krishna, got up from the vyasasana and began to show how Krishna stands bent in three places. You can emotionally present different characters. Children really love to read in this style as it is very engaging for the participants.

Attention-checking reading

A very useful technique. After a certain amount of reading: a page or two, a chapter or a purport, ask questions of what you read. Those who listened to you should give answers. Then these answers can be discussed and supplemented.

Reading with guesses

A very interesting method. You read for a while, but instead of finishing a sentence or a written thought, you pause and look questioningly at the listeners. Their objective is to express aloud different versions and guess what word is written next. If no one guesses, you say the correct option.

Example: Srila Prabhupada's purport on the Bhagavad-gita (10.19).

“For example, the Puranas describing the events of ancient times contain stories about the pastimes of numerous incarnations of the Lord. Therefore, no matter how many times one reads them, they never [get bored].” You do not verbalize “get bored”, you pause, leaving the listeners to ponder how the sentence ends. You emphasize

the correct one, and if no one guessed, name it yourself. This is done fairly quickly. It is best to give one word to guess. It can be someone's name or quality.

It is very good to read in the evenings with family or in the company of devotees in the program. In order to apply the above five techniques, you will need the participation of devotees.

“Your winter schedule is very nice. I am so glad to hear that temple worship is going on nicely and that you have made program for discussing all our books. Such group discussion of transcendental topics is so much potent and all should participate”. (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Bhavanand, January 21, 1971).

TECHNIQUES RELATED TO SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Speed reading

A lot was already said about speed reading in the last lesson. You can improve your speed reading skills through various exercises.

Bookmarks

Many devotees have a Bhagavad-gita literally stuffed with all kinds of bookmarks and stickers. It helps to mark interesting and important places and then easily find the topic you need in the book. When you read it again, it is easier for the mind to concentrate on the important points you noted last time.

Pencil marks

As already mentioned in the second lesson, it is not recommended to write in books. But some people are more used to making notes with a pencil. I myself, when preparing for classes on “Bhakti-shastri” use a pencil.

Presentations

Make a presentation of the book you have read. You can prepare slides, describe the structure of the book, give interesting quotes, demonstrate what was useful to you etc.

You can use all the techniques, mixing them together as you like. All of them are needed, not to amuse the mind, but to deepen one’s Krishna consciousness and understanding of spiritual philosophy. This is done through strict adherence to the shastras and guru.



“As for the difference between mental speculation and philosophical speculation, we take it that everything is known by the psychological action of the mind, so that philosophical speculation is the same as mental speculation if it is merely the random or haphazard activity of the brain to understand everything and making theories, ‘if’s’ and ‘maybe’s.’ But if philosophical speculation is directed by Sastra and Guru, and if the goal of such philosophical attempts is to achieve Visnu, then that philosophical speculation is not mental speculation. It is just like this: Krishna says in Bhagavad-gita that ‘I am the taste of water.’ Philosophical speculation in the accepted sense then means to try to understand, under the direction of Sastra and Guru, just how Krishna is the taste of water. The points of Bhagavad-gita, though they are simple and complete, can be understood from unlimited angles of vision. So our philosophy is not dry, like mental speculation. The proper function of the brain or psychological activity is to understand everything through Krishna’s perspective or point-of-view, and so there is no limit to that understanding because Krishna is unlimited,

and even though it can be said that the devotee who knows Krishna, he knows everything (15th Chapter), still, the philosophical process never stops and the devotee continues to increase his knowledge even though he knows everything. Try to understand this point, it is a very good question". (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Chaturbhuj, January 21, 1972).



SEVEN METHODS OF STUDYING PURPORTS

These methods overlap with some of the previous sections. I decided to elaborate on them further anyway. We have compiled these seven methods for students of Bhakti-sastri courses.

1. **Brief retelling of the purport.** You need to briefly retell what you have read.
2. **Questions about the purport.** To do this, you can take a separate notebook and write out questions. There are two types of questions: what you didn't understand, or a question to clarify something in the purport.
3. **To apply the purport in different directions.** This means that it is necessary to explain the purport or its essence in one of the directions: application in personal life, application in preaching, and application in the mood and mission of Srila Prabhupada. (For more information, see the textbook "Bhakti-sastri".)
4. **Structure and logic of the purport.** You can write down or sketch the structure of the comment.
5. **Report or lecture.** You can prepare a short report or lecture on the purport.

6. **Bank of quotes.** In a separate notebook, write down Srila Prabhupada quotes that inspired you.
7. **Preaching to different people.** To preach the purport to different audiences: students, doctors, lawyers, and so on.

Srila Prabhupada's purports should be thoroughly studied. Questions from "Bhakti-shastri" textbook help greatly: to answer them, students need to do significant work with purport.

SEVEN TYPES OF READING

Reading, depending on the goals and circumstances, can be of different types. Sometimes you need to quickly look at something, sometimes you need to study something, etc. We have divided reading into seven different categories.

1. **Conscious concentration.** In such reading, you have to work on your attention. Usually, in order to get into the meaning of the book, it is necessary to understand its details.
2. **Study.** You need to study and understand the book. In this case, you will re-read many points, chapters or sections. You should also use the various methods of studying purports and performing homework. For example, it took me several years to study the "Nectar of Instructions"—a thin little book. I reread it many times with a pencil, memorized verses, compiled a structure, listened to courses on it and, in the end, taught myself. One sannyasi said: "When I need to learn something, I try to teach it to others. Then, owing to a sense of responsibility, I thoroughly study the material."
3. **Overview.** It is a superficial reading. Perhaps, due to lack of time or interest, it is not possible to read the book in conscious concentration. If this is the case, you can review it and return to it in the future. Several times my spiritual master gave me books

that were presented to him, requesting me to look through and retell them to him. This means that I had only a day to understand the essence of the book, find some interesting points, and tell Guru Maharaj all of this in the evening. In this case, I used overview reading.

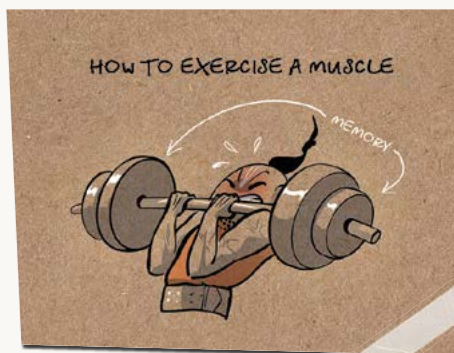
4. **Selective reading.** Used if you need to prepare for some topic, or you are interested in a topic that you read about from different sources. For example, one can study the question of three levels of devotees: kanishtha, madhyamam and uttama. Choose from different books to read only what is related to these concepts.
5. **Partial reading.** Unlike the previous type of reading, in this technique you read one book, but not sequentially, only parts of it. For example, you need to prepare for a lecture on the three modes of material nature. Most likely, you will read the 14th chapter of the Bhagavad-gita, the 7th-28th verses of the 17th chapter, the 7th-40th verses of the 18th chapter, the 27th verse of the 3rd chapter and the 14th verse of the 7th chapter. There is no need to read the entire book, just the necessary sections are enough. This reading is applicable in preparation for lectures, seminars and reports. Or you can read only those sections of the book that are interesting or relevant to you now.
6. **Relaxed reading.** So-called stress-free reading. It is well suited for reading magazines, articles, letters, etc. You don't have to make a mental effort, you just perceive information, interesting facts, description of events or someone's experience.
7. **Search reading.** It is used when you browse a lot of literature, looking for quotes, topics or anything else that you would need. It begins with perusing the table of contents, and then a decision if you shall do a review or selective reading.

It should be understood that reading can have different goals and objectives. You should use your discretion to decide on a type of reading.

HOW TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU READ

Our brain has a limited capacity, so it has to constantly evaluate the importance of incoming information. Therefore, it is simply impossible to remember everything you read. To better understand how this happens, remember the literature classes at school. Surely you can still describe the plot, characters, and even a few key scenes from books included in the curriculum. Yet, you forget what you read just a few months ago.

There is a simple explanation for this. You remember what you read at school because you had to remember it. You had a goal to get a good grade, and you knew that this information would have to be used in the future—in an exam or report. The book you took to read on vacation only helped to kill time on the plane—that’s all.



There is a similar effect with spiritual books: if there is good motivation and interest, then it is more likely that the information will be absorbed. One spiritual master, a sannyasi who knows all the slokas from the Bhagavad-gita by heart, once told me: “Memory is like muscles: if you don’t train, it will atrophy.” Memorizing slokas or terms is very good for improving memory.



“Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to be always remembering Kṛṣṇa in some way or other, just like we are immediately thinking of Kṛṣṇa when we chant His Name, Kṛṣṇa, and we are always thinking how we can do something nice to please Kṛṣṇa with some service or other, or we are reading literature about Kṛṣṇa or speaking about Kṛṣṇa. In this way

we are always remembering Kṛṣṇa and that is our natural conscious state. So naturally everything about Kṛṣṇa is originally known to us all and as soon as we begin to associate with the devotees of the Lord and chant His Holy Name, this memory gradually becomes stronger as we remember our constitutional position of always serving Kṛṣṇa in different ways” (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Sten, November 17, 1970).

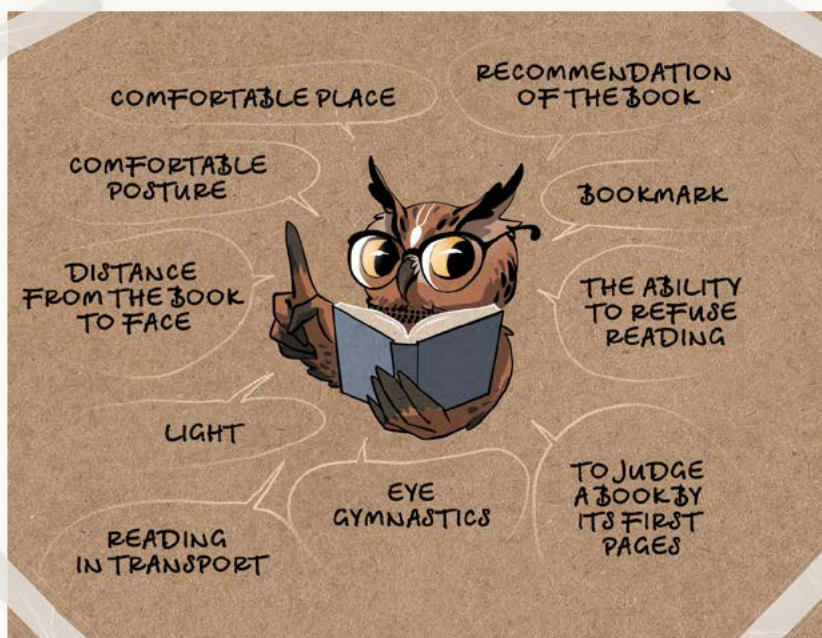


Two points are important in this quote. First: the essence of memory is to constantly remember Krishna. This is a real memory: smartavyah satatam vishnu vismartavyo na jatu chit sarva vidhi-nishedhah syur etayor eva kinkaraha. “Krishna is the source of Lord Vishnu. We must always remember Him and not forget Him under any circumstances. All the regulations and prohibitions mentioned in the shastras should serve these two principles” (Bhakti-rasamṛta-sindhu, 1.2.8). This is the key point of memory. Such remembrance can be achieved with the help of the second point—our memory becomes strong through the practice of Krishna consciousness. An elderly devotee studied with me for Bhakti-shastri. When he came to the course, he immediately said that he would not be able to learn any of the 64 shlokas, because he had no memory left. However, by the end of the course, he had memorized all of them. I asked, “How could you do this?” He replied, “Association with devotees, sadhana, holy place and the mercy of the guru have done something amazing to my memory.”

In this section, we will not give methods to improve memorization. All the techniques given in previous lessons will help you.

USEFUL READING TIPS

Here are some practical tips on how to read books better.



A comfortable place

Everyone has their favorite places to read. For example, I like to read by the window, not just because of the lighting. The mind has some freedom, you can stop reading for a minute, look into the distance, relax and continue. It's especially good when it's raining outside and a table lamp is on, then you can read endlessly. Some like to read at the desk, some in an armchair, and others in the bedroom.

Comfortable posture

Everything is very simple here. The pose needs to be changed when some parts of the body begin to go numb. I used to read while lying down, now I do it only sitting down. One thing is certain—it should be convenient. But do not forget about the posture. My father taught

me an interesting trick. He used to read Srimad-Bhagavatam every day while sitting in an armchair. But if you hold a book in your hands, they begin to go numb, and if you put it on your knees, the book is too far away. He placed a special pillow on his knees, put a book on it, and got a perfect reading position. Now I regularly use this method.

The distance from the book to the face

Usually the optimal distance from the book to the eyes is the length of your forearm with the palm open. This distance is relevant for any written work, it helps to keep your back straight.

Lighting

You should always make sure that there is a good light that falls directly on the book. The ideal option is daylight from the window. In dim light, you will spoil your eyes very quickly. Reading from a screen that emits a light that is bad for the eyes.

Reading in transport

This is the most dangerous place to read. Especially in a car or a bus. Often there is poor lighting and shaking. Reading while shaking can make you very seasick. Avoid such reading. It can be easier on the train and plane, as there are no sharp turns.

Gymnastics for the eyes

Reading is work for your eyes, and they get tired. Especially if you read a lot. It is very good to do simple gymnastics for the eyes. In “YouTube” you can find many different options. I usually use two. The first is to close your eyes tightly and relax your eyes. Second: you need to rub your palms together until they are hot and then apply them to your eyes for a minute. It also helps a lot to look at a distance.

Judging a book by the first pages

The first fifty pages are usually enough to understand whether you will be able to read this book or not. After you have started reading a book, it is useful to stop for a while and think about whether it is relevant for you to read this book right now.

Be able to refuse to read

Realizing that the book is not suitable for you now, be able to put it away. It is not necessary to finish it by force. You can start something else. It happens that you haven't finished one book yet, and already there is a strong desire to start another. In this case, it is better to finish reading the current book.

Bookmark

It is always easier to read with a beautiful and stylish bookmark. I don't know why. It looks like the aesthetics are doing its job. Beauty is one of Krishna's opulences that attracts everyone. I used different pieces of paper, calendars, a torn page from a notebook, etc. All this looked shabby. It is better to make a beautiful, creative bookmark in the spirit of Krsna consciousness.

Book Recommendation

After reading the book, you need to be able to recommend it correctly. If you liked the book, you should refrain from imposing it on others. It's enough to tell them what you were interested in and what benefits it brought to you. Leave the choice to the person. If you don't like the book, be careful when giving negative reviews about it. It is better to show restraint. If the book was not relevant for you, it may still be very useful to others. Remember that your opinion is always subjective. However, there are books that are always unfavorable for

devotees. In the Prabhupada-Shikshamitra there is a whole section devoted to what books Srila Prabhupada did not recommend his students to read.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I read regularly, but I don't remember anything. Shall I keep reading?

Definitely continue and do not stop. We read Srila Prabhupada's books not just to memorize information, but to soak up his mood. You may not remember the facts, but you will be well versed in philosophy. By regularly reading these books, you will capture Srila Prabhupada's spirit, and this is the most important thing.

If you want to keep the information in your memory, use the methods described above. Tell others, write out something, learn slokas—and you will find that you have remembered what you read.

Is it possible to read Vaishnava books from other sampradayas or Gaudiya math?

The answer to the question is quite unambiguous—no, but there are exceptions.



“Regarding your question about rasa with the Spiritual Master, I do not know who is the someone who has said this, but it is a most unauthorized statement. Better you should stick to hearing from authorized persons, like your Spiritual Master or experienced Godbrothers. But never try to hear someone who is not in our line. It is simply a waste

of time to hear and then again have to rectify the mistake” (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Hansadutta, september 5, 1969).



In this letter, Srila Prabhupada says that inexperienced devotees may not understand spiritual matters and do not understand what corresponds to Siddhanta, and what does not. Therefore, it is better to get information from authoritative sources—Srila Prabhupada’s books. Listen to the explanation of his books from a spiritual teacher and ISKCON devotees. Vaishnavas from other schools may not deviate, but their angle of view may be different. Therefore, it is best to avoid reading their books and listening to their lectures.



“There is no need by any of my disciples to read any books besides my books—in fact, such reading may be detrimental to their advancement in Krishna Consciousness. All reading of outside books, except in certain authorized cases such as for example to read some philosopher like Plato to make an essay comparing his philosophy with Krishna’s philosophy—but otherwise all such outside reading should be stopped immediately. It is simply another botheration. If my students cannot even read my own books thoroughly, why they should read others? I have given you TLC, what need is there to read Caitanya Caritamrta translated by someone else. You are right to stop such reading” (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Sri Govinda, January 20, 1972).



In this letter, Srila Prabhupada gives general instructions for all his disciples. There is no need to read other books. Then he continues to say that there may be exceptions. For the purpose of preaching. Once I was preparing for the seminar “How to defeat Mayavada”. It was necessary to prepare a large amount of information on the philosophy of Mayavada, its history, arguments that destroy this doctrine, to analyze the conversations of Lord Chaitanya with Sarvaabhauma Bhattacharya and Prakashananda Saraswati. In the process

of preparation, I decided to use a book written by one of the Gaudiya Math acharyas.

The book is available only in English. I have previously asked my spiritual master's permission for this. He told me that I could use it, but not focus on it. The emphasis is on Srila Prabhupada's books, from the rest we can take something if it is useful.

There is a desire to study the Bible and the Koran. Is it rational?

Again, the application of what you read is important. If you are a preacher or at least often associate with Christians and Muslims, then it is likely relevant for you to know the basic ideas of their philosophy. However, no matter how many times I preached to Christians or Muslims, it was always a dialogue of the deaf. In association with representatives of other religions, it is important to strengthen their faith in their path and to present the principles of Krishna consciousness in an accessible way. Sometimes, Srila Prabhupada went on attack and caught Christians on the commandment "Do not kill."

“So these Christian and Buddhist scriptures were delivered for a different class of men, and we needn't spend our time in studying their doctrines. You should read our own books over and over again and as far as possible do not try to enter into controversy. We do not concern ourselves with any other religion. Our religion is to become the servant of the servant of the servant of Krishna” (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Hansadutta, November 2, 1969.).

A very interesting instruction, it has personal character, but also a very rational approach. Do not waste time studying other doctrines, and do not get involved in disputes.

For myself, I realized that an argument is very much different from preaching. Although, reasoned debates are also part of preaching.

Is it possible to learn something from materialists?

You can learn anything, but is it necessary? The answer remains the same—there are exceptions. Personally, I studied from them, but it wasn't the best experience. They can improve our skills, but their mood is the embodiment of the mode of passion. All motivation is based on profit and money. Below I will quote a letter from Srila Prabhupada, where he explains that we have nothing to learn from outsiders. The letter puts a lot of emphasis on inviting outsiders to the temple for education, but I think this can also be attributed to studying with them outside the temple.

“Regarding the Sanskrit class, I think it was only a plea, but he wanted to teach us something other philosophy. Our Temple is meant for our men, and we may have our own discussions amongst ourselves, no outsider needed. It is definitely concluded that we have not got to learn anything from any outsider beyond the jurisdiction of Gaudiya Vaisnava philosophy. Our philosophy is established on sound ground of the conclusion arrived at by Vyasadeva down to Jiva Goswami, Visvanatha Cakravarti, Bhaktininode Thakura, etc. The other day one Indian boy came here to take permission for chanting some bhajan, so I indirectly refused. Try to understand our own philosophy described in so many books, but I cannot allow you to hear from the mental speculators without any solid knowledge” (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Tamala Krsna. May 27, 1970).



Again, there are exceptions. To get a driver's license, you will have to study with materialists in a driving school.

WORKSHOP

- 1 Start a reading diary. Write out interesting thoughts and quotes there. If possible, design it creatively.
- 2 Organize a group reading of books. Use various techniques for such reading. Write down your experience in the appropriate field.
- 3 Retell someone close to you or your tutor, in as much detail as possible, the last book you read. Evaluate on a ten point scale how much you were able to retell from the book. 0—I don't remember anything, 10—I fully remember the contents of the book.



Lesson 6

Difficulties in reading books



DETERMINATION

In this lesson, we will take a closer look at everything that prevents you from reading Srila Prabhupada's books regularly. The key to overcoming any difficulties is determination. This is a quality that you need to consciously cultivate. An interesting idea was expressed by Theodore Roosevelt (the 26th President of the United States): "Perhaps there is no more important quality than firm determination. A person who wants to become great or somehow leave a mark in this life must be prepared not only to overcome a thousand obstacles, but also to win, despite a thousand failures and defeats."

Devotees have no ambition to become great or leave a mark in this life, devotees simply develop humility and practice Krishna consciousness by studying spiritual literature. But in this process they often encounter a thousand obstacles and suffer thousands of failures and defeats.

This is a normal phenomenon, that someone may not be able to read regularly. There may be periods when it is difficult to even pick up a book, and this can happen with every element of spiritual practice. It takes determination to continue. We had a devotee in the brahmachari ashram who distributed a book a day on sankirtana. In this mode, he distributed the entire December marathon. I was thinking that this person should have remarkable determination, to continue doing the service without any tangible result. He went out every day. By the end of the marathon, I asked him: "Where does your determination come from? People don't take books from you and there are almost no results." He replied: "Why are there no results? I feel that in a month of distributing books, my Krishna consciousness deepened and I got a lot of spiritual discoveries." The result of determination is not something materially tangible—the number of pages read or



distributed books—but the deepening of bhakti and becoming closer to Krishna. On the other hand, one should not justify oneself with determination, like “I do not read books, but I have determination”. determination is meant for acting. Srila Prabhupada tells an interesting story about a sparrow.

“As for determination, one should follow the example of the sparrow who lost her eggs in the waves of the ocean. A sparrow laid her eggs on the shore of the ocean, but the big ocean carried away the eggs on its waves. The sparrow became very upset and asked the ocean to return her eggs. The ocean did not even consider her appeal. So the sparrow decided to dry up the ocean. She began to pick out the water in her small beak, and everyone laughed at her for her impossible determination. The news of her activity spread, and at last Garuḍa, the gigantic bird carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, heard it. He became compassionate toward his small sister bird, and so he came to see the sparrow. Garuḍa was very pleased by the determination of the small sparrow, and he promised to help. Thus Garuḍa at once asked the ocean to return her eggs lest he himself take up the work of the sparrow. The ocean was frightened at this, and returned the eggs. Thus the sparrow became happy by the grace of Garuḍa. Similarly, the practice of yoga, especially bhakti-yoga in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, may appear to be a very difficult job. **But if anyone follows the principles with great determination, the Lord will surely help, for God helps those who help themselves**”. (Bhagavad-gita 6.24, purp)



The opposite of determination is laziness and apathy. Determination can be attributed to the mode of passion, and laziness to ignorance.

To get out of ignorance, you need to use passion. Nothing destroys development in any sphere as much as laziness. It is very important not to allow yourself to be in a state of laziness.

Steady determination can lead to enthusiasm, utsaha. Enthusiasm helps in developing bhakti. It does not mean doing something by force or out of necessity, as in determination. It means acting out of desire and inspiration. Everyone feels great enthusiasm. Describing enthusiasm, Srila Prabhupada identifies several components in it:

“**Endeavor executed with intelligence in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is called utsāha, or enthusiasm.** The devotees find the correct means by which everything can be utilized in the service of the Lord (*nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate*). The execution of devotional service is not a matter of idle meditation but practical action in the foreground of spiritual life.” (*Nectar of Instruction*, text 3, purp).

Efforts are based on intelligence. What is it? One of the Bhakti-sastri teachers described it as the ability to engage one’s talents in devotional service. One can give an example of mataji Yamuna, a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. She possessed many talents and used them in the service of Krishna. She was an outstanding cook, and compiled a great book of vegetarian recipes. She had a beautiful voice. Srila Prabhupada immortalized it by making Yamuna’s record of Brahma-Samhita prayers mandatory for Deity Greeting in every ISKCON temple. She had calligraphy handwriting, so she personally drafted the document for land in Vrindavan. Each of us have many different talents, and by using our intelligence, we can apply them in Krishna consciousness.

How long does enthusiasm last? This quality has an interesting property—extinction. Sometimes we get inspiration to read books every day: “OK! I will read from today!”—and after a few days we revert back to the previous state—over engagement or laziness. When the enthusiasm fades, we again need to find the determination to continue

reading books. When will we have continuous enthusiasm? Most likely, when we become pure devotees. Before that, you need to be patient and understand that sometimes there will be ups and downs, you need to accept this calmly.

“*These activities must be executed with patience. One should not be impatient in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Indeed, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started single-handedly, and in the beginning there was no response, but because we continued to execute our devotional activities with patience, people gradually began to understand the importance of this movement, and now they are eagerly participating.*” (Nectar of Instruction, text 3, purp).

Patience is possible if there is confidence. Confidence is a kind of ability to trust guru and Krishna, sincerely believing that they will lead us to the goal. This is called surrender. Of course, for this we need a bona fide guru. When the spiritual master is bona fide and the disciple is able to surrender to him, then the process of spiritual growth will work.

“*One should not be impatient in discharging devotional service but should take instructions from the spiritual master and execute them with patience, depending on the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. The successful execution of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities requires both patience and confidence. A newly married girl naturally expects offspring from her husband, but she cannot expect to have them immediately after marriage. Of course, as soon as she is married she can attempt to get a child, but she must surrender to her husband, confident that her child will develop and be born in due time. Similarly, in devotional service **surrender means that one has to become confident.** The devotee thinks, *avaśya rakṣibe kṛṣṇa*: ‘**Kṛṣṇa will surely protect me***”

and give me help for the successful execution of devotional service. This is called confidence”. (Nectar of Instruction, text 3, purp).



The situation with books is similar: we need to surrender to them. Reading Srila Prabhupada’s books is devoted to him. If I am determined to surrender to him, it is better to do it through his books.

We have several components of determination: enthusiasm, patience, confidence and surrender. We all do this in our spiritual practice, and each of them is connected to each other. Try to direct all your determination to regularly reading books. By the way, determination and enthusiasm are different things. If they do not manifest themselves in any way, you need to get inspiration from someone.

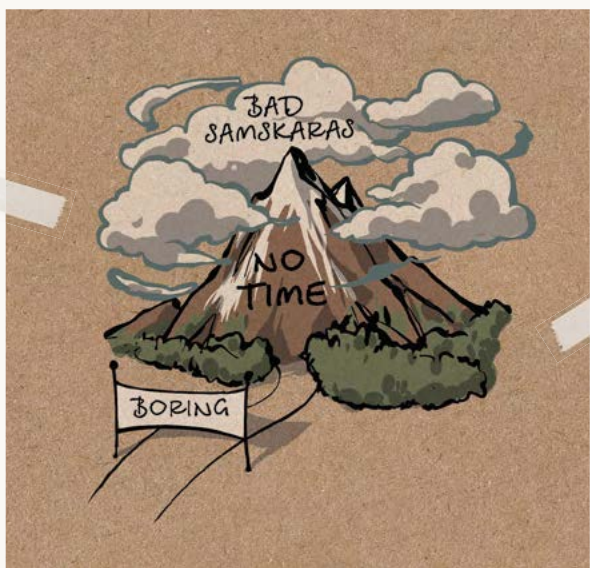
THE MAIN OBSTACLES TO REGULAR READING



“One mistake of judgment often made by the neophyte devotees is that any time there is some disturbance or some difficulty they are considering that the conditions or the external circumstances under which the difficulty took place are the cause of the difficulty itself. That is not the fact. **In this material world there is always some difficulty**, no matter in this situation or that situation. Therefore simply by changing my status of occupation or my status of life, that will not help anything”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Madhukara, January 4, 1975)



In this letter Srila Prabhupada describes the difficulties in relationships. However, he gives a universal law of any difficulties—they will always be there. This should be taken as, so to speak, knowing your



enemy in person. Below is a list of the main things that prevent us from regularly reading.

A rapid decreasing in enthusiasm

Many people face such a problem. You start reading—and then everything stops. There is another form of this—when there is a strong interest in another book. Again, the main cure for this difficulty is determination. Try to arouse interest in this book, or in the process of reading, without delaying it. If you do not succeed on your own, you can always ask for help from your friends or your mentor.

No time

The most common excuse. And often it is not imagined, but real. To cope with this difficulty, you need to change tactics. In certain scenarios, there may be no time for long and concentrated reading,

but it is easier to find time for a quick and short one. When you look at your schedule, you think: “Well, where to add this hour of reading books?”, but if you look for 10 minutes, it becomes much easier to find some time. 10 minutes after lunch, 15 minutes on the way to work, 20 minutes before going to bed, etc. You will discover that you have time.

Hard to start

It is difficult to take the first step. Reading together helps very well. Start reading with someone. The main goal is just to begin, and then to continue.

No interest

Sometimes, it is not interesting to read something specific, and sometimes there is no interest in reading in general. If you are struggling with specific books, then appreciate the interesting art. If the problem is general, then this book is for you!.

Ups and downs

Stable reading is alternated with a prolonged break. In this case, it is important not to allow breaks. You can rest for a day or two, and motivate yourself in different ways to start reading again.

False reading

Sometimes, it's hard to admit that you don't read books. Recognition and a request for help and support are one of the strongest stimuli in reading books. It is better to seek such support from equals or senior devotees.

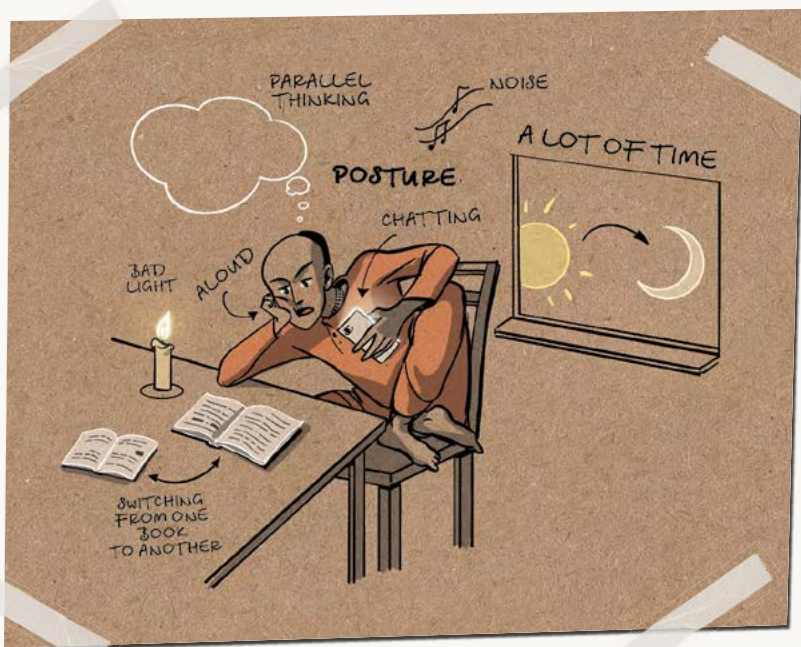
Fear of pride

I encountered such an argument from some devotees: if you read a lot, you can develop pride. However, pride does not develop from reading, but from one's wrong attitude to it.

Bad samskaras

This problem may have roots in our childhood. In school days, teachers forced us to read something that was not interesting. Samskaras need to be rewritten. It is necessary to create new, positive impressions from reading books.

The key to solving all difficulties is determination.



MISTAKES WHEN READING BOOKS

Is it possible to read incorrectly? It is difficult to describe the criteria of correctness and incorrectness. But there are some common mistakes that can negatively affect reading. Obstacles that prevent you from beginning to read, and mistakes made during reading that are detrimental towards forming a daily reading habit. Let's consider the most common ones. Many of them can hardly be called mistakes, but by avoiding them you can improve your reading.

To think on parallel with reading

We talked a little about this point, describing the influence of the emotional state on attention. When you read a book, there are a lot of extraneous thoughts and ideas in your head. If they can't be kicked out with a racket or other tools, then you can stop, write these thoughts on paper and return to reading. If this did not help, perhaps you should pause and pay attention to your thoughts.

Distracting factors

It can be anything: sounds, phone, neighbors, etc. Earplugs can help with various noises and sounds, a positive discussion can help with family, flight mode can help with a phone.

Abrupt switching from book to book

It may be caused by an urgent need, or it may be the habit of not reading a book to completion. If it is the latter, make every effort to finish the book, then a feeling of fulfillment will arrive. When there are unfinished books, it feels like you owe someone something.

Read through force

After such practice, you may stop reading books for a long time. We read through force when it is not interesting, or when reading has been going on for a long time. If you are not interested, change the book. If you are tired, read less.

To chat at the same time

An attempt to combine two things. I made this mistake very often and gradually got rid of it. At first, I looked to chat no more than every 5 minutes. Then 10 minutes and so on.

Uncomfortable posture, bad light

Detailed recommendations on these points can be found in the previous lesson.

Reading aloud

It can also be useful, because listening is also involved. In general, it is better to read silently if you are fine with concentration.

Spend too much time reading

This is when you do nothing but read. Not paying attention to your relatives and not executing your duties. There must be moderation in everything.



*“Reading in class for two hours is sufficient and other reading can be done in spare time if one has got it, it is not that one has to be always reading. One hour a morning for Bhagavata class and one hour evening, either Bhagavad-gita or Nectar of Devotion, that is sufficient”
(from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Bali-mardana and Pusta Krisna, September 18, 1972)*

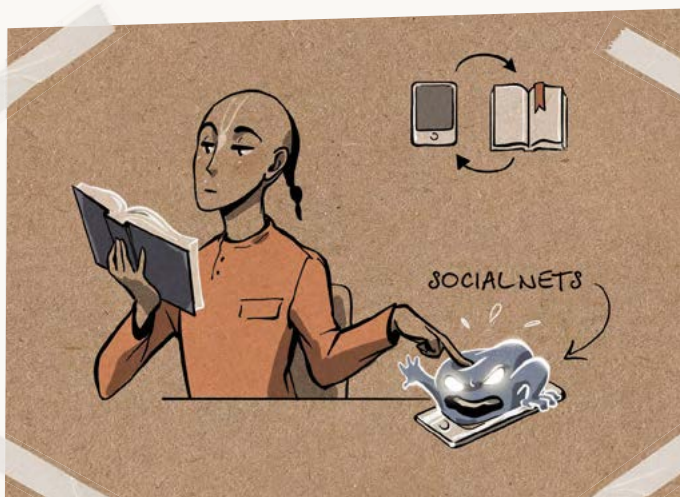


There are still such trivial mistakes as whispering while reading or returning to what you read, but they are so insignificant that I see no point in describing them in detail. Most likely, this is relevant if you want to do speed reading.

HOW TO REPLACE THE HABIT OF SITTING ON SOCIAL NETWORKS WITH READING

There are 3 steps in replacing one habit with another.

1. **Reduce resistance.** It is psychologically difficult for us to get the same pleasure from reading books as from reading posts on social networks. It seems to us that when we open a book, we take on some kind of daunting commitment, because the book is big and it will take a long time to finish it. But you may well dissuade yourself from this. Allow yourself to read books in small fragments.



2. **Change a trigger.** Every time you have a desire to look at social networks, pick up a book. For starters, a printed book is better. There may be too many temptations while reading on an electronic device. If you still have to read from your phone, swap the application icons so that all social networks and messengers are out of sight, and reading applications are easily visible.
3. **Change the action.** Read! Open the desired page and start reading. Try to get rid of the idea that the book is a commitment. Start with a book that has many short chapters. For example, “Perfect questions, perfect answers”. The chapters in it are short and fascinating.

Habit is like a samskara, it is difficult to get rid of, and it seems to have become a part of us. Therefore, it is best not to erase it, but to simply replace it with another one. In our situation, social networks are replaced by books. In both cases, the reading process takes place.

“As for *saṁskāra*, or reformation, this is possible by good association, for by good association one develops good habits, and habit becomes second nature. Therefore, *bhakta-sane vāsa*: let people have the chance to live with *bhaktas*. Then their habits will change. In the human form of life one has this chance, but as *Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura* sings, *hari hari viphale janama goñāinu*: if one fails to take advantage of this opportunity, one’s human life is wasted. We are therefore trying to save human society from degradation and actually elevate people to the higher nature”. (*Srimad-Bhagavatam*, 10.13.53, *purp.*).

Here Srila Prabhupada emphasizes that through the mercy of devotees, it is possible to change habits or samskaras.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Can a person's temperament be an obstacle or influence reading?

People with different temperaments read different books. Perhaps those with a predominantly brahminical nature, or those with a scientific mindset, may be more inclined to read and study. In this sense, nature can greatly influence the propensity for educational activity. The habit of studying is a very good thing, but the learning process itself, or the institution, can leave a negative imprint.

“School may be bad, but **studying is not bad, it is very good. So we should not give up the habit of studying**, especially Bhagavad-gita, Srimad Bhagavatam, and Brahma Samhita”. (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Robert, February 20, 1968).

Most often, the unwillingness to read or study is influenced not by the nature of a person's character, but by their laziness. This is a banal thing that needs to be fought. Someone may think that he has a temperament or nature that does not correspond to reading books. That it is not for him. No way. Reading books and education are for everyone. You need to make an effort to do this. It is not that “I will do only what I like and what gives me satisfaction”. So you need to pull yourself together and read.

The conclusion may be as follows: on one hand, inborn character or nature can affect the ability to learn and read, on the other hand, we should always make efforts to learn.

How to inspire a friend to read books if he doesn't read them?

It depends on what kind of relationship you have with this person. Depending on whether it is an equal, a subordinate, a family member, or an elder, there may be different strategies. In any case, it is best to do this by example.

First, it is necessary that the person himself will accept this idea as important, so that he has a desire to read, then it will be possible to start helping him. A horse can be brought to a watering hole, but it cannot be forced to drink water. The best opportunity for you to help is when someone *comes* to you for help. So the person trusts you. This trust builds a relationship between you in which you have the authority to help him. Imposing your help is not a completely natural process, therefore it may be ineffective. But if you sincerely want to help your friend, this does not mean that you need to wait for him to ask for help.

There are different ways to inspire. Share what you read, organize joint reading, recommend good courses or a book.

My relatives complain that all I do is read. How do I explain to them that this is important to me?

Maybe they are right. They expect you to fulfill your duties, associate with them, participate in family life, and all you do is read. Any strong passion can distract you from your duty. Therefore, they are most likely frustrated not with you reading books, but at your indifference or negligence to them. But if you feel you don't read that much, and that they just don't like your reading, then you need to talk to them. Understand their reasoning, and explain to them that it is important for you to read at least an hour a day.

WORKSHOP

- 1 List a few difficulties that you are experiencing while reading books. Describe a possible plan to overcome each of these difficulties.
- 2 Try to build determination. Think about what you need for this. Remember the times when you showed determination, as well as when you lacked it. Share it with someone close to you or a tutor.
- 3 Analyze the manifestation of laziness in your life. How often does it manifest, what can you do or are doing to conquer it?
- 4 Remember when you acted enthusiastically in Krishna consciousness. Share these examples with your friends or a tutor.



Lesson 7

The Living Reading Experience



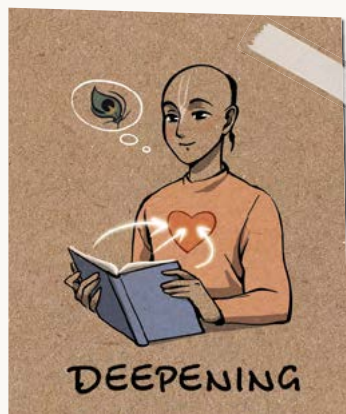
APPLICATION IN LIFE

There are different processes of devotional service described by Prahlada Maharaj in Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.5.23). The nine types of devotional service are: listening (sravanam), chanting (kirtanam), remembering (smaranam), serving the lotus feet of the Lord (pada-sevanam), worshiping (arcanam), offering prayers (vandanam), performing duties of a servant (dasyam), friendship (sakhyam), and surrendering (atma-nivedanam). Following even a single method of bhakti can lead a person to the highest goal of life.

Reading and studying books is identical to smaranam—remembering. Remembrance is a result of deep Reading and studying books is identical to smaranam—remembering. Remembrance is a result of deep exploration, study and immersion up to the level of samadhi. Listening and chanting are external processes, and although they are the simplest, they are the most powerful. Smaranam is the result of prolonged sravanam and kirtanam. If you ask a person what he is thinking about, he will answer:

“Nothing, just my daily things.” People typically think that they need to buy food, feed a cat,

make a plan for the week, make peace with husband, etc. There is no depth in the ordinary process of thinking. The thoughts are insignificant. But if a person engages in the spiritual process of comprehension through immersion in Srila Prabhupada’s books, then it is real remembrance (smaranam).



He begins to reflect on spiritual truths, to search for answers, to compare different levels of the scriptures, to apply them in life. Such deep immersion can lead to the level of samadhi (spiritual trance).

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, in his commentary on Sri-mad-Bhagavatam verse 7.5.23–24, called “Tathya”, gives the following definition to the smaranas: “One should understand the Supreme Lord more and more deeply.” The very process of comprehension refers to smaranam. It can be concluded that smaranam is not just remembering through the mind, but a culmination of all efforts that help to achieve this state. The most important components of this process are reading and studying books about the Lord, hearing about Him and chanting His glory. Another interesting facet of remembrance is refining. It means that I do not just fixate about some object, but I constantly discover new knowledge about it, and my understanding becomes deeper. The depth of understanding is measured not just by the amount of information, but by the ability to apply it in life.



“According to different relationships with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there are varieties of nāmānukīrtanam, chanting of the holy name, and thus according to different relationships and mellowings there are five kinds of remembering. These are as follows:

- (a) conducting research into the worship of a particular form of the Lord,*
- (b) concentrating the mind on one subject and withdrawing the mind’s activities of thinking, feeling and willing from all other subjects,*
- (c) concentrating upon a particular form of the Lord (this is called meditation),*
- (d) concentrating one’s mind continuously on the form of the Lord (this is called dhruvānusmṛti, or perfect meditation),*
- (e) awakening a likening for concentration upon a particular form (this is called samādhi, or trance).*

Mental concentration upon particular pastimes of the Lord in particular circumstances is also called remembrance.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 7.5.23–24, purp.).



There are five types of remembrance. They all related to concentration of the mind on the divine pastimes of the Lord. It is best to focus the mind by listening and reading books. The first, and very important result of such smaranam will be application in life of all that comes from these books.

You can draw an analogy with the assimilation of food. When food is digested in the stomach, it becomes part of the body. In the same way, knowledge that is consciously cultivated becomes a part of life.

There are several ways you can apply this knowledge in your life.

1. **Application in practice.** Srila Prabhupada gives a lot of practical recommendations and tips for spiritual life. I knew a devotee who compiled a list of about 1,000 items that he learned through Krishna consciousness, from rinsing his mouth after eating, cleaning his tongue, taking shower every morning, to preparing samosas, lecturing and making a turban for the deity of Krishna.
2. **Acceptance of guidance.** To take these books as a guide in one's life. To consult with them. To monitor areas in which I am lacking. Ordinary people are guided by their mind, mano rathena, whereas devotees are guided by the instructions of guru, sadhu, and sastras.
3. **Self-identification.** Accept and understand that this philosophy is a part of me. I live according to it. Identify everything related to Krishna consciousness as part of yourself and your life.
4. **Find mistakes in yourself.** Recognize your imperfections and develop a tendency to grow.

5. **Share with others.** Talk about your understanding, what inspired you. Share your experience.

Theoretically, this knowledge should develop into practice, then it will bring maximum benefit.

“So you take the good opportunity to study well our literatures and how to apply the philosophy of Krsna consciousness practically in daily working and help us to spread this transcendental message to all the people of the world. That is our desire. So your humble and sincere effort is needed to be applied for executing this program to the best of your capacity.

My Guru Maharaja used to say that everything is already supplied by Krsna; all the ingredients of different varieties already are there; there is no lack of anything in this world. The only thing that is lacking is Krsna consciousness. So Krsna is supplying us with all facilities, so there is no question of scarcity of anything. Simply we must become Krsna conscious and conscientiously apply our energy to utilizing all facilities in the matter of pleasing Krsna or devotional service. We should always be very careful to avoid utilizing any of the facilities available for our own sense gratification, but we should use everything for the satisfaction of Krsna only.” (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Madhavananda, June 3, 1970).



There is everything in this world. The only thing missing is Krishna consciousness. It can be obtained through devotees and Srila Prabhupada’s books.

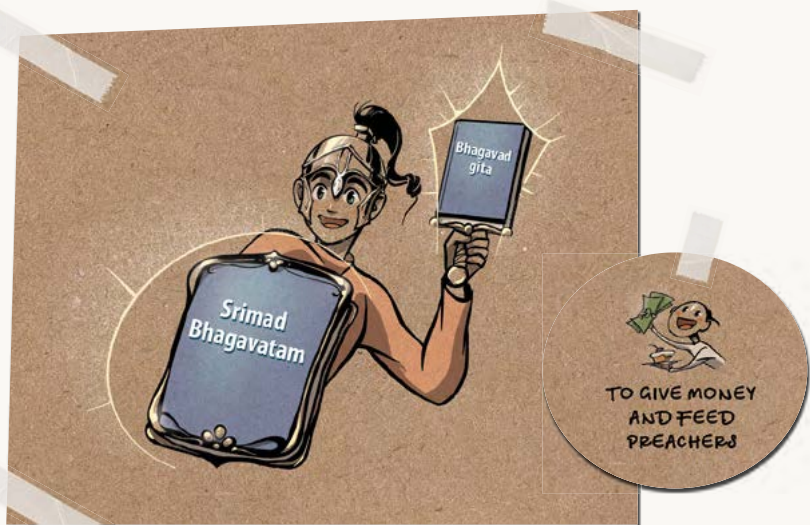
APPLICATION IN PREACHING

A person at the level of smaranam, unlike the one who just thinks of nonsense, always has something to say. His Grace Chaitanya Chandra Charan prabhu told me how on a Ganga safari, they were

at Jagannath Puri in Siddha bakula, the place of Haridas Thakur meditation. Srila Jayapataka Swami was giving a class, and suddenly he turned to Chaitanya Chandra Charan prabhu, asking him to say something. Prabhu replied that he was not ready. Then Maharaj gravely said that a preacher should always be ready to speak. When there is smaranam, there is always something to say. Preaching is a natural continuation of a deep study of books. Let's try to understand the essence of preaching.

“Now, because you are on the field work, you have to meet so many opposing elements. And you have to satisfy them or fight with them with conclusive statements from Bhagavad-gita, and Srimad-Bhagavatam, and as such, it is needed that you should be thoroughly conversant with the truth”. (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Gurudas, September 29, 1968).

In this letter, Srila Prabhupada identifies two strategies in preaching: pacifying the opponent and fighting with him. He prescribes one



tactic for both strategies—to use statements from Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam. This means that preaching tactics should consist not only of logic, argumentation, the ability to convince, but also of substantiating our statements and arguments with shastras. We become versed in the truth through regular reading of the books, and by the mercy of the spiritual master.

The pacifying strategy can be attributed to innocent people whose minds are infected with various speculations and doctrines, or to those who do not have prominent philosophical beliefs. We can give them some evidence of the scriptures. Finally giving useful and healthy food to their mind.

The battle strategy is applicable for those who are aggressive towards Krishna consciousness or actively preach antagonistic towards bhakti philosophies (Mayavada, sahajiya, etc.). Here we need serious erudition in the sastras.

“It is very encouraging that Devananda is combating with Mr. Jarvis representing Maharishi Mahesa. Yes, in each and every such meeting you should go and challenge these persons, but you must be equipped very strongly with conclusions of the Bhagavad-gita. In the Bhagavad-gita it is clearly said that the first class yogi is he who has in his heart always the eternal form of Krishna. I could not follow what Devananda said to the Jerry Jarvis when he said that he was also worshipping Krishna. It is very good to argue with him even at the suspension of meetings, and it is very good enthusiasm”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Satsvarupa, November 18, 1968).



Here Srila Prabhupada supports his student’s enthusiasm for debate.

It is an open debate in public. There are many of Srila Prabhupada’s philosophical debates published in The Science of Self-Realization. Why is it important to argue in public? Because the public will be able to appreciate your victory and hear the correct philosophical

conclusions. Sometimes, devotees challenge the so-called scientists and professors of materialism, and they always come out victorious.

Not everyone is ready to challenge or engage in active preaching right now. In this situation, you need to participate in preaching, helping those who are on the front line. You can make donations to them, give them a ride, feed them, etc. Here is what Srila Prabhupada writes about this:

“**One should be sympathetic to the propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.** There are many devotees who are engaged in the propagation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and they require help. So, even if one cannot directly practice the regulative principles of bhakti-yoga, he can try to help such work. Every endeavor requires land, capital, organization and labor”. (Bhagavad-gita, 12.10, purp.).

The statements from the shastras are scientific. We rely on the guru-parampara and the conclusions of the Vedas. Nothing gives such a vivid experience of reading books as preaching. Therefore, we need to be free from the false fears of our mind.

“**Preaching can be a difficult, thankless task, but a preacher must follow the orders of the Supreme Lord and be unafraid of materialistic persons**”. (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 6.5.39, purp.).

A rare person will thank you for the direct preaching of Krishna consciousness.

Devotees often receive curses from materialists. There is an episode in Sixth Canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam, when Daksha cursed Narada Muni for preaching the science of bhakti to his sons, as they accepted renunciation. Nevertheless, a determined preacher should not be

afraid of the influence of materialistic people, he should boldly bring out his arguments with statements from Srila Prabhupada's books.

It is good to study preaching from such books as "The Science of Self-Realization", "Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers", "Life comes from Life". These books provide arguments for materialistic people and various representatives of Western philosophy. In order to preach to mayavadis, the adherents of various so-called Vedic philosophies, or to understand deviations from siddhanta, we have to thoroughly understand the Bhagavad Gita, the Nectar of Devotion, the Teachings of Sri Chaitanya, the Nectar of Instructions, Sri Isopanisad, Srimad-Bhagavatam, and Sri Chaitanya-Charitamrita. Below are some practical tips for preaching.

- **Study Srila Prabhupada's arguments.** You can write out or use the search feature to learn the arguments that Srila Prabhupada used against various philosophies.
- **Study Srila Prabhupada's terminology.** Srila Prabhupada always knew how to choose terms that people could understand. For example, in one of his conversations with reporters, instead of the word "soul", he uses the term "life force".
- **To study analogies, used by Srila Prabhupada.** The analogy method itself is not a proof, but it can illustrate your arguments very clearly. It is easy to understand what you are talking about with the help of analogies. This is a tradition used in our parampara. In the textbook on Bhakti-sastri, you can find a list of the main analogies used by Srila Prabhupada.
- **To study Srila Prabhupada's strategies.** An example of one of Srila Prabhupada's strategies is the ability to hit the point. In a conversation with a Catholic cardinal, the representative of the church always avoided the question of killing animals, but, having caught him in a trap, Srila Prabhupada did not let this topic go.

- **To speak in a practical way.** Theorizing doesn't attract people. It is important to explain from a practical point of view the concepts of karma and reincarnation, showing their logical justification.
- **Confirm your words with the conclusions of the sastras.** For secular people, one or two quotes are enough. Too many quotes will overload them.
- **To quote Srila Prabhupada in lectures.** Recently, senior Vaishnavas have noticed that devotees hardly quote Srila Prabhupada in lectures. This is a very dangerous omission. Instead of mystical stories and esoteric examples, it is best to quote Srila Prabhupada's words and build the lecture on his instructions. One day, Srila Bhakti Vaibhava Swami gave a lecture based on an abstract printed on A4 sheet. At the end, the devotees thanked him very much, but he replied that it was an abstract of Srila Prabhupada's class.

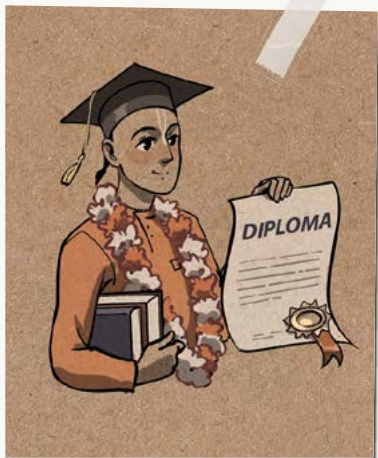
EDUCATION THROUGH BOOKS

Srila Prabhupada called ISKCON temples educational centers. The idea is that we receive a systematic Vaishnava education. He understood that devotees needed to immerse themselves in the study of the scriptures in an organized manner. We have already talked about self-study of the purports, but it is best to study in special courses. Currently, more and more opportunities are emerging for this. We are organizing Srila Prabhupada's book study courses in Mayapur. Every year, thirty to fifty students come to us, and devote the next three and a half months to a deep study of the books.



“...in January of 1970 we will be holding an examination among all of our students on this book, and those who will pass shall be awarded with the title of Bhakti-sastri. With these examinations I wish to encourage all my disciples to very carefully learn this philosophy of Krishna Consciousness because there is so many preachers who will

be required to bring this message to all of the corners of the earth”.
(from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Mahapurusa, February 7, 1969).



Srila Prabhupada emphasizes that the purpose of education is to give us the philosophy of Krishna consciousness. The result of which will be preaching. So we are learning philosophy in order to preach. It is interesting that in many letters, when Srila Prabhupada talks about studying philosophy, he always adds preaching. It is clearly seen that one is a logical continuation of the other. Preaching follows education.

All of Srila Prabhupada’s books are textbooks at the same time. Having developed a taste, I want to not just read them, but study them. Senior Vaishnavas like Bhurijana prabhu, Gopiparanadhana prabhu, Mataji Narayani and many others have devoted a lot of time to compiling courses based on Srila Prabhupada’s books. They outlined the main philosophical points, the logic of the chapters, compiled standardized questions and essay topics. In other words, they have prepared the entire foundation for devotees to study these books. Srila Prabhupada himself spoke about giving various Vaishnava degrees to those who successfully pass certain exams.



“I have also suggested for the GBC’s consideration, that we introduce a system of examinations for the devotees to take. Sometimes there is criticism that our men are not sufficiently learned, especially the brahmanas. Of course the second initiation does not depend upon

passing an examination. How one has molded his life—chanting, attending arati, etc., these are essential. Still, brahmana means pandita. Therefore I am suggesting examinations. Bhakti-sastri... Bhakti-vaibhava... Bhaktivedanta... Bhakti-sarvabhauma...". (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Svarupa Damodara, January 10, 1976).



Approximately forty years later we started Bhaktivedanta courses in ISKCON. Srila Prabhupada understood that a well-organized educational system would help devotees to understand the philosophy and become qualified preachers. However, education does not end only with the academic study of books. It is important that a devotee organizes his or her life and understands what Krishna consciousness is. This is not a theory—it is a practice.



"One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of Bhaktivedanta. I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations\... That is my program. So we should not simply publish these books for reading by outsiders, but our students must be well versed in all of our books so that we can be prepared to defeat all opposing parties in the matter of self-realization". (from Srila Prabhupada's letter to Hansadutta, January 3, 1969).



Bhaktivedanta means "one who has understood the conclusions of the Vedas in connection with devotional service." This letter shows Srila Prabhupada's fervent desire that all his disciples reach the same level of understanding the scriptures as he does. He established a system of studying his books for many generations to come, as if bequeathing to all future grandchildren and great-grandchildren his title of Bhaktivedanta. This is the key to all education. To understand these books, you need to understand him, you need to get into his

mood, you need to accept his mission, you need to become like Srila Prabhupada, a Bhaktivedanta.

TASTE FOR READING BOOKS

Lessons first to sixth, mainly develop the habit of reading books. From the seventh to ninth lesson we emphasize developing a taste for reading. What is the difference? Habit is a mechanical action that helps us in reading. Taste is a natural need and desire for reading. I must say that devotees who have a taste for reading are like precious gems, one should always strive to associate with them. In word-by-word translations, Srila Prabhupada most often translates the word “rasa” as taste. In the Vaishnava understanding, rasa is not just a single, unchanging flavor, but a variety of different sensations. We enjoy various preparations because there are many different rasas in them. For example, koftas, they simultaneously have salty, sweet, sour and spicy tastes. Its combination in the right proportions makes koftas very flavorful, and if you add rice and sabji to them, you get an enhanced combination of different flavors. But the material rasa is characterized by two qualities: impermanence (chopal-sukha) and alternation of pleasures and renunciation of them (bhoga-tyaga). Today I like koftas, tomorrow—I do not. Today I renounce them, and in a month, I can’t live without them.

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, in the seventh chapter of Sri Chaitanya-shikshamrita, describes the rasas as the eternal relationships of the soul and God. He says that it is impossible to understand rasa through mental speculation, it is only possible through experiencing it. Either we have it or not. Spiritual rasa is a combination of different tastes, such as:

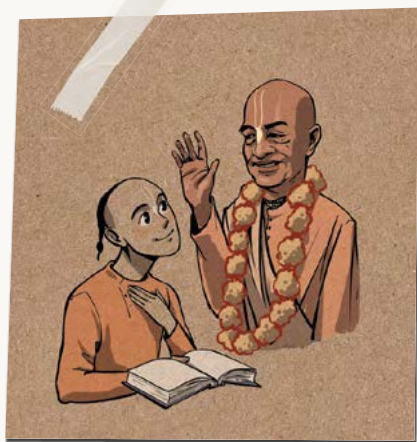
- **Sthayi-bhava** is continuous ecstasy. An emotional state that subordinates all other emotions. when a devotee begins to experience spiritual emotions.

- **Vibhava** is the cause of these emotions or rasas. It is the soul (ashraya) and God (supreme). The soul takes shelter (ashraya) from God, who gives this shelter (vishaya). Together they form the basis of a relationship, alambana. To bring out these relationships, we need a stimulus (uddipana)—Krsna’s qualities, His activities, His ornaments, His devotees, etc. Anything that reminds the soul of Krsna is a stimulus.
- **Anubhava**—external manifestations of the rasa. There are nine of them: dancing, rolling on the ground, loud singing, anger, etc.
- **Sattvika-bhava**—changes in the body under the influence of ecstasy. There are eight of them: numbness, perspiration, trembling in the voice, etc.
- **Vyabhichari-bhava**—additional manifestations of emotions. There are 32 of them: annoyance, regret, humility, pride, etc.

Sthayi-bhava, mixing with the four other bhavas, gives rise to the rasa. This is described in more details in *The Nectar of Devotion*.

We gave a simplified analysis of material and spiritual taste in order to better understand its manifestations in reading books. The spiritual taste for Srila Prabhupada’s books is what gives birth to our relationships with Krishna. One who feels this taste does not read books because it is necessary, but because by reading them, he receives personal association with Krishna and Srila Prabhupada. Many spiritual masters and senior Vaisnavas say this: “Two personalities associate with us through the pages of Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam and other books: Krishna and Srila Prabhupada.” The taste buds from associating with them.

At the stage of habit, a person is still attracted by the external aspects and benefits of reading books. He is interested in applying techniques, learning something new, comparing and studying. At the stage of taste, a person simply cannot live without reading. He needs not



just to feed his mind every day, but to associate. And it doesn't matter with which particular book. A devotee can reread one paragraph ten times and wonder how many different facets can be found in one paragraph. It's a taste. His Grace Chaitanya Chandra Charan prabhu gave such an example: while reading books, it seemed to him that there were many repetitions. It's as

if Srila Prabhupada is talking about the same thing everywhere. For example, while reading the Srimad-Bhagavatam third canto, tenth chapter "Creation of the Universal Form", he noticed that in many purports (verses 10, 35, 39 and 40) Srila Prabhupada gives an example of a frog professor sitting in a well and thinking about the world. This example is about the limitations of scientists' thinking. He was thinking: why is the same example given so often? But after a while, when he was rereading this chapter, an understanding suddenly came to him—because we can't understand it from the first time! Thus taste is born, and we start needing it more and more. The full depth of Srila Prabhupada's thought and message becomes visible.

Nowadays, people read less, because it is easier to get information through YouTube videos. It uses sound, beautiful shots, plot, etc. But there is depth in the books. This does not happen in the video.

Srila Prabhupada is not an ordinary writer, or even an outstanding Vaishnava writer. He is the shakti-avesha-avatar of the Lord. He brought knowledge to all the people of the world. There is more depth in one sentence he wrote than in all the videos from the Internet combined. Srila Prabhupada received the authority from Krishna to save souls.

The world has never seen such powerful books as the books of Srila Prabhupada.

“The people in general want to read (that is a natural instinct), but because their minds are polluted they want such literatures. Under the circumstances, transcendental literature like Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam will not only diminish the activities of the corrupt mind of the people in general, but also it will supply food for their hankering after reading some interesting literature. In the beginning they may not like it because one suffering from jaundice is reluctant to take sugar candy, but we should know that sugar candy is the only remedy for jaundice. **Similarly, let there be systematic propaganda for popularizing reading of the Bhagavad-gītā and the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which will act like sugar candy for the jaundice-like condition of sense gratification. When men have a taste for this literature, the other literatures, which are catering poison to society, will then automatically cease.**” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.5.11, purp.).

The taste for reading books is not the privilege of the exalted Vaishnavas alone. Almost everyone can experience it, almost immediately. It awakens and gradually intensifies. Just as the spiritual rasa, the relationship between the living entity and Krishna is awakened, so too is the book-reading rasa, the relationship between Srila Prabhupada and his devotee, awakened. “Bhagavad-gita” and “Srimad-Bhagavatam” are medicines, and if we regularly take them, the illnesses of weak desire for reading and strong attachment to worldly literature will gradually disappear.

This lesson was partially compiled from a lecture on reading books by H.G. Chaitanya Chandra Charan prabhu.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Srila Prabhupada makes quite harsh statements about complete surrender to Krishna, development of renunciation. How to apply such instructions in life if you are not ready for it yet?

In personal letters, Srila Prabhupada most often gives individual instructions. This point should be taken into account. The books provide general instructions for all devotees of ISKCON. Like any question, Srila Prabhupada's instructions can be considered on different levels. Therefore, we need a scientific approach to study it. It's not like you opened a book and read the statement "leave everything and completely surrender". The approach should be scientific, not emotional. Srila Prabhupada's purports are based on the context of the verse, chapter, and story being described, etc. He illustrates how this relates to the shastras, previous acaryas and how it applies in our Krishna consciousness. For example, in the purport to Srimad-Bhagavatam (1.5.15), Srila Prabhupada writes: *"In the Vedas it is distinctly said that the perfection of life is never to be attained either by voluminous work, or by accumulation of wealth or even by increasing the population. But it is attained only by renunciation"*. Superficially looking at this statement, you might think that it is too complicated. But at the end of the purport, Srila Prabhupada mentions for whom these instructions are intended—for those who have embarked upon the path of devotional service. In the purport to Bhagavad-gita (12.10), he writes: *"If one cannot sacrifice the results of his activities, the same person can still sacrifice some percentage to propagate Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This voluntary service to the cause of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will help one to rise to a higher state of love for God, whereupon one becomes perfect"*. Here is described the level for those who are not ready to surrender themselves completely. They can serve Krishna in a different way.

Another interesting point, besides the multilevel nature of the instructions, is its depth.

If we take the example of renunciation, Srila Prabhupada describes different aspects of it and different ways of application. Thus, in the commentary to the Bhagavad-gita (5.2), he writes: *“Therefore action in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is always superior to renunciation, which always entails a risk of falling. Renunciation without Kṛṣṇa consciousness is incomplete”*. Here he gives a different understanding of renunciation, from the view point of devotional service: *“One who knows that everything is Kṛṣṇa’s property is always situated in renunciation”*. Activity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is already activity in renunciation.

Understanding the style in which Srila Prabhupada wrote his purports will help to better understand this issue. His style is called “bhashyam” (considering purports from the point of view of the ultimate goal). Previous acharyas more often used the “tika” style (sequential consideration of each verse and its connection with the other verses). Srila Prabhupada took the main conclusion of the shastras—bhakti—and wrote his purports from the point of pure devotional service.

Considering the style of Srila Prabhupada’s purports, their variegatedness and depth, we can conclude that they are absolutely suitable for all people practicing and not practicing spiritual culture. Each purport is aimed at either gaining, deepening, or expanding one’s Krishna consciousness.

How to distinguish a preaching from a false preaching? Is there such a concept?

It is necessary to understand the definitions of preaching and false preaching.

For example, if as a result of conversation a person accepts Srila Prabhupada’s books, it was definitely preaching. And if he decides to dive into the study of psychology or yoga, it is hardly preaching. On the other hand, if this person is a devotee, even if he may talk about some other things, the interlocutor, simply attracted by the devotee, can also accept Krishna consciousness. False preaching can also be

called a desire to make money or become famous. Srila Prabhupada often spoke hard against the so-called professional readers of the Bhagavatam, who arrange weekly readings and mislead people with their false interpretations.

The preaching can be viewed from different points of view, such as types of preaching, levels, time, place, circumstances, from the point of view of the audience, and to the qualifications of the preacher himself. This is a very broad question. Therefore, in the context of this work, it will not be possible to make a deep analysis. We suggest simply considering a few quotes where Srila Prabhupada describes preaching.

“After all it is not the question of the place, but it is the person who chants which is important. A sincere soul like you, so much devoted to Spiritual Master and Krsna is sure to be successful anywhere. So you adopt the same principle as we are doing here”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Jayapataka, July 10, 1970).

This letter says that the preacher’s qualifications are the priority and circumstances are secondary.

“The test of preaching ability is whether one is making some disciples or not. So it appears that your preaching is going on nicely. The standard of purity which I have introduced in the Krsna Consciousness movement will give you the real spiritual strength needed to preach. If you will simply stick to your principles, you will gain the respect of the whole world and our preaching work will be successful”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Tirthapada, November 13, 1970).

It is another interesting letter that demonstrates two different principles of preaching. Success is when people accept Krishna consciousness, with the preacher not compromising principles for the sake of preaching.

“I especially appreciate your attitude toward increasing more and more the sales of our books, that will sanctify all other activities of preaching because preaching means selling books”, (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to, Bhakta das, February 21, 1972).

Another good criterion of preaching is whether people are attracted by Srila Prabhupada’s books.

“For a preacher there are four principles to be followed. One, he must be fully surrendered to Krishna. Two, intimately in friendly relationship with devotees trying to elevate conditioned living entities to Krishna Consciousness and rejecting the nondevotee class. So if you find a nondevotee eager to listen submissively you can show your mercy to elevate him to Krishna Consciousness, but a nondevotee who is already poisoned by the serpent of the demon class swami or yogi is very difficult to be dealt with, so the best thing is to reject them and not waste time for their elevation; but a person who is willing to hear us submissively must be given chance to understand the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness”. (from Srila Prabhupada’s letter to Gurudasa, February 24, 1968).

Here, Srila Prabhupada talks about the qualifications of a preacher. The purpose of preaching is to elevate people to Krishna consciousness, and know whom to preach and whom to not.

How do you know that you have a taste for reading?

When it appears, there will be no such question. In fact, if you are reading, then the taste is already there, just the degree of its manifestation may be different.

What should I do if I can't go to Mayapur to study?

If there are no organized courses in your community, then you can enroll in online training. Many of these courses are taught by senior Vaishnavas and there are online meetings with curators.

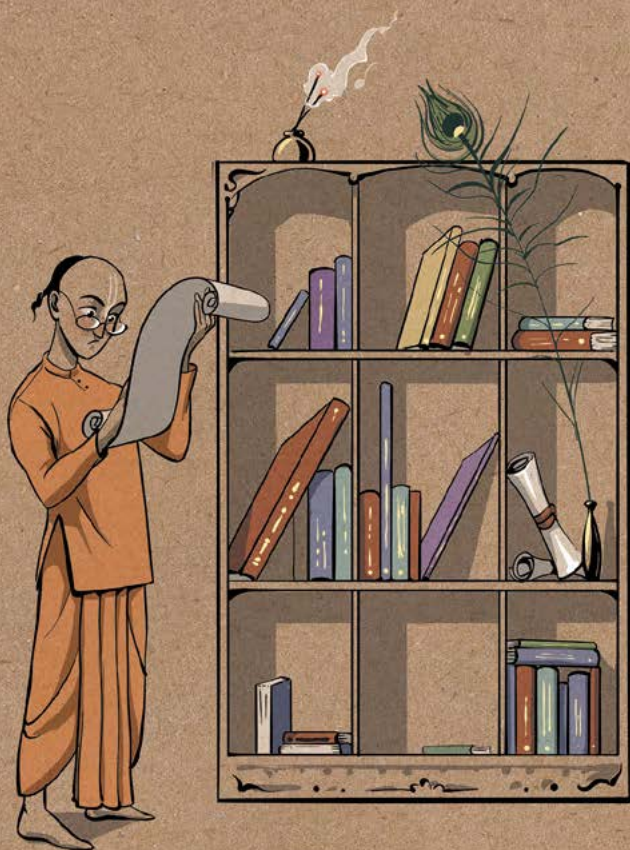
WORKSHOP

- 1 What practical things have you learned from studying Srila Prabhupada's books? Write a list. Share it with your friend or a tutor.
- 2 Make a plan to apply the knowledge gained from Srila Prabhupada's books in your life. You can write down simple steps or what you would like to apply. You can write out an instruction for the week and try to apply it.
- 3 Find devotees who have a taste for reading books. If possible, build relationships with them and regularly speak to them about reading books. Ask them questions.



Lesson 8

Book Reading Workshop



READING BOOKS AS A SPIRITUAL REVELATION

Let's talk about the important result of reading Srila Prabhupada's books, spiritual revelation. Revelation can be described as God's revelation of himself, or his will, to the people. The shastras themselves are already a revelation of God. But to what degree do they become a revelation for each of us? That we will try to clarify in this chapter.



*“tan naḥ śuśrūṣamāñānām arhasy aṅgānuvarṇitum
yasyāvatāro bhūtānām kṣemāya ca bhavāya ca*

O Sūta Gosvāmī, we are eager to learn about the Personality of Godhead and His incarnations. Please explain to us those teachings imparted by previous masters [ācāryas], for one is uplifted both by speaking them and by hearing them..

Purport: The conditions for hearing the transcendental message of the Absolute Truth are set forth herein. The first condition is that the audience must be very sincere and eager to hear. And the speaker must be in the line of disciplic succession from the recognized ācārya. The transcendental message of the Absolute is not understandable by those who are materially absorbed. Under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, one becomes gradually purified. Therefore, one must be in the chain of disciplic succession and learn the

spiritual art of submissive hearing. In the case of Sūta Gosvāmī and the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya, all these conditions are fulfilled because Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī is in the line of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, and the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya are all sincere souls who are anxious to learn the truth. Thus the transcendental topics of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's superhuman activities, His incarnation, His birth, appearance or disappearance, His forms, His names and so on are all easily understandable because all requirements are fulfilled. Such discourses help all men on the path of spiritual realization.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1.1.13).



So, Srila Prabhupada gives two conditions to gain spiritual experience by studying books. The first is the sincerity and strong desire of the person who listens or reads. The second is the credibility of the narrator. In this case, we will equate the process of listening to the process of reading, since reading is one of the forms of listening, it is directly related to the first three processes of bhakti: sravanam, kirtanam and smaranam. The result of proper listening should be the manifestation of God's presence, the manifestation of spiritual reality.

The term “revelation” can also be found in Sanskrit. “Spota” (explosion)—understanding the meaning. When we listen to someone and suddenly his words makes sense to us. You may feel “spota” when reading books, listening to Srila Prabhupada or a spiritual teacher. This is the state when the message he is trying to convey suddenly becomes clear. For example, the speech of foreigners is not clear to us, the singing of birds is not clear, the noise of the forest is not clear. But the moment when we, learning languages, begin to understand what foreigners are talking about, it becomes a revelation to us. Of course, this is still a material level. One day, traveling with my spiritual master, we stopped for lunch in the forest. Suddenly he asked my wife, “Omkaṛa Gita, do you hear the noise of the forest? What is he talking about?” She was a little confused and replied that she did not know. Then Guru Maharaja said that one who is in full Krishna

consciousness can even understand the language of trees and birds. I thought about this example, and tried to understand it literally, until I remembered the story of Srila Prabhupada. He was on a walk with his students, when he pointed out to the droppings of birds and asked what it meant. The students could not find a clear answer. Then he explained to them that even birds are attached to the house. My revelation was that a pure devotee can understand absolutely any language, any phenomena of the world, through Krishna consciousness.

In the process of regular and careful study of the books, various revelations come to every devotee. They can be of different degrees of awareness. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, in one of his essays on spiritual revelations, explains that the meaning we discover can be of three levels.

1. **Vidvad-ruddhi** is a meaning that conveys the highest truth, spiritual meaning. Through these words, the listener is transferred to spiritual reality, he receives spiritual revelations.
2. **Sadharana-ruddhi**—ordinary or direct meaning. It is not a spiritual experience as such, but it is also essential for understanding. At this level, consciousness is gradually cleared. The listener perceives and analyzes knowledge with the help of his mind and tries to apply it in life.
3. **Agya-ruddhi** has a distorted meaning. The listener passes all knowledge through his ego. In this case, a strange meaning is extracted from the book. A person constantly argues and quarrels on the basis of books, although he reads the same words as others. He interprets everything in his own way.

One should strive to perceive on the second level, gradually ascending to vidvad-ruddhi, while trying his best to avoid the third, since it is not possible to comprehend spiritual meaning in that consciousness. In this regard, we will consider agya-ruddhi in more detail. Sound and text are transcendental, but they are not necessarily perceived

by transcendental consciousness. There are four forms of distortion of knowledge:

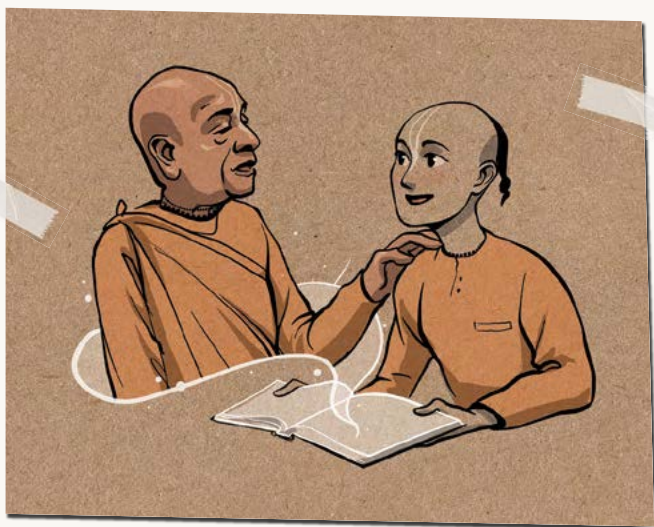
1. **Paricina- jnana.** Cina (chop, cut). Knowledge is assimilated in the form of information that is separated (cut off) from the spiritual experience. Often people are simply programmed for information, they are not set up for a miracle or revelation. They think: “I already know this, I need something new. I heard about the difference between the soul and the body many times”.
2. **Sankirna- jnana.** Sankirna (crumpled, clamped) reflection of spiritual reality. The reader tries to reduce the spiritual reality to the size of his consciousness. “It’s hard to believe that Nanda Maharaj had 900 thousand cows. It’s impossible. 50–60 cows—realistic”. A person thinks with this perception.
3. **Vikrita- jnana.** Vikrita (to deform). When it comes to incomprehensible things, these things are deformed into material tastes in our consciousness. A person with such a vision perceives Krishna’s pastimes with the gopis as erotic activities.
4. **Vivarta-grasta-jnana.** Vivarta grasta (covering with illusion). When we take the rope for a snake. The information is covered by the reader’s experience, and he begins to attribute non-existent qualities (snakes) to the rope. Knowledge distorted by material desires. A person with this perception will read the scriptures to justify his false ideas, he will prove and find references that, let’s say, the world is created for enjoyment, etc.

When the reader or listener gets rid of these four forms of distortion of knowledge, becomes sincere, puts aside preconceived opinions, then spiritual revelations will begin to open in his heart.

This section was compiled on the basis of a lecture on reading books by H.H. Bhakti Vijnana Goswami.

SRILA PRABHUPADA OPENS UP THROUGH HIS BOOKS

Many times have we echoed this thought: Srila Prabhupada opens up through his books. I would like to clarify it once again, and also summarize it. We can look at reading books from the point of form and essence. According to the form—these are skills, habits, techniques, etc. In essence, it is depth, enthusiasm, practice, revelation and, in the end, Srila Prabhupada himself. Any subject can be viewed through the prism of these two contexts. For example, ice creams are different in shape—color, taste, composition; in fact, any ice cream has a cooling taste. Of these two factors, the essence is the most important, but it cannot exist without form. In fact, the negation of form and concentration in essence, is Mayavada or sahajiya. To understand the essence of ice cream, its taste, you need to get in touch with the shape. And the denial of the essence and only acceptance of the form, is smarta (attachment to rituals). These two constants go inextricably



together. The omission of one of them leads to a shift in the scales of one side. This is detrimental to spiritual practice.

We examined the process of reading books from these two points of view. We can also say that the form is the books themselves, and their essence is Srila Prabhupada's Krishna consciousness.

Bhakti in form is sadhana (the practice of devotional service), and in essence—rasa, eternal relationship. One who practices sadhana-bhakti gradually awakens rasa in his heart, as described by Srila Rupa Gosvami in *The Nectar of Devotion*. If we want to discover Srila Prabhupada, understand his special position as the founder acharya, shakti-avesha-avatara and jagad-guru, then reading and studying books should be taken as a form that reveals the essence of Srila Prabhupada to us.

Let us consider the path of opening and deepening the relationship with Srila Prabhupada. It all starts with a meeting, a first contact with the carrier of Srila Prabhupada, it can be his sincere follower or a book. Then, studying the history of Srila Prabhupada, his preaching in the West, we comprehend his special position as THE person who will spread Krishna consciousness, the message of the Vedas, the teachings of Lord Chaitanya and the entire guru parampara all over the world. This realization gives rise to a deep sense of gratitude in the devotee for the causeless mercy that Srila Prabhupada has shed on us, and leads to taking shelter of him, prabhupada-padashraya. The next step after realization of his position, is the discovery of Srila Prabhupada's mood, it manifests in a clear commitment to the teachings of Lord Chaitanya and in infinite compassion. In fact, his instructions become a guiding star in the life of a sadhaka (practitioners). Following the realization of his mood awakens the desire to accept Srila Prabhupada's mission. As a result of sincere service, and spreading the mission and tradition, Srila Prabhupada personally reveals himself to the devotee, takes him by the hand, and leads him through the very doors of the spiritual world.



*“The decisive factor in establishing the necessary synthesis is a deep awareness of Srila Prabhupada’s position and application of this knowledge—jnana and vijnana. **As the founder acharya, Srila Prabhupada symbolizes the unity of ISKCON and in a sense he is this unity. Therefore, his presence should be felt in the life of all Vaishnavas as the most important thing**—no matter who else serves as their diksha- or shiksha-guru. The gurus currently present on the planet make a more vivid impression on their followers than those who are not physically with us. Due to the fact that Srila Prabhupada’s personality is not manifested on the physical plane, the absence of vapu should be compensated by the constantly deepening awareness of his manifestation in the aspect of vani (which he himself taught).*

Srila Prabhupada’s presence of in the aspect of vani should become such an integral part of ISKCON, such an essential feature of its culture, that the feeling of his presence it has not weakened with us, even when everyone who personally knew Srila Prabhupada will follow him from this world” (from Ravindra Svarupa prabhu’s book “Srila Prabhupada—the founder acharya of ISKCON”).



The Guru manifests in two hypostasis—vapu (body) and vani (instructions). They are equally significant, but vani has an eternal form, whereas vapu will disappear over time. Srila Prabhupada’s eternal manifestation on earth is his books.



*“One who is sincere and pure gets an opportunity to consult with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Paramātmā feature sitting within everyone’s heart. The Paramātmā is always the caitya-guru, the spiritual master within, and He comes before one externally as the instructor and initiator spiritual master. The Lord can reside within the heart, and He can also come out before a person and give him instructions. **Thus the spiritual master is not different from the Supersoul sitting within the heart...** When the brāhmaṇa asked the woman who the man lying on the floor was, she answered that he was her spiritual master and that she was perplexed about what to*

do in his absence. At such a time the Supersoul immediately appears, provided the devotee is purified in heart by following the directions of the spiritual master. A sincere devotee who follows the instructions of the spiritual master certainly gets direct instructions from his heart from the Supersoul. **Thus a sincere devotee is always helped directly or indirectly by the spiritual master and the Supersoul**". (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 4.28.52, purp.).



Another manifestation of the spiritual master is Paramatma in the heart. We can receive instruction from the heart if we are pure and sincere. Srila Prabhupada talks to us on the pages of his books.

Apart from books, Srila Prabhupada is also in the hearts of his sincere followers. Truly, he can be called the soul of ISKCON.



"Just as Srila Prabhupada is the soul of ISKCON, ISKCON is the body of Srila Prabhupada. And since together they form a spiritual whole, the body in this case is indistinguishable from the soul embodied in it." (from Ravindra Svarupa prabhu's book "Srila Prabhupada—acharya—the founder of ISKCON").



Based on this statement, it is fair to say that Srila Prabhupada is the soul of his books, and books are the body of Srila Prabhupada. And since together they make up a spiritual whole, the body in this case is not different from the soul embodied within it.

QUALIFICATIONS TO WRITE BOOKS



*"Now that the International Society for Krishna Consciousness has taken up this task of preaching the cult of Lord Caitanya, its members should not only construct temples in every town and village of the globe but also **distribute the books that have already been written***

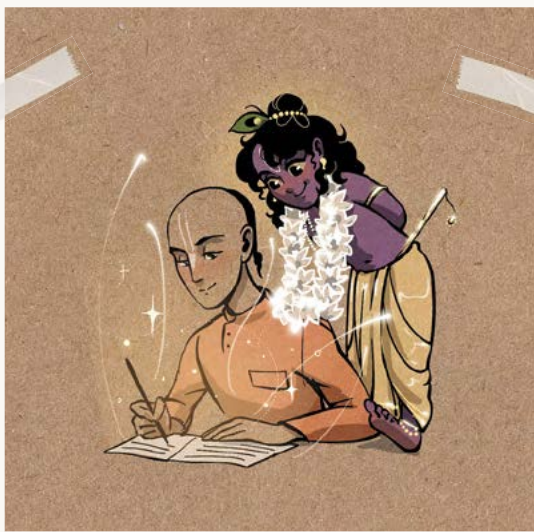
and further increase the number of books.” (Caitanya-caritamrita, Adi-lila, 7.164 purp).



Srila Prabhupada is to the highest degree, the gold standard of commenting and writing books. He himself often claimed that he expected his disciples to write, too. One day, Mataji Malati, one of the first disciples of Srila Prabhupada, told us how Srila Prabhupada, while in Mayapur, together with his disciples went to one of the Gaudiya Math temples. In it was a samadhi (tomb) of his spiritual teacher Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura. Naturally, Srila Prabhupada immediately went to the storefront where books were being sold. After examining the literature, he said that the mission was dying. This is because after Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, his disciples did not release any new books.

Some disciples wrote various essays and articles in the presence of Srila Prabhupada. For example, in the first volume of the Transcendental Diary of Hari Sauri Prabhu, it is described how Harikesa Swami wrote an article against materialistic scientists, and Srila Prabhupada helped him with his instructions. Writing a book is a lot of work, and not all devotees will do it. But every devotee is capable of writing short essays. It is important to learn how to express your thoughts correctly on paper, identify a problem, prescribe its solution, and demonstrate practical application in life, in preaching, in our society, in ethical behavior, etc. Moreover, all thoughts can be framed with a beautiful narrative form. We gave detailed descriptions, practical tips and standards for writing essays in the textbook “Bhakti-sastri”. For an in-depth study of writing an essay, you can refer to it.

Writing a book is a very serious job. For some, it can be a lifetime’s work. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu himself did not write books, He left only eight verses of the Shikshashtakam, but He bequeathed to his disciples and followers to write. His closest disciples, such as Rupa



and Sanatana Goswami, have written a large number of priceless books detailing the philosophy and practice of bhakti. Their nephew and disciple, Srila Jiva Goswami, wrote more than 400,000 verses in Sanskrit, including 25 major books and many different commentaries and supplements to the books of his teachers and the scriptures, such as “Srimad-Bhagavatam”. In our disciplic succession there are many other outstanding writers: Gopal Bhatta Goswami, Narahari Sarakara, Vrindavan das Thakur, Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami, Visvanatha Chakravarti Thakur, Baladev Vidyabhushana, Bhakti-vinoda Thakur, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur and many others. Srila Prabhupada often quotes all the above-mentioned authors of Vaishnava literature in his books. Therefore, by studying his books, we receive the association of the entire guru-parampara.

Nowadays, many of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples also write books. Many people know such outstanding authors as Srila Satsvarupa das Goswami, Srila Gopiparanadhana prabhu, Srila Bhakti Chaitanya Swami and others. For me, one of the most striking examples of

Vaishnava writers is Srila Sivarama Swami. His book series “Krishna in Vrindavan”, along with his other works have truly incredible depth, and immerse your whole being in Vrindavan. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Maharaja for Shuddhabhakti-Chintamani work. At one time, it became a reference book for me, which helped my unruly mind to understand the practice of pure devotional service. In it, Srila Sivarama Swami, like an experienced jeweler, cleanses all the pus of materialism, Mayavada, sahajiya and other deviations from the inflamed consciousness with the fine instrument of pure bhakti.

An example of writing preaching books for me is my dear spiritual master, H.G. Chaitanya Chandra Charan prabhu. When I was still at university, I gave his first two books “Karma” and “Reincarnation” to my teacher of pedagogy. After reading them, she said that for the first time in her life she understood these two concepts. At present, thanks to Gurudev works, many people have awakened interest in Krishna consciousness and Srila Prabhupada’s books.

A gigantic gulf lies between worldly writers and Vaishnava writers. Materialists usually write novels that are inspired by the stormy imagination of their mind. They describe their stories, how they came to so-called success, or create various textbooks on applied sciences, skills and abilities. At the beginning of this book, we already called all this literature useless paper waste. Unlike these people, devotees are not guided by their own mind or experience when writing. They adhere to the philosophical conclusions (siddhanta) that their predecessors came to. An interesting example is the academic degree in Doctor of Sciences. In the secular world, to become a doctor of sciences, a candidate must come up with or create something that no one has done before. Then his achievement will be recognized and marked with this title. In the Vaishnava world, this title sounds like Bhaktivedanta. To obtain the degree of Bhaktivedanta (studying Srimad-Bhagavatam 7th to the 12th canto, preceded by the stage of

Bhaktivaibhava—studying 1st-6th cantos of “Srimad—Bhagavatam”, as well as “Bhakti-sastri”—studying Bhagavad-gita, Sri Isopanisd, The Nectar of Instructions and the Nectar of Devotion), a Vaishnava candidate should analyze the instructions of Srila Prabhupada and previous acaryas on a given topic. In his work, he should show a clear commitment to the sastras, guru and sadhu, while demonstrating the rational and practical application of the given topic. The books of materialists are the result of the delirium of their mind, and the books of the Vaishnavas are the result of their spiritual revelations.

“**The writing of Vaiṣṇava literatures is not a function for ordinary men. Vaiṣṇava literatures are not mental concoctions. They are all authorized literatures meant to guide those who are going to be Vaiṣṇavas. Under these circumstances, an ordinary man cannot give his own opinion. His opinion must always correspond with the conclusion of the Vedas. Unless one is fully qualified in Vaiṣṇava behavior and authorized by superior authority (the Supreme Personality of Godhead), one cannot write Vaiṣṇava literatures or purports and commentaries on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the Bhagavad-gītā.**” (Caitanya-caritamrita, Madhya-lila, 24.326, purp.).

Next, let’s look at Srila Prabhupada’s instructions on writing books and draw conclusions from them.

“**To keep oneself free from material contamination and attain the Lord’s favor, one must be sincerely eager to render service to the Lord. This is the only qualification necessary. As soon as one is favored by the mercy of the spiritual master and the Lord, one is immediately given all the power necessary to write books and propagate the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement without being hampered by material considerations.**” (Caitanya-caritamrita, Madhya-lila, 19.135, purp.).

It is clear from the quote that Vaishnavas do not write on their own whim. First, they receive mercy in the form of blessings from their elders. The Chaitanya-caritamrita describes an episode when Rupa Goswami presented his books, Vidagdha-madhava and Lalita-madhava. Lord Chaitanya had assembled a whole board to give feedback. Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, Svarupa Damodara Goswami, Ramananda Rai, Haridas Thakur and Mahaprabhu himself were there. They asked Rupa Goswami to recite various verses from his plays. Writing books is a form of preaching. Preaching to both devotees and external audiences.

“**If one is a literary man, he can write articles and poetry for the service of the Lord under the direction of the spiritual master. One has to receive the message of the spiritual master regarding how to act in one’s capacity, for the spiritual master is expert in giving such instructions**”. (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 3.22.7, purp.).

There are people who have a literary gift. This ability itself does not indicate a person’s spiritual experience or qualifications. There is great potential for it to be occupied in devotional service. You should ask a spiritual teacher how to do this.

“**Transcendental literature that strictly follows the Vedic principles and the conclusion of the Purāṇas and pāñcarātri-ka-vidhi can be written only by a pure devotee. It is not possible for a common man to write books on bhakti, for his writings will not be effective. He may be a very great scholar and may be an expert in presenting literature in flowery language, but this is not at all helpful in understanding transcendental literature. Even if transcendental literature is written in faulty language, it is acceptable if it is written by a devotee, whereas so-called transcendental literature written by a mundane scholar, even if it is a very highly polished literary presentation, cannot be accepted. The secret in a devotee’s writing is that when he writes about the pastimes of the Lord, the Lord helps him; he does not write alone.**

As stated in the Bhagavad-gītā (10.10), dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te. Since a devotee writes in service to the Lord, the Lord from within gives him so much intelligence that he sits down near the Lord and goes on writing books”. (Caitanya-caritamrita, Adi-lila, 8.39, purp.).

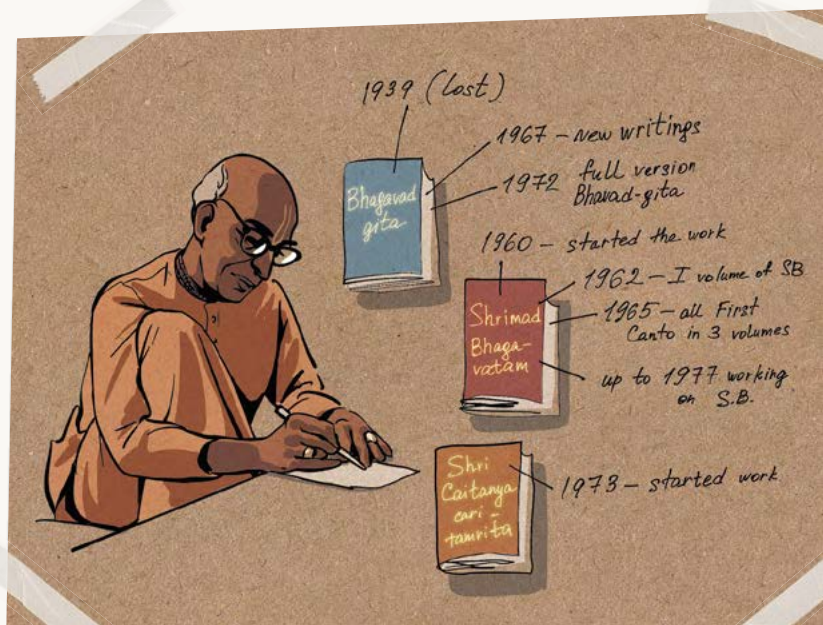
“One must be an authorized Vaiṣṇava, humble and pure. One should write transcendental literature to purify oneself, not for credit. By writing about the pastimes of the Lord, one associates with the Lord directly. One should not ambitiously think, ‘I shall become a great author. I shall be celebrated as a writer.’ These are material desires. One should attempt to write for self-purification. It may be published or it may not be published, but that does not matter. If one is actually sincere in writing, all his ambitions will be fulfilled. Whether one is known as a great author is incidental. One should not attempt to write transcendental literature for material name and fame”. (Caitanya-caritamrita, Adi-lila, 9.5, purp.).



Here Srila Prabhupada talks about the most important motivation—to work for your own purification, without thinking about glory. Purification occurs if the author is not attached to the results of his work. In the purports to Chaitanya-Caritamrita, especially to the Adi-lila, you can find more than 20 different places where Srila Prabhupada talks about writing books.

SRILA PRABHUPADA’S WRITING HISTORY

Perhaps the reader will be interested in how Srila Prabhupada wrote and published each of his books. We decided to give some stories and facts related to this topic. The information will be given in the most concise form, since its full volume would take an entire book.



“Bhagavad-gita as it is”

In 1939, just seven years after Srila Prabhupada received spiritual initiation, he wrote an introduction to the Bhagavad Gita in English. A short while later making a complete translation of the book, which contained more than 1,000 pages. Unfortunately, the manuscript was stolen. In 1966, already in New York, his typewriter, cassette recorder and several books were stolen again. But this did not deter him at all, on the contrary, Srila Prabhupada was determined to finish the work. In 1967, a new manuscript appeared.

There were also difficulties with the publication of the book. None of his first disciples could provide a solution. However, help unexpectedly came from the publishing house “Macmillan”, one of the largest publishers in the world. They requested an album with Srila Prabhupada’s bhajans. Instead of sending the album by mail, he sent

Brahmananda to invite them to print the Bhagavad-gita. Brahmananda put on a suit and tie and drove to the giant skyscraper of the Macmillan Publishing house. Having lost all hope, Brahmananda accidentally met the editor-in-chief of the publishing house and immediately told him: "I am a disciple of a guru from India, and we have the Bhagavad-gita." The editor-in-chief's eyes widened and he replied: "We have published many Indian books and were just looking for the Bhagavad-gita. Bring the manuscripts, we will print it."

The first version was reduced by about three times. The full version of the Bhagavad-gita was published only in 1972.

"Srimad-Bhagavatam"

Srila Prabhupada started working on Srimad-Bhagavatam around 1960, when he moved to live in Vrindavan. The Prabhupada-lilamrita (10th chapter) gives a detailed history of how he wrote the first volumes and published them in Mathura. He had a vision of printing all 12 cantos in 60 volumes. Srila Prabhupada personally collected funds to print the first volume. He found help in one entrepreneur from Gorakhpur, Hanuman Prasad Poddar. After a cursory glance at the manuscripts, Mr. Poddar concluded that it was a work that deserved every support. Srila Prabhupada participated in every stage of the book's release. Thus, in 1962, the first volume of Srimad-Bhagavatam was published. He personally distributed books from house to house, from person to person. By 1965, it was possible to print the entire First Canto in three volumes. Srila Prabhupada himself created the picture of the dust jacket of the spiritual sky with Goloka Vrindavana and Vaikunthas. It was these first three volumes that Srila Prabhupada brought with him to the West.

Up until the day of his departure in 1977, Srila Prabhupada paid special attention to working on Srimad-Bhagavatam. He devoted all his free time to writing purports. In this work he was greatly assisted

by his disciple Pradyumna. He learned Sanskrit and edited books from 1971 until Srila Prabhupada's departure.

In one of his Vyasa pujas, Srila Prabhupada glorified Pradyumna by saying that these books were his merit. It was Pradyumna who developed the BBT typing style, diacritical symbols, transliteration and division of Sanskrit words into English, italicization, etc.

“Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita”

One day, being in the room with Brahmananda Swami and Jayapataka Swami, Srila Prabhupada suddenly said: “I have to introduce my students to the biography of Lord Chaitanya. There are two main books describing His life and teachings. Sri Chaitanya-bhagavata, written by Vrindavan das Thakur, and Sri Chaitanya-caritamrta, written by Krishnadasa Kaviraj Goswami. I will have time to translate only one, but which one of them?” Brahmananda Swami suggested translating the Chaitanya-bhagavata. Looking at Jayapataka Swami, Srila Prabhupada asked him, “What do you think?” Naturally, Jayapataka replied that he was for “Chaitanya-charitamrita”. After some thought, Srila Prabhupada replied, “Yes. I will translate the Chaitanya-caritamrita.” In 1973, he took up the work.

The history of the Chaitanya-charitamrita publication is very fascinating and amazing. We will give a short episode of it from the 45th chapter of Prabhupada-Lilamrita.



“These seventeen volumes unpublished,” he began, “are a great problem for our movement.”

“Yes, Prabhupāda,” Rāmeśvara responded, attentive and concerned. The other devotees also nodded, commiserating. Something must be done.

“Yes,” Prabhupāda continued, “they must be published immediately.”

“Yes, Prabhupāda,” Rāmeśvara replied obediently.

“So I think they can be printed in two months,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said conclusively.

Rāmeśvara wasn’t sure he had heard correctly. The Press had only just opened. The artists didn’t even have the lights in their room. Two months was illogical, impossible. Now was the moment to tell Śrīla Prabhupāda the plan for increased production. Rāmeśvara stepped closer.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda,” he began, “we’ve been meeting about this, and now that the Press is finally here and established, I think we can increase production four times. We think that now we can go from producing one book every four months to producing one of your books every month.” Now both Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha were walking together beside Śrīla Prabhupāda, with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Brahmānanda Swami walking on his other side.

“One book every month,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said, as if thinking out loud and considering it. “That means over one year. It is not fast enough.” The other devotees looked over at Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha, who glanced at each other.

“You have to do all the books in two months’ time,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said again. They had clearly heard it this time, and the two managers were stunned in disbelief.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda,” Rāmeśvara said, “I think that’s impossible. Maybe we can go faster...”

Śrīla Prabhupāda suddenly stopped walking. Planting his cane firmly in the sand, he turned to Rāmeśvara and said, without anger but very gravely, “Impossible is a word found in the fool’s dictionary.”

Suddenly Rāmeśvara realized his spiritual life was on the line. To say “impossible” now would mean he had no faith in Kṛṣṇa’s representative, no faith in the power of God. He must throw away his material estimations and rational common sense.

While Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha stood speechless, Śrīla Prabhupāda resumed walking, accompanied by the others. The two devotees hurried to catch up, but now everyone looked at them as if

to say, “Come on. Stop doubting. You have to do it.” Rāmeśvara asked Śrīla Prabhupāda if he could discuss this with the other devotees at the Press and then report back. “Oh, yes,” Prabhupāda replied, “whatever is required.” Rāmeśvara and Rādhāvallabha dropped back, while Śrīla Prabhupāda and the others continued down the beach”. (morning walk with Srila Prabhupada).



So the BBT, thanks to the special grace of Srila Prabhupada, was able to publish all seventeen volumes in two months. To do this, a huge marathon of the entire publishing house was organized. The details are described in the Prabhupada-lilamrita.

The artists who painted pictures for Srila Prabhupada’s books have accomplished a real feat. Some of the works were painted by several artists. When one artist fell asleep, another came in his place, and so the paintings were completed together.

There is a lot to tell about the writing and publication of each of Srila Prabhupada’s books. However, in order not to increase the volume of this book, we will leave only three of the stories described above.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What to do if in your reading you discover one of the types of distortion of knowledge?

To some extent, we have all these types. Sincerity will help to defeat them. Sincerity means that you admit your imperfections or mistakes and ask for help. That’s all. This is a natural process of discovering flaws in yourself.

Then you need to work on improving yourself. In my practice, I have noticed that when I experience difficulties and honestly address it to my elders, everything passes quickly. But if I keep it to myself, try to overcome them on my own, or try to be hypocritical, then I will remain in the same place for years.

WORKSHOP

- 1 Write down 2–3 of the brightest revelations that came during the whole period of reading books. If possible, discuss it with your friend or tutor.
- 2 Write a short essay about how Srila Prabhupada opens up to you through his books.



Congratulations!

You've made it all the way to the end of our book. Devakinandan Prabhu has proved to have both an insightful, and pragmatic approach to reading Srila Prabhupada's books. In the opening chapters, Prabhu shared a brief history on the origins of the Vedas, giving us enough context to fully appreciate the grand scale of what Srila Prabhupada has accomplished in his purports and commentaries. Devakinandan Prabhu further expanded on this by explaining the special position of our Founder Acharya, and how we as his followers can build a relationship with him through his books. These insights were followed by practical techniques to help improve our reading comprehension, followed by easy exercises that will build our enthusiasm to continue reading Srila Prabhupada's books daily. Devakinandan Prabhu's analytical study on the process of reading, reinforced by his deep understanding of philosophy, provided a much needed guide to help ISKCON devotees drink deeply of the nectar Srila Prabhupada has left behind in his books.

I hope this journey has been as enjoyable for you as it has been for me. I am also hopeful that Devakinandan Prabhu's tips and advice will help guide you towards a consistent reading habit. The daily reading of Srila Prabhupada's books is something that I feel strongly about. I believe it is the cornerstone of a healthy Sadhana, and is the key to maintaining a strong spiritual life. Even before my tenure with the ISKCON Ministry of Education, I had made it my life's goal to bring

attention to this most important aspect of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It brings me great joy to see a powerful preacher such as Devakinandan Prabhu share the same goal as me. His book is a big step in our mission of making daily reading an active part of everyone's Sādhana. I implore all of you to visit our webpage and YouTube channel to take advantage of all the resources we have gathered with the express purpose of inspiring devotees to read Śrīla Prabhupada's books. We have everything from compilations of interviews and realisations, to academic papers on the philosophy of education. Now, we also have a book exclusively focused on expanding our vision of daily reading within ISKCON, and the world. Devakinandan Prabhu has made such a massive contribution to our mission, that I cannot find the words to glorify or thank him enough.

It was a pleasure working alongside him on "Conscious Reading", and I am confident that this is just one of many future collaborations to come. Thank you Devakinandan Prabhu for being a part of Śrīla Prabhupada's mission.

Tapan Mishra Dāsa
Minister, ISKCON Ministry of Education

Appendix

THE HISTORY OF PRINTING “KRISHNA” BOOK AND “SRI ISOPANISAD”

Prabhupāda’s main business in Tokyo was with Dai Nippon. Considering him an important author and a venerable religious monk, they had provided him a car and apartment. Each morning they sent a private car to drive Prabhupāda to Imperial Palace Park, where he could take his morning walk. Prabhupāda liked the neatly planted trees and gravel walks, and he appreciated the habits of the Japanese people. As he would pass, elderly ladies would bow to him from the waist, and others would fold their hands respectfully, acknowledging his being a holy man.

On the morning of Prabhupāda’s meeting with Dai Nippon, he came out of his apartment with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Devānanda Mahārāja and got into the back seat of a Dai Nippon company car. The car proceeded through the early-morning streets, and Prabhupāda chanted his Gāyatrī mantra silently.

A Dai Nippon junior executive escorted Prabhupāda and his two disciples into an elevator and up to a spacious room with a long conference table. Prabhupāda’s guide cordially offered him a seat at the table, and Prabhupāda sat down, with Tamāla Kṛṣṇa and Devānanda Mahārāja on either side. Soon there entered Dai Nippon’s

six top executives, including the corporation president. Each stood behind his respective chair, and each in turn, beginning with the president, bowed slightly from the waist and presented his business card. Addressing Prabhupāda as “Your Divine Grace,” they introduced themselves, announced their posts, and took their seats.

“We are very honored to have you here,” the president began. “You are a great religious author, and it is our great privilege to be publishing your books.” After the president had spoken briefly, tea was served. Prabhupāda requested hot milk. Conversation was informal, and Prabhupāda spoke of the importance of his mission and his Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. No one discussed business, however, and the Dai Nippon executives soon excused themselves. They would meet again the next morning.

When Prabhupāda was again alone in the room with his disciples and the junior executive who had escorted him, he asked the young Japanese, “So what is your goal in life?” By way of answer, the man gathered up all the business cards that lay scattered before Prabhupāda on the table and stacked them, with the president’s on top, then the first vice-president’s, and so on, putting his own card in its place on the bottom. He then dramatically removed his card from the bottom of the stack and slapped it on top—a graphic answer to Prabhupāda’s question.

Prabhupāda smiled. To become president of the company, he said, was temporary. All material life was temporary. He explained on the basis of Bhagavad-gītā that the body was temporary and that the self was eternal. All the identities and positions people hankered after were based on the bodily conception of life and would one day be frustrated. The purpose of life, therefore, was not to become the temporary president of a temporary corporation within the temporary material world, but to realize the eternal soul’s relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and gain eternal life. Prabhupāda spoke for almost half an hour while the man listened politely.

At the next day's meeting, negotiations began. The conference room was different, the table smaller, and three of Dai Nippon's international sales representatives sat opposite Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda presented his price: \$1.35 per book.

"Oh, Your Divine Grace," one of the salesmen exclaimed, "it is not possible for us to give this price. We will lose too heavily. We cannot afford it." They explained their position, quoting paper costs and other expenses.

Prabhupāda began to speak about his mission. ISKCON's book distribution, he said, was a charitable work for the benefit of all humanity. ISKCON distributed these books for whatever donations people were able to make, and he received no profit or royalties. It was spiritual education, the most valuable literature. "In any case," Prabhupāda said in closing, "you deal with my secretary in this regard." And he sat back in his chair. The burden was on Tamāla Kṛṣṇa.

Tamāla Kṛṣṇa began by saying that Prabhupāda had been too kind, because ISKCON could actually never pay such a high price. He then quoted a price forty cents lower per book than Prabhupāda's quote. "Mr. Tamāla,"—the salesmen were again upset—"please reconsider your point." A polite argument ensued.

Suddenly Prabhupāda interrupted, presenting himself as an impartial third party. He said he would settle the difference that had arisen between his secretary and the salesmen. "I have heard both sides," he said, "and I feel that the price should be \$1.25 per book. That's all."

"Yes, Your Divine Grace," the salesmen agreed, "that is right."

After further negotiations, Prabhupāda agreed on a contract that included a reprint of Volume One and a first printing of Volume Two of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, two issues of Back to Godhead, a Hindi issue of Back to Godhead, and a new book, Śrī

Īsopaniṣad. ISKCON had to pay only \$5,000 in cash, and Dai Nippon would deliver everything on credit.

Prabhupāda held a feast at his apartment for the Dai Nippon executives, who especially liked the samosās and pakorās. They presented Prabhupāda with a watch and continued to see to his comfort during his stay in Tokyo. Prabhupāda also met a Canadian-born Japanese boy, Bruce, who was seriously interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda invited him to come and join him in India, and the boy eagerly agreed.

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami “Prabhupada-lilamrita”, chapter 31

SRILA PRABHUPADA HIMSELF SELECTED THE COVERS FOR THE BOOKS

Again I had the good fortune to present this idea to Srila Prabhupada. He rejected it. He was angry. He said,

“I have specially chosen Lord Vishnu for the cover of Sri Isopanisad. I want this book to be attractive to people of all philosophical persuasions, even Mayavadis and Vedantists. All the different schools of philosophy should see Vishnu on the cover of the Isopanisad. They will not buy Krishna. What’s wrong with you?”

Srila Prabhupada was so involved in the selection of artwork, choosing the size, the number of pages in the book, the design of the book.

The genius of Prabhupada was that he took books of higher philosophy and made them popular.

Books on philosophy are not popular. Philosophical books are not sold anywhere in the world. But the genius of Prabhupada was that these magnificent paintings, carefully selected, were inserted into books of

philosophy to sell them to people all over the world. It was brilliant marketing by Srila Prabhupada. He was responsible. He planned it. You couldn't make changes if he didn't approve it.

Ramesvara prabhu

THE HISTORY OF THE BOOK “EASY JOURNEY TO OTHER PLANETS”

Trying to compose *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at Chippiwada while surrounded by sometimes noisy families with their non devotional domestic habits had impressed upon him the importance of *not* using a temple as an apartment house.

Despite his plans to settle down and begin the monumental task of translating *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Bhaktivedanta Swami was ready to preach in other ways also. In October of 1959 he had encountered a news article in *The Times of India*. Two American scientists had received the Nobel prize in physics for discovering the antiproton. “According to one of the fundamental assumptions of the new theory,” the article read, “there may exist another world or an anti-world built up of anti-matter.” The “other world” reminded Bhaktivedanta Swami of the eternal spiritual world described in *Bhagavad-gītā*. He was well aware that the scientists were not speaking of *antimaterial* in the sense of “eternal,” or “spiritual,” but he thought of using their scientific terms to capture the interest of scientific-minded people. He conceived of an essay presenting the theistic science of *Bhagavad-gītā* in terms of the antimaterial particle and the antimaterial world.

It was a time when the whole world was talking of space travel. Indian news media had reported the Russian Sputnik two years ago, and the race for space had begun. Seizing on the current interest in space travel, Bhaktivedanta Swami described how by *bhakti-yoga* the soul can travel past the farthest reaches of space to the eternal planets of

the spiritual world, where life is blissful and full of knowledge. He gave his own fresh translations of *Bhagavad-gītā* verses, couched in the language of the new physics, with its antimaterial particle and antimaterial world. The complete work, *Easy Journey to Other Planets*, was a fifteen-thousand-word manuscript, and he showed it to Hitesaran Sharma of Radha Press. But he didn't have enough money to get the little book printed.

In February of 1960 Bhaktivedanta Swami decided to print it himself in two installments of *Back to Godhead*. The articles drew an immediate response from a physicist at the Gujarat University in Ahmedabad, Mr. Y.G. Naik, who received *Back to Godhead* through the mail. Dr. Naik thought Bhaktivedanta Swami's application of the antimaterial principle was "really a grand one. ... This is no doubt a classic essay. ..." Dr. Naik was interested in further discussion on physics and transcendental knowledge, and Bhaktivedanta Swami replied with equal enthusiasm, finally asking the physicist to join him in distributing the cultural heritage of India to the whole world.

Convinced that such an essay had great potential to interest educated English-speaking readers, Bhaktivedanta Swami worked hard to raise enough donations to print *Easy Journey to Other Planets* as a paperback book. He finally did so in the fall of 1960. A foreword by Dr. N.K. Sidhanta, vice chancellor of the University of Delhi, arrived late but was included in the book as an insert.

While everyone may gain from it, the student community in particular is recommended to read the book with care and practice Bhakti yoga, which will help to strengthen the mind and build up character. I shall be glad to see this work read by the students and the teachers alike. ...

Several Indian scientists and scholars contributed reviews, noting the book's "scientific cum spiritual vision" and "the method of speeding over space not by mechanical acceleration of speed, but through psychological effort and spiritual emancipation." It was only thirty-eight

pages, but it was his first publication aside from the one-page folded newspaper, *Back to Godhead*.

Easy Journey to Other Planets had been like a warm-up for his real work of presenting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But now he was even more convinced of the need for books. To preach, he would have to have books—especially if he were to go to the West. With books he could create a spiritual revolution. There was so much literature in the West, but Westerners had nothing like this, nothing to fill their spiritual vacuum.

Satsvarupa das Goswami “Prabhupada-lilamrita”, chapter 10

SRILA PRABHUPADA’S PLANS FOR FUTURE BOOKS

What books did Srila Prabhupada want to translate after *Srimad-Bhagavatam*?

Pradyumna das: Prabhupada always believed that the four books—*Bhagavad-gita*, *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Nectar of Devotion* and *Chaitanya-caritamṛta*—were the most important books. Other books are additional.

One day we were in Prabhupada’s room in New York when Radhavalabha asked Prabhupada, “So after you finish *Bhagavatam*, Prabhupada, which books would you like to translate?”

Srila Prabhupada said, “Oh, maybe the *Sandharbhas* of Jiva Goswami, or *Vedanta-sutra*”, or “*Bhagavad-gita*”. There are so many of them.”

Someone said, “But Prabhupada, you have already translated the *Bhagavad-gita*.”

Srila Prabhupada said: “There are so many comments, we made a small part. *Ramanujacharya*, *Madhvacharya*, everyone has given a

commentary of the Gita. We could do a lot of Bhagavad Gita, not just one.”

That’s why he had such a concept.

Pradyumna prabhu

CHRONOLOGY OF SRILA PRABHUPADA’S BOOKS

In this appendix, we give a list of the release dates of Srila Prabhupada’s books. We based it on the materials of Jayadvaita Swami and Rameshvara prabhu. For a deeper study of Srila Prabhupada’s books, you can focus on the year when the book was released.

In his purports, Srila Prabhupada noted many moments and milestones in the development of our movement. For example, he first begins to use the term “Krishna consciousness” from the Third Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam (chapter 15, text 45). Srila Prabhupada commented on the First and Second Cantos mainly whilst in India, and has not yet used this term.

Further, from the Fourth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, the term ISKCON appears, and Srila Prabhupada very often talks about the principles, rules, and fundamentals of the Krishna consciousness movement.

Rameshvara Prabhu about Srila Prabhupada’s literary work

Srila Prabhupada finished the Second Canto and started the Third in 1969. Then he took a break to write “Krishna Book” and “Nectar of Devotion”. Sometime in 1970–1971, he resumed work on the Third Canto. In 1972, Srila Prabhupada supervised the publication of the book “Bhagavad-gita as it is” at MacMillan Publishing House.

By 1973, the Fourth Canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam was completed, and His Divine Grace began the 17-volume Sri Chaitanya-charitamrita, which he completed in November 1974. He then began work on the Fifth Canto, which was completed in early 1975.

Srila Prabhupada's transcendental literary works averaged one volume per month between 1970 and 1977, which by any standards is a miracle in the field of writing! Traveling the world, managing a growing global movement, writing dozens of letters a day, giving morning and evening lectures, giving loans for the purchase and construction of temples around the world, meeting with dignitaries, reporters, guests, students ... and this is an incomplete list of his affairs. No author in the history of the world could concentrate on all these tasks, let alone write an entire volume every month for many years.

He didn't just deny himself rest and sleep for all those years. Srila Prabhupada gave his life to give transcendental works to the world. And his disciples were thus empowered and inspired to give up the comforts of material life in order to distribute books to hundreds of thousands of conditioned souls in continuous marathons. Srila Prabhupada cannot be compared with others—no one had such a worldwide preaching spirit that manifested itself so widely and on a large scale.

Chronology of writing books

Title of the book	Year
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The first canto	1962–1965
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The second canto	1965–1966
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The third canto	1967
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The forth canto	1967–1968
“Krishna”	1968–1969
“The Nectar of devotion”	1968–1969
“Chaitanya-charitamrita”	1971–1974

Chronology of books release with new editions of disciples

Title of the book	Year	Editor
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The first canto	1972	Hayagriva (Jayadvaita)
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The second canto	1970–1972	Hayagriva (Jayadvaita)
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The third canto	1972–1974	Satsvarupa Jayadvaita (Hayagriva)
“On the way to Krishna”	1973	Hayagriva
“Raja-vidya: the King of knowledge”	1973	Hayagriva
Elevation to Krishna Consciousness	1973	Hayagriva
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Fourth Canto (chapters 1–8)	1974	Satsvarupa Jayadvaita (Hayagriva)
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Fourth Canto (chapters 9–31)	1974	Hayagriva (Jayadvaita)
“Chaitanya-charitamrita”. Adi-lila	1974	Jayadvaita
“Chaitanya-charitamrita”. Madhya-lila	1975	Hayagriva Jayadvaita
“Chaitanya-charitamrita”. Antya-lila	1975	Jayadvaita, Dravida
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Fifth Canto (chapters 1–13)	1975	Hayagriva (Jayadvaita)
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Fifth Canto (chapters 14–26)	1975	Jayadvaita, Dravida
“The Nectar of Instruction”	1975	Hrishikeshananda, Hayagriva Jayadvaita
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Sixth Canto	1975–1976	Jayadvaita
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Seventh Canto	1976	Jayadvaita
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Eighth Canto	1976	Jayadvaita
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Ninth Canto	1977	Jayadvaita

“Perfect questions, perfect answers”	1977	Shyamasundara, Jayadvaita
“The Teachings of Lord Kapila”	1977	Hayagriva (Jayadvaita)
“The science of self-awareness”	1977	Several editors
Srimad-Bhagavatam. The Tenth Canto (Chapters 1–13)	1977	Jayadvaita

Dates of the Third and Fourth cantos of Srimad-Bhagavatam do not match Rameshvara prabhu and Jayadvaita Swami. I think this is due to either the dates of the editions, or to the fact that Srila Prabhupada started writing purports on the Third Canto in 1967, and released the book only in the early 70s.

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