

Distribute Books
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History of Book Distribution in ISKCON 1972-1976

SATSVARUPA DASA GOSWAMI

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IN ISKCON
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Author's Note

AS STATED IN the Introduction to this book, I have not attempted here a complete, exhaustive history of ISKCON, or even of book distribution in ISKCON. I have attempted to tell how, in the years of 1970 through 1974, Śrīla Prabhupāda and his disciples increased ISKCON book distribution. I have also attempted to describe something about ISKCON's book publication, especially in 1975.

If I were to tell the full story of book distribution up to the present day, the account would include achievements of many devotees not mentioned here or mentioned here only briefly. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and the Rādhā-Dāmodara Party, for example, are mentioned as forming in 1974, but by 1975 they had become leaders in book distribution, with their *brahmacārīs* outdistributing all ISKCON temples. Similarly, book distribution in Europe is described here in its beginning stages only; yet by 1976, Northern and Southern Europe as well as England were world *saṅkīrtana* giants. And recently, the temples of Southern Europe have led all others in books distributed.

In South America, Hṛdayānanda Goswami and Pañcadra-
viḍa Swami have developed a phenomenal book distribution program. And in India, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami has also printed and distributed books on a very large scale. There are also many other book distributors who have distributed as much as those described here. To do justice to all of them would not be possible.

This book is accurate, however, for the historical period it covers. I hope that this account will fan the flames of desire in the hearts of ISKCON devotees to distribute Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and thus please Śrīla Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa.

SDG

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Introduction

IN THE 1970s Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers rallied enthusiastically to distribute his books in larger and larger quantities. The dozens of books Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote and published and the millions of copies his disciples distributed all over the world constitute perhaps the major achievement of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness during Śrīla Prabhupāda's lifetime. This history is a real and often astounding testimony of how the spiritual master can empower his disciples to carry out "the impossible." As stated in the scripture, "By the mercy of the spiritual master a blind man can see, a lame man can cross the mountains, and a dumb man can speak like an orator."

If we try to trace out the beginning of Kṛṣṇa conscious book distribution, we will find it beginningless. Because disseminating Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the conditioned souls is an eternal activity of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa conscious knowledge exists eternally. In the spiritual world the liberated souls share love of Kṛṣṇa in an atmosphere of eternity, bliss, and knowledge. In the material world the Vedic literature preserves and teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the conditioned souls, who have become covered by illusion (*māyā*) due to misuse of their free will.

At the beginning of the creation of the material universes the Supreme Being introduces transcendental knowledge in the form of the *Vedas*, the original scriptures. The *Vedas* comprise a vast Sanskrit literature that Lord Kṛṣṇa instructed to the first created personality in the universe, Lord Brahmā. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* tells how the personified *Vedas* pray to the Supreme Person at the time of the creation, requesting Him to distribute knowledge of Kṛṣṇa to the conditioned souls.

All the *śrutis* or personified *Vedas* offered glories to the Lord again and again, singing, “*Jaya! Jaya!*” This indicates that the Lord is praised for His glories. Of all His glories the most important is His causeless mercy upon the conditioned souls in reclaiming them from the clutches of *māyā*.

—*Kṛṣṇa* book, Vol. III, Chapter Eighteen

Brahmā, the creator of the material planets and of all species of life, is the most intellectual sage. And he instructs the Vedic knowledge to his son, Nārada, who teaches his disciple, Vyāsadeva, who later compiles and divides the knowledge into the four *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Purāṇas*.

In former ages there was no need to preserve these teachings by writing, since everyone could memorize them. But five thousand years ago, Vyāsadeva saw the impending deterioration of humanity and compiled the Vedic teachings into books. Kṛṣṇa conscious book distribution, therefore, began in this world with the first great sage Brahmā, and propagating this knowledge has continued to be the responsibility of each spiritual master in disciplic succession. Vedic knowledge is so important that during the times of devastation, the Supreme Lord incarnates just to protect the *Vedas*. Thus at the time of the great deluge, the Supreme Lord incarnated as Matsya, and saved the *Vedas*. In another age He appeared as Hayagrīva for the same purpose.

When compiling the Vedic literatures, Vyāsadeva was also instructed by his spiritual master to write an ultimate, sublime

literature that would contain the summation of all Vedic teachings—devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, along with *Bhagavad-gītā*, constitutes the most important Vedic teachings; these are the literatures Śrīla Prabhupāda especially stressed in his mass book distribution campaign.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was in disciplic succession from Lord Caitanya, who appeared five hundred years ago and who, according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and other scriptures, was Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Lord Kṛṣṇa's mission in His appearance as Lord Caitanya was to introduce the chanting of the names of God (Hare Kṛṣṇa) as the best method of reviving God consciousness in the present age. Lord Caitanya Himself spread the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa throughout India and held learned discussions with leading philosophers of the day, converting them to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. He also instructed His chief followers, the six Gosvāmīs, to preserve His teachings in books. The six Gosvāmīs went to Vṛndāvana, the birthplace of Kṛṣṇa, and there studied all the revealed scriptures and faithfully expounded the teachings of Lord Caitanya. Of the works of the six Gosvāmīs, Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, "Lord Caitanya instructed His disciples to write books on the science of Kṛṣṇa, a task which His followers have continued to carry out down to the present day. The elaborations and expositions on the philosophy taught by Lord Caitanya are, in fact, the most voluminous, exacting, and consistent, due to the system of disciplic succession."

Lord Caitanya's life and teachings were recorded in many biographies, the most important of which is *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* was also one of the main works Śrīla Prabhupāda translated.

A few hundred years after Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, persons deviating from the strict path of Lord Caitanya were giving a bad reputation to the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In order to clarify the actual position of Lord Caitanya and His

followers, the great Vaiṣṇava teacher Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura appeared in Bengal and vigorously preached the actual conclusions of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura wrote about one hundred books, both in English and Bengali, and envisioned Kṛṣṇa consciousness's spreading throughout the Western world. In 1896, the year of Śrīla Prabhupāda's birth, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sent one of his English books, a small volume entitled *Caitanya Mahaprabhu: His Life and Precepts*, to the McGill University library in Montreal.

The son of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master. Carrying on the work of his illustrious father, he traveled throughout India, lecturing and organizing a network of some sixty centers for disseminating the teachings of Lord Caitanya. He also wrote and published many books, mostly Bengali translations of the Vedic literatures, and sent preachers abroad, although they had little success.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī impressed upon his disciple, Śrīla Prabhupāda, that Kṛṣṇa conscious book distribution was of greatest importance. At Rādhā-kuṇḍa, near Vṛndāvana, in November, 1935, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī told Śrīla Prabhupāda, "If you ever get money, print books." These words entered deeply into Śrīla Prabhupāda's life, and he tried his utmost to carry out those instructions, with full faith in his spiritual master.

The first volume of *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* describes how Śrīla Prabhupāda singlehandedly wrote, printed, and distributed a fortnightly magazine, *Back to Godhead*. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī had told him, "If you ever get money"—but even when he had not even enough money for food or rickshaw, he attempted to publish Kṛṣṇa conscious literature. Thus for two decades he distributed *Back to Godhead* in India.

After taking the *sannyāsa* order of renounced life in 1959, Śrīla Prabhupāda concentrated on writing and printing hard-bound volumes of his English translations of the First Canto

of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This effort, projected to fill sixty volumes, Śrīla Prabhupāda also began singlehandedly, in poverty and obscurity.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda managed to get passage to the United States in 1965, he brought with him copies of his three published volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, carrying them in two trunks as virtually his only possessions. He lived from month to month paying rent by personally selling a few of his books in Manhattan book stores. And although he was unable to publish more books during his first years in America, even while spending most of his time meeting with and directing his first followers in New York City he continued to translate and write his Bhaktivedanta purports to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Even after Śrīla Prabhupāda had several dozen followers and a few small centers in America, he was unable to realize his ambitious plans for printing books, because of his followers' youth and inexperience. For the time being, Prabhupāda remained content to see these young Americans giving up sinful life and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, even if they could not expertly organize or assist his mission in a big way.

But Prabhupāda expected his disciples eventually to become competent to execute the important mission of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in America. In 1969 he wrote to a disciple in New York expressing disappointment that although his (Prabhupāda's) life was dedicated to publishing the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and despite having hundreds of assistants and being in a wealthy country, he was unable to accomplish what he had done singlehandedly in India.

Now since I have come to your country, I have been unable to publish the fourth volume of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, but with your help and assistance, since 1965 this one book only (Teachings of Lord Caitanya) has been published . . .

Anyway, I am very much anxious for getting my books published. The manuscripts which I have presently may be

converted into eight different books of the same size which I generally publish (400 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 . . . I require to have eight books published and on the price of six thousand dollars which is charged by Dai Nippon, I will require about fifty thousand dollars immediately. Selling or not selling, I want to see these books published. That is my ambition.

Gradually, Prabhupāda's young disciples gained the knowledge to fulfill the order of their spiritual master. In the summer of 1968, the devotees discovered that by going to the public parks and holding Hare Kṛṣṇa *kīrtana* they could attract a large number of persons and then sell them *Back to Godhead* magazines. As more devotees joined ISKCON and new centers opened, the prospects for Kṛṣṇa consciousness brightened, until in the early 1970s a great surge occurred, and by Kṛṣṇa's grace, the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement began to distribute Prabhupāda's books on a larger and larger scale.

Although my intention here is to present a part of the biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda, keeping ISKCON history in the background, ISKCON history is inextricably connected to Śrīla Prabhupāda's life. Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes said that he *was* ISKCON, and on one occasion he said he was "a member of ISKCON." I will, however, leave the more exhaustive account of ISKCON's early history to a future chronicler and will present here a condensed, concise account of how Kṛṣṇa conscious book distribution flourished under Śrīla Prabhupāda's direction in the early 1970s.

“Distribute Books, Distribute Books, Distribute Books!”

July 5, 1970
San Francisco

Srīla Prabhupāda was attending the 1970 Ratha-yātrā in San Francisco. The day was cold and windy, and about ten thousand people had gathered as Lord Jagannātha’s procession had proceeded through Golden Gate Park. Śrīla Prabhupāda had danced in the streets with thousands of participants during the parade, he had spoken to the crowd in a large auditorium by the beach, and he had seen his disciples distributing much *prasādam*, a free vegetarian feast, to thousands. But when a devotee arrived with advance copies of Volume I of *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, Śrīla Prabhupāda appeared especially pleased.

Surrounded by devotees and curious festival-goers, Śrīla Prabhupāda held one of the books, admiring the front cover, a full color picture of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The volume was big,

almost eight-and-a-half by eleven inches, and its silver dust jacket shone with large, bright red letters: “KṚṢṂA.” It was a transcendental wonder in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s reverent hands.

The people nearby could barely restrain themselves from pressing in against Śrīla Prabhupāda to peer over his shoulders and see the book. And they *didn’t* restrain their exclamations when Śrīla Prabhupāda smiled and opened the volume. He examined the paintings, the print, the paper, and the binding. “Very nice,” he said. He fixed his attention for a few moments on a page, reading. Then he looked up and announced that this greatly valuable book, *Kṛṣṇa*, had just arrived and that everyone should read it. Holding one book in his hand with the other copies stacked before him, he asked for anyone who so desired to come up and buy a copy.

The people went wild, pushing and shoving, and hands thrust forward with ten-dollar bills, while voices cried out, begging for one of the first copies of *Kṛṣṇa* from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda promptly sold every copy, not even retaining one for himself.

For the devotees, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s selling of the *Kṛṣṇa* book was the spectacular event of the 1970 Ratha-yātrā festival. They pored over the purchased books in groups, discussing Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes and the effect they would have on the people of America who had never heard of Kṛṣṇa. Brahmānanda told how Prabhupāda had given away the advance copy of the *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* in his room at 26 Second Avenue in New York City. Just before that book had arrived, Śrīla Prabhupāda had been sitting and talking with a disciple, Satyavrata, who had recently left Śrīla Prabhupāda’s association due to some petty quarreling with other devotees. When the *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* volume had arrived, Śrīla Prabhupāda had briefly, lovingly inspected it with great pleasure but then offered it to Satyavrata as a gift. Brahmānanda, who had been present, had been astounded that Śrīla Prabhupāda would

give his only copy of the book. Having helped Śrīla Prabhupāda publish the book, Brahmānanda knew how painstakingly Prabhupāda had written it and waited an anxious year for the printer to finally print it; and yet once it had arrived, Śrīla Prabhupāda had almost immediately given it away, and to a disciple who was not even in good standing. Satyavrata had taken the book, thanked Śrīla Prabhupāda, and left, never again to be seen at the temple.

Obviously Śrīla Prabhupāda was demonstrating that devotees of Kṛṣṇa should be very eager and merciful in distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious books. But in 1970 almost no one knew *how* to do it. Distributing a magazine and asking for a small donation was one thing—but a big, hardbound book? Śrīla Prabhupāda had done it, of course, but that was special—he was the author of the book and the spiritual master of the whole Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. And that had been half a dozen books. But when thousands of books would later arrive at the temples, what would the devotees do then? It would be just like the *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, now stored in scores of cartons in ISKCON centers around the country. The entire shipment of *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* had arrived in New York, and the devotees had hired a truck, picked them up at the docks, and unloaded them at 26 Second Avenue. Then they had shipped them out to ISKCON centers in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Montreal, and other places. Everywhere the devotees had the same question: “What do we do with them? How can we distribute so many expensive-looking hardbound books?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter to Kīrtirāja:

You say that you are too busy printing books so that you are unable to distribute them. So what is the use of printing if we are unable to distribute? There must be good programme for distribution also. So I think if you increase by placing emphasis on this point of distribution, then our this Krishna Consciousness movement will be strong on two

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sides instead of on one side of printing only, and then progress will be rapid.

Some devotees had tried placing ads in magazines and placing books on consignment in book stores. But these methods didn't sell books. How to sell big books remained a mystery.

Then in 1971 something significant happened, a kind of accidental discovery. One day while coming home from a chanting party in downtown San Francisco, two *brahmacārīs* stopped their car for a refill at a local gas station. They happened to have a few copies of the *Kṛṣṇa* book with them, and when the attendant came to get money for the gas, one of the devotees showed him the book. The attendant was interested, and both devotees began preaching the glories of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When they suggested he take the book as payment for the gas, he agreed.

Astonished at what had happened and inspired at their success, the two *brahmacārīs*, Buddhimanta and Premārṇava, went out the next day with several *Kṛṣṇa* books and stood in front of a grocery store. After a few hours it happened again; this time they sold two books. Keśava, the San Francisco temple president, phoned his G.B.C. supervisor, Karandhara, in Los Angeles and told him what had happened. Keśava described it as miraculous, and Karandhara encouraged him to make further experiments. The San Francisco devotees soon organized half a dozen men going door-to-door and showing the books to people in their homes. When Buddhimanta began selling as many as five in a day, the devotees in other temples, especially Los Angeles, San Diego, and Denver, began to follow his example. And whoever tried it—and sold a book—became caught up in a euphoric excitement.

A reader may become amused hearing these book-selling activities described in glowing terms, as if they were something highly unusual. Many a large business has started out small, and door-to-door book selling is not uncommon. Yet the experi-

ence and testimonies of devotees taking part in this book distribution describe a special taste, distinct from the happiness young men ordinarily might experience by stumbling upon a sales technique and finding themselves on the verge of making a lot of money. The difference between the excitement of starting an ordinary business and the taste of learning how to distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious books is that the devotees' book distribution is devotional service to Kṛṣṇa and can thus produce a transcendental ecstasy not possible even at the height of material happiness.

Ordinary business and Kṛṣṇa conscious book distribution are as different as material life is from spiritual life. If one attempts to observe spiritual life from the material point of view, he will be unable to understand it. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī described the academician's attempt to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness as an attempt to taste honey by licking the outside of the bottle. According to Rūpa Gosvāmī in *The Nectar of Devotion*, the special taste of happiness in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is that it is eternal. The taste of serving Kṛṣṇa is the original, eternal happiness of every living being; therefore, it alone brings complete satisfaction to the self.

The young men and women beginning to distribute books in America had seen and heard Śrīla Prabhupāda and read his books. They knew that he had saved them from hellish life by giving them Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and they wanted to work for his cause, which they understood to be Kṛṣṇa's cause. Śrīla Prabhupāda had inspired within them a desire to be devotees and to chant and hear about Kṛṣṇa. And when they learned of the qualities of a devotee, they understood that an advanced devotee is also a preacher. They wanted to follow Prabhupāda, and preach. It was ecstatic, and their happiness was spiritual.

By mid-1971, the temples were selling hundreds of *Kṛṣṇa* books a week. Karandhara, Prabhupāda's book fund manager, began sending *saṅkīrtana* newsletters to the North American

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temples and to Śrīla Prabhupāda. By listing the scores of each temple, the newsletter incited a transcendental competition. Karandhara's December 1971 newsletter summed up the mood of the year and encouraged the devotees to increase.

Recently, in an all out program to sell books, the San Francisco Temple has been averaging 20 Krishna Books per day distribution. What is their technique? Kesava Prabhu says, "Simply we make it our priority activity. All you have to do is want to do it and then try as hard as you can. Everywhere we go we carry BTGs and Krishna Books," he says, "on street SKP, door to door, to the laundromat, to the store, everywhere." We have been taxing our brains in so many fancy and complicated ways to try to increase sales, but as it has been experienced, nothing is more successful than simply taking the books personally in hand and going door to door with this Causeless Mercy. Just consider, how many hours a day do we spend specifically trying to distribute Srila Prabhupada's literature, which is the dearest thing to him?

The crowning touch to end the year's *saṅkīrtana*, however, came not from the newsletter, but from Prabhupāda himself who wrote to Keśava, the "king" of *Kṛṣṇa* book distribution.

I have been receiving so many reports about how my disciples from the San Francisco Temple cannot be surpassed by anyone in distributing my books. Sometimes they are selling as many as 70 Krishna Books daily. So if this is true then certainly when I return to the U.S. I must come and stay in your Temple. By distributing my books profusely you are giving me great encouragement to translate. And you are all helping me to fulfill the order which Guru Maharaj gave me. So I am so much grateful to you, and I am sure Krishna will bless you a million times over, for doing this work.

I hope that you and all my beloved disciples in San

Francisco Temple are in strong health and jolly mood.

Copies of this letter were soon sent to all the ISKCON centers. Prabhupāda had always given his blessings to all the devotees, but never had he said a devotee would get Kṛṣṇa's blessings a "million times over."

Śrīla Prabhupāda conveyed his desires to various disciples through letters. A letter was a direct instruction to an individual, and yet most of the time it was also universal in application. By exchanging letters with his temple leaders, Śrīla Prabhupāda made it clear that he wanted his disciples to make book distribution their top priority.

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

Śrīla Prabhupāda's ambition was to replace popular literature with transcendental literature. Everyone in the world should have at least one Kṛṣṇa conscious book, he reasoned, because if a person read only one page, his life could be changed towards perfection. "If one percent of the readers become devotees," Prabhupāda wrote, "that will change the world." Mail-order advertisers were satisfied if they got a five percent return from their mail-outs, while Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke of an even smaller percentage, one percent, whom he thought could actually become pure devotees in response to receiving a book. Lord Kṛṣṇa also confirmed this in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: "Out of many thousands among men, one may endeavor for perfection, and of those who have achieved perfection hardly one knows Me in truth." A plan to make the world Kṛṣṇa conscious, therefore, required very wide distribution.

Śrīla Prabhupāda always acted in terms of the *siddhānta*, the conclusion of Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy. And he wanted his disciples to also understand *why* they should distribute his books.

Who God is can be summed up in only five words—Krishna is the Supreme Controller. If you become convinced of this and preach it enthusiastically, success is assured, and you will be doing the greatest service for all living entities.

In November he wrote to Jayādvaīta:

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.

To Jagadīśa Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in December:

I am encouraged to see your report of books sold, because it proves that you consider it your responsibility to see that more and more people are reading our literature. Actually, this is the solid basis for our preaching work—no other movement has got such profuse authority for preaching, and if someone reads our Krishna conscious philosophy he becomes convinced.

Prabhupāda continued to insist that all the main Kṛṣṇa conscious programs be maintained, including Deity worship, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in public, and holding outside lectures; all preaching programs were important. But they should be accompanied by book distribution. To a *sannyāsī* whose main program was public lecturing, Prabhupāda wrote,

Distribute books, as many as possible. If anyone hears something philosophy from us, that will help him. But if he purchases one book that may turn his life. So selling books is the best preaching activity. Sell books, hold the

kirtana in public places like schools and colleges, preach.

And Prabhupāda repeated the same thing in a letter to Bhagavān dāsa, his G.B.C. secretary in France: “What will your three minutes preaching do?—but if they buy one book, it may turn their life.”

During this time, one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s newly initiated *sannyāsa* disciples concocted that the devotees should spend much more time reading. While passing through the New York temple, this *sannyāsī* openly advocated that devotees read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books five to eight hours daily. The temple was presently following a new schedule Śrīla Prabhupāda had set up, with devotees attending the morning program then going out all day for street chanting and book distribution, to return in the evening for a class. A controversy arose, and an urgent phone call was placed to Śrīla Prabhupāda in Los Angeles. When Prabhupāda heard from his secretary what was going on, he immediately responded.

My reply is that this *saṅkīrtana* or street chanting must go on, it is our most important program. Lord Caitanya’s movement means the *saṅkīrtana* movement. You may simply take two hours for chanting sixteen rounds daily, two hours for reading congregationally, and balance of time go out for *saṅkīrtana*. We must do both, reading books and distributing books, but distributing books is the main propaganda. 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 *Bhāgavata* class and one hour evening, either *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Nectar of Devotion*, that is sufficient.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had already given these guidelines, and he was unhappy that one of his disciples was concocting something new. He wanted the standard he had given to be maintained.

January 1972

“You should always think of new outlets for distributing my books,” Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Jagadīśa. And the devotees soon found new outlets—shopping centers, malls, and parking lots—where they met even more people. By entering the malls they plunged into the heart of American society, meeting pious and impious, rich and poor, black and white, coarse and sensitive. Selling books was difficult, but the devotees stayed at it, carrying their heavy books bags and distributing the literature they knew to be the remedy for all ills.

Seeing through the eyes of the scriptures, the devotees saw the crowds of shoppers as so many walking victims, people living almost exclusively for sensual and mental pleasure and, therefore, doomed to an inauspicious death. Any serious devotee could philosophically explain the predicament of the materialists, as described in *Bhagavad-gītā*. And now the devotees could also experience this plight with their heart’s conviction; and by Prabhupāda’s mercy, they were there to deliver compassionate knowledge of life beyond the body.

Next, the devotees discovered the benefits of traveling from town to town. Some of the *brahmacārīs* in Los Angeles had been feeling that by staying in the temple they were wasting time they could be using for book distribution. So they got permission to fill a van with *Kṛṣṇa* books and go to an area where they would camp for a week, live a simpler life, and distribute books as many hours a day as possible. This traveling *saṅkīrtana* produced another significant increase, since it created an exclusive environment wherein the men became absorbed in their service without any distractions. Quickly the new program spread throughout the ISKCON world, and Śrīla Prabhupāda liked it.

I am very glad to hear from you the wonderful news of travelling party in England. I think the people of that place are becoming more and more inclined for this Krishna Consciousness movement, they are inviting you to stay at

their houses, they are taking books, becoming sometimes devotees—all of these are very encouraging signs to me. If you simply go on in this way, stopping in every village and city in England-Scotland, or if there are other places like Ireland, simply stop for some time, distribute books and hold Sankirtan procession, answer their questions, give some leaflets or small informations freely, distribute prasadam wherever possible, at least some small thing, and if there is some genuine interest being shown, then request the townspeople to arrange some engagements for speaking in their schools, or in someone's home, or a hall, like that. In this way remain always without anxiety for destination and comfortable situations, always relying only on the mercy of Krishna for your plan, just go on preaching His message and selling His books, wherever there is interest. We shall not waste time if there is no interest or if people are unfriendly, there are so many places to go.

Śrīla Prabhupāda began saying that opening new centers was less important, now that the traveling parties were combing the country. When he heard that the temple president in Vancouver had acquired a bus for traveling, he wrote:

I think we are becoming like a gigantic guerilla warfare movement fighting with maya. This travelling in buses is the best means to drive away maya and establish Krishna Consciousness all over the world.

Prabhupāda was glad to hear that temple presidents and zonal leaders were also going out with the traveling *saṅkīrtana*. He said that the Vedic concept of the commander is that he must be in the front of the fight, not that he should sit back behind the lines. Having already witnessed how some of his leading disciples had become bogged down by managing many things, he advised them all to travel and preach, distributing literature wherever they went.

Practically, this ISKCON organization is there because I

have been always travelling. I never sat down in my old age, no. So you follow my example and preach widely all over the world, that is Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's version.

When a devotee in California wrote Śrīla Prabhupāda, asking if he could give up his married life and go on traveling *saṅkīrtana*, Prabhupāda replied that it was not necessary to give up householder life to travel and preach. Lord Caitanya had taught that whether one is a *sannyāsī* or a *gṛhastha* does not matter as long as one fully serves Kṛṣṇa. A householder could also sometimes travel and distribute books, with or without his wife.

Near the end of 1972, the BBT newsletter, now compiled by Karandhara's assistant, Rāmeśvara, churned up enthusiasm by reporting the ever-increasing results of book distribution.

Book Distribution continues soaring to all-time highs, as more than 25 travelling SKP Parties roam the countryside, affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands of conditioned souls! Since mid-September we have distributed over 15,000 complete KRSNA TRILOGY SETS! And since mid-August we have distributed over 9000 SOFT BHAGAVAD-GITAS & over 950 HARD BHAGAVAD-GITAS. MacMillan too has completely sold out (20,000 GITAS sold commercially) and is reprinting large quantities for the Christmas rush!

Another new breakthrough for book distribution came at the end of 1972. The previous year devotees had taken advantage of the Christmas season by selling the *Kṛṣṇa* book door-to-door, but no one had been aware just how significant the Christmas season could actually be. In the 1971 Christmas season, therefore, the book distribution had increased by only about twenty percent. But by December of 1972 the devotees had built up a great excitement for distributing as many books as possible.

Rāmeśvara: *It was on December 22, 1972, that we acciden-*

tally discovered the Christmas marathon in Los Angeles. We noticed a great increase in the number of people going into the stores, and the stores were staying open sometimes until midnight. I was standing in front of this Burbank Zody's. We were having an intense competition and prizes in Los Angeles, and it was building up to a feverish pitch.

So after distributing madly all day long, it was about ten o'clock at night. I had collected about \$350 and had distributed 650 magazines. I was convinced this was the new world's record in ISKCON and nobody was possibly going to beat me this day. Even though the store was still open until twelve, it had started slowing off, and I was thinking, "Maybe I should go back. Undoubtedly everyone is back already. No one has ever stayed out past eight o'clock. They'll all be waiting up for me. I shouldn't keep them waiting up." So in this way my mind was convincing me to go back.

By eleven o'clock the store was completely dead. I got in the car and started driving back. On the way back I passed another Zody's called Hollywood Zody's on Sunset and Western. I was torn whether to stop or not, because that store was crowded and it was going to be open until midnight. But I decided, "No, I'll go back because I'll be the champion, and that way I can let everyone know it." So I just kept on driving.

I finally arrived at the temple at about ten minutes to twelve, and I burst into the saṅkīrtana room. But the only person there was the secretary, Madhukaṅṭha. I said, "Oh, no, everyone went to bed?" He said, "No, nobody is back yet." I was the first one back! That was the discovery of the first Christmas marathon. It was completely unplanned. No one had ever instructed anyone to stay out that late. We just did it spontaneously.

Finally at about one-thirty in the morning all the devotees had returned, and we were sitting around looking at the saṅkīrtana map. We couldn't sleep, we were so agitated to go out. We were thinking, "Where can we find plenty of conditioned souls?"

Our noise and raucous laughter was like a drunken party, which finally woke up Karandhara, who was sleeping in his office in the next room. He came stumbling in, wiping the sleep from his eyes, but when he saw us and saw what was going on, he burst out laughing and sent us all to bed, saying, "Get ready for tomorrow." So in this way we performed the three-day marathon, the twenty-second, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth of December.

No one had ever distributed as many books before in the history of our movement. A big day had been considered to be somewhere between twenty-five and forty books. But we were distributing between five thousand and six thousand pieces of literature a day for a three-day period. One temple had distributed almost eighteen thousand pieces of literature in just three days.

At this time Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Bombay, residing at the home of a life member, Mr. Kartikeya Mahadevia. Śrīla Prabhupāda's attempts to secure the land at Juhu Beach had become entangling. The landlord was now refusing to sell the property and was trying to evict the devotees, even though Śrīla Prabhupāda had already installed Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities on the land. These matters were causing Śrīla Prabhupāda anxiety. He could not tolerate the thought of giving up the land and asking Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to move away.

Śrīla Prabhupāda continued his usual daily duties receiving news from his centers around the world. He went on morning walks and lectured in the evening from *The Nectar of Devotion*. Along with his devotees in India, he was also organizing a *paṇḍāl* festival to be held in Bombay in January.

Then Prabhupāda received news of the book distribution in Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States, and he was very pleased, and amazed. Although dealing with many affairs from all around the world, he put them aside and relished the

overwhelming victory of book distribution in America. Immediately, he called in his personal secretary and dictated letters.

My dear Ramesvar,

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated December 27, 1972, and with great happiness I have read your figures of amount of books sold during three-day period, December 22-24, 1972. It is scarcely believable that more than 17,000 books could have been sold by one temple in three days! That indicates to me that people are at last becoming little serious about this Krsna Consciousness movement in your country. Otherwise, why they should buy our books? But they can see that our boys and girls, devotees, are so much sincere and serious to distribute the message of Krsna consciousness, they are at once struck by seeing them and therefore they appreciate and purchase. This is unique in the world. . . . So I am so much pleased upon all of the boys and girls in Los Angeles and all over the world who are understanding and appreciating this unique quality of our transcendental literature and voluntarily they are going out to distribute despite all circumstances of difficulty. By this effort alone they are assured to go back to home, back to Godhead.

On the same day Prabhupāda dictated a letter to Karandhara:

I could never have thought it was possible to distribute so many of our literatures. Therefore I can understand it is simply Krsna's blessing us for your sincerely working on His behalf. Actually, that is the secret of my success, not that personally I have done anything wonderful, but that because those who are helping me are sincere, they have done the work, that is the reason for our success all over the world where others have failed. A little sincerity is very difficult thing in this age of hypocrisy and bluff, but I am so fortunate that Krsna has sent me all of you nice boys

and girls who are sincerely working. Please convey to all of them my deepest appreciation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters acknowledging the Christmas marathon and assuring the devotees that they would go back to Godhead, sent the book distribution movement flying into the new year with great momentum. Devotees continued to find new places to distribute books. Yesterday's high results were always being toppled by new records, while still higher projections were made for the future. It was a time of unbounded possibility, freedom, and ecstasy. Those who took part felt themselves very fortunate.

In his February 1973 newsletter, Rāmeśvara published a letter from a person who had read a book by Śrīla Prabhupāda. ISKCON's mail-order office was receiving hundreds of letters a month and this one was typical.

Sir:

A couple of weeks ago, devotees of Krishna (from Denver, I understand) were here at the University of Arkansas distributing literature. One young man approached me, with a "hard pitch" for my purchasing a copy of the Prabhupada translation of the Bhagavad-gita; I was initially quite skeptical (so many people are getting rich from selling their versions of "the answer") and told him to not bother me. He insisted, though, and I finally gave in.

I have been reading the Gita, having not finished it yet, and have found it quite rewarding; my mind, shaped in logic and empiricism, seems to find itself barely tasting the transcendental material in the book; I discuss it with others; I find myself remembering certain passages. . . .

It has genuinely stimulated my interest, to say the least, in a way that my quite un-extensive readings in Christianity, Zen Buddhism, the "lower" forms of yoga, etc. have never succeeded in doing.

In short, I *think* I have finally found the beginning.

Rāmeśvara went on to beat the drum of *saṅkīrtana*.

Actually no one can properly measure the effect of our book distribution. If it was known how many books we distribute each month we would be listed on every best-seller list in the country! For example, as many of you know, already the new GITA has outsold any other edition of the GITA ever printed. The MacMillan Company has already sold tens of thousands of copies, while we have sold over 27,000 copies ourselves since they first appeared last August.

With increased monies coming into the book fund, Śrīla Prabhupāda had approved his trustees' decision to print more and more books and to make them available in a warehouse for mass distribution throughout the year. Yet even with a warehouse, keeping up with the demands of the distributors was difficult. Small, easy-to-sell books by Śrīla Prabhupāda—*Beyond Birth and Death*, *On the Way to Kṛṣṇa*, *Rāja-Vidyā*—were printed in the tens of thousands. Distributors would go out carrying a variety of books in their book bags: *Kṛṣṇa*, *The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, as well as an assortment of small books, *Back to Godhead* magazines, and some very inexpensive booklets, like *Kṛṣṇa, the Reservoir of Pleasure* and *On Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa*.

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Tripurāri was living with his wife in Santa Cruz, California. After attending a Lord Caitanya festival in Berkeley where he chanted all day, and after reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Bhagavad-gītā*, he decided he wanted to become a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he began trying to convince his wife and friends. Then a traveling party of *brahmacārīs* came to start a center in Santa Cruz. Tripurāri told them he wanted to join. At first they weren't sure he really meant it, but when one day Tripurāri showed up

with a shaved head and *dhotī*, the devotees realized he was sincere.

Tripurāri: I began going out every day with the chanting party. Then gradually I began to break away from the kīrtana party to sell small books in shopping centers. One day I came back, and one of the brahmacārīs, Sārvabhauma, criticized me. He asked me how many big books I had sold. I said, "I didn't sell any." He said, "How many did you bring with you?" I said, "I didn't have any to bring with me." "Then you're in māyā," he said. "You didn't bring any big books? How do you expect to sell them? Prabhupāda wants these big books sold." So I thought to myself, "Gee, I must be in māyā." I said, "How do you sell these books?" He said, "You pray to Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda gives you the mercy." So I thought, "Well, that makes sense. That's how everything works in Kṛṣṇa consciousness."

I went to my house. I thought about it and prayed to Prabhupāda that I could sell these big books. I prayed all evening and then took rest. In the morning I got up, and it was on my mind, so I put out one big book, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, in my bag of small books. But in the course of selling the small books, I forgot about the big book.

Suddenly a lady came up to me and said, "What is that big book you have there?" Then I remembered Prabhupāda and my prayers, and I said, "This is the Teachings of Lord Caitanya." I gave her the book, and she gave me three dollars. When I got back to the temple, I told the devotees how Prabhupāda had sold a book.

Praghoṣa: I was coming regularly to the Detroit temple for classes in the evening, and I was doing some odd work to help the devotees prepare the temple. Every night I would be painting, and I would watch the devotees coming back from saṅkīrtana. They seemed very ecstatic and enlivened, and I was always a little curious about what they did out there that made them

come back like this. I would be up on my ladder, painting and listening to them talk as they sat on the floor drinking milk. They would talk about how they had knocked on one man's door and this had happened and then that had happened—it was very attractive to me.

After I moved into the temple and had been a devotee about a week, someone asked me if I would like to go out and try distributing books. So I went out wearing a dhotī and tilaka and using a straightforward presentation, walking up to people, giving them a card and a book, telling them about the contents of the book, showing them Prabhupāda's picture, and asking for a donation. The exhilaration I got from that was just incredible. It became extremely blissful to go out and do this. None of us could actually put our finger on why it was so ecstatic.

We used to lie awake at night. All the brahmacārīs stayed in one big room, and we would lie there on the floor, whispering to each other: "What did you say to the people out there?" There would be all these different conversations going on in the room at night with the lights out and everyone talking, trying to relate how we were presenting Prabhupāda's books.

Jagad-dhātrī-devī dāsī: My first service was cleaning the temple. I was cleaning the whole temple. I would be looking out the window at the men piling into the vans getting ready for saṅkīrtana, and I would always think that I would really like to be doing that. Finally our temple formed two traveling parties, one of men and one of women, and went for the summer to distribute books in the fairs of Washington state. The men and the ladies used to have competition to see who could distribute the most.

Sura dāsa: I joined Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Seattle in 1973, and they sent me out on book distribution my first day. We would always hear from Los Angeles about the letters Prabhupāda was sending. Everything we heard was centered on Prabhupāda's desire for his books to be distributed. It was by hearing this

that newer devotees wanted to go out and be part of the saṅkīrtana party. We wanted to be soldiers for Prabhupāda's book distribution army.

We went to the Spokane Fair, and the leader of the Spokane center wrote a letter to Śrīla Prabhupāda requesting him to come and telling him the results of our book distribution. Then we received a reply from Prabhupāda saying that he couldn't make it but that the devotees should go to the fair and preach on his behalf. "Fulfill my mission," Prabhupāda said, "that every man and woman in the United States gets a book."

That was just what we were waiting for—to get an order directly from Śrīla Prabhupāda that this was what pleases him. Our book distribution kept increasing, and we just thought we'd never had so much fun before. It wasn't like austerity. Some of the devotees were thinking, "Well, it's really hard to go on saṅkīrtana." We were thinking, "You must be nuts! It's the most fun thing you can do to go on saṅkīrtana and sell books." It was fun, not for sense gratification but for the soul, because of our being linked in service to the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. I appreciated it in that way, and when I first met Praghoṣa I could see he was really dedicated and a true lover of Prabhupāda because he was so dedicated to pleasing Prabhupāda by distributing books.

Praghoṣa: We were distributing in Santa Barbara, California. The area had been worked many times before, and the people were really puffed-up. I went there with Premārṇava and Vyāsātīrtha. One day, after trying to distribute for about seven hours, I had only sold one book. I had never before had anything like that happen to me in my whole time as a devotee. I was really working. I never stopped. At one particular point I just couldn't take it any more. I tried to give a book to someone, and they just cracked off to me in a really obnoxious way. I had so much desire, I was trying so hard, that when he did this it just devastated me. I just wanted to punch the guy in the nose.

All my intensity came out, and I erupted into tears. I just sat down on an old telephone pole that was lying on the street and started to cry.

Then this devotee, Premārṇava, walked up and found me sitting there like I had just lost my best friend. He said, "Prabhu, what's the matter?" I said, "I don't know what's the matter. I just can't distribute one book. Not one person will take a book. I've been out here for seven hours. Do you know how many books I've distributed? One book." Then he sat down and preached to me and put me back together.

The next day I was really trying to have a better day, and I took my book bag and just ran from one person to another all morning. Then I was showing a book to a girl, and she said she couldn't pay me with money but that she would gladly pay me. I was young and naive, and I didn't know exactly what she was talking about for a minute. Then finally when I realized I called, "Hare Kṛṣṇa!" and took the book back from her, took off my wig, and just bolted to another parking lot. I ran from person to person all day, praying real hard to Kṛṣṇa. By the end of the day I had distributed quite a large number of books.

Lavaṅga-latikā-devī dāsī: When I first came to Los Angeles Śrīmatī told me Śrīla Prabhupāda had said that being in the temple all the time was māyā. Prabhupāda wanted us to go out and distribute BTG's door-to-door. I learned from the other devotees how to distribute books. There were so many talented devotees who knew how, so I just followed in their footsteps. I would say what they'd say and do what they'd do. Then it became easy. When a person took a book and gave a donation, I could see it was Lord Caitanya acting. I could see it was all working under the direction of Kṛṣṇa's internal energy.

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Tripurāri had moved from Santa Cruz to Los Angeles, and by associating with devotees like Rāmeśvara and other book

distributors, he quickly developed into a leader. Every day he would go to a supermarket parking lot near the temple and sell a couple hundred copies of *Easy Journey to Other Planets*.

One evening he and a few other book distributors attended a lecture at the University of California at Long Beach given by a popular yoga leader.

Rāmeśvara: *I remember when they came back. It was the middle of Bhagavad-gītā class. I was giving the class in the temple room, and all of a sudden the door burst open, and they were standing there. Tripurāri was in his street clothes, and the girls were in their sārīs. They just ran into the temple. You could see that something very special had taken place, because their faces were glowing. They couldn't even speak. They were dazed or stunned. The whole temple was anxious to hear the news, so I quickly finished the class. Then Tripurāri told us that he had just distributed seventeen Bhagavad-gītās—the full, hard-bound, unabridged Bhagavad-gītās—in two hours. Līlā-śakti had distributed thirteen, Vṛndāvana had distributed eleven, Tilaka had distributed eleven, and Makhanlāl had distributed nine. Nothing like this had ever been done before. We were just astonished that anyone could sell so many big books like that.*

Shortly after successfully selling so many *Bhagavad-gītās*, Tripurāri was driving down the San Diego freeway in his car to go on traveling *saṅkīrtana* when he saw the sign for the Los Angeles airport and decided on the spur of the moment to try it. He sold a dozen big books that day and realized that the airport was a wonderful facility for book distribution. He started going out regularly to the airport and was soon distributing thirty to forty books a day, sometimes giving a single person six volumes of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* at once.

In April Śrīla Prabhupāda flew from New York to Los Angeles, and a crowd of loving devotees greeted him.

Tripurāri: *Prabhupāda was arriving at two in the afternoon, and all the devotees were going to meet him. But it was also*

Easter weekend and a big day for book distribution at the airport. At that time I was the only one working the airport. I was doing rather well and had sold about thirty books by one-thirty. Then I changed into my dhotī and walked over to the arrivals area to meet His Divine Grace. When he entered the terminal building, he looked at me and smiled, and I melted in ecstasy.

We had kīrtana all the way down the stairs, and when we got outside, all the devotees were going back to the temple. Then I thought, "What business do I have going back to the temple and chanting with all the devotees? My business is to stay out and distribute the books. That is my service to Prabhupāda." So I was the only one who didn't go back to the temple. I stayed and distributed sixty-seven books. When I got back, I found that Karandhara had told Prabhupāda about me and how I had been distributing books. When I heard that, I became very enthusiastic and continued going out every day that week.

In Los Angeles Śrīla Prabhupāda went for morning walks, either at the shore of the Pacific Ocean or in Cheviot Hills Park. Every day a few disciples would join him, especially Svarūpa Dāmodara, a Ph.D. candidate in organic chemistry at the University of California. Śrīla Prabhupāda would regularly discuss with Svarūpa Dāmodara about the scientific theory of life originating from matter. Day after day Prabhupāda would show how Darwin's theory was foolish and unscientific.

The sun would be just rising on the horizon as Prabhupāda and a small group of disciples walked. The air would be chilly, and Śrīla Prabhupāda would wear his saffron overcoat with hood, while his disciples, wearing sweaters or wrapped in *cādars*, followed him, listening or raising questions.

Most of the conversation, however, would be between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Svarūpa Dāmodara, who played the role of a scientist and, at Śrīla Prabhupāda's request, supplied the atheistic arguments, which Śrīla Prabhupāda would defeat with

scripture and logic. “I say to the scientists,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “if life originated from chemicals, and if your science is so advanced, then why can’t you create life biochemically in your laboratories?”

Rāmeśvara and Tripurāri were relatively new devotees, although their *saṅkīrtana* activities were well-known throughout ISKCON. Rāmeśvara had also received his first letter from Śrīla Prabhupāda at the end of the 1972 Christmas marathon—the letter in which Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “By this effort they (the book distributors) are assured to go back to home, back to Godhead.” And yet as bold as Rāmeśvara and Tripurāri were among the nondevotees, they were shy before their spiritual master.

It was on one of these morning walks that the older devotees introduced Rāmeśvara to Prabhupāda. At the devotees’ request Rāmeśvara began telling Śrīla Prabhupāda accounts of what was happening when devotees went out to distribute books. Rāmeśvara mentioned that sometimes they met impersonalists and convinced them to buy a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Śrīla Prabhupāda turned gravely, stopped, and looked at Rāmeśvara. “What do you say to them?” he asked.

Rāmeśvara told Prabhupāda some of his techniques for selling a book. “Is that all you say to them?” Prabhupāda asked.

“Well, yes,” Rāmeśvara replied. “Because we want to as quickly as possible say something, so we can distribute as many books as possible. We just say a little bit to get them to take the book.”

Prabhupāda cut him short and said, “Don’t you know my books? Don’t you know how to preach?” The atmosphere became tense. “Do you attend classes?” Prabhupāda continued. “Do you read my books?” Rāmeśvara replied that he attended all the classes very faithfully and that he was regularly studying the books. Prabhupāda then replied, “Do you know this verse?” and he quoted a Sanskrit verse. The MacMillan

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is with Sanskrit had been published only one year before, and very few devotees in the movement knew the Sanskrit verses. Rāmeśvara didn't know the verse. Prabhupāda became silent and continued walking. After a few moments he said, "Our men need to study our books." Rāmeśvara understood his exchange with Śrīla Prabhupāda to be special mercy and walked on with the others, feeling terrified and humbled in the presence of his spiritual master.

Another morning Tripurāri got a chance to go on the morning walk. On that particular morning Prabhupāda was very quiet, walking up and down the beach. Only when it was time to return and Prabhupāda was walking towards his car did one of the devotees mention, "Śrīla Prabhupāda, Tripurāri is here."

Prabhupāda turned to Tripurāri and smiled. "Ah. How is the book distribution going?" he asked. It was the first time he had ever spoken to Tripurāri.

Tripurāri loved *saṅkīrtana* and Śrīla Prabhupāda, and he wanted to say many things at once, but he couldn't speak properly. In nervous enthusiasm he began blurting out his realizations. Prabhupāda interrupted him. "This is the best service for humanity." And he quoted from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, "There will never be a devotee more dear to Me than he who preaches this message."

Aside from Rāmeśvara's and Tripurāri's brief encounters with Prabhupāda, none of the other book distributors in Los Angeles had any personal exchanges or meetings with their spiritual master. But the closeness of their relationship with him was not dependent on personal exchanges or physical proximity. The scriptures stress that serving the spiritual master's instructions is the important thing. The spiritual master is not always physically with the disciple, but he remains always with his disciples in the form of his instructions. The book distributors had heard many times from Prabhupāda's lectures, books, and conversations that book distribution was the prime order he had

received from *his* spiritual master. Therefore, anyone who helped Śrīla Prabhupāda distribute Kṛṣṇa conscious books was a confidential servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. An intimate relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda was guaranteed to whoever sincerely took up his order.

Tripurāri: My association with Śrīla Prabhupāda was always more or less in separation and in the field. While many of the older devotees were trained personally by Prabhupāda, I never got that training. I was trained by Śrīla Prabhupāda more from within my own heart. I think that's the case with all of our book distributors. They have a very intimate sense of feeling for Prabhupāda, but they never had much personal contact. Their intimacy and real sense of knowing Prabhupāda very closely was because of that service which Prabhupāda said was his life and soul—seeing that the books went out. What little association I had, I was to serve as a spokesman for the book distributors.

Śrīla Prabhupāda liked to sit in his garden, with its roses, jasmine, azaleas, honeysuckle, mint, silver lace vine, marigolds, and banana trees. He liked the sound of the fountain. It was a small compound with high cinder block walls, a lawn, flowers, bushes, and a seat for Śrīla Prabhupāda. If he had special guests, the devotees would bring chairs for them, otherwise Prabhupāda's disciples would sit on thin mats on the lawn and look up at Śrīla Prabhupāda. The neighborhood was quieter and more peaceful in the evening, and Prabhupāda could hear the *kīrtana* in the temple and cars passing along Venice Boulevard. Men's shouts from the nearby karate school were the only disturbance, and that he had also come to tolerate.

Prabhupāda would sit for an hour or so, listening as a devotee read from *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, while a few others sat around on the grass, sharing the transcendental moment with him. Prabhupāda was fully satisfied

to hear Kṛṣṇa *līlā*, and he would sit erect, head held high, in a meditative mood. It was only an informal group, but his presence made the occasion very special, momentous. Hearing *Kṛṣṇa* book was not a trifling thing, especially in the presence of Kṛṣṇa's pure devotee. From time to time he would interrupt the reading and comment. Night would fall, and Prabhupāda would end the reading and leave the garden, walking on the gravel path past the main temple building and up to his second floor suite.

Śrīla Prabhupāda so much liked his Los Angeles garden that he decided he wanted one like it at his Māyāpur headquarters.

With regard to the Mayapur house I may suggest you make one roof garden. On the top of the house you can put soil of six inches and then plant so many tulasi plants and nice bushes. I like the garden very much. Just like here in Los Angeles temple they have made one very nice garden for me and I sit there every evening. So you please also make a first-class Mayapur garden.

At about ten in the evening Śrīla Prabhupāda usually took rest. He would go into his bedroom and lie down, and his servant, Śrutakīrti, would massage his legs. He would then close his eyes.

Each evening while Śrīla Prabhupāda was being massaged Rāmeśvara would wait at the bottom of the stairs, hoping that the secretary or servant would come down after the massage with a message from Prabhupāda. By about ten P.M. each day all the book distributors had returned to the temple, and Rāmeśvara had gathered all their totals and typed a *saṅkīrtana* report for Śrīla Prabhupāda. The report would usually begin with a quote from the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and then list the names of the *saṅkīrtana* devotees and their totals. The report would end with a prayer to Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa to allow the devotees to always continue performing *saṅkīrtana*.

Rāmeśvara: *I was too afraid to go into Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, so I would be waiting at the bottom of the stairs, just hanging there, just waiting for one word. Śrīla Prabhupāda would often say something, and it would be passed to me. Then every morning the saṅkīrtana devotees would just surround me and ask, "What did he say?" They would be begging for some nectar. It was an intense experience. We felt that we were all having a special direct connection with Prabhupāda.*

While waiting outside Prabhupāda's door, I would be in transcendental bliss just thinking how we were distributing books as an offering of pure love for our spiritual master. This was the first time that devotees were going to airports. No one else in the movement was going to an airport except the devotees in Los Angeles, so it was something very special. No one was doing big books in the quantity that we were.

At one point, when Śrīla Prabhupāda saw one of my daily reports, he commented, "Who is Rāmeśvara?" Śrīla Prabhupāda was seeing these ecstatic letters coming day after day, sprinkled with nectarean quotes from his Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā chapter that had just been published. He realized that these disciples were in ecstasy, and so he asked, "Who are they?" He could see we loved saṅkīrtana. It was not an artificial burden or that we were struggling. He could see that there didn't seem to be any struggle. It was like fun, bliss, ecstasy. And the whole philosophy was there. We were completely tuning into the Caitanya-caritāmṛta philosophy that Lord Caitanya descends with His confidential associates to spread love of God but doesn't discriminate who is a fit candidate and who is not. These were the verses we were putting into the daily letter. This was our mood, and Prabhupāda loved it.

From Śrutakīrti's point of view, as Śrīla Prabhupāda's servant, the evening massage was a very special time, because Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed free of the day's pressure of management. Prabhupāda would ask him to bring three or five night-blooming

jasmine flowers from the garden, and Prabhupāda would place the fragrant blossoms near his nose during the massage. He would be even quieter and more relaxed than during the *Kṛṣṇa* book reading. There was no business to attend to. He had done a hard day's work and would be rising again after only three hours' rest. But now he lay back, enwrapped in thought or chanting softly.

Some evenings Śrīla Prabhupāda would delay the massage and pace back and forth in his bedroom, chanting on his beads, or he would sit up in bed and chant. But most nights he would lie on his back while Śrutakīrti massaged his legs. If Prabhupāda conversed with his servant at all, it wouldn't be about ISKCON management. He might look at a picture on the wall and say, "How beautiful Kṛṣṇa is! How could someone not be attracted to Kṛṣṇa?" Or sometimes he would talk about his childhood and other informal topics. But even at this relaxed time, he relished hearing the *saṅkīrtana* results, and so he would sometimes read Rāmeśvara's report or simply say something about preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Prabhupāda's servants would faithfully report on all these things to the others.

One night, after reading Rāmeśvara's ecstatic daily *saṅkīrtana* report, Prabhupāda felt moved to write a message on the back of the report. Dating the paper April 20, 1973, he wrote:

My dear boys and girls, you are working so hard for broadcasting the glories of Lord Krishna's lotus feet, and thus my Guru Maharaj will be so pleased upon you. Certainly my Guru Maharaj will bestow his blessings thousand times more than me and that is my satisfaction. All Glories to the assembled devotees.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

N.B. Everyone should go with the Sankirtan Party as soon as possible.

Rāmeśvara may have been shy while quietly waiting at the

bottom of the stairs for the slightest recognition from Śrīla Prabhupāda, but when he received the prize jewel of this handwritten note, he ran off, shouting to share the good fortune with any devotee who was still awake.

Tripurāri: Every morning after maṅgala-ārati there was always a little group clustered around the door of the temple, because you weren't supposed to talk in the temple while chanting japa early in the morning. So Rāmeśvara was standing at the doorway chanting, and he called us over, until a little cluster of devotees were there at the doorway. He showed us Prabhupāda's note. Some of the other devotees got frustrated, seeing that we were talking during the japa period. They felt we were a distraction or that we weren't absorbed in our service or japa. But actually we were really intensely absorbed in thinking of saṅkīrtana, and when we returned to our japa, we began chanting with the desire to be able to go out and please Prabhupāda.

It was only a matter of days before Prabhupāda's words—"Everyone should go with the Sankirtan Party as soon as possible"—reached the other temples. Soon Śrīla Prabhupāda left Los Angeles, returning to India. But his message stayed and deepened the devotees' convictions.

* * *

A letter from a girl who had just read Prabhupāda's books appeared in the July BBT newsletter. The letter was written on TWA in-flight stationery.

In the S.F. airport before I departed for London the Krsna book was given to me by one of your followers. . .

I never felt so happy + privileged, or honored would be a better phrase . . .

I am sick of this material rat race. I want a higher life without material riches and games.

On her way back from London she had purchased another book,

Rāja-Vidyā, in the Chicago airport and now asked for more help. "It is beautiful," she concluded.

In the summer of 1973 the devotees found they could distribute hundreds of *Kṛṣṇa* books in a few hours at concerts. The *Kṛṣṇa* book, available now as a paperback trilogy with a foreword by George Harrison, was especially attractive to young people. In July Rāmeśvara wrote to Prabhupāda in London telling him that Los Angeles alone was distributing two thousand *Kṛṣṇa* books a week and that at one concert devotees had distributed six hundred volumes. The devotees decided that Tripurāri and a few other leading *saṅkīrtana* men should travel from temple to temple and share their experience. Rāmeśvara wrote to Prabhupāda, "This is the mercy of Sri Sri Rukmini-Dvarakadisa (the worshipable Deities of the L.A. temple) that we can send out so many devotees to other centers. It is the real opulence of New Dvaraka." Śrīla Prabhupāda replied on August 3.

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. Just like during war time the Bombs are raining from the sky like anything....

I like also your programme of sending out your best men to teach the others. That is the actual progress of Krishna Consciousness, to train others. Continue this programme so that in the future every devotee in our movement will know the art of distributing books. This is approved by me.

As Tripurāri traveled and introduced *saṅkīrtana*, more devotees followed his example and began going out wearing a wig and conventional shirt and pants. This made relating to

people much easier, and it increased the potential for distributing books. Some devotees, however, thought it shouldn't be done.

One day in September 1973, while Śrīla Prabhupāda was taking a morning walk on the beach in Bombay, a few of his *sannyāsī* disciples brought the matter before him. As usual, many respectable gentlemen were walking on Juhu Beach, and as they passed the devotees, the gentlemen would offer their respects and say, "Hare Kṛṣṇa." Śrīla Prabhupāda commented that this was the sign of a real Vaiṣṇava: anyone who sees him immediately thinks of Kṛṣṇa. The devotees, therefore, must prominently display all the Vaiṣṇava markings such as *tilaka*, *śikhā*, and neck beads so that people know, "Here are Hare Kṛṣṇa people." One of the *sannyāsīs* remarked that in America devotees were now wearing long hair wigs and dressing like hippies for the purpose of book distribution. The *sannyāsī* said that he did not let his men do this because he felt it was self-defeating; people wouldn't even know they were speaking to a devotee. When someone wants to distribute books, he said, Kṛṣṇa would help the devotee find a place where he can distribute without having to disguise himself.

Śrīla Prabhupāda turned to the others and asked their opinions. One devotee suggested that the reason the devotees in America wore "disguises" was because in many places they were not permitted to distribute books in devotee clothes. Prabhupāda heard the opinions and then gave his decision: this disguising should be stopped immediately. "We shall not in any way sacrifice our standards," Prabhupāda said. "We must maintain our principles strictly. This dressing with long hair and *karmī* clothes is the tendency to once again become hippies. Because you were hippies, that tendency is still there. So this should be stopped."

Walking back toward the temple, Prabhupāda saw a poor man evacuating by the roadside in public view. "He is not changing his standard despite public opinion," Prabhupāda remarked.

“We cannot maintain our standards as strictly as they are maintaining theirs?”

A letter was drafted and signed by Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, the G.B.C., and Prabhupāda signed also, on a line marked “approved.” The letter stated that all traveling and temple *saṅkīrtana* parties should always wear *tilaka*, *dhotīs*, neck beads, and *śikhā*, and depend on Kṛṣṇa rather than disguises to help distribute books. At the bottom of the letter, however, was a P.S., “Śrīla Prabhupāda, upon checking the above added, ‘If they like they may wear coat and pants....But tilok, sika, beads—these things should be there.’”

Śrīla Prabhupāda had previously addressed this subject in various letters. When Jagadīśa from Canada had asked the same question, Prabhupāda had replied that there was no objection to wearing Western clothes, including a wig or hat. “We have to take whatever is a favorable position for executing Krishna Consciousness,” Prabhupāda had written. “Sometimes we may adopt such means in order to help distribute books.” But in February 1973 he had written to Rūpānuga that he did not want devotees dressing up as hippies.

... This should be stopped, we should not give anyone cause to call us hippies, but the devotees may dress up in respectable clothes like ladies and gentlemen in order to distribute my literatures under special circumstances....

Wherever there are individuals there are bound to be differences of opinion.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to be spared such details. He wanted his G.B.C. men to consult among themselves and then present their conclusion to him only for a final decision. “In this way,” Prabhupāda had written Rūpānuga, “I will be free to concentrate on my translation of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*.” But because there *was* individuality and because some of the particular details were very crucial, Prabhupāda was again and again

called on to make fine judgements.

When the letter from India reached Karandhara in Los Angeles, Karandhara made an elaborate counter-report to Śrīla Prabhupāda about the benefits of this kind of *saṅkīrtana*. Before sending out the word that all *saṅkīrtana* in Western clothes must be stopped, Karandhara wanted Prabhupāda to hear his side of the story. He concluded that the main thing Prabhupāda objected to was a disreputable appearance, and having heard that the devotees were looking like hippies, he had objected. Karandhara wrote to Prabhupāda that distributors were always clean, well-groomed, and presentable. He said that if the devotees were restricted to going out with shaved head and *dhotī* to distribute books, then the distribution would decline about two-thirds. "If extremes and misapplications have occurred," he wrote, "they should be worked out rather than giving up the whole program."

This time Śrīla Prabhupāda replied definitely in favor of the Western dress *saṅkīrtana*.

Yes, you can go on with your book distribution as you were doing before, there is not any harm. I thought that our men were becoming like hippies, but now I understand from you that this is not the case. So I have no objection. Our main business is to distribute books, and from the reports I am receiving from all over the world, the progress is very encouraging.

Not all controversies were private, however. A disagreement arose about techniques used in distributing books. A few people had written the BBT complaints that they had been misled or pressured into buying a book.

Devotees responded to this complaint in different ways. The book distributors were protective of Prabhupāda's order for as many books to be distributed as possible. Just because a few people had complained, they argued, was no reason to cool down

book distribution. They even quoted Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements that opposition to *saṅkīrtana* indicates its purity and genuineness. Śrīla Prabhupāda had explained this point in his books in discussing the historical incident when Lord Caitanya's *saṅkīrtana* parties were stopped by the Muslim government. "We must remember," Prabhupāda had written, "that such incidents took place in the past, five hundred years ago, and the fact that they are still going on indicates that our *saṅkīrtana* movement is really authorized, for if *saṅkīrtana* were an insignificant material affair, demons would not object to it." People in America had also objected to the chanting parties and to the devotees' dress and to the philosophy and to the food. Whatever you did, *someone* would oppose it. The main thing, the book distributors said, was that they should save the conditioned souls, who were heading for a hellish next life. If a person got a book and read just one page, his life could be changed.

Other devotees, however, including temple presidents, were disturbed by the complaints. Someone recalled that Prabhupāda had already addressed this point in a letter in 1970. "Do all activities with great enthusiasm," he had written to one devotee. "All our activities must be open so that no one may criticize our mission, so all dealing must be to the standard of Vaiṣṇavism. As everything is undertaken forthrightly in Krishna Consciousness, in a Krishna Conscious way, then Lord Krishna will be pleased to provide all facilities for aiding such sincere service." Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted the book distributors to execute his order, but he was not giving them a license to do anything and everything and claim it was for Kṛṣṇa. Preaching required expertise, not only in getting people to take a book but in giving them the right impression.

The book distributors were doing the best they could, they maintained, and would try to improve. If any devotee thought he could do better, then he should go out and demonstrate how to distribute books without disturbing anyone. Techniques for

selling books could not be simply theoretical. The books had to go out, and the number of books sold shouldn't decrease in the name of improving public relations. Distributing books all day, day after day, was hard. People were already agitated by their minds and senses and harassed by their occupations, governments, and personal relationships. No wonder even an innocent devotee also sometimes disturbed them.

The tactics in question were mostly the book distributor's lines. They would say they were students, that they were helping young people off drugs, or that the books were about how to solve modern-day crises. None of these things were untrue, but sometimes the emphasis was excessive.

A mature devotee could speak more directly. Tripurāri would tell how the books describe an ancient civilization in which people knew how life should be lived. He would represent himself as a member of an organization that had communities all over the world where people could benefit from the example of an alternative lifestyle. Tripurāri and others were able to be both personal and, in a casual way, philosophical, as they spoke about spiritual life. They made quick friends with strangers and convinced them to take books. But more and more devotees were going out, and some were crude. Obviously, more training was needed.

The question was whether the devotees should be straightforward and open or rely on sales techniques.

Bhakta dāsa, the San Diego temple president, wrote to Śrīla Prabhupāda for clarification. Bhakta dāsa was himself a book distributor who had traveled around the country with a group of men in a van, which had a license plate that read "KRSNA." Bhakta dāsa's wife traveled with a women's party in a separate van with a license plate that read "RADHA." Bhakta dāsa asked Śrīla Prabhupāda the definition of the word *cheating* as applied to *saṅkīrtana*. Prabhupāda replied,

So far the meaning of the word "cheating," there are only three things to be known, that Krishna is the Supreme

Enjoyer, the Supreme Proprietor of everything, and the Supreme Friend of everyone, and we say that honesty is acting upon the knowledge of these three facts. One who is always acting in this knowledge is truly honest and if one is not acting on this knowledge then he is always cheating or being dishonest. So if you apply this to your techniques for selling literature to persons in the Sankirtan party, then you will understand what is the meaning of the word “cheating.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s philosophy was clear, but different interpretations persisted. A sincere devotee trying to sell a book could not be considered a cheater, as he was glorifying Kṛṣṇa. That much was clear. But did this apply to the devotees’ practices on *saṅkīrtana*? Prabhupāda’s answer had been without any reference to specific techniques; he had simply stressed the purity of book distribution and had encouraged the book distributors to continue without interruption. The main thing was to distribute books. Critics of the *saṅkīrtana* movement, those who did not accept Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme and abide by His instructions, were themselves cheaters by not recognizing Kṛṣṇa as the supreme proprietor, enjoyer, and friend. Śrīla Prabhupāda advised that if one carefully thought over the points of the letter and then applied them, he would become enlightened in all aspects of distributing books.

Devotees continued to press Śrīla Prabhupāda for further clarification. The book distributors were concerned that the urgency of book distribution not be minimized, whereas other responsible ISKCON leaders were concerned that loose practices might hamper the society’s progress. Prabhupāda replied to questions by Bali-mardana of New York with a letter that became particularly influential.

You have to sell books, do it by hook or by crook. The real preaching is selling books. You should know the tactic how to sell without irritating. What your lecture will do for three minutes, but if he reads one page his life may be turned.

We don't want to irritate anyone, however. If he goes away by your aggressive tactics, then you are nonsense and it is your failure. Neither you could sell a book, neither he would remain. But if he buys a book, that is the real successful preaching.

On the one hand, Prabhupāda's phrase, "by hook or by crook," seemed to give a complete license for the distributors to use any means to sell a book. But if one carefully examined Prabhupāda's letter, he found that Prabhupāda repeatedly said devotees should not irritate people on *saṅkīrtana*. His position was clear: the books should be sold, but nicely. And had there been any doubt, Prabhupāda reiterated his main thrust that the book distribution was the best preaching. "The success of your preaching," he wrote, "will be substantiated by how many books are sold." It was a test of intelligence and expertise in the service of Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda's pleasure was not so easy to obtain. If they slackened in distributing books out of fear that the public would be irritated, then how could that enliven Śrīla Prabhupāda? But—"if you only irritate and he goes away, that is your less intelligence." Prabhupāda also wrote, "The art is to sell many many books and not to irritate the public, so you may instruct all the others how to do this successfully. That is *sannyasa*, that is *GBC*."

As books continued to go out by the millions, many people expressed their thanks on receiving a book, although occasionally someone complained. The dialogue continued within ISKCON regarding the application of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements. Some distributors went on selling the books by any means they could. In the absolute sense, they said, the end justified the means. But others reasoned that even those means had been carefully defined by Śrīla Prabhupāda; the absolute end should not be taken as a license for acting irresponsibly. A devotee was responsible to help the conditioned souls to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It was hard enough for a materialist to appreciate

renunciation; therefore the devotees had adopted Western dress. Such materialists could never accept such a blunt application of “the end justifies the means”; so why should overly aggressive book distributors repel the public from spiritual life?

Some book distributors felt that while discussion of techniques was welcome, too much talk was idle. Better everyone just go out and distribute Prabhupāda’s books to the best of their ability. From time to time Prabhupāda would issue statements redefining the matter. His instructions in letters were especially aimed at the individuals to whom he was writing. When Śrī Govinda, the president of ISKCON Chicago, wrote Prabhupāda, Prabhupāda encouraged him in his attempt to reform the devotees engaged in excessive practices.

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

* * *

November 1973

Scores of men and women were going out every day on book

distribution. One November day the devotees of the New York City temple broke the ISKCON world record by distributing in one day 13,200 pieces of literature. On the same day they also distributed fifteen thousand pieces of *prasādam*. The society-wide total for 1973 was 4,169,004 books sold and millions collected. When Śrīla Prabhupāda received these figures, he replied to Rāmeśvara:

I have faith in your words that next year the figures will be far beyond what they were last year. It is the nature of the spiritual energy, it is always increasing if we just apply our energy.

Early in January 1974 Śrīla Prabhupāda again returned to Los Angeles. One morning he gave a lecture on the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* stressing book distribution. “There is no literature throughout the universe like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,” he said. “There is no comparison or competition. Every word is for the good of the human society. Each and every word. Therefore we stress so much in the book distribution. Somehow or other, if the book goes in one’s hand, he’ll be benefited. At least he’ll see, ‘That I have taken so much price—let me see what is there.’ If he reads one *śloka*, his life will become successful. If he reads one *śloka*, one word! This is such a nice thing. Therefore, we are stressing so much, please distribute books, distribute books, distribute books.”

Nineteen-seventy-four, however, began with what appeared to be a serious setback. The Supreme Court ruled against Vietnam war protestors, who were distributing political leaflets in private malls. Private property rights were being violated, the court ruled, and citizens of nonprofit groups—religions included—could solicit or distribute on private property only on invitation from the owner of the property. By that ruling, the malls that the book distributors frequented were suddenly shut down.

And the lawyers predicted great difficulty in changing the Supreme Court ruling. The same constitution that barred the devotees from private property, however, gave them access to public property.

ISKCON devotees filed a lawsuit against the city-owned Las Vegas airport and won an immediate injunction on the basis that the airport was depriving the devotees their rights of free speech. The case opened a new era, with possibilities of legalizing *saṅkīrtana* in all major airports. Rāmeśvara wrote Prabhupāda of the plans to open airports and other public areas, especially transportation centers, by working with lawyers. Prabhupāda endorsed the plan.

I am extremely happy to hear that a firm of young lawyers are now working with us to help us spread this movement by helping us to flood the world with our books. This is very welcome news. Things are looking very favorable for us, now we simply have to try even harder to sincerely carry out Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's orders and He will be pleased to provide us with more and more facilities. Cooperate nicely with one another and strongly push on this mission by printing and distributing our books in unlimited quantity.

On the momentum of Prabhupāda's authorization more major airports opened for book distribution. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to the temple president of Chicago:

The enclosed newspaper story, Krishna followers freed from police harassment, is just further testimony of the great victory made by Caitanya Mahaprabhu in Chicago. I understand that the Chicago area is the most lucrative place in the world for distribution of our books and that you have done very careful work in getting all permission.

In this letter Śrīla Prabhupāda also quelled a rumor among some devotees that in a few years police repression and economic

breakdown would make *saṅkīrtana* impossible.

Whoever told you that is a rascal, saying it in my name. I never said that. Rather sankirtan movement will expand, continuing so long as we are sincere. When I came in the beginning I began to expand it and it is now going on and there is no question of it stopping. Therefore go on with your life time plans making secure in distributing of books. There is no cessation. This movement is eternal.

Previously, only a few devotees had been bold enough to venture into the airports. But now they could distribute there legally. Devotees saw this as proof that Kṛṣṇa was working through Prabhupāda to arrange for more book distribution. No previous spiritual master had ever attained such facility to distribute Vedic literature on so great a scale. It was another sign that Śrīla Prabhupāda was Kṛṣṇa's empowered representative. And by their efforts to follow Prabhupāda's order, Kṛṣṇa was also giving them facility. But only if they were willing to go through trials of surrender and renunciation.

Praghoṣa: I went out one day to the airport, and I walked up to one black man and said, "Excuse me, sir." And bam! He punched me right in the face and knocked me down. At that moment so many thoughts went through my mind. I could just hear Tripurāri's words ringing in my ears from the class that morning, "We must be determined. . . ." So I just said to myself, "Well, I'll just stand right back up and keep trying." I stood up, and I got the inspiration to just turn around and try to hand the next person one of Prabhupāda's books.

Another time a husband and wife approached me, but the husband didn't want anything to do with me. When the woman saw that the book was spiritual, she stopped and said, "What's this book about?" I said very bluntly, "This book explains birth and death and what's beyond." She said, "Oh." Then she turned to her husband and said, "Please buy it." But he said, "I don't

want it. Come on, let's go." She said, "Please!" But her husband said, "You buy it." And he walked off.

So she stayed with me and said, "Could you tell me a little more about this?" I started to explain the book, and then I said, "Where are you coming from?" She said, "I'm coming from Rochester." Then she revealed to me that she was coming from the Mayo Clinic and that she had terminal cancer and was going to die. She said, "I desperately want to read this book." She gave me ten dollars and said, "Thank you very much." Then she took the book and ran off.

A little later she came back and found me and shook my hand and thanked me. These kinds of experiences that devotees would have day in and day out gave us the feeling of being like emissaries or representatives of something very special. By this we became more attached to Śrīla Prabhupāda and to executing his work. We would see these miracles take place.

Keśava Bhāratī: I used to distribute books in the San Francisco airport. I thought that this airport was particularly difficult because the people were sophisticated and that if I could be in L.A. I could probably distribute as many books as Tripurāri. I was a little proud. Then I got the chance to distribute with him.

I am very outgoing and gregarious, so I don't have any problem stopping people or anything like that. But a half an hour and then an hour went by, and Tripurāri had distributed five and then ten books. But I couldn't get anybody to stop and shake my hand. It was incredible! But I knew it was because I was too proud. Another hour went by, and still no one would stop and shake my hand. I was bewildered, because I wanted to pass out Prabhupāda's books. Finally I just sat down out of frustration. I was nearly crying.

Tripurāri came up and preached to me. He told me I should pray to Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda in times like this and not to worry about it, that this happens. So I got it together, and then about the next ten to fifteen people in a row came

after that and talked with me. So when we discussed it afterwards, we could understand that we were just instruments in Lord Caitanya's hands. This is how we developed the saṅkīrtana philosophy. Through the book distribution we came to realize who Prabhupāda was and to appreciate him more.

Lavaṅga-latikā: All day I would stand at the top of the stairs and thousands and thousands of people would come by. And we would distribute hundreds and hundreds of books. We used to take lines from Prabhupāda's books. Tripurāri used to talk about the swans' taking milk from water. So we used to use that a lot in approaching someone. We'd say how these great sages used to know how to separate milk from water, the essence. He also said the pictures were windows to the spiritual world. We'd say, "This book is like the brilliant sun that will drive away the darkness of ignorance in this age of Kali."

I found the best way to distribute the books was to use Prabhupāda's own words. Prabhupāda said if we read one line to someone, he can make one hundred times spiritual advancement. One time a devotee complained to Prabhupāda that people were throwing some of the books away. But then we could understand that Prabhupāda wanted it distributed on a large scale. Not that you kept the book for a special person you thought might be intelligent enough to read it. Because Prabhupāda said that if they read only one line they would be very much affected. So we could understand that Prabhupāda wanted mass distribution, not that we just keep them for the special, right person.

Sura dāsa: Vaiśeṣika was selling books in the airport with me. He would walk up to people and say, "Well, how are you doing, sir? All glories to the Śrī Kṛṣṇa saṅkīrtana movement, the prime benediction for humanity at large which cleanses the heart." He was repeating the "Śikṣāṣṭaka" prayers of Lord Caitanya right out of the book, and yet he was selling books. The books had pictures of Kṛṣṇa and devotional scenes on the cover, and sometimes some devotees couldn't understand how

people could relate to these books. But Prabhupāda wanted them distributed. And he was saying that we should preach on the merit of the book. When a devotee asked Prabhupāda what we should say to distribute the books, Prabhupāda replied *kṛṣṇe sva-dhāmopagate*, which is the verse that the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is as brilliant as the sun and it has arisen just to give people religion in this age of darkness. So we were also repeating that verse and distributing books on faith.

We would go out and see the people actually becoming struck by Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They would see that the devotees were very sincere and serious, and they would become impressed. Daily on saṅkīrtana we would see people appreciating Prabhupāda's books. There was also harassment, but Prabhupāda had talked about it, that there was always difficulty. So everything was there from Prabhupāda to confirm whatever realizations we had. Śrīla Prabhupāda said a book salesman had to go sometimes and have difficulty because he'll be sometimes accepted and sometimes rejected. But he tolerates.

In the airport we met professors, lawyers, all kinds of people who would stop and talk. They would challenge, and we would constantly have to defend Prabhupāda's books and his movement and speak up on behalf of Prabhupāda, more so than when we were just kids out on the lots talking to women and begging fifty cents for a pack of incense. We were presenting Prabhupāda's books to the scholars, coming into contact with Māyāvādīs, scientists, businessmen, people who were very sharp, in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, and San Diego. People there were very sharp and hard. And just by having to spiritually combat them and defend the movement we became more mature in our understanding of Prabhupāda's books and how to present them in such a way that we could convince people even who didn't want to be convinced. We had to study Prabhupāda's books.

In 1974 several new parties formed just for distributing

books. Tripurāri had been traveling as an emissary from Los Angeles, but now, with Śrīla Prabhupāda's permission, he formed a Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT) *saṅkīrtana* party of some leading book distributors who stationed themselves in different airports. This in itself caused a significant increase in book distribution.

Tripurāri began corresponding directly with Śrīla Prabhupāda. "Your entire program is approved by me," Prabhupāda wrote him. When Tripurāri asked if he could take *sannyāsa*, Prabhupāda replied that Tripurāri was already doing more than any *sannyāsī*. In one letter Prabhupāda called him "the incarnation of book distribution."

A further great increase in book distribution occurred when Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami, Śrīla Prabhupāda's zonal secretary in India for four years, returned to the U.S. He joined with his friend Viṣṇujana Swami and formed the Rādhā-Dāmodara *saṅkīrtana* party, traveling in a bus with Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities to distribute books and hold festivals all over the U.S.

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Seeing Śrīla Prabhupāda's emphasis on book distribution in North America, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja soon made this the main priority of the Rādhā-Dāmodara party. Śrīla Prabhupāda took personal interest in the party and approved loans from the BBT for the purchase of more buses, thus creating a *saṅkīrtana* army traveling in renovated Greyhound buses. By the end of the year the Rādhā-Dāmodara party had five buses, a fleet of vans, and one hundred and four men. "I am glad that you have understood the importance of my books," Prabhupāda wrote, "therefore I am stressing it so much. Let everyone take these books." Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged the Rādhā-Dāmodara party to expand to hundreds of buses and thus fulfill the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to bring Kṛṣṇa con-

sciousness to every town and village.

I am very glad to hear that not only you are maintaining such programs but that you want to expand it. Yes, this is our philosophy: *anandam buddhi vardhanam*. It means to expand or to increase.

Prabhupāda called the buses moving temples, and he urged the Rādhā-Dāmodara devotees to continue their program with certainty that they were pleasing Lord Caitanya.

A tight transcendental competition arose between the Los Angeles temple, Tripurāri's BBT party, and the Rādhā-Dāmodara party. Prabhupāda watched and approved it with pleasure.

Another party forming in 1974 was the BBT Library Party. It began with Hṛdayānanda Goswami's sending some *brahmacārīs* from his traveling party to visit the prestigious universities in New England. The men attempted to sell entire sets of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books to the professors and, even in their first attempts, met with great success.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had long cherished this idea. He himself had gone to libraries in India with copies of his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* First Canto—before ever coming to America. By Prabhupāda's efforts in New Delhi, the United States Library of Congress had obtained full sets of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Now his desire to see his books placed in all the U.S. libraries and universities was becoming a reality.

Within a few months professors began writing favorable reviews of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, and some even ordered them for their college courses. It was a pride for all the devotees that Śrīla Prabhupāda's books were finally being appreciated by scholars. "I very much like this program of the standing orders," Prabhupāda wrote. "Try to increase it up to fifty thousand such orders from the libraries."

Another party, Nāma-haṭṭa, also formed in 1974. A group

of *brahmacārīs* led by two *sannyāsīs*, this party would travel and do *saṅkīrtana*, with their profits going directly to Śrīla Prabhupāda's Indian projects in Bombay, Māyāpur, and Vṛndāvana.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda became ill for a few weeks in September, the incoming book distribution reports were his best medicine. "Whenever I get report of my book selling," Prabhupāda wrote to the Library Party, "I feel strength. Even now in this weakened condition I have got strength from your report." And during the same illness Prabhupāda wrote to Rāmeśvara:

Regarding book sales figures, please endeavor in this way. This is the only solace of my life. When I hear that my books are selling so nicely, I become energetic like a young man.

Śrīla Prabhupāda recovered his health, and by the end of the year his BBT was also in extraordinary health, with temples competing again in a furious Christmas marathon. At the end of the year the BBT office reported to Śrīla Prabhupāda increases in the distribution of all varieties of his literature. Approximately 387,000 hardbound books were sold during the year, a sixty-seven percent increase over the previous year. And almost four million *Back to Godheads* were sold, an eighty-nine percent increase. The BBT sold to the individual temples a total volume of 6,668,000 pieces, a sixty percent increase. Such news made Śrīla Prabhupāda "become energetic like a young man." Prabhupāda and his book distribution movement headed into 1975 with all signs of increasing—doubling and tripling—the already astounding figures of 1974.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda had created his Bhaktivedanta Book Trust in 1972 as an independent entity to ensure that no matter what else happened, his books could continue being produced and

distributed. The BBT would operate exclusively for the benefit of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and yet it would exist independently.

The trust document stated that the trustees should divide the money from the sale of the books to ISKCON temples into two funds, one for printing books and one for purchasing ISKCON property and building temples. Prabhupāda believed that if this fifty-fifty formula were followed, Kṛṣṇa would assure the success of ISKCON, and he would repeatedly refer to this formula in numerous conversations and letters, even in his purports on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave his BBT trustees authority to make printing plans; then they would consult him for approval. He set the standards and gave his BBT trustees guidelines to follow, and they could not make any changes without first consulting him. He was particularly averse to changes. He would choose the book size, determine the artwork, and make suggestions about the size of a particular printing, about shipping policies, about sales to temples—about almost every aspect of the BBT's publishing activities. Even when certain temples did not remit their payments to the BBT, Prabhupāda would become involved.

It is not good if such big temples who are setting the example for the whole Society do not pay their bills. This is most irregular. I am trying to retire from the administrative affairs, but if the presidents and GBC men make such disturbances then how can I be peaceful? Things should be maintained automatically, then it will be peaceful for me.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was a strict manager: "According to Vedic instruction," he said, "fire, debt, and disease should never be neglected. They must be extinguished by all means."

Śrīla Prabhupāda felt that book distribution could be the basis for economic soundness in ISKCON. Other businesses could also operate, but book-selling was the best, combining

preaching with a good source of income. As he wrote to one of his temple presidents,

I am very encouraged by the report of how nicely our books are being distributed. This is our main business all over the world. If you give full attention to this, there will never be any shortage of funds.

And on another occasion,

Regarding the society's leaders emphasizing business, you should understand what is the meaning of business. Business means to help the preaching. Preaching needs financial help, otherwise, we have no need for business. So far as I understand, our book business is sufficient to support our movement.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also oversaw all BBT loans to temples. The process was that a G.B.C. secretary or a temple president would approach Prabhupāda with a request for a loan. In 1974 Śrīla Prabhupāda granted sizable loans for building, purchasing, and improving temples in Dallas, Hawaii, Melbourne, Chicago, and Vancouver. He also granted a loan to the Rādhā-Dāmodara party for buying "traveling temples" and one to South America for printing books. Kīrtanānanda Mahārāja automatically got a fifty thousand dollar loan each year for New Vrindaban. But Prabhupāda would deny requests for money for projects he considered inconsistent with the purposes of the BBT. On November 6, he wrote to Rāmeśvara,

No, we cannot loan BBT money for any other purposes than what is mentioned in the BBT Agreement. These other loans for cows, equipment, and restaurants must all be re-paid, and no other loans other than for publishing and temple construction can be granted.

Starting in 1974 and increasing to a very large scale in 1975, Śrīla Prabhupāda utilized the BBT profits for constructing his

main temples in India—Vṛndāvana, Māyāpur, and especially Bombay. Rāmeśvara informed the devotees of this special function of the BBT.

Srila Prabhupada is personally overseeing all the Indian programs and spending. . . . If one rupee is misspent Srila Prabhupada becomes disturbed and chastizes the devotees (mercifully)—“ . . . this money is earned by the sweat of many devotees, so why you are not careful . . . ”

Srila Prabhupada wants to see our Vrndavana temple, SRI SRI KRSNA-BALARAMA Mandir completed by Janmāstami. Prabhupada wants to establish Sri Mayapur Temple as well One interesting note in this connection is that in India, I've been told that 10 paise purchases 1 brick! 10 paise means US \$0.01 — just think every penny you collect may buy one brick in India. **EVERY PENNY COUNTS TOWARDS THESE TRANSCENDENTAL GOALS!**

“These places in India,” Prabhupada wrote, “are spiritually potent. By establishing temples in Māyāpur and Vṛndāvana we assure that the purity of our movement will be kept intact.”

In October 1974 Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote to Hamsadūta, his G.B.C. secretary for Germany, “Whenever there is any publication in any language, it enlivens me one hundred times.” Although Śrīla Prabhupāda's order from Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī was to preach and print in the English language, Śrīla Prabhupāda had expanded that order to include all the languages and countries of the world. “My first concern is that my books shall be published and distributed profusely all over the world,” Śrīla Prabhupāda had written to one of the first devotees in Europe in 1972. Prabhupāda wrote always in English, and he considered it a world language. But as soon as ISKCON began spreading to other countries—as early as 1968—he began talking of having his books translated into foreign languages.

When in 1972 a German edition of *Bhagavad-gītā* appeared,

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote Haṁsadūta, “You have done the right thing by printing Bhagavad Gita in German language, and I very much appreciate that you have done this great service.” By 1973, *saṅkīrtana* parties were traveling throughout Germany, distributing several hundred copies of *Bhagavad-gītā* a week. Haṁsadūta promised that he would translate one book a month into German, and when in the fall of 1974 Prabhupāda heard of six recently printed German translations, he replied, “This is very happy news for me. Thank you. Overflood Europe with German books.” Śrīla Prabhupāda said that whenever he published a book he felt that he had conquered an empire. Books were the basis of the spiritual revolution that would eventually change humanity and save it from the pernicious effects of the age of Kali.

“Produce voluminously Spanish language literature, Śrīla Prabhupāda requested. When his disciple, Hṛdayānanda Goswami became the zonal leader for South America Śrīla Prabhupāda gave him specific directions to emphasize book printing and distribution even before opening temples. “I also was printing even before I had big temples in the U.S. So you may follow the footsteps of the previous acaryas.” Hṛdayānanda Goswami made book distribution his number one program, and he organized a Spanish BBT in Mexico for translating and publishing. Early in 1974 when the Spanish BBT was ready to print translations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Volume One, *Bhagavad-gītā*, and *Kṛṣṇa, The Supreme Personality of Godhead*, Prabhupāda wrote:

By printing these books of our Kṛṣṇa Conscious philosophy in so many different languages we can actually inject our movement into the masses of persons all over the world, especially there in the western countries and we can literally turn whole nations into Kṛṣṇa Conscious nations.

With one hundred thousand copies of a Spanish *Back to Godhead* printed, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “Now give them to

everyone.” Spanish book distribution soon became the second largest in the world, next to the American division.

In South Europe, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s representative, Bhagavān, was printing in French and Italian. As early as December of 1972 Bhagavān had printed Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *Easy Journey to Other Planets* in French. And by the beginning of 1974, three parties in France were distributing one thousand books daily, including a French *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Bhagavān printed the first Italian *Back to Godhead* with a French *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* soon to come.

Wherever devotees went, they knew their program was to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, follow the regulative principles, and arrange for printing and distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books. When the first devotees reached South Africa, they proceeded just according to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire, and he replied to them, “Your report is very encouraging to me, that you distributed 110 Gītas in two days in Capetown.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda was thinking seriously of books in Russian, and he wrote to the Minister of Education and Culture, U.S.S.R., suggesting they publish “a translation of the ancient classical Vedic literature, namely, *Bhagavad-gītā*” as already published by “the famous London publishing house of M.S.S. MacMillan Company.” He also talked with his disciples about printing their own Russian translations. Whenever Śrīla Prabhupāda met an interested person proficient in *any* foreign language, he would request that person to translate his books. “I am also very encouraged to hear that Japanese language translations of some of my books will be brought out soon,” he had written in 1972, “because without books and magazines, what authority or what basis have we got for preaching?” Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda had written to an American devotee in Indonesia who had made a Chinese friend,

I am especially happy to hear that you have got Chinese boy there who is doing some translating work. Yes, the

Chinese-speaking portion of the world is very huge and it requires to infiltrate gradually, especially by distributing our literatures widely in Chinese languages. So his service is the greatest to Kṛṣṇa.

Later, when Prabhupāda heard that the Chinese boy, Yaśomatī-suta had finished translating three chapters of the *Bhagavad-gītā* into Chinese, he wrote that they should immediately print those three chapters as a small book.

Other English-speaking nations besides the U.S. also rose to prominence in the book distribution competition. Australia was especially strong, and by 1974 they were competing with top temples like Los Angeles for world leadership.

An Australian party headed by Buddhimanta, who had come from San Francisco, distributed profusely. By the fall of 1974 about a dozen top Australian and New Zealand distributors were regularly selling daily more than twenty big books each. The Australian centers, like those in America, doubled their book distribution between 1973 and 1974.

When book distribution had been just beginning in America in 1970, no books had been available in England. But within a year, *Kṛṣṇa* book distribution had begun there. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "All of my disciples in London center are very intelligent, and they should unite around this single task of selling Krishna book widely throughout Britain." By 1974 the devotees in Britain were valiantly distributing books. During one busy six-day period, they distributed six hundred volumes of *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, four hundred of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and one thousand *Back to Godhead* magazines.

India was special. Śrīla Prabhupāda had introduced book distribution there with his life membership program. Wealthy Indians were more inclined to accept the books as a part of an ISKCON membership "package," which included such benefits as free accommodations in ISKCON temples throughout the world. But Śrīla Prabhupāda also wanted his books distributed

to India's colleges, libraries, and prominent citizens. By early 1975 Prabhupāda's disciples were printing Hindi and Bengali versions of *Back to Godhead*. When Śrīla Prabhupāda had heard that Western devotees in India were complaining of insufficient engagement, he had replied, "I am pleased you are selling many *Krishna Books* daily. All our men should go with books. There is sufficient engagement." To his G.B.C. secretary in India Śrīla Prabhupāda had written, "Engage all of them in book distribution specifically, and take with you some sankirtan party."

"Without books we will make no progress in India," Śrīla Prabhupāda had written to Tejīyas dāsa, his temple president in Delhi. Prabhupāda had also trained his leaders in India in the strict policy of "fifty-fifty." "Proceeds from life membership or any other collections should go fifty percent to the BBT and fifty percent for construction and other projects." On his order the American BBT had been making donations of books to India and by 1974 had donated three hundred thousand dollars worth of literature. Although America was the leading pioneer in book printing and distribution, Śrīla Prabhupāda foresaw translating, printing, and distribution going on all over the world, eventually to surpass the U.S.

Śrīla Prabhupāda was author, publisher, worldwide book distribution manager, and creator of a transcendental competition among his disciples. When in 1971 he had observed Keśava in San Francisco leading the field in *Kṛṣṇa* book distribution, he had written to Keśava that if he out-distributed Karandhara (his brother both materially and spiritually) then Śrīla Prabhupāda would leave Los Angeles and stay in San Francisco. He continued to instigate such competition over the years, fanning the fires of book distribution among his followers. He encouraged the leaders to send in reports, and on hearing them he would respond with letters that raised the book distribution fever even higher.

The whole of ISKCON waited to hear the next letter or quote from Prabhupāda inciting them to go on and on. Devotees' lives became completely changed by these words. For example, when Śrīla Prabhupāda had given the lecture in January 1974, stressing, "Distribute books, distribute books, distribute books," several devotees in the audience had vowed on the spot to dedicate their lives to that instruction above all others. And when Prabhupāda had sent the handwritten note down from his room in L.A.—"Everyone should go out with the Sankirtan Party as soon as possible"—that one line created a deepest spirit of sacrifice and dedication in the hearts of many disciples who felt themselves destined to take up that order as their life and soul. Although Rāmeśvara had been completely caught up in the waves of the *saṅkīrtana* ocean from the beginning, Śrīla Prabhupāda cast his perpetual service to the cause of book distribution when he wrote,

Make program to distribute our books all over the world. Our books are being appreciated by learned circles so we should take advantage. Whatever progress we have made is simply due to distributing these books. So go on and *do not divert your mind for a moment from this.*

When devotees in London reported to Śrīla Prabhupāda their increase in book and magazine sales, he responded by inviting them to compete.

I have heard that in San Francisco they are selling daily not less than 75 Kṛṣṇa Books. So I am *very* much encouraged to hear this. Now take this spirit of transcendental rivalry and consult with Dayananda and the others there in England to be the first-rate book-sellers.

When writing to a *sannyāsa* disciple preaching in Scotland, where perhaps the devotees were not fully aware of the scope of book distribution in the U.S., Śrīla Prabhupāda had given a report on the latest book scores he had just received from New York and had commented, "New York is leading the list."

Śrīla Prabhupāda also inspired the society as a whole to compete with its previous years' efforts. "Somehow the book distribution must be doubled and tripled as far as possible. Do it." As soon as the BBT Library Party had been formed, Prabhupāda had told the members to get fifty thousand orders. And he had asked the Rādhā-Dāmodara party to get one hundred buses.

These were not careless boasts by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He knew the determination and sacrifice required to achieve these nearly unattainable goals, but he wanted his devotees to work with total dedication, as he was doing. Ultimately, he simply wanted them to try their utmost to serve *guru* and Kṛṣṇa sincerely. He called this logic "shooting for the rhinoceros." If a man, attempting to kill a rhinoceros, failed, no one would criticize him. But if he succeeded, that would be very wonderful.

He wrote to Rūpānuga:

Your sankirtana reports are very encouraging, especially that one girl, Gauri dasi, has set an all ISKCON women's record of 108 big books. This is very wonderful. Formerly this would have been considered impossible, but now by Kṛṣṇa's grace everything is becoming possible. Encourage them all to increase more and more.

The competition was particularly high between Los Angeles, the Rādhā-Dāmodara party, and Australia, and Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged them all, like a maestro calling for a *fortissimo* from the orchestra.

Some devotees, however, became confused by their Godbrothers' and Godsisters' rousing calls for competition and rivalry. To them it was the rivalry of the material world, which they had hoped to leave forever. Śrīla Prabhupāda, however, had explained the proper attitude of transcendental competition.

Competition and profiteering spirit are always there in the living entity. It is not that they can be artificially removed in some matter. Factually we saw in Russia that by removing

competition and profit calculation from society the people were not at all happy, and still these things are going on. So we shall not expect that we are any different. Only difference is, that our profit is for Krishna's pleasure, and our competition is how to please Krishna more than someone else. Even amongst the Gopis there is competition to please Krishna, and there is envy also. But this envy is not material, it is transcendental. They are thinking, Oh, she has done something more wonderful than me, that is very nice, but now let me do something even more wonderful, like that. So I am pleased that you desire for competition with your Godbrothers to spread Krishna Consciousness Movement all over the world by printing our books.

When a traveling *saṅkīrtana* party from one temple intensively distributed books in another city, the local temple was often disturbed. This problem came before Śrīla Prabhupāda, who was inevitably called in to judge and to cool down the fires of competition. Prabhupāda wrote to Keśava and Bhūtātmā who had traveled all the way from San Francisco to London to distribute books but who had disturbed the devotees there by their fervor. Prabhupāda wrote to Keśava:

Ultimately, it shall be up to the local temple president if the presence of your party is favorable or not, everything considered, if he agrees you may stay, otherwise if he judges it is unfavorable at the time, he may order you to go out. But just to avoid these things, better to arrange in advance with the GBC men concerned. Ours is a cooperative movement, with Krishna and the advancement of Krishna's movement at the centre and we must continue to sell as many books as possible, but discuss everything amongst yourselves and do it nicely without irritating anyone, that is the art.

When devotees beheld the mighty efforts of the top leaders in book distribution, they sometimes became envious, or at least dispirited, thinking themselves useless and unable to please Śrīla

Prabhupāda. This problem also came before Śrīla Prabhupāda, who replied, “There must always be competition. That gives life. That cannot be separated from life.” Prabhupāda commented further that competition was built into the *varṇāśrama-dharma* social system of Vedic culture. In human society there were always the four classes, and the upper classes, especially the *kṣatriyas* or warriors, were always stronger. This competitive spirit contributed to making a society strong, not that a society should be composed only of weak men. But all men, whether strong or weak, should admit their weakness before Kṛṣṇa’s material energy. The material energy, present in the world as the goddess *Durgā-devī*, is always piercing the materialist with her trident (the three material modes). Everyone, therefore, has to acknowledge their insignificance and Kṛṣṇa’s supremacy. In the Vedic society, therefore, the weak do not envy the strong; all classes work cooperatively, with Kṛṣṇa in the center. “The perfect society,” Prabhupāda said, “does not eliminate competition, but it eliminates *envy*, because everyone is weak before Kṛṣṇa.”

But competition had its limit. Quantity was not the all-in-all. Prabhupāda wrote a doubtful *brahmacārī* in Florida,

It is not so much important the quantity of books that we distribute, that we serve Krishna as best we can and depend on Him for the result. But it should not come to the point of making us lose our Krishna Consciousness. When you have these feelings do not mistake it for enviousness, but take it to be an indirect appreciation of the service done by your other Godbrothers. This is spiritual. In the material world, when someone surpasses us in some way we become angry and plan how to stop him, but in the spiritual world when someone does some better service we think, “Oh, he has done so nicely. Let me help him to execute his service.”

Although competition might be a catalyst, the deepest

commitment was the devotee's motivation to serve Śrīla Prabhupāda's order. According to scriptures to serve the instructions of a pure devotee is to actually see Kṛṣṇa face-to-face. Association with Kṛṣṇa is, in fact, gained only by serving His pure devotee. And the devotees, by steadfastly distributing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, were experiencing the essence of service in loving separation, which is the highest exchange with Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Prabhupāda's spiritual master had often said, "Don't try to see God, but act in such a way that God sees you." In other words, by submissively acting on the order of the servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa, a devotee is sure to catch Kṛṣṇa's loving attention.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that the quickest way to catch Kṛṣṇa's attention was to direct another person to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, the book distributors felt a special reciprocation with their spiritual master, and this impelled them to go on serving and distributing in the mood of the eternal servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa.

Sañjaya: Philosophically we saw the connection between going out and distributing books and the fact that this was what our spiritual master wanted us to do. We knew that. That was clear to us. We also had a real sense of idealism—that these books and magazines would change the world. Once you come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, you actually see how crummy the world really is, how really contaminated things are, how envious people are, and how horrible material life is. You can see that. You don't feel that you yourself can change it, but you feel that whoever gets one of Prabhupāda's books and looks at it will be changed in a spiritual way. There was no question about it. We also felt a big change would come in the world in the future as Kṛṣṇa consciousness spread. Prabhupāda also said that if people just touch one of these books their lives will change. Our faith was in the books and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Keśava Bhāratī: When you pass out a book, there is a certain

reciprocation from Prabhupāda. There was a dramatic difference in our internal experience when a person would take a book compared to just taking some incense or something. We would actually experience Prabhupāda's association all day by doing those books. We didn't feel left out just because certain devotees were closer physically or anything. Book distributors always got strong enlivenment. We would read about Haridāsa Ṭhākura going out and rolling on the ground and begging people to chant. That kind of thing would inspire us.

Vaiśeṣika: We had Prabhupāda's books and different letters from him. And we also knew that we could get our name in the newsletter, and we could think of how Prabhupāda would read it. But I was just trying to keep up with the others. Sometimes I would go a couple of hours without giving anyone a book. Everyone else would just be passing them out like crazy. I would try, and people would all but spit in my face. They were pushing me around. It was very heavy for me. I would sometimes just walk off and start crying, it was so heavy. But I knew this book distribution was pleasing for Prabhupāda, and I just wanted to be part of it.

We used to think how Prabhupāda was spending so much time behind a dictaphone just writing these books. We would meditate on how he would sleep just a few hours a day and minimize everything else to write these books. So we were also trying to cut down our other activities and just go out and distribute books. Prabhupāda said a devotee should be in the mood of the six Gosvāmīs, so we were singing those prayers every day. We felt a real connection. Even in the beginning a devotee told me, "Where is Prabhupāda, do you know?" And then he said, "He's in his books." That mood was always there. We always felt that connection.

Jagad-dhātrī: When I was distributing Prabhupāda's books, I understood that that was the most pleasing thing I could do for him. I was helping him to fulfill his spiritual master's

instructions, and so he was pleased. And he was even more pleased if I did it nicely. I always used to hear the story about how Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī would be happy even if someone went out and distributed one magazine, because it's actually the mood of saṅkīrtana, of going out and trying to give mercy to the conditioned souls, that counts.

I always wanted to do welfare work. I liked the feeling of doing something for people. So this is the summum bonum of helping people. You are helping them to go back to Godhead. So that was my motivation. And we automatically became purified by bringing other living entities to Kṛṣṇa.

Tripurāri Mahārāja: I got inspired mostly by Prabhupāda's greatness—how he was just following his Guru Mahārāja blindly. It was his Guru Mahārāja's order, and therefore he was doing it. I was never very scholarly or intelligent. I never thought that I had much brains or talent. I was never trained practically in any kind of skill, and I didn't have much education. I took it like that—that I was talking to the most fallen people and that I was the most fallen myself. Blindly I was just doing what Prabhupāda wanted, because he wanted. I would pray to Prabhupāda to help me realize why he wanted book distribution. Then within I would get inspiration, and it would come out in all of my talks about book distribution.

That time that I stayed out at the airport when all the devotees went back with Prabhupāda to the temple very much affected me for my whole spiritual life. I was very much intimately connected with Prabhupāda. But my closest association with him was by following his instructions and just getting down to work and not trying to enjoy the spiritual master but to serve him.

Vṛndāvana-vilāsinī-devī dāsī: When Prabhupāda gave that famous lecture in Los Angeles, "Distribute books, distribute books, distribute books," then I wanted to take it up. Whenever he wrote to Rāmeśvara it was really to "Rāmeśvara and Com-

pany.” *We all felt included. We are all eternal book distributors—a team together. And I wanted to be part of it. It was Lord Caitanya’s eternal saṅkīrtana party, and we all wanted to be part of it. It’s going on in every planet, in every universe. I know it is pleasing to Śrīla Prabhupāda.*

I would relate to book distribution like the battle of Kurukṣetra. It’s a battle, but Kṛṣṇa is right there. It’s like Kurukṣetra Number Two. I’m sure all book distributors feel like that. You feel like Kṛṣṇa is right there, and He’s going to win. You just have to take shelter of Him. You may not win this battle, but you win the overall war. So I always felt connected with Prabhupāda, because he’s telling us in his books about the great devotees that we can take shelter of. It’s all by his mercy. He’s giving us these books, and he’s in these books.

Sura dāsa: We were so much addicted to selling Prabhupāda’s books that we didn’t want to do anything else. We would just go straight to the airport and start distributing and not stop except for maybe a twenty-minute lunch break and maybe some reading for twenty minutes—otherwise not stop until 7:30 or 8:00 at night. We really felt that Śrīla Prabhupāda was protecting us.

One time out at the airport I was given a BBT newsletter. Maybe it was due to the exhaustion or maybe it was due to some false sentimentality or whatever, but I was reading Prabhupāda’s remarks about book distribution, and I became very moved. I was by myself at the airport, and I just started crying, because I thought of how devotees all over the world are so beautiful, so wonderful-hearted; they are distributing books and working so hard. I was just really appreciating Prabhupāda and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Prabhupāda had said something in the newsletter about book distribution, and it just touched me. We were so absorbed in books, books, books, that whenever Prabhupāda would say anything about book distribution, we would go nuts. That meant it was our connection to Prabhupāda.

We weren't big guns who could sit at a meeting with Prabhupāda or get personal attention so much. Maybe some morning walks at the Māyāpur festival we got to sneak in with the sannyāsīs, but otherwise our book distribution was our connection with Prabhupāda. Whenever he would mention something about book distribution, it would be our life and soul.

Lavaṅga-latikā: Having heard Śrīla Prabhupāda speak and knowing he was always reading from these books, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and that he was preaching that you have to distribute this knowledge to others made it all very simple. That is, you just knew that this was Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire. He was always telling us that he was giving us this knowledge and that once you have this knowledge, you have to distribute it to others. Śrīla Prabhupāda came to America to preach with his disciples. So we must do it. Because it's Prabhupāda's desire. He spent so much time translating these books to be distributed. You just want to distribute to others, and you want people to have these books in their homes.

* * *

On April 20, 1975, Śrīla Prabhupāda successfully performed the Deity installation for the grand opening of the Krishna-Balarāma Mandir in Vṛndāvana, India. Almost a thousand disciples were present, and the governor of Uttar Pradesh was the guest of honor. After years of hard endeavor, it was a climactic triumph for Śrīla Prabhupāda and his movement. In his temple-opening address, which Śrīla Prabhupāda gave while standing on the altar after completing the first *ārati* for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Prabhupāda announced that this was an international temple where people from all over the world would come and worship and take shelter of Gaura-Nitāi, Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Later that evening Śrīla Prabhupāda sat in his room with a few G.B.C. men. He sat in a relaxed position, the shirt buttons

of his *kurta* open because of the heat, his legs and bare feet extended under the low table. His men sat close around him in the dim light of the desk lamp. He was not merely savoring the success of the day or retelling it. It was a milestone, but now they had to go forward. Many things were still to be done to make the temple and guesthouse operative.

And beyond Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda was thinking of the whole world. He began talking about the BBT, and at one point he said, “This temple construction is so important that I’m willing to spend many lakhs to open a temple like this. And yet as important as it is, the book production is even more important.” It was a significant reaffirmation of the book production priority, because even while in the midst of this splendid temple opening, Prabhupāda was stressing that book production was more important. But he was not pleased with the present situation of the BBT. Scowling as he spoke, he said that although he had finished the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* manuscript, the books were still unpublished. He had completed also the Fourth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and was beginning the Fifth, and yet only one volume of the Fourth Canto had been published.

One of the devotees present, not understanding Prabhupāda’s point, said that since Prabhupāda was going next to Hawaii he would be able to write nicely there in peace and quiet. Prabhupāda replied that he was not encouraged to write any more, since his manuscripts were not being published.

At that time the BBT Press, which had been located in New York, was just about to move its men and headquarters to Los Angeles, and Rāmeśvara would be the new BBT Press manager. Rāmeśvara had not been informed or aware of the delay in publishing the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* manuscript. He heard about it for the first time, with shock, in Vṛndāvana. He promised Prabhupāda that he would have the press set up in Los Angeles as fast as possible and begin producing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.

The press's past mismanagement had resulted in a great backlog. Returning to Los Angeles, Rāmeśvara and the BBT Press production manager, Rādhāballabha dāsa, determined that it would take seventeen volumes to publish Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. And now Prabhupāda wanted them all as soon as possible.

That Śrīla Prabhupāda had completed the entire *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* manuscript in eighteen months during 1973 and 1974 was a remarkable feat. In those same months he had been constantly traveling and intensely engaged in many affairs of management. He had confronted major problems with leaders who had left their posts. He had had to personally manage G.B.C. affairs in India as well as dealing with other G.B.C. and BBT affairs. He had authorized many large BBT loans and had approved the expansion and development of ISKCON in all areas of the world, in addition to responding regularly to large volumes of mail, speaking daily to guests, and giving *Bhāgavatam* lectures wherever he went. The only time Prabhupāda had had for writing had been on rising at one in the morning when he had persistently worked two or three hours each day. Only by minimizing his sleep in this way had he found a peaceful time for writing.

While Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled from Vṛndāvana to Australia, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha worked in Los Angeles to hurry the completion of the new BBT offices. Prabhupāda was now meditating more on his completed *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* manuscript waiting to be published. From Australia he wrote to Los Angeles.

Caitanya-caritamṛta is complete (12 parts) and only 3 parts are published, and now the 5th Canto is almost finished, so why these books are not being published? This is our first business. Immediately, these pending books (17 in total) must all be published. Why the delay? The US printer's binding is better than Dai Nippon. So, some may be printed in US and some in Japan, but the pending books must be finished in a very short time. When I see so many books

pending, it does not encourage me to translate. When I see books printed, I become encouraged to write more and more. We can talk this over more in Hawaii. Now, you and Hansadutta expedite the publishing work. That is your business. And push on the selling. You request Tripurari Maharaja in this connection along with others. Now, Bhavananda Swami and Gargamuni Swami are there. They are also expert in pushing this on. By combined effort, publish as quickly as possible and immediately Caitanya-caritamṛta should be done.

In Los Angeles Rāmeśvara had only completed the lease arrangements for the new building for the BBT. The BBT artists had just arrived, and editors, proofreaders, and other production workers were soon coming. The press had just purchased a computer typesetter, and the devotees were learning to use it. Carpenters knocked down walls to build a photo lab and darkroom. New plumbing had to be added, and the entire press had to be set up within one month. Śrīla Prabhupāda was coming to Los Angeles by June, and everything had to be ready and running by then.

By May Śrīla Prabhupāda was in Hawaii and the press was running in Los Angeles. Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary often phoned Los Angeles. "Prabhupāda is angry," the secretary said. "He keeps talking about the unpublished books. You'd better be prepared when he arrives."

Aside from the physical setting up, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha investigated the necessities and difficulties in printing the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* manuscript. One of the main problems was that the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* was a translation from Bengali to English. Although the BBT editors were experienced in assisting Śrīla Prabhupāda with the Sanskrit language, making certain the Sanskrit-English synonyms were accurate and the diacritic marks correct, because they were not proficient in Bengali, the work was progressing slowly. Also, since Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted as many paintings as possible in his books,

the art department was struggling to meet his requests.

Never before had the BBT lagged so far behind Śrīla Prabhupāda's publishing. Straining their brains to produce the books quickly and efficiently, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha devised a stepped-up production schedule. By the old production schedule they could publish a book every two or three months, but on the new schedule the managers decided they could produce a book a month. In that way, they would eventually catch up with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Rāmeśvara was eager to satisfy Prabhupāda with this plan when he came to Los Angeles.

More phone calls came from Prabhupāda's secretary. Prabhupāda had heard about the preparation of the press buildings, but he had also heard that his name had not been printed on the front of the BBT building. He was always carefully insistent to preserve the disciplic succession of ISKCON. He foresaw that in the future, unless ISKCON stressed that A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami was the founder-*ācārya*, others might come and make fantastic claims of their rights of leadership and even ownership of ISKCON properties. Śrīla Prabhupāda had warned his disciples that some of his own Godbrothers were envious of ISKCON, even to that extent. In the rush for completing the buildings, Rāmeśvara had not put Prabhupāda's name on the BBT facade, and Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to press the point through his secretary until he heard that it had at last been done.

June 20, 1975

Śrīla Prabhupāda arrived in Los Angeles, where he received a joyous welcome home. He was accompanied by leading *san-nyāsīs* and G.B.C. secretaries, including Kīrtanānanda Swami, Viṣṇujana Swami, Brahmānanda Swami, Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Mahārāja, and others. Sitting in his room, one of his favorites in the world, he spoke only briefly about the backlog of unprinted books. He seemed mildly disturbed but said little. He was, however, pleased to see the temple and the Deities of Rukmiṇī-Dvārakādhiśa.

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's short arrival speech, he significantly explained why he was so urgent in pressing his disciples to produce books. "I have no personal qualification," Prabhupāda said, sitting and leaning forward on the plush, upholstered red *vyāsāsana*, "but I simply try to satisfy my *guru*, that's all. My Guru Mahārāja asked me that, 'If you get some money you print books.' So there was a private meeting, talking. Some of my important Godbrothers also were there—it was in Rādhā-kuṇḍa. So Guru Mahārāja was speaking to me that, 'Since we have got this Bhag Bazar marble temple, there has been so much dissention. And everyone thinking who will occupy this room or that room. I wish therefore to sell this temple and the marble and print some books.' Yes, so I took up this from his mouth, that he is very fond of books. And he told me personally, 'If you get some money, print books.' Therefore I am stressing on this point—where is book, where is book? So kindly help me. That is my request. Print as many books in as many languages, and distribute throughout the whole world. Then Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement will automatically increase."

The next morning, however, while walking on Venice Beach, Śrīla Prabhupāda delivered an extraordinary ultimatum. Surrounded by devotees, he walked along, poking the sand softly with his cane. "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 with the mood of their spiritual master. 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 rightly. Besides, it was illogical. The press had only just opened. The artists didn't even have lights in their room. Now seemed the right moment to tell Śrīla Prabhupāda their plan

for more efficient production. Rāmeśvara stepped forward.

“Śrīla Prabhupāda,” he began, “we’ve been meeting about this, and now that the press is finally here and installed, 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 Rādhāballabha were walking together beside Śrīla Prabhupāda. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami and Brahmānanda Swami walked on the 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 leaders started looking over at Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha, who glanced at each other.

“You have to do all the books in two months’ time,” Śrīla Prabhupāda said again. Rāmeśvara had clearly heard it this time. Prabhupāda was serious. Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha stood 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, without anger, but very gravely, he turned to Rāmeśvara and said, “*Impossible* is a word found in the fool’s dictionary.” Rāmeśvara suddenly realized that his whole spiritual life was on the line. If he disbelieved now, or said “impossible,” it would mean that he had no faith in Kṛṣṇa’s representative, no faith in the power of God. He had to throw away his material estimations and rational common sense.

While Rāmeśvara stood speechless, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued walking, the other devotees hurrying to catch up with him. Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha also caught up but now the whole mood of the walk shifted. Everyone looked at the BBT managers as if to say, “Come on. Stop doubting. You have to do it.” Rāmeśvara asked Śrīla Prabhupāda if he could discuss

it with the other devotees at the press and then meet with Śrīla Prabhupāda. “Oh yes,” Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, “whatever is required.” Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha then dropped out of the morning walk, while Śrīla Prabhupāda and the others continued down the beach. The two devotees questioned each other.

“Do you think it’s even remotely possible?” Rāmeśvara asked.

“Well, what do *you* think?” Rādhāballabha replied.

“Let’s go back and have a meeting and see what we can do.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda returned to the temple and toured the new press facilities—two buildings, a graphic arts building and an editorial building. While walking on a second-floor outside walkway, Śrīla Prabhupāda looked down and noticed a two-foot strip of bare earth running between the two buildings. Annoyed, Śrīla Prabhupāda said that they should plant grass there and not waste space. In the layout room a transparency of baby Kṛṣṇa carrying Nanda Mahārāja’s shoes was on the light table. Śrīla Prabhupāda began laughing when he saw it. He also saw the new typesetting equipment, which worked fifty times faster than the previous equipment. Devotees demonstrated it for Prabhupāda, as he remarked that in India he had dreamed of having a press like this.

In Rādhāballabha’s office Śrīla Prabhupāda sat at the manager’s chair and looked up at the large bulletin board that showed all the steps in the production of a book. Śrīla Prabhupāda laughed and said, “For someone like me this makes it even more complicated.” Some small children had squeezed into the office, and Śrīla Prabhupāda patted one of them on the head. “Oh, you’re not in *guru-kula*?” The boy replied no, and another devotee said, “His father took him out. He doesn’t want him to go to *guru-kula*.”

Prabhupāda said, “Oh? Are you your father’s son, or

mine?" The boy, about five years old, did not say anything. Prabhupāda, rubbing him on the head and on the back of the neck, repeated, "Are you your father's son or mine?" The boy looked up and said, "Yours." And all the devotees cheered, "Jaya!" while Prabhupāda laughed.

Śrīla Prabhupāda saw all the equipment and walked into every room in the two buildings. All this modern technology was fine, he concluded, as long as they could use it to meet the deadline of seventeen books in two months; otherwise, their equipment was like the technology of the material scientists who tried uselessly to go to the moon.

All through the morning program in the temple, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha tried to control their minds, but all they could think of was how to arrange for the production of seventeen volumes in two months. By the time they met with the press workers, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha had become convinced that it could be done. It was as if some mystical power was going to descend. Somehow or other it could be done. So they presented the plan and convinced the other workers.

"It can be done," Rāmeśvara said later, talking with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"Hmmm," Śrīla Prabhupāda replied.

But Rāmeśvara said, there were some conditions. For the Bengali editing to go smoothly, the editors would have to be able to regularly consult Śrīla Prabhupāda. He replied that he was prepared to stay in Los Angeles as long as it took and that he would make time to see the editors. The next condition was that the painters would work as quickly as humanly possible, but that the paintings might not be of the best quality. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that he understood, "But a blind uncle is better than no uncle." He said they should put in the book whatever paintings they could get, and if necessary new paintings could replace the old ones in future editions. Another condition was that the artists would also have many questions about how to

illustrate *Caitanya-līlā*, and Prabhupāda agreed to make time for answering their questions. He also agreed to allow the use of photographs of holy places in India connected with *Caitanya-līlā* to supplement the paintings. With Śrīla Prabhupāda agreeing to stay and make time for queries, Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha felt they had a chance. They left Śrīla Prabhupāda's room, running down the stairs. The race was on.

Work in all departments went on twenty-four hours daily. Most workers attended *maṅgala-ārati* at 4:30 A.M., but after that they worked all day, taking only one meal and staying up late at night, chanting their prescribed rounds of *japa* whenever possible. It was as if nothing else existed except the task before them. Additional editors, painters, photographers, indexers, typists, proofreaders, and layout men were needed aside from those gathered in Los Angeles, and calls to other parts of ISKCON brought immediate response as devotees flew in to join the regular press crew.

The commercial printers also cooperated. Although astounded at the demand, they wanted the business. Kingsport Press in Tennessee, one of America's largest, took the job, agreeing to push back all other assignments and free their presses and bindery to work around the clock. For a month or two they would do just Bhaktivedanta books. A paper company in New York agreed to supply the paper on credit in time to meet all the deadlines. Bhārgava dāsa, a BBT photographer, flew immediately to India to photograph the places of *Caitanya-līlā*, especially in Bengal and Orissa.

Aside from physical and mental strain, some of the main difficulties were for the editors and the artists to cope with the managers' practice of taking work out of their hands before they had finished. An artist would fall asleep around midnight in front of an unfinished painting, and it would be taken to another artist to finish. Rādhāballabha had arranged the deadline and kept to it at all costs. Proofreaders saw manuscripts come in and out

of their hands so fast they could hardly bear it. It was not unusual to see devotees asleep over their desks or typewriters or lying beside their canvases at two or three in the morning.

Jayādvaīta, the main BBT editor, was assigned half of the manuscript and Hayagrīva the other half. Although accustomed to regularly editing Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, Jayādvaīta had never worked on so much at once with so little time. He regretted that although Śrīla Prabhupāda was there in Los Angeles, while others got to see him, the press workers had to stay in their offices and constantly work. But he also found it very ecstatic. He liked the feeling of increased life in the press. It was the feeling that everyone had to give all their energy for Śrīla Prabhupāda. There was a special happiness in working in this marathon.

Rādhāballabha was especially active, going from one department to another. He would come into Jayādvaīta's room at two A.M., wake him, and hand him twenty pages to edit. Jayādvaīta would then throw some water on his face and start his work. Although the press devotees rarely saw Śrīla Prabhupāda while he was in Los Angeles, they felt a very special connection with him. They were carrying out his order, which was the same order he had received from *his* spiritual master—to produce Kṛṣṇa conscious books. Anyway, Jayādvaīta reasoned, since as editor his main relationship with Prabhupāda was on the printed page rather than in person, it was not unusual to associate with Prabhupāda in this way. And now that association was being increased and intensified.

Sītā-devī dāsī was a typist with the Spanish BBT who was working with a small staff to turn out the Spanish *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Śrīla Prabhupāda had previously expressed displeasure that this book was taking too long to produce, so when the American BBT flung themselves into a marathon, the Spanish BBT began their own marathon to finish the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Like the others, Sītā worked until one or two in the morning,

then chanted her *japa* and attended the *maṅgala-ārati*, although she could hardly keep her eyes opened. Then she would take a few hours' rest, take breakfast—the one meal of the day—and then go back to work until one or two the next morning. By associating with the devotees working on *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, she got to hear nectarean new stories about Lord Caitanya.

As the days and nights passed, Sītā felt exhausted but very happy. Although she had never associated intimately with Śrīla Prabhupāda, she now felt privileged by her connection with him through her service at the BBT. A few press devotees were sometimes allowed to attend Prabhupāda's *darśana* in the garden. Sītā went one evening. Śrīla Prabhupāda wasn't talking about the book production, but she felt he was thanking them for sacrificing a little for the sake of his books. Although the press workers missed different events, like the play the devotees performed for Śrīla Prabhupāda, Sītā didn't feel she was really missing anything, because the service was so satisfying. When she felt particularly strained, she would talk with other devotees, and they would encourage her.

Yamarāja, the chief layout man, pasted up the galleys of the text and scaled the photos for final production. He also had worked on Śrīla Prabhupāda's books for years and was happy that his sometimes routine work had now become an exciting challenge. Śrīla Prabhupāda was testing the press devotees to see how much they wanted to serve Kṛṣṇa, and Yamarāja was glad to see everyone so enthusiastically responding. No one complained, and no one felt exploited. They worked willingly because they understood how important the books were. They were learning how potent Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction was, and by executing that instruction they gained enthusiasm and deeper convictions.

Yamarāja would rest a few hours, get up, work all day, rest again, etc. He knew that although the goal was almost impossible, it was a chance to please Śrīla Prabhupāda. The working

conditions were nice; pressure was there but few distractions. No one bothered him in idle talk, so he could just keep working.

Muralīdhara was one of the main artists. In his mid-twenties, he had been studying art his whole life. Although before coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness he had quit art for meditation, now he found he could do both at the same time. Śrīla Prabhupāda, after seeing a drawing Muralīdhara had done of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, had personally requested him to paint.

Muralīdhara found the marathon difficult because he was a perfectionist in his work, and accepting a lesser standard was hard. But the paintings had to be done quickly, and he also had to help newer artists who had come to join them. Kṛṣṇa was testing him, he felt. When other artists had their work taken away from them for failing to meet a deadline, Muralīdhara would finish their work. For the other artists this was a great strain and surrender of ego. Muralīdhara also felt strained as he had to mix his style of painting with others' styles. Each artist was forced to consider his painting not as his personal product but as the result of a cooperative effort. Muralīdhara considered that since his spiritual master needed a certain amount of paintings, then disciples simply had to produce them—quickly. None of the BBT artists were able to indulge in the luxury of thinking, “This is my particular style that I will offer to Kṛṣṇa.” Muralīdhara took it as a special time.

At first Muralīdhara had thought of the marathon as ridiculous. How could the devotees give up their regulation? He was already thinking that the reason the press had fallen behind in production was because too many devotees had neglected their regulated life, especially chanting their rounds. So he resolved to chant *japa* strictly even while handling the deadline pressure.

On one occasion Muralīdhara was asked to bring one of his paintings to Śrīla Prabhupāda. The painting was of Śākṣī Gopāla, the Deity of Kṛṣṇa who had walked thousands of miles

to please His devotees. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that Kṛṣṇa's head was too big and His hair too long. Muralīdhara went back and corrected it. In the course of that exchange, Muralīdhara felt a very profound and close relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Gaurī-devī dāsī was a book distributor convalescing after an operation. Since she was artistic, she was drafted to paint pictures during the press marathon. Although it seemed to her an impossible task, she understood that it must be done somehow. As she worked, she felt Śrīla Prabhupāda's presence, as if he might just walk in at any moment and see their work, just as he had actually done when he had toured the press. In his room Prabhupāda would look at the preliminary sketches of each painting and approve them, and so Gaurī felt an increased sense of working to please him. She wasn't considered one of the best artists, and her painting of the Guṇḍicā temple seemed amateurish to some of the senior artists. But when Rāmeśvara, accompanied by a couple of artists, showed the painting to Śrīla Prabhupāda, the verdict from Prabhupāda was, "Oh, this is very nice." And when the artists pointed out the many technical errors in the painting, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, "A blind uncle is better than none."

Gaurī had never before been so absorbed in her work. She now painted eighteen hours a day, completely absorbed and involved in Lord Caitanya's pastimes, such as the passing away of Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Śrīla Prabhupāda appreciated the devotional qualities in the paintings, Gaurī realized, and she tried to work in that spirit. She kept her brushes and paints clean, thinking, "I'm dealing with Kṛṣṇa," and praying that Kṛṣṇa would kindly manifest Himself on the canvas.

To the press workers, Rādhāballabha seemed to be omnipresent. He slept little and worked hard, encouraging the workers, bringing them whatever they needed. He begged and coerced them to complete their quotas. One afternoon he took a break and dropped by Śrīla Prabhupāda's room while Śrīla

Prabhupāda was sitting with a group of devotees, listening to a tape of himself singing *bhajan*s accompanied by harmonium, drum, and *karatālas*. Śrīla Prabhupāda sat with closed eyes, shaking his head in meditative ecstasy.

Suddenly Śrīla Prabhupāda opened his eyes and saw Rādhāballabha there. “I am keeping you,” Prabhupāda said, and again closed his eyes and listened to the music. One of the devotees spoke up and said, “Oh, no, no, no, Prabhupāda, you’re not bothering us.” But another devotee turned to Rādhāballabha and said, “I think Prabhupāda was talking to you.” Then Rādhāballabha realized what Prabhupāda was doing. Prabhupāda knew they were trying to do the books under a very tight deadline, and he was telling Rādhāballabha to go back to work. By Prabhupāda’s subtle remark, Rādhāballabha took it that Prabhupāda was actually saying, “What are you doing sitting here looking at me? Get back to work.”

The marathon not only tested the endurance but the sincerity of the disciples. From this challenge they could clearly see that the business of the disciple is not to find excuses for the spiritual master to explain why his order cannot be carried out but to take that order so seriously that the disciple does not consider the possibility of *not* doing it or of changing or modifying it. When the spiritual master gives an order, the disciple does not modify the order; he modifies his life. He modifies his consciousness for carrying out that order. The general human tendency is that when the spiritual master gives an order that in some way disrupts our way of thinking and acting, we try to find out how to modify the order, or arrive at a modified understanding of the order, so that we don’t have to do exactly what the spiritual master says. But the real business of the disciple is to make whatever adjustments necessary to do what the spiritual master wants. A disciple shouldn’t hold back or look for excuses. And when he surrenders in this way, his satisfaction is guaranteed.

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda did not stay in Los Angeles for the entire month of June, the marathon continued, and soon the first books began returning from the printers. Advance copies of five volumes of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* arrived. When Rāmeśvara and Rādhāballabha drove to the airport at two in the morning to pick them up, they stood at the air freight counter half asleep. They received the books, rushed back to the temple, and arrived just in time to place the books on the altar to offer to the Deities at the *maṅgala-ārati*.

None of the other devotees knew the books had arrived, and when the Deity doors opened, three hundred devotees were thrilled to behold five new volumes of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* with gold-colored covers adorning the marble altars. The miracle was taking place! Seeing the books and taking part in the *kīrtana* before the Deities, many devotees shed ecstatic tears. The *ārati* was filled with spiritual emotion. Although many press devotees had come to *maṅgala-ārati* exhausted, they all began dancing and chanting with spontaneous enthusiasm, especially while singing again and again the *mantra* to Śrīla Prabhupāda, *namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī pracāriṇe*: “Our obeisances unto you, our spiritual master, the servant of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī. You are so kindly teaching the message of Lord Caitanya and delivering these Western countries, which are full of voidism and impersonalism.”

Lord Caitanya, in the form of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, was ready to flood the Western world, and the press devotees felt proud to be able to serve as Prabhupāda’s assistants. It was a sweet realization for a devotee to know that he was actually assisting the mission of Lord Caitanya to flood the world with love of God.

After *maṅgala-ārati*, devotees crowded around to see the books. Jayādvaīta looked through each book with a professional eye, judging the color printing, the binding quality, the print. He knew they had made compromises they wouldn’t have made under ordinary conditions. Yet even from a professional point

of view he thought the books were exceptional. There were probably presses that had done a larger volume, but for a small group of amateurs the feat was nothing short of miraculous. Muralīdhara looked at the paintings with mixed feelings of ecstasy and dissatisfaction. In fact he was never satisfied with any of his paintings—everything could be done better—but it was done; the authorized *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* was coming out. And basically, everything was all right.

At the end of two months the BBT fulfilled their promise to Prabhupāda and sent the seventeenth and last volume of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* off to the printer. On August 21, on the occasion of Lord Balarāma's appearance day, they wired Śrīla Prabhupāda in New Delhi. The telegram read, "By the mercy of Lord Balarāma, Nityānanda, the last volume of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is leaving today for the printer. By your mercy and divine order it is done." On August 31 the devotees received the final volumes of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. The seventeen-volume set was now complete. A devotee was dispatched to India with a full set of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* to present to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

On September 1 the books reached Prabhupāda at the Krishna-Balarāma temple in Vṛndāvana. Upon seeing the books Śrīla Prabhupāda was as excited as his young devotees in Los Angeles had been. He looked through them page-by-page, picture-by-picture. As he took each book he would place it to his head, honoring it as worshipable. On the same day he wrote a letter.

My dear Ramesvar & Co.,

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter dated August 31, 1975 and the six new volumes of Chaitanya Charitamrita. So the books have increased, and they are all very nicely done. I think I may stop all touring and just sit down here for translating. You have taken seriously the publishing and also the distribution of these books, and that is the success of our mission. You have taken

seriously this work and I know that my guru maharaj is pleased with you because he wanted this. So by your endeavor you will all go back home back to Godhead.

Let me first of all finish Srimad Bhagawatam, then we can take up others. So I wish to also thank you for your cooperation. Because of your cooperation, therefore it has been possible. For me to publish alone the first three volumes, I had to take so much trouble, but by the cooperation of you American boys and girls now this has become possible.

You promised on Vyas Puja Day, and it has come, although Nitai has come a little late just after our ceremony. Anyway, what you have done is good. Nitai has said he has brought advanced verses for 7th Canto, and this will help me. Nitai was to come on the 20th but he has come with the substance, so I am very much pleased.

The pictures are all wonderful. The artists teased me with so many questions, about this and that, but they have done nicely, so it is all right. So you all go on with your work, and I will pray to Krsna for your ever advancement in His service.

I hope this meets you all in good health.

Prabhupāda felt—just as he had written in the concluding words of the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*—that his spiritual master was very pleased to see the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* presented in English. And sincere followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would also work to distribute these beautiful books to the learned circles and, as far as possible, to all people. Lord Caitanya was the most merciful form of Kṛṣṇa, and His teachings were especially intended for the present age. His teachings, in fact, offered the only way out of the darkness of Kali-yuga. At Śrīla Prabhupāda's merciful insistence his disciples were responding; they were becoming empowered to produce and deliver the teachings of Lord Caitanya to every town and village in the world. Kali-yuga is the age of darkness, just as winter is the season of cold. So it would not be easy to

convince the stubborn materialists of Kali-yuga. It was a fight. But Lord Kṛṣṇa had already promised, “Arjuna, declare it boldly that My devotee will never be vanquished.” By printing and distributing Prabhupāda’s books, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement would be victorious.

Appendix

Exerpts from Letters And Lectures by Śrīla Prabhupāda

June 2, 1968

During the time of my Guru Maharaj's passing away, his last instruction was to me that "You try to preach whatever you have learned from me in English, and that will do good to you and the people who will hear you." This instruction was given to me in 1936, and I started this paper in 1944. So during my householder life I was printing this paper and almost distributing free, and some of them were paying me subscription, and some of them not. But I was trying my best at my cost. You have seen the old articles about my tendency in this regard, and please try to follow this principle and improve the condition of this paper as you think best. You have got full liberty to make it acceptable to the general public, keeping pace with our principles of Krishna Consciousness. And as I have told you several times that I am awaiting for the day when this paper will take the shape of Life magazine or similar other magazines, in the matter of its popularity. From India this paper has been brought to America, with this hope that American young boys like you will take interest in spreading this sublime gospel of Krishna Consciousness.

August 8, 1968

Regarding collection from the public, I think you should take special license or permission from the authority because as a religious society we can collect in such a way. Simply the authorities have to be informed that we are a serious institute for spreading God consciousness, and that we are not professional beggars. This method of chanting in the park, distributing Prasadam, and selling our literature and making some collection, is just the way by which we can make both propaganda and maintain our institution. So this process must be continued with necessary sanction from the authority. I think there will be no difficulty in getting such sanction.

January 20, 1969

But perhaps the best news of all is that soon we shall have our own press for printing Krishna Consciousness literature in the German language. Our life and soul is kirtan and presenting literature to the public at large, and I can understand that Krishna is dictating to you from within how to carry this out successfully. I think that translation work should be done on such articles that may be included in a German edition of *Back to Godhead*, as well as my *Introduction to Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*. I am wondering if there are people there who can speak English with you. Please inform me on this matter.

May 31, 1969

Concentrate on organizing sankirtan very nicely and try to sell *Back to Godhead*. That is our main propaganda.

July 16, 1969

We want to distribute as many issues of BTG as possible, so the more you can print and distribute, the more my Guru Maharaj will be pleased to see his great dream being fulfilled.

July 22, 1969

Regarding Copenhagen, if there is possibility, we wish to open many such branches. But your main business at present is Sankirtan and selling literature, and this is similarly very important work. You write that you are interested in learning how to print, and if you have time for this, then Jayagovinda can instruct you. I wish that all of our Krishna Consciousness literatures may be available to men of all languages throughout the world, so whatever assistance you can give in this connection is always appreciated. But your main business at the present moment is to propagate Sankirtan to all the people of Germany. This is also very great service.

July 28, 1969

Our first important business is to hold Sankirtan as many times as possible. The next important business is publication work. Recently I received one letter from Shivananda that he is also thinking nicely to improve our press work. I hope in the future you shall be able to start a regular press in Germany for printing our books and literatures. I have heard that in Germany the press machines are very good and cheap. So if you jointly can think of starting a press there, that will be a great success. So far as doing business by importing Indian goods, that is a nice idea, but it is secondary. We should not deviate much of our time for any business manipulations. Our main business is Sankirtan. You will be very glad to hear that in New York last week they collected \$1,000 and sold BTG at a rate of 200 per day on the weekend days. Similarly we have got good report from Boston that they are collecting \$50-\$60 daily and selling about 60-70 copies of BTG. And what to speak of Los Angeles? So if we can organize our Sankirtan movement, there will be no scarcity of money; rest assured. But we may do some business which we require for ourselves. Otherwise, if you divert your attention for a separate business in Indian goods, that will

not be a very good idea. It may be done conveniently as a secondary engagement, but the primary engagement should be as above mentioned.

August 2, 1969

Regarding your order of BTG, on such matters you should negotiate with Tamal Krishna. But one thing is that we are now stepping up publication from 20,000 to 25,000 per month, so we must likewise step up our sales on Sankirtan Party. In Philadelphia, Subal has reported that simply by standing on the street corners wearing our robes, automatically many, many people come up to enquire and purchase BTG from them, and they are selling about 80 copies per day. My Guru Maharaj always stressed the importance of distributing this Krishna Consciousness literature, so try to do it as far as possible.

September 8, 1969

You write that you are introducing our books in a new bookstore; similarly try to introduce this valuable literature in many such bookstores in the Los Angeles area.

September 14, 1969

One thing I can suggest is that we are now getting our own press, and as we have got so many books, if you can arrange for the selling of these books, there will be no scarcity of money either for father or the son.

October 8, 1969

I am pleased to note that you are so seriously considering how to organize the printing of our German Krishna Consciousness literature. So far as sales are concerned, if you don't sell, then how you will be able to maintain your establishment? If you want to maintain a nice place simply by all working hard—in the beginning that is all right—but if you cannot maintain it by selling literature and making collections, then that is

not a good idea. How to sell our magazines and literatures you have to find out means and ways. On the whole, everywhere we are arranging to sell our BTG and maintaining our centers on this sale. So what is the defect that you cannot sell? It is printed in the German language, and it is presenting new and sublime ideas.

November 6, 1969

So continue to push on as you are now doing and as far as possible distribute our books and magazines. Now that our press is ready in Boston, we have more than one dozen books which are ready to be printed, so with your help I wish to overflow the marketplaces with our literatures. Now people are reading all kinds of nonsense books, and thus their reading capacity is helping to pave their way through the cycles of birth and death. If they will simply take to reading this transcendental literature we are presenting, the same reading capacity will elevate them to the highest perfection of spiritual life. So this is very important task we are doing, and all of you push forward in Colorado with increased enthusiasm.

April 16, 1970

BTG is my life and soul. Please therefore try to distribute BTG as many as it is possible. I started this magazine in 1944 in my householder life. I was spending Rs. 300 to 400 (\$300 to \$400, in your exchange), and I was distributing this magazine without any consideration how much I was getting in return. Practically the whole money was spent without any return. But ten years after, from 1954 to 1959, the struggle was very hard because at that time I had no money and all alone I was editing, publishing, and securing money for publication. So it was a great struggle. My ambition was that I would publish BTG in huge quantity so that people may understand the transcendental blessings of Lord Caitanya.

Now, since I have come to your country, I have entrusted

the matter to my beloved American boys and girls, and I wish to see that this magazine is published and distributed in the American way like 'Reader's Digest,' 'Life,' etc., published in millions and distributed all over the world. Actually the position of BTG should be more important than any mundane magazine because it contains the quintessence of human necessities.

May 18, 1970

Actually we do not want to disturb the law and order of the state, that is not our business. But the Vedic principle to receive contribution by the devotees has to be allowed. Properly speaking we preachers are not supposed to work. Therefore we have got the right to take contribution for executing our activities.

July 1, 1970

I am very glad to know that your sales of our literature and books are very good and improving more. It is natural that such distribution of literatures should increase as the people hear more about Krsna Consciousness Movement, so distributions of our books and literatures is our major propaganda program.

July 27, 1970

After taking sannyas I was more engaged in writing my books without any attempt to construct temples or to make disciples like my other Godbrothers in India. I was not very much interested in these matters because my Guru Maharaj liked very much publication of books than constructing big big temples and creating some neophyte disciples. So I have decided to retire and divert attention to book writing and nothing more . . . Therefore if you simply print my books in the Press incessantly, that will give me great delight. I think I shall now stop all other ac-

tivities except publishing of my books.

September 13, 1970

I am so glad to learn that you are having nice success in placing my books in the libraries and in schools and colleges. That is very much to my satisfaction, so please continue your program for placing these Krsna consciousness literatures in all the libraries and schools and colleges. I am sure that this will revolutionize the thinking of the thoughtful men of your country as well as the students and professors and the ultimate end will be to save the world from the clutches of material illusory activities which is now causing havoc everywhere.

November 4, 1970

Your plan to increase our propaganda activities in the colleges and high schools is very nice, and it is my desire that every American boy and girl will receive a Krsna conscious education through my books. You have a very great responsibility to print and distribute these books. I want that each and every one of my centers should be fully stocked with all of my books.

November 30, 1970

My Guru Maharaja used to say, 'Don't worry about money. Do something nice for Krishna and money will come.' So we should always be thinking how to distribute the message of Krishna, and surely He will give us facility. Even an ordinary man, if he wants publicity, then he gives so much money for the propaganda work. Similarly, Krishna is not poor. He can supply any amount for the devotees who are engaged in broadcasting His glories.

January 21, 1971

I am very glad to learn that you are trying to distribute our books. Please continue with this program as it is so very

important. Especially try and place our books in the schools and libraries. Our literatures are for the intelligent class also.

February 17, 1971

I cannot stress this point enough that we must handle this publication of *Back To Godhead* very nicely, for it is one of the most important aspects of our society.

March 18, 1971

Anyone reading our Krsna book, *Nectar of Devotion*, *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* and *Bhagavad Gita* will certainly become a Krsna conscious person. Someway or other we have to push these literatures, whether through schools, colleges, libraries, membership or ordinary sales. In your country practically there is no illiteracy. Everyone can read and write. So when they will read Krsna book, certainly they will enjoy this as a story or as philosophy, morality, religion, etc. and gradually they will become perfect in Krsna consciousness.

March 25, 1971

Actually we want that every American have a copy of BTG in his hand.

May 17, 1971

In my heart I want that Krsna book, in small or large form, should be distributed in every home.

May 17, 1971

That is the immediate important business—how to distribute these books all over the world. So far as the per cent of discount, that will depend on your discretion. But quickly distribute all the books as soon as they are received.

June 21, 1971

Yes, my order still stands. Please organize BTG distribution and do it nicely. Sankirtan Party and distribution of our magazines and books is our real program. Other things are secondary. So during this summer time you should vitalize this program of Sankirtan and book distribution vigorously. Attention diverted to business is not a very good sign. We should give all our energy for distributing BTG.

December 28, 1971

I am very pleased to see that the foreign literature is being produced nicely under your enthusiastic supervision. Just try to increase more and more our output of such books and magazines in many languages—Otherwise, how will preaching go on in these places? So if somehow or other you can produce profuse books in foreign languages, then I think you will be able to improve the situation there. If there are ample books, everything else will succeed. Practically our Society is built on books. One book is not very impressive. Still, a blind uncle is better than no uncle at all, so it is very nice that one book has appeared, and that BTG is appearing at least several issues in other languages. But now try to produce at least four or five new books per year in several languages, plus regularly every month BTG. That will be your success. Apply yourself fully to this very great responsibility of producing numerous books in foreign languages.

January 2, 1972

Whatever strength our movement has now got is due in large part to the enthusiasm we have had to distribute our literatures profusely throughout the world. I have got very, very encouraging reports how my books are being distributed vigorously.

January 10, 1972

I am pleased that your distribution of literatures is also increasing. Go on giving this matter your full attention. The more books we sell, the more we ourselves advance in Krsna consciousness.

February 28, 1972

One thing, you say that you are too busy printing books so that you are unable to distribute them. So what is the use of printing if we are unable to distribute? There must be good programme for distribution in New York also. I think New York City is a very very good field for selling our books, so I think if you increase by placing emphasis on this point of distribution, then our this Krsna consciousness movement will be strong on two sides instead of on one side of printing only, and then progress will be rapid. Unless people can have access to reading our books, why print them?

April 24, 1972

Don't bother too much about financial matters, but your first concern should be book and magazine distribution. We have to increase our preaching propensity. That is our main business. Your reports of book distribution are very, very encouraging. The more you distribute our books and magazines, that is solid work.

May 2, 1972

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

become devotees, that will change the world.

December 31, 1972

I am convinced that if you simply glorify Krsna and our books in the best descriptive manner, that anyone and everyone, no matter even atheistic or otherwise, they can be convinced to purchase. Of course that is a great art and not everyone can do it, but gradually by practice of preaching in this way, striving to so much present a wonderful picture of our books to the people, gradually you will master the trick how to do it.

January 5, 1973

I am very much encouraged by hearing from you that the distribution of books and literatures in Vancouver has increased greatly. I am getting the same report from all places in the world, wherever we are working, and this is extremely pleasing to me. I never thought this Krsna Consciousness movement would have been so successful. Actually the whole thing rests upon these books. There is no such literature anywhere in the world as our books. So go on selling more and more books and magazines, that is our main business. Thank you very much for helping me in this way.

January 9, 1973

Our primary business is to sell these transcendental literatures profusely all over the world. We shall judge the thing by its result, not by its means. But at the same time, we must avoid irritating anyone, or disappointing anyone later by cheating them or telling big lies which become detected.

January, 1973

I am so much pleased upon all the boys and girls in Los Angeles and all over the world who are understanding and appreciating this unique quality of our transcendental literature

and voluntarily they are going out to distribute despite all circumstances of difficulty. By this effort alone they are assured to go back to home, back to Godhead.

February 14, 1973

I am very much pleased to hear of your increased book distribution and it gives me great pleasure to hear of your eagerness to distribute my literature. Through the distribution of this literature we can completely annihilate all the bogus yogi groups in the world. Of this fact I am sure. Therefore there is no need for us to directly attack these charlatans but simply by this distribution of books the sunlight of Krsna consciousness will prevail . . . So my request to you is to go on in this way with more enthusiasm. This is the key. Always remain enthusiastic and inspire others, and your life will be glorious and at the end you are sure to go back to home, back to Godhead.

July 27, 1973

It is very encouraging to note that the work on our B.T.G. and other books is going on. Actually, producing and distributing books is our most important engagement; all other engagements culminate in this one end—distribution of books.

December 23, 1973

When I was alone in your New York, I was thinking, “Who will listen to me in this horrible, sinful place? Alright, I shall stay a little longer, at least I can distribute a few of my books, that is something.” But Krsna was all along preparing something I could not see, and He brought you to me, one by one, sincere American boys and girls, to be trained up for doing the work of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Now I can see that it is a miracle. Otherwise, your city of New York, one single old man, with only a few books to sell for barely getting eatables, how he can survive, what to speak of introducing a God-conscious movement

for saving humankind. That is Krsna's miracle.

April 16, 1974

The more we distribute books and literature, the more we become understood by the people about our mission, and the more they understand our mission they become advanced on the path of liberation from all problems of life. My thanks to all of you.

May 8, 1974

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

May 9, 1974

I received one rumour that the sankirtana parties in the U.S. would be stopped by political repression and lack of money by the people. Some so-called devotee was thinking like that, but you can assure all your men that I have great hope for Krsna consciousness in America. And there is no question of repression provided we go on sincerely.

June 9, 1974

It is good news that you are finding engagement in distributing my books all day in Hawaii. So there is no question of taking other engagement; distribution of my books is the highest kind of preaching and thus the best engagement.

August 8, 1974

It is very encouraging that many professors have purchased books for themselves and are considering to order them for their students. I very much like this program of the standing orders. Try to increase it up to 50,000 such orders for the libraries.

August 13, 1974

Regarding the Society's leaders emphasizing business, you should understand what is the meaning of business. Business means to help the preaching. Preaching needs financial help; otherwise, we have no need for business. So far I understand, our book business is sufficient to support our movement. I do not want the preaching to be at the expense of managing. Manager must also be a preacher, otherwise who will want to follow him?

August 13, 1974

Regarding sales figures, please endeavor in this way. The sales figures—this is the only solace in my life. When I hear that my books are selling so nicely, I become energetic like a young man . . .

September 8, 1974

Your letter is very much pleasing to me with the report of the book distribution. Whenever I get report of my books selling I feel strength. Even now in this weakened condition I have got strength from your report. You should know that in this work you have Krsna's blessings... So go on with your work there in America and distribute my books to these libraries. This is very encouraging to me, to write more books.

October 11, 1974

Make program to distribute our books all over the world.

Our books are being appreciated by learned circles, so we should take advantage. Whatever progress we have made, it is simply due to distributing these books. So go on, and do not divert your mind for a moment from this.

October 19, 1974

My request is that you print as much as possible and distribute profusely. That is the great success of our movement... Continue this work. Whenever there is any publication in any language, it enlivens me 100 times.

October 23, 1974

Regarding sankirtana and book distribution, both should go on, but book distribution is more important. It is brhad kirtana. In Tokyo airport one boy had come up to me asking if he could speak with me. I said yes and then he asked me, "Swami, where do you get all that knowledge in your books?" Of course, it is Krsna's knowledge, not mine. But the effect is there. So for wider kirtana, book distribution is better. Book distribution is also kirtana. Regarding making hundreds of travelling parties, yes do that please as far as possible.

October 24, 1974

These statistics are very nice. I like very much to receive the report of my book sales. I think it also gives encouragement to the devotees who distribute the books. Here at Mayapur my Guru Maharaja was printing one paper. It was selling for only a few paise. Sometimes whenever one brahmacary would go to Nabadwipa and sell even a few copies, I would see my Guru Maharaja become very much pleased. Even if the brahmacary was not a very important member, my Guru Maharaja would become very, very pleased with him. He personally instructed me that books are more important than big temples. At Radha Kunda he told me that "Since constructing the big temple at

Bagh Bazar (Calcutta), there have been so many difficulties; our men are envious over who will live in which room. I think it would be better to take off all the marble and sell it and print books." He told me this personally. So I am always emphasizing book distribution. It is better kirtana. It is better than chanting. Of course, chanting should not stop, but book distribution is the best kirtana.

November 12, 1974

Regarding Gurukula, they are in financial difficulty, so introduce book distribution. Sankirtana and book distribution should be pushed side by side, and there will be no difficulties. That is our experience.

November 12, 1974

This book selling is the real preaching of our cult. Especially when you sell Caitanya-caritamrta and Srimad-Bhagavatam. They will understand what we mean by reading these books. So you organize freely. You are the incarnation of book distribution. So take the leadership and do the needful. I pray that by Krsna's grace you will have all success. Yes, you are correct that by distributing books, that income will be sufficient for all programs.

November 21, 1974

Regarding the book distribution, apart from our books, the Communist Party has become popular simply by distributing their literatures. I know in Calcutta the Communist agents were inviting friends and reading their literature. The Russians never came to India, but by distributing literature in every language they get a pretty good number of followers. So if it is possible for ordinary, third class, mundane literature, why should not our transcendental literature create devotees all over the world? I see practically how our books and magazines are becoming

popular in your country. So there is good potency for pushing on these literatures very vigorously. So organize this propaganda work very carefully and our movement will be very much successful by introducing literature from village to village. Lord Caitanya wants this, so carry out His order . . . So go on with your preaching work solidly. Krsna will be pleased and Caitanya Mahaprabhu will be kind. He is already kind. You simply have to go village to village, and your life will be perfect.

November 28, 1974

You know that I also was selling my books in this way to the schools and colleges and libraries. I would write, then publish, and then distribute without any help. So how much pleased I am with you that you are helping me in this mission. So go on with your work. Krsna will help you. You are sincere in your purpose. This is very important engagement of visiting the professors and the colleges and libraries, and getting the standing orders. This is the most important engagement. Do not doubt this.

December 12, 1974

Regarding introducing records in the USA, yes, why not, but do not minimize the book selling. Better if a different party is engaged in record selling, so that the book selling may not be affected. Both book selling and record selling are good, but book selling is better and permanent. Record selling is temporary . . . So concentrate on publishing books as far as possible and sell.

December 12, 1974

So German people are not coming to join this movement? So far I have seen your German devotees, they are very enthusiastic and steady workers. So if you get some good souls to join, then there will be no difficulty for selling the books.

So it doesn't matter if we are selling more or less, so far the publications are there. We may sell or not, but the books must be there.

December 18, 1974

Your sankirtana reports are very encouraging, especially that one girl, Gauri dasi, who has set an all ISKCON women's record of 108 big books. This is very wonderful. Formerly this would have been considered impossible, but now by Krsna's grace everything is becoming possible. Encourage them all to increase more and more. Now Tripurari Prabhu is there and he can train the others. This book distribution is the essence of our mission.

December 21, 1974

I think this is the first time in history that ever before so many religious books have sold so popularly. Four thousand books in one day is a very unique figure. Keep distributing as many as possible in huge quantities. This is my pleasure. We must make a large propaganda program for Krsna consciousness by distributing these books everywhere, all over the world. Just like the Communists they are very expert in distributing their literature, their propaganda. At the present moment they are distributing their literature here in India in the different languages and it is quite effective. Therefore we must print thousands and thousands of books and distribute them at the same speed and then we will have a great effect on the mass population of Europe and America. If we can get the masses in the Western countries like Europe and America to become Krsna conscious, then all the rest of the world will follow. That is a fact. So please, I beg you, continue distributing my books in this way and Krsna will pour His blessings upon you all.

December 1974

Ultimately everyone should preach and distribute books

... Book distribution must be given stress always. If you do this sincerely, it is a fact that Krsna will supply everything else ... I follow my Guru Maharaja blindly. I do not know what is the result. So I am stressing on this book distribution. He told me this personally.

January 7, 1975

I have considered the matter of record distribution and have decided that the stress must be on books. Nothing else needs to be sold. If someone hears a record, he will simply think it is a nice magical sound, that's all. But if he reads one book, he will be convinced about spiritual life. That is our success. So stress book distribution more and more.

January 9, 1975

Regarding the controversy about book distribution techniques, you are right. Our occupation must be honest. Everyone should adore our members as honest. If we do something which is deteriorating to the popular sentiments of the public in favor of our movement, that is not good. Somehow or other, we should not become unpopular in the public eye. Dishonest methods (will not be used). They would hamper our reputation all over the world.

June 27, 1975

The only hope is that you distribute books, as much as possible—all of Europe, all America ... it will come some day they will realize what valuable books we have left for the study of the whole world—that will come!

November 9, 1975

Yes, my books should be introduced as regular reading in all courses. There are many evidences of the professors' certificates, so these can be utilized as proof of how our books are being appreciated.

November 20, 1975

As I had ordered you to preach and distribute, so you are doing it. So I am very pleased with your activities. Now continue and increase. Everyone will want our books. We will always have customers. This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy.

November 20, 1975

We shall only do one "business" and that is book selling. That's all. As soon as you become karmis after business, then spiritual life becomes damaged. This business should not be encouraged any more. Doing business and not sankirtan, this is not at all good. Visaya chadiya kabe suddha he'be mana/kabe hama herabo sri vrndavana—"When the mind is completely purified, being freed from material anxieties and desires, then I shall be able to understand Vrndavana and the conjugal love of Radha and Krsna, and then my spiritual life will be successful." One has to engage himself in devotional service, giving up the engagement of manufacturing pounds, shilling, pence. Sankirtan is very good, but grhastas under condition can do other business, only if they give at least 50 percent. But sankirtan is the best "business."

December 7, 1975

I have received the new books in Portuguese and Spanish. They are very nice and the reports of sales are also very encouraging. You print all my books; if you can sell them why not print? Print as much as possible and store them if necessary. But you must pay regularly the BBT loans, that is not to be neglected.

December 18, 1975

Your letter is very, very encouraging to me. I do not know how you are selling so many books. There is no instance in history where religious books were sold with such enthusiasm

and success. Is there any such history? The Christians have spread their teachings all over the world, and they have only one book. So we have got already 40 big books published in English; therefore, if we distribute as you are distributing we cannot even imagine the result.

January 5, 1976

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

January 9, 1976

I was very glad to see how your temple is now amongst the big leaders in book distribution. This is a sure sign of spiritual strength, for where there is preaching there must be life. Please go on increasing more and more the book distribution. You are working in the right direction.

January 12, 1976

That so many people are purchasing our literature indicates that it is being advertised: "Oh, I have got a very nice book." Then their acquaintances want the book also. The book distribution during the 6-day period is transcendental samadhi. They are working in trance, not on the material platform. No common man can work so hard, it is not possible. Working without sleep means no death. Sleeping is dead condition. Your book distribution is really intoxication.

May 4, 1976

We are putting these books for deliberation before the top-most thinkers of human society. Therefore, I have to see that

in all languages all of our books are published. If we strain, and if he takes one book home, some day people will come to understand what valuable knowledge they have received. It is transcendental literature. Nobody can challenge it. It is done so nicely, without any spot, the spotless Purana. Please continue like this, to print books in all languages, for the benefit of suffering, misdirected humanity.

September 18, 1976

I have received today the Spanish edition of Srimad Bhagavatam 1:4. They have printed 75,000 copies. Similarly you should print in the German language as many copies as possible. That is my only life. When I see that there is publication of Srimad Bhagavatam and other books in other languages it gives me life. It is very nice that you will print in Yugoslavian, Hungarian, Polish and Russian . . . You should print more and more books and increase your inventory.

October 4, 1976

The main thing is to distribute books more and more. That remark by the man in Houston is to your credit, that this movement is becoming an epidemic. Actually, everywhere envious people are against this movement, especially communists, because this movement is a threat to them. The main thing is to distribute books! The communist ideas have spread practically all over the world on account of distributing huge amounts of literature, but they have no substance. Introduce Rathayatra very nicely and distribute books.

November 23, 1976

I am very glad to hear how the book distribution is increasing more and more. This is our greatest weapon. The more books are distributed, the more the ignorance of the Age of Kali will be smashed. The world is feeling the weight of this Hare Krsna

Movement, especially in your country. We have to increase this book distribution work more and more to firmly establish this Movement, which is the only hope for the suffering living entities.

December 20, 1976

Your book distribution report is very encouraging. If I see our leaders are enthusiastic, that gives me more enthusiasm. Your suggestion to get new buses is good. I always recommended that. I don't like old vehicles. I think one hundred buses are not sufficient for America. You propose to induce the American people to surrender to Lord Caitanya by expansion of book distribution; that is wanted. When you come to that, that is success. Then you can take charge of the government. And, as soon as in America the Krsna conscious boys are in power the whole world will be changed.

“We are the only hope for the human society to receive real knowledge. And our books are the only real thing. So it may take some time, but one day all this rubbish literature, rubbish philosophy, rubbish culture will be replaced . . . This is my only ambition, that so many people can become enlightened. But they are being deprived of the chance. One day the whole world will appreciate how we have changed the face of the world from darkness to light. This year, book distribution must increase more than double. We have so many plans; we are building Mayapur city, so Krsna must increase our book sales more and more. In the future there will be history of how the Vedic culture was introduced in America. We are actually introducing a new style of life and civilization. Everything should be ideal. Others have never dreamt of such civilization—free life, happy life, no anxiety, and hope, great hope, that we are going back home, back to Godhead. By increasing the selling of books, America, and then the whole world, will become Krsna conscious. All the world is in darkness. The scientists, Darwin, Freud, all in

darkness. This is the only institute that is giving some light. You must be convinced of this in order to preach effectively.”

“We have no other business than to make people happy. By book distribution your country will become happy and prosperous. No cheating, no politics, no personal ambition, not a tinge of personal sense gratification—this is our mission. There are no such things in the Krsna consciousness movement. Our only ambition is to live among the devotees and execute the mission of our predecessors, Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Lord Krsna. You are responding. Your responding means America is responding. If one-fourth of America becomes Vaisnava, the whole world will change. Krsna has given all facilities—good land, education, fabulous prestige. Take this opportunity. This is our ambition. I went to America with this ambition, that the American people would take this Krsna consciousness movement.

“My Guru Maharaja—physically he is not here, but in every action he is there. So I am not going to die. You are my bodies. By your words book distribution will double. Yes, be doubly blessed . . . Don’t you see that this printing is my life? Then do it; otherwise you are killing me. If you don’t arrange this, then you are half-killing me. Either kill me full or give me peace. How do you expect me to have any peace if you don’t organize this? I want to immediately spread Krsna consciousness everywhere. Our unique contribution is Deity worship and large scale distribution of Indian cultural tradition. This is the Krsna consciousness movement.

“If you love me you will not fight. Stay united. Don’t let this become another Gaudiya Math. Maintain the Society in my absence. Do not let it deteriorate. Sometimes it gives me pain that I am in prison (ill) because I am a freedom lover. Out of sentiment for my Guru Maharaja’s order I started in the U.S. with Rs. 40. Still, even in this condition I am trying to write

books, and practically I am whipping them, 'Sell books, sell books.' Lately I am becoming morose because I am becoming tired. So if you all work vigorously to spread Krsna consciousness, then my moroseness will go.

“Religion means direct touch with God. They have no idea what is God, so how can they know about religion? Now it is in your hands. You are resourceful, intelligent; now spread this Krsna philosophy and challenge this Mayavada philosophy. This is a new, historical renaissance. Historians will note this period, how the world was changed....”

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