



Bhakti Vriksha Training Module

Srila Prabhupada Ashraya
Guru Ashraya





ISKCON Congregation

*Congregational Development
Ministry*

Devotee Care Series

The Bhakti Vriksha Modules

Srila Prabhupada Ashraya



Bhakti Vriksha Training Centre

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Introduction to the Bhakti Vriksha Modules

Dear devotees,

The Bhakti Vriksha programme material is intended to facilitate your application of the Bhakti Vriksha principles very systematically. It is simple and easy to follow.

We would also like to share with you that these modules have been implemented in many countries all over the world for people of different nationalities both western and eastern and have brought about outstanding results.

We will be discussing some additional points of consideration for the cultivation of the people; also common difficulties and doubts that preachers normally encounter.

We will be dividing the entire course into five modules according to the level of progress a group goes through. At the end of each module, there will be some questions for you in the form of a check list, which will help you gauge which level your group is at. The topics for discussion in the different modules have been designed according to the knowledge required for the members to commit themselves to the next higher level.

The levels are determined by the commitments they make in Krishna Consciousness. The siksha programme developed by the Congregational Development ministry ISKCON, assigns different commitments for different levels of Siksha. For example, one who is regularly attending an ISKCON programme at least once a week and is chanting one mala of japa will be acknowledged as a “Shraddhavan.” The acknowledgement is in the form of a certificate, which could be issued by the local ISKCON authorities. This could be awarded to the participants either at a public gathering at the local ISKCON temple or during the special programmes like the “Vyuha” programmes held for the Bhakti Vriksha groups or during the weekly sunday programs at the Temple or even at the Bhakti Vriksha meetings itself, if someone is not able to come to the other programs. It is important to keep giving the certificates as and when the members are ready to commit themselves to the next level, so that they keep progressing without any delay. A sample of the siksha certificate are available at the back of this book.

We have allotted eight weeks for people to commit to the level of “Shraddhavan”, the next eight weeks for people to move to “Krishna Sevaka”(Chanting four rounds of japa, accepting Lord Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, no meat eating, offering some regular service and starting to read Srila Prabhupada’s books), and the next eight weeks for people to move to “Krishna Sadhaka”(chanting eight rounds of japa, following the four regulative principles, offering bhoga to pictures, establishing an altar at home and generally accepting the process of *Sadhana-bhakti*), the next 12 weeks to move to the level of Srila Prabhupada Ashraya (Chanting 16 rounds of japa, following regulative principles, showing a strong conviction in Krishna Consciousness like attending/ performing Mangala Arathi, studying the scriptures seriously, etc, and the last 12 weeks of the modules are for the people to move up to “Guru Ashraya”(accepting a living Guru in ISKCON).

At the end of every module we have assigned the succeeding week for presenting a seminar to motivate the participants to commit themselves to the next siksha level. We have included the seminar material in the texts. These are very inter-active sessions and have proved very effective in enlightening and inspiring the members to move to the next level.

One important point to note is that the focus of the regular weekly programme of the Bhakti Vriksha is to instill faith in Krishna in the members and give them the basic understanding of Krishna Conscious philosophy in order that they can be engaged in pure devotional service. The emphasis is thus on the practical application of Krishna Consciousness and the development of bhakti or devotion.

The Discussion sessions are geared towards understanding the goal of Krishna Consciousness and to engage oneself in realizing that goal, which necessitates a lot of participation from the members. For learning shastra in a more systematic way, we have advised that the members attend a study group on another day of the week. We have also described the format of the study group. We have recommended that this be done by the sixth month of starting the group. In actual practice, members become very enthusiastic even before the fourth month to attend the study classes! Truly, Bhakti is the source of Jnana and Vairagya. Also during the study classes the members are trained in practical devotional services like performing Arathi, learning slokas and following Vaishnava etiquette.

The practical sadhana of the members are also carefully guided. When the members begin to follow all the minimum standards of a surrendered devotee, then they are requested to maintain the Sadhana charts (a sample is available in this book) which give a very good idea of their day to day practical performance of Sadhana both to themselves as well as to their group leaders. It acts as a very good incentive to keep on maintaining and improving one's sadhana. All senior leaders are also advised to maintain it to ensure their on going spiritual progress. The art of gentle persuasion through love and respect enables the members to make great strides in their spiritual commitments without feeling any external pressure or compulsion to do so.

The reading of Srila Prabhupada's books is emphasized from the very beginning and members are encouraged to borrow/purchase them from the group leaders. As they are encouraged to share what they have read with every one during the Sat sanga session, it acts as a very good reason for them to start reading. Different books of Srila Prabhupada are recommended for the different levels of their achievement in the Siksha program. We have assigned some home- work of reading from Srila Prabhupada's books for every week.

The two parallel programmes of the Bhakti Vriksha and the study classes fortify the aspiring devotees' faith and knowledge in Krishna Consciousness in a very strong and deep way. We find that very soon members become enthusiastic to attend the sunday programmes of the yatra as well. This helps them to associate with senior devotees and also integrate with the larger devotee community of the yatra. They get a chance to participate in the different services, festivals, *samskaras* and other programmes very quickly.

If you were to substitute the Discussion sessions with a more study-based material, there could be a compromise on their participation, enthusiasm and practical application of Krishna Conscious principles.

The members will also be trained to preach effectively and also become group leaders themselves in 64 weeks. Those who do not make it to the minimum requirement for leading a group, which is Prabhupada Asraya, or are not ready to lead a group themselves can continue attending one of the groups that the parent group multiplies to. Each of these groups will be lead by one of the trained members, and the remaining members of the group could be assigned to attend these different groups and participate as a senior member, assisting the new Bhakti Vriksha leader and thus acting as interns.

In case these members seem to be too advanced to go through a Bhakti Vriksha again, they could just continue attending the study classes and be gradually trained to lead a Bhakti Vriksha group. Or if after some time of attending the Bhakti Vriksha they feel confident of leading a group, they could be helped to do so.

If you are following the same pace as the material, you should be able to multiply the group within a year and three months and train quite a few leaders.

This has been our experience that by following these modules, we have been able to make the pace of progress of the members in different groups more uniform. By following these modules, all of the groups reported very good results; in fact even better results than what we have anticipated in the modules themselves.

There are some important points that you must bear in mind and must take special care about which will greatly enhance your preaching, and make it a very satisfying experience:

1) Please read the material a few days in advance. Be sure that you know the answers for the questions in the passage. If there are any doubts, you can clarify it with your senior. You can also read additional literature relevant to the topic under consideration. This will help you clarify their doubts, as well as make your summing up very interesting. Also kindly go through the suggestions for every session given each week, even though they may be repetitive some times. As and when some change is required, it has been added, and so lest you miss them, kindly go through them every week.

2) Please do not explain the passage to them after it has been read out. Let them try to understand the passage by answering the questions themselves.

There are questions given at the end of each passage of the spiritual edification to enable them to cover all the important points in the passage.

Your role is to facilitate their discovery of the passage, by acknowledging and accepting or gently correcting their answers in an informal way; not as one would do in a classroom. If you were to give out all the answers yourself, or just lecture to them in advance about it, they will not apply their minds to understand it. Hence their learning will remain superficial. So please do keep all the explanation and extra points that you would like to share with them for the end of the session, when you will be summing up the discussion.

3) Please make sure that every body participates in the application questions, since it will not only aid everyone to apply the principles in their daily life, it will also give you a first hand knowledge of any obstacles that they may be facing and about their spiritual progress. It is the application session, which enthuses the devotees to make real spiritual progress and not remain stagnant on a theoretical level.

4) The preaching session is also a very important part of the program. In the first few sessions you need only read out the passage on "Preaching is the essence" as it is mentioned in the material. Once they will be a little familiar with the mission and its purpose, there are instructions to start getting everyone involved in preaching through small steps, and in this way training them to be effective preachers and leaders themselves.

5) Please make sure that you speak to the members during the week informally some time. This will greatly encourage them. You can also visit them in their homes. This helps tremendously, as you get a first hand and personal knowledge of them. So you can help them progress in their spiritual lives even better. Your suggestions will be more relevant and practical for them, thus building up their trust in your spiritual care.

6) While caring for them and making them grow, you yourself will grow by leaps and bounds. For example, you will be motivated to read Srila Prabhupada's books, and follow the principles more carefully in order to set a good example. Besides, it gives you so much of devotional service to do while training you in the principles of humility, tolerance, service attitude etc. So do take up the Bhakti Vrksa preaching very seriously, since your own spiritual life is woven into it.

7) The ice- breakers mentioned in the ice- breaker/ sat sanga session will help the people to open up and relate to the group, help in developing close relationships, concentrate on what is happening during the program, and participate freely. There are also ice- breakers, which foster their team – spirit. So after some sessions, when the group is likely to feel comfortable with one another and a good team spirit has also developed, we will move into discussing what they read during the week from Srila Prabhupada's books and their realizations. So this will encourage them to read as well as promote understanding them personally. The ice-breakers have been selected from the The Book of ice- breakers compiled by HG Kaunteya das and published by the Congregational Development Ministry.

8) If there are any heated arguments with regard to the philosophy, or if somebody tries to disagree on some issue, it is better to discontinue the particular point and request them to discuss it separately with us. This way we can avoid wasting time and disturbing the minds of the new comers. If they deviate from Srila Prabhupada's teachings, we can request them to keep to the text and later discuss their doubts/ opinions with us. This can be done very politely and gently, but firmly.

If there is some question we are not able to answer, we can tell them that we will come back with the answer the next week. We have to make sure that we find out the answer and let them know in the next meeting.

9) We have to set an example with our service mood, but at the same time we have to let them render services too, only then they will mature in their devotional service. If we give them services, so that it will benefit them spiritually, they will accept it with great eagerness. But if we think in terms of sharing our burden, they will begin to resent it. After two or three months, if you make a list of all the services required for the weekly program and request them to volunteer for it, explaining how this will benefit them spiritually, you can ensure that they develop the service mood and enthusiasm to advance in spiritual life.

10) Regular Japa marathons where members meet together ideally with the larger community of Vaishnavas to chant japa for at least four hours together, and more hours gradually, will give the members a great taste to chant. Members enjoy this very much. Very new devotees, as well as young children are able to chant amazing number of rounds! After this if you ask them to share their realizations and experience of the japa marathon, this will be very encouraging for them as well as for the others. After this, normally the members commit themselves to chanting more rounds every day. So by regularly conducting japa marathons, your members will reach sixteen rounds of chanting very easily and fairly quickly.

11) It is very important to conduct the siksha seminars mentioned at the end of every module. This ensures that the members of the group will be inspired to keep progressing in the Siksha levels. We have enclosed a sample of the Siksha certificate.

12) Every three months, it is important that we let the group members have a break from the routine and have a different programme, which we call as the “Vyuha” programme. It may comprise of a long Kirtan, a lecture by a senior devotee, an interactive session among the members with games, quiz, entertainment of music, drama, sharing realizations, etc. so that they are enthused. It is also a programme to which new members will gladly attend as it is like an outreach programme. It is also an opportunity for the members to have the association of senior devotees. This is very important for their progress. We have assigned the weeks periodically for such programmes at regular intervals. We will also give you reminders for going on picnics together, for attending the yatra programmes, etc.

13) Another aspect that we may encounter is that what to do if when we have progressed to heavier topics in the discussion and we have a new visitor to our Bhakti Vriksha. How do we make him understand and participate? So then, we must take a few minutes off and explain to him the basics in Krsna consciousness and an introduction to what is being discussed. Later we can assign some senior and steady member to give him association, and familiarize him/her with the sessions already covered by the group. You can also make sure that he is comfortable participating in the group. If there are a few members who have joined late in the group, say after 6 months, then it will be difficult for them to integrate in the Discussion session with the others. So we can have them sit separately and discuss the earlier Discussion sessions.

14) Picnics and other informal gatherings like home programmes to celebrate occasions like house-warming ceremonies, birthdays, inaugurating a new altar, etc, are very important in helping the members come close together.

15) In every week of the module, we have enclosed some home-learning for the members which includes learning of Bhagavad-gita slokas, Vaishnava songs, reading from the Bhakti Vriksha hand-book which trains them on practical aspects of devotional service and gives them all the required knowledge to go with it, and Srila Prabhupada books to read. Leaders can encourage the members to follow this systematically, especially when they start to show some seriousness in Krishna consciousness. We have a CD attached to the book, “Hand book for Bhakti Vriksha members” which will enable them to learn the songs and slokas easily by themselves. You need to only check from time to time on how they are progressing in their learning.

We have also enclosed the Sadhana chart for devotees to maintain record of their daily Sadhana. This can be useful for all levels of devotees.

16) Please fill up the Bhakti Vriksha report form at the end of each lesson, every week immediately after the programme. This is easy to do and will help you and your seniors in the Bhakti Vriksha programme to analyze the growth of your Bhakti Vriksha members. A sloppy approach will not yield the desired results, nor help you take proper measures to improve preaching.

17) We request you to give us a feed back on how you are progressing with the modules, as well as any difficulties if you encounter. We are at your service and will reply you promptly. Though sufficient care has been taken to avoid errors, we apologize for any errors (typological or others) that may have crept in due to oversight or human error. We request you to revert back This will enable us to improve the modules. Please contact us at the following e-mail address:

veejayprema@gmail.com

Thank you very much,

Yours in the service of

Srila Prabhupada

Vijaya Venugopala das

Prema Padmini devi dasi

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya
Week 29 – Leader’s Section

From now on the training is a little more focused as the members have to be trained as effective leaders and mature devotees all within the next thirty-eight weeks, so that they can start leading a group as well as take Guru Ashraya! It is not difficult to achieve, and can be achieved with the right mood and techniques.

You should arrange for the Siksha ceremony for distribution of the Siksha certificates to the members at the Sunday program in the Temple, or any other centralized program or festival of the yatra, so that the members get the mercy, appreciation and blessings of senior Vaishnavas. Also, being recognized for their spiritual achievement will greatly encourage them to further progress in their spiritual life.

Please see the Siksha forms and certificates on how to go about the Siksha ceremony.

Though the ideal standard has been mentioned here, you may fall short in your achievements due to various factors like variability in the kinds of people and culture you are dealing with, as well as due to circumstances beyond your control. But you can be rest assured that by setting out to ‘aim for the rhinoceros’, you might at least land up with a deer! If you ‘aim a rhinoceros’, that is to your credit, but if you fail in getting the rhinoceros, you will still do creditably, since your aim is high.

You should make arrangements (through sector sevakas or senior devotees if any) to have regular study classes in the Bhagavad-gita for the members on a day separate from the Bhakti Vriksha. Most of the members should be ready to come for the extra day in order to get a deeper understanding of shastra. Though most of them must be reading Srila Prabhupada’s books at home, the study classes can ensure their proper understanding and application and aid in the rapid spiritual advancement of the members.

Even those who have not yet committed themselves to the Krsna Sadhaka level may come for these study classes.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn. By now most would have started reading Srila Prabhupada’s books and sharing a point from them every week. This should definitely have increased their enthusiasm for reading the books as well for sharing them with the fellow group members. This must be having multiple effects of making the members come closer, improving the self-confidence of the members in communicating their thoughts, as well improving their knowledge. In fact you should be experiencing punctuality among the members in attending the Bhakti Vriksha program every week.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “If you could ask just one question to Srila Prabhupada, what would that be?”

This question could be answered individually on paper, before sharing, so that people are not influenced by what others say.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

The regular members should have learnt the kirtana tune by now. You can add more simple tunes for your kirtana, and teach the members to play the karatala, mridanga, etc.

Distribute the sheet containing the pranama mantras and the Hare Krishna mantra as well as the glorifications at the end of the kirtana to the newer members.

Continue with the offering of incense by every member to the Alter Deities or Deity pictures.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from the passage from The Nectar of the Holy Name.

Chant a mala of japa together loudly after chanting the Pancatattva mantra 3 times together. Enquire from the members after the japa, how they feel now after chanting 8 minimum rounds at home everyday. You could ask one or two members to share their realizations. The others you could ask in the subsequent weeks.

Spiritual Edification- 45 minutes

If there are newcomers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week's edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

With more devotees now on the Krsna sadhaka level, you can start entrusting more preaching responsibilities to them.

Making phone calls to remind the new members of the Bhakti Vriksha programs, enquiring the well being of the newer members during the week and slowly encouraging them to start chanting, visiting new members in their homes to give them some association and encouragement etc.. can be all be distributed to the senior members of the group.

The juniors could try to get their colleagues at work, or their neighbors, friends relatives, etc to bring them to the program.

So after you share your preaching work done for the week, entrust all the members with their respective responsibilities for the week, and note it down. You should ask them for the report the subsequent week and give them further tasks to do.

Discuss any doubts or queries they may have about their preaching services.

You can also engage all of them in book distribution to their friends and acquaintances.

Home Work
Things to Learn

Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read: The Significance Of

Srila Prabhupada: Pages 89, 90

Offering Guru Puja to Srila Prabhupada: Page 91

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 6.29, B.G 6.30, B.G 6.31

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Srila Prabhupada's Biography"

Vaishnava Songs:

1. Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!! Pages 128, 129
2. Bhajahu Re Mana Page 130
3. Prayer To One's Beloved Lord Pages 131, 132
4. Gauranga Bolita Habe Pages 132, 133, 134
5. Jaya Radha Madhava Pages 134
6. A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Pages 134, 135
7. Lord Sri Gauranga Udilo Aruna Pages 136, 137
8. Jiv Jago Page 137
9. Sri Nama-Kirtana Page 138
10. Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura Page 139
11. Vibhavari Sesa Pages 140, 141
12. Nama-Sankirtana Pages 141, 142
13. Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis) Page 143
14. Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa Pages 143, 144
15. Sri Radhika Stava Pages 144, 145

ISKCON Websites: Page 27.

Prasadam : 20 minutes

Let the entire distribution of the prasadam, be organized by the members themselves. They can take turns every week in doing the services. You can ensure that no one is burdened and at the same time every body gets a chance to share in the services. Do not force any one to do the services, but ask for volunteers.

If children volunteer to read out the prasadam mantra, they can be given turns to do so. Devotees repeat each line after them.

You can spend time giving your association to the members while everyone honors the prasadam.

Week 29 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

The Meaning of the Name “Kṛiṣṇa”

The name Kṛiṣṇa means “all-attractive.” God attracts everyone; that is the definition of “God.” We have seen many pictures of Kṛiṣṇa, and we see that He attracts the cows, calves, birds, beasts, trees, plants, and even the water in Vṛndāvana. He is attractive to the cowherd boys, to the gopīs, to Nanda Mahārāja, to the Pāṇḍavas, and to all human society. Therefore if any particular name can be given to God, that name is “Kṛiṣṇa.”

The Science of Self-Realization

The Meaning of the Name “Rāma”

[Lord Kṛṣṇa to Yogamāyā]: The son of Rohiṇī will also be celebrated as Saṅkarṣaṇa because of being sent from the womb of Devakī to the womb of Rohiṇī. He will be called Rāma because of His ability to please all the inhabitants of Gokula, and He will be known as Balabhadra because of His extensive physical strength.

These are some of the reasons why Balarāma is known as Saṅkarṣaṇa, Balarāma or sometimes Rāma. In the mahā-mantra—Hare Kṛiṣṇa, Hare Kṛiṣṇa, Kṛiṣṇa Kṛiṣṇa; Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—people sometimes object when Rāma is accepted as Balarāma. But although devotees of Lord Rāma may object, they should know that there is no difference between Balarāma and Lord Rāma. Here Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam clearly states that Balarāma is also known as Rāma (rāmeti). Therefore, it is not artificial for us to speak of Lord Balarāma as Lord Rāma. Jayadeva Gosvāmī also speaks of three Rāmas: Paraśurāma, Raghupati Rāma and Balarāma. All of them are Rāmas.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.13

The word “Rāma” refers both to Lord Balarāma and to Lord Nityānanda:

In the mahā-mantra Hare Kṛiṣṇa, Hare Kṛiṣṇa, Kṛiṣṇa Kṛiṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, the word Rāma refers to Balarāma. Since Nityānanda is an expansion of Balarāma, Rāma also refers to Lord Nityānanda. Thus Hare Kṛiṣṇa, Hare Rāma addresses not only Kṛiṣṇa and Balarāma but Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda as well.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā Intro.

The Meaning of the Name “Hare”

Harā is Kṛiṣṇa’s internal potency, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or Lakṣmī:

When we are chanting the mahā-mantra, we are actually addressing God and His energy, Harā. Harā is Kṛiṣṇa’s internal potency, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Thus the Vaiṣṇavas worship Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa and Sītā-Rāma. In the beginning of the Hare Kṛiṣṇa mahā-mantra we first address the internal energy of Kṛiṣṇa, Hare. Thus we say, “O Rādhārāṇī! O Hare! O energy of the Lord!”

The Teachings of Lord Kapila, the son of Devahuti

Passage for Discussion

Krishna Consciousness is not obtained by sacrifices

*dravya-yajñās tapo-yajñā / yoga-yajñās tathāpare
svādhyāya-jñāna-yajñās ca / yatayaḥ samśīta-vratāḥ*

TRANSLATION

There are others who, enlightened by sacrificing their material possessions in severe austerities, take strict vows and practice the yoga of eightfold mysticism, and others study the Vedas for the advancement of transcendental knowledge.

PURPORT

These sacrifices may be fitted into various divisions. There are persons who are sacrificing their possessions in the form of various kinds of charities. In India, the rich mercantile community or princely orders open various kinds of charitable institutions like dharmaśālā, anna-kṣetra, atithi-śālā, anathalaya, vidyāpīṭha, etc. In other countries, too, there are many hospitals, old age homes and similar charitable foundations meant for distributing food, education and medical treatment free to the poor. All these charitable activities are called dravyamaya-yajña.

There are others who, for higher elevation in life or for promotion to higher planets within the universe, voluntarily accept many kinds of austerities such as candrāyana and cāturmāsya. These processes entail severe vows for conducting life under certain rigid rules. For example, under the cāturmāsya vow the candidate does not shave for four months during the year (July to October), he does not eat certain foods, does not eat twice in a day and does not leave home. Such sacrifice of the comforts of life is called tapomaya-yajña.

There are still others who engage themselves in different kinds of mystic yogas like the Patañjali system (for merging into the existence of the Absolute), or haṭha-yoga or aṣṭāṅga-yoga (for particular perfections). And some travel to all the sanctified places of pilgrimage. All these practices are called yoga-yajña, sacrifice for a certain type of perfection in the material world.

There are others who engage themselves in the studies of different Vedic literatures, specifically the Upaniṣads and Vedānta-sūtras, or the sāṅkhya philosophy. All of these are called svādhyāya-yajña, or engagement in the sacrifice of studies.

All these yogīs are faithfully engaged in different types of sacrifice and are seeking a higher status of life. Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, is, however, different from these because it is the direct service of the Supreme Lord. Kṛiṣṇa consciousness cannot be attained by any one of the above-mentioned types of sacrifices but can be attained only by the mercy of the Lord and His bona fide devotee. Therefore, Kṛiṣṇa consciousness is transcendental.

Bg 4.29

Discovery:

1. Name the different types of sacrifices people perform in order to elevate themselves. Mention the Sanskrit names of these different sacrifices as well.

Understanding:

1. Describe each kind of sacrifice and what benefits they give the performers of the sacrifice.
2. What is common among all the above mentioned sacrifices? How is Krishna consciousness different from them?
3. How can serving the Lord benefit us?

Application:

1. Are you convinced that spreading Krishna consciousness is the best welfare work? Why or why not?

Preaching is the Essence

A Vaiṣṇava shows compassion toward sinful, suffering entities

Prahlāda Mahārāja is the topmost example of a Vaiṣṇava who is always compassionate toward sinful persons suffering a hellish life within this material world. Kṛṣṇa is therefore known as para-duḥkha-duḥkhī kṛpāmbudhi, or one who is compassionate toward others' suffering and who is an ocean of mercy. Like Prahlāda Mahārāja, all pure devotees of the Lord come to this material world with full compassion to deliver the sinful. They undergo all kinds of tribulations, suffering them with tolerance, because that is another qualification of a Vaiṣṇava, who tries to deliver all sinful persons from the hellish conditions of material existence. Vaiṣṇavas are therefore offered the following prayer:

*vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca
patitānām pāvanebhyo*

*kṛpā-sinhubhya eva ca
vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord. They are just like desire trees who can fulfill the desires of everyone, and they are full of compassion for the fallen conditioned souls.”

The chief concern of a Vaiṣṇava is to deliver the fallen souls.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.47

Week 30 – Leader’s Section

Your group should have expanded to include close to 15 members by now, and they should be quite comfortable with one another and enjoying the programs together.

It is not advisable to keep inviting new members to join your group now as they may find it difficult to keep up with the level of the rest of the group.

Nevertheless, if somebody is very eager to join you and you cannot find another suitable group for them, you could include them in your group. But give them a brief introduction of what the Krsna consciousness movement is about, about how we are eternal souls and what the purpose of our lives is, etc.

During the Discussion session, you can have the new comer/s sit separately and discuss the earlier weeks’ papers... You could also ask them to come another day of the week if possible to give them some special attention to help them understand what is happening in the program. In this way it is still possible to integrate the new comers provided there are not too many of them.

Ice breaker : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “If you could give an advise to all the members of this group, what would that be?”

Kirtan : 15 minutes

The regular members should have learnt the kirtana tune by now. You can add more simple tunes for your kirtana, and teach the members to play the karatala, mridanga , etc.

Distribute the sheet containing the pranama mantras and the Hare Krsna mantra as well as the glorifications at the end of the kirtana to the newer members.

Continue with the offering of incense by every member to the Alter Deities or Deity pictures.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from the passage from Sri Namamrita.

Chant a mala of japa together loudly after chanting the Pancatattva mantra 3 times together. Enquire from the members after the japa, how they feel now after chanting 8 minimum rounds at home everyday. You could ask one or two members to share their realizations. The others you could ask in the subsequent weeks.

Discussion - 45 minutes

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there is more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Members’ Section to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

With more devotees now on the Krsna sadhak level, you can start entrusting more preaching responsibilities to them .

Making phone calls to remind the new members of the Bhakti Vriksha programs, enquiring the well being of the newer members during the week and slowly encouraging them to start chanting, visiting new members in their homes to give them some association and encouragement etc.. can all be distributed to the senior members of the group.

The juniors could try to get their colleagues at work, their neighbors, friends relatives, etc to bring them to the outreach/ festival/ vyuha programs. After some cultivation they can be requested to attend other Bhakti Vriksha groups if they are there and if they are not already filled up. Otherwise , since in the next 24 weeks, there will hopefully emerge a few trained leaders to start new Bhakti Vriksha groups, these new contacts can be invited to the those new groups. So after you share your preaching work done for the week, entrust all the members with their respective responsibilities for the week, and note it down. You should ask them for the report the subsequent week and give them further tasks to do.

Discuss any doubts or queries they may have about their preaching services.

You can also engage all of them in book distribution, tapes of kirtanas, lectures and prasadam, incense etc to their friends and acquaintances.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/ No	Additional notes

Home Work

Things to Learn

Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed)

Read: Three Stages of Chanting & Improving Your Japa: Pages 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99

Ten Offences to be avoided while Chanting: Pages 100, 101, 102, 103

Tips To Improve Chanting: Pages 103, 104, 105

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 6.32, B.G 6.46, B.G 6.47

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Srila Prabhupada's Biography -contd-"

Vaishnava Songs:

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!! | Pages 128, 129 |
| 2. | Bhajahu Re Mana | Page 130 |
| 3. | Prayer To One's Beloved Lord | Pages 131, 132 |
| 4. | Gauranga Bolita Habe | Pages 132, 133, 134 |
| 5. | Jaya Radha Madhava | Pages 134 |
| 6. | A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga | Pages 134, 135 |
| 7. | Udilo Aruna | Pages 136, 137 |
| 8. | Jiv Jago | Page 137 |
| 9. | Sri Nama-Kirtana | Page 138 |
| 10. | Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura | Page 139 |
| 11. | Vibhavari Sesa | Pages 140, 141 |
| 12. | Nama-Sankirtana | Pages 141, 142 |
| 13. | Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti(Prayers to the Sakhis) | Page 143 |
| 14. | Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa | Pages 143, 144 |
| 15. | Sri Radhika Stava | Pages 144, 145 |

ISKCON Websites: Page 27.

Prasadam : 20 minutes

Let the entire distribution of the prasadam, including the cleaning up be organized by the members themselves. They can take turns every week in doing the services. You can ensure that no one is burdened and at the same time every body gets a chance to share in the services. Do not force any one to do the services, but ask for volunteers.

If children volunteer to read out the prasadam mantra, they can be given turns to do so. Devotees repeat each line after them.

You can spend time giving your association to the members while everyone honors the prasadam. Immediately after the devotees have left the program, kindly fill in the attendance form.

Sri Namamṛta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Page 143

By chanting the holy name, one can be delivered regardless of caste, creed, color or social position:

Generally brāhmaṇas are puffed up with false prestige because they belong to the aristocracy and perform many Vedic sacrifices. In South India especially, this fastidious position is most prominent. At any rate, this was the case five hundred years ago. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu actually started a revolution against this brahminical system by inaugurating the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. By this chanting, one can be delivered regardless of caste, creed, color or social position. Whoever chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra is immediately purified due to the transcendental position of devotional service. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is here hinting to Vallabha Bhaṭṭācārya that an exalted brāhmaṇa who makes sacrifices and follows the Vedic principles should not neglect a person who is engaged in devotional service by chanting the holy name of the Lord.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.69

Passage for Discussion

Going from fearfulness and anger to real love

*vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhā
man-mayā mām upāśritāḥ
bahavo jñāna-tapasā
pūtā mad-bhāvam āgatāḥ*

TRANSLATION

Being freed from attachment, fear and anger, being fully absorbed in Me and taking refuge in Me, many, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of Me-and thus they all attained transcendental love for Me.

PURPORT

As described above, it is very difficult for a person who is too materially affected to understand the personal nature of the Supreme Absolute Truth. Generally, people who are attached to the bodily conception of life are so absorbed in materialism that it is almost impossible for them to understand that there is a transcendental body which is imperishable, full of knowledge and eternally blissful.

In the materialistic concept, the body is perishable, full of ignorance and completely miserable. Therefore, people in general keep this same bodily idea in mind when they are informed of the personal form of the Lord. For such materialistic men, the form of the gigantic material manifestation is supreme. Consequently they consider the Supreme to be impersonal. And because they are too materially absorbed, the conception of retaining the personality after liberation from matter frightens them. When they are informed that spiritual life is also individual and personal, they become afraid of becoming persons again, and so they naturally prefer a kind of merging into the impersonal void. Generally, they compare the living entities to the bubbles of the ocean, which merge into the ocean. That is the highest perfection of spiritual existence attainable without individual personality. This is a kind of fearful stage of life, devoid of perfect knowledge of spiritual existence.

Furthermore there are many persons who cannot understand spiritual existence at all. Being embarrassed by so many theories and by contradictions of various types of philosophical speculation, they become disgusted or angry and foolishly conclude that there is no supreme cause and that everything is ultimately void. Such people are in a diseased condition of life.

Some people are too materially attached and therefore do not give attention to spiritual life, some of them want to merge into the supreme spiritual cause, and some of them disbelieve in everything, being angry at all sorts of spiritual speculation out of hopelessness.

This last class of men take to the shelter of some kind of intoxication, and their affective hallucinations are sometimes accepted as spiritual vision.

One has to get rid of all three stages of attachment to the material world: negligence of spiritual life, fear of a spiritual personal identity, and the conception of void that underlies the frustration of life.

To get free from these three stages of the material concept of life, one has to take complete shelter of the Lord, guided by the bona fide spiritual master, and follow the disciplines and regulative principles of devotional life. The last stage of the devotional life is called bhāva, or transcendental love of Godhead.

According to Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, the science of devotional service:

*ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā tato
'nartha-nivṛttiḥ syāt tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ athāsaktis
tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyudañcati sādhakānām ayam
premaṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramaḥ.*

“In the beginning one must have a preliminary desire for self-realization. This will bring one to the stage of trying to associate with persons who are spiritually elevated. In next stage one becomes initiated by an elevated spiritual master, and under his instruction the neophyte devotee begins the process of devotional service. By execution of devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one becomes free from all material attachment, attains steadiness in self-realization, and acquires a taste for hearing about the Absolute Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This taste leads one further forward to attachment for Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is matured in bhāva, or the preliminary stage of transcendental love of God.

Real love for God is called premā, the highest perfectional stage of life.” In the premā stage there is constant engagement in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. So, by the slow process of devotional service, under the guidance of the bona fide spiritual master, one can attain the highest stage, being freed from all material attachment, from the fearfulness of one’s individual spiritual personality, and from the frustrations resulting from void philosophy. Then one can ultimately attain to the abode of the Supreme Lord.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is Chapter 4. Text 10

Discovery:

1. What qualifications are necessary to attain love of God?

Understanding:

1. Why are some people afraid of the personal form of the Lord? What form of the Lord do they prefer?
2. Why are some people angry about any form of spiritual life? What do they take shelter of?

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

3. Why are some people indifferent to spiritual life?
4. How can we rise above all the 3 material concepts of life and attain love of Godhead?
5. Give a brief description of the stages one will go through before attaining love of Godhead or prema.

Applicaton:

1. Are you convinced that God or Kṛṣṇa is a person and that attaining love of Kṛṣṇa is the highest perfection of life? Share your realizations on what you look forward to by advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Preaching is the essence

A bona fide devotee is aggrieved to see the fallen condition of the world:

A bona fide devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa is always pained to see the fallen condition of the whole world. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to say, “There is no scarcity of anything within this world. The only scarcity is of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” That is the vision of all pure devotees. Because of this lack of Kṛṣṇa consciousness in human society, people are suffering terribly, being merged in an ocean of nescience and sense gratification. A devotee onlooker is very much aggrieved to see such a situation in the world.

Cc. Ādi 13.67

A devotee is not satisfied with his own salvation; out of compassion, he preaches to others, and Kṛṣṇa gives him special protection:

A devotee is not satisfied with his own salvation; out of compassion, he preaches to others, and Kṛṣṇa gives him special protection:

A Kṛṣṇa conscious person should free himself from the clutches of māyā, and he should also be compassionate to all others suffering in those clutches. The activities of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are meant not only for oneself but for others also. This is the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who is interested in his own salvation is not as advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as one who feels compassion for others and who therefore propagates the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Such an advanced devotee will never fall down, for Kṛṣṇa will give him special protection. That is the sum and substance of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.36-37

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya
Week 31 – Leader’s Section

The study classes you have started for them on a day other than the Bhakti Vriksha should be giving an opportunity for the members to study the books more thoroughly. You could start with the Bhagavad Gita, verse after verse from the first chapter. Read out the Sanskrit sloka line by line, with the translation with repetition by the devotees. Make them read out the purports one by one. They can read one paragraph at a time and you can ask them to repeat the points. You can explain the purport if need be and also share some realizations about its practical application.

The shastra will come alive for them when it is discussed with the others in the group and they will develop a taste for studying Srila Prabhupada’s books. This is very essential for training them to be serious preachers and leaders.

They will also start to participate better in the satsanga as well as in the spiritual edification sessions of the Bhakti Vriksha.

The person who is conducting the study class should preferably have done a Bhakti shastri course, or at least have a good overview of the Bhagavad Gita. But if this is not possible, still you can conduct a study class and have everyone learn the Bhagavad Gita together from Srila Prabhupada’s purports. You can give them a quiz on the chapters covered during the study class itself, or during the bi-monthly vyuha programs or doing special gatherings, just to make them more enthusiastic about the Bhagavad Gita.

Ice breaker : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “What is the thing that you are most grateful for in your life?”

Kirtan : 15 minutes

The regular members should have learnt the kirtana tune by now. You can add more simple tunes for your kirtana, and teach the members to play the karatala, mridanga , etc.

Distribute the sheet containing the pranama mantras and the Hare Krsna mantra as well as the glorifications at the end of the kirtana to the newer members.

Continue with the offering of incense by every member to the Alter Deities or Deity pictures.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from the passage from Sri Namamrita.

Chant a mala of japa together loudly after chanting the Pancatattva mantra 3 times together. Enquire from the members after the japa , how they feel now after chanting 8 minimum rounds at home everyday. You could ask one or two members to share their realizations. The others you could ask in the subsequent weeks.

Discussion- 45 minutes

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week's edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Discussion Session to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and His devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from the passage from Preaching is the Essence:

With more devotees now on the Krishna sadhak level, you can start entrusting more preaching responsibilities to them .

Making phone calls to remind the new members of the Bhakti Vriksha programs, enquiring the well being of the newer members during the week and slowly encouraging them to start chanting, visiting new members in their homes to give them some association and encouragement etc. can all be distributed to the senior members of the group.

The juniors could try to get their colleagues at work, their neighbors, friends, relatives, etc to bring them to the out reach/ festival/ vyuha programs. After some cultivation they can be requested to attend other Bhakti Vriksha groups if they are there and if they are not already filled up. Otherwise , since in the next 24 weeks, there will hopefully emerge a few trained leaders to start new Bhakti Vriksha groups, these new contacts can be invited to the those new groups. So after you share your preaching work done for the week, entrust all the members with their respective responsibilities for the week, and note it down. You should ask them for the report the subsequent week and give them further tasks to do.

Discuss any doubts or queries they may have about their preaching services.

You can also engage all of them in book distribution, tapes of kirtans, lectures and prasadam, incense etc to their friends and acquaintances.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home Work

Things to Learn

Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read:

Sikshastakam: Pages 106, 107, 108, 109

Maintaining a Good Sadhana at Home - Pages 110, 111

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 9.29

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Srila Prabhupada's Biography -contd-"

Vaishnava Songs:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!! | Pages 128, 129 |
| 2. Bhajahu Re Mana | Page 130 |
| 3. Prayer To One's Beloved Lord | Pages 131, 132 |
| 4. Gauranga Bolita Habe | Pages 132, 133, 134 |
| 5. Jaya Radha Madhava | Pages 134 |
| 6. A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga | Pages 134, 135 |
| 7. Udilo Aruna | Pages 136, 137 |
| 8. Jiv Jago | Page 137 |
| 9. Sri Nama-Kirtana | Page 138 |
| 10. Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura | Page 139 |
| 11. Vibhavari Sesa | Pages 140, 141 |
| 12. Nama-Sankirtana | Pages 141, 142 |
| 13. Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis) | Page 143 |
| 14. Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa | Pages 143, 144 |
| 15. Sri Radhika Stava | Pages 144, 145 |

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam : 20 minutes

Let the entire distribution of the prasadam, including the cleaning up be organized by the members themselves. They can take turns every week in doing the services. You can ensure that no one is burdened and at the same time every body gets a chance to share in the services. Do not force any one to do the services, but ask for volunteers.

If children volunteer to read out the prasadam mantra , they can be given turns to do so. Devotees repeat each line after them.

You can spend time giving your association to the members while everyone honors the prasadam. Enquire from the members if they are cooking food for the Lord and offering it to Him before honoring the prasadam. Encourage them to cook and offer to the Lord. If someone is doing it regularly, express your appreciation. These are big milestones in their spiritual advancement . Teach them how to do the offering to the Deity pictures if you have not already done .Also tell them the rules to follow while cooking for the Lord and the consciousness in which it must be prepared.

Give them some vegetarian , non onion and garlic recipes to follow.

You can also ask each of them to share a recipe they know. You can ask one of the members who volunteer to compile the various recipes , type them out for distribution to all the members.

Week 31 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta

Unlike the conditioned soul, there is no distinction between Kṛṣṇa’s name and His person:

[Lord Caitanya to a brāhmaṇa]: “The Lord’s holy name, His form and His personality are all one and the same. There is no difference between them. Since all of them are absolute, they are transcendently blissful. There is no difference between Kṛṣṇa’s body and Himself or between His name and Himself. As far as the conditioned soul is concerned, everything is different. One’s name is different from the body, from one’s original form and so on.... The holy name of Kṛṣṇa, His transcendental qualities and pastimes as well as Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself are all equal. They are all spiritual and full of bliss.”

The name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa the person are both spiritual. Everything about Kṛṣṇa is transcendental, blissful and objective. For a conditioned soul, the body is different from the soul, and the name given by the father is also different from the soul. The conditioned living entity’s identification with material objects keeps him from attaining his actual position. Although he is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, he acts differently.

The svarūpa, or actual identification of the living entity, is described by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as jīvera ‘svarupa’ haya-kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa.’ [Cc. Madhya 20.108]. The conditioned soul has forgotten the real activities of his original position. However, this is not the case with Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa’s name and His person are identical. There is no such thing as māyā for Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa is not a product of the material creation. There is no difference between Kṛṣṇa’s body and His soul. Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously both soul and body. The distinction between body and soul applies to conditioned souls.

The body of the conditioned soul is different from the soul, and the conditioned soul’s name is different from his body. One may be named Mr. John, but if we call for Mr. John, Mr. John may never actually appear. However, if we utter the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa is immediately present on our tongue.

In the Padma Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇa says, mad-bhakta yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi nārada: “O Nārada, I am present wherever My devotees are chanting.” When the devotees chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—Lord Kṛṣṇa is immediately present.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.131-32, 135

Passage for Discussion

The method of Krishna Consciousness

*brahmārpaṇam brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam brahmaiva tena
gantavyam brahma-karma-samādhinā*

TRANSLATION

A person who is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sure to attain the spiritual kingdom because of his full contribution to spiritual activities, in which the consummation is absolute and that which is offered is of the same spiritual nature.

PURPORT

How activities in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness can lead one ultimately to the spiritual goal is described here. There are various activities in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, and all of them will be described in the following verses. But, for the present, just the principle of Kṛiṣṇa consciousness is described. A conditioned soul, entangled in material contamination, is sure to act in the material atmosphere, and yet he has to get out of such an environment. The process by which the conditioned soul can get out of the material atmosphere is Kṛiṣṇa consciousness. For example, a patient who is suffering from a disorder of the bowels due to overindulgence in milk products is cured by another milk product, namely curds.

The materially absorbed conditioned soul can be cured by Kṛiṣṇa consciousness as set forth here in the Gītā. This process is generally known as yajña, or activities (sacrifices) simply meant for the satisfaction of Viṣṇu or Kṛiṣṇa. The more the activities of the material world are performed in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, or for Viṣṇu only, the more the atmosphere becomes spiritualized by complete absorption. Brahman means spiritual. The Lord is spiritual, and the rays of His transcendental body are called brahmajyoti, His spiritual effulgence. Everything that exists is situated in that brahmajyoti, but when the jyoti is covered by illusion (māyā) or sense gratification, it is called material. This material veil can be removed at once by Kṛiṣṇa consciousness; thus the offering for the sake of Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, the consuming agent of such an offering or contribution; the process of consumption, the contributor, and the result are all combined together-Brahman, or the Absolute Truth.

The Absolute Truth covered by māyā is called matter. Matter dovetailed for the cause of the Absolute Truth regains its spiritual quality. Kṛiṣṇa consciousness is the process of converting the illusory consciousness into Brahman, or the Supreme.

When the mind is fully absorbed in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, it is said to be in samādhi, or trance. Anything done in such transcendental consciousness is called yajña, or sacrifice for the Absolute. In that condition of spiritual consciousness, the contributor, the contribution, the consumption, the performer or leader of the performance, and the result or ultimate gain-everything-becomes one in the Absolute, the Supreme Brahman. That is the method of Kṛiṣṇa consciousness.

Discovery:

1. What is the qualification needed to go back to the spiritual world?

Understanding:

1. Describe material consciousness.
2. Describe how this material veil is removed, with an example.
3. How do activities in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness become absolute in nature?
4. How is perfect yajña performed for the Absolute?

Application:

1. How can we improve our Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, so that all our activities become more and more spiritual in nature?

Preaching is the Essence

The Lord is satisfied with a preacher who is tolerant and merciful:

The Lord is very satisfied with His devotee when the devotee greets other people with tolerance, mercy, friendship and equality.

It is the duty of an advanced devotee in the second stage of devotional perfection to act in accordance with this verse.... Sometimes devotees are ill-treated by envious persons. It is advised that an advanced devotee should be tolerant; he should show complete mercy to persons who are ignorant or innocent. A preacher-devotee is meant to show mercy to innocent persons whom he can elevate to devotional service. Everyone, by constitutional position, is an eternal servant of God. Therefore, a devotee's business is to awaken everyone's Krishna consciousness. That is his mercy.... His general view should be to see every living entity as part of the Supreme Lord. Different living entities appear in different forms of dress, but according to the instruction of the Bhagavad-gītā, a learned person sees all living entities equally. Such treatment by the devotee is very much appreciated by the Supreme Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.11.13

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya
Week 32 – Leader’s Section

Organizing picnics or get-togethers on certain week-ends is a wonderful way of creating a family feeling among the members. It will also gradually make them associate more with one another for close inter personal relationships, rather than with their materialistic friends. It is also ideal for the children of the group to feel comfortable and happy in the association.

Organizing will not be a strain for any one individual if you let everyone take part and volunteer their services. At the end of the day, you will be happy you undertook it as you find all the members blissful and happy.

You can make the outings / get-togethers Krsna conscious, by including kirtana, Krsna conscious games or quiz and sharing personal realizations etc.

We will give you a list of suggestions for these outings as a separate sheet after this week’s lesson.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “What do you like most of going to the Temple?”

Kirtana : 15 minutes

If any of your members have started to chant 16 rounds of japa, then you can encourage them by asking them to lead the kirtan. Of course you should do so after giving them sufficient training and have tested that they are able to do so effectively. This will also enthuse the other members by giving them hope to make further progress and feel a sense of achievement.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from the passage from Sri Namamrita.

Chant a mala of japa together loudly after chanting the Panca tattva mantra 3 times together. Enquire from the members after the japa, how they feel now after chanting 8 minimum rounds at home everyday. You could ask one or two members to share their realizations. The others you could ask in the subsequent weeks.

Discussion- 45 minutes

If there are newcomers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there is more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Preaching is the Essence. With more devotees now on the Krishna sadhak sadhaka level, you can start entrusting more preaching responsibilities to them .

Making phone calls to remind the new members of the Bhakti Vriksha programs, enquiring the well being of the newer members during the week and slowly encouraging them to start chanting, visiting new members in their homes to give them some association and encouragement etc.. can all be distributed to the senior members of the group.

The juniors could try to get their colleagues at work, their neighbors, friends relatives, etc to bring them to the program.

So after you share your preaching work done for the week, entrust all the members with their respective responsibilities for the week, and note it down. You should ask them for the report the subsequent week and give them further tasks to do.

Discuss any doubts or queries they may have about their preaching services.

You can also engage all of them in book distribution to their friends and acquaintances. Fill in this table in your Preaching session note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/ No	Additional notes

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

Please enter the details about your members attending this week:

No.	Members	Attendance	Current Siksha status	Remarks

Home Work

Things to Learn

Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed)

Read: Six Symptoms Of Surrenderin Devotional Service:Page 112

Offering Obeisances & Respecting Vaishnavas: Pages 113, 114

Four Regulative Principles:Pages 115

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 12.8, B.G 12.9, B.G 12.10

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Sri Isopanishad and Nectar of Instruction"

Vaishnava Songs:

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!! | Pages 128, 129 |
| 2. | Bhajahu Re Mana | Page 130 |
| 3. | Prayer To One's Beloved Lord | Pages 131, 132 |
| 4. | Gauranga Bolita Habe | Pages 132, 133, 134 |
| 5. | Jaya Radha Madhava | Pages 134 |
| 6. | A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga | Pages 134, 135 |
| 7. | Udilo Aruna | Pages 136, 137 |

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8.	Jiv Jago	Page 137
9.	Sri Nama-Kirtana	Page 138
10.	Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura	Page 139
11.	Vibhavari Sesa	Pages 140, 141
12.	Nama-Sankirtana	Pages 141, 142
13.	Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis)	Page 143
14.	Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa	Pages 143, 144
15.	Sri Radhika Stava	Pages 144, 145

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam : 20 minutes

Let the entire distribution of the prasadam, including the cleaning up be organized by the members themselves. They can take turns every week in doing the services. You can ensure that no one is burdened and at the same time every body gets a chance to share in the services. Do not force any one to do the services, but ask for volunteers.

If children volunteer to read out the prasadam mantra, they can be given turns to do so. Devotees repeat each line after them.

You can spend time giving your association to the members while everyone honors the prasadam. Enquire from the members if they are cooking food for the Lord and offering it to Him before honoring the prasadam. Encourage them to cook and offer to the Lord. If someone is doing it regularly, express your appreciation. These are big milestones in their spiritual advancement. Teach them how to do the offering to the Deity pictures if you have not already done. Also tell them the rules to follow while cooking for the Lord and the consciousness in which it must be prepared.

Give them some vegetarian, non-onion and non-garlic recipes to follow.

You can also ask each of them to share a recipe they know. You can ask one of the members who volunteer to compile the various recipes, type them out for distribution to all the members.

Week 32 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta

The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the greatest benediction:

It is said that once a poor brāhmaṇa worshiped Lord Śiva for a benediction, and Lord Śiva advised the devotee to go to Sanātana Gosvāmī. The devotee went to Sanātana Gosvāmī and informed him that Lord Śiva had advised him to seek out the best benediction from him (Sanātana). Sanātana had a touchstone with him, which he kept with the garbage. On the request of the poor brāhmaṇa, Sanātana gave him the touchstone, and the brāhmaṇa was very happy to have it.

He now could get as much gold as he desired simply by touching the touchstone to iron. But after he left Sanātana, he thought, “If a touchstone is the best benediction, why has Sanātana Gosvāmī kept it with the garbage?” He therefore returned and asked Sanātana Gosvāmī, “Sir, if this is the best benediction, why did you keep it with the garbage?” Sanātana Gosvāmī then informed him, “Actually, this is not the best benediction. But are you prepared to take the best benediction from me?” The brāhmaṇa said, “Yes, sir. Lord Śiva has sent me to you for the best benediction.”

Then Sanātana Gosvāmī asked him to throw the touchstone in the water nearby and then come back. The poor brāhmaṇa did so, and when he returned, Sanātana Gosvāmī initiated him with the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Thus by the benediction of Lord Śiva the brāhmaṇa got the association of the best devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa and was thus initiated in the mahā-mantra, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.7.6

Passage for Discussion

Secret of Bhakti Yoga Success: Determination

*sa niścayena yoktavyo yogo
‘nirviṇṇa-cetasā saṅkalpa-
prabhavān kāmāṁś tyaktvā
sarvān aśeṣataḥ
manasaivendriya-grāmaṁ
viniyamya samantataḥ*

TRANSLATION

One should engage oneself in the practice of yoga with undeviating determination and faith. One should abandon, without exception, all material desires born of false ego and thus control all the senses on all sides by the mind.

PURPORT

The yoga practitioner should be determined and should patiently prosecute the practice without deviation. One should be sure of success at the end and pursue this course with great perseverance, not becoming discouraged if there is any delay in the attainment of success. Success is sure for the rigid practitioner. Regarding bhakti-yoga, Rupa Gosvāmī says:

*utsāhān niścayād dhairyāt tat tat karma-pravartanāt
saṅga-tyāgāt satovṛtteḥ śadbhir bhaktiḥ prasidhyati*

“The process of bhakti-yoga can be executed successfully with full-hearted enthusiasm, perseverance, and determination by following the prescribed duties in the association of devotees and by engaging completely in activities of goodness.”

As for determination, one should follow the example of the sparrow who lost her eggs in the waves of the ocean. A sparrow laid her eggs on the shore of the ocean, but the big ocean carried away the eggs on its waves. The sparrow became very upset and asked the ocean to return her eggs. The ocean did not even consider her appeal. So the sparrow decided to dry up the ocean. She began to pick out the water in her small beak, and everyone laughed at her for her impossible determination. The news of her activity spread, and at last Garuḍa, the gigantic bird carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, heard it. He became compassionate toward his small sister bird, and so he came to see the sparrow. Garuḍa was very pleased by the determination of the small sparrow, and he promised to help. Thus Garuḍa at once asked the ocean to return her eggs lest he himself take up the work of the sparrow. The ocean was frightened at this, and returned the eggs. Thus the sparrow became happy by the grace of Garuḍa.

Similarly, the practice of yoga, especially bhakti-yoga in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, may appear to be a very difficult job. But if anyone follows the principles with great determination, the Lord will surely help, for God helps those who help themselves.

“Bhagavad-gita As it is

BY DIVINE GRACE A. C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA Bg. Ch-6 Text-24

Discovery:

1. What are the ingredients necessary for success in our spiritual lives?

Understanding:

1. With the example of the sparrow explain how we should be determined to continue with our spiritual lives in spite of all obstacles.
2. Why is it guaranteed that we will succeed in our spiritual path if we persist?

Application:

1. Share some of the obstacles you encountered in practicing Kṛiṣṇa consciousness, and how you overcame them. If you have not already overcome them, mention those also.

Preaching is the essence

Out of compassion for materialists, devotees preach Kṛiṣṇa consciousness:

The duty of those who follow in the footsteps of Prahlaḍa Maharaja is to teach the entire world how to be Kṛiṣṇa conscious and thus be really happy.... Materialistic persons are engaged in striving for temporary benefits, whereas persons advanced in spiritual knowledge, such as Prahlaḍa Mahārāja, are not interested in the materialistic way of life. Instead, they want to be elevated to an eternal life of knowledge and bliss. Therefore, as Kṛiṣṇa is always compassionate to the fallen souls, His servants, the devotees of Lord Kṛiṣṇa, are also interested in educating the entire populace in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness. The mistake of materialistic life is understood by devotees, and therefore they smile upon it, considering it insignificant. Out of compassion, however, such devotees preach the gospel of Bhagavad-gītā all over the world.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.55

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya
Week 33 – Leader’s Section

There are various practical aspects of devotional service that you need to teach the devotees in your group. How to set up the altar, how to perform the Arathi, how to lead a kirtana, play the karatala and mridanga (if possible), to sing the various songs during the Arathi, how to offer the Bhoga to the Lord, how to apply tilaka on all the 12 parts of the body, how to tie a dhoti or even sari, etc, etc... All these aspects cannot be covered during a regular Vrinda program, and so during the half an hour set aside during the study classes, make sure that the devotees get well trained in all these aspects. If need be you can also invite them to come and learn these things separately on another day from you.

Ice breaker : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: When someone tells you that you are doing something wrong, what is your usual reaction?

Kirtana : 15 minutes

The regular members should have learnt the kirtan tune by now. You can add more simple tunes for your kirtana, and teach the members to play the karatala, mridanga, etc.

Distribute the sheet containing the pranama mantras and the Hare Krsna mantra as well as the glorifications at the end of the kirtana to the newer members.

Continue with the offering of incense by every member to the Alter Deities or Deity pictures.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Sri Namamrita.

Chant a mala of japa together loudly after chanting the Panca tattva mantra 3 times together. Enquire from the members after the japa, how they feel now after chanting 8 minimum rounds at home everyday. You could ask one or two members to share their realizations. The others you could ask in the subsequent weeks..

Discussion: 45 minutes

If there are new-comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

Edition – September 2010

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Preaching is the Essence.

With more devotees now on the Krsna sadhaka level, you can start entrusting more preaching responsibilities to them.

Making phone calls to remind the new members of the Bhakti Vriksha programs, enquiring the well being of the newer members during the week and slowly encouraging them to start chanting, visiting new members in their homes to give them some association and encouragement etc.. can all be distributed to the senior members of the group.

The juniors could try to get their colleagues at work, their neighbors, friends, relatives, etc to bring them to the program.

So after you share your preaching work done for the week, entrust all the members with their respective responsibilities for the week, and note it down. You should ask them for the report the subsequent week and give them further tasks to do.

Discuss any doubts or queries they may have about their preaching services.

You can also engage all of them in book distribution to their friends and acquaintances.

Fill in this table in your Preaching session note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed)

Read: Why Onion & Garlic are not good for consumption:Pages 116, 117

Substitutes for Onion, Garlic & Eggs: Pages 118

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 12.11, B.G 12.12

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Nectar of Devotion(abridged version)"

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

Vaishnava Songs:

1.	Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!!	Pages 128, 129
2.	Bhajahu Re Mana	Page 130
3.	Prayer To One's Beloved Lord	Pages 131, 132
4.	Gauranga Bolita Habe	Pages 132, 133, 134
5.	Jaya Radha Madhava	Pages 134
6.	A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga	Pages 134, 135
7.	Udilo Aruna	Pages 136, 137
8.	Jiv Jago	Page 137
9.	Sri Nama-Kirtana	Page 138
10.	Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura	Page 139
11.	Vibhavari Sesa	Pages 140, 141
12.	Nama-Sankirtana	Pages 141, 142
13.	Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis)	Page 143
14.	Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa	Pages 143, 144
15.	Sri Radhika Stava	Pages 144, 145

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Prasadam: 20 minutes

Let the entire distribution of the prasadam, including the cleaning up be organized by the members themselves. They can take turns every week in doing the services. You can ensure that no one is burdened and at the same time every body gets a chance to share in the services. Do not force any one to do the services, but ask for volunteers.

If children volunteer to read out the prasadam mantra, they can be given turns to do so. Devotees repeat each line after them.

You can spend time giving your association to the members while everyone honors the prasadam. Enquire from the members if they are cooking food for the Lord and offering it to Him before honoring the prasadam. Encourage them to cook and offer to the Lord. If someone is doing it regularly, express your appreciation. These are big milestones in their spiritual advancement. Teach them how to do the offering to the Deity pictures if you have not already done. Also tell them the rules to follow while cooking for the Lord and the consciousness in which it must be prepared.

Give them some vegetarian, non-onion-and-garlic recipes to follow.

You can also ask each of them to share a recipe they know. You can ask one of the members who volunteer to compile the various recipes, type them out for distribution to all the members.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program, kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Week 33 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta

As long as one is within the limited jurisdiction of fruitive activities or is involved in mental speculation, he may perhaps be eligible to study or teach the theoretical knowledge of Vedānta-sūtra, but he cannot understand the supreme, eternal, transcendental (completely liberated) vibration of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. One who has achieved perfection in chanting the transcendental Hare Kṛṣṇa vibration does not have to separately learn the philosophy of Vedānta-sūtra. According to the teachings of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the bona fide spiritual master, those who do not understand the transcendental vibration as being nondifferent from the Supreme and who try to become Māyāvādī philosophers or experts in Vedānta-sūtra are all fools. Studying Vedānta-sūtra by one’s own efforts (the ascending process of knowledge) is another sign of foolishness.

He who has attained a taste for chanting the transcendental vibration, however, actually attains the conclusion of Vedānta. In this connection, there are two verses in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam which are very instructive. The purport of the first is that even if a low caste person is engaged in chanting the transcendental vibration, it is to be understood that he has performed all types of renunciation, austerities and sacrifice and has studied all the Brahma-sūtras. Thus one can be able to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. The purport of the second verse is that one who chants the two syllables Ha-ri must be considered to have studied all the Vedas: the Ṛg Veda, Atharva Veda, Yajur Veda and Sāma Veda.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

Passage for Discussion

Controlling the restless mind

*cañcalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa
pramāthi balavad dṛḍham
tasyāham nigrahaṁ manye
vāyor iva su-duṣkaram*

TRANSLATION

For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Kṛṣṇa, and to subdue it is, it seems to me, more difficult than controlling the wind.

PURPORT

The mind is so strong and obstinate that it sometimes overcomes the intelligence, although mind is supposed to be subservient to the intelligence. For a man in the practical world who has to fight so many opposing elements, it is certainly very difficult to control the mind. Artificially, one may establish a mental equilibrium toward both friend and enemy, but ultimately no worldly man can do so, for this is more difficult than controlling the raging wind. In the Vedic literatures it is said:

*ātmānam rathinam viddhi śarīram ratham eva ca
buddhintu sārathim viddhi manaḥ pragraham eva ca
indriyāṇi hayānāhur viṣayāms teṣu gocharān
ātmendriya-mano-yukto bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ.*

“The individual is the passenger in the car of the material body, and intelligence is the driver. Mind is the driving instrument, and the senses are the horses. The self is thus the enjoyer or sufferer in the association of the mind and senses. So it is understood by great thinkers.” Intelligence is supposed to direct the mind, but the mind is so strong and obstinate that it often overcomes even one’s own intelligence.

Such a strong mind is supposed to be controlled by the practice of yoga, but such practice is never practical for a worldly person like Arjuna. And what can we say of modern man? The simile used here is appropriate: one cannot capture the blowing wind. And it is even more difficult to capture the turbulent mind. The easiest way to control the mind, as suggested by Lord Caitanya, is chanting “Hare Kṛṣṇa,” the great mantra for deliverance, in all humility. The method prescribed is *sa vai manaḥ kṛṣṇa-padāravindayoḥ*: one must engage one’s mind fully in Kṛṣṇa. Only then will there remain no other engagements to agitate the mind.

Bg 6.35

Discovery:

1. Describe the analogy of the chariot and the driver with our body and ourselves.

Understanding:

1. What is supposed to control our minds?
2. Why is it so difficult to control the mind?
3. Describe how we can easily control our minds as suggested by Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Application:

1. Share your realizations on how the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is helping you to control your mind.

Preaching is the essence

For a preacher to have potency, he must be pure:

Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant for this purpose. We want to create pure devotees so that other people will benefit by their association. In this way the number of pure devotees increases. Professional preachers cannot create pure devotees.... Only a pure devotee can convert others to pure devotional service. It is therefore important for all the preachers in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to first become pure devotees and follow the regulative principles, refraining from illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling and intoxication. They should regularly chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra on their beads, follow the devotional process, rise early in the morning, attend maṅgala-ārati and recite Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā regularly. In this way, one can become purified and free from all material contamination.... To make a show of devotional service will not help one. One must be a pure devotee following the devotional process; then one can convert others to devotional service.... If a preacher behaves properly in devotional service, he will be able to convert others. Otherwise, his preaching will have no effect.

Cc. Madhya 24.98

Week 34 – Leader’s Section

The preaching session from this week onwards will endeavor to make plans for home visits and to review the last week’s visits.

Home visits are an integral and very effective method of cultivating people at different levels.

Ice breaker : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question:
Tell us something you learned about yourself this year.

Kirtan : 15 minutes

The regular members should have learnt the kirtan tune by now. You can add more simple tunes for your kirtan, and teach the members to play the karatala, mridanga , etc.

Distribute the sheet containing the pranama mantras and the Hare Krsna mantra as well as the glorifications at the end of the kirtana to the newer members.

Continue with the offering of incense by every member to the Alter Deities or Deity

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Sri Namamrita.

Chant a mala of japa together loudly after chanting the Pancatattva mantra 3 times together. Enquire from the members after the japa, how they feel now after chanting 8 minimum rounds at home everyday. You could ask one or two members to share their realizations. The others you could ask in the subsequent weeks..

Discussion- 45 minutes

If there are newcomers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Preaching is the Essence. You have to start training the members up to take on more responsibilities in the spiritual advancement of the members. Categorize the group into senior devotees, junior devotees and newcomers. A senior devotee would be one who is chanting at least 8 rounds and following all the siksha commitments of his level carefully, and is keen to be guided further in his spiritual progress. A junior devotee will be some one who is chanting 4 rounds, regular in his attendance of the weekly program and is vegetarian.

First of all train the senior devotees by taking them with you while making your visits to new contacts, as well as the junior devotees' homes. After a few visits, they can make the visits to the junior devotees' homes to give them association, and also take the junior devotees along with them when they go to see the new members as well as the new contacts.

These visits have to be discussed every week in this preaching session, so that everyone knows about the impact this has on the people, as well learn about how to deal with different people effectively in order to inspire them to become a devotee.

When you visit a new contact, you have to inform them of your visit in advance if it is in a western country. But in Asian cultures, an announced visitor is also normally welcome. Make sure you put your host to ease by enquiring about his welfare without probing too much, and after exchanging some pleasantries, you can give him some packed dry prasadam that you should have brought along, and some gift in the form of a Krsna conscious calendar/ diary or pen etc... and invite him to come for your weekly program of outreach/ bhakti Vriksha. Do not stay for too long, and keep the duration of your visit brief.

While visiting junior devotees, you can be a little more relaxed and informal, and enquire a little more about their personal lives, without again being too intrusive. The object of this is to gain more knowledge about the devotee in order to be able to guide him effectively. Any problems or obstacles that they may be facing to progress in Krsna consciousness can also be counseled. It will also help you come closer to the devotee.

The senior devotee accompanying you should also observe your dealings and learn from them. You can also discuss the essential points of your preaching plans and strategies with him, so that you can also engage him to do these home visits after a while.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/ No	Additional notes

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read: Man – Women Association:Page 119

Garbhadhana Samskara:Page 120

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 18.42, B.G 18.43, B.G 18.44

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Second Chance"

Vaishnava Songs:

1. Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!!	Pages 128, 129
2. Bhajahu Re Mana	Page 130
3. Prayer To One's Beloved Lord	Pages 131, 132
4. Gauranga Bolita Habe	Pages 132, 133, 134
5. Jaya Radha Madhava	Pages 134
6. A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga	Pages 134, 135
7. Udilo Aruna	Pages 136, 137
8. Jiv Jago	Page 137
9. Sri Nama-Kirtana	Page 138
10. Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura	Page 139
11. Vibhavari Sesa	Pages 140, 141
12. Nama-Sankirtana	Pages 141, 142
13. Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis)	Page 143
14. Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa	Pages 143, 144
15. Sri Radhika Stava	Pages 144, 145

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam : 20 minutes

Let the entire distribution of the prasadam, including the cleaning up be organized by the members themselves. They can take turns every week in doing the services. You can ensure that no one is burdened and at the same time every body gets a chance to share in the services. Do not force any one to do the services, but ask for volunteers.

If children volunteer to read out the prasadam mantra , they can be given turns to do so. Devotees repeat each line after them.

You can spend time giving your association to the members while everyone honors the prasadam. Enquire from the members if they are cooking food for the Lord and offering it to Him before honoring the prasadam. Encourage them to cook and offer to the Lord. If someone is doing it regularly, express your appreciation. These are big milestones in their spiritual advancement . Teach them how to do the offering to the Deity pictures if you have not already done .Also tell them the rules to follow while cooking for the Lord and the consciousness in which it must be prepared.

Give them some vegetarian , non-onion-and-garlic recipes to follow.

You can also ask each of them to share a recipe they know. You can ask one of the members who volunteer to compile the various recipes , type them out for distribution to all the members.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program, kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Week 34 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta

The Holy Name Is Ever Fresh

Because the Hare Kṛiṣṇa mantra is spiritual, chanting never becomes hackneyed or tiresome:

In the material world we are simply chewing the chewed, throwing it away, picking it up and then chewing it again. Spiritual variety is not like this. Spiritual variety is ānandāmbudhi-varadhanam: it is constantly increasing. It is even greater than the ocean, because the ocean does not increase. The shores of the ocean are set; they have certain limits. However, the ocean of bliss is constantly increasing. The more we enter into that spiritual bliss, the more we become joyful.

The young people in the Hare Kṛiṣṇa movement chant the Hare Kṛiṣṇa mantra all the time. If this mantra were material, how long would they chant it? It is not possible to chant a material name for very long because the chanting would become hackneyed and very tiresome. No one could be satisfied simply by chanting Hare Kṛiṣṇa unless Hare Kṛiṣṇa itself were spiritual. We may chant, “Mr. John, Mr. John, Mr. John,” but after an hour we will be fed up.

However, the more we become spiritually advanced, the more bliss we will derive from chanting Hare Kṛiṣṇa.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahūti

Passage for Discussion

We are one of His Energies

*apareyam itas tv anyām
prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jīva-bhūtām mahā-bāho
yayedam dhāryate jagat*

TRANSLATION

Besides this inferior nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is a superior energy of Mine, which are all living entities who are struggling with material nature and are sustaining the universe.

PURPORT

Here it is clearly mentioned that living entities belong to the superior nature (or energy) of the Supreme Lord. The inferior energy is matter manifested in different elements, namely earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego. Both forms of material nature, namely gross (earth, etc.) and subtle (mind, etc.), are products of the inferior energy. The living entities, who are exploiting these inferior energies for different purposes, are the superior energy of the Supreme Lord, and it is due to this energy that the entire material world functions. The cosmic manifestation has no power to act unless it is moved by the superior energy, the living entity. Energies are always controlled by the energetic, and therefore living entities are always controlled by the Lord—they have no independent existence. They are never equally powerful, as unintelligent men think. The distinction between the living entities and the Lord is described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam as follows (10.87.30):

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*aparimitā dhruvās tanubhrto yadi sarva-gatās
tarhiṁ na śāsyateti niyamo dhruva netarathā
ajani ca yanmayam tad avimucya niyantr
bhavet samam anujānatām yad-amataṁ mata-duṣṭatayā*

“O Supreme Eternal! If the embodied living entities were eternal and all-pervading like You, then they would not be under Your control. But if the living entities are accepted as minute energies of Your Lordship, then they are at once subject to Your supreme control. Therefore real liberation entails surrender by the living entities to Your control, and that surrender will make them happy. In that constitutional position only can they be controllers. Therefore, men with limited knowledge who advocate the monistic theory that God and the living entities are equal in all respects are actually misleading themselves and others.”

The Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa is the only controller, and all living entities are controlled by Him. These living entities are His superior energy because the quality of their existence is one and the same with the Supreme, but they are never equal to the Lord in quantity of power.

While exploiting the gross and subtle inferior energy (matter), the superior energy (the living entity) forgets his real spiritual mind and intelligence. This forgetfulness is due to the influence of matter upon the living entity. But when the living entity becomes free from the influence of the illusory material energy, he attains the stage called *mukti*, or liberation. The false ego, under the influence of material illusion, thinks, “I am matter, and material acquisitions are mine.” His actual position is realized when he is liberated from all material ideas, including the conception of his becoming one in all respects with God. Therefore one may conclude that the Gītā confirms the living entity to be only one of the multi-energies of Kṛṣṇa; and when this energy is freed from material contamination, it becomes fully Kṛṣṇa conscious, or liberated.

Bg 7.6

Discovery:

1. What two energies are the living entities made up of? Name which aspects of the living entity belong to each of the energies.

Understanding:

1. Why is the living entity always controlled, and not independent?
2. Why do the living entities forget that they are controlled by the Lord?
3. When can we be called liberated or fully Kṛṣṇa conscious?

Application:

1. Do you experience that you are gradually becoming liberated from the influence of the material energy? Share in what ways this is happening.

Preaching is the essence

Distribution of transcendental knowledge is the highest welfare work:

Prthu maharaja continued: How can such persons, who have rendered unlimited service by explaining the path of self realization to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and whose explanations are given for our enlightenment with complete conviction and Vedic evidence, be repaid except by folded palms containing water for their satisfaction? Such great personalities can be satisfied only by their own activities, which are distributed amongst human society out of their unlimited mercy.

Great personalities of the material world are very eager to render welfare service to human society, but actually no one can render better service than one who distributes the knowledge of spiritual realization in relation with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All living entities are within the clutches of the illusory energy. Forgetting their real identity, they hover in material existence, transmigrating from one body to another in search of a peaceful life.

Since these living entities have very little knowledge of self- realization, they are not getting any relief, although they are very anxious to attain peace of mind and some substantial happiness.

Saintly persons like the Kumaras, Narada, Prahlada, Janaka, Sukhadeva Goswami, Kapiladeva, as well as the followers of such authorities as the Vaishnava *acharyas* and their servants can render a valuable service to humanity by disseminating knowledge of the relationship between the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the living entity. Such knowledge is the perfect benediction for humanity.

Week 35 – Leader’s Section

Even though the majority of the members should be making progress in their devotional commitments along expected lines, there are still a few who may opt to go at a slower or faster pace. So rather than make them wait for the siksha ceremonies mentioned after every few months, you can give away the certificates to them as they are progressing, at the weekly Sunday/ Saturday/ Friday programs of your yatra. This will cater to the speed of each individual and maximize the speed in which they advance spiritually.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta, during the week. Request them to start reading Srila Prabhupada’s lilamrta, and share points from it.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: **What makes you laugh more?**

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Continue as in the previous weeks by distributing the sheet containing the pranama mantras and the Hare Krishna mantra as well as the glorifications at the end of the kirtana.

Also the offering of incense by every member to the Altar Deities or Deity pictures can be done.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Sri Namamrita.

Chant a *mala* of japa together loudly after chanting the Panca tattva mantra 3 times together. You could ask one or two members to share their realizations on how they are progressing in their japa, both in the number of malas as well in the quality of their chanting. The others you could ask in the subsequent weeks.

Discussion- 45 minutes

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

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Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Preaching is the Essence.

Discuss your visit to a new contact's house along with one of your Bhakti Vriksha senior members. Ask the senior member also for his/her feed back on how the meeting went and what he learned from the visit. You can ask another senior member to accompany you for the following week. If each of the senior members get to come a few times to these visits, they will gain confidence and the experience how to deal with the new people. They can then be entrusted to do the visits themselves taking along with them a junior member for training them as well. These home visits were discussed at length in the previous week's preaching session advise.

Right now you can ask the junior members for their reports on who they contacted for the week and what they managed to achieve by their effort (invited them for the program, sold them a book or just started to cultivate them in Krsna consciousness, etc). Give them further assignments for the week. If they carry some prasadam along with them while they make these preaching efforts, it is bound to be more effective.

Fill in this table in your Preaching session note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home Work

Things to Learn

Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read: Vaishnava

Appearance:Page 121

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn :

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Teachings of Lord Chaitanya"

Vaishnava Songs:

1. Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!! Pages 128, 129
2. Bhajahu Re Mana Page 130
3. Prayer To One's Beloved Lord Pages 131, 132
4. Gauranga Bolita Habe Pages 132, 133, 134
5. Jaya Radha Madhava Pages 134
6. A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga Pages 134, 135

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

7.	Udilo Aruna	Pages 136, 137
8.	Jiv Jago	Page 137
9.	Sri Nama-Kirtana	Page 138
10.	Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura	Page 139
11.	Vibhavari Sesa	Pages 140, 141
12.	Nama-Sankirtana	Pages 141, 142
13.	Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis)	Page 143
14.	Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa	Pages 143, 144
15.	Sri Radhika Stava	Pages 144, 14

ISKCON Websites: Page 27.

Prasadam : 20 minutes

Always announce the member's names that have sponsored for the prasadam, especially if it is for some special occasion.

Encourage them also to make offerings of simple sweets in their homes and distribute it to their friends or acquaintances. It will be a very fulfilling service for them and will enable them to appreciate and understand the glories of prasadam even further.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program, kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Week 35 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is asking the Lord, “Please engage me in Your service.” This is the mantra taught by Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself. Hare refers to the energy of the Lord, and Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are names for the Lord Himself. When we chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, we are asking Kṛṣṇa to please engage us in His service. This is because our entire material disease is due to our having forgotten to serve God. In illusion, we are thinking, “I am God. What is the other God that I have to serve? I myself am God.” Ultimately, that is the only disease, the last snare of illusion.

First of all, a person tries to be a prime minister, president, Rockefeller, Ford, this and that, and when one fails or attains such a post and is still unhappy, he wants to become God. That is like becoming an even higher president. When I understand that the presidency does not afford me eternal bliss and knowledge, I demand the highest presidency. I demand to become God. In any case, the demand is there, and this demand is our disease. In illusion, we are demanding to be the highest, but the process of bhakti-yoga is just the opposite. We want to become servants, servants of the servants of the Lord. There is no question of demanding to become the Lord; we just want to serve. That’s all.

The Path of Perfection

Passage for Discussion

The Cycle of Time

*sahasra-yuga-paryantam
ahar yad brahmaṇo viduḥ
rātriṁ yuga-sahasrāntām
te ‘ho-rātra-vido janāḥ*

TRANSLATION

By human calculation, a thousand ages taken together is the duration of Brahmā’s one day. And such also is the duration of his night.

PURPORT

The duration of the material universe is limited. It is manifested in cycles of kalpas. A kalpa is a day of Brahmā, and one day of Brahmā consists of a thousand cycles of four yugas or ages: Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali.

The cycle of Satya is characterized by virtue, wisdom and religion, there being practically no ignorance and vice, and the yuga lasts 1,728,000 years. In the Tretā-yuga vice is introduced, and this yuga lasts 1,296,000 years. In the Dvāpara-yuga there is an even greater decline in virtue and religion, vice increasing, and this yuga lasts 864,000 years. And finally in Kali-yuga (the yuga we have now been experiencing over the past 5,000 years) there is an abundance of strife, ignorance, irreligion and vice, true virtue being practically nonexistent, and this yuga lasts 432,000 years.

In Kali-yuga vice increases to such a point that at the termination of the yuga the Supreme Lord Himself appears as the Kalkī avatara, vanquishes the demons, saves His devotees, and commences another Satya-yuga. Then the process is set rolling again. These four yugas, rotating a thousand times, comprise one day of Brahmā, the creator god, and the same number comprise one

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night. Brahmā lives one hundred of such “years” and then dies. These “hundred years” by earth calculations total to 311 trillion and 40 million earth years. By these calculations the life of Brahmā seems fantastic and interminable, but from the viewpoint of eternity it is as brief as a lightning flash. In the causal ocean there are innumerable Brahmās rising and disappearing like bubbles in the Atlantic. Brahmā and his creation are all part of the material universe, and therefore they are in constant flux.

In the material universe not even Brahmā is free from the process of birth, old age, disease and death. Brahmā, however, is directly engaged in the service of the Supreme Lord in the management of this universe—therefore he at once attains liberation.

Elevated sannyāsīs are promoted to Brahmā’s particular planet, Brahmāloka, which is the highest planet in the material universe and which survives all the heavenly planets in the upper strata of the planetary system, but in due course Brahmā and all inhabitants of Brahmāloka are subject to death, according to the law of material nature.

Discovery:

1. What is a *kalpa*? What is its duration?
2. What are the 4 *yugas*? What are their characteristics? How long does each *yuga* last?
3. How many years totally does Lord *Brahma* live?
4. How is *Sathya yuga* re-established after the dark age of *Kali yuga*?

Understanding:

1. Why is even the extraordinary life of a *Brahma* insignificant ultimately?
2. How does Lord *Brahma* attain his liberation?
3. What is special about *Brahma loka*? Who attains to *Brahma loka*?
4. Why is attaining *Brahmaloka* too insignificant ultimately?

Application:

1. Discuss about where you would like to go at the end of life. Why do you want to go there?

Preaching is the Essence

ISKCON preaching success formula: Stick to the regulative principles and preach sincerely according to the instructions of the ācāryas:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to preach the saṅkīrtana movement of love of Kṛṣṇa throughout the entire world, and therefore during His presence He inspired the saṅkīrtana movement. Specifically, He sent Rūpa Gosvāmī to Vṛndāvana and Nityānanda to Bengal and personally went to South India. In this way He kindly left the task of preaching His cult in the rest of the world to the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. The members of this Society must always remember that if they stick to the regulative principles and preach sincerely according to the instructions of the ācāryas, surely they will have the profound blessings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and their preaching work will be successful everywhere throughout the world.

Cc. Ādi 7.171

Week 36 – Leader’s Section

Inviting your members to the Sunday programs of your yatra will give them the exposure to the bigger programs, more devotees association as well as senior devotees’ association. They will flourish and progress by attending them. Make sure you are there to receive them, or take them along, introduce them to the leaders and to everyone else and see that they are comfortable. It is also a sense of joy and achievement to you to see your members become accepted in the larger community of devotees. This brings great transcendental happiness to everyone.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta, during the week. Request them to start reading Srila Prabhupada’s lilamrta, and share points from it.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: What do you feel about old people? What does being old mean to you?

Kirtana : 15 minutes

You could ask someone chanting 16 rounds already to lead the kirtana. You could first ensure that they know how to lead, and then you can encourage them to do so. This will enthuse them as well as the other members, who will then feel confident to also make progress in their commitments. Also this is part of their training to become good Kirtana singers as well.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Sri Namarita.

As most of the members are approaching the completion of nine months of regularly attending the Bhakti Vriksha and are all attending the study classes, they are now coming close to taking up the commitment of taking Srila Prabhupada Asraya. Find out how many of them are chanting 16 rounds of japa and encourage them to start doing so.

Discussion- 45 minutes

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the spiritual edification to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the application question one by one.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Preaching is the Essence. Discuss your visit to a new contact's house along with one of your Bhakti Vriksha senior members. Ask the senior member also for his/her feed back on how the meeting went and what he learned from the visit. You can ask another senior member to accompany you for the following week. If each of the senior members get to come a few times to these visits, they will gain confidence and the experience how to deal with the new people. They can then be entrusted to do the visits themselves taking along with them a junior member for training them as well.

Right now you can ask the junior members for their reports on who they contacted for the week and what they managed to achieve by their effort (invited them for the program, sold them a book or just started to cultivate them in Krsna consciousness, etc). Give them further assignments for the week. If they carry some prasdam along with them while they make these preaching efforts, it is bound to be more effective.

Note down in a book the preaching efforts of everyone. This will help you plan better to cover all the people that need to be visited, and also to train all the members who need training to do the visiting themselves.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Please enter the details about your members attending this week:

No.	Members	Attendance	Current Siksha status	Remarks

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read:

Caturmasya & Damodara Vrata: Page 122

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 18.47

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Teachings of Lord Kapila"

Vaishnava Songs:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!! | Pages 128, 129 |
| 2. Bhajahu Re Mana | Page 130 |
| 3. Prayer To One's Beloved Lord | Pages 131, 132 |
| 4. Gauranga Bolita Habe | Pages 132, 133, 134 |
| 5. Jaya Radha Madhava | Pages 134 |
| 6. A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga | Pages 134, 135 |
| 7. Udilo Aruna | Pages 136, 137 |
| 8. Jiv Jago | Page 137 |
| 9. Sri Nama-Kirtana | Page 138 |
| 10. Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura | Page 139 |
| 11. Vibhavari Sesa | Pages 140, 141 |
| 12. Nama-Sankirtana | Pages 141, 142 |
| 13. Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis) | Page 143 |
| 14. Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa | Pages 143, 144 |
| 15. Sri Radhika Stava | Pages 144, 14 |

ISKCON Websites: Page 27.

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Always announce the member's names that have sponsored for the prasadam, especially if it is for some special occasion.

Encourage them also to make offerings of simple sweets in their homes and distribute it to their friends or acquaintances. It will be a very fulfilling service for them and will enable them to appreciate and understand the glories of prasadam even further.

Find out and narrate the pastime of why Lord Jagannath accepts so much prasadam at Puri and why He allows it to be distributed widely to everyone in Kali yuga.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program, kindly fill in the following form:

Week 36 – Members' Section

Sri Namamrta

As stated in the Fifteenth Chapter, all the rules and regulations of the Vedas are meant for knowing Kṛṣṇa. If one understands Kṛṣṇa from the Bhagavad-gītā and becomes situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, engaging himself in devotional service, he has reached the highest perfection of knowledge offered by the Vedic literature. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu made this process very easy: He asked people simply to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare and to engage in the devotional service of the Lord and eat the remnants of foodstuff offered to the Deity. One who is directly engaged in all these devotional activities is understood as having studied all Vedic literature. He has come to the conclusion perfectly.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 16.24

Passage for Discussion

The King of Education

*rāja-vidyā rāja-guhyam
pavitram idam uttamam
pratyakṣāvagamam dharmyam
su-sukham kartum avyayam*

TRANSLATION

This knowledge is the king of education, the most secret of all secrets. It is the purest knowledge, and because it gives direct perception of the self by realization, it is the perfection of religion. It is everlasting, and it is joyfully performed.

PURPORT

This chapter of Bhagavad-gītā is called the king of education because it is the essence of all doctrines and philosophies explained before. There are seven principal philosophers in India: Gautama, Kaṇāda, Kapila, Yājñavalkya, Śāṅḍilya, Vaiśvānara, and, finally, Vyāsadeva, the author of the Vedānta-sūtra. So there is no dearth of knowledge in the field of philosophy or transcendental knowledge.

Now the Lord says that this Ninth Chapter is the king of all such knowledge, the essence of all knowledge that can be derived from the study of the Vedas and different kinds of philosophy. It is the most confidential because confidential or transcendental knowledge involves understanding the difference between the soul and the body. And the king of all confidential knowledge culminates in devotional service.

Generally, people are not educated in this confidential knowledge; they are educated in external knowledge. As far as ordinary education is concerned, people are involved with so many departments: politics, sociology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, engineering, etc. There are so many departments of knowledge all over the world and many huge universities, but there is, unfortunately, no university or educational institution where the science of the spirit soul is instructed. Yet the soul is the most important part of this body; without the presence of the soul, the body has no value. Still people are placing great stress on the bodily necessities of life, not caring for the vital soul.

The Bhagavad-gītā, especially from the Second Chapter on, stresses the importance of the soul. In the very beginning, the Lord says that this body is perishable and that the soul is not perishable. That is a confidential part of knowledge: simply knowing that spirit soul is different from this body and that its nature is immutable, indestructible and eternal. But that gives no positive information about the soul. Sometimes people are under the impression that the soul is different from the body and that when the body is finished, or one is liberated from the body, the soul remains in a void and becomes impersonal. But actually that is not the fact. How can the soul, which is so active within this body, be inactive after being liberated from the body? It is always active. If it is eternal, then it is eternally active, and its activities in the spiritual kingdom are the most confidential part of spiritual knowledge. These activities of the spirit soul are therefore indicated here as constituting the king of all knowledge, the most confidential part of all knowledge.

This knowledge is the purest form of all activities, as is explained in Vedic literature. In the Padma Purāṇa, man's sinful activities have been analyzed and are shown to be the results of sin after sin. Those who are engaged in fruitive activities are entangled in different stages and forms of sinful reactions. For instance, when the seed of a particular tree is sown, the tree does not appear immediately to grow; it takes some time. It is first a small, sprouting plant, then it assumes the form of a tree, then it flowers, bears fruit, and, when it is complete, the flowers and fruits are enjoyed by persons who have sown the seed of the tree. Similarly, a man performs a sinful act, and like a seed it takes time to fructify. There are different stages. The sinful action may have already stopped within the individual, but the results or the fruit of that sinful action are still enjoyed. There are sins which are still in the form of a seed, and there are others which are already fructified and are giving us fruit, which we are enjoying as distress and pain, as explained in the twentieth verse of the Seventh Chapter.

A person who has completely ended the reactions of all sinful activities and who is fully engaged in pious activities, being freed from the duality of this material world, becomes engaged in devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. In other words, those who are actually engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Lord are already freed from all reactions. For those who are engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all sinful reactions, whether fructified, in the stock, or in the form of a seed, gradually vanish. Therefore the purifying potency of devotional service is very strong, and it is called pavitram uttamam, the purest. Uttamam means transcendental. Tamas means this material world or darkness, and uttamam means that which is transcendental to material activities. Devotional activities are never to be considered material, although sometimes it appears that devotees are engaged just like ordinary men. One who can see and is familiar with devotional service, however, will know that they are not material activities. They are all spiritual and devotional, uncontaminated by the material modes of nature.

It is said that the execution of devotional service is so perfect that one can perceive the results directly. This direct result is actually perceived, and we have practical experience that any person who is chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa (Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare) in course of time feels some transcendental pleasure and very quickly becomes purified of all material contamination. This is actually seen. Furthermore, if one engages not only in hearing but in trying to broadcast the message of devotional activities as well, or if he engages himself in helping the missionary activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he gradually feels spiritual progress. This advancement in spiritual life does not depend on any kind of previous education or qualification. The method itself is so pure that by simply engaging in it one becomes pure.

Discovery:

1. What is referred to as the king of all education? What are its chief qualities?

Understanding:

1. What knowledge is considered very confidential? Why are people generally unaware of it?
2. What is even more confidential than that to know? Why ?
3. Why is this knowledge the purest?
4. Why is this knowledge mentioned to be transcendental?
5. Describe how we can see the result of this knowledge?

Application:

1. Describe the changes you have experienced in yourself after taking up Krishna consciousness.

Preaching is the Essence

The Lord empowers the devotee to preach:

The Supreme Lord has multi-potencies, which the Lord bestows on His fortunate devotees. The Lord has a special potency by which He spreads the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This is also explained in Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya 7.11). Kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana: “One cannot spread the holy name of Kṛṣṇa without being specifically empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa.” A devotee who receives this power from the Lord must be considered very fortunate. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading to enlighten people about their real position, their original relationship with Kṛṣṇa. One requires Kṛṣṇa’s special power in order to be able to do this.... The Lord again comes as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to induce people to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Lord also empowers a special devotee to teach people their constitutional position.

Cc. Madhya 19.114

Week 37 – Leader’s Section

Your Bhakti Vriksha should be the hub of enthusiastic activities now as the members are slowly meeting more days than one together. They should be attending the study classes, and at least a few of them must be attending the Sunday classes of the yatra. Giving them exposure to serving and participating in the bigger festivals of the yatra is also very essential. They should have also started to come along with you, even if only one at a time to your visits to the new contacts.

Apart from that, picnics etc on certain week-ends at least once in a month or two months will greatly enthrall them.

All these activities and influence will work miracles in bringing the members together in spiritual consciousness. There are deep lasting spiritual relationships being built.

At the same time, since preaching is very much emphasized in the Bhakti Vriksha, the members will be always ready and looking forward to being expert preachers themselves, so they could give the mercy to more and more people.

Without this preaching urge, the relationships could just become stumbling blocks in one’s spiritual advancement. One may develop a closed mentality and display symptoms of exclusivity about the membership of the group and have a discriminative attitude towards non-members, etc.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta, during the week.

Request them to start reading Srila Prabhupada’s lilamrta , and share points from it.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: **Tell us something that you learned about yourself this year.**

Kirtana : 15 minutes

You could ask someone chanting 16 rounds already to lead the kirtana. You could first ensure that they know how to lead, and then you can encourage them to do so. This will enthrall them as well as the other members, who will then feel confident to also make progress in their commitments . Also this is part of their training to become good kirtana singers as well. You can give every week a different devotee to lead the kirtana.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Sri Namamrita.

As most of the members are approaching the completion of 9 months of regularly attending the Bhakti Vriksha and are all attending the study classes, they are now coming close to taking up the commitment of taking Srila Prabhupada Asraya. Find out how many of them are chanting 16 rounds of japa and encourage the others to start doing so.

Discussion- 45 minutes

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

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Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the spiritual edification to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Preaching is the Essence. Discuss your visit to a new contact's house along with one of your Bhakti Vriksha senior members. Ask the senior member also for his/her feed back on how the meeting went and what he learned from the visit. You can ask another senior member to accompany you for the following week. If each of the senior members get to come a few times to these visits, they will gain confidence and the experience how to deal with the new people. They can then be entrusted to do the visits themselves taking along with them a junior member for training them as well.

Right now you can ask the junior members for their reports on who they contacted for the week and what they managed to achieve by their effort (invited them for the program, sold them a book or just started to cultivate them in Krsna consciousness, etc). Give them further assignments for the week. If they carry some prasadam along with them while they make these preaching efforts, it is bound to be more effective.

Note down in a book the preaching efforts of everyone. This will help you plan better to cover all the people that need to be visited, and also to train all the members who need training to do the visiting themselves.

Fill in this table in your Preaching session note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read: Damodara

Ashtakam:Page 122

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 18.48

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: “Teachings of Queen Kunti”

Vaishnava Songs:

1.	Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!!	Pages 128, 129
2.	Bhajahu Re Mana	Page 130
3.	Prayer To One's Beloved Lord	Pages 131, 132
4.	Gauranga Bolita Habe	Pages 132, 133, 134
5.	Jaya Radha Madhava	Pages 134
6.	A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga	Pages 134, 135
7.	Udilo Aruna	Pages 136, 137
8.	Jiv Jago	Page 137
9.	Sri Nama-Kirtana	Page 138
10.	Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura	Page 139
11.	Vibhavari Sesa	Pages 140, 141
12.	Nama-Sankirtana	Pages 141, 142
13.	Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis)	Page 143
14.	Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa	Pages 143, 144
15.	Sri Radhika Stava	Pages 144, 14

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Always announce the member's names that have sponsored for the prasadam, especially if it is for some special occasion.

Encourage them also to make offerings of simple sweets in their homes and distribute it to their friends or acquaintances. It will be a very fulfilling service for them and will enable them to appreciate and understand the glories of prasadam even further.

You can narrate your own experiences as well as the experiences of other devotees as well what you have read from books like “Srila Prabhupada lilamrta” as well as the BACK TO GOHEAD, etc, the spiritual effects of prasadam on people.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program, kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Week 37 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta

The Name of Christ

The relationship of the names “Kṛiṣṇa” and “Christ”:

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What is the meaning of the word Christ?

Father Emmanuel: Christ comes from the Greek word Christos, meaning “the anointed one.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Christos is the Greek version of the word Kṛiṣṇa.

Father Emmanuel: This is very interesting.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When an Indian person calls on Kṛiṣṇa, he often says, “Kṛṣṭa.” Kṛṣṭa is a Sanskrit word meaning “attraction.” So when we address God as “Christ,” “Kṛṣṭa,” or “Kṛiṣṇa,” we indicate the same all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead. When Jesus said, “Our Father, who art in heaven, sanctified be Thy name,” that name of God was “Kṛṣṭa” or “Kṛṣṇa.” Do you agree?

Father Emmanuel: I think Jesus, as the son of God, has revealed to us the actual name of God: Christ. We can call God “Father,” but if we want to address Him by His actual name, we have to say “Christ.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. “Christ” is another way of saying Kṛṣṭa, and “Kṛṣṭa” is another way of pronouncing Kṛiṣṇa, the name of God. Jesus said that one should glorify the name of God, but yesterday I heard one theologian say that God has no name—that we can call Him only “Father.” A son may call his father “Father,” but the father also has a specific name. Similarly, “God” is the general name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, whose specific name is Kṛiṣṇa. Therefore whether you call God “Christ,” “Kṛṣṭa,” or “Kṛiṣṇa,” ultimately you are addressing the same Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Father Emmanuel: Yes, if we speak of God’s actual name, then we must say, “Christos.” In our religion, we have the Trinity: the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe we can know the name of God only by revelation from the Son of God. Jesus Christ revealed the name of the father, and therefore we take the name Christ as the revealed name of God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Actually, it doesn’t matter—Kṛiṣṇa or Christ—the name is the same. The main point is to follow the injunctions of the Vedic scriptures that recommend chanting the name of God in this age.

The Science of Self-Realization

Passage for Discussion

Continued from last week

In the Vedānta-sūtra this is also described in the following words: prakāśaś ca karmaṇy abhyāsāt. “Devotional service is so potent that simply by engaging in the activities of devotional service, one becomes enlightened without a doubt.” Nārada, who happened to be the son of a maidservant, had no education, nor was he born into a high family. But when his mother was engaged in serving great devotees, Nārada also became engaged, and sometimes, in the absence of his mother, he would serve the great devotees himself.

Edition – September 2010

Nārada personally says, “Once only, by their permission, I took the remnants of their food, and by so doing all my sins were at once eradicated. Thus being engaged, I became purified in heart, and at that time the very nature of the transcendentalist became attractive to me.” (Bhāg. 1.5.25) Nārada tells his disciple Vyāsadeva that in a previous life he was engaged as a boy servant of purified devotees during four months of their stay and that he was intimately associating with them. Sometimes those sages left remnants of food on their dishes, and the boy, who would wash their dishes, wanted to taste the remnants. So he asked the great devotees whether he could eat them, and they gave their permission. Nārada then ate those remnants and consequently became freed from all sinful reactions. As he went on eating, he gradually became as purehearted as the sages, and he gradually developed the same taste. The great devotees relished the taste of unceasing devotional service of the Lord, hearing, chanting, etc., and by developing the same taste, Nārada wanted also to hear and chant the glories of the Lord. Thus by associating with the sages, he developed a great desire for devotional service. Therefore he quotes from the Vedānta-sūtra (prakāśāś ca karmaṇy abhyāsāt): If one is engaged simply in the acts of devotional service, everything is revealed to him automatically, and he can understand. This is called prakāśaḥ, directly perceived.

Nārada was actually a son of a maidservant. He had no opportunity to go to school. He was simply assisting his mother, and fortunately his mother rendered some service to the devotees. The child Nārada also got the opportunity and simply by association achieved the highest goal of all religions, devotional service. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam it is said that religious people generally do not know that the highest perfection of religion is the attainment of the stage of devotional service. Generally Vedic knowledge is required for the understanding of the path of self-realization. But here, although he was not educated in the Vedic principle, Nārada acquired the highest results of Vedic study. This process is so potent that even without performing the religious process regularly, one can be raised to the highest perfection. How is this possible? This is also confirmed in Vedic literature: ācāryavān puruṣo veda. One who is in association with great ācāryas, even if he is not educated or has not studied the Vedas, can become familiar with all the knowledge necessary for realization.

The process of devotional service is a very happy one. Why? Devotional service consists of śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ, so one can simply hear the chanting of the glories of the Lord or can attend philosophical lectures on transcendental knowledge given by authorized ācāryas. Simply by sitting, one can learn; then one can eat the remnants of the food offered to God, nice palatable dishes. In every state devotional service is joyful. One can execute devotional service even in the most poverty-stricken condition. The Lord says, patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalam: He is ready to accept from the devotee any kind of offering, never mind what. Even a leaf, a flower, a bit of fruit, or a little water, which are all available in every part of the world, can be offered by any person, regardless of social position, and will be accepted if offered with love.

There are many instances in history. Simply by tasting the tulasī leaves offered to the lotus feet of the Lord, great sages like Sanatkumāra became great devotees. Therefore the devotional process is very nice, and it can be executed in a happy mood. God accepts only the love with which things are offered to Him.

It is said here that this devotional service is eternally existing. It is not as the Māyāvādī philosophers claim. They sometimes take to so-called devotional service, and as long as they are not liberated they continue their devotional service, but at the end, when they become liberated, they “become one with God.” Such temporary time-serving devotional service is not accepted as pure devotional service.

Actual devotional service continues even after liberation. When the devotee goes to the spiritual planet in the kingdom of God, he is also engaged there in serving the Supreme Lord. He does not try to become one with the Supreme Lord.

As it will be seen, actual devotional service begins after liberation. So in Bhagavad-gītā it is said, brahma-bhūta. After being liberated, or being situated in the Brahman position, one's devotional service begins.

By executing devotional service, one can understand the Supreme Lord. No one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead by executing karma-yoga, jñāna, or aṣṭāṅga-yoga or any other yoga independently. Without coming to the stage of devotional service, one cannot understand what is the Personality of Godhead. In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam it is also confirmed that when one becomes purified by executing the process of devotional service, especially by hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam or Bhagavad-gītā from realized souls, then he can understand the science of Kṛṣṇa or the science of God. *Evam prasanna-manaso bhagavad-bhakti-yogataḥ*. When one's heart is cleared of all nonsense, then one can understand what God is. Thus the process of devotional service, of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is the king of all education and the king of all confidential knowledge. It is the purest form of religion, and it can be executed joyfully without difficulty. Therefore one should adopt it.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is chapter 9 Text 2

Discovery:

1. Which is the most potent way to gain enlightenment?

Understanding:

1. Through the example of Narada, explain how we can gain spiritual enlightenment.
2. How is devotional service joyful to perform?
3. How is devotional service to the Lord eternal?
4. Why is performing devotional service so pure?

Application:

1. Which aspect/aspects of devotional service to you enjoy doing the most? Do you find any difficulty in rendering any part of devotional service?

Preaching is the essence

The secret of success in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is faith in the order of guru and Kṛṣṇa:

Believing in the words of His spiritual master, He [Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu] introduced the saṅkīrtana movement, just as the present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started with belief in the words of our spiritual master. He wanted to preach, we believed in his words and tried somehow or other to fulfill them, and now this movement has become successful all over the world.

Therefore faith in the words of the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the secret of success. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never disobeyed the orders of His spiritual master and stopped propagating the saṅkīrtana movement. Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, at the time of his passing away, ordered all his disciples to work conjointly to preach the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world. Later, however, some self-interested, foolish disciples disobeyed his orders. Each one of them wanted to become head of the mission, and they fought in the courts, neglecting the order of the spiritual master, and the entire mission was defeated. We are not proud of this; however, the truth must be explained. We believed in the words of our spiritual master and started in a humble way - in a helpless way - but due to the spiritual force of the order of the supreme authority, this movement has become successful.

Cc. Ādi 7.95-96

Week 38 – Leader’s Section

Through reading Srila Prabhupada’s books the members must be feeling close to Srila Prabhupada and must be developing faith in him. You can make them know him better by showing a video of Srila Prabhupada. Either Acharya 1, 2,3, 4, 5 or any of the ITV productions of Srila Prabhupada’s recordings available as video cassettes, vcds and dvds. Or you can also play some of his lectures during prasadam time. Also it is very important that they all of them read Srila Prabhupada’s lilamrta. If they can read at least the abridged version, they will come to know more about His Divine Grace and the history of ISKCON.

Make an announcement about the siksha seminar on taking up “Srila Prabhupada Ashraya”, during the following week.

Ice breaker: 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta, during the week.

Request them to start reading Srila Prabhupada’s lilamrta, and share points from it.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: Share about the day of your life that you consider most important.

Kirtan : 15 minutes

You could ask someone chanting 16 rounds already to lead the kirtana. You could first ensure that they know how to lead, and then you can encourage them to do so. This will enthuse them as well as the other members, who will then feel confident to also make progress in their commitments. Also this is part of their training to become good kirtana singers as well.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Sri Namamrita.

As most of the members are approaching the completion of 9 months of regularly attending the Bhakti Vriksha and are all attending the study classes, they are now coming close to taking up the commitment of taking Srila Prabhupada Ashraya. Find out how many of them are chanting 16 rounds of japa and encourage them to start doing so.

Discussion- 45 minutes

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krsna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there is more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the spiritual edification to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Ask the members to take turns to read out a few sentences each from Preaching is the Essence. Discuss your visit to a new contact's house along with one of your Bhakti Vriksha senior members. Ask the senior member also for his/her feed back on how the meeting went and what he learned from the visit. You can ask another senior member to accompany you for the following week. If each of the senior members get to come a few times to these visits, they will gain confidence and the experience how to deal with the new people. They can then be entrusted to do the visits themselves taking along with them a junior member for training them as well.

Right now you can ask the junior members for their reports on who they contacted for the week and what they managed to achieve by their effort (invited them for the program, sold them a book or just started to cultivate them in Krsna consciousness, etc). Give them further assignments for the week. If they carry some prasadam along with them to give them, while they make these preaching efforts, it is bound to be more effective.

Note down in a book the preaching efforts of everyone. This will help you plan better to cover all the people that need to be visited, and also to train all the members who need training to do the visiting themselves.

Fill in this table in your Preaching session note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/ No	Additional notes

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed)

Read: Fasting and Feasting on Festival & Special Days: Page 126

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 18.48

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Srimad Bhagavad- gita- Introduction"

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

Vaishnava Songs:

1.	Radha Krishna Bol Bol !!!	Pages 128, 129
2.	Bhajahu Re Mana	Page 130
3.	Prayer To One's Beloved Lord	Pages 131, 132
4.	Gauranga Bolita Habe	Pages 132, 133, 134
5.	Jaya Radha Madhava	Pages 134
6.	A Prayer To Lotus Feet of Lord Sri Gauranga	Pages 134, 135
7.	Udilo Aruna	Pages 136, 137
8.	Jiv Jago	Page 137
9.	Sri Nama-Kirtana	Page 138
10.	Ohe! Vaishnava Thakura	Page 139
11.	Vibhavari Sesa	Pages 140, 141
12.	Nama-Sankirtana	Pages 141, 142
13.	Sakhi-Vrnde Vijnapti (Prayers to the Sakhis)	Page 143
14.	Saparsada-bhagavad-viraha janita-vilapa	Pages 143, 144
15.	Sri Radhika Stava	Pages 144, 14

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam

Always announce the member's names that have sponsored for the prasadam, especially if it is for some special occasion.

Encourage them also to make offerings of simple sweets in their homes and distribute it to their friends or acquaintances. It will be a very fulfilling service for them and will enable them to appreciate and understand the glories of prasadam even further.

You can play a video of Srila Prabhupada's from the Acharya series or any other, or you can play one of his lecture tapes while the devotees are honouring their prasadam.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program, kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Week 38 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta

*Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra brings one to the point of full surrender
to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa:*

[Haridāsa Ṭhākura to the reformed prostitute]: “Chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra continuously and render service to the tulasī plant by watering her and offering prayers to her. In this way you will soon get the opportunity to be sheltered at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.”

At least five thousand years ago, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa expressed His desire that everyone surrender to Him (sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja [Bg. 18.66]). Why is it that people cannot do this? Kṛṣṇa assures us, ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ: “I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” Everyone is suffering from the results of sinful activities, but Kṛṣṇa says that if one surrenders unto Him, He will protect one from sinful reactions.

Modern civilization, however, is interested neither in Kṛṣṇa nor in getting relief from sinful acts. Therefore men are suffering. Surrender is the ultimate instruction of Bhagavad-gītā, but for one who cannot surrender to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, it is better to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra constantly, under the instruction of Haridāsa Ṭhākura.... Although Kṛṣṇa wants everyone to surrender to His lotus feet, because of people’s sinful activities they cannot do this. Na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ: [Bg. 7.15] rascals and fools, the lowest of men, who engage in sinful activities, cannot suddenly surrender to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

Nevertheless, if they begin chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and rendering service unto the tulasī plant, they will very soon be able to surrender. One’s real duty is to surrender to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, but if one is unable to do so he should adopt this process, as introduced by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His most confidential servant, Nāmācārya Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura. This is the way to achieve success in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 3.137

Passage for Discussion

Description of Real Mahatmas

*satataṁ kīrtayanto mām
yatantaś ca dṛḍha-vratāḥ
namasyantaś ca mām bhaktyā
nitya-yuktā upāsate*

Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.

PURPORT

The mahātmā cannot be manufactured by rubber-stamping an ordinary man. His symptoms are described here: a mahātmā is always engaged in chanting the glories of the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead. He has no other business. He is always engaged in the glorification of the Lord. In other words, he is not an impersonalist. When the question of glorification is there, one has to glorify the Supreme Lord, praising His holy name, His eternal form, His transcendental qualities and His uncommon pastimes. One has to glorify all these things; therefore a mahātmā is attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

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One who is attached to the impersonal feature of the Supreme Lord, the brahmajyoti, is not described as mahātmā in the Bhagavad-gītā. He is described in a different way in the next verse. The mahātmā is always engaged in different activities of devotional service, as described in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, hearing and chanting about Viṣṇu, not a demigod or human being. That is devotion: śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ, smaraṇam, and remembering Him. Such a mahātmā has firm determination to achieve at the ultimate end the association of the Supreme Lord in any one of the five transcendental rasas. To achieve that success, he engages all activities-mental, bodily and vocal, everything-in the service of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is called full Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In devotional service there are certain activities which are called determined, such as fasting on certain days, like the eleventh day of the moon, Ekādaśī, and on the appearance day of the Lord, etc. All these rules and regulations are offered by the great ācāryas for those who are actually interested in getting admission into the association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the transcendental world. The mahātmās, great souls, strictly observe all these rules and regulations, and therefore they are sure to achieve the desired result.

As described in the second verse of this chapter, this devotional service is not only easy, but it can be performed in a happy mood. One does not need to undergo any severe penance and austerity. He can live this life in devotional service, guided by an expert spiritual master, and in any position, either as a householder or a sannyāsī, or a brahmacārī; in any position and anywhere in the world, he can perform this devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus become actually mahātmā, a great soul.

Bhagavad- gita As It Is Chapter 9 verse 14

Discovery:

1. What are the symptoms of a true *mahatma*?

Understanding:

1. Can the worshipper of a demigod, or an impersonalist be considered a *mahatma*?
2. Describe what the aspirations and activities of the mahatma are.
3. Why are the *mahatmas* sure to achieve their desired result?
4. How can one become a *mahatma*?

Application:

1. Would you like to become a *mahatma*? Why or why not?

Preaching is the essence

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can save the world:

Kirāta, Hūṇa, Āndhra, Pulinda, Pulkaśa, Ābhīra, Śumbha, Yavana and the Khasa races and even others who are addicted to sinful acts can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto Him.

The above-mentioned historical names are different nations of the world. Even those who are constantly engaged in sinful acts are all corrigible to the standard of perfect human beings if they take shelter of the devotees of the Lord. Jesus Christ and Hajrat Muhammad, two powerful devotees of the Lord, have done tremendous service on behalf of the Lord on the surface of the globe. And from the version of Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī it appears that instead of running a

godless civilization in the present context of the world situation, if the leadership of world affairs is entrusted to the devotees of the Lord, for which a worldwide organization under the name and style of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness has already been started, then by the grace of the Almighty Lord there can be a thorough change of heart in human beings all over the world because the devotees of the Lord are able authorities to effect such a change by purifying the dust-worn minds of the people in general.

The politicians of the world may remain in their respective positions because the pure devotees of the Lord are not interested in political leadership or diplomatic implications. The devotees are interested only in seeing that the people in general are not misguided by political propaganda and in seeing that the valuable life of a human being is not spoiled in following a type of civilization which is ultimately doomed. If the politicians would, therefore, be guided by the good counsel of the devotees, then certainly there would be a great change in the world situation by the purifying propaganda of the devotees, as shown by Lord Caitanya....

... A person, though he be even the most sinful man, can at once be purified by systematic contact with a pure Vaiṣṇava.... So by the order of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the cult of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam or the Bhagavad-gītā can be preached all over the world, reclaiming all persons willing to accept the transcendental cult. Such cultural propaganda by the devotees will certainly be accepted by all persons who are reasonably inquisitive, without any particular bias for the custom of the country.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.4.18

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya
Week 39 – Srila Prabhupada Ashraya Siksha Seminar

Welcome all the members and guests. Make a change in the seating arrangement, as today they would all have to sit in a crowd facing the speaker, rather than in a circle.

Have the black board / white board ready with chalk or marker as the case may be, for the seminar. Have a chair and table arranged for the speaker. Discuss with your senior leader about who could possibly enact the short skit which is part of the seminar given below.

Also show him / her the seminar material well in advance, so that they can be well prepared. Prepare the handouts to be given at the end of the class.

Kirtana: 20 minutes

Request the senior to lead a *kirtana* for twenty minutes.

Seminar : 90 minutes PRABHUPADA ASHRAYA Lesson Module :

Aim:

- To motivate members to take shelter of Srila Prabhupada.
- To inspire them to start performing the Mangala Arathi regularly.
- To help them accept the regulative principles in greater detail (having only prasadam, avoiding onion, garlic, tea, coffee etc. and avoiding frivolous sports).
- To start chanting 16 rounds.
- To attend the Friday Bhagavatam class / attend the Bhagavad-Gita study groups.
- To start reading the Bhagavad-Gita systematically.

Objectives: At the end of the lesson the participants will be able to:

- Give at least four reasons why one should take shelter of Srila Prabhupada.
- Will agree to perform the Mangala arati daily and learn it from a senior devotee in case they don't know it already.
- Will commit themselves to observing all the finer details of the four regulative principles, namely no onion & garlic, tea and coffee and avoiding frivolous sports.
- Will start offering all the food preparations to the Lord and only eat Prasadam.
- Will agree to attend the Friday Bhagavatam class regularly.
- Will agree to attend the study groups for Bhagavad gita as well as Srimad Bhagavatam.

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Conditions: They will volunteer to commit these things.

Criteria: At least 75% of the members attending the program will agree to take up the Prabhupada Ashraya certificate immediately.

Assessment: By orally asking them at the end of the class.

Preparation:

What	Who	Resources	Time
A Video Presentation/ Flip Chart Presentation	Facilitator	A TV, Video player and video cassette / Flip chart & B/W Board	30 minutes
Lecture	Facilitator	B/W Board, Flip chart	15 minutes
Quiz	Facilitator any other devotee	Quiz Question, B/W/ Board	10 minutes
Lecture	Facilitator	Do	20 minutes
Skit	Devotees	10 minutes
Conclusion	Facilitator	5 minutes

Les son Pla n :

1) Show the m the Lecture Facilitator Do 20 minutes Skit Devotees 10 minutes
Conclusion **Facilitator** 5 minutes

a) 1 & 2"

2) Lecture on: a) Srila Prabhupada's achievements:

1. Bringing the authentic Vedic religion to the notice of the whole world.
2. Converting even mlechas into first class brahmanas.
3. Convincing all kinds of people about the existence of God.
4. Removing the misery of the people by giving the mahamantra.
5. Giving His transcendental association to everyone and thus uplifting them spiritually.
6. Engaging everyone in the service of Krsna.
7. Giving initiation to tens of thousands of devotees all over the world so that they may be connected to Krsna and can go back to Godhead.
8. Translated & wrote as well as published plenty of books for our spiritual knowledge and upliftment.
9. Gave us the simple process to achieve the highest perfection.
10. Gave us Temples, Farm Communities, Gurukuls, Govinda Restaurants, Ratha Yatras and numerous festival celebrations. Along with a number of cultural festivals for our benefit. He gave us his own disciples so that we may learn and follow his instructions and thus please Krsna.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

Also lecture on the need to take the shelter of Srila Prabhupada / the benefits one gets by taking shelter of Srila Prabhupada :

1. One feels more committed to following Srila Prabhupada.
2. One gets spiritual strength from Srila Prabhupada.
3. Srila Prabhupada is a pure devotee of the Lord, so by pleasing HDG and serving him we can easily please Krsna.
4. Srila Prabhupada is our Siksa Guru and the Founder Acharya of ISKCON so one has to take shelter of his lotus feet if one wants to make further spiritual progress.
5. Can understand the mysteries of the Bhagavad-Gita only by his mercy.

Quiz :

Questions for the Quiz:

1. In which year did Srila Prabhupada go to the United States?
2. What was the real reason for his successful preaching worldwide?
3. What was his mission?
4. What was his relationship with his disciples?
5. Mention at least six of his achievements.

Lecture on the importance and significance of performing Mangala Arathi, Japa, Reading Srila

Prabhupada's books and maintaining strict standards with regard to Prasadam, Deity worship, etc. Flip charts can have the pictures of the above-mentioned processes along with the following points in the respective charts.

Benefits Of Mangala Arathi:

1. Gives a very good spiritual start to the day.
2. Early hours are Brahma Muhurta and are most suited for prayers.
3. Will give us great spiritual strength.
4. Very essential to advance in Krishna Consciousness.

Benefits of chanting 16 rounds:

1. Gives us great spiritual strength.
2. Keeps our mind in Krsna consciousness throughout the day.
3. This is the minimum recommended by Srila Prabhupada in order to be a "human being". Otherwise our consciousness is animalistic.
4. Gives us more taste in chanting.
5. Gives rapid advancement and the desire to render devotional service.
6. Gives us great protection in our spiritual and material lives.
7. Can get a deeper understanding of the Krsna conscious philosophy.

Onion and Garlic

1. Too Rajasic and Tamasic, respectively, in nature.
2. Onion and garlic are not used in temples and religious functions.
3. The Puranas are a testimony to this.
4. Easy substitutes are available for cooking purposes.

Coffee and Tea

1. Addictive
2. Acidic and very bad for health.
3. Tea consumption produces aluminum in the brain
4. Keep us dependent on them and thus keep us on the bodily platform.

Benefits of taking only Prasadam

1. It is “Mercy of the Lord”.
2. Destroys sins.
3. Purifies our consciousness.
4. We taste Krsna and so it is extremely tasty!
5. Makes us regulated in our eating habits.
6. Is healthy as we only use food in the mode of goodness.
7. Makes us blissful since it connects us to God.
8. Gives us love of God.
9. Easy and practical to follow the principle.

Skit for taking up Systematic Study of the Bhagavad-gita

Devotee to his friend : “Ramesh, you must take up chanting Hare Krishna you know. It will really give you so much bliss and happiness.”

Ramesh: “Why should I chant only Hare Krsna? There are so many Gods you know. I can chant any of those mantras.”

Devotee: “No, but Krsna is the supreme personality of Godhead.” Ramesh: “Says who?”

Devotee : “The scriptures.”

Ramesh: “Well, I know some scriptures, which talk of Lord Siva as the supreme. Can you refute that with any quotes?”

Devotee: “Scratches his head. Well, you must have faith you know.”

Ramesh: “But you talked of scripture. Where in the scriptures does it say that Krsna is the supreme personality of godhead?”

Devotee: “Well, er... I have forgotten. I will look it up and tell you.”

Ramesh : “And can you tell me why we must offer Krsna only vegetarian food. Kali Mata accepts non-vegetarian food you know. Where has God said that He will only accept certain kinds of foods. If He has created everything, everything must be good to eat, you know.”

Devotee: (aside) “My Bhakti Vrksa leader told me to do it and I did it. Now where does it say all this?”(looks dumb).

Ramesh: “And I also cannot understand why you are so fanatic about your religious activities. Now does God ever say that you must not watch the cinemas once in a while. You never take part in any of our social functions. A little bit of drinking and womanizing is what gives spice to life you know. You just don’t know how to enjoy life...”

Devotee(aside): “May be what he says is true. Maybe Krsna did not want us to be so fanatic after all...” (looks bewildered)

Ramesh : “For all the puja and worship that you are doing why are you suffering so much. Your boss constantly harasses you, your family members ill-treat you and you are always short of money. What is the use of your worshipping Him?”

“You see me, I am moderate and balanced in my religious beliefs and I have no major problem going for me. You should become smart in your material dealings. You should work hard like me...”

Devotee: “But I do work hard .. as much as is necessary. It is just my bad karma that I get these sufferings.”

Ramesh: “Then, is there no hope for you? What a defeatist philosophy! No I would rather enjoy life ! You become a sannyasi if you want.... “(Walks out)

Devotee: “Oh Krsna! Why do I feel so confused?..... What do I do? Why don’t I have any answers for all his questions? How can I reveal my defeat to my Bhakti Vrksa leader? He keeps scolding me for not reading the Bhagavad-Gita...(thoughtfully)..... oh yes!... now I understand.. I must read the Bhagavad-Gita systematically and thoroughly as my BV leader has done.. then I can be very strong and will be able to preach authoritatively! Oh yes! I am going to start reading the Bhagavad-gita from today!”

CHECK LIST FOR MODULE 4 (Srila Prabhupada Ashraya)

The fourth module consists of twelve lessons which are covered in twelve weeks. At the end of this module, there are some questions / check list given below that you can answer to see if the members have progressed along the expected lines up at least up to Srila Prabhupada Ashraya level. (Srila Prabhupada Ashraya: committed to chanting at least sixteen malas of japa every day, following the four regulative principles, eating only prasadam, accepting Srila Prabhupada alone as one's siksha Guru, .

You should have been entering the details about your members in the BV report form given at the end of each lesson, every week. This will help you fill up the check-list easily and will make your assessment of your progress authentic. If there is any short fall, you will know you have to give some special attention, or see if you have not given sufficient attention to some particular aspect of the program. Please go through the introduction of this book once again to help you in this.

In spite of our best efforts, it is still possible that our results may sometimes be less than ideal as we are dealing with human beings who all have their independence to advance in Krsna consciousness at the pace they want... but we can do our part to the best of our ability, and that in most cases does inspire them to surrender faster. But there is no need to feel depressed or dispirited if we are not always successful, because we are constantly improving ourselves both in our level of Krsna conscious surrender as well as in our skills to inspire people, so we can always keep improving.

Write Yes/ No or the appropriate answer in the right hand side column

1.	Do you have at least 14 to 15 members members attending your program?
2.	Are they all attending regularly? If not how many are irregular?
3.	Do they regularly attend the study classes? How many are not attending?
4.	Do they come for Sunday programs at the temple? How many are not coming?
5.	Are they all chanting at least 16 rounds ? If not how many are not chanting?
6.	Do they do the home – work that you assign them? If not, how many are not doing it?
7.	Do they all feel comfortable with you and are communicative with you? If not, how many are not communicative?
8.	Are they regular in all aspects of their sadhana, including performing Mangala Arathi and reading Srila Prabhupada's books ? How many are not regular?
9.	In which aspects of their sadhana are they not regular?
10.	Do they take an active part in the preaching activities? How many are not taking part?
11.	Are they all enthusiastic to take up the Srila Prabhupada Ashraya certificate? If not, how many are not willing to take ?

If you have just one or two that are not up to the mark, you can feel that you have done a good job, but that you must still work at bringing everyone to the desired level. If there are around half the group not advancing, then you must do a review of your program. You can discuss this with your senior preachers, take their guidance and help as well. Remember you are the parent, and parents will do everything to care for each one of their children !

Devotee Care Series

The Bhakti Vriksha Modules

Sri Guru Ashraya



Bhakti Vriksha Training Centre

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Week 40 – Leader’s Section

Many of the devotees who attended your seminar on Srila Prabhupada Asraya should have committed themselves to that level. You can ask them to fill in the siksha forms (the format is available in this book). You can apply for a certificate with the Temple President’s signature for them from the yatra for taking on the commitment. You can request for the certificates to be handed out during the Sunday/ Saturday/Friday weekly programs in the yatra, so the members will feel the gravity of their commitment and will feel enthused by the cheering of so many devotees.

If for some reason this is not possible, you could hand it out at the Vyuha program which will follow in two weeks’ time. You could invite a senior devotee to come, attend the program and also address them for a while. The senior devotee can also participate in the other interactive programs, so that the members get his/her personal association too.

Timely handing out of the certificates is very important if you want to keep up the pace of their spiritual advancement.

Our complacency can delay their spiritual growth!

Ice breaker : 15 minutes

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

Request them to start reading Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrita, and share points from it in the following weeks.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: What makes you most angry? What do you do with the anger?

Kirtana : 15 minutes

You could ask someone chanting 16 rounds already to lead the kirtana. You could first ensure that they know how to lead, and then you can encourage them to do so. This will enthuse them as well as the other members, who will then feel confident to also make progress in their commitments. They will also gain experience to be good kirtana singers.

Japa.... 15 minutes

Read out first the passage from the Sri Namamrita.

As many of the devotees of your group have committed to chanting 16 rounds, you can ask them their realizations on chanting and how they make the time to chant everyday. You can guide them to do better, and also those who are chanting less rounds will feel inspired to keep improving their chanting. Encourage them to chant in the early morning hours of the day (Brahma muhurtha hour) when their minds will be fresh and calm after a good night’s rest. To begin with they should chant at least 8 rounds before they start the day’s work. They should gradually come up to the level of chanting all their rounds in the morning. Help them to schedule their day, so that they can fit in japa, Mangala Arathi as well as reading of the Bhagavad Gita. This is the basic minimum to ensure steady spiritual progress.

If they have more time to accommodate Tulasi puja, Srila Prabhupada puja, Sandhya Arathi also, they can do so. Otherwise they could just attend the week-end common programmes at the temple or else where for a complete Mangala Arathi and and/ or Sandhya Arathi programme.

Spiritual Edification - 45 minutes

If there are newcomers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first

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week's edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

After sharing your preaching activities for the week, you can make plans for the forth coming week in this way:

Take along with you one of the senior preachers who were accompanying you in the past few weeks for visiting new contacts. Only, this time, let them do all the talking while you support them in their service, and later on you can give an assessment of how well they did. In this way, they will be quickly trained and gain the confidence to go out on visits on their own and take along the junior devotees in the group with them.

You can ask the junior members for their reports on whom they contacted for the week and what they managed to achieve by their effort (either invited them for the program, sold them a book or just started to cultivate them in Krishna consciousness, etc). Give them further assignments for the week. If they carry some prasadam along with them to give the people during their preaching, it is bound to be more effective.

Note down in a book the preaching efforts of everyone. This will help you plan better to cover all the people that need to be visited, and also to train all the members who need training to do the visiting themselves.

Fill in this table in your note book for the preaching session:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/ No	Additional notes

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read: *The Need for Taking Guru Ashraya*

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : 11.54 and 7.4

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 1"

Vaishnava Songs:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| • Suddha - bhakata (from Saranagati) | Pages 162, 163 |
| • Sri Vraja-dhama-mahimamrta | Pages 166, 167 |
| • Jaya Radha-Krsna Giti | Pages 168, 169 |
| • Sri Nama (From Gitavali) | Pages 171 |
| • Gopinatha (From Kalyana-kalpataru) | Pages 171, 172 |
| • Sri Dasavatara-stotra (from Gita-Govinda) | Pages 173, 174 |
| • Sri Jagannathastakam (By Mahaprabhu) | Pages 175, 176, 177 |

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Always announce the member's names that have sponsored for the prasadam, especially if it is for some special occasion. Encourage them to make offerings of simple sweets in their homes and distribute it to their friends or acquaintances. It will be a very fulfilling service for them and will enable them to appreciate and understand the glories of prasadam even further. You can play a video of Srila Prabhupada's from the Acharya series or any other, or you can play one of his lecture tapes while the devotees are honouring their prasadam

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Sri Namamrita – The Nectar of the Holy Name

The benefits of chanting cannot be taken away

It is said that the sun is taking away our duration of life—every minute, every hour, every day—but if we engage ourselves in the topics of Uttama-śloka, the topics of the Lord, that time cannot be taken away. The time one devotes in a Kṛṣṇa consciousness temple cannot be taken away. It is an asset—a plus, not a minus. The duration of life, so far as the body is concerned, may be taken; however one tries to keep it intact, no one can do it. But the spiritual education we receive in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be taken away by the sun. It becomes a solid asset.

Chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare is a very easy thing to do. Time spent chanting cannot be taken away like time pertaining to the body. Fifty years ago I was a young man, but that time has been taken and cannot be returned. The spiritual knowledge I received from my spiritual master, however, cannot be taken away, but will go with me. Even after I quit this body, it will go with me; and if it is perfect in this life, then it will take me to the eternal abode.

Easy Journey to Other Planets

Passage for Discussion

Who can give us Self-realisation?

*Tad viddhi pranipātena
paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

TRANSLATION

Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.

PURPORT

The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult. The Lord therefore advises us to approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord Himself. No one can be a bona fide spiritual master without following this principle of disciplic succession. The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his disciple. No one can be spiritually realized by manufacturing his own process, as is the fashion of the foolish pretenders.

The Bhāgavatam says: dharmam hi sākṣād-bhagavat-praṇītam—the path of religion is directly enunciated by the Lord. Therefore, mental speculation or dry arguments cannot help one progress in spiritual life. One has to approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge. Such a spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realized spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life.

Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding. Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective. One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding.

In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. One should not only hear submissively from the spiritual master; but one must also get a clear understanding from him, insubmission and service and inquiries. A bona fide spiritual master is by nature very kind toward the disciple. Therefore when the student is submissive and is always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries becomes perfect.

Bg 4.35

Discovery:

1. What is the Lord's advise on who we can choose as our spiritual master?

Understanding:

1. Why is it so important to accept a Guru who belongs to a proper disciplic succession?
2. Describe how we must approach a spiritual master and how we must enquire the truth from him?
3. How do we advance in spiritual realization?
4. What two things are condemned in our relationship with the spiritual master?
5. Why is it important to please the Guru ?

Application:

1. What are your thoughts about accepting a living Guru in order to further progress in your spiritual life?

Preaching is the Essence

Lord Caitanya's prediction that Kṛiṣṇa consciousness will spread all over the world is being realized:

When people came to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to discuss the principles of various scriptures, the Lord defeated their false conclusions and established the predominance of devotional service to the Lord. With logic and argument He very politely changed their minds.

We have been spreading this saṅkīrtana movement in the Western countries, and in our recent tour of European cities like Rome, Geneva, Paris and Frankfurt, many learned Christian scholars, priests, philosophers and yogīs came to see us, and by the grace of Kṛiṣṇa they agreed that this Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement, the bhakti cult, offers the topmost conclusion. Following in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we are trying to convince everyone that the devotional service of the Lord is enjoined in every scripture.... It is not a question of being Christian, Mohammedan or Hindu. One should be purely religious and freed from all these material designations.... This argument appeals to all intelligent men, and consequently this Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement is gaining ground throughout the world. Due to our solid logic and scientific presentation, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's prediction that Kṛiṣṇa consciousness will spread in every town and village throughout the world is gradually being realized.

Cc. Madhya 25.20

Week 41

The devotees who are progressing as per schedule need to be given training on how to preach confidently and expertly to new people. The idea is that by the end of 64 weeks, quite a few of them will be ready and will agree to lead Bhakti Vriksha groups on their own, though under your supervision and direction as you who will then be acting in the role of a sector leader. You have to engage them from now on in conducting different parts of the program, and you can witness how they perform and correct them wherever they go wrong.

You can ask one devotee to lead the Satsanga, another devotee the kirtana, a third, the spiritual edification session, etc. After a few more weeks you can also ask them to lead the preaching sessions.

In the subsequent weeks, you can give this opportunity to all the eligible candidates to receive this training in conducting the different sessions, and in this way develop the communication and leadership skills in them.

Have a meeting with all the possible trainees and give them a briefing on how each part of the program is conducted. They can go through the instructions that are there in the modules.

Since they are doing it right before you, they will not be too diffident about making mistakes, as you are there to correct them. Also the other members will feel comfortable due to your presence, and will not mind any of their mistakes.

Ice breaker : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada's Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

Request them to start reading Srila Prabhupada's Lilamrita, and share points from it in the following weeks.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: Describe an episode in which you lied to someone or someone lied to you. How did you feel after?

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa : 15 minutes

You can ask another of the devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita and then conduct the japa session by leading the japa and later making the enquiries of some of the devotees' japa and their realizations on their progress:

Ask some of the devotees to share about their progress in japa and how they feel about it. You can cover a few devotees every week, so that the time allotted to japa session does not get extended.

Spiritual Edification - 45 minutes

Ask one of the most serious devotees to conduct this session. Everyone will get their turn, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They might be apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong, very discreetly, so that he does not

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

If there are newcomers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week's edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Have a discussion on how the senior devotees felt after conducting the different features of the Bhakti Vriksha program. The other members will also appreciate what is going on and what is also in store for them as they progress along. There will be a lot of cooperation among all of them due to this. Draw up a roster of which devotee will conduct which aspect of the program for the coming weeks.

As for the home visits, you can entrust some of the senior devotees who have been accompanying you in the last few weeks, to take along the junior devotees(chanting 4 rounds at least and are regularly attending the Bhakti Vriksha) for the visits, so that the junior devotees will also get trained in this aspect of preaching.

You can start taking the senior devotees one by one with you as you make the home visits to the members of your group starting with the most junior members. This will create a lot of bonding, will help remove anarthas faster and make them inspired to progress faster in their Krishna consciousness.

You can also encourage them in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana etc, wherever possible. These will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting for festivals, etc, and also for their new prospective Bhakti Vrikshas.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read: ISKCON & The GBC:Page 157

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 7.5, B.G 7.6, B.G 7.14

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 2"

Vaishnava Songs:

- Suddha - bhakata (from Saranagati) Pages 162, 163
- Sri Vraja-dhama-mahimamrta Pages 166, 167
- Jaya Radha-Krsna Giti Pages 168, 169
- Sri Nama (From Gitavali) Pages 171
- Gopinatha (From Kalyana-kalpataru) Pages 171, 172
- Sri Dasavatara-stotra (from Gita-Govinda) Pages 173, 174
- Sri Jagannathastakam (By Mahaprabhu) Pages 175, 176, 177

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam: 20 minutes

You can also entrust the planning and organizing of the prasadam with the senior members. They should consult with you before finalizing the menu etc, so they get trained to organize prasadam as well. Otherwise they might consider a difficult task to do if they were to start a Bhakti Vriksha of their own. And such a glorious service as conducting a Bhakti Vriksha may be stopped due to apprehensions about prasadam.

If they are experienced with managing prasadam, they will not hesitate to enthusiastically start a Bhakti Vriksha of their own. Make sure the menu is as simple and uncomplicated as possible, so that it is easy for everyone to follow.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Week 41 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrita - The Nectar of the Holy Name

By always chanting the mahā-mantra, we will get Kṛṣṇa’s protection from sinful reactions:

One cannot commit sinful activities and at the same time advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But Kṛṣṇa says, ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpēbhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi: [Bg. 18.66] “Surrender unto Me, and I shall rescue you by giving you liberation from all kinds of sinful reactions.”

Every one of us, life after life, is knowingly or unknowingly committing sinful activities. I may knowingly kill an animal, and that is certainly sinful, but even if I do it unknowingly, it is also sinful. While walking on the street we unknowingly kill so many ants, and in the course of our other ordinary dealings—while cooking, while taking water, while using a mortar and pestle to crush spices—we kill so many living beings. Unless we remain Kṛṣṇa conscious, we are liable to be punished for all these unknowingly committed sinful acts.

If a child unknowingly touches fire, does it mean that the fire will excuse the child and not burn? No. Nature’s law is so strict, so stringent, that there is no question of an excuse. Even in ordinary law, ignorance is no excuse. If we go to court and say, “I did not know that this action was criminal,” this plea does not mean that we shall be excused. Similarly, ignorance is no excuse for transgressing nature’s laws.

Therefore, if we actually want to be free from the reactions of sinful life, we must be Kṛṣṇa conscious, for then Kṛṣṇa will free us from all sinful reactions. It is therefore recommended, kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ [Cc. Ādi 17.31]—one should always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare so that Kṛṣṇa will save us.

Teachings of Queen Kuntī

Passage for Discussion

We are never separate from Krishna

*yaj jñātvā na punar moham
evam yāsyasi pāṇḍava yena
bhūtāny aśeṣāṇi
drakṣyasy ātmany atho mayi*

TRANSLATION

And when you have thus learned the truth, you will know that all living beings are but part of Me- and that they are in Me, and are Mine.

PURPORT

The result of receiving knowledge from a self-realized soul, or one who knows things as they are, is learning that all living beings are parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The sense of a separated existence from Kṛṣṇa is called māyā (mā-not, yā-this). Some think that we have nothing to do with Kṛṣṇa, that Kṛṣṇa is only a great historical personality and that the Absolute is the impersonal Brahman. Factually, as it is stated in the Bhagavad-gītā, this impersonal Brahman is the personal effulgence of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the cause of everything.

In the Brahma-saṁhitā it is clearly stated that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cause of all causes. Even the millions of incarnations are only His different expansions. Similarly, the living entities are also expansions of Kṛṣṇa.

The Māyāvādī philosophers wrongly think that Kṛṣṇa loses His own separate existence in His many expansions. This thought is material in nature. We have experience in the material world that a thing, when fragmentally distributed, loses its own original identity. But the Māyāvādī philosophers fail to understand that Absolute means that one plus one is equal to one, and that one minus one is also equal to one. This is the case in the absolute world.

For want of sufficient knowledge in the absolute science, we are now covered with illusion, and therefore we think that we are separate from Kṛṣṇa. Although we are separated parts of Kṛṣṇa, we are nevertheless not different from Him. The bodily difference of the living entities is māyā, or not actual fact. We are all meant to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. By māyā alone Arjuna thought that the temporary bodily relationship with his kinsmen was more important than his eternal spiritual relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The whole teaching of the Gītā is targetted toward this end: that a living being, as His eternal servitor, cannot be separated from Kṛṣṇa, and his sense of being an identity apart from Kṛṣṇa is called māyā.

The living entities, as separate parts and parcels of the Supreme, have a purpose to fulfill. Having forgotten that purpose, since time immemorial they are situated in different bodies, as men, animals, demigods, etc. Such bodily differences arise from forgetfulness of the transcendental service of the Lord.

But when one is engaged in transcendental service through Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one becomes at once liberated from this illusion. One can acquire such pure knowledge only from the bona fide spiritual master and thereby avoid the delusion that the living entity is equal to Kṛṣṇa. Perfect knowledge is that the Supreme Soul, Kṛṣṇa, is the supreme shelter for all living entities, and giving up such shelter, the living entities are deluded by the material energy, imagining them selves to have a separate identity. Thus, under different standards of material identity, they become forgetful of Kṛṣṇa. When, however, such deluded living entities become situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is to be understood that they are on the path of liberation, as confirmed in the Bhāgavatam: *muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ svarūpeṇa vyavasthiṭh*. Liberation means to be situated in one's constitutional position as the eternal servitor of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa consciousness).

Bhagavad-gita As It Is Chapter 4 Text 35

Discovery:

1. What knowledge can we get from a self realized soul?

Understanding:

1. What do some people wrongly say about Krishna? What is the absolute truth according to them?
2. What is *Brahma Samhita's* explanation of the Absolute truth?
3. Why do the Mayavadis think that Krishna becomes fragmented when He expands Himself into various expansions? Explain with an example.
4. What do we think is our identity when we are in Maya?
5. When are we actually liberated?

Application:

1. Do you sometimes have to battle with two identities that you have at present, one material and the other spiritual? Share an experience of such a conflict and which identity prevailed at the end.

Preaching is the Essence

*The Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading
like wildfire and cannot be checked:*

Human life is meant for God realization, but unfortunately the materialistic civilization is stressing only the senses of the body, not understanding the living force within the body. As clearly stated in Bhagavad-gītā (dehino 'smin yathā dehe [Bg. 2.13]), within the body is the body's proprietor, the living force, which is more important. But human society has become so fallen that instead of understanding the living force within the body, people have become busy with external things. This is a discrepancy in human duties.

Therefore Kṛiṣṇa has taken birth or taken shelter within the womb of the Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement. Men of Kāmsa's class, therefore, are very much afraid and are busy trying to stop this movement, especially in the Western countries. One politician has remarked that the Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading like an epidemic and that if not checked immediately, within ten years it may capture governmental power. There is, of course, such potency in the Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement.

As stated by authorities (Cc. Ādi 17.22), kali-kāle nāma-rūpe kṛiṣṇa-avatāra: in this age, Kṛiṣṇa has appeared in the Hare Kṛiṣṇa mahā-mantra. The Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading like wildfire all over the world, and it will go on doing so. Men who are like Kāmsa are very much afraid of the movement's progress and acceptance by the younger generation, but as Kṛiṣṇa could not be killed by Kāmsa, this movement cannot be checked by men of Kāmsa's class. The movement will go on increasing more and more, provided the leaders of the movement remain firmly Kṛiṣṇa conscious by following the regulative principles and the primary activities of chanting the Hare Kṛiṣṇa mantra regularly.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.20

Week 42 - Leader's Section

You have to make them aware that shortly the group will be multiplying and that many of them could become Bhakti Vriksha leaders after being properly trained. The study classes that you are conducting should also have given them sufficient incentive to gain more knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita as well as the Srimad Bhagavatam and other smaller books of Srila Prabhupada's more systematically.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada's Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

Request them to start reading Srila Prabhupada's Lilamrta, and share points from it in the following weeks.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: . "Tell us of a time when you felt blessed by the Lord."

Kirtan : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities .. etc.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another of the devotee to read out the passage from Sri Nanmrta, and then conduct the japa session by leading the japa and later making enquiries of some of the devotees' japa and their realizations on their progress.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week's edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Sri Namamrita.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainee's performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting the confidence as well as giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Of course your evaluation of their performance has to be also shared, so that they understand the correct standards for evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana etc, These will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting for festivals, etc, and also for the new prospective Bhakti Vrikshas by the trainee leaders shortly.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home Work

Things to Learn

Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read:

Addressing Vaishnavas: Page 158

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 7.5, B.G 7.6, B.G 7.14

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: “Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 3”

Vaishnava Songs:

- Suddha - bhakata (from Saranagati) Pages 162, 163
- Sri Vraja-dhama-mahimamrta Pages 166, 167
- Jaya Radha-Krsna Giti Pages 168, 169
- Sri Nama (From Gitavali) Pages 171
- Gopinatha (From Kalyana-kalpataru) Pages 171, 172
- Sri Dasavatara-stotra (from Gita-Govinda) Pages 173, 174
- Sri Jagannathastakam (By Mahaprabhu) Pages 175, 176, 177

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

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Prasadam: 20 minutes

You can also entrust the planning and organizing of the prasadam with the senior members. They should consult with you before finalizing the menu etc, so they get trained to organize prasadam as well. Otherwise they might consider a difficult task to do if they were to start a Bhakti Vriksha of their own. And such a glorious service as conducting a Bhakti Vriksha may be stopped due to apprehensions about prasadam.

If they are experienced with managing prasadam, they will not hesitate to enthusiastically start a Bhakti Vriksha of their own. Make sure the menu is as simple and uncomplicated as possible, so that it is easy for everyone to follow the same standard.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Sri Namamrita - The Nectar of the Holy Name
One should control the mind by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra,
which engages the mind at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa:

One should not trust his mind, which is so fickle that it can give way to enemies at any moment. The mind is always accompanied by six enemies—namely, kāma, krodha, mada, moha, mātsarya and bhaya—that is, lust, anger, intoxication, illusion, envy and fear. Although the mind may be merged in spiritual consciousness, one should always be very careful in dealing with it, just as one is careful in dealing with a snake. One should never think that his mind is trained and that he can do whatever he likes. One interested in spiritual life should always engage his mind in the service of the Lord so that the enemies of the mind, who always accompany the mind, will be subdued. If the mind is not engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness at every moment, there is a chance that it will give way to its enemies. In this way we become victims of the mind.

Chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra engages the mind at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa constantly; thus the mind’s enemies do not have a chance to strike.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 11.10

Passage for Discussion

The Perfect Peace Formula

*bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ
sarva-loka-maheśvaram
suhṛdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ
jñātvā māṁ śāntim ṛcchati*

TRANSLATION

The sages, knowing Me as the ultimate purpose of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attain peace from the pangs of material miseries.

PURPORT

The conditioned souls within the clutches of illusory energy are all anxious to attain peace in the material world. But they do not know the formula for peace, which is explained in this part of the Bhagavad-gītā. The greatest peace formula is simply this: Lord Kṛṣṇa is the beneficiary in all human activities. Men should offer everything to the transcendental service of the Lord because He is the proprietor of all planets and the demigods thereon. No one is greater than He. He is greater than the greatest of the demigods, Lord Śiva and Lord Brahmā. In the Vedas the Supreme Lord is described as tam īśvarāṇāṁ paramaṁ maheśvaram.

Under the spell of illusion, living entities are trying to be lords of all they survey, but actually they are dominated by the material energy of the Lord. The Lord is the master of material nature, and the conditioned souls are under the stringent rules of material nature. Unless one understands these bare facts, it is not possible to achieve peace in the world either individually or collectively. This is the sense of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: Lord Kṛṣṇa is the supreme predominator, and all living entities, including the great demigods, are His subordinates. One can attain perfect peace only in complete Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

This Fifth Chapter is a practical explanation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, generally known as karma-yoga. The question of mental speculation as to how karma-yoga can give liberation is answered herewith. To work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to work with the complete knowledge of the Lord as the predominator. Such work is not different from transcendental knowledge. Direct Kṛṣṇa

consciousness is bhakti-yoga, and jñāna-yoga is a path leading to bhakti-yoga. Kṛṣṇa consciousness means to work in full knowledge of one's relationship with the Supreme Absolute, and the perfection of this consciousness is full knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

A pure soul is the eternal servant of God as His fragmental part and parcel. He comes into contact with māyā (illusion) due to the desire to lord it over māyā, and that is the cause of his many sufferings. As long as he is in contact with matter, he has to execute work in terms of material necessities. Kṛṣṇa consciousness, however, brings one into spiritual life even while one is within the jurisdiction of matter, for it is an arousing of spiritual existence by practice in the material world.

The more one is advanced, the more he is freed from the clutches of matter. The Lord is not partial toward anyone. Everything depends on one's practical performance of duties in an effort to control the senses and conquer the influence of desire and anger. And, attaining Kṛṣṇa consciousness by controlling the above-mentioned passions, one remains factually in the transcendental stage, or brahman-nirvāṇa. The eightfold yoga mysticism is automatically practiced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness because the ultimate purpose is served. There is gradual process of elevation in the practice of yama, niyama, āsana, pratyāhāra, dhyāna, dhāraṇā, prāṇāyāma, and samādhi. But these only preface perfection by devotional service, which alone can award peace to the human being. It is the highest perfection of life.

Bhagavad- gita As It Is Chapter 5 verse 29

Discovery:

1. What three things do we need to know for attaining peace from material anxieties?

Understanding:

1. Why should Lord Krishna be the beneficiary in all our activities?
2. Why do living entities in the material world serve Maya instead?
3. What happens when they are under Maya?
4. How can one come out of Maya's control?
5. Why is action in Krishna consciousness considered to be the highest perfection of life?

Application:

1. Share your realizations on the times you feel anxious or depressed. Can you think of how you can preach to yourself in those moments?

Preaching is the essence

To become an empowered preacher, one must be favored by Lord Caitanya or the spiritual master

Whoever heard Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu chant, “Hari, Hari,” also chanted the holy name of Lord Hari and Kṛṣṇa. In this way, they all followed the Lord, very eager to see Him. After some time, the Lord would embrace these people and bid them to return home, after investing them with spiritual potency. Being thus empowered, they would return to their own villages, always chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa and sometimes laughing, crying and dancing. These empowered people used to request everyone and anyone—whomever they saw—to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. In this way all the villagers would also become devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Simply by seeing such empowered individuals, people from different villages would become like them by

the mercy of their glance. When these individuals returned to their villages, they also converted others into devotees. When others came to see them, they were also converted. In this way, as those men went from one village to another, all the people of South India became devotees.

This spiritual potency is the essence of the pleasure potency and the eternity potency. By these two potencies, one is empowered with devotional service. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, or His representative, the unalloyed devotee, can mercifully bestow these combined potencies upon any man. Being thus endowed with such potencies, one can become an unalloyed devotee of the Lord. Anyone favored by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was empowered with this bhakti-śakti. Thus the Lord’s followers were able to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness by divine grace.

In order to become an empowered preacher, one must be favored by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu or His devotee, the spiritual master. One must also request everyone to chant the mahā-mantra. In this way, such a person can convert others to Vaiṣṇavism, showing them how to become pure devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Cc. Madhya 7.98-104

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 43 – Leader’s Section

Attending the weekly Bhakti Vrikshas now must be very exciting for the members as there are so many prospective leaders being trained to lead. This must have already sparked a sense of responsibility and adventure in them.

Make an announcement about the Vyuha program that is to be conducted in the following week. Discuss and allot responsibilities and services. You can make a team to discuss the various services to be performed. You can just check up in the end if every detail was covered. You can then co-ordinate with the other Vrinda leaders for having the joint program.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so from the Lilamrta.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “If you were to ask Krishna to change one thing in the world today, what would that be?”

Kirtan : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another of the devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita and then conduct the japa session by leading the japa and later making the enquiries of some of the devotees’ japa and their realizations on their progress.

Spiritual Edification - 45 minutes

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the following passage:

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainee's performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting the confidence as well as giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Of course your judgement of their performance has to be also said so that they understand the correct standards for evaluation. For example, it is nit necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana etc, These will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting for festivals, etc, and also for the new prospective Bhakti Vrikshas by the trainee leaders shortly.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home Work

Things to Learn

Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read:

Vaishnavas not to be seen from material view: Page 158

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 9.11, B.G 9.12, B.G 18.54

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: “Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter “4”

Vaishnava Songs:

- Suddha - bhakata (from Saranagati) Pages 162, 163
- Sri Vraja-dhama-mahimamrta Pages 166, 167
- Jaya Radha-Krsna Giti Pages 168, 169
- Sri Nama (From Gitavali) Pages 171
- Gopinatha (From Kalyana-kalpataru) Pages 171, 172
- Sri Dasavatara-stotra (from Gita-Govinda) Pages 173, 174
- Sri Jagannathastakam (By Mahaprabhu) Pages 175, 176, 177

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam: 20 minutes

You can also entrust the planning and organizing of the prasadam with the senior members. They should consult with you before finalizing the menu etc, so they get trained to organize prasadam as well. Otherwise they might consider a difficult task to do if they were to start a Bhakti Vriksha of their own. And such a glorious service as conducting a Bhakti Vriksha may be stopped due to apprehensions about prasadam.

If they are experienced with managing prasadam, they will not hesitate to enthusiastically start a Bhakti Vriksha of their own. Make sure the menu is as simple and uncomplicated as possible, so that it is easy for everyone to follow.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Sri Namamrita - The Nectar of the Holy Name

To avoid pride, one should chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra incessantly

When Vāsudeva, the leper brāhmaṇa, was lamenting due to not being able to see Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Lord immediately returned to that spot and embraced him. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu touched him, both the leprosy and his distress went to a distant place. Indeed, Vāsudeva’s body became very beautiful, to his great happiness.... Being meek and humble, the brāhmaṇa Vāsudeva worried that he would become proud after being cured by the grace of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. To protect the brāhmaṇa, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised him to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra incessantly. By doing so, he would never become unnecessarily proud.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 7.140-41, 146-47

Passage for Discussion

A true yogi engages senses in Krishna’s Service

yadā viniyataṁ cittam ātmany evāvatiṣṭhate nisprīhaḥ sarva-kāmebhyo yukta ity ucyate tadā

TRANSLATION

When the yogī, by practice of yoga, disciplines his mental activities and becomes situated in Transcendence-devoid of all material desires-he is said to have attained yoga. PURPORT

The activities of the yogī are distinguished from those of an ordinary person by his characteristic cessation from all kinds of material desires-of which sex is the chief. A perfect yogī is so well disciplined in the activities of the mind that he can no longer be disturbed by any kind of material desire. This perfectional stage can automatically be attained by persons in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as is stated in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (9.4.18-20):

*sa vai manaḥ kṛṣṇa-padāravindayor vacāmsi vaikuṅṭha-guṇānavarṇane karau harer mandira-
mārjanādiṣu śrutiṁ cakārācyuta-sat-kathodaye mukunda-liṅgālaya-darśane dṛṣau tad-
bhṛtyagātra-sparśe ‘ṅga-saṅgamam ghrāṇaṁ ca tat-pāda-saroja-saurabhe śrīmat tulasyā
rasanām tad-arpite pādaḥ hareḥ kṣetra-padānusarpane śiro hr̥ṣīkeśa-padābhivandane
kāmaṁ ca dāsye na tu kāma-kāmyayā yathottama-śloka-janāśrayā ratih*

“King Ambarīṣa first of all engaged his mind on the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa; then, one after another, he engaged his words in describing the transcendental qualities of the Lord, his hands in mopping the temple of the Lord, his ears in hearing of the activities of the Lord, his eyes in seeing the transcendental forms of the Lord, his body in touching the bodies of the devotees, his sense of smell in smelling the scents of the lotus flower offered to the Lord, his tongue in tasting the tulasī leaf offered at the lotus feet of the Lord, his legs in going to places of pilgrimage and the temple of the Lord, his head in offering obeisances unto the Lord and his desires in executing the mission of the Lord. All these transcendental activities are quite befitting a pure devotee.”

This transcendental stage may be inexpressible subjectively by the followers of the impersonalist path, but it becomes very easy and practical for a person in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as is apparent in the above description of the

engagements of Mahārāja Ambarīṣa. Unless the mind is fixed on the lotus feet of the Lord by constant remembrance, such transcendental engagements are not practical. In the devotional service of the Lord, therefore, these prescribed activities are called arcanā, or engaging all the senses in the service of the Lord.

The senses and the mind require engagements. Simple abnegation is not practical. Therefore, for people in general—especially those who are not in the renounced order of life—transcendental engagement of the senses and the mind as described above is the perfect process for transcendental achievement, which is called yukta in the Bhagavad-gītā.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is Ch 6 Text 18

Discovery:

- 1) When is a person said to be situated in perfect yoga?

Understanding:

1. How do persons in Krishna consciousness achieve this perfection automatically? Explain with the example of king Ambarisa.
2. When is it possible for us to be always engaged in transcendental engagements?
3. Why is it much easier for devotees to achieve the transcendental state than the impersonalists?

Application:

1. List all your activities in Krishna consciousness during the day. What are the times that you remember Krishna?

Preaching is the Essence

The Lord empowers the devotee to preach

The Supreme Lord has multi-potencies, which the Lord bestows on His fortunate devotees. The Lord has a special potency by which He spreads the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This is also explained in Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya 7.11). Kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana: “One cannot spread the holy name of Kṛṣṇa without being specifically empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa.” A devotee who receives this power from the Lord must be considered very fortunate. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading to enlighten people about their real position, their original relationship with Kṛṣṇa. One requires Kṛṣṇa’s special power in order to be able to do this.... The Lord again comes as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to induce people to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The Lord also empowers a special devotee to teach people their constitutional position.

Cc. Madhya 19.114

Week 44 - Vyuha Program

A Vyuha program involves the participation of two or three Bhakti Vriksha groups together in a combined program. It is a break from the regular Bhakti Vriksha program and has a different format. A senior leader is invited to give a discourse/ lecture.

Before we start describing to you how the Vyuha program is conducted, let us see the reasons for conducting it.

1. It is a break in format from the regular Bhakti Vriksha meetings. The members need to have something different and relaxing periodically, so that a kind of complacency or monotony does not set in, and their spirits are uplifted. This will also enthruse them to be more participative and involved in the Bhakti Vriksha meetings.
2. It is a chance for them to come in touch with more senior devotees. If they have a sector leader/ circle leader /greater circle leader, then it is an opportunity to listen to their lecture and to associate closely with them.
3. It is an opportunity for the senior leaders to come and observe the progress of the Bhakti Vrikshas and to get to know the new devotees personally.
4. The members get to associate with other Bhakti Vriksha members and their leaders, and this is very encouraging, inspiring, educative and enjoyable for them.
5. As they feel that they are part of a larger family and have common experiences, this reinforces their strength and commitment to Krishna consciousness.
6. The members get to help in organizing the program, and so this is a great opportunity for them to utilize their talents in serving Krishna. This also trains them in organizing programs.
7. The cultural part of the program is entertaining as well. The audience is enlivened and so are the participants. Members' talents can be recognized and appreciated. The Parents are very enthusiastic if their children participate in a skit/song/ dance/ sloka recitation/ etc. This can reinforce their interest in the Bhakti Vriksha program further.
8. It is a good opportunity for the members to invite their friends and acquaintances for the program, as it is not a regular one. It would be an enjoyable evening for them as long kirtans, games, quiz, cultural programs, lecture, feast etc. would be included in the program.
9. The Bhakti Vriksha members will get a wonderful opportunity to render different services while organizing the program. This increases their service attitude, co-operation with other devotees and an opportunity to learn different skills in the service of Krishna.

Vyuha program : Two hours and fifteen minutes. You can adjust the time to suit your convenience.

1. Have a regular Arathi and kirtan **30 minutes.**
2. When everyone is seated, introduce the guest of honour to the members, welcome him/her as well as the audience. Any of the Bhakti Vriksha leaders/ sector leader(if he is not the special guest himself) can do this.
3. Introduce the different Bhakti Vriksha leaders to the audience. Let the leaders introduce their members to the audience. They can invite a few of the volunteers within the group to come and

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Speak about their experiences of attending their Bhakti Vrikshas. Just two or three from each group would suffice. The rest can be allowed to speak in future Vyuha programs.

4. This sets the mood for the crowd to be a little familiar with each other and thus relax.....**15 minutes**
5. Invite the senior devotee to speak to the guests..... **30 minutes**
6. Have a quiz on the general information they have learnt in Krishna consciousness.
7. You can quiz them from the modules you have covered for them so far. You can divide them into different Bhakti Vriksha teams.....**20 minutes**
8. Have a cultural presentation of a skit , vaishnava song,dance, sloka recitation etc(you can include one or more of them)**20 minutes**
9. If you have any siksha certificates to be handed out, you could request the senior leader do so at this juncture. (If you have planned to distribute it else where, then skip this.)
10. Serve prasadam to the guests.**20 minutes**
11. Do not forget to take the new visitor's contact numbers and e-mail ids. If you have any programs for children, this could also be announced. Since this is already the 44th week, it will be difficult to absorb them in the Bhakti Vrikshas. You can start an outreach program for them if there are quite a few interested to attend. Otherwise, you can invite them for special functions till you have completed the 52nd week in 2 months time. Then they can be invited to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will start after the current Bhakti Vrikshas are divided.

Week 45 – Leader’s Section

You should have been creating a family feeling among your Bhakti Vriksha members by having periodic Vyuha programs, picnics, get-togethers etc as has been mentioned in the modules. This goes a long way in building up close spiritual relationships which is the chief impetus for devotees to commit themselves more and more to Krishna consciousness..

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so from the Lilamrta

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “Tell us one thing that you learned in your childhood that is now useful in your spiritual life”

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Spiritual Edification - 45 minutes

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

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Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read:

Loving exchanges between Vaishnavas:Page 160

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 13.2, B.G 13.22, B.G 13.23

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: “Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter “5”

Vaishnava Songs:

- Suddha - bhakata (from Saranagati) Pages 162, 163
- Sri Vraja-dhama-mahimamrta Pages 166, 167
- Jaya Radha-Krsna Giti Pages 168, 169
- Sri Nama (From Gitavali) Pages 171
- Gopinatha (From Kalyana-kalpataru) Pages 171, 172
- Sri Dasavatara-stotra (from Gita-Govinda) Pages 173, 174
- Sri Jagannathastakam (By Mahaprabhu) Pages 175, 176, 177

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam: 20 minutes

You can entrust the planning and organizing of the prasadam with the senior members. They should consult with you before finalizing the menu so that they get trained to organize the prasadam well. Otherwise they might consider it a difficult task to do when they start a Bhakti Vriksha group of their own. And such a glorious service as conducting such a program may be stopped due to apprehensions about prasadam.

If they are experienced with managing prasadam, they will not hesitate to enthusiastically start a program on their own. Make sure the menu is as simple and uncomplicated as possible, so that it is easy for everyone to follow it.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 45 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

By Chanting, One Develops Forbearance

By chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, the quality of forbearance automatically develops:

A devotee engaged in chanting the holy name of the Lord should practice forbearance like that of a tree. Even if rebuked or chastised, he should not say anything to others to retaliate. For even if one cuts a tree, it never protests, nor even if it is drying up and dying does it ask anyone for water.

This practice of forbearance (trṇād api sunīcena) is very difficult, but when one actually engages in chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, the quality of forbearance automatically develops. A person advanced in spiritual consciousness through the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra need not practice to develop it separately, for a devotee develops all good qualities simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra regularly.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 17.27-28

Passage for Discussion

The Devotees get Krishna’s Guarantee

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca
pārtha naiveha nāmutra
vināśas tasya vidyate
na hi kalyāṇa-kṛt kaścīd
durgatīm tāta gacchati*

TRANSLATION

The Blessed Lord said: Son of Pṛthā, a transcendentalist engaged in auspicious activities does not meet with destruction either in this world or in the spiritual world; one who does good, My friend, is never overcome by evil.

PURPORT

In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.5.17) Śrī Nārada Muni instructs Vyāsadeva as follows:

*tyaktvā sva-dharmaṁ caraṇāmbujam harer
bhajann apakko ‘tha patet tato yadi
yatra kva vābhadram abhūd amuṣya kiṁ
ko vārtha āpto ‘bhajatām sva-dharmataḥ*

“If someone gives up all material prospects and takes complete shelter of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, there is no loss or degradation in any way. On the other hand a nondevotee may fully engage in his occupational duties and yet not gain anything.” For material prospects, there are many activities both scriptural and customary. A transcendentalist is supposed to give up all material activities for the sake of spiritual advancement in life, Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

One may argue that by Kṛṣṇa consciousness one may attain the highest perfection if it is completed, but if one does not attain such a perfectional stage, then he loses both materially and spiritually. It is enjoined in the scriptures that one has to suffer the reaction of not executing prescribed duties; therefore one who fails to discharge transcendental activities properly becomes subjected to these reactions.

The Bhāgavatam assures the unsuccessful transcendentalist that there need be no worries. Even though he may be subjected to the reaction of not perfectly executing prescribed duties, he is still not a loser, because auspicious Kṛṣṇa consciousness is never forgotten, and one so engaged will continue to be so even if he is lowborn in the next life.

On the other hand, one who simply follows strictly the prescribed duties need not necessarily attain auspicious results if he is lacking in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The purport may be understood as follows: humanity may be divided into two sections, namely, the regulated and the nonregulated. Those who are engaged simply in bestial sense gratifications without knowledge of their next life or spiritual salvation belong to the non regulated section. And those who follow the principles of prescribed duties in the scriptures are classified amongst the regulated section. The unregulated section, both civilized and uncivilized, educated and uneducated, strong and weak, are full of animal propensities. Their activities are never auspicious because, enjoying the animal propensities of eating, sleeping, defending and mating, they perpetually remain in material existence, which is always miserable. On the other hand, those who are regulated by scriptural injunctions and thus gradually rise to Kṛṣṇa consciousness certainly progress in life.

Those who are then following the path of auspiciousness can be divided into three sections, namely,

1) the followers of scriptural rules and regulations who are enjoying material prosperity, 2) those who are trying to find out the ultimate liberation from material existence, and 3) those who are devotees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Those who are following the rules and regulations of the scriptures for material happiness may be further divided into two classes: those who are fruitive workers and those who desire no fruit for sense gratification. Those who are after fruitive results for sense gratification may be elevated to a higher standard of life-even to the higher planets; but still, because they are not free from material existence, they are not following the truly auspicious path.

The only auspicious activities are those which lead one to liberation. Any activity which is not aimed at ultimate self-realization or liberation from the material bodily concept of life is not at all auspicious. Activity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the only auspicious activity, and anyone who voluntarily accepts all bodily discomforts for the sake of making progress on the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be called a perfect transcendentalist under severe austerity. And because the eightfold yoga system is directed toward the ultimate realization of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, such practice is also auspicious, and no one who is trying his best in this matter need fear degradation.

Discovery:

1. What is Krishna's assurance to those engaged in spiritual activities?

Understanding:

1. Why is taking up the path of devotional service the most important thing? How does Srila Narada explain this fact in comparison to doing one's occupational duties?
2. What will happen materially in his next birth to a person who gives up material duties for a spiritual life, but is unable to attain perfection in his spiritual life either?
3. What happens to his spiritual life in his next birth?
4. What happens to a person performing his material duties properly, but no devotional service to the Lord?
5. Why is it bad to lead an unregulated life?
6. Explain the 3 kinds of people leading a regulated life of following scriptural injunctions.
7. Which categories of people among these regulated people are actually following the auspicious path? Why?
8. Which is the most auspicious goal? Why can we be fearless if we have such a goal?

Application:

1. How important is Krishna consciousness to you? Please share your views.

Preaching is the essence

The preacher must tolerate inimical persons:

[After discussing "enemies" of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement—caste brāhmaṇas and parents of devotees:]

We have no business creating enemies, but the process is such that nondevotees will always be inimical toward us. Nevertheless, as stated in the śāstras, a devotee should be both tolerant and merciful. Devotees engaged in preaching should be prepared to be accused by ignorant persons, and yet they must be very merciful to the fallen conditioned souls. If one can execute his duty in the disciplic succession of Nārada Muni, his service will surely be recognized. As the Lord says in Bhagavad-gītā (18.68-69):

ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ mad-bhakteṣv abhidhāsyati bhaktiṁ mayi parāṁ kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaḥ na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścīn me priya-kṛttamaḥ bhavitā na ca me tasmād anyah priyataro bhuvi

“For one who explains the supreme secret to the devotees, devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me. There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he, nor will there ever be one more dear.”

Let us continue preaching the message of Lord Kṛṣṇa and not be afraid of enemies. Our only duty is to satisfy the Lord by this preaching, which will be accepted as service by Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa. We must sincerely serve the Lord and not be deterred by so-called enemies.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.39

Week 46 – Leader’s Section

It is very important to train the devotees in their sadhana practices, as well as in rendering practical services properly. You will have to have a few sessions separately with them to check up on their regularity of performing the Mangala Arathi, Guru Puja, Sandhya Arathi, etc, that they know the exact procedures of conducting the Arathis, the different mantras for offering bhoga to the Lord, honoring prasadam, etc.,

They should also be taught the tilaka mantras and asked to wear them everyday (they could apply with water on the forehead when they go out for work, they should wear the Tulasi neck beads (could be hidden if they wish), but must wear it for their protection).

You should also ensure that all of them know the different Arathi songs, that they know to play at least the karatala well, and know how to set up the altar.

All these practical aspects of their devotional life can be taught during the 30 minutes set aside during the study classes.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so from the Lilamrta.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question **“Tell us one thing that you learned in your childhood that is now useful in your spiritual life..”**

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the kirtana. Let them be responsible for the kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, he should ask two or three devotees from the group to share the progress in their daily chanting.

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programmes, especially the outreach programs and the new Bhakti Vriksha groups to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/ No	Additional notes

Home Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed) Read:

Holy places To Visit:Page 161

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 8.5, B.G 8.6, B.G 8.7, B.G 8.8

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: “Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter “6”

Vaishnava Songs:

- Suddha - bhakata (from Saranagati) Pages 162, 163
- Sri Vraja-dhama-mahimamrta Pages 166, 167
- Jaya Radha-Krsna Giti Pages 168, 169
- Sri Nama (From Gitavali) Pages 171
- Gopinatha (From Kalyana-kalpataru) Pages 171, 172
- Sri Dasavatara-stotra (from Gita-Govinda) Pages 173, 174
- Sri Jagannathastakam (By Mahaprabhu) Pages 175, 176, 177

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam: 20 minutes

You can entrust the planning and organizing of the prasadam with the senior members. They should consult with you before finalizing the menu so that they get trained to organize the prasadam well. Otherwise they might consider it a difficult task to do when they start a Bhakti Vriksha group of their own. And such a glorious service as conducting such a program may be stopped due to apprehensions about prasadam.

If they are experienced with managing prasadam, they will not hesitate to enthusiastically start a program on their own. Make sure the menu is as simple and uncomplicated as possible, so that it is easy for everyone to follow it.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Attendance form.

Sri Namamrita - The Nectar of the Holy Name

We must chant Hare Kṛṣṇa in order to cleanse the heart of lust and greed

The whole world is revolving due to kāma and lobha. Kāma means “lustful desire,” and lobha means “greed.” People cannot have enough sex or money, and because of this, their hearts are filled with contaminations, which have to be cleansed by hearing, repeating and chanting. Human life is meant to get rid of anarthas, unwanted things, but where is the university or college where this science of purification is taught? The only institution is this Kṛṣṇa consciousness society. Kṛṣṇa is within the heart, and the contaminations are also there, but Kṛṣṇa will help us cleanse them. Naṣṭa- prāyeṣv abhadreṣu nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā (S.B. 1.2.18). We must regularly hear Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa; these are the two processes recommended by Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahūti

Passage for Discussion

Krishna Says He is a Person

mattaḥ parataram nānyat

kiñcid asti dhanañjaya

mayi sarvam idaṁ protaṁ

sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva

TRANSLATION

O conquerer of wealth [Arjuna], there is no Truth superior to Me. Everything rests upon Me, as pearls are strung on a thread.

PURPORT

There is a common controversy over whether the Supreme Absolute Truth is personal or impersonal. As far as Bhagavad-gītā is concerned, the Absolute Truth is the Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and this is confirmed in every step. In this verse, in particular, it is stressed that the Absolute Truth is a person.

That the Personality of Godhead is the Supreme Absolute Truth is also the affirmation of the Brahma-saṁhitā: īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ; that is, the Supreme Absolute Truth Personality of Godhead is Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the primeval Lord, the reservoir of all pleasure, Govinda, and the eternal form of complete bliss and knowledge. These authorities leave no doubt that the Absolute Truth is the Supreme Person, the cause of all causes.

The impersonalist, however, argues on the strength of the Vedic version given in the Śvetāśvatara

Upaniṣad:

*tato yad uttarataram tad arūpam anāmayaṁ ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti
athetare duḥkham evāpi yanti.*

“In the material world Brahmā, the primeval living entity within the universe, is understood to be the supreme amongst the demigods, human beings and lower animals. But beyond Brahmā there is the Transcendence who has no material form and is free from all material contaminations. Anyone who can know Him also becomes transcendental, but those who do not know Him suffer the miseries of the material world.”

The impersonalist puts more stress on the word arūpam. But this arūpam is not impersonal. It indicates the transcendental form of eternity, bliss and knowledge as described in the Brahma- saṁhitā quoted above. Other verses in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad substantiate this as follows:

*vedāham etaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam āditya-varṇaṁ tamaśaḥ parastāt
tam eva vidvān amṛta iha bhavati nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya
yasmāt paraṁ nāparam asti kiñcid yasmānnāñīyo na jyāyo 'sti kiñcit*

“I know that Supreme Personality of Godhead who is transcendental to all material conceptions of darkness. Only he who knows Him can transcend the bonds of birth and death. There is no way for liberation other than this knowledge of that Supreme Person.

“There is no truth superior to that Supreme Person because He is the supermost. He is smaller than the smallest, and He is greater than the greatest. He is situated as a silent tree, and He illumines the transcendental sky, and as a tree spreads its roots, He spreads His extensive energies.”

From these verses one concludes that the Supreme Absolute Truth is the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is all-pervading by His multi-energies, both material and spiritual.

Bhagavad-gita As It Is Chapter 7 Text 7

Discovery:

1. What are the pearls compared to? What is the thread compared to?

Understanding:

1. Mention all the scriptural evidences given here to prove that God is a person and that He is the supreme controller of both the material and spiritual worlds.
2. What are the benefits of knowing these facts about the supreme Lord?
3. What are the disadvantages of not knowing or understanding these facts about the supreme Lord?
4. How does the impersonalist interpret the scriptures to prove that God is impersonal?
5. How can we explain to them their mistaken understanding?

Application:

1. The absolute truth is ultimately impersonal. Refute this statement with scriptural evidences, logic and realizations of great devotees.

Preaching is the Essence

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada

For a preacher to have potency, he must be pure:

Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant for this purpose. We want to create pure devotees so that other people will benefit by their association. In this way the number of pure devotees increases.

Professional preachers cannot create pure devotees.... Only a pure devotee can convert others to pure devotional service. It is therefore important for all the preachers in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to first become pure devotees and follow the regulative principles, refraining from illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling and intoxication.

They should regularly chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra on their beads, follow the devotional process, rise early in the morning, attend maṅgala-ārati and recite Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā regularly. In this way, one can become purified and free from all material

contamination.... To make a show of devotional service will not help one. One must be a pure devotee following the devotional process; then one can convert others to devotional service....If a preacher behaves properly in devotional service, he will be able to convert others. Otherwise, his preaching will have no effect.

Cc. Madhya 24.98

Week 47 – Leader’s Section

These last few weeks of the Bhakti Vriksha group are crucial in training and getting the members into the right mood.

A lot has to be achieved in a short time and it is definitely possible if you make them understand the value of the training you are giving them. This happens due to close personal relationships that you are continuing to nurture on them. Most devotees are especially enthusiastic in the first three years of their spiritual life (according to a survey conducted by the Christian cell groups). This is the best time to foster in them unlimited enthusiasm to do devotional service in a humble mood without expecting anything in return.

Example is better than precept and just as children accept their parents as role models in their early years and are deeply influenced by them for life, your example as a devotee and preacher is the most valuable asset you are bequeathing them.

On the sixty-fourth week, we will consider how the Bhakti Vriksha can be multiplied and what will happen with the members who are not ready yet to be leaders.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so from the Lilamrta.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “Do you speak to others about your past mistakes? Why or why not?”

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the kirtana. Let them be responsible for the kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Spiritual Edification- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week's edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainee's performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your judgement of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new Bhakti Vriksha groups to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

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Home- Work Things to Learn Reference:

A Hand Book for Bhakti Vriksha members Part 2

Siksha level: Srila Prabhupada Ashraya

(CD with BG slokas and Vaishnava songs enclosed)

Bhagavad-gita slokas to learn : B.G 6.34, B.G 6.35, B.G 6.41

Srila Prabhupada Books To Read: "Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter "7"

Vaishnava Songs:

- Suddha - bhakata (from Saranagati) Pages 162, 163
- Sri Vraja-dhama-mahimamrta Pages 166, 167
- Jaya Radha-Krsna Giti Pages 168, 169
- Sri Nama (From Gitavali) Pages 171
- Gopinatha (From Kalyana-kalpataru) Pages 171, 172
- Sri Dasavatara-stotra (from Gita-Govinda) Pages 173, 174
- Sri Jagannathastakam (By Mahaprabhu) Pages 175, 176, 177

ISKCON Websites: Page 27

Prasadam: 20 minutes

You can entrust the planning and organizing of cooking and serving prasadam as well as the cleaning up with the trainee leaders. They should consult with you before finalizing the menu so that they are trained to organize the prasadam well. Otherwise they might consider it a difficult task to start a Bhakti Vriksha of their own. If they gain experience in managing prasadam, they will not hesitate to enthusiastically start one. Make sure the menu is simple, easy to be prepared by themselves.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Attendance form:

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

The Holy Name Brings Faith in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

Faith in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is attained by chanting the holy name:

[Lord Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna]: In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge. Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism. And one who has achieved this enjoys the self within himself in due course of time. A faithful man who is absorbed in transcendental knowledge and who subdues his senses quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace.

Such knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be achieved by a faithful person who believes firmly in Kṛṣṇa. One is called a faithful man who thinks that, simply by acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can attain the highest perfection. This faith is attained by the discharge of devotional service, and by chanting “Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare,” which cleanses one’s heart of all material dirt. Over and above this, one should control the senses. A person who is faithful to Kṛṣṇa and who controls the senses can easily attain perfection in the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness without delay.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.38-39

Passage for Discussion

Only Guru and Krishna can help us escape from material energy

*daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī
mama māyā duratyayā
mām eva ye prapadyante
māyām etān taranti te*

TRANSLATION

This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.

PURPORT

The Supreme Personality of Godhead has innumerable energies, and all these energies are divine. Although the living entities are part of His energies and are therefore divine, due to contact with material energy, their original superior power is covered. Being thus covered by material energy, one cannot possibly overcome its influence. As previously stated, both the material and spiritual natures, being emanations from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, are eternal. The living entities belong to the eternal superior nature of the Lord, but due to contamination by the inferior nature, matter, their illusion is also eternal. The conditioned soul is therefore called nitya-baddha, or eternally conditioned.

No one can trace out the history of his becoming conditioned at a certain date in material history. Consequently, his release from the clutches of material nature is very difficult, even though that material nature is an inferior energy, because material energy

is ultimately conducted by the supreme will, which the living entity cannot overcome. Inferior material nature is defined herein as divine nature due to its divine connection and movement by the divine will. Being conducted by divine will, material nature, although inferior, acts so wonderfully in the construction and destruction of the cosmic manifestation. The Vedas confirm this as follows:

māyāṁ tu prakṛtiṁ vidyān māyinaṁ tu maheśvaram.

“Although māyā [illusion] is false or temporary, the background of māyā is the supreme magician, the Personality of Godhead, who is Maheśvara, the supreme controller.”

Another meaning of guṇa is rope; it is to be understood that the conditioned soul is tightly tied by the ropes of illusion. A man bound by the hands and feet cannot free himself - he must be helped by a person who is unbound. Because the bound cannot help the bound, the rescuer must be liberated. Therefore, only Lord Kṛṣṇa, or His bona fide representative the spiritual master, can release the conditioned soul. Without such superior help, one cannot be freed from the bondage of material nature. Devotional service, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, can help one gain such release. Kṛṣṇa, being the Lord of illusory energy, can order this insurmountable energy to release the conditioned soul. He orders this release out of His causeless mercy on the surrendered soul and out of His paternal affection for the living entity who is originally a beloved son of the Lord. Therefore surrender unto the lotus feet of the Lord is the only means to get free from the clutches of the stringent material nature.

The words mām eva are also significant. Mām means unto Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) only, and not Brahmā or Śiva. Although Brahmā and Śiva are greatly elevated and are almost on the level of Viṣṇu, it is not possible for such incarnations of rājo-guṇa (passion) and tamogūṇa (ignorance) to release the conditioned soul from the clutches of māyā. In other words, both Brahmā and Śiva are also under the influence of māyā. Only Viṣṇu is the master of māyā; therefore He can alone give release to the conditioned soul. The Vedas confirm this in the phrase tvam eva viditvā or “Freedom is possible only by understanding Kṛṣṇa.” Even Lord Śiva affirms that liberation can be achieved only by the mercy of Viṣṇu. Lord Śiva says:

mukti-pradātā sarveṣāṁ viṣṇur eva na saṁśayah.

There is no doubt that Viṣṇu is the deliverer of liberation for everyone ”

Discovery:

1. What does the material nature consist of?

Understanding:

1. Why are the living entities called “nitya baddha”?
2. Why does the conditioned living being find it very difficult to overcome the influence of the material energy?
3. Why is material energy called divine?
4. How can we get liberated from material nature?
5. Why is Lord Krishna or Lord Vishnu only able to liberate us and not even such exalted personalities like Lord Brahma and Lord Siva?

Application:

1. Share at least one feature of the material nature (which have been harmful to you) that you have been able to overcome by coming to Krishna consciousness.

Preaching is the essence

Spiritual strength to preach the Kṛiṣṇa consciousness movement is derived from following the orders of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

That order [of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu] is still existing, and anywhere and everywhere, in all parts of the world, one can execute it. That order is to become a spiritual master under the direction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by following the regulative principles, chanting daily at least sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛiṣṇa mahā-mantra, and preaching the cult of Kṛiṣṇa consciousness all over the world. If we adhere to the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we shall get spiritual strength

without a doubt, and we shall be free to preach this cult of the Hare Kṛiṣṇa movement and not be hampered by anyone.

Cc. Ādi 17.126

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 48 – Leader’s Section

Even from earlier weeks, it was suggested that if some of your members ever requested you that they host the Bhakti Vriksha .for a week or few weeks in their homes, it would be a good idea to do so. It would give them blessings and happiness and the opportunity to attract their neighbours, friends and relatives to the program. This way you can gradually increase your contacts for cultivating them into regular members.

Now it is even more relevant to rotate the program in the trainee leaders’ homes, so that they get into the habit of hosting programs.

Satsanga : 15 minutes.

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga.

Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so from the Lilamrta.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “Tell us about one thing that you learned the hard way, through direct experience?”

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, he should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session..

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainee's performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your judgement of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new vrindas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/No	Additional notes

Home work

1. Srila Prabhupada's Books to read

Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 8

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Make sure that the devotees preparing prasadam are the ones who are chanting 16 rounds and following the 4 regulative principles.

If an initiated devotee can supervise them, it would be ideal. But in the absence or unavailability of such a person to do the service, persons who have taken Srila Prabhupada Ashraya can be engaged in the service. But please be very strict about the standards they follow while cooking: standards of cleanliness, standards of how they maintain their Krishna consciousness devotion while cooking (can be chanting or listening to Krishna conscious kirtans and lectures from the tapes/cds), and standards of offering bhoga to the Lord.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly report form:

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Spiritual strength to preach the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is derived from following the orders of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

That order [of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu] is still existing, and anywhere and everywhere, in all parts of the world, one can execute it. That order is to become a spiritual master under the direction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by following the regulative principles, chanting daily at least sixteen rounds of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, and preaching the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. If we adhere to the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we shall get spiritual strength without a doubt, and we shall be free to preach this cult of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and not be hampered by anyone.

Cc. Ādi 17.126

Passage for Discussion

Krishna’s Abode

*avyakto ‘kṣara ity uktas
tam āhuḥ paramāṁ gatim
yaṁ prāpya na nivartante
tad dhāma paramaṁ mama*

TRANSLATION

That supreme abode is called unmanifested and infallible, and it is the supreme destination. When one goes there, he never comes back. That is My supreme abode.

PURPORT

The supreme abode of the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is described in the Brahma-saṁhitā as cintāmaṇi-dhāma, a place where all desires are fulfilled. The supreme abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa known as Goloka Vṛndāvana is full of palaces made of touchstone. There are also trees which are called “desire trees” that supply any type of eatable upon demand, and there are cows known as surabhi cows which supply a limitless supply of milk. In this abode, the Lord is served by hundreds of thousands of goddesses of fortune (Lakṣmīs), and He is called Govinda, the primal Lord and the cause of all causes. The Lord is accustomed to blow His flute (venum kvanantam). His transcendental form is the most attractive in all the worlds—His eyes are like the lotus petals and the color of His body like clouds. He is so attractive that His beauty excels that of thousands of cupids. He wears saffron cloth, a garland around His neck and a peacock feather in His hair.

In the Gītā Lord Kṛṣṇa gives only a small hint of His personal abode (Goloka Vṛndāvana) which is the supermost planet in the spiritual kingdom. A vivid description is given in the Brahma-saṁhitā. Vedic literature states that there is nothing superior to the abode of the Supreme Godhead, and that that abode is the ultimate destination. When one attains to it, he never returns to the material world. Kṛṣṇa’s supreme abode and Kṛṣṇa Himself are nondifferent, being of the same quality. On this earth, Vṛndāvana, ninety miles southeast of Delhi, is a replica of that supreme Goloka Vṛndāvana located in the spiritual sky. When Kṛṣṇa descended on this earth, He sported on that particular tract of land known as Vṛndāvana in the district of Mathurā, India.

Discovery:

1. Describe Goloka Vrindavana or the spiritual world as given in the *Brahma samhita*
2. Describe Lord Krishna’s form as given in the *Brahma samhita*..

Understanding:

1. What is very significant about the nature of the spiritual world?
2. Why is the land known as Vrindavan 90 miles south east of Delhi situated on this earth, equally important and worshippable as the original Goloka Vrindavana?

Application:

1. Have you read the pastimes in the book “Krishna The Supreme Personality of Godhead” by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada? Share a pastime of Krishna’s from that book. If you have not read the book, then share all that you know about Lord Krishna from any of Srila Prabhupada’s books.

Preaching is the Essence

If preachers of Krishna Consciousness are sincere devotees of Krishna, the Krishna Consciousness movement will spread by Krishna’s grace

The Krishna consciousness movement has spread all over the world within a very short time(within five years), and mundane people are very astonished by this. However, by the grace of the Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, we understand that everything is possible by the grace of Krishna. Why does Krishna have to take five years? In five days He can spread His name and fame all over the world like wildfire. Those who have faith and devotion to Krishna can understand that these things happen so wonderfully by the grace of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. We are simply the instruments . In the fierce battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna was victorious within eighteen days simply because Krishna’s grace was on his side.....

If the preachers in our Krishna consciousness movement are sincere devotees of Krishna, Krishna will always be with them because He is very kind and favorable to all His devotees. Just as Arjuna and Krishna were victorious in the battle of Kurukshetra , this Krishna consciousness

movement will surely emerge victorious if we but remain sincere devotees of the Lord and serve the Lord according to the advice of the predecessors(the six Gosvamis and other devotees of the Lord)... Within the Society we must try to serve the predecessors by preaching Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s cult and spreading His name and fame all over the world. If we attempt this seriously within the Society, it will be successfully done. There is no question of estimating how this will happen in the mundane sense. But without a doubt, it happens by the grace of Krishna.

Cc.

Madhya

4.79

Week 49 – Leader’s Section

If you have been encouraging all your Bhakti Vriksha group members to be attending the temple or the centrally coordinated programs of the Nama Hatta Directorate, they would have benefited a lot by the higher standards of the program, exposure to senior devotees, as well as devotees from other Bhakti Vriksha group members.

This is very important for their development. As a good parent is always concerned about the all round development of his children, you have to ensure that they benefit in the best possible way.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so from the Lilamrta

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “Tell us of a time you felt joy of serving someone else.”

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

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Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainee's performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your judgement of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new bhakti vriksha groups to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Home Work

1. Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 9

Prasadam time has to be totally relaxed and a happy one. Do not discuss any serious or disturbing topics at that time, lest there be arguments, etc.

It must be a time for socializing, for cultivating relationships and also for learning or sharing things very informally.

It is also the only activity during which all the age groups and sexes can be together exchanging a lot of affection, concern and service. It gives everyone unlimited opportunity to express love.

Share the importance of having prasadam together, with all your Bhakti Vriksha members. Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

By chanting the holy name, we can have the Lord’s association:

One should ask that the grace of the Lord always be present on earth so that we may be favored with His causeless mercy and be happy, having all necessities of life. One may ask how we can detain the Supreme Lord on this earth after His mission is fulfilled and He has left this earth for His own abode. The answer is that there is no need to detain the Lord. The Lord, being omnipresent, can be present with us if we want Him at all. By His omnipresence, He can always be with us if we are attached to His devotional service by hearing, chanting, remembering, etc.

There is nothing in the world with which the Lord is disconnected. The only thing we must learn is to excavate the source of connection and thus be linked with Him by offenseless service. We can be connected with Him by the transcendental sound representation of the Lord. The holy name of the Lord and the Lord Himself are identical, and one who chants the holy name of the Lord in an offenseless manner can at once realize that the Lord is present before him. Even by the vibration of radio sound, we can partially realize sound relativity, and by resounding the sound of transcendence we can verily feel the presence of the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.32-33

Passage for Discussion

Who is a real Mahatma?

*mahātmānas tu mām pārtha daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ bhajanty ananya-manaso
jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam*

TRANSLATION

O son of Pṛthā, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible.

PURPORT

In this verse the description of mahātmā is clearly given. The first sign of the mahātmā is that he is already situated in the divine nature. He is not under the control of material nature. And how is this effected? That is explained in the Seventh Chapter: one who surrenders unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, at once becomes freed from the control of material nature. That is the qualification. One can become free from the control of material nature as soon as he surrenders his soul to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the preliminary formula. Being marginal potency, as soon as the living entity is freed from the control of material nature, he is put under the guidance of the spiritual nature. The guidance of the spiritual nature is called daivīm prakṛtim, divine nature. So, when one is promoted in that way-by surrendering to the Supreme Personality of Godhead-one attains to the stage of great soul, mahātmā.

The mahātmā does not divert his attention to anything outside Kṛṣṇa because he knows perfectly well that Kṛṣṇa is the original Supreme Person, the cause of all causes. There is no doubt about it. Such a mahātmā, or great soul, develops through association with other mahātmās, pure devotees.

Pure devotees are not even attracted by Kṛṣṇa's other features, such as the four-armed Mahā-Viṣṇu. They are simply attracted by the two-armed form of Kṛṣṇa. Since they are not attracted to other features of Kṛṣṇa (what to speak of the demigods), they are not concerned with any form of a demigod or of a human being. They only meditate upon Kṛṣṇa in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. They are always engaged in the unswerving service of the Lord in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Discovery:

1. What are the symptoms of a great soul or *mahatma*?

Understanding:

1. How can one become freed from the control of material nature?
2. What happens to one who is freed from the clutches of the material energy?
3. Why does a mahatma not divert his attention to anything other than Krishna?
4. How does a person become a Mahatma?
5. How is a mahatma absorbed in Krishna consciousness?

Application:

1. Would you like to become a real mahatma? Why, or why not?

Preaching is the Essence

Servants of God preach and thus become dear to the Lord:

...asuras are gradually rectified to God consciousness by the mercy of the Lord's liberated servitors in different countries according to the Supreme will. Such devotees of God are very confidential associates of the Lord, and when they come to save human society from the dangers of godlessness, they are known as the powerful incarnations of the Lord, as sons of the Lord, as servants of the Lord or as associates of the Lord... Such servants of God are called *mahatmas, or tirthas*, and they preach according to particular time and place. The servants of God urge people to become devotees of the Lord.....

The servants of God come to propagate God consciousness, and intelligent people should cooperate with them in every respect. By serving the servant of God, one can please God more than by directly serving the Lord. The Lord is more pleased when He sees that His servants are properly respected because such servants risk everything for the service of the Lord and so are very dear to the Lord. The Lord declares in the *Bhagavad-gita (18.69)* that no one is dearer to Him than one who risks everything to preach His glory.

Bhag. 1.2.16 (1:1. P. 112)

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 50 – Leader’s Section

As the days are nearing for the Bhakti Vriksha to multiply, and for devotees to make solid commitments in siksha of taking Guru Ashraya as well as in taking up services of responsibility, the air must be full of mixed feelings of excitement, anticipation, nervousness and the pain of separation. Understand what they are going through and empathize with them in their sharing of emotions. You can encourage, inspire, and cheer them up to meet the challenges successfully. Since the preaching mood has been instilled in them through training, they will be strong to face the demands made on them.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s Lilamrta during the week, and ask others also to do so from the Lilamrta

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: **“Tell us about one thing that you learned the hard way, through direct experience.**

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, he should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

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Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha program now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new Bhakti Vriksha groups to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Fill in this table in your preaching session's note book:

Date	Member	Preaching Assignment	Target Achieved: Yes/ No	Additional notes

Home Work

1. Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 10

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Always announce the names of the devotees who have helped in sponsoring, purchasing, cooking, offering and distributing the prasadam and in cleaning up. Normally though everyone benefits greatly by these services, they tend to be left unnoticed or unappreciated and taken for granted.

Appreciation can inspire the devotees to serve Krishna better, and also inspire more people to join in the services, and taste the nectar of doing so. The ones who acknowledge their services also feel good for having done so.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Sri Namamrita - The Nectar of the Holy Name

The test of successful chanting is eagerness to render service to the Lord:

[Muhammadan governor to Lord Caitanya]: The Muhammadan governor then said, “Since you have so kindly accepted me, please give me some order so that I can render You some service.” The Muhammadan governor then prayed for liberation from the unlimited sinful activities he had previously incurred by being envious of brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas and killing cows.

If one is purified by following Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s orders—that is, by chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa—one must certainly be eager to render service to the Lord. This is the test. When one engages enthusiastically in the Lord’s service, it is to be understood that he is reaping the results of chanting the names of Kṛṣṇa and Hari.... After being released from one’s sinful reactions (karma), one becomes eager to serve the Lord. This is the test. Since the Muhammadan governor was immediately purified in the presence of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he could utter the names of Kṛṣṇa and Hari. Consequently he was anxious to render some service.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 16.188-89

Passage for Discussion

The three types of Charity

*dātavyam iti yad dānam
diyate ‘nupakāriṇe
deśe kāle ca pātre ca
tad dānam sātṭvikam smṛtam*

TRANSLATION

That gift which is given out of duty, at the proper time and place, to a worthy person, and without expectation of return, is considered to be charity in the mode of goodness.

PURPORT

In the Vedic literature, charity given to a person engaged in spiritual activities is recommended. There is no recommendation for giving charity indiscriminately. Spiritual perfection is always a consideration. Therefore charity is recommended to be given at a place of pilgrimage and at lunar or solar eclipses or at the end of the month or to a qualified brāhmaṇa or a Vaiṣṇava (devotee) or in temples. Such charities should be given without any consideration of return. Charity to the poor is sometimes given out of compassion, but if a poor man is not worth giving charity to, then there is no spiritual advancement. In other words, indiscriminate charity is not recommended in the Vedic literature.

Bg 17.21

TRANSLATION

*yat tu pratyupakārārtham
phalam uddīśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam
tad dānam rājasam smṛtam*

But charity performed with the expectation of some return, or with a desire for fruitive results, or in a grudging mood, is said to be charity in the mode of passion.

PURPORT

Charity is sometimes performed for elevation to the heavenly kingdom and sometimes with great trouble and with repentance afterwards. “Why have I spent so much in this way?” Charity is also sometimes made under some obligation, at the request of a superior. These kinds of charity are said to be made in the mode of passion.

There are many charitable foundations which offer their gifts to institutions where sense gratification goes on. Such charities are not recommended in the Vedic scripture. Only charity in the mode of goodness is recommended.

Bg 17.22

TRANSLATION

*adeśa-kāle yad dānam
apātrebhyaś ca dīyate
asat-kṛtam avajñātam
tat tāmasam udāhṛtam*

And charity performed at an improper place and time and given to unworthy persons without respect and with contempt is charity in the mode of ignorance.

PURPORT

Contributions for indulgence in intoxication and gambling are not encouraged here. That sort of contribution is in the mode of ignorance. Such charity is not beneficial; rather, sinful persons are encouraged. Similarly, if a person gives charity to a suitable person without respect and without attention, that sort of charity is also said to be in the mode of darkness.

Bg 17.23

Discovery:

1. Describe charity in the modes of goodness, passion and ignorance.

Understanding:

1. What is the purpose of giving charity?
2. Who is worth giving charity to?
3. What kinds of charities are forbidden in the scriptures?

Application:

1. Discuss some charities that devotees can perform in Krishna consciousness. Ask everyone to give suggestions. Ask them to share with everyone the charities they are already performing, or those they would like to give.

Preaching is the Essence

The Lord is pleased with the preacher (who performs the highest welfare activity):

It is said that great personalities almost always accept voluntary suffering because of the suffering of people in general. This is considered the highest method of worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is present in everyone's heart.

Here is an explanation of how those engaged in activities for the welfare of others are very quickly recognized by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Lord says in Bhagavad-gītā (18.68-69),

*ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ mad-bhakteṣv abhidhāsyati ... na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me
priya- kṛttamaḥ*

One who preaches the message of Bhagavad-gītā to My devotees is most dear to Me. No one can excel him in satisfying Me by worship.” There are different kinds of welfare activities in this material world, but the supreme welfare activity is the spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Other welfare activities cannot be effective, for the laws of nature and the results of karma cannot be

checked.... If one tries to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world, he should be understood to be performing the best welfare activity. The Lord is automatically very pleased with him. If the Lord is pleased with him, what is left for him to achieve? If one has been recognized by the Lord, even if he does not ask the Lord for anything, the Lord, who is within everyone, supplies him whatever he wants.... The best welfare activity is raising people to the platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, since the conditioned souls are suffering only for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.... All the śāstras conclude, therefore, that spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the best welfare activity in the world. Because of the ultimate benefit this bestows upon people in general, the Lord very quickly recognizes such service performed by a devotee.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.7.44

Week 51 – Leader’s Section

Since all the organizing work is being done by the Bhakti Vriksha group members under your supervision, this should give you time to keep reviewing their services and training them in areas where they may be lacking knowledge and experience. Within a very short period this will give them a lot of self confidence to do things on their own. In the succeeding weeks, the passages dealing with Vaishnava etiquette and behavior will also enlighten them on the mood in which to do the devotional services. This will lead to wonderful Vaishnava relationships between them, all co- operating together for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada and Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

Share an interesting and useful point that you have learnt from Srila Prabhupada’s books during the week, and ask others also to do so in turn.

For those who are still a little new to the group or are somehow not reading yet, you could ask the question: “What do you like most about sharing Krishna consciousness with others?”

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them be responsible for the Kirtana session by ensuring that the new members get the copies of the mantras being sung, and that they offer the incense to the Deities.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the following passage. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feed back on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your judgement of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new Bhakti Vriksha groups to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Things to learn:

1. Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 11

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Always announce the names of the devotees who have helped in sponsoring, purchasing, cooking, offering, distributing the prasadam and in cleaning up Normally though everyone benefits greatly by these services, they tend to be left unnoticed or unappreciated and taken for granted.

Appreciation can enthuse the devotees to serve Krishna better, inspire more people to join in the services, and taste the nectar while performing their services.. The ones who acknowledge others services also feel good for having done so.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Week 51 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Even if one is highly elevated in Krishna consciousness, if he stops chanting, his devotional creeper will dry up.

Krishna is within you, and as soon as Krishna sees that you are very sincere, that you are seeking. He sends a bona fide spiritual master. This combination of Krishna and the spiritual master is the cause of one’s receiving the seed of Krishna consciousness. The seed is there. If you have a very nice seed of a rose bush, what is your duty? If you have a seed of any nice plant, it is your duty not to lock it up in the safety vault of a bank. Your duty is to sow it in the ground. Where should you sow that seed? If you have information of Krishna consciousness, you just sow it in your heart. Not in this earth, but in the earth within yourself. And after sowing a seed you have to pour a little water on it, so that water is hearing and chanting. Once the seed is sown in the heart, just pour on a little water, and it will grow.

This process should not be stopped by the thought that because one is initiated there is no need of hearing and chanting. It should go on continuously. If you stop pouring water on a plant, it will dry up; it will not produce any fruit. Similarly, even if you are highly elevated in Krishna consciousness, you cannot stop this process of hearing and chanting because maya is so strong, so powerful, that as soon as she sees, “Ah, here is an opportunity,” at once you will dry up. By the process of pouring water, that plant of Krishna consciousness grows..... if you continue this chanting and hearing process, you will grow and grow and actually reach Krishna’s lotus feet and there relish His association.

Krishna Consciousness : The Topmost-Yoga System.

Passage for Discussion

Even sinful, surrender only to Krishna, with faith and love

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

TRANSLATION

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.

PURPORT

The Lord has described various kinds of knowledge, processes of religion, knowledge of the Supreme Brahman, knowledge of the Supersoul, knowledge of the different types of orders and statuses of social life, knowledge of the renounced order of life, knowledge of nonattachment, sense and mind control, meditation, etc. He has described in so many ways different types of religion. Now, in summarizing Bhagavad-gītā, the Lord says that Arjuna should give up all the processes that have been explained to him; he should simply surrender to Kṛiṣṇa. That surrender will save him from all kinds of sinful reactions, for the Lord personally promises to protect him.

In the Eighth Chapter it was said that only one who has become free from all sinful reactions can take to the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus one may think that unless he is free from all sinful reactions he cannot take to the surrendering process. To such doubts it is here said that even if one is not free from all sinful reactions, simply by the process of surrendering to Śrī Kṛṣṇa he is automatically freed. There is no need of strenuous effort to free oneself from sinful reactions. One should unhesitatingly accept Kṛṣṇa as the supreme savior of all living entities. With faith and love, one should surrender unto Him.

According to the devotional process, one should simply accept such religious principles that will lead ultimately to the devotional service of the Lord. One may perform a particular occupational duty according to his position in the social order, but if by executing his duty one does not come to the point of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, all his activities are in vain.

Anything that does not lead to the perfectional stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be avoided. One should be confident that in all circumstances Kṛṣṇa will protect him from all difficulties. There is no need of thinking how one should keep the body and soul together. Kṛṣṇa will see to that. One should always think himself helpless and should consider Kṛṣṇa the only basis for his progress in life. As soon as one seriously engages himself in devotional service to the Lord in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, at once he becomes freed from all contamination of material nature. There are different processes of religion and purificatory processes by cultivation of knowledge, meditation in the mystic yoga system, etc., but one who surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa does not have to execute so many methods. That simple surrender unto Kṛṣṇa will save him from unnecessarily wasting time. One can thus make all progress at once and be freed from all sinful reaction.

One should be attracted by the beautiful vision of Kṛṣṇa. His name is Kṛṣṇa because He is all-attractive. One who becomes attracted by the beautiful, all-powerful, omnipotent vision of Kṛṣṇa is fortunate. There are different kinds of transcendentalists—some of them are attached to the impersonal Brahman vision, some of them are attracted by the Supersoul feature, etc., but one who is attracted to the personal feature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and, above all, one who is attracted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead as Kṛṣṇa Himself, is the most perfect transcendentalist. In other words, devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, in full consciousness, is the most confidential part of knowledge, and this is the essence of the whole Bhagavad-gītā. Karma-yogīs, empiric philosophers, mystics, and devotees are all called transcendentalists, but one who is a pure devotee is the best of all. The particular words used here, mā śucaḥ, “Don’t fear, don’t hesitate, don’t worry,” are very significant. One may be perplexed as to how one can give up all kinds of religious forms and simply surrender unto Kṛṣṇa, but such worry is useless.

Discovery:

1. What are the different kinds of knowledge and religions described by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-gita?
2. What does Krishna say that we must do with all this knowledge? What are His final instruction to us?

Understanding:

1. In what ways does Krishna help His surrendered devotees?
2. Who is the best transcendentalist? Why?

3. How can we become the best transcendentalist?
4. Why do we hesitate to follow Krishna's final instruction?

Application:

1. Share with everyone what surrendering to Krishna means to you. How has it helped you?

Preaching is the Essence

Devotee-preachers are engaged in the highest welfare work:

The self-effulgent Vaikuṅṭha planets, by whose illumination alone all the illuminating planets within this material world give off reflected light, cannot be reached by those who are not merciful to other living entities. Only persons who constantly engage in welfare activities for other living

entities can reach the Vaikuṅṭha planets.

From this material world ... people can be transferred to the Vaikuṅṭhaloka, if they incessantly engage in welfare activities for all other living entities. Such incessant welfare activities can really be performed only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There is no other philanthropic work within this material world but Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which can engage a person twenty-four hours a day.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious being is always engaged in planning how to take all the suffering humanity back home, back to Godhead. Even if one is not successful in reclaiming all the fallen souls back to Godhead, still, because he is Kṛṣṇa conscious, his path to Vaikuṅṭhaloka is open. He personally becomes qualified to enter the Vaikuṅṭhalokas, and if anyone follows such a devotee, he also enters into Vaikuṅṭhaloka. Others, who engage in envious activities, are known as karmīs. Karmīs are envious of one another.... Jñānīs are not as sinful as karmīs, but they do not try to reclaim others back to Godhead. They perform austerities for their own liberation. Yogīs are also engaged in self-aggrandizement by trying to attain mystic powers. But devotees, Vaiṣṇavas, who are servants of the Lord, come forward in the actual field of work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to reclaim fallen souls.... the Lord says that there is no one dearer to Him than those who preach the gospel of Bhagavad-gītā to the world.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.36

Week 52 – Leader’s Section

By now all the members of the Bhakti Vriksha must be attending the study classes and so must also be quite regular in reading Srila Prabhupada’s books and in discussing their understanding and realizations in the study classes. Hence the ice-breaker sessions are now mostly going to deal with the devotees’ realizations, experiences about their spiritual development as well as of the other members, challenges they faced, what they learnt from the Bhakti Vriksha, and from each other, etc. . . as now the devotees will have some realized knowledge and experiences to share with the members with whom they also have grown closer to.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “Share a moment in the life of this Bhakti Vriksha group that had a big impact on your personal life”. Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee who is going to lead, what tunes he is planning to sing. You can teach him some tunes if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed earlier in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. It would be appropriate to also train them to sing attractively

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Ask one of the most serious devotees in the group to conduct this session. All the senior devotees will get their turns, but a serious devotee will set the right precedent for the other trainees to follow. Also the group will enjoy the experience. They will as it is be a little apprehensive to be led by someone other than whom they are used to. Make sure that you are also present during the discussion and take part in it as a regular member. You can also correct the trainee leader wherever he goes wrong very discreetly, so that he does not feel too embarrassed. Since the trainee leader is with his fellow students, he will not mind being openly corrected. Once they become leaders of new groups your correction will have to be in private.

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group into a regular Vrinda .

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which are likely to be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainee's performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your judgement of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc,. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new vrindas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly

Home Work

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 12

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Always announce the names of the devotees who have helped in sponsoring, purchasing, cooking, offering , distributing the prasadam and in cleaning up Normally though everyone benefits greatly by these services, they tend to be left unnoticed or unappreciated and taken for granted.

Appreciation can enthuse the devotees to serve Krishna better, inspire more people to join in the services, and taste the nectar while performing their services.. The ones who acknowledge others services also feel good for having done so.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 52 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be distributed to everyone, without discrimination:

With great respect, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu requested Advaita Ācārya, “Give Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotion to Kṛṣṇa, even to the lowest of men [caṇḍālas].”

This is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s order to all His devotees. Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, devotion to Kṛṣṇa, is open to everyone, even low-class men like caṇḍālas. One should follow this order in the disciplic succession stemming from Śrī Advaita and Nityānanda Prabhu and distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness without discrimination throughout the world.

There are different kinds of men, beginning with the brāhmaṇa and going down to the lowest platform known as caṇḍāla. Whatever one’s position, everyone in this age of Kali needs to be enlightened in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is the greatest need of the day. Everyone is acutely feeling the pangs of material existence.... everyone is feeling the resultant pinpricks of Kali-yuga brought about by human society’s indulging in illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling and intoxication. Now is the time for the members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness to distribute kṛṣṇa-bhakti all over the world and thus follow the orders of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The Lord has ordered everyone to become a guru (Cc. Madhya 7.128).... Everyone in every town and village should be enlightened by the instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Kṛṣṇa consciousness should be distributed to everyone indiscriminately. In this way, the entire world will be peaceful and happy, and everyone will glorify Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as He desires.

The word caṇḍāla actually refers to a dog-eater, who is considered the lowest of men. Even caṇḍālas can be enlightened in Kṛṣṇa consciousness due to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s benedictions. Kṛṣṇa-bhakti is not the monopoly of a certain caste. Everyone is eligible to receive this great benediction given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Everyone should be given a chance to receive it and be happy.

Cc. Madhya 15.41

Passage for Discussion

The seven purposes of the International Society for Krishna consciousness

Founder Acharya HDG A.C. Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada

1.
 - a. To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and
 - b. To educate all peoples in the techniques of spiritual life,
 - c. In order to check the imbalance of values in life and
 - d. To achieve real unity and peace in the world.

1. To propagate a consciousness of Krishna, as it is revealed in the Bhagavad Gita and the Srimad Bhagavatam.
2. To bring the members of the society together with each other nearer to Krishna, the prime entity, thus to develop the idea within the members, and humanity at large, that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead(Krishna),
3. To teach and encourage the Sankirtana movement, congregational chanting of the holy names of God as revealed in the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
4. To erect for the members and for society at large, a holy place of transcendental pastimes, dedicated to the personality of Krishna.
5. To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler and more natural way of life.
6. With the view towards achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books and other writings.

Discovery:

1. What is the very first purpose of Srila Prabhupada's in forming ISKCON?
2. Mention all the purposes of ISKCON one by one.

Understanding:

1. In what ways do you think that the first purpose of ISKCON can and have been to a certain extent achieved?
2. What do you think is the primary motive of Srila Prabhupada's for forming ISKCON?
3. What aspects of this legal charter are an integral part of the Bhakti Vriksha preaching or in other words, how does the Bhakti Vriksha system of preaching fulfill the purposes of ISKCON?

Application:

1. How do you think you can help in fulfilling these purposes of ISKCON?
2. Please have these purposes framed and mounted on a wall in your home or on a desk. Seeing and reading it everyday will make these purposes firmly fixed in your mind and will inspire you to fulfill your commitments to Srila Prabhupada.

Preaching is the essence

Devotee-preachers are engaged in the highest welfare work:

The self-effulgent Vaikuṅṭha planets, by whose illumination alone all the illuminating planets within this material world give off reflected light, cannot be reached by those who are not merciful to other living entities. Only persons who constantly engage in welfare activities for other living entities can reach the Vaikuṅṭha planets.

From this material world ... people can be transferred to the Vaikuṅṭhaloka, if they incessantly engage in welfare activities for all other living entities. Such incessant welfare activities can really be performed only in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. There is no other philanthropic work within this material world but Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which can engage a person twenty-four hours a day.

A Kṛṣṇa conscious being is always engaged in planning how to take all the suffering humanity back home, back to Godhead. Even if one is not successful in reclaiming all the fallen souls back to Godhead, still, because he is Kṛṣṇa conscious, his path to Vaikuṅṭhaloka is open. He personally becomes qualified to enter the Vaikuṅṭhalokas, and if anyone follows such a devotee, he also enters into Vaikuṅṭhaloka. Others, who engage in envious activities, are known as karmīs. Karmīs are envious of one another.... Jñānīs are not as sinful as karmīs, but they do not try to reclaim others back to Godhead. They perform austerities for their own liberation. Yogīs are also engaged in self-aggrandizement by trying to attain mystic powers. But devotees, Vaiṣṇavas, who are servants of the Lord, come forward in the actual field of work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to reclaim fallen souls.... the Lord says that there is no one dearer to Him than those who preach the gospel of Bhagavad-gītā to the world.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.36

Week 53 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good/good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “What has been the biggest challenge or difficulty for you in this group cycle of the Bhakti Vriksha program?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee who is going to lead, what tunes he is planning to sing. You can teach him some tunes if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed earlier in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. It would be appropriate to also train them to sing attractively

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, he should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Sri Namamrita.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the discussion passages without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your judgement of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new vrindas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Things to learn:

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 13

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign a single trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the following form:

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Preaching activities satisfy the Lord:

The demigods are called sakāma devotees, or devotees with material desires in mind, while the pure devotees are called niṣkāma devotees because they have no desires in their personal interests. The sakāma devotees are self-interested because they do not think of others, and therefore they are not able to satisfy the Lord perfectly, whereas the pure devotees take the missionary responsibility of turning nondevotees into devotees, and they are therefore able to satisfy the Lord more than the demigods.... Sometimes the Lord Himself descends for missionary activities, as He did in the form of Lord Caitanya, but mostly He sends His bona fide representatives, and thus He shows His causeless mercy towards the nondevotees. The Lord is so satisfied with His pure devotees that He wants to give them the credit of missionary success, although He could do the work personally. This is the sign of His satisfaction with His pure niṣkāma devotees, compared to the sakāma devotees.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.9.12

Passage for Discussion

Preaching and Behavior

Between preaching and behavior there exists a dynamic tension. This is expressed in Sanatana Gosvami’s praise of Haridas Thakura. “Some behave well but do not preach the cult of Krishna consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly. You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world”.

Srila Prabhupada confirms that his own followers also must preach and behave in an exemplary way. “The qualifications expressed in this connection are that one must act according to the scriptural injunctions and at the same time preach... the members of the Hare Krishna movement chant a minimum 16 rounds a day, which can be done without difficulty, and at the same time they must preach the cult of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu according to the gospel of *Bhagavad Gita as it is*. One who does so is quite fit to become the spiritual master for the entire world. Cc. *Antya* 4.102- 103

A devotee should not retire to the forest in search of the ideal place for executing Vaishnava behavior. Rather, he should stay in the cities and offer people the chance to go back home back to Godhead. The Srimad Bhagavatam states that that if a *brahmana* neglects those who are in want of Krishna consciousness, that *brahmana*’s spiritual knowledge will diminish, just as water kept in a cracked pot, leaks out.”

If a devotee tries to avoid preaching, he cannot become spiritually advanced. Indeed, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has said that the position of a Vaishnava can be tested by seeing how good a touchstone he is- that is by seeing how many Vaishnavas he has made during his life.

“The first preaching work”, Srila Prabhupada wrote in a letter, “is that you yourself should become an ideal devotee”. (April 23rd to Niranjan das)

Only an immature preacher thinks that he can maintain enthusiasm for his ongoing service while at the same time not pay strict attention to the rules and regulations. By keeping all activities Krishna conscious, a preacher will not allow *Maya* to enter. To think that a Vaishnava can preach and yet remain ignorant of the Vaishnava philosophy or disregard the standard principles of Vaishnava behavior is ludicrous.

Behavior in preaching:

When a television interviewer asked Srila Prabhupada by what behavior one could recognize a true follower of Krishna consciousness, Srila Prabhupada replied, “He’d be a perfect gentleman, that’s all.” Srila Prabhupada, “one should himself become a perfect gentleman and learn to give proper respect to others.” Bg 13.8-12

Although in ordinary usage, the word gentleman may refer to a man of wealth and aristocracy, we use it here to describe a devotee’s high standard of honourable and considerate behavior. The polite and humble behavior can be appreciated even by a non-devotee. A devotee is not arrogant, boorish or inconsiderate of others.

When Lord Chaitanya came into the company of Mayavadi sannyasis at Benares, He sat down humbly at the doorway until the chief Sannyasi, Prakasananda Saraswati, personally came to invite Him inside.

As a youth Lord Chaitanya soundly defeated a Kashmiri Pandita in debate. But when Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s students began to laugh at the Pandita, Lord Chaitanya silenced them and treated His opponent with honor.

When Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu started a civil disobedience kirtana against the kazi’s order in Navadvipa, He certainly defied the law, but non-violently. Although Lord Chaitanya led 100,000 men in kirtan to the kazi’s residence, on arriving there, He discussed peacefully with the Kazi, treating him like an honourable leader.

The scriptures advise, *satyam bruyat priyam bruyat*. In the material world only palatable truths should be spoken and unpalatable truths should be carefully avoided. But Prabhupada wrote in a letter, “Devotees always humbly offer respect to everyone, but when there is discussion on a point of sastra, they do not observe the usual etiquette, satyam bruyat priyam bruyat. They speak only the satyam, although it may not necessarily be priyam”. August 9, 1976 to Sumati Morarjee

All things considered, a devotee should try his best to act as a Vaishnava lady or gentleman and behave politely, as did Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. If in the course of sincerely delivering the absolute truth, the non-devotees regard us as unimpressive, then that will not disturb us. A devotee has to please his spiritual master and Krishna, and then everything is complete, even if the world finds him lacking.

Discovery:

1. Why was Haridas Thakura considered to be the most advanced Vaishnava?
2. Who is fit to become a spiritual master?
3. What is our first preaching work according to Srila Prabhupada?

Understanding:

1. Why is it essential for devotees to preach?
2. How can devotees qualify themselves to preach?
3. What does Srila Prabhupada mean when he said that devotees are perfect gentle men?
4. Explain how Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu demonstrated the exemplary behavior of a Vaishnava?
5. How should we speak the truth to others?

Application:

1. Share your experiences in preaching to others. How have your dealings been?
2. What responses from the people have you encountered?
3. In what ways do you want to improve your preaching and Vaishnava behavior?

Preaching is the essence

Preaching by humble persuasion:

... the original purpose of the Māyāvādī sannyāsīs of Benares in meeting Caitanya Mahāprabhu was to defeat His personal conception of God. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, however, as a preacher, turned the minds of the Māyāvādī sannyāsīs. They were melted by the sweet words of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and thus became friendly and spoke to Him also in sweet words.

Similarly, all preachers will have to meet opponents, but they should not make them more inimical. They are already enemies, and if we talk with them harshly or impolitely their enmity will merely increase. We should therefore follow in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu as far as possible and try to convince the opposition by quoting from the śāstras and presenting the conclusion of the ācāryas. It is in this way that we should try to defeat all the enemies of the Lord.

Cc. Ādi 7.99

Week 54 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha group are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them on how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that each of them gets a chance to conduct all the parts of the program.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good/good/fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “Share something you learnt from a member of the group during this cycle?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee who is going to lead, what tunes he is planning to sing.. You can teach him some tunes if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed earlier in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. It would be appropriate to also train them to sing attractively

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the following passage. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Spiritual Edification- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting the confidence as well as giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Of course your evaluation of their performance has to be also said so that they understand the correct standards for evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana etc, These will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting for festivals, etc, and also for the new prospective Bhakti Vrikshas by the trainee leaders shortly.

Home Work

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 14

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign another trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 54 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

*To derive the full benefit of chanting the mahā-mantra, one should first chant the Pañca-tattva
mahā-mantra:*

As preachers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we first offer our obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting this Pañca-tattva mantra; then we say, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. There are ten offenses in the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, but these are not considered in the chanting of the Panca-tattva mantra, namely śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is known as mahā- vadānyāvatāra, the most magnanimous incarnation, for He does not consider the offenses of the fallen souls. Thus to derive the full benefit of the chanting of the mahā-mantra (Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare), we must first take shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, learn the Pañca-tattva mahā-mantra, and then chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. That will be very effective.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.4

Passage for Discussion

Vaishnava behavior in Different relationships

Serving the Spiritual Master

Love of God begins by hearing about Him from His authorized representative, the Vaishnava spiritual master. This is called *śravaṇa*. A devotee’s relationship with God, therefore begins with God’s representative, the spiritual master. The disciple understands his spiritual master to be sent by Krishna to save him.

All the Vaishnava scriptures emphasize that one’s relationship with Krishna is realized through one’s relationship with the Guru.

In the beginning, the disciple may have an inkling of the identity of his eternal spiritual master. But when that inkling becomes his heart’s conviction, he understands that his spiritual master has come from Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that his spiritual master can save him from the ocean of repeated birth and death.

It is the Guru himself who has to teach this to us. Lord Chaitanya explained to Rupa Gosvami that the eternal souls are wandering through out the universe, birth after birth. Only by the mercy of the spiritual master, sent by Krishna, do we get the chance of eternal life in devotional service. The spiritual master offers his great blessings to us, and we have to bear it with faith. Only as we understand our relationship with our spiritual master will we understand our real self and our relationship with God. All the knowledge available carried by the entire disciplic succession is available to us through our spiritual master. Therefore, Srila Vishwanatha Chakravarti Thakura says in his Gurushtakam that we should offer our respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of our spiritual master.

Srila Prabhupada writes in a letter, “... For offering prasadam, present everything before the spiritual master Whose picture is also in the altar, means that the spiritual master will take care of offering the food stuff to the Lord. Therefore simply by chanting the prayer to the Spiritual Master, everything will be complete.

Before meeting the spiritual Master, we are so covered by illusion that we don't even know we're suffering the pangs of birth and death. But he opens our eyes. Once we understand from him that we are in the ocean of *samsara*, of repeated birth and death, we desire to get out, so we turn sincerely to him. He is the representative of Krishna; if he accepts our service, then we are safe.

By Krishna's grace the spiritual master is an ecstatic devotee; he is always engaddened by the Sankirtana movement. Naturally he engages his disciple in chanting the holy name, an dancing, singing, and playing musical instruments. The spiritual master is like a touch stone. He gives us the holy name, and if we chant the name with devotion, we realize our relationship with Krishna.

Sometimes the spiritual master is with us in his personal form (vapurh), but more often not. Yet, in either case, as we chant and dance in kirtana under his instructions, our relationship will grow and improve....we can experience his presence and approval. As we chant the holy name under the order of the spiritual master, we are always united with our Lord and His pure devotee.

The spiritual master introduces us to our relationship with the Deity. He invites Radha and Krishna to descend and he bathes and dresses Their forms before the eyes of his disciples. He demonstrates the principle of utsaha, enthusiasm, because without enthusiasm, the worship becomes like idol worship. "...The spiritual master teaches the neophyte devotees all these kindly and personally to help him gradually in the realization of the transcendental name, quality, form, etc., of the Lord

Worship of the Deity in the temple or any service to the spiritual master must be done with an abiding sense of obedience. In the early stages of devotion, obedience is important in our loving relationship with God, and it is formed in our relationship to the guru. By his order, we bathe, we sit down to chant the maha mantra, , and then enter the temple room to awaken the Deity and perform Mangala Arati. A sense of obedience is the primary motivating force when we are serving in the sadhana stage.

Srila Prabhupada, " The disciple should accept the words of his spiritual master without hesitation. Whatever the father or the spiritual master or orders should be taken without argument." "Yes." There should be no instance in which the disciple or son says, "This is not correct. I cannot carry it out." When he says that, he is fallen."

But if a disciple treats his relationship with the spiritual master as a mere formality, then he cannot advance or realize Krishna consciousness. The guru is not like a family priest for performing ritual ceremonies, nor is he figurehead appointed by the institution, without real presence in the heart and mind of the disciple. Rather the spiritual master is the center of the disciple's very being.- "He is my lord, birth after birth."

The spiritual master becomes pleased when his disciples take bhagavat prasadam. Because he has great faith that prasadam is not material, the spiritual master is confident that when his disciples offer prasadam, their going back to Godhead is assured. Thus both he and his disciples become happy simply by sharing the palatable maha -prasadam. The guru introduces us to this merciful form of Krishna as prasadam. And he teaches us that while taking prasadam, we should call upon Lord Caitanya and Nityananda to please help us in devotional service.

....*To be continued in the next discussion*

From

Discovery:

1. How can we cultivate our relationship with Krishna?

Understanding:

1. Describe all the ways in which the spiritual master helps us to realize Krishna.
2. What are the attitudes that the disciple should develop towards his guru in order to advance in Krishna consciousness?
3. How can we always stay united with our guru?

Application

1. Share your realizations on the need for accepting a guru. Do you think you need to take a shelter of a guru now? Why or why not?

Preaching is the essence

Preaching is more important than staying in or visiting Vṛndāvana or Jagannātha Purī for one's own personal satisfaction:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu then told Nityānanda Prabhu, “Please hear Me, O holy man: I now request something of you. Kindly grant My request. Do not come to Jagannātha Purī every year, but stay in Bengal and fulfill My desire.”

The mission of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is to spread the only medicine effective in this fallen age of Kali—the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. Following the orders of His mother, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was residing at Jagannātha Purī, and the devotees were coming to see Him. However, the Lord felt that this message must be spread very elaborately in Bengal, and in His absence there was not a second person capable of doing it. Consequently the Lord requested Nityānanda Prabhu to stay there and broadcast the message of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Lord also entrusted a similar preaching responsibility to Rūpa and Sanātana. Nityānanda Prabhu was requested not to come every year to Jagannātha Purī, although seeing Lord Jagannātha greatly benefits everyone. Does this mean that the Lord was refusing Nityānanda Prabhu a fortunate opportunity? No. One who is a faithful servant of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu must execute His order, even if one has to sacrifice going to Jagannātha Purī to see Lord Jagannātha there. In other words, it is a greater fortune to carry out Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's order than to satisfy one's senses by seeing Lord Jagannātha. Preaching Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult throughout the world is more important than staying in Vṛndāvana or Jagannātha Purī for one's own personal satisfaction. Spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission; therefore His sincere devotees must carry out His desire.

Cc. Madhya 16.63-64

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 55 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha group are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them on how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that each of them gets a chance to conduct all parts of the program.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good /good /fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “What did you learn about cultivating new people during this cycle of the group?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtan : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee who is going to lead, what tunes he is planning to sing.. You can teach him some tunes if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed earlier in singing the Hare Krishna mahamantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. It would be appropriate to also train them to sing attractively

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the following passage. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new Bhakti Vriksha groups to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Home Work

1. Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 15

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign a trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam, as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

The chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa protects a devotee from all accidental falldowns:

Generally, a devotee who is engaged in the nine kinds of devotional activities is engaged in the process of cleansing all material contamination from the heart. He puts the Supreme Personality of Godhead within his heart, and all sinful contaminations are naturally washed away. Continuous thinking of the Supreme Lord makes him pure by nature. According to the Vedas, there is a certain regulation that if one falls down from his exalted position, he has to undergo certain ritualistic processes to purify himself. But here there is no such condition because the purifying process is already there in the heart of the devotee, due to his remembering the Supreme Personality of Godhead constantly. Therefore, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare should be continued without stoppage. This will protect a devotee from all accidental falldowns. He will thus remain perpetually free from all material contaminations.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 9.31

Passage for Discussion

Vaishnava behavior in Different relationships (..continued..)

Serving the Spiritual Master

(Continued from the previous week)

The Vaishnava guru is regularly serving Radha and Krishna. He arranges for Their swing for Jhulana yatra, and he helps to decorate Srimati Radharani, Lalita, and Visakha in the groves of Vrindavana. He directly takes part in these pastimes and encourages his disciples to join him. In another way – as a preacher, arranging for sankirtana - the spiritual master is attempting to bring the fallen souls back into their constitutional position, and he urges them to enter their relationship with devotees of Radha and Krishna in Vrindavana.

This is especially accomplished when the spiritual master engages devotees in chanting the Hare Krishna mantra: “Oh, Radharani! Oh, Krishna! Please engage me in Your service.” When the disciples assist the spiritual master in these activities, they are also acting as assistants of the gopis. The spiritual master has the responsibility of directly assisting the intimate servants of the Lord, and the disciples participate, under his direction, as servants.

The higher realizations about the devotee’s eternal relationships with Krishna in the spiritual world will be fully revealed in the course of time, and one should patiently wait while laboriously serving the the guru in many different ways. Certainly the spiritual master is serving Radha and Krishna, and certainly his sincere disciples are assisting him; but too many questions about the particular rasas will only serve as mental distractions and will not be beneficial or even comprehensible. The disciple’s main work is to assist the spiritual master in rescuing the fallen souls, who in most cases have not the slightest spiritual understanding. By directly assisting the spiritual master in preaching, the disciple will become eligible to understand more and more about Krishna.

The sastras and the sadhu affirm that the spiritual master should be honored as much as God, and therefore we accept. If we accept that God should be honored as God, the greatest, then we should not have any difficulty in accepting his “viceroy.” As long as he is genuine, the citizens must accept his words as coming directly from the king. Similarly, the spiritual master must be accepted on the strength of his symptoms and credentials. He must be in disciplic succession from a bonafide spiritual master, and he must act and speak always as the representative of Krishna. To such a genuine representative of Lord Krishna we should offer our obeisances.

“Anyone therefore, who takes shelter of the lotus feet of a pure devotee by accepting the pure devotee as his spiritual master can be at once purified. Such devotees of the Lord are honored equally with the Lord because they are engaged in the most confidential service of the Lord, for they deliver out of the material world the fallen souls whom the Lord wants to return home back to Godhead. Such pure devotees are better known as vice-lords according to revealed scriptures. The sincere disciple of the pure devotee considers the spiritual master equal to the Lord, but always considers himself to be a humble servant of the servant of the Lord. This is the pure devotional path.

It is true that in kali yuga the light of knowledge is covered by clouds of fraudulent practice, but it is also true that genuine representatives of the light of the Bhagavatam are streaming forth as the sincere and ardent followers of Srila Prabhupada. When we hear about and see for ourselves the genuine symptoms and credentials of a real spiritual master, we should gladly accept him and honor him as the most respectable personality. And we should appreciate his transcendental identity. This view is upheld “in all revealed scriptures and followed by all authorities.”

At least 3 times a day the formal prayers should be offered, but the remembrance and praise of the spiritual master should be continual. Especially after receiving his orders, the disciple should think about these orders constantly and not be disturbed by anything else. According to Vishwanatha Chakravarti Thakura, the order of the spiritual master is the life and soul of the disciple. Meditation on his order is the perfection of meditation, and sincere attempts to carry out that order are the perfection of human society.

When the spiritual master is pleased, then the disciple’s highest objectives are achieved and he becomes more encouraged to go on carrying out the orders of the spiritual master. He wants to please his spiritual master more and more, and there is no limit to the exchange. By this reciprocal energy, the preaching of Krishna consciousness is going on. A disciple’s satisfaction to please the previous spiritual masters in disciplic succession, is secured when he faithfully practices and preaches. To the degree a disciple carries out the spiritual master’s order he can satisfy guru and Krishna and subsequently satisfy himself.

If the spiritual master is displeased with a disciple, then that disciple’s progress is blocked.

The secret of success in devotional service is to follow the order of the guru. Otherwise, a devotee becomes *asara*, or useless. One should mold his life so that all his thoughts and actions are directed toward carrying out the orders of the spiritual master. In this way, one realizes directly his eternal relationship with Krishna. This is the essence of Vaishnava behavior.

Book From Name

Discovery:

1. In what ways is the Vaishnava guru engaged in serving Radha and Krishna?
2. How does the Vaishnava guru engage devotees in the service of Sri Radha and Krishna?

Understanding:

1. What is the benefit of serving and assisting the guru in his various services to Radha and Krishna?
2. Why should we worship the Vaishnava guru as good as God Himself?
3. Why should we try to please the spiritual master?
4. How can we please the spiritual master and all the previous Acharyas?

Application:

1. On the basis of the previous week's spiritual edification as well as this week's, list out the qualifications of an ideal Vaishnava guru and an ideal disciple. Share your plans about taking shelter from a bonafide Vaishnava Guru.

Preaching is the Essence

Servants of God preach and thus become dear to the Lord:

... asuras are gradually rectified to God consciousness by the mercy of the Lord's liberated servitors in different countries according to the Supreme will. Such devotees of God are very confidential associates of the Lord, and when they come to save human society from the dangers of godlessness, they are known as the powerful incarnations of the Lord, as sons of the Lord, as servants of the Lord or as associates of the Lord.... Such servants of God are called mahātmās, or tīrthas, and they preach according to particular time and place. The servants of God urge people to become devotees of the Lord....

The servants of God come to propagate God consciousness, and intelligent people should cooperate with them in every respect. By serving the servant of God, one can please God more than by directly serving the Lord. The Lord is more pleased when He sees that His servants are properly respected because such servants risk everything for the service of the Lord and so are very dear to the Lord. The Lord declares in the Bhagavad-gītā (18.69) that no one is dearer to Him than one who risks everything to preach His glory.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.16

Week 56 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good /good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “What has been the most difficult thing to learn or to do during this cycle of the group?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee who is going to lead, what tunes he is planning to sing.. You can teach him some tunes if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed earlier in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood

towards the holy names. It would be appropriate to also train them to sing attractively

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Home Work

Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 16

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new Bhakti Vrikshas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign a single devotee to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Nāma-dīkṣā, Brahminical Initiation, and the Holy Name

Sincere eagerness to chant the holy name is the main qualification to be initiated according to the pāñcarātrika process:

The following injunction is given in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (1.194):

*tāntrikeṣu ca mantresu
dīkṣāyām yoṣitām api
sādhvīnām adhikāro ‘sti
śūdrādīnām ca sad-dhiyām*

“Śūdras and women who are chaste and sincerely interested in understanding the Absolute Truth are qualified to be initiated with the pāñcarātrika-mantras.”

This is also confirmed in Bhagavad-gītā (9.32):

*mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya
ye ‘pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās
te ‘pi yānti parām gatim*

“O son of Pṛthā, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaiśyas [merchants], as well as śūdras [workers]—can approach the supreme destination.”

If one actually wants to serve Kṛṣṇa, it doesn’t matter whether one is a śūdra, vaiśya, or even a woman. If one is sincerely eager to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra or dīkṣā-mantra, he is qualified to be initiated according to the pāñcarātrika process. According to Vedic principles, only a brāhmaṇa who is fully engaged in his occupational duties can be initiated. Śūdras and women are not admitted to a vaidika initiation. Unless one is fit according to the estimation of the spiritual master, one cannot accept a mantra from the pāñcarātrika-vidhi or the vaidika-vidhi. When one is fit to accept the mantra, he is initiated by the pāñcarātrika-vidhi or the vaidika-vidhi. In any case, the result is the same.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.331

When the disciple has become competent and purified by chanting, the spiritual master offers him the sacred thread:

Usually, initiation depends on the bona fide spiritual master, who directs the disciple. If he sees that a disciple has become competent and purified by the process of chanting, he offers the sacred thread to the disciple.... By the process of initiation by the spiritual master, a person is accepted as a brāhmaṇa in his purified state of chanting the holy name of the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.6

Even without recitation of kāma-gāyatrī, the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is sufficient to elevate one to the highest spiritual platform:

Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshiped by the Gāyatrī mantra, and the specific mantra by which He is worshiped is called kāma-gāyatrī. Vedic literatures explain that that sound vibration which can elevate one from mental concoction is called gāyatrī. The kāma-gāyatrī mantra is composed of 24 1/2 syllables thus:

*klīm kāma-devāya vidmahe
puṣpa-bāṇāya dhīmahi
tan no 'naṅgaḥ pracodayāt*

This kāma-gāyatrī is received from the spiritual master when the disciple is advanced in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In other words, this kāma-gāyatrī mantra and saṁskāra, or reformation of a perfect brāhmaṇa, are offered by the spiritual master when he sees that his disciple is advanced in spiritual knowledge. Even then, the kāma-gāyatrī is not uttered under certain circumstances. In any case the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa is sufficient to elevate one to the highest spiritual platform.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

Passage for Discussion

Vaishnava behavior in Different relationships

Vaishnava scholars have analyzed that there are different categories of devotees and different attitudes of general behavior to be followed in devotional interactions.

“One should mentally honor any devotee who chants the holy names of Lord,” states Rupa Goswami (Upadeshamṛta #5) Thus Rupa Goswami describes in brief the *kanishta adhikari*, or beginning devotee. The *kanishta adhikari* has the disqualifications of not properly respecting advanced devotees and not perceiving Lord Krishna within the hearts of all living beings. Mostly he recognizes Krishna’s presence only in the Deity within the Temple. Yet the *kanishta adhikari* is far greater than all the non-devotees who are classified as either karmis (gross materialists,) or as yogis and *jnanis* (impersonal transcendentalists). Because he is a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the *kanishta adhikari* is also sometimes called a materialistic devotee, because he has a tendency to be interested in material benefits. Therefore a devotee must strive to make progress to come to the second class position, the *madhyama adhikari*.

“The *madhyama adhikari*, writes Srila Prabhupada, “has received spiritual initiation from the spiritual master and has been fully engaged by him in the transcendental service of the Lord.”

Srila Prabhupada also describes the highest stage or *Uttama adhikari*, “Out of many such Vaishnavas, one may be found to be very seriously engaged in the service of the Lord and strictly following all the regulative principles, chanting the prescribed number of rounds on japa beads, and always thinking of how to expand the Krishna conscious movement. Such a Vaishnava should be accepted as an *uttama adhikari*, a highly advanced devotee, and his association should always be sought.”

Rupa Goswami explains that one should mentally honor the beginner, or materialistic devotee, one should offer humble obeisances to the *madhyama* devotee, and associate with and faithfully serve the pure devotee, “who is advanced in undeviated devotional service and whose heart is completely devoid of the propensity to criticize others.” (Upadeshamṛta #5)

Although all devotees should receive our honor, there are clear guidelines for dealing with different classes of devotees. Every devotee will find himself in a situation where some devotees are more advanced than he, some are his peers, and some are newcomers or less advanced. According to Vaishnava behavior, one should inquire from and render service to the more advanced devotees, one should make loving friendships with equal devotees, and

one should give merciful guidance to those who are more neophyte than oneself.

Whenever a devotee gets an opportunity to hear from or serve an advanced Vaishnava, he should remember the shastric injunction and go forward with great eagerness to honor the devotee. If there is an imbalance between two disciples, a devotee should not be envious. Srila Prabhupada writes, "If a God brother is more enlightened and advanced in Krishna consciousness, one should accept him as almost equal to the spiritual master, and one should be happy to see such Godbrothers advance in Krishna consciousness.

(Bhag- 3.32.42)

But how one may well ask, do we know who is an advanced devotee? Is every Godbrother of the spiritual master really deserving to be accepted as almost equal to one's guru? Is every sannyasi or senior devotee to be considered advanced?

If a senior devotee's or sannyasi's behavior does not correspond with the symptoms for proper Vaishnava behavior, then one has to judge for oneself; but even if one does not see symptoms of advancement, he should continue to observe the etiquette befitting senior devotees and sannyasis. This manner of behavior was demonstrated by Lord Chaitanya who continued to honor a senior sannyasi, Ramachandra Puri, even though Ramachandra Puri behaved offensively in many ways. When individual cases become extremely subtle, one should consult respectable devotees for guidance on how to behave.

With whom are we equal in devotional service? A humble devotee tends to think that he is less than others, and he will hesitate to consider with whom he is spiritually equal. Immature devotees however may make too many social distinctions, as if a grhastha could never be spiritually equal to a sannyasi, or as if a devotee of twelve years standing could not be equal to a devotee of sixteen years' standing. Yet "equals" really means equal-minded friends. Therefore equals in devotional services on behalf of the spiritual master for friendships. Of course no two individuals can be exactly equal in everything. Friendships are therefore give and take. A basis for the loving spiritual exchange between devotees is given by Rupa Gosvami in Upadeshamrta. Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one's mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, accepting prasadam, and offering prasadam are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another.

Spiritual friendship is distinct from material friendship in that material friendship is based on sense gratification, whereas spiritual friendship is based on Krishna consciousness.

A person endeavoring for Krishna consciousness should not seek out a friend for any material reason; a devotee has nothing to gain from a rich man or a political ally. Since we are no longer on the path of material progress, we should not be interested in bodily beauty, aristocratic birth, material wealth, or material education. All our friendships should intensify devotional service.

Giving mercy to less advanced devotees:

The most obvious kind of less advanced devotee is the newcomer. He does not know the Vaishnava philosophy well and is yet uncertain in his commitment. Older devotees should help such a neophyte in any way possible.

Persons who have spent years in the Krishna consciousness movement but who have remained materially attached may also be less advanced devotees. A Vaishnava shows mercy by taking time to counsel and give relevant instructions and by making plans whereby the lesser devotees may engage in devotional service, thereby tasting the nectar of Krishna

consciousness. Showing mercy to others is sometimes not an easy thing. If we give a thief the mercy of good moral instructions, he may become angry with us. And one must be competent to “tactfully and intelligently” extend mercy to lesser devotees. Giving mercy cannot be someone’s concoction and cannot be done with a motivation to become praised and worshipped by lesser devotees. A devotee should remain humble and fixed in Krishna conscious principles, and then he will be competent to give the mercy of his good example to others. If one behaves ideally, he will give mercy to everyone, without any extraneous effort.

Relationship to the innocent non devotees:

A pure devotee has a naturally friendly disposition. He is not prone to cause anyone anxiety by words or even by ill thoughts. He forgives the wrongs of others. When this mood is combined with the understanding that the non devotees are suffering and preparing themselves for more suffering, the devotee’s compassion is activated, and he wants to render service to the fallen souls. Out of compassion, the preacher approaches and tries to deliver all sinful persons. The devotee is not satisfied with his own salvation.; he is anxious for the welfare of others. This attitude is inspired by Krishna Himself, who, as the well-wishing Father of all living entities, wants everyone to give up their suffering and return to Him.

Avoiding the association of the atheists: When Lord Chaitanya was asked by a house holder devotee what the behavior of a devotee should be, he immediately replied: *asat sanga tyaga, -ei vaisnav*

acara.stri sangi eka asadhu, Krishna bhakta ara

A Vaishnava should always avoid the association of ordinary people. Common people are very much materially attached, especially to women. Vaishnavas should also avoid the company of those who are not devotees of the Lord.

– Cc .Madhya 22.87

Association is all important. As the company of the mahatmas can open the door to liberation, so the company of degraded materialists can drag an aspiring devotee into ignorance. Persons fond of enjoying illicit sex and persons opposed to God consciousness destroy by their association the purity of Vaishnava behavior. It is no wonder therefore, that a devotee does not enjoy such association.

Discovery:

1. Name the 3 levels of devotees. Describe the characteristics of each stage.

Understanding:

1. Describe how we should relate with each of these types of devotees?
2. Who are the less advanced devotees? How should we deal with them?
3. How should we relate with the innocent non-devotees?
4. Whom should we avoid close association with? Why?

Application:

1. Share your experiences of relating with the different types of devotees. Did you observe the proper Vaishnava etiquette? Were you seeking a spiritual relationship with them? What went right or wrong with your approach?

Preaching is the Essence

A sincere devotee is empowered by the Lord to preach:

For ten days Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu stayed at Prayāga and instructed Rūpa Gosvāmī, empowering him with the necessary potency.

This is a confirmation of the statement kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana. Unless one is specifically empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he cannot spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. An empowered devotee sees and feels himself to be the lowest of men, for he knows that whatever he does is due to the inspiration given by the Lord in the heart. This is also confirmed in Bhagavad-gītā:

*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ
bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te*

“To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.” (Bg. 10.10)

To be empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one has to qualify himself. This means that one must engage twenty-four hours daily in the loving devotional service of the Lord. The material position of a devotee doesn't matter because devotional service is not dependent on material considerations. In his earlier life, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī was a government officer and a gṛhastha. He was not even a brahmacārī or sannyāsī. He associated with mlecchas and yavanas, but because he was always eager to serve, he was a qualified recipient for the Lord's mercy. A sincere devotee can therefore be empowered by the Lord regardless of his situation. In the preceding verse

from Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described how he was personally empowered by the Lord. He further states in Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.187):

ihā yasya harer dāsye karmanā manasā girā nikhilāsv apy avasthāsu jīvan-muktaḥ sa ucyate
“A person acting in the service of Kṛṣṇa with his body, mind and words is a liberated person even in the material world, although he may be engaged in many so-called material activities.”

To keep oneself free from material contamination and attain the Lord's favor, one must be sincerely anxious to render service to the Lord. This is the only qualification necessary. As soon as one is favored by the mercy of the spiritual master and the Lord, one is immediately given all the power necessary to write books and propagate the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement without being hampered by material considerations.

Cc. Madhya 19.135

Week 57 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good/good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “Is there anything that the Lord has done for you through a member of this group? What and through whom?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee what tunes he is going to sing, so that you can guide him/her suitably. You can teach them some tunes too if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. Now it would be appropriate to also train them to sing it attractively.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another of the devotee to read out the passage from Sri Naamrita and then conduct the japa session by leading the japa and later making the enquiries of some of the devotees’ japa. and their realizations on their progress.

Discussion – 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new vrindas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly

Home Work

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 17

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign another trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance Form.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 57 – Members’ Section

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name
Householders Can Conduct Chanting at Home

Even householders can achieve perfection by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra:

[Nārada Muni to King Yudhiṣṭhira]: The process of chanting the holy name of the Lord is so powerful that by this chanting even householders [gṛhasthas] can very easily gain the ultimate result achieved by persons in the renounced order. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, I have now explained to you that process of religion.

This is a confirmation of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Anyone who takes part in this movement, regardless of what he is, can gain the topmost result achieved by a perfect sannyāsī, namely Brahmajñāna (spiritual knowledge). Even more important, he can advance in devotional service. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira thought that because he was a gṛhastha there was no hope of his being liberated, and therefore he asked Nārada Muni how he could get out of material entanglement. But Nārada Muni, citing a practical example from his own life, established that by associating with devotees and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, any man in any condition of life can achieve the highest perfection without a doubt.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.74

Passage for Discussion

Vaishnava behavior in Different relationships

26 qualities of a devotee

While teaching Sanatana gosvami, Lord Chaitanya described twenty-six qualities of the Vaishnava: devotees are always merciful, truthful, equal to all, faultless, magnanimous, mild and clean. They are without material possessions, and they perform devotional work for everyone. They are peaceful, surrendered to Krishna and desire-less. They are indifferent to material acquisitions- lust, anger, greed and so forth. They are respectful, grave, compassionate and without false prestige. They are friendly, poetic, expert and silent.

It is not however, that a devotee must work separately to achieve each of these qualities. As Sukhadeva Gosvami explains in Srimad Bhagavatam (6.1.15): Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Krishna can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this by simply discharging devotional service, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays.

Although the twenty- six qualities are not independent of devotional service, we may nevertheless strive to behave in devotional service so as to fulfill them all. To be a devotee means many things. For example, although it is important to preach, if one’s behavior is not exemplary his preaching will be ineffective. One may be very careful about cleanliness but not chant Hare Krishna. There are many things a devotee must be accomplished in. All his qualities are sublime; no one can find any fault in him.

1. A devotee is merciful, *krpalu*:

We may think, “Yes, Lord Chaitanya and Srila Prabhupada can be merciful, but how can I be merciful?” The answer is that by serving a merciful great soul and by serving his cause, we can act mercifully on his order. We can distribute Krishna consciousness under the authorization of the merciful and compassionate great soul, and thus we also become merciful workers.

The principles of Bhagavat dharma are merciful, and anyone who follows them automatically gives up all kinds of unkindness and its resultant *karma*. If we follow the Vedic codes of religion, then by obedience alone we will act on the platform of mercifulness to all living entities. We will not kill the innocent animals, and we will give the human beings Krishna consciousness.

2. A devotee is not defiant, *akrta-droha* :

In his Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Srila Prabhupada writes: “Humility means that one should not be anxious to have the satisfaction of being honored by others.” And Lord Chaitanya in Siksastaka gives the ultimate expressions of humility: “One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw in the street; one should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.”

Humility is glorious and is one of the prime qualities of a transcendently situated person. Srila Prabhupada says, “The qualities of humbleness and meekness lead very quickly to spiritual realization.”

No one is fit to approach Krishna’s lotus feet unless he is humble. Humility before Krishna is natural, of course, because He is the supreme. Similarly, humility before the Vaishnava is also natural, because he is the servant of the greatest.

When Krishna dasa Kaviraja said, “I am so sinful that if you simply remember my name you will lose all the credit for your pious activities”, he actually meant it. Such humility is not so cheap that one can obtain it simply by writing “Humbly yours” before signing his name. It cannot be imitated; it must develop gradually. If one sincerely desires to be a devotee and faces facts honestly, then he must drop all arrogance and pride. Following in the path of the previous acharyas, he will note how Lord Chaitanya showed humility by accepting himself as a fool before his spiritual master, Isvara Puri. An honest devotee will conclude, “What am I compared to Lord Chaitanya? My place is humble. I have very stupidly entered the cycle of birth and death. So what do I have to be proud of?”

3. A devotee is truthful.

Sathya sara: Of the four principles of religion- austerity, cleanliness, mercifulness and truthfulness- only truthfulness remains in Kali- yuga.

When Maharaja Parikshit found the bull of religion after it had been attacked by the personified Kali, only one of the bull’s legs, that representing truthfulness, remained. This means that although people are living sinful, hedonistic lives, still in this age a willingness to hear about Krishna remains. When Srila Prabhupada went to America, he found everyone more or less everyone engaged in sinful activities; but when he exposed these activities as sinful, and when he revealed the truth of Krishna, the hedonists reformed.

Those devotees following Prabhupada should be very truthful, like real brahmanas. This certainly means in their own behavior they should not cheat. The first truthfulness of a disciple is to keep his promise to avoid sinful acts and always chant sixteen rounds of japa on his beads. Nor should a devotee engage in illegal activities. Although Krishna consciousness is transcendental to mundane law, that mundane law is to be rarely violated. And even an ordinary person can appreciate such truthfulness. Society must recognize the members of the Krishna consciousness movement as religious persons. But we must be truthful in the ultimate sense, acting not for our own interests but for Krishna's interests. However, we must first understand who is Krishna. He is the supreme Truth, and satyam param dhimahi - we have to meditate on the supreme Truth by chanting Hare Krishna. Then we can render pure devotional service and be effective in our distribution of the Absolute Truth, which can alone serve mankind in this disastrous age.

4. A devotee is equal to everyone, sama :

The devotee sees all creatures from the perspective of knowledge. Wherever he sees a living creature displaying the six symptoms of life, namely birth, growth, duration, producing by-products and dwindling, and death, he knows a spirit soul inhabits that form, whether a human being, an

animal, an insect, a bird or plant. In addition to perceiving the presence of the individual soul, the learned devotee knows the Supreme Soul is also there within the heart of every living entity. Seeing with equal vision, however, does not mean that we treat each person exactly the same. But our intention to be the same: to share Krishna consciousness with one and all.

The quality of being equal to everyone is realized among the servants of the Lord. Srila Prabhupada wrote in one letter:

Everyone should be friendly for the service of the Lord. Everyone should praise another's service to the Lord and not be proud of his own service. This is the way of vaishnava thinking. Vaikuntha thinking. There may be rivalries and apparent competitions between servants in performing service, but in the Vaikuntha planets the service of another servant is appreciated, not condemned. This is Vaikuntha competition. There is no question of enmity between servants. Everyone should be allowed to render service to the Lord to the best of his ability, and everyone should appreciate the services of others. Such are the activities of Vaikuntha. Since everyone is a servant, everyone is on the same platform and is allowed to serve the Lord according to his ability.

Discovery:

1. Mention the 26 qualities of devotees. How does one acquire these qualities? How can one exercise these qualities?

Understanding:

1. How can we be merciful?
2. What does being humble mean? Why is it important to be humble? How can we acquire humility?
3. What is special about the quality of truthfulness in Kali yuga? Give an example to show how there is truthfulness still in the present day world.
4. What is the first truth that a disciple keeps? How does he deal with regard to following the principle of truth in the material world?

5. How does the devotee behave towards all living entities in the material world. How does he deal equally with the other devotees?

Application:

1. Describe any of these qualities that you may have seen in devotees.
2. Also share with everyone how you are planning in practical terms to live according to these qualities. For example a person who wants to be more merciful may decide that I will give more time to preach Krishna consciousness to everyone.

Preaching is the Essence

Lord Caitanya wants his followers to preach all over the world:

“Dear Lord, Your personal associates, devotees, wander all over the world to purify even the holy places of pilgrimage. Is not such activity pleasing to those who are actually afraid of material existence?”

There are two kinds of devotees. One is called goṣṭhy-ānandī and the other bhajanānandī. The word bhajanānandī refers to the devotee who does not move but remains in one place. Such a devotee is always engaged in the devotional service of the Lord. He chants the mahā-mantra as taught by many ācāryas and sometimes goes out for preaching work. The goṣṭhy-ānandī is one who desires to increase the number of devotees all over the world. He travels all over the world just to purify the world and the people residing in it. Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised:

*pr̥thivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma
sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted His followers to move all over the world and preach in every town and village. In the Caitanya-sampradāya those who strictly follow the principles of Lord Caitanya must travel all over the world to preach the message of Lord Caitanya, which is the same as preaching the words of Kṛṣṇa—Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The more the devotees preach the principles of kṛṣṇa-kathā, the more people throughout the world will benefit.

Devotees like the great sage Nārada who travel all over to preach are called goṣṭhy-ānandī. Nārada Muni is always wandering throughout the universe just to create different types of devotees. Nārada even made a hunter a devotee. He also made Dhruva Mahārāja and Prahāda devotees. Actually all devotees are indebted to the great sage Nārada, for he has wandered both in heaven and in hell. A devotee of the Lord is not even afraid of hell. He goes to preach the glories of the Lord everywhere—even in hell—because there is no distinction between heaven and hell for a devotee.

*nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve na
kutaścana bibhyati s
vargāpavarga-narakeṣv
apī tulyārtha-darśinaḥ*

“A pure devotee of Nārāyaṇa is never afraid of going anywhere and everywhere. For him heaven and hell are one and the same.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.17.28)

Such devotees, wandering all over the world, deliver those who are actually afraid of this material existence.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.30.37

Week 58 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good /good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “What gives you joy in the fact of multiplying?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee what tunes he is going to sing, so that you can guide him/her suitably. You can teach them some tunes too if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. Now it would be appropriate to also train them to sing it attractively.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another of the devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita and then conduct the japa session by leading the japa and later making the enquiries of some of the devotees’ japa. and their realizations on their progress.

Discussion - 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

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Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

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After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

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Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new vrindas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly

Home Work

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 18

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign another trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance Form.

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Relative Importance of Chanting and Deity Worship

In Kali-yuga, chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is more powerful than Deity worship:

As it is said in Śrīmad-Bhagavatam (12.3.52):

*kṛte yad dhyāyato visnoh
tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ
dvāpare paricaryāyām
kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt*

“Whatever result one obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Viṣṇu, in Tretā-yuga by performing sacrifices and in Dvāpara-yuga by serving the Lord’s lotus feet one can also obtain in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.”

In Satya-yuga, every person was spiritually advanced, and there was no envy between great personalities. Gradually, however, because of material contamination with the advance of the ages, disrespectful dealings appeared even among brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas.... When great saintly persons saw this contamination, they introduced worship of the Deity in the temple. This began in Tretā-yuga and was especially prominent in Dvāpara-yuga (dvāpare paricaryāyām). But in Kali- yuga, worship of the Deity is being neglected. Therefore chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is more powerful than Deity worship. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu set a practical example in that He did not establish any temples or Deities, but He profusely introduced the saṅkīrtana movement.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.14.39

Passage for Discussion

Continued from last week’s discussion:

5. A devotee is faultless

How could anyone claim to be without fault? But a devotee who is surrendered in body, mind and words to Krishna is always executing Krishna’s will and repeating Krishna’s message; so as Krishna, the Supreme Perfect is faultless, so the fully surrendered devotee is faultless. Those things that appear as faults in the devotees do not mar his faultlessness.

It is possible for a rascal to masquerade as a faultless pure devotee, to try to show himself as an advanced spiritual leader and to cheat people for his own profit. But an intelligent devotee can detect such a fraud. A pure hearted devotee, or someone sincerely following his orders, will not act to harm or abuse anyone. Despite the presence of rascals, we should go ahead whole heartedly honoring and following the instructions of the pure devotee. In the guise of holy men and devotees, imposters have come, but that does not mean that there is no real devotee. The real devotee is known by his acts strictly in accordance with parampara. He will never abuse the honor, service, or money he receives on behalf of Krishna; we can trust him with our life. He will do good for all humanity, because he will live and preach the message of Krishna.

6. A devotee is magnanimous, *vadanya*

Without endeavoring for anything else, one should merge all his desires into the service of Krishna by the standard process of devotional service, beginning with hearing and chanting, under the guidance of an expert spiritual master. The science of surrender is a blissful process and as a result, the devotee becomes a lover of Krishna. The givers of this devotional process are indeed magnanimous.

Because we are living in the material world, a world of difficulty, a world governed by the forces of illusion and evil, there are always difficulties in distributing the magnanimous gifts of Lord Chaitanya. But the devotees' desire to distribute Lord Chaitanya's gifts, whatever the difficulties, is another indication of the nature of their magnanimity.

Lord Chaitanya and His followers know that love of God is the greatest of all things, and they go on distributing it without self-motivation, without disappointment, and without being checked. Their magnanimity knows no bounds, and the good fortune of those who receive their gifts is unparalleled.

7. A devotee is mild, *mrdu*

The devotee avoids the chase after illusory material pleasure and its resultant suffering. He remains peaceful because he is satisfied in Krishna consciousness. A man who already has a million dollars does not become frantic trying to obtain or enjoy the pleasures of a thousand dollars. His temperament is mild because he has nothing to gain and no one can deprive him of his Krishna consciousness.

A devotee is also mild in his dealings with others. Of course there is a saying "A Vaishnava is as soft as a rose and as hard as a thunderbolt." So sometimes, when responding to blasphemous person, for example, he is not mild. Lord Chaitanya was not mild when He ran with the Sudarsana cakra to kill Jagai and Madhai. But the devotee is generally mild in his responses, especially when there is a question of tolerating some wrong doing against himself. His mild disposition toward events is also compatible with the quality of meekness, or humility.

He does not get into a great huff if personally inconvenienced but tends to react mildly, like Haridas Thakura in relation to the men who were ordered to cane him in twenty-two market places. That mildness comes again not from timidity but from deep self-satisfaction.

Like the great ocean, he is Pacific. Others get agitated and rant over worldly happenings, personal frustrations, and misgivings, but the devotee depends upon Krishna and tries to carry out His order. Thus a non-violent, undisturbed, transcendental mildness is another attractive feature of the devotee.

8. A devotee is clean, *suci*

Of course, this means clean inside and outside. The devotee's mind, heart, intelligence, body, clothes, living place, place of work, place of worship, his personal and business dealings- all should be suci, clean. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" may be a homely proverb, but it has wisdom for those interested in spiritual life.

External cleanliness is important, but it has to be done in connection to Krishna. The high standard of cleanliness in worshipping the Deity in the Temple indicates the devotee's devotion. ...Out of pure devotion, the devotee wants to make the best and cleanest offering of worship to the Lord.

Cultivation of knowledge other than pure devotional service, as well as the desire to gain material reward even from religious endeavors, are considered impurities and oppose the conclusion of pure bhakti. Srimad Bhagavatam(1.2.17) praises the process of chanting and hearing as quickly cleansing the heart of all unwanted, dirty things.

When Narada muni was trying to regain the vision of the Lord Krishna in his meditation, the Lord spoke to him and told him that a devotee has to be completely “free from all material taints” before he could expect to see Him. In this age Lord Chaitanya’s magnanimous distribution of the chanting of Hare Krishna provides us with the most effective method for cleaning the dirty mind and heart and thereby gives us a pure vision of Krishna.

Discovery:

1. How can a devotee be faultless?
2. What are the symptoms and activities of such a pure devotee?

Understanding:

1. Why do we say that Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and His devotees are the most magnanimous?
2. How is the pure devotee be able to be always mild and undisturbed? How are his dealings with others?
3. When is he not mild?
4. In what areas of our lives must we exercise cleanliness? Why?

Application:

1. Share your realizations on the Vaishnava qualities discussed and how they have inspired you to follow them in your life.

Preaching is the essence

Preaching Kṛiṣṇa consciousness is showing real mercy to living entities:

“If a living entity is developed in Kṛiṣṇa consciousness and is merciful to others, and if his spiritual knowledge of self-realization is perfect, he will immediately attain liberation from the bondage of material existence.”

In this verse the word *dayā jīvesu*, meaning mercy to other living entities, indicates that a living entity must be merciful to other living entities if he wishes to make progress in self-realization. This means he must preach this knowledge after perfecting himself and understanding his own position as an eternal servant of Kṛiṣṇa. Preaching this is showing real mercy to living entities. Other types of humanitarian work may be temporarily beneficial for the body, but because a living entity is spirit soul, ultimately one can show him real mercy only by revealing knowledge of his spiritual existence.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.1b

Week 59 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good /good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “What did you learn from your servant leader that most impressed you?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtan : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee what tunes he is going to sing, so that you can guide him/her suitably. You can teach them some tunes too if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. Now it would be appropriate to also train them to sing it attractively.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another of the devotee to read out the following passage below and then conduct the japa session by leading the japa and later making the enquiries of some of the devotees’ japa. and their realizations on their progress

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting the confidence as well as giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Of course your evaluation of their performance has to be also said so that they understand the correct standards for evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana etc, These will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting for festivals, etc, and also for the new prospective Bhakti Vrikshas by the trainee leaders shortly.

Home Work

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavad-gita chapter 18-contd-

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign another trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy name

Even if one is illiterate (and thus cannot read Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam) he can still perfect his life simply by chanting the mahā-mantra:

A realized student of Kṛṣṇa consciousness can very easily say what his next life is, what God is, what the living entity is and what his relationship with God is. His knowledge is perfect because it is coming from perfect books of knowledge such as Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

This, then, is the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is very easy, and anyone can adopt it and make his life perfect. If someone says, “I’m not educated at all, and I cannot read books,” he is still not disqualified. He can still perfect his life by simply chanting the mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Kṛṣṇa has given us a tongue and two ears, and we may be surprised to know that Kṛṣṇa is realized through the ears and tongue, not through the eyes.

Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Matchless Gift

Passage for Discussion

Vaishnava Behavior

*The Twenty Six qualities of a devotee
Continued from last week’s Discussion:*

9. A devotee is without material possessions, *Akincana*

The six Goswamis of Vrindavana are classic examples of renunciation in Krishna consciousness. Rupa Gosvami and Sanatana Gosvami were highly placed government ministers, and Raghunatha dasa was the son of a very wealthy land owner. They gave up all their material possessions as insignificant and lived in Vrindavana wearing only loin cloths and subsisting as mendicants.

It was Rupa Gosvami, however who enunciated the principle of renunciation through using things in the service of Krishna. “When one is not attached to anything, but at the same time accepts everything in relation to Krishna, one is rightly situated above material possessiveness. On the other hand, one who rejects everything without knowledge of its relationship to Krishna is not as complete in his realization.

The underlying axiomatic truth is that Krishna is the Supreme Proprietor. Anyone’s claim to own possessions, therefore, is a kind of madness or thievery.

As stated in the Ispanishad, Mantra 1, “Everything in the universe is controlled and owned by the Supreme Lord. One should therefore, accept those things that are assigned to him as his quota.”

But what is that “quota”? Although the scriptures allow for limited sense gratification and material possessions, that sanction does not constitute pure devotional service. Ultimately Krishna’s last instruction is to give up even those religious concessions. : “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender to Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.”

Bg 18.66

The highest realization is to see everything as Krishna's. The daring, inspired, and compassionate devotee, is not satisfied to see that it belongs to Krishna, but he works to use all things in the service of the Lord- so that the whole world can benefit.

10. A devotee performs welfare work for everyone, *sarvopakaraka*

Srimad Bhagavatam (10.22.35) enjoins: "It is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence and words.."The Vishnu purana (3.12.45) states: "By his work, thoughts and words, an intelligent man must perform actions which will be beneficial for all living entities in this life and the next."

The devotee distributes Krishna consciousness to everyone, thus proving its universality. Lord Chaitanya has given this duty of giving Krishna consciousness to everyone:

*"bharata bhumite haila manusya-janma yara
Janma sarthaka kari kara para upakara*

"One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India (Bharata-varsa) should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all the people."

His Divine Grace A.C Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada is, without exaggeration, a transcendental worker who stands supreme in the application of "Para-upakara."

For thousands of years the most valuable knowledge of bhakti-yoga remained within India. Even Lord Chaitanya traveled only within India. People outside of Bharata –varsa were considered uncivilized mlecchas. even persons who considered themselves Vaishnavas did not think it possible to deliver these fallen mlecchas.

The good wishes, prayers, intentions, and self-sacrificing activities of the devotees bring about immense good for all persons in the material world.

11. A devotee is peaceful, *santa*

Srila Prabhupada calls the verse "Bhoktarama yagna tapasam" from BG 5.29, the peace formula.. The three realizations about God :1) Whatever work we do is actually meant to be offered to Him. We have to give up once and for all the ridiculous pretense of being the supreme enjoyer and recognize the reality of the almighty Godhead. To come to this awakened state of recognizing that we are part and parcel of God and that we should serve Him brings peace.

2) The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the owner and controller of all the planets, and men and nations should not claim they are proprietors. To claim ownership without any reference to the supreme proprietor Krishna, is a fraud.

3) Krishna is the friend of all living beings. One who acknowledges these 3 attributes of Krishna and also serves and worships Him, "attains peace from the pangs of material miseries.

Once we make peace with God, then we can also be peaceful with ourselves.

So peaceful does not refer to a physically idyllic setting that may in fact be shattered at any moment. Peaceful is the condition of that soul at peace with Krishna, and it is possible for the devotee who sees Krishna as everything. Srila Prabhupada writes in Bhagavad Gita, "Realization that there is no existence besides Krishna is the platform of peace and fearlessness."

Krishna consciousness means that a devotee can always think of Krishna and chant Hare Krishna whether he is in heaven or hell. This rare peacefulness is the blessing of Krishna for whoever enters His devotional service and gives up the unpeaceful world of material desires.

12. A devotee is surrendered to Krishna, *Krishnaika –sarana*

Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya describes that Lord Chaitanya came to teach renunciation, knowledge of Himself, and the science of surrender, Bhakti yoga. Chanting Hare Krishna is to surrender the speaking, the hearing, and the mind in the yagna of the holy name. Lord Chaitanya taught that we should avoid the 10 offenses in chanting and dedicate our lives to the instructions of the spiritual master.

Surrender is not whimsical but authorized and scientific. If we practise, we will learn how to surrender. A devotee engaged in a life of full surrender to Krishna has many things to do and does not waste a moment. His goal is to completely surrender to Krishna so that he can be rid of all material desires and serve Krishna more and more in the footsteps of the servant of the servant of the servant of the gopis.

Discovery:

1. How did the Six gosvamis set an example of renunciation?

Understanding:

1. How does Srila Rupa Gosvami recommend renunciation through using things for Krishna? Why did he call this real renunciation?
2. Why is doing welfare work for others important?
3. What kind of welfare work are we supposed to do? Why?
4. How did Srila Prabhupada exhibit this quality?
5. How is a devotee able to be peaceful?
6. How can we surrender to Krishna? What is the goal of a fully surrendered devotee?

Application:

1. Mention any devotee/s that you know who have any of these Vaishnava qualities. Discuss how you plan to acquire these qualities.

Preaching is the Essence

The duty of the disciple is to distribute the transcendental message for others' welfare, without material motive:

The life of a sincere devotee of the Lord is thus explained in a nutshell by Nārada Muni by his personal example. Such a devotee, after his initiation by the Lord or His bona fide representative, takes very seriously chanting of the glories of the Lord and traveling all over the world so that others may also hear the glories of the Lord. Such devotees have no desire for material gain. They are conducted by one single desire: to go back to Godhead. This awaits them in due course on quitting the material body. Because they have the highest aim of life, going back to Godhead, they are never envious of anyone, nor are they proud of being eligible to go back to Godhead. Their only business is to chant and remember the holy name, fame and pastimes of the Lord and, according to personal capacity, to distribute the message for others' welfare without motive of material gain.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.26

Week 60 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good /good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “Is there something you fear about multiplying? Why or why not?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee who is going to lead, what tunes he is planning to sing. You can teach him some tunes if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed earlier in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. It would be appropriate to also train them to sing attractively

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new Bhakti Vrikshas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly.

Home Work

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavatam 1st canto chapter 1

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign another trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

Any person trying to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by chanting the holy name should be respected by Vaiṣṇavas:

[Rūpa Gosvāmī]: One should mentally honor the devotee who chants the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa...

One of our friends, a famous English musician, has become attracted to chanting the holy names of Kṛṣṇa, and even in his records he has several times mentioned the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. At his home he offers respect to pictures of Kṛṣṇa and also to the preachers of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In all regards, he has a very high estimation for Kṛṣṇa’s name and Kṛṣṇa’s activities; therefore we offer respects to him without reservation, for we are actually seeing that this gentleman is advancing gradually in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Such a person should always be shown respect. The conclusion is that anyone who is trying to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by regularly chanting the holy name should always be respected by Vaiṣṇavas.

The Nectar of Instruction Text 5

One Who Realizes that the Lord and His Name Are Identical Is a Pure Devotee and Should Be Respected

A devotee who believes that the holy name is identical with the Lord is a pure devotee:

A devotee who believes that the holy name of the Lord is identical with the Lord is a pure devotee, even though he may be in the neophyte stage. By his association, others may also become Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.106

The chanting of the holy names of Kṛṣṇa is so sublime that if one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā- mantra offenselessly, carefully avoiding the ten offenses, he can certainly be gradually elevated to the point of understanding that there is no difference between the holy name of the Lord and the Lord Himself. One who has reached such an understanding should be very much respected by neophyte devotees.

The Nectar of Instruction Text 5

Passage for Discussion

Continued from last week’s spiritual edification:

13. A devotee is desireless, akama

The real goal of desirelessness is revealed in the literal meaning of *akama*, “without lust”. Two words we should consider here are *kama* and *prema*. *Kama* means lust or material desire and *prema* means love. Love is reserved for Krishna. Affection and attachments for things other than Krishna are always some kind of *kama*.

Only when one attains *prema*, love of Krishna, can he come to the platform of desirelessness. Desiring only to please Krishna is *akama*.

Lord Krishna advises that *kama* cannot be given up artificially. “The embodied soul maybe restricted from sense enjoyment, though the taste for sense object remains. But, ceasing such engagements by experiencing a higher taste, he is fixed in Krishna consciousness.”

If one sincerely follows the process of Krishna consciousness under the guidance of guru, shastra, and sadhu, he will experience the higher taste and give up material desires even while still on the neophyte stage of devotional service.

Admittedly, until a devotee reaches unalloyed devotional service, he will still sometimes consider the possibility of becoming happy by material desires. How does a devotee persist in resisting Material desires even before he has fully experienced the higher taste of spontaneous Krishna consciousness? The answer is *tapasya*, austerity.

There are two kinds of happiness: *preyah*, immediate, and *sreyah*, ultimate. A mature human being will forego *preyah* to achieve *sreyah*. A young adult at college sometimes foregoes the immediate pleasure of socializing in the evening to study and advance his education. Austerity is like that. A devotee therefore does not begrudge austerity; he willingly struggles to overcome his lower nature. Nothing valuable is achieved without endeavor, and Krishna consciousness is the most valuable thing. The devotee receives immense help from the spiritual master and from Krishna in the heart. The Lord also helps the reluctant devotee by force. If a devotee is sincerely desirous of attaining love of God and yet at the same time has strong material desires, Lord Krishna sometimes intervenes. "When I feel especially mercifully disposed towards someone, I gradually take away all his material possessions. His friends and relatives then reject this poverty stricken and most wretched fellow." (Bhag. 10.88.8)

14. A devotee is indifferent to material acquisitions, *aniha*

The quality of *aniha*, indifference to material acquisitions, is another part of the Vaishnava's opulence. He doesn't have to acquire things because he is already situated in devotional service. A devotee may use material things in the service of Krishna, but he does not become attached or dependent on them. He may serve Krishna with millions of dollars, construct buildings, and profusely publish Krishna conscious literatures, but even if he has nothing material to use, he can serve Krishna just by chanting Hare Krishna.

A devotee does the compassionate work of staying within materialistic society, rather than hiding in seclusion to save himself; he moves amid material attractions and disturbances. He therefore must have the quality of *aniha*. And sometimes approaches persons who are fully absorbed in material life. Sometimes he sits with the karmi and tells him of Krishna consciousness, and sometimes he is offered material attractions and material troubles. But he remains always *aniha* and also draws the sense gratifier away from material acquisition.

15. A devotee is fixed, *sthira*

An unsteady neophyte devotee, although able to prosecute devotional practices under favorable circumstances, deviates in the face of strong allurements. The vedic histories tell of meditating sages distracted by beautiful women. And a devotee also, in the neophyte stage, may fall victim to the attraction of the opposite sex. Or a situation of distress may unfix a weaker devotee. Often devotees are harassed and their preaching disrupted by the non devotees. If a devotee is fixed, however he will not abandon chanting Hare Krishna, even at the cost of his life. Sometimes devotees quarrel among themselves, and this is another discouragement that might sway a weak devotee from following the spiritual master's order.

Firm faith in the spiritual master is paramount. One who displeases his spiritual master loses his fixed course and wanders aimlessly like a ship without rudder. Without firm faith in the spiritual master, one cannot be *sthira*. Prahlada Maharaja, considering his debt to his spiritual master, says, "I was falling into the ways of the common man, and my spiritual master Narada saved me. How could I ever leave him?"

A devotee is fixed in the philosophy of the Absolute truth, not only intellectually but out of love. And as the devotee is fixed on Krishna and no one else, so is Krishna fixed on His devotee.

We should proceed scrupulously in our chanting and hearing and serving the order of the spiritual master as our life's duty. Certainly being fixed will come about in this way, be regular practise. As a devotee continues hearing , whatever conviction he lacks will come to him as a gradual realization.

When a neophyte devotee chants Hare Krishna, he does not taste the full happiness of chanting the holy names. But as he continues, the original sweetness of the holy name will manifest.

16. A devotee completely controls the bad qualities, *vijita sad guna*

The six bad qualities are lust, *kama*, anger, *krodha*, greed, *lobha*, illusion, *moha*, madness, *mada*, and envy. A pure devotee controls these qualities by full engagement in the service of Krishna. Although the six bad qualities are material, they can be used in Krishna's service. This transforms them. The bad qualities are perverted reflections of qualities existing in an original pure state in the spiritual world.

Lust is epitomized by sex desire. The gopis approached Krishna as a beautiful young boy, and yet we know that this is the complete opposite of mundane lust. We have been warned not to imitate the gopis, so how can we who are trying to practise pure devotional service, understand lust in service to Krishna? In Bhagavad Gita, 7.11, Krishna states, *dharmo viruddho bhutesu kamo smi*: "I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles." When kama is controlled, it is not illicit and can be used in Krishna's service. In the beginning there may be material desires, but when sex is regulated and used for the service of the Lord, it is transcendental.

Lust is the spirit soul's original love for Krishna after becoming contaminated by association with the mode of passion. Even while in the material world, if by the grace of the spiritual master and the Vaishnavas a jiva establishes his relationship with Krishna, he can revive his pure desire. Once the jiva takes up devotional service under the direction of the spiritual master, his lust is transformed into love.

We can enter Krishna's lila by hearing from authorized sources. To hear of Him in an unauthorized way , however can result in *prakrita sahajiya*. *Prakrita sahajiya* is a perverted form of Vaishnavism in which the practitioner tries to approach Krishna while still engaging in mundane sex. Hearing about Krishna's pastimes with the gopis in the rasa dance is a specific remedy for lust. By engaging in Deity worship in the temple, a devotee can also directly approach Radha-Krishna on the order of the spiritual master.

Anger, *Krodha* Lust can never be satisfied and therefore it is followed by anger. When anger spreads, the whole body becomes polluted. But anger can also be used in the service of Krishna, by directing it against the enemies of Krishna. The famous example is Hanuman, Lord Rama's warrior servitor who fought against the forces of Ravana.

Devotional anger may therefore take on the form of fighting. The ksatriya devotee cannot tolerate seeing the Lord's devotees or innocent persons or creatures hurt.

A devotee may also direct anger against bogus gurus and other misleaders of the people. When a devotee hears bad propoganda against devotional service, he may write articles against the demons or actively preach in another way.

Greed, *lobha*: A greedy person wants to accumulate as much as possible for himself- much more than he actually needs. Obsessed with taking for himself, he conflicts with others and has no mercy on them. So greed can become a great evil. But because a devotee is greedy to use everything for the Supreme Personality of Godhead's satisfaction, his greed benefits everyone. A devotee wants the whole world at Krishna's lotus feet.

Illusion, *Moha*: The main illusion of the conditioned soul is that he thinks of his body as the self and the material world as his home. This illusion will kill him, just as an animal in the desert is killed running after a mirage of water. A devotee who has a bonafide spiritual master should know and be free of misconception. When Arjuna became enlightened by Krishna's teachings in Bhagavad Gita, he declared: *nasto mohah*: "My illusion is now gone."

Madness, *mada*: Because of their mad acts for sense-gratification, people have to transmigrate, body after body. For a person to accept his body as the self is crazy, because at the time of death, everything he lived for will vanish.

Envy, *matsarya*: An envious person is unhappy to see other's good fortune, and he is happy to see other's failure. But when one takes to devotional service, he loses his poisonous mentality; he becomes humble and wants to serve Krishna. Sometimes among devotees there is a spirit of competition, but ultimately they are mutual well-wishers and are not disturbing to Krishna.

What does the devotee do if he feels the urge for the the bad qualities in the material form? When this happens, we must use self-control. Being able to control the bad qualities is the criterion of gopami, or a controller of the senses. A devotee has to gain strength to rightly say "NO!" to desires for material things.

Control of the senses is possible not by dry restraint or mechanical repression, but by transcendental knowledge (jnana) and transcendental taste (vijana).

Discovery:

1. What is the actual meaning of desirelessness in Krishna consciousness? How can this be achieved?

Understanding:

1. How can we overcome material desires in the beginning?
2. How can we see practically the devotee's indifference to material acquisitions?
3. What are some of the obstacles devotees face in remaining fixed in devotional service?
4. How can we progress to becoming very fixed in devotional service?
5. What are the six bad qualities that a devotee controls? Explain how he can control each of these bad qualities.

Application:

1. Do you feel encouraged to develop Vaishnava qualities by discussing these qualities of a pure devotee? Explain why.

Preaching is the Essence

To spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one must be empowered by Kṛṣṇa; the Kṛṣṇa conscious ācārya should be considered nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa:

In this age of Kali, real religious propaganda should induce people to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā- mantra. This is possible for someone who is especially empowered by Kṛṣṇa. No one can do this without being especially favored by Kṛṣṇa.... Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura ... comments: “Without being empowered by the direct potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa to fulfill His desire and without being specifically favored by the Lord, no human being can become the spiritual master of the whole world.... Only an empowered personality can distribute the holy name of the Lord and enjoin all fallen souls to worship Kṛṣṇa. By distributing the holy name of the Lord, he cleanses the hearts of the most fallen people; therefore he extinguishes the blazing fire of the material world. Not only that, he broadcasts the shining brightness of Kṛṣṇa’s effulgence throughout the world. Such an ācārya, or spiritual master, should be considered non-different from Kṛṣṇa — that is, he should be considered the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s potency.

Cc. Madhya 25.9

Week 61 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good /good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “Tell us some positive changes that you witnessed in any of the group members during this last cycle of the group, some good quality or behavior he or she developed?” Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna maha mantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee who is going to lead, what tunes he is planning to sing. You can teach him some tunes if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed earlier in singing the Hare Krishna maha mantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. It would be appropriate to also train them to sing attractively

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita. Let him conduct the japa session by leading the japa. After japa, He should ask two or three devotees from the group to share their progress in their daily chanting.

Discussion- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainees' performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting their confidence as well as in giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Your evaluation of their performance is very important for them to understand the correct standards of evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is good.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes. Fix up which devotee is going to accompany you for the week.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana, etc.. These experiences will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting them to different programs, especially the outreach programs and the new vrindas to be started by the trainee leaders shortly

Home Work

1.Srila Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavatam 1st canto chapter 2

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign another trainee leader to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of the other devotees, but would have to be responsible for the organization and distribution of prasadam as well as the cleaning up at the end of the program.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

One should pray to the Lord to be able to chant His holy name at the time of death:

[The priests at King Nābhi’s sacrifice to Lord Viṣṇu]: Dear Lord, we may not be able to remember Your name, form and qualities, due to stumbling, hunger, falling down, yawning or being in a miserable diseased condition at the time of death when there is a high fever. We therefore pray unto You, O Lord, for You are very affectionate to Your devotees. Please help us remember You and utter Your holy names, attributes and activities, which can dispel all the reactions of our sinful lives.

The real success in life is ante nārāyaṇa-smṛtiḥ [SB 2.1.6]—remembering the holy name, attributes, activities and form of the Lord at the time of death. Although we may be engaged in the Lord’s devotional service in the temple, material conditions are so tough and inevitable that we may forget the Lord at the time of death due to a diseased condition or mental derangement. Therefore we should pray to the Lord to be able to remember His lotus feet without fail at the time of death, when we are in such a precarious condition.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.3.12

Passage for Discussion

26 Qualities of a Vaishnava

Continued from last week’s spiritual edification:

17. A devotee eats only as much as required, *mita bhuk*

Bhagavad-gīta sets the standard of eating for the bhaktiyogi: “One should not eat too little or too much.” According to the yoga of sense control, the tongue, belly, and genitals form a straight line, and all three can be controlled if the tongue is controlled. If the tongue is uncontrolled, then a person will eat too much. His stomach will be overloaded and will then put pressure upon his genitals, and the result will be great demand for sex.

A devotee always eats Krishna prasadam, the remnants of the offerings to Krishna. But still the rule of *mita bhuk* applies, as Srila Prabhupada notes in the nectar of Instruction: “However if one accepts prasadam only because of its palatable taste and thus eats too much, he also falls prey to trying to satisfy the demands of the tongue. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu taught us to avoid very palatable dishes even while eating *prasadam*.”

Sometimes Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu would serve large quantities of prasadam to the devotees with His own hand. On the occasion of a Vaishnava’s festival Krishna’s desire maybe that the devotees’ “eat upto the neck” to satisfy the wishes of the Vaishnava and the spiritual master. Such eating sometimes becomes a joyful, joking exchange and is transcendental to the rules and regulations. But in the normal daily course of life, the devotee should not be interested in eating big amounts.

“Eat sumptuously,” Srila Prabhupada used to say, “but not too much.”

18. A devotee is without inebriation, *apramata*

Apramattah is the opposite of pramattah, which means crazy. The materialist is crazy because he acts on the demands of the senses, forcing himself unnecessarily to continue his cycle of birth and death. But the devotee is apramattah, sane.

By the standard of the absolute truth, the devotee has attained the right balance between material duties and spiritual duties. Bhaktivinoda Thakura has explained that both material duties and spiritual duties should run along parallel lines. But if the pursuance of the material duties seriously hampers the path of spiritual realization, then the material duties should be reduced.

A devotee is not inebriated. He is not lopsided. He is not intoxicated by material pleasure. He reduces his material needs to a simple level and patiently dedicates his life to the service of Krishna. His life is therefore the real example of moderation, balance, and sanity.

19. A devotee is respectful, *manada*

The sikshastaka describes how the devotee offers respects to others without expecting any respect for himself. He is respectful even to the ant. Why? Because he sees all living beings as parts and parcels of Krishna. A materialist is not deeply respectful to others because his concern is to get respect for himself. But the devotee wants to be the servant, not the master, and taking that humble position, he respects the lives of others. He respects their right to live and doesn't want to hurt or disturb anyone. He respects that all living beings have been given their life by Krishna, and he knows that he has no right to take it away. He sees all living beings equally and respects them equally.

The respect the devotee pays to others is in accord with his Krishna conscious understanding. His respect is universal, yet he makes distinctions, understanding Krishna has given greater responsibility to the demigod and an insignificant life to the ant.

Although the devotee respects all, he doesn't worship anyone except Krishna or the pure devotee of Krishna.

In the Bhagavad -gita, Krishna teaches us to distinguish between the devotee and the non devotee and also to see all living entities as His parts and parcels.

Respecting the latent spiritual identity within the heart of the materialist, the devotee encourages everyone to return to their position as loving servants of the Lord.

In preaching Krishna consciousness, a devotee makes distinctions among the different jivas. The scriptures prescribe that a devotee should avoid the demon.

A devotee also has relationships with various classes of devotees, and he must also show respect accordingly.

The Nectar of Instruction states that one should offer mental respect to anyone who is chanting the names of Krishna, even if the chanter is not following regulative principles. If a devotee finds another devotee who regularly chants the Hare Krishna maha mantra and follows the regulative principles, the devotee considers him his friend. Regular exchanges of love between equal devotees are sharing prasadam, offering and receiving gifts, and revealing one's mind. When a devotee meets a very advanced devotee, he should offer him full respect and treat him as a spiritual master.

Discussing these matters in the Nectar of Instruction, Srila Prabhupada advises us to know our own position and not imitate advanced devotees.

The disciple offers the spiritual master the same respect as to God, and whatever the spiritual master says, the disciple should try to execute right away. He should give everything he owns to the guru and serve him as a menial servant. If the spiritual master corrects the disciple, he should take the chastisement humbly. The spiritual master will train a sincere disciple to become a compassionate Krishna conscious person, so that he too can show respect to all living beings by the welfare work of Krishna consciousness.

20. A devotee is without false prestige, *amani*

False prestige can be considered in two ways: 1) the objects of prestige are falsely prestigious, and

2) our claim to any prestigious object or position is false.

A devotee is free of both kinds of false prestige. He is not attracted to the glitter of desirable material possessions, and whatever is attractive he acknowledges as but a reflection of Krishna, the all attractive cause of all causes.

You may obtain prestige for a time, but very soon you may also lose it. And you will be very bitter

about your loss of prestige. The baseball hero of yesterday makes an error and he is booed. Last election's winning candidate suffers ignominy. Krishna therefore says in the Bhagavad-gita that His dear devotee "is equipoised in honour and dishonour, fame and infamy." According to Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati, fame and material happiness are as valuable as the dung of a boar.

Another kind of false prestige is to take credit for one's achievements. Krishna says in the Bhagavad-gita that He is ability in man and that intelligence and memory come from Him. Yet even one pursuing transcendental life may falsely claim to be the doer or owner. In the beginning stages, when the false ego is still strong, even the transcendentalist may suffer from this impurity. He may become proud that he is an ascetic, a yogi with powers, a learned devotee scholar, a worshipful guru, or an ecstatic chanter and dancer.

When a devotee loses all false prestige and becomes completely absorbed in humble service at the lotus feet of Krishna, he becomes eligible to go to Krishna and associate with Him in eternity, bliss, and knowledge. The aspiring devotee fights hard to kick off all vestiges of false prestige, and he prays to Krishna: "O savior of the fallen, please don't kick me away, but allow me to serve Your servants. I am a rascal possessed by material desires and am falsely taking credit for things which are Yours, not mine. Please deliver me."

21. A devotee is grave, *gambhira*

The Nectar of Devotion states : A person who does not express his mind to everyone, or whose mental activity and plan of actions are very difficult to understand, is called grave.

A devotee's emotions and concentration are not swept away because the next person is giddy or morose. He does not feel obliged to immediately turn from his meditation on Krishna to talking nonsense. Although he is not anti-social, first and foremost he must always remember Krishna. That is the prime rule: always remember Krishna and never forget Krishna. A devotee thinks that if he is at all to help another person, then he can only do so when he himself is centered on Krishna.

If one hears the profound speeches of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one becomes grave. Similarly, if one associates with serious devotees, he too becomes serious and grave. There are many light moments in Krishna consciousness, but for the conditioned soul to give up his material life and to go back to Godhead is no joke. It is a very deep purpose. And when, by chanting and hearing, a devotee realizes something of the holy name and Srimad Bhagavatam, then his philosophic outlook deepens more and more.

Discovery:

1. What are the instructions on eating for devotees?
2. How is it that the devotees are sane and not the others?

Understanding:

1. How does the devotee respect all living entities, devotees, non devotees, demons, and the spiritual master?
2. What are the two types of false prestige we have? Why are they useless things to pursue?
3. How do devotees also manifest their false ego? Why does an aspiring devotee try to remove his false ego? How does he do it?
4. Why are devotees grave? How does their behavior exhibit their gravity?

Application:

1. Let each member mention one quality of a pure devotee that they have learnt so far and explain that quality.

Preaching is the Essence

Preaching is more important than Deity Worship

Deity worship is especially meant for purifying the neophyte devotees. Actually, however, preaching is more important. In Bhagavad-gītā (18.69) it is said, *na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścīn me priya-kṛttamaḥ*: if one wants to be recognized by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he must preach the glories of the Lord. One who worships the Deity must therefore be extremely respectful to preachers; otherwise simply worshipping the Deity will keep one in the lower stage of devotion.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.14.40

Week 62 – Leader’s Section

Ensure that all the members who are leading different parts of the Bhakti Vriksha are well prepared to do so before they arrive for the program. This will necessitate your discussing with them how they are going to proceed. Also ensure that all of them get a chance to do different parts of the program during the different weeks so that they get enough experience and expertise to conduct the entire program. Maintain a file with all their names written down. The next column can be the dates on which the Bhakti Vriksha was conducted. The third column can mention the particular part of the Bhakti Vriksha which was lead by them. Make sure that they get all the parts of the Bhakti Vriksha to conduct.

The next column can contain ratings for their performance: Very good /good/ fair, satisfactory/ poor. The last column can have your additional comments on their performance.

Satsanga : 15 minutes

Engage one of the senior devotees of your group to lead the Satsanga. Let them go through the following instructions before conducting it.

You can ask every one this question, “Share your plans of what you are going to do in the new group. Please proceed from one devotee to the next giving each one a minute to answer this question. If someone continues longer, you can request them to share their experiences during Prasadam time, as others also would have to speak.

Kirtana : 15 minutes

Assign another senior devotee of the group to lead the Kirtana. Let them practise to sing different tunes of the Hare Krishna mahamantra, to play the karatalas properly and also the mridanga if possible. Check in advance with the devotee what tunes he is going to sing, so that you can guide him/her suitably. You can teach them some tunes too if necessary. Since the aspect of bhakti was stressed in singing the Hare Krishna mahamantra, it is to be hoped that by now people have the proper mood towards the holy names. Now it would be appropriate to also train them to sing it attractively.

Japa.... 15 minutes

You can ask another of the devotee to read out the passage from Sri Namamrita and then conduct the japa session by leading the japa and later making the enquiries of some of the devotees’ japa and their realizations on their progress

Discussion:- 45 minutes

Please ask the trainee leader to go through the following instructions and the passage well in advance and discuss with you about extra points on the topic before the session.

If there are new comers to the group, then you should give them a brief introduction on Krishna consciousness and a summary of what you have been doing so far. It is better to give them the first week’s edification to go through. If there are more than one member, you can facilitate a discussion between them separately. This should not be difficult as the other members are also going to be discussing in smaller groups as you will find out below:

You should divide the group into 2 or 3 groups and make them sit in circles. Make sure that the group is evenly distributed with regard to the number of senior, junior and new members in them.

Distribute the sheets containing the Passage for Discussion to the members. You could ask a senior member in each group to be the group spokesman/woman.

The leader of each group has to facilitate the participation of all the members, encouraging each one to answer the question addressed to them. Let the leader take down their points. This procedure is only for the

Discovery and Understanding sessions.

After this the whole group can sit in a circle. You can ask the leaders to read out the consolidated answers of their respective groups for each of the questions. Or, better still, you can go round the circle, asking each member the next question if they have nothing to add to the answer to the previous question.

After this, you can ask each one of them to answer the Application question one by one.

You can then sum up the spiritual edification lesson once again and add more points relevant to the topic. You can also include interesting pastimes of the Lord and his devotees, current topics etc, to substantiate the topic.

Preaching Session : 15 minutes

Read out the passage from Preaching is the Essence.

You can encourage some of the devotees in the group who are most enthusiastic and qualified, to start outreach programs in their homes or elsewhere. You can start it off for them and then they would easily be able to take it up independently after one or two such classes.

The format can be simple: a) Kirtan, reading out some short passage from one of the edifications without having a discussion (Can give a short explanation for it); teach them a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita with a short explanation of the meaning of the verse, and prasadam. They should interact with the people during prasadam time. Japa can be gradually introduced after 2 or 3 weeks if the members look receptive.

Gradually after 4 or 5 weeks, the classes can be made interactive by asking them a few questions. After about 8 weeks, you could think of making the group a regular Bhakti Vriksha group.

Alternatively, you can have a permanent outreach program with kirtan, lecture, prasadam and interaction with the members. All the members who show some seriousness could be requested to attend the new Bhakti Vrikshas which will be started shortly by the trainee leaders.

Ask the devotees who conducted the various parts of the Bhakti Vriksha now, to share their realizations on their new experiences. You can also ask for the group's evaluation of the various trainee's performances. Since all of them are their peers, no one will mind this kind of evaluation. On the other hand it can be very helpful in boosting the confidence as well as giving the necessary feedback on how effective they were and where they need to improve. Of course your judgement of their performance has to be also said so that they understand the correct standards for evaluation. For example, it is not necessary that a good speaker is the best leader, but that one who facilitates well is the one who is.

Ask for the report of the home visits of the senior devotees along with juniors to some new contacts' homes.

Continue taking a senior devotee along with you to visit more junior devotees' homes.

You can enquire from the group their progress in their book distribution, prasadam distribution, street Sankirtana etc, These will give them exposure to dealing with new people and gaining contacts for inviting for festivals, etc, and also for the new prospective Bhakti Vrikshas by the trainee leaders shortly.

Things to learn:

1. Srimad Prabhupada's Books to read : Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 1 Chapter 3

Prasadam: 20 minutes

Assign a single devotee to organize the prasadam for the succeeding week. They could take the help of others, but would have to take up the responsibility and organization of the prasadam themselves.

Immediately after the devotees have left the program kindly fill in the Weekly Attendance form.

Abbreviations: A= Attendance, S= Siksha level

Sri Namamrta - The Nectar of the Holy Name

One can make home life pleasant by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa

As for detachment from children, wife and home, it is not meant that one should have no feeling for these. They are natural objects of affection, but when they are not favorable to spiritual progress, then one should not be attached to them. The best process for making the home pleasant is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If one is in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can make his home very happy because this process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is very easy. One need only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, accept the remnants of foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa, have some discussion on books like Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam, and engage oneself in Deity worship. These four things will make one happy. One should train the members of his family in this way. The family members can sit down morning and evening and chant together Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. If one can mold his family life in this way to develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness, following these four principles, then there is no need to change from family life to renounced life.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 13.8-12

Passage for Discussion

Vaishnava Behavior, the 26 qualities of a devotee

Continued from last week’s spiritual edification:

22. A devotee is compassionate, *karuna*

The Nectar of Devotion describes compassion:

A person who is unable to bear another’s distress is called compassionate. For practically doing the compassionate work of Krishna consciousness movement, Srila Prabhupada gave us four aphorisms: 1) Preaching is the essence, 2) purity is the force 3) Books are the basis. 4) Utility is the principle.

The essence of compassion is preaching. But the force that drives preaching is purity. Preaching rests on the sincere, pure hearts and minds of the devotees. When a devotee surrenders to Krishna, Krishna blesses his efforts. At that time we say a devotee is empowered to preach. Preaching is not just a matter of getting a devotee to appear on television with a big personality or pushing a devotee beside a world famous person so the press will take his photo and put it in the paper. The devotee going to preach must be actually pure.

When we say “books are the basis”, we mean Srila Prabhupada’s books. Srila Prabhupada’s books are not just translations, they are transcendental literature to guide the a whole world for the next ten thousand years. The best compassionate work is to take part in printing and distributing these Krishna conscious literatures in different languages all over the world.

The aphorism “utility is the principle” refers to using material things in the service of Krishna. When a devotee realizes that he can spread Krishna consciousness in every country, adjusting things according to time, place and circumstance, but without changing the parampara - then he becomes enlivened and enlightened further in how to spread Krishna consciousness.

According to his devotion, Krishna gives him intelligence to preach in a practical way. The jurisdiction of Krishna consciousness has no boundaries and the Krishna conscious preacher who realizes this is the greatest renunciant.

Following the spirit of Srila Prabhupada's four aphorisms, the workers of the Krishna consciousness movement can become compassionate to everyone. The quality of compassion is not reserved only for a few rare saints. Rather, sainthood is now, by Lord Chaitanya's mercy, open to all who submissively hear and take up the *Sankirtana movement*.

23. A devotee is a friend, *maitra*

A devotee is a friend because he directs you to Krishna. Krishna is the best friend of all living entities.

Although the devotee, by virtue of his pointing us to Krishna, is a friend, his friendly act is not merely formal, like a traffic policeman giving you directions. The devotee-friend has all the virtues of a friend in the truest sense of friendship. Devotees live together, chant, share, and solace each other in spiritual intimacy. Because there is no sense gratification, in Krishna consciousness, devotees don't spoil their friendship with ulterior motives.

Friends in Krishna consciousness help each other like pilots on the ground before take-off. They share their experiences and strategies because when they are aloft in their planes one pilot cannot help another. Taking off alone in a plane is a metaphor to describe the spirit soul's solitary passage after death. At that time, each person has to face the result of his own individual karma. But if he has spent well in Krishna conscious association, he will have grasped the essence of remembering Krishna and be able to go home back to Godhead, at the time of death. Friendship in Krishna consciousness is, therefore eternal because all pure devotees finally meet at the destination in the spiritual world.

24. A devotee is a poet, *kavi*

Krishna's qualities demand to be described in the choicest poetic words, and the pure devotee is equal to the task, because Krishna empowers him. The compilers of the shastras are not ordinary human beings, and the shastras are not their own writings but were dictated by Krishna Himself. Not all the Vaishnava poets in disciplic succession wrote in highly literate Sanskrit mantras. Narottama das Thakura composed his songs in simple Bengali language, but the erudite Vishwanatha Chakravarti Thakura later approved the songs of Narottama das to be as good as Vedic mantras. The essence of Vaishnava poetry, therefore is devotion to Krishna.

Aside from making poetic compositions, a devotee is a poet by his poetic perception. He is not dull. He tastes Krishna in pure water and sees the sun as Krishna's eye. He uses language to describe God. He has in his mind's eye a vision of intense beauty, the transcendental form of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Always hearing transcendental sounds passed down from great poets of the past, always chanting the Hare Krishna mantra, dancing and singing in ecstasy, and aspiring to please Krishna, the devotee lives minute to minute in ever-fresh Krishna consciousness. He is a poet.

25. A devotee is expert, *daksa*

Devotees utilize many skills in Krishna consciousness. For Krishna's service a devotee may occasionally take courses or study a skill - how to use a computer or printing press. But more often devotees learn "on the job" how to become expert for Krishna. A skill can be learned

by practice, and more importantly, Krishna, being in the heart of the devotee, can teach him whatever is required. Krishna actually teaches everyone, because it is He who supplies memory and intelligence, “I give the intelligence by which they can come to Me.” We therefore see devotees applying their skills in constructing temples, learning arts and crafts, dealing in business, cooking, painting, and so on.

But devotees are not the only persons who are expert in these matters. In fact many non devotees are more expert in these skills. A devotee’s being expert, therefore cannot refer merely to his executing certain manual and intellectual skills in the service of Krishna.

The real expertise of the pure devotee is that he is able to extricate himself and others from the difficult web of *maya*. For us the required expertise is simple: we have to grasp the lotus feet of Lord Chaitanya’s Krishna conscious practices. Finding the ways and means to preach Krishna consciousness and thus extricate others from maya’s entanglement is another expertise of the devotee.

The best expertise of the devotee is sincere surrender. If Lord Krishna takes charge of our affairs, then certainly we are in expert hands. We should diligently learn the art of surrender to Krishna and apply it purely.

Srila Prabhupada said “A devotee is expert. This means that he is willing to do anything. He does not say because he is a brahmana he cannot do a menial task.” Again this meaning of expert implies surrender. By this definition, Srila Prabhupada was encouraging us to engage in whatever task had to be done in Krishna consciousness. The ability to surrender and do the needful is the sign of an expert devotee.

Surely Srila Prabhupada was one of the most expert Vaishnavas in every sense. And he urged us, “Become expert.” We also must learn how to deliver Krishna to the “expert” avoiders of his mercy. We also must figure out the ways and means. There is no alternative. Krishna will not be pleased if we remain inept. We must also learn to be expert.

26. A devotee is silent, mauni

A devotee never speaks any nonsense, this is his silence. *Mauni*, does not refer to vows of not speaking or becoming incommunicado, as is practiced by some yogis. Of course if a person does not know Krishna, then better he is silent. Sometimes, therefore, a guru will ask a frivolous disciple whose speech is uncontrolled to practice complete *mauna*.

The devotee can speak the glories of Krishna and present the philosophy of Krishna consciousness all day long. A devotee wants to always chant

*HARE Krishna HARE Krishna Krishna Krishna HARE HARE
HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE*

Why should he be silent?

Certainly he is always inclined to talk about Krishna, , but if for example, some foolish person wants him to revel the confidential pastimes of Krishna or to take advantage of him in some way, he is not obliged. That might be an occasion calling for the devotee’s silence.

At other times, the devotee may be in an ecstatic mood where he is unable to speak.

Lord Chaitanya silently listened to Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya speak Vedanta philosophy for seven days. In this way Lord Chaitanya showed respect to the great scholar, and dramatically showed his disapproval as well. Lord Chaitanya’s silence was also a demonstration of his tolerance.

Discovery:

1. How does a devotee express his deep compassion towards people? What are the four principles on which he expresses this compassion?
2. List all the ways mentioned which describe how the devotee is a true or best friend.

Understanding:

1. In what ways does a devotee express his poetic nature?
2. What are the different ways in which the devotee is expert? What is his best expertise?
3. What exactly is a devotee's silence? Why is it good that a devotee keeps talking all the time?
4. Mention different circumstances when devotees prefer to remain silent.

Application:

1. Try to discuss these exalted qualities from what you have read, heard or seen about great Vaishnavas. Each one can choose one or more of the qualities. Or alternatively, you can share your feelings on how you feel after going through these 26 qualities of a devotee... your inspirations, determination and plans to develop them, etc.

Preaching is the Essence

In the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement, Both Men and Women Preach

Women as well as men can preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

Seeing that the Māyavādīs and others were fleeing, Lord Caitanya thought: I wanted everyone to be immersed in this inundation of love of Godhead, but some of them have escaped. Therefore I shall devise a trick to drown them also.

Here is an important point. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to invent a way to capture the Māyavādīs and others who did not take interest in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This is the symptom of an ācārya. An ācārya who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be spread. Sometimes jealous persons criticize the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because it engages equally both boys and girls in distributing love of Godhead...

However, since both the boys and girls are being trained to become preachers, those girls are not ordinary girls but are as good as their brothers who are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, to engage both boys and girls in fully transcendental activities is a policy intended to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. These jealous fools who criticize the intermingling of boys and girls will simply have to be satisfied with their own foolishness because they cannot think of how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by adopting ways and means which are favorable for this purpose. Their stereotyped methods will never help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, what we are doing is perfect by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, for it is He who proposed to invent a way to capture those who strayed from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Cc. Ādi 7.32

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 63 – Guru Ashraya Seminar

Welcome all the members and guests. Make a change in the seating arrangement, as today they would all have to sit facing the speaker, rather than in a circle.

Have the black board / white board ready with chalk or marker as the case may be, for the seminar. Have a chair and table arranged for the speaker. Discuss with your senior leader about who could possibly enact the short skit which is part of the seminar given below.

Also show him / her the seminar material well in advance, so that they can be well prepared. Prepare the handouts to be given at the end of the class. This could be the forms that have to be filled up as an application for receiving the siksha certificate. A copy of the siksha application form is given at the end of the book.

Kirtana: 20 minutes

Request the senior devotee to lead a kirtana for twenty minutes.

Seminar: 90 minutes

Seminar Module For Guru Ashraya

Aim:

- ☞ To motivate members to take shelter from an initiating Guru of ISKCON.
- ☞ To inspire them to commit themselves to following all the rules very scrupulously.

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the participants will be able to:

- ☞ Give their names for taking shelter

Conditions:

- ☞ They will volunteer to commit these things. Criteria:
- ☞ At least 75% of the members attending the program will agree to take up shelter immediately.

Assessment:

- ☞ By orally asking them at the end of the class.

Preparation:

- ☞ For the lecture session on the guru you can have a flip chart having all the points mentioned.

LESSON OUTLINE :

What	Who	Resources	Time
Skit	Devotees	10 minutes
Group Discussion	The whole class	Small notes of paper and pens	15 minutes
Lecture	Facilitator	Flip charts	20minutes
Summing Up and Question & Answer session	Facilitator	15 minutes

LESSON PLAN :

Have two devotees practise the following skit and enact it before the audience: In case it is not possible to enact it, you can ask two devotees to read it out slowly and clearly, but with expression.

Guru's Mercy

Dhruva is standing on one leg , deep in meditation, chanting the mantra “Om namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya”.

Slowly, he smiles in deep satisfaction. Lord Krishna appears.

Dhruva immediately opens his eyes. He is very agitated, excited and falls flat paying obeisances. Then he raises his head and keeps drinking the beauty of the Lord and then embraces His lotus feet.

Dhruva attempts to speak something, but is not able to. The Lord then touches his head with a conch shell.

Dhruva(with folded hands): My dear Lord, You are all powerful. After entering within me, You have enlivened all my sleeping senses—my hands, legs, ears, touch sensation, life force and especially my power of speech. Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

The Lord smiles and keeps looking at Dhruva.

Dhruva: My Lord, You are the supreme one. You appear differently in the spiritual and the material worlds. In the material world, You create everything by Your external energy Maya. Then You enter the material world as the Paramatma or Super soul. You create varieties of manifestations in the material world, according to the three modes of material nature.

People who worship You simply for sense gratification are certainly misled by Maya. In spite of having You, who are like a desire tree and are the cause of liberation from birth and death, foolish persons such as me , desire benedictions from You for sense gratification, which is available even for animals , and those living in hellish conditions.

I was overcome by my material desires for position and fame, but it is by the mercy of my spiritual master that I have found You now.

My beloved spiritual master Narada muni, who is always hankering after Your Divine lotus feet, and is always serving you took pity on me and instructed me on how I can achieve You!

I have been so fortunate to have a guru coming in such a bonafide sampradaya .

He destroyed all the obstacles in my devotional service. I was a young boy alone in the jungle, and my mind was prone to be disturbed by the roar of wild animals. But by my Guru's shelter and protection I have achieved perfection so fast! All my karmas and sinful reactions have been destroyed only by his mercy!

Krishna: My dear Dhruva, you were looking so earnestly for Me. Being the Paramatma in Your heart, I knew your desire and so I sent him to you. I am very pleased that you took advantage of his mercy and instructions to attain Me. But you also desired something material, and I am going to fulfill that as well.

Dhruva: No, no Lord, I was looking for some broken pieces of glass, but have found You the most precious diamond. I have no need for anything else!

And since it is by the mercy of my Gurudeva, that I have found You, I want to engage eternally in serving my spiritual master. I want to eternally be the servant of Your dear servant.

Krishna: My dear Dhruva, I am very pleased by your devotion to your Guru. It is simply your full devotion and faith in your Guru that has attracted Me to you.

I will still award you the kingdom of the pole star, which is circumambulated by all the planets, stars and solar systems. I Myself reside there in an island called Svetadvipa situated on an ocean of milk. At the end of your material life in this body you will come go to my planet, never to come back again to this miserable material world.

Krishna blesses Dhruva and leaves.

Dhruva: Oh! By following the instructions of my Guru I have been blessed so much. All my material and spiritual desires are fully satisfied!

But I still feel ashamed for having those material desires. When my spiritual master preached to me about the impermanent nature of this material world, and advised me to tolerate the insults of others, I could not follow him. And that is why I am still left here in this material world to enjoy for so many years away from my beloved Lord Krishna.

My Guru has been so merciful to me, he has forgiven my mistakes and offenses and given me this most wonderful benediction of Krishna consciousness! I am eternally indebted to my spiritual father! He has shown me by example what it is to be a devotee. He is the personification of the book Bhagavatam. I can never exist for a moment without his protection and guidance.

Exit Dhruva.

Group Discussion :

Divide the class into small groups.

Ask them to note down points on the topic : **Why is it necessary to accept a spiritual Master?**

One spokesperson from each group can come and read out 2 points each.

Lecture :

Display the flip chart containing the points for the Topic: **Necessity to accept shelter from a Spiritual**

Master Points you can cover:

1. Shastra's instructions
2. Guru worship is greater than even the worship of the Lord
3. The Lord set an example Himself
4. To receive perfect knowledge & to clarify doubts
5. To understand transcendental subject matter
6. Guru is the representative of Krishna
7. Easy to approach the Lord's representative
8. Guru is mercy incarnation of Krishna

9. Only with blessings of the Guru is spiritual advancement possible
10. Instructions of Guru liberates us
11. Initiation necessary to go back to Godhead
12. To solve all the problems of life
13. To be protected in our devotional service
14. *Krishna prema* possible only by his mercy

Next cover the other 2 flip charts on the qualifications of a Spiritual Master & qualifications of a disciple.

Explain each point clearly during the lecture.

Qualifications of a bonafide spiritual master

1. Follows our disciplic succession always
2. Is fixed in bhakti yoga
3. Speaks from the shastra
4. Does not speculate
5. Is fully submissive and faithful to his guru's instructions
6. Is a great devotee of Krishna
7. Is self-controlled
8. Shows us by example
9. Can clear all our spiritual doubts
10. Gives proper directions
11. Ability to liberate his disciples with his instructions
12. Is very merciful and compassionate
13. Is engaged fully in delivering all the fallen souls

Qualifications of an ideal disciple

1. Is inquisitive to know the spiritual truths.
2. Enquires submissively from the Guru.
3. Does not argue
4. Renders selfless service to the Guru.
5. Follows all the instructions of the Guru
6. Tries to satisfy and please the Guru
7. Respects the Guru as Krishna's representative
8. Avoids all offenses to the Guru
9. Is fully surrendered to the Guru
10. Tries to help in the Guru's mission
11. Is self controlled
12. Is humble before the Guru

13. Has firm faith in the Guru
14. Worships and glorifies the Guru

Summing up:

Ask for possible obstacles in taking up the shelter of a Guru.. Clarify doubts. Check if they are following all the rules for Prabhupada Asraya.

Then distribute the application form for shelter to them. (A copy of it is at the back of this book.)

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
Week 64 – Group Multiplication Program

The last program before the Bhakti Vriksha group multiplies is bound to be charged with emotion and great expectations. Of course, all the members should continue to attend the study classes together, even after the multiplication. Take great care to make this program memorable and inspirational for them. It will be very nice to acknowledge and appreciate every one of them. You can do this by giving a small memento to each one of them informally when they come for the program. It can be something as simple as a card, or a photograph, or some devotional paraphernalia, etc. You can thank and inspire each one of them individually during the program and that will leave them with lasting impressions. More than mere sentiments of separation, the program is a time to plan who the new leaders are going to be and who will attend whose Bhakti Vriksha and so on.

Make a list of the new leaders. Divide the group tentatively into these groups, taking into account their geographical locations. Also ensure that there is a proper distribution of devotees of different levels of advancement in each group. If there are any requests from particular members to change their group, you can comply with that if there is a genuine reason .

Invite the senior devotees like sector leader/ circle leader /greater circle leader, if they are there and the temple president, etc

Invite other devotees too.

Arrange for a good prasadam feast for everyone.

Total time : 2 hour and 30 minutes. (You can adjust the time to suit your convenience.)

Have a regular **Arathi with Kirtan : (30 minutes)**

Introduce the guest of honor and the other senior Vaishnavas who have been invited. Speak briefly on the occasion why you have gathered, which is to multiply your Bhakti Vriksha.

Also give a brief history of when the Vrinda was started, how many devotees belong to it, the siksha status of the members and most importantly, how many leaders are going to now start leading the new Bhakti Vrikshas. **(10 minutes)**

Request the guest of honor to come and speak to the devotees. (30 minutes)

Read out the names of the leaders and the names of the members who will be in each group. You can enquire if everyone agrees with the grouping. If any differences of opinion are expressed, give it a hearing, and try to change wherever it is justified.

Set the dates on which the Bhakti Vrikshas will start commencing and the locations where they will be conducted after enquiring from the leaders.

Invite each leader to come on stage. Introduce the each one of them and their services, qualities, etc.. Request each one of them to speak on what they are looking forward to in conducting a Bhakti vriksha of their own.

Invite the other members too to come on stage. Appreciate their services and participation, and give them the mementos too with words of encouragement.

Request volunteers to come and speak about their experiences in Krishna consciousness in the last fifteen months and their goals for the future.

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If there are three or more leaders who are ready to start the new programs, then your role will be more of a sector leader supervising their activities. An outline of the responsibilities of a sector leader is given in the Bhakti Vriksha manual published by the Congregational Development ministry. Complete details are given in the book *Sector Leader* published by Mathuradesh Bhakti Vriksha Training Centre.

(50 minutes)

Take a few photographs with the group. **(10 minutes)**

Prasadam : (20 minutes)

You can be involved in the prasadam distribution along with the volunteers, to every one.

Bhakti Vriksha Modules - Sri Guru Ashraya
CHECK LIST for MODULE 5

The fifth module consists of twenty-five lessons in twenty-five weeks. At the end of this module, there are some questions / check list given below that you can answer to see if the members have progressed to taking shelter of an ISKCON Guru and how many ready to lead a Bhakti Vriksha group of their own.

You should have been entering the details about your members in the BV report form given at the end of each lesson, every week. This will help you fill up the check-list easily and will make your assessment of your progress authentic. If there is any short-fall, you will know you have to give some special attention, or see if you have not given sufficient attention to some particular aspect of the program. Please go through the introduction of this book once again to help you in this.

In spite of our best efforts, it is still possible that our results may sometimes be less than ideal as we are dealing with human beings who all have their independence to advance in Krishna consciousness at the pace they want... but we can do our part to the best of our ability, and that in most cases does inspire them to surrender faster. But there is no need to feel depressed or dispirited if we are not always successful, because we are constantly improving ourselves both in our level of Krishna conscious surrender as well as in our skills to inspire people, so we can always keep improving.

Check list for Module 5 Guru Ashraya

Write Yes/ No or the appropriate answer in the right hand side column

- 1 Do you have at least fifteen members attending your program?
- 2 Are they all attending regularly? If not how many are irregular?
- 3 Are they all participating in all the sessions? If not, how many are not participating?
- 4 In which sessions are they not participating?
- 5 How many are not attending the study classes?
- 6 How many are not attending the Sunday programs at the temple/congregational Directorate?
- 7 Are they all following all aspects of sadhana and the regulative principles? How many are not following?
- 8 How many are not reading Bhagavad gita and Srimad Bhagavatam regularly?
- 9 Do they do the home – work that you assign them (including preaching home- work)? If not, how many are not doing it?
- 10 Do they all feel comfortable with you and are communicative with you? If not, how many are not communicative?
- 11 How many are ready to lead a Bhakti Vriksha group?
- 12 Are they all enthusiastic to take up Guru Ashraya? If not, how many are not willing to take ?

If you have at least three devotees who are ready to lead Bhakti Vriksha groups, then that is very good.

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The rest of the devotees can be distributed between the three groups and they can act as senior devotees and assist the Vrinda leaders till such time that they are ready to lead Bhakti Vrikshas of their own.

If they are not ready to attend another Vrinda again and are also quite qualified in their devotional activities, then they can continue coming only to the study classes. You should gradually encourage them to start a Vrinda by helping them to set it up and in conducting it for a while, till they feel confident of handling it themselves. This is in the case of those who are exceptionally shy and need some extra push to go on their own. Normally all the training that they received in the Vrinda in the matter of conducting a program should be enough, but there may be just a few diffident devotees who need a little extra help, but once they get the feel of it, they do wonderfully well with just a little supervision and guidance from the sector leader.

Regarding other aspects of their spiritual progress,

If you have just one or two that are not up to the mark, you can feel that you have done a good job, but that you must still work at bringing everyone to the desired level. If there are around half the group not advancing, then you must do a review of your program. You can discuss this with your senior preachers, take their guidance and help as well. Remember you are the parent, and parents will do everything to care for each one of their children!