

Study w/ Sadhana

2000-2001

## Helpful Hints on the Mechanics of Giving *Bhagavatam* Class and Leading *Kirtanas*

### Class

1. Practice chanting the Sanskrit verse beforehand.
2. Know the format of the presentation:
  - Sing Jaya Radha-Madhava (know the words, practice the tune)
  - Say the Jaya Om prayers (know the prayers)
  - State the canto, chapter, chapter title, and verse for the day
  - Chant the sanskrit (practice a tune beforehand), ask audience to chant
  - Read translation (ask for audience response if you like) and purport.
  - Offer obeisances to your spiritual master, or say other prayers as appropriate.
3. If you have notes place them on the bookstand where you can see them. Don't read verbatim from the notes. They are there to refresh your memory if necessary, not to be read. They are most helpful when written as an outline.
4. Time the class. Kirtana ends at 7:50. There are announcements, then you begin. Generally by the time you finish chanting Jaya Radha-Madhava and the verse it is about 8:10. Class ends at 8:30 so there is about twenty minutes for speaking. Twenty minutes is actually quite a short amount of time. You'll find you have plenty to say. If your class is shorter, though, don't worry. Shorter and to the point is better.
5. Ask for questions. Repeat questions into the microphone for the kitchen. Don't be afraid to say you don't know an answer. You can ask for audience participation or tell the questioner you will find the answer and get back to them. The question and answer part is not difficult. It is very conversational-like and the audience is always there willing and able to help.
6. Speak into the microphone so you can be heard clearly in the temple room. If you need to adjust the mike do so.
7. Speak on the subject of the verse and purport.

### Class Preparation, General and Specific

1. Have a prayerful mood. Follow the regulative principles, chant 16 rounds, and read Srila Prabhupada's books regularly.
2. When you read the verse bounce ideas off friends and family. You'll gain insights.
3. Take time to prepare. Some people need five minutes, some people need five days. There is not right or wrong way.
4. Prepare an outline. Rehearse it, or go over it three or four times until you remember the structure of it. You can prepare notes to jog your memory when giving the class.
5. Learn verses on the side. You'll love having them handy when giving class.
6. Trust yourself. You have imbibed Krsna consciousness as Srila Prabhupada has given it to us. All you need to do is repeat, from your heart, as you realize it.
7. You can develop your skills by reading books on public speaking, overcoming fears, etc. There are plenty of books in the library that are very helpful. There are very simple techniques of speaking that are easy and should be learned and added to your skills. Don't miss out on developing these skills.

Give class! You'll see how easy it is and how valuable it is for your purification and realization.

## Kirtana

1. Know the amount of time you'll be expected to sing. Practice how you will use that time. For example, at *mangala-arati* the *samsara* prayers will be over at about 4:40 and *arati* ends at 4:55. So you'll have fifteen minutes for Srila Prabhupada's *pranam mantra*, Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya and the Hare Krsna *mantra*. Singing the Hare Krsna mantra for ten minutes is good. At *guru-puja*, Sri Guru-carana padma will go from 7:20 to about 7:35. The *kirtana* is supposed to end at 7:50, so you'll have fifteen minutes for *kirtana* in front of the Deities.
2. Practice the tunes and the order of the tunes you'll be singing.
3. Note your voice range. Practice starting the tune at a range that is comfortable with you. Pay special attention to not singing too high and straining your voice. Sing the tunes all the way through to see how they flow noticing how high they go.
4. You know the words. But don't worry for each *arati* there is a sign with the words on them (except Lord Nrsimhadeva's prayers after *mangala-arati*). However, it's good to learn the order of the verses by heart because leading is different from following in *kirtana*.
5. Start listening to how others lead the *kirtana*. Whose *kirtanas* do you like? What tunes do they use? How do they transit from one verse to another? How do they build up the *kirtana*? You can record the *kirtanas* you like so you can listen and practice with them at home.
6. Know that this is second nature for you. You've been in thousands of *kirtanas*. Your Godsisters will be right there beside you. And they can help you during *kirtana* if you need it.
7. You should have these basic qualifications: ability to carry a tune and stay on the notes; keep beat (preferably with *karatalas*); a pleasing voice.
8. Start practicing at home. You can begin singing with devotees at home programs, Ekadasi *bhajan*s, or Tulasi-puja and from there go to *mangala-arati* and *guru-puja*.