

POWERFUL READING



“ . . . If you’ll kindly read my books carefully all your spiritual desires will be fulfilled.”
--Srila Prabhupada

Some impediments to regular reading and study

- *Inertia
- *Distraction
- *Getting overwhelmed by too much information
- *Fruitive reading: collecting the information to impress others, or other materialistic goals

Techniques to improve your reading and study habits

1. Associate with Srila Prabhupada by mindfully reading his books.

Rsabdeva das shared this realization before his death: “*Study Prabhupada’s books not for the information but to associate with Srila Prabhupada.*”

2. Find a reading partner or form a group.

Bg 10.1 P 504

The more one hears about the Supreme God, the more one becomes fixed in devotional service. One should always hear about the Lord in the association of devotees; that will enhance one’s devotional service. Discourses in the society of devotees can take place only among those who are really anxious to be in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Others cannot take part in such discourses. The Lord clearly tells Arjuna that because Arjuna is very dear to Him, for his benefit such discourses are taking place.

Bg 9.1 p 448

This hearing process is recommended in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam: “The messages of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are full of potencies, and these potencies can be realized if topics regarding the Supreme Godhead are discussed amongst devotees. This cannot be achieved by the association of mental speculators or academic scholars, for it is realized knowledge.”

3. “Discuss, thoroughly, threadbare”

12.18.73 MW

Prabhupada: *If you actually believe in God, then try to understand what is God. Otherwise how you can believe? If you do not know the person in whom you have to trust, how you can trust Him? . . . I say, “Trust in Him,” but if I do not know that man, how I can trust? You must explain that “This man is in this way trustworthy.” Otherwise what is the meaning of my trust? This science should be understood, what is God and what is trust. That you discuss thoroughly, threadbare. Otherwise how you will be able to preach?*

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1.14.69. BG

Prabhupāda: *Because everything is threadbare explained. You can have answer of all questions from this Bhagavad-gītā, chapter by chapter. Everything is completely understood. Yes.*

4. Make your own index

- *Mark the ideas and points that inspire you as you read
- *Later, make a list of your points
- *Write a summary of each of your points

5. Practice following a thread

6. Learn one book well and regularly give it out to others

7. Study selected sections: notable prayers, chapters, etc:

Examples:

Divinity and Divine Service (“Get the 34!”)

S.B. 10.14

Prahlada’s Prayers

Queen Kunti’s Prayers

Rsabhadeva’s Instructions

Lord Chaitanya’s teaching’s to Rupa, Sanatana

8. Pray to the personalities who appear in the sections you’re reading

Pray to the personalities who appear in the sections you’re reading

(S.B. 1.5.11 “*We are sure, therefore, that everyone in human society will welcome Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, even though it is now presented with so many faults, for it is recommended by Śrī Nārada, who has very kindly appeared in this chapter.*”)

9. Create your own sacred space in which to read/study

10. Aspire for good quality reading (even if you can only do a small quantity).

11. Break difficult or long sections into small parts.

12. Develop your routine: “Get practiced *automatically*” SP

13. “Repetition is the mother of learning.”

Pradyumna: *We chant all the verses in this chapter, all together, starting from the beginning. Sri Suka Uvaca—everyone can chant together—Sri Suka Uvaca... (Srila Prabhupada and devotees chant together all verses in Srimad-Bhagavatam, Second Canto, Chapter 3.)*

Prabhupada: *So it takes not more than five minutes. If you practice, then you become learned scholars, simply by chanting these mantras, and the translation, transcendental vibration, will keep you fit for spiritual advancement. Every verse in Vedic literatures, especially Bhagavad-gita or Srimad-Bhagavatam, they are not ordinary sounds. Simply if you chant the mantras, you become purified. Srinvatam sva-kathah krsnah punya-sravana-kirtanah [SB 1.2.17]. Punya-sravana-kirtanah. Simply by hearing and chanting you become pious. Punya-sravana-kirtanah Even you don't understand the meaning, the very sound vibration will help you. Now we have finished one chapter within five minutes. How much time it took? I don't think more than five minutes. So everyone should chant every day at least one chapter. Then? Next chapter? Which chapter?*

Srila Prabhupada: *I thank you so much for having nicely appreciated the Bhagavad-gita As It Is. This book should be read by all of my students at least one chapter per day, and in kirtana class it should be discussed sloka after sloka. Practically, we have tried to explain in this book all of the basic principles of Krishna Consciousness. If you can simply cram Bhagavad-gita then you will surely become a very good preacher.*

Devotee: *Swamiji? Should we read just one chapter a day or...*

Prabhupada: *It is very nice if you read one chapter Bhagavatam daily. It is very nice. You make it a point to read one chapter daily. That is very nice.*

Devotee: *No more?*

Prabhupada: *No, if you can do more, that's all right. Just like I ask everybody to chant 16 rounds. But if you can chant 1600 rounds, then who prohibits you? You can do that. But we should make a regulation of our life, that "So many times I chant. One chapter I shall read. I shall go to the temple at this time." In this way we must have routine work. Then we'll get practiced automatically. Yes. And Gosvamis, the Six Gosvamis, they were following routine work. Even they... Sankhya-purvaka-nama-gana-natibhih. They were doing regularly counting. Just like you are counting sixteen rounds. Not only chanting in that counting, but they were offering obeisances also by counting, that "Hundred times I shall offer my obeisances." You see? This is regular routine. Yes.*

Bhavatarini: *Whenever Srila Prabhupada was personally with us, we all were happy, we could do anything, we were superhuman, and we were in Vaikuntha. Once in a class he said, "If you chant one chapter of the Bhagavatam in Sanskrit every day for one year, at the end of one year you will be Sanskrit scholars. You can do this?" We said, "Yes, Srila Prabhupada. Jaya, Srila Prabhupada!" He said, "All right, you will do this?" "Yes, Srila Prabhupada. Jaya, Prabhupada!" Three times he said, "You will do this now?" And three times we all said, "Yes!" I've never met one person who's done this, but when he said to do it, it seemed easy. About two years later, I did it for six months, so maybe I'm half a Sanskrit scholar. Pp 308-9*

SB 8.3.1

Prabhupada: *It is imperative, therefore, that all devotees in Kṛṣṇa consciousness practice chanting some mantra. Certainly one should chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, which is the mahā-mantra, or great*

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mantra, and also one should practice chanting *cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu* or the *Nṛsimha stotra* (*ito nṛsimhaḥ parato nṛsimho yato yato yāmi tato nṛsimhaḥ*). Every devotee should practice in order to chant some mantra perfectly so that even though he may be imperfect in spiritual consciousness in this life, in his next life he will not forget Kṛṣṇa consciousness, even if he becomes an animal.

Prabhupada on reading his books:

6.3.18

My Dear Hrsikesa,

Please accept my blessings. I am so glad to learn that you are reading my *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* with great interest, and I hope if you kindly read my books carefully that all your spiritual desires will be fulfilled. Thanking you once more for your nice letter, and hope you are well.

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

72/6/13

My Dear Bhargava,

Please accept my blessings. I am in receipt of your letter dated May 31, 1972, and I have noted the contents. Our advancement in Krishna Consciousness is made possible in two ways, by Knowledge and renunciation, *jnana* and *tyaga* or *tapasya*. The more we become renounced from this material world, the more we advance in Krishna Consciousness. But we are only able to make such sacrifices and perform *tapasya* if we have got knowledge. So first thing is to become knowledgeable in Krishna Consciousness, then the *tapasya* or voluntary life of austerity will result automatically. So I am requesting all of my students to read my books very seriously every day without fail. In this way, if your mind becomes absorbed at least one or two hours daily in the transcendental subject matter of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, *Bhagavad-gita*, and other books then very easily you will make your advancement in Krishna Consciousness. . .

I recommend you to read books more and more and try to understand the subject matter from different angles of vision and be always discussing it with your godbrothers even while you are working at the press, and when you are working and you cannot read, then listen to the tapes of my lectures and hear in that way. And never neglect to chant your 16 rounds of beads daily, rise early without fail, attend *mangal arati*, take bath, and follow the other regulative principles, and everything will come out very successfully, you can rest assured of that. . . .

Hoping this will meet you in good health,

Your ever well-wisher,

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

ACBS/sda

6/25/74

Regarding the techniques for book distribution, it is all right if the devotees dress like the young people they are selling the books to. The main thing is that the innocent are given the books and the chance to become Kṛṣṇa Conscious by reading them. You have to see that our book distributors are also reading my books and following all the regulative principles, then it is all right selling in public in that way. So I shall expect to see you in Chicago on July 5 for the *Rathayatra* and we can discuss more.

Your ever well-wisher,

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A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

Madhya 25.278

Men become strong and stout by eating sufficient grains, but the devotee who simply eats ordinary grains but does not taste the transcendental pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Kṛṣṇa gradually becomes weak and falls down from the transcendental position. However, if one drinks but a drop of the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, his body and mind begin to bloom, and he begins to laugh, sing and dance.

PURPORT

All the devotees connected with this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must read all the books that have been translated (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Bhagavad-gītā and others); otherwise, after some time, they will simply eat, sleep and fall down from their position. Thus they will miss the opportunity to attain an eternal, blissful life of transcendental pleasure.

6.16.72 Prabhupada:

You mention you like to speak now very often, but the first business should be to preach to the devotees. It is better to maintain a devotee than to try to convince others to become devotees. It is the duty of the GBC to maintain the devotees, keep them in the highest standard of Krishna Consciousness, and give them all good instruction, and let them go out and preach for making more devotees. Your first job should be to make sure that every one of the devotees in your zone of management is reading regularly our literatures and discussing the subject matter seriously from different angles of seeing, and that they are somehow or other absorbing the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness philosophy. If they are fully educated in our philosophy and if they can get all of the knowledge and study it from every viewpoint, then very easily they will perform tapasya or renunciation and that will be their advancement in Krishna Consciousness. So first thing is to instruct all of your temple presidents and the other devotees to read daily, just as we have done in our morning class in Los Angeles. You may remember that we were reading one sloka each morning in Sanskrit and reciting it altogether and then discussing it thoroughly by seeing different new things. So you introduce this system and train the devotees first. Don't be too much concerned for the time being with nondevotees, now we must fix-up what devotees we have got in the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness, then we will succeed. What good are many, many devotees if none of them are knowledgeable?