

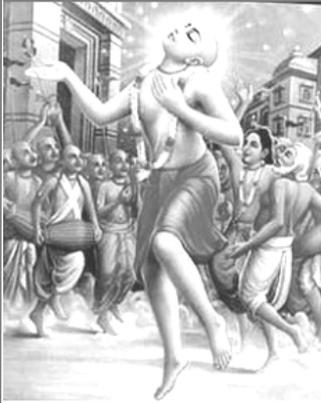


ISKCON

ISKCON, The International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Founder-acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

KIRTAN STANDARDS COMITEE

Chairaman His Holiness Janananda Goswami



ANALYZED DATA

THE KIRTAN STANDARDS BOOK

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INDEX

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS	17
Concentrating on the holy name not on the instruments*	17
To many instruments divert attention from the Holy Name*	17
Mrdanga and karatala is enough*	17
Instruments in temple programs / only mrdanga and karatala*	17
Instruments in aratis	17
Instruments during Sri Caitanya*	18
Styles of playing Mrdanga*	18
Rhythm instruments are good for Kirtana	18
If listening to Khol and Karatala – naturally you become detasteful of other sounds*	18
Better use rhythm instruments to increase the motivation to dance	18
Too complicates melody or mrdanga beats	18
The mrdanga player should follow the leader	19
Mrdangas played expertly together	19
Mrdanga players should also sing	19
Respect and care for mrdanga	19
Mrdangas should be kept covered	19
If mrdanga becomes loose or flat... ..	19
Clay mrdanga is the best	20
Mrdanga and Karatalas playing together	20
Soft and loud playing of mrdanga and karatalas	20
Karatalas should be cleaned	20
What karatalas to use?	20
Taking care of Karatalas	20
Srila Prabhupada teaching the simple karatala rhythm	21
Whoompers and gongs in kirtana	21
Blowing of the conch shell and horns *	21
Using harmonium for bhajan, not kirtan*	21
Using harmonium in a street Sankirtan *	21
Kirtan with harmonium	21
Prabhupada cautions against the use of harmonium	22
Using “vedic” stringed instruments *	22
Using tamboura *	22
Tamboura and mrdanga in street Sankirtan*	22
Melodic instruments in kirtana divert attention from the mantra	22
Srila Prabhupada not liking guitars	22
Using djembe (big african drum) in kirtana	22
Using guitar in kirtans	23
Using Accordion	23
Dancing and instruments in the Sankirtan party *	23
Public events /using different instruments*	23
Clapping is sufficient*	24
Music is only an item for chanting*	24
Arranging for Ginsberg’s show*	24
Kirtana does not require any musical or dancing knowledge*	24

Prabhupada satisfied with Harrison’s western music arrangemet.....	24
Instuments playing too loud to hear the voice	24
Instruments playing too loud	25
Instruments being used in the 60’s at Thompkins Square Park.....	25
Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public kirtans or temple porgrams	25
Kirtan should be sweet and melodious / not clanging and banging.....	25
Many instruments and loudness in Lord Caitanya’s kirtana	25
Kirtana should start with all the instruments	26
Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati restoring usage of traditional	26
Srila Prabhupada allowing other than traditional instruments	26
Guests bringing their instruments to kirtana	26
DANCE	27
Chanting Jaya Sacinandana, Nitai Gaura and dancing*	27
Krishna Consciousness movement is about music and dancing*	27
Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s movement is dancing and chanting*	27
Artificial dancing is not all right*	27
The whole world will dance in ecstasy*	28
Dancing will bring ecstasy*	28
Dancing like peacocks*	28
Simple melodious singing and dancing*	28
Dancing with raised hands like Panca Tattva*	28
We are not professional dancers+	28
Dancing and instruments in the Sankiratn party *	29
Our magic is chanting and dancing*	29
Dancing in the middle of the kértana*	29
No need to learn the dancing*	29
Natural Chanting and dancing will unite the world*	29
Dancing in a circle*	29
Stage dancing performance*	29
Kirtan as faith in the words of Guru*	29
Kirtana does not require any musical or dancing knowledge*	30
Turning backs to Deities while dancing and dancing to one another *	30
Turning back to the Deities (1)	30
Turning back to the Deities (2)	30
Turning backs to the Deities (3)	30
Defining Kirtan and Bhajan.....	32
Swami two step the best way to please Krsna.....	32
Avoiding collision during exuberant dance	32
The auspiciousness of dancing	32
Dancing removes all the sins	33
Not dancing leads to a lame birth	33
Enthusiasm for dancing.....	33
Unwilling to dance.....	33
Dancing should be be enthusiastic, beautiful, and well coordinated.....	33
Srila Prabhupada’s style of dancing	33
Prabhupada’s graceful dancing	34
ISKCON dancing styles.....	34

Jumping	34
Offensive dancing.....	35
Dancing should be controlled	35
What should and shouldn't dancing be like.....	35
Dancing to attract the opposite sex.....	35
Dangerous dancing.....	35
Women dancing in kirtana	36
Bharata Natyam and similar / women dancing.....	36
Children dancing in street harinam.....	36
Dancing in public	36
The dancing in street harinam	36
Kértana with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing	37
Dancing is a natural spiritual emotion	37
Prataparudra wonderstrucg by the dancing and chanting	37
Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public kirtans or temple porgrams	37
Mangala arati dancing (1)	37
Mangala arati dancing (2)	38
Dancing invokes devotion	38
Steady tempo is suitable for graceful dancing.....	38
Dancing with raised arms.....	38
Three styles of Gaudiya Kirtana	38
Krsna is dancing with the devotees.....	39
PARTICULAR SONGS	40
Sankirtana means Maha-mantra*	40
Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing.....	40
Songs sung by Lord Caitanya*	40
No need to introduce anything new*	40
Chanting the Parampara given chants*	41
Gurvastakam in a different melody	41
Gurvastakam being sung at mangala arati.....	41
Morning songs.....	41
Prayers in temple aratis	41
Morning program at Gaudiya Math, Vishakapatnam	42
Chanting Gurvastakam wherever one goes	42
Chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« before Gurvastakam.....	42
Nrsimha Prayers	42
Brahma Samhita tune*.....	42
Chanting Tulasi Prayers without adding anything	43
Guru puja sung as a rock 'n' roll balad	43
Dui pade loilo sarana.....	43
Jaya Radha-madhava.....	43
Gaura Arati to be sung at sandhya arati	43
Other songs at aratis	43
Akharas in Gaura arati.....	43
Hari Haraye.....	44
Songs to be sung at Mayapur / Haraye Namah Krsna*	44
Concocted Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam / following acaryas*	44

Concocted chants / Nitai Gaur Radhe syam / following acaryas*	45
The use of Panca-tattva Mantra as given by the acaryas*	45
Attention on the Hare Krishna Mantra /regarding songs of Krsnadas Babaji *	46
Songs of Narottama das Thakur *	46
We shall sing the authorized songs*	46
Chanting different bhajans, authorised arati chants	46
Chanting is powerful when one follows the disciplic succession*	46
We do not allow any song that has not been approved or sung by bona fide devotees * .	46
Only authorized songs should be sung / one must become spiritually advanced to find suitable words to offer in prayers to the Lord*	47
Unauthorized songs should never be heard *	47
We have to repeat the prayers offered by liberated souls*	47
One should chant the songs from the disciplic succession*	47
Holy names given in sampradaya should be chanted.....	47
Not being able to pronounce stotras properly / Chanting of stotras by Akincana das Babaji	48
Do not make up your own verses	48
No cinema music in temples	48
Prabhupada against mantras from other temples.....	48
Acaryas' mantars, Panca Tattva Mantra and Hare Krsna should be chanted.....	48
Authorised slokas to be chanted Vs traditional chants,	48
Picking-up Vrndavan songs is not Prabhupada's view	49
Devotees should not invent unauthorized chants	49
Unauthorized songs or statements should never be heard.....	49
No need to invent new type of Kirtan.....	49
Unacceptable songs / Mira Bhajans and commercial music.....	49
When to use different chants	50
Kirtan chaos means chaos in devotees' spiritual lives	50
The importance of being acquainted with the wealth of Vaisnava songs.....	50
Songs composed by Srila Prabhupada	50
Songs written on a high level of realization / Jaya Jaya Deva Hari, Tulasi Krsna Preyasi	50
A list of concocted chants	51
Unauthoritative chants choke the bhakti plant	51
Prabhupada not wanting the use of Gaudiya-math mantras.....	51
Chants from the Gaudiya-math filtering into our movement.....	51
The infiltration of Bengali kirtans into ISKCON	51
Our principle is to stick to the authorities / Hare Krishna is the prime authorized mantra*	52
Bhajans sung from Vande ham to Radha Krsna *	52
Chanting Bhaja Hare Krsna (1)	52
Chanting Bhaja Hare Krishna (2)	53
Chanting Bhaja Hare Krishna (3)	53
Chanting Bhaja Hare Krishna (4)/ Nitai Gaur Radhe Shyam	53
Chanting Jaya Radha-madhava / "Bhaja" Hare Krishna	53
The public (in street Sankirtan) should somehow or other chant along*	54
Sing the mahāmantra just as it is	54
"Bhaja Hare Krsna"	54

Prabhupada against “Bhaja Hare Krsna”	55
Vedic mantras gone to hell / nobody can chant properly*	55
Chanting first the first half of the Maha mantra, respond, then the second half	55
The Hare Krsna Mantra is above other chants.....	55
Maha Mantra at least a half of arati kirans.....	55
The potency of chanting the maha mantra Vs other “spontaneous” chanting.....	56
Chanting Hare Krsna means following Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu	56
Vaisnava songs and the Maha Mantra*	56
Followers of Caitanya Mahaprabhu chant Maha Mantra.....	56
Adding »bolo« to the maha-mantra	57
Adding pop-style slogans (ooo, eee, wao, etc...) to the maha-mantra	57
First worship Guru-Gauranga, then Krsna*	57
As we offer obeisances to guru, the name should be there*	57
Srila Prabhupada pranam mantra to develop our relationship.....	57
Srila Prabhupada pranam mantra to be sung before Gaura Arati song	57
Chanting both stanzas of Srila Prabhupada Pranam Mantra.....	57
Prabhupada's grand-disciples chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« in kirtana.....	58
Different “Jaya”s Vs plain old Hare Krsna	58
Chanting Panca Tattva mantra before each round and in kirtans to avoid offences	59
No offence in chanting Panca Tattva Maha Mantra*	59
Chanting the Names of Panca Tattva before Hare Krsna*	59
Before chanting Hare Krsna we should chant the Panca Tattva Mantra*	59
Chanting Bhaja Sri Krsna Caitanya	59
Bhaja / Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya... (1)	60
Chanting Bhaja / Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya (2).....	60
“Sri Krsna Caitanya” only three times	60
“Bhaja sri krsna-caitanya” reminds of the bogus groups.....	60
Not to chant “Bhaja Sri Krsna Caitanya”	60
Panca Tattva Mantra only three times.....	60
Three reasons why changing the Panca Tattva Mantra is damaging to our movement	61
“Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya” instead of “bhaja”	61
The origin of the Panca Tattva Mantra	61
We should chant all five names of the Panca-tattva	62
Chanting Maha Mantra and Panca Tattva mantra in one piece.....	62
Bhaja Gaura-bhakta-vrnda	62
...jayadvaita candra jaya gaura bhakta vrnda.....	62
»Jayadvita« in prema-dhvani and Hari haraye namah krsna.....	63
Chanting “Gauranga”*	63
The name of Gauranga	63
Nitai Gaur Radhe Shyam as chanted by Caran Das Babaji	64
Chanting Jaya Sacinandana, Nitai Gaura*	64
You cannot invent / nitäi-gaura rädhe-çyäma*	64
Chanting Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam... / Radharamanacarana Das Babaji	64
Chanting Jaya Nitai-Gaura Radha-Syama, Jaya Krsna-Balarama (2)	65
Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol (1)*	65
Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol (2)	65
Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol (3)	65

Chanting “Haribol”	66
Chanting “Haribol” (2).....	66
Prabhupada not stopping “Haribols”	66
Gaura-nityānanda bol, haribol	67
Gaura Nityananda Bol, Haribol.....	67
Chanting Nitai Gaura and Radhe Radhe.....	67
Introducing speculative chants should be avoided by all devotees	67
Jaya Gaura Nitai rather than Nitai Gaur Haribol	68
Gaura, Gaura, Gaura he... (1)	68
Gaura Gaura Gaura he... (2)	68
Chanting »Haribol« is auspicious	68
Loud Haribols and ululations.....	69
“Nitai Gaura” as guror avajna	69
Sri krsna caitanya prabhu nityananda - prabhu Nityananda prabhu nityananda.....	70
Nitai-Gaura will have some effect.....	70
Mixing of mantras is rasabhasa*	70
To Krsna through Radharani*	70
Jaya Radhe.....	71
Followers of Srila Prabhupada shouldn't chant »Jaya Radhe«	71
Radhe Govinda	71
Radharani ki jaya, Maharani ki jaya.....	72
»Jaya Radhe Jaya Krsna« to 'sing the Deities to sleep'	72
Examples of current ISKCON mantras/ Govinda bolo.....	72
Jay Radhe, Jay Govinda	72
»Raghupati Raghava...« / a political motive*	72
Sri Ram Jay Ram Jay Jay Ram in a public festival*	72
No additional kirtans for Sita-Rama*	73
Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama (1).....	73
Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama (2).....	73
Prabhupada against “Raghupati Raghava...”	73
Sri Rama, Jaya Rama.....	73
Ghandi's addition to Raghupati Raghava...	74
Chanting names of Deities (1)	74
Chanting names of Dieties (2)	74
“Jaya Gurudeva” is impersonal / Bhoga arati not to be sung	74
“Jaya Gurudeva” comes from sahajiya sampradayas	74
Chanting of »Jay Gurudeva« in Gaudiya Mathas	75
Krpamoya’s thoughts on “Jaya Gurudeva” (2).....	75
Prabhupadera prana-dhana he	76
Chanting »Jaya!« at the end of Kirtana.....	76
Not too many »jayas« in the kirtana.....	76
Jaya Sita-Rama-Laksman-Hanuman	76
Chanting »Jaya« before aratis.....	76
»Ki Jaya!« meant for prema dhvani	76
Names of different personalities sung on appearance days.....	76
»Jaya Vrnda Devi«	77
Chanting BG and ISO verses in Sankirtan*	77

Singing songs and prayers in English / writing songs*	77
Govinda Jaya Jaya	77
He Krsna Govinda...*	77
He Krsna Govinda, Hari Murari, He Natha Narayana Vasudeva	77
Sri-krsna-caitanya and je anilo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood	78
Singing the first line again after completing the song / »Je anilo prema-dhana«	78
Susvagatam jagannatha	78
Singing a different tune	78
Bhajan, Kirtan, Sankirtan dictionary definitions	79
TUNES	80
Any tune can be used*	80
Different tunes for the Hare Krsna Mantra*	80
Any tune is good for chanting Hare Krsna.....	80
Srila Prabhupada wanted traditional melodies at temple programs	80
Srila Prabhupada correcting the Mangal Arati tune	80
Gurvastakam - meditation on Srila Prabhupada.....	80
The morning melody (1).....	81
The morning melody (2).....	81
Prabhupada correcting the improper morning melody.....	81
Srila Prabhupada was strict about the morning melody	81
The morning melody must be sung throughout the mangala aratika.....	81
Srila Prabhupada presents the morning melody	81
The Gurvastakam tune	82
Singing correct mangala arati tunes should be followed by all devotees	82
The melody after Gurvastakam.....	82
Morning melody with variations	82
Gurvastakam in a different melody	83
The morning melody shouldn't be sung in the evening or during the day.....	83
Morning melody and nothing else in the morning	83
The science of ragas in Vaisnava tradition	83
Brahma Samhita tune *	83
New melody of Jaya Radha Madhava	84
Ragas at a wrong time disturb the psychic balance.....	84
Simple melody*	84
The simple four-note Prabhupada tune.....	84
Prabhupada chanting the simple tune.....	84
Rhythmical presentation of the transcendental music*	84
San Francisco kirtans in the 60's / new melodies	85
Incantation concoctions in ISKCON today.....	85
Proper tune and rhythm pleases Krsna *	85
Kirtana to a country tune*	85
Srila Prabhupada's Western Vs Indian "melodiousness"	86
The best way to sing kirtana	86
Too complicated melody or mrdanga beats	86
Comlicated melodies destroy meditation	86
Too fast public kirtan means hard to follow the melody.....	86
Non-traditional tunes sung in public functions.....	86

Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public.....	87
No long, extended notes in melodies / melody should be filled	87
The proper way to sing the response.....	87
The story of Narada Muni and the broken ragas	87
Better to sing the appropriate tune	87
Sri-krsna-caitanya and je anilo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood	88
Visnujana Swami's tunes	88
Tunes and rhythms of Narottama Das Thakur	88
Kirtana leader should know the tune he's singing.....	88
Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing.....	88
Locana Das Thakur learning rhymes and rhythms of Panchali	89
QUALITY.....	90
Kirtan our duty*	90
Establishing standards of quality is important.....	90
Music is only an item for chanting*	90
Spiritual strength is the most important*	90
Focus on musical style lessens spiritual quality*	90
Purity brings quality*	90
Purity in Hari Kirtan is more important than gorgeous show*	91
Sankirtana of serious devotees attracts people from the spiritual platform*	91
The Holy Name has to dominate.....	92
The key to leading inspired kirtanas is enthusiasm	92
First, Advanced devotees should be offered the leading	92
Namabhāsa Kirtana is only punya	92
Glorifying Krishna only / not for ourselves*	92
If listening to melodious music of khol and karatala, you will.....	93
ISKCON Kirtan standard.....	93
Following Srila Prabhupada's standards	93
Utilizing musical talents in spreading the KC movement*	93
Chanting should not be done as a show*	93
We do not stress so much importance on different musical talents*	93
Do not mind about the artistic presentation*	94
Kirtana does not require any musical or dancing knowledge*	94
No need for artistic sense, but still... *	94
We want to hear good music in relationship with Krsna *	94
Kirtan organized as a quality concert.....	94
Inept devotee musicians of the 60's	94
Prabhupada not liking showy professionalism	95
Quality kirtan has been contaminated by commercial influence	95
The importance of music.....	95
The kirtana leader shouldn't be musically inept	95
Lacking musical sense can disturb kirtana	95
The power of mantra / follow the process to get success.....	96
Follow the process to get success	97
Don't pollute the mantra or it will lose its effect.....	97
Krpamoya Dasa on kirtan being a service to the Deities and the devotees	97
Practical meditation*	98

One good singer may lead*	98
Following the leader in speed and loudness.....	98
Leading a kirtan / amplified response (1)	98
Leading a kirtan / amplified response (2)	98
Leading a kirtan / amplified response (3)	99
The proper way to sing the response.....	99
Sankirtana to be performed in an organized way.....	99
Sankértana in a systematic way*	99
Public kirtana should be performed in an organized manner	100
Public kiratn shouln't be too fast and disorganized.....	100
Kirtana shouldn't go out of control.....	100
Fast Kirtana.....	100
Long Kirtanas	100
The swami two step is the best.....	101
Public dancing should be done in an open and organized manner	101
Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants.....	101
Loudness of Kirtana	101
Playing too loud.....	102
Instuments playing too loud to hear the voice	102
Instruments playing too loud	102
Kirtana should be loud enough to hear the voice.....	102
Prabhupada requesting not using amplification.....	102
Many instruments and loudness in Lord Caitanya's kirtana	102
Training devotees in public chanting, dancing and speaking*	103
Proper tune and rhytm pleases Krsna*	103
Prabhupada appreciates quality Bengali Kirtan	103
Melodious Bengali Kirtana	103
No long, extended notes in melodies / melody should be filled	103
Kirtan should be sweet and melodious.....	104
Complicated melodies destroy meditation.....	104
Tunes and rhytms of Narottama Das Thakur	104
The mrdanga player should follow the leader	104
Mrdangas played expertly together.....	104
Mrdanga and Karatalas playing together.....	105
Too complicates melody or mrdanga beats.....	105
Improperly pronounced stotras	105
Chanting /pronouncing sanskrit.....	105
Properly pronouncing »rama«	105
About chanting Hari Ramo /right pronaunciation	106
The science of ragas in Vaisnava tradition.....	106
Ragas at a wrong time disturb the psychic balance.....	106
Brahma Samhita *	106
Kalidasa Lahiri find pleasure in Harinam **	106
San Francisco kirtans in the 60's / new melodies	107
The best way to sing kirtana	107
Sri-krsna-caitanya and je anilo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood	107
Singing the first line again after compliting the song	107

Concocted Kirtana techniques	108
Locana Das Thakur learning rhymes and rhythms of Panchali	108
CONSCIOUSNESS AND MOOD	109
Kirtan our duty*	109
Kirtana – no difficulty*	109
ISKCON Kirtan standard.....	109
Street Harinam should make devotees*	109
The best way to lead Kirtana.....	109
Kirtan is glorifying Krishna only / not for ourselves*	109
Kirtan as a means to satisfy Krishna*	109
By purity attract audience in public functions*	110
All activities in the KC movement are meant for Krsna-kirtana*	110
Sankirtan of serious devotees can attract people from the spiritual platform*.....	110
Spiritual enthusiasm*	110
No need to learn the dancing*	110
Natural Chanting and dancing will unite the world*	110
Chanting should not be done as a show*	111
Sentimental agitation cannot help one advance in KC*	111
Dancing for the pleasure of the Deities / new dancing styles	111
We are not musicians, we are Kanëa bhaktas*	111
Palatable because it is glorification of the Lord*	112
Purity in Hari Kirtan is more important than gorgeous show*	112
We want to hear good music in relationship with Krsna *	112
Why imitate?	112
A devotee’s attention during Kirtana.....	113
Kirtan is to please Krsna, not for our own pleasure.....	113
The important thing is the mood or feeling with which we chant	113
Performing kirtan for money	113
Dancing is a natural spiritual emotion	113
Public dancing should be done in an open and organized manner - cooperatively.....	114
Prataparudra wonderstruck by the dancing and chanting	114
Kirtan should be sweet and melodious.....	114
Kirtana is a dynamic service to the Lord*	114
Kirtana without ulterior motives is an enthralling.....	115
The real essence of kirtana is the desire to glorify Krsna	115
Kirtan means glorifying Krsna	115
The science of music is to complement and enhance the moods of the Divine Couple ...	115
Morning prayers to be sung to the correct raga, and with devotion and reverence.....	115
Mangala arati sung gently to awaken the Lord.....	116
Any tune in relationship to Krsna is bona fide	116
Kirtana is meant for the satisfaction of Krsna.....	116
Enthusiasm for dancing.....	116
Enthusiasm in Kirtana / the pleasure of Krsna.....	116
Krsna is so kind that he has come in the form of His name to	117
Kirtana is not an egoistic activity.....	117
The spirit of Kirtana is coming together to glorify Krsna	117
Enthusiasm is the most important	117

The kirtan group shouldn't follow the leader's mistake	118
Krpamoya Dasa on kirtan being a service to the Deities and the devotees	118
The Lord will automatically reveal Himself to the view of the chanter*	118
Music in the Vedas	118
Namabhasa Kirtana is only punya	118
Kirtan should be graceful and melodious	119
Kirtana is naturally joyful.....	119
To many instruments divert attention from the Holy Name*	119
Attention on the Hare Krishna Mantra *	119
More ears to hear and tongues to hear and chant*	119
Concentration on hearing Hare Krsna *	120
The effect of jokingly or seriously chanting the Holy Name*	120
Emphasis on style brings imitation*	120
Chanting the Names of Panca Tattva before Hare Krsna*	120
Vedic mantras gone to hell / nobody can chant properly*	120
Responsive chanting – you get to chant and hear*	120
Any tune can be used*	121
Vaisnava songs and the Maha Mantra*	121
Vaisnava songs and the Maha Mantra*	121
No need for artistic sense, but still... *	121
Hare Krsna Mantra – not a material musical manifestation*	121
Servants of the holy name*	121
Parrotlike chanting has no value*	122
Realization is most important *	122
Mixing of mantras is rasabhasa*	122
The Holy Name has to dominate.....	122
Talking during kirtan.....	122
The power of mantra / follow the process to get success.....	122
Serving the kirtana	123
Melodic instruments in kirtana divert attention from the mantra.....	123
No long, extended notes in melodies / melody should be filled with the mantra	124
Hare Krsna Maha Mantra is the most important.....	124
As much kirtana as possible	124
Impure heart experiences pleasure from artistically performed Kirtana	124
Crazy dancing concoctions in ISKCON today and with SP	124
Kirtana shouldn't go out of control.....	126
Srila Prabhupada slowly building up rhythm of Kirtana to	126
Slow Kirtana enables entering into meditation on the names	126
Banging and crashing Vs glorification of the names of God	126
Kirtana should not be chaotic	126
The leader interacts with the rest.....	126
Long Kirtanas	127
Morning program is more important than all-night kirtan.....	127
The advantage of long festival kirtanas	127
Mrdanga players should also sing.....	127
The potency of chanting the maha mantra Vs other “spontaneous” chanting.....	127
Chanting Hare Krsna means following Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu	127

Kirtan chaos means chaos in devotees' spiritual lives	128
Properly pronouncing »rama«	128
Prabhupada introduces and prefers a simple style of Kirtana.....	128
The proper way to sing the response.....	128
The importance of music.....	128
Following the Parampara*	129
Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam / following acaryas*	129
Concocted chants / Nitai Gaur Radhe Shyam / following acaryas*	129
The use of Panca-tattva Mantra as given by the acaryas*	130
Sticking to the Vaisnava principles brings luster and attracts people*	130
Bhajans sung from Vande ham to Radha Krsna *	130
One must become spiritually advanced to find suitable words to	131
The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord & not to attract a crowd+	131
Kirtan as faith in the words of Guru*	131
Unauthoritative chants choke the bhakti plant	131
Gurvastakam meditation on Srila Prabhupada	131
Singing songs by Srila Prabhupada's God-brothers	132
The benefit of publics' hearing maha-mantra Vs other prayers.....	132
Devotees in the stage of sādhana have to learn from the.....	132
Three reasons why changing the Panca Tattva Mantra is damaging to our movement...	133
Following Srila Prabhupada's standards	133
Kirtana is no arena for singers.....	133
Srila Prabhupada pranam mantra to develop our relationship.....	133
The importance of being acquainted with the wealth of Vaisnava songs.....	134
Songs written on a high level of devotion.....	134
Professional musicians at ISKCON centers.....	134
Prabhupada Didn't like harmonizing (a distraction)	134
Bengali sahajiya style present in ISKCON kirtana / come to the.....	135
Unauthorised chanting popping up in ISKCON	135
Concocted Chanting	135
Do restrictions apply for advanced devotees aslo?	135
Concocted Kirtana techniques	136
Chanting "Gauranga"	136
Kirtan leader should be a representative of Srila Prabhupada	137
Simple chanting is the most proper	137
The infiltration of Bengali kirtans into ISKCON	137
Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing.....	137
On Prabhupada's grand-disciples chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« in kirtana	138
The Kethuri festival kirtana of Jahnavā Mata	138
Mahāprabhu chanting at teh Ranganatha temple.....	138
Isvara Puri faints upon hearing Mukunda Datta	139
Sweet kirtana by Devananda Pandit	139
Jay Radhe, Jay Govinda	139
Waves of prema at Kethuri	139
Kālédāsa Lahiri find pleasure in Harinam **	139
Kālédāsa Lahiri turns Vaisnava**	140
Sri-krsna-caitanya and je anilo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood	140

Singing the first line again after completing the song /understanding the meaning	140
Kirtana should start with all the instruments	140
Mrdanga should follow the leader	141
Mira Bhajans and commercial music is not appropriate	141
ETIQUETTE	142
Kirtan our duty*	142
Responsive chanting is the system in India*	142
Any tune can be used*	142
Sticking to the Vaisnava principles brings luster and attracts people*	142
Concocted chants means guror-avajna*	142
Bhajans sung from Vande ham to Radha Krsna *	143
Prabhupada ignoring unbonafide Radharamanacarana Das Babaji's followers' chanting	143
Acaryas' mantars, Panca Tattva Mantra and Hare Krsna should be chanted.....	143
Devotees turning backs to deities*	143
Dancing in the middle of the kirtana*	143
Backs to the Deities*	144
Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants.....	144
First, Advanced devotees should be offered the leading	144
Etiquette regarding who should lead Kirtana	144
Instruments during Sri Caitanya / following the leader*	145
Kirtana should start with all the instruments	145
The mrdanga player should follow the leader	145
Bhajans to be sung in the ascending order	145
»Jayadvaita« in prema-dhvani and Hari haraye namah krsna.....	145
Maha Mantra at least a half of arati kirans.....	146
Followers of Srila Prabhupada shouldn't chant »Jaya Radhe«	146
Prabhupada's grand-disciples chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« in kirtana.....	146
Talking during kirtan.....	147
Conversations during kirtana is an offence.....	147
Following the leader in speed and loudness.....	147
Kirtana leader should know the tune he's singing.....	147
The proper way to sing the response.....	147
The kirtan group shouldn't follow the leader's mistake	147
Morning program is more important than all-night kirtan	148
Clean hands in kirtan.....	148
Standing up in aratis.....	148
Kirtana shouldn't finish before the blowing of the conch.....	148
DRESS.....	149
Devotees properly dressed in a street Sankirtan*	149
How to dress in public kirtan.....	149
Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants.....	149
Costumes in street Sankirtan*	149
Costumes of Gaura Nitai in street sankirtana *	150
Provocatively dressed woman dancing improperly at Mayapur	150
FESTIVALS AND STREET SANKIRTAN.....	151
Defining (San) kirtan *	151
Krsna Consciousness movement is about music and dancing*	151

The terminology of Nagara-sankirtan, Harinam-sankirtan etc	151
Public chanting is the process and it's easy *	151
Wherever saikértana-yajia is performed, many thousands of people gather*	151
Street Sankirtan to reawake the sleeping souls*	152
Street sankirtana as much as possible*	152
Outdoor kértana must be done*	152
First program is to organize a sankirtan party*	152
Prabhupada desired a world sankirtan party.....	152
People will be attracted by rhythmical presentation*	152
Street Harinam should make devotees*	153
Advertisement *	153
By purity attract audience in public functions*	153
Spiritual strength is the most important*	153
Not concerned with the satisfaction of public*	153
Kirtan as a means to satisfy Krishna*	153
People will appreciate sankirtana for the devotees' sticking	153
The chanting attracts even the conditioned souls*	154
Melodious kirtana attracts everyone*	154
Kirtan is meant for everybody*	154
Kirtana is both singing and recitation of Scripture*	154
The public (in street Sankirtan) should somehow or other chant along*	154
Speaking during street Sankirtan*	154
Speaking during street Sankirtan / 2*	155
Sankirtan attracting people from the spiritual platform	155
Different techniques and styles - pleasing to the Lord - attractive to the public.....	155
Prabhupada pleased by favorable and unfavorable publicity – as long as they hear the Holy Name	155
Hari Kirtan more important than gorgeous show*	156
The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord & not to attract a crowd*	156
The benefit of publics' hearing maha-mantra Vs other prayers.....	156
Srila Prabhupada's suggestion on speaking in public	157
Mantras to be chanted in public*	157
Country tune at Ratha Yatra to attract more people*	157
Training devotees in public chanting, dancing and speaking*	157
Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol in festivals.....	157
Srila Prabhupada wanted traditional melodies at temple programs	158
Non-traditional tunes sung in public functions.....	158
Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public kirtans or temple programs	158
Prabhupada chanting the simple tune in festivals.....	158
Mantras to be chanted in public	158
Organizing preaching events*	159
Arranging for Ginsberg's show*	159
Formula for street Sankirtan*	159
Dancing and instruments in the Sankirtan party *	159
Using amplifiers*	159
Using harmonium in a street Sankirtan *	159

Harmonium, accordion and horns in Street Sankirtan	159
Srila Prabhupada allowing other than traditional instruments in festivals	159
Guest bringing their instruments to kirtana	160
Sound system in Street Sankirtana	160
Srila Prabhupada leading the dance.....	160
Street kirtan speed	160
Children dancing in street harinam.....	160
The procession and dancing in the streets	161
Dancing in public	161
Public dancing should be done in an open and organized manner	161
The dancing in street harinam	161
Costumes of Gaura Nitai in street sankirtana *	161
Flags in street Sankirtan / 1*	161
Flags in street Sankirtan / 2*	162
Flags in street Sankirtan / 3*	162
Flags in street Sankirtan / 4.....	162
Using flags in festivals *	162
Using Mahā-mantra banners	162
Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants.....	162
How to dress for a public Kirtan.....	162
Kirtan organized as a quality concert.....	163
Loud kirtan turns off visitors	163
What is most important in organizing festivals	163
Kirtan and prasadam is for general public *	163
Prasada and invitations to be distributed freely.....	163
Street sankirtana to be performed in a systematic and organized way.....	164
Public kirtana to be performed in an attractive manner	164
Morning program is more important than all-night kirtan.....	164
Nama-yajna festivals – continous chanting	164
Stay-high-forever kirtanas.....	164
The advantage of long festival kirtanas	165
Nagara kirtana was Lord Caitanya's principal preaching method and devotees should do it as often as possible	165
Waves of prema at the Kethuri festival	165
MISCELLANEOUS PARAPHERNALIA, SOUND, AMPLIFICATION, ETC... ..	166
Defining (San)kirtan (1) *	166
Defining (San)kirtan (2)*	166
You may use amplifiers*	166
Costumes in street Sankirtan*	166
Natural Chanting and dancing will unite the world*	166
Chanting should not be done as a show*	167
Voice amplification over loud drumming*	167
Dictionary definitions	167
Defining Kirtan and Bhajan.....	167
Amplified response.....	167
Amplified response (2)	168
Amplified response (3)	168

Sound system in a street Sankirtan.....	168
How to dress for a public Kirtan.....	168
Children dancing in street harinam.....	169
The procession and dancing in the streets	169
Dancing in public	169
Prabhupada requesting not using amplification.....	169
Appendix I: GENERAL GUIDELINES ON SANKIRTAN	170
We are simply sankirtan men*	170
Srimad Bhagavatam announces Mahaprabhu's sankirtan	170
Srila Prabhupada fulfilling Mahaprabhu's prediction	170
Sankirtan is a must*	171
Street Sankirtan parties should be organize according to time and men*	171
Krishna Consciousness movement is based on chanting...*	171
Simple preaching and sankirtana*	171
The definition of (San)Kirtana	171
Kirtan as Vaisnava culture	171
All should understand the basic points of Kirtana	172
The importance of being acquainted with the wealth of Vaisnava songs.....	172
24-hour kirtan in ISKCON centres	172
The terminology of Nagara-sankirtan, Harinam-sankirtan etc	172
Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing.....	172
Application of Srila Prabhupada's mood / understanding in kirtana / SRS	173
Appendix II: IMPORTANT VERSES ON THE GLORIES OF THE HOLY NAME	174
The Holy Name Is the Universal and Supreme Religion for this Age	174
The Transcendental Attributes and Effects of the Holy Name	177
The Practice of the Holy Name.....	184
The Propagation of the Holy Name.....	185
Other Verses About the Holy Name.....	186

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Concentrating on the holy name not on the instruments*

The other musical instrument, if he plays his attention will be diverted in musical instrument, not to chanting. "We have to see melody, whether it is going on nicely." But that is not good. Our concentration should be hearing Hare Krsna. That is... That is bhakti. Caitanya Mahaprabhu, simply this karatala, khola, that's all. In those days... Of course, there was no harmonium, but many stringed instruments were there. Sitar, esaraja, but these things were not used. Sometimes we do use to attract, but it is not required.

Room Conversation, December 26, 1976, Bombay

To many instruments divert attention from the Holy Name*

Regarding your question about kirtana, practically we are not concerned with the instruments. They are used sometimes to make it sweeter, but if we divert our attention for using the instruments more, that is not good. Generally kirtana is performed with mrdanga and karatalas, but if somebody is expert instrument player, he can be admitted to join Sankirtana. We can accept everything for Krishna's service, but not taking the risk of diverting attention to any other thing which will hinder our Krishna Consciousness. That should be our motto, or principle

letter to Jadurani, 26 May 1969

Mrdanga and karatala is enough*

My opinion is that it is not necessary for us to utilize these different musical talents for spreading Kanna Consciousness. I would rather see people follow strictly the path of Lord Caitanya and His Saikirtana devotees. We are using mrdanga, karatala, that is enough. We are not musicians. We are Krsna bhaktas. Therefore we do not stress so much importance on these different musical talents. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu is God Himself. Had He thought it would have been better to spread Krsna Consciousness by another way He would have done so. But no, simply with mrdanga and karatala, traveling and chanting Hare Krsna, asking everyone to chant Hare Krsna, preaching simply Srimad-Bhagavatam philosophy, this is the process. There is no need for us to try and add anything to this simple method. It will only be a distraction.

letter to Jagadisa Pandit, 28 December 74

Instruments in temple programs / only mrdanga and karatala*

Regarding instruments for temple kirtanas, karatala and mrdanga are sufficient. There is no need of other instruments.

letter to Rupanuga, 2 February 1975

Instruments in aratis

Traditionally, the instruments played on Lord Caitanya's harināma-saikirtana were simply madaiga and karatalas. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted only these instruments to be played in temple āratīs.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Instruments during Sri Caitanya*

During Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's time, one party was composed of twenty-one men: four people playing madaigas, one leading the chanting, and sixteen others striking karatālas, responding to the leading chanter.

CC Ādi-līlā 17.135, purport

Styles of playing Mrdanga*

With regard to your question about Bengali style kirtana and mrdanga playing, one or two styles is best. To introduce more styles is not good. It will become an encumbrance. Who is that Kṛṣṇa das Babaji who is teaching? If we introduce so much emphasis on style of kirtana, then simply imitation will go on. Devotional emotion is the main thing. If we give stress to instrument and style then attention will be diverted to the style. That will be spiritual loss.

Letter to Satvarupa, 30 June 1976

Rhythm instruments are good for Kirtana

He said that rhythm instruments are good for kīrtana because they make one more inclined to dance, and dancing, in turn, unlocks devotion. . . .

Interview with Revatī-nandana dāsa, Memories, Vol. 1

If listening to Khol and Karatala – naturally you become detastful of other sounds*

...Now, here, the bhakti-yoga system is that if you stick to the hearing of Hare Kṛṣṇa and the music, melodious music of kohl, karatala, then naturally you become detestful for hearing other songs...

BG 4.1 -- Montreal, August 24, 1968

Better use rhythm instruments to increase the motivation to dance

He said a good kirtana lasts half an hour to forty minutes and the first half an hour is all slow and then it speeds up to a crescendo the last ten minutes. He liked the kirtana that was slow. Also in public programs whenever there were guests he almost always sang (sings standard Hare Kṛṣṇa tune) or some similarly very simple melodies slowly and just gradually building to a crescendo. He didn't like harmonizing, and he didn't like melodic instruments during kirtana because the melodies of the instruments would detract from listening to the mantra; although he liked rhythm. Srīla Prabhupada said that harmoniums and other melodic instruments are not meant for kirtana, as the ear will follow the music and be diverted from the holy names. Rhythm instruments are good, he said, because they increase the motivation to dance, and dancing in turn invokes devotion.

Revatinandana Das

Too complicates melody or mrdanga beats

If the lead singer introduces a complicated melody the rest of the group can't follow and as a result the congregational singing is weak, such kirtan is deficient. The same goes for complicated mrdanga beats that do not follow the natural flow of the mantra and are just a show of player's skill.

Kulapavana Das Dandavats Comment, June 12, 2007

The mrdanga player should follow the leader

Prabhupada was present during a kirtana performed by his disciples in the Brooklyn temple. The mrdanga player had been practicing to learn complicated beats, and he was demonstrating his rapid and intricate abilities in the kirtana. But Prabhupada stopped the music and said to the drummer that he should follow the leader. Then he started the kirtana again, but it happened again and again Prabhupada stopped the kirtana and asked the drummer to follow the leader

Prabhupada Nectar, 1.22

Mrdangas played expertly together

Good mrdanga playing can really add zest to a kirtana. And the sound of two or more mrdangas expertly played together wonderfully pleases the heart and mind. Bhaktivinoda Thakura sings, mrdanga vadya, sunite mana/ abasara sada yace: “I always desire to hear the sound of the mrdanga.” Srila Prabhupada also advised his disciples to hold mrdanga concerts.

Bhakti Viksa Swami, Kirtana / referring to Letter to: Dvarakesa, 29 September, 1976

Mrdanga players should also sing

Those who are learning to play mrdanga should do so at a time and place so that the Deities and devotees are not disturbed. Mrdanga players should also sing. Some mrdanga players put all their concentration into maintaining a complex rhythm and thus neglect to sing. But it is better if they play a more simple beat and sing also.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Respect and care for mrdanga

Bengali Vaisnavas venerate their instruments as part of the Lord’s paraphernalia. Before starting a formal kirtana, they worship them with flowers, sandalwood paste and prayers—or at least respectfully touch them to the head. A professional Bengali mrdanga player chooses a good instrument, then looks after it and keeps it for years. Despite traveling constantly under rough conditions, he makes sure his khol (another name for mrdanga) does not break. He cannot afford to smash and buy drums at whim.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Mrdangas should be kept covered

The resonant boom of a good mrdanga adds life to kirtanas, so every temple should have at least one good mrdanga. Srila Prabhupada said that we should have good quality mrdangas and that they should always be covered for protection. (cf. 761104RC.VRN and Lilamrta III.63) Each mrdanga should be purchased with a cover, which should then always remain on the drum. Clay mrdangas are fragile and should be handled carefully. They should be carried properly by conscientious devotees.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

If mrdanga becomes loose or flat...

If the large (“purusa”) end of a mrdanga becomes loose and flat, its tone may be restored by beating. Better than beating the edge of the mrdanga on the floor to revive its tone is to beat it with the type of hammer specially made for that purpose, or on a wall. Exposing to heat is also effective, but must be done carefully, as excessive heat will cause the skin of

the drum to rupture. It is safer to slowly heat a mrdanga head in the sun or near to a radiator than by a naked flame.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Clay mrdanga is the best

If a high-quality, expensive mrdanga is purchased, it is best if it is handled and played only by experienced devotees. For general use, (at least outside India where clay mrdangas are not easily available) it is best to use fiberglass or other unbreakable mrdangas. Although they do not sound as good as properly tuned quality clay mrdangas, they are more or less devotee-proof.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Mrdanga and Karatalas playing together

After the lead singer, the mrdanga player is the main leader in the kirtana. All the kartala players are meant to follow him. Mrdanga and kartalas should be played together harmoniously to enhance the transcendental sound vibration of the holy names. Kartalas should be chimed sweetly, like gopis' ankle bells, especially when the tempo is slow. They should not be clanked together like dustbin lids.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Soft and loud playing of mrdanga and karatalas

In kīrtana all musical instruments, including the madaiga and karatālas, must be played in a mood of serving the kīrtana, not controlling it. When Śrīla Prabhupāda first arrived in England in 1969, he told the devotees how, in Lord Caitanya's saikīrtana, instruments were played softly while accompanying the lead singer, and louder for the chorus, back and forth.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Karatālas should be cleaned

Karatālas should be shining and have clean multicolored ribbons strung to them, and the madaigas should be covered with attractive colored cloths.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

What karatalas to use?

Big kartalas are more suitable for outdoor kirtana than for inside, where the sound reverberates and amplifies. It is suggested that ISKCON leaders purchase small kartalas for use in their temples. This will improve the quality of kirtanas and protect the devotees' eardrums. When purchasing kartalas, each pair should be tested individually. They should have a sweet, resonant ring, not a dull clank.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Taking care of Karatalas

Kartalas should be strung with cloth sufficiently wide (at least 1.5cm) that it does not cut into the finger, and sufficiently long (at least 20cm) that it can be wrapped several times around the fingers for firm grip. The cloth should always be clean, therefore it should be washed or changed from time to time. Colored ribbons are ideal, being attractively colorful, thin enough to be easily strung through the kartala hole, and also strong. Each

kartala should be strung on a separate cloth. If two kartalas are strung on the same cloth, free movement of the hands is inhibited.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Srila Prabhupada teaching the simple karatala rhythm

For kartala playing, Srila Prabhupada taught and usually played a simple 1-2-3, although he did sometimes play a slightly more complex rhythm. Bengali kirtanias know how to do all kinds of wonderful things with a simple pair of kartalas, but for our day to day kirtanas in ISKCON, 1-2-3 is quite sufficient.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Whoompers and gongs in kirtana

Jhāija (“whompers”) and gongs are not mentioned in Caitanya-caritamṛta, but have become accepted in the Bengali kirtana tradition. They were widely used in ISKCON in Srila Prabhupada’s personal presence. Srila Prabhupada often played a gong while chanting Jaya Radha Madhava before class. Among gongs, flat brass ones give the best sound: sweet and chiming, like a bell. The temple bell may also be pulled in time with the kirtan. Gongs, jhajhas and bells are all loud instruments, and should be played with care, so as not to drown out the sound of the singing, as described above.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Blowing of the conch shell and horns *

Responsive chanting is very nice; one good singer may lead, and the others may join in. That is the system in India. It is very good for two reasons especially: One, the chanter gets to rest, so he does not become tired, and two, you get to chant and hear, that is the process. You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers. Blowing of the conch shell and horns is very nice.

letter to Haasadūta dāsa and Himāvatī dāsī, March 3, 1968

Using harmonium for bhajan, not kirtan*

The harmonium may be played during bhajan if there is someone who can play melodiously. But it is not for kirtana and arati.

letter to Bahudak, 11 January 76

Using harmonium in a street Sankirtan *

When such [public] kīrtana will be demonstrated, only the harmonium player may sit, and all the others may stand up and join the kīrtana and dancing properly dressed.

letter to Haasadūta dāsa, February 4, 1968

Kirtan with harmonium

In Vrindavan devotees were singing kirtan during aroti with harmonium. This did not please Srila Prabhupada. Srila Prabhupada asked Bhakti Caru Swami to go tell the devotee to stop singing with harmonium. He went to the temple and saw that it was Baradvaja Prabhu singing. He approached him and told him that Srila Prabhupada did not want him to sing with harmonium. He then went back to Srila Prabhupada's quarters, and Srila Prabhupada asked, "Who was the devotee singing?" He replied, "It was Baradvaja Prabhu, Srila Prabhupada." Srila Prabhupada replied, "Oh, it was Baradvaja? He can sing with harmonium."

Prabhupada cautions against the use of harmonium

Undoubtedly, harmonium accompaniment enriches the musical effect of kirtana. That may be why Srila Prabhupada cautioned against its use, lest we become overly concerned with the musical effect.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Using “vedic” stringed instruments *

Regarding the instruments, stringed instruments are Vedic, but the real Vedic instrument is mrdanga and karatala. Anyway, you have to do according to the time and circumstances if you use these other instruments. So you have got my approval and you can go on.

letter to Bahudak, 10 November 75

Using tamboura *

You can sing also very nicely, sing also, like songs, with tamboura. It is very nice. (sings:) Cintamani-prakara-sadmasu kalpa, like that, it is very nice. In every temple there should be, one man should play on tamboura and chant. It requires nice pronunciation, and with the sound of tamboura it will be (indistinct). People are coming, offering darsana, and the singing is going on. That is the system in Indian temples. It immediately vibrates.

Srila Prabhupada, >>> Ref. VedaBase => Charles Darwin

Tamboura and mrdanga in street Sankirtan*

The chanting is very effective. Along with tamera and mrdanga played very rhythmically let them chant. Perform this musical demonstration and sell books as far as possible, and feasting.

Letter to Harikesa, Vrndavan, October 28, 1976

Melodic instruments in kirtana divert attention from the mantra

Śrila Prabhupāda gave a Sunday feast lecture about kīrtana, and he said things that I never heard him say at other times, particularly not during a lecture. He remarked that melodic instruments, including the harmonium, are not meant for kīrtana, and he explained why. He said that the ear will automatically follow musical strains, and then our attention will be diverted from the mantra.

Interview with Revatī-nandana dāsa, Memories, Vol. 1

Srila Prabhupada not liking guitars

Bhurijana Prabhu later comments that he feels that Prabhupada didn't really desire the use of guitars, but submitted because the idea was forcefully presented to him.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting My Glorious Master, p.201

Using djembe (big african drum) in kirtana

I would like to bring to attention these African drums which have recently featured in many kirtanas, especially here in South Africa. I forget what they are called, but they certainly do have a powerful bassy sound.

The problem is though, the sound of these drums drown out the mrdanga sounds. If mrdangas are specifically made for glorifying the Lord by lending rhythm, these other drums fail to do justice. ... Culturally they may help the local African people feel a sense of

convergence in terms of musical rhythm, but they should be left perhaps for Harinamas or Ratha-yatra.

Even so, when someone is leading kirtana they naturally feel enthused when the response from the congregation is rousing. A kirtana leader will not complain too much when these drums are resounding - for they lend more support for him - in which case, he would not be the best to judge on kirtana aesthetics. ... And when they (african drums) are pounded the exotic vibration causes a mixture of big bass, African and Vedic, which can be a little bizarre sometimes. ...

Kesava Krsna das Dandavats Comment, date 12, 2007

Using guitar in kirtans

Our preaching in Hong Kong was successful because we were using friendly and relaxed means to attract the local Chinese people. In our creative attempts at preaching, we held kirtanas with guitars and mrdangas. I decided to ask Prabhupada about it.

"Prabhupada, we have been holding kirtanas using guitars. Is that all right?"

"Kirtana means khol (mrdanga) and karatala. That's all."

"But it is so difficult to preach in Hong Kong. And the Chinese people like kirtanas better when they are soft and with guitars. They don't like loud kirtanas with many instruments."

Prabhupada acceded to my pushing and gave us permission to also use guitars in our kirtanas along with the standard khol and karatala.

Our spiritual master may sometimes agree to our requests because we present them forcefully, but that doesn't necessarily mean it is Krsna's desire. We should be careful that our own enthusiastic vision does not cover our ability to recognize our guru's actual desires.

My Glorious Master - Bhurijana dasa

Using Accordion

Some devotees like to play harmonium on harināma-saikīrtana. But much more practical for walking harināma is the accordion, which is designed to be played while standing or walking. Horns like the trumpet and bugle are also a nice addition to harināma-saikīrtana. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that horns were also played in Lord Caitanya's saikīrtana. Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Dancing and instruments in the Sankiratn party *

Each party must consist of seven men as follows: two madaiga, four karatāla, and one dancer. One of the karatāla players is lead singer, and the dancer dances freely up and down between the two lines of players three on each side as in the drawing.

letter to Haasadūta dāsa, June 13, 1970

Public events /using different instruments*

Another proposal is I want to form a sankirtana party in which two members will play mrdanga, eight will play the cymbals, two will play on tampura, and one harmonium, besides that there will be the leader of the party. This party will be so trained that exhibitions of our chanting and dancing along with distribution of prasadam will be performed on a stage and for this performance we will sell tickets to the public. It will be known as a spiritual movement.

Letter to Hamsaduta, LA, January 22, 1968

Clapping is sufficient*

Anyone can chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. There is no need for instruments, although Caitanya Mahāprabhu introduced the madaiga (drum) and karatālas (cymbals). Otherwise, clapping in itself is sufficient.

TLK Vs. 42 purport

Music is only an item for chanting*

As I have already written to you, we should not try to become a very popular musical party. Music is one of our items for chanting, but we are not musicians. We should always remember this fact. The best example is that we take advantage of the typewriting machine, but that does not mean we are professional typists.

letter to Mukunda, 2 July 1969

Arranging for Ginsberg's show*

Recently I have made one record in Los Angeles, so in trying to train our men in that rhythm is not difficult. Just arrange for sixteen men; four mrdangas, harmonium, tamboura, and the rest playing karatalas. If we can perform kirtana following the recently made recording, it will be marvelous.

Letter to Hayagriva and Pradyumna, Allston, May 3, 1969

Kirtana does not require any musical or dancing knowledge*

It does not require any artificial musical knowledge or dancing knowledge. Out of your own ecstasy, you will dance, you'll chant. You don't require to study. Just like our playing of mrdanga. Nobody has gone to an expert mrdanga player to learn it. Whatever I play, I sing, I never studied under some expert teacher. But by practice, chanting, it may be melodious, it may be very nice or not. That doesn't matter. We are not concerned about that, whether it is appealing to the people or not. It will appeal; there is no doubt about it. But we don't require to divert our attention to these things. Simply because there is glorification of the Lord, it will be palatable.

SB lecture, Oct 6, 1969 New Vrindavan

Prabhupada satisfied with Harrison's western music arrangement

I remember one old letter I read from Prabhupada, that I don't think is even in the haktivedanta Archives. In it, Prabhupada said that we should organize kirtan as a concert in a hall, and people should pay to purchase a ticket to attend. He said there should be a mrdanga, harmonium, tamboura and karatalas, and a very nice concert should be performed. Of course, we know he also shed tears of love when he heard George Harrison's musical arrangement for Govindam, that we still hear every morning in an ISKCON temple, to this day, but he was using slide guitar, harp, bass, organ, a full drum kit, etc...

Gaura Dasa, Comment on Dandavats, June 10th, 2007

Instruments playing too loud to hear the voice

Most of the time in our temples the instruments are played much much louder than the Singer's voice, it often happens that only the musical instruments are heard and the actual glorification of the Lord is barely heard. According to the musical rules the instruments should be subordinate to the actual voice of the singer.

Dvija Raj Das, Dandavats Comment (posted by loveharekrishna), June 11th, 2007

Instruments playing too loud

If you are approaching a kirtan group and all you can hear is the instruments drowning the Maha-mantra, such kirtan is deficient. The mantra must be heard clearly and distinctly over the instruments.

Kulapavana Das Danfavats Comment, June 12, 2007

Instruments being used in the 60's at Thompkins Square Park

One thing I noticed from the wonderful new Prabhupada videos by Yadubar Prabhu et al, was how inept some of the early devotee musicians were in the early kirtans, for example in what I think was Thompkins Square Park in the '60s.

Someone was mindlessly blowing random notes on a recorder, the harmonium was used as a drone instrument with just one key being held down, etc. We've come a long way baby.

Akruranatha das Dandavats Comment, June 11th, 2007

Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public kirtans or temple porgrams

There is a distinction between street kīrtana and temple kīrtana. In street chanting, liberties may be taken to make the chanting more attractive to the public, such as additional instrumentation, dance choreography, and attractive dress. The same applies to festivals and Sunday Feast kīrtanas. For regular temple kīrtanas, however, the need to attract the public is absent, and thus temple kīrtanas are stricter when it comes to melodies, instrumentation, and so on.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Kirtan should be sweet and melodious / not clanging and banging

We had a kīrtana at the Rāma-lilā grounds, 1976 March, and Dīnanātha was leading, and tens of thousands were attending and chanting. After the program Śrīla Prabhupāda and I were alone in the back tent waiting for his servant and the car. As you know, he would often ask rhetorical questions, and he asked me, “So, what did you think of the kīrtana?” Understanding this was just a lead-in to his giving me an instruction, I answered with a bland “It was OK.” Śrīla Prabhupāda’s definition to me then was as follows: “No, it was not nice. It was clanging and banging. Kīrtana should be sweet and melodious. Come let us go to the ashram and have kīrtana.”

And so we went — Śrīla Prabhupāda, his servant, Baradrāj, and myself. Except for his servant, the three of us sat in his room and Baradrāj played harmonium on the request of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and we had a long kīrtana. . . . On Śrīla Prabhupāda’s signal, the kīrtana ended. He looked at me, smiling, shaking his head a little, and said, “So . . . sweet and melodious.” And then he moved on with the rest of preaching and hearing. I had heard him say, and heard that he also said, sometimes stopping kīrtana, “No screaming and shouting.”

Tejyas dāsa, remembrance, 12 Nov 2002

Many instruments and loudness in Lord Caitanya's kirtana

Proponents of super-loud kirtanas may cite that in Lord Caitanya’s kirtana parties at Rathayatra eight men played mrdangas and thirty-two played kartalas. However, Bengali kirtana is generally sung in a high octave that can be heard even over the sound of many kartalas. Furthermore, Bengali kirtana is mostly played with fairly small kartalas (diameter approx. 6 cm.) that add a sweet chime to the singing, rather than drowning it out

altogether. Another consideration is that traditionally, Bengali kirtana was generally conducted in the open air or in an open pavilion, so even if loud percussion instruments were used, the volume would not be increased by reverberation against walls.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana should start with all the instruments

Sometimes in a kirtana no-one takes up mrdanga or kartalas, except the devotee leading. This is not proper. Best is if, even before the kirtana begins, devotees have the instruments ready to play. Otherwise the kirtana is often disjointed at the beginning, as devotees gradually get instruments and join in one by one.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati restoring usage of traditional kirtan instruments

Later, other instruments such as harmoniums, violins and ektars were introduced into popular Bengali kirtana. To restore kirtana to an act of worship rather than a musical performance, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura restricted the use of instruments to mrdangas and kartalas only.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Srila Prabhupada allowing other than traditional instruments

In the early days of ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada allowed all kinds of instruments in kirtana. In the first temple at 26 2nd Avenue, guests even played on the innards of an old upright piano. There was no mrdanga, so Srila Prabhupada played a bongo drum. This was in accordance with Bhaktivinoda Thakura's advice: any instrument according to local use. At the Honolulu temple, Srila Prabhupada also participated in kirtanas where the devotees played electric guitars and bass guitars. Even later on, Srila Prabhupada allowed the use of tamboura and other instruments—not in the regular temple kirtanas, but in preaching programs, festivals, etc., as an attraction for the public: "Sometimes we do use [other instruments] to attract, but it is not required."

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / Srila Prabhupada Lilamrta II. 146 / 761226rc.bom

Guests bringing their instruments to kirtana

If outside guests occasionally bring musical instruments like guitars and want to play on them during kirtan, it is probably best to encourage them to play along, if they can follow the tune. This may be especially at Sunday feasts programs, that are like an open house where maximum participation is encouraged with least formality. Kirtana is our religion, and it is good to encourage all to participate, as long as the chanting goes on without too much disruption.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

DANCE

Chanting Jaya Sacinandana, Nitai Gaura and dancing*

So this benediction is offered by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who has very kindly come here, Nitai-Gaura. So you take advantage of His mercy. You are very fortunate that Nitai-Gaura is here. If you simply chant Nitai-Gaura and dance, then you'll become happy. There is no difficulty. There is no difficulty. You are chanting "Jaya Sacinandana." This simple chanting, "Jaya Sacinandana," "Hare Krsna," this chanting and dancing, yajñair sankīrtanair prayair yajanti hi sumedhasah. This is not I am manufacturing. It is the injunction of the śāstra. In this age, simply by chanting and dancing, yajñair sankīrtanair prayair, you get complete spiritual service. So I am very glad you are taking care of Nitai-Gaura so nicely, They are so nicely dressed. So continue these activities, and even if you cannot do anything, simply chant Hare Krsna and dance and "Jaya Sacinandana." That will make your life perfect.

Lecture Baltimore, CC Madhya 20.102, July 76

Krishna Consciousness movement is about music and dancing*

Our Krishna Consciousness movement is practically based upon music and dancing.

Letter to Mr. Levine, 25 January, 1969

Caitanya Mahaprabhu's movement is dancing and chanting*

Lord Caitanya's movement of Krishna consciousness is full of dancing and singing about the pastimes of Lord Krishna.

CC Adi 2.2 purport

Artificial dancing is not all right*

The kirtana begins with the chanting of the mahamantra, slowly at first and melodiously. Later the chant will speed up as the spirit of the devotion spreads. Often the most rapid and intense chanting is done by a hard-core knot of dhoti-ed men before the curtains of the shrine." The devotees get in one group and start... (laughter) Hard-core devotees. "The rhythm approaches that of an express train, and the atmosphere is apt to remind a lay visitor of an old-fashioned football rally. Some of the onlookers try to keep up with the central group, clapping their hands, swaying their bodies, throwing arms upwards and, among the younger, adapting modern dance steps to the rhythm. When the shrine curtains are drawn back, devotees kneel and press their foreheads..."

Prabhupada: Who has introduced this peculiar dancing?

Hari-sauri: It just evolved. (laughs)

Rūpanuga: We were speaking about that the other day. It's changed from the original dancing that you showed us to something else. Too much like the modern dancing.

Prabhupada: Hmm. I think this is not good.

Tamala Krsna: Shall I read on? "The service has become..." What way should we dance, Srila Prabhupada? With our hands outstretched? Sometimes the devotees like to jump around. Is that all right?

Prabhupada: In ecstasy one can do anything, that is another... But artificially to do something is not good.

Tamala Krsna: But if one feels like jumping, it is all right?

Prabhupada: Anything artificial is not required.

Rupanuga: So running back and forth is not...

Prabhupada: No, no, that should not be an artificial.

Hari-Sauri: We don't dance for show, we dance for the pleasure of the Deities.

Tamala Krsna: No, we're not professional dancers.

Room Conversation, July 10, 1976 NY

The whole world will dance in ecstasy*

"I shall personally inaugurate the religion of the age—nama-sankirtana, the congregational chanting of the holy name. I shall make the world dance in ecstasy, realizing the four mellows of loving devotional service."

CC Adi 3.19

Dancing will bring ecstasy*

People should be encouraged to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra and try to bring the ecstasy and dance. Even if there is no ecstasy, dance, it will bring ecstasy. Dancing is so nice.

Lecture, 730716, London

Dancing like peacocks*

If [materialistic persons] can find the association of a person engaged in the loving devotional service of the Lord, they become enlightened and dance just like peacocks. We have practical experience of this: many of our students were dry and morose previous to their coming to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but having come into contact with devotees, they are now dancing like jubilant peacocks.

Krsna, Ch. 20

Simple melodious singing and dancing*

...You come, sing, dance, and take prasadam. Is there any difficulty? If people come to us, in melodious songs they sing and they dance and when they are tired they take sumptuously prasadam, so what can be the more convenient way?

Room Conversation -- November 7, 1970, Bombay

Dancing with raised hands like Panca Tattva*

All previous acaryas, all previous authorized persons in this line, they have done it [chanting and dancing]. Just like see Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He is chanting and dancing, chanting and dancing, you see, the same thing. This picture is before you so that gradually, when you feel ecstasy, you will also dance like Him. And when you automatically dance, then you will know that the thing is already realized, not artificially, but when you feel, "Oh, let me dance. It is so much ecstatic. Let me dance." Nothing should be done artificially. Let everything come automatically. And only we have to follow. Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah.

Lecture, September 8, 1966. NY

We are not professional dancers+

Regarding dancing, our dancing is ecstatic. We need not waste time 5 hours daily instead of chanting, for practicing. We are not professional dancers, neither we require it. These things should not be encouraged.

Letter to: Satsvarupa, 19 April, 1973

Dancing and instruments in the Sankiratn party *

Each party must consist of seven men as follows: two madaiga, four karatāla, and one dancer. One of the karatāla players is lead singer, and the dancer dances freely up and down between the two lines of players three on each side as in the drawing.

letter to Haasadūta dāsa, June 13, 1970

Our magic is chanting and dancing*

Our magic was simply this chanting and dancing; that's all.

letter to Baṭu Gopāla dāsa, July 8, 1971

Dancing in the middle of the kīrtana*

Regarding your dancing in the middle of the kīrtana, it is not wrong. It is completely right. If in your kīrtana everyone dances in ecstasy it is perfectly all right. That is spiritual enthusiasm.

letter to Hamsadūta dāsa, October 19, 1974

No need to learn the dancing*

Nitya-siddha kanṇa-bhakti sādhya kabhu naya. It is not that one has to learn it artificially by some gymnastic. No. Natural. Just like the children here, they are also dancing with their parents. They are offering flower, trying to imitate how to chant. Naturally.

SB lecture, Los Angeles, June 1, 1972

Natural Chanting and dancing will unite the world*

If people are simply induced to chant Hare Kanṇa mantra . . . Just see. Even a child, he is taking part. It is natural . . . they are dancing and chanting. So this movement is so important. Somehow or other if you can engage them in chanting and dancing, the whole world will be united.

SB lecture, Bombay, December 27, 1974

Dancing in a circle*

Yes, I am going to the newly purchased church temple and when I go there by Sunday next, I shall try to teach the local boys in the way of performing saikīrtana in a circle.

letter to Mukunda dasa, April 1, 1970

Stage dancing performance*

This party will be so trained that exhibitions of our chanting and dancing along with distribution of prasādam will be performed on a stage and for this performance we will sell tickets to the public.

letter to Hamsaduta dasa, January 22, 1968

Kirtan as faith in the words of Guru*

I never chanted and danced to make an artificial show. I dance and chant because I firmly believe in the words of My spiritual master...I deserve very little credit for these activities of chanting and dancing, for they are being done automatically by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

CC Adi 7.95-96 purport

Kirtana does not require any musical or dancing knowledge*

It does not require any artificial musical knowledge or dancing knowledge. Out of your own ecstasy, you will dance, you'll chant. You don't require to study. Just like our playing of mrdanga. Nobody has gone to an expert mrdanga player to learn it. Whatever I play, I sing, I never studied under some expert teacher. But by practice, chanting, it may be melodious, it may be very nice or not. That doesn't matter. We are not concerned about that, whether it is appealing to the people or not. It will appeal; there is no doubt about it. But we don't require to divert our attention to these things. Simply because there is glorification of the Lord, it will be palatable.

SB lecture, Oct 6, 1969 New Vrindavan

Turning backs to Deities while dancing and dancing to one another *

Rupanuga's concern was about the way the devotees dance in the temple. He felt it was not proper. "Especially during mangala-arati. Is it not that the devotees should not turn their back while dancing to the Deity?"

Prabhupāda agreed with him. "No, no."

"And that they should not bump each other or dance with each other personally, distracting the attention from the Deity? Shouldn't all the dancing be focused toward the Deity?"

"Sometimes dancing is done here in peculiar method," Prabhupāda said wryly. He was smiling, but his point was serious. "That is not desirable. The dancing, Caitanya Mahaprabhu is showing."

"You have shown us the changing of the feet with arms upraised, not with the back to the Deity," Rupanuga said.

"They do it out of sentiment," Prabhupāda said, "but that is not very good."

"Also they bump one another with the drum or with each other's bodies. That is not bona fide is it?" Rupanuga asked. "It is very popular in our movement now."

"They are inventing," Prabhupāda said resignedly. "What can I do? If you invent your own way. ... "

Room conversation, July 8, 1976, Washington, D.C.

Turning back to the Deities (1)

In Bombay, on the last day of our "Hare Krsna Festival", we saw you dance and watched you circumambulate the Deities twice, clapping and smiling and turning so respectfully so that your back would not be to Them.

New Delhi VP offering, 1973

Turning back to the Deities (2)

Although it is not offensive to dance in a circle before the Deities, care should be taken not to keep one's back to Them. We must remember that our dancing is for Their pleasure. Especially while the arati ceremony is in progress, devotees' attention should be mainly to the Deities.

Pancaratra Pradip

Turning backs to the Deities (3)

The scene: Mayapur Gaura-Purnima festival, 1976. Prabhupada is seated in his room, talking with Prajapati dasa and his wife, who are leaders of a Krsna conscious dance and

theater group. They are showing Prabhupada pictures of one of their performances in a temple.

"Why are their backs to the Deities?" Prabhupada asked.

"Because Jayatirtha said ... "

"Jayatirtha?" Srila Prabhupada said it in a way that obviously rejected their reply. He then asked that whatever GBC men were nearby should come at once to his room. When the men had gathered, Srila Prabhupada began lecturing to them on the point of not turning one's back to the Deity. "Rupa Gosvami has said, 'Do not turn your back to the Deity,' but now they say someone has said it is all right." Prabhupada looked around heavily to the devotees in the room. "This is the problem," he said. "We have so many big, big acaryas." When a devotee began speaking and mentioned another one of Srila Prabhupada's leading disciples, Prabhupada immediately cut down, with a few words, both the devotee in the room and the person he had referred to. Then everyone was silent.

SP Nectar 4-18: "Why Are Their Backs To the Deities?" (Only one reference recorded by a devotee but not in the conversations etc..)

Dancing concoctions in ISKCON today and with Srila Prabhupada

*Regarding dance, I am glad that the committee is taking that on as well. There is a great need to upgrade the dancing situation and eliminate, from the GBC level, some of the outrageous concoctions that are now spread all over the world. Here are some of them: *

1. *High speed twist spin (where two men wrap their arms together and spin as fast as they can while the adoring audience clears space and eggs them on. This is a serious deviation from vaishnava practices. Can you imagine anyone daring to do this in front of Srila Prabhupada? They tried all kinds of things, but no one would ever have dared to introduce the High speed spin! They also sometimes knock people over, and most certainly, they stop chanting, which Srila Prabhupada would never, ever approve. You know that. Worse, the women are now also imitating the men with this spin! whatever the men do, the women will certainly follow, and they are already doing it. What really bothers me is that I have never even once seen any sannyasi or guru object to this concoction. They just write it off as "the

kids having fun". so how far will we go with this "kids having fun" concept as contrasted with the guru parampara? where's the limit? the problem is that there is not limit at all, and the concoctions will gradually, or not so gradually, get worse and worse. Case in point:

2. *The rub-your-rear on the floor mandala spin. Have you seen this? They do it right in Mayapur, in the Pancha Tattva hall. the last time I saw them holding hands and getting ready to do this, I just couldn't stomach it, so I broke it up. Yet no one else, no sannyasis or senior devotees ever say anything. Is it " yaso mat, tato mat"? Is that what things have come down to? then we are finished as part of the param para!

*So the Mandala floor spin goes like this: A standing outside ring of young men holds their hands out, grasping the arms of an inner ring of young men who are down on the floor with their rears touching the floor. the outer ring suspends the inner ring, and the rings begin to spin around. Of course they all stop chanting, while the men on the floor in the middle polish the floor with their rears! Really, i did not make this up! I have witnessed it with my own eyes, right in Holy Mayapur dham!

Were you present in Chicago when all the Radha Damodar busses were present (probably 1975, for the installation of Sri Sri Kishore Kishori)? The temple room, formerly a large

basket ball gymnasium in a YMCA or something similar, was full with about 600 or more devotees. A rip, roaring fast kirtan was going on, in front of Srila Prabhupada. the young male devotees were dancing crazy, running up to each other with their hands almost like fists, almost in a confrontational way, and going back and forth, twisting their bodies about like spastic epileptic fits. Suddenly, Srila Prabhupada gave the order to stop the kirtan completely. It was like stopping 500 freight trains, but he gave the order. The shocked devotees fell silent. then Srila Prabhupada spoke: "Not like this" (imitating the boxing-like motions of the men). "Like this", and Srila Prabhupada got up, once again re-introducing the original swami two step, just as he had taught in New York and in the San Francisco bay area in 1969-1970. From this intervention by Srila Prabhupada, and stopping of "enthusiastic" kirtan, it is clear that there are standards that must be kept, not just a free-for-all based on unrestricted concoctions and sense gratification. Please share this with the committee. More later. *

letter Mahkanlal Das to KSC pamho (Text PAMHO:13544752)

Defining Kirtan and Bhajan

KIRTAN - Congregational chanting of the glories of the lord for all to hear. Sung loudly whilst standing usually accompanied by musical instruments and dancing

BHAJAN - Singing the glories of the Lord, especially songs of the vaisnava acaryas. Sung melodiously whilst sitting and accompanied by musical instruments

Hari Sauri Prabhu to KSC pamho

Swami two step the best way to please Krsna

I was taught we danced for the pleasure of Krishna, under the direction of Radharani, and that the swami two step was the best way to do that. Some twirling. It seems that so many are unable to master the two step and its infinite variations and refinements, and instead gyrate and flop around like untrained dancing bears, simply dancing for their own pleasure, or to display raw athleticism to impress whomever they deem necessary to impress. If you can't dance well, dance with lots of energy, another de facto standard. Kirtan is supposed to be pleasing. If it ceases to be pleasing to listen to or to watch, is it still kirtan?

Madhava Ghosh dasa Dandavats Comment on June 10th, 2007

Avoiding collision during exuberant dance

Dancing devotees (especially those performing coordinated "wave" dancing) should keep in mind that some people may be chanting with their eyes closed, concentrating on the mantra and thus unable to avoid collision with the more exuberant dancers.

Kulapavana Das Dandavats Comment on June 12, 2007

»O Arjuna, I declare the truth that I become purchased by the person who sings My Names and dances before My Deity form«

Adi Purana / quoted by Bhakti Vikasa Swami in Kirtana

The auspiciousness of dancing

O king, when the devotees of Lord Kanna dance, their steps crush the inauspiciousness of the earth, their glances destroy the inauspiciousness of the ten directions, and their upraised arms push away the inauspiciousness of the demigod's planets.

Padma Purana, quoted in the Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya 20.68

Dancing removes all the sins

All the sins of those who dance before the Deity while playing kartalas fly from their bodies like birds.

Visnu Dharmottara; Hari Bhakti Vilasa 8.291

Not dancing leads to a lame birth

When the devotees are dancing no one should remain sitting and watching and no one should come between the Lord and the dancers. That person who remains sitting and watches the devotees dance will be born lame birth after birth.

Hari Bhakti Vilasa 8.291

Enthusiasm for dancing

If devotees do not dance, there is a danger that their taste for Krsna consciousness will dry up, and they will descend to the mental platform of scheming and speculating. Dancing is also a service, so even if, for whatever reason, a devotee does not feel like it, he should still try to dance for Krsna's pleasure. Even if lacking enthusiasm or energy, still devotees should somehow or other start to move their hands and legs. Enthusiasm will follow. There is great taste to be had in kirtana and dancing, even in the neophyte stage.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Unwilling to dance

Those who are unwilling, particularly guests and newcomers, or the sick and elderly, should not be forced, although they may be encouraged in a friendly way to join in.

Those who are older and less energetic may not be able to dance as vigorously as teenagers, but as long as there is some life, we should try to dance for Krsna. Dancing is not only meant for young devotees. Srila Prabhupada personally set the example by dancing ecstatically for Krsna in his (apparent) old age. Some devotees seem to consider themselves to be too mature, sophisticated or senior to join in. This is a mistake. Dancing is for all devotees. So even if we are tired, we can at least lift our arms thinking "Krsna likes me to do this."

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Dancing should be enthusiastic, beautiful, and well coordinated

Although Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want the chanting and dancing of his disciples to be professional or artificial, this does not mean that he did not want their chanting and dancing to be enthusiastic, beautiful, and well coordinated. It was Śrīla Prabhupāda himself who taught the devotees to dance together in an organized fashion.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Srila Prabhupada's style of dancing

You can see his motion on films. Don't expect to see much big, athletic jumping up and down. He would mostly start from the waist and shoulders, moving up and down in rhythm with kīrtana, and then jump. Dancing for Prabhupāda always meant upraised arms and extended fingers, like the depiction of Gaura and Nitāi. That was how he introduced dancing in his room at 26 Second Avenue, leading us around in a circle, showing how you put your left foot to the right side and how you sway back and forth with the arms always upraised. Kīrtanānanda called it "the Swami step." Once in Chicago he admonished boys

who were twisting, disco style. Emphatically from the vyāsāsana he raised up his arms. He did it once, and when the dancers did not heed, he did it again: “Like this!”

It would come upon him at different memorable times, walking-dancing with ecstatic kīrtana at Ratha-yātrās in London and Australia or in temple rooms packed with devotees or before thousands at outdoor paṇoāls in India. Suddenly creating waves of excitement—all devotees rising with him—he would dance, and we would dance. He danced, and we are dancing.

Satsvarūpa dasa Goswami; letter to Jadurani devi dasi, September 4, 1972.

Prabhupada’s graceful dancing

In the early days if somebody was dancing wildly Srila Prabhupada would frown and encourage them to not do it. He liked everyone to dance gracefully back and forth and if they were inclined to jump up and down to just leap. He would put his hands up and leap straight up and down. At other times he would just dance gracefully back and forth. He really liked that fluid graceful dancing and sometimes jumping. Srila Prabhupada said that devotees should dance with dignity (quoted by three "early day" devotees at devotee reunion festival, Bhaktivedanta Manor 1994). Srila Prabhupada personally danced in an ecstatic, but dignified manner. He said that dancing should be graceful and gentlemanly, and that such dancing will help one to feel more devotion (Revatinandana dasa). And in a lecture in Paris (710626LE.PAR), Srila Prabhupada said that "devotees dance rythmically." Srila Prabhupada appreciatively pointed out devotees who danced gracefully, and encouraged other devotees to dance like them

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

ISKCON dancing styles

Several styles of dancing in formation have been evolved in ISKCON that, although not traditional, are tasteful and not against the spirit of devotion. Some of these are:

(a) Rows of devotees rhythmically approaching each other and then receding.

(b) Dancing round and round in a circle. This was personally introduced by Śrīla Prabhupāda in kirtana in the West.

(c) Rhythmically moving towards and away from the Deities or vyasasana. Srila Prabhupada liked this style, although he did not personally teach it. After seeing it at the first Mayapur Festival in 1973, some devotees introduced this style in America. Some of the devotees thought it was strange, so Pradyumna dasa asked Srila Prabhupada if it was alright to dance like that. Srila Prabhupada replied, "Yes, of course!"

(d) Dancing in the middle of a circle of devotees. When asked about this, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied, »Regarding your dancing in the middle of the kirtana, it is not wrong. It is completely right. If in your kirtana everyone dances in ecstasy it is perfectly all right. That is spiritual enthusiasm. Letter to: Hamsaduta, 19 October, 1974

In all such formations, devotees should take care not to show their backs to the Deities. In form (b), devotees should move back and forth without turning around. In (c), devotees should turn while moving in the circle away from the Deities.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Jumping

Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta (e.g. Mad 12.140-1) describes Lord Caitanya's high jumping in kirtana. Śrīla Prabhupāda personally introduced jumping in kirtana in the West.

However, Srila Prabhupada's jumping was also graceful. He would jump only slightly bending the knees, not in athletic bounds.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Offensive dancing

Devotees should maintain reverence and avoid offenses while dancing, such as pointing the feet at the Deity or keeping one's back to the Deity. Dancing by raising high the knees or the whole legs is unauthorized, speculative and indicative of uncultured upbringing. Raising the legs means pointing the feet towards the Deities or devotees, which is offensive. Also, the legs should not be bent at the knee so that the soles are visible from behind.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Dancing should be controlled

Enthusiasm in kirtana and dancing must be tempered with decorum. In any cultured form of music or dance, enthusiasm is vital, but so is style, without which all becomes chaos. Unless and until a devotee actually attains the platform of uncontrollable ecstasy, one's dancing for Krsna should not be free form.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

What should and shouldn't dancing be like

Sometimes the ecstasy spills over and kirtanas become wild (as described in Bhakti Ratnakara (nd Bhaktivinoda Thakura's. However, such dancing should especially not be done in front of the Deities. And generally, dancing should be graceful and enthusiastic--not wild, and certainly not violent.

Srila Prabhupada often disparaged the materialistic "ball dance," so dancing for Krsna should certainly not be like a disco dance, stomp, boogie, breakdance, hip-wriggle, public bar fling, football game, acrobatic performance or exhibition of strength, vigor or sensuality. As Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "I never chanted and danced to make an artificial show. I dance and chant because I firmly believe in the words of My spiritual master

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Dancing to attract the opposite sex

It may be that devotees consciously or unconsciously try to attract the opposite sex while dancing. Such dancing cannot, of course, be pleasing to Krsna. Anyone who overtly does so should be cautioned by a senior devotee. Also, men and women should keep well apart from each other while dancing lest they inadvertently bump into each other

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Dangerous dancing

Dancing in ways that can cause injury must be avoided. Examples are:

- (a) two devotees clasping hands and spinning aggressively. This is a macho sport that has nothing do with Lord Caitanya's sankirtana movement.
- (b) spinning with arms outstretched.
- (c) tossing children (or even adults) in the air or lifting them.
- (d) pushing and shoving.

Devotees dancing in the (a) or (b) styles can spin off out of control and crash into other devotees.

In crowded situations, devotees should be careful, even while dancing in an authorized manner, not to bump into others, tread on their toes, poke them with the arms, or hit them with karatalas. Devotees should also take special care not to jostle senior Vaisnavas while dancing. In crowded kirtanas (e.g. at Rathayatras), devotees may form a ring around senior devotees to protect them from pushing and shoving.

Bhakti Viaksa Swami, Kirtana

Women dancing in kirtana

Traditionally in India, respectable women were not even seen in public, let alone allowed to dance in public. But times have changed. Srila Prabhupada liked to see his western lady disciples dance for Krsna as happily as the men. However, in keeping with their femininity, it is better if women exhibit some reserve in doing so.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Bharata Natyam and similar / women dancing

Formerly, women were trained to dance for the pleasure of Deities in temples. Such dancing was never meant for public stage performance. In Vedic tradition dance is particularly meant for the pleasure of God. Women who danced in front of ordinary men were understood to be prostitutes. Public performances of Bharata-natyam and other Indian dance styles are therefore not very bona fide. Performances of Krsna's rasa-lila, often by children, are part of many regional Indian devotional cultures, and are pleasing if performed in a pure manner.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Children dancing in street harinam

Furthermore, if older devotees dance with the children hand in hand in a circle, it is easy for children from the public to join in. And from that point it is easier to get adults to join in as well. If the kirtana progresses in this way, it is even possible to have a group of twenty, thirty, or forty people dancing and chanting with the kirtana.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Dancing in public

In standing and dancing harināma-saikīrtana, it is important that the devotees dance together facing the public. Sometimes devotees dance with their backs to the public. This is not good. The purpose of harināma, as Śrīla Prabhupāda said, is to “Induce the people to chant, that is the only thing.”

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam (quoting letter to Kīrtirāja dāsa, January 11, 1976)

The dancing in street harinam

The kirtana party should be kept in together and in order--not straggling here and there. Preferably, a megaphone should be used. Devotees can also blow conch shells. Dancing should be harmonious, graceful and aesthetic. It is better that the dancing does not get wild in the public view.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kīrtana with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing

The saikīrtana should start slow and then build up speed. The top speed should be just fast enough so that everyone can respond melodiously and dance gracefully. When the kīrtana gets too fast, the dancing gets frenetic and disorganized, the melody gets harder to follow, and the kīrtana continually stops and starts because devotees get tired. But kīrtana played with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing and melodious chanting, and can continue for hours without stopping. Such kīrtana is much more attractive to the public.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Dancing is a natural spiritual emotion

Srila Prabhupāda taught that dancing to the sound of the Hare Kāṇa mahā-mantra is a natural spiritual emotion, It is already there in everyone's heart. As it is stated in the Caitanya-caritāmata, kāṇa-bhakti nitya-siddha. Nitya-siddha. It is eternally a fact. . . . It is not to be realized, it is already there.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Pratāparudra wonderstruck by the dancing and chanting

When the devotees from Bengal first came to Jagannātha Purī to meet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, King Pratāparudra asked Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya to come to the roof of the palace so they could see all of the devotees as they arrived. Sārvabhauma told the king the name of each devotee and described the devotee's special glories. When he saw and heard the wonderful kīrtana, King Pratāparudra was wonderstruck and commented, "This kīrtana is so wonderful. Never before have I seen such wonderful dancing or heard such melodious chanting." Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya replied, "This sweet transcendental sound is a special creation of the Lord known as premasaikīrtana, congregational chanting in love of Godhead."

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam (quoting CC, Madhya 11.98)

Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public kirtans or temple programs

There is a distinction between street kīrtana and temple kīrtana. In street chanting, liberties may be taken to make the chanting more attractive to the public, such as additional instrumentation, dance choreography, and attractive dress. The same applies to festivals and Sunday Feast kīrtanas. For regular temple kīrtanas, however, the need to attract the public is absent, and thus temple kīrtanas are stricter when it comes to melodies, instrumentation, and so on.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Mangala arati dancing (1)

Mangala-arati is meant for giving a powerful spiritual charge at the beginning of the day. All in attendance will certainly feel purified and enlivened in Kṛṣṇa consciousness if the prayers are sung to the correct raga, and with devotion and reverence. If mangala-arati is led in this way, by a devotee whose only motive is to satisfy guru and Kṛṣṇa, the effect is most enchanting. The minds of all present are captured and drawn to the lotus feet of guru and Kṛṣṇa. There can be no better way to start the day.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Mangala arati dancing (2)

Many devotees feel that the mangala-arati kirtan should be sweet and gentle, as if to gently awaken the Lord. Dancing in mangala-arati is also nice, as Srila Prabhupada once recommended. (cf. letter to Upendra, Feb 19, 1973) And there is no restriction against the mangala-arati kirtana being lively. However, it is generally more appropriate that ebullient kirtanas be kept for later in the day.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Dancing invokes devotion

He said a good kirtana lasts half an hour to forty minutes and the first half an hour is all slow and then it speeds up to a crescendo the last ten minutes. He liked the kirtana that was slow. Also in public programs whenever there were guests he almost always sang (sings standard Hare Krsna tune) or some similarly very simple melodies slowly and just gradually building to a crescendo. He didn't like harmonizing, and he didn't like melodic instruments during kirtana because the melodies of the instruments would detract from listening to the mantra; although he liked rhythm. Srila Prabhupada said that harmoniums and other melodic instruments are not meant for kirtana, as the ear will follow the music and be diverted from the holy names. Rhythm instruments are good, he said, because they increase the motivation to dance, and dancing in turn invokes devotion.

Revatinandana Das

Steady tempo is suitable for graceful dancing

In general, kirtanas should begin slowly and develop smoothly. The leader should not let the kirtana run out of control. A good kirtana leader knows how to start a kirtana at a slow or slow to moderate tempo and gradually build it up to a steady or slightly faster speed. Or, he can start with steady tempo and keep it at that. Kirtana maintained at a steady tempo can go on for a long time without a break. A steady tempo is suitable for graceful dancing, and does not quickly exhaust the energy of the devotees.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Dancing with raised arms

It was here that Brahmananda Maharaja and I introduced the Bengali style of dancing to the western devotees. We had learned it at the Mayapura festival. Many of the devotees loved it and Srila Prabhupada was seen smiling as he watched the devotees dance before him. But, some did not agree. Pradyumna asked Srila Prabhupada if it was all right to dance in that way because some of the devotees thought it strange. "Yes, of course!" Srila Prabhupada replied. Srila Prabhupada loved to see his disciples chant "Hare Krsna" and dance in ecstasy. Jai Srila Prabhupada!

Srutakirti Dasa, Prabhupada Nectar

Three styles of Gaudiya Kirtana

This was the inauguration of the Padavali kirtan of Narrotam Thakur. This original style became known as Garanahati as it developed in the area of Gaderhata (Pargana). Its specific features were its slow tempo, long talas (rhythmic cycles) and cultured language. Narottama was a great preacher and travelled extensively throughout Bengal and Assam performing kirtan. His disciple Ganga Narayana Chakravarti followed in his footsteps, also visiting Manipur, and in this way the Garanahati style influenced the Assamese and Manipuri styles of kirtan and dance that we see today. 108 talas are said to have been used

in this style as well as many ragas. Narahari Chakravati, in his Bhakti-ratnakara has mentioned that no one ventured to violate the sastric rules and injunctions laid down in the ancient musical treatises such as Gita-Prakasa, Sangita Parijata, Sangita-siromani, Sangita-ratnamala, Vachaspati, Sangita-damodara, Sangita-Narayana etc. As well as following all the musical rules mentioned by Bharata in his Natya-sastra. Different interpretations of this Padavali style developed in different regional areas of Bengal. Vipra dasa Ghosh propagated the Manoharsahi style in Manoharsahi Pargana, Thakur Gokulananda the Ranihat Reneti style in Ranihati Pargana, and Venidasa the Mandarini style in the Sarkara Mandarana. There was another style Jhadakhandi started at Midnapura by Kavindra Gokula. The special features of those four schools is that at present none are easily recognizable for want of proper knowledge, culture and application.

Bhakti Vijnana Goswami, letter to Bhakti Vikasa Swami, 09 December 2002 / quoting ?

Krsna is dancing with the devotees

Devotees dance in the morning, in the evening and as much as possible in between. By dancing for the pleasure of the Lord, a person can employ his whole body in devotional service. Just by dancing, we become purified. Srila Prabhupada said that, “When we chant Hare Krsna and dance, Kanna is also dancing with us.»

Bhakti Viaksa Swami, Kirtana

PARTICULAR SONGS

Sankirtana means Maha-mantra*

Even if one chants many mantras, it must be preceded by glorious sankirtana. Sankirtana is the maha-mantra.

letter to: Yamuna, Dinatarine, 13 January, 1976

Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing

He then went on to specifically describe how kirtana should be done.

A.For mangala aratika: the samsara-dava prayer, then Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.

B.For the guru-puja: the "guru-prayer" (that's what he called it) Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.

C.For evening aratika: the gaura aratika song, Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), and Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.

D.For all aratikas this basic pattern should be followed. The chanting of sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra) should only be for three times, not more.

E.No one should sing a bhajana unless all the devotees know what the song means.

No one should sing songs in Vrindavan temple that are in languages which the people do not understand. Yasomati-nandana may be sung since the people understand that

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Songs sung by Lord Caitanya*

So I am giving herewith a few lines of authorized songs which you may deliver to George. They are as follows:

1. Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

2. Hari Haraye Namah Krsna Yadavaya Namah

Yadavaya Madhavaya Kesavaya Namah

3. Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna He

Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna He

Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Raksa mam

Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Pahi mam

Krsna Kesava Krsna Kesava Krsna Kesava Raksa mam

Rama Raghava Rama Raghava Rama Raghava Pahi mam

So these songs were sung by Lord Caitanya Himself, therefore they are the most authorized songs.

letter to Smasundara dāsa, 25 February 1970

No need to introduce anything new*

As far as music is concerned, we have got our standard of music, the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra. We do not require to introduce anything new.

Letter to Bhakta Wayne, 3 January, 1977

Chanting the Parampara given chants*

Just follow. We disagree with the persons who chant that bhaja nitāi-gaura rādhe-śyāma. No. We must follow strictly. Mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu [Cc. Madhya 17.186]. We cannot manufacture simply for some worldly cheap reputation and prestige. If we manufacture something, that will not help us. We must follow. Mahājano yena. Dharmasya tattva nihitāa guhayāa mahajano yena gatah sa panthau. We must follow the mahājanas. So you'll find in the Caitanya-caritāmata, the Kavirāja Gosvāmī, in every chapter he begins, śrī-kanna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda, jaya advaita..., gaura-bhakta-vanda. This is the process.

CC Lecture Adi 7.5, Mayapura march 7th 1974

Gurvastakam in a different melody

There is another well-known tune for Sri-Guruvastakam. This tune should not be sung during mangala-arati. It is suitable for singing when Sri Guruvastakam is sung in the day, such as on the appearance day of sampradaya acaryas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Gurvastakam being sung at mangala arati

Sri Guruvastakam, although meant to be sung during the brahma-muhurta, is not specifically a mangala-arati song. The Gaudiya Math standard is to sing it before mangala-arati. However, Srila Prabhupada told us to sing Sri Guruvastakam during mangala-arati, so we do.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Morning songs

Certain songs are meant for particular times of day, and should not be sung at other times. For instance, Arunodaya- kirtana (Udilo aruna... and Jiva jago...) and Vibhavari Sesa are meant to be sung, not exactly during the brahma-muhurta, but at daybreak—just before, during and after sunrise. Vibhavari sesa literally means “the moon is finished”. Aloka pravesa means “the light is entering”. To sing it during the pre-dawn brahma-muhurta is clearly inappropriate. Once in Bhubanesvara early in 1977, Srila Prabhupada corrected a disciple for singing Udilo aruna... in the evening. Similarly, Gaya gaura madhura svare is meant for early evening.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prayers in temple aratis

More or less his [Śrīla Prabhupāda's] exact words were: Now I want to establish the standards for kīrtana. You may chant as follows; for maigala-ārati, the saasāra-dāva prayer, then śrī-kanna-caitanya, then Hare Kanna, nothing else. For the guru-pūjā, “the guru-prayer” [that's what he called it], śrī-kanna caitanya, Hare Kanna, nothing else. For evening ārati, the gaura-ārati song, śrī-Kanna-caitanya, and hare Kanna, nothing else. For all āratīs this basic pattern should be followed. The chanting of śrī-kanna-caitanya mantra should only be for three times, not more. No one should sing a bhajan unless all the devotees know what the song means. No one should sing songs in Vandāvana temple that are in languages which the people do not understand. Yaśomatī-nandana may be sung since the people understand that. [Harikeśa continued:] I did not put this section in quotes since it would be highly presumptuous of me to think that I can remember

Prabhupāda's exact words after thirteen years have passed, but it is close enough for us to learn from.

Harikesa Swami, The Vaisnava Journal 1988

Morning program at Gaudiya Math, Vishakapatnam

While on Padayatra India many years ago I attended the mangal arati and morning prog. In Puri Maharaja's math in Vishakapatnam. There was a succession of bhajans right through the morning - and no japa period!

Kripamoya das, letter to KSC

Chanting Gurvastakam wherever one goes

Even when devotees are traveling or in other circumstances when they might not be able to maintain a regular program of kirtan, they should not neglect to do kirtana daily. It is especially important that devotees recite the Gurvastakam every morning, even if quietly to themselves.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« before Gurvastakam

Jayadvaita Swami has suggested that grand disciples of Srila Prabhupada sing om ajnana... before the Srila Prabhupada pranama-mantra. He writes: "Properly, a disciple should offer respect first to his own spiritual master, then to the previous ones. At any kirtana, the leader should first chant a generic mantra of obeisances to the spiritual master, such as Sri Gurvastakam or om ajnana timirandasya, and then Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra. The idea here is that with the first mantra Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples offer obeisances to their spiritual master. Then only can they properly offer obeisances to Srila Prabhupada.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting Jayadvaita Swami

Nrsimha Prayers

Srila Prabhupada instituted the chanting of prayers to Lord Nrsimhadeva after each Deity arati. A recent speculation is to sing the refrain Jaya Jagadisa hare two or four times, but Srila Prabhupada taught to sing it three times (c.f. 700801SB.LA), and there is no need to change from this standard.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Nirtana

Brahma Samhita tune*

Regarding the presentation of "Govindam" as well as other mantras, the vibration is always pure. I will give the theme and if the sound is Westernized that does not matter. But another point is that this specific sound of Kirtana as I sing is also another introduction of art that can be intermingled with Western art, and such combination will certainly be appreciated. But so far I know that the Kirtana tune is a specific representation of Gaudiya Vaisnavas and this tune is appreciated all over India as unique. They say that the Kirtana tune is the specific gift of Bengal, and that is a fact. So why not utilize this tune in the Western countries under the able guidance of such expert musician as George?

Letter to Syamasundara, L.A. 25 February, 1970

Chanting Tulasi Prayers without adding anything

For instance, the line *krpa kari koro tare vrndavana-vasi* is simple, clear Bengali and the meaning is easily understood. However, if the word *bhaja*, *bolo* or *jaya* is placed before it, it doesn't make any sense. The song should just be left as it is.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Guru puja sung as a rock 'n' roll balad

At one of the ISKCON international festivals in Vandāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda rejected the singing of one of his disciples. The devotee had previously been a singer in a band, and his kīrtanas were much appreciated by some devotees, especially those from his home temple. But when, with showy professionalism, he began leading the guru-pūjā in Prabhupāda's presence, making the tune sound like a rock and roll ballad, Prabhupāda didn't like it. He shook his head and indicated that someone else lead. The "great" kīrtana singer was devastated by the rejection, another form of Prabhupāda's mercy.

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, Prabhupāda Nectar

Dui pade loilo sarana

Another popular, unnecessary and meaningless interpolation is the line, *dui pade loilo sarana*, often inserted at the end of Sri Guru Vandana. This means to order the guru to take shelter at two undefined feet. A similar interpolation, *prabhupada loilo sarana*, is an order to Śrīla Prabhupāda to take shelter. Correct, in archaic Bengali, would be, *tua pade lainu sarana*: "I took shelter of your lotus feet." Just passable is, *prabhupada, lainu sarana*: "Śrīla Prabhupāda, I took shelter of you." These are grammatically better interpolations than the ones mentioned above, but nevertheless interpolations and therefore unnecessary.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Jaya Radha-madhava

Srila Prabhupada instituted the chanting of Jaya Radha-Madhava before class. He personally sang it in the original form as written by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. There is a variation with many extra "Jayas," which Srila Prabhupada liked, but he did not personally sing it.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Gaura Arati to be sung at sandhya arati

In the Gaudiya tradition, there are many arati songs, such as those for Radha-Krsna and Gaura-Gadadhara, yet Srila Prabhupada established that Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Gaura Arati (*jaya jaya Gauracander*) be sung at evening arati in every ISKCON temple. This song is specifically meant for singing during sandhya-arati (evening arati).

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Other songs at aratis

When Srila Prabhupada was asked about singing other bhajanas in arati, he said *jiva jago* was alright, but "better stick to Hare Krsna."

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting ISKCON in the 1970's by SDG, Vol.1, p. 118

Akharas in Gaura arati

Akharas are lines added to songs for poetical effect. They are commonly used in Bengali kirtana to repeat or explain a point already made. They sometimes take the form of long

poetical digressions. There are many standard ākharas for well-known Bengali songs. In ISKCON, only two simple akharas are common: the lines gaurangera arotika sobha jaga jana mana lobha and sankha baje ghanta baje madhura madhura baje, sung in the Gaura-arati kirtana. Some ISKCON devotees, especially from Bengal, sing ākharas for every line of the Gaura-arati song. However, as Srila Prabhupada wanted that chanting of Hare Krsna take up at least half of the arati kirtana, and as he did not like new innovations, it is suggested that we stick to the form approved by Srila Prabhupada.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Hari Haraye

Lord Caitanya would chant, haraye namau, kanṇa yādavāya namau/ gopāla govinda rāma śrī-madhusūdana. (cf. Caitanya-caritamṛta, Adi 17.122, and Madhya, 25.64) Srila Prabhupada recommended that these two lines be sung after the Hare Krsna mantra in our centers, particularly in Mayapura. (cf. Adi 17.124, purport) These two lines were later expanded by Narottama Dasa into the song beginning Haraye Namah Krsna (Nama-Sankirtana). In Bengal this is often sung as a finale to Vaisnava functions. Usually ISKCON devotees only sing the first four verses, but there is no particular reason for this. If we are going to sing a song, we might as well sing it in full.

Some devotees blend in the word hari at the end of the line haraye namah krsna yadavaya namah so that it becomes haraye namah krsna yadavaya nama hari. However, apart from being grammatically incorrect, this is not the way that Lord Caitanya sung it or Narottama dasa rendered it. Even the word hari at the beginning of this line (hari haraye namah krsna yadavaya namah) is not essential, as Lord Caitanya did not sing it like this and it is doubtful that Narottama dasa rendered it thus.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Songs to be sung at Mayapur / Haraye Namah Krsna*

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness now has its world center in Navadvīpa, Māyāpur. The managers of this center should see that twenty-four hours a day there is chanting of the holy names of the Hare Kanṇa mahā-mantra, with the addition of haraye namau, kanṇa yādavāya namau, for this song was a favorite of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's. But all such saikīrtana must be preceded by the chanting of the holy names of the five tattvas—śrī-kanṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda. We are already accustomed to chant these two mantras—śrī-kanṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda and Hare Kanṇa, Hare Kanṇa, Kanṇa Kanṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Now, after these, the other two lines—namely haraye namau, kanṇa yādavāya namau/ gopāla govinda rāma śrī-madhusūdana—should be added, especially in Māyāpur. Chanting of these six lines should go on so perfectly well that no one there hears any vibration other than the chanting of the holy names of the Lord. That will make the center spiritually all-perfect.

CC Adi 17.123 Purport

Concocted Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam / following acaryas*

"There are so many they have invented. Just like Hare Kanṇa mantra is prescribed in the sastras, and they have invented so many. Although there is the name of the Supreme Lord, still you have to follow the śāstra. If you say Rama Rama Rama, Radhe Radhe Radhe, Krsna, there are so many mentioned. That is also name, but you have to follow the sastra.

Sastra says: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. You have to take that. Not that you can say, nitai-gaura radhe-syama, hare krsna hare rama, no. Why? Is there any in the sastra? No, you have invented. What is the value of your invention? You are not perfect. But they like that 'It is my guru, I have got some followers, I invent some type of chanting.' This is nonsense. You must follow, mahajano yena gatah sa panthah [Cc.Madhya 17.186]. You cannot invent."

SB Class, November 5th, 1976 Vrndavana

Concocted chants / Nitai Gaur Radhe syam / following acaryas*

The Panca-tattva is a very important factor in understanding Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu. There are sahajiyas who, not knowing the importance of the Paica-tattva, concoct their own slogans, such as bhaja nitai gaura, radhe syama, japa hare krsna hare rama or sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityananda hare krsna hare rama sri-radhe govinda. Such chants may be good poetry, but they cannot help us to go forward in devotional service. In such chants there are also many discrepancies, which need not be discussed here. Strictly speaking, when chanting the names of the Paica-tattva, one should fully offer his obeisances: sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityananda sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrnda. By such chanting one is blessed with the competency to chant the Hare Krsna maha-mantra without offense. When chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, one should also chant it fully: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. One should not foolishly adopt any of the slogans concocted by imaginative devotees. If one actually wants to derive the effects of chanting, one must strictly follow the great ācāryas. This is confirmed in the Mahābhārata: mahajano yena gatah sa panthah. "The real path of progress is that which is traversed by great ācāryas and authorities."

CC Adi 7.168 PURPORT

The use of Panca-tattva Mantra as given by the acaryas*

Svayambhur dasa: Prabhupada, you wrote in the Caitanya-caritamṛta that the Caitanya maha-mantra, sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu nityananda, there is no offense to that. And so therefore in the Kali-yuga it is actually more beneficial...

Prabhupada: Offense is that what is spoken by the acaryas, if you do not follow, that is offense. Guror avajia. That is offense. To chant Gaura-Nitai is no offense. But if our previous gurus have chanted sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu nityananda sri-advaita—why should we go beyond that? That is guror avajia. Even there is no aparādha, because guru, Kaviraja Gosvami, has sung like that and my guru has sung, we should follow that. We should not make any deviation. That is guror avajiā sruti-sastra-nindanam. Namno balad yasya hi papa-buddhih. So it comes to be one of the items of the dasa-vidha-aparadha. Guror avajiā.

Svayambhur dasa: Should we consider that it's more beneficial for people to hear bhaja sri-krsna-caitanya...

Prabhupada: Why? There is already... Why should you go here and there? There is already sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu nityananda. Why you are so anxious to go out of it?

Svayambhur dasa: No, I'm saying is it more beneficial for people to hear that mantra than the Hare Krsna mantra. Is it more beneficial for people to hear the Panca-tattva mantra than the Hare Krsna maha-mantra?

Prabhupada: Oh yes. You are going to Hare Krsna through Nitai-Gaura. Nitaiyer karuna habe braje radhā-krsna pabe. The principle is don't try to manufacture. Because you are

not experienced. So what nonsense you will manufacture, that will be offensive. Better go on, the simple thing.

Conversation, September 6, 1976 Vrndavana

Attention on the Hare Krishna Mantra /regarding songs of Krsnadas Babaji *

Apart from this he said, “You should just go on chanting Hare Krishna Mahamantra and the Pancatattva mantra and don’t divert your attention. You cannot understand the meaning of the Indian songs and simply parrot like chanting of these songs has no value.”

Letter to Damodara Pandit, July 17, 1976

Songs of Narottama das Thakur *

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, another Vaiñṇava... As it sung by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, similarly, you know that Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, he also has sung many song, approved songs. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says that Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura’s songs are Vedic evidence. All Vaiñṇavas, songs are like that, Vedic evidence. There is no mistake, cheating, imperfectness or illusion. Conditioned soul, they are manufacturing by mental concoction. That is another thing. They are full of imperfection, illusion, mistake and cheating. But when we hear songs by the Vaiñṇava, that is for liberation.

Arrival Address, June 27, 1975

We shall sing the authorized songs*

We cannot follow an upstart, manufacturing some song. What is authorized song, we shall sing.

lecture, Vrndavana, November 13, 1972

Chanting different bhajans, authorised arati chants

Jayadvaita asked about made-up bhajanas. Srila Prabhupada said it was better to stick to Hare Krsna and Sri Krsna Caitanya. I asked about authorized bhajanas during arati. He said jiv’ jago was all right, but better to stick to Hare Krsna.

TKG’s Diary, date ?

Chanting is powerful when one follows the disciplic succession*

One should chant the bona fide songs received from the disciplic succession. In Bhagavad-gītā it is said that the chanting is powerful when one follows the disciplic succession (eva paramparā-prāptam imaa rājarnayo viduu). Manufacturing many ways of chanting will never be effective. However, chanting the song or the narration left by the previous ācāryas (mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu) is extremely effective, and this process is very easy.

SB 7.9.18, purport

We do not allow any song that has not been approved or sung by bona fide devotees *

Prayers must be approved by Vedic literature, as indicated in this verse by the words daivībhir gīrbhiu. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we do not allow any song that has not been approved or sung by bona fide devotees. We cannot allow cinema songs to be sung in the temple. We generally sing two songs. One is śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda. This is bona fide. It is always mentioned in the Caitanyacaritamata, and it is accepted by the ācāryas. The other, of course, is the mahā-mantra — Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. We may also sing the songs of Narottama dasa

Thakura, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, and Locana dāsa Ṭhākura, but these two songs — “sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya” and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra — are sufficient to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead, although we cannot see Him. Seeing the Lord is not as important as appreciating Him from the authentic literature or the authentic statements of authorized persons.

SB 8.5.25, purport

Only authorized songs should be sung / one must become spiritually advanced to find suitable words to offer in prayers to the Lord*

One cannot offer prayers to the Lord with mundane words. One must become spiritually advanced by controlling the mind and senses. Then he can find suitable words to offer in prayers to the Lord. Quoting the following verse from the Padma Purana, Srila Sanatana Gosvami forbids us to sing any song not sung by authorized devotees.

avaisnava-mukhodgīrnam
putam hari-kathamrtam
sravanam naiva kartavyam
sarpocchistam yatha payah

The words or songs of a person not fixed in Vaisnava behavior, not strictly following the rules and regulations and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra should not be accepted by pure devotees.

SB 6.16.33 purport

Unauthorized songs should never be heard *

Authorized songs means the songs which were sung or composed by self-realized Acaryas. It is an injunction in the Vainṣava regulations that unauthorized songs or statements should never be heard. The comparison is given that milk, although very nutritious food, if it is touched by the tongue of a serpent, it acts like poison.

letter to Syamasundara dasa, 25 February 1970

We have to repeat the prayers offered by liberated souls*

When we offer our prayers to Kṛṣṇa, they are not ordinary words. Therefore those who are not liberated souls, they cannot actually offer prayers. We have to repeat the prayers offered by liberated souls, not by an ordinary man. Because he is not yet uttama, he is not yet on the transcendental platform. Therefore we don't allow songs which are not sung by liberated souls like Bhaktivinoda Thakura, or Narottama dasa Thakura.

Letter, August 21, 1972

One should chant the songs from the disciplic succession*

One should chant the bona fide songs received from the disciplic succession. In Bhagavad-gītā it is said that the chanting is powerful when one follows the disciplic succession (eva parampara-praptam imam rajarsayo viduh). Manufacturing many ways of chanting will never be effective. However, chanting the song or the narration left by the previous ācāryas (mahajano yena gatah sa panthah) is extremely effective, and this process is very easy.

SB 7.9.18 purport

Holy names given in sampradaya should be chanted

Even names of Krishna, if not given by a bona fide sampradaya, should not be chanted.

Madhudvisa Das, Following Srila Prabhupada DVD #1

Not being able to pronounce stotras properly / Chanting of stotras by Akincana das Babaji

Trāṇa-kartā prabhu gave me another tape this morning featuring Akiicana Krsna dasa Babaji, another of Prabhupāda's Godbrothers, chanting some stotras. After I told him what Prabhupāda said yesterday, he wanted to verify whether this tape was bona-fide.

I played it for Prabhupāda to hear during massage. Again Prabhupāda said it was all right to listen to. But he shrugged and said, "They will never be able to pronounce these things, neither they will ever be able understand them. So what is the use?"

Hari Sauri Diary, October 7, 1976

Do not make up your own verses

Then he saw a Bengali verse which was written on the wall and he stopped and asked "Where does this verse come from?" Pandu admitted he had made the verse up himself and then had it translated into Bengali. Prabhupāda was not at all happy and he shook his head and admonished him quite strongly not to do it again. "Do not dare like this. It is risky. It is alright what you have done but do not dare like this."

Hari Sauri Diary, February 9, 1977 Mayapur

No cinema music in temples

Temples are meant to be places of pure spiritual sound vibration, not places for cinema music, or even bhajanas set to cinema music.

The essence of all instructions on kirtana standards is that kirtana is meant for the glorification and pleasure of Krsna, and should be performed according to the parampara system. Indeed, if we are in doubt about any chant, better not chant it. If we stick to Hare Krsna we can't go wrong.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prabhupada against mantras from other temples

Prabhupada was never abrasive towards others and especially I had never seen him act like this in the temple, but he was so determined that the kirtana standard be maintained and not changed by the introduction of 'other' mantras which were commonly heard in other temples and maths, that he sent me to stop his own godbrother from singing in the temple.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

Acaryas' mantars, Panca Tattva Mantra and Hare Krsna should be chanted

Throughout his teachings, Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that only mantras given by our sampradāya-ācāryas should be chanted. Among these, he gave special emphasis to the chanting of the Paica-tattva mantra and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Authorised slokas to be chanted Vs traditional chants,

Srila Prabhupada also authorized the chanting of slokas in kirtana. Suitable mantras are those beginning, namo maha-vadanyaya..., harer nama harer nama harer namaiva kevalam..., and so on.

There are many bona fide devotional songs in the regional languages of India that ISKCON devotees from such backgrounds may like to sing. For instance, the Hindi bhajanas beginning "Krsna jinika nama he" and "Jaya kesava kalimala hari" are acceptable.

However, it is best to stick to known authorized songs of our own sampradaya. There may be philosophical mistakes in apparently devotional songs that are so subtle that even many senior devotees may not detect them

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Picking-up Vrndavan songs is not Prabhupada's view

Besides the mantras and prayers discussed above, devotees who come to Vrndavana think it is very transcendental when they pick up the local songs and prayers. They think that by such practice they are assimilating the culture and entering into the Vrndavana mood. Subsequently their example is carried back to other temples by devotees who don't know any better and think that whatever they heard chanted in Vrndavana is safe to import. This was not Srila Prabhupada's view. He did not even chant Radhe-Syama as a greeting when in Vrndavana. He would always say Hare Krsna.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal

Devotees should not invent unauthorized chants

Devotees should not invent or sing unauthorized chants. Kirtana is not meant to be an arena for singers to express their creative imaginations by introducing varieties of tunes and songs. Everything should be according to parampara.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Unauthorized songs or statements should never be heard

Authorized songs means the songs which were sung or composed by self-realized Acaryas. It is an injunction in the Vaisnava regulations that unauthorized songs or statements should never be heard. The comparison is given that milk, although very nutritious food, if it is touched by the tongue of a serpent, it acts like poison.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

No need to invent new type of Kirtan

There is no need to invent any "new" kind of kirtana. What the sastra and acaryas have given us is complete and perfect. We cannot improve what they have given us. It is haughtiness to presume that we need to introduce something new.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Unacceptable songs / Mira Bhajans and commercial music

Examples of unacceptable songs are (a) Mira Bhajanas, many of which go against the whole spirit of our sampradaya (as Mira places herself in the position of a direct lover of Krsna, without reference to Radharani); and (b) concocted commercial bhajanas sung by professionals for profit motive. Although some are quite tasteful, many can at best be considered semi-religious, semi-entertainment. Because such bhajana cassettes are sold indiscriminately from our temples, devotees naturally tend to accept them as bona fide, but often they are not. Commercially minded devotees are eager to record and distribute any nice sounding song, and in this way all kinds of things get spread. However, "We should not try to make a profit out of the Hare Krishna Mantra; then our spiritual enlightenment will be hampered."

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting Letter to: Mukunda, 2 July, 1969

When to use different chants

As Srila Prabhupada wanted only a few chants (the designated arati song, Panca tattva mantra, and Hara Krsna mantra) to be sung during mangala-arati, guru-puja and sandhya-arati, it may be questioned when other authorized chants could be sung. In some temples kirtana is extended after guru-puja and sandhya-arati, and these are appropriate times for such chants. They may be sung also during festivals, when kirtanas often go on for several hours, and any in other kirtanas apart from arati kirtanas with specific chants.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtan chaos means chaos in devotees' spiritual lives

The reason Srila Prabhupada so carefully regulated kirtana chanting in ISKCON was to prevent kirtana chaos which means chaos in the devotees' spiritual lives. He knew very well the outcome of manufacturing new mantras. ... This strong warning is not only for outsiders, it applies to ISKCON as well. Sentimental persons indulge in long kirtana performances of chanting "Nitai-Gaura" and "Gauranga" disregarding the explicit instructions Srila Prabhupada. Nevertheless, the founder-acarya for ISKCON has pronounced the type of kirtana he desires in the society's world headquarters.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

The importance of being acquainted with the wealth of Vaisnava songs

The Gaudiya Vaisnava heritage is rich with song. Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas, the popular songbook of ISKCON, has but a few of the many bhajanas composed by our acaryas. It would be nice if our devotees could become acquainted with this wealth left to us by our preceptors. These songs contain, in most beautiful poetic language, all instruction in philosophy, devotional practice and attainment of the ultimate goal of life. Singing these bhajanas is an important devotional practice. It is an inherent part of our Vaisnava tradition and should be taken up seriously by ISKCON devotees. At least if our devotees learn the songs in Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas, that will be a great cultural and spiritual asset for them.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Songs composed by Srila Prabhupada

The songs composed by Srila Prabhupada (as featured near the beginning of Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas) are also important for ISKCON devotees, and, as suggested by Srila Prabhupada, can be sung in kirtana like the songs of Bhaktivinoda Thakura and others

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Songs written on a high level of realization / Jaya Jaya Deva Hari, Tulasi Krsna Preyasi

It is best to stick to the songs of our Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas, for they are meant to guide us gradually to the highest level of devotion. Until we reach that level, we should be cautious in selecting which bhajanas to sing, even from our own tradition. Many of the songs of our Gaudiya acaryas are written from a high level of realization beyond the comprehension of ordinary devotees. For instance, Srila Prabhupada instructed that the song with refrain "Jaya jaya deva hare" by Jayadeva Gosvami not be sung. (Letter to: Acyutananda 15 July, 1972) An exception to this standard is "Tulasi krsna preyasi," a prayer expressing elevated sentiments that is sung daily in ISKCON temples.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

A list of concocted chants

Today it is common to hear kirtanas composed of words such as: “Gauranga,” “Nityananda”, “Nitai, Nitai, Nitai, Nitai, Nitai Gauranga,” “Gaurahari,” “Gaura, Gaura”, “Nitai-Gaura,” “Nitai-Gauranga,” “Gaura-Nitai”, “Gaura-Nityananda Bol, Haribol”, “Gaura Sri Advaita Bol, Haribol” “Gaura Sri Gadahara Bol, Haribol,” “Gaura Sri Srivasa Bol, Haribol,” “Jaganatha Haribol,” “Radhe Radhe Govinda, Govinda Radhe,” “Haribol, Haribol,” “Hari, Hari Haribol,” “Hari, Hari, Hari, Hari, Hari Haribol,” “Jaya Radhe,” “Radhe, Radhe, Radhe, Radhe Radhe Govinda,” etc.

In spite of the fact that these are holy names of the Lord, ISKCON devotees should not indulge in this type of kirtana because it was disapproved by the founder-acarya of ISKCON.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Unauthoritative chants choke the bhakti plant

It is well-known that entertainers must always come up with new songs, new lyrics, new styles, etc. to maintain the loyalty of their fans and to attract new fans. Similarly, unauthorized chants produced from pūjā and pratinḥā, (i.e. the desire for mundane adoration and position) chokes the actual bhakti lata plant of devotional service.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Prabhupada not wanting the use of Gaudiya-math mantras

Srila Prabhupada's personal style of simple chanting in a pure and melodious fashion did not change when he was in India. Historically speaking, it can be traced that in the late 60's and early 70's however Western devotees coming to India had no place to stay but in some Gaudiya Math temples. In some of these temples all different kinds of mantras were chanted without restriction. Although these mantras did not seem improper, Srila Prabhupada did not want us to use them in our temple kirtanas.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Chants from the Gaudiya-math filtering into our movement

Some devotees had to leave America for various reasons and had no place to stay but in Gaudiya Math temples. In some of these temples they chant all different kinds of mantras without restriction. Although these mantras are bona fide and seemingly proper, Srila Prabhupada did not want us to use them in our temple kirtanas. However this form of kirtana filtered into our movement very quickly since it was new and exciting and therefore rapidly accepted by the kirtana leaders to increase the enthusiasm of the devotees.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal 1988

The infiltration of Bengali kirtans into ISKCON

However this form of kirtan filtered into our movement very quickly since it was new and exciting and therefore rapidly accepted by the kirtan leaders. Variety is the spice of life. This variety however, did not actually please Srila Prabhupada. Now one may say: “Okay, I accept that Srila Prabhupada wrote about exclusive Hare Krsna kirtana which he desired his followers to sing. And I accept that Srila Prabhupada himself always lead kirtanas by chanting the maha mantra and never used the other types of chants often used by Bengali devotees. But did he ever get personally involved in correcting improper chanting?”

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Our principle is to stick to the authorities / Hare Krishna is the prime authorized mantra*

In our temple, strictly Hare Krishna chanting should be given more importance. There is no harm in this mantra you have heard, but it is not very important. There are many such common songs composed by common devotees out of sentiment. But our principle is to stick to the authorities, and always remember that Hare Krishna is the prime authorized mantra.

letter to Mālatī dāsī, 28 January 1969

Bhajans sung from Vande ham to Radha Krsna *

As we come by parampara system, it is our duty to go through the right channel—namely, first the Spiritual Master, then Lord Caitanya, and then Krishna. So when we chant prayers, we do this, Bande ham Sri Guru...and gradually to the Goswamis, then to Lord Caitanya, and then to Radha Krishna. That is the praying system.

Letter to: Harer Nama, May 28, 1968

Chanting Bhaja Hare Krsna (1)

There was kirtana throughout the morning, as the devotees prepared for the installation. Śrīla Prabhupāda was sitting quietly in his room, waiting to be called when he rang the bell and asked for Harikesa. When he arrived Prabhupāda told him, “Listen! What is that?” indicating the kīrtana downstairs. “He is adding something before the Hare Kṛṇṇa mantra. Go and stop it and bring him here.”

Harikesa wasn’t sure exactly what Prabhupāda was referring to, but he went straight down and pushed his way through the packed temple room. Pathu-putra Swami was pounding a drum, leading a loud and fervent rendition of the mahā-mantra. A group of sweat-soaked brahmācārīs were gathered round him, clashing karatālas, stamping their feet, waving their hands and leaning into an intense exchange of the holy names with Pathu-putra. First he chanted, then them. Every time he took the lead he prefaced the mahā-mantra with the word “bhaja,”—“Chant!”

Harikesa butted in and brought the singing to an abrupt stop. He informed Pathu-putra that Prabhupāda wanted to see him. Pathu-putra entered Prabhupāda’s room apprehensively, wondering what was going on.

Prabhupada, whose sharp ears had picked out the extra word, demanded to know where he had learned “this bhaja Hare Krsna mantra.” He was angry. “There is no bhaja in Hare Kṛṇṇa! Where did you get this from?” Shaken by Prabhupāda’s sudden, unexpected reproach, Pathu-putra turned red. “I heard it in Vrndavana.” Prabhupāda’s wrath intensified, and his face flushed as he thought of his disciples once again becoming polluted by the non-ISKCON elements of Vrndavana. He exploded, “Why you are taking this from the nonsense bābājīs! Who has told you this!?” A shocked Prthu-putra tried to assure him. “Oh, no, not from the babajis! I heard it from our own men.” Srila Prabhupada still fumed, but he eased a bit when he understood it had not come from an outside source. Still, he strongly warned his disciple, “Never chant this bhaja Hare Krsna again! Hare Krsna mantra is complete in itself and requires no addition!” Promising not to repeat his mistake, Prthu-putra returned to the temple room to resume his chanting--this time without the addition. It is one of Prabhupāda’s great fears that ISKCON devotees will become increasingly polluted by outside influences not strictly in line with our

sampradaya's pure devotional principles. Just as he did with the gopi-bhava group in Los Angeles, he acted quickly and firmly at the very first sign of contamination.
Hari Sauri Diary, August 6, 1976 New Mayapur, France

Chanting Bhaja Hare Krishna (2)

As far as the new version of Jaya Radha-madhava is concerned, Prabhupada said it was all right. But he added, "Bhaja Hare Krsna is not all right. The thing is, they add these things without asking, and that is the danger. It is better to just follow the guru."

Hari Sauri Diary, October 6th, 1976 Vrndavana,

Chanting Bhaja Hare Krishna (3)

Again although he walked, it was a short one. We went out along a path and in the middle of a field there was a Banyan tree. Prabhupāda headed for that and sat under it for a while whilst Hansadūta lead kīrtana. Then we returned. As we neared the buildings Prabhupada again mentioned not to sing 'bhaja' in front of the Maha-mantra.

Rama-sraddha, one of the local brahmacaris is in the habit of singing "bolo" Hare Krsna ..." much to Srila Prabhupada's disapproval.

Hari Sauri Diary, December 9th, 1976 Hyderabad farm

Chanting Bhaja Hare Krishna (4)/ Nitai Gaur Radhe Shyam

At this point he took the opportunity to mention once again about the fad of chanting 'Bhaja Hare Krsna' that some of our men have adopted, although noone is doing it here. He condemned it as an invention and quoted Mayavadi-bhanyasūnile haya sarva-nāśa [Cc. Mad. 6.169]. Just as the Māyāvādīs are inventing and others are singing 'Nитай Goura Radhe Syama japa Hare Krsna Hare Rama' so he said this should be stopped.

Hari Sauri Diary, January 14th, 1977 Allahabad Kumbhamela

Chanting Jaya Radha-madhava / "Bhaja" Hare Krishna

There is a devotee here from Chicago, Trāṇa-kartā dāsa, who is very interested in singing different bhajanas. Several times I have heard him sing Jaya rādhā-mādhava, jaya kuija-bihārī, jaya gopī-jana-vallabha, jaya giri-vara-dhārī, jaya giri-vara-dhārī, rather than sing it the way Srila Prabhupāda does. In view of what Prabhupāda recently said about not changing anything given by the ācāryas I approached Trāṇa-kartā and asked him where he had learned this new version.

He said that he had heard it on a tape made by Acyutānanda Swami. He was also singing other bhajanas that are not in our song book, and said that he got them from Prabhupāda's Godbrothers. He even had a tape of himself singing a song written by B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja.

We had a bit of a debate about the merits of what he was doing, and so I decided to bring the matter to Śrīla Prabhupāda for clarification. I brought up the issues about chanting new versions of existing songs, and the chanting of new songs.

As far as the new version of Jaya Rādhā-mādhava is concerned, Prabhupāda said it was all right. But he added, "Bhaja Hare Kṛṣṇa is not all right. The thing is, they add these things without asking, and that is the danger. It is better to just follow the guru."

Hari Sauri Diary, October 6, 1976

The benefit of publics' hearing maha-mantra Vs other prayers

Authorized prayers and mantras other than the mahā-mantra are nice, and any passer-by who hears them will derive immense spiritual benefit. But the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the

mahā-mantra, which means “the greatest mantra.” Thus the public will derive the greatest benefit by hearing this mantra.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

The public (in street Sankirtan) should somehow or other chant along*

Give them the chance to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra somehow or other, then very soon good results will be visible.

letter to Harikeśa Swami, October 28, 1976

Sing the mahāmantra just as it is

One devotee was leading the guru-pūjā kīrtana in a very ecstatic way. Then all of a sudden this devotee started to sing “bhaja Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare . . .” and

Prabhupāda became very, very angry and stopped the kīrtana. Everyone was so ecstatic that they were jumping three to four feet high, but then Prabhupāda just shouted “Stop that!” and the kīrtana immediately stopped. Prabhupāda asked him, “Where did you learn this ‘bhaja Hare Kṛṣṇa’? Did you ever hear me singing ‘bhaja Hare Kṛṣṇa?’” And Prabhupāda just chastised him for about five minutes. He was very heavy. He told him, “Never add anything to the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra and never subtract anything from the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra. Sing the mahāmantra just as it is.” Prabhupāda also explained that “This is how deviation starts. Somebody puts in his own concocted thing, and then somebody else comes and adds some more concoction to it, and with time it becomes a complete distortion.”

Bhakti Cāru Swami, personal remembrance, quoted in Harinama Eva Kevalam

“Bhaja Hare Kṛṣṇa”

There were other occasions when Prabhupada had me stop kirtanas which had elements he didn't like. In July of 1976 Prabhupada was in New Mayapur, France. A raging kirtana was going on somewhere below his room while he was dictating his mail. I was taking the dictation sitting in front of him. One could hear that there was a kirtana going on, but I, at least, could not make out any individual words or understand who was singing since it was all muffled by the solid floors of the castle.

Prabhupada, however, could hear everything and was very disturbed by something he heard. “Do you hear that?”, he asked me. “What is that, Srila Prabhupada?”, “Listen to what he is saying.”

“I cannot hear anything special. What is wrong?”

“He is chanting something before the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Go and stop this immediately.”

Immediately I ran downstairs, danda in hand, and started pushing aside the crowds of ecstatic chanters to get at the leader of the kirtana. I could still not hear exactly what was being chanted, and neither could I imagine how Prabhupada could hear it, but I had experience that he had super senses and therefore with full faith I plunged through the crowd expecting to soon be close enough to know who was leading the kirtana and what it was that he was saying before the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. When I was about 2 meters away from the leader I saw that it was Prtha Putra Swami leading the kirtana and then I finally heard that he was faintly saying Bhaja before each Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. With this confirmation I demanded, in the name of Srila Prabhupada, that he not chant that before the mantra and that he never do it again. This caused a bit of a pause in the kirtana while

everyone tried to understand what was going on, but before too long I was again going back upstairs and he was chanting correctly.

When in Prabhupada's room again he asked me for a report on what happened and I told him who led the kirtana and that the mistake was corrected. One should never chant anything before the maha-mantra.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal 1988

Prabhupada against “Bhaja Hare Krsna”

At Kumbha-Mela in Allahabad in 1976, there was a huge, roaring Guru-Puja for Srila Prabhupada, with two hundred and fifty devotees jumping and dancing. All of a sudden, the devotee leading the kirtan started singing, 'Bhaja Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna...' Srila Prabhupada ROARED from the Vyasana, stopping the kirtan, "What is this BHAJA hare krsna hare krsna?! Did I teach you to sing bhaja hare krsna hare krsna!? Where did you learn to sing bhaja hare krishna hare krishna?" "The Hare Krsna maha-mantra is perfect and should be chanted AS IT IS, without any addition or subtraction."

Bhakti Caru Swami, Text PAMHO 6697141

Vedic mantras gone to hell / nobody can chant properly*

So in this age, this mantra is called mahā-mantra, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's all. All Vedic mantras are now gone to hell. You see? Nobody can properly chant Vedic mantras and take the benefit out of it. But this mantra, any way you chant, neglectfully or properly, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and the result is there.

lecture, Los Angeles, November 29, 1968

Chanting first the first half of the Maha mantra, respond, then the second half

Prabhupada had me lead the kirtanas but he would instruct me what to sing and how. One time he asked me to make a kirtana with Govinda Jaya Jaya which went on for about a half an hour. Another time he asked me to sing just Hare Krsna, but one line at a time, as these people were accustomed to sing it. That is, just Hare Krsna . . . Hare Hare the first time, they would respond, and then Hare Rama . . . Hare Hare, the second time, and they would respond. It seems that if the people are accustomed to certain types of kirtanas that we could adjust somewhat to avoid disturbing their minds.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal 1988 / Visiting Sanand, where people are accustomed to the above mentioned type of chanting

The Hare Krsna Mantra is above other chants

Śrīla Prabhupāda's mission was to spread the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. Along with chanting of Hare Krsna, he taught other chants also, yet in innumerable written and spoken instructions, Srila Prabhupada made it clear that he wanted his followers to emphasize the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra above all others. He wanted that the chanting of Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare remain the central activity of the Hare Krsna movement.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Maha Mantra at least a half of arati kirans

Although Srila Prabhupada himself taught us many other mantras, he always stressed the chanting of the Hare Krishna maha mantra. He said that at least half of the arati kirtana

should consist of chanting of the Hare Krishna maha mantra. For example, in a temple where mangala-arati only lasts for 20 minutes, devotees should only sing each of the Gurvastakam once, in order to leave ten minutes for chanting Hare Krsna. This was a well known dictum in the “early days.”

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The potency of chanting the maha mantra Vs other “spontaneous” chanting

There are those who think that when they become inspired, especially while visiting holy places, it is unavoidable to chant spontaneous mantras. Lord Caitanya’s movement is indeed meant for ecstasy. Saba avatāra, sāra śiromaṇi, kevala ānanda-kanda: Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda introduced a simply joyful process of chanting and dancing. Why though, should ecstasy be inhibited due to chanting authorized mantras? Chanting of the maha mantra is prescribed in sacred Vedas. It was brought to earth by Sri Narada Muni and it was recommended as the panacea for Kali yuga by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Furthermore the Gaudiya acaryas have provided the panca tattva maha mantra, (i.e. śrī-kanṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda) as a means to glorify Lord Gauranga and His associates. Therefore it is most illogical to consider that the devotees will not derive enough ecstasy by chanting these mantras.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Chanting Hare Krsna means following Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu

Prior to publishing his translation and commentary on Sri Caitanya Caritamṛta, Srila Prabhupada taught that the Pancatattva maha mantra was much more powerful than the Hare Krsna mantra. Upon hearing this in July of 1971, a disciple seated amongst several others in Srila Prabhupada’s room, asked why not chant some rounds of the panca tattva mantra after finishing sixteen rounds of the Hare Krsna mantra each day? Srila Prabhupada replied that we should not do so since Lord Caitanya came just to show us how to worship Lord Krsna and that the Lord wanted us to chant the Hare Krsna mantra and therefore we should follow His advice and example.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Vaisnava songs and the Maha Mantra*

Devotee: Is chanting Vaisnava songs on an equal level with maha-mantra?

Prabhupada: Yes. But first of all understand what is the maha-mantra. He krsna, Hare Krsna, “O the energy of Krsna, please accept me.” This is the prayer. This is addressing, He Krsna, Hare Krsna, “Hara, Please, now I am engaged in this material service; kindly accept me in Your service.” This is the meaning of Hare Krsna. So a relationship, requesting something. So all these songs are like that, requesting relationship. Therefore they are the same.

SB Lecture, January 20, 1974

Followers of Caitanya Mahaprabhu chant Maha Mantra

You can chant the holy names in any way but because we are followers of Lord Caitanya we chant the Hare Krishna maha-mantra.

Following Srila Prabhupada DVD #1

Adding »bolo« to the maha-mantra

Srila Prabhupada did not want anything chanted before the Hare Krsna maha mantra. Once he stopped Jaya Pataka Maharaja from chanting “bolo” before the Hare Krsna maha mantra. Bolo simply means “chant” but Srila Prabhupada did not like it and therefore we should not add it, or anything else, to the maha mantra.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Adding pop-style slogans (ooo, eee, wao, etc...) to the maha-mantra

Some devotees have the habit of inserting such words as bhaja, bolo or jaya here, there and everywhere in kirtanas. Sometimes devotees, especially lead singers, make a noise like “ooo” or “eee” before the first syllable of the maha mantra: “Ooo, Hare Krsna ,” “Eee Hare Krsna.” Or they add a pop-style “Hey! Hey!” or “Woa, Woa” to the maha mantra. Such interpolations are not only unnecessary, but can be confusing.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

First worship Guru-Gauranga, then Krsna*

In Kāṇḍa consciousness the devotees always approach Kāṇḍa through the spiritual master and Gaura-Nitāi. Finally they worship Rādhā-Kāṇḍa. Our students are first advised to worship Guru-Gaurāṅga, and then, when they are somewhat advanced, the Rādhā-Kāṇḍa Deity is installed, and they are engaged in the worship of the Lord.

CC, Adi 8.31, purport

As we offer obeisances to guru, the name should be there*

...on the invitation card you have written “All Glories to Our Guru Mahārāja.” This is impersonalism. As soon as we offer obeisances to guru, the name should be there. We are strictly personalists. The sahajiyās, they write “Glories to Guru.” Why you are learning this impersonalism, who has taught you? Daily I am offering obeisances to my guru by vibrating his real name, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī; otherwise it is impersonal. .

letter to Bhavānanda dāsa, 14 July 72

Srila Prabhupada pranam mantra to develop our relationship

Although Srila Prabhupada did not specify that his own pranama-mantra be sung in any of these aratis, devotees generally do so. This is a special case of singing something in kirtana that Srila Prabhupada, maybe out of humility, did not tell us to sing. Proponents of this view reason that it is important that in all ISKCON kirtanas, now and in the future, Srila Prabhupada’s pranama-mantra should be chanted. This will help us all to develop our relationship with him, express our love and gratitude for him, and keep him clearly in the center as the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON and the guru of all gurus to come.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Srila Prabhupada pranam mantra to be sung before Gaura Arati song

To keep the proper sequence of offering respect, it is best that Srila Prabhupada’s pranama mantra be sung before the Gaura Arati song, rather than after or not at all.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Chanting both stanzas of Srila Prabhupada Pranam Mantra

In chanting the Srila Prabhupada pranama-mantra, devotees occasionally chant the first stanza only, neglecting to chant the second. This is incorrect. Also, if the first stanza is

chanted twice, the second stanza should also be chanted twice; and if the first stanza is only chanted once, the second stanza should not be chanted twice. Each stanza should be chanted once or twice only, not more.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Bhajans to be sung in the ascending order

If several bhajanas are to be sung, they should be sung in ascending order: First, those in glorification of guru, then prayers to other Vaisnavas, then to Lord Nityananda, then Lord Caitanya, then Srimati Radharani, then Krsna. Even if only two or three bhajanas are sung, this order should be observed.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prabhupada's grand-disciples chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« in kirtana

When Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples begin kirtana by chanting the pranama mantra to Srila Prabhupada, they skip an essential link in the disciplic succession. At least in mantra, they are jumping over their own spiritual master and going directly to the previous one. This goes against our Vaisnava philosophy and principles.

Properly, a disciple should offer respect first to his own spiritual master, then to the previous ones.

So here's how I suggest our kirtanas should go. Either:

1. At mangala-arati, the leader should simply chant Gurvastakam, without Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra. (This follows Srila Prabhupada's example. At mangala-arati Srila Prabhupada simply chanted Sri Gurvastakam, and that was it. He chanted the pranama mantra to his guru with the other mangala-carana prayers in the evenings. Of course, one can chant the pranama-mantra in the mornings. But our acarya, Srila Prabhupada, didn't. So why should we?)

or

2. At any kirtana, the leader should first chant a generic mantra of obeisances to the spiritual master, such as Sri Gurvastakam or om ajnana timirandhasya, and then Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra. (The idea here is that with the first mantra Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples offer obeisances to their spiritual master. Then only can they properly offer obeisances to Srila Prabhupada.)

Jayadvaita Swami, Bugs in Lithurgy

Different "Jaya"s Vs plain old Hare Krsna

Another practice that seems to have developed is that of ending kirtanas by chanting mantras composed of the names of the temple's Deities. Thus a typical ISKCON kirtana might end with several refrains of something like this:

Jaya Prabhupada Jaya Prabhupada Jaya Prabhupada Jaya Prabhupada! Jaya Gaura-Nitai
Jaya Gaura-Nitai Jaya Gaura-Nitai Jaya Gaura-Nitai! Jaya Jagannatha Jaya Jagannatha Jaya
Baladeva Jaya Subhadra! [A recent variant: Jaya Jagannatha Jaya Baladeva Jaya Subhadra
Jaya Jagannatha!] Jaya Giri Govardhana Jaya Giri Govardhana Jaya Giri Govardhana Jaya
Giri Govardhana! [That's if the temple has a Govardhana Sila.] Jaya Radha-Govinda
Radha-Govinda Radhe! Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe Jaya Radhe! [A recent popular
variant puts a "Sri" before the last "Radhe."]

Where has all this come from? Did Srila Prabhupada teach us all this? Is this how he chanted? Did he ask us to chant this way? What's going on? And where will it lead?

I'm sure new bhaktas are being trained to feel this is all compulsory. What's wrong with plain old Hare Krsna?

Jayadvaita Swami, Bugs in Lithurgy

Chanting Panca Tattva mantra before each round and in kirtans to avoid offences

The New York temple had some great kirtan leaders—Agni-deva, Jaya Sacinandana and Visnugada prabhus—and they were already chanting the Panca-tattva mantra in the kirtans.

SP Nectar, story #7

No offence in chanting Panca Tattva Maha Mantra*

Narottama dāsa Thakura says that gaurangera balite habe, pulaka sarire, hari hari balite, nayane ba'be nira. Gauranga. So to become immediately in ecstasy of transcendental love, if we chant this sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda, it is easier. There is no offense in chanting this Paica-tattva, but there is offense if you do not properly chant Hare Kanna mantra. There are ten kinds of offenses, you know. But in chanting śrī-kanna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda, there is no aparādha. You chant in any way; you'll get the result. This is the difference, taste. This is variety. Although there is no difference by chanting sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda and Hare Krsna mantra, mahā-mantra, but still by chanting this Panca-tattva, you'll get immediately, quickly, result. Therefore our process is to chant the holy names of the Paica-tattva and then we chant Hare Krsna maha-mantra. That is perfect. And neither mixing. The mixing taste is called rasābhāsa. Rasabhāsa. And we don't manufacture anything.

CC Lecture Adi 7.5, Mayapura march 7th 1974

Chanting the Names of Panca Tattva before Hare Krsna*

At the beginning of every function in preaching, especially before chanting the Hare Kanna mahā-mantra—Hare Kanna, Hare Kanna, Kanna Kanna, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—we must chant the Panca-tattva's names and offer our respects to them.

CC, Adi 8.5, purport

Before chanting Hare Krsna we should chant the Panca Tattva Mantra*

As preachers of the Kanna consciousness movement, we first offer our obeisances to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting this Paica-tattva mantra; then we say Hare Kanna, Hare Kanna, Kanna Kanna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare...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, we must first take shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, learn the Paica-tattva mahā-mantra, and then chant the Hare Kanna mahā-mantra. That will be very effective.

CC Ādi 7.4 purport

Chanting Bhaja Sri Krsna Caitanya

In ISKCON right from the beginning we had been accustomed to chant bhaja Sri Krsna Caitanya, prabhu Nityananda....because that is the way that Srila Prabhupada taught us. However, in mid-1977 Srila Prabhupada decided to change this:

Hari Sauri dasa, A transcendental diary

Bhaja / Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya... (1)

At 3:00 p.m. Srila Prabhupada signed his will and had Upendra, Gopinatha, and myself witness it. During the kirtana, Prabhupada twice instructed Yasodanandana Maharaja not to sing “bhaja” before “Sri Krsna Caitanya.” Was it because of the bogus groups who chant this word first? Prabhupada said to chant “Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya.”

TKG's Diary, May 23, 1977 – Vrndavana

Chanting Bhaja / Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya (2)

“You can say ‘Sri Krsna Caitanya’ or ‘Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya,’ but never ‘bhaja.’ You just glorify these five personalities and They will take care of everything.”

TKG's Diary, May 29, 1977 – Vrndavana

“Sri Krsna Caitanya” only three times

In July of 1974, when Srila Prabhupada first moved into his new quarters, kirtanas were being conducted in his room in the afternoon and then he would give class. On one of the first days, Srila Prabhupada's disciple Isana Prabhu, who at that time was doing what was to be later known as FATE doll exhibition, led a kirtan. He was simply repeating the Sri Krsna Caitanya mantra over and over again, perhaps for 15 times, when Srila Prabhupada demanded that he stop and chant Hare Krsna. It was after this that Srila Prabhupada became quite strict on the number of times the mantra was sung.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

“Bhaja sri krsna-caitanya” reminds of the bogus groups

However, in May of 1977 Srila Prabhupada became very displeased with the kirtans of the group in the asrama next to Krsna Balarama Mandira in Vrndavana. There kirtans were taking place with the following speculated mantra, "(bhaja) nitai gaura radhe syama (japa) Hare Krsna Hare Ram." Srila Prabhupada then requested the devotees to stop chanting the word "bhaja" before our Panca-tattva maha mantra since the word actually is not part of the mantra. There is no word which prefaces the mantra which specifically reads "sri krsna caitanya prabhu nityananda sri advaita gadadhara srivasadi gaura bhakta vrinda." This mantra can be read in either Bengali or Sanskrit letters on the walls of every temple in Vrindavan or Bengal as it is one of the two essential mantras for Gaudiya Vaisnavas.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Not to chant “Bhaja Sri Krsna Caitanya”

During the kīrtana, Prabhupāda twice instructed Yaśodānandana Mahārāja not to sing “bhaja” before “Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.” Was it because of the bogus groups who chant this word first? Prabhupāda said to chant “Jaya Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.”

TKG Diary: May 23, 1977 Vrndavana

Panca Tattva Mantra only three times

At that time he had described to me in his room that the chanting of the Panca-tattva maha-mantra was much more powerful than the Hare Krsna mantra. I immediately asked him that since this is so, then why don't we chant some rounds of this mantra after finishing our 16 rounds of the Hare Krsna mantra each day? Prabhupada replied that we should not do so since Lord Caitanya came just to show us how to worship Lord Krsna and that the Lord wanted us to chant the Hare Krsna mantra and therefore we should

follow His advice and example. Therefore he later restricted the chanting of this mantra in kirtana to only three times.

Specifically he placed this restriction on the chanting after one incident with Isan prabhu in Vrindavana. ... One on of the first days Isan prabhu ... led a kirtana. He was simply repeating the Sri Krsna Caitanya mantra over and over again, perhaps for fifteen times, when Prabhupada demanded that he stop and chant Hare Krsna. It was after this that Prabhupada became quite strict on the number of times that mantra was sung.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

Three reasons why changing the Panca Tattva Mantra is damaging to our movement

I have always felt that this is very damaging to our movement in general for the following reasons. (1) Prabhupada himself always chanted the mantra in the original fashion and there are hundreds of tapes to testify to that. Changes in the mantra weaken the position of those who have followed Srila Prabhupada since it can be challenged as to why this change was made. I also challenged it in the same manner. (2) Prabhupada writes the original mantra everywhere in his books. Prabhupada once chastised me for listening to someone else's idea with the following words. "Regarding this idea that Where have you heard this? Is this found in our books?" Whatever is written in the books is law. If the mantra is found everywhere within Prabhupada's books do we think that he would just change it like that? All he was doing was changing the introductory word which is not at all part of the mantra. (3) Why were we so eager to change some of the basic institutions of the society, such as one of the two basic mantras of the movement, so quickly without even examining what this would mean in the future? After all, as mentioned before, this mantra is carved in stone and marble on all the temples and everyone can see for time immemorial what the correct mantra is. It just doesn't look good or feel good to have a different mantra than that which is preserved in temple walls and within Prabhupada's books and tapes. It weakens our authority to some extent.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal

"Jaya Sri Krsna Caitanya" instead of "bhaja"

However, Prabhupada insisted on the change from bhaja to jaya to definitively delineate us from the chanters across the road. When he was asked about the change from "Sri Advaita" to "Jaya Advaita" he simply said, "Sri Advaita, Jaya Advaita, what is the difference?" Now on the basis of this the devotees of the world were told that Prabhupada definitely wanted that we chant "Jaya Advaita" instead of "Sri Advaita" and that this should happen immediately. Since I was in Vrindavan at the time and heard this incident immediately after it happened in the room of Prabhupada from one of the sanskritists who were engaged in the search, I knew that this was not actually the case, and that the purpose of the changes were mainly to stop the chanting of bhaja in order to make a distinction between us and the speculated mantra chanters.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

The origin of the Panca Tattva Mantra

The mantra Panca Tattva Maha mantra is derived from an invocatory verse that appears in each chapter of the Caitanya Caritamrta:

jaya jaya śrī-caitanya jaya nityānanda
jayādvaita-candra jaya gaura-bhakta-vanda

There is of course no harm in chanting the original Caitanya-Caritamṛta verse in kirtana, but it is better to chant the form in which our recent acaryas have given it, namely “śrī-kaṇṇa-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda”

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

We should chant all five names of the Panca-tattva

Prabhupada, although not too upset by the kirtana, made it clear that such chanting was not approved by him. He told us that we should mainly chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra. He said ‘nitai-gaura haribol’ is all right, because they are bona fide names of the Lord, but the real point is that we should strictly follow only what the acaryas have given. This is the process. He said that the acaryas only chant all five names of the Panca-tattva, not just two. So although there is no offense in chanting the names of Gaura-Nitai, if we deviate and chant our own made-up mantras then this is guror avajna, or disobeying the orders of the spiritual master, and the line of the acaryas. To make advancement in spiritual life one must always follow the line of acaryas.

Hari Sauri Transcendental Diary 4, p. 361

Chanting Maha Mantra and Panca Tattva mantra in one peace

In some areas of India, it is traditional for the maha-mantra to be chanted in two parts. And from Harikesa’s essay, we see that Srila Prabhupada allowed such chanting in a particular preaching situation. Sometimes in ISKCON kirtanas the mantra is broken into eight parts, with devotees responding after every two words, or into sixteen parts, with devotees responding after each word. However, no acarya has taught like this and the norm for ISKCON devotees should be to chant the whole maha-mantra together at one time, not in two or more parts. This also applies to the Paica-tattva mantra.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Bhaja Gaura-bhakta-vrnda

In the early New York kirtana recordings, we hear Srila Prabhupada chant, “bhaja gaura-bhakta-vrnda” two or three times after chanting the Panca-tattva mantra. But later Srila Prabhupada instructed devotees to chant jaya instead of bhaja before the Panca-tattva mantra.

There is no harm if jaya gaura-bhakta-vrnda is chanted after the Panca-tattva mantra, although it is not essential and should not be chanted repeatedly

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

...jayadvaita candra jaya gaura bhakta vrnda

Then Prabhupada thought about using some mantra from the Caitanya-caritamṛta which he considered might go, Jaya Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya prabhu Nityananda, Jayadvaita Gadadhara Srivasadi Gaura bhakta vrnda, so he had his servants and sanskritists look it up to see if they could find it. After a thorough search they realized that there was no mantra like that and that the closest mantra was Jaya Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya prabhu Nityananda, Jayadvaita candra jaya goura bhakta vrnda, which was not what Prabhupada wanted and therefore was not the change which was to take place

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

»Jayadvita« in prema-dhvani and Hari haraye namah krsna

However, this idea (»jaya« instead of »sri«) became so much entrenched within the movement that it became the fashion to even change the mantra in the prema-dhvani and even in such independent songs as Hari haraye namah krsna, wherein one line says sri caitanya nityananda sri advaita sita which now due to this absolute change had to read sri caitanya nityananda jayadvaita sita.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

Chanting “Gauranga”*

A valid observation may be brought forward citing that within the Gaudiya Vaisnava literature including Ananta Samhita, Caitanya-bhāgavata and the songs of Narottama dasa Thakura, etc. one finds recommendations for chanting the names of Lord Caitanya such as Gauranga, Gauracandra, Gaurahari, etc.

Srila Prabhupada clarifies this issue for us.

Caitanya-bhāgavata there is a verse which says, gahe vā vanete thāke, hā gaurāiga bole oāke. The purport is that either if you remain in household life or you remain as mendicant in the forest, in either case, you just become a devotee of Lord Caitanya.

Lecture: New York, September 5, 1968

The name of Gauranga

This famous verse, gahe vā vanete thāke, hā gaurāiga bole oāke is also included in the fourth stanza of Narottama dasa Thakura’s song Sāvaraṇa Śrī Gaura Mahim (Gaurāigera Duṭi Pada). Gaurāiga bole oāke translated literally means to chant or shout the name of Gauranga. However, Srila Prabhupada gives a broader meaning, namely that gaurāiga bole oāke means one should become a devotee of Lord Caitanya.

This does not negate the the particular emphasis placed on chanting Gauranga’s holy name. One should become a devotee of Lord Caitanya and chant Gauranga’s name. Exactly how Gauranga’s name should be chanted is explained in the following excerpt from a lecture.

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, gahe bā vanete thāke, ‘hā gaurāiga’ bale oāke. Either you remain at home or outside home, you chant śrī kanṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda. This is the process, very simple process. And Hare Kanna. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.2 -- Johannesburg, October 22, 1975 [emphasis ours])

There is no contradiction. Chant Lord Gauranga’s holy name in the proper, authorized method śrī kanṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda then chant the Hare Kanna maha mantra. This method of chanting in kirtana was consistently described in Srila Prabhupada’s writings and was always present in Srila Prabhupada’s own example when leading kirtanas. Narottama dasa Thakura’s verse, or any other reference, should not be used as a validation for deviating from Srila Prabhupada’s clear instruction on how to perform kirtana.

While commenting on the song beginning with the words gaurāiga balite ha’be pulaka śarīra hari hari balite nayane ba’be nīra, Srila Prabhupada wrote:

The chanting of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s name is more essential than the chanting of the Hare Kanna mahā-mantra because Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the most magnanimous incarnation and His mercy is very easily achieved. Therefore one must first take shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting śrī-kanṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda. (Ādi 8.31 Purport)

Gaurāiga balite refers to chanting the name of Gauranga and once more Srila Prabhupada confirms that the proper, acceptable mode of chanting Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's names and those of Nityananda Prabhu is śrī-kaṇṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Nitai Gaur Radhe Shyam as chanted by Caran Das Babaji

“He introduced a new system of chanting: nitāi-gaura rādhe śyāma. So the Nitāi-Gaura chanting will have some effect in Kali-yuga. Although he was presenting pervertedly, the beginning was Nitāi-Gaura, so it would have some effect. He did not know actually Nitāi-Gaura-from his words it appears. He used to preach that Nitāi is Rādhārāṇī and Gaura is Kāṇṇa. That is siddhānta-viruddha. But some way or other, he was chanting Nitāi-Gaura, so some effects were there.

Conversation (From Hari sauri Diary), May 2, 1976, Fiji

Chanting Jaya Sacinandana, Nitai Gaura*

So this benediction is offered by Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who has very kindly come here, Nitāi-Gaura. So you take advantage of His mercy. You are very fortunate that Nitāi-Gaura is here. If you simply chant Nitāi-Gaura and dance, then you'll become happy. There is no difficulty. There is no difficulty. You are chanting "Jaya Sacinandana." This simple chanting, "Jaya Sacinandana," "Hare Kṛṣṇa," this chanting and dancing, yajñair sankīrtanair prayair yajanti hi sumedhasah. This is not I am manufacturing. It is the injunction of the śāstra. In this age, simply by chanting and dancing, yajñair sankīrtanair prayair, you get complete spiritual service. So I am very glad you are taking care of Nitāi-Gaura so nicely, They are so nicely dressed. So continue these activities, and even if you cannot do anything, simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and dance and "Jaya Sacinandana." That will make your life perfect.

Lecture Baltimore, CC Madhya 20.102, July 1976

You cannot invent / nitāi-gaura rādhe-śyāma*

There are so many they have invented. Just like Hare Kāṇṇa mantra is prescribed in the śāstras, and they have invented so many. Although there is the name of the Supreme Lord, still you have to follow the śāstra. If you say Rāma Rāma Rāma, Rādhe Rādhe Rādhe, Kāṇṇa, there are so many mentioned. That is also name, but you have to follow the śāstra. Śāstra says: Hare Kāṇṇa Hare Kāṇṇa Kāṇṇa Kāṇṇa Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare You have to take that. Not that you can say nitāi-gaura rādhe-śyāma, hare kāṇṇa hare rāma, no. Why? Is there any in the śāstra? No, you have invented. What is the value of your invention? You are not perfect. But they like that “It is my guru, I have got some followers, I invent some type of chanting.” This is nonsense. You must follow, mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu. You cannot invent.

lecture, Vandāvana, November 2, 1976

Chanting Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam... / Radharamanacarana Das Babaji

As we looked at the land, a kīrtana party of all older men came with garlands to greet Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda ignored them because they were singing Nitai Gaura Radhe Syama Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rama over and over. This happens to be the site of a small temple which has a mūrti of Rādhāramaṇa-araṇa dāsa Bābājī the originator of the chant in it. Prabhupāda accepted their garlands but otherwise ignored them.

Hari Sauri Diary, February 6, 1977, Panihati

Chanting Jaya Nitai-Gaura Radha-Syama, Jaya Krsna-Balarama (1)

Srila Prabhupada slept well at night, but did not translate. He had taken Bhagatji's medicine after all. Srila Prabhupada also gave Satadhanya Maharaja a new mantra, "Jaya Nitai-Gaura Radha-Syama, Jaya Krsna-Balarama," for glorifying our Deities here.

TKG's Diary June 26 1977

Chanting Jaya Nitai-Gaura Radha-Syama, Jaya Krsna-Balarama (2)

"...I can go anywhere by chair. It is difficult only in the imagination. The swelling is touching the skin, not the soul. It is all Balarama's mercy, this preaching is successful. Jaya Nitai-Gaura Radha-Syama, Jaya Krsna-Balarama. Who has got strength like Balarama? He can do anything by His strength, and He can please anyone. We are depending on Him. Mother Yasoda's sons. Yasodanandana. Gopi-jana-vallabha. Their only business is to please the gopis." Prabhupada was becoming very ecstatic, when he checked himself suddenly: "All right, let us go for massage."

TKG's Diary June 26 1977

Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol (1)*

Lokanātha: We chant, "Gaura Nityānanda bol, haribol, haribol..."

Prabhupāda: That is all right.

Lokanātha: "Gaura śrī advaita..." Is it recommended by you? That is in our paramparā? And what about "jaya jagannātha, jaya jagannātha"?

Prabhupāda: Yes. That's all right. [break] ...anukirtanam, to chant always the Lord's name. So these are Lord's name. Jagannatha is also Lord's name. Nityānanda is also Lord's name. [break] ...harer nāma harer nāma eva kevalam [Cc. Ādi 17.21]. So harer nāma can be chanted.

Lokanātha: But chanting in that particular fashion, saying "jaya jagannātha, jaya jagannātha."

Prabhupāda: Yes. Chanting means glorifying. "jaya jagannātha." "Please engage me."

Morning walk, 17 November 1975, Bombay

Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol (2)

As Srila Prabhupada sat on the small stage, Lokanatha Maharaja led his men in an exuberant kīrtana. After singing the standard prayers and the mahā-mantra, he began chanting "gaura-nityānanda bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-śrīadvaita bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-sri gadadhara bol, haribol haribol ..." with a lot of emphasis on the response of haribol, haribol. Srila Prabhupāda suddenly signaled him from the stage to stop it; he apparently didn't like it, although he didn't say why.

Hari Sauri Diary, August 30, 1976

Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol (3)

After the temple darsana in the evening there is always a big kīrtana during ārati, especially with Lokanatha Maharaja and his men here, as they are extremely enthusiastic chanters. However, they have developed a style of kīrtana that is a little different from the ISKCON norm. When the kīrtana reaches its climax, they gather around in a group and start singing "nitāi-gaura haribol, haribol, haribol, haribol." They get completely carried away with chanting haribol. Sometimes they go on for five or ten minutes singing back and forth, "haribol, haribol! haribol, haribol!" Sometimes it even goes on longer than the

chanting of the mahā-mantra. Some devotees are not happy about it, although no one can fault their enthusiasm.

Harikesa Swami objects to it quite strongly, and this evening he went into the garden to ask Srila Prabhupada's opinion. Since we have never heard Srila Prabhupāda sing this mantra, Harikesa had doubts it was actually a bona fide practice. Prabhupāda had stopped Lokanātha's kīrtana at the pandala in Delhi, but at that time he gave no reason why.

Now this evening, Prabhupada, although not too upset by it, made it clear that such chanting was not approved by him. He told us that we should mainly chant the Hare Kāṇṇa mahā-mantra. He said 'nitāi-gaura haribol' is all right, because they are bona fide names of the Lord, but the real point is that we should strictly follow only what the ācāryas have given. This is the process. He said that the ācāryas only chant all five names of the Paica-tattva, not just two. So although there is no offence in chanting the names of Gaura-Nitāi, if we deviate and chant our own made-up mantras then this is guror-avajīā, or disobeying the orders of the spiritual master, and the line of ācāryas. To make advancement in spiritual life one must always follow the line of ācāryas.

He referred to the āśrama at the back of our temple where they sing every morning, "nitāi-gaura rādhe-śyāma japa hare kāṇṇa hare rāma." He said that it is offensive because it is a deviation from the line of ācāryas.

Hari Sauri Diary, September 6, Vrindavana

Chanting "Haribol"

March 18, 1973, ISKCON Māyāpur Candrodaya Mandir: During ISKCON's first international festival in Māyāpur, many devotees demonstrated how they had become influenced by the Bengali form of kīrtana. Śrīla Prabhupāda expressed some displeasure about the chanting of so many different mantras. "They can chant their 'Nitāi Gaura, Hari Bols'," he said, "but I will chant Hare Kāṇṇa and go back home, back to Godhead." Perhaps if we had understood the translation of "Haribol," then we would have known what to do. Śrīla Prabhupāda enjoyed chanting the mahā-mantra.

Srutakīrti dāsa, Śrīla Prabhupāda Uvāca

Chanting "Haribol" (2)

On another occasion, during Māyāpura festival of 1976, devotees were chanting "Haribol, Haribol, Haribol, Haribol!" again and again in a huge, exuberant kīrtana. After several minutes of this, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent word down from his room to chant the Hare Kāṇṇa mantra. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that we are not the Haribol sampradāya.

Bhakti Vikas Swami, quoted in Harinam Eva Kevalam

Prabhupada not stopping "Haribols"

There (in Mumbai) was a kīrtana in the temple which was basically a lot of Hari bols. During this kīrtana I was highly skeptical and looked often to Srila Prabhupada to see if he wanted me to stop this kīrtana or not. I think that Prabhupada knew why I was looking at him and he specifically avoided me by looking downward or to the side the whole kīrtana. At the end, when we were walking back to his flat at the back of the land, I asked "Srila Prabhupada, "should I have stopped that kīrtana since it was not proper?" "No," he said, "at least they are chanting."

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

Gaura-nityānanda bol, haribol

After singing the standard prayers and the mahā-mantra, Lokanātha Mahārāja began chanting “gaura-nityānanda bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-śrī-advaita bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-śrī gadādhara bol, haribol, haribol . . .” with a lot of emphasis on the response of haribol, haribol. Śrīla Prabhupāda suddenly signaled him from the stage to stop it; he apparently didn’t like it, although he didn’t say why.

Hari-sauri dasa, A Transcendental Diary 4, p. 282

Gaura Nityananda Bol, Haribol

Ananda prabhu was chanting Gaura Nityananda bol etc. I knew that this was not what should happen, but I was Prabhupada's servant at this time and not the president any longer. Much to my surprise he said, “Go to the temple room and stop him from singing the kirtana. Tell him that this is your temple and that you will lead the kirtanas the way you want.”

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

Chanting Nitai Gaura and Radhe Radhe

Like yesterday I heard that someone was chanting, “Nitāi-Gaura, Nitāi-Gaura, Nitāi-Nitāi-Gaura.” Like that, I’ll hear different mantras. Someone is chanting: “Rādhe, Rādhe, Rādhe, Rādhe,” like that, at kirtan.

Prabhupāda: Well, that is not done by the ācāryas. But there is no harm chanting “Rādhe.” But sometimes it is degraded to make something new, invention. Therefore better to stick to “Hare Kṛṣṇa” and to “Shri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Prabhupāda-Nityānanda.” Otherwise... Just like the sahaḥjīyās, they have invented: “Nitāi-Gaura Rādhe Syāma, Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma.” These things will come gradually. But they are not approved. They are called chara kirtan (?), means “concocted kīrtana.” But there is no harm chanting “Rādhe, Nitāi-Gaura.” So better stick to this Panca-tattva, and mahā-mantra. Just like “Nitāi Gaura Rādhe Syāma, Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Rāma.” There is “Nitāi-Gaura, Rādhe Syāma,” but it is not approved. Mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu. We have to follow the mahājana. In Caitanya-caritāmata you’ll find “Shri Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya Prabhu-Nityānanda, Shri-Advaita Gadādhara...,” never “Nitāi Gaura, Rādhe Syāma.” So why should we do that?

Jayapatāka: The concocter of the “Nitāi Gaura Rādhe Syāma,” previously he was a follower of Bhaktisiddhānta, but then he was rejected, and then he started his own camp.

Prabhupāda: No, yes, he was meeting Bhaktivinoda Thākura. So... What is called? Carana dāsa Bābāji.

Satsvarūpa: Shila Prabhupāda, sometimes during ārati, many bona fide bhajanas are sung, but not much Hare Kṛṣṇa. Is that not a good tendency, that maybe just two or three minutes of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and many other bhajanas?

Prabhupāda: No. We should stick to Hare Kṛṣṇa. Shri Kṛṣṇa-Caitanya Prabhu-Nityānanda, jiva jāgo jiva jāgo..., these are authorized. But Hare Kṛṣṇa is the mahā-mantra. What is sung by mahājana, Bhaktivinoda Thākura, Narottama dāsa Thākura, that can be sung.

Morning Walk April 8, 1975, Māyāpur

Introducing speculative chants should be avoided by all devotees

Fortunately, Srila Prabhupada gave guidelines for standardizing the content and style of our kirtanas. As ISKCON is an international society, and kirtana is our most important activity, it is important that these points be known and followed so that the manner of performing kirtana can be more or less the same in all our centers, and to prevent

speculation. Although some variation in style is inevitable, there should be a general standard. The basic points, such as singing the correct tune in mangala-arati and not introducing speculative chants, should be known and followed by all devotees.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Jaya Gaura Nitai rather than Nitai Gaur Haribol

If the names of the Deities are chanted, the names of Gaura-Nitai should not be neglected. We can directly chant Jaya Gaura-Nitai rather than Nitai Gaura Haribol. The names of Gaura and Nitai should not be separated by chanting Jaya Gaura and then Jaya Nitai. This is a speculation directly introduced from a Bengali apa-sampradaya.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Srila Prabhupada chanting »Haribol«

There is only one known instance of Srila Prabhupada chanting Nitai Gaura Haribol. Revatinandana Dasa reports that at a park engagement in Amsterdam, where degraded hippies were causing much disturbance, Srila Prabhupada simply closed his eyes, spread his arms, and, with a look of deep concentration chanted into the microphone, long and slowly, Nitai Gaura Haribol, Haribol, Haribol, Haribol.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Gaura, Gaura, Gaura he... (1)

That evening Bharadvaja chose to sing a song (which he said he got from a book by Gopal Bhatta Goswami) which was a variation on the mantra Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna Krsna he, but instead of it being for Krsna Krsna was replaced with Gaura, so that the mantra went, Gaura Gaura Gaura Gaura Gaura Gaura Gaura he etc. Srila Prabhupada disliked this extremely, so much so that the next morning he called me into his room and wanted from me an explanation of why Bharadvaja was chanting like that. I could not give a proper explanation at that moment, but Prabhupada said that he never wanted to hear that again in the temple and that I should never allow such kinds of 'speculation' in kirtana. He then went on to specifically describe how kirtana should be done.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal 1988

Gaura Gaura Gaura he... (2)

During one of Srila Prabhupada's stays in Vrndavana he was attending the evening kirtanas and classes led by his disciples due to his being sickly and unable to speak. One night Srila Prabhupada's disciple, Bharadvaja dasa, chose to sing a song which he said he got from a book by Gopal Bhatta Goswami. The song was a variation on the mantra "krsna krsna krsna krsna krsna krsna he," but instead of the name "Krsna", the name "Gaura" was chanted. The mantra went, "gaura gaura gaura gaura gaura gaura gaura he" & etc. Srila Prabhupada disliked this extremely, so much so that the next morning he called the president of the temple into his room and wanted an explanation of why Bharadvaja was chanting like that. The devotee could not give a proper explanation at that moment. Srila Prabhupada said that he never wanted to hear that again in the temple and that the temple president should never allow such kinds of "speculation" in kirtana.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Chanting »Haribol« is auspicious

Of course, the word Haribol is written many times in Caitanya-Caritamrta. It is a standard greeting used by devotees, and is often chanted in North Indian folk bhajanas. It means

“Chant the name of God,” and is therefore auspicious and purifying. The chant Nitai Gaura Haribol, Haribol, Haribol, Haribol may sometimes be used in ISKCON to bring kirtanas to an end. However, Srila Prabhupada did not like this to be chanted excessively. On the other hand, in Baltimore, where the presiding Deities are Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Srila Prabhupada encouraged the devotees to go on chanting Nitāi-Gaura, Jaya Sacinandana and Hare Krsna. Srila Prabhupada also said, “hat is the difference, Nitāi-Gaurāiga and Hare Kanna? Nitāi-Gaurāiga and Hare Kanna, there is no difference. Nitāi-Gaurāiga is also nice. Whatever he finds convenient, let him chant.” Bhaktivinoda Thakura predicted that the day would come when devotees from overseas would chant “Jaya Sacinandana.” Jaya Sacinandana is usually chanted in sequence with Nitai-Gauranga. So based on these references it appears to be acceptable to chant Nitai-Gauranga and Jaya Sacinandana sometimes, but not to make them the principal content of our kirtanas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting Room Conversation, March 14, 1975 and Morning walk, March 4, 1974

Loud Haribols and ululations

Caitanya Caritamrta (Madhya 13.87) states that Advaita Acarya used to call out loudly during kirtana. Devotees desiring to do this should better call out “Haribol!” or “Hare Krsna,” rather than making sounds resembling Red Indian war whoops. For women, screaming or shrieking is unsuitable, being an inauspicious sound and unsuitable for reserved and chaste ladies. In Bengali culture, women make the ulu vibration to express appreciation or enhance auspiciousness during a religious activity. This is done by moving the tongue within the mouth to make a loud, high-pitched, rolling sound. Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas indicate that the gopis in Krsna-lila also ululate, and Srila Prabhupada wanted his Western women disciples to learn to do so (at the present time this practice is practically unknown in the West, and requires to be learnt from Bengali women).

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

“Nitai Gaura” as guror avajna

"Svayambhur wanted more clarification on what Srila Prabhupada had said about the chanting of nitai-gaura being a deviation. In his mind there was some contradiction, and he put it to Prabhupada to resolve. "Prabhupada, you wrote in the Caitanya-caritamrta that the Caitanya maha-mantra, sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu nityananda. ... there is no offence to that. And so therefore in the Kali-yuga it is actually more beneficial ..."

Prabhupada repeated his comments made to Harikesa Maharaja. "Offence is that what is spoken by the acaryas, if you do not follow, that is offence. Guror avajna. To chant Gaura-Nitai is no offence. But if our previous gurus have chanted sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu nityananda sri-advaita-why should we go beyond that? That is guror avajna. Even there is no aparadha, because guru, Kaviraja Gosvami, has sung like that and my guru has sung, we should follow that. We should not make any deviation. That is guror avajna, sruti-sastra-nindanam; namno balad yasya hi papa-buddhih. So it comes to be one of the items of the dasa-vidha-aparadha [ten offences in chanting]. Guror avajna.

"Is it more beneficial for people to hear the Panca-tattva mantra than the Hare Krsna maha-mantra?" Svayambhur asked.

"Oh yes," Prabhupada told us. "You are going to Hare Krsna through Nitai-Gaura. Nitaiyer karuna habe braje radha-krsna pabe." But he added, "The principle is don't try to manufacture. Because you are not experienced, so what nonsense you will manufacture, that will be offensive. Better go on, the simple thing."

Sri krsna caitanya prabhu nityananda - prabhu Nityananda prabhu nityananda

So I finally got up the nerve and said, "Srila Prabhupada, sometimes the devotees chant 'sri krsna caitanya prabhu nityananda - prabhu Nityananda prabhu nityananda.' Is that all right?" Srila Prabhupada turned to look at me and with his beautiful, deep transcendental voice said, "Yes." So since that day, on the divine appearance of Lord Nityananda, I always chant the glories of Lord Nityananda's holy name: Sri Krsna Caitanya Prabhu Nityananda, Prabhu Nityananda Prabhu Nityananda, Nityananda Nityananda Nityananda Nityananda, Sri Krsna Caitanya Prabhua Nityananda.

Srutadeva dasa

Nitāi-Gaura will have some effect

Prabhupāda's feelings about the Māyāvādīs are well known, but there are variations of Vainṇavism that are not so clearly understood. Desiring to get some clarification on gurus who may not be so far removed from our lineage Gurukapa Mahārāja cited the statement in śāstra that if someone can induce others to chant Hare Kṛṇa they must be empowered, and therefore qualified. He then asked about one Caraṇa dāsa Bābājī in Bengal, who in the early part of this century had induced people to chant a mantra which included the holy name. He built up a large following, but the mantra was his own invention and not strictly within the paramparā.

Prabhupāda acknowledged that the man had some credit, but he said that overall he was not successful because of his deviation. "He introduced a new system of chanting: nitāi-gaura rādhe śyāma. So the Nitāi-Gaura chanting will have some effect in Kali-yuga. Although he was presenting pervertedly, the beginning was Nitāi-Gaura, so it would have some effect. He did not know actually Nitāi-Gaura-from his words it appears. He used to preach that Nitāi is Rādhārāṇī and Gaura is Kṛṇa. That is siddhānta-viruddha. But some way or other, he was chanting Nitāi-Gaura, so some effects were there. Just like sandalwood: you do not know which way better pulp comes out, but if you rub anyway, some pulp will come because it is sandalwood. So he had some effect of chanting Nitāi-Gaura, but later on they deteriorated because they did not know actually; neither they were taught. Siddhānta-virodha means it will deteriorate; it will not endure."

Hari-sauri Dasa, A transcendental Diary, May 2, 1976 B Fiji

Mixing of mantras is rasabhasa*

Therefore our process is to chant the holy names of the Paica-tattva and then we chant Hare Kṛṇa mahā-mantra. That is perfect. And neither mixing. The mixing taste is called rasābhāsa. Rasābhāsa. And we don't manufacture anything. Just follow. We disagree with the persons who chant that bhaja nitāi-gaura rādhe-śyāma. No. We must follow strictly. Mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu

Cc. Madhya 17.186, purport

To Krsna through Radharani*

Actual aim of life is to satisfy Lord Vishnu, and Krsna is the origin of vishnu-tattva. And He is pleased through Rādhārāṇī. Therefore we don't want Krsna alone. No. Rādhā-Krsna. First Rādhārāṇī. So that day is today. First you have to worship Rādhārāṇī. If you go through Rādhārāṇī...

Therefore in Vrndāvana you will see all devotees, they will address one another, “Jaya Rādhe.” Still. Because they know that “If Rādhārāni is pleased, if I can please Rādhārāni...” Rādhārāni is presented, the original pleasure potency, always absorbed in thought of Kṛṣṇa.

So anyone who comes before Rādhārāni to serve Kṛṣṇa, oh, She becomes so pleased, “Oh, here is a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.” She immediately recommends, “Kṛṣṇa, oh, here is a devotee. He is better than Me.” This is Rādhārāni. I may be a, not devotee. I may be most fallen rascal. But if I try to reach Kṛṣṇa through Rādhārāni, then my business is successful. Therefore we should worship Rādhārāni first. That is our business.

Lecture Bg 18.5 -- London, September 5, 1973 /Rādhāsthmi

Jaya Radhe

The next morning I led the kīrtana in his room, duplicating the melodious style which he had shown me the day before [for the morning tune]. Prabhupāda was pleased and seemed to enjoy the kīrtana. Unfortunately, I fell victim to that demon within the mind and started to speculate a couple of “Jaya Rādhes” at the end of the kīrtana. This was one of the bigger mistakes made by me at that time. Although there is nothing wrong with “Jaya Rādhe”, Prabhupāda simply didn’t want us to chant it. He once explained that Śukadeva Gosvāmī did not feel himself qualified to chant the name of Rādhā in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and therefore only indicated Her name with the word ārādhana while describing the topmost gopī friend of Kāṇṇa. Anyway, to continue the story, I had just started to chant Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī’s holy name within Vandāvana dhāma, Her beloved Lord’s abode, within the presence of Her most intimate devotee, during the most auspicious hours of the day, when Her most intimate devotee looked at me with eyes blazing like fire and desirous of initiating my immediate destruction. Voice choked and gagging, I ended the kīrtana immediately without further formalities, never again to make the same mistake. Prabhupāda never ended kīrtanas with various extra mantras, especially not “Jaya Rādhe,” so why should I?

Harikeśa Swami, The Vainṇava Journal, 1988

Followers of Srila Prabhupada shouldn't chant »Jaya Radhe«

Srila Prabhupada told us not to chant Jaya Radhe, so we shouldn’t. Srila Prabhupada was always careful to protect his disciples from artificially jumping up to “higher levels” of devotion. His restriction on our chanting of the name of our topmost object of worship, Srimati Radharani, seems to be a manifestation of such caution. Whatever the reason may be, neither Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati nor Srila Prabhupada encouraged or introduced the chanting of Radha-nama, and it behooves their followers to be similarly conservative.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Radhe Govinda

There is another popular chant, Radhe Radhe Govinda, Govinda Radhe, which is sung to an attractive tune and has become popular in our society. Again, it is better to stick to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra, which we know is authorized and that Srila Prabhupada wanted us to chant. Incidentally, even Harikesa’s article says that it is all right to chant Jaya Radhe on Radhastami.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Radharani ki jaya, Maharani ki jaya

Radharani ki jaya, maharani ki jaya (a Brijbasi folk-song) and Jaya jaya radha-ramana haribol (an invented pop “bhajana”) are other examples of catchy jingles that have been introduced in ISKCON kirtanas. Considering his attitude towards similar non-standard chants, it is unlikely that Srila Prabhupada would have approved these innovations. Preferably, they should be discontinued in all our centers.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Govinda Bolo, Gopala Bolo

ISKCON devotees should not sing the variation “Govinda bolo Gopala bolo/Radha-ramana hari Govinda bolo.” This was not authorized by Srila Prabhupada, who never liked all these “bolo’s.”

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

»Jaya Radhe Jaya Krsna« to 'sing the Deities to sleep'

Where Radha-Krsna Deities are established, a soft, mellow rendering of “Jaya Radhe Jaya Krsna Jaya Vrndavana” is most suitable and pleasing. It is also nice, if devotees are free, for them to sing at the midday and afternoon aratis.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Examples of current ISKCON mantras/ Govinda bolo

Govinda bolo hari, gopala bolo / It’s not just that they are Krsna name therefore we can sing it. Wwe are selling them so I guess we can sing them. I heard it on the street in Vrndavan it’s okay.

Radharani ki jaya, maharani ki jaya - A Brijbasi folk song, says B.V. Swami. Not that whatever a brijbasi chants is immediately authorized.

Jaya Radha-ramana haribol - (an invented pop bhajan) -

Radhe-radhe syama milade (“O Radharani, please introduce me to your Syama.”) - More songs of the vaisnava acaryas – traditional gujarati chant.

Along with it, one verse is something else also heard lately: “Radhe radhe radhe, sri krsna radhe radhe”

Jayadvaita Swami, Kirtana Reform

Jay Radhe, Jay Govinda

...The kirtan-performer Suklambhara Brahmachari began chanting "Jai Radhe! Jai Govinda!" and attained the mercy of Shri Chaitanya

biography of Lochana Das Thakur

»Raghupati Raghava...« / a political motive*

Regarding the Raghu Pati Raghava song, we are not concerned with this song because it had a political motive; it is not pure devotional service. Gandhi was a great statesman in the garb of a saintly person, so that the Indian population would blindly follow him. But his motive was political and we are therefore not very interested with it. However, you can sing the first two lines, (Raghu Pati Raghava Raja Ram, Patita Pavana Sita Ram).

Letter to: Krsna dasa, 13 February, 1969

Sri Ram Jay Ram Jay Jay Ram in a public festival*

The record which you have sent singing Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram, and other Kirtana is really a new turn and we have enjoyed the record so nicely. This Narada Muni

song is in your country tune and I think it will attract many more of common man to join the Kirtana so you should practice this standard Kirtana more conveniently so that during your Rathayatra festival you can have this singing with the procession.

Letter to Mukunda, June 6, 1967

No additional kirtans for Sita-Rama*

For worshipping the Deities in Bombay, including Sītā-Rāma, there is absolutely no change in worship. Adopt the same method as in our Vandāvana center, simply with 3 pūjārīs just like in Vandāvana. They are all Vinṇu-tattva, Rāmacandra, Rādhā-Kaṇṇa, Gaura-Nitāi. No additional kīrtanas, simply do exactly as in Vrndavana.

letter to Surabhīr-abhipālayantam Swami, 7 June 1976

Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama (1)

The Hare Krishna mantra is enough, includes Rama. Other mantras are not necessary

At mid-day āratī some devotees were singing over the microphone a mantra glorifying Sītā Rāma: Raghupati rāghava rāja rāma, patita pāvana sītā rāma. They were also chanting some other mantras.

Srila Prabhupāda sent me into the temple with the message that they stop. He wanted them to simply chant the Hare Kaṇṇa mahā-mantra, since it automatically includes Lord Rāma. He said that other mantras were not necessary.

Hari Sauri Diary, Rama-navami, April 9, 1976 Vrindavana

Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama (2)

NB. The bhajan raghupati raghava raja rāma, patita pavana sita rāma is a recent composition. It does not come from any authorised ācārya. It was made up by a follower of M.K. Gandhi. According to TRK Somaiya of the Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal / Gandhi Book Centre “Somebody else wrote this with the suggestions of Mahatma Gandhi.”

Email to Hari-sauri dasa, September 26, 2005

Prabhupada against “Raghupati Raghava...”

However, in 1976 (in accordance with Srila Prabhupada’s policy of gradually becoming stricter in implementing standards) he stopped devotees from singing this chant in the midday aratī (and that was on Ramanavami). Srila Prabhupada said that Rama was automatically included in the maha-mantra and there was no need to sing anything else

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Sri Rama, Jaya Rama

At the end of one lecture (680910BG.SF) Srila Prabhupada taught the devotees to chant Sri Rama jaya Rama jaya jaya Rama (also, Letter to: Mukunda, 6 June, 1967). This is another popular kirtana in India. It is especially suitable for singing on Ramanavami or when visiting a temple of Lord Rama. But even then the Hare Krsna maha-mantra is quite appropriate, for it also contains the name of Lord Rama.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Ghandi's addition to Raghupati Raghava...

Another traditional chant in praise of Lord Rama is Raghupati Raghava Raja Rama, patita pavana Sita Rama. Although in 1968 Srila Prabhupada taught this to devotees, Mohanadasa (“Mahatma”) Gandhi added to the original chant the lines,

Isvara Allah hi tera nama
sabko sanmati de bhagavan

(Isvara and Allah are your names. Oh Lord! Bestow upon all proper understanding.)

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Chanting names of Deities (1)

Sometime later, Prabhupada said, "One side Nitai-Gaura, one side Radhe-Syama. In the middle, Krsna-Balarama: Two Brothers. Is it not symmetrical? This is Deity's name. Not that we are giving up the Hare Krsna mantra: Hare Krsna, Hare Krsna, Krsna Krsna, Hare Hare; Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. That is standard.

TKG's Diary November 1, 1977

Chanting names of Deities (2)

I would say in my defence that as Srila Prabhupada did it in Vrindavan it must also be a harmless and in fact beneficial devotional practice to sing the Names of our Temple's Deities. Evidently Prabhupada smiled as he coined this mantra (Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam Jaya Krsna Balaram) remembering its similarity to the infamous "Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyama Hare Krishna Hare Rama". So how can singing the name of our particular Temple's Deities ever be wrong? It is not a concocted mantra but the Deity Names .

HH Mahavisnu Swami to KSC (Text PAMHO:14050558)

“Jaya Gurudeva” is impersonal / Bhoga arati not to be sung during mangala arati offering

February 1977, Gaura Pūrṇimā. Before the first maigala-ārati, Paica-dravioa Swami had been chanting bhaja bhakata vatsala śrī-gaura-hari for the maigala offering, before the ārati. During the maigala-ārati kīrtana someone had been chanting—for Prabhupāda, of course—“Jaya Gurudeva.” And Bhavānanda came down after maigala-ārati, and during the announcements he brought two messages from Prabhupāda, because Prabhupāda was just on the floor upstairs and had heard. So Prabhupāda said, firstly, you don't sing Bhoga Ārati for the maigala-ārati sweet offering; secondly, you do not sing “Jaya Gurudeva.” The word gurudeva is impersonal; it can mean anyone. If you want to indicate your spiritual master, you call him by name. So it is “Jaya Prabhupāda.”

Krparamaya dāsa (as communicated by Jayādvaita Swami, quoted in Harinama Eva Kevalam)

“Jaya Gurudeva” comes from sahajiya sampradayas

He objected to the usage of “Jaya Gurudeva,” since it was a direct insertion into our movement from the sahajiyā sampradāyas in Bengal, who always say things like “Jaya Guru,” “Jaya Gurudeva,” without referring to any particular guru. Prabhupāda criticized this as impersonal and did not want it chanted by his disciples. “Who is the guru?” he would challenge.

Harikesa Swami, The Vainṇava Journal, 1988

Chanting of »Jay Gurudeva« in Gaudiya Mathas

It may be questioned what the disciples of Srila Prabhupada's disciples (and in future, of those in continuing generations) should sing in kirtana to praise their guru in lieu of "Jaya Gurudeva". In a famous lecture, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura said something to the effect, "Should I not teach my disciples to chant "Jaya Gurudeva"? "Jaya Gurudeva" is regularly chanted, usually one time only, at the end of Gaudiya Matha kirtanas, for all that's worth.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, letter to SP disciples PAMHO, 15. june 1998

Kripamoya's thoughts on "Jaya Gurudeva" (1)

I have raised the issue before of the chanting of "Jaya Gurudeva" after the chanting of "Jaya Prabhupada" during kirtans in Mayapura. From there it has spread all over the world, and is now standard.

But if you are a disciple of Srila Prabhupada your participation in the kirtan comes to an abrupt end right there because to chant "Jaya Gurudeva" AFTER "Jaya Prabhupada" is incorrect.

I did not get any personal instructions from Srila Prabhupada but I was present when an announcement was made on his behalf right after mangala arati during the festival in Mayapura, 1977. So I clearly remember this point.

Kripamoya das, letter to KSC

Kripamoya's thoughts on "Jaya Gurudeva" (2)

I went to the temple room early one morning and some devotees were singing 'Bhaja bhakata vatsala Sri Gaurahari'during the first offering. Then came mangala arati,a kirtan the like of which I had never experienced before. At its conclusion, the singer began chanting first 'jaya jaya Prabhupada' and then 'jaya jaya Gurudeva'. After mangala arati and nrsinghadeva prayers came the day's announcements. The sanyasi had just come from Prabhupada's room and relayed the following message:

"Prabhupada just told me that its better not to chant jaya gurudeva because that means anybody's guru-Prabhupada is his personal name and we should sing that. But if we want we can sing gurudeva first as long as we finish with jaya Prabhupada"

Now I always remembered that instruction and consequently never sang jaya gurudeva meaning Srila Prabhupada. During our Bhagavan days here in England I must confess I did chant rather a lot of jaya gurudevras because I led kirtan regularly and to not do so would have been considered wrong. Due to this rather painful historical episode,the vibration of jaya gurudeva in kirtan was never heard again in the British yatra; that is, until recently.

I'm not sure where it originated but I'm sure it was quite a natural development amongst disciples for whom 'gurudeva'was their chosen epithet for their spiritual master or where disciples of different gurus were gathered together in kirtan and the nomenclature 'gurudeva'was deemed acceptable because the term refers to anyone's spiritual master.

Reasoning that it must be now a logical development within ISKCON, and not wishing to be one of those grumpy old 'Prabhupada disciples' who always want ISKCON to be like it was 'in the good old days' I never raised any objections.

However, because of what I'd heard from Prabhupada I found myself unable to join in. I could not sing gurudeva meaning my own spiritual master and I couldn't sing gurudeva meaning anyone else's-even though I do try to see all vaishnavas as my gurus. So when the enthusiastic kirtan leader now sings 'jaya gurudeva!' I respond by singing 'Jaya Prabhupada!'

Kripamoya Das, letter to (Arcana) Deity Worship PAMHO, 13 May 1997

Prabhupadera prana-dhana he

In 1977 Srutadeva Dasa, the Temple President in London, wrote to Srila Prabhupada asking if it was acceptable to chant “Jaya Radha London Isvara... Prabhupadera prana-dhana he” in kirtana, (adapted from the song, Radha Krsna Giti). Srila Prabhupada replied in the affirmative

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting Letter to Srutadeva, 30 October, 1976

Chanting »Jaya!« at the end of Kirtana

Srila Prabhupada did not personally introduce this; he finished kirtanas simply with the maha-mantra, without adding any other chants. Yet it was an accepted practice in ISKCON during Srila Prabhupada’s personal presence, and Srila Prabhupada never expressed disapproval of it—although he specifically stated that he did not like that “Jaya Prabhupāda” be repeatedly chanted

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Not too many »jayas« in the kirtana

However, kirtanas should not go on and on with many Jayas—Jaya this, Jaya that, Jaya every name the lead singer can think of. It is suggested that the name of each Deity be chanted once only. Their names are already included in the maha-mantra, so chanting of the Deities’ names is in one sense superfluous.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Jaya Sita-Rama-Laksman-Hanuman

In ISKCON Bombay, where the Deities of Sita-Rama-Laksman-Hanuman are installed, Srila Prabhupada instructed not to chant, “Jaya Sita-Rama-Laksman-Hanuman.” He said that Their names are included in the maha-mantra and that further chanting was therefore unnecessary.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Chanting »Jaya« before aratis

Kirtanas should not begin with the singing of Jaya. It is a common practice to chant “Jaya Prabhupada” before Srila Prabhupada’s guru-puja and to chant Jaya with the names of the Deities just before an arati begins. But once the conch has blown, the singing of Jaya should cease and the appropriate arati song should be sung.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami

»Ki Jaya!« meant for prema dhvani

Some kirtana leaders stop the kirtana to call out “Srila Prabhupada ki jaya!” or some other “ki jaya!” This is another speculation. “Ki jaya” is meant for the prema-dhvani at the end of the kirtana, not in the middle.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Names of different personalities sung on appearance days

On the appearance days of other Visnu-tattva personalities or Srimati Radharani, we can chant their names throughout the day (like Nityananda, Rama, Jaya Radhe).

And during Ratha yatra, “Jaya Jagannatha” should be chanted. Srila Prabhupada Lilamrta (IV.25) says that Srila Prabhupada told devotees to change the chanting from Hare Krsna to Jaya Jagannatha at the San Francisco Ratha Yatra.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

»Jaya Vrnda Devi«

One phenomenon giving much room for speculation is to mix up chants beginning with “Jaya” (E.g.: to chant Jaya Vrndadevi, Jaya tulsi maharani, Jaya Vrndadevi, Jaya tulsi maharani.) Recently I heard the chant “Jaya Jagat Guru Srila Prabhupada Jaya Gurudeva Jaya Jaya Prabhupada (!!).” It is better to sing, for example, Jaya Vrnda Devi (x 4), then Jaya tulsi maharani (x 4). Otherwise there will be no end to the Jaya permutations and combinations. And even if we don’t sing all these Jayas, our kirtana will be perfect by chanting Hare Krsna more, as Srila Prabhupada did.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami

Chanting BG and ISO verses in Sankirtan*

I am very glad to learn that you are vibrating the mantras from ISOPANISAD and BHAGAVAD GITA independently. Here they are chanting these mantras on the streets during Sankirtana Party and the people are responding very nicely.

SP letter to Yamuna, 7 July 1970

Singing songs and prayers in English / writing songs*

Regarding your request to sing prayers in English, this is nice suggestion, and you may do it. So far as the songs that you have written, you may send me a copy of them and I shall see them. In Montreal also they are writing songs in the popular Western style of music and it is coming very nicely.

Letter to Harer Nama, 30 April, 1969,

Govinda Jaya Jaya

Govinda jaya jaya, Gopala jaya jaya/ Radha-ramana hari Govinda jaya jaya is a popular kirtana in India. Although not specifically from sastra, it is simple, inoffensive chanting of Krsna’s names. Srila Prabhupada liked this and sang it with his disciples. Usually the first line is sung with response twice, followed by the second line with response twice, then back to the first line, and so on.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

He Krsna Govinda...*

One devotee had picked up a chant in India: he krsna, govinda, hari, murari/ he natha, narayana, vasudeva. When Prabhupada heard it, he called us into his room and said, “This is not a Vedic mantra; this is a cinema song. An intelligent disciple just takes whatever his spiritual master provides for him, considering that to be sufficient.

PG p.192 ?

He Krsna Govinda, Hari Murari, He Natha Narayana Vasudeva

One devotee had picked up a chant in India: he krsna, govinda, hari, murari/ he natha, narayana, vasudeva. When Prabhupada heard it, he called us into his room and said, 'This is not a Vedic mantra; this is a cinema song. An intelligent disciple just takes whatever his spiritual master provides for him, considering that to be sufficient. There are many names

of God you can chant, but it's best to take what comes in disciplic succession and what the spiritual master introduces.'

Revatinandana Dasa, quoted in "Srila Prabhupada and His Disciples in Germany,"

Sri-krsna-caitanya and je anilo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood

Each bhajana expresses a particular sentiment and message, so most benefit from singing bhajanas will be had if the singers are aware of the meaning of the song and try to enter into its mood. It is inappropriate to sing a plaintive bhajana (such as that beginning śrī-kanṇa-caitanya-prabhu dayā koro more) or one of lamentation (such as that beginning je ānilo prema-dhana koruṇā pracur) in a fast tempo or joyful tone. Most bhajanas are traditionally sung slow and sweet.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Singing the first line again after completing the song / »Je anilo prema-dhana«

A common practice in singing bhajanas is to sing the first line of the first verse again after completing the song. In some songs, simply to sing the first line is insufficient. At least the second line is needed to make a complete sentence. For example, je ānilo prema-dhana koruṇā pracur means, "He who brought the treasure of love and was full of mercy...." The second line completes the stanza: "heno prabhu kotha gela, acarya thakura" "Where has such a great master as Srinivasa Acarya gone?" Similarly, "gaurangera duti pada, jara dhana-sampada", "Whose property and wealth is the two feet of Lord Caitanya..." is completed by "se jane bhakati-rasa sara," "he knows what is the essence of devotional mellows."

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Susvagatam jagannatha

"Susvagatam jagannatha": A recent addition to the ever expanding repertoire of speculative chants in ISKCON is "susvagatam jagannatha", "susvagatam baladeva", "susvagatam radha" etc. As others, like "jaya jaya radha ramana haribol", this is from a popular Hindi bhajan cassette. "Susvagatam", welcome, is offered to a guest when he enters a person's home. But Jagannatha is the Lord of the Universe -- it belongs to Him, not us. We should be fortunate if He welcomes us to His spiritual abode. This chant is thus particularly inappropriate when sung in the Lord's temple. It is like going to someone's house and on arriving there greeting him with "Welcome!" Such an utterance could be taken as a foolish attempt to establish one's own proprietorship. It could be stated that in bhaava-seva a devotee may welcome the Lord, but this chant is adapted from a commercial cassette, not from the bhaava-seva of genuine acaryas.

Bhakti Caru Swami, Text PAMHO 6697141

Singing a different tune

Tamal Krsna Maharaja told me how Srila Prabhupāda stopped Sudama Swami in the midst of a kirtana for singing a tune different than that taught by His Divine Grace. But after further consideration, Srila Prabhupāda encouraged Sudama to continue chanting his way saying, "You have your own ecstasy of chanting."

Sivarama Swami, Authorised Chanting / correspondence with Hari Sauri Dasa

Bhajan, Kirtan, Sankirtan dictionary definitions

Below are dictionary definitions, that indicate that in Bengali these terms are largely interchangeable.

kIrtana: praising; singing aloud in concert; narrating; songs or singing about the cycle of Radha and Krishna.

bhajana: adoration; service; worship; hymn; carol; divine song.

saMkIrtana: chanting of the names of the gods; praising deities in songs; singing hymns.

Definitions in Monier-Williams Sanskrit to English dictionary do not specifically indicate song.

KSC pamho conf, Date ?, Sender?

TUNES

Any tune can be used*

So far your questions: Any tune can be used. When it is in relationship with Krishna, that makes it bona fide;

Letter to Ekayani, August 31, 1971

Different tunes for the Hare Krsna Mantra*

Hare Kanna, this vibration you can make in different tune, we are already doing that.

letter to Ramesvara dasa, November 26, 1972

Any tune is good for chanting Hare Krsna

Conversation with Allen Ginsburg: The conversation turned to the upcoming program at the Avalon Ballroom.

"Don't you think there's a possibility of chanting a tune that would be more appealing to Western ears?" Allen asked.

"Any tune will do," said Prabhupāda. "Melody is not important. What is important is that you chant Hare Kanna. It can be in the tune of your own country. That doesn't matter."

SP Lilamrita

Srila Prabhupada wanted traditional melodies at temple programs

In temple kīrtanas, for the pleasure of the Deities devotees should sing specific traditional melodies according to the time of day. A particular melody is appropriate for the morning and another for the evening. At least once Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped a devotee from singing the wrong tune during maigalaārati and said, "Sing the morning tune." Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted these traditional melodies to be introduced in the West, particularly the Bengali melodies sung in the kīrtanas of Lord Caitanya's day.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Srila Prabhupada correcting the Mangal Arati tune

...here in Australia. He was very encouraging in kirtans, and the only example of stopping one (in Australia) was when he sent Srutakirti down to the temple to tell the kirtan leader to sing the proper mangal arati tune.

Kurma Das to KSC, December 4, 2007

Gurvastakam - meditation on Srila Prabhupada

...my feeling is that they should be mediating on Srila Prabhupada as the Founder Acarya. ISKCON's managal-arati observance is, as far as I know, unique in that we sing the Gurvastakam. I might be wrong, perhaps someone can correct me, but I don't think in the Gaudiya mathas they sing it. I do know that they don't do guru worship everyday the way we do. So Srila Prabhupada established a unique precedent in the way he formulated our daily worship, with the focus being on him. In the light of so many problems with his successor gurus, I think it is best that we keep the focus on him.

Hari Sauri Das to KSC, (Text PAMHO:14241898)

The morning melody (1)

Srila Prabhupāda was also specific about the melodies that should be chanted during kīrtanas. Particularly, he gave emphasis to the morning melody, which is technically called prabhāti, or predawn melody, in Bengali kīrtana tradition...

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

The morning melody (2)

Prabhupada spoke to me in his room that he was upset with devotees in India inventing some other melodies to sing. He said morning melody means singing this melody. And he taught me.

Bali Mardan Das, quoted in Janānanda dās' Prabhupāda in Malaysia

Prabhupada correcting the improper morning melody

A devotee had begun to lead the chanting of Gurv-antakam—the eight prayers to the spiritual master—in a nonconventional tune. I was feeling uncomfortable because I knew Śrīla Prabhupāda liked us to sing “the morning melody” during maigala-ārati. Suddenly Śruta-kīrti entered the temple and stopped the kīrtana. He whispered something to the devotee leading, who then started up again singing the correct melody. Later we found out that Prabhupāda had heard the singing from his room and had sent his servant down to make the necessary corrections.

Gaura-mandala-bhumi dasa, quoted in Kūrma dās' The Great Transcendental Adventure

Srila Prabhupada was strict about the morning melody

Srila Prabhupāda was very strict in the melody sung during the maigala-ārati. He wanted the morning melody and nothing else. He would sometimes stop kīrtanas if other melodies were sung in the morning. Of course, he was not always doing that, but when he was nearby and there was someone to appreciate the point, he would correct the mistake.

Harikesa Swami, The Vainṇava Journal 1988

The morning melody must be sung throughout the mangala aratika

We were chanting mangala aratika within the room of Srila Prabhupada each morning. Sometimes Prabhupada would appreciate the singing and sometimes not. One morning after a particularly bad kirtana, Prabhupada called me into his room and complained about the singing. He said, again, more or less, “I did not like the singing in the morning. The morning melody must be sung throughout the mangala aratika and no other melody should be sung. It should be sung sweetly and melodiously, like this ... [and he proceeded to sing the first verse of the samsara prayer in a very sweet and melodious voice with perfect inflection and musical accent]. “ Prabhupada was very insistent that the singing should be done in that way only.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

Srila Prabhupada presents the morning melody

Srila Prabhupada particularly stressed that the morning melody (prabhāti-sura) be sung during mangala-arati. This raga should generally not be sung after 10 a.m. Srila Prabhupada taught the morning melody in its simplest form to be sung in mangala-arati. This tune corresponds to that in which the song beginning jīva jāgo is usually sung.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The Gurvastakam tune

The Gurvastakam should be sung in an ‘up-down’ pattern. One verse is sung with the melody in the first line going down, and the third line going up. The next verse is sung with the first line going up, and the third line going down. Then again the next verse is sung with the first line going down, and so on. Some devotees sing the correct tune in mangala arati but don’t touch this ‘up-down’ pattern. They simply sing every stanza up or down, and thus lose much of the sweetness of the morning melody.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Singing correct mangala arati tunes should be followed by all devotees

Fortunately, Srila Prabhupada gave guidelines for standardizing the content and style of our kirtanas. As ISKCON is an international society, and kirtana is our most important activity, it is important that these points be known and followed so that the manner of performing kirtana can be more or less the same in all our centers, and to prevent speculation. Although some variation in style is inevitable, there should be a general standard. The basic points, such as singing the correct tune in mangala-arati and not introducing speculative chants, should be known and followed by all devotees.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The melody after Gurvastakam

After the Gurvastakam has been sung, the mangala arati kirtan continues with the same tune. Some devotees sing the Gurvastakam with the correct tune but then change to another tune after that. This is incorrect. Those who are unsure how to continue the kirtan in the correct tune can simply remember the tune of the Gurvastakam, or of jīva jāgo, and sing the Srila Prabhupada pranama mantra and the rest in the same tune.

The Panca Tattva maha-mantra and the Hare Krsna maha-mantra are sung in the same tune as the Gurvastakam with the same ‘up-down, up-down’ pattern. When chanting the Hare Krsna maha-mantra, one mantra can be chanted with the melody going up and the next down; otherwise, two mantras at a time can be chanted up and the next two down.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Morning melody with variations

Srila Prabhupada taught this most simple form of the morning melody to be chanted in mangala arati. However, variations on the morning melody, with added musical ornamentation, have been introduced in our society. Some devotees opine that because Srila Prabhupada did not introduce these, they should not be sung by ISKCON devotees. Others think that because they are not digressions from the morning melody, but only elaborations of it, because they are sweet and thus enhance the mood of devotion, and because they are part of our Gaudiya-Vaisnava musical tradition, that they are acceptable. If variations of the morning melody are sung, then the basic morning melody as taught by Srila Prabhupada should be sung at least several times before variations are sung. In other words, the simplest form of the morning melody as taught by Srila Prabhupada should form the greater part of chanting Hare Krsna in mangala arati.

In accordance with Srila Prabhupada’s instructions, the mangala arati kirtana should be kept simple.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Gurvastakam in a different melody

There is another well-known tune for Sri-Guruvastakam. This tune should not be sung during mangala-arati. It is suitable for singing when Sri Guruvastakam is sung in the day, such as on the appearance day of sampradaya acaryas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The morning melody shouldn't be sung in the evening or during the day

At evening arati, devotees sometimes, after singing the Gaura-arati song (jaya jaya gauracander....) in the evening melody, revert to the morning melody for the rest of the kirtana. This is totally wrong. The morning melody should never be sung in the evening.

It is inappropriate to sing the Gaura-arati song or tune before the evening, e.g. during the midday arati.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Morning melody and nothing else in the morning

Srila Prabhupada was very strict in the melody sung during the mangala-aratika. He wanted the morning melody and nothing else. Before the opening of the Vrndavana Krsna Balarama Temple in 1975, one morning Srila Prabhupada called his secretary into his room and complained about the singing. The devotee who led mangala aratrika kirtana had chanted melodies other than the morning melody. Srila Prabhupada said that he did not like the singing in the morning. He stated that the morning melody must be sung throughout the mangala-aratika and no other melody should be sung. He then demonstrated how the singing should be done singing the first verse of the Samsara Prayer. Srila Prabhupada was very insistent that the singing should be done in that way only. He then told his secretary to lead the mangala aratrika kirtanas in the morning as a way to establish the standards within the temple.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

The science of ragas in Vaisnava tradition

The scriptures describing the science of music state that there are as many ragas as there are species of life. Among them there are sixteen thousand principal ragas that were previously manifested by the gopis of Vrndavana, which have become disseminated throughout the world. Each day has eight divisions (asta-prahara), for which there are eight corresponding ragas. The eightfold eternal daily pastimes of Radha and Krsna and of Lord Caitanya also take place according to the eight divisions of the day. Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas have revealed that the ultimate purpose of the science of music is to complement and enhance the moods of the Divine Couple during Their variegated eightfold daily pastimes. Gaudiya kirtana therefore employs traditional Vedic ragas during the same divisions of the day, with the specific purpose of pleasing the Supreme Lord.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Brahma Samhita tune *

Regarding the presentation of "Govindam" as well as other mantras, the vibration is always pure. I will give the theme and if the sound is Westernized that does not matter. But another point is that this specific sound of Kirtana as I sing is also another introduction of art that can be intermingled with Western art, and such combination will certainly be appreciated. But so far I know that the Kirtana tune is a specific representation of Gaudiya Vaisnavas and this tune is appreciated all over India as unique. They say that the Kirtana

tune is the specific gift of Bengal, and that is a fact. So why not utilize this tune in the Western countries under the able guidance of such expert musician as George?

Letter to Syamasundara, L.A. 25 February, 1970

New melody of Jaya Radha Madhava

As far as the new version of Jaya Radha-madhava is concerned, Prabhupada said it was all right. But he added, “Bhaja Hare Krsna is not all right. The thing is, they add these things without asking, and that is the danger. It is better to just follow the guru.”

Hari Sauri Diary, October 6th, 1976 Vrndavana,

Ragas at a wrong time disturb the psychic balance

These ragas, performed at the correct times, enhance and enforce the subtle energies prevalent during those periods. However, ragas performed at the wrong time disturb the psychic balance. Those who are aware of the Vedic science of music can perceive the awkwardness and rasabhasa of ragas being played or sung at the wrong time. The rendering of ragas at inappropriate hours is considered inauspicious, sinful, and disruptive to cosmic harmony.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Simple melody*

Most important is that the melody remains very simple.

letter to Sureśvara dāsa, February 3, 1972 / in regards to chanting SB and Bg verses

The simple four-note Prabhupada tune

Indeed, in the early recordings of Srila Prabhupada chanting Hare Krsna in New York, we hear Prabhupada repeatedly chanting a simple melody of only four notes. Although Srila Prabhupada was a competent musician, he deliberately introduced a simple style of kirtana in ISKCON so that everybody could join in without difficulty. Even much later in his pastimes, Srila Prabhupada instructed his disciples not to introduce too many different styles of kirtana, lest it detract from the devotional essence.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prabhupada chanting the simple tune

He said a good kirtana lasts half an hour to forty minutes and the first half an hour is all slow and then it speeds up to a crescendo the last ten minutes. He liked the kirtana that was slow. Also in public programs whenever there were guests he almost always sang (sings standard Hare Krsna tune) or some similarly very simple melodies slowly and just gradually building to a crescendo. He didn't like harmonizing, and he didn't like melodic instruments during kirtana because the melodies of the instruments would detract from listening to the mantra; although he liked rhythm. Srila Prabhupada said that harmoniums and other melodic instruments are not meant for kirtana, as the ear will follow the music and be diverted from the holy names. Rhythm instruments are good, he said, because they increase the motivation to dance, and dancing in turn invokes devotion.

Revatinandana Das, Memories

Rhythmical presentation of the transcendental music*

I shall call you and some other students to assemble there to practice saikīrtana in a systematic way. Of course, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa does not require any artificial artistic

sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music.

letter to Upendra Dāsa, 1 June 1968

San Francisco kirtans in the 60's / new melodies

It was a new singsong chant, nothing at all like the morning and evening ragas that Srila Prabhupada had introduced. This was an American version for sure: horns blared, drums boomed, and cymbals clanged; it was a festive party sound. Some of the New York devotees were aghast; after hearing the tape through, Srila Prabhupada smiled broadly and expressed his appreciation: "Oh, they have done nicely. Very nice. They are chanting so enthusiastically". One of the tape bearers protested the modern unauthentic sound. Srila Prabhupada drowned him out. It was, in his opinion, wonderful. He sent a message to San Francisco to let them know he loved their kirtan tape and to go on chanting. Srila Prabhupada then said: "They are chanting Hare Krsna, that is the main thing. It may be this tune or that tune, doesn't matter - this way or that, but they are sincerely chanting. That is what Krsna wants".

SP Nectar – story #6 Wild kiratns

Incantation concoctions in ISKCON today

The dreaded ISKCON monotone incantation. Somehow, this monotonous incantation has become the most popular non-kirtan in the world of ISKCON devotees, and probably some in the Gaudiya Math's also. I am referring to flat, non-melody incantation with almost no up or down, and where melody is conspicuous by its absence, and sometimes even goes on for hours! The essential quote from Srila Prabhupada in this regards is: "Kirtan means melodius". So if there is no melody, only a flat incantation, I submit that it is not kirtan at all--it is a concoction. Why, then, is it so popular all over the world? For several reasons. (1) the singer doesn't have to be a singer at all. He can just drone out this incantation; (2) The passionate young male drummers can do their usual thing of speeding up the incantation easily, in their desperate efforts to burn off their sex desire by working up a sweat (and impressing everyone?); (3) no musical talent is required. These are some of the top reasons, but there are bound to be others as well.

letter from Mahkanlal Das to KSC pamho conf (Text PAMHO:13544752)

Proper tune and rhythm pleases Krsna *

One gopi, joining Lord Mukunda in His singing, sang pure melodious tones that rose harmoniously above His. Krsna was pleased and showed great appreciation for her performance, saying "Excellent! Excellent!" Then another gopi repeated the same melody, but in a special metrical pattern, and Krsna praised her also.

SB 10.33.9

Kirtana to a country tune*

The record which you have sent singing Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram, and other Kirtana is really a new turn and we have enjoyed the record so nicely. This Narada Muni song is in your country tune and I think it will attract many more of common man to join the Kirtana so you should practice this standard Kirtana more conveniently so that during your Rathayatra festival you can have this singing with the procession.

Letter to Mukunda, June 6, 1967

Srila Prabhupada's Western Vs Indian "melodiousness"

*Please note the significant language SP uses in speaking of kirtan. It is significant that he says the westerners "are not singers in the tune we chant in India". This indicates that SP has some expectation that his followers will know and sing traditional melodies, not concoctions. Next, he gives clear insight into HOW kirtan should be sung: "I have tested it definitely that melodious vibration of Sankirtana, if they are performed by serious devotees, can attract people from the very spiritual platform, and it at once makes the spiritual background very smooth". the key phrase is "melodious vibration (not dreadful incantation with no melody, musicality, or refined style)". Next quote, he states that the "melodious" chanting (as particularly demonstrated by HH Lokanath Swami, Radhanath Swami, and some other sweet singers), then this will be our "unique position" (i.e. classic, classy, aesthetically pleasing, traditional, musically excellent, charming, charismatic, pleasing to all, and moving to the heart). *

Letter from Makhanlal Das to KSC pamho conf (Text PAMHO:13639768)

The best way to sing kirtana

Brahmananda Prabhu recalls asking Srila Prabhupada "What is the best way to sing kirtana?"

Srila Prabhupada replied, "In a way that you never get tired."

Following Srila Prabhupada DVD #1

Too complicated melody or mrdanga beats

If the lead singer introduces a complicated melody the rest of the group cant follow and as a result the congregational singing is weak, such kirtan is deficient. The same goes for complicated mridanga beats that do not follow the natural flow of the mantra and are just a show of player's skill.

Kulapavana Das Danfavats Comment, June 12, 2007

Comlicated melodies destroy meditation

Kirtan is above all a meditation on the Holy Name. It combines the universal and timeless tradition of sacred chant and dance with the most potent sound vibration: Lord Krishna's Holy Name. In meditation one must avoid distraction. Complicated melodies, off-key singing, off-beat or loud instrument use can be distracting to most participants.

Kulapavana Das Danfavats Comment, June 12, 2007

Too fast public kirtan means hard to follow the melody

The saikirtana should start slow and then build up speed. The top speed should be just fast enough so that everyone can respond melodiously and dance gracefully. When the kirtana gets too fast, the dancing gets frenetic and disorganized, the melody gets harder to follow, and the kirtana continually stops and starts because devotees get tired. But kirtana played with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing and melodious chanting, and can continue for hours without stopping. Such kirtana is much more attractive to the public.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Non-traditional tunes sung in public functions

However, during public engagements it may be difficult for Westerners to respond to traditional Bengali melodies. Srila Prabhupada therefore agreed that other melodies could be sung in such situations.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public kirtans or temple programs

There is a distinction between street kīrtana and temple kīrtana. In street chanting, liberties may be taken to make the chanting more attractive to the public, such as additional instrumentation, dance choreography, and attractive dress. The same applies to festivals and Sunday Feast kīrtanas. For regular temple kīrtanas, however, the need to attract the public is absent, and thus temple kīrtanas are stricter when it comes to melodies, instrumentation, and so on.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

No long, extended notes in melodies / melody should be filled with the mantra

Another time he told Vinṇujana that he did not like melodies that had long, extended notes in them. He liked the melody to be filled with the mantra.

Interview with Revati-nandana dasa, Memories, Vol. 1

The proper way to sing the response

During the lecture he gave that day he also said, “Don’t harmonize during the response.” The leader may sing little variations, but the group should sing a steady response. One person shouldn’t be singing one melody and another doing another melody during the response. “These things,” he said, “will help one pay more attention to the mantra as one is chanting and dancing. That way one will get the maximum benefit, and the kīrtana will also become more ecstatic.”

Interview with Revati-nandana dasa, Memories, Vol. 1

The story of Narada Muni and the broken ragas

Once, while traveling throughout the universe, Narada came to a planet inhabited by many beautiful people. They lived in gorgeous palaces, dressed in splendid clothes, and were ever engaged in singing and playing on musical instruments.

However, they were all deformed. Some had no feet, some no ankles, and some no knees. Some had twisted hips, some had shriveled thighs, some had disfigured torsos, some had loose teeth, some had hunched shoulders, some had bowed heads, and some had no necks. Astonished, Narada asked them who they were. The people unhappily replied, “We are the personified ragas. We have become deformed by the sage Narada. Mad with love, he sings the wrong melodies at the wrong time, with the wrong notes and without proper rhythm. In this way he has broken the limbs of our bodies.”

Narada inquired from the ragas how his fault could be rectified. They directed him to propitiate the goddess Sarasvati; he then learned from her the science of music and became an unrivaled musician.

Garga-samhita, quoted in Bhakti Vikasa Swami's Kirtana

Better to sing the appropriate tune

Of course, singing Kṛṣṇa’s names is transcendental and purifying—even when sung in an inappropriate tune. Srila Prabhupada once wrote to a disciple that “Any tune can be used. When it is in relationship with Krishna, that makes it bonafide.” Letter to: Ekayani, 31 August, 1971 Still, it is better to sing the correct melody at the appropriate time. That will be more pleasing to Kṛṣṇa.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Sri-krsna-caitanya and je anilo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood

Each bhajana expresses a particular sentiment and message, so most benefit from singing bhajanas will be had if the singers are aware of the meaning of the song and try to enter into its mood. It is inappropriate to sing a plaintive bhajana (such as that beginning śrī-kanṇa-caitanya-prabhu dayā koro more) or one of lamentation (such as that beginning je ānilo prema-dhana koruṇā pracur) in a fast tempo or joyful tone. Most bhajanas are traditionally sung slow and sweet.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Visnujana Swami's tunes

Many bhajanas are traditionally sung to specific tunes, that in many cases are different to the tunes widely known in ISKCON. Many of the tunes known in ISKCON in the West were composed by Visnujana Swami at Śrīla Prabhupāda's behest

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Tunes and rhythms of Narottama Das Thakur

At the time of Narottama Dasa Thakura, over 100 talas (rhythmic beats) were used. Less than half of these are still known in Bengali and Manipuri kirtana, and most kirtanias know less than five. The most common beat is the 1-2-3 used in most ISKCON kirtanas. Another beat, 1-2, 1-2, is common in Bengali kirtana and was sometimes played by Srila Prabhupada. It has its own charm, and it would be nice if more of our devotees learned it.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana leader should know the tune he's singing

Along with enthusiasm and spiritual advancement, another good qualification to lead kirtana is to have a strong, clear voice. Also, a kirtana leader should have a feeling for raga (melody), tala (rhythm) and laya (tempo). This doesn't mean that he has to study music, but he should have some basic musical sense—he cannot be unsure of the tune he is singing, mixing up tunes, breaking the rhythm by coming in at the wrong times, or unable fit the words to the melody. Those devoid of such simple musical sense are advised not to lead kirtanas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing

He then went on to specifically describe how kirtana should be done.

A. For mangala aratika: the samsara-dava prayer, then Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.

B. For the guru-puja: the "guru-prayer" (that's what he called it) Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.

C. For evening aratika: the gaura aratika song, Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), and Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.

D. For all aratikas this basic pattern should be followed. The chanting of sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra) should only be for three times, not more.

E. No one should sing a bhajana unless all the devotees know what the song means.

No one should sing songs in Vrindavan temple that are in languages which the people do not understand. Yasomati-nandana may be sung since the people understand that

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Locana Das Thakur learning rhymes and rhythms of Panchali

Previously in Bengal the poets used to compose sacred songs and verses in different forms of classic rhymes and rhythmic meters called Panchali. The Panchali style of composition was especially used for glorifying the Lord. Shрила Lochana Dasa Thakura used the Panchali form of verse-meter in composing his famous work, Shri Chaitanya Mangala. The Panchali form employs five different kinds of song-styles...In the prime of his youth he went to Shri Khanda where he found his gurudeva, Shri Narahari Sarakara Thakur, and took shelter at his lotus feet. He stayed there for some time, and there he was instructed in kirtan...

Biography of Lochana Das Thakur

QUALITY

Kirtan our duty*

Kirtana is our first duty.

Letter to: Palika, 13 November, 1975

Establishing standards of quality is important.

There are many talented devotees and we can expect many different techniques and styles to flourish that will be very pleasing to the Lord and attractive to the public.

Of course, the important thing is the mood or feeling with which we chant, but if we have the proper mood we will be especially careful to do it nicely (and not to cause deafness by banging away loudly on gongs and karatals). Training and establishing standards of quality are important.

Akruranatha Das Dandavats Comment, June 11th, 2007

Music is only an item for chanting*

As I have already written to you, we should not try to become a very popular musical party. Music is one of our items for chanting, but we are not musicians. We should always remember this fact. The best example is that we take advantage of the typewriting machine, but that does not mean we are professional typists.

letter to Mukunda, 2 July 1969

Spiritual strength is the most important*

But one thing we must remember that we are not professional musicians or concert party. Our main business is to vibrate the Holy Name of Krishna everywhere so that the people will be benefited by hearing the transcendental sound. The musical training is not so important as it is to keep ourselves spiritually fit in spiritual strength, that we should not forget. If we are in spiritual strength, there will be no scarcity of money; and the spiritual strength is that each and every one of us must chant the sixteen rounds of beads and follow the rules and regulations with great adherence.

letter to Tamal Krishna, 8 February 197

Focus on musical style lessens spiritual quality*

With regard to your question about Bengali style kirtana and mrdanga playing, one or two styles is best. To introduce more styles is not good. It will become an encumbrance. Who is that Krsna das Babaji who is teaching? If we introduce so much emphasis on style of kirtana, then simply imitation will go on. Devotional emotion is the main thing. If we give stress to instrument and style then attention will be diverted to the style. That will be spiritual loss.

Letter to Satvarupa, 30 June 1976

Purity brings quality*

There are many professional chanters who can perform congregational chanting with various musical instruments in an artistic and musical way, but their chanting cannot be as attractive as the congregational chanting of pure devotees. If a devotee sticks strictly to the

principles governing Vainṇava behavior, his bodily luster will naturally be attractive, and his singing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord will be effective. People will appreciate such kirtana without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or Śrī Kāṇa should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord's glories.

CC, Madhya 11.95, purport

Purity in Hari Kirtan is more important than gorgeous show*

Regarding your question of dancing-show, whatever it may be, it may not deviate from the real Krishna Consciousness program. We are Hari Kirtana men, that's all. We can attract people by some gorgeous show, but inside there must be strict purity and seriousness, otherwise, we shall be attracted by the gorgeous show only. There are two energies always working simultaneously, and Maya means when we diminish the spiritual energy, then automatically we become attracted to the external dress of Maya. So I do not care very much for these plays and dramas unless they are coming directly from the Vedas. If we can recite from Bhagavad gita the first chapter without any need for elaborate scenery or stage-props and gorgeous dresses, that is best. Just like your Shakespeare. Macbeth may be recited by two men, without anything else, and simply by their acting ability and the meaningful words alone, they can very easily capture the entire audience and give them real substance. We have so many stories, like Jagai-Madhai, Krishna departing for Mathura, like that. Satire will not help us. Our message is very grave, and because it is the Absolute Truth, it will work without any artificial presentation.

Because they heard of our program in Bombay along with the Zavery sisters Manipuri Dancers, here in London they had arranged one program of lecturing by me along with a recital by one man playing on the vina just to attract attention to my speaking. I am not in approval of such arrangements, and it will be dangerous thing in future if we begin this type of program just to attract the masses. Already I see this happening practically all over the Society, so better we stop it now and get ourselves firmly on the track chalked out for us by Lord Caitanya. We are simply Sankirtana men, our program is chanting, dancing, distributing prasadam, and speaking high philosophy, that's all

Letter to Madhudvisa, 8 July, 1972

Sankirtana of serious devotees attracts people from the spiritual platform*

...If you have got opportunity to purchase one copy of Life Magazine, published Feb. 9, 1968, you will find there on page 56, how nicely the American boys and girls are dancing and chanting the Holy Name of the Lord. A Sankirtana party as they can be organized in India is not possible here. Here the boys and girls, they are very serious about chanting, but they are not trained singers, or singers in the tune we chant in India. Therefore, I wish that if you organize a Sankirtana party there, completely trained in spiritual ways, and the American students combine with them, I think a very nice Sankirtana party can be organized to travel all over the world. I have tested it definitely that melodious vibration of Sankirtana, if they are performed by serious devotees, can attract people from the very spiritual platform, and it at once makes the spiritual background very smooth, when a spiritual instruction from the Bhagavad-gita can be implemented very nicely.

...Why not join this movement which does not discriminate between human being to human being, and thus everyone, either Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs,

or anyone also, all can join in this melodious Sankirtana movement and accept Lord Krishna Prasadam in Temple with great relish...

Letter to: Harikrishnadas Aggarwal -- Los Angeles 3 March, 1968

The Holy Name has to dominate

Although in the kirtanas he allowed openness and free expression and welcomed the wildest participation, the transcendental sound of the holy name had to dominate. He never allowed the kirtana to degenerate into mere beating on drums or chanting of any old words, nor could anyone in the group become so crazy that others wouldn't be able to hear or take part in congregational chanting.

Prabhupada Lilamrita ch 22

The key to leading inspired kirtanas is enthusiasm

Leading kirtana is an important service. A good kirtana leader can uplift the temple atmosphere, help keep the devotees inspired and enthusiastic, and attract newcomers to participate in sankirtana. The key to leading inspired kirtanas is enthusiasm to glorify Krsna, which is the essence and very meaning of kirtana. Such enthusiasm is a symptom of spiritual advancement, and develops in one who seriously dedicates his life to Krsna by following the rules and regulations of devotional service. Enthusiasm born of the mode of passion can also make for a lively kirtana, but it will not have the same purifying effect as chanting born of real advancement.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

First, Advanced devotees should be offered the leading

Therefore Srila Prabhupada stressed that as far as possible, chanting should be heard from the lips of pure devotees of the Lord. A kirtana can be lively, sweet and musically integrated, but spiritually empty also if not sung by devotees who are consciously surrendered to Krsna. Hence, first preference should be given to advanced devotees to lead kirtana, and next to others competent to lead.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Namabhasa Kirtana is only punya

There needs to be training and supervision of kirtan all singers and kartal players just as there is for the twenty four hour members. The excessively loud kirtans, flamboyant styles and unbonafide 'mantras' and tunes may captivate ignorant members of the public but it is namabasa, not bhakti and Bhaktivinode Thakur says that namabasa is only punya. The Movement is not for propagating punya but pure devotion. These loud, raucous and flowery performances drive actual devotees away.

Rasananda Das

Glorifying Krishna only / not for ourselves*

So if you have talent for musical achievement, that is nice; but if you nourish some idea of becoming famous by playing some music, that will be a source of frustration—the end. So it is better if you play your music for Krishna by having very ecstatic kirtanas in your center in Vancouver, and in this way, as I have introduced it, all of the devotees and also the general public as well will be able to join together cooperatively in the glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not that we shall glorify anyone else. . Let the materialists operate in their own way, but we have got Vainnavism stand and we should

train the general public to accept it and come up to our platform of process of doing things, not that we should reduce to their standard.

letter to Mahatma, 10 April 1972

If listening to melodious music of khol and karatala, you will lose taste for other sounds*

...Now, here, the bhakti-yoga system is that if you stick to the hearing of Hare Krsna and the music, melodious music of kohl, karatala, then naturally you become detestful for hearing other songs...

BG 4.1 -- Montreal, August 24, 1968

ISKCON Kirtan standard

Following Srila Prabhupada's example, the standard for kirtana in ISKCON is that it should be simple, pure, sweet and thus pleasing to Srila Prabhupada and Krsna.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

Following Srila Prabhupada's standards

Srila Prabhupada was more insistent on some standards than others. Some points, such as the correct tune in mangala-arati, he insisted must be followed. On other points, he let it be known what standard he wanted, but didn't always enforce it. As followers of Srila Prabhupada, we should know and follow what he wanted in all aspects of Krsna consciousness, especially in kirtana, our central activity.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Utilizing musical talents in spreading the KC movement*

My opinion is that it is not necessary for us to utilize these different musical talents for spreading Krsna Consciousness. I would rather see people follow strictly the path of Lord Caitanya and His Sankirtana devotees

letter to Jagadisa Pandit, 28 December 1974

Chanting should not be done as a show*

If one chants the holy name of the Lord just to make a show, not knowing the secret of success, he may increase his bile secretion, but he will never attain perfection in chanting the holy name.

CC, Adi 7.95-96, purport

We do not stress so much importance on different musical talents*

My opinion is that it is not necessary for us to utilize these different musical talents for spreading Kanna Consciousness. I would rather see people follow strictly the path of Lord Caitanya and His Saikirtana devotees. We are using madaiga, karatāla, that is enough. We are not musicians. We are Kanna bhaktas. Therefore we do not stress so much importance on these different musical talents. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is God Himself. Had He thought it would have been better to spread Kanna Consciousness by another way He would have done so. But no, simply with madaiga and karatāla, traveling and chanting Hare Kanna, asking everyone to chant Hare Kanna, preaching simply Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam philosophy, this is the process. There is no need for us to try and add anything to this simple method. It will only be a distraction.

letter to Jagaisa Pandita dāsa, 28 Dec 1974

Do not mind about the artistic presentation*

I understand also, there was a Kirtana performance given by Śrī Pūrṇa. You have rightly remarked whether they are devotees. You are right. These people are professional singers. Krishna Kirtana is not for earning a livelihood. Krishna Kirtana is not meant for entertaining the public for demonstration of arts. It is dynamic service to the Lord. We do not therefore mind so much about the artistic presentation of Krishna Kirtana but we want to see how much a devotee is satisfying the Supreme Will.

letter to Jadurani dasi, 12 December 1967

Kirtana does not require any musical or dancing knowledge*

It does not require any artificial musical knowledge or dancing knowledge. Out of your own ecstasy, you will dance, you'll chant. You don't require to study. Just like our playing of mrdanga. Nobody has gone to an expert mrdanga player to learn it. Whatever I play, I sing, I never studied under some expert teacher. But by practice, chanting, it may be melodious, it may be very nice or not. That doesn't matter. We are not concerned about that, whether it is appealing to the people or not. It will appeal; there is no doubt about it. But we don't require to divert our attention to these things. Simply because there is glorification of the Lord, it will be palatable.

SB lecture, Oct 6, 1969 New Vrindavan

No need for artistic sense, but still...*

Chanting Hare Krishna does not require any artificial artistic sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music.

Letter to: Upendra, 1 June, 1968

We want to hear good music in relationship with Krsna *

...We want to hear good music, melodious music, but if we engage our ears for hearing melodious music in relationship with the Supreme Lord Krsna [that is our perfection].

BG lecture, 2.59-69 -NY, April 29, 1966

Kirtan organized as a quality concert

I remember one old letter I read from Prabhupada, that I don't think is even in the haktivedanta Archives. In it, Prabhupada said that we should organize kirtan as a concert in a hall, and people should pay to purchase a ticket to attend. He said there should be a mrdanga, harmonium, tamboura and karatals, and a very nice concert should be performed. Of course, we know he also shed tears of love when he heard George Harrison's musical arrangement for Govindam, that we still hear every morning in an ISKCON temple, to this day, but he was using slide guitar, harp, bass, organ, a full drum kit, etc...

Gaura Dasa, Comment on Dandavats, June 10th, 2007

Inept devotee musicians of the 60's

One thing I noticed from the wonderful new Prabhupada videos by Yadubar Prabhu et al, was how inept some of the early devotee musicians were in the early kirtans, for example in what I think was Thompkins Square Park in the '60s.

Someone was mindlessly blowing random notes on a recorder, the harmonium was used as a drone instrument with just one key being held down, etc. We've come a long way baby.
Akruranatha das Dandavats Comment, June 11th, 2007

Prabhupada not liking showy professionalism

At one of the ISKCON international festivals in Vandāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda rejected the singing of one of his disciples. The devotee had previously been a singer in a band, and his kīrtanas were much appreciated by some devotees, especially those from his home temple. But when, with showy professionalism, he began leading the guru-pūjā in Prabhupāda's presence, making the tune sound like a rock and roll ballad, Prabhupāda didn't like it. He shook his head and indicated that someone else lead. The "great" kīrtana singer was devastated by the rejection, another form of Prabhupāda's mercy.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Prabhupāda Nectar

Quality kirtan has been contaminated by commercial influence

Alas, much of what Narottama and others taught is now lost. And, although Gaudiya kirtana culture is still very much alive in Bengal, Orissa, and Manipur, it has been contaminated by the influence of commercialism and apa-sampradayas. Catchy cinema tunes have been introduced into modern bhajana culture, much to the dismay of traditionalists, who want to keep the devotional mood. Nevertheless, still today, traditional kirtana, when performed expertly and without ulterior motives, is an enthralling transcendental experience.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

The importance of music

Purity is the force behind good kirtana. Musical arrangements are incidental. However, having nice music is important because Kṛṣṇa likes it, and it is the nature of the soul to enjoy.

And music can help uplift the consciousness when performed properly. Therefore our previous acaryas greatly developed the science of music to enhance the effect of kirtana. However, if we put more stress on the music than on the meaning of the song, we again miss the point.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The kirtana leader shouldn't be musically inept

Conversely, if the kirtana is performed unenthusiastically, as a kind of entertainment or sport, or if it is musically unpleasing due to the devotees being musically inept (unable to properly follow the tune or rhythm), the effect of generating devotion will be stunted.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Lacking musical sense can disturb kirtana

Devotees lacking musical sense can really disturb kirtanas, especially if they are not aware of their inability. They may enthusiastically sing or play instruments loudly or out of time, quite unaware of how they are spoiling the kirtana. Such devotees should be stopped and corrected. If they cannot correct themselves, the instruments should be taken away from them. Some devotees come in at the wrong time, i.e. start singing on the wrong beat, thus breaking the rhythm. Such devotees should also be corrected. Or, if they cannot improve, they should at least sing quietly, so that they don't spoil the whole kirtana for everybody

else. (The same applies to devotees who cannot sing in tune). However, devotees with a lack of musical sense need not feel discouraged. They should still join in kirtanas, but in a restrained way so as not to disturb. Unless they measurably improve, they should not attempt to lead kirtanas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The power of mantra / follow the process to get success

Prabhupāda spoke again in this morning's class about the tremendous power of mantra [re: Vedic weapons]. "This mantra weapon is so strong that it can be manufactured simply by touching water with mantra. Just like we take mantra, apavitrau pavitro vā sarvāvasthāa gato 'pi vā yau smaret puṇoarīkāknā sa bāhya. The same process. Do not think that it is some ritualistic, external. No, it has got meaning, if you can chant the mantra properly, if you follow the rules. You must be expert in chanting mantra." He gave the example of Haridasa Thakura, who avoided the allurements of a beautiful prostitute by the strength of his advancement in chanting. "Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said, 'Simply by chanting you'll get all success of life.' It is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's blessing. Ihā haite sarva-siddhi haibe tomāra, by simply chanting one gets the highest perfection. So we should be very careful and follow the regulative principles. Then automatically you'll be perfect."

Yesterday in class, Prabhupāda mentioned how the power of mantra had been verified by some doctors in Lucknow, but he didn't tell us how. Today he related the story. "Just like sometimes the snake-charming mantra can be purchased in the market. But if you do not make yourself perfect about chanting the mantra, it will not be effective. I'll give you one practical instance. It is not a story; it is a fact. Perhaps some of you know my friend who came here, Dr. Ghosh. He told me there was a case. In Lucknow University they were students. So there is a big building, and two, three snake-biting cases happened. So some snake charmer was invited to find out the snake and take him. So he came and took it away, the snake. Then this Dr. Ghosh and his class friends, they were medical students. Naturally, the so-called modern scientist, they do not believe in all these things. So they became very inquisitive. All of them went to that snake charmer—he was a Muhammadan gentleman. So he knew that 'These medical students, they have come to see the fun how the snakes are charmed.'

"So they inquired, 'What is the magic that you can catch up snake and the snake cannot do any harm to you?'

"So he said it is possible by mantra.

"So they challenged, 'Oh, your snakes, I think they are poisonless and they cannot bite; the poison teeth, the fang, is taken away.'

"No, no. They have got everything.'

"So he took one and showed that 'Here is...' So to make a fun, he had many snakes, he let them all come out from the box. And immediately all over the courtyard, they began to run over, and these medical students, they became afraid. They were fleeing this side, that side, that side. So the charmer said, 'Don't be afraid. So long I am here they'll not bite you.'

"So this was spoken by Dr. Ghosh, a personal experience. The mantra has got so much power. But not that you purchase the mantra and chant. That will not. You have to make it perfect. There is process, how to become perfect in chanting the mantra."

This was just a material example Prabhupāda said, and if we seriously chanted the mahā-mantra, which is completely spiritual, then the effect would be unlimited. He said that if we chant it properly only once, the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra can destroy more sins than the most sinful person can commit in a whole lifetime. "Nāma-aparādha-sūnyam. Without any

nāma-aparādha, if we chant according to the principle, then the mantra will act so nicely that the mantra will keep you always in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the power of mantra. Don't think it is a hobby or it is something superfluous. No. Actually, this mantra, Kanna, Hare Kanna, Kanna Himself.

“So if you are allowed to keep yourself constantly in company with Kanna, then just imagine what is your position. If you keep yourself always near the fire, certainly you shall remain warm; there will be no attack of cold or anything like that. If we constantly chant Hare Kanna mantra, then we are not in this material world. But if we purposely again come to the material world ... That independence we have got.”

Hari Sauri Diary, September 17, 1976

Follow the process to get success

Srila Prabhupada then told Tusta Krsna Maharaja that his chanting was like the cooking of the servant. All the ingredients may be there – the rice, the pot, the fire—but unless you follow the process, the result will only come after a long time and a lot of trouble.

Hari Sauri Diary, September 17, 1976

Don't pollute the mantra or it will lose its effect

Apparently some local city officials are trying to ban the devotees from chanting in the street. The reporter mentioned this, and Tusta Krsna confirmed that there had indeed been some publicity in one or two other cities--some favorable and some unfavorable.

Prabhupāda was pleased, because he said that if there is agitation against chanting, it is also good. Even if they say that Hare Kanna is bad, that is also good, because at least they will have chanted Hare Kanna. Prabhupāda told the devotees they will become triumphant if they continue to chant and distribute books.

But he cautioned them as well. “They think Hare Kanna movement is disturbing, a rascal civilization. So let us try our best, what can be done? You also are helping in this Movement, so don't spoil the Movement by manufacturing ideas. Don't do that. Go on in the standard way, keep yourself pure. Then the movement is sure to be successful. But if you want to spoil it by being whimsical, then what can be done? It will be spoiled. If you manufacture whims and disagree and fight amongst yourself, then it will be another edition of these so-called movements. It will lose the spiritual strength. Always remember it. Don't make it an ordinary musical vibration. It is a different thing, spiritual. So mantra is not ordinary sound vibration. We have to keep the mantra in potency, by offenseless chanting, by remaining pure. If you pollute the mantra, then it will lose its effect.”

Hari Sauri Diary, April 27, 1976

Krpamoya Dasa on kirtan being a service to the Deities and the devotees

When I lead kirtana, I feel I want to serve the devotees that are there. I'm very conscious that there's a very thin line and you can fall either side of the line. If you can sing in such a way that afterwards devotees come up and say "Nice kirtana," you've got to be very careful that you don't allow your artistic considerations to take precedence over the devotional. My devotional considerations are to be thinking of two things--Krsna and allowing the devotees to have space in which to listen to the holy name and reflect. So I try to chant in such a way that I know that everybody can join in. I don't tend to sing unfamiliar tunes. I sing familiar tunes that I think the devotees will know, just so they can become absorbed. I don't change the tunes that often. And I just really try to stay this side of the line of

modulating the voice too much--that is, not modulating the voice so much that people will treat it as an artistic thing and not a devotional thing.

Krpmoya Dasa, quoted by Jayadvaita Swami in Kirtana Reform

Practical meditation*

this chanting process immediately attracts the mind. Our process is... Just like Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. We chant it in melodious song. So mind is attracted, and we try to hear the sound. That means my mind and my ear is compact in that thought. Therefore it is practical meditation.

Radio Interview -- February 12, 1969, Los Angeles

One good singer may lead*

Responsive chanting is very nice; one good singer may lead, and the others may join in. That is the system in India. It is very good for two reasons especially: One, the chanter gets to rest, so he does not become tired, and two, you get to chant and hear, that is the process. You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers. Blowing of the conch shell and horns is very nice.

letter to Hamasaduta dāsa and Himāvati dāsī, March 3, 1968

Following the leader in speed and loudness

Speed is usually connected with loudness. As the tempo increases, so does the volume. The rule is to follow the leader. The instruments should be played softly when the leader leads slowly, and gradually more strongly as the pace increases.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana leader should know the tune he's singing

Along with enthusiasm and spiritual advancement, another good qualification to lead kirtana is to have a strong, clear voice. Also, a kirtana leader should have a feeling for raga (melody), tala (rhythm) and laya (tempo). This doesn't mean that he has to study music, but he should have some basic musical sense—he cannot be unsure of the tune he is singing, mixing up tunes, breaking the rhythm by coming in at the wrong times, or unable fit the words to the melody. Those devoid of such simple musical sense are advised not to lead kirtanas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Leading a kirtan / amplified response (1)

I was personally stopped by Srila Prabhupada in 1975 for singing the refrain over the microphone while I was leading a midday arati in the Krishna Balarama Mandir. He heard me from his rooms and sent Upendra, who was his servant at that time, to tell me to stop singing continuously over the microphone. He said only the lead should be amplified, not the response.

Hari Sauri Das to Candrasekar Acarya Das, Date? / The lead singer should not sing the response (in connection to Mayapur brahmacharis leading kirtan – one leading, the other chanting the response in the microphone)

Leading a kirtan / amplified response (2)

I don't know if Srila Prabhupada ever said two people can chant in the mike though. Sometimes when a large public is present and few devotees the devotees response might

not be heard and a follow up kirtan singer may make the holy name more audible to the guests. Also I never have trouble hearing myself during kirtan even if someone is chanting. However since some seem to find it disturbing we can have this standard when mainly devotees are present to respond. but say at noon arotik when few devotees are present i don't see any problem with a response singer.

Jayapataka Swami to Candrasekar Acarya Das, Date? / The lead singer should not singing the response (in connection to Mayapur brahmacaris leading kirtan – one leading, the other chanting the response in the microphone)

Leading a kirtan / amplified response (3)

The one incident that I personally experienced with Srila Prabhupada was when I was singing the noon arati at the Krishna Balarama mandir in Vrindavan, sometime during Sept. of 1975, before I became Srila Prabhupada's servant. I was the temple commander. I was leading the kirtan over the microphone, and because there were very few other devotees attending, I was also singing the refrain over the microphone. After a few minutes Upendra, who was Srila Prabhupada servant then, came into the temple room and told me, "Srila Prabhupada doesn't like you singing the response over the microphone. Just sing the lead but not the response." It was clear that he didn't like the continuous use of the microphone.

Hari Sauri Das to Candrasekar Acarya Das (2), Date? / Prabhupada not wanting the leader to sing the response / The lead singer should not singing the response (in connection to Mayapur brahmacaris leading kirtan – one leading, the other chanting the response in the microphone)

The proper way to sing the response

During the lecture he gave that day he also said, “Don’t harmonize during the response.” The leader may sing little variations, but the group should sing a steady response. One person shouldn’t be singing one melody and another doing another melody during the response. “These things,” he said, “will help one pay more attention to the mantra as one is chanting and dancing. That way one will get the maximum benefit, and the kīrtana will also become more ecstatic.”

Interview with Revatī-nandana dāsa, Memories, Vol. 1

Sankirtan to be performed in an organized way

Cleanliness, proper attire, orchestration, and even choreography all have their place in Lord Caitanya’s movement. Harināma-saikīrtana parties need not be massive to make a good impression, but because millions of people see them every year, more frequent and better-organized saikīrtana parties will have greater impact and elicit a more positive response from the public. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted saikīrtana to be performed in a systematic and organized way.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Sankīrtana in a systematic way*

I shall call you and some other students to assemble there to practice saikīrtana in a systematic way. Of course, chanting Hare Kāṇṇa does not require any artificial artistic sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music.

letter to Upendra Dāsa, 1 June 1968

Public kirtana should be performed in an organized manner

Some devotees are of the opinion that the transcendental sound vibration of kṛṣṇa-kīrtana will have a positive effect regardless how it is presented. Whereas it is true that the holy name is transcendental no matter how devotees vibrate it, when kīrtana is performed to attract the attention of the public, it must be presented in a beautiful, organized manner. It is unfortunate when the public does not appreciate the harināma-saikīrtana because it is performed improperly.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Public kirtana shouldn't be too fast and disorganized

The saikīrtana should start slow and then build up speed. The top speed should be just fast enough so that everyone can respond melodiously and dance gracefully. When the kīrtana gets too fast, the dancing gets frenetic and disorganized, the melody gets harder to follow, and the kīrtana continually stops and starts because devotees get tired. But kīrtana played with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing and melodious chanting, and can continue for hours without stopping. Such kīrtana is much more attractive to the public.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Kirtana shouldn't go out of control

In general, kirtanas should begin slowly and develop smoothly. The leader should not let the kirtana run out of control. A good kirtana leader knows how to start a kirtana at a slow or slow to moderate tempo and gradually build it up to a steady or slightly faster speed. Or, he can start with steady tempo and keep it at that. Kirtana maintained at a steady tempo can go on for a long time without a break. A steady tempo is suitable for graceful dancing, and does not quickly exhaust the energy of the devotees.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Fast Kirtana

However, “slow-fast-stop-restart” kirtana is now common in ISKCON. Fast kirtana usually cannot be maintained for long, as the mrdanga players and devotees dancing quickly tire. Also, although fast kirtana can be stimulating and exciting, for periods of longer than a few minutes it does not sound as pleasant as kirtana at a steady tempo. So, when a fast tempo is reached, it is usually brought to a crescendo fairly soon. Then the kirtana is started again at a slower pace. This process of building-up kirtanas from slow to fast and then restarting slow should be done gradually, as Srila Prabhupada describes: ““In Bengal we have a style of kirtana where we bring it up slowly till it gets very fast and then they stop and start over and go slow again.” Jivananda Many stops and starts do not sound good. Another technique is that before the kirtana becomes uncontrollably fast, the leader changes the beat and tempo from fast back to steady.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Long Kirtanas

Long kirtanas blissfully help devotees to become deeply absorbed in the holy names. When Lord Caitanya was residing at Puri, He would hold kirtana for at least four hours each evening. And for one year in Mayapura, He would perform kirtana during the night.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The swami two step is the best

I was taught we danced for the pleasure of Krishna, under the direction of Radharani, and that the swami two step was the best way to do that. Some twirling. It seems that so many are unable to master the two step and its infinite variations and refinements, and instead gyrate and flop around like untrained dancing bears, simply dancing for their own pleasure, or to display raw athleticism to impress whomever they deem necessary to impress. If you can't dance well, dance with lots of energy, another de facto standard. Kirtan is supposed to be pleasing. If it ceases to be pleasing to listen to or to watch, is it still kirtan?

Madhava Ghosh dasa, Dandavats Comment on June 10th, 2007

Public dancing should be done in an open and organized manner

Devotees should dance together, facing the public, in a coordinated and choreographed manner, concentrating on attracting the public to Kṛṇa. When each devotee does his or her own thing, the kīrtana loses focus and potency. Such a kīrtana is less likely to attract people to become involved, either as participants or spectators. Anything can be attractive when many people do it together, even a bunch of men shoveling dirt, all performing movements simultaneously to the rhythm of music—what to speak of a group of bright-faced, cheerful Hare Kṛṇa devotees dancing because Kṛṇa consciousness makes them happy.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants

The sankirtana party should be festive. The devotees should be dressed nicely--no torn dhotis, odd socks or socks with holes. Srila Prabhupada sug-gested that devotees wear silk turbans on harinama sankirtana (quoted by Jaya Pataka Swami). Yellow bundis (Indian tie-up shirts) kept especially for nagara kirtana parties, can be used by male devotees, both married and unmarried, to give a uniform effect. Ideally, the men should have shaved heads, and certainly should not have stubbly faces. A special touch is using heavy ankle bells specifically made for dancing (available in India). All devotees should have fresh tilaka. Deity prasada flower garlands add to the color. Re-usable silk garlands may also be kept especially for nagara kirtana. Karatalas are best shined and tied with clean, colorful rib-bons. Flags and festoons with pictures of Srila Prabhupada, Kṛṣṇa etc., or banners with the maha mantra, all add to the pageantry. For creating a highly festive mood, devotees can dress in costumes and be made up as Gaura and Nitai, Radha and Kṛṣṇa, Narada Muni, and so on.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Loudness of Kirtana

Lord Caitanya's kirtanas were often extraordinarily loud. It is described in Lord Caitanya's pastimes that "When the tumultuous vibration of sankirtana resounded, all good fortune immediately awakened, and the sound penetrated the whole universe throughout the fourteen planetary systems." (cc Madhya 11.217)

Srila Prabhupada recommended that chanting be performed very loudly. However, loudness can also have deleterious effects. Regular exposure to loud sounds often gradually leads to deafness. This is a real danger, for most ISKCON kirtanas are, from the medical point of view, too loud.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Playing too loud

I frequently find myself leaving the temple room because my ears hurt, and sometimes avoid even going if I think it will be loud. This must turn off a lot of casual visitors. Has it become a de facto standard that if you can't play well, play loudly? It seems to.

Madhava Ghosh dasa, Dandavats Comment June 10th, 2007

Instruments playing too loud to hear the voice

Most of the time in our temples the instruments are played much much louder than the Singer's voice, it often happens that only the musical instruments are heard and the actual glorification of the Lord is barely heard. According the musical rules the instruments should be subordinate to the actual voice of the singer.

Dvija Raj Das, Dandavats Comment (posted by loveharekrishna), June 11th, 2007

Instruments playing too loud

If you are approaching a kirtan group and all you can hear is the instruments drowning the Maha-mantra, such kirtan is deficient. The mantra must be heard clearly and distinctly over the instruments.

Kulapavana Das Danfavats Comment, June 12, 2007

Kirtana should be loud enough to hear the voice

...if the sound of the instruments drowns out that of the singing, the whole purpose of kirtana—to hear and chant the holy names of Krsna—is lost. Some so-called kirtanas are simply bang-bang-bang-bang-bang. The voices are either almost or completely inaudible. In such so-called kirtanas, many devotees jump, dance, bang and shout but do not sing at all! These athletic performances may be good for letting out excess passion, but cannot be called kirtana - glorification of God. Passion is not ecstasy. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "The drum should not be louder than the voice."

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting Prabhupada Nectar 1.22

Prabhupada requesting not using amplification

For more than a month, Prabhupada has had to ask daily that devotees not use the microphone for performing kirtana: "They think that their voice becomes sweet from using it. Actually, they sound exactly like a raksasa."

TKG's Diary, page 149

Many instruments and loudness in Lord Caitanya's kirtana

Proponents of super-loud kirtanas may cite that in Lord Caitanya's kirtana parties at Rathayatra eight men played mrdangas and thirty-two played kartalas. However, Bengali kirtana is generally sung in a high octave that can be heard even over the sound of many kartalas. Furthermore, Bengali kirtana is mostly played with fairly small kartalas (diameter approx. 6 cm.) that add a sweet chime to the singing, rather than drowning it out altogether. Another consideration is that traditionally, Bengali kirtana was generally conducted in the open air or in an open pavilion, so even if loud percussion instruments were used, the volume would not be increased by reverberation against walls.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Training devotees in public chanting, dancing and speaking*

...We have to teach the Brahmacharis and the Brahmacharinis to speak in Sanskrit some of the verses in this connection, and we explain the verses by singing, chanting, and speaking also. Sometimes in the middle of chanting and singing, we shall speak also. So, all these varieties show will be so attractive with melodious musical sounds, and above all our good behavior and advanced Krishna Consciousness, will make this show very successful. In the meantime, you train the Kirtana party as you are doing, and the responsive method is all-perfect...

Letter to: Hamsaduta -- Los Angeles 4 March, 1968

Proper tune and rhythm pleases Krsna*

One gopi, joining Lord Mukunda in His singing, sang pure melodious tones that rose harmoniously above His. Krsna was pleased and showed great appreciation for her performance, saying "Excellent! Excellent!" Then another gopi repeated the same melody, but in a special metrical pattern, and Krsna praised her also.

SB 10.33.9 / Note: In this sloka it is clear that "melodious tones" sung "harmoniously" are very pleasing to Krishna, thus He repeatedly said "Excellent! Excellent!" "Special metrical pattern" indicates attentiveness to proper raga and rhythm. In ISKCON today it is common for devotees to sing wrong raga for the muhurtas (time of day), such as singing other melodies at Mangala arati besides morning raga, then singing morning raga at noon or in evening.

Prabhupada appreciates quality Bengali Kirtan

Some musically inclined members of ISKCON (both Bengali and non-Bengali) have specialized in Bengali kirtana, and thus added a cultural asset to our movement. Srila Prabhupada did not personally introduce such kirtana in ISKCON, but he did express appreciation of it. For instance, he liked to hear the Mayapura gurukula boys singing in their sweet, high-pitched Bengali style. And he praised Acyutananda Swami in the foreword to "Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas" for "having learned to play mrdanga like an expert professional" (which means like a Bengali professional).

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

Melodious Bengali Kirtana

Kirtana leaders should sing not too high or low, but in a register that is comfortable for most of the devotees to follow. Leaders should also be careful to keep the kirtana melodious, even when it is intense. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that, "Screaming is not good. Kirtana must be sweet and melodious." Inflecting the voice can add sweetness, but if overindulged in, sounds sickly. As stated above, Srila Prabhupada did not like harmonizing in kirtana. In other words, all devotees should sing the same melody, and not in varying pitches to create a mixture of tones. In Bengali kirtana, it is common to sing up and down the musical scale without enunciating any particular words. For instance, the singer will sing "Hare Krsna" extending the syllables on and on, up and down, so that the maha-mantra is all but lost in an exhibition of vocal flexibility.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

No long, extended notes in melodies / melody should be filled with the mantra

Another time he told Vinujana that he did not like melodies that had long, extended notes in them. He liked the melody to be filled with the mantra.

Kirtan should be sweet and melodious

We had a kīrtana at the Rama-līla grounds, 1976 March, and Dīnanātha was leading, and tens of thousands were attending and chanting. After the program Śrīla Prabhupāda and I were alone in the back tent waiting for his servant and the car. As you know, he would often ask rhetorical questions, and he asked me, “So, what did you think of the kīrtana?” Understanding this was just a lead-in to his giving me an instruction, I answered with a bland “It was OK.” Śrīla Prabhupāda’s definition to me then was as follows: “No, it was not nice. It was clanging and banging. Kīrtana should be sweet and melodious. Come let us go to the ashram and have kirtana.”

And so we went — Srila Prabhupāda, his servant, Baradrāj, and myself. Except for his servant, the three of us sat in his room and Baradrāj played harmonium on the request of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and we had a long kīrtana. . . . On Śrīla Prabhupāda’s signal, the kīrtana ended. He looked at me, smiling, shaking his head a little, and said, “So . . . sweet and melodious.” And then he moved on with the rest of preaching and hearing. I had heard him say, and heard that he also said, sometimes stopping kīrtana, “No screaming and shouting.”

Tejyas dāsa, remembrance, 12 Nov 2002

Complicated melodies destroy meditation

Kirtan is above all a meditation on the Holy Name. It combines the universal and timeless tradition of sacred chant and dance with the most potent sound vibration: Lord Krishna's Holy Name. In meditation one must avoid distraction. Complicated melodies, off-key singing, off-beat or loud instrument use can be distracting to most participants.

Kulapavana Das Danfavats Comment, June 12, 2007

Tunes and rhythms of Narottama Das Thakur

At the time of Narottama Dasa Thakura, over 100 talas (rhythmic beats) were used. Less than half of these are still known in Bengali and Manipuri kirtana, and most kirtanīyas know less than five. The most common beat is the 1-2-3 used in most ISKCON kirtanas. Another beat, 1-2, 1-2, is common in Bengali kirtana and was sometimes played by Srila Prabhupada. It has its own charm, and it would be nice if more of our devotees learned it.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The mrdanga player should follow the leader

Prabhupada was present during a kirtana performed by his disciples in the Brooklyn temple. The mrdanga player had been practicing to learn complicated beats, and he was demonstrating his rapid and intricate abilities in the kirtana. But Prabhupada stopped the music and said to the drummer that he should follow the leader. Then he started the kirtana again, but it happened again and again Prabhupada stopped the kirtana and asked the drummer to follow the leader

Prabhupada Nectar, 1.22

Mrdangas played expertly together

Good mrdanga playing can really add zest to a kirtana. And the sound of two or more mrdangas expertly played together wonderfully pleases the heart and mind. Bhaktivinoda Thakura sings, mrdanga vadya, sunite mana/ abasara sada yace: “I always desire to hear the

sound of the mrdanga.” Srila Prabhupada also advised his disciples to hold mrdanga concerts.

Bhakti Viksa Swami, Kirtana / referring to Letter to: Dvarakesa, 29 September, 1976

Mrdanga and Karatalas playing together

After the lead singer, the mrdanga player is the main leader in the kirtana. All the kartala players are meant to follow him. Mrdanga and kartalas should be played together harmoniously to enhance the transcendental sound vibration of the holy names. Kartalas should be chimed sweetly, like gopis’ ankle bells, especially when the tempo is slow. They should not be clanked together like dustbin lids.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Too complicates melody or mrdanga beats

If the lead singer introduces a complicated melody the rest of the group cant follow and as a result the congregational singing is weak, such kirtan is deficient. The same goes for complicated mrdanga beats that do not follow the natural flow of the mantra and are just a show of player's skill.

Kulapavana Das Danfavats Comment, June 12, 2007

Improperly pronounced stotras

Trāṇa-kartā prabhu gave me another tape this morning featuring Akiicana Kaṇṇa dāsa Bābājī, another of Prabhupāda’s Godbrothers, chanting some stotras. After I told him what Prabhupāda said yesterday, he wanted to verify whether this tape was bona-fide.

I played it for Prabhupāda to hear during massage. Again Prabhupāda said it was all right to listen to. But he shrugged and said, “They will never be able to pronounce these things, neither they will ever be able understand them. So what is the use?”

Hari Sauri Diary, October 7, 1976

Chanting /pronouncing sanskrit

Prabhupāda remained in his room and finished the questions and answers from Bhavan’s Journal. The first one of the session, question ten, caught my attention. It asked, “Will mantras lose their sanctity or holiness if they are not in the Sanskrit language?”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that they are transcendental sounds and cannot be changed. “The sound must be vibrated. You cannot translate it. The sound as it is ... Just like Hare Kaṇṇa mahā-mantra, the sound must be produced. You cannot translate. Then it will be artha-vāda [speculative interpretation]. That is prohibited. You cannot interpret or do other way ... The sound vibration must be there. Then it will continue in sanctity.”

Punṭa Kaṇṇa asked for clarification. “Is that to say the mantras can be written in Devanāgarī script or in Roman letters, but the sound must be the same?”

“Yes,” Prabhupāda said. “The sound is important.”

Hari Saury Diary, July 1, 1976 – New Vrindaban

Properly pronouncing »rama«

Does the Hare Krsna maha mantra lack potency? Quite to the contrary, this mantra which contains thirty-two syllables, is quite sufficient in itself to bring ecstasy, victory, mercy, knowledge etc. To equal thirty-two syllables it is necessary to chant ra-ma rather than simply ram.

About chanting Hari Ramo /right pronounciation

On another point, I forgot to mention in my last two notes to you you another problem in kirtan that needs to be rectified all over the world. Specifically, many devotees are addicted to chanting "Hari Ramo, with a long "o" vowel sound. Maha Muni prabhu, our God brother, told me that another God brother he knows was personally present when Vishnu Jana was chanting "Hari Ramo". Srila Prabhupada said to him, "Why are you trying to destroy Lord Chaitanya's sampradaya?" The Name of the devotee who was present and told this to Maha Muni you can get from him as an important reference. *

letter from Makhanlal Das to KSC pamho conf (Text PAMHO:13639768)

The science of ragas in Vaisnava tradition

The scriptures describing the science of music state that there are as many ragas as there are species of life. Among them there are sixteen thousand principal ragas that were previously manifested by the gopis of Vrndavana, which have become disseminated throughout the world. Each day has eight divisions (asta-prahara), for which there are eight corresponding ragas. The eightfold eternal daily pastimes of Radha and Krsna and of Lord Caitanya also take place according to the eight divisions of the day. Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas have revealed that the ultimate purpose of the science of music is to complement and enhance the moods of the Divine Couple during Their variegated eightfold daily pastimes. Gaudiya kirtana therefore employs traditional Vedic ragas during the same divisions of the day, with the specific purpose of pleasing the Supreme Lord.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Ragas at a wrong time disturb the psychic balance

These ragas, performed at the correct times, enhance and enforce the subtle energies prevalent during those periods. However, ragas performed at the wrong time disturb the psychic balance. Those who are aware of the Vedic science of music can perceive the awkwardness and rasabhasa of ragas being played or sung at the wrong time. The rendering of ragas at inappropriate hours is considered inauspicious, sinful, and disruptive to cosmic harmony.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Brahma Samhita *

Regarding the presentation of "Govindam" as well as other mantras, the vibration is always pure. I will give the theme and if the sound is Westernized that does not matter. But another point is that this specific sound of Kirtana as I sing is also another introduction of art that can be intermingled with Western art, and such combination will certainly be appreciated. But so far I know that the Kirtana tune is a specific representation of Gaudiya Vaisnavas and this tune is appreciated all over India as unique. They say that the Kirtana tune is the specific gift of Bengal, and that is a fact. So why not utilize this tune in the Western countries under the able guidance of such expert musician as George?

Letter to Syamasundara, L.A. 25 February, 1970

Kalidasa Lahiri find pleasure in Harinam **

Regarding a brāhmaṇa singer from Śāntipura, Kālīdāsa Lahiri: "Early in life, while still a young boy, experts in the field of Indian classical music had taught him, and he

considered that such instruction qualified him to occasionally lead the kīrtana sessions of the Vainṇavas. However, when previously he had led some kīrtanas, the Vainṇavas were apparently not fond of his typically palace-court classical touch. Nonetheless, he had introduced these classical variations into the kīrtanas, oblivious of the Vainṇavas' feelings. Attempting to parade his musical ability, he had stared at the faces of the Vainṇavas, awaiting a response, hoping for some appreciation. For quite some days now, this had continued. However, quite suddenly, a few days earlier, he had unexpectedly started to feel increasing pleasure in singing harināma."

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Jaiva Dharma, Chapter 3

San Francisco kirtans in the 60's / new melodies

It was a new singsong chant, nothing at all like the morning and evening ragas that Srila Prabhupada had introduced. This was an American version for sure: horns blared, drums boomed, and cymbals clanged; it was a festive party sound. Some of the New York devotees were aghast; after hearing the tape through, Srila Prabhupada smiled broadly and expressed his appreciation: "Oh, they have done nicely. Very nice. They are chanting so enthusiastically". One of the tape bearers protested the modern unauthentic sound. Srila Prabhupada drowned him out. It was, in his opinion, wonderful. He sent a message to San Francisco to let them know he loved their kirtan tape and to go on chanting. Srila Prabhupada then said: "They are chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, that is the main thing. It may be this tune or that tune, doesn't matter - this way or that, but they are sincerely chanting. That is what Kṛṣṇa wants".

SP Nectar – story #6 Wild kirtans

The best way to sing kirtana

Brahmananda Prabhu recalls asking Srila Prabhupada "What is the best way to sing kirtana?" Srila Prabhupada replied, "In a way that you never get tired."

Following Srila Prabhupada DVD #1

Sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya and je ānīlo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood

Each bhajana expresses a particular sentiment and message, so most benefit from singing bhajanas will be had if the singers are aware of the meaning of the song and try to enter into its mood. It is inappropriate to sing a plaintive bhajana (such as that beginning śrī-kanṇa-caitanya-prabhu dayā koro more) or one of lamentation (such as that beginning je ānīlo prema-dhana koruṇā pracur) in a fast tempo or joyful tone. Most bhajanas are traditionally sung slow and sweet.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Singing the first line again after completing the song

A common practice in singing bhajanas is to sing the first line of the first verse again after completing the song. In some songs, simply to sing the first line is insufficient. At least the second line is needed to make a complete sentence. For example, je ānīlo prema-dhana koruṇā pracur means, "He who brought the treasure of love and was full of mercy...." The second line completes the stanza: "heno prabhu kotha gela, acarya thakura" "Where has such a great master as Srinivasa Acarya gone?" Similarly, "gaurangera duti pada, jara dhana-sampada", "Whose property and wealth is the two feet of Lord Caitanya..." is completed by "se jane bhakati-rasa sara," "he knows what is the essence of devotional mellows."

Concocted Kirtana techniques

Some techniques used by kirtana leaders to enliven the devotees are listed below:

- (1) To suddenly change the tempo from slow to fast.
- (2) The lead singer starts to sing the beginning of the maha-mantra while the other devotees are still singing the last part of the mantra. The lead singer simultaneously changes the tempo. This has an exciting effect, but is nevertheless not good. The maha-mantra should not be cut in on just to gain some musical effect.
- (3) To suddenly stop a fast kirtana and then again quickly start fast.
- (4) In a fast kirtana, to stop singing for some seconds so that only the instruments are heard, then again start singing. This technique is often combined with change of tempo, as mentioned in technique (2) above.
- (5) In a steady or fast kirtana, to gradually or suddenly stop the instruments so that only voices are heard or to reduce the tone of instruments and singing to very slight. This may go on even for a few minutes, accompanied by dancing. Then, at the indication of the kirtana leader, the instruments are suddenly brought back loud and strong.

Although not traditional, such techniques can add zest to kirtanas. However, if used often they may lose their stimulating effect.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Locana Das Thakur learning rhymes and rhythms of Panchali

Previously in Bengal the poets used to compose sacred songs and verses in different forms of classic rhymes and rhythmic meters called Panchali. The Panchali style of composition was especially used for glorifying the Lord. Shрила Lochana Dasa Thakura used the Panchali form of verse-meter in composing his famous work, Shri Chaitanya Mangala. The Panchali form employs five different kinds of song-styles...In the prime of his youth he went to Shri Khanda where he found his gurudeva, Shri Narahari Sarakara Thakur, and took shelter at his lotus feet. He stayed there for some time, and there he was instructed in kirtan...

Biography of Lochana Das Thakur

CONSCIOUSNESS AND MOOD

Kirtan our duty*

Kirtana is our first duty.

SP Letter to Palika, 13 November, 1975

Kirtana – no difficulty*

So long our kirtana is alright there is no difficulty at all.

Letter to: Rayarama, 30 January, 1967

ISKCON Kirtan standard

Following Srila Prabhupada's example, the standard for kirtana in ISKCON is that it should be simple, pure, sweet and thus pleasing to Srila Prabhupada and Krsna.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

Street Harinam should make devotees*

Your program for distributing books and having the street festivals and then preaching and making devotees is very good.

letter to Tamāl Krishna Goswami, September 8, 1974

The best way to lead Kirtana

Brahmananda Prabhu recalls asking Srila Prabhupada "What is the best way to sing kirtana?"

Srila Prabhupada replied, "In a way that you never get tired."

Following Srila Prabhupada DVD #1

Kirtan is glorifying Krishna only / not for ourselves*

So if you have talent for musical achievement, that is nice; but if you nourish some idea of becoming famous by playing some music, that will be a source of frustration—the end. So it is better if you play your music for Krishna by having very ecstatic kirtanas in your center in Vancouver, and in this way, as I have introduced it, all of the devotees and also the general public as well will be able to join together cooperatively in the glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, not that we shall glorify anyone else.

letter to Mahatma, 10 April 72

Kirtan as a means to satisfy Krishna*

Krishna Kirtana is not for earning a livelihood. Krishna Kirtana is not meant for entertaining the public for demonstration of arts. It is dynamic service to the Lord. We do not therefore mind so much about the artistic presentation of Krishna Kirtana but we want to see how much a devotee is satisfying the Supreme Will.

Letter to Jadurani, 12 December, 1967

By purity attract audience in public functions*

I am pleased to note that there is interest in having our Sankirtana Party perform in various public engagements. The same thing is going on here, and they have been invited to such places as Amsterdam and Germany. So if you can also do this, it is nice. But do not change our principles. Practicing is already done by kirtana. It is not required for us to become artists. Our main point is service to Krishna, not to please an audience. We shall not divert our attention too much to adjustment of musical sounds. People should not misunderstand that we are a band of musical artists. They must know that we are devotees of Krishna. Our devotional practice and purity shall be so strong that wherever we chant there will be immediately an impression in the audience for devotion to Krishna.

letter to Tamal Krsna, 30 Oct 1969

All activities in the KC movement are meant for Krsna-kirtana*

Kirtana means glorification of Lord Krsna. All activities in the Hare Krsna movement are meant for Krsna-kirtana-glorification of Lord Krsna. Although this glorification takes many forms, kirtana is particularly understood to mean chanting Krsna's holy names. This is also called sankirtana. The prefix "san" means "complete" or "in association." So sankirtana means "complete glorification" or "congregational chanting."

Kirtana means alone, and sankirtana means in the assembly of many others.

Lecture October 21, 1974, Mumbai

Sankirtan of serious devotees can attract people from the spiritual platform*

"I have tested it definitely that melodious vibration of saikirtana, if they are performed by serious devotees, can attract people from the very spiritual platform, and it at once makes the spiritual background very smooth, when a spiritual instruction from the Bhagavad-gītā can be implemented very nicely. So my first concrete program is . . . to organize such a saikirtana party."

letter to Harikrishnadas Aggarwal, 3 March 1968

Spiritual enthusiasm*

Regarding your dancing in the middle of the kirtana, it is not wrong. It is completely right. If in your kirtana everyone dances in ecstasy it is perfectly all right. That is spiritual enthusiasm.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa, October 19, 1974

No need to learn the dancing*

Nitya-siddha kanṇa-bhakti sādhyā kabhu naya. It is not that one has to learn it artificially by some gymnastic. No. Natural. Just like the children here, they are also dancing with their parents. They are offering flower, trying to imitate how to chant. Naturally.

SB lecture, Los Angeles, June 1, 1972

Natural Chanting and dancing will unite the world*

If people are simply induced to chant Hare Kanṇa mantra . . . Just see. Even a child, he is taking part. It is natural . . . they are dancing and chanting. So this movement is so important. Somehow or other if you can engage them in chanting and dancing, the whole world will be united.

SB lecture, Bombay, December 27, 1974

Chanting should not be done as a show*

If one chants the holy name of the Lord just to make a show, not knowing the secret of success, he may increase his bile secretion, but he will never attain perfection in chanting the holy name.

CC, Ādi-līlā 7.95–96, purport

Sentimental agitation cannot help one advance in KC*

Artificial chanting and dancing may be due to sentiments or sentimental agitation, but this cannot help one advance in Kāṇṇa consciousness.

CC, Madhya-līlā 11.102, purport

Dancing for the pleasure of the Deities / new dancing styles not required*

Tamāl Krishna Mahārāja (reading the article): “Often the most rapid and intense chanting is done by a hard-core knot of dhotied men before the curtains of the shrine. . . . The rhythm approaches that of an express train, and the atmosphere is apt to remind a lay visitor of an old-fashioned football rally. Some of the onlookers try to keep up with the central group, clapping their hands, swaying their bodies, throwing arms upwards and, among the younger, adapting modern dance steps to the rhythm . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Who has introduced this peculiar dancing?

Hari-śauri: It just evolved. (laughs)

Rūpānuga: We were speaking about that the other day. It’s changed from the original dancing that you showed us to something else. Too much like the modern dancing.

Prabhupāda: Hmm. I think this is not good.

Tamāl Krishna: What way should we dance, Śrīla Prabhupāda? With our hands outstretched? Sometimes the devotees like to jump around. Is that all right?

Prabhupāda: In ecstasy one can do anything, that is another. . . . But artificially to do something is not good.

Tamāl Krishna: But if one feels like jumping, it is all right?

Prabhupāda: Anything artificial is not required.

Rūpānuga: So running back and forth is not.

Prabhupāda: No, no, that should not be an artificial.

Hari-śauri: We don’t dance for show, we dance for the pleasure of the Deities.

Tamāl Krishna: No, we’re not professional dancers.

Room conversation, June 10, 1976 / on the basis of a news article about the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement

We are not musicians, we are Kāṇṇa bhaktas*

My opinion is that it is not necessary for us to utilize these different musical talents for spreading Kāṇṇa Consciousness. I would rather see people follow strictly the path of Lord Caitanya and His Saikīrtana devotees. We are using madaiga, karatāla, that is enough. We are not musicians. We are Kāṇṇa bhaktas. Therefore we do not stress so much importance on these different musical talents. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is God Himself. Had He thought it would have been better to spread Kāṇṇa Consciousness by another way He would have done so. But no, simply with madaiga and karatāla, traveling and chanting Hare Kāṇṇa, asking everyone to chant Hare Kāṇṇa, preaching simply Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam philosophy, this is the process. There is no need for us to try and add anything to this simple method. It will only be a distraction.

letter to Jagadīśa Paṇoita dāsa, 28 Dec 1974

Palatable because it is glorification of the Lord*

It does not require any artificial musical knowledge or dancing knowledge. Out of your own ecstasy, you will dance, you'll chant. You don't require to study. Just like our playing of mrdanga. Nobody has gone to an expert mrdanga player to learn it. Whatever I play, I sing, I never studied under some expert teacher. But by practice, chanting, it may be melodious, it may be very nice or not. That doesn't matter. We are not concerned about that, whether it is appealing to the people or not. It will appeal; there is no doubt about it. But we don't require to divert our attention to these things. Simply because there is glorification of the Lord, it will be palatable.

SB lecture, Oct 6, 1969 New Vrindavan

Purity in Hari Kirtan is more important than gorgeous show*

Regarding your question of dancing-show, whatever it may be, it may not deviate from the real Krishna Consciousness program. We are Hari Kirtana men, that's all. We can attract people by some gorgeous show, but inside there must be strict purity and seriousness, otherwise, we shall be attracted by the gorgeous show only. There are two energies always working simultaneously, and Maya means when we diminish the spiritual energy, then automatically we become attracted to the external dress of Maya. So I do not care very much for these plays and dramas unless they are coming directly from the Vedas. If we can recite from Bhagavad gita the first chapter without any need for elaborate scenery or stage-props and gorgeous dresses, that is best. Just like your Shakespeare. Macbeth may be recited by two men, without anything else, and simply by their acting ability and the meaningful words alone, they can very easily capture the entire audience and give them real substance. We have so many stories, like Jagai-Madhai, Krishna departing for Mathura, like that. Satire will not help us. Our message is very grave, and because it is the Absolute Truth, it will work without any artificial presentation.

Because they heard of our program in Bombay along with the Zavery sisters Manipuri Dancers, here in London they had arranged one program of lecturing by me along with a recital by one man playing on the vina just to attract attention to my speaking. I am not in approval of such arrangements, and it will be dangerous thing in future if we begin this type of program just to attract the masses. Already I see this happening practically all over the Society, so better we stop it now and get ourselves firmly on the track chalked out for us by Lord Caitanya. We are simply Sankirtana men, our program is chanting, dancing, distributing prasadam, and speaking high philosophy, that's all

Letter to Madhudvisa, 8 July, 1972

We want to hear good music in relationship with Krsna *

...We want to hear good music, melodious music, but if we engage our ears for hearing melodious music in relationship with the Supreme Lord Krsna [that is our perfection].

BG lecture, 2.59-69 -NY, April 29, 1966

Why imitate?

A devotee wrote, asking about the kirtanas of Krsnadasa Babaji of Mayapur. Prabhupada said, "He is bona fide. But why imitate anyone. Sing in your own way, and Krsna will accept the feeling and the tune."

TKG's diary, July 18, 1977

A devotee's attention during Kirtana

Although it is not offensive to dance in a circle before the Deities, care should be taken not to keep one's back to Them. We must remember that our dancing is for Their pleasure. Especially while the arati ceremony is in progress, devotees' attention should be mainly to the Deities.

Pancaratra Pradip

Kirtan is to please Krsna, not for our own pleasure

I was taught we danced for the pleasure of Krishna, under the direction of Radharani, and that the swami two step was the best way to do that. Some twirling. It seems that so many are unable to master the two step and its infinite variations and refinements, and instead gyrate and flop around like untrained dancing bears, simply dancing for their own pleasure, or to display raw athleticism to impress whomever they deem necessary to impress. If you can't dance well, dance with lots of energy, another de facto standard. Kirtan is supposed to be pleasing. If it ceases to be pleasing to listen to or to watch, is it still kirtan?

Madhava Ghosh dasa Dandavats Comment on June 10th, 2007

The important thing is the mood or feeling with which we chant

There are many talented devotees and we can expect many different techniques and styles to flourish that will be very pleasing to the Lord and attractive to the public.

Of course, the important thing is the mood or feeling with which we chant, but if we have the proper mood we will be especially careful to do it nicely (and not to cause deafness by banging away loudly on gongs and karatals). Training and establishing standards of quality are important.

Akruranatha Das Dandavats Comment, June 11th, 2007

Performing kirtan for money

There was a kirtana competition which seemed to be going on very well. Different groups from around Bengal had been invited and groups of our devotees representing different yatras from around the world are all competing. The best group was to be awarded some prize so each evening several different groups have been on stage doing their chanting. In the evening Prabhupāda was coming out of his room onto the veranda to go to the bathroom. He stopped for a moment to hear one of the Bengali groups and he asked me what I thought of it. I wasn't sure what to say—I was reluctant to reply just in case I got it wrong. A moment later Prabhupāda asked me if I wanted to know what he thought of it. So I said “Oh, yes Śrīla Prabhupāda.” Prabhupāda replied with a smile, “I think they are doing it simply for money. Such chanting is worthless” and he walked off to the bathroom. He later condemned it, saying that the groups that had come were doing it simply to get some name and fame.

Needless to say I sent word down to Jayapataka Swami what Prabhupāda had said and he has decided not to hold it again.

Hari Sauri Diary, March 5, 1977 – Mayapur

Dancing is a natural spiritual emotion

Srila Prabhupāda taught that dancing to the sound of the Hare Kanna mahā-mantra is a natural spiritual emotion, It is already there in everyone's heart. As it is stated in the

Caitanya-caritāmata, kanna-bhakti nitya-siddha. Nitya-siddha. It is eternally a fact. . . . It is not to be realized, it is already there.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Public dancing should be done in an open and organized manner - cooperatively

Devotees should dance together, facing the public, in a coordinated and choreographed manner, concentrating on attracting the public to Kanna. When each devotee does his or her own thing, the kirtana loses focus and potency. Such a kirtana is less likely to attract people to become involved, either as participants or spectators. Anything can be attractive when many people do it together, even a bunch of men shoveling dirt, all performing movements simultaneously to the rhythm of music—what to speak of a group of bright-faced, cheerful Hare Kanna devotees dancing because Kanna consciousness makes them happy.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Prataparudra wonderstruck by the dancing and chanting

When the devotees from Bengal first came to Jagannātha Purī to meet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, King Pratāparudra asked Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya to come to the roof of the palace so they could see all of the devotees as they arrived. Sārvabhauma told the king the name of each devotee and described the devotee’s special glories. When he saw and heard the wonderful kirtana, King Pratāparudra was wonderstruck and commented, “This kirtana is so wonderful. Never before have I seen such wonderful dancing or heard such melodious chanting.” Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya replied, “This sweet transcendental sound is a special creation of the Lord known as premasaikirtana, congregational chanting in love of Godhead.”

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam (quoting CC, Madhya-līlā 11.98)

Kirtan should be sweet and melodious

We had a kirtana at the Rāma-līlā grounds, 1976 March, and Dīnanātha was leading, and tens of thousands were attending and chanting. After the program Śrīla Prabhupāda and I were alone in the back tent waiting for his servant and the car. As you know, he would often ask rhetorical questions, and he asked me, “So, what did you think of the kirtana?” Understanding this was just a lead-in to his giving me an instruction, I answered with a bland “It was OK.” Śrīla Prabhupāda’s definition to me then was as follows: “No, it was not nice. It was clanging and banging. Kirtana should be sweet and melodious. Come let us go to the ashram and have kirtana.”

And so we went — Śrīla Prabhupāda, his servant, Baradrāj, and myself. Except for his servant, the three of us sat in his room and Baradrāj played harmonium on the request of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and we had a long kirtana. . . . On Śrīla Prabhupāda’s signal, the kirtana ended. He looked at me, smiling, shaking his head a little, and said, “So . . . sweet and melodious.” And then he moved on with the rest of preaching and hearing. I had heard him say, and heard that he also said, sometimes stopping kirtana, “No screaming and shouting.”

Tejyas dāsa, remembrance, 12 Nov 2002

Kirtana is a dynamic service to the Lord*

I understand also, there was a Kirtana performance given by Śrī Pūrṇa. You have rightly remarked whether they are devotees. You are right. These people are professional singers.

Krishna Kirtana is not for earning a livelihood. Krishna Kirtana is not meant for entertaining the public for demonstration of arts. It is dynamic service to the Lord. We do not therefore mind so much about the artistic presentation of Krishna Kirtana but we want to see how much a devotee is satisfying the Supreme Will.

letter to Jadurāṇī dāsī, 12 December 1967

Kirtana without ulterior motives is an enthralling transcendental experience

Alas, much of what Narottama and others taught is now lost. And, although Gaudiya kirtana culture is still very much alive in Bengal, Orissa, and Manipur, it has been contaminated by the influence of commercialism and apa-sampradayas. Catchy cinema tunes have been introduced into modern bhajana culture, much to the dismay of traditionalists, who want to keep the devotional mood. Nevertheless, still today, traditional kirtana, when performed expertly and without ulterior motives, is an enthralling transcendental experience.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The real essence of kirtana is the desire to glorify Kṛṣṇa

However, Bengali kirtana is complex and cannot be practiced by all devotees. That does not matter, because the real essence of kirtana is the simple desire to glorify Kṛṣṇa. Everyone can chant the names of Kṛṣṇa and become purified. As Kṛṣṇa has unlimited names, and as musical combinations of rhythms and melodies are also unlimited, kirtana can be performed in unlimited ways. However, simple kirtana, if sung with devotion, has a certain charm that cannot be had from even the most intricate musical arrangements.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtan means glorifying Kṛṣṇa

However, we should always remember that kirtana is not meant for glorifying ourselves, nor is it meant for our enjoyment. Although kirtana may be considered transcendental recreation, it is primarily an act of worship. It is certainly enjoyable, but we should always remember that it is meant for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure, not for our pleasure.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

The science of music is to complement and enhance the moods of the Divine Couple

The scriptures describing the science of music state that there are as many ragas as there are species of life. Among them there are sixteen thousand principal ragas that were previously manifested by the gopis of Vrndavana, which have become disseminated throughout the world. Each day has eight divisions (asta-prahara), for which there are eight corresponding ragas. The eightfold eternal daily pastimes of Radha and Kṛṣṇa and of Lord Caitanya also take place according to the eight divisions of the day. Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas have revealed that the ultimate purpose of the science of music is to complement and enhance the moods of the Divine Couple during Their variegated eightfold daily pastimes. Gaudiya kirtana therefore employs traditional Vedic ragas during the same divisions of the day, with the specific purpose of pleasing the Supreme Lord.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Morning prayers to be sung to the correct raga, and with devotion and reverence

Mangala-arati is meant for giving a powerful spiritual charge at the beginning of the day. All in attendance will certainly feel purified and enlivened in Kṛṣṇa consciousness if the

prayers are sung to the correct raga, and with devotion and reverence. If mangala-arati is led in this way, by a devotee whose only motive is to satisfy guru and Krsna, the effect is most enchanting. The minds of all present are captured and drawn to the lotus feet of guru and Krsna. There can be no better way to start the day.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Mangala arati sung gently to awaken the Lord

Many devotees feel that the mangala-arati kirtan should be sweet and gentle, as if to gently awaken the Lord. Dancing in mangala-arati is also nice, as Srila Prabhupada once recommended. (cf. letter to Upendra, Feb 19, 1973) And there is no restriction against the mangala-arati kirtana being lively. However, it is generally more appropriate that ebullient kirtanas be kept for later in the day.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Any tune in relationship to Krsna is bona fide

Of course, singing Krsna's names is transcendental and purifying—even when sung in an inappropriate tune. Srila Prabhupada once wrote to a disciple that “Any tune can be used. When it is in relationship with Krishna, that makes it bonafide.” Letter to: Ekayani, 31 August, 1971 Still, it is better to sing the correct melody at the appropriate time. That will be more pleasing to Krsna.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana is meant for the satisfaction of Krsna

Temples are meant to be places of pure spiritual sound vibration, not places for cinema music, or even bhajanas set to cinema music.

The essence of all instructions on kirtana standards is that kirtana is meant for the glorification and pleasure of Krsna, and should be performed according to the parampara system. Indeed, if we are in doubt about any chant, better not chant it. If we stick to Hare Krsna we can't go wrong.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Enthusiasm for dancing

If devotees do not dance, there is a danger that their taste for Krsna consciousness will dry up, and they will descend to the mental platform of scheming and speculating. Dancing is also a service, so even if, for whatever reason, a devotee does not feel like it, he should still try to dance for Krsna's pleasure. Even if lacking enthusiasm or energy, still devotees should somehow or other start to move their hands and legs. Enthusiasm will follow. There is great taste to be had in kirtana and dancing, even in the neophyte stage.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Enthusiasm in Kirtana / the pleasure of Krsna

Every kirtana should be an event. Kirtana should never be considered a drudgery—something that we attend just because we have to. Enthusiasm for kirtana is essential. Enthusiasm means not to avoid kirtana and, having come, to participate wholeheartedly. As it is offensive to be inattentive while chanting the holy names, devotees should be mentally as well as physically present in kirtana. They should get involved by carefully chanting and hearing the holy names—not just let their attention wander here and there.

While chanting before the Deities, with great respect we should meditate on the holy names as non-different from Them.

Caitanya Caritamṛta relates that “As long as the devotees remained at Jagannātha Purī with Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the pastime of saikīrtana was performed with great jubilation every day. CC Madhya 11.241 text

There is no reason why we also cannot have ecstatic kīrtana every day. We should consider how fortunate we are to get the chance to join in kīrtana, and how we can be benefited by participating with enthusiasm.

kali-kale nama-rupe kṛṣṇa-avatāranama haite haya sarva jagat-nistara

In this age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra, is the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Simply by chanting the holy name, one associates with the Lord directly. Anyone who does this is certainly delivered. CC Adi 17.22

Kṛṣṇa is so kind that he has come in the form of His name to save us. “Everyone engaged in the practice of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra will be completely cleansed, from the core of his heart, and be saved from the cycle of birth and death.” (SB 7.6.1 purport)

There are innumerable quotes about the holy name, many of which are compiled in the book Sri Namamṛta. By studying these quotes and learning slokas about the holy names, we can remain enthused for kīrtana, and help enthuse others. It is also essential to regularly discuss the glories of Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana in our classes, and also informally among the devotees.

Without enthusiasm for chanting, all the do’s and don’t’s about kīrtana discussed herein will not help much. However, as in any service - cooking, Deity worship or whatever - enthusiasm in itself is not sufficient. We have to learn the techniques also.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kīrtana

Kīrtana is not an egoistic activity

Kīrtana is also devotional service, and should be done with a service attitude, praying, “Hare Kṛṣṇa—O Rādhā, O Kṛṣṇa, please engage me in your service.” We should not chant and dance in an egotistical way, to attract attention to ourselves. Consciously or unconsciously, we may be trying to impress others, including the opposite sex. The ethos of a rock musician as a hero, attractive to women, should especially be avoided. We should sing to please Kṛṣṇa, and for no other reason.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kīrtana

The spirit of Kīrtana is coming together to glorify Kṛṣṇa

There can be many moods in kīrtana: Slow, grave and sweet, energetically exuberant, or even light-hearted transcendental fun. Caitanya-Caritamṛta (Madhya 25.4) records that Paramānanda Kīrtaniya’s funny chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa used to make Lord Caitanya laugh! Whatever mood we chant in, the basic spirit of kīrtana is one of coming together to glorify Kṛṣṇa.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kīrtana

Enthusiasm is the most important

Leading kīrtana is an important service. A good kīrtana leader can uplift the temple atmosphere, help keep the devotees inspired and enthusiastic, and attract newcomers to participate in sankīrtana. The key to leading inspired kīrtanas is enthusiasm to glorify Kṛṣṇa, which is the essence and very meaning of kīrtana. Such enthusiasm is a symptom of spiritual advancement, and develops in one who seriously dedicates his life to Kṛṣṇa by

following the rules and regulations of devotional service. Enthusiasm born of the mode of passion can also make for a lively kirtana, but it will not have the same purifying effect as chanting born of real advancement.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The kirtan group shouldn't follow the leader's mistake

The kirtana leader should also know the words of the song he is singing and how to pronounce them properly. He should know the correct order of the lines of the song. Sometimes devotees sing the first half of a verse followed by the second half of another, leave out verses, or get them in the wrong order. Those who are not sure can have someone hold a songbook for them to see, but really the kirtana leader should know the song he is singing. If the devotee leading kirtan does sing a line or verse of a song out of sequence, the other devotees should not follow the mistake, but should sing the correct line or verse.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Krpamoya Dasa on kirtan being a service to the Deities and the devotees

When I lead kirtana, I feel I want to serve the devotees that are there. I'm very conscious that there's a very thin line and you can fall either side of the line. If you can sing in such a way that afterwards devotees come up and say "Nice kirtana," you've got to be very careful that you don't allow your artistic considerations to take precedence over the devotional. My devotional considerations are to be thinking of two things--Krsna and allowing the devotees to have space in which to listen to the holy name and reflect. So I try to chant in such a way that I know that everybody can join in. I don't tend to sing unfamiliar tunes. I sing familiar tunes that I think the devotees will know, just so they can become absorbed. I don't change the tunes that often. And I just really try to stay this side of the line of modulating the voice too much--that is, not modulating the voice so much that people will treat it as an artistic thing and not a devotional thing.

Krpamoya Dasa, quoted by Jayadvaita Swami in Kirtana Reform

The Lord will automatically reveal Himself to the view of the chanter*

One should not artificially try to see the form of the Lord while chanting Hare Kanna, but when the chanting is performed offenselessly the Lord will automatically reveal Himself to the view of the chanter. The chanter, therefore, has to concentrate on hearing the vibration, and without extra endeavor on his part, the Lord will automatically appear.

SB 4.8.53 Purport

Music in the Vedas

In the Vedic culture, musical knowledge is an intricate and elaborate science delineated in the Gandharva-veda. It is particularly meant for the upliftment of the practitioners by being engaged for the worship and pleasure of the Supreme Lord, or at least his representatives such as the demigods or the king. Among the demigods, misuse of the musical propensity for personal sense enjoyment is considered a grave offense.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Namabhāsa Kirtana is only punya

There needs to be training and supervision of kirtan all singers and kartal players just as there is for the twenty four hour members. The excessively loud kirtans, flamboyant styles

and unbonafide 'mantras' and tunes may captivate ignorant members of the public but it is namabasa, not bhakti and Bhaktivinode Thakur says that namabasa is only punya. The Movement is not for propagating punya but pure devotion. These loud, raucous and flowery performances drive actual devotees away.

Rasananda Das

Kirtan should be graceful and melodious

The saikīrtana should start slow and then build up speed. The top speed should be just fast enough so that everyone can respond melodiously and dance gracefully. When the kīrtana gets too fast, the dancing gets frenetic and disorganized, the melody gets harder to follow, and the kīrtana continually stops and starts because devotees get tired. But kīrtana played with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing and melodious chanting, and can continue for hours without stopping. Such kīrtana is much more attractive to the public.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Kirtana is naturally joyful

Of course, kirtana is not meant to be rigid, but spontaneous and joyful. Kirtana, glorification of Krsna, is the natural function of the soul. Kirtana is naturally joyful, being the outflowing of the soul's love for Krsna. Even nondevotees become materially happy by mundane singing and dancing, so what to speak of devotees' glorification of the Lord of their hearts?

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

To many instruments divert attention from the Holy Name*

Regarding your question about kirtana, practically we are not concerned with the instruments. They are used sometimes to make it sweeter, but if we divert our attention for using the instruments more, that is not good. Generally kirtana is performed with mrdanga and karatalas, but if somebody is expert instrument player, he can be admitted to join Sankirtana. We can accept everything for Krishna's service, but not taking the risk of diverting attention to any other thing which will hinder our Krishna Consciousness. That should be our motto, or principle

letter to Jadurani, 26 May 1969

Attention on the Hare Krishna Mantra *

Apart from this he said, "You should just go on chanting Hare Krishna Mahamantra and the Pancatattva mantra and don't divert your attention. You cannot understand the meaning of the Indian songs and simply parrot like chanting of these songs has no value."

letter to Damodara Pandit, July 17, 1976

More ears to hear and tongues to hear and chant*

The authorities like Rupa Gosvami, he says that "What I shall chant with one tongue? If I would have millions of tongues, then I could chant a little more. And what I shall hear with two ears?" So he's expecting, he's aspiring to have millions of ears and trillions of tongues to relish this chanting Hare Krsna. So that is another stage, of course, when this chanting will be so melodious that we shall try to have more ears and more tongues to utilize it. Atah sri-krsna-namadi na bhaved grahyam indriyaih [BRS. 1.2.234].

Initiation Lecture -- Hamburg, August 27, 1969

Concentration on hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa *

Attention will be diverted in musical instrument, not to chanting. Our concentration should be hearing Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Room conversation, 26 December 1976

The effect of jokingly or seriously chanting the Holy Name*

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has started performing saikīrtana-yajña in different places, and it has been experienced that wherever saikīrtana-yajña is performed, many thousands of people gather and take part in it. Imperceptible auspiciousness achieved in this connection should be continued all over the world. The members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should perform saikīrtana-yajñas one after another, so much that all the people of the world will either jokingly or seriously chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, and thus they will derive the benefit of cleansing the heart. The holy name of the Lord (harer nāma) is so powerful that whether it is chanted jokingly or seriously the effect of vibrating this transcendental sound will be equally distributed.

SB 4.24.10, purport

Emphasis on style brings imitation*

With regard to your question about Bengali style kīrtana and mrdanga playing, one or two styles is best. To introduce more styles is not good. It will become an encumbrance. Who is that Kṛṣṇa das Babaji who is teaching? If we introduce so much emphasis on style of kīrtana, then simply imitation will go on. Devotional emotion is the main thing. If we give stress to instrument and style then attention will be diverted to the style. That will be spiritual loss.

Letter to Satvaruṇa, 30 June 1976

Chanting the Names of Panca Tattva before Hare Kṛṣṇa*

At the beginning of every function in preaching, especially before chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—we must chant the Pañca-tattva's names and offer our respects to them.

CC, Adi 8.5, purport

Vedic mantras gone to hell / nobody can chant properly*

So in this age, this mantra is called mahā-mantra, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. That's all. All Vedic mantras are now gone to hell. You see? Nobody can properly chant Vedic mantras and take the benefit out of it. But this mantra, any way you chant, neglectfully or properly, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and the result is there.

lecture, Los Angeles, November 29, 1968

Responsive chanting – you get to chant and hear*

Responsive chanting is very nice; one good singer may lead, and the others may join in. That is the system in India. It is very good for two reasons especially: One, the chanter gets to rest, so he does not become tired, and two, you get to chant and hear, that is the process. You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers. Blowing of the conch shell and horns is very nice.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa and Himavati dāsī, March 3, 1968

Any tune can be used*

Any tune can be used. When it is in relationship with Kanna, that makes it bona fide.
letter to Ekāyanī dāsī, August 31, 1971

Vaisnava songs and the Maha Mantra*

Devotee: Is chanting Vaisnava songs on an equal level with maha-mantra?

Prabhupada: Yes. But first of all understand what is the maha-mantra. He krsna, Hare Krsna, “O the energy of Krsna, please accept me.” This is the prayer. This is addressing, He Krsna, Hare Krsna, “Hara, Please, now I am engaged in this material service; kindly accept me in Your service.” This is the meaning of Hare Krsna. So a relationship, requesting something. So all these songs are like that, requesting relationship. Therefore they are the same.

SB Lecture, January 20, 1974

Vaisnava songs and the Maha Mantra*

Devotee: Is chanting Vaisnava songs on an equal level with maha-mantra?

Prabhupada: Yes. But first of all understand what is the maha-mantra. He krsna, Hare Krsna, “O the energy of Krsna, please accept me.” This is the prayer. This is addressing, He Krsna, Hare Krsna, “Hara, Please, now I am engaged in this material service; kindly accept me in Your service.” This is the meaning of Hare Krsna. So a relationship, requesting something. So all these songs are like that, requesting relationship. Therefore they are the same.

SB Lecture, January 20, 1974

No need for artistic sense, but still...*

Chanting Hare Krishna does not require any artificial artistic sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music.

Letter to: Upendra, 1 June, 1968

Hare Krsna Mantra – not a material musical manifestation*

It is to be understood that when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu chanted and danced, He did so by the influence of the pleasure potency of the spiritual world. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never considered the holy name of the Lord to be a material vibration, nor does any pure devotee mistake the chanting of the Hare Kanna mantra to be a material musical manifestation.

CC Adi 7.95-96 purport

Servants of the holy name*

Caitanya never tried to be the master of the holy name; rather He taught us how to be servants of the holy name. If one chants the holy name of the Lord just to make a show, not knowing the secret of success, he may increase his bile secretion, but he will never attain perfection in chanting the holy name

CC Ādi 7.95-96

Parrotlike chanting has no value*

You cannot understand the meaning of the Indian songs, and simply parrot like chanting of these songs has no value.

Letter to: Damodara Pandita, 17 July, 1976

Realization is most important *

Realization is more important than parrotlike chanting.

SB 1.4.13 purport

Mixing of mantras is rasabhasa*

Therefore our process is to chant the holy names of the Paica-tattva and then we chant Hare Kanna mahā-mantra. That is perfect. And neither mixing. The mixing taste is called rasābhāsa. Rasābhāsa. And we don't manufacture anything. Just follow. We disagree with the persons who chant that bhaja nitāi-gaura rādhe-śyāma. No. We must follow strictly. Mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu

Cc. Madhya 17.186

The Holy Name has to dominate

Although in the kirtanas he allowed openness and free expression and welcomed the wildest participation, the transcendental sound of the holy name had to dominate. He never allowed the kīrtana to degenerate into mere beating on drums or chanting of any old words, nor could anyone in the group become so crazy that others wouldn't be able to hear or take part in congregational chanting.

Prabhupada Lilamrita ch 22

Talking during kirtan

If devotees in the temple room are talking among themselves while the kirtan is going on, that is a disrespectful behavior and a disruption to the kirtan. It is best to ask such devotees to carry their conversation somewhere else.

Kulapadava Das Dandavats Comment, June 12, 2007

The power of mantra / follow the process to get success

Prabhupada spoke again in this morning's class about the tremendous power of mantra [re: Vedic weapons]. "This mantra weapon is so strong that it can be manufactured simply by touching water with mantra. Just like we take mantra, apavitrau pavitro vā sarvāvasthāa gato 'pi vā yau smaret puṇoarīkāknaa sa bāhya. The same process. Do not think that it is some ritualistic, external. No, it has got meaning, if you can chant the mantra properly, if you follow the rules. You must be expert in chanting mantra." He gave the example of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, who avoided the allurements of a beautiful prostitute by the strength of his advancement in chanting. "Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said, 'Simply by chanting you'll get all success of life.' It is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's blessing. Ihā haite sarva-siddhi haibe tomāra, by simply chanting one gets the highest perfection. So we should be very careful and follow the regulative principles. Then automatically you'll be perfect."

Yesterday in class, Prabhupāda mentioned how the power of mantra had been verified by some doctors in Lucknow, but he didn't tell us how. Today he related the story. "Just like sometimes the snake-charming mantra can be purchased in the market. But if you do not make yourself perfect about chanting the mantra, it will not be effective. I'll give you one practical instance. It is not a story; it is a fact. Perhaps some of you know my friend who

came here, Dr. Ghosh. He told me there was a case. In Lucknow University they were students. So there is a big building, and two, three snake-biting case happened. So some snake charmer was invited to find out the snake and take him. So he came and took it away, the snake. Then this Dr. Ghosh and his class friends, they were medical students. Naturally, the so-called modern scientist, they do not believe in all these things. So they became very inquisitive. All of them went to that snake charmer—he was a Muhammadan gentleman. So he knew that ‘These medical students, they have come to see the fun how the snakes are charmed.’ “So they inquired, ‘What is the magic that you can catch up snake and the snake cannot do any harm to you?’

“So he said it is possible by mantra.

“So they challenged, ‘Oh, your snakes, I think they are poisonless and they cannot bite; the poison teeth, the fang, is taken away.’

“No, no. They have got everything.’

“So he took one and showed that ‘Here is...’ So to make a fun, he had many snakes, he let them all come out from the box. And immediately all over the courtyard, they began to run over, and these medical students, they became afraid. They were fleeing this side, that side, that side. So the charmer said, ‘Don’t be afraid. So long I am here they’ll not bite you.’

“So this was spoken by Dr. Ghosh, a personal experience. The mantra has got so much power. But not that you purchase the mantra and chant. That will not. You have to make it perfect. There is process, how to become perfect in chanting the mantra.”

This was just a material example Prabhupāda said, and if we seriously chanted the mahā-mantra, which is completely spiritual, then the effect would be unlimited. He said that if we chant it properly only once, the Hare Kāṇṇa mantra can destroy more sins than the most sinful person can commit in a whole lifetime. “Nāma-aparādha-sūnyam. Without any nāma-aparādha, if we chant according to the principle, then the mantra will act so nicely that the mantra will keep you always in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the power of mantra. Don’t think it is a hobby or it is something superfluous. No. Actually, this mantra, Kāṇṇa, Hare Kāṇṇa, Kāṇṇa Himself.

“So if you are allowed to keep yourself constantly in company with Kāṇṇa, then just imagine what is your position. If you keep yourself always near the fire, certainly you shall remain warm; there will be no attack of cold or anything like that. If we constantly chant Hare Kāṇṇa mantra, then we are not in this material world. But if we purposely again come to the material world ... That independence we have got.”

Hari Sauri Diary, September 17, 1976

Serving the kirtana

In kīrtana all musical instruments, including the madaiga and karatālas, must be played in a mood of serving the kīrtana, not controlling it. When Śrīla Prabhupāda first arrived in England in 1969, he told the devotees how, in Lord Caitanya’s saikīrtana, instruments were played softly while accompanying the lead singer, and louder for the chorus, back and forth.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Melodic instruments in kirtana divert attention from the mantra

Śrīla Prabhupāda gave a Sunday feast lecture about kīrtana, and he said things that I never heard him say at other times, particularly not during a lecture. He remarked that melodic instruments, including the harmonium, are not meant for kīrtana, and he explained why.

He said that the ear will automatically follow musical strains, and then our attention will be diverted from the mantra.

Interview with Revati-nandana dasa, Memories, Vol. 1

No long, extended notes in melodies / melody should be filled with the mantra

Another time he told Vinñujana that he did not like melodies that had long, extended notes in them. He liked the melody to be filled with the mantra.

Interview with Revatī-nandana dāsa, Memories, Vol. 1

Hare Krsna Maha Mantra is the most important

Srila Prabhupāda's mission was to spread the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. Along with chanting of Hare Krsna, he taught other chants also, yet in innumerable written and spoken instructions, Srila Prabhupada made it clear that he wanted his followers to emphasize the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra above all others. He wanted that the chanting of Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare remain the central activity of the Hare Krsna movement.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

As much kirtana as possible

In the early days of our movement, the main engagement for most devotees was simply to go out on the streets all day to chant Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Also, in the "early days," Srila Prabhupada used to hold kirtanas after morning class. Later, many different services were introduced as our movement expanded. Most devotees now only join in kirtanas at the prescribed temple programs. However, devotees should strive to do as much kirtana as possible.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Impure heart experiences pleasure from artistically performed Kirtana

Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura writes in his Madhurya Kadambini (5) that persons of impure heart only experience pleasure from kirtana if it is pleasing to the ear and artistically sung. At the Mayapura festival in 1977, some devotees had organized a "kirtana competition." Groups of both local Bengali kirtanias and ISKCON devotees from centers around the world took turns doing short stints of singing and dancing. The idea was to encourage kirtana, and was received with much enthusiasm. Srila Prabhupada, however, let it be known that he did not like it, and that was the last kirtana competition held in Mayapura.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Crazy dancing concoctions in ISKCON today and with SP

The dreaded ISKCON monotone incantation. Somehow, this monotonous incantation has become the most popular non-kirtan in the world of ISKCON devotees, and probably some in the Gaudiya Math's also. I am referring to flat, non-melody incantation with almost no up or down, and where melody is conspicuous by its absence, and sometimes even goes on for hours! The essential quote from Srila Prabhupada in this regards is: "Kirtan means melodius". So if there is no melody, only a flat incantation, I submit that it is not kirtan at all--it is a concoction. Why, then, is it so popular all over the world? For several reasons. (1) the singer doesn't have to be a singer at all. He can just drone out this incantation; (2)

The passionate young male drummers can do their usual thing of speeding up the incantation easily, in their desperate efforts to burn off their sex desire by working up a sweat (and impressing everyone?); (3) no musical talent is required. These are some of the top reasons, but there are bound to be others as well.

*Regarding dance, I am glad that the committee is taking that on as well. There is a great need to upgrade the dancing situation and eliminate, from the GBC level, some of the outrageous concoctions that are now spread all over the world. Here are some of them: *

1. *High speed twist spin (where two men wrap their arms together and spin as fast as they can while the adoring audience clears space and eggs them on. This is a serious deviation from vaishnava practices. Can you imagine anyone daring to do this in front of Srila Prabhupada? They tried all kinds of things, but no one would ever have dared to introduce the High speed spin! They also sometimes knock people over, and most certainly, they stop chanting, which Srila Prabhupada would never, ever approve. You know that. Worse, the women are now also imitating the men with this spin! whatever the men do, the women will certainly follow, and they are already doing it. What really bothers me is that I have never even once seen any sannyasi or guru object to this concoction. They just write it off as "the kids having fun". so how far will we go with this "kids having fun" concept as contrasted with the guru parampara? where's the limit? the problem is that there is not limit at all, and the concoctions will gradually, or not so gradually, get worse and worse. Case in point:

2. *The rub-your-rear on the floor mandala spin. Have you seen this? They do it right in Mayapur, in the Pancha Tattva hall. the last time I saw them holding hands and getting ready to do this, I just couldn't stomach it, so I broke it up. Yet no one else, no sannyasis or senior devotees ever say anything. Is it " yaso mat, tato mat"? Is that what things have come down to? then we are finished as part of the param para!

*So the Mandala floor spin goes like this: A standing outside ring of young men holds their hands out, grasping the arms of an inner ring of young men who are down on the floor with their rears touching the floor. the outer ring suspends the inner ring, and the rings begin to spin around. Of course they all stop chanting, while the men on the floor in the middle polish the floor with their rears! Really, i did not make this up! I have witnessed it with my own eyes, right in Holy Mayapur dham! *

*Were you present in Chicago when all the Radha Damodar busses were present (probably 1975, for the installation of Sri Sri Kishore Kishori)? The temple room, formerly a large basket ball gymnasium in a YMCA or something similar, was full with about 600 or more devotees. A rip, roaring fast kirtan was going on, in front of Srila Prabhupada. the young male devotees were dancing crazy, running up to each other with their hands almost like fists, almost in a confrontational way, and going back and forth, twisting their bodies about like spastic epileptic fits. Suddenly, Srila Prabhupada gave the order to stop the kirtan completely. It was like stopping 500 freight trains, but he gave the order. The shocked devotees fell silent. then Srila Prabhupada spoke: "Not like this" (imitating the boxing-like motions of the men). "Like this", and Srila Prabhupada got up, once again re-introducing the original swami two step, just as he had taught in New york and in the San Francisco bay area in 1969-1970. From this intervention by Srila Prabhupada, and stopping of "enthusiastic" kirtan, it is clear that there are standards that must be kept, not just a free-for-all based on unrestricted concoctions and sense gratification. Please share this with the committee. More later. *

letter from Mahkanlal Das to KSC pamho conf (Text PAMHO:13544752)

Kirtana shouldn't go out of control

In general, kirtanas should begin slowly and develop smoothly. The leader should not let the kirtana run out of control. A good kirtana leader knows how to start a kirtana at a slow or slow to moderate tempo and gradually build it up to a steady or slightly faster speed. Or, he can start with steady tempo and keep it at that. Kirtana maintained at a steady tempo can go on for a long time without a break. A steady tempo is suitable for graceful dancing, and does not quickly exhaust the energy of the devotees.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Srila Prabhupada slowly building up rhythm of Kirtana to meditate on the chanting

Srila Prabhupada didn't usually speed up the kirtana to a frenetic pitch, and then stop and start again. He gradually built up to a steady, medium-slow rhythm. This gave a chance to enter into the kirtan and meditate on the chanting. The melody was simple, and he didn't change it.

Satsvarupa Dasa Gosvami, Prabhupada Meditations

Slow Kirtana enables entering into meditation on the names

Some devotees equate "good kirtana" with "loud, fast, wild kirtana." They only know two speeds: fast and very fast. Of course, we want kirtanas to be ecstatic—but not simply passionate. Kirtana does not have to be, and should not always be, fast, loud and heavy. Slow tempo kirtanas, focusing clearly on the holy names, have a special charm that is especially conducive to entering into absorbed meditation on the names. Unfortunately, such kirtanas are little known in our society

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Banging and crashing Vs glorification of the names of God

Sometimes kirtanas are speeded up to such a fast pitch that it becomes impossible to pronounce the holy names. The whole purpose of kirtana—to glorify the names of God—becomes lost in a frenzy of banging and crashing. But kirtana is not a mundane activity meant for our amusement or taking out frustrations.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana should not be chaotic

If kirtana is performed either unenthusiastically, or with enthusiasm but as a kind of entertainment or sport, it cannot be very pleasing to Krsna. Therefore, although Srila Prabhupada encouraged energetic kirtanas, he also made it known that they should not be too wild and chaotic.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The leader interacts with the rest

But to lead a kirtana well is an art. A good kirtana leader personally tastes the nectar of the holy name, and helps others relish it also. He doesn't just stand with his eyes closed. He interacts with the other devotees, and encourages them to dance and chant enthusiastically.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Long Kirtanas

Long kirtanas blissfully help devotees to become deeply absorbed in the holy names. When Lord Caitanya was residing at Puri, He would hold kirtana for at least four hours each evening. And for one year in Mayapura, He would perform kirtana during the night.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Morning program is more important than all-night kirtan

Following Lord Caitanya's example, some devotees like to organize all-night kirtanas. However, this is inevitably followed by missing the morning program. It is better to follow the standard program of hearing and chanting given us by Śrīla Prabhupāda than to introduce a substitute. Long kirtanas may be held in the day so as not to render the participants incapable of taking part in the morning program that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his followers to attend every day.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The advantage of long festival kirtanas

Festivals provide good opportunities for devotees to soak themselves in the nectar of kirtana. Festivals are often celebrated with hours and hours of kirtana. At such times, devotees who are generally otherwise engaged can take a deep bath in the holy names.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Mrdanga players should also sing

Those who are learning to play mrdanga should do so at a time and place so that the Deities and devotees are not disturbed.

Mrdanga players should also sing. Some mrdanga players put all their concentration into maintaining a complex rhythm and thus neglect to sing. But it is better if they play a more simple beat and sing also.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The potency of chanting the maha mantra Vs other "spontaneous" chanting

There are those who think that when they become inspired, especially while visiting holy places, it is unavoidable to chant spontaneous mantras. Lord Caitanya's movement is indeed meant for ecstasy. Saba avatāra, sāra śiromaṇi, kevala ānanda-kanda: Lord Caitanya and Nityānanda introduced a simply joyful process of chanting and dancing. Why though, should ecstasy be inhibited due to chanting authorized mantras? Chanting of the maha mantra is prescribed in sacred Vedas. It was brought to earth by Sri Narada Muni and it was recommended as the panacea for Kali yuga by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Furthermore the Gaudiya acaryas have provided the panca tattva maha mantra, (i.e. śrī-kanṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda) as a means to glorify Lord Gauranga and His associates. Therefore it is most illogical to consider that the devotees will not derive enough ecstasy by chanting these mantras.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Chanting Hare Krsna means following Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu

Prior to publishing his translation and commentary on Sri Caitanya Caritamṛta, Srīla Prabhupada taught that the Pancatattva maha mantra was much more powerful than the Hare Krsna mantra. Upon hearing this in July of 1971, a disciple seated amongst several others in Srīla Prabhupada's room, asked why not chant some rounds of the panca tattva

mantra after finishing sixteen rounds of the Hare Krsna mantra each day? Srila Prabhupada replied that we should not do so since Lord Caitanya came just to show us how to worship Lord Krsna and that the Lord wanted us to chant the Hare Krsna mantra and therefore we should follow His advice and example.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Kirtan chaos means chaos in devotees' spiritual lives

The reason Srila Prabhupada so carefully regulated kirtana chanting in ISKCON was to prevent kirtana chaos which means chaos in the devotees' spiritual lives. He knew very well the outcome of manufacturing new mantras. ... This strong warning is not only for outsiders, it applies to ISKCON as well. Sentimental persons indulge in long kirtana performances of chanting "Nitai-Gaura" and "Gauranga" disregarding the explicit instructions Srila Prabhupada. Nevertheless, the founder-acarya for ISKCON has pronounced the type of kirtana he desires in the society's world headquarters.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Properly pronouncing »rama«

Does the Hare Krsna maha mantra lack potency? Quite to the contrary, this mantra which contains thirty-two syllables, is quite sufficient in itself to bring ecstasy, victory, mercy, knowledge etc. To equal thirty-two syllables it is necessary to chant ra-ma rather than simply ram.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Prabhupada introduces and prefers a simple style of Kirtana

Indeed, in the early recordings of Srila Prabhupada chanting Hare Krsna in New York, we hear Prabhupada repeatedly chanting a simple melody of only four notes. Although Srila Prabhupada was a competent musician, he deliberately introduced a simple style of kirtana in ISKCON so that everybody could join in without difficulty. Even much later in his pastimes, Srila Prabhupada instructed his disciples not to introduce too many different styles of kirtana, lest it detract from the devotional essence.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The proper way to sing the response

During the lecture he gave that day he also said, "Don't harmonize during the response." The leader may sing little variations, but the group should sing a steady response. One person shouldn't be singing one melody and another doing another melody during the response. "These things," he said, "will help one pay more attention to the mantra as one is chanting and dancing. That way one will get the maximum benefit, and the kirtana will also become more ecstatic."

Interview with Revati-nandana dāsa, Memories, Vol. 1

The importance of music

Purity is the force behind good kirtana. Musical arrangements are incidental. However, having nice music is important because Krsna likes it, and it is the nature of the soul to enjoy. And music can help uplift the consciousness when performed properly. Therefore our previous acaryas greatly developed the science of music to enhance the effect of kirtana. However, if we put more stress on the music than on the meaning of the song, we again miss the point.

Following the Parampara*

Just follow. We disagree with the persons who chant that bhaja nitāi-gaura radhe-syama. No. We must follow strictly. Mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu [Cc. Madhya 17.186]. We cannot manufacture simply for some worldly cheap reputation and prestige. If we manufacture something, that will not help us. We must follow. Mahājano yena. Dharmasya tattvaa nihitaa guhāyāa mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu. We must follow the mahājanas. So you'll find in sthe Caitanya-caritamata, the Kavirāja Gosvāmī, in every chapter he begins, sri-krsna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda, jaya advaita..., gaura-bhakta-vrnda. This is the process.

CC Lecture Adi 7.5 Mayapura march 7th 1974

Nitai Gaura Radhe Shyam / following acaryas*

"There are so many they have invented. Just like Hare Kanna mantra is prescribed in the sastras, and they have invented so many. Although there is the name of the Supreme Lord, still you have to follow the śāstra. If you say Rama Rama Rama, Radhe Radhe Radhe, Krsna, there are so many mentioned. That is also name, but you have to follow the sastra. Sastra says: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. You have to take that. Not that you can say, nitai-gaura radhe-syama, hare krsna hare rama, no. Why? Is there any in the sastra? No, you have invented. What is the value of your invention? You are not perfect. But they like that 'It is my guru, I have got some followers, I invent some type of chanting.' This is nonsense. You must follow, mahajano yena gatah sa panthah [Cc.Madhya 17.186]. You cannot invent."

SB Class November 5th, 1976 Vrndavana

Concocted chants / Nitai Gaur Radhe Shyam / following acaryas*

The Panca-tattva is a very important factor in understanding Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu. There are sahajiyas who, not knowing the importance of the Paica-tattva, concoct their own slogans, such as bhaja nitāi gaura, rādhe śyāma, japa hare kanna hare rāma or śrī-kanna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda hare kanna hare rāma śrī-rādhe govinda. Such chants may be good poetry, but they cannot help us to go forward in devotional service. In such chants there are also many discrepancies, which need not be discussed here. Strictly speaking, when chanting the names of the Paica-tattva, one should fully offer his obeisances: śrī-kanna-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda. By such chanting one is blessed with the competency to chant the Hare Kanna mahā-mantra without offense. When chanting the Hare Kanna mahā-mantra, one should also chant it fully: Hare Kanna, Hare Kanna, Kanna Kanna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. One should not foolishly adopt any of the slogans concocted by imaginative devotees. If one actually wants to derive the effects of chanting, one must strictly follow the great ācāryas. This is confirmed in the Mahābhārata: mahājano yena gatau sa panthāu. "The real path of progress is that which is traversed by great ācāryas and authorities."

Ādi 7.168 PURPORT

The use of Panca-tattva Mantra as given by the acaryas*

Svayambhur dasa: Prabhupada, you wrote in the Caitanya-caritamṛta that the Caitanya maha-mantra, sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityananda, there is no offense to that. And so therefore in the Kali-yuga it is actually more beneficial...

Prabhupada: Offense is that what is spoken by the acaryas, if you do not follow, that is offense. Guror avajia. That is offense. To chant Gaura-Nitai is no offense. But if our previous gurus have chanted sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityananda sri-advaita—why should we go beyond that? That is guror avajia. Even there is no aparādha, because guru, Kaviraja Gosvami, has sung like that and my guru has sung, we should follow that. We should not make any deviation. That is guror avajia śruti-sastra-nindanam. Namno balad yasya hi papa-buddhih. So it comes to be one of the items of the dasa-vidha-aparadha. Guror avajia.

Svayambhur dasa: Should we consider that it's more beneficial for people to hear bhaja sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya...

Prabhupada: Why? There is already... Why should you go here and there? There is already sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu nityananda. Why you are so anxious to go out of it?

Svayambhur dasa: No, I'm saying is it more beneficial for people to hear that mantra than the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra. Is it more beneficial for people to hear the Panca-tattva mantra than the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra?

Prabhupada: Oh yes. You are going to Hare Kṛṣṇa through Nitai-Gaura. Nitaiyer karuna habe braje radhā-kṛṣṇa pabe. The principle is don't try to manufacture. Because you are not experienced. So what nonsense you will manufacture, that will be offensive. Better go on, the simple thing.

conversation September 6, 1976 Vrndavana

First worship Guru-Gaurāṅga, then Kṛṣṇa

In Kāṇḍa consciousness the devotees always approach Kāṇḍa through the spiritual master and Gaura-Nitāi. Finally they worship Rādhā-Kāṇḍa. Our students are first advised to worship Guru-Gaurāṅga, and then, when they are somewhat advanced, the Rādhā-Kāṇḍa Deity is installed, and they are engaged in the worship of the Lord.

CC, Ādi 8.31, purport

Sticking to the Vaisnava principles brings luster and attracts people*

There are many professional chanters who can perform congregational chanting with various musical instruments in an artistic and musical way, but their chanting cannot be as attractive as the congregational chanting of pure devotees. If a devotee sticks strictly to the principles governing Vainṇava behavior, his bodily luster will naturally be attractive, and his singing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord will be effective. People will appreciate such kīrtana without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or Śrī Kāṇḍa should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord's glories.

CC, Madhya 11.95, purport

Bhajans sung from Vande ham to Radha Kṛṣṇa *

As we come by parampara system, it is our duty to go through the right channel—namely, first the Spiritual Master, then Lord Caitanya, and then Krishna. So when we chant

prayers, we do this, Bande ham Sri Guru...and gradually to the Goswamis, then to Lord Caitanya, and then to Radha Krishna. That is the praying system.

Letter to: Harer Nama, May 28, 1968

One must become spiritually advanced to find suitable words to offer in prayers to the Lord. One cannot offer prayers to the Lord with mundane words. One must become spiritually advanced by controlling the mind and senses. Then he can find suitable words to offer in prayers to the Lord. Quoting the following verse from the Padma Purana, Srila Sanatana Gosvami forbids us to sing any song not sung by authorized devotees.

avaishnava-mukhodgirnam
putam hari-kathamrtam
sravanam naiva kartavyam
sarpocchistam yatha payah

The words or songs of a person not fixed in Vaisnava behavior, not strictly following the rules and regulations and chanting the Hare Krsna mantra should not be accepted by pure devotees.

SB 6.16.33 purport

The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord & not to attract a crowd+

Without being empowered by Krishna nobody can preach Krishna Consciousness. It is not academic qualification or financial strength which helps in the matter, but it is sincerity of purpose which helps us always.I never thought about the audience. I was prepared to chant even if there were no men present to hear me. The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord & not to attract a crowd. If Krishna hears nicely then he will ask some sincere devotee to gather in such place.

Letter to Subala, 12 November, 1967

Kirtan as faith in the words of Guru*

I never chanted and danced to make an artificial show. I dance and chant because I firmly believe in the words of My spiritual master...I deserve very little credit for these activities of chanting and dancing, for they are being done automatically by the grace of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

CC Ādi 7.95-96 purport

Unauthoritative chants choke the bhakti plant

It is well-known that entertainers must always come up with new songs, new lyrics, new styles, etc. to maintain the loyalty of their fans and to attract new fans. Similarly, unauthorized chants produced from pūjā and pratinthā, (i.e. the desire for mundane adoration and position) chokes the actual bhakti lata plant of devotional service.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Gurvastakam meditation on Srila Prabhupada

...my feeling is that they should be mediating on Srila Prabhupada as the Founder Acarya. ISKCON's managal-arati observance is, as far as I know, unique in that we sing the Gurvastakam. I might be wrong, perhaps someone can correct me, but I don't think in the Gaudiya mathas they sing it. I do know that they don't do guru worship everyday the way we do. So Srila Prabhupada established a unique precedent in the way he formulated our

daily worship, with the focus being on him. In the light of so many problems with his successor gurus, I think it is best that we keep the focus on him.

Hari Sauri Das to KSC, (Text PAMHO:14241898)

Singing songs by Srila Prabhupada's God-brothers

There is a devotee here from Chicago, Trāṇa-kartā dāsa, who is very interested in singing different bhajanas. Several times I have heard him sing Jaya rādhā-mādhava, jaya kuija-bihārī, jaya gopī-jana-vallabha, jaya giri-vara-dhārī, jaya giri-vara-dhārī, rather than sing it the way Śrīla Prabhupāda does. In view of what Prabhupāda recently said about not changing anything given by the ācāryas I approached Trāṇa-kartā and asked him where he had learned this new version.

He said that he had heard it on a tape made by Acyutānanda Swami. He was also singing other bhajanas that are not in our song book, and said that he got them from Prabhupāda's Godbrothers. He even had a tape of himself singing a song written by B. R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja.

We had a bit of a debate about the merits of what he was doing, and so I decided to bring the matter to Śrīla Prabhupāda for clarification. I brought up the issues about chanting new versions of existing songs, and the chanting of new songs.

As far as the new version of Jaya Rādhā-mādhava is concerned, Prabhupāda said it was all right. But he added, "Bhaja Hare Kāṇa is not all right. The thing is, they add these things without asking, and that is the danger. It is better to just follow the guru."

Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed that the song, and the singing, of his Godbrothers was also all right. Nevertheless, his preference is clearly that we stick to whatever he has introduced and not be so interested in running here and there to gather up new songs, as this may cause a distraction for us. As he has said before, our Western mentality is to always seek out something new--we are never satisfied with what we already have.

Hari Sauri Diary, October 6, 1976

The benefit of publics' hearing maha-mantra Vs other prayers

Authorized prayers and mantras other than the mahā-mantra are nice, and any passer-by who hears them will derive immense spiritual benefit. But the Hare Kāṇa mantra is the mahā-mantra, which means "the greatest mantra." Thus the public will derive the greatest benefit by hearing this mantra.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Prabhupada rejecting showy professionalism at guru puja

At one of the ISKCON international festivals in Vandāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda rejected the singing of one of his disciples. The devotee had previously been a singer in a band, and his kīrtanas were much appreciated by some devotees, especially those from his home temple. But when, with showy professionalism, he began leading the guru-pūjā in Prabhupāda's presence, making the tune sound like a rock and roll ballad, Prabhupāda didn't like it. He shook his head and indicated that someone else lead. The "great" kīrtana singer was devastated by the rejection, another form of Prabhupāda's mercy.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, Prabhupāda Nectar

Devotees in the stage of sādhanā have to learn from the parampara how to chant

Although Lord Caitanya stated that there are no hard and fast rules for chanting, this applies particularly to devotees on the spontaneous platform beyond rules, or to those who have not even begun to follow any rules but should nevertheless be induced to chant the

holy names some way or other. Devotees in the stage of sādhanā have to learn from the parampara how to chant in a way that is most pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. For ISKCON devotees, that particularly means doing kīrtana as Srīla Prabhupada instructed.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kīrtan

Three reasons why changing the Panca Tattva Mantra is damaging to our movement

I have always felt that this is very damaging to our movement in general for the following reasons. (1) Prabhupada himself always chanted the mantra in the original fashion and there are hundreds of tapes to testify to that. Changes in the mantra weaken the position of those who have followed Srīla Prabhupada since it can be challenged as to why this change was made. I also challenged it in the same manner. (2) Prabhupada writes the original mantra everywhere in his books. Prabhupada once chastised me for listening to someone else's idea with the following words. "Regarding this idea that Where have you heard this? Is this found in our books?" Whatever is written in the books is law. If the mantra is found everywhere within Prabhupada's books do we think that he would just change it like that? All he was doing was changing the introductory word which is not at all part of the mantra. (3) Why were we so eager to change some of the basic institutions of the society, such as one of the two basic mantras of the movement, so quickly without even examining what this would mean in the future? After all, as mentioned before, this mantra is carved in stone and marble on all the temples and everyone can see for time immemorial what the correct mantra is. It just doesn't look good or feel good to have a different mantra than that which is preserved in temple walls and within Prabhupada's books and tapes. It weakens our authority to some extent.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal

Following Srīla Prabhupada's standards

Srīla Prabhupada was more insistent on some standards than others. Some points, such as the correct tune in mangala-arati, he insisted must be followed. On other points, he let it be known what standard he wanted, but didn't always enforce it. As followers of Srīla Prabhupada, we should know and follow what he wanted in all aspects of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, especially in kīrtana, our central activity.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kīrtana

Kīrtana is no arena for singers

Devotees should not invent or sing unauthorized chants. Kīrtana is not meant to be an arena for singers to express their creative imaginations by introducing varieties of tunes and songs. Everything should be according to parampara.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kīrtana

Srīla Prabhupada pranama mantra to develop our relationship

Although Srīla Prabhupada did not specify that his own pranama-mantra be sung in any of these aratis, devotees generally do so. This is a special case of singing something in kīrtana that Srīla Prabhupada, maybe out of humility, did not tell us to sing. Proponents of this view reason that it is important that in all ISKCON kīrtanas, now and in the future, Srīla Prabhupada's pranama-mantra should be chanted. This will help us all to develop our relationship with him, express our love and gratitude for him, and keep him clearly in the center as the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON and the guru of all gurus to come.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kīrtana

The importance of being acquainted with the wealth of Vaisnava songs

The Gaudiya Vaisnava heritage is rich with song. Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas, the popular songbook of ISKCON, has but a few of the many bhajanas composed by our acaryas. It would be nice if our devotees could become acquainted with this wealth left to us by our preceptors. These songs contain, in most beautiful poetic language, all instruction in philosophy, devotional practice and attainment of the ultimate goal of life. Singing these bhajanas is an important devotional practice. It is an inherent part of our Vaisnava tradition and should be taken up seriously by ISKCON devotees. At least if our devotees learn the songs in Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas, that will be a great cultural and spiritual asset for them.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Songs written on a high level of devotion

It is best to stick to the songs of our Gaudiya Vaisnava acaryas, for they are meant to guide us gradually to the highest level of devotion. Until we reach that level, we should be cautious in selecting which bhajanas to sing, even from our own tradition. Many of the songs of our Gaudiya acaryas are written from a high level of realization beyond the comprehension of ordinary devotees. For instance, Srila Prabhupada instructed that the song with refrain “Jaya jaya deva hare” by Jayadeva Gosvami not be sung. (Letter to: Acyutananda 15 July, 1972) An exception to this standard is “Tulasi krsna preyasi,” a prayer expressing elevated sentiments that is sung daily in ISKCON temples.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Professional musicians at ISKCON centers

Sometimes popular professional singers are invited to perform at ISKCON functions, to attract the public to attend or for fund raising. Apparently Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed such performances, with some reservations. Such professional performances should not, however, be held before the Deities.

Commercial bhajanas should certainly not be played over the loudspeakers in ISKCON temples. Nor should devotees privately listen to them. The most important function of ISKCON centers is to disseminate purified sound vibrations, not to pollute the atmosphere with sounds of cheap entertainment.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prabhupada Didn't like harmonizing (a distraction)

He said a good kirtana lasts half an hour to forty minutes and the first half an hour is all slow and then it speeds up to a crescendo the last ten minutes. He liked the kirtana that was slow. Also in public programs whenever there were guests he almost always sang (sings standard Hare Krsna tune) or some similarly very simple melodies slowly and just gradually building to a crescendo. He didn't like harmonizing, and he didn't like melodic instruments during kirtana because the melodies of the instruments would detract from listening to the mantra; although he liked rhythm. Srila Prabhupada said that harmoniums and other melodic instruments are not meant for kirtana, as the ear will follow the music and be diverted from the holy names. Rhythm instruments are good, he said, because they increase the motivation to dance, and dancing in turn invokes devotion.

Revatinandana Das

Bengali sahajiya style present in ISKCON kirtana / come to the platfor of service to the holy name

Devotees should be careful not to be influenced by sahajiya contaminations prevalent in modern Bengali kirtana, such as feigned shows of devotion and a highly affected style. Many Bengalis sing plaintively, as if their heart were about to break, and some of our Western devotees have successfully imitated this style. Some have even adopted the mannerisms and facial expressions of genuine Bengali sahajiyas. However, affectedness and exhibitionism are definitely not wanted in kirtana. Although a little artistic flourish is not unexpected, excessive showiness is not good. Best is to come to the completely spiritual platform of service to the holy name, and forget all artificial, extraneous performances.

Bhkati Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Unauthorised chanting popping up in ISKCON

There appears to be symptoms of chara kirtana (concocted kirtana) growing within the society. Unatuhorized kirtanas are popping up even at various major festivals such as the Mayapura-Vrindavana Festival or Rathayatra festivals. If this infectious disease goes unchecked, it will turn into prakrita sahajiya.

But someone may protest, “The devotees love it. Can’t you see how ecstatic everyone is chanting?” All the same, ISKCON devotees should ask the question whether Srila Prabhupada authorized such methods of chanting? Although forgetful or inexperienced devotees may be swept away, those who actually know Srila Prabhupada’s instructions about chanting are alarmed.

Danavir Goswami, On Chanting

Concocted Chanting

Today it is common to hear kirtanas composed of words such as: “Gauranga,” “Nityananda”, “Nitai, Nitai, Nitai, Nitai, Nitai, Nitai Gauranga,” “Gaurahari,” “Gaura, Gaura”, “Nitai-Gaura,” “Nitai-Gauranga,” “Gaura-Nitai”, “Gaura-Nityananda Bol, Haribol”, “Gaura Sri Advaita Bol, Haribol” “Gaura Sri Gadahara Bol, Haribol,” “Gaura Sri Srivasa Bol, Haribol,” “Jaganatha Haribol,” “Radhe Radhe Govinda, Govinda Radhe,” “Haribol, Haribol,” “Hari, Hari Haribol,” “Hari, Hari, Hari, Hari, Hari Haribol,” “Jaya Radhe,” “Radhe, Radhe, Radhe, Radhe Radhe Govinda,” etc.

In spite of the fact that these are holy names of the Lord, ISKCON devotees should not indulge in this type of kirtana because it was disapproved by the founder-acarya of ISKCON.

Danavir Goswami. On chanting

Do restrictions apply for advanced devotees aslo?

One may agree that kirtana constraints are healthy for neophytes but may question whether kirtana restrictions also apply for advanced devotees? Did not Lord Caitanya Himself chant names of the gopis incurring criticism from His neophyte students? How then can there be regulations in chanting for uttama adhikaris?

Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, while experiencing the highest platform of mahabhava, chanted the names of the gopis rather than the mahamantra. That is His perogotive, He is God. That was also a unique event. However, He instructed His followers to chant the mahamantra; hare kanna hare kanna, kanna kanna hare hare, hare rama hare rama rama rama hare hare. If we imitate Lord Caitanya’s unequalled and exclusive right rather than

follow His instructions, it will be a failure. Furthermore, His senapati bhakta, Srila Prabhupada instructed his ISKCON devotees to chant Hare Krsna and not other things.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Concocted Kirtana techniques

Some techniques used by kirtana leaders to enliven the devotees are listed below:

(1) To suddenly change the tempo from slow to fast.

(2) The lead singer starts to sing the beginning of the maha-mantra while the other devotees are still singing the last part of the mantra. The lead singer simultaneously changes the tempo. This has an exciting effect, but is nevertheless not good. The maha-mantra should not be cut in on just to gain some musical effect.

(3) To suddenly stop a fast kirtana and then again quickly start fast.

(4) In a fast kirtana, to stop singing for some seconds so that only the instruments are heard, then again start singing. This technique is often combined with change of tempo, as mentioned in technique (2) above.

(5) In a steady or fast kirtana, to gradually or suddenly stop the instruments so that only voices are heard or to reduce the tone of instruments and singing to very slight. This may go on even for a few minutes, accompanied by dancing. Then, at the indication of the kirtana leader, the instruments are suddenly brought back loud and strong.

Although not traditional, such techniques can add zest to kirtanas. However, if used often they may lose their stimulating effect.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Chanting “Gauranga”

A valid observation may be brought forward citing that within the Gaudiya Vaisnava literature including Ananta Samhita, Caitanya-bhāgavata and the songs of Narottama dasa Thakura, etc. one finds recommendations for chanting the names of Lord Caitanya such as Gauranga, Gauracandra, Gaurahari, etc.

Srila Prabhupada clarifies this issue for us.

Caitanya-bhāgavata there is a verse which says, gahe vā vanete thāke, hā gaurāiga bole oāke. The purport is that either if you remain in household life or you remain as mendicant in the forest, in either case, you just become a devotee of Lord Caitanya. (Lecture: New York, September 5, 1968)

This famous verse, gahe vā vanete thāke, hā gaurāiga bole oāke is also included in the fourth stanza of Narottama dasa Thakura’s song Sāvaraṇa Śrī Gaura Mahim (Gaurāigera Duṭi Pada). Gaurāiga bole oāke translated literally means to chant or shout the name of Gauranga. However, Srila Prabhupada gives a broader meaning, namely that gaurāiga bole oāke means one should become a devotee of Lord Caitanya. This does not negate the the particular emphasis placed on chanting Gauranga’s holy name. One should become a devotee of Lord Caitanya and chant Gauranga’s name. Exactly how Gauranga’s name should be chanted is explained in the following excerpt from a lecture.

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, gahe bā vanete thāke, ‘hā gaurāiga’ bale oāke. Either you remain at home or outside home, you chant śrī kanṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda. This is the process, very simple process. And Hare Krsna. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.2 -- Johannesburg, October 22, 1975 [emphasis ours])

There is no contradiction. Chant Lord Gauranga’s holy name in the proper, authorized method śrī kanṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-

bhakta-vanda then chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha mantra. This method of chanting in kirtana was consistently described in Srila Prabhupada's writings and was always present in Srila Prabhupada's own example when leading kirtanas. Narottama dasa Thakura's verse, or any other reference, should not be used as a validation for deviating from Srila Prabhupada's clear instruction on how to perform kirtana.

While commenting on the song beginning with the words gaurāiga balite ha'be pulaka śārīra hari hari balite nayane ba'be nīra, Srila Prabhupada wrote:

The chanting of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's name is more essential than the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra because Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the most magnanimous incarnation and His mercy is very easily achieved. Therefore one must first take shelter of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda. (Ādi 8.31 Purport)

Gaurāiga balite refers to chanting the name of Gauranga and once more Srila Prabhupada confirms that the proper, acceptable mode of chanting Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's names and those of Nityananda Prabhu is śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vanda.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Kirtan leader should be a representative of Srila Prabhupada

Merely to gather many sheep-like followers is not a qualification for being a kirtana leader or a guru. Those who lead kirtanas are responsible to represent Srila Prabhupada's will in chanting the way he delineated

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Simple chanting is the most proper

Srila Prabhupada's personal style of simple chanting in a pure and melodious fashion did not change when he was in India. Historically speaking, it can be traced that in the late 60's and early 70's however Western devotees coming to India had no place to stay but in some Gaudiya Math temples. In some of these temples all different kinds of mantras were chanted without restriction. Although these mantras did not seem improper, Srila Prabhupada did not want us to use them in our temple kirtanas.

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

The infiltration of Bengali kirtans into ISKCON

However this form of kirtan filtered into our movement very quickly since it was new and exciting and therefore rapidly accepted by the kirtan leaders. Variety is the spice of life. This variety however, did not actually please Srila Prabhupada. Now one may say: "Okay, I accept that Srila Prabhupada wrote about exclusive Hare Kṛṣṇa kirtana which he desired his followers to sing. And I accept that Srila Prabhupada himself always lead kirtanas by chanting the maha mantra and never used the other types of chants often used by Bengali devotees. But did he ever get personally involved in correcting improper chanting?"

Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing

He then went on to specifically describe how kirtana should be done.

A. For mangala aratika: the samsara-dava prayer, then Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra, nothing else.

- B. For the guru-puja: the "guru-prayer" (that's what he called it) Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.
- C. For evening aratika: the gaura aratika song, Sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), and Hare Krsna mahamantra, nothing else.
- D. For all aratikas this basic pattern should be followed. The chanting of sri Krsna Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra) should only be for three times, not more.
- E. No one should sing a bhajana unless all the devotees know what the song means. No one should sing songs in Vrindavan temple that are in languages which the people do not understand. Yasomati-nandana may be sung since the people understand that
- Danavir Goswami, On chanting

On Prabhupada's grand-disciples chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« in kirtana

When Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples begin kirtana by chanting the pranama mantra to Srila Prabhupada, they skip an essential link in the disciplic succession. At least in mantra, they are jumping over their own spiritual master and going directly to the previous one. This goes against our Vaisnava philosophy and principles.

Properly, a disciple should offer respect first to his own spiritual master, then to the previous ones.

So here's how I suggest our kirtanas should go. Either:

1. At mangala-arati, the leader should simply chant Gurvastakam, without Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra. (This follows Srila Prabhupada's example. At mangala-arati Srila Prabhupada simply chanted Sri Gurvastakam, and that was it. He chanted the pranama mantra to his guru with the other mangala-carana prayers in the evenings. Of course, one can chant the pranama-mantra in the mornings. But our acarya, Srila Prabhupada, didn't. So why should we?)

or

2. At any kirtana, the leader should first chant a generic mantra of obeisances to the spiritual master, such as Sri Gurvastakam or om ajnana timirandhasya, and then Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra. (The idea here is that with the first mantra Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples offer obeisances to their spiritual master. Then only can they properly offer obeisances to Srila Prabhupada.)

Jayadvaita Swami, Bugs in Lithurgy

The Kethuri festival kirtana of Jahnava Mata

...In the evening, the devotees began performing sankirtana. Shri Raghunandana, from Shri Khanda, began the preliminary kirtan. All the people of Kheturi gram turned out for the occasion. Within the midst of that great assembly, Nityananda's shakti, Shri Jahnava Mata looked very beautiful. Upon seeing her, upon seeing the devotees gathered there, and upon hearing the divine kirtan of those great souls, all the atheists and sinners were supremely purified. Everyone had left their homes and hurried out to see the devotees and to drown themselves in the nectar of the kirtan. Everyone dived and surfaced in the ocean of ecstasy, and in this way were drowned in the bliss of Vaikuntha. In this way, the kirtan continued until midnight...

Lives of the Acharyas—Jahnava Mata

Mahaprabhu chanting at teh Ranganatha temple

...Within the temple of Sri Ranganatha, the brahmanas are constantly chanting His glories. When Shri Gauranga Mahaprabhu entered that temple and began chanting Hare Krishna

in kirtan, his song was far sweeter than that of millions of Gandharvas. Everyone was stunned and astonished, and the hairs of their body stood on end...

Biography of Sri Vyenkatta Bata

Ishvara Puri faints upon hearing Mukunda Datta

Immediately upon seeing him, Mukunda Datta recognized that Ishvara Puri was a Vaishnava Sannyasi. At that time, Mukunda Datta very sweetly began to perform Krishna-lila kirtan. Vrindavan Das asks, Who is there who can remain unmoved when Mukunda Datta performs his sweet kirtan? Upon hearing the deeply moving songs of Mukunda Datta, Sri Ishvara Puri lost his composure and fainted on the ground in a trance of deep ecstasy...

Biography of Sri Ishvara Puri

Sweet kirtana by Devananda Pandit

...That evening Vakresvara Pandita was absorbed in kirtana and dancing. Hearing the news of this, people gathered from all around to take part in the kirtana. As the night went on, more and more devotees began arriving there. Hearing this news, Devananda Pandita could not maintain his steadiness. He also hurried to the place where the kirtana was going on. Seeing the empowered figure of Vakresvara Pandita and hearing his sweet kirtana Devananda Pandita was astonished. He stood transfixed for what seemed like hours. As the night wore on, the crowd grew and, in attempts to push forward and see the dancing of Vakresvara Pandita...

Author unknown

Jay Radhe, Jay Govinda

...The kirtan-performer Suklambhara Brahmachari began chanting "Jai Radhe! Jai Govinda!" and attained the mercy of Shri Chaitanya

biography of Lochana Das Thakur

Waves of prema at Kethuri

... The orators' spoke, and the singers sang sweet songs. The expert dancers performed wonderful dances. The different devotees filled the four directions with the ecstatic sounds of the holy name of Krishna, and the glories of the Lord. In this way the four directions were filled with ecstasy...Gauranga Das and the others were the most expert in the assembly gathered in that town of all the different kinds of singing and kirtan, and understood perfectly the different classical modulations of voice, performing music by ear, as well as fixed and unfixed melodies. The sweet and wonderful kirtan of Narottama Thakura with its sweet tune and unique style of voice filled the four directions and the heavens above, causing all the men and women weep to tears of prem, and they all sported in the waves of the Vaikuntha ocean of ecstasy...

biography of Narottama das Thakur / the description of the Great Festival of Kheturi Gram

Kālidāsa Lahiri find pleasure in Harinam **

Regarding a brāhmaṇa singer from Śāntipura, Kālidāsa Lahiri: "Early in life, while still a young boy, experts in the field of Indian classical music had taught him, and he considered that such instruction qualified him to occasionally lead the kīrtana sessions of the Vainṇavas. However, when previously he had led some kīrtanas, the Vainṇavas were apparently not fond of his typically palace-court classical touch. Nonetheless, he had

introduced these classical variations into the kīrtanas, oblivious of the Vainṇavas' feelings. Attempting to parade his musical ability, he had stared at the faces of the Vainṇavas, awaiting a response, hoping for some appreciation. For quite some days now, this had continued. However, quite suddenly, a few days earlier, he had unexpectedly started to feel increasing pleasure in singing harināma.”

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Jaiva Dharma, Chapter 3

Kālidāsa Lahiri turns Vaisnava**

He [Kālidāsa Lahiri Mahāsaya] lost all interest in trivial talks, as well as classical music. Thus, a metamorphosis took place in Lahiri Mahāsaya. He was now a Vainṇava.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Jaiva Dharma, Chapter 4

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura once wrote that “The delightful tune, time, cadence alone do not constitute the Hari-kirtan of the Gaudiya Math; those are found even in the performances of the gramophone or of harlots.”

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, From The Harmonist Volume XXV, No. 1, June 1927

Sri-kṛṣṇa-caitanya and je ānilo prema-dhana in the appropriate mood

Each bhajana expresses a particular sentiment and message, so most benefit from singing bhajanas will be had if the singers are aware of the meaning of the song and try to enter into its mood. It is inappropriate to sing a plaintive bhajana (such as that beginning śrī-kāṇṇa-caitanya-prabhu dayā koro more) or one of lamentation (such as that beginning je ānilo prema-dhana koruṇā pracur) in a fast tempo or joyful tone. Most bhajanas are traditionally sung slow and sweet.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Bhajans to be sung in the ascending order

If several bhajanas are to be sung, they should be sung in ascending order: First, those in glorification of guru, then prayers to other Vaisnavas, then to Lord Nityananda, then Lord Caitanya, then Srimati Radharani, then Kṛṣṇa. Even if only two or three bhajanas are sung, this order should be observed.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Singing the first line again after completing the song /understanding the meaning

A common practice in singing bhajanas is to sing the first line of the first verse again after completing the song. In some songs, simply to sing the first line is insufficient. At least the second line is needed to make a complete sentence. For example, je ānilo prema-dhana koruṇā pracur means, “He who brought the treasure of love and was full of mercy....” The second line completes the stanza: “heno prabhu kotha gela, acarya thakura” “Where has such a great master as Srinivasa Acarya gone?” Similarly, “gaurangera duti pada, jara dhana-sampada”, “Whose property and wealth is the two feet of Lord Caitanya...” is completed by “se jane bhakati-rasa sara,” “he knows what is the essence of devotional mellows.”

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana should start with all the instruments

Sometimes in a kirtana no-one takes up mrdanga or kartalas, except the devotee leading. This is not proper. Best is if, even before the kirtana begins, devotees have the instruments

ready to play. Otherwise the kirtana is often disjointed at the beginning, as devotees gradually get instruments and join in one by one.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Mrdanga should follow the leader

Prabhupada was present during a kirtana performed by his disciples in the Brooklyn temple. The mrdanga player had been practicing to learn complicated beats, and he was demonstrating his rapid and intricate abilities in the kirtana. But Prabhupada stopped the music and said to the drummer that he should follow the leader. Then he started the kirtana again, but it happened again and again Prabhupada stopped the kirtana and asked the drummer to follow the leader.

Prabhupada Nectar 1.22

Mira Bhajans and commercial music is not appropriate

Examples of unacceptable songs are (a) Mira Bhajanas, many of which go against the whole spirit of our sampradaya (as Mira places herself in the position of a direct lover of Krsna, without reference to Radharani); and (b) concocted commercial bhajanas sung by professionals for profit motive. Although some are quite tasteful, many can at best be considered semi-religious, semi-entertainment. Because such bhajana cassettes are sold indiscriminately from our temples, devotees naturally tend to accept them as bona fide, but often they are not. Commercially minded devotees are eager to record and distribute any nice sounding song, and in this way all kinds of things get spread. However, “We should not try to make a profit out of the Hare Krishna Mantra; then our spiritual enlightenment will be hampered.”

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting Letter to: Mukunda, 2 July, 1969

ETIQUETTE

Kirtan our duty*

Kirtana is our first duty.

SP Letter to: Palika, 13 November, 1975

Responsive chanting is the system in India*

Responsive chanting is very nice; one good singer may lead, and the others may join in. That is the system in India. It is very good for two reasons especially: One, the chanter gets to rest, so he does not become tired, and two, you get to chant and hear, that is the process. You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers. Blowing of the conch shell and horns is very nice.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa and Himāvati dāsī, March 3, 1968

Any tune can be used*

Any tune can be used. When it is in relationship with Kanna, that makes it bona fide.

letter to Ekāyanī dāsī, August 31, 1971

Sticking to the Vaisnava principles brings luster and attracts people*

There are many professional chanters who can perform congregational chanting with various musical instruments in an artistic and musical way, but their chanting cannot be as attractive as the congregational chanting of pure devotees. If a devotee sticks strictly to the principles governing Vainṇava behavior, his bodily luster will naturally be attractive, and his singing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord will be effective. People will appreciate such kīrtana without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or Śrī Kanna should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord's glories.

CC, Madhya-līlā 11.95, purport

Concocted chants means guror-avajna*

Caraṇāravindam: Prabhupāda, you wrote in the Caitanya-caritāmata that the Caitanya mahāmantra, śrī-kanna-caitanya prabhu nityānanda, there is no offense to that. And so therefore in the Kali-yuga it is actually more beneficial . . .

Prabhupāda: Offense is that what is spoken by the ācāryas, if you do not follow, that is offense. Guror avajīā. That is offense. To chant Gaura-Nitāi is no offense. But if our previous gurus have chanted śrī-kanna-caitanya prabhu nityānanda śrī-advaita- . . . why should we go beyond that? That is guror avajīā. Even there is no aparādha, because guru, Kavirāja Gosvāmī, has sung like that and my guru has sung, we should follow that. We should not make any deviation. That is guror avajīā śruti-śāstra-nindanam. Nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhiu. So it comes to be one of the items of the daśa-vidha-aparādha. Guror avajīā.

Room conversation, September 6, 1976, Vandāvana, India

Bhajans sung from Vande ham to Radha Krsna *

As we come by parampara system, it is our duty to go through the right channel—namely, first the Spiritual Master, then Lord Caitanya, and then Krishna. So when we chant prayers, we do this, Bande ham Sri Guru...and gradually to the Goswamis, then to Lord Caitanya, and then to Radha Krishna. That is the praying system.

Letter to: Harer Nama, May 28, 1968

Prabhupada ignoring unbonafide Radharamanacarana Das Babaji's followers' chanting

As we looked at the land, a kīrtana party of all older men came with garlands to greet Prabhupāda. Prabhupāda ignored them because they were singing Nitai Gaura Radhe Syama Hare Krsna Hare Rama over and over. This happens to be the site of a small temple which has a mūrti of Rādhāramaṇacaraṇa dāsa Bābājī the originator of the chant in it. Prabhupāda accepted their garlands but otherwise ignored them.

Hari Sauri Diary, February 6, 1977, Panihati

Acaryas' mantars, Panca Tattva Mantra and Hare Krsna should be chanted

Throughout his teachings, Śrīla Prabhupāda stressed that only mantras given by our sampradāya-ācāryas should be chanted. Among these, he gave special emphasis to the chanting of the Paica-tattva mantra and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Devotees turning backs to deities*

Rūpānuga: I also wanted to ask a question, Srila Prabhupada, on dancing in the temple room during arati, especially mangala-arati. Is it not that the devotees should not turn their back while dancing to the Deity?

Prabhupāda: No, no.

Rūpānuga: And that they should not bump each other or dance with each other personally, distracting the attention from the Deity? Shouldn't all the dancing be focused toward the Deity?

Prabhupāda: Sometimes dancing is done here in peculiar method. (laughter). That is not desirable. The dancing, Caitanya Mahāprabhu is showing.

Rūpānuga: You have shown us the feet, changing of the feet with arms upraised, not with the back to the Deity.

Prabhupāda: They do it out of sentiment, but that is not very good.

Rūpānuga: Also they bump one another with the drum or with each other's bodies, they dance and they bump like this. That is not bona fide is it? It is very popular in our movement now.

Prabhupāda: They are inventing. What can I do? If you invent your own way...

Room conversation, July 8, 1976, Washington, D.C.

Dancing in the middle of the kirtana*

Regarding your dancing in the middle of the kīrtana, it is not wrong. It is completely right. If in your kīrtana everyone dances in ecstasy it is perfectly all right. That is spiritual enthusiasm.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa, October 19, 1974

Backs to the Deities*

The scene: Mayapur Gaura-Purnima festival, 1976. Prabhupada is seated in his room, talking with Prajapati dasa and his wife, who are leaders of a Krsna conscious dance and theater group. They are showing Prabhupada pictures of one of their performances in a temple.

"Why are their backs to the Deities?" Prabhupada asked.

"Because Jayatirtha said ... "

"Jayatirtha?" Srila Prabhupada said it in a way that obviously rejected their reply. He then asked that whatever GBC men were nearby should come at once to his room. When the men had gathered, Srila Prabhupada began lecturing to them on the point of not turning one's back to the Deity. "Rupa Gosvami has said, 'Do not turn your back to the Deity,' but now they say

someone has said it is all right." Prabhupada looked around heavily to the devotees in the room. "This is the problem," he said. "We have so many big, big acaryas."

When a devotee began speaking and mentioned another one of Srila Prabhupada's leading disciples, Prabhupada immediately cut down, with a few words, both the devotee in the room and the person he had referred to. Then everyone was silent.

SPNectar 4-18: "Why Are Their Backs To the Deities?"

(Only one reference recorded by a devotee but not in the conversations etc..)

Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants

The sankirtana party should be festive. The devotees should be dressed nicely--no torn dhotis, odd socks or socks with holes. Srila Prabhupada suggested that devotees wear silk turbans on harinama sankirtana (quoted by Jaya Pataka Swami). Yellow bundis (Indian tie-up shirts) kept especially for nagara kirtana parties, can be used by male devotees, both married and unmarried, to give a uniform effect. Ideally, the men should have shaved heads, and certainly should not have stubbly faces. A special touch is using heavy ankle bells specifically made for dancing (available in India). All devotees should have fresh tilaka. Deity prasada flower garlands add to the color. Re-usable silk garlands may also be kept especially for nagara kirtana. Karatalas are best shined and tied with clean, colorful ribbons. Flags and festoons with pictures of Srila Prabhupada, Krsna etc., or banners with the maha mantra, all add to the pageantry. For creating a highly festive mood, devotees can dress in costumes and be made up as Gaura and Nitai, Radha and Krsna, Narada Muni, and so on

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

First, Advanced devotees should be offered the leading

Therefore Srila Prabhupada stressed that as far as possible, chanting should be heard from the lips of pure devotees of the Lord. A kirtana can be lively, sweet and musically integrated, but spiritually empty also if not sung by devotees who are consciously surrendered to Krsna. Hence, first preference should be given to advanced devotees to lead kirtana, and next to others competent to lead.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Etiquette regarding who should lead Kirtana

In big temples, where there are many devotees eager and capable of leading kirtanas, a roster may be made up so that they all get a chance. A roster is also useful for excluding devotees who indulge in deviant styles. On the visit of a senior devotee, the roster may be

adjusted to let the senior devotee lead. In temples without roster systems, the seniormost devotees present should first be given the chance to lead.

If those more senior don't want to lead, they should indicate to others to do so. And after the conch is blown and devotees have offered their obeisances, someone should lead—not that everyone simply waits for someone else. In such a situation, someone—anyone—should start the kirtana, for the Deities should not be kept waiting.

Sometimes the opposite situation occurs. A devotee rushes his obeisances, or doesn't even offer them at all, and just jumps in and starts singing, to ensure that he will lead the kirtana. Such persons should know that they cannot please Kṛṣṇa by leading kirtana without properly offering obeisances to Him first. Such »kirtana hogs« are usually only enthusiastic for kirtana if they are leading it. Their leading is for sense gratification, not for service. They want to put themselves in the center instead of Kṛṣṇa. Their voice may be sweet, but their heart is not.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Instruments during Sri Caitanya / following the leader*

During Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu's time, one party was composed of twenty-one men: four people playing madaigas, one leading the chanting, and sixteen others striking karatālas, responding to the leading chanter.

CC Ādi-līlā 17.135, purport

Kirtana should start with all the instruments

Sometimes in a kirtana no-one takes up mrdanga or kartalas, except the devotee leading. This is not proper. Best is if, even before the kirtana begins, devotees have the instruments ready to play. Otherwise the kirtana is often disjointed at the beginning, as devotees gradually get instruments and join in one by one.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The mrdanga player should follow the leader

Prabhupada was present during a kirtana performed by his disciples in the Brooklyn temple. The mrdanga player had been practicing to learn complicated beats, and he was demonstrating his rapid and intricate abilities in the kirtana. But Prabhupada stopped the music and said to the drummer that he should follow the leader. Then he started the kirtana again, but it happened again and again Prabhupada stopped the kirtana and asked the drummer to follow the leader

Prabhupada Nectar, 1.22

Bhajans to be sung in the ascending order

If several bhajanas are to be sung, they should be sung in ascending order: First, those in glorification of guru, then prayers to other Vaisnavas, then to Lord Nityananda, then Lord Caitanya, then Srimati Radharani, then Kṛṣṇa. Even if only two or three bhajanas are sung, this order should be observed.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

»Jayadvaita« in prema-dhvani and Hari haraye namah kṛṣṇa

However, this idea (»jaya« instead of »sri«) became so much entrenched within the movement that it became the fashion to even change the mantra in the prema-dhvani and even in such independent songs as Hari haraye namah kṛṣṇa, wherein one line says sri

caitanya nityananda sri advaita sita which now due to this absolute change had to read sri caitanya nityananda jayadvaita sita.

Harikesa Swami, Vaisnava Journal, 1988

Maha Mantra at least a half of arati kirans

Although Srila Prabhupada himself taught us many other mantras, he always stressed the chanting of the Hare Krishna maha mantra. He said that at least half of the arati kirtana should consist of chanting of the Hare Krishna maha mantra. For example, in a temple where mangala-arati only lasts for 20 minutes, devotees should only sing each of the Gurvastakam once, in order to leave ten minutes for chanting Hare Krsna. This was a well known dictum in the “early days.”

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Followers of Srila Prabhupada shouldn't chant »Jaya Radhe«

Srila Prabhupada told us not to chant Jaya Radhe, so we shouldn't. Srila Prabhupada was always careful to protect his disciples from artificially jumping up to “higher levels” of devotion. His restriction on our chanting of the name of our topmost object of worship, Srimati Radharani, seems to be a manifestation of such caution. Whatever the reason may be, neither Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati nor Srila Prabhupada encouraged or introduced the chanting of Radha-nama, and it behooves their followers to be similarly conservative.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prabhupada's grand-disciples chanting »Om ajnana timirandasya...« in kirtana

When Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples begin kirtana by chanting the pranama mantra to Srila Prabhupada, they skip an essential link in the disciplic succession. At least in mantra, they are jumping over their own spiritual master and going directly to the previous one. This goes against our Vaisnava philosophy and principles.

Properly, a disciple should offer respect first to his own spiritual master, then to the previous ones.

So here's how I suggest our kirtanas should go. Either:

1. At mangala-arati, the leader should simply chant Gurvastakam, without Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra. (This follows Srila Prabhupada's example. At mangala-arati Srila Prabhupada simply chanted Sri Gurvastakam, and that was it. He chanted the pranama mantra to his guru with the other mangala-carana prayers in the evenings. Of course, one can chant the pranama-mantra in the mornings. But our acarya, Srila Prabhupada, didn't. So why should we?)

or

2. At any kirtana, the leader should first chant a generic mantra of obeisances to the spiritual master, such as Sri Gurvastakam or om ajnana timirandhasya, and then Srila Prabhupada's pranama mantra. (The idea here is that with the first mantra Srila Prabhupada's grand-disciples offer obeisances to their spiritual master. Then only can they properly offer obeisances to Srila Prabhupada.)

Jayadvaita Swami, Bugs in Lithurgy

Talking during kirtan

If devotees in the temple room are talking among themselves while the kirtan is going on, that is a disrespectful behavior and a disruption to the kirtan. It is best to ask such devotees to carry their conversation somewhere else.

Kulapadava Das Dandavats Comment, June 12, 2007

Conversations during kirtana is an offence

Conversations should not be held in the middle of kirtanas. Anything that has to be said can be said later. If necessary, those needing to speak urgently can go away from the kirtana, say what they have to say, and come back. To go on talking during kirtana constitutes the offense of inattentiveness to the holy name, and disturbs the other devotees. If done in front of the Deities, it is also an offense to Them.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Following the leader in speed and loudness

Speed is usually connected with loudness. As the tempo increases, so does the volume. The rule is to follow the leader. The instruments should be played softly when the leader leads slowly, and gradually more strongly as the pace increases.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana leader should know the tune he's singing

Along with enthusiasm and spiritual advancement, another good qualification to lead kirtana is to have a strong, clear voice. Also, a kirtana leader should have a feeling for raga (melody), tala (rhythm) and laya (tempo). This doesn't mean that he has to study music, but he should have some basic musical sense—he cannot be unsure of the tune he is singing, mixing up tunes, breaking the rhythm by coming in at the wrong times, or unable fit the words to the melody. Those devoid of such simple musical sense are advised not to lead kirtanas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The proper way to sing the response

During the lecture he gave that day he also said, “Don't harmonize during the response.” The leader may sing little variations, but the group should sing a steady response. One person shouldn't be singing one melody and another doing another melody during the response. “These things,” he said, “will help one pay more attention to the mantra as one is chanting and dancing. That way one will get the maximum benefit, and the kirtana will also become more ecstatic.”

Interview with Revatī-nandana dāsa, Memories, Vol. 1

The kirtan group shouldn't follow the leader's mistake

The kirtana leader should also know the words of the song he is singing and how to pronounce them properly. He should know the correct order of the lines of the song. Sometimes devotees sing the first half of a verse followed by the second half of another, leave out verses, or get them in the wrong order. Those who are not sure can have someone hold a songbook for them to see, but really the kirtana leader should know the song he is singing. If the devotee leading kirtan does sing a line or verse of a song out of sequence, the other devotees should not follow the mistake, but should sing the correct line or verse.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Morning program is more important than all-night kirtan

Following Lord Caitanya's example, some devotees like to organize all-night kirtanas. However, this is inevitably followed by missing the morning program. It is better to follow the standard program of hearing and chanting given us by Śrīla Prabhupāda than to introduce a substitute. Long kirtanas may be held in the day so as not to render the participants incapable of taking part in the morning program that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his followers to attend every day.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Clean hands in kirtan

In kirtana, devotees not playing instruments should clap their hands, join them in respect or hold them above their heads. They should not cross their hands, hold them behind their backs, or keep them in their pockets.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Standing up in aratis

Unless devotees have severe health problems, they should not sit during standing kirtanas. This is especially true of arati kirtanas.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Kirtana shouldn't finish before the blowing of the conch

Kirtana in arati should continue until the conch has been blown at the end. Only then should the kirtana finish and the prema-dhvani be said—not before.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

DRESS

Devotees properly dressed in a street Sankirtan*

When such [public] kīrtana will be demonstrated, only the harmonium player may sit, and all the others may stand up and join the kīrtana and dancing properly dressed.

letter to Haasadūta dāsa, February 4, 1968

How to dress in public kirtan

Devotees should dress respectably on harināma-saikīrtana. Everyone must wear shoes and have tilaka and neck beads. The men should be clean-shaven, and if their head is not shaved, their hair should be neat. They should wear dhoti and kurtā, and the ladies should wear saris. If possible, the ladies should decorate their faces with gopī dots. These look very attractive and help create a festive atmosphere.

Devotees can also wear flower garlands. In Śrī Caitanya-caritāmata (Madhya 13.30) we read how during the harināma-saikīrtana at the Ratha-yātrā festival, “Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gathered all His devotees and, with His own hand, decorated them with flower garlands and sandalwood pulp.”

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants

The sankirtana party should be festive. The devotees should be dressed nicely--no torn dhotis, odd socks or socks with holes. Srila Prabhupada sug-gested that devotees wear silk turbans on harinama sankirtana (quoted by Jaya Pataka Swami). Yellow bundis (Indian tie-up shirts) kept especially for nagara kirtana parties, can be used by male devotees, both married and unmarried, to give a uniform effect. Ideally, the men should have shaved heads, and certainly should not have stubbly faces. A special touch is using heavy ankle bells specifically made for dancing (available in India). All devotees should have fresh tilaka. Deity prasada flower garlands add to the color. Re-usable silk garlands may also be kept especially for nagara kirtana. Karatalas are best shined and tied with clean, colorful rib-bons. Flags and festoons with pictures of Srila Prabhupada, Krsna etc., or banners with the maha mantra, all add to the pageantry. For creating a highly festive mood, devotees can dress in costumes and be made up as Gaura and Nitai, Radha and Krsna, Narada Muni, and so on.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Costumes in street Sankirtan*

The idea of introducing Paica-tattva in the kīrtana party was also contemplated by me. Not only that, we have to prepare different dresses for Rādhā and Kāṇṇa, and Their eight confidential associates, Sakhīs. Sometimes you have to dress somebody as Nasiahadeva and Prahlāda; in this way, we shall have varieties of show along with the kīrtana, and all the varieties will be picked up from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā. We have to teach the brahmācārīs and the brahmācārīṇīs to speak in Sanskrit some of the verses in this connection.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa, March 4, 1968

Costumes of Gaura Nitai in street sankirtana *

Yes, if you like, you can also arrange for costumes and wigs. One boy may be dressed as Lord Caitanya, another as Nityananda, as well as Gadadhara, Advaita with white beard and Srivasa with shaven head.

Letter to Hamsaduta, Himavati, 3 March, 1968

Provocatively dressed woman dancing improperly at Mayapur

What about something similar regarding dancing and dress code in the temple. In the last two years in Mayapura I heard many complaints about the way certain groups were dancing. Mostly they were younger woman dressed provocatively and dancing in an even more provocative way more suitable to a disco dance floor than where they were--standing in front of the Pancatattva. Some young men were also involved but mostly it was young women. It seemed to those who commented to me that these persons were trying to attract the attention of the opposite sex with their sensual bodily movements than the mercy of the Panca-tattva.

If they want to dance that way fine, but not in our kirtans where serious devotees go to try and absorb the mind in the Holy Name. At least in the temple room we should have some shelter from the influence of maya.

Shyamasundar Das, Dandavats Comment, June 2007

FESTIVALS

AND

STREET SANKIRTAN

Defining (San) kirtan *

Kirtana means glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All activities in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement are meant for Kṛṣṇa-kirtana-glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although this glorification takes many forms, kirtana is particularly understood to mean chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names. This is also called sankirtana. The prefix "san" means "complete" or "in association." So sankirtana means "complete glorification" or "congregational chanting." Kirtana means alone, and sankirtana means in the assembly of many others.

Lecture October 21, 1974, Mumbai

Kṛṣṇa Consciousness movement is about music and dancing*

Our Krishna Consciousness movement is practically based upon music and dancing.

Letter to: Mr. Levine, 25 January, 1969

The terminology of Nagara-sankirtan, Harinam-sankirtan etc

Nagara kirtana means public group chanting (nagara means "town"). In our movement, public chanting is often called harinama, an abbreviation of harinama sankirtana. This abbreviation was introduced to distinguish public chanting from book distribution. Book distribution is also called sankirtana, which it certainly is, but the generally accepted usage of the word sankirtana in Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava parlance is "group chanting". To call public chanting harinama is also misleading, because harinama simply means "the name of God", and does not specifically refer to public chanting. Thus it is better to use the Bengali term nagara kirtana, or nagara sankirtana.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Public chanting is the process and it's easy *

In India there are sacred places where yogis go to meditate in solitude, as prescribed in Bhagavad-gītā. Traditionally, yoga cannot be executed in a public place, but insofar as kīrtana—mantra-yoga, or the yoga of chanting the Hare Kīṛṇa mantra: Hare Kīṛṇa, Hare Kīṛṇa, Kīṛṇa Kīṛṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—is concerned, the more people present, the better. When Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu was performing kīrtana in India some five hundred years ago, He organized in each group sixteen people to lead the chanting, and thousands of people chanted with them. This participation in kīrtana, in the public chanting of the names and glories of God, is very possible and is actually easy in this age; but as far as the meditational process of yoga is concerned, that is very difficult.

POY 3

Wherever saikīrtana-yajia is performed, many thousands of people gather*

The Kāṇa consciousness movement has started performing saikīrtana-yajia in different places, and it has been experienced that wherever saikīrtana-yajia is performed, many

thousands of people gather and take part in it. Imperceptible auspiciousness achieved in this connection should be continued all over the world. The members of the Kanna consciousness movement should perform saikirtana-yajias one after another, so much that all the people of the world will either jokingly or seriously chant Hare Kanna, Hare Kanna, Kanna Kanna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, and thus they will derive the benefit of cleansing the heart. The holy name of the Lord (harer nama) is so powerful that whether it is chanted jokingly or seriously the effect of vibrating this transcendental sound will be equally distributed.

SB 4.24.10, purport

Street Sankiratan to reawake the sleeping souls*

The people in general can be reached very well by the distribution of our literatures and by the propagation of saikirtana in the streets. These are our two madaigas for reawakening the sleeping conditioned souls.

letter to Janardana Dasa, January 16, 1970

Street sankirtana as much as possible*

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted all of his followers to go on harinama-saikirtana regularly. Everyone should go on the streets with saikirtana party as much as possible.

letter to Madhusudana Dasa, January 30, 1970

Outdoor kirtana must be done*

At least for one hour you must all go to have saikirtana outside on the streets or in the park. . . . Outdoor kirtana must be done.

letter to Rayarama dasa, July 14, 1969

First program is to organize a sankirtan party*

“I have tested it definitely that melodious vibration of saikirtana, if they are performed by serious devotees, can attract people from the very spiritual platform, and it at once makes the spiritual background very smooth, when a spiritual instruction from the Bhagavad-gītā can be implemented very nicely. So my first concrete program is . . . to organize such a saikirtana party.”

letter to Harikrishnadas Aggarwal, 3 March 1968

Prabhupada desired a world sankirtan party

It was one of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s most ardent desires that his disciples organize a world saikirtana party. He wrote many letters to this effect, and described how these parties should perform and the various embellishments that devotees could use on saikirtana. These include drama, prasadam, speaking, book distribution, and follow-up—in other words, the making of devotees.

Mukunda Goswami, forward to Harinama eva kevalam

People will be attracted by rhythmical presentation*

I shall call you and some other students to assemble there to practice saikirtana in a systematic way. Of course, chanting Hare Kanna does not require any artificial artistic sense, but still, if the procedure is presented rhythmically, then the people may be attracted more by the transcendental music.

letter to Upendra Dasa, 1 June 1968

Street Harinam should make devotees*

Your program for distributing books and having the street festivals and then preaching and making devotees is very good.

letter to Tamal Krishna Goswami, September 8, 1974

Advertisement *

Our advertisement is the saikirtana movement.

SB lecture, 12 September, 1973, London

By purity attract audience in public functions*

I am pleased to note that there is interest in having our Sankirtana Party perform in various public engagements. The same thing is going on here, and they have been invited to such places as Amsterdam and Germany. So if you can also do this, it is nice. But do not change our principles. Practicing is already done by kirtana. It is not required for us to become artists. Our main point is service to Krishna, not to please an audience. We shall not divert our attention too much to adjustment of musical sounds. People should not misunderstand that we are a band of musical artists. They must know that we are devotees of Krishna. Our devotional practice and purity shall be so strong that wherever we chant there will be immediately an impression in the audience for devotion to Krishna.

letter to Tamal Krsna, 30 Oct 1969

Spiritual strength is the most important*

But one thing we must remember that we are not professional musicians or concert party. Our main business is to vibrate the Holy Name of Krishna everywhere so that the people will be benefited by hearing the transcendental sound. The musical training is not so important as it is to keep ourselves spiritually fit in spiritual strength, that we should not forget.

letter to Tamal Krishna, 8 February 70

Not concerned with the satisfaction of public*

By your chanting some public is satisfied—no, we are not concerned with that. He may be satisfied or not satisfied. But if I chant in the proper way, then my predecessors, the ācāryas, will be satisfied. That is my business, finished, if I don't invent in my own way. So I am very glad that Kṛṣṇa has sent so many nice boys and girls to help me.

Lecture, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati disappearance, February 7, 1969

Kirtan as a means to satisfy Krishna*

Krishna Kirtana is not for earning a livelihood. Krishna Kirtana is not meant for entertaining the public for demonstration of arts. It is dynamic service to the Lord. We do not therefore mind so much about the artistic presentation of Krishna Kirtana but we want to see how much a devotee is satisfying the Supreme Will.

Letter to Jadurani, 12 December, 1967

People will appreciate sankirtana for the devotees' sticking to the Vaisnava principles*

There are many professional chanters who can perform congregational chanting with various musical instruments in an artistic and musical way, but their chanting cannot be as attractive as the congregational chanting of pure devotees. If a devotee sticks strictly to the

principles governing Vainṇava behavior, his bodily luster will naturally be attractive, and his singing and chanting of the holy names of the Lord will be effective. People will appreciate such kīrtana without hesitation. Even dramas about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or Śrī Kāṇa should be played by devotees. Such dramas will immediately interest an audience and be full of potency. The students of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness should note these two points and try to apply these principles in their spreading of the Lord's glories.

CC, Madhya-līlā 11.95, purport

The chanting attracts even the conditioned souls*

...Not only chanting gives us liberation, but even in our conditioned state we like to hear the sweet melodious sound of the chanting. Only a person who is committing suicide or who is addicted in animal killing, such persons cannot relish the sweetness of this chanting. But even if they take to this chanting, they will become liberated...

Letter to: Jadurani -- New Vrindaban 17 June, 1969

Melodious kirtana attracts everyone*

...The festival we are holding at present in Delhi has been extremely successful, and by Krishna's grace everyone is appreciating this Movement by seeing the beautiful deity worship, by hearing the melodious kirtana, and by seeing the bright faces of my students.

Letter to Sri Galim -- Delhi 20 November, 1971

Kirtan is meant for everybody*

...People can hold meetings to glorify the Lord in their respective languages and with melodious songs, and if such performances are executed in an offenseless manner, it is certain that the participants will gradually attain spiritual perfection without having to undergo more rigorous methods. At such meetings everyone, the learned and the foolish, the rich and the poor, the Hindus and the Muslims, the Englishmen and the Indians, and the candalas and the brahmanas, can all hear the transcendental sounds and thus cleanse the dust of material association from the mirror of the heart...Some were attracted by His [Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu's] bodily features, and others were attracted by His melodious songs glorifying the Lord...

SB Introduction

Kirtana is both singing and recitation of Scripture*

...Kirtanam can be performed both by singing the glories of the Lord in accompaniment with melodious music and by recitation of scriptures like Srimad-Bhagavatam or Bhagavad-gīta...

SB 2.4.15

The public (in street Sankirtan) should somehow or other chant along*

Give them the chance to chant the Hare Kāṇa mahā-mantra somehow or other, then very soon good results will be visible.

letter to Harikeśa Swami, October 28, 1976

Speaking during street Sankirtan*

Dialogue, kīrtana; then again dialogue, again kīrtana; again repeat; like that.

letter to Madhudvina Swami, July 29, 1972

Speaking during street Sankirtan / 2*

Our process will remain the same eternally, namely, to begin with saikīrtana and prolong it at least for half an hour, then speak something from Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Brahmaśāhita, etc., and invite questions and answer them. Then again concluded by chanting. This is my dream or idea.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa, February 4, 1968

Sankirtan attracting people from the spiritual platform

*Please note the significant language SP uses in speaking of kirtan. It is significant that he says the westerners "are not singers in the tune we chant in India". This indicates that SP has some expectation that his followers will know and sing traditional melodies, not concoctions. Next, he gives clear insight into HOW kirtan should be sung: "I have tested it definitely that melodious vibration of Sankirtana, if they are performed by serious devotees, can attract people from the very spiritual platform, and it at once makes the spiritual background very smooth". the key phrase is "melodious vibration (not dreadful incantation with no melody, musicality, or refined style). Next quote, he states that the "melodious" chanting (as particularly demonstrated by HH Lokanath Swami, Radhanath Swami, and some other sweet singers), then this will be our "unique position" (i.e. classic, classy, aesthetically pleasing, traditional, musically excellent, charming, charismatic, pleasing to all, and moving to the heart). *

Letter from Makhanlal Das to KSC pamho conf (Text PAMHO:13639768)

Different techniques and styles - pleasing to the Lord - attractive to the public

There are many talented devotees and we can expect many different techniques and styles to flourish that will be very pleasing to the Lord and attractive to the public.

Of course, the important thing is the mood or feeling with which we chant, but if we have the proper mood we will be especially careful to do it nicely (and not to cause deafness by banging away loudly on gongs and karatals). Training and establishing standards of quality are important.

Akruranatha Das Dandavats Comment, June 11th, 2007

Prabhupada pleased by favorable and unfavorable publicity – as long as they hear the Holy Name

Apparently some local city officials are trying to ban the devotees from chanting in the street. The reporter mentioned this, and Tusta Kṛṣṇa confirmed that there had indeed been some publicity in one or two other cities--some favorable and some unfavorable.

Prabhupāda was pleased, because he said that if there is agitation against chanting, it is also good. Even if they say that Hare Kṛṣṇa is bad, that is also good, because at least they will have chanted Hare Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda told the devotees they will become triumphant if they continue to chant and distribute books.

But he cautioned them as well. "They think Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is disturbing, a rascal civilization. So let us try our best, what can be done? You also are helping in this Movement, so don't spoil the Movement by manufacturing ideas. Don't do that. Go on in the standard way, keep yourself pure. Then the movement is sure to be successful. But if you want to spoil it by being whimsical, then what can be done? It will be spoiled. If you manufacture whims and disagree and fight amongst yourself, then it will be another edition of these so-called movements. It will lose the spiritual strength. Always remember

it. Don't make it an ordinary musical vibration. It is a different thing, spiritual. So mantra is not ordinary sound vibration. We have to keep the mantra in potency, by offenseless chanting, by remaining pure. If you pollute the mantra, then it will lose its effect."

Hari Sauri Diary, April 27, 1976

Hari Kirtan more important than gorgeous show*

Regarding your question of dancing-show, whatever it may be, it may not deviate from the real Krishna Consciousness program. We are Hari Kirtana men, that's all. We can attract people by some gorgeous show, but inside there must be strict purity and seriousness, otherwise, we shall be attracted by the gorgeous show only. There are two energies always working simultaneously, and Maya means when we diminish the spiritual energy, then automatically we become attracted to the external dress of Maya. So I do not care very much for these plays and dramas unless they are coming directly from the Vedas. If we can recite from Bhagavad gita the first chapter without any need for elaborate scenery or stage-props and gorgeous dresses, that is best. Just like your Shakespeare. Macbeth may be recited by two men, without anything else, and simply by their acting ability and the meaningful words alone, they can very easily capture the entire audience and give them real substance. We have so many stories, like Jagai-Madhai, Krishna departing for Mathura, like that. Satire will not help us. Our message is very grave, and because it is the Absolute Truth, it will work without any artificial presentation.

Because they heard of our program in Bombay along with the Zavery sisters Manipuri Dancers, here in London they had arranged one program of lecturing by me along with a recital by one man playing on the vina just to attract attention to my speaking. I am not in approval of such arrangements, and it will be dangerous thing in future if we begin this type of program just to attract the masses. Already I see this happening practically all over the Society, so better we stop it now and get ourselves firmly on the track chalked out for us by Lord Caitanya. We are simply Sankirtana men, our program is chanting, dancing, distributing prasadam, and speaking high philosophy, that's all

Letter to Madhudvisa, 8 July, 1972

The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord & not to attract a crowd*

Without being empowered by Krishna nobody can preach Krishna Consciousness. It is not academic qualification or financial strength which helps in the matter, but it is sincerity of purpose which helps us always.I never thought about the audience. I was prepared to chant even if there were no men present to hear me. The principle of chanting is to glorify the Lord & not to attract a crowd. If Krishna hears nicely then he will ask some sincere devotee to gather in such place.

Letter to Subala, 12 November, 1967

The benefit of publics' hearing maha-mantra Vs other prayers

Authorized prayers and mantras other than the mahā-mantra are nice, and any passer-by who hears them will derive immense spiritual benefit. But the Hare Kāṇṇa mantra is the mahā-mantra, which means "the greatest mantra." Thus the public will derive the greatest benefit by hearing this mantra.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Srila Prabhupada's suggestion on speaking in public

Śrīla Prabhupāda suggested the following five points to Mukunda Mahārāja as the content for a public presentation of Kāṇṇa consciousness. The speaker on harināma may make a presentation that focuses on any or all of these points, depending on the time, place, circumstances, and the audience's attention span: (1) Kāṇṇa consciousness is a tradition that has been practiced in India for more than 5,000 years, (2) It is based on the Bhagavad-gītā, which is like the Bible of the East, (3) In the tradition of ancient India, God is addressed by the name Kāṇṇa. He is the same God people address as Allah, Jehovah, Adanoi and other names, (4) Lord Caitanya is a full incarnation of God who appeared in India 500 years ago and popularized the chanting of God's name, especially in the form of the mahā-mantra — Hare Kāṇṇa Hare Kāṇṇa, Kāṇṇa Kāṇṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, (5) The chanting of the name of God is a form of yoga or meditation called mantra meditation, through which one can develop love for God and awaken spiritual consciousness.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Mantras to be chanted in public*

I am very glad to learn that you are vibrating the mantras from ISOPANISAD and BHAGAVAD GITA independently. Here they are chanting these mantras on the streets during Sankirtana Party and the people are responding very nicely.

Letter to Yamuna 7 July 1970

Country tune at Ratha Yatra to attract more people*

The record which you have sent singing Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram, and other Kirtana is really a new turn and we have enjoyed the record so nicely. This Narada Muni song is in your country tune and I think it will attract many more of common man to join the Kirtana so you should practice this standard Kirtana more conveniently so that during your Rathayatra festival you can have this singing with the procession.

Letter to Mukunda, June 6, 1967

Training devotees in public chanting, dancing and speaking*

...We have to teach the Brahmacharis and the Brahmacharinis to speak in Sanskrit some of the verses in this connection, and we explain the verses by singing, chanting, and speaking also. Sometimes in the middle of chanting and singing, we shall speak also. So, all these varieties show will be so attractive with melodious musical sounds, and above all our good behavior and advanced Krishna Consciousness, will make this show very successful. In the meantime, you train the Kirtana party as you are doing, and the responsive method is all-perfect...

Letter to: Hamsaduta -- Los Angeles 4 March, 1968

Chanting Gaura Nityananda bol haribol in festivals

As Srila Prabhupada sat on the small stage, Lokanatha Maharaja led his men in an exuberant kīrtana. After singing the standard prayers and the mahā-mantra, he began chanting “gaura-nityānanda bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-śrīadvaita bol, haribol, haribol; gaura-srī gadadhara bol, haribol haribol ...” with a lot of emphasis on the response of haribol, haribol. Srila Prabhupāda suddenly signaled him from the stage to stop it; he apparently didn't like it, although he didn't say why.

Hari Sauri Diary, August 30, 1976

Srila Prabhupada wanted traditional melodies at temple programs

In temple kīrtanas, for the pleasure of the Deities devotees should sing specific traditional melodies according to the time of day. A particular melody is appropriate for the morning and another for the evening. At least once Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped a devotee from singing the wrong tune during maigalaārati and said, “Sing the morning tune.” Srila Prabhupāda wanted these traditional melodies to be introduced in the West, particularly the Bengali melodies sung in the kīrtanas of Lord Caitanya’s day.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Non-traditional tunes sung in public functions

However, during public engagements it may be difficult for Westerners to respond to traditional Bengali melodies. Śrīla Prabhupāda therefore agreed that other melodies could be sung in such situations.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Different approach in dance and instrumentation for public kirtans or temple programs

There is a distinction between street kīrtana and temple kīrtana. In street chanting, liberties may be taken to make the chanting more attractive to the public, such as additional instrumentation, dance choreography, and attractive dress. The same applies to festivals and Sunday Feast kīrtanas. For regular temple kīrtanas, however, the need to attract the public is absent, and thus temple kīrtanas are stricter when it comes to melodies, instrumentation, and so on.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Prabhupada chanting the simple tune in festivals

He said a good kirtana lasts half an hour to forty minutes and the first half an hour is all slow and then it speeds up to a crescendo the last ten minutes. He liked the kirtana that was slow. Also in public programs whenever there were guests he almost always sang (sings standard Hare Krsna tune) or some similarly very simple melodies slowly and just gradually building to a crescendo. He didn’t like harmonizing, and he didn’t like melodic instruments during kirtana because the melodies of the instruments would detract from listening to the mantra; although he liked rhythm. Srila Prabhupada said that harmoniums and other melodic instruments are not meant for kirtana, as the ear will follow the music and be diverted from the holy names. Rhythm instruments are good, he said, because they increase the motivation to dance, and dancing in turn invokes devotion.

Revatinandana Das, Memories

Mantras to be chanted in public

For public kirtana, Srila Prabhupada approved of chanting Sri Krsna Caitanya etc., the Hare Krsna maha-mantra, and “Govinda jaya jaya”. (told to Visnujana Swami—related by Mahamantra dasa). It is best that we mostly chant the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. That is what the public expects of us, and what we want to familiarize them with. Śrīla Prabhupāda approved of slokas, such as those from Sri Isopanisad and Bhagavad-gita, being chanted in public kirtanas. As in all kirtanas, we should start with the Srila Prabhupada pranama-mantra. If demons disturb the sankirtana party, devotees can invoke the protection of Lord Nrsinghadeva by chanting the prayers to Him.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Organizing preaching events*

Another proposal is I want to form a sankirtana party in which two members will play mrdanga, eight will play the cymbals, two will play on tampura, and one harmonium, besides that there will be the leader of the party. This party will be so trained that exhibitions of our chanting and dancing along with distribution of prasadam will be performed on a stage and for this performance we will sell tickets to the public. It will be known as a spiritual movement.

Letter to Hamsaduta, LA, January 22, 1968

Arranging for Ginsberg's show*

Recently I have made one record in Los Angeles, so in trying to train our men in that rhythm is not difficult. Just arrange for sixteen men; four mrdangas, harmonium, tamboura, and the rest playing karatalas. If we can perform kirtana following the recently made recording, it will be marvelous.

Letter to Hayagriva and Pradyumna, Allston, May 3, 1969

Formula for street Sankirtan*

The chanting is very effective. Along with tampura and mrdanga played very rhythmically let them chant. Perform this musical demonstration and sell books as far as possible, and feasting.

Letter to Harikesa, Vrindavan, October 28, 1976

Dancing and instruments in the Sankirtan party *

Each party must consist of seven men as follows: two madaiga, four karatāla, and one dancer. One of the karatāla players is lead singer, and the dancer dances freely up and down between the two lines of players three on each side as in the drawing.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa, June 13, 1970

Using amplifiers*

You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa and Himāvati dāsī, March 3, 1968

Using harmonium in a street Sankirtan *

When such [public] kīrtana will be demonstrated, only the harmonium player may sit, and all the others may stand up and join the kīrtana and dancing properly dressed.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa, February 4, 1968

Harmonium, accordion and horns in Street Sankirtan

Some devotees like to play harmonium on harināma-saikīrtana. But much more practical for walking harināma is the accordion, which is designed to be played while standing or walking. Horns like the trumpet and bugle are also a nice addition to harināma-saikīrtana. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that horns were also played in Lord Caitanya's saikīrtana. Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Srila Prabhupada allowing other than traditional instruments in festivals

In the early days of ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada allowed all kinds of instruments in kirtana. In the first temple at 26 2nd Avenue, guests even played on the innards of an old upright

piano There was no mrdanga, so Srila Prabhupada played a bongo drum. This was in accordance with Bhaktivinoda Thakura's advice: any instrument according to local use. At the Honolulu temple, Srila Prabhupada also participated in kirtanas where the devotees played electric guitars and bass guitars. Even later on, Srila Prabhupada allowed the use of tamboura and other instruments—not in the regular temple kirtanas, but in preaching programs, festivals, etc., as an attraction for the public: "Sometimes we do use [other instruments] to attract, but it is not required."

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, *Kirtana / Srila Prabhupada Lilamrta II*. 146 / 761226rc.bom

Guest bringing their instruments to kirtana

If outside guests occasionally bring musical instruments like guitars and want to play on them during kirtan, it is probably best to encourage them to play along, if they can follow the tune. This may be especially at Sunday feasts programs, that are like an open house where maximum participation is encouraged with least formality. Kirtana is our religion, and it is good to encourage all to participate, as long as the chanting goes on without too much disruption.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, *Kirtana*

Sound system in Street Sankirtana

A good sound system is important to pierce the noise of big cities. On small harināma parties the sound system is important so that the public can hear the chanting, and on large parties the sound system is also important so that the devotees at the back of the procession, as well as the public, will be able to hear the leader.

Indradyumna Swami, *Harinam Eva Kevalam*

Srila Prabhupada leading the dance

It would come upon him at different memorable times, walking-dancing with ecstatic kīrtana at Ratha-yātrās in London and Australia or in temple rooms packed with devotees or before thousands at outdoor paṇoāls in India. Suddenly creating waves of excitement—all devotees rising with him—he would dance, and we would dance danced, and we are dancing.

Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami; letter to Jadurāṇī-devī dāsī, September 4, 1972.

Street kirtan speed

The saikīrtana should start slow and then build up speed. The top speed should be just fast enough so that everyone can respond melodiously and dance gracefully. When the kīrtana gets too fast, the dancing gets frenetic and disorganized, the melody gets harder to follow, and the kīrtana continually stops and starts because devotees get tired. But kīrtana played with a steady rhythm allows for graceful dancing and melodious chanting, and can continue for hours without stopping. Such kīrtana is much more attractive to the public.

Indradyumna Swami, *Harinam Eva Kevalam*

Children dancing in street harinam

Furthermore, if older devotees dance with the children hand in hand in a circle, it is easy for children from the public to join in. And from that point it is easier to get adults to join in as well. If the kīrtana progresses in this way, it is even possible to have a group of twenty, thirty, or forty people dancing and chanting with the kīrtana.

Indradyumna Swami, *Harinam Eva Kevalam*

The procession and dancing in the streets

The procession should be formed in two orderly lines so pedestrians may pass by unobstructed. When the group is large and there is room on the sidewalk, it may be necessary to form more lines. In addition, the saikīrtana leader and one or more assistants may need to direct traffic so the procession runs smoothly.

A saikīrtana procession moving in orderly lines looks attractive and is also fun. Sometimes the two lines may separate from each other, turn back in the opposite direction, and then meet again and continue down the street. If the footpath becomes too narrow for pedestrians to pass the party comfortably, the two lines of the harināma party should merge and form a single line. It is important that the devotees not block the entire sidewalk, forcing pedestrians into the street or onto the grass.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Dancing in public

In standing and dancing harināma-saikīrtana, it is important that the devotees dance together facing the public. Sometimes devotees dance with their backs to the public. This is not good. The purpose of harināma, as Śrīla Prabhupāda said, is to “Induce the people to chant, that is the only thing.”

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam (quoting letter to Kīrtirāja dāsa, January 11, 1976)

Public dancing should be done in an open and organized manner

Devotees should dance together, facing the public, in a coordinated and choreographed manner, concentrating on attracting the public to Kāṇṇa. When each devotee does his or her own thing, the kīrtana loses focus and potency. Such a kīrtana is less likely to attract people to become involved, either as participants or spectators. Anything can be attractive when many people do it together, even a bunch of men shoveling dirt, all performing movements simultaneously to the rhythm of music—what to speak of a group of bright-faced, cheerful Hare Kāṇṇa devotees dancing because Kāṇṇa consciousness makes them happy.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

The dancing in street harinam

The kīrtana party should be kept in together and in order—not straggling here and there. Preferably, a megaphone should be used. Devotees can also blow conch shells. Dancing should be harmonious, graceful and aesthetic. It is better that the dancing does not get wild in the public view.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Costumes of Gaura Nitai in street sankīrtana *

Yes, if you like, you can also arrange for costumes and wigs. One boy may be dressed as Lord Caitanya, another as Nityananda, as well as Gadadhara, Advaita with white beard and Srivasa with shaven head.

Letter to Hamsaduta, Himavati, 3 March, 1968

Flags in street Sankīrtan / 1*

You have to take saikīrtana party . . . take some flags.

Room conversation with Satsvarūpa dāsa, Boston, February 24, 1969

Flags in street Sankirtan / 2*

If you carry flags, festoons, and pictures in that procession . . . , that will be a great success.

letter to Śyāmasundara dāsa, February 21, 1970

Flags in street Sankirtan / 3*

The flags mentioned above were all painted with the picture of either Garuda or Hanumān, the two great servitors of the Lord.

SB 1.11.13, purport

Flags in street Sankirtan / 4

The flags can be various shapes, colors, and combinations of colors, and sizes. You can paint them with various designs in the shape of tilaka, lotus flowers, conch shells, and other auspicious things.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Using flags in festivals *

In Vedic festivals people often decorate temples, houses, and palaces with flags. When Kāṇṇa visited Satyabhāmā's palace, "She decorated her palace with various flags, heralding the news of her great husband's presence there."

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.14.37, purport), quoted by Indradyumna Swami in Harinama Eva Kevalam

Using Mahā-mantra banners

Mahā-mantra banners are easiest to read from afar when the letters are displayed in bright colors on a dark background, or vice versa. The banner can be supported either by one or two poles. If it is held up on a single pole, one devotee can carry it, thus making it easier for dance choreography. Also, in small harināma parties, more devotees would then be available for singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. The banner should be displayed either in the middle or at the back of the harināma party, never in front, since then it would block the public's view of the devotees, and vice versa.

Indradyumna swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Appearance of nagar sankirtan participants

The sankirtana party should be festive. The devotees should be dressed nicely--no torn dhotis, odd socks or socks with holes. Srila Prabhupada suggested that devotees wear silk turbans on harinama sankirtana (quoted by Jaya Pataka Swami). Yellow bundis (Indian tie-up shirts) kept especially for nagara kirtana parties, can be used by male devotees, both married and unmarried, to give a uniform effect. Ideally, the men should have shaved heads, and certainly should not have stubbly faces. A special touch is using heavy ankle bells specifically made for dancing (available in India).

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

How to dress for a public Kirtan

Devotees should dress respectably on harināma-saikīrtana. Everyone must wear shoes and have tilaka and neck beads. The men should be clean-shaven, and if their head is not

shaved, their hair should be neat. They should wear dhoti and kurtā, and the ladies should wear saris. If possible, the ladies should decorate their faces with gopī dots. These look very attractive and help create a festive atmosphere.

Devotees can also wear flower garlands. In Śrī Caitanya-caritāmata (Madhya 13.30) we read how during the harināma-saikīrtana at the Ratha-yātrā festival, “Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu gathered all His devotees and, with His own hand, decorated them with flower garlands and sandalwood pulp.”

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Kirtan organized as a quality concert

I remember one old letter I read from Prabhupada, that I don't think is even in the haktivedanta Archives. In it, Prabhupada said that we should organize kirtan as a concert in a hall, and people should pay to purchase a ticket to attend. He said there should be a mrdanga, harmonium, tamboura and karatals, and a very nice concert should be performed. Of course, we know he also shed tears of love when he heard George Harrison's musical arrangement for Govindam, that we still hear every morning in an ISKCON temple, to this day, but he was using slide guitar, harp, bass, organ, a full drum kit, etc...

Gaura Dasa, Comment on Dandavats, June 10th, 2007

Loud kirtan turns off visitors

I frequently find myself leaving the temple room because my ears hurt, and sometimes avoid even going if I think it will be loud. This must turn off a lot of casual visitors. Has it become a de facto standard that if you can't play well, play loudly? It seems to.

Madhava Ghosh dasa, Dandavats Comment June 10th, 2007

What is most important in organizing festivals

The main thing is kirtan and prasadam. Srila Prabhupada said many times that first class prasadam should be served. This is more important than even chanting.

Hari Sauri Das to Parasurama Das, November 19, 2007

Kirtan and prasadam is for general public *

Therefore this process is recommended. Caitanya Mahāprabhu argued with Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, Prakasananda Sarasvati, not with ordinary public. Ordinary public—“Go on chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and dancing.” Never argued, neither He discussed Bhāgavatam. For ordinary public—four hours' kīrtana, chanting and dancing, *bas*. And then give them sufficient prasādam:

Room Conversation, October 4, 1975, Mauritius

Prasada and invitations to be distributed freely

There should always be some attractive sweet prasada, preferably in packets, for free distribution. Handbills with the maha-mantra, an invitation to our nearest center, and perhaps a little philosophy, can also be distributed for free. Distributors of books and Back to Godhead magazines should go along with the kirtana party.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The need to renew ISKCON's street sankirtan

ISKCON's daily or weekly harināma-saikīrtana in many parts of the world, however, has not seemed to keep pace with our generally constant expansions of book and prasādam

distribution. The number of devotees who participate in harināma, and the quality of most of the parties, need addressing.

Mukunda Goswami, article, quoted in Harinam Eva Kevalam

Street sankīrtana to be performed in a systematic and organized way

Harināma-saikīrtana parties need not be massive to make a good impression, but because millions of people see them every year, more frequent and better-organized saikīrtana parties will have greater impact and elicit a more positive response from the public. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted saikīrtana to be performed in a systematic and organized way.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Public kirtana to be performed in an attractive manner

Some devotees are of the opinion that the transcendental sound vibration of kṛtana will have a positive effect regardless how it is presented. Whereas it is true that the holy name is transcendental no matter how devotees vibrate it, when kīrtana is performed to attract the attention of the public, it must be presented in a beautiful, organized manner. It is unfortunate when the public does not appreciate the harināma-saikīrtana because it is performed improperly.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Morning program is more important than all-night kirtan

Following Lord Caitanya's example, some devotees like to organize all-night kirtanas. However, this is inevitably followed by missing the morning program. It is better to follow the standard program of hearing and chanting given us by Śrīla Prabhupāda than to introduce a substitute. Long kirtanas may be held in the day so as not to render the participants incapable of taking part in the morning program that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted his followers to attend every day.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Nama-yajna festivals – continuous chanting

Important in Bengali Vaishnava culture are festivals of nonstop chanting that last at least a full day, or three days, or even seven days. Such festivals (known as nama-yajna—“sacrifice of chanting the holy names”—although actually any kirtana is a nama-yajna, not just these festivals) are now sometimes organized in ISKCON centers throughout the world. Such continuous kirtanas are performed by groups of devotees in shifts.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Stay-high-forever kirtanas

In the spirit of Śrīla Prabhupāda's first kirtanas in New York, devotees sometimes organize “Stay High Forever” kirtanas. These consist of chanting only the Hare Kṛṣṇa maha-mantra with only one melody—Prabhupāda's simple tune—for at least three hours. Otherwise it's pull-out-the-stops, hang-up-the-rules. No limitations on types of instruments, changing keys, dancing, etc.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The advantage of long festival kirtanas

Festivals provide good opportunities for devotees to soak themselves in the nectar of kirtana. Festivals are often celebrated with hours and hours of kirtana. At such times, devotees who are generally otherwise engaged can take a deep bath in the holy names.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Nagara kirtana was Lord Caitanya's principal preaching method and devotees should do it as often as possible

... nagara kirtana is of immense value to the devotees who participate and all others who see or hear it. Nagara kirtana was Lord Caitanya's principal preaching method. It is also the best way to keep our movement prominent in the public's minds. Blissful chanting parties show people that our movement is active and alive with the color and joy of Krsna consciousness.

It is essential that nagara kirtana be a regular function of every temple and Nama Hatta group. Nagara kirtana should be held as often as possible with as many devotees as possible. The more devotees present, the better. In important cities like New York, London and Paris, where there are always thousands of visitors from all over the world, the preaching effect of nagara kirtana is immeasurable. Ideally, such cities should have all day, every day chanting parties. It is also nice to go to small towns and villages and to residential area in towns with our kirtana parties, benedict-ing people where they least expect it. But even if devotees go in the same area every day, that is also perfect.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Waves of prema at the Kethuri festival

... The orators' spoke, and the singers sang sweet songs. The expert dancers performed wonderful dances. The different devotees filled the four directions with the ecstatic sounds of the holy name of Krishna, and the glories of the Lord. In this way the four directions were filled with ecstasy...Gauranga Das and the others were the most expert in the assembly gathered in that town of all the different kinds of singing and kirtan, and understood perfectly the different classical modulations of voice, performing music by ear, as well as fixed and unfixed melodies. The sweet and wonderful kirtan of Narottama Thakura with its sweet tune and unique style of voice filled the four directions and the heavens above, causing all the men and women weep to tears of prem, and they all sported in the waves of the Vaikuntha ocean of ecstasy...

biography of Narottama das Thakur / the description of the Great Festival of Kheturi Gram

MISCELLANEOUS

PARAPHERNALIA, SOUND, AMPLIFICATION, ETC...

Defining (San)kirtan (1) *

Kirtana means glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All activities in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement are meant for Kṛṣṇa-kirtana-glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although this glorification takes many forms, kirtana is particularly understood to mean chanting Kṛṣṇa's holy names. This is also called sankirtana. The prefix "san" means "complete" or "in association." So sankirtana means "complete glorification" or "congregational chanting."

Kirtana means alone, and sankirtana means in the assembly of many others.

Lecture October 21, 1974, Mumbai

Defining (San)kirtan (2)*

Sankirtana means when many persons combine together and chant and dance.

Bg lecture April 17, 1974, Mumbai

You may use amplifiers*

Responsive chanting is very nice; one good singer may lead, and the others may join in. That is the system in India. It is very good for two reasons especially: One, the chanter gets to rest, so he does not become tired, and two, you get to chant and hear, that is the process. You may also have melodious accompaniment instruments, and amplifiers. Blowing of the conch shell and horns is very nice.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa and Himāvati dāsī, March 3, 1968

Costumes in street Sankirtan*

The idea of introducing Paica-tattva in the kīrtana party was also contemplated by me. Not only that, we have to prepare different dresses for Rādhā and Kāṇṇa, and Their eight confidential associates, Sakhīs. Sometimes you have to dress somebody as Nasiahadeva and Prahlāda; in this way, we shall have varieties of show along with the kīrtana, and all the varieties will be picked up from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā. We have to teach the brahmacārīs and the brahmacāriṇīs to speak in Sanskrit some of the verses in this connection.

letter to Hamasadūta dāsa, March 4, 1968

Natural Chanting and dancing will unite the world*

If people are simply induced to chant Hare Kāṇṇa mantra . . . Just see. Even a child, he is taking part. It is natural . . . they are dancing and chanting. So this movement is so important. Somehow or other if you can engage them in chanting and dancing, the whole world will be united.

SB lecture, Bombay, December 27, 1974

Chanting should not be done as a show*

If one chants the holy name of the Lord just to make a show, not knowing the secret of success, he may increase his bile secretion, but he will never attain perfection in chanting the holy name.

CC, Ādi-līlā 7.95–96, purport

Voice amplification over loud drumming*

Tamāla Kanna: I wanted to know whether... The person who's singing is Śveta-varāha from Māyāpura. In Māyāpura they use a small microphone, not for the drums but for his voice, and he has a very sweet voice. So normally we don't use mic at all, but sometimes the devotees don't know how to sing very sweetly. Whether we should use a small microphone for his voice?

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Tamāla Kanna: We can try it, and if it's not nice we can stop it.

Prabhupāda: It is going on without microphone?

Tamāla Kanna: The drums are... Right now the drumming is very loud.

Prabhupāda: Oh.

Tamāla Kanna: But the voice is hard to hear. Should I try a little microphone? I can take it off immediately if it's not good. I think you'll...

Bhavānanda: Last year in Māyāpura, Śrīla Prabhupāda, during the festival and before, when you were there, they would, this kīrtana group of your disciples, they would be chanting over microphone so that Your Divine Grace could hear it in your room. I remember you commented many times on how sweet and nice it sounded.

Prabhupāda: It is already very loud.

Room conversation, October 21 1977

Dictionary definitions

Below are dictionary definitions, that indicate that in Bengali these terms are largely interchangeable.

kīrtana: praising; singing aloud in concert; narrating; songs or singing about the cycle of Radha and Krishna.

bhajana: adoration; service; worship; hymn; carol; divine song.

saMkīrtana: chanting of the names of the gods; praising deities in songs; singing hymns.

Definitions in Monier-Williams Sanskrit to English dictionary do not specifically indicate song.

KSC pamho conf, Date ?, Sender?

Defining Kirtan and Bhajan

KIRTAN - Congregational chanting of the glories of the lord for all to hear. Sung loudly whilst standing usually accompanied by musical instruments and dancing

BHAJAN - Singing the glories of the Lord, especially songs of the vaisnava acaryas. Sung melodiously whilst sitting and accompanied by musical instruments

Hari Sauri Prabhu to KSC pamho conf, Date?

Amplified response

I was personally stopped by Srila Prabhupada in 1975 for singing the refrain over the microphone while I was leading a midday arati in the Krishna Balarama Mandir. He heard me from his rooms and sent Upendra, who was his servant at that time, to tell me to stop

singing continuously over the microphone. He said only the lead should be amplified, not the response.

Hari Sauri Das to Candrasekar Acarya Das (1), Date? / The lead singer should not singing the response (in connection to Mayapur brahmacaris leading kirtan – one leading, the other chanting the response in the microphone)

Amplified response (2)

I don't know if Srila Prabhupada ever said two people can chant in the mike though. Sometimes when a large public is present and few devotees the devotees response might not be heard and a follow up kirtan singer may make the holy name more audible to the guests. Also I never have trouble hearing myself during kirtan even if someone is chanting. However since some seem to find it disturbing we can have this standard when mainly devotees are present to respond. but say at noon arotik when few devotees are present i don't see any problem with a response singer.

Jayapataka Swami to Candrasekar Acarya Das, Date ? / The lead singer should not singing the response (in connection to Mayapur brahmacaris leading kirtan – one leading, the other chanting the response in the microphone)

Amplified response (3)

The one incident that I personally experienced with Srila Prabhupada was when I was singing the noon arati at the Krishna Balarama mandir in Vrindavan, sometime during Sept. of 1975, before I became Srila Prabhupada's servant. I was the temple commander. I was leading the kirtan over the microphone, and because there were very few other devotees attending, I was also singing the refrain over the microphone. After a few minutes Upendra, who was Srila Prabhupada servant then, came into the temple room and told me, "Srila Prabhupada doesn't like you singing the response over the microphone. Just sing the lead but not the response." It was clear that he didn't like the continuous use of the microphone.

Hari Sauri Das to Candrasekar Acarya Das (2), Date? / Prabhupada not wanting the leader to sing the response / The lead singer should not singing the response (in connection to Mayapur brahmacaris leading kirtan – one leading, the other chanting the response in the microphone)

Sound system in a street Sankirtan

A good sound system is important to pierce the noise of big cities. On small harināma parties the sound system is important so that the public can hear the chanting, and on large parties the sound system is also important so that the devotees at the back of the procession, as well as the public, will be able to hear the leader.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

How to dress for a public Kirtan

Devotees should dress respectably on harināma-saikīrtana. Everyone must wear shoes and have tilaka and neck beads. The men should be clean-shaven, and if their head is not shaved, their hair should be neat. They should wear dhoti and kurtā, and the ladies should wear saris. If possible, the ladies should decorate their faces with gopī dots. These look very attractive and help create a festive atmosphere.

Devotees can also wear flower garlands. In Śrī Caitanya-caritāmata (Madhya 13.30) we read how during the harināma-saikīrtana at the Ratha-yātrā festival, “Śrī Caitanya

Mahāprabhu gathered all His devotees and, with His own hand, decorated them with flower garlands and sandalwood pulp.”

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Children dancing in street harinam

Furthermore, if older devotees dance with the children hand in hand in a circle, it is easy for children from the public to join in. And from that point it is easier to get adults to join in as well. If the kīrtana progresses in this way, it is even possible to have a group of twenty, thirty, or forty people dancing and chanting with the kīrtana.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

The procession and dancing in the streets

The procession should be formed in two orderly lines so pedestrians may pass by unobstructed. When the group is large and there is room on the sidewalk, it may be necessary to form more lines. In addition, the saikīrtana leader and one or more assistants may need to direct traffic so the procession runs smoothly.

A saikīrtana procession moving in orderly lines looks attractive and is also fun. Sometimes the two lines may separate from each other, turn back in the opposite direction, and then meet again and continue down the street. If the footpath becomes too narrow for pedestrians to pass the party comfortably, the two lines of the harināma party should merge and form a single line. It is important that the devotees not block the entire sidewalk, forcing pedestrians into the street or onto the grass.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinam Eva Kevalam

Dancing in public

In standing and dancing harināma-saikīrtana, it is important that the devotees dance together facing the public. Sometimes devotees dance with their backs to the public. This is not good. The purpose of harināma, as Śrīla Prabhupāda said, is to “Induce the people to chant, that is the only thing.”

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam (quoting letter to Kīrtirāja dāsa, January 11, 1976)

Prabhupada requesting not using amplification

For more than a month, Prabhupada has had to ask daily that devotees not use the microphone for performing kirtana: "They think that their voice becomes sweet from using it. Actually, they sound exactly like a raksasa."

TKG's Diary, page 149

APPENDIX I

GENERAL GUIDELINES ON SANKIRTAN

We are simply sankirtan men*

Regarding your question of dancing-show, whatever it may be, it may not deviate from the real Krishna Consciousness program. We are Hari Kirtana men, that's all. We can attract people by some gorgeous show, but inside there must be strict purity and seriousness, otherwise, we shall be attracted by the gorgeous show only. There are two energies always working simultaneously, and Maya means when we diminish the spiritual energy, then automatically we become attracted to the external dress of Maya. So I do not care very much for these plays and dramas unless they are coming directly from the Vedas. If we can recite from Bhagavad gita the first chapter without any need for elaborate scenery or stage-props and gorgeous dresses, that is best. Just like your Shakespeare. Macbeth may be recited by two men, without anything else, and simply by their acting ability and the meaningful words alone, they can very easily capture the entire audience and give them real substance. We have so many stories, like Jagai-Madhai, Krishna departing for Mathura, like that. Satire will not help us. Our message is very grave, and because it is the Absolute Truth, it will work without any artificial presentation.

Because they heard of our program in Bombay along with the Zavery sisters Manipuri Dancers, here in London they had arranged one program of lecturing by me along with a recital by one man playing on the vina just to attract attention to my speaking. I am not in approval of such arrangements, and it will be dangerous thing in future if we begin this type of program just to attract the masses. Already I see this happening practically all over the Society, so better we stop it now and get ourselves firmly on the track chalked out for us by Lord Caitanya. We are simply Sankirtana men, our program is chanting, dancing, distributing prasadam, and speaking high philosophy, that's all

Letter to Madhudvisa, 8 July, 1972

Srimad Bhagavatam announces Mahaprabhu's sankirtan

This (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.13.23) is the final verse of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which is the cream of the Vedas. This verse is therefore the vedānta, the culmination of all the Vedas. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam ends by setting the scene for the appearance of the yuga-avatāra, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and His inauguration of the saikīrtana movement.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Srila Prabhupada fulfilling Mahaprabhu's prediction

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu predicted, pathivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma/ sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma—the chanting of the holy name will spread to every town and village of the world. This prediction is coming true due to the efforts of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's most dear servant, His Divine Grace Oa Vinṇupāda Paramahaasa Parivrājakācārya

Anṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. To achieve this end Śrīla Prabhupāda, who is most expert in pleasing his spiritual master, formed the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Indradyumna Swami, Harinama Eva Kevalam

Sankirtan is a must*

To emphasize something to an ordinary person, one may repeat it three times, just as one might say, ‘You must do this! You must do this! You must do this!’ Thus the Bahan nārāḍīya Purāṇa repeatedly emphasizes the chanting of the holy name so that people may take it seriously and thus free themselves from the clutches of māyā.

CC. Ādi 17.23, purport

Street Sankirtan parties should be organize according to time and men*

If many men join the saikīrtana movement, they may follow in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and form different parties according to the time and the number of men available.

CC Ādi-līlā 17.135, purport

Krishna Consciousness movement is based on chanting...*

The Kāṇṇa consciousness movement is based on this principle: chant the Hare Kāṇṇa mantra at every moment, as much as possible . . . and, as far as possible, distribute prasādam . . . Simply by liberal distribution of prasādam and saikīrtana, the whole world can become peaceful and prosperous.

SB 4.12.10

Simple preaching and sankirtana*

So preach like this, very simply, and hold saikīrtana widely all over the city, and distribute prasādam profusely, especially to the young people and the students, and everything will be increasingly successful more and more.

letter to Dānavīr dāsa, August 2, 1972

The definition of (San)Kirtana

Kirtana means glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All activities in the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement are meant for Kṛṣṇa-kirtana—glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although this glorification takes many forms, kirtana is particularly understood to mean chanting Kṛṣṇa’s holy names. This is also called sankirtana. The prefix “san” means “complete” or “in association.” So sankirtana means “complete glorification” or “congregational chanting.”

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

Kirtan as Vaisnava culture

Kirtana is central to Gaudiya Vaisnava culture. Many of Lord Caitanya’s associates, such as Svarupa Damodara, Sanjaya, Mukunda and Vasudeva Ghosa, and Paramananda Kirtaniya, were reputed singers and musicians. The Gaudiya Vaisnavas have composed thousands of songs in praise of the name, fame, form, qualities, pastimes and associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. Acaryas such as Narottama Dasa Thakura and others developed the

science of kirtana to perfectly express rasa through music, and thus transport the participants and hearers to the ecstasy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtan

All should understand the basic points of Kirtana

Fortunately, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave guidelines for standardizing the content and style of our kirtanas. As ISKCON is an international society, and kirtana is our most important activity, it is important that these points be known and followed so that the manner of performing kirtana can be more or less the same in all our centers, and to prevent speculation. Although some variation in style is inevitable, there should be a general standard. The basic points, such as singing the correct tune in mangala-arati and not introducing speculative chants, should be known and followed by all devotees.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

The importance of being acquainted with the wealth of Vaisnava songs

The Gaudiya Vaisnava heritage is rich with song. Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas, the popular songbook of ISKCON, has but a few of the many bhajanas composed by our acaryas. It would be nice if our devotees could become acquainted with this wealth left to us by our preceptors. These songs contain, in most beautiful poetic language, all instruction in philosophy, devotional practice and attainment of the ultimate goal of life. Singing these bhajanas is an important devotional practice. It is an inherent part of our Vaisnava tradition and should be taken up seriously by ISKCON devotees. At least if our devotees learn the songs in Songs of the Vaisnava Acaryas, that will be a great cultural and spiritual asset for them.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

24-hour kirtan in ISKCON centres

Śrīla Prabhupāda's instituted continuous nonstop chanting—permanent 24 hour kirtanas—in his Mayapura and Vrndavana temples. Sometimes in other centers also, continuous kirtanas are held for some days, especially if devotees wish invoke the Supreme Lord's protection from a certain danger or inauspiciousness that has arisen. It would be wonderful to have continuous chanting in all ISKCON centers, but lack of manpower may render it impractical in most, as noted by Śrīla Prabhupāda

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana / quoting Letter to Bali Mardana, 5. september, 1974

The terminology of Nagara-sankirtan, Harinam-sankirtan etc

Nagara kirtana means public group chanting (nagara means "town"). In our movement, public chanting is often called harinama, an abbreviation of harinama sankirtana. This abbreviation was introduced to distinguish public chanting from book distribution. Book distribution is also called sankirtana, which it certainly is, but the generally accepted usage of the word sankirtana in Gaudiya Vaisnava parlance is "group chanting". To call public chanting harinama is also misleading, because harinama simply means "the name of God", and does not specifically refer to public chanting. Thus it is better to use the Bengali term nagara kirtana, or nagara sankirtana.

Bhakti Vikasa Swami, Kirtana

Prabhupada's general instructions on which songs and tunes to sing

He then went on to specifically describe how kirtana should be done.

- A. For mangala aratika: the samsara-dava prayer, then Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra, nothing else.
- B. For the guru-puja: the "guru-prayer" (that's what he called it) Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), then Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra, nothing else.
- C. For evening aratika: the gaura aratika song, Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra), and Hare Kṛṣṇa mahamantra, nothing else.
- D. For all aratikas this basic pattern should be followed. The chanting of sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (panca tattva maha mantra) should only be for three times, not more.
- E. No one should sing a bhajana unless all the devotees know what the song means. No one should sing songs in Vrindavan temple that are in languages which the people do not understand. Yasomati-nandana may be sung since the people understand that
- Danavir Goswami, On chanting

Application of Srila Prabhupada's mood / understanding in kirtana / SRS

These two different aspects of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on chanting—the strict and the more lenient—must be synthesized in order to judiciously distinguish chanting that is acceptable to His Divine Grace from that which is not. Such synthesis is possible when we extract the underlying principles upon which Śrīla Prabhupāda based both sets of instructions. I suggest the following as a rough version of those basic principles:

- 1) Devotees should not sing mantras which they have formulated or changed without first receiving authorization from Śrīla Prabhupāda (or his representative, the GBC body).
- 2) In kīrtana devotees should almost exclusively chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, and that chanting should be preceded by a brief chanting of the Paica-tattva mahā-mantra (3 times).
- 3) Other authorized mantras—"nitāi-gaura haribol" and "jaya sacināndana," as well as the names of the deities before whom the kīrtana is taking place—may be chanted, but not in a way that such chanting takes prominence over the time in which the two mahā-mantras are chanted.
- 4) Authorized songs like Jaya Rādhā Mādhava may also be chanted, but (aside from mangala āraṭi and gaura āraṭi) they should only take up a small fraction of the kīrtana, the rest of the time being devoted to chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

The music and dancing that accompanies the singing should not be artificial, it should be spontaneous, and it should invoke the mood and philosophy of pure devotion in keeping with the dignity of Gauoīya Vainṇavism.

Sivarama Swami, Authorised Kirtana / Correspondence with Hari Sauri Dasa

APPENDIX II

IMPORTANT VERSES ON THE GLORIES OF THE HOLY NAME

The Holy Name Is the Universal and Supreme Religion for this Age

harer nāma harer nāma
harer nāmaiva kevalam
kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva
nāsty eva gatir anyathā

[Adi 17.21]

“In this age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual progress than the holy name, the holy name, the holy name of the Lord.”

Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.76]

klīṇa-varṇaḥ tviṅāklīṇaḥ
sāṅgopāṅgāstra-pārṇadam
yajdaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair
yajanti hi su-medhasaḥ

[SB 11.5.32]

[Karabhājana to Mahārāja Nimi]:

“In the age of Kali, intelligent persons perform congregational chanting to worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly sings the name of Kṛṇa. Although His complexion is not blackish, He is Kṛṇa Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.32 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 20.10]

hare kṛṇa hare kṛṇa kṛṇa kṛṇa hare hare
hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare
iti ṅoṅśakaḥ nāmnāḥ kali-kalmaṅa-nāsanam
nātaḥ parataropāyaḥ sarva-vedeṅu dīsyate

“Hare Kṛṇa, Hare Kṛṇa, Kṛṇa Kṛṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—these sixteen names composed of thirty-two syllables are the only means to counteract the evil effects of Kali-yuga. In all the Vedas it is seen that to cross the ocean of nescience there is no alternative to the chanting of the holy name.”

Kalisantarāṇa Upaniṅad [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.76 transliteration given: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 3.40]

kaler doña-nidhe rājann
asti hy eko mahān guṇau
kīrtanād eva kīrṇasya
mukta-saṅgau paraṅ vrajet

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīksit]:

“My dear King, although Kali-yuga is full of faults, there is still one good quality about this age. It is that simply by chanting the Hare Kīrṇa mahā-mantra, one can become free from material bondage and be promoted to the transcendental kingdom.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.51 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 20.344]

kīte yad dhyāyato viṇṇuṅ
tretāyār yajato makhaiṅ
dvāpare paricaryāyār
kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṣit]:

“Whatever result was obtained in Satya-yuga by meditating on Viṇṇu, in Tretā-yuga by performing sacrifices and in Dvāpara-yuga by serving the Lord's lotus feet can also be obtained in Kali-yuga simply by chanting the Hare Kīrṇa mahā-mantra.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 12.3.52 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 20.345]

dhyāyan kīte yajan yajḍais
tretāyār dvāpare ṛcayan
yad āpnoti tad āpnoti
kalau saḅkīrtya keśavam

“Whatever is achieved by meditation in Satya-yuga, by performance of yajḍa in Tretā-yuga or by the worship of Kīrṇa's lotus feet in Dvāpara-yuga is also obtained in the age of Kali simply by chanting and glorifying Lord Keśava.”

Viṇṇu Purāṇa (6.2.17), Padma Purāṇa (Uttara-khaṇḅa 72.25) and Bīhan-nārādīya Purāṇa (38.97) [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 20.346]

dvāparīyair janair viṇṇuṅ
paḍcarātrais tu kevalaiṅ
kalau tu nāma-mātreṇa
pūjyate bhagavān hariṅ

“In the Dvāpara-yuga one could satisfy Kīrṇa or Viṇṇu only by worshiping opulently according to the paḍcarātrikī system; but in the age of Kali, one can satisfy and worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead Hari simply by chanting His holy name.”

Nārāyaṇa-saḅhitā (quoted by Śrīla Madhvācārya in his commentary on Muṇḅaka Upaniḅad) [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 7.12]

kalīṅ sabhājayanty āryā

guṇa jḍ'āũ sāra-bhāginaũ
yatra saëkīrtanenaiva
sarva-svārtho 'bhilabhyate

[Karabhājana Śrī to Mahārāja Nimi]:

“Those who are advanced and highly qualified and are interested in the essence of life know the good qualities of Kali-yuga. Such people worship the age of Kali because in this age, simply by chanting the Hare Kīrṇa mahā-mantra one can advance in spiritual knowledge and attain life’s goal.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.36 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Madhya-līlā 20.347]

nāma vinu kali-kāle nāhi āra dharma
sarva-mantra-sāra nāma, ei śāstra-marma

[Īśvara Purī to Lord Caitanya]:

“In this age of Kali there is no other religious principle than the chanting of the holy name, which is the essence of all Vedic hymns. This is the purport of all scriptures.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Ādi-līlā 7.74

etāvān eva loke 'smin
puśśār dharmaũ paraũ smītaũ
bhakti-yogo bhagavati
tan-nāma-grahaṇādibhiũ

[Yamarāja to the Yamadutas]:

“Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.22

etan nirvidyamānānām
icchatām akuto-bhayam
yoginār nīpa nirṇītar
harer nāmānukīrtanam

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṇit]:

“O King, constant chanting of the holy name of the Lord after the ways of the great authorities is the doubtless and fearless way of success for all, including those who are free from all material desires, those who are desirous of all material enjoyment, and also those who are self-satisfied by dint of transcendental knowledge.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.1.11

tattva-vastu—kīrṇa, kīrṇa-bhakti, prema-rūpa
nāma-saëkīrtana—saba ānanda-svarūpa

“The Absolute Truth is Śrī Kīrṇa, and loving devotion to Śrī Kīrṇa exhibited in pure love is achieved through congregational chanting of the holy name, which is the essence of all bliss.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Ādi-līlā 1.96

iti mūrty-abhidhānena
mantra-mūrtim amūrtikam
yajate yajḍa-puruṅar
sa samyag darṣanaṁ pumān

[Nārada Muni to Vyāsadeva]:

“Thus he is the actual seer who worships, in the form of transcendental sound representation, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, who has no material form.”
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.38

The Transcendental Attributes and Effects of the Holy Name

ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanaṁ bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇaṁ
śreyaṁ-kairava-candrikā-vitarāṇaṁ vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam
ānandāmbudhi-vardhanaṁ prati-padaṁ pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanaṁ
sarvātma-snapanaṁ paraṁ vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saḍkīrtanam

[Cc. Antya 20.12]

“Let there be all victory for the chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which can cleanse the mirror of the heart and stop the-miseries of the blazing fire of material existence. That chanting is the waxing moon that spreads the white lotus of good fortune for all living entities. It is the life and soul of all education. The chanting of the holy name of Kṣṇa expands the blissful ocean of transcendental life. It gives a cooling effect to everyone and enables one to taste full nectar at every step.”

Śrī Śrī Śikṣāṅṭaka (verse 1), by Lord Caitanya [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 20.12]

nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatrārpitā niyamitāṁ smarāṇe na kālaṁ
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mamāpi
durdaivam idṛśam ihājani nānurāgaṁ

“My Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, in Your holy name there is all good fortune for the living entity, and therefore You have many names, such as Kṛṣṇa and Govinda, by which You expand Yourself. You have invested all Your potencies in those names, and there are no hard and fast rules for remembering them. My dear Lord, although You bestow such mercy upon the fallen, conditioned souls by liberally teaching Your holy names, I am so unfortunate that I commit offenses while chanting the holy name, and therefore I do not achieve attachment for chanting.”

Śrī Śrī Śikṣāṅṭaka (verse 1), by Lord Caitanya [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 20.16]

ākṛṣṭiṁ kṛta-cetasāṁ sumanasām uccāṭanaṁ cārhasām
ācaṅṅālam amūka-loka-sulabho vaśyaś ca mukti-śriyaṁ
no dikṣar na ca sat-kriyār na ca puraścaryār manāg ikṣate
mantro 'yar rasanā-splḡ eva phalati śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmātmakaṁ

“The holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa is an attractive feature for many saintly, liberal people. It is the annihilator of all sinful reactions and is so powerful that save for the dumb who cannot chant it, it is readily available to everyone, including the lowest type of man, the caṅḡāla. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the controller of the opulence of liberation, and it is identical with Kṛṣṇa. Simply by touching the holy name with one’s tongue, immediate effects are produced. Chanting the holy name does not depend on initiation, pious activities or the puraścaryā regulative principles generally observed before initiation. The holy name does not wait for all these activities. It is self-sufficient.”

Padyāvalī (29), by Rūpa Gosvāmī [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.110]

nāma cintāmaṇiṁ kṛṣṇaś
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaṁ
pūrṇaṁ śuddho nitya-mukto
’bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoṁ

“The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is transcendently blissful. It bestows all spiritual benedictions, for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa’s name is complete, and it is the form of all transcendental mellows. It is not a material name under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Since Kṛṣṇa’s name is not contaminated by the material qualities, there is no question of its being involved with māyā. Kṛṣṇa’s name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical.”

Padma Purāṇa [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.133]

jayati jayati nāmānanda-rūpa’ murārer
viramita-nija-dharma-dhyāna-pūjādi-yatnam
kathamapi sakīd-ātta’ muktida’ prāṇinā’ yat
paramam amṛtam eka’ jivana’ bhūṣaṇa’ me

“All glories, all glories to the all-blissful holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which causes the devotee to give up all conventional religious duties, meditation and worship. When somehow or other uttered even once by a living entity, the holy name awards him liberation. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the highest nectar. It is my very life and my only treasure.”

Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta (1.9), by Sanātana Gosvāmī [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.71]

nikhila-śruti-mauli-ratna-mālā-
dyuti-nīrājita-pāda-paḡkajānta
ayi mukta-kulair upāsyamāna’
paritas tvā’ hari-nāma saśrayāmi

“O Hari-nāma! The tips of the toes of Your lotus feet are constantly being worshiped by the glowing radiance emanating from the string of gems known as the Upaniśads, the crown jewels of all the Vedas. You are eternally adored by liberated souls such as Nārada and Śukadeva. O Hari-nāma! I take complete shelter of You.”

Nāmāṅṡaka (verse 1), by Rūpa Gosvāmī [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.71]

trayo vedāũ náñ-aëgāni
chandārsi vividhāũ surāũ
sarvam añṭākñarāntaũsthañ
yac cānyad api vāë-mayam
sarva-vedānta-sārārthaũ
sañsārārñava-tārañaũ

“The essence of all Vedic knowledge—comprehending the three kinds of Vedic activity [karma-kāñña, jñāna-kāñña and upāsanā-kāñña], the chandaũ or Vedic hymns, and the processes for satisfying the demigods—is included in the eight syllables Hare Kīñña, Hare Kīñña. This is the reality of all Vedānta. The chanting of the holy name is the only means to cross the ocean of nescience.”

Nārada-padcarātra [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Ādi-līlā 7.76]

tañ nirvyājañ bhaja guña-nidhe pāvanañ pāvanānāñ
śraddhā-rajyan-matir atitarām uttamaũ-śloka-maulim
prodyann antaũ-karaña-kuhare hanta yan-nāma-bhānor
ābhāso `pi kñapayati mahā-pāataka-dhvānta-rāsim

“O reservoir of all good qualities, just worship Śrī Kīñña, the purifier of all purifiers, the most exalted of the personalities worshiped by choice poetry. Worship Him with a faithful, unflinching mind, without duplicity and in a highly elevated manner. Thus worship the Lord, whose name is like the sun, for just as a slight appearance of the sun dissipates the darkness of night, so a slight appearance of the holy name of Kīñña can drive away all the darkness of ignorance that arises in the heart due to greatly sinful activities performed in previous lives.”

Bhakti-rasāmīta-sindhu (2.1.103), by Rūpa Gosvāmī [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Antya-līlā 3.62]

nāmno hi yāvatī śa
pāpa-nirharañe hareũ
tāvat kartuñ na śaknoti
pātaakañ pātakī naraũ

“Simply by chanting one holy name of Hari, a sinful man can counteract the reactions to more sins than he is able to commit.”

Bīhad- Viññu Purāña [cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.7]

avaśenāpi yan-nāmni
kīrtite sarva-pātakaiũ
pumān vimucyate sadyaũ
siñha-trastair mīlgair iva

“If one chants the holy name of the Lord, even in a helpless condition or without desiring to do so, all the reactions of his sinful life depart, just as when a lion roars, all the small animals flee in fear.”

Garuda Purāña [cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.7]

“My dear King, this word ‘Kīñña’ is so auspicious that anyone who chants this holy name immediately gets rid of the resultant actions of sinful activities from many, many births.”

Viññu-dharma [cited: The Nectar of Devotion]

‘eka’ kīṛṇa-nāme kare sarva-pāpa nāśa
premera kāraṇa bhakti karena prakāśa

“Simply chanting the Hare Kīṛṇa mahā-mantra without offenses vanquishes all sinful activities. Thus pure devotional service, which is the cause of love of Godhead, becomes manifest.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 8.26

āpannaṁ saśśīṭīṛ ghorār
yan-nāma vivaśo gīṇan
tataṁ sadyo vimucyeta
yad bibheti svayaṛ bhayam

[The sages at Naimiṇāraṇya to Sūta Gosvāmī]:

“Living beings who are entangled in the complicated meshes of birth and death can be freed immediately by even unconsciously chanting the holy name of Kīṛṇa, which is feared by fear personified.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.14

sakīd uccāritaṛ yena
harir ity akīra-dvayam
baddha-parikaras tena
mokṇāya gamanaṛ prati

“By once chanting the holy name of the Lord, which consists of the two syllables ha-ri, one guarantees his path to liberation.”

Skanda Purāṇa [cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.7]

“For any person who is chanting the holy name either softly or loudly, the paths to liberation and even heavenly happiness are at once open.”

Padma Purāṇa [cited: The Nectar of Devotion]

kīṛṇa-mantra haite habe saśśāra-mocana
kīṛṇa-nāma haite pābe kīṛṇera caraṇa

[Īśvara Purī to Lord Caitanya]: “Simply by chanting the holy name of Kīṛṇa, one can obtain freedom from material existence. Indeed, simply by chanting the Hare Kīṛṇa mantra one will be able to see the lotus feet of the Lord.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.73

tāra madhye sarva-śreṇṭha nāma-saṅkīrtana
niraparādhe nāma laile pāya prema-dhana

[Lord Caitanya to Sanātana Gosvāmī]: “Of the nine processes of devotional service, the most important is to always chant the holy name of the Lord. If one does so, avoiding the ten kinds of offenses, one very easily obtains the most valuable love of Godhead.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.71

kl̥īṇa-ādi, āra yata sthāvara-jaḅgame
kl̥īṇa-preme matta kare kl̥īṇa-saḅkirtane

“The holy name of Kl̥īṇa is so attractive that anyone who chants it—including all living entities, moving and nonmoving, and even Lord Kl̥īṇa Himself—becomes imbued with love of Kl̥īṇa. This is the effect of chanting the Hare Kl̥īṇa mahā-mantra.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-lilā 3.268

anāyāse bhava-kṛāya, kl̥īṇera sevana
eka kl̥īṇa-nāmera phale pāi eta dhana

“As a result of chanting the Hare Kl̥īṇa mahā-mantra, one makes such great advancement in spiritual life that simultaneously his material existence terminates and he receives love of Godhead. The holy name of Kl̥īṇa is so powerful that by chanting even one name, one very easily achieves these transcendental riches.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-lilā 8.28

saḅkirtana haite pāpa-saḅsāra-nāśana
citta-śuddhi, sarva-bhakti-sādhana-udgama
kl̥īṇa-premodgama, premāmṛta-āsvādana
kl̥īṇa-prāpti, sevāmṛta-samudre majjana

[Lord Caitanya to Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāmānanda Rāya]:

“By performing congregational chanting of the Hare Kl̥īṇa mantra, one can destroy the sinful condition of material existence, purify the unclean heart and awaken all varieties of devotional service. The result of chanting is that one awakens his love for Kl̥īṇa and tastes transcendental bliss. Ultimately, one attains the association of Kl̥īṇa and engages in His devotional service, as if immersing himself in a great ocean of love.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-lilā 20.13–14

kl̥īṇa-nāma-mahā-mantrera ei ta' svabhāva
yei jape, tāra kl̥īṇe upajaye bhāva

[Īśvara Purī to Lord Caitanya]:

“It is the nature of the Hare Kl̥īṇa mahā-mantra that anyone who chants it immediately develops his loving ecstasy for Kl̥īṇa.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-lilā 7.83

evaḁ-vrataū sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā
jātānurāgo druta-citta uccaiū
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty
unmāda-van nītyati loka-bāhyaū

[Kavi to Mahārāja Nimi]:

“When a person is actually advanced and takes pleasure in chanting the holy name of the Lord, who is very dear to him, he is agitated and loudly chants the holy name. He also laughs, cries, becomes agitated and chants just like a madman, not caring for outsiders.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.40 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-lilā 9.262]

nayanaś galad-aśru-dhārayā
vadaṇaś gadgada-ruddhayā girā
pulaḱair nicitaś vapuḥ kadā,
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṇyati

“My dear Lord, when will My eyes be beautified by filling with tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name? When will My voice falter and all the hairs on My body stand erect in transcendental happiness as I chant Your holy name?”

Śrī Śrī Śikṣāntaka (verse 6), by Lord Caitanya [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 20.36]

tuṅṅhe tāṅṅavinī ratiś vitanute tuṅṅāvalī-labdhaye
kaṇa-kroṅa-kaṅambinī ghaṭayate kaṅārbudebhyaḥ spṛhām
cetaḥ-prāḗgaṇa-saḗginī vijayate sarvendriyaṅaś kṛtiś
no jāne janitā kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ kṛṅṅeti varṇa-dvayī

“I do not know how much nectar the two syllables ‘Kṛṅṅa’ have produced. When the holy name of Kṛṅṅa is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.”

Vidagdha-mādhava (1.15), by Rūpa Gosvāmī [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 1.99]

mriyamāṇo harer nāma
gṛṅṅan putropacāritam
ajāmilo ’py agād dhāma
kim uta śraddhayā gṛṅṅan

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṣit]:

“While suffering at the time of death, Ajāmila chanted the holy name of the Lord, and although the chanting was directed toward his son, he nevertheless returned home, back to Godhead. Therefore if one faithfully and inoffensively chants the holy name of the Lord, where is the doubt that he will return to Godhead?”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.49

ataḥ śrī-kṛṅṅa-nāmādi
na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ
sevonmukhe hi jihvādau
svayam eva sphuraty adaḥ

[BRS. 1.2.234]

“Therefore material senses cannot appreciate Kṛṅṅa’s holy name, form, qualities and pastimes. When a conditioned soul is awakened to Kṛṅṅa consciousness and renders service by using his tongue to chant the Lord’s holy name and taste the remnants of the Lord’s food, the tongue is purified, and one gradually comes to understand who Kṛṅṅa really is.”

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.234), by Rūpa Gosvāmī [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.136]

syāt kṛīṇa-nāma-caritādi-sitāpy avidyā-
pittopatapta-rasanasya na rocikā nu
kintv ādarād anudinaḥ khalu saiva juṅṭā
svādvī kramād bhavati tad-gada-mūla-hantrī

“The holy name, character, pastimes and activities of Kṛīṇa are all transcendently sweet like sugar candy. Although the tongue of one afflicted by the jaundice of avidyā, ignorance, cannot taste anything sweet, it is wonderful that simply by carefully chanting these sweet names every day, a natural relish awakens within his tongue, and his disease is gradually destroyed at the root.”

The Nectar of Instruction, Text 7

‘kāḥhāra smaraṇa jīva karibe anukṛāṇa?’
‘kṛīṇa-nāma-guṇa-līlā—pradhāna smaraṇa’

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked, “What should all living entities constantly remember?” Rāmānanda Rāya replied, “The chief object of remembrance is always the holy name of the Lord, His qualities and pastimes.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.252

yasya smṛtyā ca nāmoktyā
tapo-yajḍa-kriyādiṇu
nūnaḥ sampūrṇatām eti
sadyo vande tam acyutam

“I offer my obeisances unto Him, the infallible, because simply by either remembering Him or vibrating His holy name one can attain the perfection of all penances, sacrifices or fruitive activities, and this process can be universally followed.”

Skanda Purāna [cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.36]

yan-nāmadheya-śravaṇānukīrtanād
yat-prahvaṇād yat-smaraṇād api kvacit
śvādo ’pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate
kutaḥ punas te bhagavan nu darśanāt

[Devahuti to Lord Kapila]:

“To say nothing of the spiritual advancement of persons who see the Supreme Person face to face, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices if he once utters the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or chants about Him, hears about His pastimes, offers Him obeisances or even remembers Him.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.6

aho bata śva-paco ’to garīyān
yaj-jihvāgre vartate nāma tubhyam

tepus tapas te juhuvuṁṁ sasnur āryā
brahmānūcur nāma gṛṇanti ye te

[SB 3.33.7]

[Devahūti to Lord Kapila]:

“Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your holy name! Even if born in the families of dog-eaters, such persons are worshipable. Persons who chant the holy name of Your Lordship must have executed all kinds of austerities and fire sacrifices and achieved all the good manners of the Āryans. To be chanting the holy name of Your Lordship, they must have bathed at holy places of pilgrimage, studied the Vedas and fulfilled everything required.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.7

rāma rāmeti rāmeti
rame rāme manorame
sahasra-nāmaḥ tulyaś
rāma-nāma varānane

[Lord Śiva to his wife, Durgā]:

“I chant the holy name of Rāma, Rāma, Rāma and thus enjoy this beautiful sound. This holy name of Rāmacandra is equal to one thousand holy names of Lord Viṣṇu.”

Bṛhad-Viṣṇu-sahasranāma-stotra, 72.335 (from Padma Purāṇa, Uttara-khaṇḍa) [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.32]

sahasra-nāmnāḥ puṇyānāḥ
trir-āvṛtṭyā tu yat phalam
ekāvṛtṭyā tu klīṇasya
nāmaikaḥ tat prayacchati

“The pious results derived from chanting the thousand holy names of Viṣṇu three times can be attained by only one repetition of the holy name of Klīṇa.”

Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa (quoted in Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta, 1.354, by Rūpa Gosvāmī) [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.33]

The Practice of the Holy Name

tīṇād api sunīcena
taror api sahiṇṇunā
amāninā mānadena
kīrtanīyaṁ sadā hariṁ

[Cc. adi 17.31]

“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 respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly.”

Śrī Śrī Śikṣāṅṅaka (verse 3), by Lord Caitanya, Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 20.21
[cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 3.207]

bahu janma kare yadi śravaṇa, kīrtana
tabu ta' nā pāya kīṛṇa-pade prema-dhana

“If one is infested with the ten offenses in the chanting of the Hare Kīṛṇa mahā-mantra, despite his endeavor to chant the holy name for many births, he will not get the love of Godhead which is the ultimate goal of this chanting.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 8.16

nāmāparādha-yuktānār
nāmāny eva haranty agham
aviśrānti-prayuktāni
tāny evārtha-karāṇi ca

[Even if in the beginning one chants the Hare Kīṛṇa mantra with offenses, one will become free from such offenses by chanting again and again.]

Padma Purāṇa [cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.24]

tad āsma-sāraḥ hīdayaḥ batedaḥ
yad gl̥hyamāṇair hari-nāma-dheyaiḥ
na vikriyetaṭha yadā vikāro
netre jalaḥ gātra-ruheṇu harṇau

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Mahārāja Parīkṣit]:

“If one’s heart does not change, tears do not flow from his eyes, his body does not shiver, nor his hairs stand on end as he chants the Hare Kīṛṇa mahā-mantra, it should be understood that his heart is as hard as iron. This is due to his offenses at the lotus feet of the Lord’s holy name.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.24 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 8.25]

duḥṭa mana! tumi kisera vaiṇṇava?
pratiṅṭhāra tare, nirjanera ghare,
tava hari-nāma kevala kaitava

“My dear mind, what kind of devotee are you? Simply for cheap adoration you sit in a solitary place and pretend to chant the Hare Kīṛṇa mahā-mantra, but this is all cheating.”

Song by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura [cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.33]

The Propagation of the Holy Name

pṭhivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma
sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma

[Lord Caitanya]:

“In every town and village, the chanting of My name will be heard.”

Caitanya-bhāgavata, by Vīndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 25.264]

kali-kālera dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana
kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nāhe tāra pravartana

“The fundamental religious system in the age of Kali is the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. Unless empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot propagate the saṅkīrtana movement.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 7.11

nāca, gāo, bhakta-saṅge kara saṅkīrtana
kṛṣṇa-nāma upadeśi' tāra' sarva-jana

[Īśvara Purī to Lord Caitanya]:

“My dear child, continue dancing, chanting and performing saṅkīrtana in association with devotees. Furthermore, go out and preach the value of chanting kṛṣṇa-nāma, for by this process You will be able to deliver all fallen souls.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.92

āpane ācare keha, nā kare pracāra
pracāra karena keha, nā karena ācāra
'ācāra', 'pracāra',—nāmera karaha 'dui' kārya
tumi—sarva-guru, tumi jagatera ārya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.92

[Sanātana Gosvāmī to Haridāsa Ṭhākura]:

“Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa 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 by your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.102–3

kali-yuge yuga-dharma—nāmera pracāra
tathi lāgi' pīta-varṇa caitanyāvatāra

“The religious practice for the age of Kali is to broadcast the glories of the holy name. Only for this purpose has the Lord, in a yellow color, descended as Lord Caitanya.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 3.40

Other Verses About the Holy Name

nāhaṛ tiñṭhāmi vaikuṇṭhe
yoginār hīdayeṅgu vā
tatra tiñṭhāmi nārada
yatra gāyanti mad-bhaktāu

“My dear Nārada, actually I do not reside in My abode, Vaikuṅṭha, nor do I reside within the hearts of the yogīs, but I reside in that place where My pure devotees chant My holy name and discuss My form, pastimes and qualities.”

[cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.30.35]

“The chanting of the Hare Kīṛṇa mantra is present only on the lips of a person who has for many births worshiped Vāsudeva.”

Padma Purāṇa [cited: The Nectar of Devotion]

...yajdānār japa-yajdo 'smi...

[Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna]:

“...Of sacrifices I am the chanting of the holy names [japa]...”

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 10.25

avaiṅṅava-mukhodgīṇar
pūtar hari-kathāmītam
śravaṇar naiva kartavyar
sarpocchīṅṅar yathā payau

[The holy name chanted by non-Vaiṅṅavas is like milk touched by the lips of a serpent.]

Padma Purāṇa [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Antya-līlā 1.101]

“kīṛṇa-nāma nirantara yāḥhāra vadane
sei vaiṅṅava-śreṅṅṅha, bhaja tāḥhāra caraṅe

[Lord Caitanya to an inhabitant of Kulīna-grāma]:

“A person who is always chanting the holy name of the Lord is to be considered a first-class Vaiṅṅava, and your duty is to serve his lotus feet.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Madhya-līlā 16.72

yāḥhāra darśane mukhe āise kīṛṇa-nāma
tāḥhāre jāniha tumi 'vaiṅṅava-pradhāna'

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “A first-class Vaiṅṅava is he whose very presence makes others chant the holy name of Kīṛṇa.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmīta Madhya-līlā 16.74