

## Book Distribution, ISKCON Delhi

### Brief History

In the initial stages, only a few Brahmacharis were involved in Book Distribution. The key was to involve more congregational and outside members as they had a lot of exposure due to their various occupations and professions, which gave them a wide outreach. In the year 2005, there were more than 5 lakh congregational devotees involved in book distribution.

### Workflow

- All Head of Departments (HODs) meet once in a fortnight to discuss plans and strategies. They try to encourage devotees and engage them. There is an in-charge for each godown. Inventory taking is done on a monthly basis
- Seminars are seen as the main impetus for a successful book distribution program in the following ways:
  - ✓ Devotees are constantly inspired through the various seminars held across many temples
  - ✓ They are made to pledge a specific number of Bhagavad Gitas(BG) that they would distribute
  - ✓ A team is set up to constantly follow up with the devotees.
  - ✓ The Delhi Temple President, Mohan Rupa Prabhu personally sends motivational quotes on book distribution to keep the devotees' morale high.
- Srila Prabhupada always said 'Think Big'. The key is to involve as many people as possible in the program to achieve huge success.
- Separate groups of people are assigned to do corporate preaching. These are the ones who go to the large corporate houses to get bulk orders. The corporate honchos usually order in bulk for their employees, as gifts or as an incentive.
- The key is meeting influential people and cultivate them throughout the year by
  - ✓ Conducting house programs
  - ✓ Sending Rajbhog prasadam
  - ✓ Inviting them to the temple
  - ✓ Setting up meetings with H.H Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaj

Only once a year are they approached for books. This, apart from keeping them motivated also makes sure that they come contribute year after year. In the process, contacts with other high profile people are gained through them.

- Approaching high profile people has always been successful through reference rather than direct approaching. There are chances of being avoided when approached directly.

### Achievements & Remarkable Features

- This program was started in the year 2005 and Delhi NCR stood 2<sup>nd</sup> all over the world.

- The number of books distributed in 2006 was double the number in 2005. This was made possible by meeting corporate honchos and pushing devotees at every step. They were made to double the number they actually pledged.
- For the next 8 years, Delhi NCR stood 1<sup>st</sup> all over the world.
- Several 8 & 10 year olds were also involved. They setup book stalls outside shopping malls and were successful in distributing 200 small books
- The congregational devotees alone from Faridabad distributed around 1 Lakh books.

## Challenges

- A lot of risk and uncertainty is involved. It is a huge responsibility to order and sell 7 Lakh BGs. In spite of plans, strategies and seminars, risk is inevitable.
- There are times when expectations are huge from regular donors but they don't turn up. It is always the mercy of Srila Prabhupada, Guru and Sri Krsna that books can be distributed.
- It is always a challenge to make people realize that book distribution is the most important activity as there are many projects that are going on at the same time. With youth preaching, construction activities, festivals, etc. it becomes difficult especially for congregational devotees to juggle many balls at the same time.

## Motivational Tactics

- Devotees have to take more responsibility and focus more on book distribution during this month. They have to be constantly inspired to increase productivity.
- Congregational devotees also face a lot of problems from their family members, so the key is to involve all the members of the family in various activities connected to book distribution.
- To keep devotees constantly motivated,
  - ✓ Below the Srimad Bhagvatam verse every morning, motivational book distribution quotes are written
  - ✓ Srila Prabhupad quotes on book distribution is sent in the form of daily SMS
  - ✓ In the Prasadam Hall, a devotee is made to read quotes and statistics on book distribution.
  - ✓ Follow up teams keep calling and reminding devotees about their pledge.
- The key is that the leaders should be personally involved. Only if the leader is motivated can he motivate others. They should lead by example- only then miracles will happen. We can depend on Krishna only if we work hard.
- Follow-up should be strong. Devotees should not be happy merely by increasing scores, steps must be taken to connect more people to the movement through book distribution.
- Devotees should not be discouraged by the fact that people are become online nowadays or are too busy. Faith is a must. We should have that this Sankirtan yajna is possible.

## Training Strategies

- It is not just about book distribution. Substance & value also needs to be imparted. Broadly 2 strategies are used:

- ✓ For the new people, they are given contact cards along with the books they buy and a flyer to invite them for festivals. This way they can be kept in touch and new devotees can also be formed over time.
- ✓ Aashray Program is held for the existing devotees where they study Srila Prabhupada books. Seminars are also held. This is to make sure that their knowledge is also increasing so that they can distribute books better.
- Srila Prabhupada said that the key to increasing scores is attentive chanting. That is where all the energy comes from and it renews enthusiasm.
- Effective planning is a must. Devotees must be taught What to Speak, What Not To Speak, How to Speak. They have to be very careful and shouldn't be too pushy so as to irritate people.
- Devotees should rather explain how the buyers will be benefitted from buying books or how corporates will be benefitted by distributing books to their employees.
- It is important not to involve entire neophytes as they may not have a clear idea about distribution. They can be involved after the Aashray program & get a fair idea about distribution.

### Other Value Added Activities

- In 2016, more than 15000 small books and over 5000 BGs were distributed in Kendriya Vidyalaya.
- Value Education programs based on BG is held for Govt. Schools. Deputy C.M of Delhi, Mr. Sisodiya also requested us to conduct value education programs and mid-day meal schemes across 50 Govt. schools in Delhi.
- Value education is also conducted in hospitals for patients as well as doctors.
- Official permission was given for counseling prisoners of Tihar Jail. A lot of prasadam also is distributed to the inmates there. At one instance, a businessman sponsored almost 15000 BGs to be distributed to all the inmates.

### Outreach Strategies

- In the Magh Mela, a stall is setup where sponsored books are distributed. People may lose value of BG if books are distributed for free. Hence, a copy of BG is given to buyers on every purchase of a set of small books worth Rs. 30. The same strategy is implemented in schools and colleges.
- A small box of Srila Prabhupada books called 'Happy Kits' was implemented. GAIL was one among many companies which purchased 15000 such kits for all its employees. 'Yoga Kits' are also very famous. Plan is underway to introduce 'Wedding Kits'.
- Recently, permission was sought from the Railway Minister to set up a stall at the Railway Station. The procedural and statutory work is underway.
- Value Education contest is held every year in which around 80,000 people participated in 2016. Each participant was given 1 Srila Prabhupada book among 3 books.

### Lessons

- Every year is a challenge to maintain the No. 1 spot. At the same time, it is important not to run after name and fame. It should be remembered that these activities are for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada.

- Devotees should not be too pushy and irritate people which leaves a negative impact about ISKCON devotees. It is important to maintain the spirit of service.