

## NOURISHING ASSOCIATION

### THE CRUCIAL QUESTION

The crucial question to be dealt with is: how can we transform ordinary association into *sat-saṅga* – association that nourishes our spiritual life.<sup>1</sup>

*Sat-saṅga* always brings forth faith in Kṛṣṇa (*śraddhā*) and the inclination to serve him (*sevā-matīḥ*) which is covered due to material life.

The general answer is we should make sure that in our association the Lord's names, form, qualities and pastimes are chanted and discussed<sup>2</sup> so that we can transcend material illusion and develop Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

#### More specifically we can learn to

- counsel someone spiritually
- help someone see and fulfill his/her needs in a spiritual way
- present the tree of life

and in this way benefit and nourish those who seek our guidance.



<sup>1</sup> "Oh Lord Acyuta, the living entity wanders in the cycle of birth and death. Only when he obtains the association of those established in truth, does his material existence come to an end. From the moment he attains such association (*sat-saṅga*) a devotional inclination is awakened towards You, the supreme goal of all attainments for the sages, and the orchestrator of both cause and effect." (SB 10.51.53)

<sup>2</sup> "In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin." (SB 3.25.25)

# THE ART OF SPIRITUAL COUNSELING

Spiritual counseling is the art of giving advice and inspiration in such a way that brings out the best in others. For this we can apply five steps that will help us to have a good spiritual exchange in which Kṛṣṇa manifests himself.

## Step 1

Become conscious that the person in front of you is an eternal spiritual soul on his/her way in his/her spiritual journey. Everything that happens in that person's life is meant to help them progress in that journey. You are there to help them see things from the spiritual perspective.

## Step 2

Take on the observer role – and do not become “lost” in the apparent or external perspective. In our Sacred Space Retreat part one and the training letters this is taught in detail. In short: you have to look from a neutral position – almost like an unmoved witness. Listen attentively.

## Step 3

Pray for insight and permission to be able to inspire and help. Pray to become an instrument through which divine blessings flow.

## Step 4

Try to recognize the specific, unfulfilled needs of the other person. Empathy is required here: see and feel things from the other perspective. (More on that in the circle of needs which will be discussed in part two of this training letter.)

## Step 5

Encourage the person to understand the story behind the story. Everything and everyone moves under the sweet will of Kṛṣṇa (Śrīla Prabhupāda). Help the other find the specific lesson to be learnt here.



**However, the second and most important element in spiritual counseling has to do with you:**

- Strengthen yourself by good spiritual practice (*sādhana*) so that you can help from a platform of spiritual strength and vision.
- Check your motivation. Ideally you should act on the principles of *jīva dayā* (compassion for others) and *vaiṣṇava sevā* (service to the devotees).

## A final word:

Spiritual counseling becomes easy, and successful, when one is trying to help from the spiritual platform of Krishna consciousness.

Give your best and Krishna will do the rest!

