

# Śaranagati

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## HOW TO ASSOCIATE WITH SĀDHUS



It is said that if you are blessed by God you will meet saintly people. This is how we can see that someone is blessed. Association with saintly devotees, *sādhus-saṅga*, is said to be the birth place of *bhakti*.

But how does one properly associate with *sādhus* so as to obtain their blessings? In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* we find the description of how King *Prthu* received the four *Kumāras*: “Seeing the four *Kumāras*, *Prthu Mahārāja* was greatly anxious to receive them. Therefore the King, with all his officers, very hastily got up, as anxiously as a conditioned soul whose senses are immediately

attracted by the modes of material nature. When the great sages accepted their reception, according to the instructions of the *sāstras*, and finally took their seats offered by the King, the King, influenced by the glories of the sages, immediately bowed down. Thus he worshiped the four *Kumāras*.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 4.22.3-4)

*Prthu* and his ministers had a spontaneous attraction for the four *Kumāras* and that qualified them for getting the mercy from the four sages. In order to also receive the mercy of *sādhus* we must be anxious and eager for true *sādhus-saṅga* and desire a true connection. We should be humble and not in a challenging spirit. Instead of only desiring to enjoy an intellectual stimulus, we should desire to serve these great souls. At least, we should have the attitude of, “Let me see if there is something here for me to learn.” Then our heart will get purified in *sādhus-saṅga*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “Whenever one meets a great saintly person, one should immediately surrender unto him and inquire about relief from the material pains of existence.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 4.22.15, pp.)

*Sādhus* or devotees of *Kṛṣṇa* should be asked very directly, “You know I have this problem, I seem not to be able to get rid of it. How can I become free from this obstacle to my advancement?” And also, “What should I do now, at my present level of *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness, to attain the lotus feet of *Kṛṣṇa*?”

from a lecture by Śacīnandana Swami in Zagreb, Croatia, February 22nd, 2013.

## MAKING THE MIND RECEPTIVE

It is the nature of the mind to always be filled with something, either material or spiritual. Merely trying to give up materialistic thinking does not lead to a truly spiritual life. The mind must be engaged in hearing about *Kṛṣṇa*, so that it can be filled with positive spiritual subjects. However, sometimes we face the problem that spiritual subjects simply do not enter our mind, just as if there is a guard standing before our ear and shooting down any spiritual information that tries to enter. Here are a few guidelines from *Sanat-Kumāra*’s instructions to King *Prthu* that can help us to make our mind more receptive:

- We should practice non-violence, *ahimsā*. Even if we are vegetarians, we have to ask ourselves, “Am I actually non-violent in my mind?” We have to give up the tendency to criticize everything and everyone all the time, including ourselves. Then we can become truly peaceful.
- We need role models, that is, we should follow in the footsteps of the *ācāryas*. We can read about their lives. We should also follow the good example of other devotees.

- We should remember *Kṛṣṇa*. A day when you remember *Kṛṣṇa* is a good day, a day when you forget *Kṛṣṇa* is a bad day. What we have heard, what we have read, what someone else told us about *Kṛṣṇa* – we should remember it. Only if we train our mind to remember positive or spiritual subjects will we be able to have emotional well-being.



■ It is important to follow regulative principles. These principles set us free – they are not needless tortures. They free our mind so that it has more capacity to think about Kṛṣṇa and does not move back to material subjects all the time – which happens when we break regulative principles.

■ We have to refrain from blaspheming and judging others. This will help us on our path. Instead we can think, “*They are giving their best, let me support them.*”

■ We should keep our life simple. In this modern time everything seems to be going faster and faster, with more information and stress. When life becomes too stressful it is mostly our spiritual life, our spiritual practices, that suffer. The urgent material things cannot wait and often we tend to think that Kṛṣṇa can

– “*After all he has been waiting for us already for many billions of lifetimes.*” In this state our spiritual life may become a theory only. To avoid this we have to simplify our life and determinately throw out all those time-wasters that have nothing to do with our ultimate purpose of life.

■ And finally we are advised to learn the art of tolerance. We should not try to make the material world a perfect place – we will only waste our time. Great people before us have tried and failed. Peace can only be found in the mind. If we do not find it there, we will not find it anywhere else. Therefore we need to learn to tolerate disturbances.

☪ from a lecture by Śācinandana Swami in Zagreb, Croatia, February 24th, 2013.

## DOES KRṢṆA TAKE AWAY THINGS I NEED?

**Question:** For someone seeking spiritual advancement it is important to be properly situated in life. On the other hand it is said that when one is very dear to Kṛṣṇa he takes everything away from his devotee. Is this not a contradiction?

**Answer:** Excellent Question. Yes, Kṛṣṇa says, “*If I especially favor someone, I gradually deprive him of his wealth. Then the relatives and friends of such a poverty-stricken man abandon him. In this way he suffers one distress after another.*” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 10.88.8)

But the Lord only takes away the wealth from his devotees that is an obstacle for them. He does not take away what they need in order to come to him.

We need to understand that different devotees are on different levels of spiritual advancement. Beginners require different things than those who are advanced. A devotee on the moderate level of advancement needs to have emotional stability – which comes from being properly situated in life. Otherwise, if there are obstacles in life, he or she becomes so disturbed that these obstacles will block all his or her spiritual progress. Devotees do not leave the path of spiritual advancement because of doubting the philosophy of *bhakti*. They usually leave because they have a great obstacle in their life and they hope that it will go away all by itself, but it doesn't. This is why leading a balanced life is so important.

Kṛṣṇa assures us: “*For those who are devoted to me I give what they need and I maintain what they have.*” (Bhagavad-gītā, 9.22)

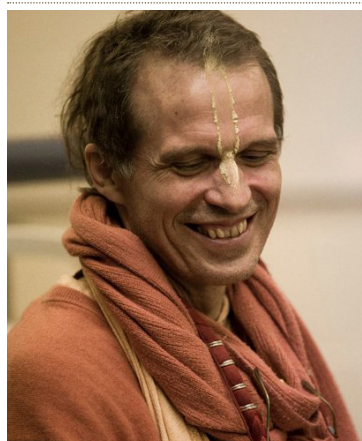


Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura comments on this verse: The Lord likes caring for his devotees. It is not that he does it grudgingly and thinks, “*They are not so advanced, so I have to provide these things.*” No, he does it like a father who maintains his beloved family – he doesn't consider it a burden, but considers it a joy to care for his children.

However, Kṛṣṇa does take away the obstacles on our path. The problem is that sometimes we think the obstacles are great assets in our life because our intelligence is standing on its head and we see things upside down. Then Kṛṣṇa's merciful hand may seem like an intrusion into our little world. Later we usually understand that the Lord has removed an obstacle. That is something most devotees have already observed in their lives. Kṛṣṇa always gives and maintains what we need on our present level of advancement.

☪ from a lecture by Śācinandana Swami in Zagreb, Croatia, February 22nd, 2013.

Photo by Mickey Shah



## ☪ MEET ŚĀCĪNANDANA SWAMI

upcoming seminars & events:

Jul. 6-13 Fruska Gouranga Summer Camp, Fruska Gora, Serbia

Aug. 13-18 Kīrtana Melā, Walthersdorf, Germany

Aug. 21 Balarāma Jayantī, Kraenzlin, Germany

Aug. 28-29 Janmāṣṭamī Festival, Nueva Vrajamandala, Spain

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