

Śaranagati

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HOW TO BECOME STRONG - THE TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life is a simple model that shows how we can lead a vibrant, inspired spiritual life and help others to do the same. It consists of three parts that bring your life to a level where you can live with a deep connection to the Lord.

We need to visit these three parts of our life daily. If all of them are well taken care of we can “stand tall and not fall” even in the midst of difficulties. These three parts are: individual nourishment, a supportive lifestyle, and our contribution to the lives of others. Life can be compared to a tree. Just as a tree needs to have deep roots, a strong trunk and a flourishing crown, we all need to have roots in eternity, a supportive life style, in which physical, emotional and social needs are met, and the fruits of contributing to the lives of others.

THE ROOTS – Spiritual Cultivation

The Tree of Life will dry up and fall to the ground if its roots are not deep. In the ancient Vedas these roots refer to one’s own relationship to God (*sambandha*), and the practices of spiritual life (*abhideya*). These practices include reading and realizing sacred texts, chanting the Lord’s names, visiting holy places, prayer and worshiping the Lord in various ways.

The roots of the Tree of Life are not visible to others. In order for your personal relationship with the Lord to be nourished, it must be kept private. If you take the flame of a candle out into a storm it will extinguish. In the same way the fruits of your spiritual life – your deep realizations and insights – will vanish if you take them out into the public. Although the roots of a person often remain “beneath the earth” so to speak – they are the most important.



THE TRUNK – Physical, Emotional, Social and Mental Well-Being

One’s lifestyle is of similar importance. Only if we live properly, can we think and act properly. According to Ayurveda, a person’s mental and physical well-being stands on three pillars: a healthy diet, good sleep and a beneficial lifestyle. Lifestyle is composed of both physical and mental cultivation. Physical cultivation includes cleanliness, regular exercise and engaging the senses in service. Mental cultivation includes truthfulness, refraining from theft, giving up bad association, simplicity (not taking more than we need), religiosity, celibacy, refraining from unnecessary talk, forgiveness, fearlessness, purification of the heart and an attitude of service.

THE CROWN – Contributing to the Lives of Others

Finally, is our enriching the lives of others. It is like the fruits on the crown of the tree. Our help to others may be small like giving inspiration, or large like managing a project or even a country.

Exercise:

Check the three parts of the Tree of Life in your own life: How deep are your roots? How strong is your trunk? Do you have fruits on your crown?

Based on Tree of Life training sessions with Śacīnandana Swami in London, UK, on February 16 –18, 2013.

SAMBANDHA - LIVING IN CONNECTION WITH THE LORD

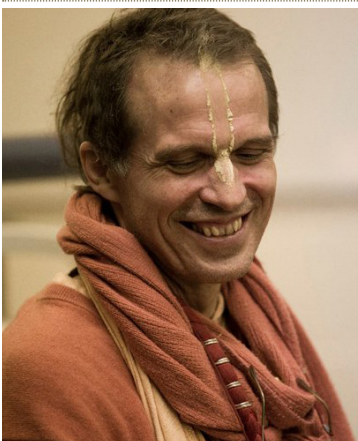
Sambandha jñāna means to know deeply from the heart that you are an eternal soul and that Kṛṣṇa is your master. It is an understanding of one's relationship to Kṛṣṇa that facilitates the realization of spiritual truths. Our spiritual life will not function if we are not properly connected to Kṛṣṇa. It is also not possible to chant properly without a connection to Kṛṣṇa. We need to experience a bond with Kṛṣṇa. This bond is so sweet that even if one has material desires, Kṛṣṇa thinks,

“Okay, my dear devotee, I know you harbor those other desires, but still you will come to me at the end.” We must know this both in regards to our own material desires and those of others who struggle with material desires and feel helpless. If we keep our connection to Kṛṣṇa, our *sambandha*, we will become pure after sometime. This is the secret of *bhakti*.

from a lecture by Śacīnandana Swami on Iz, Croatia, June 10th, 2013.



Photo by Mickey Shah



MEET ŚACĪNANDANA SWAMI

upcoming seminars & events:

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| Aug. 21 | Balarāma Jayantī, Dharma Castle, Germany |
| Aug. 28-29 | Kṛṣṇa-Janmāṣṭamī Festival, New Vraja Mandala, Spain |
| Aug. 30- Sep. 1 | Sacred Space Retreat, Switzerland |
| Sep. 12-15 | Rādhāṣṭamī Festival, Goloka Dhāma, Germany |

Read more: www.sacinandanaswami.com