

The 10 Principles for improving sadhu sanga

Principle One: Discuss Srila Prabhupada's Books With Family Members And Friends

*“So you European, American students, you take full advantage of this Vedic culture. I am therefore so much laboring hard that we, before my leaving this body, I may give you some books you can enjoy after my death. So utilize it. Utilize it. Read every sloka nicely, **try to understand the meaning, discuss amongst yourselves.***

Nityam bhagavata-sevaya. That is our mission. Nasta-prayesa abhadresu nityam bhagavata-sevaya [SB 1.2.18]. Abhadra, we have got so many dirty things within our heart. So these dirty things can be cleansed simply by Krishna consciousness. There is no other method.” Lecture on Srimad Bhagavatam 1.1.1 in New York, on July 6th, 1972 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/720706sblon/> (audio 20:01 to 21:12)

*“Generally, people cannot understand. But if one understands, he becomes liberated. If some way or other...it is not very difficult; simply we have to associate with devotees and **discuss this literature.** Then we will understand Krishna very easily.”* Lecture on SB 6.1.39-Los Angeles, June 5, 1976

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/760605sbla/> (audio 18:11 to 18:39)

*“Be engaged always in reading Srimad-Bhagavatam, **discussing amongst yourself.** Then you'll make progress. Otherwise, if you take it as an official routine work... You should take as routine work, but with consciousness that “We have to learn something,” not simply attending the class, but to learn something. In this way make your life successful. Because after all, everything is being done daiva-coditāt, impelled by the Supreme Person. The Supreme Person is behind everything. So in the association of devotees, if we read Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam regularly, then your..., our material contamination will be dissolved, and our spiritual consciousness will come out, and that will make our life successful.”* (Lecture SB 3.26.41, Bombay January 16, 1975)

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/750116sbbom/> (audio 34:57 to 36:00)

*“One need only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare, accept the remnants of foodstuffs offered to Kṛṣṇa, **have some discussion on books like Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,** and engage oneself in Deity worship. These four things will make one happy. One should train the members of his family in this way.”* Bg 13.8-12 purport

*“For a devotee, there is no point in making friendships with ordinary persons; he should **make friendship with other devotees so that by discussing among***

themselves they may elevate one another on the path of spiritual understanding. This is called *iṣṭa-goṣṭhī*. In *Bhagavad-gītā* there is reference to *bodhayantaḥ parasparam*, “discussing among themselves.” Generally pure devotees utilize their valuable time in chanting and discussing various activities of Lord Krishna or Lord Caitanya amongst themselves. There are innumerable books, such as the *Purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Upaniṣads*, which contain countless subjects for discussion among two devotees or more.” SB 3.29.17 purport

“The messages of the Supreme Personality of Godhead are full of potencies, and these potencies can be realized if topics regarding the Supreme Godhead are discussed amongst devotees... Discussion of Krishna is very potent, and if a fortunate person has such association and tries to assimilate the knowledge, then he will surely make advancement toward spiritual realization.” Bg 9.1 purport

Why this Principle is important:

One might ask why we must discuss Srila Prabhupada’s books. Why not read other devotees’ books which are easier to understand than Srila Prabhupada’s? Initiated devotees sometimes say they prefer to read their diksa guru’s books. Still others tell us they prefer to read Srila Prabhupada’s books by themselves, rather than discuss them with their family members or friends. Below we explain why we feel it is important to read and discuss Srila Prabhupada’s books.

Why we must hear from Srila Prabhupada:

Unless we hear from a “self-realised”, “liberated”, “unalloyed” devotee, we cannot make spiritual advancement.

“The summary is that one has to first of all seek the association of pure devotees who not only are learned in the Vedānta but are self-realized souls and unalloyed devotees of Lord Sri Krishna, the Personality of Godhead.” S.B. 1.5.34 purport

“One should take shelter of a pure devotee, who has nothing to do with this material world but is simply engaged in devotional service. By serving him only, one can transcend the qualitative material condition. In this verse, it is recommended (yogesvara-upasanaya) that one serve the lotus feet of the topmost yogi or the devotee. To serve the topmost devotee means to hear from him about the glories of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” SB 4.22.22

“The topmost benediction for those who are living in this material world and are subjected to the repetition of birth and death is association with pure devotees. One should search out such pure devotees and remain with them. That will make one completely happy, even though living within the material world.” SB 4.30.34 purport

“Therefore one must learn detachment by discussion of spiritual science based on authoritative scriptures, and one must hear from persons who are actually in knowledge. As a result of such discussion in the association of devotees, one comes to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” Bg 15.3-4 purport

“Unless one hears from a bona fide ācārya, who is never disturbed by the changes of the material world, one cannot have the real key to transcendental knowledge.” Sri Isopanisad mantra 13 purport

As neophytes, it is difficult for us to discern who is a liberated, self-realised, and unalloyed devotee. If we hear from someone who has not fully and properly understood sastra, and who may therefore misinterpret it in part, we can be misled. The misinterpretation might seem very small and inconsequential, but by following it we will eventually go completely off course. Please read the section entitled, **‘Improving Sanga can help heal our devotional communities’** in ‘I’m So Glad You are Here’. In the section regarding healing our devotional communities she mentions two apparently small misinterpretations which have wreaked havoc. By regularly discussing Srila Prabhupada’s books, such misunderstandings will be rectified. We understand that is why he asked us to continue hearing from him after his physical departure.

Reporter (2): What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die? Prabhupada: I will never die. I shall live forever in my books, and you will utilise.” Press conference – July 16, 1975, San Francisco.

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/750716pcsf/> (audio 14:37 to 14:54)

“Prabhupāda: So in my absence you read the books. What I talk, I have written in the books. That’s all.

Indian man (2): Personally, we think more greater.

Prabhupāda: That’s all right. But still, you can associate with me by reading my books.” Morning Walk in Toronto, 1975

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/750807mwtor/> (audio 20:53 to 21:13)

Failure to follow this principle will ruin everything:

If we do not apply this first Principle, we will not make spiritual advancement or fulfil Srila Prabhupada’s mission.

“What is the value of this association? Sat-saṅga. Sat-saṅga means assembly, discussion. Bodhayantaḥ parasparam, tuṣyanti ca ramanti ca. If you are not interested in association, discussion, then you are finished. So... karmīs, they are fools and rascals. When you have got this center, it is not that you should be engaged from morning till you go to bed for sense gratification. That is not life. That

is karmī's life. You have no time for sat-saṅga, for association. You cannot make any progress by this sort of karmī's life. We have to work for organization, but not that whole day and night engaged and no sat-saṅga. That is a misguided policy, and it will spoil the whole structure. In Los Angeles, they regularly assemble during āraṭi and class. If this regulative principle is lost, then you are karmīs." (Room conversation, New Delhi, Nov 3, 1973)

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/731103r1del/> (audio 1:42 to 3:19)

"So this is difficulty, that we are not very much interested in hearing. And that is the main business. Our bhakti begins = śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ [SB 7.5.23]. **We have to hear and we have to speak.** But if we are not interested in hearing and speak, then it will be the same ṭhākura-bari[?], simply formula. That's all. And gradually it will be stopped. Unless there is life of śravaṇaṁ kīrtanam, these big, big building, temples, will become burden. So if we are..., if we want to create burden for future, then we may give up this hearing and chanting and sleep very nicely. It will be burden. Galagraha. Not śrī-vigraha, but galagraha. Galagraha. Śrī-vigraha means worshipable Deity. So if we give up this śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ [SB 7.5.23], then it will be thought that "Our Guru Mahārāja has given a burden in the neck, galagraha." This is the danger. So we must be very much alert in śravaṇaṁ kīrtanam. Otherwise, all this labor will be futile. This building will be only the nest, nest for the doves and the pigeons. That is the danger." Lecture on Srimad Bhagavatam 1.8.19 on September 29th, 1974 in Mayapur

<https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/740929sbmay/> (audio 13:05 to 15:02)

Woman devotee: Well, people are instructing with these chanting sessions. Prabhupāda: Because that is offense. Guror avajñā. First offense is guror avajñā, defying the authority of guru. This is the first offense. So one who is offensive, how he can make advance in chanting? He cannot make. Then everything is finished in the beginning. Guror avajñā. Everything is there. If one is disobeying the spiritual master, he cannot remain in the pure status of life. He cannot be śikṣā-guru or anything else. He is finished, immediately. Guror avajñā śruti-śāstra-nindanam, nāmno balād yasya hi . . . (Padma Purāṇa). You do not study all these things. You become initiated . . . there are ten kinds of offenses. Do you have any regard for these things or not? You must avoid these ten kinds of offenses. The first offense is to disobey the orders of guru. That is first offense. So if you are offensive, how you can become advanced by chanting? That is also not possible.

Woman devotee: Can we just have the chanting without instructions?

Prabhupāda: But that chanting must be pure. Your guru is writing books. If you think, "There is no necessity of reading books," that is guror avajñā. Do you mean to say I am writing these books whole night for selling and making money? Why do you think like that?

Woman devotee: So there should just be chanting and reading of the books.

Prabhupāda: Yes." Lecture on Bg 17.1-3, Melbourne, 1974

https://vaniquotes.org/wiki/And_if_he_does_not_follow_the_instruction_of_spiritual_master,_he_is_a_rascal._He_is_defying_the_authority._That%27s_all
(audio 3:14 – 5:14)

Principle Two:

Systematically Scrutinise The Books Together

Systematically:

“In systematic way you discuss.” Morning Walk; 30/12/73 Los Angeles
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/731230mwla/> (audio 27:45 to 27:48)

“This Bhagavad-gita is the ABCD of knowledge. This is entrance examination, matriculation examination, school-leaving examination. And Srimad-Bhagavatam is graduate. When you become graduate in spiritual knowledge, then you can understand Srimad-Bhagavatam. And when you have passed your Bachelor degree, when you are post-graduate, that study is Sri-Chaitanya-charitamṛta. So we have got three different status of reading capacity. We have got already twenty books. So don’t waste your time. Try to understand what is Krishna and what is spiritual life by reading these books. Everything is explained there.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 13.22-24 — Melbourne, June 25, 1974
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/740625bgmel/> (audio 30:38 to 31:44)

“Therefore Bhagavad-gītā is the preliminary study of spiritual life. If you can understand Bhagavad-gītā, then you can begin Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. If you have not understood Bhagavad-gītā, it is useless. You cannot understand Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.” Lecture on SB 3.25.22 — Bombay, November 22, 1974 .
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/741122sbbom/> (audio 27:07 to 27:26)

“Try to understand each and every verse of Bhagavad-gītā, especially, and if possible Bhāgavatam.” Conversation at house of Ksirodakasayi dasa — July 25, 1976, London <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/760725l1on/> (audio 57:37 to 57:46)

“Everything is explained in Bhagavad-gītā. Therefore, to learn how to become free from the miserable condition of material existence, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is is the preliminary study. Then, if one understands Bhagavad-gītā, one can proceed to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and if one advances further, one may study Chaitanya-charitāmṛta. We are therefore presenting these invaluable books to the whole world so that people may study them and be happy, being delivered from miserable conditional life.” SB 10.8.49 purport

“The systematic hearing of the transcendental activities, qualities and names of Lord Śrī Krishna pushes one towards eternal life. Systematic hearing means knowing Him gradually in truth and fact, and this knowing Him in truth and fact means attaining eternal life, as stated in the Bhagavad-gītā.” SB 1.18.10 purport

Scrutinisingly:

“Prabhupada: First of all, try to understand one word please. One word, if you understand, your life will be successful.” Morning Walk — March 30, 1974, Bombay <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/740330mwbom/> (audio 15:48 to 15:55)

“Therefore you will find in Srimad-Bhagavatam, each word is transcendental. Each word is full of meaning and transcendental knowledge because the writer, the composer of this transcendental book, is Vyasadeva. He is perfect, Vedavyasa, perfect in Vedic knowledge.” Lecture on SB 1.7.6; Vrndavana; April 18, 1975 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/750418sbvrn/> (audio 16:35 to 17:01)

“Just like in the Srimad-Bhagavatam there are so many descriptions, so many other things, but because it is in relationship with Krsna, so each word of Bhagavatam is valued. Each word of Bhagavad-gita is valued.” Lecture on SB 1.8.44, Los Angeles; MAY 6, 1973 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/730506sbla/> (audio 34:23 to 34:43)

“This Bhagavata is so, I mean to say, exalted transcendental knowledge that there are eighteen thousand verses, and if you analyze each verse, each word, you will get a great transcendental information.” Lecture on SB 2.1.1-5; Boston, December 22; 1969 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/691222sb-boston/> (audio 25:59 to 26:23)

“So by studying Krsna, you become liberated. So these verses should be studied very carefully, understanding each word very carefully. Then you’ll understand Krsna.” Lecture on SB 7.9.32; Mayapur; March 10, 1976 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/760310sbmay/> (audio 21:54 to 22:10)

Sometimes people object that this is unrealistic as we would never get through all the books. There is no objection to reading all the books, but to fully experience their transformative benefit, we must systematically scrutinise them. In this way, over several lifetimes, we will qualify ourselves to attain Goloka Vrindavana.

“And every verse is so important that if a serious student studies each and every verse, each verse will take at least one month to understand. And there are eighteen thousand verses. So for serious study of Srimad-Bhagavatam, it will take eighteen thousand months.” Lecture on SB 2.1.1-5; Melbourne; June 26, 1974 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/740626sbmel/> (audio 13:06 to 13:37)

Principle Three: Do This Regularly

“At least one day, this Sunday, you devote, seriously studying Bhagavad-gita, and discuss amongst you whenever there is any doubt.” Conversation at house of Ksirodakasayi dasa — July 25, 1976, London

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/76072511lon/> (audio 54:23 to 54:36)

“Discuss Bhagavatam daily, as much as possible. Everything will be clarified. Because Bhagavata is the essence.” Room Conversation — October 21, 1977, Vrndavana <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/771021r2vrn/> (audio 10:04 to 10:28)

“We should gradually come to the sattva-guna, so that we may avoid the two lower gunas. This can be done if we regularly discuss Srimad-Bhagavatam and hear about Krishna’s activities. Nasta-prayesv abhadresu nityam bhagavata-sevaya (SB 1.2.18).” SB 10.13.53 purport

“You are experiencing some doubts, that you cannot believe that the Krishna from Krishna Book can be the Supreme Personality of Godhead, that it must be like some fairy-tale. To clear up these things the best remedy is to discuss amongst yourselves all members regularly all our books in classes, then these doubts will be killed.”
Letter to: Satyabhama Mayapur; 28 February, 1972

“We should discuss Srimad-Bhagavatam daily as much as possible, and then everything will be clarified, for Bhagavatam is the essence of all Vedic literature (nigama-kalpa-taror galitam phalam [SB 1.1.3]).” SB 10.13.54 purport

Principle Four: Repeat The Meaning In Our Own Words

“When we will learn something, we have to repeat it, even in material things. And what to speak of spiritual?” Lecture New York, 1966 Bhagavad-gita 2.55-56
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/660408bg-new-york/> (audio 31:33 to 31:41)

“So one who is spreading krishna-upadesa, simply repeat what is said by Krishna, then you become acarya. Not difficult at all. Everything is stated there. We have to simply repeat like parrot. Not exactly parrot. Parrot does not understand the meaning; he simply vibrates. But you should understand the meaning also; otherwise how you can explain?” Lecture CC Adi 1.13, April 7, 1975

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/750406ccmay/> (audio 15:45 to 16:20)

“To hear and explain them is more important than reading them. One can assimilate the knowledge of the revealed scriptures only by hearing and explaining. Hearing is called sravana, and explaining is called kirtana. The two processes of sravana and kirtana are of primary importance to progressive spiritual life. Only one who has properly grasped the transcendental knowledge from the right source by submissive hearing can properly explain the subject.” SB 1.1.6 purport.

“Hearing is solidified by the process of chanting. One who has perfectly heard from the perfect source becomes convinced about the all-pervading Personality of Godhead and thus becomes enthusiastic in glorifying the Lord.” SB 2.2.36 purport

“Just read from my books and try and explain the meaning in your own words.” Srila Prabhupada letter to Sudama, 26.01.1973

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/letters/letter-to-sudama-41/?query=sudama+explain+books+read+own+words#bb133756>

Passive hearing does not help comprehension. We must hear actively, which means hearing, thinking about, and then repeating in our own words what we understood. In this way, our association with Srila Prabhupada’s books will bear fruit.

Principle Five: AVOID DEBATE (Instead, respect and appreciate each other’s different perspectives)

“I am very much stressing nowadays that my students shall increase their reading of my books and try to understand them from different angles of vision. Each sloka can be seen from many, many angles of vision, so become practised in seeing things like this.” Letter to: Tribhuvanatha — Los Angeles 16.06.1972

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/letters/letter-to-tribhuvanatha-4/?query=tribhuvanatha+stressing+nowadays+angles+of+vision#bb130788>

“Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is as great as Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord and shelter of everything. In each and every verse of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and in each and every syllable, there are various meanings.” CC M 24.318

There can be many legitimate meanings for each text. Lord Chaitanya illustrated this by giving sixty-one meanings to the ‘*atmarama*’ verse of the Srimad Bhagavatam (1.7.10). (You can read his explanations in CC Madhya Lila, chapter 24.) Without accepting this point, we will be prone to argue with devotees who see things differently from us. Such arguments can be very unpalatable for all concerned. However, according to Srimad Bhagavatam discussions of Krishna katha should be mutually enjoyable.

Evidence that Krishna katha should be mutually enjoyable:

“Actually, Vedic scripture is krishna-katha, topics about Krishna, and krishna-katha is not a subject matter for a debate club. It is meant for the devotees. Nondevotees simply waste their time reading Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam, and we have often mentioned that so-called scholars, politicians and philosophers simply give misleading commentaries when they try to interpret Bhagavad-gita. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura used to say that they are like people trying to lick at a bottle of honey that is sealed closed. If one does not know how to taste honey, one begins licking at the bottle, but for one to actually taste the honey, the bottle must be opened, and the key to its opening is the devotee. Therefore it is said:

*satam prasangan mama virya-samvido
bhavanti hrt-karna-rasayanah kathah
asv apavarga-vartmani
sraddha ratir bhaktir anukramisyati
taj josana*

“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) Teachings of Lord Kapila vs 34

“One should learn how to associate with the devotees of the Lord by gathering with them to chant the glories of the Lord. This process is most purifying. As devotees thus develop their loving friendship, they feel mutual happiness and satisfaction. And by thus encouraging one another they are able to give up material sense gratification, which is the cause of all suffering.” Srimad Bhagavatam 11.3.30 verse

“Austerity of speech consists in speaking words that are truthful, pleasing, beneficial, and not agitating to others, and also in regularly reciting Vedic literature.” Bg 17.15 verse

“..they derive great satisfaction and bliss from always enlightening one another and conversing about me.” Bg 10.9 verse

“In discussing Krishna’s opulences and His diverse energies, the pure devotees take transcendental pleasure. Therefore they want to hear and discuss them.” Bg 10.19 purport

Unpleasant exchanges inhibit our critical thinking:

If you have experienced an unpleasant exchange, you may have noted the effect it has on you. Even comments such as “I don’t agree” or “That’s wrong” may make it difficult to share openly and honestly. All too often, we are much more strident and hurtful and may even insult each other. Such harsh exchanges will not give us a higher taste for Krishna katha and will inhibit our ability to contemplate high spiritual

truths. When we feel insulted or attacked, most of us experience anger, which incites us to retaliate, or fear, which makes us withdraw.

Imagine sharing your understanding of a passage in Srila Prabhupada's books. How would you feel if your companion exclaimed, "You are wrong," or "Well, I don't agree with you." Some devotees may argue back, while others will withdraw and stop sharing. Either way, we are unlikely to enjoy the exchange, and our ability to continue deeply deliberating on the subject will be checked. Considering that Krishna katha is meant to be pleasurable, such comments are counterproductive. (Of course, it's different if you have accepted the person as your siksa or diksa guru, and feel confident in their love, good wishes, and competence to help you. In such a case you should feel enlivened and enlightened by their rebukes. If you don't, your acceptance of that person may have been premature.)

Objection: we should speak the truth even if unpleasant:

Devotees sometimes argue that speaking pleasantly is less important than speaking the truth. They argue that we should call a 'spade a spade' and tell someone when they are wrong.

"Satyam, truthfulness, means that facts should be presented as they are, for the benefit of others. Facts should not be misrepresented. According to social conventions, it is said that one can speak the truth only when it is palatable to others. But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straightforward way, so that others will understand actually what the facts are. If a man is a thief and if people are warned that he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are for the benefit of others. That is the definition of truth."
Bg 10.4-5 purport

The problem with this objection is that it assumes I know the truth; that I am always right, and if anyone disagrees with me, they must be wrong. Such people also seem to believe that insulting someone is the best way to influence them. Unfortunately, such a person will neither grow in knowledge nor influence others.

On the other hand, by applying the Improving Sanga (IS) Principles, we can say what we *understand* to be correct while remaining appreciative of our partner's perspective. If we discuss correctly, differences of opinion will not lead to friction and animosity. Instead, we will rectify misunderstandings while fostering deep devotional relationships and increasing our attraction to Krishna katha.

"May there be good fortune throughout the universe, and may all envious persons be pacified. May all living entities become calm by practicing bhakti-yoga, for by accepting devotional service they will think of each other's welfare. Therefore let us

all engage in the service of the supreme transcendence, Lord Śrī Kṛiṣṇa, and always remain absorbed in thought of Him.” SB 5.18.9

How to rectify misunderstandings without telling someone they are wrong:

In our experience, properly applying the IS Principles will naturally remove misconceptions while fostering a safe and harmonious emotional atmosphere between discussion partners.

This is how the principles can help. When your discussion partner reads a passage and tells you what they understand, reflect their words to show you heard them. Then try to express their intended meaning better than they did. That allows them to hear their thoughts mirrored back clearly. If they misunderstood the passage, this allows them to correct themselves. If we deal respectfully with each other, there is no fear of losing face or resistance to changing our minds.

If understanding them doesn't help them to self-correct, you can then do your understanding without commenting negatively about theirs. If their understanding was inaccurate, this gives them another chance to self-correct.

If we both still have opposing views, in the next part of the discussion, we respectfully express our doubts about our partner's understanding. This offers them another opportunity to self-correct. Finally, in the IS approach, we must support our perspective with sastric evidence. Researching scripture to find such evidence provides yet another opportunity to self-correct.

By the end of this process, one or both of us may have changed our original understanding, or we may have broadened our understanding to accommodate both perspectives. It's also possible we end up agreeing to disagree. Even then, our goodwill has not been compromised, and we remain open to sharing with and hearing each other. By applying these principles, we are more likely to enjoy the discussion. This is the benefit of learning to discuss from different perspectives, as Srila Prabhupada wrote in his letter to Tribhuvanatha. (See the first evidence we share for this Principle.)

Objection: Lord Chaitanya debated, so why can't we?

Sometimes devotees object that Lord Chaitanya debated with Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya and with the Mayavadi sannyasis. So why does Srila Prabhupada say Krishna katha is “not the subject of a debate club”?

It depends on how we understand the word 'debate'. One synonym is 'deliberation'. This type of debate is acceptable; in Sanskrit, it is called *vada*. Other meanings of 'debate' are 'altercation', 'rebutting', and 'refuting'. When we debate in this manner it is called *jalpa* or *vitanda*. When two or more people discuss an issue with the sole intention of understanding the truth, the discussion is *vada*. When either party uses false arguments to disprove the views of the other, it is *vitanda*; when the only goal is to win the argument, it is called *jalpa*. When Srila Prabhupada says Krishna katha is not the subject matter of a debate club, I understand he means it cannot be understood or relished by these two latter types of debate: *vitanda* and *jalpa*.

"When both parties desire to win by establishing their own opinion with proofs and arguments, and by refuting the opponent's view with circumvention...false generalization...and syllogistic fault...it is called jalpa. When one party refutes the opponent's view (by the above means), without establishing his own opinion, it is called vitanda. These two types of debate, with a desire to win, simply display skill in debating and bear no result. That discussion having a desire for truth is called vada. Being outstanding for being fruitful in determining truth, vada is My vibhuti." Srila Baladeva Vidyabhusana's commentary to Gita Bhusana 10.32

To avoid using these false arguments or to detect when others use them, it can help to know what is meant by 'circumvention', 'false generalisation', and 'syllogistic fault'.

Circumvention is defined as going around or bypassing the real issue. Here is an example to illustrate circumvention.

Devotee 1: "Srila Prabhupada instructed all his disciples to become spiritual masters."

Devotee 2: "Women must be subordinate and cannot be spiritual masters."

Note how in this exchange, Devotee 2 circumvents the point regarding Srila Prabhupada's instructions.

Syllogistic Fault: A syllogism is a logical argument that arrives at a conclusion based on two premises which are assumed to be true. Sometimes there is a fault in the syllogism because of a fault in the deduction process, and sometimes because there is a fault in one or both premises. Here is an example of a syllogistic fault where the deductive process is wrong.

Premise 1: All men are mortal.

Premise 2: My dog is mortal.

Conclusion: Therefore, my dog is a man.

Most instances of syllogistic fault are less absurd and therefore harder to detect.

False generalisation: ‘Generalise’ means to infer something is always true because it is often true. A typical generalisation familiar to women in ISKCON is:

“The Srimad Bhagavatam 1.4.25 purport says: ‘The *dvija-bandhus* are classified with the *śūdras* and the woman class, who are by nature less intelligent.’ You are a woman; therefore, you are less intelligent.” This logic is applied even to very learned, saintly Vaisnavis. This fails to acknowledge other statements, such as those below, where he qualifies this point.

“Generally strī, or woman, is less intelligent than man; therefore, if the husband is intelligent enough, the woman gets a great opportunity for spiritual enlightenment.” Srimad Bhagavatam 3.24.5 purport

“Therefore generally, generally, woman, less intelligent than man.” Srimad Bhagavatam Lecture in Los Angeles, 1972

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/720926sbla/?query=woman+less+intelligent#bb206635>

False arguments can be hard to detect, especially if we are unfamiliar with scriptural teachings. However, if we avoid the tendency to think I must always be right and instead discuss with mutual courtesy, we will more likely correct such aberrations and arrive at the truth.

Principle Six: Hear Each Other Empathically

CC Madhya Lila 24.9: *“Generally by Myself I cannot give an explanation, but by the strength of your association something may manifest itself.”* (Lord Chaitanya to Sanatana Goswami)

CC Madhya Lila 24.312: *“Now, due to your association, another meaning has awakened. It is due to your devotional service that these waves of meaning are arising.”* (Lord Chaitanya to Sanatana Goswami)

In both the above verses, Lord Chaitanya expresses his inability to understand the text alone. He says that Sanatana Goswami’s presence enabled him to understand.

Hearing this was a pivotal moment in our discussion journey. Our experience to this point had been very frustrating for both of us. We regularly impeded each other’s ability to understand by dismissing the other’s efforts. This is so easy to do with little throwaway comments like, “Yes, but that’s not the main point”. At other times, we would change the subject, altogether ignoring the other person’s point. I wonder if you’ve ever experienced this (or done it yourself). You say something, and when you stop, the other person makes a completely unrelated comment.

It's hard to deepen our understanding of Srila Prabhupada's teachings when our discussion partner's antipathy cancels our every attempt to connect with either Srila Prabhupada or them. We struggled with this until, at last, we heard the above CC verses. We asked ourselves what Sanatana did to make Lord Chaitanya enthusiastic to speak. If we could get some insight into this question, maybe we could learn to be more mutually supportive.

Insights from Stephen Covey

Around the time we heard the above section of the Caitanya Caritamrta, we also read two other books: *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey, and *How to Speak so Kids Will Listen; and Listen so Kids will Speak* by Elaine Mazlish and Adele Faber. Both introduced us to the vital importance of empathic listening in promoting good communication.

Stephen Covey writes:

"The one who listens does the most work, not the one who speaks."

The above statement echoed Lord Caitanya's sentiments when He credited Sanatana Goswami for what He understood. So, we decided to try to hear each other empathically. When one of us would say something, the other would actively reflect what they understood. This development in our discussion technique really helped, but we discovered that it only worked if our mood was right. If we reflected half-heartedly or disrespectfully, it was as unhelpful as our previous practices of marginalising and ignoring each other. Covey supports this discovery in the following extract from his book:

"Empathic listening skills, in part, give others psychological air (open space where a person may explore feelings, vent emotions, and feel understood without being judged.) These skills include capturing feelings from nonverbal cues, listening attentively, and phrasing empathic responses clearly, supportively, and sincerely. But while all these skills are important, attitude is even more important for allowing others psychological air. To work effectively, skills must be built on a caring attitude and sincere desire to understand."

Obstacles to empathic listening and attendant problems

Many of us can find it challenging to sincerely understand our discussion partners, especially if we think they are our spiritual 'juniors'. As fathers, for example, we may feel it's a waste of time to hear our wife or child actively and carefully. There may be a deeply held belief that they should hear from me because I know better than them. This dynamic can also occur between 'senior' and 'junior' devotees. This will impede

the discussion process, for if we consistently refuse to hear someone, they will likely gradually become disinclined to listen to us.

Some benefits to overcoming our resistance to empathic hearing

From our years of discussing with various devotees, including our children, we have learned that Krishna often spoke through them for our benefit. He can instruct us through anyone since He is in everyone's heart. Lord Chaitanya alludes to this in the following verse:

“Lord Krishna is very merciful to you because by bewildering My mind, He has exposed His personal opulence and sweetness. He has caused you to hear all these things from Me for your understanding.” (Lord Chaitanya to Sanatana Goswami, CC Madhya Lila 21.145)

Furthermore, the best way to encourage others to hear us is by first hearing them. Example is better than precept. By modelling active hearing, we encourage our wife, child, or other 'spiritual junior' to do likewise.

Mutually respectful hearing generates a favourable culture for discussing Srila Prabhupada's purports enabling all concerned to have an enjoyable and beneficial learning experience.

Below are some examples of empathic listening from sastra:

Verse: “Hearing these matters, four-headed Brahma, overwhelmed by a vast treasure of transcendental joy, quietly repeated and agreed with each point he was taught, and then offered his respects again and again at the feet of the Lord.”

Commentary: “...To show understanding of the Lord's words, Brahma dutifully repeated each point, and confirmed that he agreed completely, before the Lord continued with the next.” -Sri Brihad-Bhagavatamrita; Part Two; Chapter 2 text 134:

In the Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.7.21-23, Vidura reflects what he understood Maitreya said in earlier chapters.

Similarly, in Srimad Bhagavatam 6.1.1-5, Pariksit Maharaja summarises what he has understood Sukadeva Goswami to have taught so far.

Principle Seven: Submissively Raise Your Doubts, Confusions And Misgivings

“Doubt is one of the important functions of intelligence; blind acceptance of something does not give evidence of intelligence. Therefore the word samsaya is

very important; in order to cultivate intelligence, one should be doubtful in the beginning..." Srimad Bhagavatam 3.26.30

"In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. Not only should one hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries." Bg 4.34 purport

"So we request simply people that you accept this authoritative knowledge and try to assimilate it by your intelligence. It is not that you stop your argument and intelligence, simply blindly accept something. No. We are human beings, we have got intelligence. We are not animals that we shall be forced to accept something. No. Tad viddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya [Bg. 4.34]. In this Bhagavad-gita you'll find. You try to understand, tad viddhi. Viddhi means to try to understand. Pranipata. Pranipatena means surrendering, not by challenge." Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 2.13 — Pittsburgh, September 8, 1972

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/720908bgpit/> (audio 26:32 to 27:29)

"Now, we have received this news, very pleasing. Now next duty? Taj-joṣaṇāt. Now, if you little try to assimilate it. And what is that assimilation? Smaraṇam. Simply by thinking, "Oh, this has been spoken." Try to argue whether it is true or not. So you have to think over. Satām prasaṅgān, taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani. And if you do that... Suppose you hear something of the Bhagavad-gītā, and it appeals to you, or even does not appeal to you. Just try to think over: "What Bhagavad-gītā says? How Swāmījī has discussed this matter?" Apply your arguments. Apply your logic. Don't take it as a sentiment or as in a blind faith. You have got reason; you have got argument; you have got sense. Apply it and try to understand it. Neither it is bogus. It is scientific. Then you will feel... Taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani śraddhā bhaktir ratir anukramiṣyati. You will gradually develop your attachment for hearing it, and devotional service will be invoked in your heart, and then, gradually, you will make progress." Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 4.11-12 — New York, July 25, 1966
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/660725bg-new-york/> (audio 27:11 to 28:48)

"Without questions, you cannot make progress. So blind faith is never required, neither questions should be in a mood of challenge. That should not. Questions or answers should be just to understand. And that should be accompanied with service." Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 4.39-5.3 — New York, August 24, 1966
<https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/bhagavad-g%C4%ABt%C4%81-43953/> (audio 45:49 to 46:15)

"No, inquiring submissively. Not that challenging. If one challenges to inquire, he'll never be benefited." Morning Walk — March 23, 1974, Bombay
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/740323mwbom/> (32:23 to 32:31)

“You have to receive this word little submissively. Namanta eva. Don’t think yourself, that you are very man of knowledge. Because our knowledge is very limited, so we should not be puffed up with false thinking that I am very learned man. No. Just become a little gentle and submissive, and hear these messages from Krsna. Sthane sthitah sruti-gatam tanu-van-manobhih. Tanu. Tanu means your body, and vak means your words, and mana means mind. Just try to adjust your mind, your body, your words, and hear the Srimad-Bhagavad-gita which is spoken by the Supreme Lord, and put your arguments, put your reason, whatever you have got. Don’t accept it blindly. And think over it, and then you’ll see what is the result.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 9.11-14 — New York, November 27, 1966
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/661123bg-new-york/> (21:18 to 22:30)

One might ask how we can raise doubts, confusion and misgivings submissively. This is what we recommend. First, recognise that if something doesn’t make sense to us, it is not due to a fault in scripture. The problem probably lies with our insufficient knowledge. For example, if I don’t yet understand undergraduate quantum science, I won’t understand something at the PhD level. To understand higher truths, I must build my knowledge base.

Accepting this, we pose our questions and do our best to resolve them, and if we can’t, we write them down to ask others. We invite you to share your questions on the IS Interactive WhatsApp group. If we still cannot understand, we accept that we need to build the breadth and depth of our knowledge until we are eligible to understand the answer. We have experience of being confused about something for many years until our knowledge increased to the point where we could understand.

Don’t act on ‘knowledge’ you haven’t understood.

If we fanatically act on something we have not understood, or worse still, that we have misunderstood, we could cause problems in our lives or those of others. Better we ensure we have cleared all doubts, confusions and misgivings before implementing changes in our lives, such as divorcing our spouse or abandoning our children, which we have seen happen. If in doubt about something, don’t act on it.

“Nothing should be accepted blindly; everything should be accepted with care and with caution.” (Bhagavad-gita 10.4-5)

“This is called firm, unflinching faith. Faith, I do not mean faith by blind faith. This Bhagavad-gita is not blind faith. Everything is being explained step by step, scientifically, authoritatively. So try to understand.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 4.39-42 — Los Angeles, January 14, 1969
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/690114bg-los-angeles/> ([audio 6:39 to 7:02](#))

The difference between blind faith and “implicit” faith:

“So this is called faith. The faith is not blind. There is proof. He..., the cobbler was not blindly believing that Nārāyaṇa was pulling an elephant through the hole of a needle, but he sees practically the potency, the power of the Lord, bījo 'haṁ sarva-bhūtānām [Bg. 7.10], how He keeps all the potencies of the banyan tree within the seed. So otherwise there is no meaning "all-powerful." He can do whatever He likes.

Inconceivable.” Nectar of Devotion lecture in Vrindavan in 1972

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/721113ndvrn/?query=Narada+unflinching+faith+blind+needle#bb214525>

Srila Prabhupada often refers to ‘unflinching’ faith as ‘implicit’ faith:

“Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed.” Bg 6.47

purport

A person who has blind faith cannot give any reasonable explanation for what he believes, nor is his faith based on personal experience. He is fanatical or sentimental in his assertions. But implicit faith means he can rationally and scripturally justify his faith, and his reason is confirmed by his personal experience.

Questions should focus on understanding the passage being discussed. Do not use questions to divert the discussion from the passage under scrutiny.

“Don't go to outside today's lecture. You try to... Question means the lecture on which I was speaking. If there is any difficulty, that should be questioned. Otherwise, if you go outside, that present atmosphere created for this purpose, that will be lost. So question means on the subject matter which is already discussed. If there is any doubt or if there is any difficulty for understanding the subject matter which we have already discussed, that is the subject matter of question.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 3.6-10; 23/12/68; Los Angeles.

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/681223bg-los-angeles/> (audio 44:40 to 45:24)

“No, you don't bring any other question. You talk about this, which we have lectured. In this way, if you bring other question, that is not... We are discussing one verse. You can put question on this, not irrelevant question. Of course, that is not irrelevant, but not in connection with this verse.

So question means in connection with this verse.” Lecture on Bg 2.11; 11/02/75; Mexico City

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/750211bgmex/?query=Question+means+in+connection+to+this+verse+#bb302419> (audio 19:54 to 20:27)

“Try to understand, question. It is not a thing that we are forcibly pushing. You have got intelligence. Krishna has given you intelligence. Try to understand with your

intelligence but do not try to avoid. Make your question to understand it, not making question to avoid it. There are two kinds of question. That question will not help you. If you try to avoid, then Krishna will help you to avoid, and if you want to capture Krishna, then Krishna will help you how you can capture.” Lecture; 4/10/68; Seattle <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/681004le-seattle/> (audio 1:01:38 to 1:02:21)

Don't ask absurd questions, or ones that do not help clarify the meaning of the text. Below are three case studies of questions Srila Prabhupada disapproved of.

First case study:

Japanese man: *I always want to ask whether if you met demigods or Indra or Brahma or..*

Paramahansa: *He wants to know if you met any of the demigods, Brahma, Indra..*

Prabhupada: *Then what benefit will be for you? Suppose if I met, now what benefit you will derive out of it? If I say, “Yes, I have met,” that what benefit you will get? Why you are asking this question? That you do not know. Then why you are asking?*

Japanese man: *Maybe sense gratification. (laughter)*

Prabhupada: *What is that, maybe...?*

Trivikrama: *Maybe sense gratification.*

Prabhupada: *Yes, it is sense gratification.*

Japanese man: *But actually, other devotees sometimes tell me that you met Indra or...*

Prabhupada: *Yes, I have met Indra or I have not met Indra. So if I met Indra, what benefit you get? And if I did not meet Indra, what is your loss? That is my question. Then why do you ask this question? You have no profit, no loss. Any other question? Put some intelligent questions. Then we can understand that you are studying really.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 16.8 — Tokyo, January 28, 1975 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/750128bgtok/> (50:39 to 53:12)*

Second case study:

Guest: *Yes. Bhagavad-gita teaches us that one should treat a piece of gold...*

Prabhupada: *Hm?*

Guest: *...a piece of gold and a piece of stone alike. Is it practically considered?*

Prabhupada: *Where it is stated?*

Devotee: *One should treat a piece of gold and a piece of stone...*

Prabhupada: *Where it is stated?*

Guest: *In the Bhagavad-gita.*

Prabhupada: *Where? You recite the sloka.*

Guest: *Well I can't...*

Prabhupada: *That's all. This is not question. If you have no clear idea, where the question? Where it is stated?*" Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 16.5 — Calcutta, February 23, 1972 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/720223bgcal/> (audio 34:37 to 35:21)

Third Case study:

"Guest: How many other people are there on this planet who have made as much spiritual progress as you have?"

Prabhupāda: Many. But not many, but there are many also. But there is no statistics in my possession. But... The formula is that what is the use of taking statistics how many there are? Why don't you become one of them? [laughter] Why you are wasting time in that way? These are not very intellectual questions. You just try to become enlightened. What is use of who is enlightened or not? You try to be enlightened. That's all." Lecture 1968

<https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/681213bgla/> (audio 1:04:38 to 1:05:36)

Here are the key lessons from the above case studies:

1. We should ask questions that directly clear doubts or confusion regarding the topic Srila Prabhupada discussed and not steer the discussion away from it.
2. When we ask a question, we should specify the verse or instructions we are asking about. We must reference the text. Making vague references to something we think we heard or remember from our reading will only confuse the discussion as we may not even accurately represent the point in question. We need a specific reference. If we cannot recall where we saw the reference in question, we should take a few minutes to search for it in the Vedabase.
3. We must ensure our reasons for raising the question are sincere. As the above examples show, Srila Prabhupada often challenged, "Why are you asking that question?" Are we trying to show someone up? Are we trying to show off? What is our motive? We should only try to clear doubts and confusion regarding the specific topic Srila Prabhupada is discussing.

PRINCIPLE Eight: DISCUSS A REALISTIC APPLICATION

"Brahmana must be well-educated, jnana, and he must apply the knowledge in practical life and believe in the Vedic injunctions." Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 2.2-6 — Ahmedabad, December 11, 1972

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/721211bgahm/> (audio 31:16 to 31:28)

“And the essence of Vedic knowledge is Bhagavad-gita because the Supreme Personality of Godhead is speaking personally. Take advantage of it. Apply it practically life and be happy not only in this life, but the next life.” Lecture Bhagavad-gita 13:22 — Hyderabad, August 17, 1976

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/760817bghyd/> (audio 30:19 to 30:36)

“We just have to try to understand by hearing and then try to put the process to practice in our daily lives. By becoming submissive, hearing from the right source, and trying to apply the teachings in our daily lives, we can become conquerors of the Supreme. For one who does this, Lord Krishna becomes easily available.” Path of Perfection 9: Destination After Death

“One who follows the principles and instructions enjoined by the great sages of the past can utilize these instructions for practical purposes. Such a person can very easily enjoy life and pleasures.” SB 4.1.4 verse

“Everyone is expected to follow these rules and regulations. If one does not follow them and acts whimsically according to his lust, greed and desire, then he never will be perfect in his life. In other words, a man may theoretically know all these things, but if he does not apply them in his own life, then he is to be known as the lowest of mankind. In the human form of life, a living entity is expected to be sane and to follow the regulations given for elevating his life to the highest platform, but if he does not follow them, then he degrades himself.” Bg 16.23 purport

Once we understand a truth correctly, free from doubt, confusion or misgiving, we need to discuss how it can be applied in our lives. In other words, now we have understood this point, what should we do? Sometimes, we ask this question in two sections. In the first, we discuss the ideal application, and in the next, we discuss a more realistic application for us. For example, we may understand that following Ekadashi will help us advance spiritually. The ideal is to do a dry fast each Ekadashi and stay up all night chanting. However, this may be beyond us, and a realistic application might be to simply refrain from eating grains on Ekadashi. The application will be different for each of us.

This question is best used when discussing with our close family members or a small group of intimate friends and may not always be appropriate in larger, less intimate discussion groups. First, in a large group, it would take too long for each person to discuss their application; and second, we might feel inhibited to be honest about what is realistic for us.

Please read the article: [‘Some thoughts on adau sraddha to anartha nivritti’](#).

Principle Nine: CITE SASTRIC EVIDENCE

“The process of speaking in spiritual circles is to say something upheld by the scriptures. One should at once quote from scriptural authority to back up what he is saying. At the same time, such talk should be very pleasurable to the ear. By such discussions, one may derive the highest benefit and elevate human society.” Bg 17.15 purport

“So sruti-smṛti-pramāṇa — citing evidence from the Vedas and the corollary literature — is the only method for making a spiritual statement.” Civilization and Transcendence chp 5: Eternal Truths vs. Everyday Realities

There are four types of evidence: *pratyakṣa* (direct perception), *śabda pramāṇa* (evidence from the Vedic statements), *anuman* (logical deduction), and *aitihya* (historical). Of these, the most authoritative is *śabda pramāṇa*:

*“srutih pratyakṣam aitihiyam anumānam catustayam
pramāṇesv anavasthānad vikalpat sa virajyate
Vedic literature, direct perception, history and hypothesis are the four kinds of
evidential proofs. Everyone should stick to these principles for the realization of the
Absolute Truth.”* Madhya 9.362 purport

“Therefore if the evidence is there in the statement of Vedas, that is the proof. Śabda-pramāṇa. There are three kinds of evidences. Pratyakṣa, direct sense perception, and śabda-pramāṇa, evidence from the Vedic statement, and anumāna, aitihiya, historical or hypothesis. So out of all evidences, the evidence which is called, derived from Vedic statement, that is accepted as most authoritative.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gīta 2.20-25 — Seattle, October 14, 1968
<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/681014bg-seattle/> (audio 10:53 to 11:44)

“There are three kinds of evidences. Out of that, śruti-pramāṇa, evidence from higher authorities, that is the first-class evidence. What are those evidence? Pratyakṣa, aitihiya and sruti. Pratyakṣa means direct perception. Direct perception, that is evidence. People with poor fund of knowledge, they want direct perception of everything. That is not possible. Direct perception of everything is not possible. Therefore aitihiya. Aitihiya means historical, historical, parampara, hearing, traditional. And the next first-class evidence is sruti. Sruti means to hear from the authority. That is sruti. Just like the example we have several times cited here that the evidence “Who is my father?” that evidence is to hear from my mother. That’s all. There is no other evidence. The mother says that “This is your father. He is your father.” This is sruti, hearing from the mother, authority. And we have no other authority to understand father. Similarly, we have to understand our supreme father from the sruti mother, Vedas mother, mother Vedic mother. We have to accept Vedas as mother, sruti.” Lecture on Sri Chaitanya-caritamṛta, Madhya-līla 20.318-329 — New York, December 23, 1966 <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/661223cc-new-york/> (audio 11:24 to 13:13)

If you struggle to find evidences we suggest you:

1. Learn to do searches on Vedabase
2. Reach out to learned devotees
3. Listen to more Srila Prabhupada lectures. It's amazing how often you will 'accidentally' hear something which pertains to your discussion.

Principle Ten: PRACTICE THEN PREACH

“Practically you have to behave; then you can preach.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 16.7 — Hyderabad, December 15, 1976

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/761215bghyd/> (audio 11:50 to 11:56)

“So that is part of our business to preach, but to practice personally, that is our main business. To practice personally, that is our main business. Not that everyone will be preacher, but at least his own life be perfect.” Room Conversation — June 24, 1976, New Vrindaban <https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/760624r1nv/> (audio 48:17 to 48:40)

“Try to understand its philosophy, apply in life, and try to distribute this knowledge.” Lecture on Bhagavad-gita 2.17 — Hyderabad, November 22, 1972

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/721122bghyd/> (audio 43:34 to 43:42)

“Unless one practices devotional service himself, he cannot teach it to others. This conclusion is indeed confirmed throughout the Gita and Bhagavatam.” CC Adi 3.21

In Bhagavad-Gita 18.68, Krishna promises:

“For one who explains this supreme secret to the devotees, pure devotional service is guaranteed, and at the end he will come back to Me.”

Please read our article: [‘Two Life-changing Secrets of the Bhagavad-Gita’](#), wherein we illustrate the following:

- Regular discussion of Bhagavad-Gita equates to surrendering to Krishna. By surrendering to Krishna we are protected from our karmic suffering.
- By then teaching others to do likewise, we can go back home to Godhead.

The idea behind this tenth principle is that we must first attain Krishna’s shelter before we can help others to do likewise.

“So Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that ‘Before becoming preacher, before endeavoring yourself to do good to others, you just perfect yourself.’

'Physician, heal thyself.'” lecture 1967

<https://vedabase.io/en/library/transcripts/670210cc-san-francisco/#bb517613>

However, please remember that even while helping others, never give up the discussion sessions you do for your own purification.