

# The VTE Training Scheme

## Statement of Principles and Values

*The following ten principles and values underpin the VTE's approach to Training and Education:*

1. Training and Education must be consistent with Srila Prabhupada's instructions.
2. Training and Education is one of ISKCON's main purposes.
3. The Brahmachari and Brahmacharini ashrams are educational institutes.
4. Effective training is individualised.
5. Effective training is scheduled and pro-active.
6. Effective training fulfils the needs of both the individual and the institution.
7. Devotional service is based on free-will.
8. Krishna consciousness is dormant in everyone's heart.
9. Effective training is goal-oriented.
10. The main purpose of training is character development.

# Principles and Values Unpacked and Explained

## 1. Training and Education must be consistent with Srila Prabhupada's instructions

- Srila Prabhupada's instructions, as revealed through his books, lectures, letters, etc. are the guiding-light for all members of the Society and form the framework within which Training and Education must operate.
- within the theological and operational framework left by Srila Prabhupada there is ample opportunity for devotees to develop and express their initiative and individuality.

## 2. Training and Education is one of ISKCON's main purposes

- Srila Prabhupada gives many quotes on the importance of training and education.  
*e.g. "Our first business is to preach to the devotees and to maintain the highest standard of Vaishnava education".*  
(SPL to Hridayananda, 9th July, 1972).
- the vast majority of devotees want (or would have wanted) far more systematic training than we're currently able to offer (or have been able to offer in the past).
- systematic training is necessary for creating future leaders. It will attract the more intelligent class of men and women (though not excluding others). Such people plan their lives and rightfully want and expect real prospects.  
*"In this way, try to recruit some men from the student class of men for joining us as future leaders of our Society. If we simply go on expanding and there are no qualified men to lead, then everything will be spoiled eventually".*  
(SPL to Ravindra Svarupa, 5 January 1973).
- training is a necessity rather than a luxury. (ie. training is "doing the needful").
- training is an investment which will produce valuable returns.
- training could attract funding through specific means, e.g. a scholarship scheme patronised by the Asian Hindu community.
- it is difficult to implement if we continue to rely on students for fund-raising.

## 3. The Brahmachari and Brahmacharini ashrams are educational institutes

- The temples, and more specifically the student ashrams, are not places where devotees join indefinitely, but establishments in which they enrol, knowing full well their future prospects.

#### **4. Effective training is individualised**

- a principle consistent with varnashrama.
- allowing ISKCON to embrace as many people as possible whilst simultaneously maintaining the identity and purity of the different sections of the Society, through the allocation of corresponding values and standards.
- promoting more efficient use of potential talent.
- providing the student with more job satisfaction. Inability to function well in a particular service does not necessarily denote a lack of sincerity or an aversion to austerity.
- creating more motivated members.
- encouraging students to develop their own specific relationship with Krishna.

#### **5. Effective training is scheduled and pro-active**

- a principle consistent with the Vedic system of four ashrams or stages of life.
- with constant monitoring, scheduled periods of commitment and regular re-assessment.
- encouraging changes in service to be initiated by success rather than through burn-out, dissatisfaction or (apparent) failure.
- most devotees will get married (though the proposed scheme also caters to life-long celibates). Householders who value their training are more likely to voluntarily contribute towards the Society, freeing students from the debilitating constraints of fund-raising. If our Society is to flourish financially, its members must give esteem to the grihastha ashram.

#### **6. Effective training fulfils the needs of both the individual and the institution**

- Establishing goals in terms of training minimises the dichotomy between the needs of the individual and those of the mission. They allow the Society to be both institution and person-oriented.
- The welfare of the individual devotee is a priority. The potency of our movement is considerably determined by the strength of its individual members. There is a subsequent need to train self-reliant devotees with genuine esteem, in themselves and in the movement. Trainers should avoid the tendency to promote conformity by unnecessarily discouraging individuality, initiative, and self-expression.

#### **7. Devotional service is based on free-will**

This has practical implications for training:

- devotees should be trained to take responsibility for their decisions, actions etc. and not become inordinately or inappropriately dependant on the Society.
- Student's themselves should make the decision to enrol for any stage of training, knowing well their rights and responsibilities during that period. In other words, the student should be inducted on a contractual basis which respects the integrity of both the Society and the individual.

- the student should be trained to be independently thoughtful with ample and validated opportunities to appropriately express doubts, opinions, feelings and difficulties.
- the student should be encouraged to ask questions and to study the Krishna conscious philosophy from all points of view.
- the individual must be respected for his or her intelligence from the beginning of their training (highlighting the need for qualified trainers with esteem and integrity).
- credit should be constantly given for the continuing performance of devotional service. It should not be taken for granted after induction. (Nevertheless, the student will have agreed to a level of commitment and any apparent deviation should be constructively addressed).

## **8. Krishna consciousness is dormant in everyone's heart**

- trainers should not try to superficially or prematurely impose Krishna conscious values on the student but should attempt to evoke a natural appreciation of these axiomatic truths through a mood of service and open and honest enquiry.

## **9. Effective training is goal-oriented**

- Consistent with tradition, personal sadhana and outreach activities will constantly go hand-in-hand. Nevertheless, training at any stage should be analysed as to whether it is:
  - (a) primarily for the spiritual development of the student
  - (b) primarily as a means for the student to share his or her Krishna consciousness with others.
- The various opportunities for trainees and their future possible involvement with the Society after completing training at any stage should be carefully delineated.
- The aims and purposes of training should be clearly identified.

## **10. The main purpose of training is character development**

- Training and Education goes far beyond simple knowledge transmission. Rather it is to facilitate the student to acquire and develop:
  - (1) knowledge and understanding
  - (2) practical, devotional and interpersonal skills
  - (3) appropriate values and attitudes.
- Srila Prabhupada wished to develop an ideal class of men of women who can set practical examples for others to follow. That students nurture and demonstrate integrity and a sense of morality is essential to realisation of this goal.

## **The Aims of the VTE Training Scheme**

1. To equip students with the knowledge, skills and values that enable them to consistently advance in Krishna consciousness throughout their lives.
2. To develop students' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of their spiritual heritage.
3. To train students to become self-reliant and responsible men and women, able to make a positive contribution to ISKCON and to society at large.
4. To train students as bona fide representatives of the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, expert in ministering to the ongoing needs of a growing congregation.
5. To prepare students to accept the spiritual and practical responsibilities of the successive ashrams, as and where required.