

Chapter 9 Satsang: Company of the Holy

1. Why Seek Spiritual Company?

Men and women of great spiritual attainment are almost always found in the Company of devotees and spiritual aspirants. Seekers are drawn to the light of such great beings, just as inspired teachers feel compelled to share their light, love, and wisdom with a world hungry for their gifts.

Good company lifts and carries us on the tide of spirituality. Unwholesome company washes us away on the dark current of self-indulgence and grief. Good fellowship provides us with regular sustenance and encouragement. Beneficial companionship aids our steady and lasting progress, which inspires us on the Godward path. Spiritual association encourages faith and grants us the strength to continue our quest – even when the task seems most difficult. Keeping the company of holy-minded men and women can make the difference between success and failure in spiritual endeavor.

The easiest and most fruitful method of keeping yourself free from dust and rust is satsang (good company). The company of the good and the godly will slowly and surely chasten and cleanse the persons prone to straying away from the straight path towards self-realization.

Sathya Sai Speaks 9, p.223

2. What is Good Company?

Real friends encourage only the best in us. A true companion gives to others without seeking return. As a tree is known by its fruits, friends are known by their actions. Good company is association with those who seek to learn and practice truthfulness, love, duty, devotion, and peace. Such company encourages us to make our best effort on the divine path. Men and women who practice spiritual discipline are examples to each other and to the world. It is their nature to serve all, even those who seek to harm them.

第九章 社僧 (Satsang)：与善知识交往

1. 为何寻求心灵的交往？

造诣很深的男女高灵，经常都可以在信徒和灵修者的交游中看到。求道者会被这样的高灵的光给吸引，就如受神感召的老师们有一种急迫感，要把他们的光，爱，和智慧跟渴望获得他们的礼物的世界分享一样。

益友在心灵的浪潮中扶持我们，提携我们。损友则在自我放纵和悲伤的暗流中冲走我们。真挚的友谊提供我们一定的身心维系与健全激励。有助益的交往帮助我们获得稳定而持久的进展，激励我们在灵道上迈进。心灵交游激发信心并授予我们继续探索的力量 -- 即便困难重重，也不退缩。与善知识交往在灵修努力的成败之间确实举足轻重。

使你远离尘和锈的最容易和最有效的方法就是‘社僧’(satsang, 好的友伴)。与善者和敬神者交游肯定会慢慢地纯化和清涤那些会在朝向明心见性之康庄大道上迷失方向的人。

《沙迪亚赛说》第9章223面

2. 何谓益友？

真正的朋友只促进我们内在的最优越的素质。一个真心的友伴只付出而不求回报。如树之以其果实而见分晓，朋友则以其行动而见分晓。物以类聚，人以群分，益友则与那些志于学和持以诚信，爱心，责任，虔诚和平和的人交往。这样的友伴鼓励我们竭尽所能在灵道上迈进。修行者彼此树立榜样也给世界树立榜样。为大家服务是他们的本质，就连那些想伤害他们的人，他们也一视同仁。

When a sharp axe is used to cut a sandalwood tree, the sandalwood tree does not feel hurt by the axe, nor does it get angry with it. On the contrary, the sandalwood tree hands its fragrance to the axe... This is the quality of good people.

Summer Showers 1973, p.53

3. We Adapt to Our Surroundings

In nature all creatures adapt to their environments. The chameleon changes color to suit its habitat. The giraffe has developed a long neck to reach his meal of leaves on high tree branches. People also accommodate themselves to their surroundings. They develop tastes for available foods and they normally build their homes from materials obtainable locally.

A similar type of adaptation occurs in our minds. We naturally tend to agree with the attitudes and behaviors of those whose company we keep. We seek acceptance and approval from our peers. For this reason we must be certain to seek only good companionship. Particularly when we are new on the spiritual path, good company is indispensable. When the mind is not confirmed in the ways of good behavior and morality, it is easily led astray. Only great beings can change the world around them. The tendency of untrained minds is to adapt to their environments, at the expense of their spiritual aspirations.

There were two parrots on a tree, twins, to be more precise. A hunter trapped them and sold them, one to a low, cruel butcher and the other to a sage who was running an ashrama (school) to teach the Vedas (holy scriptures). After a few years, he was surprised to find that one bird swore very foully, while the other recited the leelas (divine play) of the Lord in a sweet musical tone which captivated the listeners. Such is the effect of the environment; so seek and secure satsang.

Sathya Sai Speaks I, pp.91-92

Long practice and discipline are required to make the mind obey the divinity within. It is difficult to wean the mind from low desires. But by associating with high-minded friends, we can adopt aspirations and ideals similar

当用一把锋利的斧头来砍伐一棵檀香树时，檀香树不因此而受创也不生气。它反而把芬芳传给斧头……这就是好人的素质。

《夏季浸濡》1973, 53面

3. 适应环境

自然界中，所有生物都适应它们的环境。变色龙变其颜色以配合其栖息地。长颈鹿为了吃到高大树枝的叶子而培育起了长颈。人类亦然。他们就所能得到的食物来加以调配，而一般上，他们都就地取材来建造自己的家园。

一种类似的适应也发生在我们的心念之中。我们很自然地认同我们结交之友人的态度和行为。我们也寻求友伴的接受和认可。因为这原因，我们必须肯定只结交益友。尤其是我们刚踏上灵道之时，益友更不可或缺。当心念犹未按照良好的行为和品德确立时，它就容易误入歧途。只有高灵才能改变他们的周遭世界。未训练过的心念易于牺牲他们灵性的渴望而迁就环境的需要。

树上有两只鸚鵡，说贴切些，是两只双胞胎鸚鵡。一个猎人将它们捕获并转卖给他人，一只卖给一个低级而残忍的屠夫，另一只则卖给一个开办学校教授吠陀经的贤人。几年后，猎人惊讶地发现一只鸚鵡讲的是卑鄙的脏话，而另一只则以优美的旋律赞颂主的神圣戏曲，令到听者为之神魂颠倒。这就是环境的影响；所以，交友不可不慎，必须求得‘社僧’（satsang）。

《沙迪亚赛说》第1章91-92面

为使心念顺从内在圣灵，长期的训练和修行在所必需。要把低贱欲望赶出心念委实不易。然而，凭借与崇高心智的友人交往，我们就能向他们看齐而采纳类似的志向和理想。益友可比为甜牛奶而损友则比为

to theirs. Beneficial company may be compared to sweet milk, while the company of bad people is like water. When a drop of milk is added to a pitcher of water, the milk loses its value. But when a small amount of water is added to a pitcher of milk, the water takes on the value of milk. As Rama is said to have admonished Lakshmana:

The company of bad men is the prelude to the disappearance of wisdom. The company of good men makes wisdom blossom.

Ram Katha Rasavahini, p. 367

4. Satsang, a Spiritual Discipline

Can we call the practice of choosing our company a spiritual discipline? The methods that help us to evolve spiritually are designed to purify our hearts and minds. Meditation, service, study – all spiritual training has this aim as its purpose. Similarly, the company we keep directly influences our purity of mind.

The discipline of attending regular gatherings of aspirants, such as study circles or devotional meetings, is a great aid on the spiritual journey. We better understand the practical aspects of spirituality when we see them practiced by others. As we learn by observing Sai Baba's actions, we also learn by observing the lives of our peers. Practical demonstration is necessary for our education, as well as our own study and devotion.

Ascetic practices, years of constant recitation of the name, pilgrimages to holy places and shrines, study of sacred books – these will not help the aspirant to spiritual victory as much as communion with the godly and good.

Sathya Sai Speaks 6, p.193

The best way to combat wrong tendencies is to keep them out of sight and out of mind. The untrained mind seeks out inferior sights and sounds. To deter the mind from attaching itself to unwholesome influences, we must keep such influences far away. The recommended way to learn virtue is to keep it

水。当把一滴牛奶倒入一壶水中，牛奶便失去价值。但当少量的水加入一壶牛奶中，水就有牛奶的价值。如罗摩（Rama）给与罗什满那（Lakshmana）的忠告：

与坏人为伍是智慧消失的前兆。与好人为伍使人的智慧绽放异彩。

《Ram Katha Rasavahini》367面

4. 社僧，一个灵性的修行

我们能否称择友的实行为一种灵性的修习？帮助我们灵性进展的法门是用来净化我们的心智和心念的。静坐，服务，学习 -- 所有灵性的训练都以此作为其目的。同样，我们结交的友伴直接影响我们心念的纯净。

出席求道者例常聚会所得到的一种训练，诸如学习圈或研讨会，在灵道上是一个极大的帮助。当我们看到他人修习灵性法门时，我们更了解灵修的实用层面。就如凭借观察赛峇峇的言行而有所得一样，我们凭借观察同辈的生活也有所得。实际的展示对我们的教育，以及我们自己的学习和虔诚，都是必需的。

多年不断持名，朝圣，读经的苦修 -- 这些都比不上与善知识交游更能帮助求道者在灵道上的进展和成就。

《沙迪亚赛说》第6章193面

战斗错误倾向的最佳方法就是把它们赶出视线与心念之外，即，眼不见，心不想。未受过训练的心念想要找出卑贱的视像与声音。要打断心念之依附有害的影响，我们必须远离这样的影响。值得推荐的培育

always in sight. High ideals inspire us to noble action. Mahatma Gandhi was inspired to live a life of truth after he witnessed a holy play about the life of the avatar Rama.

You are molded by the company you relish. When you make friends with the blacksmith, you are bound to collect black dust on your clothes and skin. That is why sangam, association, is held to be so crucial in spiritual life.

Sathya Sai Speaks 5, p. 107

5. Satsang or Socializing?

In the Sai Baba centers, it is important for us to understand the effects of our actions on others. There is an important difference between satsang and socializing. We have need for good company, but we must not allow our association to become mundane banter. Newcomers should be warmly welcomed, but members must avoid diluting the milk of satsang with the water of worldly affairs. We must maintain a spiritual focus in our discussion or we should be silent.

It is also important for us to know when we are providing good company for another, or the other is having a negative influence on us. Much introspection is required for us to be vigilant in the situation. We must know our own strengths and weaknesses very well. Even the highly evolved seeker is subject to the negative influence of bad company.

For the siddha (the accomplished seeker) too, one who has reached success, satsang is valuable, for it is like keeping a pot of water inside a tank of water: there will not be any loss by evaporation. If the yogi lives among worldly men, the chances of his yoga evaporating into bhoga (bad habits) are very great.

Sathya Sai Speaks 4, p. 226

美德的方法是耳濡目染。崇高的理想鼓舞我们执行崇高的行动。圣雄甘地就是看了有关神化身罗摩事迹的戏剧之后，得到激励而过一个依据真理的生活。

近朱者赤，近墨者黑，您所结交的朋友塑造你的行为模式。如果你与铁匠为伍，你一定满身沾满黑色的铁屑。那就是为什么交友（*sangam*僧伽）在灵性生活中占有那么重要地位的原因了。

《沙迪亚赛说》第5章107面

5. 社僧或社交？

在赛中心里，明白我们的行动对他人的影响是重要的。社僧（*satsang*）与社交之间有极大的不同处。我们需要益友，但我们决不能让我们的交游陷入俗气的戏谑。刚加入者应该受到热忱的欢迎，但会员必须避免以俗务之水去冲淡社僧之牛奶。我们必须在我们的讨论中维持一种灵性的焦点，否则，我们就应该保持缄默。

确认自己是他人的益友或他人对自己有负面的影响也是重要的。为慎重小心故，自我反省在所必需。我们必须了解自己的优点和弱点。即便造詣很高的求道者也免不了受到损友的负面影响。

对得道者（*siddha*）而言，社僧（*satsang*，与善知识交游）还是重要的，因为这就像是把一壶水置于水槽中一样：不会因蒸发而有所损失。如果修行者生活于俗人之中，他的‘*yoga*’（修持，瑜伽）被蒸发为‘*bhoga*’（恶习）的机会就很大了。

《沙迪亚赛说》第4章226面

Good company is important for the advanced aspirant, but it is even more important for the newcomer. When we are caught in the grips of worldly desire, we can only be reformed by good company. Without strong spiritual guidance and support we may not even realize our plight.

Join satsang, the company of the godly. Just as the tame elephants surround the wild tusker and rope him and bind him hand and foot and immobilize him before taming him, the spiritually minded will bring the doubter around.

Sathya Sai Speaks 2, p. 187

6. Resolve to Seek Only the Good

The choice is ours. We have clear decisions to make regarding our future: we can choose to do what is right or we can take the path of minimum effort. If we lose the opportunity to take the correct path now, can we be sure when the chance will come again?

Our heart is our best guide to correct action. It tells us if we are benefiting or losing from the company we keep. If we are inspired and uplifted, we feel the benefit. In good company all should profit from the shared spiritual energy and enthusiasm. The benefits of satsang can lead to liberation itself. Satsang enables us to see through the delusion of worldly desires. It can grant us a vision of our destination and a model for the journey.

Through satsang you develop freedom from delusion, through freedom from delusion you develop faith in truth, and through faith in truth you attain liberation itself.

Sathya Sai Speaks 10, p. 151

Questions for Study Circle:

1. What is good company?
2. Why seek holy company?
3. Why does association have so much effect on people?

对先进的求道者而言，好的友伴还是重要，而对初入道者而言，那就更重要了。当我们深陷于世俗欲望之中时，只有良师益友才能使我们跳出这泥泞。缺乏强而有力的灵性指导和支持，我们或许连自己所处的困境也一无所知。

要参与‘社僧’ (satsang)，也就是，与虔诚者交往。就如驯服的象群围绕着一只野性的大象一样，在驯服他之前，先绑住他的手脚，使他不能自由行动，有灵性观念者会说服怀疑者，使他回心转意。

《沙迪亚赛说》第2章187面

6. 决心只交益友

选择在我们。有关我们的未来，我们要有明确的决定：我们可以选择做对的事情或者我们可以采纳最不费力的途径。如果我们现在错失步上正轨的机会，我们能肯定这机会会再来吗？

我们的心是我们正确行为的最佳向导。它告诉我们，我们是否从所结交的朋友中获益。如果我们得到激励和提升，我们就感到获益。在与益友交往中，大家都应该从分享灵性能量和热忱中获益。‘社僧’可以带来超脱。‘社僧’使我们透视世俗欲望的虚幻，让我们看到我们的目的地和人生旅程的一个典范。

透过社僧 (satsang)，你摆脱虚幻，
透过摆脱虚幻，你培育起对真理的信心，
而透过对真理的信心，你达获超脱。

《沙迪亚赛说》第10章151面

学习圈的问题：

1. 何谓益友？
2. 为何寻求至善的友伴？
3. 为何交友带来那么大的影响？

4. What is the difference between satsang and socializing?
5. How can we be a beneficial influence on others without their bad habits influencing us?
6. When is it better just to be alone?
7. Is it possible for us to remain unaffected by those around us?
8. Should we seek to change others?
9. Is satsang a spiritual discipline?
10. How do we practice the discipline of satsang in daily living?

References for Further Study

1. Gita Vahini, p.224
2. Sathya Sai Speaks 6, p.113 (The bear and the fly).
3. Sathya Sai Speaks 7, pp. 425-426.
4. Sathya Sai Speaks 8, pp. 210-213 (Friendship).
5. Sathya Sai Speaks 9, pp. 223-224.
6. Sathya Sai Speaks 10, p. 74, pp. 130-133.
7. Summer Showers 1973, pp. 47-56 (Who is a good man?).
8. Summer Showers 1973, p. 253.
9. Summer Showers 1977, pp. 246-247.
10. Summer Showers 1978, p. 89.
11. Summer Roses on the Blue Mountains, pp. 69-70.

4. 社僧与社交之间有何不同？
5. 我们如何给他人带来好的影响而又不受到他人恶习的影响？
6. 什么时候独自一人较好？
7. 我们能不被周遭的人所影响吗？
8. 我们应该想方设法改变他人吗？
9. 社僧是一种灵修吗？
10. 在日常生活中，我们如何实行社僧的纪律？