

Part One: The Journey Begins

Chapter 1 Study Circle: A Tool for Transformation

1. How Spiritual Training Begins

An ounce of honest doubt and a commitment to self-improvement are the only requirements for beginning the spiritual journey. When we first set foot on the path, our only assurance of success lies in our sincere inquiry. Faith, devotion, and knowledge grow in time, but an open mind is required for their development. Earnest seekers will find that a harvest of joy awaits them when they cultivate the field of divinity.

Spiritual growth needs to be approached along several avenues. Devotion, study, and service are especially required. Study alone cannot carry us to God-realization: our knowledge must be seasoned with devotion to win the Lord's grace. Similarly, devotion without study and service limits our realization of our full spiritual potential. A balanced approach to the spiritual life promises the best results.

The Sathya Sai Baba study circle promotes an integrated approach to spiritual endeavor. Practice and sincerity are held in higher esteem than voluminous knowledge. Experience and devotion are given greater credence than academic learning. The study circle seeks to transform our behavior – not to fill our heads with undigested information. It conveys practical knowledge that uplifts and ennobles our characters. Only the process of character-building can be called true education.

Not information, but transformation; not instruction, but construction should be the aim. Theoretical knowledge is a burden unless it is practiced, for then it can be lightened into wisdom and assimilated into daily life. Knowledge that does not give harmony and wholeness to the process of living is not worth acquiring. Every activity must be rendered valid and worthwhile by its contribution to the discovery of truth, both of the self and of nature.

Sathya Sai Speaks 9, p.51

第一集：旅程开始

第一章 学习圈：为改造而备的一个工具

1. 灵修如何开始

一个少量的真诚的怀疑和一个自我改进的承诺是开始步上灵道唯一的必要条件。当我们首先步上灵道时，我们成功的机率在于我们真诚的探讨。信心，虔诚和知识与时并进，然而一颗敞开的心则是其进展不可或缺的条件。热衷的求道者，在开垦和耕耘圣灵田地之后，他们会找到等待着他们的喜悦之丰收。

灵性的成长需要沿循几条大道以入门。虔诚，研讨和服务尤其需要。仅靠研讨不能带领我们达到证悟神之境界：我们的知识必须调配虔诚以赢得圣恩。同理，不去研讨和服务的虔诚限制我们对我们充满灵性潜能的认知。一个平衡而相称的进入灵性生活的法门带来最佳的成果。

沙迪亚赛峇峇学习圈促成致力于灵修的一个完整的法门。实行和诚心比满腹经纶更有价值。体验和虔诚比学问更为可靠。学习圈寻求的是改造我们的行为——不是把难以消化的资讯注入我们的脑袋。它传达实用的知识以提升和高尚化我们的人格。只有‘树立人格’的过程才能被称为真正的教育。

成为目标的不是资讯(information)而是改造(transformation)，不是教授(instruction)而是建造(construction)。理论上的知识如不加以实行，则形同一种负担，因为如实行之，它即能化为智慧而融入日常生活中。不给生活过程带来和谐与完整的知识是不值得求取的。一个行动是否有效和有真实价值就要看它对自己与天地万物两者的真相（或真理）的探讨上，是否有所贡献来决定。

《沙迪亚赛说》第9章51面

2. The Study Circle's Purpose

The study circle is a human dynamo that charges us with ideas, inspiration, and resolve. It lifts the weary and points the way when we become lost. The discipline pushes us from behind as it holds a light in front to guide us. The process is simple, but the results can be wondrous.

A study circle is a group of aspirants who meet regularly to discuss spiritual topics. A group leader coordinates the discussion, giving each participant an opportunity to present his or her view of the current subject. The study circle is not a debate. Members are encouraged to state their views, but are discouraged from criticizing others' views. A variety of perspectives is sought on a common theme. During the course of the discussion, the group leader attempts to summarize major themes and to develop a consensus on the important points.

Hislop asked the question, "What is study circle?" It is not just reading books. "Circle, study circle" means taking a point and each person discussing what is the meaning of the point to them – like a roundtable conference. Each person gives his point of view, and finally values are derived from this. If there is just reading, there is doubt. But if each one gives his view, doubts will be answered. The topic is viewed; the study circle looks at different facets. It is like a diamond with its different facets, but there is one facet that is flat, the top facet, and from this all can be viewed. To discover the top facet is the task of the study circle.

Conversations, pp.125-126

The study circle enables us to learn from the wisdom of saints and sages through quotations and references, and also from our peers. The sacred scriptures of all lands may be consulted as sources of wisdom, but in discussing spiritual topics with our contemporaries, we interpret behavior appropriate to our own time and culture. The newcomer benefits from hearing the views of those with more experience. Experienced members gain by restating and clarifying their views. Participants who find book study difficult profit from the discussion, while the studious learn from the practical comments of those with a less academic and more service-oriented bent. In each case the aspirant is encouraged to make a systematic habit of study and practice.

2. 学习圈的目的

学习圈是一个人类发电机，以理念，鼓舞和决心来给我们充电。它提高士气并指点迷津。修行从背后推动我们就像它在我们前面提着一盏灯给我们引路一样。整个过程是单纯的，但其结果可以是不可思议的。

一个学习圈是由一组求道者组成的，他们经常相聚以讨论灵性的问题。组长统筹和协调讨论，给予每一个参与者机会去发表正在讨论的主题之观点。学习圈可不是一场辩论会。会员们都应该受到鼓励去表达他们的观点，但不容许批评他人的观点。在共同的题目上探求多种想法。讨论过程中，组长尝试去总结主要的话题并达成要点的共识。

喜斯乐普(Hislop)发问，“何谓学习圈？”它不仅是阅读书籍而已。“圈，学习圈”意谓拿出一个论点，让每一个人讨论那论点的意义——就像一个圆桌会议。每一个人提出他的见解，而最后找出它真正的价值。若仅仅阅读，必有怀疑。但若人人提出其意见，疑点就会水落石出。主题被深入地讨论；学习圈会从不同的切面或角度来看问题。它就像具有诸多切面的钻石，但有一个切面是平的，顶端的切面，而从这切面，一切皆收入眼帘。学习圈的任务就是寻找那顶端的切面。

《会谈》125--126面

学习圈使我们从圣贤的智慧中获益非浅而这些智慧是通过他们的语录和引文获得的；我们也从同辈的智慧中学到不少。所有地方的经典都可被视为智慧之源，然而，在我们与同辈讨论灵性话题时，我们以适合我们自己的时代和文化去表达我们的行为。初入门者获益自那些比较有经验者所讲述的观点；有经验者则通过再一次的讲述和澄清自己的见解而得以温故知新。觉得研读书籍有困难的参与者可以从讨论中获益不少，而用功勤学者可以向那些教育水平较低而更趋向于服务的成员们学习他们的实用评论。在每一个例子中，求道者无不获得鼓励去养成一种系统化的研究和实行的习性。

3. Knowledge and Self-Confidence

A rose blossoms in the pure sunlight. With proper food, water, and care it grows full and tall. The study circle provides us with similar benefits. With the care of every member, it grants the pure light of inspiration, the food of knowledge, and the water of self-confidence. Through regular discussion and study, we build confidence in our knowledge – and perhaps even acquire some wisdom. We clarify our ideas and learn to express our views on spiritual topics. We learn to listen more closely to others' ideas and to consider other viewpoints. By fellow aspirants, we are inspired to regularly practice spiritual disciplines.

Subjects for discussion usually differ from session to session. Questions or quotations based on general themes, such as those contained in this book, can create the basis for excellent discussions. The spiritual questions or concerns of members also provide good subjects. If a member is experiencing difficulty with a point of study or practice, it may be beneficial for him or her to discuss the subject in a study circle. Usually, if one member has questions, others will have the same question.

Authoritative texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita or Swami's published discourses, are sometimes chosen for systematic study because they cover a variety of pertinent topics. Whatever theme is chosen, it is best to maintain some flexibility in the discussion. Related issues may be aired without drifting too far from the original subject. If the group chooses a topic in advance each week, members may research the theme before discussion. This tends to create a more rewarding exchange because members arrive prepared with thoughts and quotations on the topic.

4. A Typical Study Circle Routine

Study circles will inevitably vary in some respects. Each group of aspirants radiates its own distinctive light, and so each group adopts an approach that suits its needs. However, some aspects of the circle should remain fairly constant.

3. 知识与自信

一朵玫瑰绽放于纯净的阳光下。有了适当的食物，水分和照顾，它长得高大完好。学习圈提供我们以同样的利益。有了每一个成员的照顾之后，它赐予我们以激励的纯光，知识的粮食以及自信的水分。通过定期的研讨，我们树立起信心于我们的知识 --- 或甚至获得某种智慧。我们明确化我们的理念并学会表达我们的见解于灵性的话题上。我们学会仔细聆听他人的理念并对其他观点加以考虑。从同道者中，我们得到激励去定期实行灵性修习。

讨论的主题通常随着每一期的聚会而有所不同。根基于一般主题的问题或语录，诸如包含于此书的那一些，可以给优越的讨论打好基础。灵性问题或会员们的关心事，也都可以成为好的话题。一个会员如果遇到某个论点有疑问或在实行上有困难，他可以拿到学习圈来讨论，肯定获益。一般上，一个会员有问题，其他人也会有同样的问题。

权威的著作，如《梵歌》（Bhagavad Gita）或斯瓦米出版的讲道，有时被选来作有系统的研讨，因为它们概括各种相关的主题。不论所选的是什么主题，最好还是保留某种讨论的伸缩性。有关的问题可以提出来但不能离题。如果小组每周事先选择一个主题，会员们可在讨论前对主题先做一番研究。由于会员们对主题思想和语录作了准备，这就可以建立一个更有意义的交流。

4. 一个典型的学习圈课程

在某些层面上，学习圈难免有所更动。每一组的求道者都散发自己的特殊亮光故而每一组都采纳适合其需要的方法。无论如何，一些层面仍应保持相当的平稳和固定。

7 Study Circle

A study circle should meet regularly, weekly if possible. The location should be convenient for all members. Every participant should be welcome, for each is a valuable part of the group. In study circles, as in other center functions, Swami asks that men and women sit on separate sides of the circle. This helps all participants to concentrate on the subject at hand. Only at public functions, where outside guests are invited, does Swami relax this rule.

Swami says there is no specific limit on how many participate in the circle. However, the size of the room available and the time allotted may require certain prearrangements. More than one circle may be conducted if many participants are present. This is particularly true if all members cannot meet at one location or at one time. Differences of interest may also necessitate the presentation of themes of particular relevance to groups within a center. For example, a group of parents may wish to focus on issues related to child-rearing. A limit of forty-five minutes to one hour allows sufficient time for a discussion without it becoming tiresome.

A successful study format begins with a short presentation by the week's leader. This presentation may last from five to fifteen minutes, depending on the subject matter. Complex, research-oriented topics take longer to present than subjects of general knowledge. The purpose of the introduction is to highlight the important themes of the subject. This allows participants to focus on the subject, particularly if they have been unable to read previously the passage under discussion. An introduction also starts to generate ideas for discussion when the subject is opened to members' comments. It is desirable for the presentation to include various viewpoints and to conclude with a question for discussion. Quotations with apparent contradictions frequently stimulate discussion. After a question is posed, a one-or two-minute meditation allows participants to collect their thoughts before speaking.

Rotation of the leader's task affords each member an opportunity to research and prepare for a meeting. All regular participants are encouraged to present a topic, but they should not be required to do so.

一个学习圈应该经常相聚，若可能，每周一次。地点应该选择方便大家的地方。每一个参与者都应该受到欢迎，因为每一个参与者都是小组珍贵的一员。一如中心的其他聚会，斯瓦米要求在学习圈里男女必须围着圈圈分边而坐。这可以使到参与者专注于主题而不分心。只有公开的聚会，因为有外宾被邀请，斯瓦米才放宽这限制。

斯瓦米说，参加学习圈的人数没有特别的限制。无论如何聚会室的大小和时间的分配或需作事先的安排。若人数太多，可分成多组进行讨论。若所有成员不能在同一时间或同一地点出席的话，这就非变通不可了。就中心的各个小组而言，特别的主题必须被考虑以配合不同兴趣的需要。例如，一组为人父母者或希望谈论子女的教养问题。四十五分钟至一小时的讨论会已足够，且不致于令人感到厌倦。

一个成功的研讨模式往往由该周的组长以一个简短的开场白作为开始。这开场白大约是在五分钟至十五分钟之间，要看主题的内容来决定。复杂的，以研究为方向的主题比一般知识的主题需要较长的时间来表述。开场白的目的在于强调主题的重要话题。这可让参与者专注于主题，尤其是如果他们事先未克过目所要讨论的章节。开场白也让一些概念开始产生，在主题公开给成员们评论时进行讨论。表述必须包括各种不同的观点并且给讨论提供一个问题作为终结。有明显矛盾的引文（或语录）常常会激发讨论。提出一个问题之后，一两分钟的静坐让参与者在发表意见之前可以蒐集和整理他们的思想。

轮流充当组长之职提供每一个成员机会去研究和准备一个讨论会。所有常出席的参与者都受到鼓励去提出一个话题，当然他们还是有选择权可以不必这么做。

5. Suggested “Rules”

Rivers aid us in food production, transportation, and recreation, but they are only helpful when they remain within their banks. If they overflow their bounds, they can cause untold destruction. For aspirants, rules are the banks which make our efforts productive. In the study circle, it is important that all participants be aware of the “rules” from the start. Rules may vary in detail, but some guidelines should be maintained for a productive discussion. Nine rules to encourage active participation are suggested below.

- A. The meeting should be started with omkar (the repetition of Om three times) and a prayer or spiritual song to raise the atmosphere of the meeting room. This creates a climate of brotherhood and cooperation among all participants and a feeling of working toward a common goal. If the study circle occurs after a devotional song meeting, it is not necessary to sing additional songs.
- B. The study circle is not a debating society; it is an exploration of viewpoints. Each participant should feel free to speak without fear of judgment or personal criticism.
- C. Active and equal participation should be sought from all members. The facilitator of the discussion may need to encourage new members to speak. New or quiet members often require a break in the conversation to present their views, and will not speak if another participant appears ready to speak.
- D. Dominant members must take care not to monopolize the conversation. A time limit may be placed on individual comments to deter enthusiastic members from “lecturing” the group. However, tact and courtesy should be used by the facilitator in observing this rule.
- E. The discussion leader and members should avoid reading long quotations. The study circle is not a reading club. Lengthy quotations often prove tiring. It is particularly inappropriate to read long passages in foreign languages which other members do not understand.

5. 所建议的“规则”

河流帮助我们粮食生产，运输和游乐，但只有当它们仍然流动于河岸之间才有帮助的。若泛滥，它们就可能造成莫大的破坏。就求道者而言，规则是河岸，使我们所付出的努力得到成效。在学习圈里，所有参与者在一开始就对“规则”有所明白是重要的。在细节上，规则或有不同，但对一个富有成效的讨论而言，一些指导原则仍该保留。以下是为鼓励积极参与讨论而建议的九大规则：

- A. 讨论会应该以念诵三个唵（OM）作为开始，接着可以念诵一则祷文或赞唱一曲圣歌来提高室内的氛围。这可建立起兄弟情谊的气氛和参与者彼此间的合作以及朝向一个共同目标前进的感觉。如果学习圈是在峇赞之后举行，那就不必再赞唱圣歌了。
- B. 学习圈并非辩论会；它是探究和蒐集各种观点。每一个参与者尽量发言，不要在乎也不要畏惧他人的批评与判决。
- C. 必须从所有会员中寻求积极的和均等的参与。主持者必须鼓励新会员发表意见。新的或不多说话的会员往往需要在讨论中的停顿时间才发表他们的意见，而如果有另一个人想发言，他们就保持缄默了。
- D. 资深的会员必须注意，切莫垄断整个座谈。个人的评论应该加以时间上的限制，以防止热心会员对小组做出“授课”的姿态。然而，对遵守这规则而言，主持者应该保持圆通和谦恭的态度。
- E. 领导者和会员们应该避免诵读太长的语录。学习圈不是读书会。冗长的语录往往令人感到厌倦。尤其不宜的是，用其他人不懂的外语去念读冗长的章句。

11 Study Circle

- F. Each group member should be engaged in turn. This is done by taking turns, with members speaking in a circular order. Although reticent members should be encouraged to speak, they should not be required to do so. They may elect to pass and perhaps comment after all others have taken their turns.
- G. Quotations or anecdotes should be relevant to the topic. Quotations particularly should be chosen from sources which all members would consider authoritative. In the Sai Baba study circle, the most appropriate quotations are from the discourses and writings of Sathya Sai Baba.
- H. A moderator should be named in advance for one or more discussion sessions. It is that person's duty to see that participants follow study circle guidelines. The moderator is responsible for helping the group adhere to the meeting format and for keeping the discussion moving. The moderator for the week need not be the person presenting the topic.
- I. A single specific question should be posed to the group for discussion. It should concern a practical aspect of spiritual life. In small circles, more than one question may be posed if time allows. It is helpful to take several minutes of reflection on the question before starting the discussion.

If these guidelines are followed, the study circle should proceed well. Above all, members must feel welcomed and that their views are regarded as valuable. Respect all participants and encourage them to speak, for each has a special viewpoint to share.

6. The Goal of Self-Discovery

Self-discovery fills us with joy and confidence. It fulfills our expectations and grants us spiritual satisfaction. It is the prize which encourages us to further effort. Through the discipline of the study circle, we learn to visualize the goal of our efforts. Equipped with greater knowledge, our practice and devotion both benefit. With inspiration and incentive from the group, we strive to advance in self-understanding. In such an atmosphere of loving cooperation, each of us progresses closer to the goal of discovering the vast potential within. The honest doubt with which we began the journey gives way to a joyous knowledge as we experience the truth of ourselves.

- F. 每一组成员应该轮流积极参与讨论。这可由成员们坐成一个圆圈，依次序轮流发言来达成。对沉默寡言的成员也应该多予以鼓励，使他们发言，即便他们拒绝也无所谓。他们可以推给下一个成员发言或在大家发言之后才发言。
- G. 语录或轶事应该与主题相关。特别是语录，要选自大家认为可信赖的或有权威的出处。在赛塔塔学习圈里，最合宜的语录应该来自沙迪亚赛塔塔的讲道或著作。
- H. 应该事先为一个或多个讨论会选定一个仲裁者。仲裁者的义务就是要肯定参与者遵守学习圈的指导方针。仲裁者负责协助小组遵守讨论会的安排方式和负责维持讨论会的顺利进行。那一星期的仲裁者可能与讲述主题者不是同一个人。
- I. 一个专一的，明确的问题应该提出给小组加以讨论。它应该涉及灵性生活的一个实用的层面。在一个人数少的学习圈，若时间许可，也可以讨论超过一个以上的问题。讨论前，先拨出数分钟时间反思此问题，肯定有所助益。

如能恪守这些指导方针，学习圈应该进行得顺利。最重要的，会员们必须有宾至如归的感觉，而他们的见解也受到重视。要尊重所有的参与者并鼓励他们发言，因为每一个人都有他独特的观点而愿与大家分享。

6. 自知之明的目标

自知之明把喜悦与自信注入我们。它实现我们的期望并赐予我们灵性的满足感。它是鼓舞我们再接再厉的奖赏。透过学习圈的训练，我们看到我们努力的目标。备有更高深的知识，在实行与虔诚两者上，我们都获益匪浅。有了小组给予的鼓舞和奖励，我们就会提高自知之明的水平。在这样的一个亲切合作的氛围中，我们每一个人都越来越走近发现内在莫大潜能的目标。在我们启程时所怀持的真诚怀疑于是因我们体验我们自己的真相而让位给一个充满喜悦的知识。