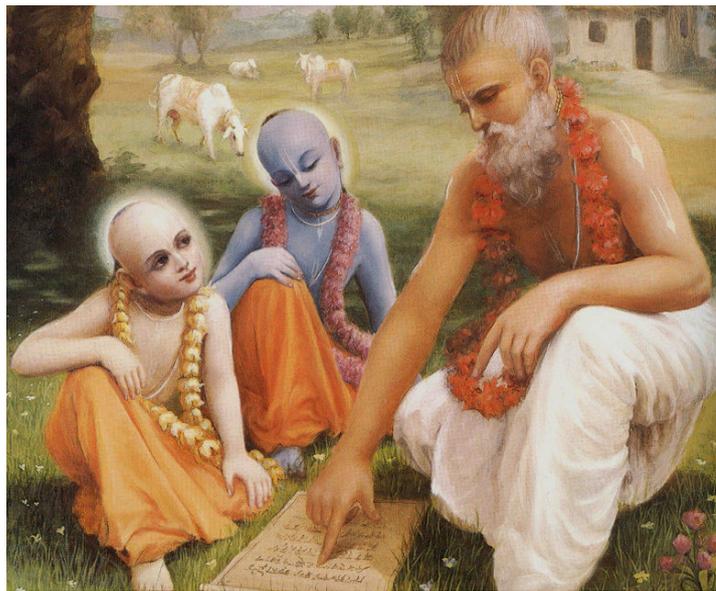




# Mentorship Manual

ISKCON Manchester



**INFORMATION FOR MENTORS & MENTEES**

This document is based on the Bhaktivedanta Manor 'Mentorship System Manual' 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2012.

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## Background

There is an increasing need to serve all those who come to the shelter of Srila Prabhupada so that they can make steady progress towards their chosen spiritual goals. ISKCON Manchester's congregation continues to grow, and a network of relationships helps to support and encourage all members throughout their lives. The Mentorship System is an important contribution to the healthy growth of our spiritual community.

## Aims and Objectives

- To offer the mentor, as well as those devotees being mentored a chance to progress in spiritual life.
- To provide our resident, community and congregation members guidance in the practice of Krishna consciousness.
- To provide one-to-one mentorship so that every individual feels enlivened, inspired and protected, and so that their growth as devotees is facilitated and they **remain within ISKCON for the rest of their life.**
- To provide individuals with the opportunities and the practical support needed to positively improve their spiritual life.
- To improve the quality of devotional practices, especially those of hearing and chanting.
- To create a family of devotees characterised by **love and trust**, and to help to sustain the enthusiasm of the members of the Mentorship System.
- To foster mutual respect within members of all the ashrams, and all our constituent communities.
- To enhance each individual's sense of personal responsibility and community belonging.
- To provide a **strong sense of moral codes and choices in life, including how men and women relate to each other.**
- To help the mentee develop personal qualities such as humility and compassion.
- To foster the **spirit of selfless service** and commitment to the sankirtan mission.

## FAQ's

### What is mentoring?

Mentoring is where an experienced devotee, the mentor, helps another devotee to come closer to Krishna by providing time, knowledge and skills. Mentoring responds to important needs in the life of the devotee in ways that facilitate the individual's spiritual advancement. It is a structured system of **devotee-care** where **mentors make every possible intelligent effort** to help each of the devotees in their care in all aspects of their lives.

### Why have you chosen this particular model of devotee-care?

Within ISKCON there are several existing models of devotee-care. The Mentorship System offered by ISKCON Manchester, in conjunction with the structure of local groups or 'sangas' and a good, systematic educational plan, combines the best of the models. The system also encompasses the goal to have a common system throughout the UK.

### Why is it needed?

All aspiring Vaishnavas require close devotional relationships and positive role models, to feel cared for and inspired, in order to continue advancing and serving in Krishna consciousness. An organization that does not take care of its members will not be able to expand.

### What is the role of a mentor?

A mentor is an individual who assists and guides another's development. This guidance is not done for personal gain or praise. A mentor can act as a role model, guide, tutor, coach, or confidante. Mentors enrich lives by sharing their experiences, by listening and giving advice, and through their life examples.

### What is a 'mentee'?

There is no English word for someone who is being mentored. But as we are Vaishnavas and accustomed to Sanskrit grammar and its back-formation of words, then the word 'mentee' popped up and now seems to have stuck. It's not in the dictionary, but it's our word. We hope you don't mind.

### How does it work?

Up to ten devotees meet together, **as a group**, with their mentor every two weeks. Devotees also meet up **individually** with their mentor at least once every three months. Meanwhile, the mentors meet together as a group once every month. The fortnightly meeting between one mentor and a number of mentees is known as the **Mentee Meeting**. The monthly meeting between mentors is known, not surprisingly, as the **Mentor Meeting**.

Mentors also have mentors; however they do not attend their mentor's Mentee Meeting, instead they receive one-to-one guidance at least every three months from their mentor.

Supervising all of this is the Mentorship Committee or MC, and keeping an eye on the entire enterprise is the ISKCON Manchester Management Council or IMMC with assistance and guidance from key personnel associated with the Bhaktivedanta Manor.

### **How does one become a mentor?**

Someone (ideally an existing mentor) recommends a devotee who shows the necessary aptitude and enthusiasm to the Mentorship Committee (MC). That devotee should already be in the Mentorship System as a mentee. The MC then considers the suitability of the devotee to become a mentor. If considered appropriate, the devotee's name is put forward at the next monthly Mentor Meeting and if there are no upheld objections the devotee becomes a mentor with a six month probationary period.

### **What should I consider before accepting a mentor?**

Before taking a mentor, mentees should contemplate their involvement in the mentoring process. This should include the following considerations:

- Am I willing, and able, to regularly attend and participate in fortnightly meetings?
- Do I have a genuine desire to take spiritual life seriously and the sincerity and willingness to accept the guidance of a mentor?
- What aspects of my spiritual life am I hoping to improve?

### **How do I find a mentor?**

Firstly, it is important that you carefully read the Mentorship Manual to understand the commitment involved. If you need further help in any way regarding the Mentorship System you may contact the MC. Once you are sure that you would be able to participate in the Mentorship System as per the guidelines, you should review the Mentor Profiles Presentation and then complete the Mentor Preference Form; both documents may be obtained by contacting the MC.

### **What should I consider when selecting a mentor?**

When choosing a mentor, it is beneficial if the following aspects are present and recognised. The mentor should be:

- Attracted to Krishna, an attraction that should include Kirtan, chanting, and serving Krishna in a devotional attitude.
- A person with greater experience and knowledge.
- Flexible and progressive in assisting the mentee to move forward in spiritual life.
- Someone whom you are able to trust.
- A person who is happy to help you to develop skills and knowledge, and able to share knowledge and experience openly and honestly.
- Someone **other than** your service authority.

You might also want to consider geographical distance as a criterion for your choice.

**Husband and wife should** preferably belong to the same mentor group; however if one of the couple does not feel comfortable taking guidance from the mentor in charge of their mentor group, he/she may receive regular one-to-one guidance from another mentor of their choice.

### **What if I'm unofficially mentoring someone already?**

We know that many devotees already offer guidance and encouragement to others, and of course we're glad of that and hope it will always continue. However, **the term 'mentor' or 'mentee' is reserved** for those who have been **authorized by the MC** to participate within the Mentorship System. There are **no 'unofficial' mentors**; the terms 'mentor' and 'mentee' should **not** be used to describe an ongoing relationship of guidance. Please note that all **devotees who aspire for initiation will require a mentor.**

### **What is the difference between Mentorship/Counsellor systems and Sanga/Bhakti Vriksha?**

The purpose of all the systems are the same: to create spiritually healthy individuals; to help those individuals join together with others for mutual support, practise and learning; and to foster the spirit of service to the mission of Srila Prabhupada, thus providing for newcomers the same opportunities.

The Mentorship/Counsellor system concentrates on the supportive relationships between senior and junior practitioners, yet also includes group activity.

The Sanga/Bhakti Vriksha concentrates on group participation yet also includes supportive relationships between senior and juniors. The additional focus is on group multiplication and preaching.

In the Mentorship/Counsellor system, group meetings are held between fellow mentees of a single mentor. In the Sanga/Bhakti Vriksha system the meeting is open to newcomers periodically, and the group facilitator is the natural leader of the members of the group.

### **Can I invite a guest speaker to give a lecture?**

Only devotees from within the group should speak. Speakers can be invited for sanga gatherings instead.

### **Is it authorised?**

To have an older devotee look after the needs of a newer devotee is part of our Vaishnava culture. Srila Prabhupada said that in the Vedic educational system one guru was able to look after many, many students by dividing up the school into groups where seniors each taught a number of juniors. There are numerous instances in Gaudiya Vaishnava history where devotees were placed under the care of certain other devotees; for example, Jiva Goswami was placed under the guidance of Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami.

Similarly, our situation today, where one guru initiates many hundreds of disciples, necessitates us employing the best aspects of our own traditional culture. And if each disciple extends

themselves to newcomers we will have a very vibrant and spiritually healthy ISKCON which continues to grow.

Srila Prabhupada gave repeated instructions for his older disciples to look after his younger disciples:

*(Letter to Karandhara Dasa, Delhi, 3 December, 1971):*

Please accept my blessings. I am in due receipt of your letter of November 13, 1971, in which you have recommended that Sriman Howard Sorgen and Srimate Jo An McNamara be accepted by me as my disciples. I am very glad to accept them as my initiated students, and I have given their spiritual names as Ganga Narayana das and Jaga Mohini dasi respectively. Now you must guide them very nicely in Krishna consciousness, because you are a veteran devotee and practically speaking the future of our Krishna Conscious Society rests in the hands of my older disciples. Give them all facility to perfect their lives by protecting them and instructing them nicely, that is now the duty of my senior disciples.

*(Letter to Satsvarupa Dasa Bombay, 25 November, 1970):*

You are right to say that the example and kindly guidance of our elder members in the Society is the most profound force for motivating our students both new and old towards advanced Krishna consciousness.....One should sincerely try to bring himself to the stage of devotional service motivated by pure love of Krishna, and our personal example must set a guide for them.

## **Role of the Mentorship Committee**

The Mentorship Committee (MC) oversees the various functions of the Mentorship System and reports regularly to the ISKCON Manchester Temple Council. The MC is also required to authorise an acceptance or change in the Mentorship System membership before changes are formalised. Any changes to the management, governance or operation of the Mentorship System need to be ratified by the full Mentorship Committee.

Mentors must get **approval from the MC prior to accepting a mentee**. The MC will approve or disapprove after taking into consideration a number of factors including number of mentees the mentor already has and the suitability of the mentor.

The MC facilitates ongoing training and development for both mentors and mentees through the fortnightly Mentee Meetings and monthly Mentor Meetings. **Some aspects of this training is compulsory for all mentors**. Yearly weekend retreats are also arranged specifically for those in the Mentorship System.

If there is a breach of proper conduct between mentor and mentee the MC will, where necessary, act as a mediator and, where appropriate, also refer the matter to the ISKCON Manchester Temple Council.

## Qualification Criteria to be a Mentee

A mentee should have a genuine desire to take spiritual life seriously and the sincerity and willingness to accept the guidance of a mentor to develop sadhana, relationships and service.

## Expectations of a Mentee

All mentees are required to:

- **Regularly** attend their Mentee Meetings and be punctual.
- Give prior notice, and explanation, for absences at Mentee Meetings.
- Actively participate in Mentee Meetings.
- Regularly attend festivals and Sunday Feast programmes.
- Be careful **not to download all their mind's thoughts** upon their mentor, but rather to consult their mentor with a **view to obtaining guidance**.
- Be careful that they do not misuse their mentor for material gain.

## Qualification Criteria to be a Mentor

All mentors are required to:

- Chant, **on beads**, sixteen rounds of the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra daily (Srila Prabhupada asked his disciples to chant eight rounds before ten o' clock, but not to chant whilst driving).
- Follow the four regulative principles.
- Have received Hari Nama initiation.
- Demonstrate a **good level of sadhana** by attending morning program **at least** once per month and on a regular basis.
- Be residing in the UK for **at least** ten months each year.
- Have a mentor themselves who is also resident in the UK.
- Be properly situated in his/her ashrama.
- Be a loyal member of ISKCON who accepts his/her local temple management as an authority.
- Be a mature, sober and stable individual.
- Have good relationships with others, especially within their family; they must not be involved in any form of physical or verbal abuse including within their family.
- Have demonstrated a certain level of sincerity through their words and actions.
- Have read and understood the Mentorship System Manual and agreed to abide by it.

- **Immediately inform a member of the MC should they contravene any of the above requirements.**

**In addition to the above criteria, mentors should be sincerely endeavouring to:**

- Chant, **attentively**, at least eight rounds before 10 a.m.
- Read Srila Prabhupada's books daily.
- Preferably lead, but at least participate in, either a regular (at least monthly) local sangha group or other ISKCON projects that involve preaching and cultivation.
- Refrain from watching TV/going to cinemas.
- Be a contributing member of ISKCON.

## **Monthly Mentor Meetings**

Mentors are expected to regularly attend Mentor Meetings which are held once every month. There is Kirtan to begin with then a preselected devotee gives a short presentation on what he/she has prepared; this could be focused on a point of philosophy, spiritual practices, mentoring skills, or training principles. There can be discussions on improvement of sadhana, family relationships, Vaishnava etiquette and study / career / spiritual life-balance.

Exams on various topics are periodically set for the mentors during these meetings.

## **Attitude and Personal Behaviour of a Mentor**

It is helpful to remember that there is really only one criterion to consider when answering any life-balance questions a mentee may ask: how is your answer going to impact his/her Krishna consciousness in the short, medium and long term? Too much liberalism may lead to a weakened commitment and a consequent erosion of spiritual standards. Like the watering down of milk - eventually the milk ends up as water. On the contrary, being too fanatical or harsh is not good either, as each devotee requires flexibility to practise their spiritual life at their own pace.

In general, mentors should be honest with themselves about the level of their spiritual practice and refrain from trying to assume an elevated position out of pride. The public tend to judge an entire society by its representatives; that is why a preacher's good behaviour is vital.

A mentor is often given deference as a guide and 'siksa-guru'. This position can be subject to abuse by mentors. There must never be any attempts of manipulation or coercion by a mentor.

Related to the above points, there must not be any instances where a mentor is accepting **regular** personal service from those they are guiding, except in the most exceptional circumstances (**in which case the MC must be immediately notified**).

**Mentors should:**

- **Strive to be in the mood of the servant of the servant in all relationships; if this mood of service is lost then great damage will ensue.**

- Be compassionate and have **genuine concern** for the welfare of devotees.
- Be willing to extend themselves to help others and have a spirit of sacrifice.
- Be a representative of Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON and a **good example of a Vaishnava**.
- **Stick to Srila Prabhupada's teachings** as the basis of any advice they give.
- Encourage their mentees to associate with appropriate senior devotees.
- Be willing to sincerely consider constructive feedback in a non-defensive manner.
- Sincerely strive to be exemplary in both behaviour and communication with others.
- Be honest, straightforward and a **good listener**.
- Be mindful that the same thing can be said in a pleasant or unpleasant way; hence mentors should always be sensitive in their speech.
- Be able to give balanced advice according to time, place and circumstance.
- Be **endeavouring to develop affectionate Krishna conscious relationships with other mentors**; this will avoid disunity and unhealthy competition amongst mentors.
- All be giving the same message to mentees; they should respect other mentors and not try to **score points over each other**.
- Not give authoritative direction on subjects where they do not have sufficient experience or knowledge (for example marriage, children or career). They should instead direct mentees to an appropriate authority.
- Not impose upon others their own preferences or inclinations in spiritual life.
- Not interfere with, or try to control or micromanage, a mentee's life.
- Not approach **another mentor's mentees** to enquire about their sadhana, service, personal issues etc.
- Not be prone to taking extreme and controversial positions on issues.
- Not be involved in deviant teachings.
- Not encourage, foster or even tolerate an unhealthy dependency of a mentee upon them.
- Be careful not to feel that they deserve any special privilege or respect.
- Focus on the growth, development and the ultimate well-being of the mentee and should not in any way exploit or manipulate the mentee for any selfish purpose.
- Avoid engaging in too much mundane chit-chat.
- Avoid speech that is politically motivated, reactionary, rude or self-righteous.
- As a representative of ISKCON, avoid all criticism of devotees and the Society **both in public and in private**.

## Confidentiality

All mentors must observe the highest standards of propriety involving integrity, objectivity and confidentiality.

Once feeling comfortable within a religious organisation people often feel the need to divulge information they would otherwise keep very private. A mentor will be taken into confidence and often consulted on very sensitive and personal matters. There must not be any breaches of this

confidence save for the most extreme situations where there is imminent danger of physical self-harm or harm to others. In such cases, the breaking of confidentiality should be done in the least damaging manner available.

It should be noted that **discussion of a mentee with one's spouse, or even the mentee's past mentors, without permission from the mentee is also considered a breach of confidentiality.**

It is extremely important that no one discloses details of conversations held during meetings without explicit and prior permission from all members of that meeting. This also applies to information which **may not be apparently sensitive or private.**

Meetings where ballots are taken, descriptions of who has voted, and how they voted, should not be disclosed to anyone who was not present at the meeting. To do so is a breach of confidentiality. Once a vote has been made and majority decisions reached, an individual should not break confidence in order to exonerate himself from an unpopular resolution.

All devotees are therefore required to read, understand and enter into a Confidentiality Agreement with ISKCON Manchester.

## **The Mentor-mentee Relationship:**

- Mentors should give personalised care and attention to each mentee and the mentee should be able to **perceive** that the mentor is **genuinely concerned** for their welfare. The **main element to exist between mentor and mentee is affectionate care.**
- The mentor is a loving friend and guide, rather than an organisational authority figure. The mentor gives courage – encouragement – so the mentee can overcome any reservation in taking the next step in spiritual life. The mentor offers assessment and correction where necessary, and continually monitors mentees for suitability to receive first and second initiation; however the mentor should not be just looking for faults. Mentors should encourage mentees to cultivate others.
- A mentor discusses with each mentee all issues concerning a devotee's life including health, emotions, family and business, in addition to the spiritual aspects such as japa, sadhana, hearing, reading and service. It is advisable that the mentor **keeps a log of all such discussions to facilitate follow-ups.**
- The mentor is not a doctor, psychologist, financial advisor, marriage guidance counsellor, police officer or solicitor, although he or she may offer general guidance. Expert advice must be sought from those who are **qualified in the relevant field.**
- A mentor may guide a couple, helping them to balance occupation and spiritual practice, educating the couple to adjust to each other and to serve Krishna together. A mentor (in the absence of his/her spouse) may **guide a person of the opposite gender only if that person's spouse is also present at the meeting.**
- A mentor is there to help the mentee ask the right questions and guide them toward resources that will help them to make these choices. Mentees should remember that they,

not their mentor, are responsible for their own life choices; the mentor will give general guidance but **the ultimate responsibility lies with the individual mentee.**

- Mentors should **make themselves available** for each mentee to give them the opportunity to discuss personal matters on a one-to-one basis; **the responsibility to do this lies with the mentor.** The principle of this requirement is to create a more reciprocal, personal and natural relationship with mentees where more personal issues can be discussed. Mentors should therefore arrange **one-to-one meetings with each mentee or mentee couple at least once every three months**, if not more often.
- There is **no enforcement of any rules upon mentees by mentors, except of course those of confidentiality.** Mentees should follow guidance out of love and trust, not due to any enforcement by mentors.
- Mentors should have a maximum of ten mentees. In exceptional circumstances, the MC may allow individual mentors to exceed this number. There should be a trial period of six months for the mentor and mentee to verify that the relationship is healthy and progressive for all concerned.
- It should be clear that accepting a mentor is not a permanent commitment. Both the mentor and the mentee are completely free to end the arrangement at any point. It is natural for the mentor/mentee relationship to change over time, and if helpful another mentor can be chosen who may further assist in spiritual growth. This should be done in a mature manner after discussing the matter and ensuring mutual respect and understanding of the conclusion. It is the **mentor's responsibility to remove any perceived fears or uneasiness in the mind of the mentee when the mentee expresses a desire for another mentor.** The mentee should be careful not to choose another mentor for the wrong reasons, for example because they don't want to be accountable to any one person for a long period of time. If required the MC can be approached for advice. The mentor is responsible for ensuring that the **MC is immediately informed** of the outcome of any such discussions.
- The mentor is not the mentee's service or organisational authority. The mentor cannot overrule a service authority in ISKCON. The mentor may give advice on general services and attitude etc. In instances of any contradiction with regards to services, mentors should defer to the service authority.
- If there is a lapse of mentoring communication (two months or more) between a particular mentor/mentee, the mentee will be approached by the MC. If the situation is not quickly resolved the MC will consider implementing a change in mentor for the mentee concerned.

## Mentee Meetings

There should be **regular fortnightly** mentee group meetings which should be of the duration of approximately one and a half hours (not including Prasadam). Meetings should **commence and finish promptly** so as not to encroach upon devotees' time. Mentees can take turns to host the meetings.

**Below is the general format upon which fortnightly meetings should be based:**

- Vaishnava Bhajans are sung.
- One of the mentees shares the presentation they have prepared on a topic based on Srila Prabhupada's books and a discussion follows.
- There is sharing of realisations amongst mentees.
- Discussion on chanting, sadhana, service and Vaishnava etiquette.
- Devotees are asked if they want to discuss any problems which are not personal (personal problems are discussed in private with the mentor).
- Kirtan.
- Prasadam is honoured if possible.
- Children's birthdays and wedding anniversaries can be celebrated.

A copy of the **Vaishnava Etiquette Manual** is given to each mentor couple which will enable mentees to be systematically trained in this crucial aspect of Krishna consciousness.

## Summary of Mentor/Mentee Responsibilities

The mentor-mentee relationship is founded on the basis of firm friendship; however in order for the relationship to be dynamic the responsibilities are divided as below:

Mentor responsibilities	Mentee responsibilities	
Acting as a source of information and/or insight into spiritual life and facilitating learning.	Taking time to actively participate in fortnightly mentee group meetings.	
Assisting with personal goal setting and planning.	Thinking about goals before meeting their mentor and being willing to openly discuss these goals with their mentor.	
Listening with an open mind, challenging and encouraging the exploration of ideas.	Communicating expectations, needs and feelings.	

Encouraging sadhana/service.	Negotiating activities in order to obtain goals.	
Arranging fortnightly mentee group meetings and one-to-one meetings	Embracing learning opportunities with enthusiasm and commitment.	
Providing feedback on observed performance and serving as a reference point for recommendations on initiation.	Learning to accept feedback and using it positively.	
Being a confidante during personal crises, problems, transitions, and times of success.	Trying to implement their mentor's suggestions.	

**Mentees are also advised to verify** continuously, and especially during the initial stages, the advice the mentor gives by also taking advice from other senior devotees and checking with scripture.

## **Mentors and Personal Relationships**

A close friendship can often develop between a mentor and another devotee, and to a certain extent this is welcome. Friendship is the 'glue' that makes the members of ISKCON stick together, and a Society where there is close friendships is attractive to newcomers.

Yet there are boundaries beyond which such **spiritual friendships become a subtle form of exploitation**. Any relationship between a preacher/teacher/priest/mentor whereby the newcomer or committed member becomes the subject of personal requests for funds, for instance, is unhelpful for all concerned, and **ultimately debilitating for ISKCON**.

Similarly, there are times when forms of emotional dependence are subtly encouraged by the mentor; or times when the subject is made to feel that he/she has become the personal disciple of the mentor, or a personal servant. It is not uncommon, with those who are new to any form of spiritual life, for the relationship with the preacher or priest to be overly-philosophized to the point where discrepancies, and even exploitative actions, are regarded as sanctified. Additionally, for the exploited person, there may be fear of rejection, fear of offense, or a general confusion as to the exact nature of the relationship.

Occasionally, a mentor may even become romantically involved with someone he or she is caring for. Such a situation renders the preacher useless, the member exploited, and the **spiritual future of both precarious**.

All these situations arise because the natural boundaries of a spiritual friendship have not been observed and a form of exploitation, or in some cases spiritual abuse, is the result.

**Mentors are expected to remember at all times that no one is a personal financial sponsor, disciple, servant or romantic interest.**

## **Mentors and Gifts**

There is a relationship between a missionary movement going out into the world and the funds and other resources that are reciprocally offered back to that movement. Preachers are the link, because they offer the knowledge and inspiration that changes a person's life for the better. When someone's life is improved, and they are happier as a result, they actually like to offer something back in gratitude.

It is very easy, therefore, for a preacher to imagine that this simple connection authorizes him to be the direct recipient of the funds as a direct response to his travelling, visiting and preaching.

**A mentor in ISKCON is preaching, teaching or guiding on behalf of the entire Society, as a representative of the Society.** That is why all funds raised as a result of preaching, teaching and other brahminical or priestly duties are the property of the entire Society and are meant to be banked and accounted for by the local head office. Mentors should **contact the MC for advice** if they are not sure if a gift they have received needs to be declared.

If every preacher becomes independently resourced as a consequence of his or her own preaching it will be almost impossible for ISKCON to function as a united Society. **Such a mentality of 'every man for himself' will impoverish the temples and ashrams**, the very places where the preacher learned his skills. As a long-term consequence, it will not be long before the one ISKCON fractures. Therefore preachers must be mindful that their words and actions are on behalf of the Society which is, in turn, the mission of the founder-acarya, His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada.

## **Mentor as a Link between Temple Management and Devotees**

Mentors assist temple management:

- By encouraging mentees to perform service at their local temple. This in turn is a safety net since it helps to keep the mentors feet on the ground as the tendency for ownership or controllership is minimised by coming together to serve at the temple.
- By encouraging co-operation and communication between his/her own mentees, mentees of other mentors, and temple management.
- By encouraging the mentees under their care to integrate with other mentee groups and the local temple; spirit of unity is very important. Mentors must endeavour to ensure that their groups do not become isolated and independent from the local temple. This can be

done by bringing their mentee group to attend festivals and by performing services together with other mentee groups at the local temple.

## Differentiation between Mentorship System and Sanga Groups

- Sangas are congregational groups of no more than fifteen members.
- Our ISKCON movement grows through the proliferation of such sangas.
- The sanga network is the organizational structure of ISKCON.
- The temple is the administrative headquarters of the sanga network
- The sangas may be open to new members or may be closed if at capacity.
- Mentors may be leaders of sangas, and their mentees may be members of that sanga.
- The sanga is not a mentee group, although both may be there.
- **The sanga cannot function as a substitute for the Mentee Meeting.**
- **A mentee need not attend a sanga where his/her mentor is the leader.**
- All devotees are encouraged to attend a sanga of their choice.

## Mentorship System and Initiation

Devotees wishing to receive initiation must already have a mentor and **must also be attending a sanga** regularly.

It should be noted that **mentors are for both the pre-initiation and post-initiation stages of a devotee's life.**

## Stepping Down of Mentors

In order to maintain integrity and accountability within the system, all mentors will be monitored for the qualification criteria listed previously.

Mentors who fail to maintain the qualification criteria, or fail to keep up with the expectations of a mentor, will be requested by the MC to have a plan drawn up with their mentor to satisfactorily resolve the issue within an agreed period of time.

Failure to meet the standards within the agreed time period will result in the mentor being asked to step down from their mentorship role, either permanently or, for a period to be determined by the MC.

Breaking of the regulative principles, or any other serious transgression of Vaishnava etiquette or confidentiality, requires that the mentor will be advised to immediately step down, either permanently or, for a period to be determined by the MC.

## **Reporting Suggestions, Concerns and Complaints**

**Your feedback is extremely important to us; if you have any suggestions for improvement or any concerns please do contact us. It is important that concerns are expressed at an early stage as this will help to prevent them from festering into complaints.**

All concerns or complaints against mentors or mentees should be directed to the MC. The same holds true for reporting concerns of inappropriate behaviour by mentors or mentees. Devotees should try to report concerns/complaints in a positive solution-seeking manner.

You may speak to any member of the MC by contacting **mentorship@iskconmanchester.com**

If unresolved at the above level, the concern or complaint can be sent directly to the ISKCON Manchester Management Council.