



SV-22 Akrura Strategic Thinking 1

**Krishna Conscious  
Gita Coaching**

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Akrura dasa:** Sometimes coaches when they listen to this lady they say so will we ever be able to say anything? And she says "Yes, you can. But much later, much later. Just let them speak let them think aloud and don't interrupt them."

**Krsnendu dasa:** This is Episode 22 of Successful Vaisnavas. We are talking about Thinking Partnerships with Akrura Prabhu.

It's time to get inspired. Join us as we celebrate devotee success stories... Preaching... Business... Community Development... Leadership and Personal Growth... All from the point of view of Krishna Consciousness.

Our goal.... To help you to make your life successful.

Hare Krishna, welcome to Successful Vaisnavas with our first return guest Akrura Prabhu. In this episode, we will be discussing Thinking Partnerships, which is a form of non-directive coaching. What that basically means is learning to be a good listener and helping people to solve their own problems.

It's something that's very useful for practically everybody and especially devotees who are in the position of coaching or advising others. So in other news, I'm just about to head off to India with my sons, which is really exciting. It's their first time to India. So Jay Nitai is almost nine and Nandan's almost 12 and I can't believe that's their age and they still haven't been to India, but I'm really looking forward to going.

It's just a couple of days to go so I'm super busy but really looking forward to going back there. I haven't been there since 2005. So that's like 12 or 13 years since I was there last time and I'm sure that things have really changed. For a start, the new temple, the TOVP, they hadn't even started building it when I was there.

I thought Prabhupada's Samadhi was big but this new temple is like three times bigger! So that's exciting. I'm looking forward to seeing that and I've also heard there's a whole lot of other construction going on. But anyway, the idea is to go and absorb in Krishna Consciousness and hopefully help my kids to get some connection with the Holy damn and help them in their Krishna consciousness.

So in other news with Successful Vaisnavas, I'm working on a new webinar at the moment and the title of the webinar is the Newbury hammered anger, how to set up an online system that supports your spiritual life, promotes Krishna Consciousness and makes money at the same time, even if you are busy, have a limited budget and have zero technical or business skills.

So that's quite a big mouthful. But the gist of it is that this internet is the Newbury hammer down go and as devotees we need to take advantage of it and use it the best way that we can in Lord Krishna's service. So this webinar we'll be looking at how we can use the internet in a way that we can align our life so that we can make money at the same time that we're completely focused on preaching in a way that also helps us to develop our own Krishna Consciousness. So if that's something that sounds interesting to you then make sure you go over to [successfulvaishnavas.com](http://successfulvaishnavas.com) and join our email list because that's where we will be giving you the links to find out about this new webinar. So it's been fun preparing it and it's very close to completion.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

So you can expect that one to be arriving within the next couple of weeks. So there's not too much more I'll mention at the moment. We've just been through the Festival season with Janmashtami and Radhasthmi and now there's a short break before we move into the next spiritual part of the program which will be kartic.

So with that let's go into the interview with Akrura Prabhu teaching us about Thinking Partnerships.

Hare Krishna I'm here with Akrura Prabhu today and it's very exciting. This is actually the first return guest on the Successful Vaisnavas podcast, and although the topic is similar, it's about coaching, Akrura Prabhu has been studying a form of coaching which we're gonna discuss today, which I'm quite excited to hear about which is called non-directive coaching.

So, I won't say much more. I'll leave it up to Akrura Prabhu to explain more of that. I'm always happy to find ways that we can help devotees to deal with the issues that come up in their life and to continue to make progress. So welcome back Akrura Prabhu

**Akrura dasa:** I'm very happy to be here again with you and Successful Vaisnavas.

**Krsnendu dasa:** It's great. So Prabhu tell us a little bit like when we spoke last time you were, way back, you know in the last millennium it feels like, you were talking about your Gita model of coaching and the importance of having a coach. So tell me a little bit about your journey since we spoke last until now and you know what it is that you're finding exciting at the moment.

**Akrura dasa:** I have been doing the Gita coaching for 18 years now and all the time I felt something is missing. And when I came across one book, this book was about non-directive coaching by one gentleman from England and then I looked and there is one online library where you can get some eBooks and I was looking there for a book on coaching that is about non-directive coaching.

So non-directive coaching means that you don't give advice. You don't teach, you don't counsel, but you listen and ask questions and help a person to come up with their own answers and conclusions. So I wanted to straighten that scheme that I already practiced before but I wanted to learn more about it.

And that book, this author from England, he's also a coach, this lady called Nancy Kline. And these quotes were so impressive for me that I stopped reading this book and I looked for her books.

So I found her books and the book is called Time to Think and I saw that she has really refined non-directive coaching to the max.

**Krsnendu dasa:** So you found that, you'd had an exposure to the idea and you liked the idea but this particular author really expressed it in a way that connected with you. Is that the basic idea?

**Akrura dasa:** Yes, I mean, I think anyone who is studying coaching techniques would agree that she has really refined it. She has really improved it. She has really polished it and she calls this Thinking Environment or creating thinking environment. So basically this approach is about helping people to think for themselves.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

But the point is that in the presence of another person you think much better. So this is why it is better if you have someone with you and the way they behave with you influences your thinking.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah, that's interesting, isn't it? And I've certainly had that experience that I'm sort of struggling on my own.

And then I'll go and talk to someone about it not looking for an answer really but just wanting to get it off my chest and somehow by just talking to them, sometimes the answer comes to me or you know, get some inspiration or something. It's amazing.

**Akrura dasa:** Yes, so I don't want to minimize or undermine the value of teaching, the value of giving advice. But this is a different type of service for devotees.

So this can be used, actually preachers can use this, mentors can use this and any kind of a helper, doctors, psychiatrists any kind of a helper can use this technique and it's just one type of service that we can provide. And the services to help them think, to think better. I can summarize the whole system in one sentence.

Don't listen to respond. Listen to stimulate high thinking.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Interesting. So tell us a bit more about that high thinking. What does that mean, exactly?

**Akrura dasa:** High thinking means higher quality thinking and high thinking could be spiritual thinking, could be thinking in the mode of goodness or something like that. But I mean for different people it may be like better quality thinking maybe different things. But for devotees, it's definitely more spiritual, more Krishna conscious thinking.

**Krsnendu dasa:** This is intriguing. So on the one hand I can see that this type of coaching is, the idea of non-directive coaching is to get the other person to sort of come up with their own solutions. But from what you're saying now, it sounds like the coach has quite an important role in guiding the person in the way they think. Would that be a correct thing to say?

Like you saying that you want to provoke higher thinking so it's like the way that you respond to them is encouraging them to think in a certain way, or how does that part work?

**Akrura dasa:** Yes, it is encouraging people to think but to have a better quality thinking. To think for themselves, to think independently. Srila Prabhupada speaks in a letter to Karandar in 72 about independent thinking and I think this approach of coaching can help with that. Independent thinking doesn't mean becoming independent of our philosophy of Krishna consciousness, of our books, of our authorities, of our structure. But it means thinking intelligently for yourself how you can serve better, how you can help others to serve better and to be able to come to conclusions that will help you and help others also.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Krsnendu dasa:** Alright. I guess I'm just thinking of an example or just trying to clarify this. When I think of higher thinking I think of an example that someone might come and they might be very much in a blaming mood or an irresponsible mood where they're so "Ahh... this happened to me and that happened to me and I'm really angry at that person that they did this thing to me" as an example and from my way of thinking a higher level of thinking would be okay.

So the situation has happened. Now, let me see, what would be the best thing that I can do in this situation to make things better. Would that be an example of kind of lower thinking and higher thinking?

**Akrura dasa:** Well, actually, with this approach you're not, you're hoping that people will come up with the higher thinking but the beginning sessions are just to help them think more deeply and to give them a space to think because usually they don't have time to think, they don't have peace. So you provide peace, peaceful place. You provide attention, which is very important.

And of course when you are listening to their thinking that they are expressing through their words. They will not, most people will not I think just complain and criticize and things like that. So before the session, one explains the structure of the session, the purpose and then you can have a session that can be very helpful.

And of course you want them to have better thinking and better thinking doesn't mean complaining, more complaining, more criticizing and more blaming.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Right, so it sounds like a couple of things. One is that the, like for the coach when you are starting to talk to someone it's quite important to sit there understanding about what you are trying to do in that session so that they come into it with the right kind of mentality or the right expectation. Would that be one of the elements?

**Akrura dasa:** Yes. In coaching they call it sometimes contracting, to have a contract, to have an agreement prior to the session that how the session would look like and how will the coach serve the client. So many people will expect advice.

They will expect your input and you know many coaches do that, they hit people with that. But this specific approach is for people who like to be listened attentively by someone. And who would like to hear a couple of questions that will stimulate their better thinking. This whole system is about doing things as a coach or as a helper that will facilitate their better thinking. And we have 10 components of creating a thinking environment that actually help people to think better and the second has a structure which I can explain if you like.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay. Yeah, that'll be good.

**Akrura dasa:** And we can go through this ten components of the thinking environment. And also we have 40 habits of a thinking coach.

**Krsnendu dasa:** How many?

**Akrura dasa:** 40.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow it's like the 64 processes of devotional service or something like...It's quite a lot.

**Akrura dasa:** We don't have to go through all of them. I can select a couple of them. I have them in front of me. But these are amazing. These are very common sense principles and ideas. And these are the things that actually can help devotees to think better in our presence.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay, cool. That sounds great. So it's like a toolbox in a way is it? You sort of have them in front of you and I mean you can explain a bit more, but I'm imagining that you have it with you and you can look at that list as a guide and you can see things that might be appropriate for the particular situation to help that particular person at that time.

**Akrura dasa:** Yes, and anyone who wants the materials that I have, I will be very happy to send them. It's maybe about 150 Megabytes of e-books, articles, and manuals.

And also there is a website called timetothink.com where you can find a lot of articles and also audio recordings like keynote addresses by this author and some shorter audios where she expresses her thinking about attention and about other principles that facilitate better thinking.

So these things are available for all your listeners and if they send me an email then I will very gladly send them for free.

**Krsnendu dasa:** That's awesome. And so what would be the best email address for them to contact you?

**Akrura dasa:** My email address is gitaseva108 at gmail.com.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Great. And I'll also put a link and I'll put your contact details in the show notes for this episode so that if someone wants to look it up later, they can find it easily.

**Akrura dasa:** Right. Also, I am available on Facebook as Gita Seva. It's two words G-i-t-a S-e-v-a. Two words Gita Seva, so they can also find it on Facebook and send me a message in the inbox.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay. Great.

**Akrura dasa:** If you like now we can go to this ten components.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay great. That sounds exciting. I'm quite intrigued by this whole approach as you can tell by my questions. It's something new for me. So, I'm really, I'm keen to find out how it works.

**Akrura dasa:** Before I start explaining I want to say that I felt when I encountered this that this is something I was looking for for many years and this is something that was missing in my coaching. And maybe it will sound funny and maybe even some of devotees I assisted will not agree.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

But the two main things why I am impressed by this are that I can learn how to listen more attentively to devotees and I'm learning how to respect each person much more than I have been doing so far.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow, that's a pretty powerful thing to say.

**Akrura dasa:** It's a very respectful approach. I mean, it's just a, it's almost you know, treating them as a soul or seeing them as a soul.

Before I start I want to mention a couple of more things. For example, this lady says that imagine if everybody's mind is a gold mine.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay.

**Akrura dasa:** So usually when we think about our mind or other people's mind, we think it's full of junk. But she says that she believes that people have like a gold mine in their heads and their hearts and also they have much more intelligence than they are using and so, how can you listen attentively, how can you push yourself to listen attentively even if you are not particularly interested is you become interested, very interested in what they will say next. And this goes in harmony with what we have been listening for years from success teachers that people have great potential. So now this is a very practical way to see people as having great potential that you are waiting that they express this potential through their words by believing that they have gold within them.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Well, that's really beautiful and I can see that this is so crucial, this sort of mindset. As a coach going in with that mindset makes such a difference, you know, if you contrast it with this problem, this person has problems and we've gotta fix them. It's quite a different mindset that it's like this person.

And this is our philosophy, right, that the soul is perfect and the soul is pure and we just need to fan the spark, so to speak. It's looking for the nectar in the dirty place even, like the it's a really positive approach. I love it.

**Akrura dasa:** Right. Satchitananda means Eternal, full of knowledge and full of bliss. So the soul is described as Satchitananda and chief aspect is actually that the soul is full of knowledge, of intelligence.

**Krsnendu dasa:** It's true, yeah. Awesome.

**Akrura dasa:** So now as a coach who has been coaching people and giving advice and tools and suggestions for 18 years. When I listen to people I have like an irresistible tendency to say something.

So sometimes it's not easy to practice this and sometimes coaches when they listen to this lady they say so will we ever be able to say anything? And she says "yes, you can but much later, much later. Just let them speak, let them think aloud and don't interrupt them." So one of the top principles of this approach is never interrupt anyone, never finish their sentences. Just be comfortable with silence.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

You don't want to damage their thinking by jumping in with your great wisdom and great ideas and tools. This is a different type of service. So I was telling Govinda Nanda Prabhu from Zagreb, he's also a mentor, he is also an expert in communication. And he told me he says "Oh, this is like remove yourself so others can shine".

So I said yes. Actually she says who is the star in your session. Is it you or your client? So we want that the client becomes a star in our session. And he also gave, Govinda Nanda Prabhu gave another example. He says that if a shell is broken from the outside it kills and when the shell is broken from the inside it develops, it grows, it gives life.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow that's awesome. These things are gold.

**Akrura dasa:** So now our attention actually can stimulate a better thinking and in this sense we are a catalyst of a better thinking. So people who expect advice from you, you have been helping people with your advice for so many years so you can tell, ask them how long you can think and speak productively and constructively without my help.

And then how long after this you can think and speak and I will listen to you and how long after this? So in this way, you help people to stretch their mind, to stretch their intelligence, to stretch their thinking. So this lady is coming from a Quaker. Have you heard of Quakers?

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah, it's a Christian religious group or something. I don't know much about it. But I think that they're quite, they're based on simple living. It's one of their principles as far as I know.

**Akrura dasa:** She's coming from that tradition. She doesn't speak about this at all. She doesn't speak about religion, but they have couple of interesting aspects of their culture and one of them is that I listen to you attentively so you can hear God.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow, that's cool. I like that.

**Akrura dasa:** Right. So basically for us this thinking environment is to help people to hear the super-soul in their heart.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Brilliant, yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** What are the benefits of this? Better empowerment, better releasing of potential, better clarity. You help them to take responsibility for their conclusions and their decisions instead of you taking responsibility by giving them advice. Higher creativity and there is many many other. So of course there's a statement by Srila Prabhupada in the third canto purport chapter 4 verse 35... Is more important than thinking. So if you want to improve the quality of our thinking and our thinking we convey is a thinking of Kali Yuga people, we need to hear from the acharyas and we want to refine, improve, polish our thinking, make it more spiritual. And this also can be a topic in a session of a discussion. So I will describe now how the session starts...

**Krsnendu dasa:** Just before you do, could you just repeat again what was that quote that you said from the third canto that Prabhupada said?



# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Akrura dasa:** Hearing is more important than thinking

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay.

**Akrura dasa:** especially in Kali Yuga.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Excellent. Yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** I think the soul damaged in Kali Yuga. So we need to learn from the acharyas how to think

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow, okay. Thanks. Yes. Please continue.

**Akrura dasa:** Right. So now I will describe how the session looks like and in the seminars I have, I will have later today one seminar here for mentors. We have demonstrations.

And of course I write down the structure. So when they practice they can see on the flipchart, they can see so they don't miss any part of the session. But it starts by coach asking what would you like to think about and what are your thoughts? And then the person is speaking. And then after some time they say well, that's it.

And then you ask them "Is there anything more you think, feel, or would like to say or want to say" and then they might say yes or no if they say no, then the session can end there. But if they say yes, then they continue speaking. And then when they finish this one or maybe one more you can ask once again, you can ask this question.

What more do you think, feel, or want to say? Is there anything more you think, feel, or want to say and when they say now no, that's it. And there is still some time left in the session then you can ask them "So what would you like to accomplish by the end of the session?" and then they might say that "well, I would like to have a clear plan how to improve my Japa".

And then they would start to, sometimes they would start to speak that well, I have been having difficulties with my job. I try to improve my job but it didn't work. And then now one of the important tools for this approach comes into the scene. This is called incisive questions.

**Krsnendu dasa:** So is this the second step in the process? You mentioned there was 10 steps in the process. So I'm just trying to sort of...

**Akrura dasa:** No, I'm just giving the structure of the session

**Krsnendu dasa:** Just the overview of how it goes. Okay.

**Akrura dasa:** The 10 components of a thinking environment are just some of, how do you say it?

**Krsnendu dasa:** Principles. Is it sort of like overall ideas that it's based on right?

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Akrura dasa:** Yes. Some items, some principles but this is just the structure of the session.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay got it

**Akrura dasa:** And then they say well I have been having difficulty with Japa. And so then the incisive question, to incise means to cut and then pluck it out. To root out something. So incisive question you ask "What are you assuming that is stopping you from working on improving your Japa?"

And then they might say well I'm assuming that it will not work because I already tried it. I'm assuming that I can't control my mind. It's too crazy. I'm assuming... And then you can look at these assumptions. Some of them may be true. Some of them may not be true. And you want to replace these assumptions with, these are called limiting assumptions.

There's the assumptions that are preventing them from progressing and replace them with liberating assumptions.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay.

**Akrura dasa:** So then you would ask another incisive question if you would know that you can't concentrate, how would you prepare for your chanting? If you would know that you could focus nicely and that you will be inspired by all the benefits.

How would you prepare for your chanting every day? And then they are already making a shift from being negative and hopeless to being more positive and looking into the solution, solution-centered, solution-focused not a problem using the problem to obstruct them. So you are turning the limiting assumption into a liberating assumption.

And then they might say, oh, I would prepare like this and then they can at that point, you can remind them they are allowed to write down the ideas of how they are going to proceed.

And at the end of the session you could have, they can have a very nice plan. Sometimes they don't even have to set the goal.

They don't even have to set different to choose different tasks that they can do. They just think and by thinking then they don't have to do it in the first session maybe next or the next session they can set goals, but they don't have to set goals immediately. It's just by your attention by you're listening.

They are in a situation where they're thinking is improving. And they will come to the goal later. It's not a problem. But the whole thing is transformation of the quality of thinking and and so this is where the session can end and of course, you have to explain to them before how the session looks like, especially if they're not familiar. And now what I will be teaching in ISKCON temples is Thinking Partnership, which means that always session is two-way.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Right.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Akrura dasa:** So this can be done between friends. This can be done between family members, any kind of two people can actually do this if they know the principle.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Interesting. Yes. So tell me more about these Thinking Partnerships. How do they work? And how are they different from like the coaching session that you've just explained? Is it basically you doing the same thing with each other or how does it work?

**Akrura dasa:** I will in a second. I just want to say that last part of the session is appreciation.

Every session ends with appreciation. Coach appreciates the client and client appreciates the coach. Or the mentor appreciates his ward and and the devotee who is mentored, he appreciates the mentor.

So this helps to build trust, to build a positive perception of each other and to build a relationship.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah that's good. I can see the importance of that, so that you finish the sessions highlighting the positive things that you've got out of it and you're inspired to continue with the action plan that you've talked about perhaps or even just to come back to the next session knowing that you'll get some positive benefit from it, too.

**Akrura dasa:** There is many benefits of appreciation and it underlines or stresses the value of the whole assistance and the work that that assistance from the side of the coach and the work that the client is agreeing to. So both are doing very valuable work actually for the benefit of the client.

So appreciation is always at the end and this is one of the ten components. And you asked about Thinking Partnership. Basically you're using the structure and you just switch roles and it's the same.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Right.

**Akrura dasa:** So it's very simple. Ideally every action would need only one question. What would you like to think about and then they come up with everything themselves.

So ideally. But these incisive questions help. So now you might ask, so my instructor. Can I improvise, can I add some more questions? You know, it looks so square. It looks only boring and the same. Why this structure and why we should stick to it? It's because it was tested over 20, 30 years. And they said that this approach is most effective and most efficient.

So this is not meant to you know, like stifle creativity. Actually, it stimulates creativity. I doesn't matter that the structure is always the same. But actually within the structure you can be so creative you can expand your intelligence, expand your thinking and you can release your potential.

**Krsnendu dasa:** It's interesting that when things are simple they are often the most effective as well.

**Akrura dasa:** Yeah. So now if you like we can go to the components.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yup. Actually I just had a question as well. You were talking about incisive questions. So, if you'd like a list of those incisive questions, or you have to kind of think of them yourself, like what would be a good question to ask in a particular case?

**Akrura dasa:** These questions usually deal with assumptions.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay.

**Akrura dasa:** Limiting assumptions and then creating liberating assumptions.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay, got it.

**Akrura dasa:** So for example Krsnendu Prabhu, if you knew that you could become an outstanding motivational speaker better than Tony Robbins, better than Jack Canfield, better than... I don't know J. Abraham. How would you prepare for your next public talk?

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow yeah, it's opening up a type of thinking I haven't thought of before.

**Akrura dasa:** It's opening something, definitely. I experienced self sessions from experts. I attended a three-day training course, which was a thousand pounds actually worth. But fortunately this trainer let me go for free because I said I will not make money with this, I will just help people and she said fine you can come.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow, that's generous of her.

**Akrura dasa:** Yeah. So the first is attention

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay.

**Akrura dasa:** You need to listen carefully and open interest in everything they say and be respectful of their ideas, beliefs and values that they will express. So I will be very brief with each of them. And if somebody, if anybody likes to learn more then I will send them materials and links.

**Krsnendu dasa:** So the first one was attentive, is that right?

**Akrura dasa:** Attention. So clients complain that most coaches are very busy. And they are very impatient when they're talking, just waiting to speak.

But if a coach believes in you, they believe you're brilliant, you have intelligence you are full of ideas, your mind is like a gold mine, then the coach will not interrupt you. He will just wait for you to come up with something wonderful.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

Another component is incisive questions that we just spoke about. So these questions that evoke awareness and the goal of the incisive question is to challenge or shake the entrenched patterns of thinking that create limitations. So basically we address different assumptions that are limiting us.

And then with these questions we try to create liberating assumptions. The next one is equality. Speaker and listener deserve equal respect, attention and time, and you and I as speakers are equal. I believe we can come up with great ideas even better than mine. So this is my commitment. I regard you as my equal as a thinker, even if I'm higher in a hierarchy, if I am Senior and so on.

But if I see you as an equal as a thinker then it will be easier for you to think better than if I feel I am better than you. Now, this is very subtle. But I mean everybody can feel when somebody comes with his huge knowledge and then now look at you and they maybe think what this person has to say that I don't know. I was thinking this arrogant approach. But you want to liberate thinking. You want to facilitate better thinking. The next one is appreciation. We already explained something about this and now what is recommended is that for every criticism you give high praises.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Wow.

**Akrura dasa:** I mean, this is just in life. This whole system is actually how to live a life, how to live a high quality life, how to communicate.

**Krsnendu dasa:** It's not just any coaching session. It's a general principle of life, yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** It doesn't criticize at all. But this is like an instruction for life. Like if you want to rebuke your child or correct your child, you have to give high praises either after this or before this, correct or criticize.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah, well, that would make a difference.

**Akrura dasa:** So appreciation comes at the end of the session between the client and the coach and it's always two-way

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** If I'm critical, if I bully you or ignore you then it will stifle your thinking.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** And this is also in the Neuroscience. This is also proved. Like, you know through the, with different machines that can measure the reaction of the brain to appreciation or to criticism. So this is scientifically proven. Then the next one is ease. Ease means that there is no rush.

We have one hour, but there is no rush. I will not interrupt you. I will not rush you. You can relax. You can think. Silence is okay... Just the coach is very relaxed and this helps the client to think also in a relaxed way.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** No urgency. Urgency is a destructive force for better thinking.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** Encouragement is the next one.

So encouragement promotes this collaborative mindset. So there is no competition. There is no culture, not show how he's better, how he knows more, but just is there to support. He believes in the client. He believes in their potential. He believes in their intelligence and they can feel it. They can feel that he is very encouraging.

The next one is feelings. Letting the speaker express and experience their emotion. They can be released from their grip. So to cry is okay. Sometimes they say crying can make you smarter and I can see after people cry then they start, I mean I have been, recently I had someone cry very long for a very long time in the session and I was just waiting.

Otherwise, I would try to save them. You know, I will try to console them. I would try to call the emergency ambulance. But I was just waiting because I learned that I should just wait and then they started to speak in an amazing way more clear, more intelligent, more spiritual. And I saw letting people express their feelings can make them think better.

**Krsnendu dasa:** That's powerful.

**Akrura dasa:** The next one is information. Sometimes the client expresses some expressions and some descriptions of reality that are actually not true. So also a coach can help with some information to clarify things and to remove certain perceptions and ideas which will stifle their thinking. It doesn't mean to teach. Sometimes people listen and when you ask them, like we say that don't speak until you are asked and then people think yes, but when I'm asked I'm really going to speak, you know forever.

Don't take advantage of the opportunity that someone gives you to speak and just give some brief information about something so that actually they can think better. So again your service to them is not to teach in this environment but to facilitate their thinking

Place. Place means that it should be quiet.

We should stop all the laptops, mobile phones, all the gadgets just turn off everything don't allow anybody to interrupt. And also place refers to their own body and your body, coaches body that you should not be in pain. You should not have difficulties and be uncomfortable, but it should be peaceful, comfortable, clean, nicely lighted.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Private.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Akrura dasa:** Especially, yes, private. And in this way, you have a very very shall we say favorable place for high thinking.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Takes away the distractions, whether it's physical body distractions or other people distractions or gadget distractions.

**Akrura dasa:** Yes. Also when you create such an environment, people feel respected, you know, you don't interrupt them.

You don't look at own... You have a clean place. You know, you have welcomed them in a nice place.

**Krsnendu dasa:** True.

**Akrura dasa:** Last one is diversity. Diversity, we welcome ideas that are different from ours. Not everyone is the same. It doesn't mean that all my ideas are better there than yours. This is also very important in meetings.

They also teach how to run meetings based on this principle. So differences is full of opportunities and diversity adds value.

So this is the overview of the ten components and more can be learned from her books, which are called Time to Think. The second book is called More Time to Think and third Living with the Time to Think.

And she is now working on her new book, which I don't know how it could be called, but I guess there will be words Time to Think in the title. But I give no guarantee.

So this is the overview. And what is the purpose of all this? The purpose is to create environment for higher quality thinking. And they consider this to be actually a way of living, a way of being. This is not just a coaching technique. It's not a set of techniques. It's just a way of communicating with people living in this world.

So what do you think about this? How does it sound?

**Krsnendu dasa:** Oh, it sounds great. And as you say it's not just like a framework for a coaching session but it's a whole approach to how we respect people and help people. I mean personally like I'm thinking within Hare Krishna movement. I've often seen some of these things violated in it.

It pains me to see it. Just to give some examples, you know, like when someone would ask a question. And then someone will immediately give an answer without even really trying to understand what the person is trying to ask. And that they're just trying to kind of like, okay, that was that question, next question. So a lot of these principles I can see that I mean, I'm contrasting it from a negative point of view, but I can see that if the person had that and idea of ease.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

That we're not in a rush. I'm willing to take the time to understand. You know, what you are you trying to work out and also the equality like sometimes when someone's giving a class, they think that when someone asks a question, I'm on the other side, I must have the answer. So whenever they ask me something I have to say the answer. It's kind of like a one it goes this way and then it goes that way. Whereas a lot of times someone asks a question, it may not necessarily be that there's one answer. It may be something to think about or something to discuss rather than that there's always such a straightforward answer. And so encouraging devotees to think in this way, actually encouraging devotees to think rather than to just sort of give shallow answers to things or to think in a very kind of dogmatic way.

I think that this framework is really powerful in many ways. It helps individuals that are trying to work through how to understand something. But just as a society just to build the relationships with each other, following these principles will really help people get much more connected with each other.

So those are two really powerful benefits that I can see from this process that you've described. And even I can see that this would be really helpful in a marriage. I'm looking at some of these things and thinking "Hmm... I can improve in that area and that area and actually most practically all of them" and I'm like, yeah, I mean as you say they're quite universal ideas that we can apply in so many different situations.

**Akrura dasa:** Yes, exactly.

So now if somebody, those who are listening, I believe some of them have a question. Well, if you are so ready to listen, it's because people will speak and speak and speak and speak because no one was listening to them for years, especially in ISKCON. So, you know, but actually, it's a paradoxical but actually this takes less time. When people know they will not be interrupted, they know they will be listened to attentively for a certain amount of time, they will come to conclusions quicker. They will think faster. And this is what happens. I mean, there is so many case studies how it speeds up everything, this kind of approach where people have space to think.

**Krsnendu dasa:** It's counterintuitive, but I can see how it would work when people have space to think, then they can think for themselves, but if they're always getting sort of stopped, then they don't have a chance to get the flow that helps them to come to conclusions and things.

**Akrura dasa:** Well, they say interrupting someone's thinking is violence. It's violence, it's aggressive.

As I was listening to you, I was trying not to interrupt you but one point I was thinking maybe you're not sure if I'm here. So I said yes, and I interrupted you a little bit, very little.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah, actually when you mentioned that I was, I wanted to say something but then I felt I better not.

**Akrura dasa:** You see. You have experienced how obstructive it is. And if we were face to face I wouldn't say yes. I would just look at you.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Right, just nod or just give eye contact or something like that to show you're attentive.



# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

**Akrura dasa:** Right right.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Yeah.

**Akrura dasa:** So eye contact is important in the session very much. But if you cannot have eye contact like now, we don't have, then you can say something but wait until the person stops.

So I'm still you know, I still have the disease of interrupting, of jumping in and I'm trying to get rid of this. Now before we move to our 40 habits of a thinking coach, I would like to share one experience when for the first time when I decided that in this session I'm not going to give advice.

Now every preacher has a little syndrome of being a savior.

And usually when people suffer it's practically impossible to resist the urge to save them. But it might not be the best service for them.

Sometimes it's needed. Sometimes only giving them a tissue is helpful without even saying anything. But I gave this session where there was a very problematic person and this person came to the translator and I decided I'm not going to give advice and as the person was speaking, the person was in pain and I was thinking my God I had to encourage.

I have to encourage. I had to show that I care. I had to give some idea, some hope. I have to save this person. And I didn't. And the magic happened as the person was talking, she started to calm down. And I was listening and I resisted all my savior inclinations and at the end it was so powerful, so...so... it completely changed the mood, so enthusiastic. I did show that I listened. I did ask maybe one or two questions and it was not based on this structure. I didn't even introduce the person to the structure because at that time I was just starting. But I just decided I'm not going to give advice and it was amazing what effect it had on that person. And even the trust of that person in me grew so much by me saying nothing. Immediately I had this experience how powerful this is and I got a desire to explore more and to test more and to practice more and I continued and the more I did it, the more every time I saw like more benefits and how it works. And then a couple of days ago in Croatia I had this Think Partnership seminar for mentors, ISKCON mentors in Croatia.

And so I made a demonstration with the structure I described to you and the devotee who was in a role of a client he was, he actually also had like a transformational experience. It wasn't something super spectacular but it was significant and then I little bit like I would say with a little bit of fear, I asked those who are observing for feedback and I was thinking oh my God what they will say now.

Maybe they will say well this is useless. You didn't say anything, you didn't help him. He was just struggling himself. But when they gave feedback my God, it was so positive and they have seen things that I couldn't possibly see the quality. I mean the beneficial and useful things in the session and I have it recorded.

# SV-22-Akrura-Strategic-Thinking-1

I need to translate it into English, their feedback. It was so encouraging for me to see how they see the value of this. I mean, these are experienced devotees. These are preachers, long time devotees. So I got more actually encouraged to continue teaching this and practicing this. And also it helped me to actually suggest to you to share this in your podcast,

**Krsnendu dasa:** Okay, so thank you Akrura Prabhu, that was wonderful that you've given us this 10 principles of...

**Akrura dasa:** Ten components of a Thinking Environment.

**Krsnendu dasa:** And you've given us also the structure of a session that you can do as a coach or with your thinking partner. It's really opened up a lot of ideas for me and I can just see how positive these principles would be. Not just a coaching situation, but in all of our relationships. So thank you very much for what you've covered today and I really look forward to our follow-up session which would be the next podcast episode when we go through the...

**Akrura dasa:** 40 habits of a thinking coach... Coach that helps improve our thinking.

**Krsnendu dasa:** Right great. Yes, so that'll be the topic for our next podcast and I really look forward to discussing them and hearing the feedback from everybody as well.

So I will see you in the next episode. Hare Krishna.

**Akrura dasa:** Hare Krishna. Thank you.

**Krsnendu:** Thanks for listening to find out more go to [successfulvaishnavas.com](http://successfulvaishnavas.com).

**Sri Prahlad:** Whatever little service that anyone can do it for Krishna is to be appreciated and celebrated.

**Jagattarini Mataji:** Just give this life to Krishna.

**Akrura Prabhu:** We know that they have much more potential than they're presently using.

**Urmila Mataji:** I'm into a place of relishing the activity and letting go of the result completely.

**Srila Prabhupada:** You just associate with pure devotees then you shall be able to cross over the ocean of nescience.