

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

# Spiritual Master and Disciple



Founder-*Ācārya* of the  
International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Compiled and Edited by Śubhānanda dāsa brahmacārī

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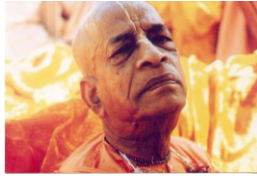


**“One who cannot deliver**  
his dependents from the  
path of repeated birth and  
death should never become  
a spiritual master, a father,  
a husband, a mother or a  
worshipable demigod.”

Çrémad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.18

## **| Spiritual Master and Disciple**

## Preface



In the months of apprehensive anticipation preceding His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure from this world, we, the disciples of His Divine Grace, were all forced to contemplate, more deeply than ever before, certain basic, essential questions: *Who is Śrīla Prabhupāda?* What is the position of the spiritual master? What does it mean to be a disciple of a spiritual master? What is the nature of my connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda? What is the nature of my relationship with him? And finally, What will be the nature of my relationship with my spiritual master after his physical departure? During this difficult period, and shortly following Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, I thought that it might be a worthwhile project to compile all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on the subject of spiritual master and disciple, so that all of the disciples of His Divine Grace could find shelter, solace and inspiration in Śrīla Prabhupāda's own illuminating instructions.

Later, when the eleven new spiritual masters appointed<sup>1</sup> by Śrīla Prabhupāda began to accept disciples, it occurred to me that such a compilation of the subject of *guru* and disciple would be helpful to the new spiritual masters in fulfilling their weighty responsibilities, as well as to their disciples by helping them to perfectly understand the meaning of discipleship. I approached Rāmeśvara Swami and volunteered to execute a comprehensive, systematic compilation of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions from all of his books, covering the subjects of spiritual master, disciple, disciplic succession, and initiation, and then the book could be published and distributed to all the devotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. He liked the idea and gave me all encouragement. This book, *The Spiritual Master and the Disciple*, is the product of that encouragement. A glance through the table of contents will give one an idea of the volume and complexity of the subject. I have tried to organize this voluminous material from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books into precise, well-defined categories, so that his instructions can be easily and conveniently located. Any imperfections encountered in the reading of this text (e.g. neglected or misplaced references, inappropriate categorization, etc.) are the fault of this imperfect conditioned soul. But I have tried my best to please my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrīla Prabhupāda, by doing as thorough and careful a job as possible.

In *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, Fourteenth Chapter, Śrīla Prabhupāda describes how, by placing His lotus feet on the head of Sanātana Gosvāmī, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu blessed Sanātana with the benediction that all of His transcendental instructions on the science of devotional service would become fully manifest within his heart:

“[Sanātana Gosvāmī prayed:] ‘By Your grace, I have appreciated the conclusions which You have taught me, but I am so low that I cannot even touch a drop of the ocean of Your instructions. Thus if You want me, who am nothing but a lame man, to dance, then please give me Your benediction by placing Your feet on my head.’

“Thus Sanātana Gosvāmī prayed for the Lord's confirmation that His teachings would actually evolve in his heart by His grace.... Unless one is blessed by the spiritual master, or the *ācārya*, such teachings cannot become fully manifest. Therefore one should seek the mercy of the spiritual master so that the

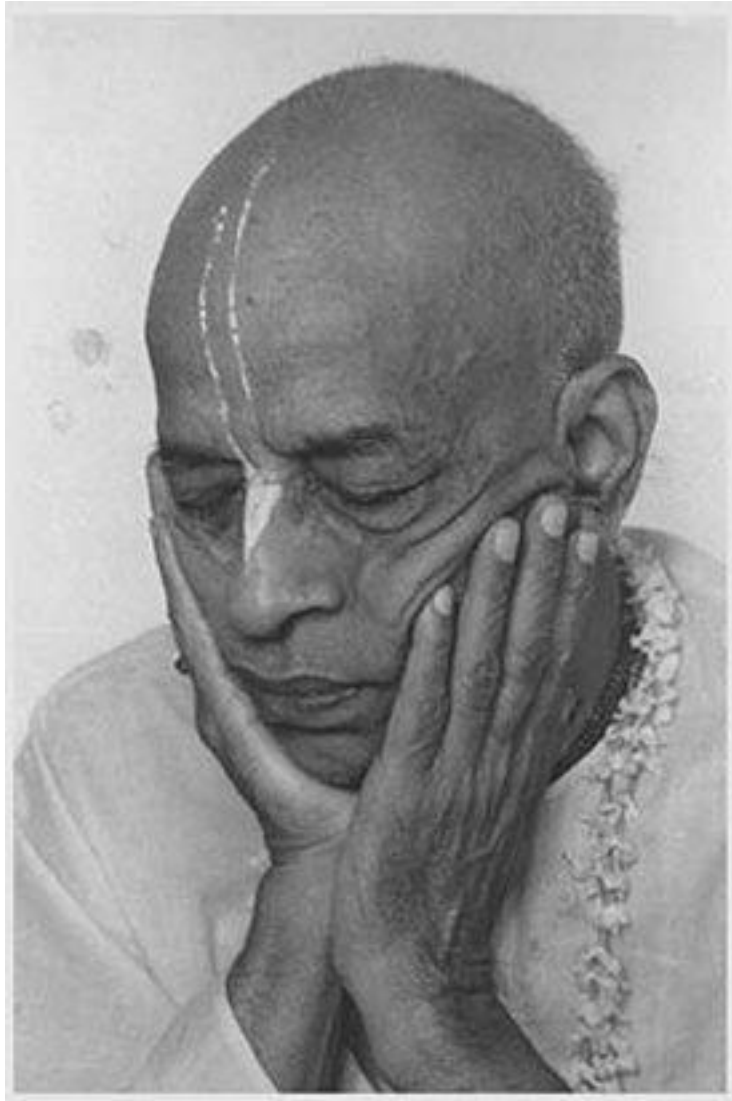
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1 Proof of this so-called “*appointment*” is still elusive (2010AD)

instructions of the spiritual master can develop within oneself. After receiving the prayers of Sanātana Gosvāmī, Lord Caitanya placed His feet on the head of Sanātana and gave him His benediction so that all His instructions would develop fully.”

With all the humility at my command, I offer this book at the divine lotus feet of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. I pray that, by his causeless mercy, he will firmly implant within the hearts of all his disciples, grand-disciples<sup>2</sup> and coming generations of disciples, the instructions contained within this volume, just as Lord Caitanya enlightened Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī by placing His feet on Sanātana’s head. Only by such transcendental blessings can these sublime instructions develop fully within our hearts, become practical realizations, and become communicated into practical action.

Śubhānanda dāsa *brahmacārī*




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2 grand-disciples is a contentious issue in ISKCON today



## Prayers in Honor of the Spiritual Master

### Çré Çré-gurv-aññaka

of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

(1)

*samsāra-dāvānala-līḍha-loka-  
trāṇāya kārūṇya-ghanāghanatvam  
prāptasya kalyāṇa-guṇārṇavasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master is receiving benediction from the ocean of mercy. Just as a cloud pours water on a forest fire to extinguish it, so the spiritual master delivers the materially afflicted world by extinguishing the blazing fire of material existence. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is an ocean of auspicious qualities.

(2)

*mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta-  
vāditra-mādyan-manaso rasena  
romāñca -kampāśru-taraṅga-bhājo  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

Chanting the holy name, dancing in ecstasy, singing, and playing musical instruments, the spiritual master is always gladdened by the saṁkīrtana movement of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Because he is relishing the mellows of pure devotion within his mind, sometimes his hair stands on end, he feels quivering in his body, and tears flow from his eyes like waves. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.

(3)

*śrī-vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānā-  
śṅgāra-tan-mandira-mārjanāḍau  
yuktasya bhaktāṁś ca niyuñjato 'pi  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master is always engaged in the temple worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. He also engages his disciples in such worship. They dress the Deities in beautiful clothes and ornaments, clean Their temple, and perform other similar worship of the Lord. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.

(4)

*catur-vidha-śrī-bhagavat-prasāda-  
svādv-anna-tṛptān hari-bhakta-saṅghān  
kṛtvaiḥ tṛptiṁ bhajataḥ sadaiva  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master is always offering Kṛṣṇa four kinds of delicious food [analyzed as that which is licked, chewed, drunk, and sucked]. When the spiritual master sees that the devotees are satisfied by eating bhagavat-prasāda, he is satisfied. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.

(5)

*śrī-rādhikā-mādhavayor apāra-  
mādhurya-līlā guṇa-rūpa-nāmnām  
prati-kṣaṇāsvādana-lolupasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master is always eager to hear and chant about the unlimited conjugal pastimes of Rādhikā and Mādhava, and Their qualities, names, and forms. The spiritual master aspires to relish these at every moment. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.

(6)

*nikuñja-yūno rati-keli-siddhyai  
yā yālibhir yuktir apekṣaṇīyā  
tatrāti-dākṣyād ati-vallabhasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master is very dear, because he is expert in assisting the gopés, who at different times make different tasteful arrangements for the perfection of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's conjugal loving affairs within the groves of Vṛndāvana. I offer my most humble obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.

(7)

*sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair  
uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ  
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord, because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged in all revealed scriptures and followed by all authorities. Therefore I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is a bona fide representative of Śrī Hari [Kṛṣṇa].

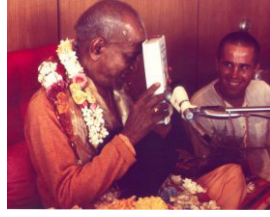
(8)

*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo  
yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi  
dhyāyan stuvaṁs tasya yaśas tri-sandhyam  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Kṛṣṇa. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement. Therefore, I should always remember and praise the spiritual master. At least three times a day I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master.

## Çré-guru-vandanā

from the *Prema-bhakti-candrikā* of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura



*śrī-guru-carana-padma, kevala bhakati-sadma,  
bando mui sāvadhāna mate  
jāhāra prasāde bhāi, e bha va toriyā jāi,  
krṣṇa-prāpti hoy jāhā hāte*

The lotus feet of the spiritual master are the abode of pure devotional service. I bow down to those lotus feet with great care and attention. My dear brother (my dear mind)! It is through the grace of the spiritual master that we cross over this material existence and obtain Kṛṣṇa.

*guru-mukha-padma-vākya, cittete koriyā aikya,  
ār nā koriho mane āśā  
śrī-guru-caraṇe rati, ei se uttama gati,  
je prasāde pure sarva āśā*

Make the teachings from the lotus mouth of the spiritual master one with your heart, and do not desire anything else. Attachment to the lotus feet of the spiritual master is the best means of spiritual advancement. By his mercy all desires for spiritual perfection are fulfilled.

*cakhu-dān dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei,  
divya jñān hṛde prokāśito  
prema-bhakti jāhā hoite, avidyā vināśa jāte,  
vede gāy jāhāra carito*

He who has given me the gift of transcendental vision is my lord birth after birth. By his mercy, divine knowledge is revealed within the heart, bestowing prema-bhakti and destroying ignorance. The Vedic scriptures sing of his character.

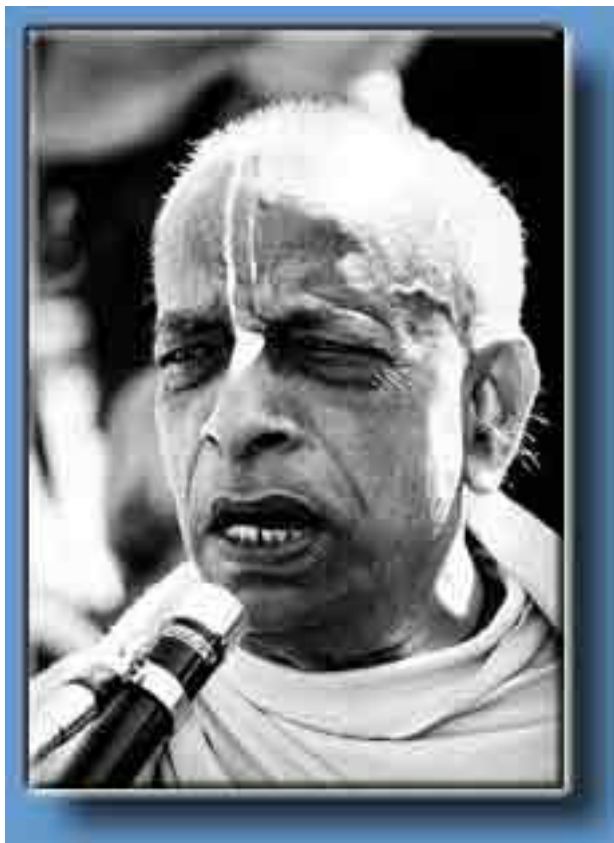
*śrī-guru karuṇā-sindhu, adhama janāra bandhu,  
lokanāth lokera jīvana  
hā hā prabhu koro doyā, deho more pada-chāyā,  
ebe jaśa ghuṣuk tribhuvana*

O spiritual master, ocean of mercy and friend of the fallen souls, you are the teacher of everyone and the life of all people. O master! Be merciful unto me and give me the shade of your lotus feet. May your glories now be proclaimed throughout the three worlds.



## Gurudeva!

by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



*gurudeva!*

*kṛpā-bindu diyā, koro' ei dāse, tṛṇāpekḥā ati hīna  
sakala-sahane, bolo diyā koro nija māne spṛhā-hīna*

**Gurudeva! By a drop of your mercy, make this servant of yours humbler than a blade of grass. Giving me strength to bear all trials and troubles, make me devoid of all desires for personal honor.**

*sakale sammān, korite śakati, deho' nātha! jathājatha  
tabe to' gāibo, harināma-sukhe, aparādha ha 'be hata*

**O lord and master! Please give me the power to properly honor all living beings. Only then will I sing the holy name in great ecstasy and all my offenses cease.**

*kabe heno kṛpā, lobhiyā e jana, kṛtārtha hoibe, nātha!  
śakti-buddhi-hīn, āmi ati dīn, koro' more ātma-sātha*

**O lord and master! When will this devotee, obtaining your mercy, become blessed? Devoid of all strength and intelligence, I am very low and fallen. Please make me your own servant.**

*jogyatā-vicāre, kichu nāhi pāi, tomāra karuṇā sāra  
karuṇā nā hoile, kāṇḍiyā kāṇḍiyā, prāṇa nā rākhibo āra*

**Upon examining my value, I find that I have none; your mercy is essential to me. Therefore, if you are not merciful I will constantly weep and I will not maintain my life any longer.**

## Key Verses from Vedic and Vaisnava Literature Concerning the Spiritual Master

### The Spiritual Master as a Manifestation or Representative of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

*ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyān*

*nāvamanyeta karhicit*

*na martya-buddhyāsūyeta*

*sarva-devamayo guruḥ*

“One should know the ācārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.”

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.17.27

[cited: *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 1.46]

“My dear King, a disciple has to accept the spiritual master not only as spiritual master, but also as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supersoul. In other words, the disciple should accept the spiritual master as God because he is the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.”

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Canto Eleven

[cited: *The Nectar of Devotion*]

*guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe*

*guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe*

“According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 1.45

*kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne*

*guru-antaryāmi-rūpe śikhāya āpane*

“Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone’s heart as caitya-guru, the spiritual master within. When He is kind to some fortunate conditioned soul, He personally gives one lessons to progress in devotional service, instructing the person as the Supersoul within and the spiritual master without.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Madhya-līlā 22.47

*naivopayanty apacitiṁ kavayas taveśa*

*brahmāyusāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ*

*yo ‘ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann*

*ācārya-caitya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti*

“O my Lord! Transcendental poets and experts in spiritual science could not fully express their indebtedness to You, even if they were endowed with the prolonged lifetime of Brahmā, for You appear in two features-externally as the ācārya and internally as the Supersoul-to deliver the embodied living being by directing him how to come to You.”

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.6

[cited: *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Madhya-līlā 22.48]

## The Absolute Necessity of Accepting a Spiritual Master

*tad viddhi praṇipātena  
paripraśnena sevayā  
upadekṣyanti te jñānam  
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.”

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.34*

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva  
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

“According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.151*

*tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet  
samit-pāṇiḥ śrotṛyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham*

“In order to learn the transcendental science, one must approach the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession, who is fixed in the Absolute Truth.”

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12*

*yasya deve parā bhaktir  
yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ  
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

“Only unto those great souls who simultaneously have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.”

*Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23*

[cited: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.7.17]

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya  
jñānāñjana-śalākayā  
cakṣur unmlitaṁ yena  
tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who, with the torchlight of knowledge has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance.”

*Gautamīya-tantra*

[Cited: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.1.11]

*sarva-deśa-kāla-daśāya janera kartavya*

*guru-pāśe sei bhakti praṣṭavya, śrotavya*

“It is therefore the duty of every man-in every country, in every circumstance and at all times-to accept the bona fide spiritual master, question him about devotional service and listen to him explain the process.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 25.122*

*dharmasya tattvaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyaṁ*

*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*

“It is very difficult to understand the secret of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but one who advances by the instruction of the previous ācāryas and follows in the footsteps of his predecessors in the line of disciplic succession will have success.”

*Mahābhārata, Vana-parva 313.117*

[cited: *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 8.7*]

*ato gurum praṇamyaivaṁ*

*sarva-svaṁ vinivedya ca*

*gṛhṇīyād vaiṣṇavaṁ mantraṁ*

*dīkṣā-purvaṁ vidhānataḥ*

“It is the duty of every human being to surrender to a bona fide spiritual master. Giving him everything-body, mind and intelligence-one must take a Vaiṣṇava initiation from him.”

*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 2.10*

[cited: *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108*]

*evam paramparā-prāptam. . .*

“This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession...”

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.2*

*tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje, kare gurura sevana*

*māyā-jāla chuṭe, pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

“If the conditioned soul engages in the service of the Lord and simultaneously carries out the orders of his spiritual master and serves him, he can get out of the clutches of māyā and become eligible for shelter at Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 22.25*

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti*

*kāmsyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ*

*tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena*

*dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*

“As bell metal is turned to gold when mixed with mercury in an alchemical process, so one who is properly trained and initiated by a bona fide spiritual master immediately becomes a brāhmaṇa.”

*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.47]*

## The Qualifications of a Bona Fide Spiritual Master

*yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa*

*āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tara' ei deśa*

“Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in Bhagavad-gētā and Çré-mad-Bhāgavatam. In this way become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 7.128

*kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya*

*yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*

“Whether one is a brāhmaëa, a sannyāsé or a çūdra-regardless of what he is-he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.128

*vaco vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam*

*jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam*

*etān vegān yo viśaheta dhīraḥ*

*sarvam apīmāṁ pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt*

“A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind’s demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the tongue, belly and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world.”

NOI Text 1

*tasmād gurum prapadyeta*

*jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*

*śābde pare ca niṣṇātām*

*brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

“Any person who seriously desires to achieve real happiness must seek out a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of his spiritual master is that he must have realized the conclusion of the scriptures by deliberation and be able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, are to be understood as bona fide spiritual masters.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.21

[cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.14.41]

*gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt*

*pitā na sa syāj jananī na sā syāt*

*daivam na tat syān na patiś ca sa syān*

*na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum*

“One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother or a worshipable demigod.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.18

# Chapter I

## The Absolute Necessity for Accepting a Bona Fide Spiritual Master

### 1. General Instructions

The first five basic principles of devotional service involve acceptance of a bona fide spiritual master:

[Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī] mentions the basic principles as follows: (1) accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master, (2) becoming initiated by the spiritual master and learning how to discharge devotional service from him, (3) obeying the orders of the spiritual master with faith and devotion, (4) following in the footsteps of great *ācāryas* (teachers) under the direction of the spiritual master, (5) inquiring from the spiritual master how to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness...

*The Nectar of Devotion*

The first five essential practices of devotional service involve establishing a relationship with a bona fide spiritual master:

On the path of regulative devotional service, one must observe the following items: (1) one must accept a bona fide spiritual master. (2) Accept initiation from him. (3) Serve him. (4) Receive instructions from the spiritual master and make inquiries in order to learn devotional service. (5) Follow in the footsteps of the previous *ācāryas* and follow the directions given by the spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 22.115

It is the duty of every human being to surrender to a bona fide spiritual master:

*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.10) quotes:

*ato gurum praṇamyaivam  
sarva-svaṁ vinivedya ca  
gṛhnīyād vaiṣṇavaṁ mantraṁ  
dīkṣā-purvaṁ vidhānataḥ*

“It is the duty of every human being to surrender to a bona fide spiritual master. Giving him everything-body, mind and intelligence-one must take a Vaiṣṇava initiation from him.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108

Better than worship of the Lord is worship of the Lord's devotee:

In the *Padma Purāṇa*, there is a nice statement praising the service of the Vaiṣṇavas or devotees. In that scripture Lord Śiva tells Pārvatī, “My dear Pārvatī, there are different methods of worship, and out of all such methods the worship of the Supreme Person is considered to be the highest. But even higher than the worship of the Lord is the worship of the Lord's devotees.”

*The Nectar of Devotion*

### 2. To Set an Example, Even the Lord (and His Incarnations, etc.) Accepts a Spiritual Master

To set an example, even Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Kāñḍā accepted spiritual masters:

One may ask that if Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, then why did He need a spiritual master? Of course He did not need a spiritual master, but because He was playing the role of *ācārya* (one who teaches by example), He accepted a spiritual master. Even Kṛṣṇa Himself accepted a spiritual master, for that is the system. In this way the Lord sets the example for men. We should not think, however,



that the Lord takes a spiritual master because He is in want of knowledge. He is simply stressing the importance of accepting the disciplic succession.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā Intro.

### To set an example, God Himself accepts a spiritual master:

Although formally Śrīla Nārada Rṣi is his spiritual master, Śrīla Vyāsadeva is not at all dependent on a spiritual master because in essence he is the spiritual master of everyone else. But because he is doing the work of an *ācārya*, he has taught us by his own conduct that one must have a spiritual master, even though he be God Himself. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord Śrī Rāma and Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, all incarnations of Godhead, accepted formal spiritual masters, although by Their transcendental nature They were cognizant of all knowledge.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.21

### To set an example for ordinary men, Kāñḍa and Balarāma accepted a spiritual master and strictly followed the regulative principles of brahmacharya:

Vasudeva had his son initiated by sacred thread as the token of second birth, which is essential for the higher castes of human society. Vasudeva called for his family priest and learned *brāhmaṇas*, and the sacred thread ceremony of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma was duly performed ... and They repeated the chanting of the *Gāyatrī mantra*. The *Gāyatrī mantra* is offered to the disciples after the sacred thread ceremony, and Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa properly discharged the duties of chanting this *mantra*. Anyone who executes the chanting of this *mantra* has to abide by certain principles and vows. Although Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were both transcendental personalities, They strictly followed the regulative principles. Both were initiated by Their family priest Gargācārya, usually known as Gargamuni, the *ācārya* of the Yadu dynasty. According to Vedic culture, every respectable person has an *ācārya*, or spiritual master. One is not considered to be a perfectly cultured man without being initiated and trained by an *ācārya*. It is said, therefore, that one who has approached an *ācārya* is actually in perfect knowledge. Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of all education and knowledge. There was no need for Them to accept a spiritual master or *ācārya*, yet for the instruction of ordinary men, They also accepted a spiritual master for advancement in spiritual knowledge.

It is customary, after being initiated in the *Gāyatrī mantra*, for one to live away from home for some time under the care of the *ācārya* in order to be trained in spiritual life. During this period one has to work under the spiritual master as an ordinary menial servant. There are many rules and regulations for a *brahmachārī* living under the care of an *ācārya*, and both Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma strictly followed those regulative principles while living under the instruction of their spiritual master, Sāṅdīpani Muni, in his place in northern India. According to scriptural injunctions, a spiritual master should be respected and be regarded on an equal level with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma exactly followed those principles with great devotion and underwent the regulations of *brahmacharya*, and thus They satisfied Their spiritual master, who instructed Them in Vedic knowledge. Being very satisfied, Sāṅdīpani Muni instructed Them in all the intricacies of Vedic wisdom as well as in supplementary literatures such as the *Upanisads*.

... The ocean is the source of water in a river. The cloud is created by the evaporation of ocean water, and the same water is distributed as rain all over the surface of the earth and then returns toward the ocean in rivers. So Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, are the source of all kinds of knowledge, but because They were playing like ordinary human boys, They set the example so that everyone would receive knowledge from the right source. Thus They agreed to take knowledge from a spiritual master.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

### The absolute necessity of accepting a bona fide spiritual master:

... How could one have knowledge of devotional service and detachment without the help of such [spot-

less] devotees?

**PURPORT:** There are many inexperienced persons who advocate self-realization without the help of a spiritual master. They decry the necessity of the spiritual master and try themselves to take his place by propagating the theory that a spiritual master is not necessary. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, however, does not approve this viewpoint. Even the great transcendental scholar Vyāsadeva had need of a spiritual master, and under the instruction of his spiritual master, Nārada, he prepared this sublime literature, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Even Lord Caitanya, although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, accepted a spiritual master; even Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted a spiritual master, Sāṅdīpani Muni, in order to be enlightened; and all the *ācāryas* and saints of the world had spiritual masters. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna accepted Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master, although there was no question about the necessity of accepting a spiritual master. The only stipulation is that the spiritual master should be bona fide; i.e., the spiritual master must be in the proper chain of disciplic succession, called the *paramparā* system.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.7.39

### **3. One Approaches the Lord Through the Spiritual Master**

(Service to the Lord Begins with Service to His Representative, the Spiritual Master)

**One can approach Kāṇḍea not directly, but through His pure devotee, by accepting such a pure devotee as spiritual master:**

In the *Ādi-līlā Purāṇa* there is the following statement by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, addressed to Arjuna: “My dear Pārtha, one who claims to be My devotee is not so. Only a person who claims to be the devotee of My devotee is actually My devotee.” No one can approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly [Cc. Mad 13.80]. One must approach Him through His pure devotees. Therefore, in the system of Vaiṣṇava activities, the first duty is to accept a devotee as spiritual master and then to render service unto him.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**One should approach Kāṇḍea not directly, but through a transparent via medium:**

The best way to establish our relation in transcendental sweetness is to approach [Lord Kṛṣṇa] through His recognized devotees. One should not try to establish the relation directly; there must be a via medium which is transparent and competent to lead us to the right path.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.22

**The spiritual master is the transparent via medium through which one can approach the Supreme Lord:**

My spiritual master used to say, “The spiritual master is the transparent via medium.” For example, I can see the letters of this book very nicely through these transparent eyeglasses, without which I cannot see because my eyes are defective. Similarly, our senses are all defective. We cannot see God with these eyes, we cannot hear Hare Kṛṣṇa with these ears, we cannot do anything without the via medium of the spiritual master. Just as a defective eye cannot see without the via medium of spectacles, so one cannot approach the Supreme Lord without the transparent via medium of the spiritual master. “Transparent” means that the via medium must be free of contamination. If it is transparent, one can see through it.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**To become a servant of the Lord, one must become a servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord by accepting a spiritual master in disciplic succession:**

[For devotional life] one must first become a servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord (*dāsānudāsa*). Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised, and He also showed by His own example, that a living entity should always desire to be a servant of the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa, the maintainer of the

*gopīs (gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsadāsānudāsaḥ)*. This means that one must accept a spiritual master who comes in the disciplic succession and is a servant of the servant of the Lord [Cc. Mad 13.80].

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.11.24

**The disciple does not serve the Lord directly, but serves the spiritual master first:**

“My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of my association with material desires, one after another, I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But Your servant Nārada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve this transcendental position. Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?”

**PURPORT:** As will be seen in later verses, even though Prahlaḍa Mahārāja was directly offered all the benedictions he might have desired, he refused to accept such offerings from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. On the contrary, he asked the Lord to engage him in the service of His servant Nārada Muni. This is the symptom of a pure devotee. One should serve the spiritual master first. It is not that one should bypass the spiritual master and desire to serve the Supreme Lord. This is not the principle for a Vaiṣṇava. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says:

*tāṇdera caraṇa sevi bhakta-sane vāsa*

*janame janame haya, ei abhilāsa*

One should not be anxious to offer direct service to the Lord. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised that one become a servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord (*gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsadāsānudāsaḥ* [Cc. Mad 13.80]). This is the process for approaching the Supreme Lord. The first service should be rendered to the spiritual master so that by his mercy one can approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead to render service. While teaching Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*: [Cc Mad 19.151] one can achieve the seed of devotional service by the mercy of the guru, the spiritual master, and then by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. This is the secret of success. First one should try to please the spiritual master, and then one should attempt to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura also says, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. One should not attempt to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead by concoction. One must first be prepared to serve the spiritual master, and when one is qualified he is automatically offered the platform of direct service to the Lord. Therefore Prahlaḍa Mahārāja proposed that he engage in the service of Nārada Muni. He never proposed that he engage directly in the service of the Lord. This is the right conclusion. Therefore he said, *so ‘haṁ katham nu viśṛje tava bhṛtya-sevām*: “How can I give up the service of my spiritual master, who has favored me in such a way that I am now able to see You face to face?” Prahlaḍa Mahārāja prayed to the Lord that he might continue to engage in the service of his spiritual master, Nārada Muni.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.9.28

**One can approach the Supreme Lord by approaching His representative:**

Sometimes there are inquiries as to how one can surrender unto the Supreme Lord. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) the Lord asked Arjuna to surrender unto Him, and therefore persons unwilling to do so question where God is and to whom they should surrender. The answer to such questions or inquiries is given herein very properly. The Personality of Godhead may not be present before one’s eyes, but if one is sincere in wanting such guidance the Lord will send a bona fide person who can guide one properly back home, back to Godhead.... The bona fide representative of God is as good as God Himself. Or, in other words, the loving representative of the Lord is more kind and more easy to approach. A sinful soul cannot approach the Lord directly, but such a sinful man can very easily approach a pure devotee of the Lord. And if one agrees to put himself under the guidance of such a devotee of the Lord, he can also understand the science of God and can also become like the transcendental pure devotee of the Lord and thus get his liberation back to Godhead, back home for eternal happiness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.7.46

**Service to the devotee (spiritual master) in disciplic succession is the first condition of devotional service:**

The person who has not at any time received the dust of the feet of the Lord's pure devotee upon his head is certainly a dead body....

**PURPORT:** There is a common saying that one should first love the dog of the beloved before one shows any loving sentiments for the beloved. The stage of pure devotion is attained by sincerely serving a pure devotee of the Lord. The first condition of devotional service to the Lord is therefore to be a servant of a pure devotee, and this condition is fulfilled by the statement "reception of the dust of the lotus feet of a pure devotee who has also served another pure devotee." That is the way of pure disciplic succession, or devotional *paramparā*.... Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the property of His pure unconditional devotees, and as such only the devotees can deliver Kṛṣṇa to another devotee; Kṛṣṇa is never obtainable directly.... The conclusion is, therefore, that one should be more serious about seeking the mercy of the devotee than that of the Lord directly, and by one's doing so (by the good will of the devotee) the natural attraction for the service of the Lord will be revived.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.23

**Service of the Lord begins with service of His servants:**

O Muni, in the last millennium I was born as the son of a certain maidservant engaged in the service of brāhmaëas who were following the principles of Vedānta. When they were living together during the four months of the rainy season, I was engaged in their personal service.

**PURPORT:** From the personal example of Śrī Nārada Muni in his previous birth, it is clear that the service of the Lord begins with the service of the Lord's bona fide servants. The Lord says that the service of His servants is greater than His personal service. Service of the devotees is more valuable than the service of the Lord. One should therefore choose a bona fide servant of the Lord constantly engaged in His service, accept such a servant as the spiritual master and engage himself in his (the spiritual master's) service. Such a spiritual master is the transparent medium by which to visualize the Lord, who is beyond the conception of the material senses. By service of the bona fide spiritual master, the Lord consents to reveal Himself in proportion to the service rendered.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.23

**Without the favor of the spiritual master, one cannot directly approach Kāñēa:**

"Although these two young men are the sons of the very rich Kuvera and I have nothing to do with them, Devarṣi Nārada is My very dear and affectionate devotee, and therefore because he wanted Me to come face to face with them, I must do so for their deliverance."

**PURPORT:** Because Nārada Muni desired that Nalakūvara and Maṇigrīva see Vāsudeva face to face, the Supreme Personality of Godhead wanted to fulfill the words of His very dear devotee Nārada Muni. If one seeks the favor of a devotee instead of directly asking favors from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one is very easily successful. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has therefore recommended: *vaiṣṇava ṭhākura, tomāra kukkura, bhuliyā janaha more, kṛṣṇa se tomāra kṛṣṇa dite pāra*. One should desire to become like a dog in strictly following a devotee. Kṛṣṇa is in the hand of a devotee. *Adurlabham ātma-bhaktau*. Thus without the favor of a devotee, one cannot directly approach Kṛṣṇa, what to speak of engaging in His service. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura therefore sings, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*: unless one becomes a servant of a pure devotee, one cannot be delivered from the material condition of life. In our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava society, following in the footsteps of Rūpa Gosvāmī, our first business is to seek shelter of a bona fide spiritual master (*āḍau gurv-āśrayaḥ*).

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.10.25

**One cannot be initiated directly by the Lord from within, but by the bona fide spiritual master:**

Brahmā was initiated by the Lord from within. The Lord is within every living entity as the Supersoul, and He initiated Brahmā because Brahmā was willing to receive the initiation. The Lord can similarly



initiate everyone who is inclined to have it.... One should not, however, think himself on the level of Brahmā to be initiated directly by the Lord from inside because in the present age no one can be accepted to be as pure as Brahmā. The post of Brahmā to officiate in the creation of the universe is offered to the most pure living being, and unless one is so qualified one cannot expect to be treated like Brahmājī directly. But one can have the same facility through unalloyed devotees of the Lord, through scriptural instructions (as revealed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* especially), and also through the bona fide spiritual master available to the sincere soul.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.7

**To serve Kāñēa favorably, one has to find out what He wants, from the spiritual master:**

Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommends pure devotional service. There should be no desire to fulfill one's own material desires, there should be no attempt to understand Kṛṣṇa by experimental philosophy, and there should be no fruitive activities to derive material benefits from Kṛṣṇa. The only desire should be to serve Him favorably, as He desires. If Kṛṣṇa wants something, then we should do it.... One has to understand what Kṛṣṇa wants. When there is that intimate relationship, then one can serve Kṛṣṇa most favorably. And as long as there is not that intimate relationship, one must take information of what Kṛṣṇa wants through the transparent medium of the spiritual master.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**Following the instructions of a devotee is more valuable than directly following the instructions of the Lord:**

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*: without being a devotee of a devotee, one cannot be released from material entanglement. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu identified Himself as *gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ* [Cc. Mad 13.80]. Thus He instructed us to become not directly servants of Kṛṣṇa but servants of the servant of Kṛṣṇa. Devotees like Brahmā, Nārada, Vyāsadeva and Śukadeva Gosvāmī are directly servants of Kṛṣṇa, and one who becomes a servant of Nārada, Vyāsadeva and Śukadeva, like the six Gosvāmīs, is still more devoted. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura therefore says, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*: if one very sincerely serves the spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa certainly becomes favorable to such a devotee. Following the instructions of a devotee is more valuable than following the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead directly.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 9.4.63

**The devotee is engaged in the intimate service of the Lord through the agency of the spiritual master:**

The Lord reveals His identity gradually to one who has unflinching faith, both in the spiritual master and in the Lord. After this, the devotee is endowed with mystic opulences, which are eight in number. And above all, the devotee is accepted in the confidential entourage of the Lord and is entrusted with specific service of the Lord through the agency of the spiritual master.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.39

#### **4. One Can Understand the Lord Only Through the Spiritual Master**

**One can understand Kāñēa only by the direction of a spiritual master:**

One who has unflinching devotion for the Supreme Lord and is directed by the spiritual master can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead by revelation. For one who does not take personal training under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, it is impossible to even begin to understand Kṛṣṇa. The word *tu* is specifically used here to indicate that no other process can be used, can be recommended, or can be successful in understanding Kṛṣṇa.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 11.54

**One can understand Kāñēa through the spiritual master** (although the experience is direct):

By the mercy of Vyāsa, I have heard these most confidential talks directly from the master of all mysticism, Kṛṣṇa, who was speaking personally to Arjuna.

**PURPORT:** Vyāsa was the spiritual master of Sañjaya, and Sañjaya admits that it was by his mercy that he could understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This means that one has to understand Kṛṣṇa not directly but through the medium of the spiritual master. The spiritual master is the transparent medium, although it is true that the experience is direct. This is the mystery of disciplic succession. When the spiritual master is bona fide, then one can hear *Bhagavad-gītā* directly, as Arjuna heard it.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 18.75

**Unless enlightened by a spiritual master, one cannot see Kāñēa, or see things as they are:**

One must see things as they are through the mercy of a spiritual master; otherwise if one tries to see Kṛṣṇa directly, he may mistake an ordinary man for Kṛṣṇa or Kṛṣṇa for an ordinary man. Everyone has to see Kṛṣṇa according to the verdict of Vedic literatures presented by the self-realized spiritual master. A sincere person is able to see Kṛṣṇa through the transparent medium of Śrī Gurudeva, the spiritual master. Unless one is enlightened by the knowledge given by the spiritual master, he cannot see things as they are, even though he remains constantly with the spiritual master.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 18.99

**By the grace of a bona fide spiritual master, one can understand the Lord:**

Furthermore, after leaving all his associates, the King surrendered himself as a disciple to the son of Vyāsa [Śukadeva Gosvāmī], and thus he was able to understand the actual position of the Personality of Godhead.

**PURPORT:** The word *ajita* is significant here. The Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is known as Ajita, or unconquerable, and He is so in every respect. No one can know His actual position. He is unconquerable by knowledge also. We have heard about His *dhāma*, or place, eternal Goloka Vṛndāvana, but there are many scholars who interpret this abode in different ways. But by the grace of a spiritual master like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, unto whom the King gave himself up as a most humble disciple, one is able to understand the actual position of the Lord, His eternal abode, and His transcendental paraphernalia in that *dhāma*, or abode. Knowing the transcendental position of the Lord and the transcendental method by which one can approach that transcendental *dhāma*, the King was confident about his ultimate destination, and by knowing this he could leave aside everything material, even his own body, without any difficulty of attachment. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated, *param dṛṣṭvā nivartate*: [2.59] one can give up all connection with material attachment when one is able to see the *param*, or the superior quality of things. From *Bhagavad-gītā* we understand the quality of the Lord's energy that is superior to the material quality of energy, and by the grace of a bona fide spiritual master like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, it is quite possible to know everything of the superior energy of the Lord by which the Lord manifests His eternal name, quality, pastimes, paraphernalia and variegatedness. Unless one thoroughly understands this superior or eternal energy of the Lord, it is not possible to leave the material energy, however one may theoretically speculate on the true nature of the Absolute Truth. By the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Maharāja Parīkṣit was able to receive the mercy of such a personality as Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and thus he was able to know the actual position of the unconquerable Lord. It is very difficult to find the Lord from the Vedic literatures, but it is very easy to know Him by the mercy of a liberated devotee like Sukadeva Gosvāmī.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.18.3

**One can see the Lord not by mental speculation but through the transparent medium of the bona fide spiritual master:**

As stated in the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, the mental speculators, even by dint of learned scholarship, cannot even dream of the Absolute Truth by speculating over it for eternity. The Lord reserves the right of not being exposed to such mental speculators. And because they cannot enter into the network of the stem



of the lotus feet of the Lord, all mental speculators differ in conclusions, and at the end they make a useless compromise by saying “as many conclusions, as many ways,” according to one’s own inclination (*yathā-rucam*). But the Lord is not like a shopkeeper trying to please all sorts of customers in the mental speculator exchange. The Lord is what He is, the *Absolute Personality of Godhead*, and He demands absolute surrender unto Him only. The pure devotee, however, by following the ways of previous *ācāryas*, or authorities, can see the Supreme Lord through the transparent medium of a bona fide spiritual master (*anupaśyanti*). The pure devotee never tries to see the Lord by mental speculation, but by following in the footsteps of the *ācāryas* (*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* [Cc Mad 17.186]).

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.4.21

**To understand Kāñēa, one must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master:**

Unless they smear upon their bodies the dust of the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava completely freed from material contamination, persons very much inclined toward materialistic life cannot be attached to the lotus feet of the Lord, who is glorified for His uncommon activities. Only by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious and taking shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord in this way can one be freed from material contamination.

**PURPORT:** One may ask why highly educated persons do not take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The reason is explained in this verse. Unless one takes shelter of a bona fide, fully Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master, there is no chance of understanding Kṛṣṇa. The educators, scholars and big political leaders worshiped by millions of people cannot understand the goal of life and take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, for they have not accepted a bona fide spiritual master and the *Vedas*. Therefore in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (3.2.3) it is said, *nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo/ na medhayā na bahunā śrutena*: one cannot become self-realized simply by having an academic education, by presenting lectures in an erudite way (*pravacanena labhyaḥ*), or by being an intelligent scientist who discovers many wonderful things. One cannot understand Kṛṣṇa unless one is graced by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only one who has surrendered to a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa and taken the dust of his lotus feet can understand Kṛṣṇa. First one must understand how to get out of the clutches of *māyā*. The only means is to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. And to become Kṛṣṇa conscious very easily, one must take shelter of a realized soul—a *mahat*, or *mahātmā*—whose only interest is to engage in the service of the Supreme Lord.... One must take shelter of a self-realized spiritual master, not a materially educated scholar or politician. One must take shelter of a *niṣkiñcana*, a person engaged in devotional service and free from material contamination. That is the way to return home, back to Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.32

**One who engages in devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master in disciplic succession becomes qualified to see the Lord face to face:**

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Anantadeva, replied as follows: O King, as a result of your having accepted the instructions spoken about Me by the great sages Nārada and Aṅgirā, you have become completely aware of transcendental knowledge. Because you are now educated in the spiritual science, you have seen Me face to face. Therefore you are now completely perfect.

**PURPORT:** The perfection of life is to be spiritually educated and to understand the existence of the Lord and how He creates, maintains and annihilates the cosmic manifestation. When one is perfect in knowledge, he can develop his love of Godhead through the association of such perfect persons as Nārada and Aṅgirā and the members of their disciplic succession. Then one is able to see the unlimited Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face. Although the Lord is unlimited, by His causeless mercy He becomes visible to the devotee, who is then able to see Him.... If one takes to spiritual life under the direction of Nārada Muni or his representative and thus engages himself in the service of the Lord, he qualifies himself to see the Lord face to face.... One must follow the instructions of the spiritual master. Thus one becomes qualified and later sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.16.50

**By engaging in devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master, one comes to see the Lord face to face:**

The science of devotional service has been instructed by Nārada and Aṅgirā to Citraketu. Now, because of Citraketu's devotional service, he has seen the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By performing devotional service, one advances step by step, and when one is on the platform of love of Godhead (*premā pum-artha mahān*) he sees the Supreme Lord at every moment. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, when one engages in devotional service twenty-four hours a day (*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam* [Bg. 10.10]) in accordance with the instructions of the spiritual master, his devotional service becomes more and more pleasing. Then the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is within the core of everyone's heart, speaks to the devotee (*dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ yena mām upayānti te*). Citraketu Mahārāja was first instructed by his gurus, Aṅgirā and Nārada, and now, having followed their instructions, he has come to the stage of seeing the Supreme Lord face to face.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.16.51

**To understand God, one must approach a guru:**

**Mr. O'Grady:** Is it possible to arrive at this understanding of God alone?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No. Therefore we have cited this verse: *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet* [MU 1.2.12]. The word *abhigacchet* means "must." It is not possible alone. In Sanskrit grammar this is called the *vidhi-liṅ* form of a verb, and this form is used when there is no choice. The word *abhigacchet* means that one must approach a guru. That is the Vedic version. Therefore in the *Bhagavad-gītā* you will find that Arjuna was talking to Kṛṣṇa, but when he saw that things were not being resolved, he surrendered himself to Kṛṣṇa and accepted Him as his guru.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**To understand Kāñḍea, one must approach a spiritual master in the disciplic succession from Vyāsadeva:**

It is said that Vidura understood transcendental knowledge from Maitreya, and it is stated that Maitreya is a friend of Vyāsadeva's. This means that both Vidura and Maitreya know what Vyāsadeva knows. We have to approach a spiritual master who is in the disciplic succession from Vyāsadeva. Everyone may claim to be following Vyāsadeva, but one must actually follow him. Vyāsadeva accepted Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Arjuna also accepted Kṛṣṇa as Parabrahman, the Supreme Person.... Vyāsadeva accepted Kṛṣṇa as *paraṁ brahma*, and Vyāsadeva began his commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* with the words *om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*. If we are actually interested in understanding, we must approach a representative of Vyāsadeva like Maitreya.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**Unless guided by a realized spiritual master, one's understanding of the Supreme Lord is simply foolishness:**

A student is to be considered perfected when he understands the identity of the holy name and the Supreme Lord. Unless one is under the shelter of a realized spiritual master, his understanding of the Supreme is simply foolishness. However, one can fully understand the transcendental Lord by service and devotion.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

## **5. To Receive Perfect Knowledge or to Realize the Truth, One Must Approach a Spiritual Master**

**For perfect knowledge, one must approach a spiritual master:**

*tad viddhi pranipātena...*

**"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master."...**

**PURPORT:** The path of spiritual realization is undoubtedly difficult. The Lord therefore advises us

to approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord Himself.... No one can be spiritually realized by manufacturing his own process, as is the fashion of the foolish pretenders. The *Bhāgavatam* says: *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam* [SB 6.3.19]—the path of religion is directly enunciated by the Lord. Therefore, mental speculation or dry arguments cannot help one progress in spiritual life. One has to approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 4.34

### The light of knowledge is given by the guru:

This world is full of darkness and ignorance, but Kṛṣṇa consciousness is transcendental to this material world. In Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there is no darkness but simply light. If we try to find things at night, it becomes very difficult; however, in the daytime, there is no difficulty. The *śāstras* enjoin that we leave this darkness and come to light. This light is given by the guru.

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya*

*jñānāñjana-śalākayā*

*cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena*

*tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

“I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him.”

It is the guru’s business to give light by knowledge. The guru has completely assimilated the Vedic essence of life.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

### To get knowledge, one must approach a guru:

We can speculate for many births, for many years, and yet not be able to understand the ultimate goal of life. Therefore the *śāstras* all advise that we search out a guru. The word guru means “heavy” or “weighty.” One who has much knowledge is heavy with knowledge. One should consider the bona fide guru in this way, and one should not think, “I know everything. Who can teach me?” No one can say such a thing, for everyone needs instruction.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

### Knowledge must be acquired from one who is dhīra (undisturbed by material illusion), the spiritual master:

The instructions of *vidyā* (knowledge) must be acquired from a *dhīra*. A *dhīra* is one who is not disturbed by material illusion. No one can be undisturbed unless he is perfectly spiritually realized, at which time one neither hankers nor laments for anything. A *dhīra* realizes that the material body and mind which he has acquired by chance through material association are but foreign elements; therefore he simply makes the best use of a bad bargain.... The *dhīras* are those who have come to know all these facts by hearing of them from superior authorities. The *dhīras* realize this knowledge by following the regulative principles.

To follow the regulative principles, one must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. The transcendental message and regulative principles come down from the spiritual master to the disciple. Such knowledge does not come in the hazardous way of nescient education. One can become a *dhīra* only by submissively hearing the messages of the *Personality of Godhead*. The perfect disciple must be like Arjuna, and the spiritual master must be as good as the Lord Himself. This is the process of learning *vidyā* (knowledge) from the *dhīra*, the undisturbed.

*Śrī Īśopaniṣad Mantra* 10

Without being trained by a spiritual master, one cannot understand the existence of the soul within the body:

Foolish rascals, including so-called *jñānīs*, philosophers and scientists, cannot understand the existence of the soul within the body because they are lacking in spiritual knowledge. The *Vedas* enjoin, *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] to understand spiritual knowledge, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master. Unless one has been trained in geology, one cannot detect gold in stone. Similarly, unless one has been trained by a spiritual master, he cannot understand what is spirit and what is matter. Here it is said, *yogais tad-abhijñāḥ*. This indicates that one who has connected himself with spiritual knowledge can understand that there is a spiritual soul within the body. However, one who is in an animalistic conception of life and has no spiritual culture cannot understand. As an expert minerologist or geologist can understand where there is gold and can then invest his money to dig there and chemically separate the gold from the ore, an expert spiritualist can understand where the soul is within matter. One who has not been trained cannot distinguish between gold and stone. Similarly, fools and rascals who have not learned from an expert spiritual master what is soul and what is matter cannot understand the existence of the soul within the body. To understand such knowledge, one must be trained in the mystic yoga system, or, finally, in the *bhakti-yoga* system. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.55), *bhakti-yā māṁ abhijānāti*. Unless one takes shelter of the *bhakti-yoga* process, one cannot understand the existence of the soul within the body.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.21

**To understand the material and spiritual worlds, and his own existential position, the conditioned soul must approach a bona fide spiritual master and learn from him:**

**A person interested in transcendental knowledge must therefore always directly and indirectly inquire about it to know the all-pervading truth. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.36)**

**PURPORT:** Those who are serious about the knowledge of the transcendental world, which is far beyond the material cosmic creation, must approach a bona fide spiritual master to learn the science both directly and indirectly. One must learn both the means to approach the desired destination and the hindrances to such progress. The spiritual master knows how to regulate the habits of a neophyte disciple, and therefore a serious student must learn the science in all its aspects from him....One should understand, through the transparent medium of the spiritual master, that the Supreme Lord exists everywhere in His transcendental spiritual nature and that the living entities' relationships with the Lord are directly and indirectly existing everywhere, even in this material world. In the spiritual world there are five kinds of relationships with the Supreme Lord—*śānta*, *dāśya*, *sākhya*, *vātsalya* and *mādhurya*.... These five relationships in the material world are distorted reflections of the original pure sentiments, which should be understood and perfected in relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master ... a conditioned soul must ultimately approach a bona fide spiritual master and try to understand perfectly the material and spiritual worlds and his own existential position.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi. 1.56

**A real brāhmaëa, rather than endeavor for material advancement, approaches a bona fide spiritual master:**

The Vedic injunction is that no one can have full knowledge without being under the guidance of an *ācārya*. *Ācāryavān puruṣo veda*: one who has accepted an *ācārya* knows what is what. The Absolute Truth cannot be understood by arguments. One who has attained the perfect brahminical stage naturally becomes renounced; he does not strive for material gain because by spiritual knowledge he has come to the conclusion that in this world there is no insufficiency. Everything is sufficiently provided by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A real *brāhmaṇa*, therefore, does not endeavor for material perfection; rather, he approaches a bona fide spiritual master to accept orders from him.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

**Unless one approaches an enlightened guru, one remains in ignorance and suffering:**

The human form of body is actually meant for *jīvasya tattva jijñāsā*, enlightenment in knowledge of spiritual values. Therefore, one must seek shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. *Tasmād gurum pra-*



*padyeta*: [SB 11.3.21] one must approach a guru. Who is a guru? *Śābde pare ca niṣṇātām* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.27): a guru is one who has full transcendental knowledge. Unless one approaches a spiritual master, one remains in ignorance. *Ācāryavān puruṣo veda* (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.14.2): one has full knowledge about life when one is *ācāryavān*, controlled by the *ācārya*. But when one is conducted by *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa*, one does not care about anything; instead, one acts like an ordinary foolish animal, risking his life (*mṛtyu-saṁsāra-vartmani* [Bg. 9.3]) and therefore continuing to go through suffering after suffering. *Na te viduḥ svārtha-gatiṁ hi viṣṇum* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.31). Such a foolish person does not know how to elevate himself in this body. Instead, he indulges in sinful activities and goes deeper and deeper into hellish life.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.10.10

**By surrendering to a bona fide spiritual master, one advances on the path of transcendental realization:**

One cannot become a perfect devotee of the Lord without having touched the lotus feet of a great devotee. One who has nothing to do with this material world is called *niṣkiñcana*. The process of self-realization and the path home, back to Godhead, means surrendering to the bona fide spiritual master and taking the dust of his lotus feet on one's head. Thus one advances on the path of transcendental realization.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.31.28

**To realize the Transcendence, one's senses must be spiritualized under the direction of the spiritual master:**

The serious candidate must accept a bona fide spiritual master in order to be trained scientifically. Because the senses are material, it is not at all possible to realize the Transcendence by them. Therefore the senses have to be spiritualized by the prescribed method under the direction of the spiritual master.

*Easy Journey to Other Planets*

**Transcendental knowledge can be understood only by the grace of a bona fide spiritual master:**

Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the well wisher and friend of all living entities, formerly explained this transcendental knowledge to the great saint Nārada. Such knowledge is extremely difficult to understand without the mercy of a saintly person like Nārada, but everyone who has taken shelter of Nārada's disciplic succession can understand this confidential knowledge.

**PURPORT:** It is stated here that this confidential knowledge is extremely difficult to understand, yet it is very easy to understand if one takes shelter of a pure devotee. This confidential knowledge is also mentioned at the end of *Bhagavad-gītā*, where the Lord says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: [Bg. 18.66] "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me." This knowledge is an extremely confidential secret, but it can be understood if one approaches the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the bona fide agent, the spiritual master in the disciplic succession from Nārada.... Understanding does not depend upon high parentage. The living entity is certainly pure on the spiritual platform, and therefore anyone who attains the spiritual platform by the grace of the spiritual master can also understand this confidential knowledge.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.6.27

**Freedom from lamentation and illusion follow surrender to a spiritual master:**

Although Arjuna was for the time being overwhelmed with false grief due to family affection, he surrendered unto Kṛṣṇa, the supreme spiritual master, as a disciple. This indicated that he would soon be free from the false lamentation resulting from family affection and would be enlightened with perfect knowledge of self-realization, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and would then surely fight.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 2.9

**Realized knowledge is attained when one realizes the teachings received from the spiritual master:**



One should approach a bona fide spiritual master—irrespective of caste, creed, color, country, etc.—and hear from him everything about devotional service. The real purpose of life is to revive our dormant love of God. Indeed, that is our ultimate necessity. How that love of God can be attained is explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There is theoretical knowledge and specific or realized knowledge, and perfect realized knowledge is attained when one realizes the teachings received from the spiritual master.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**Because nothing is unknown to the realized spiritual master, one should approach him for complete knowledge:**

The Vedic mantras say: *yasmin vijñāte sarvam evaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavati* (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.3). When the devotee sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead by his meditation, or when he sees the Lord personally, face to face, he becomes aware of everything within this universe. Indeed, nothing is unknown to him. Everything within this material world is fully manifested to a devotee who has seen the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34) therefore advises:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena  
paripraśnena sevayā  
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ  
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

**“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.”**

Lord Brahmā is one of these self-realized authorities (*svayambhūr nāradaḥ śambhuḥ kumāraḥ kapilo manuḥ* [SB 6.3.20]). One must therefore accept the disciplic succession from Lord Brahmā, and then one can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead in fullness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.6.9

**By serving the lotus feet of the spiritual master, one can achieve transcendental knowledge:**

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear King, Prince Priyavrata was a great devotee because he sought the lotus feet of Nārada, his spiritual master, and thus achieved the highest perfection in transcendental knowledge.

**PURPORT:** Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has sung, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*:

**“Without serving the lotus feet of a pure Vaiṣṇava or spiritual master, no one has ever attained perfect liberation from material bondage.”** Prince Priyavrata regularly served the lotus feet of Nārada, and thus the Prince perfectly understood transcendental subjects in truth.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.1.6

**By getting knowledge from the spiritual master, the disciple transcends the modes of nature:**

One can transcend all the activities of the modes of material nature simply by understanding them properly by learning from the proper souls. The real spiritual master is Kṛṣṇa, and He is imparting this spiritual knowledge to Arjuna. Similarly, it is from those who are fully in Kṛṣṇa consciousness that one has to learn this science of activities in terms of the modes of nature. Otherwise, one’s life will be misdirected. By the instruction of a bona fide spiritual master, a living entity can know of his spiritual position, his material body, his senses, how he is entrapped, and how he is under the spell of the material modes of nature. He is helpless, being in the grip of these modes, but when he can see his real position, then he can attain to the transcendental platform, having the scope for spiritual life. Actually, the

living entity is not the performer of different activities. He is forced to act because he is situated in a particular type of body, conducted by some particular mode of material nature. Unless one has the help of spiritual authority, he cannot understand in what position he is actually situated. With the association of a bona fide spiritual master, he can see his real position, and, by such an understanding, he can become fixed in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 14.19

## **6. To Understand Vedic Knowledge, One Must Hear from a Spiritual Master**

**Kāññā taught, by example, that everyone must learn the Vedas from an authorized teacher:**

The Lord is constitutionally well versed in all the *Vedas*, and yet to teach by example that everyone must go to learn the *Vedas* from an authorized teacher and must satisfy the teacher by service and reward, He Himself adopted this system.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.3.2

**The disciple should study and learn all the Vedic literatures under the care of the spiritual master:**

One who is twiceborn, namely a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya*, should reside in the *guru-kula* under the care of the spiritual master. There he should study and learn all the Vedic literatures along with their supplements and the *Upaniṣads*, according to his ability and power to study.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.12.13

**Unless one surrenders to a spiritual master, he cannot understand Vedic knowledge** (merely by an academic career):

When all the students thus resolved, criticizing Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, their intelligence was spoiled. Thus although they were learned scholars, because of this offense the essence of knowledge was not manifest in them.

**PURPORT:** One who is unflinchingly devoted to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, and similarly devoted to the spiritual master, with no ulterior motive, becomes a master of all knowledge. In the heart of such a devotee, the real essence of the Vedic knowledge becomes manifest. This essence is nothing but surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah* [Bg. 15.15]). Only unto one who fully surrenders to the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord does the essence of Vedic knowledge become manifest, not to anyone else.... Śrīdhara Svāmī confirms in his commentary that first one must surrender to the spiritual master; then the process of devotional service will develop. It is not a fact that only one who diligently pursues an academic career can become a devotee. Even with no academic career, if one has full faith in the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he develops in spiritual life and real knowledge of the *Vedas*. The example of Mahārāja Khaṭvāṅga confirms this. One who surrenders is understood to have learned the subject matter of the *Vedas* very nicely. One who adopts this Vedic process of surrender learns devotional service and is certainly successful. One who is very much proud, however, is unable to surrender either to the spiritual master or to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus he cannot understand the essence of any Vedic literature.... Anyone who does not follow the surrendering process but is simply interested in an academic career cannot make any advancement. His profit is only his labor for nothing. If one is expert in the study of the *Vedas* but does not surrender to a spiritual master or Viṣṇu, all his cultivation of knowledge is but a waste of time and labor.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 17.257

**Scriptural study without contact of a realized spiritual master is ineffectual:**

Unless one inquires about his own self beyond the body and the mind, all his activities in human life are total failures. Therefore out of thousands and thousands of men, one may inquire about his spirit

self and thus consult the revealed scriptures like *Vedānta-sūtras*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But in spite of reading and hearing such scriptures, unless one is in touch with a realized spiritual master, he cannot actually realize the real nature of self, etc.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.1

**To understand the mystery of revealed scriptures, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master:**

One who is not taught by a bona fide spiritual master cannot understand the Vedic literature. To emphasize this point, Lord Kṛṣṇa, while instructing Arjuna, clearly said that it was because Arjuna was His devotee and confidential friend that he could understand the mystery of *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is to be concluded, therefore, that one who wants to understand the mystery of revealed scriptures must approach a bona fide spiritual master, hear from him very submissively and render service to him. Then the import of the scriptures will be revealed. It is stated in the *Vedas*:

yasya deve parā bhaktir  
yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ  
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ

“The real import of the scriptures is revealed to one who has unflinching faith in both the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the spiritual master.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.48

**Only from the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession can one understand the Çrēmad-Bhāgavatam:**

“One should taste the meaning of Çrēmad-Bhāgavatam in the association of pure devotees....”

**PURPORT:** The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* can only be recited by one who has unflinching faith in the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and His devotee, the spiritual master. One should try to understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the spiritual master. The Vedic injunction states: *bhaktyā bhāgavatam grāhyaṁ na buddhyā na cāṭikayā*. One has to understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* through the process of devotional service and by hearing the recitation of a pure devotee. These are the injunctions of Vedic literature—*śruti* and *smṛti*. Those who are not in the disciplic succession and who are not pure devotees cannot understand the real mysterious objective of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 22.131

**One cannot see properly without hearing Vedic wisdom descending through disciplic succession:**

It is clearly mentioned in this sixth *mantra* that one should observe, or see. This means that one must follow the previous *ācārya*, the perfected teacher. *Anupaśyati* is the exact Sanskrit word used in this connection. *Paśyati* means to observe. This does not mean that one should try to see things as he does with the naked eye. Due to material defects, the naked eye cannot see anything properly. One cannot see properly unless he has heard from a superior source, and the highest source is the Vedic wisdom which is spoken by the Lord Himself. Vedic truths are coming in disciplic succession from the Lord to Brahmā, from Brahmā to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsa, and from Vyāsa to many other disciples.

Śrī Īśopaniṣad Mantra 6

**Rather than speculate, one should approach a bona fide spiritual master and get real knowledge from him:**

[One should] approach a bona fide guru who is the representative of the Lord following the *paramparā* system. No one should try to squeeze out his own meaning by imperfect mundane knowledge. The guru, or the bona fide spiritual master, is competent to teach the disciple in the right path with reference to the context of all authentic Vedic literature. He does not attempt to juggle words to bewilder the

student. The bona fide spiritual master, by his personal activities, teaches the disciple the principles of devotional service. Without personal service, one would go on speculating like the impersonalists and dry speculators life after life and would be unable to reach the final conclusion.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.37

**To understand Vedic knowledge (and thus become a brāhmaëa), one must be initiated by a bona fide guru:**

A first-class intelligent man is called a *brāhmaṇa* because he knows the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute Truth. According to the Vedic instructions, *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] to know this science, one must approach a bona fide guru, a spiritual master who will initiate the disciple with the sacred thread so that he may understand the Vedic knowledge. *Janmanā jāyate śūdraḥ saṁskārād bhaved dvijaḥ*. Becoming a *brāhmaṇa* through the endeavor of a bona fide spiritual master is called *saṁskāra*. After initiation, one is engaged in study of the *śāstra*, which teaches the student how to gain release from materialistic life and return home, back to Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.20

**To understand the instructions of the supreme spiritual master, Kāñëa, one must approach a guru:**

Sometimes it is argued that people do not know who is a spiritual master and that finding a spiritual master from whom to get enlightenment in regard to the destination of life is very difficult. To answer all these questions, King Satyavrata shows us the way to accept the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the real spiritual master. The Supreme Lord has given full directions in *Bhagavad-gītā* about how to deal with everything in this material world and how to return home, back to Godhead. Therefore, one should not be misled by so-called gurus who are rascals and fools. Rather, one should directly see the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the guru or instructor. It is difficult, however, to understand *Bhagavad-gītā* without the help of the guru. Therefore the guru appears in the *paramparā* system. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34) the Supreme Personality of Godhead recommends:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena*

*paripraśnena sevayā*

*upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ*

*jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

**“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.”**

... Where, then, is the difficulty in finding a guru? If one is sincere he can find the guru and learn everything. One should take lessons from the guru and find out the goal of life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.24.53

**One must study the Vedas under a bona fide spiritual master:**

The institution of *varṇa* and *āśrama* prescribes many regulative duties to be observed by its followers. Such duties enjoin that a candidate willing to study the *Vedas* must approach a bona fide spiritual master and request acceptance as his disciple. The sacred thread is a sign of those who are competent to study the *Vedas* from the *ācārya*, or the bona fide spiritual master.... Generally, a man is born as an ordinary being, and by the purificatory processes he is born for the second time. When he sees a new light and seeks direction for spiritual progress, he approaches a spiritual master for instruction in the *Vedas*. The spiritual master accepts only the sincere inquirer as his disciple and gives him the sacred thread. In this way a man becomes twiceborn, or a *dvija*. After qualifying as a *dvija* one may study the *Vedas*, and after becoming well versed in the *Vedas* one becomes a *vipra*. A *vipra*, or a qualified *brāhmaṇa*, thus realizes the Absolute and makes further progress in spiritual life until he reaches the Vaiṣṇava stage. The Vaiṣṇava stage is the postgraduate status of a *brāhmaṇa*. A progressive *brāhmaṇa* must necessarily

become a Vaiṣṇava, for a Vaiṣṇava is a self-realized, learned *brāhmaṇa*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.2

## 7. To Understand Things Beyond the Range of the Senses and Mind, One Must Hear from a Spiritual Master

Knowledge of the absolute region can be had not by material observation or speculation, but by surrendering to and hearing from the guru:

Gentlemen, our knowledge is so poor, our senses are so imperfect, and our sources are so limited that it is not possible for us to have even the slightest knowledge of the absolute region without surrendering ourselves at the lotus feet of Śrī Vyāsadeva or his bona fide representative. Every moment we are being deceived by the knowledge of our direct perception. It is all the creation or concoction of the mind, which is always deceiving, changing, and flickering. We cannot know anything of the transcendental region by our limited, perverted method of observation and experiment. But all of us can lend our eager ears for the aural reception of the transcendental sound transmitted from that region to this through the unadulterated medium of Śrī Gurudeva or Śrī Vyāsadeva.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

To understand that which is beyond one's senses, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master:

If you want to attain knowledge by any personal endeavor, by exercising your imperfect senses, you will never come to the right conclusion. That is not possible.

There is a statement in *Brahma-saṁhitā*: Just ride on the airplane which runs at the speed of mind. Our material airplanes can run two thousand miles per hour, but what is the speed of mind? You are sitting at home, you immediately think of India, say ten thousand miles away, and at once it is in your home. Your mind has gone there. The mind-speed is so swift. Therefore it is stated, "If you travel at this speed for millions of years, you'll find that the spiritual sky is unlimited." It is not possible even to approach it. Therefore, the Vedic injunction is that one must approach—the word "compulsory" is used—a bona fide spiritual master, a guru.

Śrī Īśopaniṣad Intro.

To understand things beyond material conception, one must hear from a bona fide ācārya:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu then assured the brāhmaṇa, "Have faith in my words and do not burden your mind any longer with this misconception."

**PURPORT:** This is the process of spiritual understanding. *Acintyāḥ khalu ye bhāvā na tāms tarkeṇa yo-jayet*. We should not try to understand things beyond our material conception by argument and counter argument. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*: [Cc Mad 17.186] we have to follow in the footsteps of great authorities coming down in the *paramparā* system. If we approach a bona fide ācārya and keep faith in his words, spiritual realization will be easy.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.195

## 8. One Can Achieve Liberation from Material Existence Only by Approaching a Spiritual Master

The bound (conditioned) soul requires help of an unbound (liberated) soul—the spiritual master:

It is to be understood that the conditioned soul is tightly tied by the ropes of illusion. A man bound by the hands and feet cannot free himself—he must be helped by a person who is unbound. Because the bound cannot help the bound, the rescuer must be liberated. Therefore, only Lord Kṛṣṇa, or His bona fide representative the spiritual master, can release the conditioned soul. Without such superior help,



one cannot be freed from the bondage of material nature.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 7.14

**To be freed from the entanglement of the material world, one must approach a spiritual master:**

O My sons, you should accept a highly elevated paramahansa, a spiritually advanced spiritual master.

**PURPORT:** One has to accept a bona fide spiritual master. This is advocated by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: śrī-guru-padaśrayaḥ*. To be freed from the entanglement of the material world, one has to approach a spiritual master.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.10

**No one can get free from the influence of material nature by personal attempts; one must accept a bona fide spiritual master and act under his direction:**

The personified *Vedas* continued: “Our dear Lord, although great mystic yogīs may have full control over the elephant of the mind and the hurricane of the senses, unless they take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, they fall victims to the material influence and never become successful in their attempts at self-realization. Such unguided persons are compared to merchants going to sea on a ship without a captain. By his personal attempts, therefore, no one can get free from the clutches of material nature. One has to accept a bona fide spiritual master and work according to his direction. Then it is possible to cross over the nescience of material conditions.”

*Kṛṣṇa*

**By coming under the shelter of a guru, the conditioned soul becomes free from the continuous struggle up and down within the material world:**

When the conditioned soul accepts the shelter of the creeper of fruitive activity, he may be elevated by his pious activities to higher planetary systems and thus gain liberation from hellish conditions, but unfortunately he cannot remain there. After reaping the results of his pious activities, he has to return to the lower planetary systems. In this way he perpetually goes up and comes down.

**PURPORT:** Even if one wanders for many millions of years, from the time of creation until the time of annihilation, one cannot get free from the path of material existence unless one receives shelter at the lotus feet of a pure devotee. As a monkey takes shelter of the branch of a banyan tree and thinks he is enjoying, the conditioned soul, not knowing the real interest of his life, takes shelter of the path of karma-kāṇḍa, fruitive activities. Sometimes he is elevated to the heavenly planets by such activities, and sometimes he again descends to earth. This is described by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as *brahmāṇḍa bhramite*. However, if by Kṛṣṇa’s grace one is fortunate enough to come under the shelter of the guru, by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa he receives lessons on how to execute devotional service to the Supreme Lord. In this way he receives a clue of how to get out of his continuous struggle up and down within the material world. Therefore the Vedic injunction is that one should approach a spiritual master.... One must come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and therefore one must take shelter of a pure devotee. Thus one can become free from the clutches of matter.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.14.41

**Approaching a spiritual master is not a fashion but a necessity for one wanting freedom from material miseries:**

Approaching a spiritual master is not just a fashion but is a necessity for one who is seriously conscious of the material miseries and who wants to be free of them. It is the duty of such a person to approach a spiritual master. In this regard, we should note similar circumstances in *Bhagavad-gītā*. When Arjuna was perplexed by so many problems involving whether to fight or not, he accepted Lord Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**The duty of a human being is to come in touch with Kāñḍā's representative, the bona fide spiritual master:**

Harassed life after life by the laws of nature, the living entity wanders throughout the entire universe in different planets and different species of life. Somehow or other, if he is fortunate enough, he comes in touch with a devotee who reforms his entire life. Then the living entity goes back home, back to Godhead. Therefore it is said:

*janame janame sabe pitā-mātā pāya*

*kṛṣṇa guru nāhi mile bhaja hari ei*

In the transmigration of the soul through different bodies, everyone, in every form of life—be it human, animal, tree or demigod—gets a father and mother. This is not very difficult. The difficulty is to obtain a bona fide spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. Therefore the duty of a human being is to capture the opportunity to come in touch with Kṛṣṇa's representative, the bona fide spiritual master. Under the guidance of the spiritual master, the spiritual father, one can return home, back to Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.16.6

**When the conditioned soul meets and follows the instructions of the expert physician, the bona fide spiritual master, his material disease is cured:**

Due to the conditioned soul's eternal attitude of separation from Kṛṣṇa, the spell of material energy awards him two kinds of bodily existence—the gross body consisting of five elements, and the subtle body consisting of mind, intelligence and ego. Being covered by these two bodies, the conditioned soul eternally suffers the pangs of material existence known as the threefold miseries. He is also subjected to six enemies (such as lust, anger, etc.). Such is the everlasting disease of the conditioned soul.

Diseased and conditioned, the living entity transmigrates throughout the universe. Sometimes he is situated in the upper planetary system and sometimes in the lower system. In this way he leads his diseased life. His disease can be cured only when he meets and follows the expert physician, the bona fide spiritual master. When the conditioned soul faithfully follows the instructions of a bona fide spiritual master, his material disease is cured, he is promoted to the liberated stage, and he again attains to the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa and goes back home, back to Kṛṣṇa.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**To get out of the clutches of material nature and achieve the lotus feet of Kāñḍā, one must approach a spiritual master and be trained by him in devotional service:**

In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is stated (7.14) that material nature is so strong that it cannot be surmounted by an ordinary living entity. Only those who surrender unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa can cross the ocean of material existence. The living entity forgets that he is eternally the servitor of Kṛṣṇa, and his forgetfulness causes his bondage in conditional life and his attraction for material energy. Indeed, that attraction is the shackle of material energy. Since it is very difficult for a person to become free as long as he desires to dominate material nature, it is recommended that he approach a spiritual master who can train him in devotional service and enable him to get out of the clutches of material nature and achieve the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**One must approach a guru to find out one's real self interest and to cross beyond material existence:**

Sanātana Gosvāmī was a great learned scholar, and he was called a *paṇḍita*, which indicates that he was a learned *brāhmaṇa*. When Sanātana Gosvāmī approached Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, he said, "The people in my neighborhood are calling me a *paṇḍita*, and I am very unhappy because of this." Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked, "Why are you dissatisfied?" Sanātana Gosvāmī replied, "I am such a poor *paṇḍita* that I do not even know the goal of life. I do not even know what is beneficial for me. I am simply being carried away by sense gratification." In this way, Sanātana Gosvāmī approached Śrī Caitanya Mahāpra-

bhu. He did not approach Him to get some gold or some medicine. He went to find out his real self-interest. This is the real purpose for approaching a guru.

Devahūti approached Lord Kapiladeva in the same way. She said, “My dear Kapila, You have come as my son, but You are my guru because You can inform me how I can cross the ocean of nescience, which is the material world.” Thus one who feels the need to cross the dark ocean of nescience, which is material existence, requires a guru. It is not the guru’s task to supply gold and medicine. Now it has become a fashion to keep a guru as if he were a dog or a cat. This is of no use. We must inquire about that portion of God’s creation which is beyond this darkness.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The spiritual master is the captain of the boat of the human form of life for crossing the ocean of nescience:**

Lord Brahmā said: My dear demigods, the human form of life is of such importance that we also desire to have such life, for in the human form one can attain perfect religious truth and knowledge. If one in this human form of life does not understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His abode, it is to be understood that he is very much affected by the influence of the external nature.

**PURPORT:** Brahmājī condemns very vehemently the condition of the human being who does not take interest in the Personality of Godhead and His transcendental abode, Vaikuṇṭha. The human form of life is desired even by Brahmājī. Brahmā and other demigods have much better material bodies than human beings, yet the demigods, including Brahmā, nevertheless desire to attain the human form of life because it is specifically meant for the living entity who can attain transcendental knowledge and religious perfection. It is not possible to go back to Godhead in one life, but in the human form one should at least understand the goal of life and begin Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is said that the human form is a great boon because it is the most suitable boat for crossing over the nescience ocean. The spiritual master is considered to be the most able captain in that boat, and the information from the scriptures is the favorable wind for floating over the ocean of nescience. The human being who does not take advantage of all these facilities in this life is committing suicide. Therefore one who does not begin Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the human form of life loses his life to the influence of the illusory energy. Brahmā regrets the situation of such a human being.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.15.24*

**A human being who takes advantage of taking instruction from the spiritual master has properly used his human form of life:**

“If a man is sufficiently educated in student life under the guidance of a proper teacher, then his life becomes successful in the future. He can very easily cross over the ocean of nescience, and he is not subjected to the influence of the illusory energy.... The spiritual master who instructs the disciples about spiritual matters is called *śikṣā-guru*, and the spiritual master who initiates the disciple is called *dīkṣā-guru*. Both of them are My representatives. There may be many spiritual masters who instruct, but the initiator spiritual master is one. A human being who takes advantage of these spiritual masters and, receiving proper knowledge from them, crosses the ocean of material existence, is to be understood as having properly utilized the human form of life. He has practical knowledge that the ultimate interest of life, which is to be gained only in this human form of life, is to achieve spiritual perfection and thus be transferred back home, back to Godhead.”

*Kṛṣṇa*

**To get relief from the struggle for existence, one must find a bona fide guru and take instructions at his lotus feet:**

In this material world the conditioned souls are baffled by their activities, and sometimes they are relieved after great difficulty. On the whole the conditioned soul is never happy. He simply struggles for existence. Actually his only business is to accept the spiritual master, the guru, and through him he must accept the lotus feet of the Lord. This is explained by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *guru-kṛṣṇa-*

*prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* [Cc Mad 19.151]. People struggling for existence in the forests or cities of the material world are not actually enjoying life. They are simply suffering different pains and pleasures, generally pains that are always inauspicious. They try to gain release from these pains, but they cannot due to ignorance. For them it is stated in the *Vedas*: *tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet* [MU 1.2.12]. When the living entity is lost in the forest of the material world, in the struggle for existence, his first business is to find a bona fide guru who is always engaged at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu. After all, if he is at all eager to be relieved of the struggle for existence, he must find a bona fide guru and take instructions at his lotus feet. In this way he can get out of the struggle.... No one can get out of this struggle for existence, which is full of miseries, without accepting a pure devotee of the Lord. The material attempt changes from one position to another, and no one actually gains relief from the struggle for existence. The only resort is the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master, and, through him, the lotus feet of the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.15.24

### A person who associates with and surrenders to a spiritual master is saved by Kāñā:

Kṛṣṇa comes like an ordinary human being, He comes as a devotee like Lord Caitanya, or He sends His representative, the spiritual master or pure devotee.... They come to canvass and educate, and thus a person in the illusory energy of the Supreme Lord gets a chance to mix with them, talk with them, and take lessons from them, and somehow or other if a conditioned soul surrenders to such personalities and by intimate association with them chances to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, he is saved from the material conditions of life.... A person who surrenders unto [Kṛṣṇa] by utilizing the chance to associate with the pure devotee, spiritual master or other authorized incarnations of Godhead like Pṛthu Mahārāja, is saved by Kṛṣṇa. Then his life becomes successful.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.27

### One cannot be freed from birth and death without the association of a bona fide spiritual master:

When the living entity is encaged in the material body, he is called *jīva-bhūta*, and when he is free from the material body he is called *brahma-bhūta* [SB 4.30.20]. By changing his material body birth after birth, he travels not only in the different species of life, but also from one planet to another. Lord Caitanya says that the living entities, bound up by fruitive activities, are wandering in this way throughout the whole universe, and if by some chance or by pious activities they get in touch with a bona fide spiritual master, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, then they get the seed of devotional service. After getting this seed, if one sows it within his heart and pours water on it by hearing and chanting, the seed grows into a big plant, and there are fruits and flowers which the living entity can enjoy, even in this material world. That is called the *brahma-bhūta* stage.... Unless one gets the opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of the Lord, there is no possibility of one's liberation from the cycle of birth and death in the different species of life and through the different grades of planets.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.31.43

### The spiritual master extinguishes the blazing fire of material existence:

Constant transmigration of the soul from one body to another is the cause of suffering in material existence. This conditional life in material existence is called *samsāra*. One may perform good work and take his birth in a very nice material condition, but the process under which birth and death takes place is like a terrible fire. Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, in his prayer to the spiritual master, has described this. *Samsāra*, or the repetition of birth and death, is compared to a forest fire. A forest fire takes place automatically, without anyone's endeavor, by the friction of dried wood, and no fire department or sympathetic person can extinguish it. The raging forest fire can be extinguished only when there is a constant downpour of water from a cloud. The cloud is compared to the mercy of the spiritual master. By the grace of the spiritual master the cloud of the mercy of the Personality of Godhead is brought in, and then only, when the rains of Kṛṣṇa consciousness fall, can the fire of material existence

be extinguished.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.21.17

**Unless one receives the mercy of the spiritual master (and saintly persons and Kāñēa) liberation from material existence is not possible:**

Once one enters into the continuation of material existence, it is very difficult to get out. Therefore the Supreme Personality of Godhead comes Himself or sends His bona fide representative, and He leaves behind scriptures like *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, so that the living entities hovering in the darkness of nescience may take advantage of the instructions, the saintly persons and the spiritual masters and thus be freed. Unless the living entity receives the mercy of the saintly persons, the spiritual master or Kṛṣṇa, it is not possible for him to get out of the darkness of material existence; by his own endeavor it is not possible.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.32.38

**One properly initiated by a bona fide spiritual master is gradually freed from material conceptions and becomes attached to devotional service:**

The Lord's service is the only means by which one can become detached from material activities. A person properly initiated by a bona fide spiritual master and engaged in chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare* gradually becomes freed from the conception of "I" and "mine" and becomes attached to the Lord's transcendental loving service.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**By faithful and devotional service to the spiritual master, one can transcend the modes of material nature:**

*rajas tamaś ca sattvena  
sattvaṁ cōpaśamena ca  
etat sarvaṁ gurau bhaktyā  
puruṣo hy añjasā jayet*

One must conquer the modes of passion and ignorance by developing the mode of goodness, and then one must become detached from the mode of goodness by promoting oneself to the platform of *çuddha-sattva*. All this can be automatically done if one engages in the service of the spiritual master with faith and devotion. In this way one can conquer the influence of the modes of nature.

**PURPORT:** Just by treating the root cause of an ailment, one can conquer all bodily pains and sufferings. Similarly, if one is devoted and faithful to the spiritual master, he can conquer the influence of *sattva-guṇa*, *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa* very easily. Yogīs and jñānīs practice in many ways to conquer the senses, but the *bhakta* immediately attains the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the mercy of the spiritual master. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. If the spiritual master is favorably inclined, one naturally receives the mercy of the Supreme Lord, and by the mercy of the Supreme Lord one immediately becomes transcendental, conquering all the influences of *sattva-guṇa*, *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa* within this material world. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhuyāya kalpate [Bg. 14.26]). If one is a pure devotee acting under the directions of the guru, one easily gets the mercy of the Supreme Lord and thus becomes immediately situated on the transcendental platform.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.25

**When one accepts a saintly spiritual master, he gets spiritual knowledge, becomes detached and returns to his original Kāñēa consciousness:**

When a man comes into good consciousness and accepts a saintly person as a spiritual master, he hears



many Vedic instructions in the form of philosophy, stories, narrations about great devotees and transactions between God and His devotees. In this way a man becomes refreshed in mind, exactly like a person who smears scented sandalwood pulp all over his body and decorates himself with ornaments. These decorations may be compared to knowledge of religion and the self. Through such knowledge one becomes detached from a materialistic way of life and engages himself in always hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and other Vedic literatures. The word *sādhv-alāṅkṛta* used in this verse indicates that one must be absorbed in knowledge gathered from the instructions of saintly persons ... one who is decorated with knowledge and instructions from saintly persons should try to search out his original consciousness, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One cannot return to Kṛṣṇa consciousness unless he is favored by the instructions of a saintly person. Therefore Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura sings: *sādhv-śāstra-guru-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya*. If we want to become saintly persons, or if we want to return to our original Kṛṣṇa consciousness, we must associate with *sādhv* (a saintly person), *śāstra* (authoritative Vedic scripture), and *guru* (a bona fide spiritual master). This is the process.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.26.12

**By engaging in devotional service under the guidance of a spiritual master with faith and obedience, one is liberated from māyā:**

The Personality of Godhead said: My dear mother, the path of self-realization which I have already instructed to you is very easy. You can execute this system without difficulty, and by following it you shall very soon be liberated, even within your present body.

**PURPORT:** Devotional service is so perfect that simply by following the rules and regulations and executing them under the direction of the spiritual master, one is liberated, as it is said herein, from the clutches of *māyā*, even in this body. In other yogic processes, or in empiric philosophical speculation, one is never certain whether or not he is at the perfectional stage. But in the discharge of devotional service, if one has unflinching faith in the instruction of the bona fide spiritual master and follows the rules and regulations, he is sure to be liberated, even within this present body. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, has also confirmed this. *Īhā yasya harer dāsyē*: anyone whose only aim is to serve the Supreme Lord under the direction of the spiritual master, regardless of where he is situated, is called *jīvan-mukta*, or one who is liberated even with his material body.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.33.10

**To become purified from the influence of material nature, one must worship the Lord under the guidance of the bona fide spiritual master:**

All the conditioned souls are impure due to contact with the material energy in three modes of nature. Therefore it is necessary that they purify themselves under the guidance of the bona fide spiritual master, who not only is a *brāhmaṇa* by qualification but must also be a Vaiṣṇava. The only self-purifying process mentioned herein is to worship the Lord under the recognized method—under the guidance of the bona fide spiritual master. That is the natural way of purification, and no other method is recommended as bona fide. The other methods of purification may be helpful to come to this stage of life, but ultimately one has to come to this last point before he attains actual perfection.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.6.34

**By following the instructions of the bona fide spiritual master the disciple attains knowledge and detachment:**

By following the instructions of the bona fide spiritual master in conjunction with the principles of revealed scriptures, the student will rise to the plane of complete knowledge, which will be exhibited by development of detachment from the world of sense gratification.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.37

## 9. The Spiritual Master Solves the Problems of Life

To solve the problems of life, one must approach a spiritual master:

*kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ  
prcchāmi tvam dharma-sammudha-cetaḥ  
yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me  
śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam*

Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me.

**PURPORT:** By nature's own way the complete system of material activities is a source of perplexity for everyone. In every step there is perplexity, and therefore it behooves one to approach a bona fide spiritual master who can give one proper guidance for executing the purpose of life. All Vedic literatures advise us to approach a bona fide spiritual master to get free from the perplexities of life which happen without our desire. They are like a forest fire that somehow blazes without being set by anyone. Similarly, the world situation is such that perplexities of life automatically appear, without our wanting such confusion. No one wants fire, and yet it takes place, and we become perplexed. The Vedic wisdom therefore advises that in order to solve the perplexities of life and to understand the science of the solution, one must approach a spiritual master who is in the disciplic succession. A person with a bona fide spiritual master is supposed to know everything. One should not, therefore, remain in material perplexities but should approach a spiritual master.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.7*

Only the spiritual master can solve the problems of life:

**TRANSLATION** I can find no means to drive away this grief which is drying up my senses. I will not be able to destroy it even if I win an unrivaled kingdom on the earth with sovereignty like that of the demigods in heaven.

**PURPORT:** Although Arjuna was putting forward so many arguments based on knowledge of the principles of religion and moral codes, it appears that he was unable to solve his real problem without the help of the spiritual master, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He could understand that his so-called knowledge was useless in driving away his problems, which were drying up his whole existence; and it was impossible for him to solve such perplexities without the help of a spiritual master like Lord Kṛṣṇa. Academic knowledge, scholarship, high position, etc., are all useless in solving the problems of life; help can only be given by a spiritual master like Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the conclusion is that a spiritual master who is one hundred percent Kṛṣṇa conscious is the bona fide spiritual master, for he can solve the problems of life.... The problems of material existence—birth, old age, disease and death—cannot be counteracted by accumulation of wealth and economic development. In many parts of the world there are states which are replete with all facilities of life, which are full of wealth, and economically developed, yet the problems of material existence are still present. They are seeking peace in different ways, but they can achieve real happiness only if they consult Kṛṣṇa, or the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*—which constitute the science of Kṛṣṇa—or the bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa, the man in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.8*

To solve the problems of material existence, an intelligent person must accept a bona fide spiritual master and inquire from him:

The living entity's evolution through different types of bodies is conducted automatically by the laws of nature in bodies other than those of human beings. In other words, by the laws of nature (*prakṛteḥ*

*kriyamāṇāni* [Bg. 3.27]) the living entity evolves from lower grades of life to the human form. Because of his developed consciousness, however, the human being must understand the constitutional position of the living entity and understand why he must accept a material body. This chance is given to him by nature, but if he nonetheless acts like an animal, what is the benefit of his human life? In this life one must select the goal of life and act accordingly. Having received instructions from the spiritual master and the *śāstra*, one must be sufficiently intelligent. In the human form of life, one should not remain foolish and ignorant, but must inquire about his constitutional position. This is called *athāto brahma jijñāsā*. The human psychology gives rise to many questions, which various philosophers have considered and answered with various types of philosophy based upon mental concoction. This is not the way of liberation. The Vedic instructions say, *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] to solve the problems of life, one must accept a spiritual master. *Tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*: [SB 11.3.21] if one is actually serious in inquiring about the solution to material existence, one must approach a bona fide guru.... One must approach a bona fide spiritual master by surrendering himself (*praṇipātena*) and rendering service. An intelligent person must inquire from the spiritual master about the goal of life. A bona fide spiritual master can answer all such questions because he has seen the real truth. Even in ordinary activities, we first consider gain and loss, and then we act. Similarly, an intelligent person must consider the entire process of material existence and then act intelligently, following the directions of the bona fide spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.47

**To solve the problems of life, one must humbly approach a spiritual master and inquire from him:**

The sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī sat perfectly pacified, intelligent and ready to answer any question without hesitation. The great devotee, Mahārāja Parīkṣit, approached him, offered his respects by bowing before him, and politely inquired with sweet words and folded hands.

**PURPORT:** The gesture now adopted by Mahārāja Parīkṣit of questioning a master is quite befitting in terms of scriptural injunctions. The scriptural injunction is that one should humbly approach a spiritual master to understand the transcendental science. Mahārāja Parīkṣit was now prepared for meeting his death, and within the very short time of seven days he was to know the process of entering the kingdom of God. In such important cases, one is required to approach a spiritual master. There is no necessity of approaching a spiritual master unless one is in need of solving the problems of life. One who does not know how to put questions before the spiritual master has no business seeing him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.19.31

## **10. To Learn the Art of Devotional Service, One Must Approach a Spiritual Master**

**It is the duty of every man to approach a spiritual master and to learn the process of devotional service from him:**

*sarva-desa-kāla-daśāya janera kartavya*  
*guru-pāśe sei bhakti praṣṭavya, śrotavya*

“It is therefore the duty of every man—in every country, in every circumstance and at all times—to approach the bona fide spiritual master, question him about devotional service and listen to him explain the process.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 25.122

**One must be trained in devotional service by a spiritual master:**

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.1) the Lord recommends, *mayy āsakta-manāḥ pārtha yogaṁ yuñjan mad-āśrayaḥ*. This indicates that one must execute devotional service under the guidance of a devotee or directly under the guidance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is not possible, however, to train one-

self without guidance from the spiritual master. Therefore, according to the instructions of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the first business of a devotee is to accept a bona fide spiritual master who can train him to engage his various senses in rendering transcendental service to the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.4.18-20

**To learn the instructions of devotional service, the neophyte devotee must approach the number one Bhāgavata, the personality of devotee:**

A third-class devotee has to receive the instructions of devotional service from the authoritative sources of *Bhāgavata*. The number one *Bhāgavata* is the established personality of devotee, and the other *Bhāgavatam* is the message of Godhead. The third-class devotee therefore has to go to the personality of devotee in order to learn the instructions of devotional service. Such a personality of devotee is not a professional man who earns his livelihood by the business of *Bhāgavatam*. Such a devotee must be a representative of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, like Sūta Gosvāmī, and must preach the cult of devotional service for the all-around benefit of all people.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.12

**To understand devotional service, one must accept, and inquire from, a Vaiñēava guru:**

If one wants to learn the meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one must take lessons from a realized soul. One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books. One must become a servant of a Vaiṣṇava. As Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has confirmed, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*: one cannot be in a transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure Vaiṣṇava. One must accept a Vaiṣṇava guru (*āḍau gurv-āśrayam*), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is. That is called the *paramparā* system.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 7.53

**How, by associating with a pure devotee and accepting him as spiritual master, one advances to the ultimate perfection of devotional service:**

The influence of a pure devotee is such that if someone comes to associate with him with a little faith, he gets the chance of hearing about the Lord from authoritative scriptures like the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Thus, by the mercy of the Lord, who is situated in everyone's heart, one gradually develops his faith in the descriptions of such authoritative scriptures. This is the first stage of association with pure devotees. In the second stage, after one becomes a little advanced and mature, he automatically offers to follow the principles of devotional service under the guidance of the pure devotee and accepts him as the spiritual master. In the next stage, under the guidance of the spiritual master, the devotee executes regulative devotional service, and, as a result of such activities, he becomes freed from all unwanted occupations, his faith becomes steadily fixed, and he develops a transcendental taste for devotional service, then attachment, then ecstasies, and in the last stage there is pure love of Godhead. These are the different stages of the development of pure love.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**Abandoning speculative logic, a devotee must let himself be guided by an expert spiritual master in a specific manner of devotional service, according to his tendency:**

If one develops love for Kṛṣṇa by Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, one can know the Supreme Absolute Truth, but he who tries to understand God simply by logical arguments will not succeed, nor will he get a taste for unalloyed devotion. The secret is that one must submissively listen to those who know perfectly the science of God, and one must begin the mode of service regulated by the preceptor. A devotee already attracted by the name, form, qualities, etc., of the Supreme Lord may be directed to his specific manner of devotional service; he need not waste time in approaching the Lord through logic.

The expert spiritual master knows well how to engage his disciple's energy in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, and thus he engages a devotee in a specific devotional service according to his special tendency.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.35

**By practicing bhakti-yoga under the direction of a spiritual master, one attains love of God:**

To practice the regulative principles of *bhakti-yoga* one should, under the guidance of an expert spiritual master, follow certain principles: one should rise early in the morning, take bath, enter the temple and offer prayers and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, then collect flowers to offer to the Deity, cook foodstuffs to offer to the Deity, take *prasāda*, and so on. There are various rules and regulations which one should follow. And one should constantly hear *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from pure devotees. This practice can help anyone to rise to the level of love of God, and then he is sure of his progress into the spiritual kingdom of God. This practice of *bhakti-yoga*, under the rules and regulations, with the direction of a spiritual master, will surely bring one to the stage of love of God.

*Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is 12.9

**To act under the spiritual master's direction with a motive to satisfy Kāñēa is pure devotional service:**

In the conditioned stage, when one engages in devotional service, he should follow the instruction of the bona fide spiritual master in full surrender. The spiritual master is the manifested representation of the Supreme Lord because he receives and presents the instructions of the Lord, as they are, by disciplic succession. It is described in *Bhagavad-gītā* that the teachings therein should be received by disciplic succession, otherwise there is adulteration. To act under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master with a motive to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead is pure devotional service.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.29.8

**The neophyte must be trained in devotional service under the direction of the spiritual master to attain the ultimate goal of life:**

By service of the Absolute Truth, even for a few days, a devotee attains firm and fixed intelligence in Me. Consequently he goes on to become My associate in the transcendental world after giving up the present deplorable material worlds.

**PURPORT:** Serving the Absolute Truth means rendering service unto the Absolute Personality of Godhead under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master, who is a transparent via medium between the Lord and the neophyte devotee. The neophyte devotee has no ability to approach the Absolute Personality of Godhead by the strength of his present imperfect material senses, and therefore under the direction of the spiritual master he is trained in transcendental service of the Lord. And by such training, even for some days, the neophyte devotee gets intelligence in such transcendental service, which leads him ultimately to get free from perpetual inhabitation in the material worlds and to be promoted to the transcendental world to become one of the liberated associates of the Lord in the kingdom of God.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.6.23

**In an advanced stage of devotional service, one transcends the regulative principles and, through his spiritual master, engages in spontaneous devotional service to Kāñēa:**

Externally a devotee performs all the items of devotional service—*śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*—in nine different ways, and within his mind he always thinks of his eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa and follows in the footsteps of the devotees of Vṛndāvana. If one engages himself in the service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in this way, he can transcend the regulative principles enjoined in the *śāstras* and, through his spiritual master, fully engage in rendering spontaneous love to Kṛṣṇa. In this way, he attains affection at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa actually comes under the control of such spontaneous feelings, and ultimately



one can attain association with the Lord.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 22.165

### How the disciple attains spiritual perfection by taking shelter of a spiritual master:

One's first duty is to approach the spiritual master, the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to begin rendering service to him. Prahlaḍa Mahārāja proposed that from the very beginning of life (*kaumāra ācāret prājñāḥ*) a small child should be trained to serve the spiritual master while living at the *guru-kula*. *Brahmacārī guru-kule vasan dānto guror hitam* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.12.1). This is the beginning of spiritual life. *Guru-padaśrayaḥ, sādhu-vartmānuvartanam, sad-dharma-prcchā*. By following the instructions of the guru and the *śāstras*, the disciple attains the stage of devotional service and becomes unattached to possessions. Whatever he possesses he offers to the spiritual master, the guru, who engages him in *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ* [SB 7.5.23]. The disciple follows strictly and in this way learns how to control his senses. Then, by using his pure intelligence, he gradually becomes a lover of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as confirmed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī (*ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu-saṅgaḥ*). In this way one's life becomes perfect, and his attachment for Kṛṣṇa becomes positively manifested. In that stage, he is situated in ecstasy, experiencing *bhāva* and *anubhāva*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.33

## 11. For Success in Spiritual Life, One Requires a Spiritual Master

### For success in spiritual life, one must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master:

Even for a king like Mahārāja Parīkṣit there was need of a spiritual master for guidance. Without such guidance one cannot make progress in spiritual life. The spiritual master must be bona fide, and one who wants to have self-realization must approach and take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master to achieve real success.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.16.3

### For spiritual life, a spiritual master is essential:

The principle of accepting a spiritual master ... is essential. Even for one who takes to devotional service, it is most important. Transcendental life begins when one accepts a bona fide spiritual master. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, clearly states here that this process of knowledge is the actual path. Anything speculated beyond this is nonsense.... without the instruction of a bona fide spiritual master, one cannot progress in the spiritual science.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 13.8

### To make progress in transcendental science, one must approach a spiritual master who is a realized devotee of the Lord:

A serious devotee must first approach a spiritual master who not only is well versed in the Vedic literatures but is also a great devotee with factual realization of the Lord and His different energies. Without the help of such a devotee spiritual master, one cannot make progress in the transcendental science of the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.4.10

### To reach perfection, the common man, who cannot control the mind and senses, must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master:

Because the common man is unable to control the senses and the mind, it is therefore his duty to seek the shelter of a great soul or a great devotee of the Lord and just try to please him. That will make his life perfect. A common man cannot rise to the topmost stage of spiritual perfection simply by following the rituals and religious principles. He has to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and work

under his direction faithfully and sincerely; then he becomes perfect without a doubt.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.6

**To make spiritual advancement, one must approach a guru:**

O best of the brāhmaṇas, kindly instruct me in the perfect method of worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead in devotional service, by which the Lord may very soon be pleased with me and save me, along with my sons, from this most dangerous condition.

**PURPORT:** Sometimes less intelligent men ask whether one has to approach a guru to be instructed in devotional service for spiritual advancement. The answer is given here—indeed, not only here, but also in *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Arjuna accepted Kṛṣṇa as his guru (*śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam* [Bg. 2.7]). The *Vedas* also instruct, *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] one must accept a guru for proper direction if one is seriously inclined toward advancement in spiritual life. The Lord says that one must worship the *ācārya*, who is the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*ācāryam mām vijānīyāt* [SB 11.17.27]). One should definitely understand this. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is said that the guru is the manifestation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, according to all the evidence given by the *śāstra* and by the practical behavior of devotees, one must accept a guru. Aditi accepted her husband as her guru, so that he would direct her how to advance in spiritual consciousness, devotional service, by worshiping the Supreme Lord.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.16.23

**One can get relief from all obstacles to spiritual life and be situated in blissful life only when one's mind is completely surrendered to the lotus feet of the spiritual master:**

Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Svāmī has composed a nice verse in which he says, “O all-merciful spiritual master, representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, when will my mind be completely surrendered unto your lotus feet? At that time only, by your mercy, I shall be able to get relief from all obstacles to spiritual life, and I shall be situated in blissful life.”

*Kṛṣṇa*

**One who, out of pride, does not accept a spiritual master, can never go back to Godhead:**

One should always remember that a person who is reluctant to accept a spiritual master and be initiated is sure to be baffled in his endeavor to go back to Godhead. One who is not properly initiated may present himself as a great devotee, but in fact he is sure to encounter many stumbling blocks on his path of progress toward spiritual realization, with the result that he must continue his term of material existence without relief. Such a helpless person is compared to a ship without a rudder, for such a ship can never reach its destination. It is imperative, therefore, that one accept a spiritual master if he at all desires to gain the favor of the Lord. The service of the spiritual master is essential.... If one thinks that he is above consulting anyone else, including a spiritual master, he is at once an offender at the lotus feet of the Lord. Such an offender can never go back to Godhead.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 1.35

**To understand the purpose of spiritual life, one must act with reference to sādhu, ṣāstra and guru:**

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura advises, *sādhu-śāstra-guru-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya*. The meaning of this instruction is that one must consider the instructions of the *sādhu*, the revealed scriptures and the spiritual master in order to understand the real purpose of spiritual life. Neither a *sādhu* (saintly person or Vaiṣṇava) nor a bona fide spiritual master says anything that is beyond the scope of the sanction of the revealed scriptures. Thus the statements of the revealed scriptures correspond to those of the bona fide spiritual master and saintly persons. One must therefore act with reference to these three important sources of understanding.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 7.48

## 12. To Attain Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, One Must Accept a Spiritual Master

**To attain Kāñḍa consciousness, one must surrender to the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master:**

One should, by deliberate consideration, raise himself to the platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To attain such an end, one must touch the lotus feet of the spiritual master. Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be achieved by self-endeavor. One must therefore approach a self-realized Kṛṣṇa conscious person and touch his lotus feet.... One cannot come to the precincts of Kṛṣṇa consciousness unless he touches the dust of the lotus feet of a person who has become a *mahātmā*, a great devotee. This is the beginning of the surrendering process. Lord Kṛṣṇa wants everyone to surrender unto Him, and this surrendering process begins when one touches the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master. By sincerely rendering service to a bona fide spiritual master, one begins his spiritual life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Touching the lotus feet of a spiritual master means giving up one's false prestige and unnecessarily puffed-up position in the material world. Those who remain in the darkness of material existence due to their falsely prestigious positions—so-called scientists and philosophers—are actually atheists. They do not know the ultimate cause of everything. Although bewildered, they are not ready to surrender themselves to the lotus feet of a person who knows things in their proper perspective. In other words, one cannot arouse Kṛṣṇa consciousness simply by his own mental speculation. One must surrender to a bona fide spiritual master. Only this process will help him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.26.20

**One develops his Kāñḍa consciousness proportionately to his association with a spiritual master:**

In the human form of life, because of developed consciousness (*cetanam*), one can be transferred from ignorance and passion to goodness by the results of his activities (*kriyā-phalatvena*). A human being is therefore advised to associate with spiritually advanced personalities. The Vedas give the direction *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] in order to reach the perfection of life or to understand the real constitutional position of the living entity, one must approach the spiritual master (*Muṇḍaka Upanisad* 1.2.12). *Gurum evābhigacchet*—one must; it is not optional. It is imperative that one approach the spiritual master, for by such association one proportionately develops his consciousness towards the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.35

**To become free from sin and to revive one's original Kāñḍa consciousness, one must serve a mahātmā spiritual master:**

My dear King, if a sinful person engages in the service of a bona fide devotee of the Lord and thus learns how to dedicate his life unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, he can be completely purified. One cannot be purified merely by undergoing austerity, penance, brahmacarya and the other methods of atonement I have previously described.

**PURPORT:** *Tat-puruṣa* refers to a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, such as the spiritual master. Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has said, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*: “Without serving a bona fide spiritual master, an ideal Vaiṣṇava, who can be delivered from the clutches of *māyā*?” This idea is also expressed in many other places. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (5.5.2) says, *mahat-sevām dvāram āhur vimukteḥ*: if one desires liberation from the clutches of *māyā*, one must associate with a pure devotee mahātmā. A *mahātmā* is one who engages twenty-four hours daily in the loving service of the Lord.... Thus the symptom of a *mahātmā* is that he has no engagement other than service to Kṛṣṇa. One must render service to a Vaiṣṇava in order to get freed from sinful reactions, revive one's original Kṛṣṇa consciousness and be trained in how to love Kṛṣṇa. This is the result of *mahātma-sevā*. Of course, if one engages in the service of a pure devotee, the reactions of one's sinful life are vanquished automatically. Devotional service is necessary not to drive away an insignificant stock of sins, but to awaken our dormant love for Kṛṣṇa. As fog is vanquished at the first glimpse of sunlight, one's sinful reactions are automatically vanquished as soon as one begins serving a pure devotee; no separate endeavor is required.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.1.16

**To increase attachment to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master and inquire from him about the process of devotional service:**

For work in devotional service the first item is *ādau gurvāśrayam*: one should accept a bona fide spiritual master, and from the bona fide spiritual master (*sad-dharma-ṛcchā*) inquire about his transcendental occupational duties (*sādhū-mārga-anugamanam*) and follow in the footsteps of great saintly persons, devotees. These are the instructions given in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* by Rūpa Gosvāmī.

The conclusion is that to increase attachment for the Supreme Personality of Godhead one has to accept a bona fide spiritual master and learn from him the methods of devotional service and hear from him about the transcendental message and glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In this way one has to increase his conviction about devotional service. Then it will be very easy to increase attachment for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.22

**Service of the devotees of the Lord frees one from miserable material conditions and brings one love of God:**

In the Third Canto, Seventh Chapter, 19th verse, of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [it is said], “Let me become a sincere servant of the devotees because by serving them one can achieve unalloyed devotional service unto the lotus feet of the Lord. The service of devotees diminishes all miserable material conditions and develops within one a deep devotional love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**How, by following the instructions of the spiritual master, the disciple attains Kāñēa consciousness:**

As one advances in devotional activities, the process becomes progressively clearer and more encouraging. Unless one gets this spiritual encouragement by following the instructions of the spiritual master, it is not possible to make advancement. Therefore, one’s development of a taste for executing these instructions is the test of one’s devotional service. Initially, one must develop confidence by hearing the science of devotion from a qualified spiritual master. Then, as he associates with devotees and tries to adopt the means instructed by the spiritual master in his own life, his misgivings and other obstacles are vanquished by his execution of devotional service. Strong attachment for the transcendental service of the Lord develops as he continues listening to the messages of Godhead, and if he steadfastly proceeds in this way, he is certainly elevated to spontaneous love of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 1.60

**One who surrenders to the Lord under the direction of the Lord’s servant, the spiritual master, is immediately purified and becomes eligible to go back to Godhead:**

If one seriously accepts the lotus feet of the Lord, he is purified by the grace of the Lord and by the grace of the Lord’s servant.... One who is brought under the lotus feet of the Lord by the endeavor of the Lord’s servant, the spiritual master, is certainly immediately purified, however lowborn he may be. He becomes eligible to return home, back to Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.30.41

### **13. Other Important Reasons for Accepting a Bona Fide Spiritual Master**

**Any person desiring real happiness must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master:**

In the Eleventh Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Prabuddha tells Mahārāja Nimi: “My dear King, please know for certain that in the material world there is no happiness. It is simply a mistake to think that there is happiness here, because this place is full of nothing but miserable conditions. Any person who is seriously desirous of achieving real happiness must seek out a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation.”

*The Nectar of Devotion*

Only one out of millions of living entities gets the fortunate opportunity of associating with a bona fide spiritual master:

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva  
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

“According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.”

**PURPORT:** When we speak of *brahmāṇḍa*, we refer to the whole universe, or to the cluster of many millions of universes. In all universes, there are innumerable planets and innumerable living entities upon those planets in the air and in the water. There are millions and trillions of living entities everywhere, and they are engaged by *māyā* in suffering and enjoying the results of their fruitive activity life after life. This is the position of the materially conditioned living entities. Out of many of these living entities, if one is actually fortunate (*bhāgyavān*), he comes in contact with a bona fide spiritual master by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.151

To act in yoga requires surrender to the servant of Kāṁḍa:

Be steadfast in yoga, O Arjuna. Perform your duty and abandon all attachment to success or failure. Such evenness of mind is called yoga.

**PURPORT:** The following of Kṛṣṇa’s dictation is real yoga, and this is practiced in the process called Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By Kṛṣṇa consciousness only can one give up the sense of proprietorship. One has to become the servant of Kṛṣṇa, or the servant of the servant of Kṛṣṇa [Cc. Mad 13.80]. That is the right way to discharge duty in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which alone can help one to act in yoga.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.48

The spiritual master is one who solves all confusion:

Śrīla Prabhupada: ...In a chaotic condition, in a confused state of life, one should approach another, who is in full knowledge of the matter. You go to a lawyer to solve legal problems, and you go to a physician to solve medical problems. Everyone in the material world is confused about spiritual identity. It is therefore our duty to approach a bona fide spiritual master, who can give us real knowledge.

Mr. O’Grady: I am very confused.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So you must approach a spiritual master.

Mr. O’Grady: And he makes a decision on how to help me stop this confusion?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, the spiritual master is one who solves all confusion. If the spiritual master cannot save his disciple from confusion, he is not a spiritual master. That is the test.

*samsāra-dāvānala-līdha-loka-  
trāṇāya kārūṇya-ghanāghanatvam  
prāptasya kalyāṇa-guṇārṇavasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

This whole confused world is just like a blazing forest fire. In a forest fire all the animals are confused. They do not know where to go to save their lives. In the blazing fire of the material world, everyone is confused. How can that blazing forest fire be extinguished? It is not possible to utilize your man-made



fire brigade, nor is it possible to simply pour buckets of water. The solution comes when rain from the clouds falls on the forest fire. Only then can the fire be extinguished.

That ability is not in your hands, but is in the mercy of God. So human society is in a confused state, and it cannot find a solution. The spiritual master is one who has received the mercy of God, and he can deliver the solution to the confused man. One who has received the mercy of God can become a spiritual master and deliver that mercy to others.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**Even demons can be elevated to the supreme goal under the guidance of a spiritual master:**

The Lord forces [demons] to take birth in the womb of demoniac persons. Consequently they will live by demoniac principles life after life without knowing their relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If, however, such persons are fortunate enough to be guided by a spiritual master who can direct them to the path of Vedic wisdom, they can get out of this entanglement and ultimately achieve the supreme goal.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 17.5-6*

**Puffed-up, independent-minded persons do not seek the protection of a bona fide spiritual master:**

A person who is puffed up by so-called education and who has no humility does not seek the protection of a bona fide spiritual master. He thinks that he does not require a spiritual master and that he can achieve the highest perfection by his own efforts.... Those who are under the spell of material energy do not follow the instructions of the disciplic succession but try to manufacture something of their own and thereby step outside the sphere of *Vedānta* study. A bona fide spiritual master must always condemn such independent mental speculators.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**One can meditate only under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master:**

After that, under the shadow of a banyan tree in an uninhabited forest I began to meditate upon the Supersoul situated within, using my intelligence, as I had learned from liberated souls.

**PURPORT:** One should not meditate according to one's personal whims. One should know perfectly well from the authoritative sources of scriptures through the transparent medium of a bona fide spiritual master and by proper use of one's trained intelligence for meditating upon the Supersoul dwelling within every living being. This consciousness is firmly developed by a devotee who has rendered loving service unto the Lord by carrying out the orders of the spiritual master. Śrī Nāradaḥ contacted bona fide spiritual masters, served them sincerely and got enlightenment rightly. Thus he began to meditate.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.15*



# Chapter II

## The Spiritual Master

### 1. The Definition of “Guru” and “Acarya”

#### The meaning of “guru”:

The word guru refers to one who gives proper direction under the authority of the Vedic injunctions and according to the examples of the lives of great personalities.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.28-29

#### Definition of a spiritual master:

*yāñhā haite kṛṣṇa-bhakti sei guru haya*

“One who awakens devotion to Kṛṣṇa is certainly a spiritual master.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 16.65

#### The definition of “guru”:

It is said:

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā*

*cakṣur unmilitam yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

“I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him.”

This gives the definition of the guru. Everyone is in the darkness of ignorance. Therefore everyone needs to be enlightened with transcendental knowledge. One who enlightens his disciple and saves him from rotting in the darkness of ignorance in this material world is a true guru.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.15.16

#### Guru means “heavy with knowledge”:

The various yoga systems are given for the machine of the body, but the process of *bhakti* is transcendental to mechanical arrangements. It is therefore called *tad-vijñāna*, transcendental to material understanding. If one actually wants to understand spiritual life and spiritual knowledge, one has to approach a guru. The word guru means “heavy,” heavy with knowledge. And what is that knowledge? *Tad-vijñāna*. That heaviness is *brahma-niṣṭhā*—attachment to Brahman and Parabrahman, Bhagavān. That is the guru’s qualification.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

#### The definition of “ācārya”:

In the *Vāyu Purāṇa* an *ācārya* is defined as one who knows the import of all Vedic literature, explains the purpose of the *Vedas*, abides by their rules and regulations, and teaches his disciples to act in the same way.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

### 2. The Identity of the Spiritual Master

The spiritual master is a manifestation of Kāñḍā (and should not, therefore, be regarded as an ordinary man) The representative of the Lord, the guru, is nondifferent from the Lord:

...One who is an actually bona fide spiritual master, representative of Kṛṣṇa, is not different from Kṛṣṇa.

**PURPORT:** Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says: *sākṣād-dhari-tvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ*. The spiritual master is described in every scripture as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The spiritual master is accepted as identical with the Supreme Personality of Godhead because he is the most confidential servant of the Lord (*kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya*).... [The pure devotee spiritual master] is to be understood as the Supreme Personality of Godhead personally present ... consulting a bona fide spiritual master means consulting the Supreme Personality of Godhead personally. One should therefore take shelter of such a bona fide spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.51

**The disciple must look upon his spiritual master as the manifested representation of Kāñēa:**

*guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe  
guru rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā kareṇa bhakta-gaṇe*

According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.

**PURPORT:** The relationship of a disciple with his spiritual master is as good as his relationship with the Supreme Lord. A spiritual master always represents himself as the humblest servitor of the Personality of Godhead, but the disciple must look upon him as the manifested representation of Godhead.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.45

**There is no difference between the Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters:**

*śikṣā-guruke ta' jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa  
antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha, -ei dui rūpa*

One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the personality of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord.

**PURPORT:** Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself teaches us as the instructing spiritual master from within and without. From within He teaches as Paramātmā, our constant companion, and from without He teaches from *Bhagavad-gītā* as the instructing spiritual master.... Our only shelter is the Supreme Lord, and one who teaches how to approach Kṛṣṇa is the functioning form of the Personality of Godhead. There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.47

**The disciple must accept the spiritual master as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supersoul:**

[In the Eleventh Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] Sage Prabuddha continued to speak to the King [Nimi] as follows: “My dear King, a disciple has to accept the spiritual master not only as spiritual master, but also as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supersoul. In other words, the disciple should accept the spiritual master as God because he is the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.” This is confirmed in every scripture, and a disciple should accept the spiritual master as such.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**Kāñēa instructs that the spiritual master must be accepted as His very self and therefore must not be envied:**

In the Eleventh Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Seventeenth Chapter, 27th verse, it is stated by Lord Kṛṣṇa: “My dear Uddhava, the spiritual master must be accepted not only as My representative but as My very self. He must never be considered on the same level with an ordinary human being. One

should never be envious of the spiritual master, as one may be envious of an ordinary man. The spiritual master should always be seen as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and by serving the spiritual master, one is able to serve all the demigods.”

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**The spiritual master is a direct manifestation of the Lord, and therefore is nondifferent from Kāñēa:**

Although I know that my spiritual master is the servitor of Śrī Caitanya, I know him also as a plenary manifestation of the Lord.

**PURPORT:** Every living entity is essentially a servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the spiritual master is also His servant. Still, the spiritual master is a direct manifestation of the Lord. With this conviction, a disciple can advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa because he is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.44*

**Gurun (the spiritual masters) as one of six principles of the Absolute Truth:**

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the spiritual masters, the devotees of the Lord, the Lord’s incarnations, His plenary portions, His energies, and the primeval Lord Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

**PURPORT:** [Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī] offers his respectful obeisances to the six principles of the Absolute Truth.... *Tat-prakāśān* indicates the direct manifestation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nityānanda Prabhu, and the initiating spiritual master.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.34*

**The Supreme Personality of Godhead has simultaneously entered and not entered the spiritual master:**

*agnau gurāv ātmani ca  
sarva-bhūteṣv adhokṣajam  
bhūtaiḥ sva-dhāmabhiḥ paśyed  
apraviṣṭaṁ praviṣṭavat*

One should realize that in the fire, in the spiritual master, in one’s self and in all living entities—in all circumstances and conditions—the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, has simultaneously entered and not entered. He is situated externally and internally as the full controller of everything.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.12.15*

**By surrendering to and offering respects to the guru, one surrenders to and offers respects to God:**

The guru is Kṛṣṇa’s representative, the former *ācāryas*’ representative. Kṛṣṇa says that all *ācāryas* are His representatives; therefore the guru should be offered the same respect one would offer to God. As Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says in his prayers to the spiritual master, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*: “By the mercy of the spiritual master, one receives the benediction of Kṛṣṇa.” Thus, if we surrender to the bona fide guru, we surrender to God. God accepts our surrender to the guru.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) Kṛṣṇa instructs: ...”Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.” Someone may argue, “Where is Kṛṣṇa? I shall surrender to Him.” But no, the process is that we first surrender to Kṛṣṇa’s representative; then we surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore it is said, *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ*: the guru is as good as God. When we offer respects to the guru, we are offering respects to God. Because we are trying to be God conscious, it is required that we learn how to offer respects to God through God’s representative. In all the *śāstras* the guru is described to be as good as God, but the guru never says, “I am God.” The disciple’s duty is to offer respect to the guru just as he offers respect to God, but the guru never thinks, “My disciples are offering me the same respect they offer to God; therefore I have become God.” As soon as

he thinks like this, he becomes a dog instead of God. Therefore Viśvanātha Cakravartī says, *kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya*. Because he is the most confidential servitor of God, the guru is offered the same respect that we offer God. God is always God, guru is always guru. As a matter of etiquette, God is the worshipable God, and guru is the worshiper God (*sevaka-bhagavān*). Therefore the guru is addressed as prabhupāda. The word prabhu means “lord,” and pāda means “position.” Thus prabhupāda means “he who has taken the position of the Lord.”

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The spiritual master, who is the best of the brāhmaëas and Vaiñëavas, is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead:**

My dear King, of all persons a qualified brāhmaëa must be accepted as the best within this material world because such a brāhmaëa, by practicing austerity, Vedic studies and satisfaction, becomes the counterpart body of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**PURPORT:** From the *Vedas* we learn that the Personality of Godhead is the Supreme Person. Every living entity is an individual person, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the Supreme Person. A *brāhmaṇa* who is well versed in Vedic knowledge and fully conversant with transcendental matters becomes a representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore one should worship such a *brāhmaṇa* or Vaiṣṇava. A Vaiṣṇava is superior to a *brāhmaṇa* because whereas a *brāhmaṇa* knows that he is Brahman, not matter, a Vaiṣṇava knows that he is not only Brahman but also an eternal servant of the Supreme Brahman. Therefore, worship of a Vaiṣṇava is superior to worship of the Deity in the temple. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says, *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ*: in all the scriptures the spiritual master, who is the best of the *brāhmaṇas*, the best of the Vaiṣṇavas, is considered to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.14.41

**The spiritual master is called ācārya-vigraha, or the manifestation of the Lord of whom one must take shelter:**

Only out of His immense compassion does the Personality of Godhead reveal Himself as the spiritual master. Therefore in the dealings of an *ācārya* there are no activities but those of transcendental loving service to the Lord. He is the Supreme Personality of Servitor Godhead. It is worthwhile to take shelter of such a steady devotee, who is called *āśraya-vigraha*, or the manifestation or form of the Lord of whom one must take shelter.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 1.46

**One should respect as God, and serve, the servants of God:**

The servants of God are to be respected as God by the devotees who actually want to go back to Godhead. Such servants of God are called mahātmās, or tīrthas, and they preach according to particular time and place. The servants of God urge people to become devotees of the Lord.... The servants of God come to propagate God consciousness, and intelligent people should cooperate with them in every respect. By serving the servant of God, one can please God more than by directly serving the Lord. The Lord is more pleased when He sees that His servants are properly respected because such servants risk everything for the service of the Lord and so are very dear to the Lord.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.16

**The oneness of the spiritual master with the Personality of Godhead exists in terms of his being very dear to the Lord:**

The bona fide spiritual master always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By this test he is known to be a direct manifestation of the Lord and a genuine representative of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu.... The real Vedic philosophy is *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva*, which establishes everything to be simultaneously one with and different from the Personality of Godhead.



Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī confirms that this is the real position of a bona fide spiritual master and says that one should always think of the spiritual master in terms of his intimate relationship with Mukunda (Śrī Kṛṣṇa). Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* (213), has clearly defined that a pure devotee's observation of the spiritual master and Lord Śiva as one with the Personality of Godhead exists in terms of their being very dear to the Lord, not identical with Him in all respects. Following in the footsteps of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, later *ācāryas* like Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura have confirmed the same truths. In his prayers to the spiritual master, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura confirms that all the revealed scriptures accept the spiritual master to be identical with the Personality of Godhead because he is a very dear and confidential servant of the Lord. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas therefore worship Śrīla Gurudeva (the spiritual master) in the light of his being the servitor of the Personality of Godhead. In all the ancient literatures of devotional service and in the more recent songs of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other unalloyed Vaiṣṇavas, the spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or a manifested representation of Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

**The Lord's representative, the guru, is as good as the Lord Himself because he speaks only what is spoken by the Lord:**

One should adopt the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is described here as *guror guruḥ*, the spiritual master of all other spiritual masters.

Even though we may not have the fortune to contact the Supreme Lord personally, the Lord's representative is as good as the Lord Himself because such a representative does not say anything unless it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore gives a definition of guru. *Yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa*: [Cc. Madhya 7.128] the bona fide guru is he who advises his disciples exactly in accordance with the principles spoken by Kṛṣṇa. The bona fide guru is he who has accepted Kṛṣṇa as guru. This is the *guru-paramparā* system.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.24.48

**Because the spiritual master transmits Kāñēa's instructions without change, he is the same as the Personality of Godhead:**

*Bhagavad-gītā*, which constitutes the instructions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is presented by the spiritual master as it is, without deviation. Therefore the Absolute Truth is present in the spiritual master. As clearly stated in text SB 7.15.26, *jñāna-dīpa-prade*. The Supreme Personality of Godhead gives real knowledge to the entire world, and the spiritual master, as the representative of the Supreme Godhead, carries the message throughout the world. Therefore, on the absolute platform, there is no difference between the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.27

**The spiritual master is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead because he represents the Lord by giving knowledge to others:**

I consider your good self the most exalted master of mystic power. You know the spiritual science perfectly well. You are the most exalted of all learned sages, and you have descended for the benefit of all human society. You have come to give spiritual knowledge, and you are a direct representative of Kapiladeva, the incarnation of God and the plenary portion of knowledge. I am therefore asking you, O spiritual master, what is the most secure shelter in this world?

**PURPORT:** Although Jaḍa Bharata was an ordinary living entity, he had inherited all the knowledge given by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kapiladeva. He could therefore be taken directly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As confirmed by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his stanzas to the spiritual master: *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ*. An exalted personality like Jaḍa Bharata is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead because he fully represents the Lord by giving knowl-

edge to others. Jaḍa Bharata is herein accepted as the direct representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead because he was imparting knowledge on behalf of the Supreme Lord. Therefore Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa concluded that it was appropriate to ask him about *ātma-tattva*, the spiritual science. *Tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet* [MU 1.2.12]. This Vedic injunction is also confirmed herein. If anyone is at all interested in knowing the spiritual science (*brahma-jijñāsā*), he must approach a guru like Jaḍa Bharata.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.10.19

**The spiritual master, who acts on behalf of the Supreme Lord, is as good as the Supreme Lord:**

The representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead who acts to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness is also guided by the Supreme Lord to act properly in executing the Lord's order. Such a person may appear to be an ordinary human being, but because he acts on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the supreme spiritual master, he is not to be neglected as ordinary. It is therefore said, *ācāryam mām vijānīyāt* [SB 11.17.27]: an *ācārya* who acts on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead should be understood to be as good as the Supreme Lord Himself.... Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has advised that the spiritual master acting on the Supreme Lord's behalf must be worshiped as being as good as the Supreme Lord, for he is the Lord's most confidential servant in broadcasting the Lord's message for the benefit of the conditioned souls involved in the material world.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.24.46

**The guru acts as a representative of Kāñēa:**

Human life is meant for understanding our situation, and we should take instructions from *Bhagavad-gītā*. Arjuna is personally teaching us by accepting Kṛṣṇa as his guru. He asks Kṛṣṇa to become his spiritual master and teach him. The lessons given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa are not simply meant for Arjuna but for everyone. Kṛṣṇa tells us in *Bhagavad-gītā* that we should search out a guru. The first guru is Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, and whoever represents Śrī Kṛṣṇa is also a guru. If I am a businessman, and someone goes to canvass for my business and takes orders for me, he is my representative. If he simply says that he is my representative and yet takes some orders but uses the money for something else, he is not really my representative.

Kṛṣṇa's representative does not say, "I have become Kṛṣṇa." Such a person is neither a representative nor a guru. He is simply a cheater. Kṛṣṇa's representative is one who canvasses for Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa says, "Give up everything and surrender unto Me." Kṛṣṇa's representative says, "Give up everything and simply surrender unto Kṛṣṇa." This is certainly not very difficult to understand. Anyone can become Kṛṣṇa's representative.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**The pure devotee spiritual master is the representative of the Lord and is honored equally with the Lord:**

To take shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord means to take shelter of the pure devotees. The pure devotees whose only business is serving are honored by the names Prabhupāda and Viṣṇupāda, which indicate such devotees to be representatives of the lotus feet of the Lord. Anyone, therefore, who takes shelter of the lotus feet of a pure devotee by accepting the pure devotee as his spiritual master can be at once purified. Such devotees of the Lord are honored equally with the Lord because they are engaged in the most confidential service of the Lord, for they deliver out of the material world the fallen souls whom the Lord wants to return home, back to Godhead. Such pure devotees are better known as vice-lords according to revealed scriptures. The sincere disciple of the pure devotee considers the spiritual master equal to the Lord, but always considers himself to be a humble servant of the servant of the Lord [Cc. Mad 13.80]. This is the pure devotional path.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.15

**The spiritual master should be respected like the Supreme Personality of Godhead; when seen, one should offer obeisances:**

As it is said by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ*: **a spiritual master or the paramparā-ācārya should be respected exactly like the Supreme Personality of Godhead....** Whenever an *ācārya* is seen, one should immediately bow down before him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.4

**The disciple should accept the spiritual master as the Supreme Personality of Godhead:**

The disciple accepts the spiritual master as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.... Since the spiritual master is the most confidential servant of the Lord, he should be treated exactly like the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The spiritual master should never be neglected or disobeyed, like an ordinary person.

Çrēmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.43

**It is the duty of the disciple to respect the spiritual master as much as God:**

**Ms. Nixon:** You have said that you are not God, and yet it appears to me, as an outsider, that your devotees treat you as if you were God.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, that is their duty. Because the spiritual master is executing God's order, he should be respected as much as God, just as a government officer should be respected as much as the government because he executes the government's order. Even if an ordinary policeman comes, you have to respect him because he is a government man. But that does not mean he is the government. *Sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvyata eva sadbhiḥ*: **"The spiritual master is to be honored as much as the Supreme Lord because he is the most confidential servitor of the Lord. This is acknowledged in all revealed scriptures and followed by all authorities."**

**Ms. Nixon:** I also wonder about the many beautiful material things that the devotees bring you. For instance, you left the airport in a beautiful, fancy car. I wonder about this because...

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That teaches the disciples how to regard the spiritual master as good as God. If you respect the government representative as much as you respect the government, then you must treat him opulently. If you respect the spiritual master as much as God, then you must offer him the same facilities you would offer to God. God travels in a golden car. If the disciples offer the spiritual master an ordinary motorcar, it would not be sufficient because the spiritual master has to be treated like God. If God comes to your home, will you bring him an ordinary motorcar—or will you arrange for a golden car?

The Science of Self-Realization

**One should not accept the spiritual master as an ordinary human being:**

The Lord helps us by giving us directions how to act in devotional service and thus advance on the path back home, back to Godhead. He instructs us outwardly in the form of the spiritual master. Therefore, one should not accept the spiritual master as an ordinary human being. The Lord says, *ācāryam māṁ vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit*: **one should not treat the spiritual master as an ordinary human being because he is the substitute for the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.27).** One should treat the spiritual master as the Supreme Personality of Godhead and never be envious of him or consider him to be an ordinary human being.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.20.13

**As the external manifestation of Kāñṛēa, the spiritual master is worshiped on the same level as the Lord:**

Uddhava advised the *gopīs* that they could be saved from the fire of separation by closing their eyes and meditating on the activities of Kṛṣṇa from the very beginning of their association with Him. From

the outside, the *gopīs* could visualize all the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa by hearing the descriptions of Uddhava, and from inside they could remember those pastimes. From the instruction of Uddhava, the *gopīs* could understand that Kṛṣṇa was not separate from them. As they were constantly thinking of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa was also thinking of them constantly while at Mathurā.

Uddhava's messages and instructions saved the *gopīs* from immediate death, and the *gopīs* acknowledged the benediction from Uddhava. Uddhava practically acted as the preceptor spiritual master of the *gopīs*, and they in return worshiped him as they would worship Kṛṣṇa. It is recommended in authoritative scriptures that the spiritual master should be worshiped on the level of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of his being His very confidential servitor, and it is accepted by great authorities that the spiritual master is the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. The *gopīs* were relieved from their transcendental burning condition by realizing that Kṛṣṇa was with them. Internally, they remembered His association within their hearts, and externally Uddhava helped them to appreciate Kṛṣṇa by conclusive instructions.

Kṛṣṇa

**If the disciple considers the spiritual master, who is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to be an ordinary man, his Vedic studies and austerities will have no effect:**

*yasya sākṣād bhagavati  
jñāna-dīpa-prade gurau  
martyāsad-dhīḥ śrutam tasya  
sarvaṁ kuñjara-śaucavat*

The spiritual master should be considered to be directly the Supreme Lord because he gives transcendental knowledge for enlightenment. Consequently, for one who maintains the material conception that the spiritual master is an ordinary human being, everything is frustrated. His enlightenment and his Vedic studies and knowledge are like the bathing of an elephant.

**PURPORT:** It is recommended that one honor the spiritual master as being on an equal status with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. *Sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ*. This is enjoined in every scripture. *Ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyāt* [SB 11.17.27]. One should consider the *ācārya* to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In spite of all these instructions, if one considers the spiritual master an ordinary human being, one is doomed. His study of the *Vedas* and his austerities and penances for enlightenment are all useless, like the bathing of an elephant. An elephant bathes in a lake quite thoroughly, but as soon as it comes on the shore it takes some dust from the ground and strews it over its body. Thus there is no meaning to the elephant's bath. One may argue by saying that since the spiritual master's relatives and the men of his neighborhood consider him an ordinary human being, what is the fault on the part of the disciple who considers the spiritual master an ordinary human being? ... If the family members of the spiritual master, who is the bona fide representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, consider the spiritual master an ordinary human being, this does not mean that he becomes an ordinary human being. The spiritual master is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore one who is very serious about spiritual advancement must regard the spiritual master in this way. Even a slight deviation from this understanding can create disaster in the disciple's Vedic studies and austerities.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.15.26-27

**One who thinks the spiritual master in disciplic succession as an ordinary man is taken to be a resident of hell:**

*arcye viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhir  
viṣṇor vā vaiṣṇavānām kali-mala-mathane pāda-tīrthe 'mbu-buddhiḥ*

*śrī-viṣṇor nāmni mantre sakala-kaluṣa-he śabda-sāmānya-buddhir*

*viṣṇau sarveśvareṣe tad-itara-sama-dhīr yasya vā nārakī saḥ*

“One who thinks the Deity in the temple to be made of wood or stone, who thinks of the spiritual master in the disciplic succession as an ordinary man, who thinks the Vaiṣṇava in the *acyuta-gotra* to belong to a certain caste or creed, or who thinks of *caraṇāmṛta* or Ganges water as ordinary water, is taken to be a resident of hell.”

*Padma Purāṇa* cited: *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.21.12

### One is forbidden to think the ācārya an ordinary human being:

It is said, *tāṇra vākya, kriyā, mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya* [Cc Mad 23.39]. Even if a man is very advanced in learning, he cannot understand the behavior of a Vaiṣṇava. Anyone can take shelter of a pure Vaiṣṇava, without fear.... Nārada Muni, Haridāsa Ṭhākura and similar *ācāryas* especially empowered to broadcast the glories of the Lord cannot be brought down to the material platform. Therefore one is strictly forbidden to think that the *ācārya* is an ordinary human being (*guruṣu nara-matiḥ*).

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.7.14

### The empowered spiritual master, invested by Kāñḍa with power of attorney, can act independently:

After hearing this, Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, “Why did Īśvara Purī keep a servant who comes from a *çūdra* family?” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “Both the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, are completely independent. Therefore the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and Īśvara Purī is not subjected to any Vedic rules and regulations.”

**PURPORT:** Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya here asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu why Īśvara Purī accepted a disciple from a *śūdra* family. According to the *smṛti-śāstra*, which gives directions for the management of the *varṇāśrama* institution, a *brāhmaṇa* cannot accept a disciple from the lower castes. In other words, a *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *śūdra* cannot be accepted as a servant. If a spiritual master accepts such a person, he is contaminated. Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya therefore asked why Īśvara Purī accepted a servant or disciple born of a *śūdra* family.

In answer to this, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied that His spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, was so empowered that he was as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As such, Īśvara Purī was the spiritual master of the whole world. He was not a servant to any mundane rule or regulation. An empowered spiritual master like Īśvara Purī can bestow his mercy upon anyone, irrespective of caste or creed. The conclusion is that an empowered spiritual master is authorized by Kṛṣṇa and should be considered to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. That is the verdict of Viśvanātha Cakravartī: *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ*. An authorized spiritual master is as good as Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If Hari is free to act as He likes, the empowered spiritual master is also free. As Hari is not subject to the criticism of mundane rules and regulations, the spiritual master empowered by Him is also not subjected. According to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Antya-līlā* 7.11): *kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana*. An authorized spiritual master empowered by Kṛṣṇa can spread the glories of the holy name of the Lord, for he has power of attorney from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In the mundane world, anyone possessing his master’s power of attorney can act on behalf of his master. Similarly, a spiritual master empowered by Kṛṣṇa through his bona fide spiritual master should be considered as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 10.136-37

## The eternal identity of the spiritual master

### The spiritual master’s eternal identity and occupation:

Every living entity is eternally a servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya; therefore the spiritual master cannot



be other than a servant of Lord Caitanya. The spiritual master's eternal occupation is to expand the service of the Lord by training disciples in a service attitude.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.44

**The spiritual master is considered either one of the confidential associates of Rādhārāṇī or a manifested representation of Nityānanda:**

In his prayers to the spiritual master, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura confirms that all the revealed scriptures accept the spiritual master to be identical with the Personality of Godhead because he is a very dear and confidential servant of the Lord. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas therefore worship Śrīla Gurudevā (the spiritual master) in the light of his being the servitor of the Personality of Godhead. In all the ancient literatures of devotional service and in the more recent songs of Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other unalloyed Vaiṣṇavas, the spiritual master is always considered either one of the confidential associates of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or a manifested representation of Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

**The spiritual master as an associate of the gopīs:**

*nikuñja-yūno rati-keli-siddhyai  
yā yālibhir yuktir apekṣaṇīyā  
tatrāti-dākṣyād ati-vallabhasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

“The spiritual master is very dear because he is expert in assisting the gopīs, who at different times make different tasteful arrangements for the perfection of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's conjugal loving affairs within the groves of Vṛndāvana. I offer my most humble obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.”

Śrī Śrī-gurv-aṣṭaka Verse 6

Śrīla Visvanatha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

## The difference between the spiritual master and the Lord

**The difference between the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead:**

The spiritual master is called *sevaka-bhagavān*, the servitor Personality of Godhead, and Kṛṣṇa is called *sevyā-bhagavān*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is to be worshiped. The spiritual master is the worshiper God, whereas the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, is the worshipable God. This is the difference between the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.27

**The spiritual master is the jīva-tattva servitor of the Lord:**

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi-līlā 5.142) it is said, *ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa, āra saba bhṛtya*: **the only supreme master is Kṛṣṇa, and all others, both viññu-tattva and jīva-tattva, engage in the service of the Lord.** Both the *viññu-tattva* (as Nityānanda Prabhu and Advaita) and the *jīva-tattva* (*śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*) engage in the service of the Lord, but one must distinguish between the *viññu-tattva* servitors and the *jīva-tattva* servitors. The *jīva-tattva* servitor, the spiritual master, is actually the servitor God. As explained in previous verses, in the absolute world there are no such differences, yet one must observe these differences in order to distinguish the Supreme from His subordinates.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.14

# The Qualifications and Characteristics of the Spiritual Master

The spiritual master strictly follows the principle of disciplic succession and of scripture

**The knowledge received from the guru descends from the Lord Himself through disciplic succession:**

The transcendental knowledge of the *Vedas* was first uttered by God to Brahmā, the creator of this particular universe. From Brahmā the knowledge descended to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsadeva, from Vyāsadeva to Madhva, and in this process of disciplic succession the transcendental knowledge was transmitted by one disciple to another till it reached Lord Gaurāṅga, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who posed as the disciple and successor of Śrī Īśvara Purī. The present *Ācāryadeva* is the tenth disciplic representative from Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the original representative of Lord Caitanya who preached this transcendental tradition in its fullness. The knowledge that we receive from our Gurudeva is not different from that imparted by God Himself and the succession of the *ācāryas* in the preceptorial line of Brahmā. We adore this auspicious day as *Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā-tithi* because the *Ācārya* is the living representative of Vyāsadeva, the divine compiler of the *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**If one follows the system of disciplic succession, one can become a guru for the whole world:**

If we receive knowledge from an ordinary man, there will be many defects. An ordinary person is subject to illusion, and he also has the tendency to cheat. Although an ordinary person may be a very advanced scholar, he does not possess perfect knowledge. Perfection is something totally different from what we find in the material world. Perfection means that there is no mistake, no illusion, no cheating, no imperfection. Therefore it is stated *bhagavān uvāca*, for Bhagavān is all-perfect. We should therefore take knowledge from Bhagavān or from one who speaks according to the version of Bhagavān.

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on this principle. We are not presenting anything that we ourselves could manufacture. Whatever we manufacture is sure to be defective or deficient. What is the value of my philosophy? What is the value of my thought? Generally, people say, “**In my opinion**,” thinking that “my opinion” really means something. People do not think, “I am simply a rascal.” People value their opinion, thinking it something very big. Everyone in this material world has imperfect senses; therefore whatever knowledge has been gathered through the senses is necessarily imperfect. As we have stressed over and over, we have to receive knowledge from the disciplic succession. Knowledge has to be received from Bhagavān, the perfect one. If we simply follow this system, we can become a guru for the whole world.... It is not difficult to become a guru, provided that we repeat what Kṛṣṇa says.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The guru is one, because he does not speak differently from his predecessors in disciplic succession:**

The *Vedas* enjoin us to seek out a guru; actually, they say to seek out the guru, not just a guru. The guru is one because he comes in disciplic succession. What Vyāsadeva and Kṛṣṇa taught five thousand years ago is also being taught now. There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of *ācāryas* have come and gone, the message is one. The real guru cannot be two, for the real guru does not speak differently from his predecessors. Some spiritual teachers say, “In my opinion you should do this,” but this is not a guru. Such so-called gurus are simply rascals. The genuine guru has only one opinion, and that is the opinion expressed by Kṛṣṇa, Vyāsadeva, Nārada, Arjuna, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and the Gosvāmīs. Five thousand years ago Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and Vyāsadeva recorded it. Śrīla Vyāsadeva did not say, “This is my opinion.” Rather, he wrote, *śrī-bhagavān uvāca*, that is, “**The Supreme Personality of Godhead says.**” Whatever Vyāsadeva wrote was originally spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrīla Vyāsadeva did not give his own opinion.

Consequently, Śrīla Vyāsadeva is a guru. He does not misinterpret the words of Kṛṣṇa, but transmits them exactly as they were spoken. If we send a telegram, the person who delivers the telegram does not

have to correct it, edit it, or add to it. He simply presents it. That is the guru's business. The guru may be this person or that, but the message is the same; therefore it is said that guru is one.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The guru is one, but appears in an infinity of forms; the principle of guru is universal and nonsectarian:**

Gentlemen, the offering of such an homage as has been arranged this evening to the *Ācāryadeva* is not a sectarian concern, for when we speak of the fundamental principle of *gurudeva*, or *ācāryadeva*, we speak of something that is of universal application. There does not arise any question of discriminating my guru from yours or anyone else's. There is only one guru, who appears in an infinity of forms to teach you, me, and all others.

The guru, or *ācāryadeva*, as we learn from the bona fide scriptures, delivers the message of the absolute world, the transcendental abode of the Absolute Personality, where everything nondifferentially serves the Absolute Truth. We have heard so many times: *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* [Cc Mad 17.186] ("Traverse the trail which your previous ācārya has passed"), but we have hardly tried to understand the real purport of this *śloka*. If we scrutinizingly study this proposition, we understand that the *mahājana* is one, and the royal road to the transcendental world is also one. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (1.2.12) it is said:

*tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*

*samit-pāṇiḥ śrotṛiyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham*

**"In order to learn the transcendental science, one must approach the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession, who is fixed in the Absolute Truth."**

Thus it has been enjoined herewith that in order to receive that transcendental knowledge, one must approach the guru. Therefore, if the Absolute Truth is one, about which we think there is no difference of opinion, the guru also cannot be two. The *Ācāryadeva* for whom we have assembled tonight to offer our humble homage is not the guru of a sectarian institution or one out of many differing exponents of the truth. On the contrary, he is the *Jagad-guru*, or the guru of all of us; the only difference is that some obey him wholeheartedly, while others do not obey him directly.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**By following in the disciplic succession from Çré Kāñḍā, accepting Kāñḍā as the supreme authority, one can become a guru:**

This Kṛṣṇa consciousness philosophy is very easy because we do not manufacture ideas. We take the ideas and the words delivered by the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, or His incarnation or representative. His representative does not say anything which Kṛṣṇa Himself does not say. It is very easy to be a representative, but one cannot be a representative of Kṛṣṇa if one tries to interpret Kṛṣṇa's words in a whimsical way.

There is no authority superior to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and if we stick to this principle, we can become gurus. We don't need to change our position to become a guru. All we have to do is follow in the disciplic succession stemming from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu has advised: *āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tara' ei deśa* (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 7.128). Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed people to learn from Him and then go teach people within their own villages. One may think, "I am illiterate and have no education. I was not born in a very high family. How can I become a guru?" Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that it is not very difficult. *Yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa*: [Cc. Madhya 7.128] "Simply speak whatever Kṛṣṇa speaks. Then you become a guru." Whoever speaks what Kṛṣṇa has not spoken is not a guru but a rascal. A guru only speaks what Kṛṣṇa has spoken.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The spiritual master is a representative of Vyāsadeva and is a gosvāmé:**

One day, after finishing their morning duties by burning a sacrificial fire and offering a seat of esteem to Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī, the great sages made inquiries, with great respect, about the following matters.

**PURPORT:** The great sages offered the speaker of the *Bhāgavatam* an elevated seat of respect called the *vyāsāsana*, or the seat of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Śrī Vyāsadeva is the original spiritual preceptor for all men. And all other preceptors are considered to be his representatives. A representative is one who can exactly present the viewpoint of Śrī Vyāsadeva. Śrī Vyāsadeva impregnated the message of *Bhāgavatam* unto Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī heard it from him (Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī). All bona fide representatives of Śrī Vyāsadeva in the chain of disciplic succession are to be understood to be *gosvāmīs*. These *gosvāmīs* restrain all their senses, and they stick to the path made by the previous *ācāryas*. The *gosvāmīs* do not deliver lectures on the *Bhāgavatam* capriciously. Rather, they execute their services most carefully, following their predecessors who delivered the spiritual message unbroken to them.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.5

**The process of devotional service must be received through the bona fide Vedic system of paramparā:**

Śrī Kaśyapa Muni said: When I desired offspring, I placed inquiries before Lord Brahmā, who is born from a lotus flower. Now I shall explain to you the same process Lord Brahmā instructed me, by which Keśava, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is satisfied.

**PURPORT:** Kaśyapa Muni wanted to instruct Aditi in the same process recommended to him by Brahmā for satisfying the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is valuable. The guru does not manufacture a new process to instruct the disciple. The disciple receives from the guru an authorized process received by the guru from his guru. This is called the system of disciplic succession (*evam paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rajarṣayo viduḥ* [Bg. 4.2]). This is the bona fide Vedic system of receiving the process of devotional service, by which the Supreme Personality of Godhead is pleased. Therefore, to approach a bona fide guru, or spiritual master, is essential. The bona fide spiritual master is he who has received the mercy of his guru, who in turn is bona fide because he has received the mercy of his guru. This is called the *paramparā* system.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.16.24

**The words of the spiritual master are the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the paramparā system:**

“I cannot properly describe the discourses of Rāmānanda Rāya, for he is not an ordinary human being. He is fully absorbed in the devotional service of the Lord. There is one other thing Rāmānanda Rāya said to me. ‘Do not consider me the speaker in these talks about Kṛṣṇa. Whatever I speak is personally spoken by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Like a stringed instrument, I vibrate whatever He causes me to speak. In this way the Lord speaks through my mouth to preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Within the world, who will understand this pastime of the Lord?’”

**PURPORT:** One is forbidden to accept the guru, or spiritual master, as an ordinary human being (*guruṣu nara-matiḥ*).... A spiritually advanced person who acts with authority, as the spiritual master, speaks as the Supreme Personality of Godhead dictates from within. Thus it is not he that is personally speaking. When a pure devotee or spiritual master speaks, what he says should be accepted as having been directly spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the *paramparā* system.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 5.71-74

**The spiritual master does not deviate from the instructions of the Supreme Lord in disciplic succession:**

A bona fide spiritual master is in the disciplic succession from time eternal, and he does not deviate at all from the instructions of the Supreme Lord as they were imparted millions of years ago to the sungod.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.42



**One cannot be a bona fide spiritual master unless he has received transcendental knowledge through disciplic succession:**

Vedic transcendental knowledge descends directly from the Personality of Godhead. By His mercy, Brahmā, the first living being in the universe, was enlightened, and from Brahmājī, Nārada was enlightened, and from Nārada, Vyāsa was enlightened. Śukadeva Gosvāmī received such transcendental knowledge directly from his father, Vyāsadeva. Thus the knowledge, being received from the chain of disciplic succession, is perfect. One cannot be a spiritual master in perfection unless and until one has received the same by disciplic succession. That is the secret of receiving transcendental knowledge.

Çrēmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.25

**The two qualifications of a bona fide spiritual master—*śrotriya* à *brahma-niṣṭham*:**

The *Upaniṣads* inform us that the guru is one who has received knowledge by hearing the *Vedas*. *Śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham* [MU 1.2.12]. The *Vedas* are called *śruti*, and the bona fide guru is in the line of hearing from the disciplic succession. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.2), *evam paramparā-prāptam*. A bona fide guru does not impart some self-styled, concocted knowledge; his knowledge is standard and received from the *paramparā* system. He is also firmly fixed in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*brahma-niṣṭham*). These are his two qualifications: he must have heard the Vedic knowledge through the disciplic succession, and he must be established in service to the Supreme Lord. He does not have to be a very learned scholar, but he must have heard from the proper authority.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**The bona fide spiritual master repeats what he has heard from the disciplic succession:**

There is a standard for bona fide spiritual masters.... Who is the spiritual master? That is the next line: *śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham* [MU 1.2.12]. The word *śrotriyaṁ* refers to one who has heard from another bona fide source. A spiritual master is he who has taken the message from another qualified spiritual master. This is just like a medical man who has taken the knowledge of medical science from another medical man. Similarly, the bona fide spiritual master must come in a line of successive spiritual masters. The original spiritual master is God.... One who has heard from God explains the same message to his disciples. If the disciple doesn't change the message, he is a bona fide spiritual master.

The Science of Self-Realization

**A bona fide spiritual master is so not due to heredity, but due to following the principle of *paramparā*:**

Hiraṇyakaśipu was extremely angry and wanted to rebuke his son for deriding his teacher or spiritual master, who had been born in the *brāhmaṇa* family of the great *ācārya* Śukrācārya. The word *śukra* means “semen,” and *ācārya* refers to a teacher or guru. Hereditary gurus, or spiritual masters, have been accepted everywhere since time immemorial, but Prahlada Mahārāja declined to accept such a seminal guru or take instruction from him. An actual guru is *śrotriya*, one who has heard or received perfect knowledge through *paramparā*, the disciplic succession. Therefore Prahlāda Mahārāja did not recognize a seminal spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.31

**As a leader, the spiritual master must follow the principles of scripture:**

A teacher must follow the principles of *śāstra* (scripture) to reach the common man. The teacher cannot manufacture rules against the principles of revealed scriptures. The revealed scriptures, like *Manu-saṁhitā* and similar others, are considered the standard books to be followed by human society. Thus the leader's teaching should be based on the principles of the standard rules as they are practiced by the great teachers. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also affirms that one should follow in the footsteps of great devotees, and that is the way of progress on the path of spiritual realization. The king or the executive head of a state, the father and the school teacher are considered to be natural leaders of the innocent people in general. All such natural leaders have a great responsibility to their dependents; therefore



they must be conversant with standard books of moral and spiritual codes.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 3.21

**The spiritual master in disciplic succession scrupulously follows the conclusions of the revealed Vedic scriptures:**

On the basis of scriptures like *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* which reveal these confidential directions, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed Sanātana Gosvāmī regarding all the regular activities of a devotee.

**PURPORT:** In the *paramparā* system, the instructions taken from the bona fide spiritual master must also be based on revealed Vedic scriptures. One who is in the line of disciplic succession cannot manufacture his own way of behavior. There are many so-called followers of the Vaiṣṇava cult in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu who do not scrupulously follow the conclusions of the *śāstras*, and therefore they are considered to be *apa-sampradāya*, which means “outside of the sampradāya.”... Neither a *sādhū* (saintly person or Vaiṣṇava) nor a bona fide spiritual master says anything that is beyond the scope of sanction of the revealed scriptures. Thus the statements of the revealed scriptures correspond to those of the bona fide spiritual master and saintly persons.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 7.48

**What the guru speaks must be confirmed by sādhus (saintly persons) and sāstra (authorized scriptures):**

*Sādhū-śāstra-guru*: one has to test all spiritual matters according to the instructions of saintly persons, scriptures and the spiritual master. The spiritual master is one who follows the instructions of his predecessors, namely the *sādhū*s, or saintly persons. A bona fide spiritual master does not mention anything not mentioned in the authorized scriptures. Ordinary people have to follow the instructions of *sādhū*, *śāstra* and *guru*. Those statements made in the *śāstras* and those made by the bona fide *sādhū* or *guru* cannot differ from one another.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.16.1

**Knowledge of the science of Kṛṣṇa (not birth or social position)  
is the requirement for becoming a spiritual master**

**A person from any varēa or ācrama can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kāñēa:**

*kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya*

*yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya*

“Whether one is a brāhmaēa, a sannyāsē, or a çūdra-regardless of what he is-he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.”

**PURPORT:** This verse is very important to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that one should not think that because Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was born a *brāhmaṇa* and was situated in the topmost spiritual order as a *sannyāsī*, it was improper for Him to receive instructions from Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, who belonged to the *śūdra* caste. To clarify this matter, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu informed Rāmānanda Rāya that knowledge of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is more important than caste. In the system of *varṇāśrama-dharma* there are various duties for the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *śūdras*. Actually the *brāhmaṇa* is supposed to be the spiritual master of all other *varṇas* or sects, but as far as Kṛṣṇa consciousness is concerned, everyone is capable of becoming a spiritual master because knowledge in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is on the platform of the spirit soul. To spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one need only be cognizant of the science of the spirit soul. It does not matter whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *sannyāsī*, *gṛhastha* or whatever. If one simply understands this science, he can become a spiritual master.... If one understands the truth of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and seriously desires to attain transcendental knowledge for the perfection of life, he can accept a spiritual master from any social status, provided the spiritual master is fully conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also states that although one

is situated as a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *brahmacārī*, *vānaprastha*, *gṛhastha* or *sannyāsī*, if he is conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa he can become a spiritual master as *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *dikṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-guru*.... This injunction given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not at all against the injunctions of the *śāstras*. In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is said:

*na śūdrā bhagavad-bhaktās  
te 'pi bhāgavatottamāḥ  
sarva-varṇeṣu te śūdrā  
ye na bhaktā janārdane*

One who is actually advanced in spiritual knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is never a *śūdra*, even though he may have been born in a *śūdra* family. However, if a *vipra* or a *brāhmaṇa* is very expert in the six brahminical activities (*pañhana*, *pāṭhana*, *yajana*, *yājana*, *dāna*, *pratigraha*) and is also well versed in the Vedic hymns, he cannot become a spiritual master unless he is a Vaiṣṇava. But if one is born in the family of *caṇḍālas* yet is well versed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can become a guru.... Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world. According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's intentions: *prthivīte āche yata nagarādi-grāma/ sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult must be preached all over the world. This does not mean that people should take to His teachings and remain *śūdras* or *caṇḍālas*. As soon as one is trained as a pure Vaiṣṇava, he must be accepted as a bona fide *brāhmaṇa*. This is the essence of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instructions in this verse.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.128

### Knowledge of Kāñḍea, not birth, qualifies one as a spiritual master:

Sūta Gosvāmī did not take his birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family. He was born in a family of mixed caste, or an uncultured low family. But because of higher association, like Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī and the great ṛṣis of Naimiṣāranya, certainly the disqualification of inferior birth was washed off. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu followed this principle in pursuance of the Vedic usages, and by His transcendental association He elevated many lowborn, or those disqualified by birth or action, to the status of devotional service and established them in the position of *ācāryas*, or authorities. He clearly states that any man, whatever he may be, whether a *brāhmaṇa* or *śūdra* by birth, or a householder or mendicant in the order of society, if he is conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa, he can be accepted as an *ācārya* or guru, a spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.18.18

### Transcendental knowledge, not birth, qualifies one as a spiritual master:

Vidura, born in the womb of a *śūdra* woman, was forbidden even to be a party of royal heritage with his brothers Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pāṇḍu. Then how could he occupy the post of a preacher to instruct such learned kings and kṣatriyas as Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira? The first answer is that even though it is accepted that he was a *śūdra* by birth, because he renounced the world for spiritual enlightenment by the authority of Ṛṣi Maitreya and was thoroughly educated by him in transcendental knowledge, he was quite competent to occupy the post of an *ācārya*, or spiritual preceptor. According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, anyone who is conversant in the transcendental knowledge, or the science of Godhead, be he a *brāhmaṇa* or a *śūdra*, a householder or a *sannyāsī*, is eligible to become a spiritual master.

Even in the ordinary moral codes (maintained by Cāṇakya Paṇḍita, the great politician and moralist) there is no harm in taking lessons from a person who may be by birth less than a *śūdra*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.13.15

**Regardless of social position, if one is advanced in Kāñĕa consciousness, he may become a spiritual master:**

Cāṇakya Paṇḍita advises, *nīcāḁ apy uttamaṁ jñānam*: **one may accept education from a member of a lower social order.** The *brāhmaṇas*, the members of the most elevated *varṇa*, are teachers, but a person in a lower family, such as a family of *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* or even *śūdras*, may be accepted as a teacher if he has knowledge. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu approved of this when He expressed this opinion before Rāmānanda Rāya (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.128): *kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya/yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*. It does not matter whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, *śūdra*, *gṛhastha* or *sannyāsī*. These are all material designations. A spiritually advanced person has nothing to do with such designations. Therefore, if one is advanced in the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, regardless of his position in human society, he may become a spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.33

**Knowledge of the science of Kāñĕa, not material identity, is the qualification to become a guru:**

Being the wife of a great yogī, Devahūti understood her constitutional position; therefore she is placing her problem before her son, Kapiladeva, an incarnation of God. Although Kapiladeva is her son, Devahūti does not hesitate to take instructions from Him. She does not say, “Oh, He is my son. What can He tell me? I am His mother, and I shall instruct Him.” Instruction has to be taken from one who is in knowledge. It doesn’t matter what his position is, whether he is a son, a boy, a *śūdra*, *brāhmaṇa*, *sannyāsī* or *gṛhastha*. One should simply learn from one who knows.... This is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s teaching. Whoever is qualified in Kṛṣṇa consciousness can become a guru. His family or material identity does not matter. He simply must know the science. When we consult an engineer, a doctor or a lawyer, we do not ask whether he is a *brāhmaṇa* or a *śūdra*. If he is qualified, he can help with a particular subject. Similarly, if one knows the science of Kṛṣṇa, he can be a guru. Devahūti was taking lessons from her son because He knew the science of Kṛṣṇa.... Thus it is not birth that is important, but qualification. Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted everyone in India to know the science of Kṛṣṇa and preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is very simple. We need only repeat what Kṛṣṇa has said or what has been said about Kṛṣṇa in the Vedic literatures.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**Knowledge of the science of Kāñĕa, not birth or social position, is the qualification to become a bona fide spiritual master:**

Whatever position one may have, if he is fully conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he can become a bona fide spiritual master, initiator or teacher of the science. In other words, one can become a bona fide spiritual master if he has sufficient knowledge of the science of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The position does not depend on a particular position in society or on birth. This is the conclusion of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and it is in accordance with the Vedic injunctions. On the strength of this conclusion, Lord Caitanya, previously known as Visvambhara, accepted a spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, who was a *sannyāsī*. Similarly, Lord Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Ācārya also accepted another *sannyāsī* as Their spiritual master, Mādhavendra Purī.... Similarly, another great *ācārya*, Śrī Rasikānanda, accepted Śrī Śyāmānanda as his spiritual master, although he was not born of a *brāhmaṇa* family. So also Gangā-nārāyaṇa Cakravartī accepted Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura as spiritual master. In ancient days there was even a hunter named Dharma, who became a spiritual master for many people.... All *śāstric* injunctions, as well as the versions of great sages and authorities, establish that a bona fide spiritual master is not necessarily a *brāhmaṇa*. The only qualification is that he be conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That alone makes one perfectly eligible to become a spiritual master. This is the conclusion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His discussions with Rāmānanda Rāya.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**The Hari-bhakti-vilāsa injunction to accept a bona fide brāhmaëa spiritual master before a bona fide çüdra spiritual master is only applicable to those who consider social status more important than spiritual status:**

In the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* it is stated that if one bona fide spiritual master is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family and another, who is also qualified, is born in a *śūdra* family, one should accept the one who is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family. This statement serves as a social compromise, but it has nothing to do with spiritual understanding. This injunction is only applicable for those who consider social status more important than spiritual status. It is not for people who are spiritually serious. A serious person would accept Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instruction that anyone-regardless of his position-conversant with Kṛṣṇa science must be accepted as the spiritual master.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**A spiritual master must know the conclusion of the Vedas—the science of Kāñëa:**

The main qualification of a *brāhmaṇa* is to be inclined to the Vedic wisdom.... A real *brāhmaṇa* is the natural teacher or spiritual master. Unless one has Vedic knowledge, one cannot become a spiritual master. The perfect knowledge of the *Vedas* is to know the Lord, the Personality of Godhead, and that is the end of Vedic knowledge, or *Vedānta*. One who is situated in the impersonal Brahman and has information of the Supreme Personality of Godhead may become a *brāhmaṇa*, but he cannot become a spiritual master. It is said in the *Padma Purāṇa*:

ṣaṭ-karma-nipuṇo vipro  
mantra-tantra-viśāradaḥ  
avaiṣṇavo gurur na syād  
vaiṣṇavaḥ śva-ṇaco guruḥ

An impersonalist can become a qualified brāhmaëa, but he cannot become a spiritual master unless and until he is promoted to the stage of a Vaiṣṇava, or a devotee of the Personality of Godhead. Lord Caitanya, the great authority of Vedic wisdom in the modern age, stated:

kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya  
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya

A person may be a brāhmaëa or a çüdra or a sannyāsë, but if he happens to be well versed in the science of Kṛṣṇa, then he is fit to become a spiritual master. (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 8.128) The qualification, then, of a spiritual master is not to be a qualified *brāhmaṇa*, but to be well versed in the science of Kṛṣṇa.

One who is conversant with Vedic wisdom is a *brāhmaṇa*. And only a *brāhmaṇa* who is a pure Vaiṣṇava and knows all the intricacies of the science of Kṛṣṇa can become a spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.6.30

## The spiritual master must be learned in the Vedic literature

**The spiritual master must be well versed in Vedic literature:**

The sages said: ... You are well versed in all the scriptures famous for religious life, and in the Purāëas and the histories as well, for you have gone through them under proper guidance and have also explained them.

**PURPORT:** [The spiritual master must] be well versed in all revealed scriptures or in the *Vedas*. The *Purāṇas* are also parts of the *Vedas*. And histories like the *Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyaṇa* are also parts of the *Vedas*. The *ācārya* or the *gosvāmī* must be well acquainted with all these literatures.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.6

**The spiritual master must be well versed in the authorized scriptures (and thus be able to answer all the disciple's inquiries):**

In the process of devotional service, the first step is to take shelter of the spiritual master and then inquire from the spiritual master all about the process. This inquiry is essential for immunity to all kinds of offenses on the path of devotional service. Even if one is fixed in devotional service like Mahārāja Parikṣit, he must still inquire from the realized spiritual master all about this. In other words, the spiritual master must also be well versed and learned so that he may be able to answer all these inquiries from the devotees. Thus one who is not well versed in the authorized scriptures and not able to answer all such relevant inquiries should not pose as a spiritual master for the matter of material gain. It is illegal to become a spiritual master if one is unable to deliver his disciple.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.7

**To be accepted as an ācārya, one must understand Vedānta-sūtra:**

According to the Vedic system, the ācārya must understand *Vedānta-sūtra* (also called *Brahma-sūtra*) before he can be accepted as an ācārya. Both the *Māyāvāda sampradāya* and the *Vaiṣṇava sampradāya* have explained the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Without understanding *Vedānta-sūtra*, one cannot understand Brahman.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**One must be conversant in all systems of philosophy to sit on the vyāsāsana:**

Being the eldest learned Vedāntist, O Sūta Gosvāmī, you are acquainted with the knowledge of Vyāsadeva, who is the incarnation of Godhead, and you also know other sages who are fully versed in all kinds of physical and metaphysical knowledge.

**PURPORT:** Besides Vyāsadeva, there are other sages who are the authors of six different philosophical systems, namely Gautama, Kaṇāda, Kapila, Patañjali, Jaimini and Aṣṭāvakra. Theism is explained completely in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, whereas in other systems of philosophical speculations, practically no mention is given to the ultimate cause of all causes. One can sit on the *vyāsāsana* only after being conversant in all systems of philosophy so that one can present fully the theistic views of the *Bhāgavatam* in defiance of all other systems. Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī was the proper teacher, and therefore the sages at Naimiṣāraṇya elevated him to the *vyāsāsana*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.7

**An ācārya must know Vedānta philosophy:**

One must know very well that Vaiṣṇava philosophers are not sentimentalists or cheap devotees like the *sahajiyās*. All the *Vaiṣṇava ācāryas* were vastly learned scholars who understood *Vedānta* philosophy fully, for unless one knows *Vedānta* philosophy he cannot be an ācārya. To be accepted as an ācārya among Indian transcendentalists who follow the Vedic principles, one must become a vastly learned scholar in *Vedānta* philosophy, either by studying it or hearing it.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.102

**The spiritual master is the personification of the Vedas:**

*ācārya brahmaṇo murtiḥ*

The ācārya, the spiritual master who teaches all the Vedic knowledge and gives initiation by offering the sacred thread, is the personification of all the Vedas....

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.29



## To become a spiritual master, one must be empowered by the Lord and by his own spiritual master

Only by the Lord's order should one become spiritual master, and one should not do so for material motives:

[One] should try to cooperate with the Lord in His outward activities for correcting the fallen souls. By His order only, one should become a spiritual master and cooperate with the Lord. One should not become a spiritual master for one's personal benefit, for some material gain or as an avenue of business or occupation for earning livelihood. Bona fide spiritual masters who look unto the Supreme Lord to cooperate with Him are actually qualitatively one with the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.13.48

Unless one is favored by Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the disciplic succession, one cannot act as a spiritual master:

The Lord then replied to the Buddhist disciples: "You should all chant the names of Kṛṣṇa and Hari very loudly near the ear of your spiritual master. By this method your spiritual master will regain his consciousness." Following Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's advice, all the Buddhist disciples began to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa congregationally. When all the disciples chanted the holy names Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Hari, the Buddhist teacher regained consciousness and immediately began to chant the holy name of Lord Hari.

**PURPORT:** Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura comments that all the Buddhist disciples were actually initiated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, and when they chanted, they actually became different persons. At that time they were not Buddhists or atheists but Vaiṣṇavas. Consequently they immediately accepted Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's order. Their original Kṛṣṇa consciousness was revived, and they were immediately able to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and begin worshiping the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu.... One point to note in this regard is that the spiritual master of the Buddhists did not initiate his disciples. Rather, his disciples were initiated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and they in turn were able to initiate their so-called spiritual master. This is the *paramparā* system. The so-called spiritual master of the Buddhists was actually in the position of a disciple, and after his disciples were initiated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they acted as his spiritual masters. This was possible only because the disciples of the Buddhist *ācārya* received the mercy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Unless one is favored by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in the disciplic succession, one cannot act as a spiritual master. We should take the instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the spiritual master of the whole universe, to understand how one becomes a spiritual master and a disciple.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.59-61

By the mercy of Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu, even a lowborn person can become the spiritual master of the world:

According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's philosophy, *yei kṛṣṇa-tattva vettā, sei 'guru' haya*: [Cc. Madhya 8.128] anyone who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa can become a spiritual master, without reference to whether or not he is a *brāhmaṇa* or *sannyāsī*. Ordinary people cannot understand the essence of *śāstra*, nor can they understand the pure character, behavior and abilities of strict followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's principles. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is creating pure, exalted Vaiṣṇavas even from those born in families considered lower than those of *sūdras*.... By the grace of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, one can be completely purified, become a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and become the spiritual master of the entire world. This principle is accepted in all Vedic literature. Evidence can be quoted from authoritative *śāstras* showing how a lowborn person can become the spiritual master of the entire world. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is to be considered the most munificent personality, for He distributes the real essence of Vedic *śāstras* to anyone who becomes qualified by becoming His sincere servant.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 5.84

Any persons who see Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu, even once, become spiritual masters capable of delivering the whole world:

*strī-bāla-vṛddha, āra ‘caṇḍāla’, ‘yavana’  
yei tomāra eka-bāra pāya daraśana  
kṛṣṇa-nāma laya, nāce hañā unmatta  
ācārya ha-ila sei, tārila jagata*

“If even women, children, old men, meat-eaters or members of the lowest caste can see You even once, they immediately chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, dance like madmen and become spiritual masters capable of delivering the whole world.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 18.121-22*

Without being empowered and favored by Lord Kāñēa, no one can become a spiritual master:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura comments: “Without being empowered by the direct potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa to fulfill His desire and without being specifically favored by the Lord, no human being can become the spiritual master of the whole world. He certainly cannot succeed by mental concoction, which is not meant for devotees or religious people.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 25.9*

Characteristics of the empowered spiritual master:

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura comments: “Without being empowered by the direct potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa to fulfill His desire and without being specifically favored by the Lord, no human being can become the spiritual master of the whole world. He certainly cannot succeed by mental concoction, which is not meant for devotees or religious people. Only an empowered personality can distribute the holy name of the Lord and enjoin all fallen souls to worship Kṛṣṇa. By distributing the holy name of the Lord, he cleanses the hearts of the most fallen people; therefore he extinguishes the blazing fire of the material world. Not only that, he broadcasts the shining brightness of Kṛṣṇa’s effulgence throughout the world. Such an ācārya, or spiritual master, should be considered nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa—that is, he should be considered the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s potency. Such a personality is kāñēāliḡgita-vigraha—that is, he is always embraced by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa. Such a person is above the considerations of the varēāçrama institution. He is the guru or spiritual master for the entire world, a devotee on the topmost platform, the mahā-bhāgavata stage, and a paramaha à sa-ōhākura, a spiritual form only fit to be addressed as paramaha à sa or ōhākura.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 25.9*

Without strict obedience to one’s spiritual master, one cannot himself become a bona fide spiritual master:

One who is now the disciple is the next spiritual master. And one cannot be a bona fide and authorized spiritual master unless one has been strictly obedient to his spiritual master.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.43*

The bona fide spiritual master is he who has received the mercy of his guru:

The bona fide spiritual master is he who has received the mercy of his guru, who in turn is bona fide because he has received the mercy of his guru.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.16.24*

## The spiritual master must be a representative of Kṛṣṇa

### The spiritual master must be a representative of Kāñḍā, the original spiritual master:

[Kṛṣṇa] is the spiritual master because He originally gave the Vedic instructions to Brahmā, and presently He is also instructing the *Bhagavad-gītā* to Arjuna; therefore He is the original spiritual master, and any bona fide spiritual master at the present moment must be a descendant in the line of disciplic succession stemming from Kṛṣṇa. Without being a representative of Kṛṣṇa, one cannot become a teacher or spiritual master of transcendental subject matter.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 11.43

### The guru must be a representative of Kāñḍā:

Among all the living entities wandering throughout the universe, one who is most fortunate comes in contact with a representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus gets the opportunity to execute devotional service. Those who are sincerely seeking the favor of Kṛṣṇa come in contact with a guru, a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa. The *Māyāvādīs* indulging in mental speculation and the *karmīs* desiring the results of their actions cannot become gurus. A guru must be a direct representative of Kṛṣṇa who distributes the instructions of Kṛṣṇa without any change. Thus only the most fortunate persons come in contact with the guru. As confirmed in the Vedic literatures, *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] one has to search out a guru to understand the affairs of the spiritual world. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* also confirms this point. *Tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*: [SB 11.3.21] one who is very interested in understanding the activities in the spiritual world must search out a guru—a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa. From all angles of vision, therefore, the word guru is especially meant for the bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa and no one else. *Padma Purāṇa* states, *avaiṣṇavo gurur na syāt*: one who is not a Vaiṣṇava, or who is not a representative of Kṛṣṇa, cannot be a guru. Even the most qualified *brāhmaṇa* cannot become a guru if he is not a representative of Kṛṣṇa ... *Vaiṣṇavaḥ śva-paco guruḥ*: but a Vaiṣṇava, a bona fide representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, can become a guru, even if he is *çva-paca*, a member of a family of dog-eaters.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.17.11

### The direction of Kāñḍā and His representative, the spiritual master, are one and are free from material reaction:

Anything done under the direction of Kṛṣṇa is transcendental. It cannot be contaminated by the material reactions, which may be auspicious or inauspicious.... Therefore if we at all want our activities to be auspicious, then we should work under the directions of the Supreme Lord. Such directions are given in authoritative scripture such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*, or from a bona fide spiritual master. Because the spiritual master is the representative of the Supreme Lord, his direction is directly the direction of the Supreme Lord. The spiritual master, saintly persons and scriptures direct in the same way. There is no contradiction in these three sources. All actions done under such direction are free from the reactions of pious and impious activities of this material world.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 10.3

## The spiritual master must be a devotee of Kṛṣṇa

### A spiritual master's qualification-brahma-niṣṭham:

A spiritual master's qualification is that he is *brahma-niṣṭham*, which means that he has given up all other activities and has dedicated his life to working only for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

If one who does not have an attitude of servitorship to the Lord poses as an *ācārya*, he is an offender and is disqualified from being an *ācārya*: If one poses himself as an *ācārya* but does not have an attitude

of servitorship to the Lord, he must be considered an offender, and this offensive attitude disqualifies him from being an *ācārya*. The bona fide spiritual master always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

**The bona fide spiritual master is he who knows the science of, and is completely fixed in, bhakti-yoga:**

The bona fide spiritual master is he who knows the science of devotional service in disciplic succession. This disciplic succession is called *śrotriya*. The prime symptom of one who has become a spiritual master in disciplic succession is that he is one hundred percent fixed in *bhakti-yoga*.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

**Only a Vaiṣṇava can be a guru; the Vaiṣṇava spiritual master is automatically a brāhmaṇa:**

If one is highly qualified but is not a Vaiṣṇava, he cannot be accepted as a guru. One cannot be a *brāhmaṇa* unless one is a Vaiṣṇava. If one is a Vaiṣṇava, he is already a *brāhmaṇa*. If a guru is completely qualified as a Vaiṣṇava, he must be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa* even if he is not born in a *brāhmaṇa* family. The caste system method of distinguishing a *brāhmaṇa* by birth is not acceptable when applied to a bona fide spiritual master. A spiritual master is a qualified *brāhmaṇa* and *ācārya*. If one is not a qualified *brāhmaṇa*, he is not expert in studying Vedic literatures.... Every Vaiṣṇava is a spiritual master, and a spiritual master is automatically expert in brahminical behavior.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330

**The spiritual master must be a pure devotee, a mahā-bhāgavata, an uttama-adhikārī**

**One cannot become a spiritual master unless he is a pure devotee of the Lord:**

One who is engaged in devotional service has not the least fear in material existence. This is because the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supersoul and friend of everyone. One who knows this secret is actually educated, and one thus educated can become the spiritual master of the world....

**PURPORT:** The devotee is always engaged in the loving devotional service of the Lord. Such a person is a true guru. In *Padma Purāṇa* it is said:

ṣaṭ-karma-nipuṇo vipro  
mantra-tantra-viśāradaḥ  
avaiṣṇavo gurur na syād  
vaiṣṇavaḥ śva-pāco guruḥ

“Even if a brāhmaṇa is very learned in Vedic scriptures and knows the six occupational duties of a brāhmaṇa, he cannot become a guru or spiritual master unless he is a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. However, if one is born in a family of dog-eaters but is a pure devotee of the Lord, he can become a spiritual master.”

The conclusion is that one cannot become a spiritual master unless he is a pure devotee of the Lord.... One should therefore take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master. Success in life means accepting a spiritual master who knows Kṛṣṇa as the only supreme beloved personality.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.51

**The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service:**

The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class.... The *mahā-bhāgavata* is one who decorates his body with *tilaka* and whose name indicates him to be a servant of Kṛṣṇa by the word *dāsa*. He is also initiated by a bona fide spiritual master and is expert in worshiping the Deity, chanting *mantras*

correctly, performing sacrifices, offering prayers to the Lord, and performing *saṅkīrtana*. He knows how to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead and how to respect a Vaiṣṇava. When one has attained the topmost position of *mahā-bhāgavata*, he is to be accepted as a guru and worshiped exactly like Hari, the Personality of Godhead. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of a guru.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330

**Only an *uttama-adhikārē* can become a spiritual master; symptoms of the *uttama-adhikārē*:**

One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*.... The *uttama-adhikārī*, or highest devotee, is one who is very advanced in devotional service. An *uttama-adhikārī* is not interested in blaspheming others, his heart is completely clean, and he has attained the realized state of unalloyed Kṛṣṇa consciousness. According to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the association and service of such a *mahā-bhāgavata*, or perfect Vaiṣṇava, are most desirable.... Out of many [bona fide] Vaiṣṇavas, one may be found to be very seriously engaged in the service of the Lord and strictly following all the regulative principles, chanting the prescribed number of rounds on *japa* beads and always thinking of how to expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Such a Vaiṣṇava should be accepted as an *uttama-adhikārī*, a highly advanced devotee, and his association should always be sought.... When a person realizes himself to be an eternal servitor of Kṛṣṇa, he loses interest in everything but Kṛṣṇa's service. Always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, devising means by which to spread the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, he understands that his only business is in spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. Such a person is to be recognized as an *uttama-adhikārī*, and his association should be immediately accepted according to the six processes (*dadāti pratigṛhṇāti*, etc.). Indeed, the advanced *uttama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava devotee should be accepted as a spiritual master.... Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has given some practical hints to the effect that an *uttama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava can be recognized by his ability to convert many fallen souls to Vaiṣṇavism.

NOI Text 5

**It is better for a disciple to accept an *uttama-adhikārē*, rather than a *kaniñḥa*- or *madhyama-adhikārē*, as a spiritual master:**

One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance. Therefore a disciple should be careful to accept an *uttama-adhikārī* as a spiritual master.

NOI Text 5

## The spiritual master is a confidential servitor of Kṛṣṇa

**The spiritual master is engaged in the Lord's most confidential service of delivering all the conditioned souls:**

The spiritual master, the servant of God, is engaged in the most confidential service of the Lord, namely delivering all the conditioned souls from the clutches of *māyā*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.11

**The guru is the confidential servant of Kāñḍea because he tells people to surrender to Kāñḍea:**

Being the most confidential servant of Kṛṣṇa, the guru is very dear to Kṛṣṇa; therefore if he recommends someone to Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa accepts the person. The guru is the confidential servant of Kṛṣṇa because he canvasses from door to door, saying, "Please become Kṛṣṇa conscious and surrender unto Kṛṣṇa." Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that such a person is very dear to Him.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti



**The spiritual master is very dear to Kāñḍa because he is prepared to go anywhere to render the confidential service of preaching Kṛīḥa consciousness:**

The spiritual master is kind in that he begs from door to door, country to country, town to town: “My dear ladies and gentlemen, my dear boys and girls, please take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” In this way he renders very confidential service to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord who gives the orders, and the spiritual master executes those orders; therefore the spiritual master is very dear to Kṛṣṇa. Whether Kṛṣṇa sends him to heaven or to hell makes no difference to him. For the spiritual master, a pure devotee, heaven and hell are both the same if there is no Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In hell people are suffering in so many ways, and in heaven they are enjoying their senses in so many ways, but a devotee of the Lord can live any place where there is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and since he brings this consciousness with him, he is always self-satisfied. If he is sent to hell, he will be satisfied simply chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. In fact, he does not believe in hell but in Kṛṣṇa. Similarly if he were put in heaven, where there are so many opportunities for sense gratification, he would also remain aloof, for his senses are satisfied by Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus for the service of the Lord a devotee is prepared to go anywhere, and for this reason he is very dear to Kṛṣṇa.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The spiritual master must be able to free his disciples from birth and death and lead them back to Godhead**

**The spiritual master must be able to save his dependent disciple from birth and death:**

*gurur na sa syāt svajano na sa syāt  
pitā na sa syāj janani na sā syāt  
daivaṁ na tat syān na patiś ca sa syān  
na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum*

One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother or a worshipable demigod.

**PURPORT:** There are many spiritual masters, but Rṣabhadeva advises that one should not become a spiritual master if he is unable to save his disciple from the path of birth and death. Unless one is a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa, he cannot save himself from the path of repeated birth and death. *Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna*. One can stop birth and death only by returning home, back to Godhead. However, who can go back to Godhead unless he understands the Supreme Lord in truth? *Janma karma ca me divyam evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ* [Bg. 4.9].

We have many instances in history illustrating Rṣabhadeva's instructions. Śukrācārya was rejected by Bali Mahārāja due to his inability to save Bali Mahārāja from the path of repeated birth and death. Śukrācārya was not a pure devotee, he was more or less inclined to fruitive activity, and he objected when Bali Mahārāja promised to give everything to Lord Viṣṇu....

Ordinarily, the spiritual master, husband, father, mother or superior relative accepts worship from an inferior relative, but here Rṣabhadeva forbids this. First the father, spiritual master or husband must be able to release the dependent from repeated birth and death. If he cannot do this, he plunges himself into the ocean of reproachment for his unlawful activities. Everyone should be very responsible and take charge of his dependents just as a spiritual master takes charge of his disciple or a father takes charge of his son. All these responsibilities cannot be discharged honestly unless one can save the dependent from repeated birth and death.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.18

**One should not become a guru unless he can take the disciple back home, back to Godhead:**

According to *śāstra*, the duty of the guru is to take the disciple back home, back to Godhead. If he is

unable to do so and instead hinders the disciple in going back to Godhead, he should not be a guru. *Gurur na sa syāt* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.18). One should not become a guru if he cannot enable his disciple to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The goal of life is to become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa so that one may be freed from the bondage of material existence (*tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna* [Bg. 4.9]). The spiritual master helps the disciple attain this stage by developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.20.1

### **The spiritual master must be able to lead his disciple back to Godhead:**

The training of devotional service for a neophyte devotee completely depends on the expert spiritual master who knows how to lead his disciple to make gradual progress towards the path back home, back to Godhead. One should not become a pseudo spiritual master as a matter of business to meet one's family expenditures; one must be an expert spiritual master to deliver the disciple from the clutches of impending death.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.22

### **The bona fide spiritual master is one who trains his disciple to worship Vāsudeva:**

Kaśyapa Muni advised his wife to seek shelter at the lotus feet of Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa, so that all her problems would be very easily solved. Thus Kaśyapa Muni was an ideal spiritual master. He was not so foolish that he would present himself as an exalted personality, as good as God. He was actually a bona fide guru because he advised his wife to seek shelter at the lotus feet of Vāsudeva. One who trains his subordinate or disciple to worship Vāsudeva is the truly bona fide spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.16.20

### **The spiritual master must be able to engage his disciple, ultimately, in the devotional service of Lord Kāñḍa:**

A person who may be a spiritual master for others [should not] pose to be so if he is unable to engage his disciple ultimately in the transcendental loving service of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.13.2

## **The spiritual master must teach by example**

### **The spiritual master must teach by example:**

Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

**PURPORT:** People in general always require a leader who can teach the public by practical behavior. A leader cannot teach the public to stop smoking if he himself smokes. Lord Caitanya said that a teacher should behave properly even before he begins teaching. One who teaches in that way is called *ācārya*, or the ideal teacher.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 3.21

### **The spiritual master must teach by example, otherwise no one will follow:**

Although He has no obligatory duty, still [the Lord] does everything so that others may follow. That is the way of factual teaching; one must act properly himself and teach the same to others, otherwise no one will accept one's blind teaching.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.10.36

### **The guru does not instruct his disciples without acting accordingly himself:**

Thus once upon a time the forefather of living entities and the father of religiousness, Lord Brahmā, situated himself in acts of regulative principles, desiring self-interest for the welfare of all living entities.

**PURPORT:** One cannot be situated in an exalted position without having undertaken a regulative life of rules and regulations. An unrestricted life of sense gratification is animal life, and Lord Brahmā, in order to teach all concerned within the jurisdiction of his generations, taught the same principles of sense control for executing higher duties. He desired the welfare of all as servants of God, and anyone desiring the welfare of the members of his family and generations must conduct a moral, religious life.... The pure devotees of the Lord, like Brahmā and persons in the chain of disciplic succession, do not do anything to instruct their subordinates without acting accordingly themselves.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.40

### The spiritual master must be self-controlled

**A sober person who can control the six pushing agents is qualified to make disciples all over the world:**

*vāco vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam*

*jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam*

*etān vegān yo viśaheta dhīraḥ*

*sarvām apīmāṁ pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt*

A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger and the urges of the tongue, belly and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world.

NOI Text 1

**One who does not have full control over his senses and mind cannot become a spiritual master:**

A person who has full control over the senses and mind is called a *gosvāmī* or *gosāñi*. One who does not have such control is called *godāsa*, or a servant of the senses, and cannot become a spiritual master. A spiritual master who actually has control over the mind and senses is called *gosvāmī*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.13

**Both the guru and the disciple must be self-controlled:**

One who is not self-controlled, specifically in sex life, can become neither a disciple nor a spiritual master. One must have disciplinary training in controlling speaking, anger, the tongue, the mind, the belly and the genitals. One who has controlled the particular senses mentioned above is called a *gosvāmī*. Without becoming a *gosvāmī* one can become neither a disciple nor a spiritual master. The so-called spiritual master without sense control is certainly the cheater, and the disciple of such a so-called spiritual master is the cheated.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.43

### The spiritual master's body is spiritual

**The body of the spiritual master is spiritual:**

The material body certainly consists only of material elements, but when one awakens to Kṛṣṇa conscious understanding, the body is no longer material but spiritual. The material body is meant for sense enjoyment, whereas the spiritual body engages in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. Therefore, a devotee who engages in the service of the Supreme Lord and who constantly thinks of Him should never be considered to have a material body. It is therefore enjoined, *guruṣu nara-matiḥ*: one should stop thinking of the spiritual master as an ordinary human being with a material body. *Arcye viṣṇau śilā-dhīḥ*: everyone knows that the Deity in the temple is made of stone, but to think that the Deity is merely stone is an offense. Similarly, to think that the body of the spiritual master consists of material ingredients is offensive. Atheists think that devotees foolishly worship a stone statue as God

and an ordinary man as the guru. The fact is, however, that by the grace of Kṛṣṇa's omnipotence, the so-called stone statue of the Deity is directly the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the body of the spiritual master is directly spiritual. A pure devotee who is engaged in unalloyed devotional service should be understood to be situated on the transcendental platform (*sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate* [Bg. 14.26]). Let us therefore offer our obeisances unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by whose mercy so-called material things also become spiritual when they are engaged in spiritual activity.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.3.2

**The guru's body is spiritual and therefore unaffected by material conditions:**

One who is engaged in the service of the Lord (*yato bhaktir adhokṣaje* [SB 1.2.6]), without impediment and without cessation, is understood to be situated in his original, spiritual status. When one is promoted to this status, one is always happy in transcendental bliss. Otherwise, as long as one is in the bodily concept of life, one must suffer material conditions. *Janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī-duḥkha-doṣānudarśanam* [Bg. 13.9]. The body is subject to its own principles of birth, death, old age and disease, but one who is situated in spiritual life (*yato bhaktir adhokṣaje*) has no birth, no death, no old age and no disease. One may argue that we may see a person who is spiritually engaged twenty-four hours a day but is still suffering from disease. In fact, however, he is neither suffering nor diseased; otherwise he could not be engaged twenty-four hours a day in spiritual activities. The example may be given in this connection that sometimes dirty foam or garbage is seen floating on the water of the Ganges. This is called *nīra-dharma*, a function of the water. But one who goes to the Ganges does not mind the foam and dirty things floating in the water. With his hand, he pushes away such nasty things, bathes in the Ganges and gains the beneficial results. Therefore, one who is situated in the spiritual status of life is unaffected by foam and garbage-or any superficial dirty things. This is confirmed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī:

*īhā yasya harer dāsyē  
karmaṇā manasā girā  
nikhilāsv apy avasthāsu  
jīvan-muktaḥ sa ucyate*

**“A person acting in the service of Kṛṣṇa with his body, mind and words is a liberated person, even within the material world.”** (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.187)

Therefore, one is forbidden to regard the guru as an ordinary human being (*guruṣu nara-matīḥ ... nārakī saḥ*). The spiritual master, or *ācārya*, is always situated in the spiritual status of life. Birth, death, old age and disease do not affect him. According to the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, therefore, after the disappearance of an *ācārya*, his body is never burnt to ashes, for it is a spiritual body. The spiritual body is always unaffected by material conditions.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.4.20

## The ecstasy of the spiritual master

**The spiritual master feels ecstasy because he is relishing the mellows of pure devotion:**

*mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta  
vāditra-mādyan-manaso rasena  
romāñca-kampāśru-taraṅga-bhājo  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

**“Chanting the holy name, dancing in ecstasy, singing, and playing musical instruments, the spiritual master is always gladdened by the saikīrtana movement of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Because he is relishing the mellows of pure devotion within his mind, sometimes his hair stands on end, he feels**

quivering in his body, and tears flow from his eyes like waves. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master”

Śrī Śrī-gurv-aṣṭaka Verse 2 (Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura)

**The spiritual master enjoys transcendental bliss by chanting and dancing:**

*Mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta-vāditra-māḍyan-manaso rasena.* The second symptom of the guru is that he is always engaged in chanting, glorifying Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—that is his business ... the spiritual master enjoys transcendental bliss within his mind by chanting and dancing.... *Romāñca-kampāśru-taraṅga-bhājāḥ.* There are sometimes transformations of the body with spiritual symptoms—sometimes crying, sometimes the hairs standing on end. There are so many symptoms. These are natural. These symptoms are not to be imitated, but when one is spiritually advanced, they are visible.

“The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master” *Back to Godhead* magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

## Other important qualifications and characteristics of the spiritual master

**One who acts according to scripture and at the same time preaches is a bona fide spiritual master:**

“Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly. You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world.”

**PURPORT:** Sanātana Gosvāmī clearly defines herein the bona fide spiritual master of the world. The qualifications expressed in this connection are that one must act according to the scriptural injunctions and at the same time preach. One who does so is a bona fide spiritual master. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was the ideal spiritual master because he regularly chanted on his beads a prescribed number of times. Indeed, he was chanting the holy name of the Lord three hundred thousand times a day. Similarly, the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement chant a minimum of sixteen rounds a day, which can be done without difficulty, and at the same time they must preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu according to the gospel of *Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is. One who does so is quite fit to become a spiritual master for the entire world.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.102-3

**A genuine guru is one who speaks only about God and tries to get others to become devotees of God:**

**Reporter:** How can a person tell he has a genuine guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Can any of my students answer this question?

**Disciple:** Once I remember John Lennon asked you, “How will I know who is the genuine guru?” And you answered, “Just find out the one who is most addicted to Kṛṣṇa. He is genuine.”

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. The genuine guru is God’s representative, and he speaks about God and nothing else. The genuine guru is he who has no interest in materialistic life. He is after God, and God only. That is one of the tests of a genuine guru: *brahma-niṣṭham*. He is absorbed in the Absolute Truth. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* it is stated, *śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham*: [MU 1.2.12] “**The genuine guru is well versed in the scriptures and Vedic knowledge, and he is completely dependent on Brahman.**” He should know what Brahman [spirit] is and how to become situated in Brahman. These signs are given in the Vedic literature. As I said before, the real guru is God’s representative. He represents the Supreme Lord, just as a viceroy represents a king. The real guru will not manufacture anything. Everything he says is in accordance with the scriptures and the previous *ācāryas*. He will not give you a *mantra* and tell you that you will become God in six months. This is not a guru’s business. A guru’s business is to canvass everyone to become a devotee of God. That is the sum and substance of a real guru’s business. Indeed, he has no other business. He tells whomever he sees, “**Please become God conscious.**” If he canvasses somehow or other on behalf of God and tries to get everyone to become a devotee of God, he is a genuine guru.



**Reporter:** What about a Christian priest?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Christian, Muhammadan, Hindu-it doesn't matter. If he is simply speaking on behalf of God, he is a guru. Lord Jesus Christ, for instance. He canvassed people, saying, "**Just try to love God.**" Anyone-it doesn't matter-be he Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, is a guru if he convinces people to love God. That is the test. The guru never says, "I am God," or "I will make you God." The real guru says, "**I am a servant of God, and I will make you a servant of God also.**" It doesn't matter how the guru is dressed. As Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, "Whoever can impart knowledge about Kṛṣṇa is a spiritual master." A genuine spiritual master simply tries to get people to become devotees of Kṛṣṇa, or God. He has no other business.

**Reporter:** But the bad gurus...

**Śrīla Prabhupada:** And what is a "bad" guru?

**Reporter:** A bad guru just wants some money or some fame.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Well, if he is bad, how can he become a guru? [laughter.] How can iron become gold? Actually, a guru cannot be bad, for if someone is bad, he cannot be a guru. You cannot say "bad guru." That is a contradiction. What you have to do is simply try to understand what a genuine guru is. The definition of a genuine guru is that he is simply talking about God-that's all. If he's talking about some other nonsense, then he is not a guru. A guru cannot be bad. There is no question of a bad guru, any more than a red guru or a white guru. Guru means "**genuine guru.**" All we have to know is that the genuine guru is simply talking about God and trying to get people to become God's devotees. If he does this, he is genuine.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**Whoever teaches how to know and love God is a spiritual master:**

**Ms. Nixon:** How can one tell a bona fide spiritual master from a fake?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Whoever teaches how to know God and how to love Him-he is a spiritual master. Sometimes bogus rascals mislead people. "I am God," they claim, and people who do not know what God is believe them. You must be a serious student to understand who God is and how to love Him. Otherwise, you will simply waste your time. So the difference between others and us is that we are the only movement that can actually teach one how to know God and how to love Him. We are presenting the science of how one can know Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, by practicing the teachings of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. They teach us that our only business is to love God.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**A devotee perfectly qualified in chanting the holy name is fit to become a spiritual master and deliver all the people of the world:**

A bona fide spiritual master chants the holy names-*Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*-and the transcendental sound vibration enters into the ear of the disciple, and if a disciple follows in the footsteps of his spiritual master and chants the holy name with similar respect, he actually comes to worship the transcendental name. When the transcendental name is worshiped by the devotee, the name Himself spreads His glories within the heart of a devotee. When a devotee is perfectly qualified in chanting the transcendental vibration of the holy name, he is quite fit to become a spiritual master and to deliver all the people of the world.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**The spiritual master should not be proud of his position; being humble, he should preach the chanting of the Hare Kāñṛa mantra:**

"One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not ex-

pect personal honor yet is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant the holy name of the Lord.”

**PURPORT:** The grass is specifically mentioned in this verse because everyone tramples upon it yet the grass never protests. This example indicates that a spiritual master or leader should not be proud of his position; being always humbler than an ordinary common man, he should go on preaching the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu by chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa* mantra.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 17.31

**The spiritual master must be spotless in character:**

The sages said: Respected Sūta Gosvāmī, you are completely free from all vice....

**PURPORT:** A gosvāmī or the bona fide representative of Śrī Vyāsadeva must be free from all kinds of vices. The four major vices of *Kali-yuga* are (1) illicit connection with women, (2) animal slaughter, (3) intoxication, (4) speculative gambling of all sorts. A gosvāmī must be free from all these vices before he can dare sit on the *vyāsāsana*. No one should be allowed to sit on the *vyāsāsana* who is not spotless in character and who is not freed from the above-mentioned vices.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.6

**The spiritual master must be free from māyā:**

If Arjuna is on the same level with Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is not superior to Arjuna, then their relationship of instructor and instructed becomes meaningless. If both of them are deluded by the illusory energy (*māyā*), then there is no need of one being the instructor and the other the instructed. Such instruction would be useless because, in the clutches of *māyā*, no one can be an authoritative instructor.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.13

**One should take advice only from a person transcendental to the four basic defects, the spiritual master:**

Unless one can find a person transcendental to the four basic defects, one should not accept advice and become a victim of the material condition. The best process is to take the advice and instructions of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or His bona fide representative. In this way one can be happy in this life and the next.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.14.26

The qualification of a bona fide spiritual master—he must have realized the conclusion of the scriptures and be able to convince others of those conclusions:

*tasmād gururṁ prapadyeta*

*jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*

*śābde pare ca niṣṇātam*

*brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

“Any person who seriously desires to achieve real happiness must seek out a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of his spiritual master is that he must have realized the conclusion of the scriptures by deliberation and be able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, are to be understood as bona fide spiritual masters.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.21 [cited: Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.14.41]

**The spiritual master must have complete knowledge and be able to answer all inquiries from the disciple:**

For every unknown thing, we have to learn and inquire from a learned personality.... The spiritual master, therefore, must be one who is *sarva-jñā*.... Thus all inquires on God which are unknown to the

disciple may be made from the qualified spiritual master.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.4.6

**One can become a spiritual master, even if not liberated, by having full faith in Kāṇḍeya's words and following His instructions:**

A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to become illusioned, he has a tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. Consequently we have to take direction from liberated persons. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of material nature. Lord Caitanya therefore says: **“By My order you may become a spiritual master.”** One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.18.5

**Unless one has contact with a spiritual master and the Supersoul, one cannot be a spiritual master:**

Brahmā's enlightenment in knowledge was due to the Lord sitting within his heart. After being created, Brahmā could not ascertain the source of his appearance, but after penance and mental concentration he could see the source of his birth, and thus he became enlightened through the heart. The spiritual master outside and the spiritual master within are both representations of the Lord. Unless one has contact with such bona fide representations, one cannot claim to be a spiritual master.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.9.26

**One who knows that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supersoul and friend of everyone can become the spiritual master of the world:**

“One who is engaged in devotional service has not the least fear in material existence. This is because the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supersoul and friend of everyone. One who knows this secret is actually educated, and one thus educated can become the spiritual master of the world....

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.29.51

**The spiritual master need not be older than the disciple:**

The demigods continued: Do not fear criticism for being younger than us. Such etiquette does not apply in regard to Vedic mantras. Except in relationship to Vedic mantras, seniority is determined by age, but one may offer respectful obeisances even to a younger person who is advanced in chanting Vedic mantras. Therefore although you are junior in relationship to us, you may become our priest without hesitation.

**PURPORT:** It is said, *vṛddhatvam vayasā vinā*: one may be senior without being advanced in age. Even if one is not old, one gains seniority if he is senior in knowledge. Viśvarūpa was junior in relationship to the demigods because he was their nephew, but the demigods wanted to accept him as their priest, and therefore he would have to accept obeisances from them. The demigods explained that this should not be a cause for hesitation; he could become their priest because he was advanced in Vedic knowledge.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.7.33

**One should accept a spiritual master not in terms of heredity or social and ecclesiastical conventions, but in terms of genuine qualification:**

It is imperative that a serious person accept a bona fide spiritual master in terms of the *śāstric* injunctions. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī advises that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or custom-

ary social and ecclesiastical conventions. One should simply try to find a genuinely qualified spiritual master for actual advancement in spiritual understanding.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.35

### Disqualifications and qualifications for a bona fide spiritual master:

One should not accept as a spiritual master someone who is *Fool Number One*, who has no direction according to the scriptural injunctions, whose character is doubtful, who does not follow the principles of devotional service, or who has not conquered the influence of the six sense gratifying agents. The six agents of sense gratification are the tongue, the genitals, the belly, anger, the mind and words. Anyone who has practiced controlling these six is permitted to make disciples all over the world.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

### One can become a spiritual master at home by chanting Hare Kāñēa and preaching the principles of Bhagavad-gētā and Çrémad-Bhāgavatam to relatives and friends:

The brāhmaēa begged Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, “My dear Lord, kindly show me favor and let me go with You. I can no longer tolerate the waves of misery caused by materialistic life.” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, “Don’t speak like that again. Better to remain at home and chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa always. Instruct everyone to follow the orders of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as they are given in Bhagavad-gētā and Çrémad-Bhāgavatam. In this way become a spiritual master and try to liberate everyone in this land. If you follow this instruction, your materialistic life at home will not obstruct your spiritual advancement. Indeed, if you follow these regulative principles, we will again meet here, or, rather, you will never lose My company.” At whosoever’s house Śrī Caitanya accepted His alms by taking prasāda, He would convert the dwellers to His saṁkīrtana movement and advise them just as He advised the brāhmaēa named Kurma.

**PURPORT:** The cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is explained here very nicely. One who surrenders to Him and is ready to follow Him with heart and soul does not need to change his location. Nor is it necessary for one to change status. One may remain a householder, a medical practitioner, an engineer or whatever. It doesn’t matter. One only has to follow the instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and instruct relatives and friends in the teachings of *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. One has to learn humility and meekness at home, following the instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and in that way one’s life will be spiritually successful. One should not try to be an artificially advanced devotee, thinking, “I am a first-class devotee.” Such thinking should be avoided. It is best not to accept any disciples. One has to become purified at home by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and preaching the principles enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus one can become a spiritual master and be freed from the contamination of material life.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 7.126-30

### For the spiritual master to speak and disciple to hear kāñēa-kathā, both must be free from material desires:

*nivṛtta-tarṣair upagīyamānād*

*bhavauṣadhāc chrotra-mano-'bhirāmāt*

*ka uttamaśloka-guṇānavādāt*

*pumān virajyeta vinā paśu-ghnāt*

Glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is performed in the paramparā system; that is, it is conveyed from spiritual master to disciple. Such glorification is relished by those no longer interested in the false, temporary glorification of this cosmic manifestation.

**PURPORT:** For *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, topics about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there must be a speaker and a hearer, both of whom can be interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness if they are no longer interested in material topics.... For topics concerning *Uttamaśloka*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master

speaks, and the disciple hears with attention. Unless both of them are free from material desires, they cannot be interested in topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The spiritual master and disciple do not need to understand anything more than Kṛṣṇa because simply by understanding Kṛṣṇa and talking about Kṛṣṇa, one becomes a perfectly learned person (*yasmin vijñāte sarvam evaṁ vijñātām bhavati*) (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.3).

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.1.4

### The bona fide spiritual master as jagad-guru, a guru of all human beings:

The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class. The first-class devotee is the spiritual master for all kinds of people. It is said: *gurur nṛṇām*. The word *nṛṇām* means “of all human beings.” The guru is not limited to a particular group. It is stated in the *Upadeśāmṛta* of Rūpa Gosvāmī that a guru is a *gosvāmī*, a controller of the senses and the mind. Such a guru can accept disciples from all over the world. *Prthivīm sa śiṣyāt*. This is the test of the guru.

In India there are many so-called gurus, and they are limited to a certain district or a province. They do not even travel about India, yet they declare themselves to be *jagad-guru*, gurus of the whole world. Such cheating gurus should not be accepted. Anyone can see how the bona fide spiritual master accepts disciples from all over the world.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330

### The spiritual master is naturally victorious in an argument with the disciple:

After hearing this, Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya rendered his judgment, saying, “Brahmānanda Bhāratī, I see that you are victorious.” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu immediately said, “I accept whatever Brahmānanda Bhāratī has said. It is quite all right with Me.” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu thus posed Himself as a disciple and accepted Brahmānanda Bhāratī as His spiritual master. He then said, “The disciple is certainly defeated in an argument with the spiritual master.”...

**PURPORT:** Brahmānanda Bhāratī admitted that when there is an argument between the spiritual master and the disciple, the spiritual master is naturally victorious, although the disciple may put forward a strong argument. In other words, it is customary that the words of the spiritual master are more worshipable than the words of a disciple.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 10.172-75

### If a spiritual master cannot direct his disciples to become free from sinful activities, he becomes responsible for their sinful acts:

If parents simply give birth to children like cats and dogs but cannot save their children from imminent death, they become responsible for the activities of their animalistic children.... Similarly, if a spiritual master cannot direct his disciple to become free of sinful activities, he becomes responsible for their sinful acts.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.20.14

### The spiritual master is a liberated soul:

Sometimes doubts arise in the minds of neophytes about whether or not the spiritual master is liberated, and sometimes neophytes are doubtful about the bodily affairs of the spiritual master. The point of liberation, however, is not to see the bodily symptoms of the spiritual master. *Jīvan-mukta* means that even though one is in the material body (there are still some material necessities since the body is material), because one is fully situated in the service of the Lord, he is to be understood to be liberated.

Liberation entails being situated in one’s own position. That is the definition in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: *muktir ... svarūpeṣa vyavasthitiḥ* [SB 2.10.6]. The *sva-rūpa*, or actual identity of the living entity, is described by Lord Caitanya. *Jīvera ‘sva-rūpa’ haya-kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’*: [Cc. Mad 20.108] the real identity



of the living entity is that he is eternally a servitor of the Supreme Lord. If someone is one hundred percent engaged in the service of the Lord, he is to be understood as liberated. One must understand whether or not he is liberated by his activities in devotional service, not by other symptoms.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.10

**The spiritual master has unlimited intelligence in guiding the disciple:**

*Agādha-dhiṣaṇam dvijam*: the *ācārya* is a perfect *brāhmaṇa* and has unlimited intelligence in guiding the activities of his disciple.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.15

**The spiritual master is always thinking of Kāñṛa's pastimes:**

*śrī-rādhikā-mādhavayor apāra  
mādhurya-līlā-guṇa-rūpa-nāmnām  
prati-kṣaṇāsvādana-lolupasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master is always thinking of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with His consort Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*. Sometimes he is thinking about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the cowherd boys. This means that he is always thinking of Kṛṣṇa engaged in some kind of pastime. *Prati-kṣaṇāsvādana-lolupasya*. *Prati-kṣaṇa* means he is thinking that way twenty-four hours a day. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

**"The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master"** *Back to Godhead* magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

**A spiritual master is recognized as such when it is seen that he has changed the character of his disciples:**

Seeing the sublime character of the prostitute, everyone glorified the influence of Haridāsa Ṭhākura and offered him obeisances.

**PURPORT:** It is said, *phalena paricīyate*: one is recognized by the results of his actions. In Vaiṣṇava society there are many types of Vaiṣṇavas. Some of them are called *gosvāmīs*, some are called *svāmīs*, some are *prabhus*, and some are *prabhupāda*. One is not recognized, however, simply by such a name. A spiritual master is recognized as an actual guru when it is seen that he has changed the character of his disciples. Haridāsa Ṭhākura actually changed the character of the professional prostitute. People greatly appreciated this, and therefore they all offered obeisances to Haridāsa Ṭhākura and glorified him.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 3.143

**The spiritual master's ultimate goal is to go to Kāñṛa's planet to serve the Lord in one of five rasas:**

*nikuñja-yūno rati-keli-siddhyai  
yā yālibhir yuktir apekṣaṇīyā  
tatrāti-dākṣyād ati-vallabhasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master's ultimate goal is that he wants to be transferred to the planet of Kṛṣṇa, where he can associate with the *gopīs* to help them serve Kṛṣṇa. Some spiritual masters are thinking of becoming assistants to the *gopīs*, some are thinking of becoming assistants to the cowherd boys, some are thinking of becoming assistants to Nanda and mother Yaśodā, and some are thinking of becoming God's servants. Some are thinking of becoming flower trees, fruit trees, calves, or cows in Vṛndāvana.

**"The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master"**  
*Back to Godhead* magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

**The qualification of an ācārya-to present himself as a servant of the Supreme and to defy atheistic imposters posing as God:**

The real qualification of an ācārya is that he presents himself as a servant of the Supreme. Such a bona fide ācārya can never support the demoniac activities of atheistic men who present themselves as God. It is the main business of an ācārya to defy such imposters posing as God before the innocent public.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 6.28*

**The relationship between guru and disciple is spiritual:**

In the material world, a servant serves the master as long as the servant is pleased and as long as the master is pleased. The servant is pleased as long as the master pays, and the master is pleased as long as the servant renders good service. However, in the spiritual world, if the servant cannot serve under certain conditions, the master is still pleased. And if the master does not pay, the servant is also pleased. That is called oneness, absolute. A guru may have hundreds of disciples, hundreds of servants, but he doesn't have to pay them. They are serving out of spiritual love, and the guru is teaching without receiving a salary. This is a spiritual relationship. There are no cheaters and cheated in such a relationship.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

#### **4. The Duties and Proper Behavior of the Spiritual Master**

**The spiritual master enlightens**

**And instructs his disciple.**

(General instructions.)

**The guru's business is to bring his disciples from darkness to light:**

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā*

*cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

**"I was born in the darkest ignorance, and my guru, my spiritual master, opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto him."**

**PURPORT:** The word *ajñāna* means "ignorance" or "darkness." If all the lights in this room immediately went out, we would not be able to tell where we or others are sitting. Everything would become confused. Similarly, we are all in darkness in this material world, which is a world of *tamas*. *Tamas* or *timira* means "darkness." This material world is dark, and therefore it needs sunlight or moonlight for illumination. However, there is another world, a spiritual world, that is beyond this darkness. That world is described by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.6):... **"That abode of Mine is not illumined by the sun or moon, nor by electricity. One who reaches it never returns to this material world."**

The guru's business is to bring his disciples from darkness to light.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The guru's business is to free the human being from suffering by rescuing him from ignorance:**

The guru's business is to see that no human being suffers in this material world. No one can claim that he is not suffering. That is not possible. In this material world, there are three kinds of suffering: *adhyātmika*, *adhibhautika*, and *adhidaivika*. These are miseries arising from the material body and mind, from other living entities, and from the forces of nature. We may suffer mental anguish, or we may suffer from other living entities-from ants or mosquitos or flies-or we may suffer due to some superior power. There may be no rain, or there may be flood. There may be excessive heat or excessive cold. So many types of suffering are imposed by nature. Thus there are three types of miseries within the mate-

rial world, and everyone is suffering from one, two, or three of them. No one can say that he is completely free from suffering.

We may then ask why the living entity is suffering. The answer is: out of ignorance. He does not think, **“I am committing mistakes and am leading a sinful life; that is why I am suffering.”** Therefore the guru’s first business is to rescue his disciple from this ignorance. We send our children to school to save them from suffering. If our children do not receive an education, we fear that they will suffer in the future. The guru sees that suffering is due to ignorance, which is compared to darkness. How can one in darkness be saved? By light. The guru takes the torchlight of knowledge and presents it before the living entity enveloped in darkness. That knowledge relieves him from the sufferings of the darkness of ignorance.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The spiritual master reveals all knowledge to the disciple:**

When, however, one is enlightened with the knowledge by which nescience is destroyed, then his knowledge reveals everything, as the sun lights up everything in the daytime.

**PURPORT:** Real knowledge can be obtained from a person who is in perfect Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, one has to seek out such a bona fide spiritual master and, under him, learn what Kṛṣṇa consciousness is. The spiritual master can drive away all nescience, as the sun drives away darkness. Even though a person may be in full knowledge that he is not this body but is transcendental to the body, he still may not be able to discriminate between the soul and the Supersoul. However, he can know everything well if he cares to take shelter of the perfect, bona fide Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master. One can know God and one’s relationship with God only when one actually meets a representative of God.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 5.16*

**The sincere disciple is blessed with spiritual realization by the spiritual master:**

*upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ*

*jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

... The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.

**PURPORT:** One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding.... A bona fide spiritual master is by nature very kind toward the disciple. Therefore when the student is submissive and is always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries becomes perfect.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.34*

**The spiritual master uses sharp words to cut the disciple’s mind from material attachments:**

If one is intelligent he will associate with those who are trying to elevate themselves to the platform of self-realization through one of the various forms of yoga. The result will be that those who are *sādhū*, or realized, will be able to sever their attachment to this material affection. Because Arjuna is attracted to things that are impeding the execution of his own duty, Kṛṣṇa severs these things. To cut something, a sharp instrument is required; and to cut the mind from its attachments, sharp words are often required. The *sādhū* or teacher shows no mercy in using sharp words to sever the student’s mind from material attractions. By speaking the truth uncompromisingly, he is able to sever the bondage. For example, at the very beginning of *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa speaks sharply to Arjuna by telling him that although he speaks like a learned man, he is actually fool number one. If we actually want detachment from this material world, we should be prepared to accept such cutting words from the spiritual master. Compromise and flattery have no effect where strong words are required.

*Perfection of Yoga*

### The guru's task is to open the disciple's eyes of knowledge:

In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that one can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead through *jñāna-cakṣuṣaḥ*, eyes of knowledge. He who opens these eyes of knowledge is called a spiritual master. Thus we offer our prayers to the spiritual master with the following *śloka*:

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā  
cakṣur unmilitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

“I offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, who with the torchlight of knowledge has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance.”

(Gautamīya-tantra)

The guru's task is to open the disciple's eyes of knowledge. When the disciple is awakened from ignorance to knowledge, he can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead everywhere.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.1.11

### The spiritual master delivers the disciple from ignorance to knowledge and freedom:

Your Lordship is my only means of getting out of this darkest region of ignorance because You are my transcendental eye, which, by Your mercy only, I have attained after many, many births.

**PURPORT:** This verse is very instructive, since it indicates the relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple. The disciple or conditioned soul is put into this darkest region of ignorance and therefore is entangled in the material existence of sense gratification. It is very difficult to get out of this entanglement and attain freedom, but if one is fortunate enough to get the association of a spiritual master like Kapila Muni or His representative then by His grace one can be delivered from the mire of ignorance. The spiritual master is therefore worshiped as one who delivers the disciple from the mire of ignorance with the light of the torch of knowledge. The word *pāra-gam* is very significant. *Pāra-gam* means one who can take the disciple to the other side. This side is conditioned life; the other side is the life of freedom. The spiritual master takes the disciple to the other side by opening his eyes with knowledge. We are suffering simply because of ignorance. By the instruction of the spiritual master, the darkness of ignorance is removed, and thus the disciple is enabled to go to the side of freedom. It is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that after many, many births one surrenders to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Similarly, if, after many, many births, one is able to find a bona fide spiritual master and surrender to such a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa, he can be taken to the side of light.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.8

### The spiritual master frees the disciple from the material concept of life:

One should know the distinction between the body, the owner of the body, and the Supersoul. A faithful person should at first have some good association to hear of God and thus gradually become enlightened. If one accepts a spiritual master, he can learn to distinguish between matter and spirit, and that becomes the stepping-stone for further spiritual realization. A spiritual master teaches his students to get free from the material concept of life by various instructions. For instance, in *Bhagavad-gītā* we find Kṛṣṇa instructing Arjuna to free him from materialistic considerations.

*Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is 13.35

### The duty of an ācārya or bona fide spiritual master is to initiate disciples and instruct them in Vedic wisdom:

The spiritual master is also called *ācārya*, or a transcendental professor of spiritual science. The *Manu-saṁhitā* (2.140) explains the duties of an *ācārya*, describing that a bona fide spiritual master accepts charge of disciples, teaches them the Vedic knowledge with all its intricacies, and gives them their second birth.... The duty of the spiritual master is to initiate a disciple with the sacred thread ceremony,

and after this *samskāra*, or purificatory process, the spiritual master actually begins to teach the disciple about the *Vedas*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

**The spiritual master dissipates the darkness of empirical knowledge:**

Gentlemen, although we are like ignorant children in the knowledge of the Transcendence, still His Divine Grace, my Gurudeva, has kindled a small fire within us to dissipate the invincible darkness of empirical knowledge. We are now so much on the safe side that no amount of philosophical argument by the empiric schools of thought can deviate us an inch from the position of our eternal dependence on the lotus feet of His Divine Grace.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**Out of kindness, the spiritual master speaks on transcendental subjects to his disciples:**

*anavratānām śiṣyānām*

*putrāṇām ca dvijottama*

*anāpṛṣṭam aṇi brūyur*

*guravo dīna-vatsalāḥ*

O best among the brāhmaṇas, those who are spiritual masters are very kind to the needy. They are always kind to their followers, disciples and sons, and without being asked by them, the spiritual master describes all that is knowledge.

**PURPORT:** There are many subjects to be known from the bona fide spiritual master. The followers, disciples and sons are all on one level for the bona fide spiritual master, and he is always kind to them and always speaks to them on transcendental subjects, even though he is not asked by them. That is the nature of the bona fide spiritual master. Vidura appealed to Maitreya Muni to speak on subjects about which he might not have asked.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.7.36

**It is the right of the disciple to ask about, and the duty of the guru to explain, any confidential matter:**

A student and disciple has the right to ask the guru about any confidential service, and it is the duty of the guru to explain these confidential matters to his disciple.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.12.43

**The speaker of transcendental knowledge and the audience are very intimately connected; thus the spiritual master can speak nicely before an understanding audience:**

Falling flat at the feet of Lord Caitanya, Sanātana Gosvāmī requested Him to explain the [ātmārāma] verse as He had formerly explained it to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. Sanātana explained his eagerness to hear the same explanation in order that he might be enlightened. Being thus requested by Sanātana, the Lord replied: “I do not understand why Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya so much appreciated My explanation. As far as I am concerned, I don’t even remember what I said to him. But because you are asking this of Me, I shall, with the help of your association, try to explain whatever I can remember.” Thus the speaker and the audience are very intimately connected; the speaker is enlightened by the presence of the audience. The speaker, or master, can speak very nicely on transcendental subject matters before an understanding audience; therefore Lord Caitanya said that He did not know how to explain the Sanskrit verse but that since He was in the association of Sanātana He would try to explain it.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*



**The spiritual master must see whether the disciple understands his instructions:**

O conqueror of wealth, Arjuna, have you heard this attentively with your mind? And are your illusions and ignorance now dispelled?

**PURPORT:** The Lord was acting as the spiritual master of Arjuna. Therefore it was His duty to inquire from Arjuna whether he understood the whole *Bhagavad-gītā* in its proper perspective. If not, the Lord was ready to re-explain any point, or the whole *Bhagavad-gītā* if so required.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 18.72

**If the guru and the disciple are sincere and bona fide, the transmission and reception of spiritual knowledge will yield good results:**

If a man is potent and if a woman is not diseased, then by their conjugation there will be conception. In the same way, if the recipient of spiritual knowledge and the deliverer of spiritual knowledge are sincere and bona fide, there will be good results.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**The spiritual master should train his disciples to speak on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam:**

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu broadcast the purpose of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. He sometimes spoke for the benefit of His devotees and sometimes empowered one of His devotees to speak while He listened.

**PURPORT:** Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as an ideal teacher, or *ācārya*, explained Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam very elaborately Himself. He sometimes also empowered His devotees to speak while He listened. This is the way an *ācārya* should train his disciples. Not only should he describe the *Bhāgavata* cult personally, but he should also train his disciples to speak on this sublime subject.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 25.267

**The spiritual master should instruct his disciples (as Lord Āṇabhadeva did His sons) and continue to do so, without anger, even if the disciple sometimes cannot follow his order:**

If one is serious about going back home, back to Godhead, he must consider the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead the summum bonum and chief aim of life. If he is a father instructing his sons, a spiritual master instructing his disciples, or a king instructing his citizens, he must instruct them as I have advised. Without being angry, he should continue giving instructions, even if his disciple, son or citizen is sometimes unable to follow his order....

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.15

**The spiritual masters in the Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya should enrich their disciples with the highest devotional perfection of feeling separation from the Lord:**

The *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana were so attached to Kṛṣṇa that they were not satisfied simply with the *rāsa* dance at night. They wanted to associate with Him and enjoy His company during the daytime also. When Kṛṣṇa went to the forest with His cowherd boyfriends and cows, the *gopīs* did not physically take part, but their hearts went with Him. And because their hearts went, they were able to enjoy His company through strong feelings of separation. To acquire this strong feeling of separation is the teaching of Lord Caitanya and His direct disciplic succession of Gosvāmīs. When we are not in physical contact with Kṛṣṇa, we can associate with Him like the *gopīs*, through feelings of separation. Kṛṣṇa's transcendental form, qualities, pastimes, and entourage are all identical with Him. There are nine different kinds of devotional service. Devotional service to Kṛṣṇa in feelings of separation elevates the devotee to the highest perfectional level, to the level of the *gopīs*.... Those who are in the disciplic succession of the *Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya* should also feel the separation of Kṛṣṇa, worship His transcendental form, and discuss His transcendental teachings, His pastimes, His qualities, His entourage and His associations. The spiritual master should enrich the devotees to the highest devotional perfection. Feeling

constant separation while engaged in the service of the Lord is the perfection of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

## The spiritual master enlightens and instructs his disciple.

(What the spiritual master teaches his disciples.)

**The disciple should try to understand from the guru what is the self, the universe, God, and our relationship with God:**

Sitting at the feet of the *Ācāryadeva*, let us try to understand from this transcendental source of knowledge what we are, what is this universe, what is God, and what is our relationship with Him.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The spiritual master teaches his disciple about the relation between God and the living entity and the process of devotional service:**

What are the truths regarding the living entities and the Supreme Personality of Godhead? What are their identities? What are the specific values in the knowledge of the Vedas, and what are the necessities for the spiritual master and his disciples?

**PURPORT:** In order to elevate the living entity to [the] standard of knowledge, there is the necessity of spiritual association. The bona fide spiritual master desires that his disciples know the process of rendering transcendental service to the Lord, and the disciples also know that they have to learn about the eternal relationship between God and the living entity from a self-realized soul.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.7.38

**A bona fide spiritual master speaks about the Lord's external activities (creation) as well as His internal activities:**

A bona fide spiritual master like Śukadeva Gosvāmī does not speak about the Lord only in the matter of His internal potencies, but also explains how He associates with His external potencies. The Lord's pastimes in the internal potency are displayed in His activities in Vṛndāvana, but His external potential works are directed in His features of Kāraṇārṇavaśāyī Viṣṇu, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu and Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī offers his good counsel to the interested Vaiṣṇavas when he says that they should not be interested in hearing only about the Lord's activities (like *rāsa-līlā*), but must be keenly interested in His pastimes in His features of the *puruṣāvatara*s in connection with *sṛṣṭi-tattva*, creational functions.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.4.10

**The result of receiving knowledge from a spiritual master:**

And when you have thus learned the truth, you will know that all living beings are but part of Me-and that they are in Me, and are Mine.

**PURPORT:** The result of receiving knowledge from a self-realized soul, or one who knows things as they are, is learning that all living beings are parts and parcels of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 4.35

**The disciple must hear from his spiritual master about the transcendental qualities of pure devotees:**

Persons who hear from a spiritual master with great labor and for a long time must hear from the mouths of pure devotees about the character and activities of pure devotees. Pure devotees always think within their hearts of the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, who awards His devotees liberation.

**PURPORT:** Transcendental students are those who undergo great penance in being trained by hearing

the *Vedas* from a bona fide spiritual master. Not only must they hear about the activities of the Lord, but they must also hear about the transcendental qualities of the devotees who are constantly thinking of the lotus feet of the Lord within their hearts. A pure devotee of the Lord cannot be separated from the lotus feet of the Lord for even a moment. Undoubtedly the Lord is always within the hearts of all living creatures, but they hardly know about it because they are deluded by the illusory material energy. The devotees, however, realize the presence of the Lord, and therefore they can always see the lotus feet of the Lord within their hearts. Such pure devotees of the Lord are as glorious as the Lord; they are, in fact, recommended by the Lord as more worshipable than He Himself. Worship of the devotee is more potent than worship of the Lord. It is therefore the duty of the transcendental students to hear of pure devotees, as explained by similar devotees of the Lord, because one cannot explain about the Lord or His devotee unless one happens to be a pure devotee himself.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.13.4

### The spiritual master enlightens and instructs his disciple.

(How the spiritual master transmits knowledge to the disciple.)

**The disciple receives transcendental knowledge from the spiritual master by ardent hearing, not by electric shock:**

Śukadeva Gosvāmī imparted transcendental knowledge to Mahārāja Parīkṣit during the remaining seven days of his life, and Mahārāja Parīkṣit heard him properly, just like an ardent student. The effect of such a bona fide hearing and chanting of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was equally shared by both the hearer and the chanter. Both of them were benefited.... Transcendental realization is attained by such serious hearing and chanting and not otherwise. There is a type of spiritual master and disciple much advertised in this age of *Kali*. It is said that the master injects spiritual force into the disciple by an electric current generated by the master, and the disciple begins to feel the shock. He becomes unconscious, and the master weeps for his exhausting his store of so-called spiritual assets. Such bogus advertisement is going on in this age, and the poor common man is becoming the victim of such advertisement. We do not find such folk tales in the dealings of Śukadeva Gosvāmī and his great disciple Mahārāja Parīkṣit. The sage recited *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in devotion, and the great King heard him properly. The King did not feel any shock of electrical current from the master, nor did he become unconscious while receiving knowledge from the master. One should not, therefore, become a victim of these unauthorized advertisements made by some bogus representative of Vedic knowledge.... Ardent hearing from the bona fide master is the only way to receive transcendental knowledge, and there is no need for medical performances or occult mysticism for miraculous effects. The process is simple, but only the sincere party can achieve the desired result.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.12.3

**How the spiritual master transmits and the disciple receives transcendental knowledge:**

The system of receiving Vedic knowledge is called *avaroha-panthā*, or the process of receiving transcendental knowledge through bona fide disciplic succession. For advancement of material knowledge there is a need for personal ability and researching aptitude, but in the case of spiritual knowledge, all progress depends more or less on the mercy of the spiritual master. The spiritual master must be satisfied with the disciple; only then is knowledge automatically manifest before the student of spiritual science. The process should not, however, be misunderstood to be something like magical feats whereby the spiritual master acts like a magician and injects spiritual knowledge into his disciple, as if surcharging him with an electrical current. The bona fide spiritual master reasonably explains everything to the disciple on the authorities of Vedic wisdom. The disciple can receive such knowledge not exactly intellectually, but by submissive inquiries and a service attitude. The idea is that both the spiritual master and the disciple must be bona fide.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.10

**Transmission of knowledge from the spiritual master to the disciple is based on sense and logic, not magic:**

Service to the Lord is the completely purified use of the senses, as described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The Lord imparted instructions with full senses, and Arjuna received them with full senses, and thus there was a perfect exchange of sensible and logical understanding between the master and the disciple. Spiritual understanding is nothing like an electrical charge from the master to the disciple, as foolishly claimed by some propaganda-mongers. Everything is full of sense and logic, and the exchange of views between the master and disciple is possible only when the reception is submissive and real. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is said that one should receive the teachings of Lord Caitanya with intellect and full senses so that one can logically understand the great mission.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.20

**The spiritual master enlightens and instructs his disciple.**

(The spiritual master can enlighten even an unintelligent or dull-headed disciple.)

**However unintelligent one may be, by the grace of the spiritual master one can understand knowledge of the Absolute Truth:**

My dear son, Kapila, after all, I am a woman. It is very difficult for me to understand the Absolute Truth because my intelligence is not very great. But if You will kindly explain it to me, even though I am not very intelligent, I can understand it and thereby feel transcendental happiness.

**PURPORT:** Knowledge of the Absolute Truth is not very easily understood by ordinary, less intelligent men; but if the spiritual master is kind enough to the disciple, however unintelligent he may be, then by the divine grace of the spiritual master everything is revealed.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.25.30

**The pure devotee spiritual master can enlighten even a dull-headed disciple:**

It is not at all wonderful that simply by being covered by the dust of your lotus feet, one immediately attains the platform of pure devotional service to Adhokṣaja, which is not available even to great demigods like Brahmā. By associating with you just for a moment, I am now freed from all argument, false prestige and lack of discrimination, which are the roots of entanglement in the material world. Now I am free from all these problems.

**PURPORT:** Association with pure devotees certainly frees one from the material clutches. This is certainly true of King Rahūgaṇa's association with Jaḍa Bharata. King Rahūgaṇa was immediately freed from the misgivings of material association. The arguments offered by pure devotees to their disciples are so convincing that even a dull-headed disciple is immediately enlightened with spiritual knowledge.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.13.22

**The spiritual master engages his disciple in devotional service**

**The spiritual master's concern-how his surrendered disciples may make progress in devotional service:**

The Lord, being full and free from problems, can wholeheartedly care for His devotees. His concern is how to elevate and protect all those who have taken shelter at His feet. The same responsibility is also entrusted to the spiritual master. The bona fide spiritual master's concern is how the devotees who have surrendered to him as a representative of the Lord may make progress in devotional service. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is always mindful of the devotees who fully engage in cultivating knowledge of Him, having taken shelter at His lotus feet.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 1.61

**To achieve success in devotional service, one must be directed by a bona fide spiritual master:**

A devotee must know what Kṛṣṇa wants him to do. This can be achieved through the medium of the

spiritual master who is a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises, *ādau gurv-āśrayam*. One who is serious in wanting to render pure devotional service to the Lord must take shelter of the spiritual master who comes in the disciplic succession from Kṛṣṇa. *Evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ* [Bg. 4.2]. Without accepting a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, one cannot find out the real purpose of devotional service. Therefore one has to accept the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and agree to be directed by him. The first business of a pure devotee is to satisfy his spiritual master, whose only business is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*: if one can satisfy the spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa is automatically satisfied. This is the success of devotional service.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.167

**The spiritual master trains and engages the disciple according to his ability:**

TRANSLATION I have fortunately been instructed by you, and thus great favor has been bestowed upon me. I thank God that I have listened with open ears to your pure words.

PURPORT: Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has given directions, in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, on how to accept a bona fide spiritual master and how to deal with him. First, the desiring candidate must find a bona fide spiritual master, and then he must very eagerly receive instructions from him and execute them. This is reciprocal service.... a bona fide spiritual master knows the nature of a particular man and what sort of duties he can perform in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he instructs him in that way. He instructs him through the ear, not privately, but publicly. **“You are fit for such and such work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You can act in this way.”** One person is advised to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by working in the Deities’ room, another is advised to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by performing editorial work, another is advised to do preaching work, and another is advised to carry out Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the cooking department. There are different departments of activity in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and a spiritual master, knowing the particular ability of a particular man, trains him in such a way that by his tendency to act he becomes perfect. *Bhagavad-gītā* makes it clear that one can attain the highest perfection of spiritual life simply by offering service according to his ability, just as Arjuna served Kṛṣṇa by his ability in the military art. Arjuna offered his service fully as a military man, and he became perfect. Similarly, an artist can attain perfection simply by performing artistic work under the direction of the spiritual master. If one is a literary man, he can write articles and poetry for the service of the Lord under the direction of the spiritual master. One has to receive the message of the spiritual master regarding how to act in one’s capacity, for the spiritual master is expert in giving such instructions.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.22.7

**It is the duty of the spiritual master to train a disciple in a particular occupational duty, according to his psychological nature:**

Unless a child is trained according to his tendency, there is no possibility of his developing his particular spirit. It [is] the duty of the spiritual master or teacher to observe the psychological movement of a particular boy and thus train him in a particular occupational duty.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.36

**The spiritual master should train his disciple to love Kāñḍā:**

The spiritual master should train his disciple in such a way so that in the future only the Supreme Personality of Godhead will be the dearmost goal of his life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.32.42

**It is the duty of the spiritual master to find the ways and means for his disciple to fix his mind on Kāñḍā:**

As a man’s mental disease is cured by the directions of a psychiatrist, so *sādhana-bhakti* cures the conditioned soul of his madness under the spell of *māyā*, material illusion.



Nārada mentions this *sādhana-bhakti* in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Seventh Canto, 1st Chapter, 30th verse. He says there to King Yudhiṣṭhira: “My dear King, one has to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa by any means.” That is called Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It is the duty of the *ācārya*, the spiritual master, to find the ways and means for his disciple to fix his mind on Kṛṣṇa. That is the beginning of *sādhana-bhakti*.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**The spiritual master elevates the disciple to ecstatic love of Godhead by engaging him in the regulative principles of devotional service:**

In the beginning a devotee is engaged in the regulative principles of devotional service by the order of his spiritual master. When one thereby becomes completely purified of all material contamination, there develops an attachment and taste for devotional service. This taste and attachment, when gradually intensified in the course of time, becomes love.... Ecstatic love of Godhead can be potently invoked simply by following the rules and regulations of devotional service as they are prescribed in scriptures, under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**Devotional service performed with the mind and body must be directed by the spiritual master:**

Those who are cultivating spiritual life and executing devotional service are always engaged in activity. Such activity can be performed with the body or with the mind. Thinking, feeling and willing are all activities of the mind, and when we will to do something, the activity comes to be manifest by the gross bodily senses. Thus, in our mental activities we should always try to think of Kṛṣṇa and try to plan how to please Him, following in the footsteps of the great *ācāryas* and the personal spiritual master.... This is the mental culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Similarly, we can offer many services with our bodily activities. But all such activities must be in relationship with Kṛṣṇa. This relationship is established by connecting oneself with the bona fide spiritual master who is the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa in disciplic succession. Therefore, the execution of Kṛṣṇa conscious activities with the body should be directed by the spiritual master and then performed with faith.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**The spiritual master directs the devotee in what should be accepted or rejected in the execution of devotional service:**

One should not give up anything which can be utilized in the service of the Lord. That is a secret of devotional service. Anything that can be utilized in advancing Kṛṣṇa consciousness and devotional service should be accepted.... Our vision is that Kṛṣṇa is everything. Kṛṣṇa is the cause and effect, and nothing belongs to us. Kṛṣṇa's things must be used in the service of Kṛṣṇa. That is our vision.

This does not mean, however, that we should give up the principles of discharging devotional service or neglect abiding by the rules and regulations prescribed therein. In the neophyte stage of devotion one must follow all the principles, regulated by the authority of the spiritual master. The acceptance and rejection of things should always be in pursuance of the devotional principles; not that one can independently manufacture some idea of what should be accepted or rejected. The spiritual master as the visible manifestation of Kṛṣṇa is necessary, therefore, to direct the devotee on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**Although the spiritual master can immediately bless the disciple, his duty is to engage the disciple in devotional discipline:**

The great sage Nārada told Dhruva Mahārāja: The instruction given by your mother, Sunīti, to follow the path of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is just suitable for you. You

should therefore completely absorb yourself in the devotional service of the Lord.

**PURPORT:** Nārada Muni is referred to here as bhagavān because he can bless any person just as the Supreme Personality of Godhead can. He was very pleased with Dhruva Mahārāja, and he could have at once personally given whatever he wanted, but that is not the duty of the spiritual master. His duty is to engage the disciple in proper devotional service as prescribed in the *śāstras*. Kṛṣṇa was similarly present before Arjuna, and even though He could have given him all facilities for victory over the opposing party without a fight, He did not do so; instead He asked Arjuna to fight. In the same way, Nārada Muni asked Dhruva Mahārāja to undergo devotional discipline in order to achieve the desired result.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.40

**How the guru and Kāñēa together help the serious devotee return back home, back to Godhead:**

O Lord, who resemble the shining sun, You are always ready to fulfill the desire of Your devotee, and therefore You are known as a desire tree [*vāñchā-kalpataru*]. When ācāryas completely take shelter under Your lotus feet in order to cross the fierce ocean of nescience, they leave behind on earth the method by which they cross, and because You are very merciful to Your other devotees, You accept this method to help them.

**PURPORT:** This statement reveals how the merciful ācāryas and the merciful Supreme Personality of Godhead together help the serious devotee who wants to return home, back to Godhead.... One can achieve the seed of *bhakti-latā*, devotional service, by the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. The duty of the guru is to find the means, according to the time, the circumstances and the candidate, by which one can be induced to render devotional service, which Kṛṣṇa accepts from a candidate who wants to be successful in going back home, back to Godhead. After wandering throughout the universe, a fortunate person within this material world seeks shelter of such a guru, or ācārya, who trains the devotee in the suitable ways to render service according to the circumstances so that the Supreme Personality of Godhead will accept the service. This makes it easier for the candidate to reach the ultimate destination. The ācārya's duty, therefore, is to find the means by which devotees may render service according to references from *śāstra*.... The ācārya gives the suitable method for crossing the ocean of nescience by accepting the boat of the Lord's lotus feet, and if this method is strictly followed, the followers will ultimately reach the destination, by the grace of the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.31

**It is the duty of the spiritual master to prevent his disciples from violating the principles of Vaiñēava behavior:**

It is the duty of a Vaiṣṇava ācārya to prevent his disciples and followers from violating the principles of Vaiṣṇava behavior. He should always advise them to strictly follow the regulative principles, which will protect them from falling down.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 13.133

**The spiritual master must elevate the disciple from karmic activity to devotional service:**

... Ignorant people who engage in pious and impious activities should be engaged in devotional service by all means. They should always avoid fruitive activity. If one puts into the bondage of *karmic* activity his disciple, son or citizen who is bereft of transcendental vision, how will one profit? It is like leading a blind man to a dark well and causing him to fall in.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.15

**Under the direction of the spiritual master, the disciple must engage his body, mind and words in the service of the Lord:**

One must accept a spiritual master who comes in the disciplic succession and is a servant of the servant

of the Lord [Cc. Mad 13.80]. Under his direction, one must then engage one's three properties, namely body, mind and words. The body should be engaged in physical activity under the order of the master, the mind should think of Kṛṣṇa incessantly, and one's words should be engaged in preaching the glories of the Lord. If one is thus engaged in the loving service of the Lord, one's life is successful.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.11.24

**Under the guidance of the spiritual master, the disciple becomes convinced about his relationship with Kāñēa (sambandha), acts accordingly (abhidheya) and attains the ultimate goal of life (prayojana-siddhi):**

"It is only by devotional service, beginning with hearing, that one can approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the only means to approach Him. By practicing this regulated devotional service under the direction of the spiritual master, certainly one awakens his dormant love of Godhead. This process is called *abhidheya*."

**PURPORT:** By the practice of devotional service, beginning with hearing and chanting, the impure heart of a conditioned soul is purified, and thus he can understand his eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That eternal relationship is described by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Jīvera 'svarūpa' haya-kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*: [Cc. Mad 20.108] the living entity is an eternal servitor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. When one is convinced about this relationship, which is called *sambandha*, he then acts accordingly. That is called *abhidheya*. The next step is *prayojana-siddhi*, or fulfillment of the ultimate goal of one's life. If one can understand his relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and act accordingly, automatically his mission in life is fulfilled.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā. 7.141-42

## The spiritual master frees the disciple from material existence

**Bringing mercy from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master extinguishes the blazing fire of material existence:**

This forest fire of material existence goes on perpetually, and the authorized person who can deliver you from this fire is called guru, the spiritual master.

How does he deliver you? What is his means? Consider the same example. When there is a fire in the forest, you cannot send a fire brigade or go there yourself with bucketfuls of water to extinguish it. That is not possible. Then how will it be extinguished? You need water to extinguish fire, but where will the water come from—from your bucket or your fire brigade? No, it must come from the sky. Only when there are torrents of rain from the sky will the blazing forest fire be extinguished. These rains from the sky do not depend on your scientific propaganda or manipulation. They depend on the mercy of the Supreme Lord. So the spiritual master is compared to a cloud. Just as there are torrents of rain from a cloud, so the spiritual master brings mercy from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A cloud takes water from the sea. It doesn't have its own water, but takes water from the sea. Similarly, the spiritual master brings mercy from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Just see the comparison. He has no mercy of his own, but he carries the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the qualification of the spiritual master.

The spiritual master will never say, "I am God-I can give you mercy." No. That is not a spiritual master—that is a bogus pretender. The spiritual master will say, "I am a servant of God; I have brought His mercy. Please take it and be satisfied." This is the spiritual master's business. He is just like a mailman. When a mailman delivers you some large amount of money, it is not his own money. The money is sent by someone else, but he honestly delivers it—"Sir, here is your money. Take it." So you become very much satisfied with him, although it is not his money he is giving you. When you are in need and you get money from your father or someone else-brought by the mailman-you feel very much satisfaction.

Similarly, we are all suffering in this blazing fire of material existence. But the spiritual master brings the message from the Supreme Lord and delivers it to you, and if you kindly accept it, then you'll be satisfied. This is the business of the spiritual master.

samsāra-dāvānala-līḍha-loka-  
trāṇāya kārūṇya-ghanāghanatvam  
prāptasya kalyāṇa-guṇārṇavasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam

Thus the spiritual master is offered obeisances: “Sir, you have brought mercy from the Supreme Lord; therefore, we are much obliged to you. You have come to deliver us, so we offer our respectful obeisances.” That is the meaning of this verse: the first qualification of the spiritual master, or guru, is that he brings you the message to stop the blazing fire in your heart. This is the test.

“The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master”  
Back to Godhead magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

**The spiritual master extinguishes the blazing fire of material existence (by injecting transcendental knowledge):**

Material existence is something like a blazing fire in the forest, which can be extinguished by the mercy of the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master is the mercy representative of the Lord. Therefore, a person burning in the flames of material existence may receive the rains of mercy of the Lord through the transparent medium of the self-realized spiritual master. The spiritual master, by his words, can penetrate into the heart of the suffering person and inject knowledge transcendental, which alone can extinguish the fire of material existence.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.22

**The guru descends not to meddle with the affairs of the mundane world but to deliver the fallen, conditioned souls:**

The ācārya has been identified with God Himself. He has nothing to do with the affairs of this mundane world. He does not descend here to meddle with the affairs of temporary necessities, but to deliver the fallen, conditioned souls—the souls, or entities, who have come here to the material world with a motive of enjoyment by the mind and the five organs of sense perception. He appears before us to reveal the light of the Vedas and to bestow upon us the blessings of full-fledged freedom, after which we should hanker at every step of our life’s journey.

The Science of Self-Realization

**The guru takes on the responsibility to guide his disciple to immortality:**

We must understand that we are all born rascals and fools and that we have to be enlightened. We have to receive knowledge to make our lives perfect. If we do not perfect our lives, we are defeated. What is this defeat? The struggle for existence. We are trying to obtain a better life, to attain a superior position, and for this we are struggling very hard. But we do not know what a superior position actually is.

Whatever position we have in this material world must be given up. We may have a good position or a bad position; in any case, we cannot remain here. We may earn millions of dollars and think, “Now I am in a good position,” but a little dysentery or cholera will finish our position. If the bank fails, our position is gone. So actually there is no good position in this material world. It is a farce. Those who try to attain a better position in the material world are ultimately defeated because there is no better position.

... Is there any science that gives us the knowledge by which we may become immortal? Yes, we may become immortal, but not in the material sense. We cannot receive this knowledge in so-called universities. However, there is knowledge contained in the Vedic scriptures by which we may become immortal. That immortality is our better position. No more birth, no more death, no more old age, no more disease. Thus the guru takes on a very great responsibility. He must guide his disciple and enable him to become an eligible candidate for the perfect position-immortality. The guru must be competent to lead

his disciple back home, back to Godhead.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**It is the business of the guru to teach his disciples detachment:**

We are very much attached to this material world, but according to the Vedic system, renunciation is compulsory, for when one reaches the age of fifty, he renounces his family life. Nature gives warning, “You are now past fifty. That’s all right. You have fought in this material world. Now stop this business.” Children play on the beach and make houses out of sand, but after a while the father comes and says, “Now, my dear children, time is up. Stop this business and come home.” This is the business of the guru—to teach his disciples detachment. The world is not our place; our place is *Vaikuṇṭhaloka*.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The guru extinguishes the blazing fire of anxiety within the heart:**

Everyone has a blazing fire within his heart—a blazing fire of anxiety. That is the nature of material existence. Always, everyone has anxiety; no one is free from it. Even a small bird has anxiety. If you give the small bird some grains to eat, he’ll eat them, but he won’t eat very peacefully. He’ll look this way and that way—“Is somebody coming to kill me?” This is material existence. Everyone, even a president like Mr. Nixon, is full of anxieties. What to speak of others. Even Gandhi, in our country—he was full of anxiety. All politicians are full of anxiety. They may hold a very exalted post, but still the material disease—*anxiety*—is there. So if you want to be anxiety-less, then you must take shelter of the guru, the spiritual master. And the test of the guru is that by following his instructions you’ll be free from anxiety. This is the test. Don’t try to find a cheap guru or a fashionable guru. Just as you sometimes keep a dog as a fashion, if you want to keep a guru as a fashion—“I have a guru”—that will not help. You must accept a guru who can extinguish the blazing fire of anxiety within your heart.

“The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master” *Back to Godhead* magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

**The disciples of a pure devotee can easily become purified and enter the kingdom of God:**

Not only does a pure devotee purify his own personal existence, but whoever becomes his disciple also ultimately becomes purified and able to enter the kingdom of God without difficulty. Not only can a pure devotee easily surpass death, but by his grace his followers also can do so without difficulty. The power of devotional service is so great that a pure devotee can electrify another person by his transcendental instruction on crossing over the ocean of nescience.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**The spiritual master is the navigator of the boat of the human form of life, with which to cross the ocean of nescience:**

When one wants to cross a large ocean, he requires a strong boat. It is said that this human form of life is a good boat by which one can cross the ocean of nescience. In the human form of life one can obtain the guidance of a good navigator, the spiritual master. He also gets a favorable wind by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, and that wind is the instruction of Kṛṣṇa. The human body is the boat, the instructions of Lord Kṛṣṇa are the favorable winds, and the spiritual master is the navigator. The spiritual master knows well how to adjust the sails to catch the winds favorably and steer the boat to its destination. If, however, one does not take advantage of this opportunity, he wastes the human form of life. Wasting time and life in this way is the same as committing suicide.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.23.28

**It is the spiritual master’s duty to teach the disciple how to give up materialistic life, and the disciple’s duty to do so:**

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear King, after hearing the instructions of Nārada, the Haryaśvas, the sons of Prajāpati Dakṣa, were firmly convinced. They all believed in his instructions and reached the



same conclusion. Having accepted him as their spiritual master, they circumambulated that great sage and followed the path by which one never returns to this world.

**PURPORT:** From this verse we can understand the meaning of initiation and the duties of a disciple and spiritual master. The spiritual master never instructs his disciple, “Take a *mantra* from me, pay me some money, and by practicing this yoga system you will become very expert in material life.” This is not the duty of a spiritual master. Rather, the spiritual master teaches the disciple how to give up materialistic life, and the disciple’s duty is to assimilate his instructions and ultimately follow the path back home, back to Godhead, from whence no one returns to this material world.... [*The Haryaśvas*] materialistic father had instructed them to increase the population, but because of the words of Nārada Muni, they could not heed that instruction. Nārada Muni, as their spiritual master, gave them the *śāstric* instructions that they should give up this material world, and as bona fide disciples they followed his instructions.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.21

**By associating with a sādhu or spiritual master, one learns detachment from matter and becomes elevated in devotional service:**

Every learned man knows very well that attachment for the material is the greatest entanglement of the spirit soul. But that same attachment, when applied to the self-realized devotees, opens the door of liberation.

**PURPORT:** Here it is recommended that attachment should be transferred to the self-realized devotees, the *sādhus*. And who is a *sādhū*? A *sādhū* is not just an ordinary man with a saffron robe or long beard. A *sādhū* is described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as one who unflinchingly engages in devotional service. Even though one is found not to be following the strict rules and regulations of devotional service, if one simply has unflinching faith in Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person, he is understood to be a *sādhū*. *Sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ* [Bg. 9.30]. A *sādhū* is a strict follower of devotional service. It is recommended here that if one at all wants to realize Brahman or spiritual perfection, his attachment should be transferred to the *sādhū*, or devotee. Lord Caitanya also confirmed this. *Lava-mātra sādhu-saṅge sarva-siddhi haya*: [Cc Mad 22.54] simply by a moment’s association with a *sādhū* one can attain perfection.

*Mahātmā* is a synonym of *sādhū*. It is said that service to a *mahātmā*, or elevated devotee of the Lord, is *dvāram āhur vimukteḥ*, the royal road of liberation. *Mahat-sevām dvāram āhur vimuktes tamo-dvāram yoṣitām saṅgi-saṅgam*. Rendering service to the materialists has the opposite effect. If anyone offers service to a gross materialist or a person engaged only in sense enjoyment, then by association with such a person the door to hell is opened (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.2). The same principle is confirmed here. Attachment to a devotee is attachment to the service of the Lord because if one associates with a *sādhū*, then the result will be that the *sādhū* will teach him how to become a devotee, a worshiper and a sincere servitor of the Lord. These are the gifts of a *sādhū*. If we want to associate with a *sādhū* we cannot expect him to give us instructions on how to improve our material condition, but he will give us instructions on how to cut the knot of the contamination of material attraction and how to elevate ourselves in devotional service. That is the result of associating with a *sādhū*. Kapila Muni first of all instructs that the path of liberation begins with such association.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.20

**By the grace of the spiritual master, one can be properly situated in his liberated position:**

The individual soul has to understand his position by the grace of the Lord and the spiritual master ... one has to select a bona fide spiritual master and become enlightened to his original consciousness. In this way the individual soul can understand that he is always subordinate to the Supersoul. As soon as he declines to remain subordinate and tries to become an enjoyer, he begins his material conditioning. When he abandons this spirit of being an individual owner or enjoyer, he becomes situated in his liberated state. The word *sva-stha*, meaning “situated in one’s original position,” is very significant in this verse. When one gives up his unwanted attitude of superiority, he becomes situated in his original

position. The word *tad-vyabhicāreṇa* is also significant, for it indicates that when one is separated from God due to disobedience, his real sense is lost. Again, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and guru, he can be properly situated in his liberated position.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.64

### The spiritual master chastises the disciple (for his benefit)

**The teacher should chastise the student:**

The Blessed Lord said: While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor the dead.

**PURPORT:** The Lord at once took the position of the teacher and chastised the student, calling him, indirectly, a fool.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 2.11

**As the well-wisher of his disciples, the spiritual master has the right to chastise them:**

“My dear Lord, You are the supreme father, the supreme spiritual master and supreme king. Therefore, You have the right to chastise all living entities whenever there is any discrepancy in their behavior. The father, the spiritual master, and the supreme executive officer of the state are always well-wishers of their sons, their students and their citizens respectively. As such, the well-wishers have the right to chastise their dependents.”

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**The spiritual master reprimands the disciple for his betterment:**

Then Rāmacandra Purī was so foolish that he fearlessly dared to instruct his spiritual master. “If you are in full transcendental bliss,” he said, “you should now remember only Brahman. Why are you crying?” Hearing this instruction, Mādhavendra Purī, greatly angry, rebuked him by saying, “Get out, you sinful rascal!”

**PURPORT:** Rāmacandra Purī could not understand that his spiritual master, Mādhavendra Purī, was feeling transcendental separation. His lamentation was not material. Rather, it proceeded from the highest stage of ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa. When he was crying in separation, “I could not achieve Kṛṣṇa! I could not reach Mathurā!” this was not ordinary material lamentation. Rāmacandra Purī was not sufficiently expert to understand the feelings of Mādhavendra Purī, but nevertheless he thought himself very advanced. Therefore, regarding Mādhavendra Purī’s expressions as ordinary material lamentation, he advised him to remember Brahman because he was latently an impersonalist. Mādhavendra Purī understood Rāmacandra Purī’s position as a great fool and therefore immediately rebuked him. Such a reprimand from the spiritual master is certainly for the betterment of the disciple.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā* 8.22

### The spiritual master is glad to see his disciples advance

**When the disciple makes progress in spiritual life, the spiritual master is gladdened:**

“Chanting the holy name in ecstasy causes one to dance, laugh and cry.’ When My spiritual master heard this, he smiled....”

**PURPORT:** When a disciple very perfectly makes progress in spiritual life, this gladdens the spiritual master, who then also smiles in ecstasy, thinking, “How successful my disciple has become!” He feels so glad that he smiles as he enjoys the progress of the disciple, just as a smiling parent enjoys the activities of a child who is trying to stand up or crawl perfectly.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 7.82

**The spiritual master feels very glad and obliged when he sees a disciple following the regulative principles and advancing in spiritual life:**

“ ‘It is very good, my dear child, that You have attained the supreme goal of life by developing love of Godhead. Thus You have pleased me very much, and I am very much obliged to You.’ ”

**PURPORT:** It is very difficult to understand the science of Kṛṣṇa, not to speak of developing love of Godhead. Therefore if by the grace of Lord Caitanya and the spiritual master a disciple attains the standard of pure devotional service, the spiritual master is very happy. The spiritual master is not actually happy if the disciple brings him money, but when he sees that a disciple is following the regulative principles and advancing in spiritual life, he is very glad and feels obliged to such an advanced disciple.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.91*

**The spiritual master takes more pleasure in seeing his disciple advance than in advancing himself:**

Lord Caitanya said that His spiritual master told Him: “It is very good that You have attained such a perfectional stage of love of Godhead. Because of Your attainment, I am very much obliged to You.” The father becomes more enlivened when he sees his son advance beyond himself. Similarly, the spiritual master takes more pleasure in seeing his disciple advance than in advancing himself.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**The spiritual master’s mission in life is fulfilled if he can convert even one soul into a pure devotee:**

“ ‘It is very good, my dear child, that You have attained the supreme goal of life by developing love of Godhead. Thus You have pleased me very much, and I am very much obliged to You.’ ”

**PURPORT:** According to revealed scriptures, if a spiritual master can convert even one soul into a perfectly pure devotee, his mission in life is fulfilled. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura always used to say, “Even at the expense of all the properties, temples and maṭhas that I have, if I could convert even one person into a pure devotee, my mission would be fulfilled.” It is very difficult, however, to understand the science of Kṛṣṇa, not to speak of developing love of Godhead. Therefore if by the grace of Lord Caitanya and the spiritual master a disciple attains the standard of pure devotional service, the spiritual master is very happy.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.91*

## **The spiritual master as preacher.**

(General instructions.)

**Authorized spiritual masters are compassionate Vaiṣṇavas who try to enlighten conditioned souls:**

Vaiṣṇavas, or devotees, are usually very compassionate upon conditioned souls. Without even being invited, a devotee will go from door to door to enlighten people and to bring them out of the darkness of nescience by injecting knowledge of the living entity’s constitutional position as a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such devotees are empowered by the Lord to distribute devotional consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to the people in general. They are known as authorized spiritual masters, and it is by their mercy that a conditioned soul gets the seed of devotional service.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**The bona fide saintly spiritual master always desires to elevate every common man to Kāñṛa consciousness:**

A bona fide spiritual master or saintly person always desires to elevate a common man who comes to him. Because everyone is under the delusion of *māyā* and is forgetful of his prime duty, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a saintly person always desires that everyone become a saintly person. It is the function of a saintly person to invoke Kṛṣṇa consciousness in every forgetful common man.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.22.7*

### The ācārya is always absorbed in thought of the spiritual well-being of the general public:

Please, therefore, being blessed with many years, explain to us, in an easily understandable way, what you have ascertained to be the absolute and ultimate good for the people in general.

**PURPORT:** In *Bhagavad-gītā*, worship of the ācārya is recommended. The ācāryas and gosvāmīs are always absorbed in thought of the wellbeing of the general public, especially their spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being is automatically followed by material well-being. The ācāryas therefore give directions in spiritual well-being for people in general.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.9

### The qualification of an ācārya-compassion for suffering humanity:

Seeing the activities of the world, the Ācārya felt compassion and began to ponder how He could act for the people's benefit.

**PURPORT:** This sort of serious interest in the welfare of the public makes one a bona fide ācārya. An ācārya does not exploit his followers. Since the ācārya is a confidential servitor of the Lord, his heart is always full of compassion for humanity in its suffering. He knows that all suffering is due to the absence of devotional service to the Lord, and therefore he always tries to find ways to change people's activities, making them favorable for the attainment of devotion. That is the qualification of an ācārya.... This endeavor makes him a very dear devotee of the Lord, who says clearly in *Bhagavad-gītā* that no one in human society is dearer to Him than a devotee who constantly engages in His service by finding ways to preach the message of Godhead for the real benefit of the world. The so-called ācāryas of the age of *Kali* are more concerned with exploiting the resources of their followers than mitigating their miseries, but Śrī Advaita Prabhu, as an ideal ācārya, was concerned with improving the condition of the world situation.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 3.98

### The mission of the guru is to spread Kāñṛea consciousness all over the world:

One cannot become a guru if he does not know what the Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa or His incarnation wants. The mission of the guru is the mission of the Supreme Personality of Godhead: to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.24.48

### The function of an ācārya-to spread Kāñṛea consciousness all over the world:

The word ācārya means "teacher." The special function of such a teacher is to make people Kṛṣṇa conscious. A bona fide teacher following in the footsteps of Advaita Ācārya has no other business than to spread the principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 6.28

### One who acts according to scripture and at the same time preaches is a bona fide spiritual master:

"Some behave very well but do not preach the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whereas others preach but do not behave properly. You simultaneously perform both duties in relation to the holy name by your personal behavior and by your preaching. Therefore you are the spiritual master of the entire world, for you are the most advanced devotee in the world."

**PURPORT:** Sanātana Gosvāmī clearly defines herein the bona fide spiritual master of the world. The qualifications expressed in this connection are that one must act according to the scriptural injunctions and at the same time preach. One who does so is a bona fide spiritual master. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was the ideal spiritual master because he regularly chanted on his beads a prescribed number of times. Indeed, he was chanting the holy name of the Lord three hundred thousand times a day. Similarly, the members of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement chant a minimum of sixteen rounds a day, which can

be done without difficulty, and at the same time they must preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu according to the gospel of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. One who does so is quite fit to become a spiritual master for the entire world.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.102-3

**The ācārya should be eager to preach, not to earn his livelihood through temple income:**

Advaita Ācārya was always absorbed in thoughts of how to deliver the fallen souls of the entire world. “The entire world is full of nondevotees,” He thought. “How will they be delivered?”

**PURPORT:** Śrīla Advaita Ācārya sets the standard for ācāryas in the Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. An ācārya must always be eager to deliver the fallen souls. A person who establishes a temple or *maṭha* to take advantage of people’s sentiments by using for his livelihood what people contribute for the worship of the Deity cannot be called a *gosvāmī* or ācārya. One who knows the conclusions of the *śāstras*, follows in the footsteps of his predecessors and endeavors to preach the *bhakti* cult all over the world is to be considered an ācārya. The role of an ācārya is not to earn his livelihood through the income of the temple. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to say that if one earns his livelihood by displaying the Deity in the temple, he is not an ācārya or *gosvāmī*. It would be better for him to accept service even as a sweeper in the street, for that is a more honorable means of earning one’s living.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 3.223

**A spiritual master’s prime duty is to preach, not to construct temples:**

We can see in the life of various ācāryas in the line of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu that they are not very enthusiastic about constructing temples. However, if somebody comes forward to offer some service, the same reluctant ācāryas will encourage the building of costly temples by such servitors. For example, Rūpa Gosvāmī was offered a favor by Mahārāja Mānasingh, the commander-in-chief of Emperor Akhbar, and Rūpa Gosvāmī instructed him to construct a large temple of Govindajī, which cost vast amounts of money.

So a bona fide spiritual master should not personally take any responsibility for constructing temples, but if someone has money and wants to spend it in the service of Kṛṣṇa, an ācārya like Rūpa Gosvāmī may utilize the devotee’s money to construct a nice costly temple for the service of the Lord. Unfortunately, it happens that someone who is not fit to become a spiritual master may approach wealthy persons to contribute for temple constructions. If such money is utilized by unqualified spiritual masters to live comfortably in costly temples without actually doing any preaching work, this is not acceptable. In other words, a spiritual master needn’t be very enthusiastic for constructing temple buildings simply in the name of so-called spiritual advancement. Rather, his first and foremost activity should be to preach. In this connection, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja recommended that a spiritual master print books. If one has money, instead of constructing costly temples, one should spend his money for the publication of authorized books in different languages for propagating the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**For preaching purposes, the spiritual master descends from the *uttama-adhikārē* platform to the *madhyama-adhikārē* platform:**

The spiritual master is supposed to be in the most advanced stage, but for preaching purposes he descends to the intermediate stage [Cc. *Madhyama-adhikārī*]. The *uttama-adhikārī*, the most advanced devotee, does not discriminate between devotees and nondevotees. He sees everyone but himself as a devotee. The truly advanced devotee sees that he is not a devotee but that everyone else is a devotee.... “The *madhyama-adhikārē* is a devotee who worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the highest object of love, makes friends with the Lord’s devotees, is merciful to the ignorant and avoids those who are envious by nature.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.46 [cited: *Teachings of Lord Kapila*, the Son of Devahuti ]



## The spiritual master as preacher.

(The spiritual master must preach according to time and circumstances.)

**The ācārya cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, but must preach according to time and circumstances:**

Seeing that the *Māyāvādīs* and others were fleeing, Lord Caitanya thought: **I wanted everyone to be immersed in this inundation of love of Godhead, but some of them have escaped. Therefore I shall devise a trick to drown them also.**

**PURPORT:** Here is an important point. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to invent a way to capture the *Māyāvādīs* and others who did not take interest in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This is the symptom of an *ācārya*. An *ācārya* who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be spread.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.31-32

**The ācārya should devise means to attract people to Kāñṛa consciousness:**

As an ideal *ācārya*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu devised ways to capture all kinds of atheists and materialists. Every *ācārya* has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement with the aim of bringing men to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, the method of one *ācārya* may be different from that of another, but the ultimate goal is never neglected. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī recommends:

*tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet  
sarve vidhi-niṣedhāḥ syur etayor eva kiṅkarāḥ*

An *ācārya* should devise a means by which people may somehow or other come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. First they should become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and all the prescribed rules and regulations may later gradually be introduced. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we follow this policy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. For example, since boys and girls in the Western countries freely intermingle, special concessions regarding their customs and habits are necessary to bring them to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *ācārya* must devise a means to bring them to devotional service. Therefore, although I am a *sannyāsī* I sometimes take part in getting boys and girls married, although in the history of *sannyāsa* no *sannyāsī* has personally taken part in marrying his disciples.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.37

**The ācārya must strictly follow the rules and regulations in cāstra, yet simultaneously adapt the rules according to place, time and object:**

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared to deliver all the fallen souls. Therefore He devised many methods to liberate them from the clutches of *māyā*.

**PURPORT:** It is the concern of the *ācārya* to show mercy to the fallen souls. In this connection, *deśa-kāla-pātra* (the place, the time and the object) should be taken into consideration. Since the European and American boys and girls in our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement preach together, less intelligent men criticize that they are mingling without restriction. In Europe and America boys and girls mingle unrestrictedly and have equal rights; therefore it is not possible to completely separate the men from the women. However, we are thoroughly instructing both men and women how to preach, and actually they are preaching wonderfully. Of course, we very strictly prohibit illicit sex. Boys and girls who are not married are not allowed to sleep together or live together, and there are separate arrangements for boys and girls in every temple. *Gṛhasṭhas* live outside the temple, for in the temple we do not allow even husband and wife to live together. The results of this are wonderful. Both men and women are preaching the gospel of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Lord Kṛṣṇa with redoubled strength. In this verse the words *saba nistārite kare cātūrī apāra* indicate that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to deliver one and all. Therefore it is a principle that a preacher must strictly follow the rules and regulations laid down in

the *śāstras* yet at the same time devise a means by which the preaching work to reclaim the fallen may go on with full force.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.38

### The spiritual master orders and empowers his disciples to preach (and to write)

The spiritual master likes to see his disciples preach the sankértana movement for others' benefit; the spiritual master authorizes the sincere devotee to do so:

“My dear child, continue dancing, chanting and performing saṅkértana in association with devotees. Furthermore, go out and preach the value of chanting kâṇēa-nāma, for by this process You will be able to deliver all fallen souls.”

**PURPORT:** It is another ambition of the spiritual master to see his disciples not only chant, dance and follow the regulative principles but also preach the *saṅkértana* movement to others in order to deliver them, for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on the principle that one should become as perfect as possible in devotional service oneself and also preach the cult for others' benefit.

... Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains in his *Anubhāṣya*, “A person who has attracted the attention of the spiritual master by his sincere service likes to dance and chant with similarly developed Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees. The spiritual master authorizes such a devotee to deliver fallen souls in all parts of the world....”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.92

Disciples must follow the order of the spiritual master to preach all over the world:

“The Lord has already ordered both of you brothers to situate yourselves in Vṛndāvana. There you will achieve all happiness.” ... Sanātana Gosvāmī replied, “You have given me very good advice. I shall certainly go there, for that is the place the Lord has given me for my residence.”

**PURPORT:** The words *prabhu-datta-deśa* are very significant. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devotional cult teaches one not to sit down in one place but to spread the devotional cult all over the world. The Lord dispatched Sanātana Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī to Vṛndāvana to excavate and renovate the holy places and from there establish the cult of *bhakti*. Therefore Vṛndāvana was given to Sanātana Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī as their place of residence. Similarly, everyone in the line of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devotional cult should accept the words of the spiritual master and thus spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. They should go everywhere, to all parts of the world, accepting those places as *prabhu-datta-deśa*, the places of residence given by the spiritual master or Lord Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master is the representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa; therefore one who has carried out the orders of the spiritual master is understood to have carried out the orders of Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to spread the *bhakti* cult all over the world (*prthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma*). Therefore devotees in the line of Kṛṣṇa consciousness must go to different parts of the world and preach, as ordered by the spiritual master. That will satisfy Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.142, 144

The spiritual master gives the power to preach to the disciple who does not want anything material from his spiritual master but wants only to serve him:

We have actually seen that one of the disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wanted to enjoy the property of his spiritual master, and the spiritual master, being merciful toward him, gave him the temporary property, but not the power to preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world. That special mercy of the power to preach is given to a devotee who does not want anything material from his spiritual master but wants only to serve him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.22

In order to become an empowered preacher, one must be favored by Lord Caitanya or His devotee, the spiritual master:

Whoever heard Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu chant, “Hari, Hari,” also chanted the holy name of Lord Hari and Kṛṣṇa. In this way, they all followed the Lord, very eager to see Him. After some time, the Lord would embrace these people and bid them to return home, after investing them with spiritual potency. Being thus empowered, they would return to their own villages, always chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa and sometimes laughing, crying and dancing. These empowered people used to request everyone and anyone-whomever they saw-to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. In this way all the villagers would also become devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**PURPORT:** In his *Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya*, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that this spiritual potency is the essence of the pleasure potency. By these two potencies, one is empowered with devotional service. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself, or His representative, the unalloyed devotee, can mercifully bestow these combined potencies upon any man. Being thus endowed with such potencies, one can become an unalloyed devotee of the Lord. Anyone favored by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was empowered with this *bhakti-śakti*. Thus the Lord’s followers were able to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness by divine grace.... In order to become an empowered preacher, one must be favored by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu or His devotee, the spiritual master. One must also request everyone to chant the *mahā-mantra*. In this way, such a person can convert others to Vaiṣṇavism, showing them how to become pure devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 7.98-101

One who is empowered by one’s spiritual master can deliver the whole world:

It is said that a single pure devotee of the Lord can deliver all the fallen souls of the world. Thus one who is actually in the confidence of a pure devotee like Nārada or Śukadeva Gosvāmī and thus is empowered by one’s spiritual master, as Nārada was by Brahmājī, can not only deliver himself from the clutches of *māyā*, or illusion, but can deliver the whole world by his pure and empowered devotional strength.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.5

In order to write transcendental literature, one must take permission from, and be empowered by, the spiritual master:

In Vṛndāvana there were also many other great devotees, all of whom desired to hear the last pastimes of Lord Caitanya. By their mercy, all these devotees ordered me to write of the last pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Because of their order only, although I am shameless, I have attempted to write this Caitanya-caritāmāta. Having received the order of the Vaiṣṇavas but being anxious within my heart, I went to the temple of Madana-mohana in Vṛndāvana to ask His permission also.

**PURPORT:** Unless one is empowered by the higher authorities, or advanced devotees, one cannot write transcendental literature, for all such literature must be above suspicion, or, in other words, it must have none of the defects of conditioned souls, namely, mistakes, illusions, cheating and imperfect sense perceptions. The words of Kṛṣṇa and the disciplic succession that carries the orders of Kṛṣṇa are actually authoritative. To be empowered to write transcendental literature is a privilege in which a writer can take great pride. As a humble Vaiṣṇava, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, being thus empowered, felt very much ashamed that it was he who was to narrate the pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

... A Vaiṣṇava always follows the order of guru and Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta was written by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī by their mercy. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī considered all the devotees that have been mentioned to be his preceptor gurus, or spiritual masters, and Madana-gopāla (Śrī Madana-mohana vigraha) is Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus he took permission from both of them, and when he received the mercy of both guru and Kṛṣṇa, he was able to write this great literature, Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta. This example should be followed. Anyone who attempts to write about Kṛṣṇa must first take permission from the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone’s heart, and the spiritual

master is His direct external representative. Thus Kṛṣṇa is situated *antar-bahih*, within and without. One must first become a pure devotee by following the strict regulative principles and chanting sixteen rounds daily, and when one thinks that he is actually on the Vaiṣṇava platform, he must then take permission from the spiritual master, and that permission must also be confirmed by Kṛṣṇa from within his heart. Then, if one is very sincere and pure, he can write transcendental literature, either prose or poetry.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 8.71-73

**To write on spiritual matters, one must have the blessings of the disciplic succession:**

“I have thus given a synopsis of the Vaiṣṇava regulative principles. I have given this in brief just to give you a little direction. When you write on this subject, Kṛṣṇa will help you by spiritually awakening you.

**PURPORT:** One cannot write on spiritual matters without being blessed by Kṛṣṇa and the disciplic succession of gurus. The blessings of the authorities are one’s power of attorney. One should not try to write anything about Vaiṣṇava behavior and activities without being authorized by superior authorities. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā*: *evam paramparā-prāptam imam rājarṣayo viduḥ* [Bg. 4.2].

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.345

## The spiritual master engages his disciples in Deity worship

**The spiritual master’s duty is to engage the disciples in worshiping the Deity:**

The third symptom of the guru is:

*śrī-vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānā-  
śṅgāra-tan-mandira-mārjanādau  
yuktasya bhaktāṁś ca niyuñjato ‘pi  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master’s duty is to engage the disciples in worshiping the Deity, *śrī-vigraha*. In all of our one hundred centers, we engage in Deity worship.

... *Śrī-vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānā-śṅgāra-tan-mandira-mārjanādau*: Deity worship means to dress the Deity very nicely, to cleanse the temple very nicely, to offer nice foodstuffs to the Deity, and to accept the remnants of the Deity’s foodstuffs for our eating. This is the method of Deity worship. Deity worship is done by the guru himself, and he also engages his disciples in that worship.

**“The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master”**

*Back to Godhead* magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

**The spiritual master should engage his disciple in Deity worship:**

Simple theoretical book knowledge is not sufficient for a neophyte devotee. Book knowledge is theoretical, whereas the *arcana* process is practical. Spiritual knowledge must be developed by a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge, and that is the guaranteed way for attainment of spiritual perfection.... Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has defined the bona fide qualities of a spiritual master, and one of the verses in that description reads:

*śrī-vigrahārādhana-nitya-nānā-  
śṅgāra-tan-mandira-mārjanādau  
yuktasya bhaktāṁś ca niyuñjato ‘pi  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

Śrī-vigraha is the *arcā*, or suitable worshipable form of the Lord, and the disciple should be engaged in worshiping the Deity regularly by *śṛṅgāra*, by proper decoration and dressing, as also by *mandira-mārjana*, the matter of cleansing the temple. The spiritual master teaches the neophyte devotee all these kindly and personally to help him gradually in the realization of the transcendental name, quality, form, etc., of the Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.22

**To perform Deity worship, one must learn the process from a bona fide spiritual master:**

If one is interested in the process of arcanam [Deity worship], one must positively take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and learn the process from him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.24

### **The spiritual master engages his disciple in Preparing, offering and distributing prasāda**

**It is the spiritual master's duty to engage his disciples in preparing, offering and distributing prasāda:**

Indeed, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was fully satisfied just to see how Lord Jagannātha accepted all the food.

**PURPORT:** Following in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, a Vaiṣṇava should be fully satisfied simply to see a variety of food offered to the Deity of Jagannātha or Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. A Vaiṣṇava should not hunger for a variety of food for his own sake; rather, his satisfaction is in seeing various foods being offered to the Deity. In his *Gurv-aṣṭaka*, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes:

*catur-vidha-śrī-bhagavat-prasāda-  
svādv-anna-tṛptān hari-bhakta-saṅghān  
kṛtvaiva tṛptim bhajataḥ sadaiva  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

“The spiritual master is always offering Kṛṣṇa four kinds of delicious food (analyzed as that which is licked, chewed, drunk and sucked). When the spiritual master sees that the devotees are satisfied by eating bhagavat-prasāda, he is satisfied. I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of such a spiritual master.”

The spiritual master's duty is to engage his disciples in preparing varieties of nice food to offer the Deity. After being offered, this food is distributed as *prasāda* to the devotees. These activities satisfy the spiritual master, although he himself does not eat or require such a variety of *prasāda*. By seeing to the offering and distribution of *prasāda*, he himself is encouraged in devotional service.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 14.36

**The spiritual master encourages, and is very much pleased by, distribution of prasāda:**

The fourth symptom [of the guru] is:

*catur-vidha-śrī-bhagavat-prasāda-  
svādv-anna-tṛptān hari-bhakta-saṅghān  
kṛtvaiva tṛptim bhajataḥ sadaiva  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

The spiritual master encourages distribution of *prasāda* (remnants of Kṛṣṇa's foodstuffs) to the public. Ours is not dry philosophy-simply talk and go away. No. We distribute *prasāda*, very sumptuous *prasāda*. In every temple, we offer *prasāda* to anyone who comes. In each and every temple we already have from



fifty to two hundred devotees, and outsiders also come and take *prasāda*. So *prasāda* distribution is another symptom of the guru.

... *Kṛtvaiṣa tr̥ptim bhajataḥ sadaiva*: when the guru is fully satisfied that *prasāda* distribution is going on, he is very much pleased, and he engages himself in the devotional service of the Lord by chanting and dancing.

“The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master” *Back to Godhead* magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

## The spiritual master never claims to be God

**Although the spiritual master is considered as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he should not think himself God or exploit his prestigious position:**

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says, *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstraiḥ*: in all the scriptures the spiritual master, who is the best of the *brāhmaṇas*, the best of the Vaiṣṇavas, is considered to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This does not mean, however, that the Vaiṣṇava thinks himself God, for this is blasphemous. Although a *brāhmaṇa* or Vaiṣṇava is worshiped as being as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, such a devotee always remains a faithful servant of the Lord and never tries to enjoy the prestige that might accrue to him from being the Supreme Lord’s representative.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.14.41

**The servants of God never claim to be God:**

*Asuras* are gradually rectified to God consciousness by the mercy of the Lord’s liberated servitors in different countries according to the supreme will. Such devotees of God are very confidential associates of the Lord, and when they come to save human society from the dangers of godlessness, they are known as the powerful incarnations of the Lord, as sons of the Lord, as servants of the Lord or as associates of the Lord. But none of them falsely claim to be God themselves. This is a blasphemy declared by the *asuras*, and the demoniac follows of such *asuras* also accept pretenders as God or His incarnation. In the revealed scriptures there is definite information of the incarnation of God. No one should be accepted as God or an incarnation of God unless he is confirmed by the revealed scriptures.... [The servants of God] never tolerate being called God. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was God Himself according to the indication of the revealed scriptures, but He played the part of a devotee. People who knew Him to be God addressed Him as God, but He used to block His ears with His hands and chant the name of Lord Viṣṇu. He strongly protested against being called God, although undoubtedly He was God Himself. The Lord behaves so to warn us against unscrupulous men who take pleasure in being addressed as God.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.16

**The guru never claims to be God:**

The guru never says, “I am Kṛṣṇa, I am God, I am Bhagavān.” Rather, the guru says, “**I am the most humble servant of the servant of the servant of God.**” He does not even say that he is the direct servant. Rather, he is the servant one hundred times removed. *Gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ* [Cc. Mad 13.80].

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**A bona fide spiritual master never poses as the Supreme Lord Himself, but deserves as much respect as the Lord:**

A spiritual master never poses as the Supreme Lord Himself; he is considered a representative of the Lord. The revealed scriptures prohibit one’s pretending to be God, but a bona fide spiritual master is a most faithful and confidential servant of the Lord and therefore deserves as much respect as Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.44

## The spiritual master should be free from material motives

### A spiritual master should not accept a disciple for material benefit:

A spiritual master should not be very anxious to accept a disciple because of his material opulences. Sometimes a big businessman or landlord may approach a spiritual master for initiation. Those who are materially interested are called *viṣayīs* (*karmīs*), which indicates that they are very fond of sense gratification. Such *viṣayīs* sometimes approach a famous guru and ask to become a disciple just as a matter of fashion. Sometimes *viṣayīs* pose as disciples of a reputed spiritual master just to cover their activities and advertise themselves as advanced in spiritual knowledge. In other words, they want to attain material success. A spiritual master must be very careful in this regard. Such business is going on all over the world. The spiritual master does not accept a materially opulent disciple just to advertise the fact that he has such a big disciple. He knows that by associating with such *viṣayī* disciples, he may fall down. One who accepts a *viṣayī* disciple is not a bona fide spiritual master. Even if he is, his position may be damaged due to association with an unscrupulous *viṣayī*. If a so-called spiritual master accepts a disciple for his personal benefit or for material gain, the relationship between the spiritual master and the disciple turns into a material affair, and the spiritual master becomes like a *smārta-guru*. There are many caste *gosvāmīs* who professionally create some disciples who do not care for them or their instructions. Such spiritual masters are satisfied simply to get some material benefits from their disciples. Such a relationship is condemned by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who calls such spiritual masters and disciples a society of cheaters and cheated. They are also called *bāulas* or *prākṛta-sahajiyās*. Their aim is to make the connection between the spiritual master and the disciple into a very cheap thing. They are not serious in wanting to understand spiritual life.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330

### The spiritual master must never be carried away by an accumulation of wealth or a large number of followers:

The spiritual master must never be carried away by an accumulation of wealth or a large number of followers. A bona fide spiritual master will never become like that. But sometimes, if a spiritual master is not properly authorized, and only on his own initiative becomes a spiritual master, he may be carried away by an accumulation of wealth and large numbers of disciples. His is not a very high grade of devotional service. If a person is carried away by such achievements, then his devotional service becomes slackened. One should, therefore, strictly adhere to the principles of disciplic succession.

The Nectar of Devotion

### A Vaiṣṇava guru accepts contributions not for sense gratification, but for the service of the Lord:

The Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees collect the money of others for the service of Kṛṣṇa, and they are satisfied with Kṛṣṇa's *prasāda* and whatever He gives them for their maintenance. They do not desire material comforts. However, they go to great pains to engage the possessions of prostitutes, or persons who are more or less like prostitutes, in the service of the Lord and thus free them from sinful reactions. A Vaiṣṇava guru accepts money or other contributions, but he does not employ such contributions for sense gratification. A pure Vaiṣṇava thinks himself unfit to help free even one person from the reactions of sinful life, but he engages one's hard-earned money in the service of the Lord and thus frees one from sinful reactions. A Vaiṣṇava guru is never dependent on the contributions of his disciples. Following the instructions of Haridāsa Ṭhākura, a pure Vaiṣṇava does not personally take even a single paisa from anyone, but he induces his followers to spend for the service of the Lord whatever possessions they have.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 3.139

### The disciple should not desire material profit from his spiritual master and the spiritual master should not bestow benedictions upon the disciple to maintain a prestigious position:

A servant who desires material profits from his master is certainly not a qualified servant or pure devo-

tee. Similarly, a master who bestows benedictions upon his servant because of a desire to maintain a prestigious position as master is also not a pure master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.10.5

### Other important instructions concerning the duties and proper behavior of the spiritual master

**The spiritual master rescues the householder from the dark well of household life with the strong rope of spiritual instructions:**

A man becomes increasingly entangled in household affairs, so much so that leaving them becomes almost impossible. Thus the household becomes *gṛham andha-kūpaṁ*, a dark well into which the man has fallen. For such a man to get out is extremely difficult unless he is helped by a strong person, the spiritual master, who helps the fallen person with the strong rope of spiritual instructions. A fallen person should take advantage of this rope, and then the spiritual master, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, will take him out of the dark well.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.6.11-13

**The disciple is trained to chant the Hare Kāñēa mantra under the guidance of a spiritual master:**

Caitanya Mahāprabhu has recommended that everyone chant the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra* just to cleanse the dust from the heart. If the dust of the heart is cleansed away, then one can actually understand the importance of the holy name. For persons who are not inclined to clean the dust from their heart and want to keep things as they are, it is not possible to derive the transcendental result of chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra*. One should, therefore, be encouraged to develop his service attitude toward the Lord, because this will help him to chant without any offense. And so, under the guidance of a spiritual master, the disciple is trained simultaneously to render service and at the same time to chant the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra*. As soon as one develops his spontaneous service attitude, he can immediately understand the transcendental nature of the holy names of the *mahā-mantra*.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**The spiritual master guides the disciple from the lower modes of nature to the mode of goodness:**

The association of the living entity with the different modes of nature has been going on perpetually since the living entity is in contact with material nature. Thus he acquires different types of mentality according to his association with the material modes. But this nature can be changed if one associates with a bona fide spiritual master and abides by his rules and the scriptures. Gradually, one can change his position from ignorance to goodness, or from passion to goodness. The conclusion is that blind faith in a particular mode of nature cannot help a person become elevated to the perfectional stage. One has to consider things carefully, with intelligence, in the association of a bona fide spiritual master. Thus one can change his position to a higher mode of nature.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 17.2

**The spiritual master elevates the disciple to the sattva platform:**

One can get release from the conditioned life of material existence by devotional service to the Personality of Godhead. It is further comprehended herein that one has to rise to the platform of the mode of goodness (*sattva*) so that one can be eligible for the devotional service of the Lord. But if there are impediments on the progressive path, anyone, even from the platform of *tamas*, can gradually rise to the *sattva* platform by the expert direction of the spiritual master. Sincere candidates must, therefore, approach an expert spiritual master for such a progressive march, and the bona fide, expert spiritual master is competent to direct a disciple from any stage of life: *tamas*, *rajas* or *sattva*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.24

**When the spiritual master returns the disciple's obeisances. he is respecting the Supersoul in the disciple's heart:**

When a learned person stands up or offers obeisances in welcome, he offers respect to the Supersoul, who is sitting within everyone's heart. It is seen, therefore, among Vaiṣṇavas, that even when a disciple offers obeisances to his spiritual master, the spiritual master immediately returns the obeisances because they are mutually offered not to the body but to the Supersoul. Therefore the spiritual master also offers respect to the Supersoul situated in the body of the disciple. The Lord says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that offering respect to His devotee is more valuable than offering respect to Him. Devotees do not identify with the body, so offering respect to a Vaiṣṇava means offering respect to Viṣṇu. It is stated also that as a matter of etiquette as soon as one sees a Vaiṣṇava one must immediately offer him respect, indicating the Supersoul within. A Vaiṣṇava sees the body as a temple of Viṣṇu.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.3.22

**Although the ācārya is very strict in his principles, he may, because he is independent, sometimes be flexible:**

“My dear Lord, I know that You never mix with other sannyāsīs, but please be merciful unto me and accept my invitation.”

**PURPORT:** An *ācārya* or great personality of the Vaiṣṇava school is very strict in his principles, but although he is as hard as a thunderbolt, sometimes he is as soft as a rose. Thus actually he is independent. He follows all the rules and regulations strictly, but sometimes he slackens this policy. It was known that Lord Caitanya never mixed with the *Māyāvādī sannyāsīs*, yet He conceded to the request of the *brāhmaṇa*.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 7.55

**The spiritual master is always personally engaged in chanting and dancing (and thus teaching his disciples to do the same):**

The second test is, *mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta-vāditra-māḍyan-manaso rasena*. The second symptom of the guru is that he is always engaged in chanting, glorifying Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu—that is his business. *Mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta*. The spiritual master is dancing and chanting the holy name of the Lord, because that is the remedy for all calamities within this material world.

Therefore, the guru is always engaged in chanting. *Mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta*-chanting and dancing. Unless he performs it himself, how can he teach his disciples? So his first symptom is that he will give you such instructions that immediately you will feel relief from all anxiety, and his second symptom is that he is always personally engaged in chanting the holy name of the Lord and dancing. *Mahāprabhoḥ kīrtana-nṛtya-gīta-vāditra-māḍyan-manaso rasena* —the spiritual master enjoys transcendental bliss within his mind by chanting and dancing.

**“The Qualifications of the Spiritual Master”**

*Back to Godhead* magazine (Vol. 13, No. 1-2)

**The spiritual master should talk to the disciple with gravity:**

As Lord of all, [Kṛṣṇa] is always in the superior position as the master of everyone, and yet the Lord accepts one who wishes to be a friend, a son, a lover or a devotee, or who wants Him in such a role. But when He was accepted as the master, He at once assumed the role and talked with the disciple like the master-with gravity, as it is required.

*Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is 2.10

**A spiritual master should not accept money or foodstuffs from materialistic persons:**

“Advaita Ācārya, My spiritual master, should never accept charity from rich men or kings because if a spiritual master accepts money or grains from such materialists his mind becomes polluted.”

**PURPORT:** It is very risky to accept money or foodstuffs from materialistic persons, for such acceptance pollutes the mind of the charity's recipient. According to the Vedic system, one should give charity to *sannyāsīs* and *brāhmaṇas* because one who thus gives charity becomes free from sinful activities. Formerly, therefore, *brāhmaṇas* would not accept charity from a person unless he were very pious. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave this instruction for all spiritual masters.... a Vaiṣṇava should not even accept charity or foodstuffs from persons who do not follow the rules and regulations of the Vaiṣṇava principles.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 12.50

**The spiritual master should not accept obeisances or permit a disciple to wash his feet before the Deity:**

There are many offenses one can commit while serving the Lord, and these are described in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and other books. According to the rules and regulations, no one should accept obeisances in the temple of the Lord before the Deity. Nor is it proper for a devotee to offer obeisances and touch the feet of the spiritual master before the Deity. This is considered an offense. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself was personally the Supreme Personality of Godhead, therefore it was not actually offensive to wash His lotus feet in the temple. However, because He was playing the part of an *ācārya*, the Lord considered Himself an ordinary human being. He also wanted to give instructions to ordinary human beings. The point is that even though one plays the part of a spiritual master, he should not accept obeisances or permit a disciple to wash his feet before the Deity. This is a matter of etiquette.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 12.127

**The spiritual master should not act in such a way to become obliged to his disciples:**

A person may have many disciples, but he should not act in such a way that he will be obliged to any of them for some particular action or some favor.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**A spiritual master has no business in reading many books to get popularity as a lecturer:**

A bona fide spiritual master has no business to read many books simply to show his proficiency or to get popularity by lecturing in different places.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**It is improper for one seated on a vyāsāsana to stand up to receive a person:**

“When one is seated on the vyāsāsana, it is improper for him to stand up to receive a person.”

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**A person seated on the vyāsāsana does not generally have to stand up to receive anyone:**

When a person is seated on the vyāsāsana, he does not generally have to stand up to receive a particular person entering the assembly.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**The spiritual master has to select a mantra suited to the particular disciple:**

The word *sarva-mantra-vicāraṇa* means “considering all different types of mantras.” There are different kinds of mantras for different kinds of devotees. There are the mantras known as the *dvādaśākṣara*, and these are composed of twelve syllables. Similarly, there are mantras composed of eighteen syllables—the *Narasimha* mantra, the *Rāma* mantra, *Gopāla* mantra and so on. Each and every mantra has its own spiritual significance. The spiritual master has to select a mantra for his disciple according to the disciple's ability to chant different mantras.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330



**The requirement for an āsana for the spiritual master (fifth item of Deity worship in Hari-bhakti-vilāsa):**

(5) There must be an *āsana*, a sitting place before the altar. This *āsana* is for the spiritual master. The disciple brings everything before the spiritual master, and the spiritual master offers everything to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.334*

**If a disciple falls at the feet of the spiritual master, the spiritual master responds by smelling the disciple's head:**

If a child or disciple falls at the feet of the father or spiritual master, the superior responds by smelling the head of the subordinate.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.21*

## **5. Other Important Instructions Concerning the Spiritual Master**

**Lord Kṛṣṇa sends the spiritual master to the sincere soul**

(or the sincere soul to the spiritual master)

**Kāñḍā sends (appears as) a spiritual master to the sincere devotee:**

*jīve sākṣāt nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe*

*śikṣā-guru haya kṛṣṇa mahānta-svarūpe*

Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is no one other than Kṛṣṇa Himself.

**PURPORT:** It is not possible for a conditioned soul to directly meet Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but if one becomes a sincere devotee and seriously engages in devotional service, Lord Kṛṣṇa sends an instructing spiritual master to show him favor and invoke his dormant propensity for serving the Supreme. The preceptor appears before the external senses of the fortunate conditioned soul, and at the same time the devotee is guided from within by the *caitya-guru*, Kṛṣṇa, who is seated as the spiritual master within the heart of the living entity.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.58*

**The Lord Himself appears as the spiritual master to the sincere devotee:**

The Lord Himself appears as the spiritual master to a person who is sincere in heart about serving the Lord. Therefore the bona fide spiritual master who happens to meet the sincere devotee should be accepted as the most confidential and beloved representative of the Lord. If a person is posted under the guidance of such a bona fide spiritual master, it may be accepted without any doubt that the desiring person has achieved the grace of the Lord.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.7*

**The Lord appears as the spiritual master to guide the devotee toward the ultimate destination of perfection:**

If one takes shelter of a bona fide spiritual master, it is to be understood that he has obtained the grace of the Lord. The Lord appears as the spiritual master for the devotee. Thus the spiritual master, the Vedic injunctions, and the Lord Himself from within all guide the devotee in full strength. Thus there is no chance for a devotee to fall again into the *māyā* of material illusion. The devotee, thus protected all around, is sure to reach the ultimate destination of perfection.

*Śrī Īśopaniṣad Mantra 18*

**Out of compassion for the conditioned souls, the Lord sends His representative, the spiritual master, whom He always protects:**

The Lord desires the conditioned souls hovering in the material creation to be reclaimed to go back home, back to Godhead, and thus He helps them by preparing the transcendental literatures like the *Vedas*, by sending missionaries of saints and sages and by deputing His representative, the spiritual master. Such transcendental literatures, missionaries and representatives of the Lord are spotlessly white because the contamination of the material qualities cannot even touch them. They are always protected by the Lord when they are threatened with annihilation.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.12.16

**The Lord sends His representative, the spiritual master, to the sincere soul seeking perfection:**

Otherwise [without being inspired by Lord Kṛṣṇa] how is it that you have voluntarily appeared here, though you are moving incognito to the common man and are not visible to us who are on the verge of death?

**PURPORT:** The great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī was certainly inspired by Lord Kṛṣṇa to appear voluntarily before Mahārāja Parīkṣit, the great devotee of the Lord, just to give him the teachings of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. One can achieve the nucleus of the devotional service of the Lord by the mercy of the spiritual master and the Personality of Godhead. The spiritual master is the manifested representative of the Lord to help one achieve ultimate success. One who is not authorized by the Lord cannot become a spiritual master. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī is an authorized spiritual master, and thus he was inspired by the Lord to appear before Mahārāja Parīkṣit and instruct him in the teachings of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. One can achieve the ultimate success of going back to Godhead if he is favored by the Lord's sending His true representative. As soon as a true representative of the Lord is met by a devotee of the Lord, the devotee is assured a guarantee for going back to Godhead just after leaving the present body. This, however, depends on the sincerity of the devotee himself. The Lord is seated in the heart of all living beings, and thus He knows very well the movements of all individual persons. As soon as the Lord finds that a particular soul is very eager to go back to Godhead, the Lord at once sends His bona fide representative. The sincere devotee is thus assured by the Lord of going back to Godhead. The conclusion is that to get the assistance and help of a bona fide spiritual master means to receive the direct help of the Lord Himself.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.19.36

**If one is eager to revive his God consciousness, God sends him a spiritual master:**

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** ... The spiritual master is one who has received the mercy of God, and he can deliver the solution to the confused man. One who has received the mercy of God can become a spiritual master and deliver that mercy to others.

**Mr. O'Grady:** The problem is to find this spiritual master.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That is not the problem. The problem is whether you are sincere. You have problems, but God is within your heart. *Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām* [Bg. 18.61]. God is not far away. If you are sincere, God sends you a spiritual master. Therefore God is also called *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within the heart. God helps from within and from without. Everything is thus described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. This material body is like a machine, but within the heart is the soul, and within the soul is the Super-soul, Kṛṣṇa, who gives directions. The Lord says, "You wanted to do this; now here is the chance. Go and do it." If you are sincere, you say, "Now, God, I want You." Then He will give you directions. "Yes, now you come and get Me like this." This is His kindness. However, if we want something else, that is all right. We can have it. God is very kind. When I want something, He is in my heart directing me and telling me how to have it. So why should He not give directions on how to have a spiritual master? First of all we must again be eager to revive our God consciousness. Then God will give us a spiritual master.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The Lord sends His bona fide representative, the spiritual master, to one who sincerely wants to surrender unto Him:**

Sometimes there are inquiries as to how one can surrender unto the Supreme Lord. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66) the Lord asked Arjuna to surrender unto Him, and therefore persons unwilling to do so question where God is and to whom they should surrender. The answer to such questions or inquiries is given herein very properly. The Personality of Godhead may not be present before one's eyes, but if one is sincere in wanting such guidance the Lord will send a bona fide person who can guide one properly back home, back to Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.7.46

**To liberate conditioned souls, Kāñēa engages His confidential servants as spiritual masters and gives the living entities the conscience whereby they can accept the spiritual master:**

The conditioned soul is bewildered by the external material energy, which fully engages him in a variety of sense gratification. Due to engagement in material activities, one's original Kṛṣṇa consciousness is covered. However, as the supreme father of all living entities, Kṛṣṇa wants His sons to return home, back to Godhead; therefore He personally comes to deliver Vedic literatures like *Bhagavad-gītā*. He engages His confidential servants who serve as spiritual masters and enlighten the conditioned living entities. Being present in everyone's heart, the Lord gives the living entities the conscience whereby they can accept the *Vedas* and the spiritual master. In this way the living entity can understand his constitutional position and his relationship with the Supreme Lord.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 20.125

**Lord Kāñēa gives the sincere living entity the chance to meet a bona fide spiritual master:**

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva  
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

“According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.”

**PURPORT:** Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone's heart, and if one desires something, Kṛṣṇa's fulfills one's desire. If the living entity by chance or fortune comes in contact with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement and wishes to associate with that movement, Kṛṣṇa, who is situated in everyone's heart, gives him the chance to meet a bona fide spiritual master. This is called *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde*. Kṛṣṇa is prepared to bestow His mercy upon all living entities, and as soon as a living entity desires the Lord's mercy, the Lord immediately gives him an opportunity to meet a bona fide spiritual master. Such a person is fortified by both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master. He is helped from within by Kṛṣṇa and from without by the spiritual master. Both are prepared to help the sincere living being become free from this material bondage.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 19.151

**Kāñēa gives the sincere seeker the intelligence to find a suitable spiritual master:**

One [should] find a person who knows the science of God, or a *tattva-vit*. *Tattva-vit* means one who knows the Absolute Truth.... One has to be freed from all contamination, and at the same time he has to find a person who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa helps a sincere person; as stated in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde*: by the mercy of the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa, one attains the path of salvation, devotional service. If one sincerely searches for spiritual salvation, then Kṛṣṇa, being situ-

ated in everyone's heart, gives him the intelligence to find a suitable spiritual master. By the grace of a spiritual master like Maitreya, one gets the proper instruction and advances in spiritual life.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.20.4

**The Lord, as Supersoul, directs the living entity who is seeking liberation to His representative, the spiritual master:**

The living entities wander in life after life, undergoing the miserable conditions of material existence. But when one is very anxious to get free from the material entanglement, then he gets enlightenment through a spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. This means that Kṛṣṇa as the Supersoul is seated within the heart of the living entity, and when the living entity is serious, the Lord directs him to take shelter of His representative, a bona fide spiritual master. Directed from within and guided externally by the spiritual master, one attains the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is the way out of the material clutches.

Therefore there is no possibility of one's being situated in his own position unless he is blessed by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Unless he is enlightened with the supreme knowledge, one has to undergo the severe penalties of the hard struggle for existence in the material nature. The spiritual master is therefore the mercy manifestation of the Supreme Person. The conditioned soul has to take direct instruction from the spiritual master, and thus he gradually becomes enlightened to the path of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The seed of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is sown within the heart of the conditioned soul, and when one hears instructions from the spiritual master, the seed fructifies, and his life is blessed.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.31.16

**Kṛṣṇa enlightens the living entity from within as the Supersoul  
and from without as the spiritual master**

**Kāñēa instructs a fortunate conditioned soul from within as the Supersoul and from without as the spiritual master:**

*kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne  
guru-antaryāmi-rupe śikhāya āpane*

“Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone's heart as caitya-guru, the spiritual master within. When He is kind to some fortunate conditioned soul, He personally gives one lessons to progress in devotional service, instructing the person as the Supersoul within and the spiritual master without.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 22.47

To deliver the embodied living being, Kṛṣṇa appears in two features—the ācārya and the Supersoul:

*naivopayanty apacitaṁ kavayas taveśa  
brahmāyusāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ  
yo 'ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann  
ācārya-caitya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti*

“O my Lord! Transcendental poets and experts in spiritual science could not fully express their indebtedness to You, even if they were endowed with the prolonged lifetime of Brahmā, for You appear in two features-externally as the ācārya and internally as the Supersoul-to deliver the embodied living being by directing him how to come to You.”

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.6 [cited: *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 22.48]

**The disciple takes dictation from the spiritual master from without and the Supersoul from within:**

A person in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness acts by the dictation of Kṛṣṇa. In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, dictation is received through the transparent medium of the spiritual master. When one

is sufficiently trained and acts in submissive faith and love for Kṛṣṇa under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master, the dovetailing process becomes more firm and accurate. This stage of devotional service by the devotee in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the most perfect stage of the yoga system. At this stage, Kṛṣṇa, or the Supersoul, dictates from within, while from without the devotee is helped by the spiritual master, who is the bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa. From within He helps the devotee as *caitya*, for He is seated within the heart of everyone. Understanding that God is seated within everyone's heart is not, however, sufficient. One has to be acquainted with God from both within and without, and one must take dictation from within and without to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is the highest perfectional stage of the human form of life and the topmost perfection of all yoga.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.15.45

**In the neophyte stage, Kāñḍā dictates to the devotee from without, through the spiritual master. In an advanced stage, He dictates from within as caitya-guru:**

A person in full Kṛṣṇa consciousness acts by the dictation of Kṛṣṇa.... In the beginning of Kṛṣṇa consciousness this dictation of the Lord is received through the transparent medium of the spiritual master. When one is sufficiently trained and acts with submissive faith and love for Kṛṣṇa, under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master, the dovetailing process becomes more firm and accurate. At this stage Kṛṣṇa dictates from within. From without, the devotee is helped by the spiritual master, the bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa, and from within the Lord helps the devotee as *caitya-guru*, being seated within the heart of everyone.

The Science of Self-Realization

**After one is fully trained by Kāñḍā's representative, the spiritual master, Kāñḍā acts as one's spiritual master directly, from within:**

Kṛṣṇa can become the director and spiritual master of anyone who is serious about getting the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. The Lord sends the spiritual master to train a devotee, and when the devotee is advanced, the Lord acts as the spiritual master within his heart.

*teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ  
bhajatāṁ prīti-pūrvakam  
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ  
yena mām upayānti te*

**“To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.”**

Kṛṣṇa does not become the direct spiritual master unless one is fully trained by His representative spiritual master.... Kṛṣṇa helps as the guru, or spiritual master, from within and from without. From without He helps the devotee as His representative, and from within He talks personally with the pure devotee and gives him instructions by which he may return home, back to Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.76

**The Supersoul, the spiritual master within, directs the sincere soul to the external spiritual master, who trains him in devotional service. When the disciple becomes advanced, the Supersoul guides him from within:**

The Supreme Personality of Godhead speaks directly to the individual soul when the devotee has completely purified himself by rendering devotional service to the Lord.... The Lord is the Supersoul seated in everyone's heart, and He acts as the *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within. However, He gives direct instructions only to the advanced pure devotees. In the beginning, when a devotee is serious and sincere, the Lord gives him directions from within to approach a bona fide spiritual master. When one is trained by the spiritual master according to the regulative principles of devotional service and is situ-



ated on the platform of spontaneous attachment for the Lord (*rāga-bhakti*), the Lord also gives instructions from within. *Teṣāṁ satata-yuktānāṁ bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam* [Bg. 10.10]. This distinct advantage is obtained by a liberated soul.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.41

**When the spiritual master departs, the devotee, if he is pure in heart, is immediately guided by the Supersoul:**

One who is sincere and pure gets an opportunity to consult with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Paramātmā feature sitting within everyone's heart. The Paramātmā is always the *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within, and He comes before one externally as the instructor and initiator spiritual master. The Lord can reside within the heart, and He can also come out before a person and give him instructions. Thus the spiritual master is not different from the Supersoul sitting within the heart. An uncontaminated soul or living entity can get a chance to meet the Paramātmā face to face. Just as one gets a chance to consult with the Paramātmā within his heart, he also gets a chance to see Him actually situated before him. Then one can take instructions from the Supersoul directly. This is the duty of the pure devotee: to see the bona fide spiritual master and consult with the Supersoul within the heart.... [When the spiritual master physically departs] the Supersoul immediately appears, provided the devotee is purified in heart by following the directions of the spiritual master. A sincere devotee who follows the instructions of the spiritual master certainly gets direct instructions from his heart from the Supersoul. Thus a sincere devotee is always helped directly or indirectly by the spiritual master and the Supersoul. This is confirmed in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta: guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* [Cc Mad 19.151]. If the devotee serves his spiritual master sincerely, Kṛṣṇa automatically becomes pleased. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. By satisfying the spiritual master, one automatically satisfies Kṛṣṇa. Thus the devotee becomes enriched by both the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.52

**The Lord rectifies the conditioned souls from without as the spiritual master:**

Although qualitatively one with the Lord, the living being, due to contamination of the material world, is pervertedly manifested, and therefore he experiences so-called happiness and distress in the material world.... There is, however, a regular current from the Lord Himself, from within and without, by which to rectify the fallen condition of the living being. From within, He corrects the desiring living beings as localized Paramātmā, and from without He corrects by His manifestations, the spiritual master and the revealed scriptures.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.13.48

**The Supreme Godhead, who is the original spiritual master, manifests as spiritual master both internally and externally to help the conditioned soul:**

The Supreme Godhead in His Paramātmā feature is present in everyone's heart, and He is always trying to induce the individual soul to surrender unto Him and to engage in devotional service; therefore He is the original spiritual master. He manifests Himself as spiritual master both internally and externally to help the conditioned soul both ways. Therefore He has been mentioned herein as *gurum*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.36

**The Lord becomes the spiritual master to reclaim the conditioned souls:**

The conditioned souls are being reclaimed by the Lord both ways, namely by the process of punishment by the external energy of the Lord, and by Himself as the spiritual master within and without. Within the heart of every living being the Lord Himself as the Supersoul (Paramātmā) becomes the spiritual master, and from without He becomes the spiritual master in the shape of scriptures, saints and the initiator spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.5

### The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the Supersoul:

The supreme spiritual master is Kṛṣṇa, who is therefore known as *caitya-guru*. This refers to the Supersoul, who is sitting in everyone's heart. He helps from within as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, and He sends the spiritual master, who helps from without. The spiritual master is the external manifestation of the *caitya-guru*, or the spiritual master sitting in everyone's heart.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.8.44

### The Lord enlightens the devotees from within, and from without as the spiritual master:

My dear Lord, Your two lotus feet are so beautiful that they appear like two blossoming petals of the lotus flower which grows during the autumn season. Indeed, the nails of Your lotus feet emanate such a great effulgence that they immediately dissipate all the darkness in the heart of a conditioned soul. My dear Lord, kindly show me that form of Yours which always dissipates all kinds of darkness in the heart of a devotee. My dear Lord, You are the supreme spiritual master of everyone; therefore all conditioned souls covered with the darkness of ignorance can be enlightened by You as the spiritual master.

**PURPORT:** The Lord is the supreme spiritual master, and the bona fide representative of the Supreme Lord is also a spiritual master. The Lord from within enlightens the devotees by the effulgence of the nails of His lotus feet, and His representative, the spiritual master, enlightens from without. Only by thinking of the lotus feet of the Lord and always taking the spiritual master's advice can one advance in spiritual life and understand Vedic knowledge ... the *Vedas* enjoin that for one who has unflinching faith in the lotus feet of the Lord, as well as in the spiritual master, the real import of Vedic knowledge can be revealed.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.24.52

### Kāñēa delivers the conditioned soul through the Vedic literatures, the realized spiritual master and the Supersoul:

“The forgetful conditioned soul is educated by Kṛṣṇa through the Vedic literatures, the realized spiritual master and the Supersoul. Through these, he can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead as He is, and he can understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa is his eternal master and deliverer from the clutches of *māyā*. In this way one can acquire real knowledge of his conditioned life and can come to understand how to attain liberation.”

**PURPORT:** Being forgetful of his real position, the conditioned soul may take help from *śāstra*, *guru* and the Supersoul within his heart. Kṛṣṇa is situated within everyone's heart as the Supersoul.... As the *śaktyāveśa-avatāra*, Vyāsadeva teaches the conditioned soul through Vedic literatures. Kṛṣṇa externally appears as the spiritual master and trains the conditioned soul to come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When his original Kṛṣṇa consciousness is revived, the conditioned soul is delivered from the material clutches. Thus a conditioned soul is always helped by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in three ways-by the scriptures, the spiritual master and the Supersoul within the heart.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 20.123

## The three kinds of spiritual masters

(*dīkṣā*, *śikṣā* and *vartma-pradarśaka*)

### The three kinds of gurus defined:

One who first gives information about spiritual life is called the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru* or spiritual master. The spiritual master who initiates according to the regulations of the *śāstras* is called *dīkṣā-guru*, and the spiritual master who gives instructions for elevation is called *śikṣā-guru*.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 8.128

### The nature and function of initiating (dēkñā) and instructing (cikñā) gurus:

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the spiritual masters, the devotees of the Lord, the Lord's incarnations, His plenary portions, His energies, and the primeval Lord Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

**PURPORT:** *Gurun* is plural in number because anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master. Although others give help in showing the way to beginners, the guru who first initiates one with the *mahā-mantra* is to be known as the initiator, and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters. The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.34

A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master but can have unlimited instructing spiritual masters:

*mantra-guru āra yata śikṣā-guru-gaṇa  
tāñhāra caraṇa āge kariye vandana*

I first offer my respectful obeisances at the lotus feet of my initiating spiritual master and all my instructing spiritual masters.

**PURPORT:** A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden. There is no limit however, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept. Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.35

### Two kinds of instructing spiritual masters:

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.... There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.47

### The disciple adores his different gurus equally:

All glories to Cintāmaṇi and my initiating spiritual master, Somagiri. All glories to my instructing spiritual master, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who wears peacock feathers in His crown.... (*Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*)

**PURPORT:** In the beginning of [*Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta*, Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura] has offered his obeisances to his different gurus, and it is to be noted that he has adored them all equally. The first spiritual master mentioned is Cintāmaṇi, who was his instructing spiritual master because she first showed him the spiritual path. Cintāmaṇi was a prostitute with whom Bilvamaṅgala was intimate earlier in his life. She gave him the inspiration to begin on the path of devotional service, and because she convinced him to give up material existence to try for perfection by loving Kṛṣṇa, he has first offered his respects to her. Next he offers his respects to his initiating spiritual master, Somagiri, and then to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who was also his instructing spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.57

The initiating spiritual master is a personal manifestation of *Çrēla Madana-mohana vigraha*. The instructing spiritual master is a personal representative of *Çrēla Govindadeva vigraha*:

Śrī Govindajī acts exactly like the *śikṣā-guru* (instructing spiritual master) by teaching Arjuna *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the original preceptor, for He gives us instructions and an opportunity to serve Him. The initiating spiritual master is a personal manifestation of *Śrīla Madana-mohana vigraha*, whereas the instructing spiritual master is a personal representative of *Śrīla Govindadeva vigraha*. Both of these Deities are worshiped at Vṛndāvana.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.47

**Definition of patha-pradarṣaka-guru, ṣikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru:**

Dhruva was seated in the transcendental airplane, which was just about to start, when he remembered his poor mother, Sunīti. He thought to himself, “How shall I go alone to the Vaikuṇṭha planet and leave behind my poor mother?”

**PURPORT:** Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Sunīti. It was Sunīti who gave him the clue which had enabled him to now be personally carried to the Vaikuṇṭha planet by the associates of Lord Viṣṇu. He now remembered her and wanted to take her with him. Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarṣaka-guru*. *Patha-pradarṣaka-guru* means the guru or the spiritual master who shows the way. Such a guru is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*. Although Nārada Muni was his *dīkṣā-guru* (initiating spiritual master), Sunīti, his mother, was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the *śikṣā-guru* or *dīkṣā-guru* to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to *śāstric* injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.32

**A non-brāhmaëa may become a dīkṣā-guru as well as a śikṣā or vartma-pradarṣaka-guru:**

*kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya*

*yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya*

“Whether one is a brāhmaëa, a sannyāsē or a çūdra-regardless of what he is-he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.”

**PURPORT:** If one becomes a guru, he is automatically a *brāhmaṇa*. Sometimes a caste guru says that *yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya* means that one who is not a *brāhmaṇa* may become a *śikṣā-guru* or a *vartma-pradarṣaka-guru* but not an initiator guru. According to such caste gurus, birth and family ties are considered foremost. However, the hereditary consideration is not acceptable to Vaiṣṇavas. The word guru is equally applicable to the *vartma-pradarṣaka-guru*, *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.128

## Titles of respect applicable to the spiritual master

**The spiritual master can be addressed as “gosvāmē”:**

One who has control of the senses is called a *gosāñi* or a *gosvāmī*, master of the senses. The senses cannot be controlled unless one is engaged in the service of the Lord; therefore the bona fide spiritual master, who has full control over his senses, engages twenty-four hours a day in the Lord’s service. He can therefore be addressed as a *gosāñi* or *gosvāmī*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.289

**The title “gosvāmē” can be given not according to heredity, but to a Kāñēa conscious spiritual master:**

The title *gosvāmī* cannot be inherited but can be given only to a bona fide spiritual master.

There were six great Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana-Śrīla Rūpa, Sanātana, Bhaṭṭa Raghunātha, Śrī Jīva, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa and Dāsa Raghunātha-and none of them inherited the title of *gosvāmī*. All the Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana were bona fide spiritual masters situated on the highest platform of devotional service, and for that reason they were called *gosvāmīs*. All the temples of Vṛndāvana were certainly started by the six Gosvāmīs. Later the worship in the temples was entrusted to some householder disciples of the Gosvāmīs, and since then the hereditary title of *gosvāmī* has been used. However, only one who is a bona fide spiritual master expanding the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, and who is in full control of his senses can be addressed as a *gosvāmī*. Unfortunately, the hereditary process is going on; therefore at the present moment, in most cases the title is being misused due to ignorance of the word's etymology.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.289

### The spiritual master as paramahaṇsa:

The spiritual master who is fully surrendered unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead and has no business other than the Lord's service is called the best of the *paramahāṇsas*. A *paramahāṇsa* has no program for sense gratification; he is interested only in satisfying the senses of the Lord.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.289

### The ācārya is called paramahaṇsa-ōhākura:

Since he ["the true *ācārya*, the spiritual master of the entire world"] is understood to be the most advanced devotee, he is called *paramahāṇsa-ṭhākura*. *Ṭhākura* is a title of honor offered to the *paramahāṇsa*. Therefore one who acts as an *ācārya*, directly presenting Lord Kṛṣṇa by spreading His name and fame, is also to be called *paramahāṇsa-ṭhākura*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 7.12

### The proper use of the titles gosāñi and ōhākura:

Haridāsa Ṭhākura was so exalted that he was addressed as *ṭhākura* and *gosāñi*, and these titles are offered to the most advanced Vaiṣṇavas. The spiritual master is generally called *gosāñi*, and *ṭhākura* is used to address the *paramahāṇsas*, those in the topmost rank of spirituality.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 11.165

### The meaning of "jagad-guru":

One who trains his subordinate or disciple to worship Vāsudeva is the truly bona fide spiritual master. The word *jagad-gurum* is very important in this regard. Kaśyapa Muni did not falsely declare himself to be *jagad-guru*, although he actually was *jagad-guru* because he advocated the cause of Vāsudeva. Actually, Vāsudeva is *jagad-guru*, as clearly stated here (*vāsudevam jagad-gurum*). One who teaches the instructions of Vāsudeva, *Bhagavad-gītā*, is as good as *vāsudevam jagad-gurum*. But when one who does not teach this instruction-as it is-declares himself *jagad-guru*, he simply cheats the public. Kṛṣṇa is *jagad-guru*, and one who teaches the instruction of Kṛṣṇa as it is, on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, may be accepted as *jagad-guru*. One who manufactures his own theories cannot be accepted; he becomes *jagad-guru* falsely.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.16.20

### The qualifications of a jagad-guru:

A person who knows what is spiritual and what is material and who is firmly fixed in the spiritual position can be *jagad-guru*, the spiritual master of the entire world. One cannot become *jagad-guru* simply by advertising oneself as *jagad-guru* without knowing the essential principles for becoming *jagad-guru*. Even people who never see what a *jagad-guru* is and never talk with other people become puffed-up *sannyāsīs* and declare themselves *jagad-gurus*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not like this. Any person



who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa and who is fully qualified in spiritual life can become *jagad-guru*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 5.85

**Aññottara-ṣaṭa (108) is added to the spiritual master's name to indicate one who is situated in the transcendental state:**

The living entity is constitutionally pure. *Asaṅgo hy ayaṁ puruṣaḥ*. In the Vedic literature it is said that the soul is always pure and uncontaminated by material attachment. The identification of the body with the soul is due to misunderstanding. As soon as one is fully Kṛṣṇa conscious it is to be understood that one is in his pure, original constitutional position. This state of existence is called *śuddha-sattva*, which means that it is transcendental to the material qualities.

... In pure devotional service one simply serves the Supreme Personality of Godhead as a matter of duty, without reason and without being impeded by material conditions. That is called *śuddha-sattva*, or *vasudeva*, because in that stage the Supreme Person, Kṛṣṇa, is revealed in the heart of the devotee. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has very nicely described this *vasudeva*, or *śuddha-sattva*, in his *Bhāgavata-sandarbhā*. He explains that *aṣṭottara-ṣaṭa* (108) is added to the name of the spiritual master to indicate one who is situated in *śuddha-sattva*, or in the transcendental state of *vasudeva*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.3.23

**The term “Prabhupāda” means that the spiritual master occupies the post of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, as His representative:**

This word [*prabhu*] is applicable to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sometimes the spiritual master is addressed as Prabhupāda. *Prabhu* means “the Supreme Personality of Godhead,” and *pāda* means “post.” According to Vaiṣṇava philosophy, the spiritual master occupies the post of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, or in other words he is the bona fide representative of the Supreme Lord.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.69

**The meaning of “Prabhupāda”:**

When Pṛthu Mahārāja became spiritually powerful by the enhancement of his spiritual knowledge, *jñāna* and renunciation of material desires, he became a *prabhu*, or master of his senses (sometimes called *gosvāmī* or *svāmī*). This means that he was no longer controlled by the influence of material energy. When one is strong enough to give up the influence of material energy, he is called *prabhu* ... when one is completely self-realized and acts according to that position, he can be called *prabhu*. The spiritual master is addressed as “Prabhupāda,” because he is a completely self-realized soul. The word *pāda* means “position,” and Prabhupāda indicates that he is given the position of *prabhu*, or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for he acts on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Unless one is a *prabhu*, or controller of the senses, he cannot act as spiritual master. He is authorized by the supreme *prabhu*, or Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.23.18

**The meaning of “Prabhu” and “Prabhupāda”:**

When Kāśī Mīśra heard the proposal, he said, “I am very fortunate that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Lord of all prabhus, will stay at my home.”

**PURPORT:** In this verse the word Prabhupāda, referring to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, is significant. Regarding this, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda comments, “Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and all His servants address Him as Prabhupāda. This means that there are many prabhus taking shelter under His lotus feet.” The pure Vaiṣṇava is addressed as *prabhu*, and this address is an etiquette observed between Vaiṣṇavas. When many *prabhus* remain under the shelter of the lotus feet of another *prabhu*, the address Prabhupāda is given. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Śrī Advaita Prabhu are also addressed as Prabhupāda. Śrī

Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Advaita Prabhu and Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu are all *viṣṇu-tattva*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore all living entities are under Their lotus feet. Lord Viṣṇu is the eternal Lord of everyone, and the representative of Lord Viṣṇu is the Lord's confidential servant. Such a person acts as the spiritual master for neophyte Vaiṣṇavas; therefore the spiritual master is as respectable as Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya or Lord Viṣṇu Himself. For this reason, the spiritual master is addressed as Om Viṣṇupāda or Prabhupāda.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 10.23

### Things used by the spiritual master are worshipable

**The guru and things used by him are worshipable:**

Lord Nityānanda Prabhu then obtained an external garment used by the Lord by requesting it from Govinda. Thus Nityānanda Prabhu delivered the old cloth to the care of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, and Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya sent it to the King. When the King received the old cloth, he began to worship it exactly as he would worship the Lord personally.

**PURPORT:** We should learn to worship everything belonging to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is referred to by Lord Śiva as *tadīyānām*. In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is said:

*ārāadhanānām sarveṣāṁ  
viṣṇor ārāadhanam param  
tasmāt parataram devi  
tadīyānām samarcanam*

“O Devī, the most exalted system of worship is the worship of Lord Viṣṇu. Greater than that is the worship of tadīya, or anything belonging to Viṣṇu.”

Śrī Viṣṇu is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha* [Bs. 5.1]. Similarly, the most confidential servant of Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master, and all devotees of Viṣṇu are *tadīya*. The *sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*, *guru*, Vaiṣṇavas, and things used by them must be considered *tadīya* and without a doubt worshipable by all living beings.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 12.38

**Things used by the spiritual master are worshipable and should not be used by anyone else:**

“Now please sit in this place and take Your lunch. Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, “This place is worshipable because it was used by Kṛṣṇa.”

**PURPORT:** According to etiquette, things used by Kṛṣṇa should not be used by anyone else. Similarly, things used by the spiritual master should also not be used by anyone else. That is etiquette. Whatever is used by Kṛṣṇa or the spiritual master is worshipable. In particular, their sitting or eating places should not be used by anyone else. A devotee must be very careful to observe this.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.234

### The disciple benefits by taking remnants of food left by the spiritual master

**The remnants of food left by the spiritual master are purifying:**

When the rice thrown by Nityānanda Prabhu touched His body, Advaita Ācārya thought Himself purified by the touch of remnants thrown by Paramahansa Nityānanda. Therefore He began dancing.

**PURPORT:** The remnants of food left by a pure Vaiṣṇava are called *mahā-mahā-prasāda*. This is completely spiritual and is identified with Lord Viṣṇu. Such remnants are not ordinary. The spiritual master is to be considered on the stage of *paramahansa* and beyond the jurisdiction of the *varṇāśrama*

institution. The remnants of food left by the spiritual master and similar *paramahamsas* or pure Vaiṣṇavas are purifying. When an ordinary person touches such *prasāda*, his mind is purified, and his mind is raised to the status of a pure *brāhmaṇa*. The behavior and statements of Advaita Ācārya are meant for the understanding of ordinary people who are unaware of the strength of spiritual values, not knowing the potency of foodstuffs left by the bona fide spiritual master and pure Vaiṣṇavas.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 3.96

### Remnants of the spiritual master's meal may be taken as prasāda:

Remnants of food may be eaten only when they are part of a meal that was first offered to the Supreme Lord or first eaten by saintly persons, especially the spiritual master.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 17.8-10

## When the spiritual master can be rejected

### When a guru can be rejected:

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī said: O King Parīkṣit, when Bali Mahārāja was thus advised by his spiritual master, Śukrācārya, his family priest, he remained silent for some time, and then, after full deliberation, he replied to his spiritual master as follows.

**PURPORT:** Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura remarks that Bali Mahārāja remained silent at a critical point. How could he disobey the instruction of Śukrācārya, his spiritual master? It is the duty of such a sober personality as Bali Mahārāja to abide by the orders of his spiritual master immediately, as his spiritual master had advised. But Bali Mahārāja also considered that Śukrācārya was no longer to be accepted as a spiritual master, for he had deviated from the duty of a spiritual master. According to *śāstra*, the duty of the guru is to take the disciple back home, back to Godhead. If he is unable to do so and instead hinders the disciple in going back to Godhead, he should not be a guru. *Gurur na sa syāt* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.18). One should not become a guru if he cannot enable his disciple to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The goal of life is to become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa so that one may be freed from the bondage of material existence (*tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna* [Bg. 4.9]). The spiritual master helps the disciple attain this stage by developing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now Śukrācārya had advised Bali Mahārāja to deny the promise to Vāmanadeva. Under the circumstances, therefore, Bali Mahārāja thought that there would be no fault if he disobeyed the order of his spiritual master. He deliberated on this point—should he refuse to accept the advice of his spiritual master, or should he immediately do everything to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead? He took some time. Therefore it is said, *tūṣṇīm bhūtvā kṣaṇaṁ rājann uvācāvahito gurum*. After deliberating on this point, he decided that Lord Viṣṇu should be pleased in all circumstances, even at the risk of ignoring the guru's advice to the contrary.

Anyone who is supposed to be a guru but who goes against the principle of *viṣṇu-bhakti* cannot be accepted as a guru. If one has falsely accepted such a guru, one should reject him.... Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has advised that such a useless guru, a family priest acting as a guru, should be given up, and that the proper, bona fide guru should be accepted.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.20.1

### A spiritual master can be rejected if unworthy of the position:

Arjuna arrested Aśvatthāmā knowing perfectly well that he was the son of Droṇācārya. Kṛṣṇa also knew him to be so, but both of them condemned the murderer without consideration of his being the son of a *brāhmaṇa*. According to revealed scriptures, a teacher or spiritual master is liable to be rejected if he proves himself unworthy of the position of a guru or spiritual master. A guru is called also an *ācārya*, or a person who has personally assimilated all the essence of *śāstras* and has helped his disciples to adopt the ways. Aśvatthāmā failed to discharge the duties of a *brāhmaṇa* or teacher, and therefore he was liable to be rejected from the exalted position of a *brāhmaṇa*. On this consideration, both Lord Śrī

Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were right in condemning Aśvatthāmā.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.43

### A fallen teacher is fit to be abandoned:

According to scriptural codes, a teacher who engages in an abominable action and has lost his sense of discrimination is fit to be abandoned.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 1.5

## False spiritual masters

### The conditioned soul can get no benefit, material or spiritual, from a false guru:

Sometimes, to mitigate distresses in this forest of the material world, the conditioned soul receives cheap blessings from atheists. He then loses all intelligence in their association. This is exactly like jumping in a shallow river. As a result one simply breaks his head. He is not able to mitigate his sufferings from the heat, and in both ways he suffers. The misguided conditioned soul also approaches so-called sādhus and svāmés who preach against the principles of the Vedas. He does not receive benefit from them, either in the present or in the future.

**PURPORT:** Cheaters are always there to manufacture their own way of spiritual realization. To get some material benefit, the conditioned soul approaches these pseudo sannyāsīs and yogīs for cheap blessings, but he does not receive any benefit from them, either spiritual or material. In this age there are many cheaters who show some jugglery and magic. They even create gold to amaze their followers, and their followers accept them as God. This type of cheating is very prominent in *Kali-yuga*.... One should approach a guru who can extinguish the blazing fire of this material world, the struggle for existence. People want to be cheated, and therefore they go to yogīs and svāmīs who play tricks, but tricks do not mitigate the miseries of material life.... One cannot become happy by accepting a false guru. A guru should be accepted as advised in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.3.21). *Tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*: One should approach a bona fide guru to inquire about the highest benefit of life. Such a guru is described as follows: *śābde pare ca niṣṇātam*. Such a guru does not manufacture gold or juggle words. He is well versed in the conclusions of Vedic knowledge (*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah* [Bg. 15.15]). He is freed from all material contamination and is fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service. If one is able to obtain the dust of the lotus feet of such a guru, his life becomes successful. Otherwise he is baffled both in this life and in the next.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.14.13

### Because people want to be cheated, they get a cheater guru:

**Reporter:** What frankly worries me is that since the arrival in Britain some time ago of an Indian yogī, who was the first “guru” that most people had ever heard of, a lot of “gurus” have suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Sometimes I get the feeling that not all of them are as genuine as they ought to be. Would it be right to warn people who are thinking of taking up spiritual life that they should make sure that they have a genuine guru to teach them?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. Of course, to search out a guru is very nice, but if you want a cheap guru, or if you want to be cheated, then you will find many cheating gurus. But if you are sincere, you will find a sincere guru. Because people want everything very cheaply, they are cheated. We ask our students to refrain from illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling, and intoxication. People think that this is all very difficult—a botheration. But if someone else says, “You may do whatever nonsense you like, simply take my *mantra*,” then people will like him. The point is that people want to be cheated, and therefore cheaters come. No one wants to undergo any austerity. Human life is meant for austerity, but no one is prepared to undergo austerity. Consequently, cheaters come and say, “No austerity. Whatever you like, you do. Simply pay me, and I'll give you some *mantra*, and you'll become God in six months.” All this is going on. If you want to be cheated like this, the cheater will come.

**Reporter:** What about the person who seriously wants to find spiritual life but who happens to finish up with the wrong guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** If you simply want an ordinary education, you have to devote so much time, labor, and understanding to it. Similarly, if you are going to take to spiritual life, you must become serious. How is it that simply by some wonderful *mantras*, someone can become God in six months? Why do people want something like that? This means that they want to be cheated.

**Reporter:** I wondered how many people you think might have been taken in by fake gurus.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Practically everyone. [laughter.] There is no question of counting. Everyone.

**Reporter:** This would mean thousands of people, wouldn't it?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Millions. Millions have been cheated, because they want to be cheated. God is omniscient. He can understand your desires. He is within your heart, and if you want to be cheated, God sends you a cheater.

**Reporter:** When you say that lots of people want to be cheated, do you mean that lots of people want to carry on with their worldly pleasures and at the same time, by chanting a *mantra* or by holding a flower, achieve spiritual life as well? Is this what you mean by wanting to be cheated?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, this is like a patient thinking, "I shall continue with my disease, and at the same time I shall become healthy." It is contradictory. The first requirement is that one become educated in spiritual life. Spiritual life is not something one can understand by a few minutes' talk. There are many philosophy and theology books, but people are not interested in them. That is the difficulty. For instance, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is a very long work, and if you try to read this book, it may take many days just to understand one line of it. The *Bhāgavatam* describes God, the Absolute Truth, but people are not interested. And if, by chance, someone becomes a little interested in spiritual life, he wants something immediate and cheap. Therefore, he is cheated. Actually, human life is meant for austerity and penance.... Spiritual life means voluntarily accepting some austerities for the sake of God realization. That is why we insist on no illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling, or intoxication for our initiated students. Without these restrictions, any "yoga meditation" or so-called spiritual discipline cannot be genuine. It is simply a business deal between the cheaters and the cheated.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**Accepting an unqualified spiritual master to control is useless for spiritual realization:**

Sometimes pseudo spiritualists accept a spiritual master who is not even fit to become a disciple because they want to keep him under their control. This is useless for spiritual realization.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.72*

**Blind, conditioned souls, not knowing the goal of life, accept bogus gurus:**

*acakṣur andhasya yathāgraṇiḥ kṛtas  
tathā janasyāviduṣo 'budho guruḥ*

As a blind man, being unable to see, accepts another blind man as his leader, people who do not know the goal of life accept someone as a guru who is a rascal and a fool....

**PURPORT:** The conditioned soul, being wrapped in ignorance and therefore not knowing the goal of life, accepts a guru who can juggle words and make some display of magic that is wonderful to a fool. Sometimes a foolish person accepts someone as a guru because he can manufacture a small quantity of gold by mystic yogic power. Because such a disciple has a poor fund of knowledge, he cannot judge whether the manufacture of gold is the criterion for a guru. Why would one not accept the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, from whom unlimited numbers of gold mines come into being? *Ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavo mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate* [Bg. 10.8]. All the gold mines are created by the energy of



the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Therefore, why should one accept a magician who can manufacture only a small portion of gold? Such gurus are accepted by those who are blind, not knowing the goal of life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.24.50

**Bogus spiritual masters are interested only in the material world, and they mislead many blind followers:**

Persons who are strongly entrapped by the consciousness of enjoying material life, and who have therefore accepted as their leader or guru a similar blind man attached to external sense objects, cannot understand that the goal of life is to return home, back to Godhead, and engage in the service of Lord Viṣṇu. As blind men guided by another blind man miss the right path and fall into a ditch, materially attached men led by another materially attached man are bound by the ropes of fruitive labor, which are made of very strong cords, and they continue again and again in materialistic life, suffering the threefold miseries.

**PURPORT:** [Bogus] spiritual masters are not at all interested in Viṣṇu. Indeed, they are hopeful of material success (*bahir-artha-māninaḥ*). The word *bahiḥ* means “external,” *artha* means “interest,” and *māninaḥ* means “taking very seriously.” Generally speaking, practically everyone is unaware of the spiritual world. The knowledge of the materialists is restricted within the four-billion-mile limit of this material world, which is in the dark portion of the creation; they do not know that beyond the material world is the spiritual world. Unless one is a devotee of the Lord, one cannot understand the existence of the spiritual world. Gurus, teachers, who are simply interested in this material world are described in this verse as *andha*, blind. Such blind men may lead many other blind followers without true knowledge of material conditions, but they are not accepted by devotees like Prahlaḍa Mahārāja. Such blind teachers, being interested in the external, material world, are always bound by the strong ropes of material nature.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.31

**Bogus gurus instruct their disciples in material advancement, and such disciples remain in material existence:**

A materialistic so-called guru instructs his materialistic disciples about economic development and sense gratification, and because of such instructions the foolish disciples continue in the materialistic existence of ignorance....

**PURPORT:** So-called gurus instruct their disciples for the sake of material profit. Some guru advises that one meditate in such a way that his intelligence will increase in regard to keeping his body fit for sense gratification. Another guru advises that sex is the ultimate goal of life and that one should therefore engage in sex to the best of his ability. These are the instructions of foolish gurus. In other words, because of the instructions of a foolish guru one remains perpetually in material existence and suffers its tribulations.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.24.51

**Many so-called svāmés and yogés fall prey to women and thus cannot help others cross the ocean of nescience:**

Dangerous elements in the universe are compared to sharks in the ocean. Even though one may be a very expert swimmer, he cannot possibly survive if he is attacked by sharks. One often sees that many so-called *svāmīs* and *yogīs* sometimes advertise themselves as competent to cross the ocean of nescience and to help others cross, but in actuality they are found to be simply victims of their own senses. Instead of helping their followers to cross the ocean of nescience, such *svāmīs* and *yogīs* fall prey to *māyā*, represented by the fair sex, woman, and are thus devoured by the sharks in that ocean.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.40

**A sannyāsé (spiritual master) should not gather disciples through material allurements:**

**A sannyāsé must not present allurements of material benefits to gather many disciples...**

**PURPORT:** So-called *svāmīs* and *yogīs* generally make disciples by alluring them with material benefits. There are many so-called gurus who attract disciples by promising to cure their diseases or increase their material opulence by manufacturing gold. These are lucrative allurements for unintelligent men. A *sannyāsī* is prohibited from making disciples through such material allurements.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.13.8

**Rascal gurus claim to be God:**

In the world there are many rascal gurus who give their own opinion, but we can challenge any rascal. A rascal guru may say, “I am God,” or, “We are all God.” That is all right, but we should find out from the dictionary what the meaning of “God” is. Generally, a dictionary will tell us that the word “God” indicates the Supreme Being. Thus we may ask such a guru, “Are you the Supreme Being?” If he cannot understand this, then we should give the meaning of “supreme.” Any dictionary will inform us that supreme means “the greatest authority.” We may then ask, “Are you the greatest authority?” Such a rascal guru, even though proclaiming himself to be God, cannot answer such a question. God is the Supreme Being and the highest authority. No one is equal to Him or greater than Him. Yet there are many guru-gods, many rascals who claim to be the Supreme. Such rascals cannot help us escape the darkness of material existence. They cannot illumine our darkness with the torchlight of spiritual knowledge.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**False, impersonalist spiritual masters mislead their disciples by posing as Çré Kāñēa:**

A disciple should always respect the spiritual master as a manifestation of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but at the same time one should always remember that a spiritual master is never authorized to imitate the transcendental pastimes of the Lord. False spiritual masters pose themselves as identical with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in every respect to exploit the sentiments of their disciples, but such impersonalists can only mislead their disciples, for their ultimate aim is to become one with the Lord. This is against the principles of the devotional cult.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 1.46

**Bogus, self-made spiritual masters teach that all paths lead to the same goal:**

**It is said that one result is obtained by worshiping the supreme cause of all causes and that another result is obtained by worshiping that which is not supreme. All this was heard from the undisturbed authorities who clearly explained it.**

**PURPORT:** Different results are achieved by different modes of worship. If we worship the Supreme Lord, we will certainly reach Him in His eternal abode, and if we worship demigods like the sun-god and moon-god, we can reach their respective planets without a doubt. And if we wish to remain on this wretched planet with our planning commissions and our stop-gap political adjustments, we can certainly do that also.

Nowhere in authentic scriptures is it said that one will ultimately reach the same goal by doing anything or worshiping anyone. Such foolish theories are offered by self-made masters who have no connection with the *paramparā*, the bona fide system of disciplic succession. The bona fide spiritual master cannot say that all paths lead to the same goal and that anyone can attain this goal by his own mode of worship of the demigods or of the Supreme or whatever. For a common man it is very easy to understand that a person can reach his destination only when he has purchased a ticket for that destination. A person who has purchased a ticket for Calcutta can reach Calcutta, but not Bombay. However, temporary so-called masters say that any and all tickets can take one to the supreme goal. Such mundane and compromising offers attract many foolish creatures who become puffed up with their manufactured

methods of spiritual realization. The Vedic instructions, however, do not uphold them.

Śrī Īśopaniṣad Mantra 13

**In Kali-yuga, gurus create a disturbance by ignoring the authorized Vedic literatures:**

śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-  
pañcarātra-vidhiṁ vinā  
aikāntikī harer bhaktir  
utpātāyaiva kalpate

“Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upaniṣads, Purāṇas and Nārada-pañcarātra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.” (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.101) Those who are very advanced in knowledge and are situated in the mode of goodness follow the Vedic instructions of the *śruti* and *smṛti* and other religious scriptures, including the *pañcarātrikī-vidhi*. Without understanding the Supreme Personality of Godhead in this way, one only creates a disturbance. In this age of *Kali*, so many gurus have sprung up, and because they do not refer to the *śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pañcarātrikī-vidhi* [Brs. 1.2.101], they are creating a great disturbance in the world in regard to understanding the Absolute Truth. However, those who follow the *pañcarātrikī-vidhi* under the guidance of a proper spiritual master can understand the Absolute Truth.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.12.10

**Pseudoreligionists, lacking both knowledge and detachment, pose as spiritual masters and ācāryas and thus fall into hell:**

The ignorant pseudoreligionists and the manufacturers of so-called incarnations who directly violate the Vedic injunctions are liable to enter into the darkest region of the universe because they mislead those who follow them.... The pseudoreligionists have neither knowledge nor detachment from material affairs, for most of them want to live in the golden shackles of material bondage under the shadow of altruistic and philanthropic activities and in the guise of religious principles. By a false display of religious sentiments, they present a show of devotional service while indulging in all sorts of immoral activities. In this way they pass as spiritual masters and devotees of God. Such violators of religious principles have no respect for the authoritative *ācāryas*, the holy teachers in the strict disciplic succession. To mislead the people in general, they themselves become so-called *ācāryas*, but do not even follow the principles of the *ācāryas*.

These rogues are the most dangerous elements in human society. Because there is no religious government, they escape punishment by the law of the state. They cannot, however, escape the law of the Supreme, who has clearly declared in *Bhagavad-gītā* (16.19-20) that envious demons in the garb of religious propagandists shall be thrown into the darkest regions of hell. *Śrī Īśopaniṣad* confirms that these pseudoreligionists are heading toward the most obnoxious place in the universe after the completion of their spiritual master business, which they conduct simply for sense gratification.

Śrī Īśopaniṣad Mantra 12

**Even if one temporarily contacts a bogus guru, if he is sincere, Kāñēa will guide him to a genuine guru:**

**Reporter:** Have you ever had people come to you who had previously been involved with a fake guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, there are many.

**Reporter:** Were their spiritual lives in any way spoiled by the fake gurus?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, they were genuinely seeking something spiritual, and that was their qualification. God is within everyone’s heart, and as soon as someone genuinely seeks Him, He helps that person find a genuine guru.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

## Lord Jesus Christ as spiritual master

### Jesus Christ as spiritual master:

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that any bona fide preacher of God consciousness must have the qualities of *titikṣā* (tolerance) and *karuṇā* (compassion). In the character of Lord Jesus Christ we find both these qualities. He was so tolerant that even while he was being crucified, he didn't condemn anyone. And he was so compassionate that he prayed to God to forgive the very persons who were trying to kill him.... A Vaiṣṇava is unhappy to see the sufferings of others. Therefore, Lord Jesus Christ agreed to be crucified-to free others from their suffering. But his followers are so unfaithful that they have decided, "Let Christ suffer for us, and we'll go on committing sin." They love Christ so much that they think, "My dear Christ, we are very weak. We cannot give up our sinful activities. So you please suffer for us."

Jesus Christ taught, "**Thou shalt not kill.**" But his followers have now decided, "Let us kill anyway," and they open big, modern, scientific slaughterhouses. "If there is any sin, Christ will suffer for us." This is a most abominable conclusion.

Christ can take the sufferings for the previous sins of his devotees. But first they have to be sane: "**Why should I put Jesus Christ into suffering for my sins? Let me stop my sinful activities.**"

... Jesus Christ was such a great personality—the son of God, the representative of God. He had no fault. Still, he was crucified. He wanted to deliver God consciousness, but in return they crucified him—they were so thankless. They could not appreciate his preaching. But we appreciate him and give him all honor as the representative of God.

Of course, the message that Christ preached was just according to his particular time, place, and country, and just suited for a particular group of people. But certainly he is the representative of God. Therefore we adore Lord Jesus Christ and offer our obeisances to him.

Once, in Melbourne, a group of Christian ministers came to visit me. They asked, "What is your idea of Jesus Christ?" I told them, "**He is our guru. He is preaching God consciousness, so he is our spiritual master.**" The ministers very much appreciated that.

Actually, anyone who is preaching God's glories must be accepted as a guru. Jesus Christ is one such great personality. We should not think of him as an ordinary human being. The scriptures say that anyone who considers the spiritual master to be an ordinary man has a hellish mentality. If Jesus Christ were an ordinary man, then he could not have delivered God consciousness.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

## The physical demise of the spiritual master

### When the spiritual master leaves his body, the disciple should cry:

Being now alone and a widow in that forest, the daughter of Vidarbha began to lament, incessantly shedding tears, which soaked her breasts, and crying very loudly.

**PURPORT:** Figuratively the Queen is supposed to be the disciple of the King; thus when the mortal body of the spiritual master expires, his disciples should cry exactly as the Queen cries when the King leaves his body.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.47

### The disciple becomes bereaved when the spiritual master passes away:

That most obedient wife thus fell down at the feet of her dead husband and began to cry pitifully in that solitary forest. Thus the tears rolled down from her eyes.

**PURPORT:** Just as a devoted wife becomes afflicted at the passing away of her husband, when a spir-

itual master passes away, the disciple becomes similarly bereaved.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.49

**When the spiritual master departs, the devotee, if he is pure in heart, is immediately guided by the Supersoul:**

One who is sincere and pure gets an opportunity to consult with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Paramātmā feature sitting within everyone's heart. The Paramātmā is always the *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within, and He comes before one externally as the instructor and initiator spiritual master. The Lord can reside within the heart, and He can also come out before a person and give him instructions. Thus the spiritual master is not different from the Supersoul sitting within the heart. An uncontaminated soul or living entity can get a chance to meet the Paramātmā face to face. Just as one gets a chance to consult with the Paramātmā within his heart, he also gets a chance to see Him actually situated before him. Then one can take instructions from the Supersoul directly. This is the duty of the pure devotee: to see the bona fide spiritual master and consult with the Supersoul within provided the devotee is purified in heart by following the directions of the spiritual master. A sincere devotee who follows the instructions of the spiritual master certainly gets direct instructions from his heart from the Supersoul. Thus a sincere devotee is always helped directly or indirectly by the spiritual master and the Supersoul. This is confirmed in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* [Cc Mad 19.151]. If the devotee serves his spiritual master sincerely, Kṛṣṇa automatically becomes pleased. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. By satisfying the spiritual master, one automatically satisfies Kṛṣṇa. Thus the devotee becomes enriched by both the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.52

**After his disappearance, the spiritual master's body is never burnt to ashes:**

The spiritual master, or *ācārya*, is always situated in the spiritual status of life. Birth, death, old age and disease do not affect him. According to the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, therefore, after the disappearance of an *ācārya*, his body is never burnt to ashes, for it is a spiritual body. The spiritual body is always unaffected by material conditions.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.4.20

**The perfect disciples try to relieve the disorder which may follow the ācārya's disappearance by sincerely following his instructions:**

Whenever an *ācārya* comes, following the superior orders of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His representative, he establishes the principles of religion.... Unfortunately, when the *ācārya* disappears, rogues and nondevotees take advantage and immediately begin to introduce unauthorized principles in the name of so-called *svāmīs*, *yogīs*, philanthropists, welfare workers and so on.... The *ācārya*, the authorized representative of the Supreme Lord, establishes these principles, but when he disappears, things once again become disordered. The perfect disciples of the *ācārya* try to relieve the situation by sincerely following the instructions of the spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.48

## Other instructions

**Under the guidance of the spiritual master, the whole world can be spiritualized:**

Utilization of the human energy in the service of the Lord is the progressive path of salvation. The whole cosmic creation becomes at once identical with the Lord as soon as service in relation with the Lord is rendered under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. The expert spiritual master knows the art of utilizing everything to glorify the Lord, and therefore under his guidance the whole world can be turned into the spiritual abode by the divine grace of the Lord's servant.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.23



**Thousands of spiritual masters are now needed to spread the science of Kāñḍa consciousness throughout the world:**

There is no bar against anyone; anyone can become a spiritual master provided he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa. This is the only qualification, and this science in essence is contained in *Bhagavad-gītā*. At the present moment, thousands of spiritual masters are needed to spread this great science throughout the world.

... All living entities, beginning from Brahmā, the highest demigod, down to the lowest ant, have the right to use natural resources. Nārada Muni points out that we can use these resources as much as we require, but if we take more than required, we become thieves.... Everything belongs to the Supreme Lord, and we can accept whatever we need, but not more. That is knowledge. By the Lord's arrangement the world is so made that there is no scarcity of anything.... The perfection of spiritual communism is found in the knowledge that everything belongs to God. By knowing the science of Kṛṣṇa, we can easily cross over the ignorance of false proprietorship.

We are actually suffering due to our ignorance. In the law court ignorance is no excuse. If we tell the judge that we are not aware of the law, we will be punished anyway.... The whole world is lacking this knowledge, and therefore thousands of teachers of the science of Kṛṣṇa are needed.

There is a great necessity for this knowledge now.

*Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*

**The whole jurisdiction of Kāñḍa consciousness is directly under the spiritual energy-Kāñḍa and the spiritual master:**

The cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not material. The Lord has generally three energies-namely, the external energy, the internal energy, and the marginal energy. The living entities are called marginal energy, and the material cosmic manifestation is the action of the external or material energy. Then there is the spiritual world, which is a manifestation of the internal energy. The living entities, who are called marginal energy, perform material activities when acting under the inferior external energy. And when they engage in activities under the internal spiritual energy, their activities are called Kṛṣṇa conscious. This means that those who are great souls or great devotees do not act under the spell of material energy, but act instead under the protection of the spiritual energy. Any activities done in devotional service or in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are directly under the control of spiritual energy. In other words, energy is a sort of strength, and this strength can be spiritualized by the mercy of both the bona fide spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.

In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Lord Caitanya states that it is a fortunate person who comes in contact with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. One who is serious about spiritual life is given by Kṛṣṇa the intelligence to come in contact with a bona fide spiritual master, and then by the grace of the spiritual master one becomes advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In this way the whole jurisdiction of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is directly under the spiritual energy-Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master. This has nothing to do with the material world.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**Devotional service performed under the direction of the spiritual master and the ṣāstra, and devotional service to Kāñḍa in the spiritual world, are the same, although one is unripe and the other ripe:**

Devotional service in the association of devotees is the cause of the development of further devotional service. By devotional service only is one elevated to the transcendental planet Goloka Vṛndāvana, and there also there is only devotional service, for the activities of devotional service both in this world and in the spiritual world are one and the same. Devotional service does not change. The example of a mango can be given here. If one gets an unripe mango, it is still a mango, and when it is ripe it remains the same mango, but it becomes more tasteful and relishable. Similarly, there is devotional service performed according to the direction of the spiritual master and the injunctions and regulative principles of ṣāstra, and there is devotional service in the spiritual world rendered directly in association with the

Supreme Personality of Godhead. But they are both the same. There is no change. The difference is that one stage is unripe and the other is ripe and more relishable. It is possible to mature in devotional service only in the association of devotees.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.9.11



# Chapter III

## The Principle of Disciplic Succession (Paramparā)

### 1. The Importance of Following the Principle of Disciplic Succession

Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas as one of Rūpa Gosvāmī's six principles favorable to the execution of pure devotional service:

... *sato vṛteḥ*.... There are six principles favorable to the execution of pure devotional service: ... (6) following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas.

Nectar of Instruction Text 3

The submissive disciple receives perfect knowledge through the paramparā system:

Perfect knowledge is called *paramparā*, or deductive knowledge coming down from the authority to the submissive aural receiver who is bona fide by service and surrender. One cannot challenge the authority of the Supreme and know Him also at the same time. He reserves the right of not being exposed to such a challenging spirit of an insignificant spark of the whole, a spark subjected to the control of illusory energy. The devotees are submissive, and therefore the transcendental knowledge descends from the Personality of Godhead to Brahmā and from Brahmā to his sons and disciples in succession. This process is helped by the Supersoul within such devotees. That is the perfect way of learning transcendental knowledge.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.21

Receiving knowledge from the disciplic succession and from Kāñḍea directly is the same:

Śrīla Prabhupāda: [Kṛṣṇa] is the original guru. Then His disciple Brahmā is a guru, then his disciple Nārada is a guru, then his disciple Vyāsa is a guru—in this way there is a *guru-paramparā* [disciplic succession of gurus]. *Evam paramparā-prāptam*: [Bg. 4.2] the transcendental knowledge is received through the disciplic succession.

**Bob:** So a guru receives his knowledge through the disciplic succession, not directly from Kṛṣṇa? Do you receive some knowledge directly from Kṛṣṇa?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes. Kṛṣṇa's direct instruction is there: *Bhagavad-gītā*.

**Bob:** I see, but...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But you have to learn it through the disciplic succession, otherwise you will misunderstand it.

**Bob:** But presently you do not receive information directly from Kṛṣṇa? It comes through the disciplic succession from the books?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: There is no difference. Suppose I say that this is a pencil. If you say to him, “There is a pencil,” and if he says to another man, “This is a pencil,” then what is the difference between his instruction and my instructions?

**Bob:** Kṛṣṇa's mercy allows you to know this now?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You can take Kṛṣṇa's mercy also, provided it is delivered as it is. Just as we are teaching *Bhagavad-gītā*. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*: [Bg. 18.66] “Just give up all other forms of religion and simply surrender unto Me.” Now we are saying that you should give up everything and surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, there is no difference between Kṛṣṇa's instruction and our instruction. There is no deviation. So if you receive knowledge in that perfect way, that is as good as receiving instruction directly from Kṛṣṇa. But we don't change anything.

Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers

**To attain love of God, one has to become the servant of the servant of the servant of God by accepting the process of disciplic succession:**

A Vaiṣṇava never thinks that he has a direct relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Lord Caitanya says, “I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the servant—a hundred times the servant of the servant-of Kṛṣṇa.” We have to agree to become the servant of the servant of the servant [Cc. Mad 13.80]. This is the process of disciplic succession, and if one wants real, transcendental love of God, then he has to adopt this process. Because people do not accept this process, they do not develop real love of God. They speak of God, but actually they do not love God; because there is no cultivation of pure devotion—al service, they love dog.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**One attains the goal of life by accepting and following the instructions of the previous ācāryas in disciplic succession:**

Accepting the thoughts of exalted authorities through disciplic succession is certainly much easier than the method of mental speculation, by which one tries to invent some means to understand the Absolute Truth. The best process is to accept the instructions of the previous ācāryas and follow them. Then God realization and self-realization become extremely easy. By following this easy method, one is liberated from the contamination of the material modes of nature, and thus one can certainly cross the ocean of nescience, in which there are many miserable conditions. By following in the footsteps of the great ācāryas, one associates with the *hamsas* or *paramahamsas*, those who are completely freed from material contamination. Indeed, by following the instructions of the ācāryas one is always freed from all material contamination, and thus one’s life becomes successful, for one reaches the goal of life.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.9.18

**To understand the principles of religion, one must take shelter of one of the four authorized sampradāyas:**

[*Bhāgavata-dharma*, the principles of religion] is understandable if one follows the *paramparā* system of Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, the four Kumāras and the other standard authorities. There are four lines of disciplic succession: one from Lord Brahmā, one from Lord Śiva, one from Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, and one from the Kumāras. The disciplic succession from Lord Brahmā is called the *Brahma-sampradāya*, the succession from Lord Śiva (Śambhu) is called the *Rudra-sampradāya*, the one from the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmījī, is called the *Śrī-sampradāya*, and the one from the Kumāras is called the *Kumāra-sampradāya*. One must take shelter of one of these four *sampradāyas* in order to understand the most confidential religious system. In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is said, *sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*: if one does not follow the four recognized disciplic successions, his *mantra* or initiation is useless. In the present day there are many *apa-sampradāyas*, or *sampradāyas* which are not bona fide, which have no link to authorities like Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, the Kumāras or Lakṣmī. People are misguided by such *sampradāyas*. The *śāstras* say that being initiated in such a *sampradāya* is a useless waste of time, for it will never enable one to understand the real religious principles.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.3.20-21

**To learn about religious principles and attain spiritual liberation, one must strictly follow the principles of disciplic succession:**

No one is superior to you in peaceful life and mercy, and no one knows better than you how to execute devotional service or how to become the best of the brāhmaṇas. Therefore, you know all the principles of confidential religious life, and no one knows them better than you.

**PURPORT:** Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja knew that Nārada Muni is the supreme spiritual master of human society who can teach the path of spiritual liberation leading to the understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Actually, it is for this purpose that Nārada Muni compiled his *Bhakti-sūtra* and gave directions in the *Nārada-pañcarātra*. To learn about religious principles and the perfection of life, one must take instruction from the disciplic succession of Nārada Muni. Our Kṛṣṇa conscious-

ness movement is directly in the line of the *Brahma-sampradāya*. Nārada Muni received instructions from Lord Brahmā and in turn transmitted the instructions to Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva instructed his son Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who spoke *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Because *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was spoken by Śukadeva Gosvāmī and *Bhagavad-gītā* was spoken by Kṛṣṇa, there is no difference between them. If we strictly follow the principle of disciplic succession, we are certainly on the right path of spiritual liberation, or eternal engagement in devotional service.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.11.4

**To advance in Kāññā consciousness, one must follow the instructions and understand the conclusions of the previous ācāryas in disciplic succession:**

If one is seriously interested in Kṛṣṇa conscious activities, he must be ready to follow the rules and regulations laid down by the ācāryas, and he must understand their conclusions. The *śāstra* says: *dharmasya tattvaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyaṁ mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* [Cc Mad 17.186] (*Mahābhārata*, *Vana-parva* 313.117). It is very difficult to understand the secret of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but one who advances by the instruction of the previous ācāryas and follows in the footsteps of his predecessors in the line of disciplic succession will have success. Others will not.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 8.7

**To attain Kṛñā consciousness, one must have faith in the authorized disciplic succession:**

Prahlāda Mahārāja offers his blessings to his class friends, saying, “Also become faithful like me. Become bona fide Vaiṣṇavas.” A devotee of the Lord desires for everyone to take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Unfortunately, however, people sometimes do not have staunch faith in the words of the spiritual master who comes by the disciplic succession, and therefore they are unable to understand transcendental knowledge. The spiritual master must be in the line of authorized disciplic succession, like Prahlāda Mahārāja, who received the knowledge from Nārada. If the class friends of Prahlāda Mahārāja, the sons of demons, were to accept the truth through Prahlāda, they would certainly also become fully aware of transcendental knowledge.

The words *vaiśārādī dhīḥ* refer to intelligence concerning the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is extremely expert. The Lord has created wonderful universes by His expert knowledge. Unless one is extremely expert, he cannot understand the expert management of the supreme expert. One can understand, however, if one is fortunate enough to meet a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession from Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, mother Lakṣmī or the Kumāras. These four *sampradāyas*, or disciplic successions of knowledge and transcendence, are called the *Brahma-sampradāya*, *Rudra-sampradāya*, *Śrī-sampradāya*, and *Kumāra-sampradāya*. *Sampradāya-vihīnāye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*. The knowledge of the Supreme received from such a *sampradāya*, or disciplic succession, can give one enlightenment. If one does not take to the path of disciplic succession, it is not possible for one to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one understands the Supreme Lord through devotional service with faith in the disciplic succession and then advances further, he awakens his natural love for God, and then his success in life is assured.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.7.17

**Trying to advance in spiritual life outside the disciplic succession is ludicrous:**

According to our Vaiṣṇava philosophy, we have to follow the great ācāryas of the four *sampradāyas* or disciplic successions.

Trying to advance in spiritual life outside the disciplic succession is simply ludicrous. It is said, therefore: *ācāryavān puruṣo veda* (*Chāndogya Upanisad* 6.14.2). One who follows the disciplic succession of ācāryas knows things as they are. *Tad-vijnānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet* [MU 1.2.12]. In order to understand the transcendental science, one must approach the bona fide spiritual master.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.24



## 2. Vedic Knowledge/Perfect Knowledge Must Be Received Through Disciplic Succession

To attain perfect knowledge of eternal truth, one must receive Vedic knowledge through disciplic succession:

The disciplic succession holds that the *Vedas* were uttered by Lord Kṛṣṇa to Brahmā, by Brahmā to Nārada, and by Nārada to Vyāsadeva, and then by Vyāsadeva to Śukadeva Gosvāmī and so on. So there is no difference between the versions of all the authorities. The truth is eternal, and as such there cannot be any new opinion about the truth. That is the way of knowing the knowledge contained in the *Vedas*. It is not a thing to be understood by one's erudite scholarship or by the fashionable interpretations of mundane scholars. There is nothing to be added and nothing to be subtracted, because the truth is the truth. One has to accept, after all, some authority. The modern scientists are also authorities for the common man for some scientific truths. The common man follows the version of the scientist. This means that the common man follows the authority. The Vedic knowledge is also received in that way. The common man cannot argue about what is beyond the sky or beyond the universe; he must accept the versions of the *Vedas* as they are understood by the authorized disciplic succession. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* also the same process of understanding the *Gītā* is stated in the Fourth Chapter. If one does not follow the authoritative version of the *ācāryas*, he will vainly search after the truth mentioned in the *Vedas*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.2.32

Vedic knowledge must be received through the disciplic succession:

May the Lord, who in the beginning of the creation amplified the potent knowledge of Brahmā from within his heart and inspired him with full knowledge of creation and of His own Self, and who appeared to be generated from the mouth of Brahmā, be pleased with me.

**PURPORT:** The Vedic knowledge was first impregnated within Brahmā, and it appears that Brahmā distributed the Vedic knowledge. Brahmā is undoubtedly the speaker of the Vedic knowledge, but actually he was inspired by the Lord to receive such transcendental knowledge, as it directly descends from the Lord. The *Vedas* are therefore called *apauruṣeya*, or not imparted by any created being. Before the creation the Lord was there (*nārāyaṇaḥ paro 'vyaktāt*), and therefore the words spoken by the Lord are vibrations of transcendental sound. There is a gulf of difference between the two qualities of sound, namely *prākṛta* and *aprākṛta*. The physicist can deal only with the *prākṛta* sound, or sound vibrated in the material sky, and therefore we must know that the Vedic sounds recorded in symbolic expressions cannot be understood by anyone within the universe unless and until one is inspired by the vibration of supernatural (*aprākṛta*) sound, which descends in the chain of disciplic succession from the Lord to Brahmā, from Brahmā to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsa and so on. No mundane scholar can translate or reveal the true import of the Vedic *mantras* (hymns). They cannot be understood unless one is inspired or initiated by the authorized spiritual master. The original spiritual master is the Lord Himself, and the succession comes down through the sources of *paramparā*, as clearly stated in the Fourth Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. So unless one receives the transcendental knowledge from the authorized *paramparā*, one should be considered useless (*viphalā matāḥ*), even though one may be greatly qualified in the mundane advancements of arts or science.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī is praying from the Lord by dint of being inspired from within by the Lord so that he could rightly explain the facts and figures of creation as inquired by Mahārāja Parīkṣit. A spiritual master is not a theoretical speculator, like the mundane scholar, but is *śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham* [MU 1.2.12].

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.4.22

Vedic knowledge must be understood through disciplic succession:

My dear King, Brahmā, the firstborn, on being questioned by Nārada, exactly apprised him on this subject, as it was directly spoken by the Lord to His own son, who was impregnated with Vedic knowledge from his very birth.

**PURPORT:** As soon as Brahmā was born of the abdominal lotus petals of Viṣṇu, he was impregnated with Vedic knowledge, and therefore he is known as *veda-garbha*, or a *Vedāntist* from the embryo.... Brahmā was impregnated with all-perfect knowledge so that it was possible for him to create. Thus Brahmā knew the perfect description of creation, as it was exactly apprised to him by the Supreme Lord Hari. Brahmā, on being questioned by Nārada, told Nārada exactly what he had heard directly from the Lord. Nārada again told exactly the same thing to Vyāsa, and Vyāsa also told Śukadeva exactly what he heard from Nārada. And Śukadeva was going to repeat the same statements as he had heard them from Vyāsa. That is the way of Vedic understanding. The language of the *Vedas* can be revealed only by the abovementioned disciplic succession, and not otherwise.

There is no use in theories. Knowledge must be factual. There are many things that are complicated, and one cannot understand them unless they are explained by one who knows. The Vedic knowledge is also very difficult to know and must be learned by the abovementioned system; otherwise it is not at all understood.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī, therefore, prayed for the mercy of the Lord so that he might be able to repeat the very same message that was spoken directly by the Lord to Brahmā, or what was directly spoken by Brahmā to Nārada.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.4.25

**The science of Godhead should be heard from a bona fide representative of the disciplic succession:**

*Brahmājī* received [the] science of Godhead from the Lord directly, and he handed over the same to Nārada, who in his turn ordered Śrīla Vyāsadeva to expand it. So the transcendental knowledge of the Supreme Lord is not mental speculation by the mundane wranglers, but is uncontaminated, eternal, perfect knowledge beyond the jurisdiction of material modes. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is therefore the direct incarnation of the Lord in the form of transcendental sound, and one should receive this transcendental knowledge from the bona fide representative of the Lord in the chain of disciplic succession from the Lord to Brahmājī, from Brahmājī to Nārada, from Nārada to Vyāsa, from Vyāsadeva to Śukadeva Gosvāmī, from Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Sūta Gosvāmī. The ripened fruit of the Vedic tree drops from one hand to another without being broken by falling suddenly from a high branch down to the earth. Therefore unless one hears the science of Godhead from the bona fide representative of the disciplic succession, as above mentioned, for one to understand the theme of the science of Godhead will be a difficult job.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.7.51

**Perfect knowledge descends through disciplic succession, not through experimental knowledge:**

The Lord is unlimited, and His activities are also unfathomed. With a limited source of knowledge and with imperfect senses, any living being, up to the standard of Brahmājī, the highest perfect living being within the universe, can never imagine knowing about the unlimited. We can know something of the unlimited when it is explained by the unlimited, as has been done by the Lord Himself in the unique statements of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and it can also be known to some extent from realized souls like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who learned it from Vyāsadeva, a disciple of Nārada, and thus the perfect knowledge can descend by the chain of disciplic succession only, and not by any form of experimental knowledge, old or modern.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.4.8

**Devotional service begins with service to a devotee in disciplic succession, who is infallible due to the protection of the Lord:**

Lord Brahmā is the original speaker of Vedic wisdom to Nārada, and Nārada is the distributor of transcendental knowledge all over the world through his various disciples, like Vyāsadeva and others. The followers of Vedic wisdom accept the statements of Brahmājī as gospel truth, and transcendental knowledge is thus being distributed all over the world by the process of disciplic succession from time

immemorial, since the beginning of the creation. Lord Brahmā is the perfect liberated living being within the material world, and any sincere student of transcendental knowledge must accept the words and statements of Brahmājī as infallible. The Vedic knowledge is infallible because it comes down directly from the Supreme Lord unto the heart of Brahmā, and since he is the most perfect living being, Brahmājī is always correct to the letter. And this is because Lord Brahmā is a great devotee of the Lord who has earnestly accepted the lotus feet of the Lord as the supreme truth. In the *Brahma-saṁhitā*, which is compiled by Brahmājī, he repeats the aphorism *govindam ādi-puruṣam tam ahaṁ bhajāmi* : “**I am a worshiper of the original Personality of Godhead, Govinda, the primeval Lord.**” So whatever he says, whatever he thinks, and whatever he does normally in his mood are to be accepted as truth because of his direct and very intimate connection with Govinda, the primeval Lord. Śrī Govinda, who pleasingly accepts the loving transcendental service of His devotees, gives all protection to the words and actions of His devotees. The Lord declares in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.31), *kaunteya pratijānīhi*: “**O son of Kuntī, please declare it.**” The Lord asks Arjuna to declare, and why? Because sometimes the declaration of Govinda Himself may seem contradictory to mundane creatures, but the mundaner will never find any contradiction in the words of the Lord’s devotees. The devotees are especially protected by the Lord so that they may remain infallible. Therefore the process of devotional service always begins in the service of the devotee who appears in disciplic succession.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.6.34

### **One must understand Vedic knowledge through the chain of disciplic succession:**

**King Parīkṣit inquired from Śukadeva Gosvāmī:** How did Nārada Muni, whose hearers are as fortunate as those instructed by Lord Brahmā, explain the transcendental qualities of the Lord, who is without material qualities, and before whom did he speak?

**PURPORT:** Devarṣi Nārada was directly instructed by Brahmājī, who was also directly instructed by the Supreme Lord; therefore the instructions imparted by Nārada to his various disciples are as good as those of the Supreme Lord. That is the way of understanding Vedic knowledge. It comes down from the Lord by disciplic succession, and this transcendental knowledge is distributed to the world by this descending process. There is no chance, however, to receive the Vedic knowledge from mental speculators. Therefore, wherever Nārada Muni goes, he represents himself as authorized by the Lord, and his appearance is as good as that of the Supreme Lord. Similarly, the disciplic succession which strictly follows the transcendental instruction is the bona fide chain of disciplic succession, and the test for such bona fide spiritual masters is that there should be no difference between the instruction of the Lord originally imparted to His devotee and that which is imparted by the authority in the line of disciplic succession.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.8.1

### **Vedic knowledge must be received through disciplic succession:**

Foolish men of materialistic temperament do not take advantage of successive authorized knowledge. The Vedic knowledge is authorized and is acquired not by experiment but by authentic statements of the Vedic literatures explained by bona fide authorities. Simply by becoming an academic scholar one cannot understand the Vedic statements; one has to approach the real authority who has received the Vedic knowledge by disciplic succession.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.27

### **The guru must accept śabda-brahma through disciplic succession, not mental speculation:**

One who interprets the divine sound, or *śabda-brahma*, by his imperfect sense perception cannot be a real spiritual guru, because, in the absence of proper disciplinary training under the bona fide *ācārya*, the interpreter is sure to differ from Vyāsadeva (as the *Māyāvādīs* do). Śrīla Vyāsadeva is the prime authority of Vedic revelation, and therefore such an irrelevant interpreter cannot be accepted as the guru, or *ācārya*, howsoever equipped he may be with all the acquirements of material knowledge. As it is said in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*: “**Unless you are initiated**

by a bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession, the mantra that you might have received is without any effect.”

On the other hand, one who has received the transcendental knowledge by aural reception from the bona fide preceptor in the disciplic chain, and who has sincere regard for the real *ācārya*, must needs be enlightened with the revealed knowledge of the *Vedas*. But this knowledge is permanently sealed to the cognitive approach of the empiricists.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**No one should reach any conclusion about the Vedas without receiving instructions from Vyāsadeva’s disciplic succession:**

At present there are many commentaries on the revealed scriptures, but most of them are not in the line of disciplic succession coming from Śrīla Vyāsadeva, who originally taught the Vedic wisdom. The final, most perfect and sublime work of Śrīla Vyāsadeva is *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, which is the authorized commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. There is also *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is spoken by the Lord Himself and which was recorded by Vyāsadeva. These are the most important revealed scriptures, and any commentary which contradicts the principles of the *Gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is unauthorized. There is complete agreement amongst the *Upaniṣads*, *Vedānta*, the *Vedas*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and no one should try to reach any conclusion about the *Vedas* without receiving instructions from members of Vyāsadeva’s disciplic succession, or at least from those who believe in the Personality of Godhead and His diverse energies.

*Śrī Īsopaniṣad Mantra 6*

**Transcendental knowledge can be understood only through disciplic succession, not through mental speculation:**

We have to accept Kṛṣṇa through the disciplic succession. There are four *sampradāyas*, disciplic successions. One comes from Lord Brahmā (the *Brahma-sampradāya*), and another comes from Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune (the *Śrī-sampradāya*). There are also the *Kūmāra-sampradāya* and the *Rudra-sampradāya*.... If we do not belong to any *sampradāya*, our conclusion is fruitless. It is not that one should think, “I am a big scholar, and I can interpret Bhagavad-gītā in my own way. All these *sampradāyas* are useless.” We cannot manufacture our own comments. There are many commentaries made in this way, and they are all useless. They have no effect. We have to accept the philosophy as it was contemplated by Lord Brahmā, Nārada, Madhvācārya, Mādhavendra Purī and Īśvara Purī. These great *ācāryas* are beyond the imperfections of so-called scholars. Mundane scientists and philosophers use the words “perhaps” and “maybe” because they cannot arrive at a proper conclusion. They are simply speculating, and mental speculation cannot be perfect.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The reception of Vedic knowledge is not bona fide if not received through the paramparā system:**

All transcendental messages are received properly in the chain of disciplic succession. This disciplic succession is called *paramparā*. Unless therefore *Bhāgavatam* or any other Vedic literatures are received through the *paramparā* system, the reception of knowledge is not bona fide. Vyāsadeva delivered the message to Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and from Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Sūta Gosvāmī received the message. One should therefore receive the message of *Bhāgavatam* from Sūta Gosvāmī or from his representative and not from any irrelevant interpreter.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.42*

### **3. To Transmit Knowledge, One Must Have Received Knowledge from the Disciplic Succession**

**One lacking perfect knowledge by disciplic succession cannot present knowledge to others:**



*Jñāna* does not refer to ordinary research work. *Jñāna* entails receiving knowledge from the scriptures through the spiritual master by disciplic succession. In the modern age there is a tendency to do research by mental speculation and concoction. But the man who speculates forgets that he himself is subject to the four defects of nature: he is sure to commit mistakes, his senses are imperfect, he is sure to fall into illusion, and he is cheating. Unless one has perfect knowledge from disciplic succession, he simply puts forth some theories of his own creation; therefore he is cheating people.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.24.17

**To preach Vedic knowledge, one must have heard from the proper authority in disciplic succession:**

Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa thus spoke the purport of Ćrēmad-Bhāgavatam to the great sage Sanat-kumāra, who had already taken the vow of renunciation. Sanat-kumāra also, in his turn, when inquired of by Sāṅkhyāyana Muni, explained Ćrēmad-Bhāgavatam as he had heard it from Saṅkarṣaṇa.

**PURPORT:** This is the way of the *paramparā* system. Although Sanatkumāra, the well-known great saintly Kumāra, was in the perfect stage of life, still he heard the message of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam from Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa. Similarly, when he was questioned by Sāṅkhyāyana Ṛṣi, he spoke to him the same message he had heard from Lord Saṅkarṣaṇa. In other words, unless one hears from the proper authority one cannot become a preacher. In devotional service, therefore, two items out of the nine, namely hearing and chanting, are most important. Without hearing nicely, one cannot preach the message of Vedic knowledge.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.8.7

**In the paramparā system, one should answer questions with reference to Vedic literature; one should not concoct answers from mental speculation:**

My dear King, although you know everything, you have posed some questions, which I shall try to answer according to what I have learned by hearing from authorities....

**PURPORT:** In the *paramparā* system, when the questions are bona fide the answers are bona fide. No one should attempt to create or manufacture answers. One must refer to the *śāstras* and give answers according to Vedic understanding. The words *yathā-śrutam* refer to Vedic knowledge. The *Vedas* are known as *śruti* because this knowledge is received from authorities. The statements of the *Vedas* are known as *śruti-pramāṇa*. One should quote evidence from the *śruti*- the *Vedas* or Vedic literature-and then one's statements, will be correct. Otherwise one's words will proceed from mental concoction.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.13.23

**Learned authorities follow the paramparā system:**

Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī explained: I shall now explain to you the very subjects explained by the great sage in answer to King Parīkṣit's inquiries. Please hear them attentively.

**PURPORT:** Any question that is put forward may be answered by quoting the authority, and that satisfies the saner section. That is the system even in the law court. The best lawyer gives evidence from the past judgment of the court without taking much trouble to establish his case. This is called the *paramparā* system, and learned authorities follow it without manufacturing rubbish interpretations.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.10.51

**In presenting transcendental knowledge, the speaker must follow the previous ācāryas:**

Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one's own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*. He must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time he must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. The original purpose of the text must be maintained. No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization.... No learned man should be willing to



hear a person who does not represent the original *ācārya*.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.4.1

**Only a humble devotional servitor of the Lord can transmit Vedic knowledge purely:**

May the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who enlivens the materially created bodies of the elements by lying down within the universe, and who in His puruṣa incarnation causes the living being to be subjected to the sixteen divisions of the material modes which are his generator, be pleased to decorate my statements.

**PURPORT:** As a fully dependent devotee, Śukadeva Gosvāmī (unlike a mundane man who is proud of his own capability) invokes the pleasure of the Personality of Godhead so that his statements may be successful and be appreciated by the hearers.... Śukadeva Gosvāmī therefore wants to move by the direction of the Supreme Lord, who inspired Brahmā to speak the Vedic wisdom. The truths described in the Vedic literatures are not theories of mundane imagination, nor are they fictitious, as the less intelligent class of men sometimes think. The Vedic truths are all perfect descriptions of the factual truth without any mistake or illusion, and Śukadeva Gosvāmī wants to present the truths of creation not as a metaphysical theory of philosophical speculation, but as the actual facts and figures of the subject, since he would be dictated to by the Lord exactly in the same manner as Brahmājī was inspired. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.15), the Lord is Himself the father of the *Vedānta* knowledge, and it is He only who knows the factual purport of the *Vedānta* philosophy. So there is no greater truth than the principles of religion mentioned in the *Vedas*. Such Vedic knowledge or religion is disseminated by authorities like Śukadeva Gosvāmī because he is a humble devotional servitor of the Lord who has no desire to become a self-appointed interpreter without authority. That is the way of explaining the Vedic knowledge, technically known as the *paramparā* system, or descending process.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.4.23

#### **4. To Receive Knowledge from Beyond One's Perception, One Must Hear from the Disciplic Succession**

**To know matters beyond one's perception, one must learn from a superior authority in disciplic succession:**

Vidura said: Since you know of matters inconceivable to us, tell me, O holy sage, what did Brahmā do to create living beings after evolving the Prajāpatis, the progenitors of living beings?

**PURPORT:** Significant here is the word *avyakta-mārga-vit*, one who knows that which is beyond our perception. To know matters beyond one's perception, one has to learn from a superior authority in the line of disciplic succession. Just to know who is our father is beyond our perception. For that, the mother is the authority. Similarly, we have to understand everything beyond our perception from the authority who actually knows. The first *avyakta-mārga-vit*, or authority, is Brahmā, and the next authority in disciplic succession is Nārada. Maitreya Ṛṣi belonged to that disciplic succession, so he also is *avyakta-mārga-vit*. Anyone in the bona fide line of disciplic succession is *avyakta-mārga-vit*, a personality who knows that which is beyond ordinary perception.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.20.9

**Transcendental subject matter can be understood not through speculation, but through disciplic succession:**

It is not possible to obtain information of anything beyond this material nature by experimental means. That which is beyond our power of conception is called *acintya*, inconceivable. It is useless to argue or speculate about what is inconceivable. If it is truly inconceivable, it is not subject to speculation or experimentation. Our energy is limited, and our sense perception is limited; therefore we must rely on the Vedic conclusions regarding that subject matter which is inconceivable. Knowledge of the superior nature must simply be accepted without argument. How is it possible to argue about something to which we have no access? The method for understanding transcendental subject matter is given by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself in *Bhagavad-gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna at the beginning of the Fourth Chapter:

*imaṁ vivasvate yogam  
proktavān aham avyayam  
vivasvān manave prāha  
manur ikṣvākave 'bravīt*

“I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvān, and Vivasvān instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikṣvāku.” (4.1)

This is the method of *paramparā*, or disciplic succession. Similarly, in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Kṛṣṇa imparted knowledge into the heart of Brahmā, the first created creature within the universe. Brahmā imparted those lessons to his disciple, Nārada, and Nārada imparted that knowledge to his disciple, Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva imparted it to Madhvācārya, and from Madhvācārya the knowledge comes down to Mādhavendra Purī, to Īśvara Purī and from him to Caitanya Mahāprabhu.... The knowledge of that disciplic succession actually comes from the Lord Himself, and if the knowledge descends unbroken, it is perfect. Although we may not be in touch with the original personality who first imparted the knowledge, we may receive the same knowledge through this process of transmission.... If knowledge is received in this way, it doesn't matter whether it is inconceivable or not.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā Intro.*

**Transcendental knowledge can be understood only by submissive aural reception from the disciplic succession:**

Since we belong to [the] chain of disciplic succession from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this edition of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* will contain nothing newly manufactured by our tiny brains, but only remnants of foodstuff originally eaten by the Lord Himself. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu does not belong to the mundane plane of the three qualitative modes. He belongs to the transcendental plane beyond the reach of the imperfect sense perception of a living being. Even the most erudite mundane scholar cannot approach the transcendental plane unless he submits himself to transcendental sound with a receptive mood, for in that mood only can one realize the message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. What will be described herein, therefore, has nothing to do with the experimental thoughts created by the speculative habits of inert minds. The subject matter of this book is not a mental concoction but a factual spiritual experience that one can realize only by accepting the line of disciplic succession.... Any deviation from that line will bewilder the reader's understanding of the mystery of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.... This edition of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is presented for the study of sincere scholars who are really seeking the Absolute Truth. It is not the arrogant scholarship of a mental speculator but a sincere effort to serve the order of a superior authority whose service is the life and soul of this humble effort. It does not deviate even slightly from the revealed scriptures, and therefore anyone who follows in the disciplic line will be able to realize the essence of this book simply by the method of aural reception.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā Intro.*

## **5. Mantras Must Be Received Through Disciplic Succession**

**For a mantra to have effect, it must be received from a bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession:**

*sampradāya-vihīnā ye  
mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*

“Unless you are initiated by a bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession, the mantra that you might have received is without any effect.”

*Padma Purāṇa*

**Unless received through disciplic succession, a mantra has no efficacy for the chanter:**

One may receive a published *mantra* anywhere, but unless it is accepted through the chain of disciplic

succession, the *mantra* chanted without having been received from the disciplic succession has no efficacy.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.53

**Unless received through the paramparā system, a mantra will have no effect:**

Unless one follows this *paramparā* system, the *mantra* one receives will be chanted for no purpose. Nowadays there are so many rascal gurus who manufacture their *mantras* as a process for material advancement, not spiritual advancement. Still, the *mantra* cannot be successful if it is manufactured. *Mantras* and the process of devotional service have special power, provided they are received from the authorized person.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.16.24

One must receive his *mantras* from the authorized guru in a bona fide *sampradāya* if he wants to successfully advance in spiritual life:

Madhvācārya points out:

*vidyāḥ karmaṇi ca sadā  
guroḥ prāptāḥ phala-pradāḥ  
anyathā naiva phala-dāḥ  
prasannoktāḥ phala-pradāḥ*

One must receive all kinds of *mantras* from a bona fide spiritual master; otherwise the *mantras* will not be fruitful.... All *mantras* should be received through the authorized guru, and the disciple must satisfy the guru in all respects, after surrendering at his lotus feet. In the *Padma Purāṇa* it is also said, *sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*. There are four *sampradāyas*, or disciplic successions, namely the *Brahma-sampradāya*, the *Rudra-sampradāya*, the *Śrī-sampradāya* and the *Kumāra-sampradāya*. If one wants to advance in spiritual power, one must receive his *mantras* from one of these bona fide *sampradāyas*; otherwise he will never successfully advance in spiritual life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.8.42

## **6. Transcendental Literature Must Be Written Only in Accordance with the Disciplic Succession**

**Transcendental literature must be written according to the principle of disciplic succession:**

I have tried to preach the pastimes of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's meeting with Rāmānanda Rāya in accordance with the notebooks of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara.

**PURPORT:** At the end of every chapter, the author admits the value of the disciplic succession. He never claims to have written this transcendental literature by carrying out research work. He simply admits his indebtedness to the notes taken by Svarūpa Dāmodara, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and other authoritative persons. This is the way of describing transcendental literatures, which are never meant for so-called scholars and research workers. The process is *mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*: [Cc Mad 17.186] one has to strictly follow great personalities and *ācāryas*. *Ācāryavān puruṣo veda*: one who has the favor of the *ācārya* knows everything. This statement made by Kavirāja Gosvāmī is very valuable for all pure devotees.... In this way the message is transmitted in the bona fide spiritual disciplic succession from bona fide spiritual master to bona fide student. Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī therefore as usual concludes this chapter by reasserting his faith in the lotus feet of the six Gosvāmīs. Thus he is able to set forth this transcendental literature, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.312

To write commentaries, one must depend on the previous ācāryas and not deviate from them out of pride:

“You have dared criticize Śrīdhara Svāmī, and you have begun your own commentary on Çrémad-Bhāgavatam, not accepting his authority. That is your false pride. Śrīdhara Svāmī is the spiritual master of the entire world because by his mercy we can understand Çrémad-Bhāgavatam. I therefore accept him as a spiritual master. Whatever you might write due to false pride, trying to surpass Śrīdhara Svāmī, would carry a contrary purport. Therefore no one would pay attention to it.”

**PURPORT:** Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam has many ṭīkāś, or commentaries, following the *paramparā* system, but Śrīdhara Svāmī’s is first. The commentaries of all the other ācāryas follow his. The *paramparā* system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous ācāryas. By depending upon the previous ācāryas, one can write beautiful commentaries. However, one cannot defy the previous ācāryas. The false pride that makes one think that he can write better than the previous ācāryas will make one’s comments faulty. At the present moment it has become fashionable for everyone to write in his own way, but such writing is never accepted by serious devotees. Because of false pride, every scholar and philosopher wants to exhibit his learning by interpreting the śāstras, especially *Bhagavad-gītā* and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in his own way. This system of commenting in one’s own way is fully condemned by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Therefore He says, ‘*artha-vyasta*’ *likhana sei*. Commentaries written according to one’s own philosophical way are never accepted; no one will appreciate such commentaries on the revealed scriptures.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 7.132-34

A writer of transcendental literature never tries to surpass the previous ācāryas:

O fools, just read Caitanya-maṅgala! By reading this book you can understand all the glories of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

**PURPORT:** Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura’s *Caitanya-bhāgavata* was originally entitled *Caitanya-maṅgala*.... This acceptance of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī indicates his acceptance of the disciplic succession. A writer of transcendental literature never tries to surpass the previous ācāryas.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 8.33

Etiquette regarding writing in the paramparā:

This incident has been described in detail by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura. Therefore I have described it only in brief.

**PURPORT:** This is a matter of etiquette. If a previous ācārya has already written about something, there is no need to repeat it for personal sense gratification or to out-do the previous ācārya. Unless there is some definite improvement, one should not repeat.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 12.150

## 7. The Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍeya-sampradāya

The Madhva-Gauḍeya-sampradāya stems from Lord Brahmā, Madhvācārya and Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu:

We have to accept Kṛṣṇa through the disciplic succession. There are four *sampradāyas*, disciplic successions. One comes from Lord Brahmā (the *Brahma-sampradāya*), and another comes from Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune (the *Śrī-sampradāya*). There are also the *Kumāra-sampradāya* and the *Rudra-sampradāya*. At the present moment, the *Brahma-sampradāya* is represented by the *Madhva-sampradāya*, and we belong to the *Madhva-Gauḍeya-sampradāya*. Our original *sampradāya* stems from Madhvācārya. In that *sampradāya* there was Mādhavendra Purī, and Mādhavendra Purī’s disciple was Śrī Īśvara Purī. Śrī Īśvara Purī’s disciple was Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Thus we are coming in the disciplic succes-

sion from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and therefore our *sampradāya* is called the *Madhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya*. It is not that we have manufactured a *sampradāya*; rather, our *sampradāya* stems from Lord Brahmā.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

### The Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava-sampradāya is a disciplic succession from Madhvācārya:

Śrī Mādhavendra Purī is one of the *ācāryas* in the disciplic succession from Madhvācārya. Mādhavendra Purī had two principal disciples, Īśvara Purī and Śrī Advaita Prabhu. Therefore the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* is a disciplic succession from Madhvācārya. This fact has been accepted in the authorized books known as *Gaura-gaṇoddeśadīpikā* and *Prameya-ratnāvalī*, as well as by Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī. The *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* clearly states the disciplic succession of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as follows: “Lord Brahmā is the direct disciple of Viṣṇu, the Lord of the spiritual sky. His disciple is Nārada, Nārada’s disciple is Vyāsa, and Vyāsa’s disciples are Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Madhvācārya. Padmanābha Ācārya is the disciple of Madhvācārya, and Narahari is the disciple of Padmanābha Ācārya. Mādhava is the disciple of Narahari, Akṣobhya is the direct disciple of Mādhava, and Jayatīrtha is the disciple of Akṣobhya. Jayatīrtha’s disciple is Jñānasindhu, and his disciple is Mahānidhi. Vidyānidhi is the disciple of Mahānidhi, and Rājendra is the disciple of Vidyānidhi. Jayadharmā is the disciple of Rājendra. Puruṣottama is the disciple of Jayadharmā. Śrīmān Lakṣmīpati is the disciple of Vyāsātīrtha, who is the disciple of Puruṣottama. And Mādhavendra Purī is the disciple of Lakṣmīpati.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 6.40*

### Members of the Brahma-sampradāya try to reclaim the fallen souls:

The creation of the material world is not blind or accidental. The living entities who are ever conditioned, or *nitya-baddha*, are thus given a chance for liberation under the guidance of His own representative like Brahmā. The Lord instructs Brahmā in Vedic knowledge in order to diffuse this knowledge to the conditioned souls. The conditioned souls are forgetful souls in their relationship with the Lord, and thus a period of creation and the process of dissemination of Vedic knowledge are necessary activities of the Lord. Lord Brahmā has a great responsibility in delivering the conditioned souls, and therefore he is very dear to the Lord.

Brahmā also does his duty very perfectly, not only by generating the living entities but also by spreading his party for reclaiming the fallen souls. The party is called the *Brahma-sampradāya*, and any member of this party to date is naturally engaged in reclaiming the fallen souls back to Godhead, back home. The Lord is very much anxious to get back His parts and parcels, as stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. No one is more dear than the one who takes the task of reclaiming the fallen souls back to Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.19*

## 8. Non-Bona Fide Disciplic Successions

### In Kali-yuga, unauthorized sampradāyas spring up and mislead the people:

The great saintly King, Mahārāja Pṛthu, received knowledge from Sanat-kumāra, who was the great Vedic scholar. After receiving knowledge to be applied practically in his life, how did the saintly King attain his desired destination?

**PURPORT:** There are four Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* (systems) of disciplic succession. One *sampradāya* comes from Lord Brahmā, one from the goddess of fortune, one from the Kumāras, headed by Sanat-kumāra, and one from Lord Śiva. These four systems of disciplic succession are still going on. As King Pṛthu has illustrated, one who is serious to receive transcendental Vedic knowledge must accept a guru, or spiritual master, in one of these four disciplic successions. It is said that unless one accepts a *mantra* from one of these *sampradāyas*, the so-called *mantra* will not act in *Kali-yuga*. Many *sampradāyas* have sprung up without authority, and they are misleading the people by giving unauthorized *mantras*. The rascals of these so-called *sampradāyas* do not observe the Vedic rules and regulations. Although they



are addicted to all kinds of sinful activities, they still offer the people *mantras* and thus mislead them. Intelligent persons, however, know that such *mantras* will never be successful, and as such they never patronize nonsensical *sampradāyas*. To get some facility for sense gratification, unfortunate people in this age receive *mantras* from these so-called *sampradāyas*. Pṛthu Mahārāja, however, showed by his example that one should receive knowledge from a bona fide *sampradāya*. Therefore Mahārāja Pṛthu accepted Sanat-kumāra as his spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.17.5

**Knowledge received from disciplic successions of mental speculators is always imperfect:**

O great sage, you are as good as Brahmā, the original living being. Others follow custom only, as followed by the previous philosophical speculators.

**PURPORT:** It may be argued that Sukadeva Gosvāmī is not the only authority of perfect knowledge in transcendence because there are many other sages and their followers. Contemporary to Vyāsadeva or even prior to him there are many other great sages, such as Gautama, Kaṇāda, Jaimini, Kapila and Aṣṭāvakra, and all of them have presented a philosophical path by themselves. Patañjali is also one of them, and all these six great ṛṣis have their own way of thinking, exactly like the modern philosophers and mental speculators. The difference between the six philosophical paths put forward by the renowned sages above mentioned and that of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, as presented in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is that all the six sages mentioned above speak the facts according to their own thinking, but Śukadeva Gosvāmī presents the knowledge which comes down directly from Brahmājī, who is known as *ātma-bhū*, or born and educated by the Almighty Personality of Godhead....

The six great sages mentioned above may be great thinkers, but their knowledge by mental speculation is not perfect. However perfect an empiric philosopher may be in presenting a philosophical thesis, such knowledge is never perfect because it is produced by an imperfect mind. Such great sages also have their disciplic successions, but they are not authorized because such knowledge does not come directly from the independent Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa. No one can be independent except Nārāyaṇa; therefore no one's knowledge can be perfect, for everyone's knowledge is dependent on the flickering mind. Mind is material and thus knowledge presented by material speculators is never transcendental and can never become perfect. Mundane philosophers, being imperfect in themselves, disagree with other philosophers because a mundane philosopher is not a philosopher at all unless he presents his own theory. Intelligent persons like Mahārāja Parīkṣit do not recognize such mental speculators, however great they may be, but hear from the authorities like Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who is nondifferent from the Supreme Personality of Godhead by the *paramparā* system, as is specially stressed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.25

**One should not associate with unauthorized communities of so-called followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu who do not strictly follow the conclusions of the cāstras:**

In the *paramparā* system, the instructions taken from the bona fide spiritual master must also be based on revealed Vedic scriptures. One who is in the line of disciplic succession cannot manufacture his own way of behavior. There are many so-called followers of the Vaiṣṇava cult in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu who do not scrupulously follow the conclusions of the *śāstras*, and therefore they are considered to be *apa-sampradāya*, which means “outside of the *sampradāya*.” Some of these groups are known as *āula*, *bāula*, *kartābhajā*, *neḍā*, *darveśa*, *sāṇi*, *sahajiyā*, *sakhībhekī*, *smārta*, *jāta-gosāṇi*, *ativādī*, *cūḍādhārī* and *gaurāṅga-nāgarī*. In order to follow strictly the disciplic succession of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one should not associate with these *apa-sampradāya* communities.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.48

## **9. Other Important Instructions on the Principle of Disciplic Succession**

**The qualification for being situated in the transcendental disciplic succession:**

In this age a person ... should chant the holy names of Hari and Kṛṣṇa, the *mahā-mantra*. That is the sum and substance of eternal religion, known as *sanātana-dharma*.... Vaiṣṇava *śāstra* refers to *śruti*, or the *Vedas*, which are called *śabda-pramāṇa*, the evidence of transcendental sound. If one strictly follows the Vedic literature and chants the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he will actually be situated in the transcendental disciplic succession.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.362

**The transcendental potency of the Hare Kāñēa mantra is transmitted through disciplic succession:**

When someone heard the chanting of the holy name from the mouth of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and someone else heard this chanting from that second person, and someone again heard this chanting from the third person, everyone in all countries became a Vaiṣṇava through such disciplic succession. Thus everyone chanted the holy name of Kṛṣṇa and Hari, and they danced, cried and smiled.

**PURPORT:** The transcendental power or potency of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is herein explained. First, the holy name is vibrated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. When someone hears from Him directly, he is purified. When another person hears from that person, he also is purified. In this way the purification process is advanced among pure devotees. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and no one can claim His potency. Nonetheless, if one is a pure devotee, hundreds and thousands of men can be purified by his vibration. This potency is within every living being, provided he chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* offenselessly and without material motives. When a pure devotee chants offenselessly, another person will become a Vaiṣṇava, and from him another Vaiṣṇava will emerge. This is the *paramparā* system.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.48-49

**One can be empowered by the disciplic succession to excel even the Lord:**

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu continued, “You can perform a task that even I cannot do. But for You, I cannot find anyone in Gauḍa-deśa who can fulfill My mission there.”

**PURPORT:** In the incarnation of Gaura-Nitāi, the Lord is not supposed to kill demons but deliver them by preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the case of Jagāi and Mādhāi, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was so angry that He would have immediately killed them, but Nityānanda Prabhu was so kind that He not only saved them from death but elevated them to the transcendental position. Thus what was not possible for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was carried out by Nityānanda Prabhu.

Similarly, if one is true to Gaura-Nitāi’s service in the disciplic succession, he can excel Nityānanda Prabhu’s service. This is the process of disciplic succession. Nityānanda Prabhu delivered Jagāi and Mādhāi, but a servant of Nityānanda Prabhu, by His grace, can deliver many thousands of Jagāis and Mādhāis. That is the special benediction of the disciplic succession. One who is situated in the disciplic succession can be understood by the result of his activities.... By the grace of Viṣṇu, a Vaiṣṇava can render better service than Viṣṇu; that is the special prerogative of a Vaiṣṇava. The Lord actually wants to see His servants work more gloriously than Himself.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 16.65

**The guru accepts the disciple’s respect on behalf of Kāñēa:**

One has to surrender unto Kṛṣṇa through the via medium of the guru, not directly. This is the process. The guru does not accept respect from his disciple for his personal self but conveys this respect to Kṛṣṇa.... it is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* that knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is received through the *paramparā*, the disciplic succession. *Evaṁ paramparā-prāptam* [Bg. 4.2]. The guru offers the same respects to his guru, and his guru offers respects to his, and so it goes all the way to Kṛṣṇa. Thus the mercy of Kṛṣṇa comes down through the *paramparā* system, and the respect offered to Kṛṣṇa is offered up through the *paramparā* system. One has to learn to approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead in this way. Thus if we want to approach God, we have to take shelter of the guru in the beginning.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

### One must understand Lord Caitanya and Lord Kāṇa through the disciplic succession:

One should understand Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya and Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the Gosvāmīs in the *paramparā* system. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is following as strictly as possible in the footsteps of the Gosvāmīs. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, *ei chaya gosāñi yāñra, mui tāñra dāsa*: “I am the servant of the six Gosvāmīs.” The philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is to become the servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord [Cc. Mad 13.80]. Whoever wants to understand the difficult subject matter of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* should accept the disciplic succession. If one is somehow or other able to understand Kṛṣṇa, his life will be successful. *Tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti mām eti so 'rjuna* [Bg. 4.9]. A perfect devotee is able to understand Kṛṣṇa through the disciplic succession, and his entrance into the kingdom of God is thereby certainly opened. When one understands Kṛṣṇa, there is no difficulty in transferring oneself to the spiritual kingdom.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 25.271

### One can hear Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu through the paramparā system and thus become purified:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared five hundred years ago, but it cannot be said that now the potency of the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* is less powerful than it was in His presence. By hearing Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu through the *paramparā* system, one can be purified. Therefore in this verse it is said: *tath-āpi tāñra darśana-śravaṇa-prabhāve*. It is not that everyone is able to see Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu physically, but if one hears about Him through books like *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* and through the *paramparā* system of pure Vaiṣṇavas, there is no difficulty in becoming a pure Vaiṣṇava, free from mundane desires and personal motivations.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.51

### The spiritual master is respected as the representative of Brahmā, the original spiritual master:

At the auspicious arrival of Śrī Nārada, Śrī Vyāsadeva got up respectfully and worshiped him, giving him veneration equal to that given to Brahmājī, the creator.

**PURPORT:** Vidhi means Brahmā, the first created living being. He is the original student as well as professor of the *Vedas*. He learned it from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and taught Nārada first. So Nārada is the second *ācārya* in the line of spiritual disciplic succession. He is the representative of Brahmā, and therefore he is respected exactly like Brahmā, the father of all *vidhis* (regulations); similarly all other successive disciples in the chain are also equally respected as representatives of the original spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.4.33

### Mādhavendra Purī established worship of Rādhā along with Kāñēa, in the Madhva-sampradāya:

Upon seeing Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in such an ecstatic mood, Śrī Raṅga Purī said, “Your Holiness, please get up. Your Holiness is certainly related to Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, without whom there is no flavor of ecstatic love.”

**PURPORT:** Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura remarks that in the disciplic succession of Mādhvācārya-up to the advent of His Holiness Śrīpāda Lakṣmīpati Tīrtha-only Lord Kṛṣṇa was worshiped. After Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, worship of both Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was established. For this reason Śrī Mādhavendra Purī is accepted as the root of worship in ecstatic love. Unless one is connected to the disciplic succession of Mādhavendra Purī, there is no possibility of awakening the symptoms of ecstatic love.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.288-89

### Rather than manufacture many ways of chanting, one should chant only those songs and narrations left by the previous ācāryas received through disciplic succession:

O my Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.... I shall chant Your glories, following exactly in the footsteps of Lord Brahmā and his disciplic succession. In this way I shall undoubtedly be able to cross the ocean of nescience.

**PURPORT:** As soon as a devotee can chant the holy name and glories of the Supreme Lord, he certainly comes to the liberated position. Attachment for glorifying the Lord by hearing and chanting the holy name and activities of the Lord (*śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ* [SB 7.5.23]) certainly brings one to the position where material contamination is absent. One should chant the bona fide songs received from the disciplic succession. In *Bhagavad-gītā* it is said that the chanting is powerful when one follows the disciplic succession (*evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ* [Bg. 4.2]). Manufacturing many ways of chanting will never be effective. However, chanting the song or the narration left by the previous *ācāryas* (*mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* [Cc Mad 17.186]) is extremely effective, and this process is very easy.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.9.18

**Anyone discharging duties in disciplic succession gains fame in this life and salvation in the next:**

Brahmā is the direct recipient of Vedic knowledge from the Personality of Godhead, and anyone discharging his entrusted duties in disciplic succession from Brahmā is sure to gain fame in this life and salvation in the next.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.13.8





## Chapter IV

### The Disciple: Qualifications, Characteristics and Duties

#### 1. The Disciple Must Inquire and Hear from the Spiritual Master

**The desire to inquire from the spiritual master is essential:**

Śrī Vyāsadeva said: What did you [Nārada] do after the departure of the great sages who had instructed you in scientific transcendental knowledge before the beginning of your present birth?

**PURPORT:** Vyāsadeva himself was the disciple of Nāradaḥ, and therefore it was natural to be anxious to hear what Nārada did after initiation from the spiritual masters. He wanted to follow in Nārada's footsteps in order to attain to the same perfect stage of life. This desire to inquire from the spiritual master is an essential factor to the progressive path. This process is technically known as *sad-dharma-prcchā*.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.2*

**How to accept a spiritual master:**

Sanātana fell at the feet of the Lord and with great humility asked about his own real identity. “I am born of a lower family,” Sanātana said. “My associations are all abominable, and I am fallen, the most wretched of mankind. I was suffering in the dark well of material enjoyment, and I never knew the actual goal of my life. Indeed, I do not even know what is beneficial for me. Although I am what is known in the world as a great learned man, I am in fact so much of a fool that I myself even think that I am learned. You have accepted me as Your servant, and You have delivered me from the entanglement of material life. Now please tell me what my duty is in this liberated state.”

... Sanātana further inquired, “Who am I? Why are the threefold miseries always giving me trouble? And finally, tell me how I can be relieved from this material entanglement. I do not know how to question You about the advancement of spiritual life, but I beg that You kindly, mercifully, let me know everything that I need to know.”

This is the process of accepting a spiritual master. One should approach a spiritual master, humbly submit to him and then inquire from him about one's spiritual progress.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**The disciple of the spiritual master must be very inquisitive:**

O great sage, representative of the Lord, kindly satisfy my inquisitiveness in all that I have inquired from you and all that I may not have inquired from you from the very beginning of my questionings. Since I am a soul surrendered unto you, please impart full knowledge in this connection.

**PURPORT:** The spiritual master is always prepared to impart knowledge to the disciple and specifically when the disciple is very inquisitive. Inquisitiveness on the part of a disciple is greatly necessary for the progressive disciple. Mahārāja Parīkṣit is a typical disciple because he is perfectly inquisitive. If one is not very inquisitive about self-realization, one need not approach a spiritual master simply to make a show of discipleship. Not only is Mahārāja Parīkṣit inquisitive concerning all he has inquired about, but he is also anxious to know about what he has not been able to inquire. Factually it is not possible for a man to inquire about everything from the spiritual master, but the bona fide spiritual master is able to enlighten the disciple in every way for the disciple's benefit.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.24*

**Without inquiring intelligently from the spiritual master, one cannot make spiritual progress:**

It is not that we should blindly surrender, but we should be able to inquire with intelligence. Without



inquiry, we cannot make advancement. In school a student who makes inquiries from the teacher is usually an intelligent student. It is generally a sign of intelligence when a small child inquires from his father, “Oh, what is this? What is that?” We may have a very good spiritual master, but if we have no power to inquire, we cannot make progress.

... The beginning injunction of the *Vedānta-sūtra* is: *athāto brahma jijñāsā*. “**Now is the time to inquire about Brahman.**” The word *atha* means that one who is intelligent, who has come to the point of realizing the basic frustrations of material life, is capable of making inquiry. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that one should inquire from a spiritual master about subjects that are “beyond this darkness.” This material world is by nature dark, and it is artificially lighted by fire. Our inquiries should be about the transcendental worlds which lie beyond this universe. If one is desirous to find out about these spiritual worlds, he should seek out a spiritual master; otherwise there is no point in searching.... It is not that we are to submit ourselves blindly. The spiritual master may be self-realized and situated in the Absolute Truth, yet we have to question him in order to understand all spiritual points.

*Rāja-vidyā*: The King of Knowledge

**The disciple must inquire from the spiritual master all about the process of devotional service:**

In the process of devotional service, the first step is to take shelter of the spiritual master and then inquire from the spiritual master all about the process. This inquiry is essential for immunity to all kinds of offenses on the path of devotional service. Even if one is fixed in devotional service like Mahārāja Parīkṣit, he must still inquire from the realized spiritual master all about this.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.8.7

**One should approach a spiritual master only if anxious to inquire seriously about the way of perfection:**

**You are the spiritual master of great saints and devotees. I am therefore begging you to show the way of perfection for all persons, and especially for one who is about to die.**

**PURPORT:** Unless one is perfectly anxious to inquire about the way of perfection, there is no necessity of approaching a spiritual master. A spiritual master is not a kind of decoration for a householder. Generally, a fashionable materialist engages a so-called spiritual master without any profit. The pseudo spiritual master flatters the so-called disciple, and thereby both the master and his ward go to hell without a doubt. Mahārāja Parīkṣit is the right type of disciple because he puts forward questions vital to the interest of all men, particularly for the dying men.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.19.37

**Blind following and absurd inquiries (of the spiritual master) are condemned:**

Both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. One should not only hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 4.34

**One should approach a guru in a mood of surrender and submissive inquiry:**

Vidura was very eager to receive transcendental knowledge, and because of this, Maitreya was very pleased with him. One can please the spiritual master simply by surrendering to him and rendering service, saying, “Sir, I am your most obedient servant. Please accept me and give me instructions.” Although Arjuna was a very intimate friend of Kṛṣṇa’s, before receiving *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* he surrendered himself, saying, *śiṣyas te ‘haṁ śādhi mām tvām prapannam*: “**Now I am Your disciple and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me.**” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 2.7)

This is the proper way to ask for knowledge. One does not approach the spiritual master with a challenging spirit. One should also be inquisitive to understand the spiritual science. It is not that one considers himself superior to the guru. One must first find a guru to whom one can surrender, and if this is

not possible, one shouldn't waste his time. By surrendering to the proper person, one can very quickly come to understand transcendental knowledge.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The disciple must be eager to inquire from the spiritual master, in a submissive attitude:**

Whatever doubts I have about a particular subject matter I shall ask you about later. For the time being, these mysterious yoga instructions you have given me for self-realization appear very difficult to understand. Please repeat them in a simple way so that I can understand them. My mind is very inquisitive, and I want to understand this clearly.

**PURPORT:** The Vedic literature instructs: *tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam* [SB 11.3.21]. An intelligent man must be very inquisitive to know the transcendental science deeply. Therefore one must approach a guru, a spiritual master. Although Jaḍa Bharata explained everything to Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa, it appears that his intelligence was not perfect enough to understand clearly. He therefore requested a further explanation. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34): *tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā*. The student must approach a spiritual master and surrender unto him fully (*praṇipātena*). He must also question him in order to understand his instructions (*paripraśnena*). One should not only surrender to the spiritual master but also render loving service unto him (*sevayā*) so that the spiritual master will be pleased with the student and explain the transcendental subject matter more clearly. A challenging spirit before the spiritual master should be avoided if one is at all interested in learning the Vedic instructions in depth.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.12.3

**The disciple should be very inquisitive to hear from (and thus receive the favor of) the spiritual master:**

I have fortunately been instructed by you, and thus great favor has been bestowed upon me. I thank God that I have listened with open ears to your pure words.

**PURPORT:** Manu said that since he was advised and instructed by Kardama Muni, he was very much favored. He considered himself lucky to receive the message by aural reception. It is especially mentioned here that one should be very inquisitive to hear with open ears from the authorized source of the bona fide spiritual master. How is one to receive? One should receive the transcendental message by aural reception. The word *karṇa-randhraiḥ* means through the holes of the ears. The favor of the spiritual master is not received through any other part of the body but the ears.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7

**One must inquire from the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession:**

A person who is searching after the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, must certainly search for it up to this, in all circumstances, in all space and time, and both directly and indirectly.

**PURPORT:** To unfold the mystery of *bhakti-yoga* ... is the ultimate stage of all inquiries or the highest objective for the inquisitive. Everyone is searching after self-realization in different ways-by *karma-yoga*, by *jñāna-yoga*, by *dhyāna-yoga*, by *rāja-yoga*, by *bhakti-yoga*, etc. To engage in self-realization is the responsibility of every living entity developed in consciousness. One who is developed in consciousness certainly makes inquiries into the mystery of the self, of the cosmic situation and of the problems of life, in all spheres and fields-social, political, economic, cultural, religious, moral, etc.-and in their different branches.... One who is imbued with such sincere inquiries must ask the bona fide spiritual master in the disciplic succession from Brahmājī, and that is the direction given here. Because the mystery was disclosed before Brahmājī by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the mystery of all such inquiries regarding self-realization must be put before such a spiritual master, who is directly the representative of the Lord, acknowledged in that disciplic succession. Such a bona fide spiritual master is able to clear up the whole thing by evidence from the revealed scriptures, both direct and indirect. Although eve-

ryone is free to consult the revealed scriptures in this connection, one still requires the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, and that is the direction in this verse. The bona fide spiritual master is the most confidential representative of the Lord, and one must receive direction from the spiritual master in the same spirit that Brahmājī received it from the Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa.... The Lord is not to be found simply by education or by a good fertile brain, but surely He can be found by the sincere student through the transparent medium of the bona fide spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.36

**A human being's only business is to inquire from a spiritual master about extrication from the entanglement of fruitive activities and their reactions:**

The King replied: O great soul, Nārada, my intelligence is entangled in fruitive activities; therefore I do not know the ultimate goal of life. Kindly instruct me in pure knowledge so that I can get out of the entanglement of fruitive activities.

**PURPORT:** As long as a person is entangled in fruitive activities, he is bound to accept one body after another. This is called *karma-bandha-phāṇsa*-entanglement in fruitive activities. It does not matter whether one is engaged in pious or impious activities, for both are causes for further entanglement in material bodies ... one cannot be happy by simply executing pious or impious activities. Such activities simply cause entanglement and transmigration from one body to another. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura calls this *karma-bandha-phāṇsa*.

King Prācīnabarhiṣat admitted this fact and frankly asked Nārada Muni how he could get out of this *karma-bandha-phāṇsa*, entanglement in fruitive activities. This is actually the stage of knowledge indicated in the first verse of *Vedānta-sūtra*: *athāto brahma jijñāsā*. When one actually reaches the platform of frustration in an attempt to discharge *karma-bandha-phāṇsa*, he inquires about the real value of life, which is called *brahma-jijñāsā*. In order to inquire about the ultimate goal of life, the *Vedas* enjoin: *tad-vijñānārthan sa gurum evābhigacchet* (*Muṇḍaka Upanisad* 1.2.12). **“In order to understand the transcendental science, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master.”**

King Prācīnabarhiṣat found the best spiritual master, Nārada Muni, and he therefore asked him about that knowledge by which one can get out of the entanglement of *karma-bandha-phāṇsa*, fruitive activities. This is the actual business of human life. *Jīvasya tattva-jijñāsā nārtho yaś ceha karmabhiḥ* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.12). As stated in the Second Chapter of the First Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, a human being's only business is inquiring from a bona fide spiritual master about extrication from the entanglement of *karma-bandha-phāṇsa*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.25.5

**The disciple must be seriously inclined to inquire from a spiritual master:**

Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī said: While traveling on a pilgrimage, Vidura received knowledge of the destination of the self from the great sage Maitreya and then returned to Hastināpura. He became as well versed in the subject as he desired. After asking various questions and becoming established in the transcendental loving service of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Vidura retired from putting questions to Maitreya Muni.

**PURPORT:** Like Vidura, an inquisitive conditioned soul must approach a bona fide spiritual master like Maitreya and by intelligent inquiries must try to know everything about *karma* (fruitive activities), *jñāna* (philosophical research for the Supreme Truth) and *yoga* (the linking process of spiritual realization). One who is not seriously inclined to put questions before a spiritual master need not accommodate a show-bottle spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.13.1-2

**One should search out a guru not to cure some material disease or to become successful in business, but to learn about the Absolute Truth:**

To receive Vedic knowledge, we must approach the proper guru. The guru's qualification is given in

every *śāstra*. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.3.21) it is said: *tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*. One should not accept a guru unless one is inquisitive to know the ultimate goal of life. An ordinary man interested in bodily comforts does not need a guru. Unfortunately, at the present moment, the word guru refers to someone who can give bodily medicine. One approaches a Mahātmājī and says, “I am suffering from this disease. Please help me.” And the Mahātmājī says, “Yes, I have a *mantra* that will heal you and give you success. Give me a little money and take it.” This is not a real guru. One should approach a guru to learn about *tattva*, the Absolute Truth. One should not search out a guru to cure some material disease; rather, one requires a doctor. Similarly, people think that if a person can make him successful in business, that person is a guru. The *śāstras* do not confirm this either. A guru is one who knows the *Vedas* and the Vedic conclusion. The Vedic conclusion is the understanding of Kṛṣṇa. *Vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*: “By all the Vedas, I am to be known.” (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 15.15)

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**It is the right of the disciple to ask about, and the duty of the guru to explain, any confidential matter:**

A student and disciple has the right to ask the guru about any confidential service, and it is the duty of the guru to explain these confidential matters to his disciple.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.12.43

**For answers to spiritual inquiries, one must approach a qualified spiritual master, not a layman:**

O greatly learned one, kindly eradicate all my doubts, and let me know of all that I have inquired from you from the beginning to the end.

**PURPORT:** Vidura asked all relevant questions of Maitreya because he knew well that Maitreya was the right person to reply to all the points of his inquiries. One must be confident about the qualifications of his teacher; one should not approach a layman for replies to specific spiritual inquiries. Such inquiries, when replied to with imaginative answers by the teacher, are a program for wasting time.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.10.2

**One should approach a bona fide spiritual master to inquire from him, not to follow fashion:**

Saint Vidura was a great and pure devotee of the Lord, and therefore his questions to His Grace Ṛṣi Maitreya must have been very purposeful, on the highest level, and approved by learned circles.

**PURPORT:** Questions and answers among different classes of men have different value. Inquiries by mercantile men in the business exchange cannot be expected to be highly purposeful in spiritual values. Questions and answers by different classes of men can be guessed by the caliber of the persons concerned.... According to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one is advised to approach a bona fide spiritual master when one is actually inclined to question from an elevated level of spiritual understanding. A common man who has no interest in spiritual values has no need to approach a spiritual master just as a matter of following fashion.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.1.4

**The most important process in devotional service is hearing from the guru, sādhu and cāstra:**

One should not give up the process of devotional service, which is performed in nine different ways (*śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pāda-sevanam*, etc. [SB 7.5.23]). The most important process is hearing (*śravaṇam*) from the guru, sādhu and *śāstra*—the spiritual master, the saintly *ācāryas* and the Vedic literature. *Sādhu-śāstra-guru-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya*.... *Śravaṇa* is very important; one must hear from the Vaiṣṇava sādhu, guru and *śāstra*.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.2.37

**By hearing from the perfect authority, the spiritual master, one's knowledge is perfect:**

Hearing is more important than directly studying or perceiving. If one is expert in hearing and hears



from the right source, his knowledge is immediately perfect. This process is called *śrauta-panthā*, or the acquirement of knowledge by hearing from authorities. All Vedic knowledge is based on the principle that one must approach a bona fide spiritual master and hear from the authoritative statements of the *Vedas*. It is not necessary for one to be a highly polished literary man to receive knowledge; to receive perfect knowledge from a perfect person, one must be expert in hearing. This is called the descending process of deductive knowledge, or *avaroha-panthā*.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 16.52*

### One should hear from a realized soul:

All men should take advantage of hearing from realized souls and gradually become able to understand everything. The worship of the Supreme Lord will then undoubtedly take place. Lord Caitanya has said that in this age no one needs to change his position, but one should give up the endeavor to understand the Absolute Truth by speculative reasoning. One should learn to become the servant of those who are in knowledge of the Supreme Lord. If one is fortunate enough to take shelter of a pure devotee, hear from him about self-realization and follow in his footsteps, he will gradually be elevated to the position of a pure devotee.... Although the common man is often not as capable as so-called philosophers, faithful hearing from an authoritative person will help one transcend this material existence and go back to Godhead, back to home.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 13.26*

### Divine consciousness is kindled by hearing submissively from the spiritual master:

The Lord can be realized through the aural reception of the transcendental message, and that is the only way to experience the transcendental subject. As fire is kindled from wood by another fire, the divine consciousness of man can similarly be kindled by another divine grace. His Divine Grace the spiritual master can kindle the spiritual fire from the woodlike living entity by imparting proper spiritual messages injected through the receptive ear. Therefore one is required to approach the proper spiritual master with receptive ears only, and thus divine existence is gradually realized. The difference between animality and humanity lies in this process only. A human being can hear properly, whereas an animal cannot.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.32*

### The seed of devotional service implanted in the disciple by the spiritual master must be watered by hearing and chanting:

“When a person receives the seed of devotional service, he should take care of it by becoming a gardener and sowing the seed in his heart. If he waters the seed gradually by the process of *ṣravaṇa* and *kīrtana* [hearing and chanting], the seed will begin to sprout.”

**PURPORT:** One who is faithful to his spiritual master gets the *bhakti-latā-bīja*. This *bhakti-latā-bīja* is received when one is initiated by the bona fide spiritual master. After receiving the spiritual master’s mercy, one must repeat his instructions, and this is called *śravaṇa-kīrtana*-hearing and chanting. One who has not properly heard from the spiritual master or who does not follow the regulative principles is not fit for chanting (*kīrtana*).... One who has not listened carefully to the instructions of the spiritual master is unfit to chant or preach the cult of devotional service. One has to water the *bhakti-latā-bīja* after receiving instructions from the spiritual master.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.152*

### If the disciple hears from the guru patiently, without unnecessary opposition, the guru will have mercy on him:

All of us should hear him [the guru] patiently. If we listen to the transcendental sound without unnecessary opposition, he will surely have mercy upon us.

*The Science of Self-Realization*



**When a disciple is eager to hear spiritual subject matters, the spiritual master becomes very happy:**

After hearing of His mother's uncontaminated desire for transcendental realization, the Lord thanked her within Himself for her questions, and thus, His face smiling, He explained the path of the transcendentalists, who are interested in self-realization.

**PURPORT:** When a student hears spiritual subjects attentively, the spiritual master becomes very happy. Kapiladeva was very happy to see His mother eager to understand spiritual subject matters. He therefore thanked His mother for her inquiry.... When Kapila saw His mother interested, He thanked her from within, not openly.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**To have the real key to transcendental knowledge, one must hear from a bona fide ācārya who is never disturbed about the changes of the material world:**

It is said that one result is obtained by worshiping the supreme cause of all causes and that another result is obtained by worshiping that which is not supreme. All this was heard from the undisturbed authorities who clearly explained it.

**PURPORT:** The system of hearing from undisturbed authorities is approved in this *mantra*. Unless one hears from a bona fide ācārya, who is never disturbed about the changes of the material world, one cannot have the real key to transcendental knowledge. The bona fide spiritual master, who has also heard the *śruti-mantras*, or Vedic knowledge, from his undisturbed ācārya, never manufactures or presents anything which is not mentioned in the Vedic literatures.

*Śrī Īśopaniṣad Mantra 13*

**The result of serving the servants of the Lord:**

By serving the servants of the Lord, one gradually gets the quality of such servants, and thus one becomes qualified to hear the glories of God. The eagerness to hear about God is the first qualification of a devotee eligible for entering the kingdom of God.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.16*

**One can glorify the Lord by having heard submissively from his spiritual master:**

In spite of my inability, whatever I have been able to hear [from the spiritual master] and whatever I could assimilate I am now describing in glorification of the Lord by pure speech, for otherwise my power of speaking would remain unchaste.

**PURPORT:** Maitreya's statement is that in order to avoid unchaste conscious activities, he was trying to describe the unlimited glories of the Lord, although he did not have the ability to describe them perfectly. This glorification of the Lord is not a product of research, but the result of hearing submissively from the authority of the spiritual master. It is also not possible to repeat all that one has heard from his spiritual master, but one can narrate as far as possible by one's honest endeavor. It does not matter whether the Lord's glories are fully explained or not.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.6.36*

**By hearing instructions from a liberated soul, the devotee is overwhelmed with transcendental ecstasy:**

My dear King, in this way, after hearing the transcendental messages of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His devotees from the great sage Maitreya, Vidura was overwhelmed with ecstasy. With tears in his eyes, he immediately fell down at the lotus feet of his guru, his spiritual master. He then fixed the Supreme Personality of Godhead within the core of his heart.

**PURPORT:** This is the sign of associating with great devotees. A devotee takes instructions from a liberated soul and is thus overwhelmed by ecstasy from transcendental pleasure.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.31.28*

**By hearing the instructions of a bona fide spiritual master, one gets knowledge, detachment and ultimately liberation:**

The individual soul is liberated when it comes out of the material heart or cleanses the heart to make it spiritualized.... When a living entity increases his attachment for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is to be considered like fire. A blazing fire is visible by its exhibition of heat and light; similarly, when the living entity within the heart becomes enlightened with full spiritual knowledge, and detached from the material world, he burns up his material covering of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and sky—and becomes free from the five kinds of material attachments, namely ignorance, false egoism, attachment to the material world, envy and absorption in material consciousness.... When these are all burned into ashes by the blazing fire of knowledge and detachment, one is fixed firmly in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Unless one takes shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and advances his attraction for Kṛṣṇa by his instructions, the five coverings of the living entity cannot be uncovered from the material heart. The living entity is centered within the heart, and to take him away from the heart is to liberate him. This is the process. One must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and by his instruction increase one's knowledge in devotional service, become detached from the material world and thus become liberated.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.26*

**Scriptural knowledge heard from the bona fide spiritual master is scientific (realized) knowledge:**

Knowledge is information gathered from the scriptures, and science is practical realization of that knowledge. Knowledge is scientific when it is gathered from the scriptures through the bona fide spiritual master, but when it is interpreted by speculation, it is mental concoction.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**For the spiritual master to speak and disciple to hear kâñĕa-kathā, both must be free from material desires:**

*nivṛtta-tarṣair upagīyamānād*

*bhavauṣadhāc chrotra-mano- 'bhirāmāt*

*ka uttamaśloka-guṇānuvādāt*

*pumān virajyeta vinā paśu-ghnāt*

Glorification of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is performed in the paramparā system; that is, it is conveyed from spiritual master to disciple. Such glorification is relished by those no longer interested in the false, temporary glorification of this cosmic manifestation.

**PURPORT:** For *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, topics about Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there must be a speaker and a hearer, both of whom can be interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness if they are no longer interested in material topics.... For topics concerning Uttamaśloka, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master speaks, and the disciple hears with attention. Unless both of them are free from material desires, they cannot be interested in topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The spiritual master and disciple do not need to understand anything more than Kṛṣṇa because simply by understanding Kṛṣṇa and talking about Kṛṣṇa, one becomes a perfectly learned person (*yasmin vijñāte sarvam evaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavati*) (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.3*).

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.1.4*

**One can be elevated to the highest standard of spiritual life by hearing about the rāsa-līlā from an authorized spiritual master in disciplic succession:**

Śukadeva Gosvāmī concludes this episode of *rāsa-līlā* by pointing out that if a person hears from the right source of the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, who is Viṣṇu Himself, and the *gopīs*, who are expansions of His energy, then he will be relieved from the most dangerous type of disease, namely lust. If one actually hears *rāsa-līlā*, he will become completely freed from the lusty desire of sex life and elevated to

the highest level of spiritual understanding. Generally, because they hear from *Māyāvādīs* and they themselves are *Māyāvādīs*, people become more and more implicated in sex life. The conditioned soul should hear the *rāsa-līlā* dance from an authorized spiritual master and be trained by him so that he can understand the whole situation; thus one can be elevated to the highest standard of spiritual life, otherwise one will be implicated. Material lust is a kind of heart disease, and to cure the material heart disease of the conditioned soul, it is recommended that one should hear, but not from the impersonalist rascals. If one hears from the right sources with right understanding, then his situation will be different.

... One must hear from disciplic succession. *Anu* means following, and *anu* means always. So one must always follow the disciplic succession and not hear from any stray professional reciter, *Māyāvādī* or ordinary man. *Anuśṛṇuyāt* means that one must hear from an authorized person who is in the disciplic succession and is always engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. When a person wants to hear in this way, then the effect will be sure. By hearing *rāsa-līlā*, one will be elevated to the highest position of spiritual life.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**The conviction to worship Kāñēa is established by hearing from the undisturbed ācārya with faith and love:**

All Vedic literatures confirm that Nārāyaṇa, or Kṛṣṇa, is the cause of all causes. In *Brahma-saṁhitā* also it is said that the Supreme Lord is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, the delight of every living being and the primeval cause of all causes. The really learned person knows this from evidence given by the great sages and the *Vedas*. Thus the learned man decides to worship Lord Kṛṣṇa as all in all.

Persons are called *budha*, or really learned, when they fasten themselves to the worship of Kṛṣṇa only. This conviction is established when one hears the transcendental message from the undisturbed ācārya with faith and love. One who has no faith in or love for Lord Kṛṣṇa cannot be convinced of this simple truth. Those who are faithless are described in *Bhagavad-gītā* as *mūḍhas*, fools and asses (*Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is 9.11). It is said that the *mūḍhas* deride the Personality of Godhead because they do not have complete knowledge from the undisturbed ācārya.

*Śrī Īśopaniṣad Mantra 13*

**The proper conditions for the disciple receiving transcendental knowledge from the spiritual master:**

O Sūta Gosvāmī, we are eager to learn about the Personality of Godhead and His incarnations. Please explain to us those teachings imparted by previous masters [*ācāryas*], for one is uplifted both by speaking them and by hearing them.

**PURPORT:** The conditions for hearing the transcendental message of the Absolute Truth are set forth herein. The first condition is that the audience must be very sincere and eager to hear. And the speaker must be in the line of disciplic succession from the recognized ācārya. The transcendental message of the Absolute is not understandable by those who are materially absorbed. Under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master, one becomes gradually purified. Therefore, one must be in the chain of disciplic succession and learn the spiritual art of submissive hearing. In the case of Sūta Gosvāmī and the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya, all these conditions are fulfilled because Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī is in the line of Śrīla Vyāsadeva, and the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya are all sincere souls who are anxious to learn the truth. Thus the transcendental topics of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa's superhuman activities, His incarnation, His birth, appearance or disappearance, His forms, His names and so on are all easily understandable because all requirements are fulfilled. Such discourses help all men on the path of spiritual realization.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.13*

**By hearing of the Lord from a bona fide spiritual master, one can remember the Lord at the time of death:**

**TRANSLATION:**... Those who have dedicated their lives to the transcendental topics of the Personality of Godhead, of whom the Vedic hymns sing, and who are constantly engaged in remembering the lotus

feet of the Lord, do not run the risk of having misconceptions even at the last moment of their lives.

**PURPORT:** The highest perfection of life is attained by remembering the transcendental nature of the Lord at the last moment of one's life. This perfection of life is made possible by one who has learned the actual transcendental nature of the Lord from the Vedic hymns sung by a liberated soul like Śukadeva Gosvāmī or someone in that line of disciplic succession. There is no gain in hearing the Vedic hymns from some mental speculator. When the same is heard from an actual self-realized soul and is properly understood by service and submission, everything becomes transparently clear. Thus a submissive disciple is able to live transcendently and continue to the end of life. By scientific adaptation, one is able to remember the Lord even at the end of life, when the power of remembrance is slackened due to derangement of bodily membranes. For a common man, it is very difficult to remember things as they are at the time of death, but by the grace of the Lord and His bona fide devotees, the spiritual masters, one can get this opportunity without difficulty. And it was done in the case of Mahārāja Parīkṣit.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.18.4

## 2. The Disciple Must Strictly Follow the Instructions of the Spiritual Master

### General Instructions

**The disciple should be prepared to lay down his life to execute the will of the spiritual master:**

A devoted disciple of the spiritual master would rather die with the spiritual master than fail to execute the spiritual master's mission. As the Supreme Personality of Godhead comes down upon the earth to reestablish the principles of religion, so His representative, the spiritual master, also comes to reestablish religious principles. It is the duty of the disciples to take charge of the mission of the spiritual master and execute it properly. Otherwise the disciple should decide to die along with the spiritual master. In other words, to execute the will of the spiritual master, the disciple should be prepared to lay down his life and abandon all personal considerations.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.50

**One who executes the order of the spiritual master, however painstaking, achieves the Lord's mercy:**

In executing penance, one must be determined to return home, back to Godhead, and must decide to undergo all types of tribulations for that end. Even for material prosperity, name and fame, one has to undergo severe types of penance, otherwise no one can become an important figure in this material world. Why, then, are there severe types of penance for the perfection of devotional service? An easy-going life and attainment of perfection in transcendental realization cannot go together. The Lord is more clever than any living entity; therefore He wants to see how painstaking the devotee is in devotional service. The order is received from the Lord, either directly or through the bona fide spiritual master, and to execute that order, however painstaking, is the severe type of penance. One who follows the principle rigidly is sure to achieve success in attaining the Lord's mercy.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.24

**The secret of success for the disciple—he must hear from the bona fide spiritual master and act on his instructions:**

Lord Brahmā underwent penances for one thousand years by the calculations of the demigods. He heard this transcendental vibration from the sky, and he accepted it as divine. Thus he controlled his mind and senses, and the penances he executed were a great lesson for the living entities. Thus he is known as the greatest of all ascetics.

**PURPORT:** Lord Brahmā heard the occult sound *tapa*, but he did not see the person who vibrated the sound. And still he accepted the instruction as beneficial for him, and therefore he engaged himself in meditation for one thousand celestial years.... His acceptance of the sound was due to his pure vision of the absolute nature of the Lord. And due to his correct vision, he made no distinction between the Lord and the Lord's instruction. There is no difference between the Lord and sound vibration com-

ing from Him, even though He is not personally present. The best way of understanding is to accept such divine instruction, and Brahmā, the prime spiritual master of everyone, is the living example of this process of receiving transcendental knowledge. The potency of transcendental sound is never minimized because the vibrator is apparently absent.... One has to receive the transcendental sound from the right source, accept it as a reality and prosecute the direction without hesitation. The secret of success is to receive the sound from the right source of a bona fide spiritual master. Mundane manufactured sound has no potency, and as such, seemingly transcendental sound received from an unauthorized person also has no potency. One should be qualified enough to discern such transcendental potency, and either by discriminating or by fortunate chance, if one is able to receive the transcendental sound from the bona fide spiritual master, his path of liberation is guaranteed. The disciple, however, must be ready to execute the order of the bona fide spiritual master as Lord Brahmā executed the instruction of his spiritual master, the Lord Himself. Following the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the only duty of the disciple, and this completely faithful execution of the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the secret of success.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.8*

**The disciple must take up the order of his spiritual master as the sustenance of life:**

A devotee of the Lord cannot give up the service of the Lord, for he is ordered by his spiritual master. Pure devotees like Nārada and Nityānanda Prabhu take up the order of the spiritual master as the sustenance of life. They do not mind what becomes of the future of their lives. They take the matter very seriously as the order comes from the higher authority, from the representative of the Lord, or from the Lord Himself.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.8.6*

**One pleases the guru by carrying out his orders:**

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** ... If you please God's representative, then automatically God becomes pleased, and thus you can directly see Him.

**An Indian gentleman:** How to please God's representative?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** You have to carry out his orders, that's all. God's representative is the guru. He asks you to do this, to do that-if you do that, that is pleasing.

*Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*

**Kṛṇa's order comes through the spiritual master; the guru's orders, therefore, should be taken as the prime duty of life:**

**In all activities just depend upon Me and work always under My protection. In such devotional service, be fully conscious of Me.**

**PURPORT:** When one acts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he does not act as the master of the world. Just like a servant, one should act fully under the direction of the Supreme Lord. A servant has no individual independence. He acts only on the order of the master. A servant acting on behalf of the supreme master has no affection for profit and loss. He simply discharges his duty faithfully in terms of the order of the Lord. Now, one may argue that Arjuna was acting under the personal direction of Kṛṣṇa, but, when Kṛṣṇa is not present, how should one act? If one acts according to the direction of Kṛṣṇa in this book, as well as under the guidance of the representative of Kṛṣṇa, then the result will be the same. The Sanskrit word *mat-parah* is very important in this verse. It indicates that one has no goal in life save and except acting in Kṛṣṇa consciousness just to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. And, while working in that way, one should think of Kṛṣṇa only: **"I have been appointed to discharge this particular duty by Kṛṣṇa."** While acting in such a way, one naturally has to think of Kṛṣṇa. This is perfect Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One should, however, note that, after doing something whimsically, he should not offer the result to the Supreme Lord. That sort of duty is not in the devotional service of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One should



act according to the order of Kṛṣṇa. This is a very important point. That order of Kṛṣṇa comes through disciplic succession from the bona fide spiritual master. Therefore the spiritual master's order should be taken as the prime duty of life. If one gets a bona fide spiritual master and acts according to his direction, then his perfection in life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is guaranteed.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 18.57

**Those who love Kāñēa are simply determined to execute the order of the spiritual master, not caring for personal inconvenience or impediments:**

“After receiving the transcendental orders of Gopāla, this great personality traveled thousands of miles just to collect sandalwood by begging. Although Mādhavendra Purī was hungry, he would not beg food to eat. This renounced person carried a load of sandalwood for the sake of Śrī Gopāla. Without considering his personal comforts, Mādhavendra Purī carried one mound (about eighty-two pounds) of sandalwood and twenty tolas (about eight ounces) of camphor to smear over the body of Gopāla. This transcendental pleasure was sufficient for him. Since there were restrictions against taking the sandalwood out of the Orissa province, the toll official confiscated the stock, but Mādhavendra Purī showed him the release papers given by the government and consequently escaped difficulties. Mādhavendra Purī was not at all anxious during the long journey to Vṛndāvana through the provinces governed by the Mohammedans and filled with unlimited numbers of watchmen. Although Mādhavendra Purī did not have a farthing with him, he was not afraid to pass by the toll officers. His only enjoyment was in carrying the load of sandalwood to Vṛndāvana for Gopāla. This is the natural result of intense love of Godhead. The devotee does not consider personal inconveniences or impediments. In all circumstances he wants to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**PURPORT:** It is natural for those who have developed intense love of Kṛṣṇa not to care for personal inconvenience and impediments. Such devotees are simply determined to execute the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His representative, the spiritual master. In all circumstances, even amidst the greatest dangers, they undeviatingly carry on with the greatest determination.... An intense lover of Kṛṣṇa does not care for any number of material discomforts, scarcity, impediments or unhappiness.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 4.180-86

**To execute the order of one's spiritual master is the essence of the favorable execution of Kāñēa consciousness:**

As far as possible, one has to execute the order of one's spiritual master. That will enable one to progress. That is the essence of the favorable execution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In my old age, I have come to America, and I am trying to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness because my spiritual master gave me an order that I must do it. It is my duty. I do not know whether I shall be a success or failure. It doesn't matter; my duty is completed if I can present before you whatever I have heard from my spiritual master. This is called the favorable execution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Those who are actually serious should take the order of Kṛṣṇa through the representative of Kṛṣṇa as their entire life and soul. One who sticks to this principle is sure to progress.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The way of perfection for the disciple is to act according to the instruction of the spiritual master:**

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī also advises that if we want to be successful in our attempt to go back to Godhead, we must very seriously act according to the instruction of the spiritual master. That is the way of perfection. There need be no anxiety over attaining perfection because if one follows the instruction given by the spiritual master he is sure to attain perfection. Our only concern should be how to execute the order of the spiritual master. A spiritual master is expert in giving special instructions to each of his disciples, and if the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master, that is the way of his perfection.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.8.71

**The disciple should always meditate upon and execute the order of the spiritual master:**

When all the sons of Prācīnabarhi left home to execute austerities, they met Lord Śiva, who, out of great mercy, instructed them about the Absolute Truth. All the sons of Prācīnabarhi meditated upon the instructions, chanting and worshiping them with great care and attention.

**PURPORT:** It is clear that to perform austerities or penances, or, for that matter, any form of devotional service, one has to be guided by a spiritual master. Here it is clearly stated that the ten sons of Mahārāja Prācīnabarhi were favored by an appearance of Lord Śiva, who, out of great kindness, gave them instructions regarding the execution of austerities. Lord Śiva actually became the spiritual master of the ten sons, and in turn his disciples took his words so seriously that simply by meditating upon his instructions (*dhyāyantaḥ*) they become perfect. This is the secret of success. After being initiated and receiving the orders of the spiritual master, the disciple should unhesitatingly think about the instructions or orders of the spiritual master and should not allow himself to be disturbed by anything else. This is also the verdict of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, who, while explaining a verse of *Bhagavad-gītā* (*vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 2.41), points out that the order of the spiritual master is the life substance of the disciple. The disciple shouldn't consider whether he is going back home, back to Godhead; his first business should be to execute the order of the spiritual master. Thus a disciple should always meditate on the order of the spiritual master, and that is perfectional meditation. Not only should he meditate upon that order, but he should find out the means by which he can perfectly worship and execute it.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.24.15

**The disciple should consider the execution of the instruction of the spiritual master as his life and soul:**

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has given directions, in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, on how to accept a bona fide spiritual master and how to deal with him. First, the desiring candidate must find a bona fide spiritual master, and then he must very eagerly receive instructions from him and execute them. This is reciprocal service.... This combination, the instruction of the spiritual master and the faithful execution of the instruction by the disciple, makes the entire process perfect. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura describes in his explanation of the verse in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ*, that one who wants to be certain to achieve spiritual success must take the instruction from the spiritual master as to what his particular function is. He should faithfully try to execute that particular instruction and should consider that his life and soul. The faithful execution of the instruction which he receives from the spiritual master is the only duty of a disciple, and that will bring him perfection. One should be very careful to receive the message from the spiritual master through the ears and execute it faithfully. That will make one's life successful.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.22.7

**Surrender to a guru means to accept whatever he says:**

We have to render service to a guru and surrender ourselves. It is not that one should accept just any person as a guru. The guru must be the representative of Kṛṣṇa; then one can surrender oneself. Surrender means that one will accept whatever the guru says. It is not that one thinks, "I do not care for my guru's order. Still I am a disciple." That is not actually accepting a guru. Of course, it has become a fashion to accept a guru in this way, but this will not help anyone.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**A serious student of transcendental science must strictly follow the words of the spiritual master and thus become perfect:**

"My dear sir, My spiritual master considered Me a great fool," Lord Caitanya replied. "Therefore he has more or less punished Me by saying that because I am such a fool I have no capacity to study *Vedānta*. So in turn he gave Me the chanting of *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*. My spiritual master told Me, 'Just go on chanting this *Hare Kṛṣṇa*

mantra; it will make You all-perfect.”

Actually Lord Caitanya was neither foolish nor ignorant of the principles of *Vedānta*.... The Lord wanted to teach that a serious student of transcendental science should follow the words of his spiritual master. According to the calculations of the spiritual master, Lord Caitanya appeared to be a fool; therefore he said that He should not indulge in the study of *Vedānta* but should continue chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa* mantra. Lord Caitanya strictly obeyed this order. In other words, Lord Caitanya impressed on the *Māyāvādīs* that the words of a bona fide spiritual master must be strictly followed. By following them, one becomes perfect in all respects.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**The principle of very rigidly carrying out the orders of the spiritual master must be observed:**

Raghunātha dāsa spent more than twenty-two hours out of every twenty-four chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa* mahā-mantra and remembering the lotus feet of the Lord. He ate and slept for less than an hour and a half, and on some days that also was impossible. Topics concerning his renunciation are wonderful. Throughout his life he never allowed his tongue sense gratification. He never touched anything to wear except a small torn cloth and a patchwork wrapper. Thus he very rigidly executed the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

**PURPORT:** The principle of very rigidly carrying out the order of the spiritual master must be observed. The spiritual master gives different orders to different people. For example, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu ordered Jīva Gosvāmī, Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī to preach, and He ordered Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to strictly follow the rules and regulations of the renounced order. All six Gosvāmīs strictly followed the instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is the principle for progress in devotional service. After receiving an order from the spiritual master, one must strictly try to execute the order. That is the way of success.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 6.310-12*

**By following the instructions of the spiritual master, one is liberated from all sinful reactions:**

“Nārada Muni assured the hunter, ‘If you listen to my instructions, I shall find the way you can be liberated.’”

**PURPORT:** *Gaurāṅgera bhakta-gaṇe jane jane śakti dhare*. The purport of this song is that the devotees of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are very powerful, and each and every one of them can deliver the whole world. What, then, to speak of Nārada Muni? If one follows the instructions of Nārada Muni, one can be delivered from any amount of sinful reactions. This is the process. One must follow the instructions of a spiritual master; then one will certainly be delivered from all sinful reactions. This is the secret of success. *Yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau* [ŚU 6.23]. If one has unflinching faith in Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, the result is *tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*: all the conclusions of revealed scriptures will be open to such a person. A pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa can make the same demands that Nārada Muni is making. He says, “**If you follow my instructions, I shall take responsibility for your liberation.**” A pure devotee like Nārada can give assurance to any sinful man because by the grace of the Lord such a devotee is empowered to deliver any sinful person if that person follows the principles set forth.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.255*

**The order of the spiritual master must be obeyed:**

Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya said, “The order of the spiritual master is very strong and cannot be disobeyed. That is the injunction of the *śāstras*, the revealed scriptures.

“Being ordered by His father, Paraśurāma killed His mother, Reṇukā, just as if she were an enemy. Lakṣmaṇa, the younger brother of Lord Rāmacandra, immediately engaged Himself in the service of His elder brother and accepted His orders. The order of the spiritual master must be obeyed without

consideration.’ [Raghuvaṁśa 14.46]”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 10.144-45

### The secret of success in spiritual life-faith in the spiritual master and Kāñḍa:

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked the brāhmaṇa, “My dear sir, why are you in such ecstatic love? Which portion of Bhagavad-gītā gives you such transcendental pleasure?” The brāhmaṇa replied, “I am illiterate and therefore do not know the meaning of the words. Sometimes I read Bhagavad-gītā correctly and sometimes incorrectly, but in any case I am doing this in compliance with the orders of my spiritual master.”

**PURPORT:** This is a good example of a person who had become so successful that he was able to capture the attention of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu even while reading *Bhagavad-gītā* incorrectly. His spiritual activities did not depend on material things such as correct pronunciation. Rather, his success depended on strictly following the instructions of his spiritual master.... Actually, the meaning of the words of *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are revealed to one strictly following the orders of the spiritual master. They are also revealed to one who has equal faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In other words, being faithful to both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master is the secret of success in spiritual life.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.97-98

### The success of ISKCON is based on the principle of strict faith in the order of the spiritual master:

Disagreement among the disciples of one ācārya is also found among the members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. In the beginning, during the presence of Om Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa Parivrajakācārya Aṣṭotaraśata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires.... Therefore, we do not belong to any faction. But because the two parties, busy dividing the material assets of the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution, stopped the preaching work, we took up the mission of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura to preach the cult of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world, under the protection of all the predecessor ācāryas, and we find that our humble attempt has been successful. We followed the principles especially explained by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* [Bg. 2.41]. According to this instruction of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, it is the duty of a disciple to follow strictly the orders of his spiritual master. The secret of success in advancement in spiritual life is the firm faith of the disciple in the orders of his spiritual master. The *Vedas* confirm this:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir  
yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ  
prakāśante mahātmanāḥ*

“To one who has staunch faith in the words of the spiritual master and the words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead the secret of success in Vedic knowledge is revealed.”

The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is being propagated according to this principle, and therefore our preaching work is going on successfully, in spite of the many impediments offered by antagonistic demons, because we are getting positive help from our previous ācāryas. One must judge every action by its result. The members of the self-appointed ācārya’s party who occupied the property of the Gauḍīya Maṭha are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching. Therefore by the result of their actions one should know that they are *asāra*, or useless, whereas the success of the ISKCON party, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, which strictly follows guru and Gaurāṅga, is increas-



ing daily all over the world. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wanted to print as many books as possible and distribute them all over the world. We have tried our best in this connection, and we are getting results beyond our expectations.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 12.8

**Disciples who do not follow the order of the spiritual master are useless, because they have no authority:**

At first all the followers of Advaita Ācārya shared a single opinion. But later they followed two different opinions, as ordained by Providence. Some of the disciples strictly accepted the orders of the ācārya, and others deviated, independently concocting their own opinions under the spell of daivé mājā.

The order of the spiritual master is the active principle in spiritual life. Anyone who disobeys the order of the spiritual master immediately becomes useless.

**PURPORT:** The words *daivera kāraṇa* indicate that by dint of Providence, or by God's will, the followers of Advaita Ācārya divided into two parties. Such disagreement among the disciples of one ācārya is also found among the members of the Gauḍīya Maṭha. In the beginning, during the presence of Om Viṣṇupāda Paramahansa Parivrajakācārya Aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda, all the disciples worked in agreement; but just after his disappearance, they disagreed. One party strictly followed the instructions of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but another group created their own concoction about executing his desires. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, at the time of his departure, requested all his disciples to form a governing body and conduct missionary activities cooperatively. He did not instruct a particular man to become the next ācārya. But just after his passing away, his leading secretaries made plans, without authority, to occupy the post of ācārya, and they split in two factions over who the next ācārya would be. Consequently, both factions were *asāra*, or useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master. Despite the spiritual master's order to form a governing body and execute the missionary activities of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, the two unauthorized factions began litigation that is still going on after forty years with no decision.... The members of the self-appointed ācārya's party who occupied the property of the Gauḍīya Maṭha are satisfied, but they could make no progress in preaching. Therefore by the result of their actions one should know that they are *asāra*, or useless.

... When disciples do not stick to the principle of accepting the order of their spiritual master, immediately there are two opinions. Any opinion different from the opinion of the spiritual master is useless. One cannot infiltrate materially concocted ideas into spiritual advancement. That is deviation. There is no scope for adjusting spiritual advancement to material ideas.... Persons who strictly follow the orders of the spiritual master are useful in executing the will of the Supreme, whereas persons who deviate from the strict order of the spiritual master are useless.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 12.8-10

**Lord Caitanya taught by example that the disciple must carry out the spiritual master's instructions without deviation:**

“‘You are a fool,’ he said. ‘You are not qualified to study Vedānta philosophy, and therefore You must always chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa.’ ... Since I received this order from My spiritual master, I always chant the holy name...”

**PURPORT:** Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Mahārāja comments in this connection, “One can become perfectly successful in the mission of his life if he acts exactly according to the words he hears from the mouth of his spiritual master.” This acceptance of the words of the spiritual master is called *śrauta-vākya*, which indicates that the disciple must carry out the spiritual master's instructions without deviation. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura remarks in this connection that a disciple must accept the words of his spiritual master as his life and soul. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu here confirms this by saying that since His spiritual master ordered Him only to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, He always chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* according to this direction.... Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master of the entire universe, He never-



theless took the position of a disciple in order to teach by example how a devotee should strictly follow the orders of a spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.72, 77

**By carrying out the orders of, and pleasing, the spiritual master, the disciple can be endowed with extraordinary power:**

Bṛhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods, said: O Indra, I know the cause for your enemy's becoming so powerful. The brāhmaṇa descendants of Bhṛgu Muni, being pleased by Bali Mahārāja, their disciple, endowed him with such extraordinary power.

**PURPORT:** Bṛhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods, informed Indra, “Ordinarily, Bali and his forces could not achieve such strength, but it appears that the *brāhmaṇa* descendants of Bhṛgu Muni, being pleased with Bali Mahārāja, endowed them with this spiritual power.” In other words, Bṛhaspati informed Indra that Bali Mahārāja's prowess was not his own but that of his exalted guru, Śukrācārya. We sing in our daily prayers, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. By the pleasure of the spiritual master, one can get extraordinary power, especially in spiritual advancement. The blessings of the spiritual master are more powerful than one's personal endeavor for such advancement. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura therefore says:

*guru-mukha-padma-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya,  
āra na kariha mane āśā*

Especially for spiritual advancement, one should carry out the bona fide order of the spiritual master. By the paramparā system, one can thus be endowed with the original spiritual power coming from the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ* [Bg. 4.2]).

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.15.28

**The disciple should execute the instructions of the spiritual master, without deviating from or surpassing them:**

The instructions received from the spiritual master must be followed immediately. One should not deviate from or surpass the instructions of the spiritual master. One should not be simply intent on consulting books but should simultaneously execute the spiritual master's orders.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.5.14

**If the disciple strictly follows the instructions of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Personality of Godhead without difficulty:**

When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāñī-sevā*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his *Bhagavad-gītā* commentary on the verse *vyavasāyāt-mikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* (*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 2.41) that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead ... if one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since the Lord is in the heart, He can advise a sincere disciple from within.... In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by *vāñī* or *vapuḥ*. This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush in Vṛndāvana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.51

### How the disciple can always remain in a liberated position-by abiding by the order of the spiritual master:

One has to execute the order of Lord Viṣṇu, whether receiving it directly from Him or from His bona fide representative, the spiritual master.... every man's duty is to receive orders from Lord Kṛṣṇa or from His bona fide representative and take these orders as his life and soul, without personal considerations. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states that one should not care very much whether he is going to be liberated or not, but he should simply execute the direct order received from the spiritual master. If one sticks to the principle of abiding by the order of the spiritual master, he will always remain in a liberated position.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.20.13

### A disciple who takes the order of his spiritual master as his life and soul becomes perfect:

Sons ought to render service to their father exactly to this extent. One should obey the command of his father or spiritual master with due deference, saying, "Yes, sir."

**PURPORT:** The son or disciple should accept the words of his spiritual master and father without hesitation. Whatever the father and the spiritual master order should be taken without argument: "Yes." There should be no instance in which the disciple or the son says, "This is not correct. I cannot carry it out." When he says that, he is fallen.... the order of the spiritual master is the life and soul of the disciples. As a man cannot separate his life from his body, so a disciple cannot separate the order of the spiritual master from his life. If a disciple follows the instruction of the spiritual master in that way, he is sure to become perfect. This is confirmed in the *Upaniṣads*: the import of Vedic instruction is revealed automatically only to one who has implicit faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead and in his spiritual master. One may be materially considered an illiterate man, but if he has faith in the spiritual master as well as in the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then the meaning of scriptural revelation is immediately manifested before him.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.24.13

### To attain the perfection of life, one must follow the direction of Kāñēa and His representative, the spiritual master:

The Supreme Personality gives directions as to what is good and what is bad, and one simply has to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness to attain the perfection of life. No one can ascertain his destiny as the Supreme Lord can; therefore the best course is to take direction from the Supreme Lord and act. No one should neglect the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or the order of the spiritual master who is the representative of God. One should act unhesitatingly to execute the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead-that will keep him safe under all circumstances.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 18.58

### In devotional service, one should execute the orders of the spiritual master with patience, depending on his mercy:

These activities [of devotional service] must be executed with patience. One should not be impatient in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Indeed, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started single-handedly, and in the beginning there was no response, but because we continued to execute our devotional activities with patience, people gradually began to understand the importance of this movement, and now they are eagerly participating. One should not be impatient in discharging devotional service, but should take instructions from the spiritual master and execute them with patience, depending on the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa.

*Nectar of Instruction* Text 3

### The disciple can receive and execute the spiritual master's orders sincerely when he keeps aloof from bodily activities:

As a king, Pṛthu Mahārāja was ordered by Lord Viṣṇu to keep himself always aloof from the activities of

the bodily situation and to engage always in the service of the Lord and thus keep himself in the liberated stage.... One can fully remain in intimate connection with the Supreme Lord directly or receive orders from His bona fide representative the spiritual master and execute the orders sincerely when one keeps aloof from the activities of the body.... If we follow the instruction of the spiritual master and execute devotional service to the Lord, we will remain always free from the contamination of bodily or material activities, and our life will be successful.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.20.13

**To test who is a useful disciple, one must measure his activities in executing the will of the spiritual master:**

**Paddy is mixed with straw at first, and one must fan it to separate the paddy from the straw.**

**PURPORT:** This example given by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī is very appropriate. In the case of the Gauḍīya Maṭha members, one can apply a similar process. There are many disciples of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, but to judge who is actually his disciple, to divide the useful from the useless, one must measure the activities of such disciples in executing the will of the spiritual master.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 12.12

**The disciple must obey and satisfy the spiritual master:**

Service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is best practiced under the able guidance of a spiritual master who is a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa, who knows the nature of the student and who can guide him to act in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As such, to be well-versed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness one has to act firmly and obey the representative of Kṛṣṇa, and one should accept the instruction of the bona fide spiritual master as one's mission in life. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura instructs us, in his famous prayers for the spiritual master, as follows:

*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo  
yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi  
dhyāyan stuvaṁs tasya yaśas tri-sandhyam  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

“By satisfaction of the spiritual master, the Supreme Personality of Godhead becomes satisfied. And by not satisfying the spiritual master, there is no chance of being promoted to the plane of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I should, therefore, meditate and pray for his mercy three times a day, and offer my respectful obeisances unto him, my spiritual master.”

*Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is 2.41

**One should avoid niyamāgraha and should act under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master who adjusts things according to time and circumstance:**

To broadcast the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one has to learn the possibility of renunciation in terms of country, time and candidate. A candidate for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western countries should be taught about the renunciation of material existence, but one would teach candidates from a country like India in a different way. The teacher (*ācārya*) has to consider time, candidate and country. He must avoid the principle of *niyamāgraha*-that is, he should not try to perform the impossible. What is possible in one country may not be possible in another. The *ācārya*'s duty is to accept the essence of devotional service. There may be a little change here and there as far as *yukta-vairāgya* (proper renunciation) is concerned. Dry renunciation is forbidden by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and we have also learned this from our spiritual master, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Gosvāmī Mahārāja. The essence of devotional service must be taken into consideration, and not the outward paraphernalia.... A Vaiṣṇava is immediately purified, provided he follows the rules and regulations of his bona fide spiritual master. It is not necessary that the rules and regulations followed in India be exactly the same as those in Europe, America and other Western countries. Simply imitating without

effect is called *niyamāgraha*. Not following the regulative principles but instead living extravagantly is also called *niyamāgraha*. The word *niyama* means “**regulative principles**,” and *āgraha* means “**eagerness**.” The word *agraha* means “**not to accept**.” We should not follow regulative principles without an effect, nor should we fail to accept the regulative principles. What is required is a special technique according to country, time and candidate. Without the sanction of the spiritual master, we should not try to imitate. This principle is recommended here: *suṣka-vairāgya-jñāna saba niṣedhila*. This is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s liberal demonstration of the *bhakti* cult. We should not introduce anything whimsically, without the sanction of the bona fide spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 23.105

**By executing the order of Kāñēa and guru, all necessities are automatically provided by Kāñina:**

As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (13.3), *kṣetra-jñāṁ cāpi māṁ viddhi sarva-kṣetreṣu bhārata*. The individual souls are proprietors of their individual bodies, but the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the proprietor of all bodies. Since He is the witness of everyone’s body, nothing is unknown to Him. He knows what we need. Our duty, therefore, is to execute devotional service sincerely, under the direction of the spiritual master. Kṛṣṇa, by His grace, will supply whatever we need in executing our devotional service. In the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we simply have to execute the order of Kṛṣṇa and guru. Then all necessities will be supplied by Kṛṣṇa, even if we do not ask for them.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.6.14

**Many people who accept a spiritual master hesitate, however, when he directs them to give up fruitive activities and fully engage in devotional service:**

Śrīla Nārada Muni is personally acting as the spiritual master of King Barhiṣmān. It was Nārada Muni’s intention that through his instructions the King would immediately give up all engagements in fruitive activity and take to devotional service. However, although the King understood everything, he was still not prepared to give up his engagements.... This is the position of most people. They accept a bona fide spiritual master and listen to him, but when the spiritual master indicates that they should leave home and fully engage in devotional service, they hesitate. The duty of the spiritual master is to instruct the disciple as long as he does not come to the understanding that this materialistic way of life, fruitive activity, is not at all beneficial.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.52

**It is the spiritual master’s duty to teach the disciple how to give up materialistic life, and the disciple’s duty to do so:**

Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: My dear King, after hearing the instructions of Nārada, the Haryaśvas, the sons of Prajāpati Dakṣa, were firmly convinced. They all believed in his instructions and reached the same conclusion. Having accepted him as their spiritual master, they circumambulated that great sage and followed the path by which one never returns to this world.

**PURPORT:** From this verse we can understand the meaning of initiation and the duties of a disciple and spiritual master. The spiritual master never instructs his disciple, “Take a *mantra* from me, pay me some money, and by practicing this yoga system you will become very expert in material life.” This is not the duty of a spiritual master. Rather, the spiritual master teaches the disciple how to give up materialistic life, and the disciple’s duty is to assimilate his instructions and ultimately follow the path back home, back to Godhead, from whence no one returns to this material world.... [The *Haryaśvas*] materialistic father had instructed them to increase the population, but because of the words of Nārada Muni, they could not heed that instruction. Nārada Muni, as their spiritual master, gave them the *śāstric* instructions that they should give up this material world, and as bona fide disciples they followed his instructions.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.21

**Devotional service means that one does not do anything independently of the sanction of the previous ācāryas:**

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has sung, “My dear Lord, let me be engaged in Your transcendental loving service, as indicated by the previous ācāryas, and let me live in the association of pure devotees. That is my desire, life after life.” In other words, a devotee does not much care whether or not he is liberated, but he is anxious only for devotional service. Devotional service means that one does not do anything independent of the sanction of the *ācāryas*. The actions of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement are directed by the previous *ācāryas*, headed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī; in the association of devotees following these principles, a devotee is able to perfectly maintain his transcendental position.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**Execution of the order of the bona fide spiritual master is factual control of the senses:**

Controlling the senses means engaging them in the transcendental service of the Lord. The Lord’s order descends in disciplic succession through the bona fide spiritual master, and thus execution of the order of the bona fide spiritual master is factual control of the senses.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.8*

**Without following the directions of a spiritual master, one cannot control the mind and senses:**

Sometimes people neglect to accept a spiritual master, and instead they endeavor for self-realization by mystic yoga practice, but there are many instances of failure, even by great yogīs like Viśvāmitra. Arjuna said in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that controlling the mind is as impractical as stopping the blowing of a hurricane. Sometimes the mind is compared to a maddened elephant. Without following the direction of a spiritual master one cannot control the mind and senses. In other words, if one practices yoga mysticism and does not accept a bona fide spiritual master, he will surely fail. He will simply waste his valuable time.

*Kṛṣṇa*

**Anyone who follows the simple instructions of a pure devotee easily finds the door of liberation open:**

The instructions of a pure devotee to his disciple are very simple. No one feels any difficulty in following in the footsteps of a pure devotee. Anyone who follows in disciplic succession from recognized devotees of the Lord, such as Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, the Kumāras, Manu, Kapila, King Prahlāda, King Janaka, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Yamarāja, etc., very easily finds the door of liberation open.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**The way to advance in spiritual science-to accept the words of the spiritual master:**

The King said, “Bhaṭṭācārya, you are the most learned and experienced person I know. Therefore when you address Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as Lord Kṛṣṇa, I accept this as the truth.”

**PURPORT:** This is the way to advance in spiritual science. One must accept the words of an *ācārya*, a bona fide spiritual master, to clear the path for spiritual advancement. This is the secret of success. However, one’s guide must be a spiritual master who is actually an unalloyed devotee strictly following the instructions of the previous *ācārya* without deviation. Whatever the spiritual master says must be accepted by the disciple. Only then is success certain. This is the Vedic system.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 10.17*

**As soon as the disciple thinks independently, neglecting the instructions of the spiritual master, he is a failure:**

For advancement in anything, especially in spiritual life, one must strictly follow the bona fide instructions of the teacher.... As confirmed in the Vedic injunctions, *yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau* [ŚU 6.23]. One should have complete faith in the guru, who helps the disciple make progress in



spiritual life. As soon as the disciple thinks independently, not caring for the instructions of the spiritual master, he is a failure (*yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*).

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.17.1

**The disciple must be obedient to the spiritual master:**

The great sage Maitreya continued: My dear Vidura, because of their pious nature, all the sons of Prācīnabarhi very seriously accepted the words of their father with heart and soul, and with these words on their heads, they went toward the west to execute their father's order.

**PURPORT:** In this verse *sādhavaḥ* (meaning pious or well behaved) is very important, especially at the present moment. It is derived from the word *sādhū*. A perfect *sādhū* is one who is always engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Prācīnabarhi's sons are described as *sādhavaḥ* because of their complete obedience to their father. The father, king and spiritual master are supposed to be representatives of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and as such they have to be respected as the Supreme Lord. It is the duty of the father, the spiritual master, and the king to regulate their subordinates in such a way that they ultimately become fully unalloyed devotees of the Supreme Lord. That is the duty of the superiors, and it is the duty of the subordinates to obey their orders perfectly and in a disciplined way. The word *śirasā* (on their heads) is also significant, for the Pracetas accepted the orders of their father and carried them on their heads, which means they accepted them in complete surrender.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.24.19

**By offering obeisances to and following the directions of the spiritual master, the disciple becomes advanced:**

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says: *daṇḍavat-praṇāmās tān anupatitaḥ*. By immediately offering obeisances (*daṇḍavat*) unto the spiritual master and by strictly following his directions, the student becomes advanced.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.1.36

**The disciple's duty is to carry out the order of the spiritual master with great respect:**

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī continued: After thus being fully instructed by Lord Brahmā, who is the spiritual master of the three worlds, Priyavrata, his own position being inferior, offered obeisances, accepted the order and carried it out with great respect.

**PURPORT:** It is the duty of the inferior to carry out the order of the superior with great respect. Priyavrata therefore immediately said, "Yes, sir. I shall carry out your order." Priyavrata is described as a *mahā-bhāgavata*, a great devotee. The duty of a great devotee is to carry out the order of the spiritual master, or the spiritual master of the spiritual master in the *paramparā* system. As described in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.2), *evam paramparā-prāptam*: one has to receive the instructions of the Supreme Lord through the disciplic chain of spiritual masters. A devotee of the Lord always considers himself a servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord [Cc. Mad 13.80].

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.1.20

**By carrying out the order of the spiritual master in disciplic succession, one overcomes the four defects of conditioned life:**

Lord Brahmā said: My dear son Kardama, since you have completely accepted my instructions without duplicity, showing them proper respect, you have worshiped me properly. Whatever instructions you took from me you have carried out, and thereby you have honored me.

**PURPORT:** Brahmā praises Kardama because he carried out the orders of the spiritual master in toto and without cheating. A conditioned soul in the material world has the disqualification of cheating. He has four disqualifications: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to be illusioned, he is prone to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. But if anyone carries out the order of the spiritual master by

disciplic succession or the *paramparā* system, he overcomes the four defects.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.24.12

**To honor the spiritual master means to fully carry out his instructions:**

**Lord Brahmā said:** My dear son Kardama, since you have completely accepted my instructions without duplicity, showing them proper respect, you have worshiped me properly. Whatever instructions you took from me you have carried out, and thereby you have honored me.

**PURPORT:** Lord Brahmā, as the first living entity within the universe, is supposed to be the spiritual master of everyone, and he is also the father, the creator, of all beings. Kardama Muni is one of the *Prajāpatīs*, or creators of the living entities, and he is also a son of Brahmā. Brahmā praises Kardama because he carried out the orders of the spiritual master in toto and without cheating.... Brahmā knew well that Kardama Muni exactly carried out the instructions received from him and that he actually honored his spiritual master. To honor the spiritual master means to carry out his instructions word for word.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.24.12

**The disciple should follow the instructions of, not imitate, the Lord's empowered servants:**

“One should simply follow the instructions of the Lord and His empowered servants. Their instructions are all good for us, and any intelligent person will perform them as instructed. However, one should guard against trying to imitate their actions. One should not try to drink the ocean of poison in imitation of Lord Śiva.”

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.33.30 [cited: *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 3.24]

**The disciple cannot follow the instructions of the spiritual master without being self-controlled, disciplined and obedient:**

Without being self-controlled, without being disciplined and without being fully obedient, no one can become successful in following the instructions of the spiritual master, and without doing so, no one is able to go back to Godhead.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.24

**If the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master and does not offend other Vaiñēavas, his path is clear:**

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyechē kebā*: unless one serves a Vaiṣṇava, he cannot be delivered. The spiritual master initiates the disciple to deliver him, and if the disciple executes his order of the spiritual master and does not offend other Vaiṣṇavas, his path is clear.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 1.218

**The disciple associates eternally with his spiritual master  
by remembering and following his vāēē, instructions**

**The spiritual master and disciple are eternally united through the association of vāēē, i.e., by the disciple's following the spiritual master's instructions:**

The disciple and spiritual master are never separated because the spiritual master always keeps company with the disciple as long as the disciple follows strictly the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called the association of *vāñī* (words). Physical presence is called *vapuḥ*. As long as the spiritual master is physically present, the disciple should serve the physical body of the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master is no longer physically existing, the disciple should serve the instructions of the spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.47

In his absence, the spiritual master's words of direction should be the pride of the disciple (there is no difference between the guru and his instructions):

It is imperative that one accept a spiritual master if he at all desires to gain the favor of the Lord. The service of the spiritual master is essential. If there is no chance to serve the spiritual master directly, a devotee should serve him by remembering his instructions. There is no difference between the spiritual master's instructions and the spiritual master himself. In his absence, therefore, his words of direction should be the pride of the disciple.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.35

The spiritual master is always present with the disciple by his vāñī, his words:

Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda passed away from this material world on the last day of December, 1936, I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his vāñī, his words. There are two ways of association-by vāñī and by vapuḥ. Vāñī means words, and vapuḥ means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but vāñī continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the vāñī, not the physical presence. Bhagavad-gītā, for example, is the vāñī of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although Kṛṣṇa was personally present five thousand years ago and is no longer physically present from the materialistic point of view, Bhagavad-gītā continues.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta “Concluding Words”

### 3. The Disciple Must Serve the Spiritual Master

The disciple should approach the spiritual master with inquiries and submissive service:

paripraśnena sevayā

Inquire from him [the spiritual master] submissively and render service unto him.

**PURPORT:** A spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realized spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life. Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding. Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.34

By serving the spiritual master with heart and soul, the disciple achieves all the mercy of the spiritual master and the Lord:

By the grace of Kardama Muni, Devahūti experienced actual realization simply by serving. We get a similar example in the life of Nārada Muni. In his previous life, Nārada was a maidservant's son, but his mother was engaged in the service of great devotees. He got the opportunity to serve the devotees, and simply by eating the remnants of their foodstuff and carrying out their orders he became the great personality Nārada. For spiritual achievement the easiest path is to take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and to serve him with heart and soul. That is the secret of success. As stated by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his eight stanzas of prayer to the spiritual master, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. By serving or receiving the grace of the spiritual master, one receives the grace of the Supreme Lord. By serving her devotee-husband, Kardama Muni, Devahūti shared in his achievements. Similarly, a sincere disciple, simply by serving a bona fide spiritual master, can achieve all the mercy of the Lord and the spiritual master simultaneously.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.23.7

One who dedicates his life to the service of the spiritual master becomes most dear to Kāñḍa:

“As the Supersoul of the living entities, sitting in everyone's heart, I observe everyone's activity in

every stage and order of life. Regardless of which stage one is in, when I see that one is engaged seriously and sincerely in discharging the duties ordered by the spiritual master, and is thus dedicating his life to the service of the spiritual master, that person becomes most dear to Me.”

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**One can acquire transcendental knowledge by surrender and service to the guru:**

To receive the transcendental knowledge we must completely surrender ourselves to the real *ācārya* in a spirit of ardent inquiry and service. Actual performance of service to the Absolute under the guidance of the *ācārya* is the only vehicle by which we can assimilate the transcendental knowledge. Today’s meeting for offering our humble services and homage to the feet of the *Ācāryadeva* will enable us to be favored with the capacity for assimilating the transcendental knowledge so kindly transmitted by him to all persons, without distinction.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**The disciple should serve the spiritual master as a menial servant:**

*guru-śuśrūṣayā bhaktyā...*

One must accept the bona fide spiritual master and render service unto him with great devotion and faith....

**PURPORT:** The words *guru-śuśrūṣayā* mean that one should personally serve the spiritual master by giving him bodily comforts, helping him in bathing, dressing, sleeping, eating and so on. This is called *guru-śuśrūṣaṇam*. A disciple should serve the spiritual master as a menial servant.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.7.30

**A disciple who gives personal service to the spiritual master is a bona fide candidate for receiving instructions:**

The word *śuśrūṣābhiratāya* indicates a person who faithfully engages in serving the spiritual master. One should give personal service and all kinds of comfort to the spiritual master. A devotee who does so is also a bona fide candidate for taking this instruction.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.32.42

**The disciple must care for (offer facilities to) the spiritual master:**

A spiritual master is not an enjoyer of facilities offered by his disciples. He is like a parent. Without the attentive service of his parents, a child cannot grow to manhood; similarly, without the care of the spiritual master one cannot rise to the plane of transcendental service.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 1.46

**The invalidity of the spiritual master gives his disciples a chance to serve him:**

A Vaiṣṇava is always protected by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but if he appears to be an invalid, this gives a chance to his disciples to serve him.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 9.11

**A disciple should be concerned not merely with formalities and rituals, but practical service:**

A devotee should see to the right discharge of devotional service under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master and should not stick only to the formalities. Under the direction of the bona fide spiritual master, one should see how much service is being executed, and not simply in the matter of rituals.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.8.21

**To get the mercy of the Supreme Lord, one must serve the spiritual master, the captain of the boat of the human form of body for crossing the ocean of nescience:**

This human form of body is a most valuable boat, and the spiritual master is the captain, *guru-karṇad-hāram*, to guide the boat in plying across the ocean of nescience. The instruction of Kṛṣṇa is a favorable breeze. One must use all these facilities to cross over the ocean of nescience. Since the spiritual master is the captain, one must serve the spiritual master very sincerely so that by his mercy one will be able to get the mercy of the Supreme Lord.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.45*

**One should approach the spiritual master in an attitude of service and surrender:**

[One should not] approach the spiritual master with a challenging spirit, but should go with the aim of rendering service. The word *nīpat* means “to fall down,” and *pra* means “without reservation.” Transcendental knowledge is based on *praṇipāta*. Therefore Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja*. [Bg. 18.66] “Just surrender unto Me.” Just as we surrender unto Kṛṣṇa, we have to surrender unto His representative, the spiritual master.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**Favorable service to the spiritual master means to serve him as he desires, not to concoct service:**

Suppose I were to ask a disciple, “My dear student, please give me a glass of water.” It is then his duty to give me a glass of water. If he thinks, “Prabhupada wants a glass of water, but why not give him something better? Why not a glass of hot milk?” That is not service. In his consideration, hot milk is very palatable and is better than water, yet because I have asked for water, he has to give me water, not milk. That is favorable service.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

The conditioned soul can attain liberation from the clutches of *māyā* by serving a bona fide spiritual master:

*tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje, kare gurura sevana*

*māyā-jāla chuṭe, pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

“If the conditioned soul engages in the service of the Lord and simultaneously carries out the orders of his spiritual master and serves him, he can get out of the clutches of *māyā* and become eligible for shelter at Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.”

**PURPORT:** It is a fact that every living entity is eternally a servant of Kṛṣṇa. This is forgotten due to the influence of *māyā*, which induces one to believe in material happiness. Being illusioned by *māyā*, one thinks that material happiness is the only desirable object. This material consciousness is like a chain around the neck of the conditioned soul. As long as he is bound to that conception, he cannot get out of *māyā*’s clutches. However, if by Kṛṣṇa’s mercy he gets in touch with a bona fide spiritual master, abides by his order and serves him, engaging other conditioned souls in the Lord’s service, he then attains liberation and Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s shelter.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 22.25*

**By serving the spiritual master, one can develop ecstatic devotional service to Kāñḍea:**

By serving the feet of the spiritual master, one is enabled to develop transcendental ecstasy in the service of the Personality of Godhead, who is the unchangeable enemy of the Madhu demon and whose service vanquishes one’s material desires.

**PURPORT:** The association of a bona fide spiritual master like the sage Maitreya can be of absolute help in achieving transcendental attachment for the direct service of the Lord.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.7.19*



## 4. The Disciple Must Satisfy and Please the Spiritual Master

The disciple receives transcendental knowledge by serving and satisfying the spiritual master:

The great sage Nārada also inquired in detail from his father, Brahmā, the great-grandfather of all the universe, after seeing him well satisfied.

**PURPORT:** The process of understanding spiritual or transcendental knowledge from the realized person is not exactly like asking an ordinary question from the schoolmaster. The schoolmasters in the modern days are paid agents for giving some information, but the spiritual master is not a paid agent. Nor can he impart instruction without being authorized. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* ... Arjuna was advised to receive transcendental knowledge from the realized person by surrender, questions and service. Receiving transcendental knowledge is not like exchanging dollars; such knowledge has to be received by service to the spiritual master. As Brahmājī received the knowledge directly from the Lord by satisfying Him fully, similarly one has to receive the transcendental knowledge from the spiritual master by satisfying him. The spiritual master's satisfaction is the means of assimilating transcendental knowledge.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.43

The disciple must satisfy the spiritual master because simply by his good wishes, the disciple can make wonderful progress in devotional service:

The candidate must be prepared to satisfy the spiritual master in every way. A bona fide spiritual master who is fully cognizant of the methods of spiritual science, learned in the spiritual scriptures such as the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Vedānta*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Upaniṣads*, and who is also a realized soul who has made a tangible connection with the Supreme Lord, is the transparent medium by which the willing candidate is led to the path of the Vaiṣṇavas. The spiritual master must be satisfied in all respects, because simply by his good wishes a candidate can make wonderful progress along the path.

*Easy Journey to Other Planets*

Activities performed according to the order of the spiritual master are spiritual; concocted activities displease the spiritual master and are material:

Any activities performed favorably for the satisfaction of the Lord, under the direction of the spiritual master, are spiritual. But for a person to disregard the order of the spiritual master and act by concoction, accepting his nonsensical activities to be spiritual, is *māyā*. One must achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the mercy of the spiritual master. Therefore one must first please the spiritual master, and if he is pleased, then we should understand that the Supreme Personality of Godhead is also pleased. But if the spiritual master is displeased by our actions, they are not spiritual. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura confirms this: *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. Activities that please the spiritual master must be considered spiritual, and they should be accepted as satisfying to the Lord.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 14.29

The disciple should desire only to satisfy the previous ācāryas, represented by his spiritual master:

A devotee must always remember to please his predecessor ācārya. The Gosvāmīs are represented by one's spiritual master. One cannot be an ācārya (spiritual master) without following strictly in the disciplic succession of the ācāryas. One who is actually serious in advancing in devotional service should desire only to satisfy the previous ācāryas. *Ei chaya gosāñi yāra, mui tāra dāsa*. One should always think of oneself as a servant of the servant of the ācāryas, and thinking this, one should live in the society of Vaiṣṇavas [Cc. Mad 13.80].

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Madhya-līlā 19.156

**By satisfying the spiritual master, one can satisfy Kāñēa:**

The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is everlastingly independent and who exists in everyone's heart, is very pleased with those who follow in His footsteps and engage without reservation in the service of the descendants of brāhmaēas and Vaiṣṇavas. For He is always dear to brāhmaēas and Vaiṣṇavas, and they are always dear to Him.

**PURPORT:** It is said that the Lord is most pleased when He sees one engage in the service of His devotee. He does not need any service from anyone because He is complete, but it is in our own interest to offer all kinds of services to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. These services can be offered to the Supreme Person not directly but through the service of *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura sings, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra pāyeche kebā*, which means that unless one serves the Vaiṣṇavas and *brāhmaṇas*, one cannot get liberation from the material clutches. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura also says, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*: by satisfying the senses of the spiritual master one can satisfy the senses of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Thus this behavior is not only mentioned in scriptures but also followed by *ācāryas*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.39

**By satisfying the spiritual master, one gets the Lord's mercy:**

“The Lord has already changed His mind due to Rāmānanda Rāya's description of your pure love for Him.”

**PURPORT:** At first the Lord did not want to see the King, but due to Bhaṭṭācārya's and Rāmānanda Rāya's earnest endeavors, the Lord's mind was changed. The Lord already declared that Kṛṣṇa would be merciful upon the King due to the King's service to the devotees. This is the process by which one can advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyā prasādān na gatiḥ kuto* 'pi. Our first duty, therefore, is to satisfy the spiritual master, who can arrange for the Lord's mercy. A common man must first begin to serve the spiritual master or the devotee. Then, through the mercy of the devotee, the Lord will be satisfied. Unless one receives the dust of a devotee's feet on one's head, there is no possibility of advancement.... Unless one approaches a pure devotee, he cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Mahārāja Pratāparudra worshiped both Rāmānanda Rāya and Sārva-bhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. Thus he touched the lotus feet of pure devotees and was able thereby to approach Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 11.58

**By taking trouble for the satisfaction of the guru, one becomes free from one's debt to him:**

Kṛṣṇa continued to talk with His *brāhmaṇa* friend: “My dear friend, I think you remember our activities during the days when we were living as students. You may remember that once we went to collect fuel from the forest on the order of the guru's wife. While we were collecting the dried wood, we by chance entered the dense forest and became lost. There was an unexpected dust storm and then clouds and lightning in the sky and the explosive sound of thunder. Then sunset came, and we were lost in the dark jungle. After this, there was severe rainfall; the whole ground was overflowed with water, and we could not trace out the way to return to our guru's *āśrama*. You may remember that heavy rainfall—it was not actually rainfall but a sort of devastation. On account of the dust storm and the heavy rain, we began to feel greatly pained, and in whichever direction we turned we were bewildered. In that distressed condition, we took each other's hand and tried to find our way out. We passed the whole night in that way, and early in the morning when our absence became known to our Gurudeva, he sent his other disciples to search us out. He also came with them, and when they reached us in the jungle they found us to be very distressed.

“With great compassion our Gurudeva said, ‘My dear boys, it is very wonderful that you have suffered so much trouble for me. Everyone likes to take care of his body as the first consideration, but you are so good and faithful to your guru that without caring for bodily comforts you have taken so much trouble for me. I am also glad to see that bona fide students like you will undergo any kind of trouble for the

satisfaction of the spiritual master. That is the way for a bona fide disciple to become free from his debt to the spiritual master. It is the duty of the disciple to dedicate his life to the service of the spiritual master.”

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**If one pleases the guru, he can receive knowledge from him:**

It is stated that Vidura heard from Maitreya Ṛṣi, and that Maitreya Ṛṣi was very pleased. Unless one satisfies his guru, one cannot receive proper knowledge. That is quite natural. If one receives his guru properly and seats him comfortably, and if the guru is pleased with one's behavior, the guru can speak very frankly and freely, and this will be very beneficial to the student.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The disciple derives his strength only from his spiritual master, by pleasing him:**

O Indra, your enemies, the demons, were extremely weak because of their disrespect toward Śukrācārya, but since they have now worshiped Śukrācārya with great devotion, they have again become powerful. By their devotion to Śukrācārya, they have increased their strength so much that now they are even able to easily seize my abode from me.

**PURPORT:** Lord Brahmā wanted to point out to the demigods that by the strength of the guru one can become most powerful within this world, and by the displeasure of the guru one can lose everything. This is confirmed by the song of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura: *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyā prasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. “By the mercy of the spiritual master one is benedicted by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement.” Although the demons are insignificant in comparison to Lord Brahmā, because of the strength of their guru they were so powerful that they could even seize Brahmāloka from Lord Brahmā. We therefore pray to the spiritual master:

*mukam karoti vācālam  
paṅguṁ laṅghayate girim  
yat-kṛpā tam aham vande  
śrī-gururṁ dīna-tāraṇam*

By the mercy of the guru, even a dumb man can become the greatest orator, and even a lame man can cross mountains. As advised by Lord Brahmā, one should remember this *śāstric* injunction if one desires success in his life.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.23*

**By pleasing the spiritual master, one automatically pleases the Supreme Personality of Godhead:**

Any person upon whom the brāhmaëas and Vaiṣṇavas are pleased can achieve anything which is very rare to obtain in this world as well as after death. Not only that, but one also receives the favor of the auspicious Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu, who accompany the brāhmaëas and Vaiṣṇavas.

**PURPORT:** The devotees, out of their extreme love for Govinda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, always carry the Lord within their hearts. The Lord is already in the heart of everyone, but the Vaiṣṇavas and the brāhmaṇas actually perceive and see Him always in ecstasy. Therefore brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas are carriers of Viṣṇu.... When the brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas are pleased with a person, Lord Viṣṇu is also pleased. This is confirmed by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his eight stanzas on the spiritual master: *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. By pleasing the spiritual master, who is both brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava, one pleases the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If the Supreme Personality of Godhead is pleased, then one has nothing more to achieve either in this world or after death.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.8*

**The secret of success in spiritual life-satisfying the spiritual master and thereby getting his sincere blessings:**

And because you are submissive, your spiritual masters have endowed you with all the favors bestowed upon a gentle disciple. Therefore you can tell us all that you have scientifically learned from them.

**PURPORT:** The secret of success in spiritual life is in satisfying the spiritual master and thereby getting his sincere blessings. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has sung in his famous eight stanzas on the spiritual master as follows: “I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master. Only by his satisfaction can one please the Personality of Godhead, and when he is dissatisfied, there is only havoc on the path of spiritual realization.” It is essential, therefore, that a disciple be very much obedient and submissive to the bona fide spiritual master. Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī fulfilled all these qualifications as a disciple, and therefore he was endowed with all favors by his learned and self-realized spiritual masters such as Śrīla Vyāsadeva and others. The sages of Naimiṣāraṇya were confident that Śrīla Sūta Gosvāmī was bona fide. Therefore they were anxious to hear from him.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.8

**The bhakti-latā-bīja, the seed of devotional service, can be received only through the mercy of the spiritual master, by satisfying him:**

*guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.

**PURPORT:** *Bhakti-latā-bīja* means “the seed of devotional service.” Everything has an original cause, or seed. For any idea, program, plan or device, there is first of all the contemplation of the plan, and that is called *bīja*, or the seed. The methods, rules and regulations by which one is perfectly trained in devotional service constitute the *bhakti-latā-bīja*, or seed of devotional service. This *bhakti-latā-bīja* is received from the spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. Other seeds are called *anyābhilāṣa-bīja*, *karma-bīja* and *jñāna-bīja*. If one is not fortunate enough to receive the *bhakti-latā-bīja* from the spiritual master, he instead cultivates the seeds of *karma-bīja*, *jñāna-bīja*, or political and social or philanthropic *bīja*. However, *bhakti-latā-bīja* is different from these other *bījas*. *Bhakti-latā-bīja* can be received only through the mercy of the spiritual master. Therefore one has to satisfy the spiritual master to get *bhakti-latā-bīja* (*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*). *Bhakti-latā-bīja* is the origin of devotional service. Unless one satisfies the spiritual master, he gets the *bīja*, or root cause, of *karma*, *jñāna* and *yoga* without the benefit of devotional service. However, one who is faithful to his spiritual master gets the *bhakti-latā-bīja*. This *bhakti-latā-bīja* is received when one is initiated by the bona fide spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.151-52

**By satisfying the spiritual master, the disciple automatically becomes satisfied:**

A person who serves the Lord in order to satisfy the senses of the Lord becomes satisfied because Kṛṣṇa is the Supersoul, and the individual living entity is His part and parcel. If He is satisfied, then the living entity is satisfied. If the stomach is satisfied, then all the parts of the body are satisfied, for they receive nourishment through the stomach. When one of my Godbrothers began to fan my Guru Mahārāja (spiritual master) on a very hot day, Guru Mahārāja asked, “Why are you fanning me all of a sudden?” The boy replied, “Because if you are satisfied, we are all satisfied.” This is the formula—we should not try to satisfy our senses separately, but should try to satisfy Kṛṣṇa’s senses. Then naturally we will become satisfied.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**By pleasing the spiritual master, the disciple gets knowledge as well as strength from the Supreme Personality of Godhead with which to engage in devotional service to cross the ocean of nescience:**

As long as one has to accept a material body, with its different parts and paraphernalia, which are not fully under one’s control, one must have the lotus feet of his superiors, namely his spiritual master and



the spiritual master's predecessors. By their mercy, one can sharpen the sword of knowledge, and with the power of the Supreme Personality of Godhead's mercy one must then conquer the enemies mentioned above. In this way, the devotee should be able to merge into his own transcendental bliss, and then he may give up his body and resume his spiritual identity.

**PURPORT:** The spiritual master is certainly very merciful to his disciples, and consequently by satisfying him a devotee gets strength from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore says, *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*: [Cc Mad 19.151] one must first please the spiritual master, and then one automatically pleases Kṛṣṇa and gets the strength with which to cross the ocean of nescience. If one seriously desires to return home, back to Godhead, one must therefore become strong enough by pleasing the spiritual master, for thus one gets the weapon with which to conquer the enemy, and one also gets the grace of Kṛṣṇa. Simply getting the weapon of *jñāna* is insufficient. One must sharpen the weapon by serving the spiritual master and adhering to his instructions. Then the candidate will get the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.... In summary, as stated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one must get in touch with a bona fide spiritual master coming in the *paramparā* of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, for by his mercy and instructions one is able to get strength from Kṛṣṇa. Thus one engages in devotional service and attains the ultimate goal of life, the lotus feet of Viṣṇu.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.45

**One becomes a great soul by the grace of the mahātmā spiritual master, by satisfying him:**

The perfection of transcendental life can be achieved simply by touching the holy dust of the lotus feet of a holy man. In the *Bhāgavatam* it is said, *mahat-pāda-rajo-'bhiṣekam*, which means to be blessed by the holy dust of the lotus feet of a *mahat*, a great devotee. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *mahātmānas tu*: those who are great souls are under the spell of spiritual energy, and their symptom is that they fully engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the service of the Lord. Therefore they are called *mahat*. Unless one is fortunate enough to have the dust of the lotus feet of a *mahātmā* on his head, there is no possibility of perfection in spiritual life.

The *paramparā* system of disciplic succession is very important as a means of spiritual success. One becomes a *mahat* by the grace of his *mahat* spiritual master. If one takes shelter of the lotus feet of a great soul, there is every possibility of his also becoming a great soul. When Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa asked Jaḍa Bharata about his wonderful achievement of spiritual success, he replied to the King that spiritual success is not possible simply by following the rituals of religion or simply by converting oneself into a *san-nyāsī* or offering sacrifices as recommended in the scriptures. These methods are undoubtedly helpful for spiritual realization, but the real effect is brought about by the grace of a *mahātmā*. In Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's eight stanzas of prayer to the spiritual master, it is clearly stated that simply by satisfying the spiritual master one can achieve the supreme success in life, and in spite of executing all ritualistic performances, if one cannot satisfy the spiritual master, he has no access to spiritual perfection.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.22.6

## **5. The Disciple Must Have Faith in the Spiritual Master**

### **General instructions**

**The secret of success in spiritual life-to have complete faith in the words of the spiritual master:**

*ei tānra vākye āmi dṛḍha viśvāsa dhari'*

**"I firmly believe in these words of my spiritual master...."**

**PURPORT:** It is said in the *Vedas*:



*yasya deve parā bhaktir  
yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ  
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

**“Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.”**

This Vedic injunction is very important, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu supported it by His personal behavior. Believing in the words of His spiritual master, He introduced the *saṅkīrtana* movement, just as the present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement was started with belief in the words of our spiritual master. He wanted to preach, we believed in his words and tried somehow or other to fulfill them, and now this movement has become successful all over the world. Therefore faith in the words of the spiritual master and in the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the secret of success. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never disobeyed the orders of His spiritual master and stopped propagating the *saṅkīrtana* movement. Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, at the time of his passing away, ordered all his disciples to work conjointly to preach the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu all over the world. Later, however, some self-interested, foolish disciples disobeyed his orders. Each one of them wanted to become head of the mission, and they fought in the courts, neglecting the order of the spiritual master, and the entire mission was defeated. We are not proud of this; however, the truth must be explained. We believed in the words of our spiritual master and started in a humble way-in a helpless way-but due to the spiritual force of the order of the supreme authority, this movement has become successful.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.95-96*

**To understand transcendental knowledge, one must have full faith in the words of the spiritual master:**

**Prahlāda Mahārāja continued:** My dear friends, if you can place your faith in my words, simply by that faith you can also understand transcendental knowledge, just like me, although you are small children....

**PURPORT:** These words of Prahlāda Mahārāja are very important in regard to knowledge descending by the disciplic succession. Even when Prahlāda Mahārāja was a baby within the womb of his mother, he became fully convinced of the existence of the supreme power because of hearing the powerful instructions of Nārada and understood how to attain perfection in life by *bhakti-yoga*. These are the most important understandings in spiritual knowledge.

*yasya deve parā bhaktir  
yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ  
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ*

**“Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed.” (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23)**

... These are Vedic instructions. One must have full faith in the words of the spiritual master and similar faith in the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then the real knowledge of *ātmā* and *Paramātmā* and the distinction between matter and spirit will be automatically revealed. This *ātma-tattva*, or spiritual knowledge, will be revealed within the core of a devotee’s heart because of his having taken shelter of the lotus feet of a *mahājana* such as Prahlāda Mahārāja.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.17*

**The disciple should be fixed in the conviction that the spiritual master is beyond criticism:**

Dāmodara Paṇḍita impudently said to the Lord, “Everyone says that You are a great teacher because of

Your instructions to others, but now we shall find out what kind of teacher You are.”

**PURPORT:** Dāmodara Paṇḍita was a great devotee of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Sometimes, however, a person in such a position becomes impudent, being influenced by the external energy and material considerations. Thus a devotee mistakenly dares to criticize the activities of the spiritual master or the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Despite the logic that “Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion,” a devotee should not be disturbed by the activities of his spiritual master and should not try to criticize him. A devotee should be fixed in the conclusion that the spiritual master cannot be subject to criticism and should never be considered equal to a common man. Even if there appears to be some discrepancy according to an imperfect devotee’s estimation, the devotee should be fixed in the conviction that even if his spiritual master goes to a liquor shop, he is not a drunkard; rather, he must have some purpose in going there. It is said in a Bengali poem: *yadyapi nityānanda surā-bāḍi yāya/ tathāpio haya nityānanda-rāya*. “Even if I see that Lord Nityānanda has entered a liquor shop, I shall not be diverted from my conclusion that Nityānanda Rāya is the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 3.11

Without staunch faith in the spiritual master, one cannot realize the Supreme Lord by yoga and Vedic ritualistic performances:

Ritualistic ceremonies, regulative principles, austerities and the practice of yoga are all meant to control the senses and mind, but even after one is able to control the senses and mind, if he does not come to the point of meditation upon the Supreme Lord, all such activities are simply labor in frustration.

**PURPORT:** One may argue that one may achieve the ultimate goal of life-realization of the Supersoul by practicing the yoga system and ritualistic performances according to the Vedic principles, even without staunch devotion to the spiritual master. The actual fact, however, is that by practicing yoga one must come to the platform of meditating upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As stated in the scriptures, *dhyānāvasthita-tad-gatena manasā paśyanti yaṁ yoginaḥ*: [SB 12.13.1] a person in meditation achieves the perfection of yoga practice when he can see the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By various practices, one may come to the point of controlling the senses, but simply controlling the senses does not bring one to a substantial conclusion. However, by staunch faith in the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one not only controls the senses but also realizes the Supreme Lord.... It is further stated, *tuṣṭeyaṁ sarva-bhūtātmā guru-śūśrūṣayā and taranty añjo bhavārṇavam*. Simply by rendering service to the spiritual master, one crosses the ocean of nescience and returns home, back to Godhead. Thus he gradually sees the Supreme Lord face to face and enjoys life in association with the Lord. The ultimate goal of yoga is to come in contact with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Unless this point is achieved, one’s so-called yoga practice is simply labor without any benefit.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.15.28

Complete faith in the spiritual master, as demonstrated by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda for his Guru Mahārāja:

Today, Sunday, November 10, 1974 ... we have now finished the English translation of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī’s Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta in accordance with the authorized order of His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Gosvāmī Mahārāja, my beloved spiritual master, guide and friend. Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda passed away from this material world on the last day of December, 1936, I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his *vāñī*, his words.... I think that His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is always seeing my activities and guiding me within my heart by his words. As it is said in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye* [SB 1.1.1]. Spiritual inspiration comes from within the heart, wherein the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in His Paramātmā feature, is always sitting with all His devotees and associates. It is to be admitted that whatever translation work I have done is through the inspiration of my spiritual master because personally I am most insignificant and incompetent to do this materially impossible work. I do not think myself a very learned scholar, but I have full faith in the service of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhak-

tisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. If there is any credit to my activities of translating, it is all due to His Divine Grace.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta “Concluding Words”

### **A disciple lacking faith in the spiritual master cannot become successful in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa**

**A disciple lacking faith in the words of the spiritual master and who acts independently cannot attain success in chanting Hare Kāñḍā:**

Lord Caitanya’s spiritual master blessed Him, telling Him to “dance, sing, propagate this *saṅkīrtana* movement, and by instructing people about Kṛṣṇa, try to deliver them from nescience.”

... Lord Caitanya further informed Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī: “Because I have full faith in My spiritual master’s words, I am always engaged in chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*. I do not exactly know how I have become just like a madman, but I believe the name of Kṛṣṇa has induced Me. I realize that the transcendental pleasure derived from chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare* is just like an ocean. In comparison, all other pleasures, including the pleasure of impersonal realization, are like shallow water in channels.”

It appears from the talks of Lord Caitanya that a person who cannot keep his faith in the words of the spiritual master and who acts independently cannot attain the desired success in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. In the Vedic literatures it is stated that the import of all transcendental literature is revealed to one who has unflinching faith in the Supreme Lord and his spiritual master. Lord Caitanya firmly believed in the statements of His spiritual master, and He never neglected the instruction of His spiritual master by stopping His *saṅkīrtana* movement. Thus the transcendental potency of the holy name encouraged Him more and more in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, the *mahā-mantra*.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**A faithless, independent disciple never receives the authority to chant the holy names of the Lord:**

“I firmly believe in these words of My spiritual master, and therefore I always chant the holy name of the Lord, alone and in the association of devotees. That holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa sometimes causes Me to chant and dance, and therefore I chant and dance. Please do not think that I intentionally do it. I do it automatically.”

**PURPORT:** A person who cannot keep his faith in the words of his spiritual master but acts independently never receives the authority to chant the holy name of the Lord.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.95-96

## **6. The Disciple Must Be Submissive and Humble**

**One must remain a fool before his guru:**

Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself said, “My Guru Mahārāja, My spiritual master, considered Me a great fool.” He who remains a great fool before his guru is a guru himself. However, if one says, “**I am so advanced that I can speak better than my guru,**” he is simply a rascal.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**A disciple should always remain a fool before his spiritual master:**

Only fools give up the service of the spiritual master and think themselves advanced in spiritual knowledge. In order to check such fools, Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself presented the perfect example of

how to be a disciple. A spiritual master knows very well how to engage each disciple in a particular duty, but if a disciple, thinking himself more advanced than his spiritual master, gives up his orders and acts independently, he checks his own spiritual progress. Every disciple must consider himself completely unaware of the science of Kṛṣṇa and must always be ready to carry out the orders of the spiritual master to become competent in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A disciple should always remain a fool before his spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.72

**The disciple should approach the guru in a submissive attitude, in order to accept instructions:**

In order to become free from the miseries of material nature, one should approach a bona fide spiritual master inquisitively and submissively. When Arjuna submitted to Kṛṣṇa, he said, “My dear Kṛṣṇa, now I no longer care to talk to You as a friend because friendly talks will not benefit me now.” Generally we talk to a friend just to spend time, but when we approach a spiritual master, we should be submissive. Friends approach one another on an equal basis, but this is not the way to approach a spiritual master. Unless one is submissive, one cannot accept sublime instructions. Arjuna teaches us submission by giving up his friendly relationship with Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He says, “I have now become Your disciple. Please instruct me.”

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**If one approaches a Kāñḍa conscious spiritual master in a challenging, puffed-up attitude, he cannot gain anything and he remains in material consciousness:**

Lord Caitanya actually took the subordinate position before Rāmānanda Rāya. This has very great significance. If one is serious about understanding the transcendental nature of Kṛṣṇa, he should approach a person who is actually enriched with Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One should not be proud of his material birth, material opulence, material education and beauty and with these things try to conquer the mind of an advanced student of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who thus goes to a Kṛṣṇa conscious person, thinking that he would be favorably induced, is deluded about this science. One should approach a Kṛṣṇa conscious person with all humility and put relevant questions to him. If one goes to challenge him, such a highly elevated Kṛṣṇa conscious person would not be available for any service. A challenging puffed-up person cannot gain anything from a Kṛṣṇa conscious man; he would simply remain in material consciousness.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**The disciple must inquire submissively from the spiritual master:**

Those who listen to the *Bhāgavatam* may put questions to the speaker in order to elicit the clear meaning, but this should not be done in a challenging spirit. One must submit questions with a great regard for the speaker and the subject matter. This is also the way recommended in *Bhagavad-gītā*. One must learn the transcendental subject by submissive aural reception from the right sources.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.5

**One should submit a proposal to the spiritual master only with great humility and submission:**

The *brāhmaṇa* immediately fell at the lotus feet of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and requested Him to accept his proposal in a joyful mood. “My dear Lord, I have invited all the sannyāsés of Benares to my home. My desires will be fulfilled if You also accept my invitation.”

**PURPORT:** The Vedic injunctions state, *tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā*: one must approach a superior authority in humbleness (*Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is 4.34). One cannot challenge a superior authority, but with great submission one can submit his proposal for acceptance by the spiritual master or spiritual authorities. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is an ideal teacher by His personal behavior, and so also are all His disciples. Thus this *brāhmaṇa*, being purified in association with Caitanya Mahāprabhu, followed these principles in submitting his request to the higher authority. He fell down

at the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu ... and fervently appealed to the Lord to be compassionate and grant his request. Thus he humbly submitted his desire.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.53-54

**Even if the spiritual master deals harshly, the disciple must be submissive:**

Respectable superiors ... are always worshipable. Even if they attack, they should not be counterattacked. It is general etiquette that superiors are not to be offered even a verbal fight. Even if they are sometimes harsh in behavior, they should not be harshly treated.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 1.4

**How a bona fide student should pray when approaching a bona fide spiritual master:**

When a bona fide student approaches a bona fide spiritual master, he submissively prays to the spiritual master, “My dear lord, kindly accept me as your student and train me in such a way that I will be able to give up all other kinds of processes for self-realization and simply engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, devotional service.”

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

## **7. The Disciple Must Honor and Respect the Spiritual Master as a Manifestation or Representative of God**

(See Part Two, Section 2: The Spiritual Master Is a Manifestation of Kṛṣṇa (and Should Not, Therefore, Be Regarded as an Ordinary Man))

## **8. The Characteristics and Duties of the Brahmācārī Disciple**

**Brahmacarya is meant for devoting one's life for the service of the spiritual master while performing austerities and penances:**

“Everyone should divide his life into four parts. One should utilize the first part of life in becoming a bona fide student, receiving adequate knowledge and keeping oneself in the vow of *brahmācarya*, so that one may completely devote his life for the service of the spiritual master without indulging in sense gratification. A *brahmācārī* is meant to lead a life of austerities and penance.”

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

**Characteristics of the brahmācārī disciple of the spiritual master:**

Nārada Muni said: A student should practice completely controlling his senses. He should be submissive and should have an attitude of firm friendship for the spiritual master. With a great vow, the *brahmācārī* should live at the *guru-kula*, only for the benefit of the guru.

At both junctions of day and night, namely, in the early morning and in the evening, he should be fully absorbed in thoughts of the spiritual master, fire, the sun-god and Lord Viṣṇu, and by chanting the *Gāyatrī mantra* he should worship them.

Being called by the spiritual master, the student should study the Vedic *mantras* regularly. Every day, before beginning his studies and at the end of his studies, the disciple should respectfully offer obeisances unto the spiritual master.

The *brahmācārī* should go out morning and evening to collect alms, and he should offer all that he collects to the spiritual master. He should eat only if ordered to take food by the spiritual master; otherwise, if the spiritual master does not give this order, he may sometimes have to fast.

A *brahmācārī* should be quite well behaved and gentle and should not eat or collect more than necessary. He must always be active and expert, fully believing in the instructions of the spiritual master and the *śāstra*. Fully controlling his senses, he should associate only as much as necessary with women or



those controlled by women.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.11.1-3, 5-6

### A brahmācārī sacrifices everything for the guru:

Before entering household life, one should be trained as a *brahmācārī*, living under the care of the guru, whose place is known as the *gurukula*. *Brahmācārī guru-kule vasan dānto guror hitam* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.12.1). From the very beginning, a *brahmācārī* is trained to sacrifice everything for the benefit of the guru. A *brahmācārī* is advised to go begging alms door to door, addressing all women as mother, and whatever he collects goes to the benefit of the guru. In this way he learns how to control his senses and sacrifice everything for the guru.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.6.9

### The brahmācārī is a menial servant of the guru:

According to the Vedic system, a child is sent to a *guru-kula* to learn spiritual knowledge from the very beginning. When a child goes to a *guru-kula*, he becomes a *brahmācārī* and works like a menial servant. He may be the son of a great *brāhmaṇa* or a great king; it doesn't matter. When one goes to a *guru-kula*, he immediately becomes the menial servant of the guru. If the guru orders him to perform some lowly service, he is prepared to do it. This is the business of a *brahmācārī*. Even Kṛṣṇa went to a *guru-kula* to teach us. There was no need for Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, to go to a *guru-kula*, but He did this simply to set an example.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

### A naiṣṭhika-brahmācārī can remember whatever he has heard from his spiritual master:

The *brahmācārī* system of life is especially advantageous in that it increases the power of memory and determination. It is specifically mentioned in this connection that because Nārada was *naiṣṭhika brahmācārī* he could remember whatever he heard from his spiritual master and would never forget it. One who can remember everything perpetually is called *śruta-dhara*. A *śruta-dhara brahmācārī* can repeat all that he has heard verbatim without notes and without reference to books.... Thus the great sage Nārada, after hearing from his spiritual master Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, became completely realized.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

## 9. Householder Disciples Regulate Sex Life in Accordance with the Order of the Spiritual Master

### Householder disciples should indulge in sex life only in accordance with the order of the guru:

All the rules and regulations [concerning association of man and woman] apply equally to the householder and the *sannyāsī*, the member of the renounced order of life. The *gṛhastha*, however, is given permission by the spiritual master to indulge in sex during the period favorable for procreation.

**PURPORT:** It is sometimes misunderstood that a *gṛhastha*, a householder, is permitted to indulge in sex at any time. This is a wrong conception of *gṛhastha* life. In spiritual life, whether one is a *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha*, *sannyāsī* or *brahmācārī*, everyone is under the control of the spiritual master. For *brahmācārīs* and *sannyāsīs* there are strong restrictions on sexual indulgence. Similarly, there are strong restrictions for *gṛhasthas*. *Gṛhasthas* should indulge in sex life only in accordance with the order of the guru. Therefore it is mentioned here that one must follow the orders of the spiritual master (*guru-vṛttir vikalpena*). When the spiritual master orders, the *gṛhastha* may accept sex life. This is confirmed in *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.11). *Dharmāviruddho bhuteṣu kāmo* 'smi: indulgence in sex life without disobedience to the religious rules and regulations constitutes a religious principle. The *gṛhastha* is allowed to indulge in sex life during the period favorable for procreation and in accordance with the spiritual master's order. If the spiritual master's orders allow a *gṛhastha* to engage in sex life at a particular time, then the *gṛhastha* may do so; otherwise, if the spiritual master orders against it, the *gṛhastha* should abstain.

The *gṛhastha* must obtain permission from the spiritual master to observe the ritualistic ceremony of *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*. Then he may approach his wife to beget children, otherwise not. A *brāhmaṇa* generally remains a *brahmacārī* throughout his entire life, but although some *brāhmaṇas* become *gṛhasthas* and indulge in sex life, they do so under the complete control of the spiritual master. The *kṣatriya* is allowed to marry more than one wife, but this also must be in accordance with the instructions of the spiritual master. It is not that because one is a *gṛhastha* he may marry as many times as he likes and indulge in sex life as he likes. This is not spiritual life. In spiritual life, one must conduct one's whole life under the guidance of the guru. Only one who executes his spiritual life under the direction of the spiritual master can achieve the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. If one desires to advance in spiritual life but he acts whimsically, not following the orders of the spiritual master, he has no shelter. *Yasyā prasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. Without the spiritual master's order, even the *gṛhastha* should not indulge in sex life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.12.11

## 10. How a Disciple Should Deal with His Godbrothers

**No one should disrespect his Godbrothers:**

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu then continued speaking to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. “Consider this point. The servant of the spiritual master is always respectable for Me. As such, it is not befitting that the guru's servant engage in My personal service. Yet My spiritual master has given this order. What shall I do?”

**PURPORT:** A guru's servants or disciples are all Godbrothers to one another, and as such they should all respect one another as prabhu, or master. No one should disrespect his Godbrother.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 10.142-43

How devotees who have received first and second initiation should be honored:

*kṛṣṇeti yasya giri taṁ manasādriyeta*

*dikṣāsti cet praṇatibhiś ca bhajantam īśam*

One should mentally honor the devotee who chants the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one should offer humble obeisances to the devotee who has undergone spiritual initiation (*dēkīā*) and is engaged in worshipping the Deity...

**PURPORT:** Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises that we should meet with the Vaiṣṇavas in an appropriate way, according to their particular status. In this verse he tells us how to deal with three types of devotees—the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, *madhyama-adhikārī* and *uttama-adhikārī*. The *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* is a neophyte who has received the *hari-nāma* initiation from the spiritual master and is trying to chant the holy name of Kṛṣṇa. One should respect such a person within his mind as a *kaniṣṭha-vaiṣṇava*. A *madhyama-adhikārī* has received spiritual initiation from the spiritual master and has been fully engaged by him in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. The *madhyama-adhikārī* should be considered to be situated midway in devotional service.... those neophyte devotees who are actually initiated by the bona fide spiritual master and are seriously engaged in carrying out the orders of the spiritual master should be offered respectful obeisances. In this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement ... when we see that someone is actually interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and wants to be initiated, we accept him as a disciple for the chanting of the holy name of the Lord. When a neophyte devotee is actually initiated and engaged in devotional service by the orders of the spiritual master, he should be accepted immediately as a bona fide Vaiṣṇava, and obeisances should be offered unto him.

Nectar of Instruction Text 5

**The disciple should not be envious of his Godbrothers; he should respect advanced Godbrothers as almost equal to the spiritual master:**

[The disciple] should not be unnecessarily envious of his Godbrothers. Rather, if a Godbrother is more

enlightened and advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one should accept him as almost equal to the spiritual master, and one should be happy to see such Godbrothers advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.32.42

**The disciple should consider his spiritual master and older Godbrothers to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead:**

... [Prahāda] considered his teachers, spiritual masters and older Godbrothers to be as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead....

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.4.32

## **11. The Disciple Should Respect His Spiritual Master's Godbrothers**

**One should respect one's spiritual master's Godbrothers as one respects one's spiritual master:**

Śrī Advaita Prabhu and Īśvara Purī, Lord Caitanya's spiritual master, were both disciples of Mādhavendra Purī, who was also the spiritual master of Nityānanda Prabhu. Thus Advaita Prabhu, as Lord Caitanya's spiritual uncle, was always to be respected because one should respect one's spiritual master's Godbrothers as one respects one's spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 5.147

**One should respect one's spiritual master's Godbrothers as one's spiritual master:**

Thinking, "He [Śrī Advaita Ācārya] is a disciple of Śrī Mādhavendra Purī," Lord Caitanya obeys Him, respecting Him as His spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 6.40

## **12. Proper Dealings Between the Disciple and the Young Wife of His Spiritual Master**

**The relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master's wife:**

If the wife of the spiritual master is young, a young brahmācārī should not allow her to care for his hair, massage his body with oil, or bathe him with affection like a mother.

**PURPORT:** The relationship between the student or disciple and the wife of the spiritual master or teacher is like that between son and mother. A mother sometimes cares for her son by combing his hair, massaging his body with oil, or bathing him. Similarly, the wife of the teacher is also a mother (*guru-patnī*), and therefore she may also care for the disciple in a motherly way. If the wife of the teacher is a young woman, however, a young brahmācārī should not allow such a mother to touch him. This is strictly prohibited.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.12.8

**If the wife of the spiritual master is young, the disciple is forbidden to see her or render service to her:**

One is warned herewith that one should be extremely careful in dealings with women. A brahmācārī is forbidden even to see the wife of his spiritual master if she happens to be young. The wife of the spiritual master may sometimes take some service from the disciple of her husband, as she would from a son, but if the wife of the spiritual master is young, a brahmācārī is forbidden to render service to her.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.19.17

## **13. A Disciple Advances in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness**

### **Only Due to the Mercy and Blessings of His Spiritual Master**

**The disciple makes advancement in Kāñāa consciousness by the mercy of the spiritual master:**

*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo  
yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi  
dhyāyan stuvaṁs tasya yaśas tri-sandhyam  
vande guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

By the mercy of the spiritual master one receives the benediction of Kṛṣṇa. Without the grace of the spiritual master, one cannot make any advancement. Therefore, I should always remember and praise the spiritual master. At least three times a day I should offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master.

Śrī Śrī-gurv-aṣṭaka Verse 8 (Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura)

**Pure devotional service and Kāñḍā's mercy are attainable only by the mercy of the spiritual master:**

*śrī-guru-caraṇa-padma, kevala bhakati-sadma  
vando mui sāvadhāna-mate  
yāhāra prasāde bhāi, e bhava tariyā yāi,  
kṛṣṇa-prāpti haya yāhā haite*

The lotus feet of our spiritual master are the only way by which we can attain pure devotional service. I bow to his lotus feet with great awe and reverence. By his grace one can cross the ocean of material suffering and obtain the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī-guru-caraṇa-padma (Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura)

**One can achieve perfection simply by the blessings of a spiritual master:**

By the blessings of a Vaiṣṇava, everything is possible. This is described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* as *kṛpā-siddhi*, or perfection attained simply by the blessings of a superior person. One usually becomes liberated and perfect by executing the regulative principles set down in the *śāstras*. Nonetheless, many persons have achieved perfection simply by the blessings of a spiritual master or superior.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.1.10

**The power of the spiritual master's blessings:**

One should approach the spiritual master with all humility and offer him all services so that he will be pleased to bestow his blessings upon the disciple. Because the bona fide spiritual master is a representative of Kṛṣṇa, if he bestows any blessings upon his disciple, that will make the disciple immediately advanced without the disciple's following the regulated principles. Or, the regulated principles will be easier for one who has served the spiritual master without reservations.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 13.8

**As the most confidential servitor of Kāñḍā, the guru can bestow blessings upon the disciple:**

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has greatly stressed the mercy of the guru, and it is an actual fact that if we satisfy the guru by our service, he will give us his blessings. This is a very great opportunity, for the guru is the confidential servant of Kṛṣṇa. The guru never claims that he is Kṛṣṇa, although he is worshiped as Kṛṣṇa.... All the *śāstras* describe the guru as being on an equal basis with Kṛṣṇa, for he is the representative of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore he is worshiped as Kṛṣṇa. Being the most confidential servant of Kṛṣṇa, the guru is very dear to Kṛṣṇa; therefore if he recommends someone to Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa accepts the person.... If we cannot receive the mercy of the guru, Kṛṣṇa is very difficult to approach directly.

Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti

**One is elevated to the platform of devotional service by the mercy of the spiritual master and Kāñēa:**

*sādhū-saṅga-kṛpā kimvā kṛṣṇera kṛpāya  
kāmadī 'duḥsaṅga' chādi' śuddha-bhakti pāya*

“One is elevated to the platform of devotional life by the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava, the bona fide spiritual master, and by the special mercy of Kṛṣṇa. On that platform, one gives up all material desires and the association of unwanted people. Thus one is elevated to the platform of pure devotional service.”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.97*

**Unless one is blessed by the spiritual master, spiritual instructions will not develop within the heart:**

When Lord Caitanya finished His instructions to Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Sanātana, being empowered and enlightened, was so transcendently pleased that he at once fell at the feet of Lord Caitanya and said: “I am born of a very low family, and I have always associated with lowly people; therefore I am the lowest of sinners. Yet You are so kind that You have taught me lessons which are not even understood by Lord Brahmā, the greatest being in this universe. By Your grace I have appreciated the conclusions which You have taught me, but I am so low that I cannot even touch a drop of the ocean of Your instructions. Thus if You want me, who am nothing but a lame man, to dance, then please give me Your benediction by placing Your feet on my head.”

Thus Sanātana Gosvāmī prayed for the Lord’s confirmation that His teachings would actually evolve in his heart by His grace. Otherwise Sanātana knew that there was no possibility of his being able to describe the Lord’s teachings. The purport of this is that the *ācāryas* (spiritual masters) are authorized by higher authorities. Instruction alone cannot make one an expert. Unless one is blessed by the spiritual master, or the *ācārya*, such teachings cannot become fully manifest. Therefore one should seek the mercy of the spiritual master so that the instructions of the spiritual master can develop within oneself. After receiving the prayers of Sanātana Gosvāmī, Lord Caitanya placed His feet on the head of Sanātana and gave him His benedictions so that all His instructions would develop fully.

*Teachings of Lord Caitanya*

**One cannot progress in spiritual life without the mercy of the guru:**

Spiritual life begins with the association of a devotee, a *sādhū*. One cannot progress an inch without the mercy of a *sādhū*.... Hiraṇyakaśipu asked Prahlāda Mahārāja, “My dear son Prahlāda Mahārāja, how have you become so advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness?” Although Hiraṇyakaśipu was a demon, he was nonetheless inquisitive. Prahlāda Mahārāja replied, “My dear father, O best of the asuras, one can receive Kṛṣṇa consciousness only from the instructions of a guru. One cannot attain it simply by speculating. Ordinary men do not know that their ultimate destination is to return to Viṣṇu.”

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

**The spiritual master distributes the greatest mercy to his disciples:**

The word *guru-prasāda* indicates that the spiritual master is very merciful in bestowing the boon of devotional service upon the disciple. That is the best possible gift the spiritual master has to offer. Those with a background of pious life are eligible to receive life’s supreme benefit, and to bestow this benefit, the Supreme Personality of Godhead sends His representative to impart His mercy. Endowed with the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the spiritual master distributes the mercy to those who are elevated and pious. Thus the spiritual master trains his disciples to render devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is called *guru-kṛpā*. It is *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*, Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, that He sends a bona fide spiritual master to the deserving disciple. By the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, one meets the bona fide spiritual master, and by the mercy of the spiritual master, the disciple is fully trained in the devotional service of the Lord.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.152*



**By the blessings of the spiritual master, the disciple becomes perfect:**

In the last portion of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Chapter Eight, verses 26-29, it is stated:..."At the last stage of his life Śrī Mādhavendra Purī became an invalid and was completely unable to move, and Īśvara Purī so completely engaged himself in his service that he personally cleaned up his stool and urine. Always chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and reminding Śrī Mādhavendra Purī about the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the last stage of his life, Īśvara Purī gave the best service among his disciples. Thus Mādhavendra Purī, being very pleased with him, blessed him, saying, 'My dear boy, I can only pray to Kṛṣṇa that He will be pleased with you.' Thus Īśvara Purī, by the grace of his spiritual master, Śrī Mādhavendra Purī, became a great devotee in the ocean of love of Godhead." Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī states in his *Gurv-aṣṭaka* prayer, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*: **"By the mercy of the spiritual master one is benedicted by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. Without the grace of the spiritual master one cannot make any advancement."** It is by the mercy of the spiritual master that one becomes perfect, as vividly exemplified here. A Vaiṣṇava is always protected by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but if he appears to be an invalid, this gives a chance to his disciples to serve him. Īśvara Purī pleased his spiritual master by service, and by the blessings of his spiritual master he became such a great personality that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu accepted him as His spiritual master.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 9.11*

**When the guru is satisfied by the disciple's service, he blesses him:**

[After returning to Their teacher his revived dead son:] The brothers asked if Their teacher had anything more to ask from Them, but he replied, "My dear sons, You have done enough for me. I am now completely satisfied. What further want can there be for a man who has disciples like You? My dear boys, You can go home now. These glorious acts of Yours will always be renowned all over the world. You are above all blessing, yet it is my duty to bless You. I give You the benediction that whatever You speak will remain as eternally fresh as the instruction of the *Vedas*. Your teachings will not only be honored within this universe or in this millennium, but in all places and ages and will remain increasingly new and important." Due to this benediction from His teacher, Lord Kṛṣṇa's *Bhagavad-gītā* is ever-increasingly fresh and is not only renowned within this universe, but in other planets and in other universes also.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**By the mercy of the spiritual master, one can achieve happiness, peace and prosperity and be able to fulfill the mission of human life:**

"With great compassion our Gurudeva said ... 'It is the duty of the disciple to dedicate his life to the service of the spiritual master. My dear best of the twice-born, I am greatly pleased by your action, and I bless you: May all your desires and ambitions be fulfilled. May the understanding of the *Vedas* which you have learned from me always continue to remain within your memory, so that at every moment you can remember the teachings of the *Vedas* and quote their instructions without difficulty. Thus you will never be disappointed in this life or the next.'"

Kṛṣṇa continued: "My dear friend ... both of us can realize that without the blessings of the spiritual master no one can be happy. By the mercy of the spiritual master and by his blessings, one can achieve peace and prosperity and be able to fulfill the mission of human life."

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**A disciple's prayer for the mercy of his spiritual master:**

Gurudeva, give to this servant just one drop of mercy. I am lower than a blade of grass. Give me all help. Give me strength. Let me be as you are, without desires or aspirations.

I offer you all respects, for thus I may have the energy to know you correctly. Then, by chanting the holy name in great ecstasy, all my offenses will cease.

When will such mercy fall to this one who is weak and devoid of intelligence? Allow me to be with you.

If you examine me, you will find no qualities. Your mercy is all that I am made of. If you are not merciful unto me, I can only weep, and I will not be able to maintain my life.

*Gurudeva! kṛpā-bindu-diyā* (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

## 14. The Disciple Must Avoid Committing Offenses Against the Spiritual Master

**The mad elephant offense-disobeying the instructions of the spiritual master:**

“If the devotee commits an offense at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava while cultivating the creeper of devotional service in the material world, his offense is compared to a mad elephant that uproots the creeper and breaks it. In this way the leaves of the creeper dry up.”

**PURPORT:** One should always think of oneself as a servant of the servant of the *ācāryas*, and thinking this, one should live in the society of Vaiṣṇavas [Cc. Mad 13.80]. However, if one thinks that he has become very mature and can live separate from the association of Vaiṣṇavas and thus gives up all the regulative principles due to offending a Vaiṣṇava, one’s position becomes very dangerous. Offenses against the holy name are explained in *Ādī-līlā* (Chapter Eight, verse 24). Giving up the regulative principles and living according to one’s whims are compared to a mad elephant, which by force uproots the *bhakti-latā* and breaks it to pieces. In this way the *bhakti-latā* shrivels up. Such an offense is especially created when one disobeys the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called *gurv-avajñā*. The devotee must therefore be very careful not to commit offenses against the spiritual master. As soon as one is deviated from the spiritual master, the uprooting of the *bhakti-latā* begins, and gradually all the leaves dry up.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.156*

**The mad elephant offense occurs when the disciple leaves the association of devotees and, in the association of nondevotees, engages in nondevotional activities:**

“The gardener must defend the creeper by fencing it all around so that the powerful elephant of offenses may not enter.”

**PURPORT:** While the *bhakti-latā* creeper is growing, the devotee must protect it by fencing it all around. The neophyte devotee must be protected by being surrounded by pure devotees. In this way he will not give the maddened elephant a chance to uproot his *bhakti-latā* creeper. When one associates with nondevotees, the maddened elephant is set loose. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said: *asat-saṅga-tyāga-ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra* [Cc Mad 22.87]. A so-called mature devotee, however, commits a great offense by giving up the company of pure devotees. The living entity is a social animal, and if one gives up the society of pure devotees, he must associate with nondevotees (*asat-saṅga*). By contacting nondevotees and engaging in nondevotional activities, a so-called mature devotee will fall victim to the mad elephant offense. Whatever growth has taken place is quickly uprooted by such an offense. One should therefore be very careful to defend the creeper by fencing it in—that is, by following the regulative principles and associating with pure devotees.

If one thinks that there are many pseudodevotees or nondevotees in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness society, one can keep direct company with the spiritual master, and if there is any doubt, one should consult with the spiritual master. However, unless one follows the spiritual master’s instructions and the regulative principles governing chanting and hearing the holy name of the Lord, one cannot become a pure devotee. By one’s mental concoctions, one falls down. By associating with nondevotees, one breaks the regulative principles and is thereby lost.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 19.157*

**To protect the creeper of devotional service, one must avoid *gurv-āparādha*, offenses at the lotus feet of the spiritual master:**

While describing the system of protection for the creeper of devotional service, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has especially stressed protection from offenses unto the lotus feet of Vaiṣṇavas. This is called *vaiṣṇavāparādha*. *Āparādha* means “offense.” If one commits *vaiṣṇavāparādha*, all of his progress in devotional service will be checked. Even though one is very much advanced in devotional service, if he commits offenses at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava, his advancement is all spoiled.... Therefore one should be very careful about committing offenses at the feet of a Vaiṣṇava. The most grievous type of *vaiṣṇavāparādha* is called *gurv-āparādha*, which refers to offenses at the lotus feet of the spiritual master. In the chanting of the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, this *gurv-āparādha* is considered the most grievous offense. *Guror avajāñā śruti-śāstra-nindanam (Padma Purāṇa)*. Among the ten offenses committed against the chanting of the holy name, the first offenses are disobedience to the spiritual master and blasphemy of the Vedic literature.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.37

**The foolish disciple who, considering the spiritual master an ordinary man, tries to overtake him and occupy his post, immediately falls down:**

One cannot attain perfection without smearing the dust from the lotus feet of an exalted devotee on his head. If one always follows the orders of the spiritual master, there is no question of falling down. As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his spiritual master and becomes ambitious to occupy his post, he immediately falls down. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo yasyāprasādān na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. If the spiritual master is considered an ordinary man, the disciple surely loses his chance to advance further.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.12.14

**Guror avajāñā—the third offense against the holy name:**

The third offense at the lotus feet of the holy name, which is called *guror avajāñā*, is to consider the spiritual master to be material and therefore envy his exalted position.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 8.24

**The disciple should never (due to familiarity) be disrespectful to or envy the spiritual master:**

Lord Brahmā said: O best of the demigods, unfortunately, because of madness resulting from your material opulence, you failed to receive Bṛhaspati properly when he came to your assembly. Because he is aware of the Supreme Brahman and fully in control of his senses, he is the best of the brāhmaṇas. Therefore it is very astonishing that you have acted impudently toward him.

**PURPORT:** Lord Brahmā recognized the brahminical qualifications of Bṛhaspati, who was the spiritual master of the demigods because of his awareness of the Supreme Brahman. Bṛhaspati was very much in control of his senses and mind, and therefore he was a most qualified *brāhmaṇa*. Lord Brahmā chastised the demigods for not properly respecting the *brāhmaṇa*, who was their guru. Lord Brahmā wanted to impress upon the demigods that one's guru should not be disrespected under any circumstances. When Bṛhaspati entered the assembly of the demigods, they and their king, Indra, took him for granted. Since he came every day, they thought, they did not need to show him special respect. As it is said, familiarity breeds contempt. Being very much displeased, Bṛhaspati immediately left Indra's palace. Thus all the demigods, headed by Indra, became offenders at the lotus feet of Bṛhaspati, and Lord Brahmā, being aware of this, condemned their neglect. In a song we sing every day, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, *cakṣu-dāna dila yei, janme janme prabhu sei*: the guru gives spiritual insight to the disciple, and therefore the guru should be considered his master, life after life. Under no circumstances should the guru be disrespected, but the demigods, being puffed up by their material possessions, were disrespectful to their guru. Therefore Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.17.27) advises, *ācāryam mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit/ na martya-buddhyāsuyeta*: the ācārya should always be offered respectful obeisances; one should never envy

the *ācārya*, considering him an ordinary human being.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.21

**Envious neophytes who do not follow the *ācāryas* cannot make genuine spiritual advancement:**

The neophytes, due to their being in the lower stage of devotional service, are invariably envious, so much so that they invent their own ways and means of devotional regulations without following the *ācāryas*. As such, even if they make a show of constantly chanting the holy name of the Lord, they cannot relish the transcendental taste of the holy name. Therefore, the show of tears in the eyes, trembling, perspiration or unconsciousness, etc., is condemned. They can, however, get in touch with a pure devotee of the Lord and rectify their bad habits; otherwise they shall continue to be stonehearted and unfit for any treatment. A complete progressive march on the return path home, back to Godhead, will depend on the instructions of the revealed scriptures directed by a realized devotee.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.24

**The disciple should not be familiar with the spiritual master:**

One should not come very near a superior. The Deity of the Lord and the spiritual master should be seen from a distant place. This is called *maryādā*. Otherwise, as is said, familiarity breeds contempt. Sometimes coming too near the Deity or the spiritual master degrades the neophyte devotee. Personal servants of the Deity and the spiritual master should therefore always be very careful, for negligence may overcome them in their duty.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 12.212

**To envy a bona fide spiritual master is to envy the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself; such envy is detrimental to transcendental realization:**

One should know the *ācārya* as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him to be an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.37)

**PURPORT:** The bona fide spiritual master always engages in unalloyed devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. By this test he is known to be a direct manifestation of the Lord and a genuine representative of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu. Such a spiritual master is known as *ācāryadeva*. Influenced by an envious temperament and dissatisfied because of an attitude of sense gratification, mundaners criticize a real *ācārya*. In fact, however, a bona fide *ācārya* is nondifferent from the Personality of Godhead, and therefore to envy such an *ācārya* is to envy the Personality of Godhead Himself. This will produce an effect subversive to transcendental realization.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

**By disrespecting one's spiritual master, one becomes degraded:**

Because of your misbehavior toward Bṛhaspati, you have been defeated by the demons. My dear demigods, since the demons were weak, having been defeated by you several times, how else could you, who were so advanced in opulence, be defeated by them?

**PURPORT:** The *devas* are celebrated for fighting with the *asuras* perpetually. In such fights the *asuras* were always defeated, but this time the demigods were defeated. Why? The reason, as stated here, was that they had offended their spiritual master. Their impudent disrespect of their spiritual master was the cause of their defeat by the demons. As stated in the *śāstras*, when one disrespects a respectable superior, one loses his longevity and the results of his pious activities, and in this way one is degraded.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.22

**It is an offense to discipline or advise the spiritual master:**

It is an offense to consider an empowered Vaiṣṇava an object of disciplinary action. It is offensive to



try to give him advice or to correct him. One can distinguish between a neophyte Vaiṣṇava and an advanced Vaiṣṇava by their activities. The advanced Vaiṣṇava is always situated as the spiritual master, and the neophyte is always considered his disciple. The spiritual master must not be subjected to the advice of a disciple, nor should a spiritual master be obliged to take instructions from those who are not his disciples. This is the sum and substance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's advice in the sixth verse.

Nectar of Instruction Text 7

### The disciple cannot dictate to the spiritual master:

A disciple must first decide that he should worship the Supreme Lord, and then the spiritual master will give the disciple correct directions. One cannot dictate to the spiritual master, just as a patient cannot demand that his physician prescribe a certain type of medicine.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.16.22

### A disciple should never try to instruct his spiritual master:

Formerly, when Mādhavendra Purī was at the last stage of his life, Rāmacandra Purī came to where he was staying. Mādhavendra Purī was chanting the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, and sometimes he would cry, "O my Lord, I did not get shelter at Mathurā." Then Rāmacandra Purī was so foolish that he fearlessly dared to instruct his spiritual master. "If you are in full transcendental bliss," he said, "you should now remember only Brahman. Why are you crying?"

**PURPORT:** As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā*: [Bg. 18.54] a Brahman realized person is always happy. *Na śocati na kāṅkṣati*: he neither laments nor aspires for anything. Not knowing why Mādhavendra Purī was crying, Rāmacandra Purī tried to become his advisor. Thus he committed a great offense, for a disciple should never try to instruct his spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 8.18-21

### Because the ācārya is on the same platform as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he should not be subject to adverse criticism by the neophyte devotees:

In the higher stages of devotional service, a devotee is not even concerned with the list of do's and do not's. Such a position can be maintained only by following in the footsteps of the *ācāryas*. Because a pure devotee follows in the footsteps of the *ācāryas*, any action he performs to discharge devotional service is to be understood to be on the transcendental platform. Lord Kṛṣṇa therefore instructs us that an *ācārya* is above criticism. A neophyte devotee should not consider himself to be on the same plane as the *ācārya*. It should be accepted that the *ācāryas* are on the same platform as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and as such, neither Kṛṣṇa nor His representative *ācārya* should be subject to any adverse criticism by the neophyte devotees.

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead

### Disqualifications of a disciple-duplicity, hypocrisy, unfaithfulness, disrespect, familiarity:

**King Indra said:** Therefore with great frankness and without duplicity I shall now bow my head at the lotus feet of Bṛhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods. Because he is in the mode of goodness, he is fully aware of all knowledge and is the best of the brāhmaṇas. Now I shall touch his lotus feet and offer my obeisances unto him to try to satisfy him.

**PURPORT:** Coming to his senses, King Indra realized that he was not a very sincere disciple of his spiritual master, Bṛhaspati. Therefore he decided that henceforward he would be *niṣaṭha*, nonduplicity. *Niṣaṭhāt śiṣṣā tac-caraṇam sprśan*: he decided to touch his head to the feet of his spiritual master.... A disciple should never be a hypocrite or be unfaithful to his spiritual master. In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.17.27), the spiritual master is also called *ācārya*. *Ācāryam mām vijānīyāt*: the Supreme Personality of Godhead says that one should respect the spiritual master, accepting him as the Lord Himself. *Nāvamanyeta karhicit*: one should not disrespect the *ācārya* at any time. *Na martya-buddhyāsuṣyeta*:



one should never think the *ācārya* an ordinary person. Familiarity sometimes breeds contempt, but one should be very careful in one's dealings with the *ācārya*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.15

### One should not criticize the bodily condition of the spiritual master:

Being situated in his original Kṛṣṇa conscious position, a pure devotee does not identify with the body. Such a devotee should not be seen from a materialistic point of view. Indeed, one should overlook a devotee's having a body born in a low family, a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body. According to ordinary vision, such imperfections may seem prominent in the body of a pure devotee, but despite such seeming defects, the body of a pure devotee cannot be polluted. It is exactly like the waters of the Ganges, which sometimes during the rainy season are full of bubbles, foam and mud. The Ganges waters do not become polluted. Those who are advanced in spiritual understanding will bathe in the Ganges without considering the condition of the water.

**PURPORT:** *Bhakti-yoga* is the proper activity of the soul, and when one actually engages in unalloyed, uncontaminated devotional service, he is already liberated (*sa guṇān samatīyātān* [Bg. 14.26]). Kṛṣṇa's devotee is not subjected to material condition, even though his bodily features may appear materially conditioned. One should therefore not see a pure devotee from a materialistic point of view. Unless one is actually a devotee, he cannot see another devotee perfectly.... No one should criticize the bodily defects of a pure devotee. If there are such defects, they should be overlooked. What should be taken into account is the spiritual master's main business, which is devotional service, pure service to the Supreme Lord.... If we consider the bodily defects of a Vaiṣṇava, we should understand that we are committing an offense at the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇava. An offense at the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava is very serious. Indeed, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has described this offense as *hātī mātā*, the mad elephant offense. A mad elephant can create a disaster, especially when it enters into a nicely trimmed garden. One should therefore be very careful not to commit any offense against a Vaiṣṇava.... One is forbidden to observe the activities of a pure Vaiṣṇava from a material point of view. For the neophyte especially, considering a pure devotee from a material point of view is very injurious. One should therefore avoid observing a pure devotee externally, but should try to see the internal features and understand how he is engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. In this way one can avoid seeing the pure devotee from a material point of view, and thus one can gradually become a purified devotee himself.

Nectar of Instruction Text 6

### One should not impart spiritual instructions in the presence of a superior personality:

Śrī Uddhava said: You may take lessons from the great learned sage Maitreya, who is nearby and who is worshipable for reception of transcendental knowledge. He was directly instructed by the Personality of Godhead while He was about to quit this mortal world.

**PURPORT:** Although one may be well versed in the transcendental science, one should be careful about the offense of *maryādā-vyatikrama*, or impertinently surpassing a greater personality. According to scriptural injunction one should be very careful of transgressing the law of *maryādā-vyatikrama* because by so doing one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of all the world. To be well versed in the transcendental science necessitates awareness of the techniques of spiritual science. Uddhava, being well aware of all these technicalities of transcendental science, advised Vidura to approach Maitreya Ṛṣi to receive transcendental knowledge. Vidura wanted to accept Uddhava as his spiritual master, but Uddhava did not accept the post because Vidura was as old as Uddhava's father and therefore Uddhava could not accept him as his disciple, especially when Maitreya was present nearby. The rule is that in the presence of a higher personality one should not be very eager to impart instructions, even if one is competent and well versed. So Uddhava decided to send an elderly person like Vidura to Maitreya, another elderly person, but he was well versed also because he was directly instructed by the Lord while He was about to quit this mortal world. Since both Uddhava and Maitreya were directly instructed by the Lord, both had the authority to become the spiritual master of Vidura or anyone else, but Maitreya, being elderly, had the first claim to becoming the spiritual

master, especially for Vidura, who was much older than Uddhava. One should not be eager to become a spiritual master cheaply for the sake of profit and fame, but should become a spiritual master only for the service of the Lord. The Lord never tolerates the impertinence of *maryādā-vyatikrama*. One should never pass over the honor due to an elderly spiritual master in the interests of one's own personal gain and fame. Impertinence on the part of the pseudo spiritual master is very risky to progressive spiritual realization.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.4.26

**The devotional service of a devotee who offends his spiritual master is spoiled:**

While instructing Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī about the many restrictive rules and regulations for Vaiṣṇavas, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has very vividly described the effects of offenses at the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava. *Yadi vaiṣṇava-aparādha uṭhe hātī mātā* (*Madhya-līlā* 19.156). Offending or blaspheming a Vaiṣṇava has been described as the greatest offense, and it has been compared to a mad elephant. When a mad elephant enters a garden, it ruins all the creepers, flowers and trees. Similarly, if a devotee properly executing his devotional service becomes an offender at the lotus feet of his spiritual master or a Vaiṣṇava, his devotional service is spoiled.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 3.213

**If one offends the spiritual master, he falls down to the material platform to speculate:**

Rāmacandra Purī was thus denounced by Mādhavendra Purī. Due to his offense, gradually material desire appeared within him.

**PURPORT:** The word *vāsanā* (“material desires”) refers to dry speculative knowledge. Such speculative knowledge is only material.... In the *Bhakti-sandarbha* (111) it is said: . . . “**Even though one is liberated in this life, if one offends the Supreme Personality of Godhead he falls down in the midst of material desires, of which dry speculation is one.**”

In his *Laghu-toṣaṇī* commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.2.32), Jīva Gosvāmī says: . . . “**Even if one is liberated in this life, he becomes addicted to material desires because of offenses to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.**” These are references from authoritative revealed scriptures. If one becomes an offender to his spiritual master or the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he falls down to the material platform to merely speculate.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 8.26

**If a disciple offends the spiritual master, he is rejected by the spiritual master and becomes fallen:**

If one's spiritual master rejects him, one becomes so fallen that he, like Rāmacandra Purī, commits offenses even to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not consider the offenses of Rāmacandra Purī, for the Lord considered him His spiritual master. However, his character instructed everyone about the result of offending the spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 8.99-100

## **15. Other Important Instructions Concerning the Qualifications, Characteristics and Duties of the Disciple**

**The disciple becomes beloved to his spiritual master through good behavior, obedience, meekness and unhesitating service:**

Nārada, the most dear of the inheritor sons of Brahmā, always ready to serve his father, strictly follows the instructions of his father by his mannerly behavior, meekness and sense control.

**PURPORT:** Lord Brahmā, being the creator of all living beings in the universe, is originally the father of several well-known sons, like Dakṣa, the Catuṣśanas, and Nārada.... But out of them all, Nārada is

described here as the most beloved son of Brahmā because of good behavior, obedience, meekness and readiness to render service unto the father.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.41-42

### Qualifications of a sincere disciple:

I was very much attached to those sages. I was gentle in behavior, and all my sins were eradicated in their service. In my heart I had strong faith in them. I had subjugated the senses, and I was strictly following them with body and mind.

**PURPORT:** These are the necessary qualifications of a prospective candidate who can expect to be elevated to the position of a pure unadulterated devotee. Such a candidate must always seek the association of pure devotees. One should not be misled by a pseudodevotee. He himself must be plain and gentle to receive the instructions of such a pure devotee. A pure devotee is a completely surrendered soul unto the Personality of Godhead. He knows the Personality of Godhead as the supreme proprietor and all others as His servitors. And by the association of pure devotees only, one can get rid of all sins accumulated by mundane association. A neophyte devotee must faithfully serve the pure devotee, and he should be very much obedient and strictly follow the instructions. These are the signs of a devotee who is determined to achieve success even in the existing duration of life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.29

### The spiritual master is pleased to enlighten the disciple, provided the disciple is gentle, submissive and devoted:

Vidura requested Maitreya: My dear brāhmaëa, you are well conversant with all subjects, both past and future. Therefore I wish to hear from you all the activities of King Vena. I am your faithful devotee, so please explain this.

**PURPORT:** Vidura accepted Maitreya as his spiritual master. A disciple always inquires from the spiritual master, and the spiritual master answers the question, provided the disciple is very gentle and devoted. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura said that by the mercy of the spiritual master one is benedicted with the mercy of the Supreme Lord. The spiritual master is not inclined to disclose all the secrets of transcendental science unless the disciple is very submissive and devoted. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the process of receiving knowledge from the spiritual master entails submission, inquiry and service.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.13.24

### The qualifications of a bona fide disciple:

“In your book there should be the characteristics of the bona fide guru and the bona fide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master’s position. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be assured of the disciple’s position....”

**PURPORT:** The qualifications of a bona fide disciple are described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.10.6) as follows:

*amānya-matsaro dakṣo*  
*nirmamo dṛḍha-sauhrdaḥ*  
*asatvaro ‘rtha jijñāsur*  
*anasūyur amogha-vāk*

The disciple must have the following qualifications. He must give up interest in the material bodily conception. He must give up material lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness and envy. He should be interested only in understanding the science of God, and he should be ready to consider all points in

this matter. He should no longer think, “I am this body” or “This thing belongs to me.” One must love the spiritual master with unflinching faith, and one must be very steady and fixed. The bona fide disciple should be inquisitive to understand transcendental subject matter. He must not search out faults among good qualities, and he should no longer be interested in material topics. His only interest should be Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330

**The disciple receives transcendental knowledge from the spiritual master in disciplic succession through surrender, inquiries and service:**

Śrī Nārada Muni asked Brahmājī: O chief amongst the demigods, O firstborn living entity, I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto you. Please tell me that transcendental knowledge which specifically directs one to the truth of the individual soul and the Supersoul.

**PURPORT:** Brahmājī, the firstborn living entity, received knowledge directly from the Supreme Lord, and the same knowledge was imparted to Nārada, the next disciple. Nārada asked to receive the knowledge, and Brahmājī imparted it upon being asked. Therefore, asking for transcendental knowledge from the right person and receiving it properly is the regulation of the disciplic succession. This process is recommended in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.2). The inquisitive student must approach a qualified spiritual master to receive transcendental knowledge by surrender, submissive inquiries and service. Knowledge received by submissive inquiries and service is more effective than knowledge received in exchange for money. A spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from Brahmā and Nārada has no demand for dollars and cents. A bona fide student has to satisfy him by sincere service to obtain knowledge of the relation and nature of the individual soul and the Supersoul.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.5.1

**The sign of having accepted a bona fide guru-one speaks intelligently:**

One who has accepted a guru speaks intelligently. He never speaks nonsense. That is the sign of having accepted a bona fide guru.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**A disciple who has love for his spiritual master is endowed with all confidential knowledge:**

The word *snigdha* (very peaceful) and the word *su-snigdha* (affectionate) are ... found in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.1.8): *brūyuh snigdhasya śiṣyasya guravo guhyam apy uta*. “A disciple who has actual love for his spiritual master is endowed, by the blessings of the spiritual master, with all confidential knowledge.” Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī has commented that the word *snigdhasya* means *premavataḥ*. The word *prema-vataḥ* indicates that one has great love for his spiritual master.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.15

**Both the guru and the disciple must be self-controlled:**

One who is not self-controlled, specifically in sex life, can become neither a disciple nor a spiritual master. One must have disciplinary training in controlling speaking, anger, the tongue, the mind, the belly and the genitals. One who has controlled the particular senses mentioned above is called a *gosvāmī*. Without becoming a *gosvāmī* one can become neither a disciple nor a spiritual master. The so-called spiritual master without sense control is certainly the cheater, and the disciple of such a so-called spiritual master is the cheated.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.9.43

**A disciple is one who has voluntarily agreed to be disciplined in austerity by the spiritual master:**

Śrīla Prabhupāda: ... You have no mind to follow austerities, but when you accept a spiritual master, you have to carry out his order. That is austerity.

**Śyāmasundara:** Even if you don't want to practice austerity, you must.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, you must. Because you have surrendered to your spiritual master, his order is final. So even if you don't like it, you have to do it. To please me.

**Śyāmasundara:** Ah.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** But you don't like... [He laughs.] Nobody likes to fast, but the spiritual master says, "Today, fasting," so what can be done? A disciple is one who has voluntarily agreed to be disciplined by the spiritual master. That is austerity.

*Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*

### After initiation, the disciple should engage in *tapasya* in devotional service:

To achieve success in life, one should follow the example of Lord Brahmā, the first living creature in the beginning of creation. After being initiated by the Supreme Lord to execute *tapasya*, he was fixed in his determination to do it, and although he could not find anyone besides himself, he could rightly understand that the sound was transmitted by the Lord Himself.... After being initiated by the proper spiritual master in the chain of succession, one should engage himself in the discharge of *tapasya* in the execution of devotional service.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.7

### The relationship between guru and disciple is spiritual:

In the material world, a servant serves the master as long as the servant is pleased and as long as the master is pleased. The servant is pleased as long as the master pays, and the master is pleased as long as the servant renders good service. However, in the spiritual world, if the servant cannot serve under certain conditions, the master is still pleased. And if the master does not pay, the servant is also pleased. That is called oneness, absolute. A guru may have hundreds of disciples, hundreds of servants, but he doesn't have to pay them. They are serving out of spiritual love, and the guru is teaching without receiving a salary. This is a spiritual relationship. There are no cheaters and cheated in such a relationship.

*Teachings of Lord Kapila, the Son of Devahuti*

### Even one who has a nice guru cannot remain Kāñēa conscious if he is determined to remain in the material world:

Even one who has a nice guru cannot remain Kṛṣṇa conscious if he is determined to remain in this material world. If my determination is to remain in this material world to enjoy material life, then for me Kṛṣṇa consciousness is impossible.

*Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Topmost Yoga System*

### So-called disciples who take a spiritual master for an ulterior motive cannot understand Kāñēa consciousness:

There are so-called disciples who become submissive to a spiritual master most artificially, with an ulterior motive. They ... cannot understand what Kṛṣṇa consciousness or devotional service is.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.32.40

### To attain happiness, one should engage his wealth and possessions in the service of the Lord under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master:

The wealth and riches acquired through previous pious activities should not be misused for sense gratification. Enjoying them for sense gratification is like enjoying the fruits of a poisonous tree. Such activities will not help the conditioned soul in any way, neither in this life nor the next. However, if one engages his possessions in the service of the Lord under the guidance of a proper spiritual master,



he will attain happiness both in this life and the next. Unless he does so, he eats a forbidden apple and thereby loses his paradise.... Material wealth and opulence attained through previous pious activities can be fully utilized for one's benefit in this life and the next if one is Kṛṣṇa conscious. One should not try to possess more than he needs for the bare necessities. If one gets more than is needed, the surplus should be fully engaged in the Lord's service. That will make the conditioned soul, the world and Kṛṣṇa happy, and this is the aim of life.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.14.12

**Whatever the disciple has (life, wealth, intelligence, words, etc.) should be offered to the spiritual master as a matter of duty (with heart and soul, not to gain material prestige):**

*sarva-labdhārpaṇena*

Whatever one has in one's possession should be offered to the spiritual master.

**PURPORT:** Whatever [the disciple] has in his possession should be dedicated to the spiritual master. *Prāṇair arthair dhiyā vācā*. Everyone has his life, his wealth, his intelligence and his words, and all of them should be offered to the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the via medium of the spiritual master. Everything should be offered to the spiritual master as a matter of duty, but the offering should be made to the spiritual master with heart and soul, not artificially to gain material prestige.... Whatever is offered to the spiritual master should be offered with love and affection, not for material adoration.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.30

**After initiation, the sincere disciple seriously chants the glories of the Lord for his own and for others' benefit:**

Thus I began chanting the holy name and fame of the Lord by repeated recitation, ignoring all the formalities of the material world. Such chanting and remembering of the transcendental pastimes of the Lord are benedictory. So doing, I traveled all over the earth, fully satisfied, humble and unenvious.

**PURPORT:** The life of a sincere devotee of the Lord is thus explained in a nutshell by Nārada Muni by his personal example. Such a devotee, after his initiation by the Lord or His bona fide representative, takes very seriously chanting of the glories of the Lord and traveling all over the world so that others may also hear the glories of the Lord. Such devotees have no desire for material gain. They are conducted by one single desire: to go back to Godhead. This awaits them in due course on quitting the material body. Because they have the highest aim of life, going back to Godhead, they are never envious of anyone, nor are they proud of being eligible to go back to Godhead. Their only business is to chant and remember the holy name, fame and pastimes of the Lord and, according to personal capacity, to distribute the message for others' welfare without motive of material gain.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.26

**After being convinced by the spiritual master that Kāñēa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the disciple engages in devotional service:**

Mahārāja Pratāparudra had firm faith in Bhaṭṭācārya, who declared Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Having firm faith in Bhaṭṭācārya as his spiritual master, King Pratāparudra immediately accepted Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as the Supreme Lord. Thus he began worshiping Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in his mind. This is the process of devotional service.... This process is very simple. One need only be firmly convinced by the spiritual master that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one decides this, he can make further progress by thinking of Kṛṣṇa, chanting of Kṛṣṇa and glorifying Him. There is no doubt that such a fully surrendered devotee will receive the blessings of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 11.51

**It is essential that the disciple offer guru-dakṣiṇā to his spiritual master in return for learning received:**

Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, the reservoir of all knowledge of arts and sciences, exhibited Their perfect understanding when They offered to serve Their teacher by awarding him anything he desired. This offering by the student to the teacher or spiritual master is called *guru-dakṣiṇā*. It is essential that a student satisfy the teacher in return for any learning received, either material or spiritual.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**The disciple can never repay his debt to his spiritual master for receiving knowledge of Kāñā from him:**

Prṥthu Mahārāja continued: How can such persons, who have rendered unlimited service by explaining the path of self-realization in relation to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and whose explanations are given for our enlightenment with complete conviction and Vedic evidence, be repaid except by folded palms containing water for their satisfaction? Such great personalities can be satisfied only by their own activities, which are distributed amongst human society out of their unlimited mercy.

**PURPORT:** Great personalities of the material world are very eager to render welfare service to human society, but actually no one can render better service than one who distributes the knowledge of spiritual realization in relation with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.... Sainly persons like the Kumāras, Nārada, Prahlāda, Janaka, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Kapiladeva, as well as the followers of such authorities as the *Vaiṣṇava ācāryas* and their servants, can render a valuable service to humanity by disseminating knowledge of the relationship between the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the living entity. Such knowledge is the perfect benediction for humanity.

Knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is such a great gift that it is impossible to repay the benefactor. Therefore Prṥthu Mahārāja requested the Kumāras to be satisfied by their own benevolent activities, which involved delivering souls from the clutches of *māyā*. The King saw that there was no other way to satisfy them for their exalted activities. The word *vinoda-pātram* can be divided into two words, *vinā* and *udapātram*, or can be understood as one word, *vinoda-pātram*, which means joker. A joker's activities simply arouse laughter, and a person who tries to repay the spiritual master or teacher of the transcendental message of Kṛṣṇa becomes a laughingstock just like a joker because it is not possible to repay such a devotee. The best friend and benefactor of all people is one who awakens humanity to its original Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.22.47

**A disciple, and the work with which he is entrusted, are blessed if he is authorized by his spiritual master:**

The Supreme Personality of Godhead then said: O Brahmā, O depth of Vedic wisdom, be neither depressed nor anxious about the execution of creation. What you are begging from Me has already been granted before.

**PURPORT:** Any person authorized by either the Lord or by His bona fide representative is already blessed, as is the work entrusted to him. Of course, the person entrusted with such a responsibility should always be aware of his incapability and must always look for the mercy of the Lord for the successful execution of his duty. One should not be puffed up because he is entrusted with certain executive work. Fortunate is he who is so entrusted, and if he is always fixed in the sense of being subordinate to the will of the Supreme, he is sure to come out successful in the discharge of his work. Arjuna was entrusted with the work of fighting on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra, and before he was so entrusted, the Lord had already arranged for his victory. But Arjuna was always conscious of his position as subordinate to the Lord, and thus he accepted Him as the supreme guide in his responsibility. Anyone who takes pride in doing responsible work but does not give credit to the Supreme Lord is certainly falsely proud and cannot execute anything nicely. Brahmā and persons in the line of his disciplic succession who follow in his footsteps are always successful in the discharge of loving transcendental service to the Supreme Lord.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.9.29

### Remembrance of the spiritual master destroys all difficulties:

In the beginning of this narration, simply by remembering the spiritual master, the devotees of the Lord, and the Personality of Godhead, I have invoked their benedictions. Such remembrance destroys all difficulties and very easily enables one to fulfill his own desires.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.20-21*

### A disciple who is a very strong devotee can carry his spiritual master with him to Vaikuṇṭhaloka:

Dhruva was seated in the transcendental airplane, which was just about to start, when he remembered his poor mother, Sunīti. He thought to himself, “How shall I go alone to the Vaikuṇṭha planet and leave behind my poor mother?”

The great associates of Vaikuṇṭhaloka, Nanda and Sunanda, could understand the mind of Dhruva Mahārāja, and thus they showed him that his mother, Sunīti, was going forward in another plane.

**PURPORT:** This incident proves that the *śikṣā* or *dīkṣā*-guru who has a disciple who strongly executes devotional service like Dhruva Mahārāja can be carried by the disciple even though the instructor is not as advanced. Although Sunīti was an instructor to Dhruva Mahārāja, she could not go to the forest because she was a woman, nor could she execute austerities and penances as Dhruva Mahārāja did. Still, Dhruva Mahārāja was able to take his mother with him. Similarly, Prahlāda Mahārāja also delivered his atheistic father, Hiraṇyakaśipu. The conclusion is that a disciple or an offspring who is a very strong devotee can carry with him to Vaikuṇṭhaloka either his father, mother or *śikṣā* or *dīkṣā*-guru. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura used to say, “If I could perfectly deliver even one soul back home, back to Godhead, I would think my mission-propagating Kṛṣṇa consciousness-to be successful.” The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is spreading now all over the world, and sometimes I think that even though I am crippled in many ways, if one of my disciples becomes as strong as Dhruva Mahārāja, then he will be able to carry me with him to Vaikuṇṭhaloka.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.32-33*

### In all actions, the spiritual master must be consulted:

In all actions, the experienced guide, the spiritual master, who is the manifested mercy of the Lord, should always be consulted, and the path of progress will be assured.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.10.36*

### The disciple, never thinking himself independent of his spiritual master, should submit to him all doubts:

“I saw that I had become mad by chanting the holy name, and immediately submitted this at the lotus feet of My spiritual master.”

**PURPORT:** Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, as an ideal teacher, shows us how a disciple should deal with his spiritual master. Whenever there is doubt regarding any point, he should refer the matter to his spiritual master for clarification. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said that while chanting and dancing He had developed the kind of mad ecstasy that is possible for only a liberated soul. Yet even in His liberated position, He referred everything to His spiritual master whenever there were doubts. Thus in any condition, even when liberated, we should never think ourselves independent of the spiritual master, but must refer to him as soon as there is some doubt regarding our progressive spiritual life.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.80*

### The disciple must not tolerate blasphemy committed against the spiritual master:

A materialist who was very proud of his reputation as a great Sanskrit scholar approached Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana to argue with them about the revealed scriptures. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, not wanting to waste their time, gave him a written statement that he had defeated them in a debate on the revealed scriptures. Taking this paper, the scholar approached Jīva Gosvāmī for a similar

certificate of defeat, but Jīva Gosvāmī did not agree to give him one. On the contrary, he argued with him regarding the scriptures and defeated him. Certainly it was right for Jīva Gosvāmī to stop such a dishonest scholar from advertising that he had defeated Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī, but due to their illiteracy the *sahajiyā* class refer to this incident to accuse Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī of deviating from the principle of humility. They do not know, however, that humility and meekness are appropriate when one's own honor is insulted. But when Lord Viṣṇu or the *ācāryas* are blasphemed, one should not be humble and meek but must act.... One should tolerate insults against oneself, but when there is blasphemy committed against superiors such as other Vaiṣṇavas, one should be neither humble nor meek; one must take proper steps to counteract such blasphemy. This is the duty of a servant of a guru and Vaiṣṇavas. Anyone who understands the principle of eternal servitude to the guru and Vaiṣṇavas will appreciate the action of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī in connection with the so-called scholar's victory over his gurus, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 10.85

**A first-class devotee is one who has strictly followed the rules and regulations of devotional service under the training of a bona fide spiritual master:**

Devotees can be divided into three classes. The first or uppermost class is described as follows: one is very expert in the study of relevant scriptures, and he is also expert in putting forward arguments in terms of those scriptures. He can very nicely present conclusions with perfect discretion and can consider the ways of devotional service in a decisive way. He understands perfectly that the ultimate goal of life is to attain to the transcendental loving service of Kṛṣṇa, and he knows that Kṛṣṇa is the only object of worship and love. This first-class devotee is one who has strictly followed the rules and regulations under the training of a bona fide spiritual master and has sincerely obeyed him in accord with revealed scriptures. Thus being fully trained to preach and become a spiritual master himself, he is considered first class. A first-class devotee never deviates from the principles of higher authority, and he attains firm faith in the scriptures by understanding with all reasons and arguments.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**The disciple must offer respects and suitable prayers when approaching his spiritual master:**

It is the duty of a son or a disciple to offer respects and recite suitable prayers when he approaches his father or spiritual master.

*Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead*

**Talks between the spiritual master and the disciple are serious:**

[Arjuna] offers himself to Kṛṣṇa as a disciple. He wants to stop friendly talks. Talks between the master and the disciple are serious, and now Arjuna wants to talk very seriously before the recognized spiritual master.

*Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* 2.7

**Çrēla Prabhupāda's prayer to his Guru Mahārāja for realization of his position as the eternal servant of Kāñēa:**

Personally, I have no hope for any direct service for the coming crores of births of the sojourn of my life, but I am confident that some day or other I shall be delivered from this mire of delusion in which I am at present so deeply sunk. Therefore let me with all my earnestness pray at the lotus feet of my divine master to allow me to suffer the lot for which I am destined due to my past misdoings, but to let me have this power of recollection: that I am nothing but a tiny servant of the Almighty Absolute Godhead, realized through the unflinching mercy of my divine master. Let me therefore bow down at his lotus feet with all the humility at my command.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**In the spiritual master's old age, the disciple should actively preach so that the spiritual master can render *nirjana-bhajana*, solitary worship of the Lord:**

When disciples are grown up and are able to preach, the spiritual master should retire and sit down in a solitary place to write and execute *nirjana-bhajana*. This means sitting silently in a solitary place and executing devotional service.... The devotees of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness now render service as preachers in various parts of the world. Now they can allow the spiritual master to retire from active preaching work. In the last stage of the spiritual master's life, the devotees of the spiritual master should take preaching activities into their own hands. In this way the spiritual master can sit down in a solitary place and render *nirjana-bhajana*.... when the spiritual master retires for *nirjana-bhajana*, some of his advanced devotees follow him and engage in his personal service.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.28.33-34

**The disciple should not blindly accept his spiritual master as God Himself:**

Yet we are moved to wonder about the existence of someone more powerful than you when we think of your great austerities in perfect discipline, although your good self is so powerful in the matter of creation.

**PURPORT:** Following in the footsteps of Śrī Nārada Muni, one should not blindly accept his spiritual master as God Himself. A spiritual master is duly respected on a par with God, but a spiritual master claiming to be God Himself should at once be rejected. Nārada Muni accepted Brahmā as the Supreme due to Lord Brahmā's wonderful acts in creation, but doubts arose in him when he saw that Lord Brahmā also worshiped some superior authority. The Supreme is supreme and He has no worshipable superior. The *ahaṅgrahopāsītā*, or the one who worships himself with the idea of becoming God Himself, is misleading, but the intelligent disciple can at once detect that the Supreme God does not need to worship anyone, including Himself, in order to become God.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.5.7

**Before speaking on transcendental knowledge, one should first offer one's obeisances to one's spiritual master:**

The great sage Śukadeva Gosvāmī said:... Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto Śrīla Vyāsadeva and then begin describing topics concerning the activities of Lord Hari.

**PURPORT:** In this verse Śukadeva Gosvāmī offers his respectful obeisances *kṛṣṇāya munaye*, which means to Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa. One must first offer one's respectful obeisances to one's spiritual master. Śukadeva Gosvāmī's spiritual master is his father, Vyāsadeva, and therefore he first offers his respectful obeisances to Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa and then begins describing topics of Lord Hari.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.1.4-5

**The disciple offers obeisances not only to his own spiritual master, but to the entire paramparā:**

In the beginning of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writes: "I offer my respects to my spiritual masters." He uses the plural here to indicate the disciplic succession. It is not that he offers obeisances to his spiritual master alone but to the whole *paramparā*, the chain of disciplic succession beginning with Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. Thus the guru is addressed in the plural to show the author's highest respect for all the Vaiṣṇavas.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā Intro.

**The disciple should offer respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of his instructing spiritual masters:**

The instructing spiritual masters are Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Bhaṭṭa Raghunātha, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. These six are my instructing spiritual masters, and therefore I offer millions of respectful obeisances unto their



lotus feet.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.36-37*

**Only initiated disciples should be allowed to touch the feet of the spiritual master:**

One day when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had finished His dancing, a woman, the wife of a brāhmaṇa, came there and caught hold of His lotus feet. As she took the dust of His lotus feet again and again, the Lord became unlimitedly unhappy. Immediately He ran to the River Ganges and jumped in to counteract the sinful activities of that woman. Lord Nityānanda and Haridāsa Ṭhākura caught Him and raised Him from the river.

**PURPORT:** This holding of a great personality's lotus feet is certainly very good for the person who takes the dust, but this example of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's unhappiness indicates that a Vaiṣṇava should not allow anyone to take dust from his feet. One who takes the dust of a great personality's lotus feet transfers his sinful activities to that great personality. Unless one is very strong, he must suffer the sinful activities of the person who takes the dust. Therefore ordinarily it should not be allowed. Sometimes in big meetings people come to take the same advantage by touching our feet. On account of this, sometimes we have to suffer from some disease. As far as possible, no outsider should be allowed to touch one's feet to take dust from them. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally showed this by His example.... Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is God Himself, but He was playing the part of a preacher. Every preacher should know that being allowed to touch a Vaiṣṇava's feet and take dust may be good for the person who takes it, but it is not good for the person who allows it to be taken. As far as possible, this practice should ordinarily be avoided. Only initiated disciples should be allowed to take this advantage, not others. Those who are full of sinful activities should generally be avoided.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi 17.243-45*

**To stand up before the spiritual master to show him respect is an item of regulative devotional service:**

"One should also... (14) stand up before the Deity and the spiritual master just to show them respect....

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 22.122*

**Etiquette to observe when receiving the spiritual master:**

"The hunter then received both the great sages in the courtyard of his house. He spread out a straw mat for them to sit upon, and with great devotion he begged them to sit down. He then fetched water and washed the sages' feet with great devotion. Then both husband and wife drank that water and sprinkled it on their heads."

**PURPORT:** This is the process one should follow when receiving the spiritual master or someone on the level of the spiritual master. When the spiritual master comes to the residence of the disciples, the disciples should follow in the footsteps of the former hunter. It doesn't matter what one was before initiation. After initiation, one must learn the etiquette mentioned herein.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.274-275*

**The pure disciple can ask a favor from his spiritual master after satisfying him fully:**

When a disciple is perfectly in consonance with the spiritual master, having received his message and executed it perfectly and sincerely, he has a right to ask a particular favor from the spiritual master. Generally a pure devotee of the Lord or a pure disciple of a bona fide spiritual master does not ask any favor either from the Lord or the spiritual master, but even if there is a need to ask a favor from the spiritual master, one cannot ask that favor without satisfying him fully.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.22.8*

**The spiritual master is naturally victorious in an argument with the disciple:**

After hearing this, Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya rendered his judgment, saying, "Brahmānanda Bhāratī,

I see that you are victorious.” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu immediately said, “I accept whatever Brahmānanda Bhāratī has said. It is quite all right with Me.” Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu thus posed Himself as a disciple and accepted Brahmānanda Bhāratī as His spiritual master. He then said, “The disciple is certainly defeated in an argument with the spiritual master.” ...

**PURPORT:** Brahmānanda Bhāratī admitted that when there is an argument between the spiritual master and the disciple, the spiritual master is naturally victorious, although the disciple may put forward a strong argument. In other words, it is customary that the words of the spiritual master are more worshipable than the words of a disciple.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 10.172-75

**The disciple should not desire material profit from his spiritual master, and the spiritual master should not bestow benedictions upon the disciple to maintain a prestigious position:**

A servant who desires material profits from his master is certainly not a qualified servant or pure devotee. Similarly, a master who bestows benedictions upon his servant because of a desire to maintain a prestigious position as master is also not a pure master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.10.5

**The faithful disciple will collect some earth from the birthsite of his spiritual master and eat a small portion daily:**

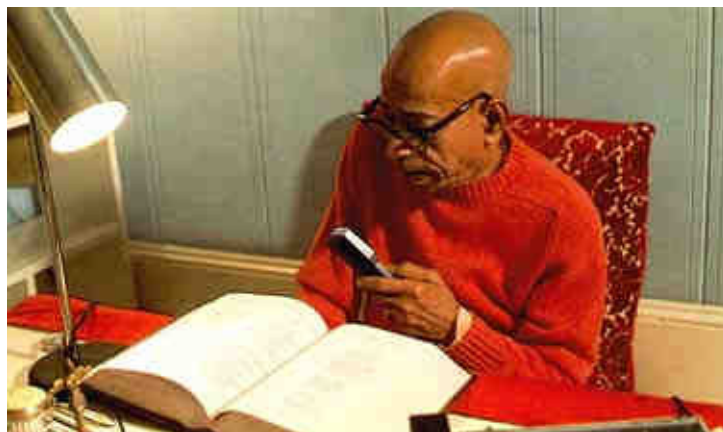
To teach others by example how to be a faithful disciple of one’s spiritual master, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, visited the birthplace of Īśvara Purī at Kāmarhaṭṭy and collected some earth from his birthsite. This He kept very carefully, and He used to eat a small portion of it daily.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 9.11

**After studying the Vedas under the spiritual master and remunerating him, the disciple, following the spiritual master’s order, should become a gāhastha, vānaprastha or sannyāśe:**

[After studying the Vedas under the spiritual master] if possible the student or disciple should reward the spiritual master with the remuneration the spiritual master requests, and then, following the spiritual master’s order, the disciple should leave and accept one of the other āśramas, namely the gṛhastha-āśrama, vānaprastha āśrama or sannyāsa-āśrama, as he desires.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.12.14



# Chapter V

## Spiritual Initiation (*Dīkṣā*)

### 1. The Definition of *Dēkñā*

#### The definition of *dēkñā*:

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains *dīkṣā* in his *Bhakti-sandarbha* (283):

*divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt  
kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam  
tasmāt dīkṣeti sā proktā  
deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ*

“*Dēkñā* is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as *dēkñā*.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108

#### The meaning of *dēkñā*:

*Dīkṣā* actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 4.111

### 2. The Necessity and Purpose of Initiation:

#### One's actual connection with Kāñēa is established at the time of initiation by a bona fide spiritual master:

This relationship [with Kṛṣṇa] is established by connecting oneself with the bona fide spiritual master who is the direct representative of Kṛṣṇa in disciplic succession.... The connection with the spiritual master is called initiation. From the date of initiation by the spiritual master, the connection between Kṛṣṇa and a person cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness is established. Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Kṛṣṇa consciousness is never performed.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

#### Unless properly initiated, one's devotional activities are useless and one can descend again into the animal species:

According to the Vaiṣṇava regulative principles, one must be initiated as a *brāhmaṇa*. The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.6) quotes the following injunction from the *Viṣṇu-yāmala*:

*adīkṣitasya vāmoru  
kṛtaṁ sarvaṁ nirarthakam  
paśu-yonim avāpnoti  
dīkṣā-virahito janaḥ*

“Unless one is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, all his devotional activities are useless. A person who is not properly initiated can descend again into the animal species.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108

### The purpose of initiation:

It is the spiritual master who delivers the disciple from the clutches of *māyā* by initiating him into the chanting of the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*. In this way a sleeping human being can revive his consciousness by chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*. In other words, the spiritual master awakens the sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Viṣṇu. This is the purpose of *dīkṣā*, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 9.61

### Initiation by and following the order of a spiritual master as part of sādhana-bhakti:

“In the beginning there must be faith. Then one becomes interested in association with pure devotees. Thereafter one is initiated by the spiritual master and executes the regulative principles under his orders. Thus one is freed from all unwanted habits and becomes firmly fixed in devotional service. Thereafter, one develops taste and attachment. This is the way of *sādhana-bhakti*, the execution of devotional service according to the regulative principles.”

*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.4.15-16 [cited: Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 23.14-15]

### The initiation ceremony is called upanēti, the function that brings one nearer to the spiritual master:

A bona fide spiritual master accepts charge of disciples, teaches them the Vedic knowledge with all its intricacies, and gives them their second birth. The ceremony performed to initiate a disciple into the study of spiritual science is called *upanīti*, or the function that brings one nearer to the spiritual master. One who cannot be brought nearer to a spiritual master cannot have a sacred thread, and thus he is indicated to be a *śūdra*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 1.46

### To carry the Supreme Personality of Godhead within one's heart, one must be initiated by another person who does:

Thereafter, accompanied by plenary expansions, the fully opulent Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is all-auspicious for the entire universe, was transferred from the mind of Vasudeva to the mind of Devakī. Devakī, having thus been initiated by Vasudeva, became beautiful by carrying Lord Kṛṣṇa, the original consciousness for everyone, the cause of all causes, within the core of her heart, just as the east becomes beautiful by carrying the rising moon.

**PURPORT:** As indicated here by the word *manastah*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead was transferred from the core of Vasudeva's mind or heart to the core of the heart of Devakī. We should note carefully that the Lord was transferred to Devakī not by the ordinary way for a human being, but by *dīkṣā*, initiation. Thus the importance of initiation is mentioned here. Unless one is initiated by the right person, who always carries within his heart the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot acquire the power to carry the Supreme Godhead within the core of one's own heart.... Yogīs meditate upon the Supreme Person within the mind. For a devotee, however, the Lord is present, and His presence need only be awakened through initiation by a bona fide spiritual master.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.18

### In second birth, one accepts the spiritual master as father and the Vedas as mother:

Human beings must be twice-born. A child is first born of a good father and mother, and then he is born again of the spiritual master and the *Vedas*. The first mother and father bring about his birth into the world; then the spiritual master and the *Vedas* become his second father and mother.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.24.15

### A civilized man must be twice-born by contact with a spiritual master:

A civilized man is one who has taken his birth twice. A living entity takes birth in this mundane world due to the union of male and female. A human being is born due to union of the father and mother, but a civilized human being has another birth by contact with a spiritual master, who becomes the actual father. The father and mother of the material body are so only in one birth, and in the next birth the father and mother may be a different couple. But the bona fide spiritual master, as the representative of the Lord, is the eternal father because the spiritual master has the responsibility to lead the disciple to spiritual salvation, or the ultimate goal of life. Therefore, a civilized man must be twice-born, otherwise he is no more than the lower animals.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.5.7

### Initiation by a bona fide spiritual master changes the disciple's life:

In his previous life, when Nāradaḥ was impregnated with spiritual knowledge by the grace of the great sages, there was a tangible change in his life, although he was only a boy of five years. That is an important symptom visible after initiation by the bona fide spiritual master. Actual association of devotees brings about a quick change in life for spiritual realization.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.6.5

### When one is initiated and follows the principles, one attains freedom from the contamination of material life:

If one is sincere, he is initiated, and this stage is called *bhajana-kriyā*. One then actually engages in the service of the Lord by regularly chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, sixteen rounds daily, and refraining from illicit sex, intoxicants, meat-eating and gambling. By *bhajana-kriyā* one attains freedom from the contamination of materialistic life. He no longer goes to a restaurant or hotel to taste so-called palatable dishes made with meat and onions, nor does he care to smoke or drink tea or coffee. He not only refrains from illicit sex, but avoids sex life entirely. Nor is he interested in wasting his time in speculating or gambling. In this way it is to be understood that one is becoming cleansed of unwanted things (*anartha-nivṛtti*). The word *anartha* refers to unwanted things. *Anarthas* are vanquished when one becomes attached to the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

*Nectar of Instruction* Text 7

### Initiation aids in the chanting of Hare Kāñṛṇa and the awakening of Kāñṛṇa consciousness:

The chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is so powerful that it does not depend on official initiation, but if one is initiated and engages in *pañcarātra-vidhi* (Deity worship), his Kṛṣṇa consciousness will awaken very soon, and his identification with the material world will be vanquished. The more one is freed from material identification, the more one can realize that the spirit soul is qualitatively as good as the Supreme Soul. At such a time, when one is situated on the absolute platform, he can understand that the holy name of the Lord and the Lord Himself are identical. At that stage of realization, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, cannot be identified with any material sound. If one accepts the Hare Kṛṣṇa *maha-mantra* as a material vibration, he falls down. One should worship and chant the holy name of the Lord by accepting it as the Lord Himself. One should therefore be properly initiated according to revealed scriptures under the direction of a bona fide spiritual master.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Madhya-līlā 15.108

### Anyone can join ISKCON and become twice-born (and thus be able to understand the Lord):

Anyone can join the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and be initiated to become twice-born. As recommended by Sanātana Gosvāmī, by the process of initiation and authorized training, any man can become twice-born. The first birth is made possible by the parent, and the second birth is made possible by the spiritual father and Vedic knowledge. Unless one is twice-born one can-



not understand the transcendental characteristics of the Lord and His devotees.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.48

**To engage in Vedic rituals or to properly worship the holy name, one must be initiated as a brāhmaëa:**

The regulative principles of *dīkṣā* are explained in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.3-4) and in *Bhakti-sandar-bha* (283). As stated:

*dvijānām anupetānām/ sva-karmādhyayanādisu  
yathādhikāro nāstīha/ syāc copanayanād anu  
tathātrādīkṣitānām tu/ mantra-devārcanādiṣu  
nādhikāro 'sty ataḥ kuryād/ ātmānam śiva-saṁstutam*

“Even though born in a brāhmaëa family, one cannot engage in Vedic rituals without being initiated and having a sacred thread. Although born in a brāhmaëa family, one becomes a brāhmaëa after initiation and the sacred thread ceremony. Unless one is initiated as a brāhmaëa, he cannot worship the holy name properly.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108

### **3. Qualifications and Requirements for Receiving Initiation**

**The qualifications for initiation:**

**Reporter:** If I wanted to be initiated into your Society, what would I have to do?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** First of all, you'd have to give up illicit sex life.

**Reporter:** Does that include all sex life? What is illicit sex life?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Illicit sex is sex outside of marriage. Animals have sex with no restrictions, but in human society there are restrictions. In every country and in every religion, there is some system of restricting sex life. You would also have to give up all intoxicants, including tea, cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana—anything that intoxicates.

**Reporter:** Anything else?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** You'd also have to give up eating meat, eggs, and fish. And you'd have to give up gambling as well. Unless you gave up these four sinful activities, you could not be initiated.

**Reporter:** Does “surrender” mean that someone would have to leave his family?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No.

**Reporter:** But suppose I were to become an initiate. Wouldn't I have to come and live in the temple?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Not necessarily.

**Reporter:** Can I stay at home?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Oh, yes.

**Reporter:** What about work? Would I have to give up my job?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, you'd simply have to give up your bad habits and chant the *Hare Kṛṣṇa* mantra on these beads—that's all.

**Reporter:** Would I have to give any financial support?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, that is your voluntary wish. If you give, that's all right. And if you don't, we don't mind. We do not depend on anyone's financial contribution. We depend on Kṛṣṇa.

**Reporter:** I wouldn't have to give any money at all?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No.

**Reporter:** Is this one of the main things that distinguishes the genuine guru from the fake guru?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes, a genuine guru is not a businessman. He is a representative of God.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

**Vaiṣṇavas do not accept disciples who do not follow the regulative principles:**

Materialistic persons who are not inclined to give up their sinful activities like illicit sex, intoxication, gambling and meat-eating sometimes want to become our disciples, but, unlike professional spiritual masters who accept disciples regardless of their condition, Vaiṣṇavas do not accept such cheap disciples. One must at least agree to abide by the rules and regulations for a disciple before a Vaiṣṇava ācārya can accept him.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 12.50*

**In taking initiation, the disciple must give up the principles of material life-illicit sex, intoxication, gambling and meat- eating:**

One should be initiated into following the principles of *śāstra*. In offering initiation, our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement asks one to come to the conclusion of *śāstra* by taking the advice of the supreme speaker of the *śāstra*, Kṛṣṇa, forgetting the principles of the materialistic way of life. Therefore the principles we advise are no illicit sex, no intoxication, no gambling and no meat-eating. These four types of engagement will enable an intelligent person to get free from the materialistic life and return home, back to Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.5.20*

**At the time of initiation, one must give up all sinful activities:**

When the Lord was invoking His Sudarśana cakra and Śrīla Nityānanda Prabhu was imploring Him to forgive the two brothers, both the brothers fell down at the lotus feet of the Lord and begged His pardon for their gross behavior. The Lord was also asked by Nityānanda Prabhu to accept these repenting souls, and the Lord agreed to accept them on one condition, that they henceforward completely give up all their sinful activities and habits of debauchery. Both the brothers agreed and promised to give up all their sinful habits, and the kind Lord accepted them and did not again refer to their past misdeeds.

This is the specific kindness of Lord Caitanya. In this age no one can say that he is free from sin. It is impossible for anyone to say this. But Lord Caitanya accepts all kinds of sinful persons on the one condition that they promise not to indulge in sinful habits after being spiritually initiated by the bona fide spiritual master ... in this *Kali-yuga* practically all people are of the quality of Jagāi and Mādhāi. If they want to be relieved from the reactions of their misdeeds, they must take shelter of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and after spiritual initiation thus refrain from those things which are prohibited in the *śāstras*.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Intro.*

**At the time of initiation, the disciple agrees to give up sinful activity and to execute the order of the spiritual master:**

“The hunter then said, ‘My dear sir, whatever you say I shall do.’ Nārada immediately ordered him, ‘First of all, break your bow. Then I shall tell you what is to be done.’”

**PURPORT:** This is the process of initiation. The disciple must admit that he will no longer commit sinful activity-namely illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling and intoxication. He promises to execute the order of the spiritual master. Then the spiritual master takes care of him and elevates him to spiritual

emancipation.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.256

### The requirements of initiation:

We do not immediately initiate disciples in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. For six months, a candidate for initiation must first attend *ārati* and classes in the *śāstras*, practice the regulative principles and associate with other devotees. When one is actually advanced in the *puraścaryā-vidhi*, he is recommended by the local temple president for initiation. It is not that anyone can be suddenly initiated without meeting the requirements. When one is further advanced by chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra* sixteen rounds daily, following the regulative principles and attending classes, he receives the sacred thread (*brahminical* recognition) after the second six months.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108

### The qualifications for first and second initiations:

“In your book there should be the characteristics of the bona fide guru and the bona fide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master’s position. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be assured of the disciple’s position....”

**PURPORT:** A disciple’s qualifications must be observed by the spiritual master before he is accepted as a disciple. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, the requirement is that one must be prepared to give up the four pillars of sinful life—illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication and gambling. In Western countries especially, we first observe whether a potential disciple is prepared to follow the regulative principles. Then he is given the name of a Vaiṣṇava servant and initiated to chant the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* at least sixteen rounds daily. In this way the disciple renders devotional service under the guidance of the spiritual master or his representative for at least six months to a year. He is then recommended for a second initiation, during which a sacred thread is offered and the disciple is accepted as a bona fide *brāhmaṇa*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330

### The requirements for first, second and sannyāsa initiation:

All the students of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement have undergone the regular process of initiation. As enjoined in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* by Sanātana Gosvāmī, *tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*: by the regular process of initiation, any man can become a *brāhmaṇa*. Thus in the beginning the students of our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement agree to live with devotees, and gradually, having given up four prohibited activities—illicit sex, gambling, meat-eating and intoxication—they become advanced in the activities of spiritual life. When one is found to be regularly following these principles, he is given the first initiation (*hari-nāma*), and he regularly chants at least sixteen rounds a day. Then, after six months or a year, he is initiated for the second time and given the sacred thread with the regular sacrifice and rituals. After some time, when he advances still further and is willing to give up this material world, he is given the *sannyāsa* order. At that time he receives the title *svāmī* or *gosvāmī*, both of which mean “master of the senses.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 17.265

### The qualifications for initiation—disinterest in material enjoyment and interest in the Absolute Truth:

*Dīkṣā*, or spiritual initiation, is explained in the *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (868) by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī:

*divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt  
kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayaṁ  
tasmād dīkṣeti sā proktā  
deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ*

**“By dékñā one gradually becomes disinterested in material enjoyment and gradually becomes interested in spiritual life.”**

We have seen many practical examples of this, especially in Europe and America. Many students who come to us from rich and respectable families quickly lose all interest in material enjoyment and become very eager to enter into spiritual life. Although they come from very wealthy families, many of them accept living conditions that are not very comfortable. Indeed, for Kṛṣṇa’s sake they are prepared to accept any living condition as long as they can live in the temple and associate with the Vaiṣṇavas. When one becomes so disinterested in material enjoyment, he becomes fit for initiation by the spiritual master. For the advancement of spiritual life *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (6.1.13) prescribes: *tapasā brahmacaryeṇa śamena ca damena ca*. When a person is serious about accepting *dīkṣā*, he must be prepared to practice austerity, celibacy and control of the mind and body. If one is so prepared and is desirous of receiving enlightenment (*divyaṁ jñānam*), he is fit for being initiated. *Divyaṁ jñānam* is technically called *tad-vijñāna*, or knowledge about the Supreme. *Tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] when one is interested in the transcendental subject matter of the Absolute Truth, he should be initiated. Such a person should approach a spiritual master in order to take *dīkṣā*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.3.21) also prescribes: *tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*. **“When one is actually interested in the transcendental science of the Absolute Truth, he should approach a spiritual master.”**

One should not accept a spiritual master without following his instructions. Nor should one accept a spiritual master just to make a fashionable show of spiritual life. One must be *jijñāsu*, very much inquisitive to learn from the bona fide spiritual master. The inquiries one makes should strictly pertain to transcendental science (*jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*). The word *uttamam* refers to that which is above material knowledge. *Tama* means **“the darkness of this material world,”** and *ut* means **“transcendental.”** Generally people are very interested in inquiring about mundane subject matters, but when one has lost such interest and is simply interested in transcendental subject matters, he is quite fit for being initiated.

*Nectar of Instruction* Text 5

**One should approach a spiritual master only if he is actually eager for enlightenment:**

Because you are great personalities, you can give me real knowledge. I am as foolish as a village animal like a pig or dog because I am merged in the darkness of ignorance. Therefore, please ignite the torch of knowledge to save me.

**PURPORT:** This is the way to receive knowledge. One must submit oneself at the lotus feet of great personalities who can actually deliver transcendental knowledge. It is therefore said, *tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*: [SB 11.3.21] **“One who is inquisitive to understand the highest goal and benefit of life must approach a bona fide spiritual master and surrender unto him.”** Only one who is actually eager to receive knowledge to eradicate the darkness of ignorance is eligible to approach a guru, or spiritual master. The guru should not be approached for material benefits. One should not approach a guru just to cure some disease or receive some miraculous benefit. This is not the way to approach the guru. *Tad-vijñānārtham*: one should approach the guru to understand the transcendental science of spiritual life. Unfortunately, in this age of *Kali* there are many bogus gurus who display magic to their disciples, and many foolish disciples want to see such magic for material benefits. These disciples are not interested in pursuing spiritual life to save themselves from the darkness of ignorance.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.15.16

**The spiritual master must not initiate an unworthy person:**

The spiritual master must not accept a disciple who is not qualified; he should not be professional and should not accept disciples for monetary gains. The bona fide spiritual master must see the bona fide qualities of a person whom he is going to initiate. An unworthy person should not be initiated.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.32.42

### The bhakti-vedāntas impartially initiate everyone into spiritual life:

The *bhakti-vedāntas* are impartial in distributing the transcendental knowledge of devotional service. To them no one is enemy or friend; no one is educated or uneducated. No one is especially favorable, and no one is unfavorable. The *bhakti-vedāntas* see that the people in general are wasting time in false sensuous things. Their business is to get the ignorant mass of people to reestablish the lost relationship with the Personality of Godhead. By such endeavor, even the most forgotten soul is roused up to the sense of spiritual life, and thus being initiated by the *bhakti-vedāntas*, the people in general gradually progress on the path of transcendental realization.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.24

### The spiritual master, not caring for a person's material condition, gives shelter to any person and engages him in spiritual life:

After hearing Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's praise, Bhavānanda Rāya submitted, "I am in the fourth class of the social order, and I engage in mundane affairs. Although I am very fallen, You have still touched us. This is proof that You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead."

**PURPORT:** Those who are highly advanced in spiritual understanding do not care about a person's material condition. A spiritually advanced person sees the spiritual identity of every living being, and consequently he makes no distinction between a learned *brāhmaṇa*, a dog, a *caṇḍāla* or anyone else. He is not influenced by the material body but sees a person's spiritual identity. Consequently Bhavānanda Rāya appreciated Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's statement, which showed that the Lord did not consider the social position of Bhavānanda Rāya, who belonged to the *śūdra* caste engaged in mundane activities. Rather, the Lord considered the spiritual position of Bhavānanda Rāya, Rāmānanda Rāya and his brothers. The servant of the Lord is also similarly inclined. He gives shelter to any person-any living entity-regardless of whether one belongs to a *brāhmaṇa* family or is a *caṇḍāla*. The spiritual master reclaims all people and encourages everyone in spiritual life. By taking shelter of such a devotee, one can make his life successful.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 10.54

### Spiritual masters in the line of Lord Caitanya are liberal in accepting disciples:

One who has accepted the *sannyāsa* order of life is forbidden to accept as a disciple anyone who is not fit. A *sannyāsī* should first of all examine whether a prospective student is sincerely seeking Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If he is not, he should not be accepted. However, Lord Caitanya's causeless mercy is such that He advised all bona fide spiritual masters to speak about Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere. Therefore, in the line of Lord Caitanya, even the *sannyāsīs* can speak about Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere, and if someone is seriously inclined to become a disciple, the *sannyāsī* always accepts him.

The one point is that without increasing the number of disciples, there is no propagation of the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, sometimes even at a risk, a *sannyāsī* in the line of Caitanya Mahāprabhu may accept even a person who is not thoroughly fit to become a disciple. Later on, by the mercy of such a bona fide spiritual master, the disciple is gradually elevated. However, if one increases the number of disciples simply for some prestige or false honor, he will surely fall down in the matter of executing Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The Nectar of Devotion

### Under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, even the most fallen person can be elevated to the supreme position; the spiritual master can accept anyone as a disciple (provided the person is sincere):

The lowest of human beings can be elevated to the highest stage of devotional life if they are trained by the bona fide spiritual master well versed in the transcendental loving service of the Lord ... devotional service to the Lord is open for all, regardless of who they are. That is the confirmation of its application for all kinds of performers of the service.



Therefore the devotional service of the Lord with perfect knowledge through the training of a bona fide spiritual master is advised for everyone.

... Therefore there is no need to seek properly qualified candidates for discharging devotional service to the Lord. Let them be either well behaved or ill trained, let them be either learned or fools, let them be either grossly attached or in the renounced order of life, let them be liberated souls or desirous of salvation, let them be inexpert in the discharge of devotional service or expert in the same, all of them can be elevated to the supreme position by discharging devotional service under the proper guidance. This is also confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.30-32).... Even if a person is fully addicted to all sorts of sinful acts, if he happens to be engaged in the loving transcendental service of the Lord under proper guidance, he is to be considered the most perfect holy man without a doubt. And thus any person, whatsoever and whosoever he or she may be ... can attain the highest perfection of life by going back to home, back to Godhead, provided he or she takes shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord in all earnestness. This sincere earnestness is the only qualification that can lead one to the highest perfectional stage of life.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.36

### The spiritual master does not accept a disciple on the basis of birth:

According to the cult of devotion, generally known as the Vaiṣṇava cult, there is no bar against anyone's advancing in the matter of God realization. A Vaiṣṇava is powerful enough to turn into a Vaiṣṇava even the *Kirāta*, etc., as above mentioned. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.32) it is said by the Lord that there is no bar to becoming a devotee of the Lord (even for those who are lowborn, or women, *śūdras* or *vaiśyas*), and by becoming a devotee everyone is eligible to return home, back to Godhead. The only qualification is that one take shelter of a pure devotee of the Lord who has thorough knowledge in the transcendental science of Kṛṣṇa (*Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*). Anyone from any part of the world who becomes well conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa becomes a pure devotee and a spiritual master for the general mass of people and may reclaim them by purification of heart. Though a person be even the most sinful man, he can at once be purified by systematic contact with a pure Vaiṣṇava. A Vaiṣṇava, therefore, can accept a bona fide disciple from any part of the world without any consideration of caste and creed and promote him by regulative principles to the status of a pure Vaiṣṇava who is transcendental to brahminical culture.... Without any reference to the particular custom of a country, one can be accepted to the Vaiṣṇava cult spiritually, and there is no hindrance in the transcendental process. So by the order of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the cult of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or the *Bhagavad-gītā* can be preached all over the world, reclaiming all persons willing to accept the transcendental cult. Such cultural propaganda by the devotees will certainly be accepted by all persons who are reasonable and inquisitive, without any particular bias for the custom of the country. The Vaiṣṇava never accepts another Vaiṣṇava on the basis of birthright....

The conclusion is that the Lord, being all-powerful, can, under any and every circumstance, accept anyone from any part of the world, either personally or through His bona fide manifestation as the spiritual master. Lord Caitanya accepted many devotees from communities other than the *varṇāśramites*, and He Himself declared, to teach us, that He does not belong to any caste or social order of life, but that He is the eternal servant of the servant of the Lord who maintains the damsels of Vṛndāvana (Lord Kṛṣṇa) [Cc. Mad 13.80]. That is the way of self-realization.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.4.18

### A cūdra is not barred from spiritual initiation provided he is approved by the spiritual master:

The sacred thread on the body of a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya* is a symbol of initiation by the spiritual master; it is worth nothing if worn merely to boast of high parentage. The duty of the spiritual master is to initiate a disciple with the sacred thread ceremony, and after this *samskāra*, or purificatory process, the spiritual master actually begins to teach the disciple about the *Vedas*. A person born a *śūdra* is not barred from such spiritual initiation, provided he is approved by the spiritual master, who is duly authorized to award a disciple the right to be a *brāhmaṇa* if he finds him perfectly qualified.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Ādi-līlā 1.46

Any sincere person is qualified for initiation according to the *pāñcarātri*ka process:

The following injunction is given in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (1.194):

*tāntrikeṣu ca mantreṣu  
dīkṣāyām yoṣitām api  
sādhvīnām adhikāro 'sti  
śūdrādīnām ca sad-dhiyām*

“Çüdras and women who are chaste and sincerely interested in understanding the Absolute Truth are qualified to be initiated with the *pāñcarātri*ka-mantras.”

... If one actually wants to serve Kṛṣṇa, it doesn't matter whether one is a *śūdra*, *vaiśya*, or even a woman. If one is sincerely eager to chant the *Hare Kṛṣṇa* mantra or *dīkṣā*-mantra, he is qualified to be initiated according to the *pāñcarātri*ka process. According to Vedic principles, only a *brāhmaṇa* who is fully engaged in his occupational duties can be initiated. *Śūdras* and women are not admitted to a *vaidika* initiation. Unless he is fit according to the estimation of the spiritual master, one cannot accept a *mantra* from the *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi* or the *vaidika*-*vidhi*. When one is fit to accept the *mantra*, he is initiated by the *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi* or the *vaidika*-*vidhi*. In any case, the result is the same.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.331

Through bona fide initiation, anyone can become a *Vaiñēava* (and thus the whole world can be converted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness):

Those who are not actually in the line of *ācāryas*, or who personally have no knowledge of how to act in the role of *ācārya*, unnecessarily criticize the activities of the ISKCON movement in countries outside of India. The fact is that such critics cannot do anything personally to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If someone does go and preach, taking all risks and allowing all considerations for time and place, it might be that there are changes in the manner of worship, but that is not at all faulty according to *śāstra*. Śrīmad Vīrarāghava Ācārya, an *ācārya* in the disciplic succession of the *Rāmānuja-sampradāya*, has remarked in his commentary that *caṇḍālas*, or conditioned souls who are born in lower than *śūdra* families, can also be initiated according to circumstances. The formalities may be slightly changed here and there to make them *Vaiṣṇavas*.... The principle that only Indians and Hindus should be brought into the *Vaiṣṇava* cult is a mistaken idea. There should be propaganda to bring everyone to the *Vaiṣṇava* cult. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is meant for this purpose. There is no bar to propagating the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement even among people who are born in *caṇḍāla*, *mleccha* or *yavana* families. Even in India, this point has been enunciated by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in his book *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, which is *smṛti* and is the authorized Vedic guide for *Vaiṣṇavas* in their daily behavior. Sanātana Gosvāmī says that as bell metal can turn to gold when mixed with mercury in a chemical process, so, by the bona fide *dīkṣā*, or initiation method, anyone can become a *Vaiṣṇava*. One should take initiation from a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, who is authorized by his predecessor spiritual master. This is called *dīkṣā-vidhāna*. Lord Kṛṣṇa states in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *vyapāśritya*: one should accept a spiritual master. By this process the entire world can be converted to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.54

#### 4. Mutual Testing of the Spiritual Master and the Candidate for Discipleship

The guru and disciple should study each other carefully before establishing a relationship:

The *sāstras* enjoin that before we take a guru we study him carefully to find out whether we can surrender to him. We should not accept a guru suddenly out of fanaticism. That is very dangerous. The guru should also study the person who wants to become a disciple to see if he is fit. That is the way a rela-

tionship is established between the guru and disciple.

*The Science of Self-Realization*

### The process of mutual testing of the spiritual master and disciple:

“In your book there should be the characteristics of the bona fide guru and the bona fide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master’s position. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be assured of the disciple’s position....”

**PURPORT:** As far as the mutual testing of the spiritual master and disciple is concerned, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that a bona fide disciple must be very inquisitive to understand the transcendental subject matter. As stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.3.21):

*tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta*

*jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam*

“One who is inquisitive to understand the highest goal and benefit of life must approach a bona fide spiritual master and surrender unto him.”

A serious disciple must be alert when selecting a bona fide spiritual master. He must be sure that the spiritual master can deliver all the transcendental necessities. The spiritual master must observe how inquisitive the disciple is and how eager he is to understand the transcendental subject matter. The spiritual master should study the disciple’s inquisitiveness for no less than six months or a year.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.330*

### The spiritual master tests the determination of the candidate for discipleship:

Now you have decided to undertake the mystic process of meditation under the instruction of your mother, just to achieve the mercy of the Lord. But in my opinion such austerities are not possible for any ordinary man. It is very difficult to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

**PURPORT:** The process of *bhakti-yoga* is simultaneously very difficult and very easy to perform. Śrī Nārada Muni, the supreme spiritual master, is testing Dhruva Mahārāja to see how determined he is to prosecute devotional service. This is the process for accepting a disciple. The great sage Nārada has come to Dhruva under the direction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead just to initiate him, yet he is testing Dhruva’s determination to execute the process. It is a fact, however, that for a sincere person devotional service is very easy. But for one who is not determined and sincere, this process is very difficult.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.30*

### It is the spiritual master’s duty to test how serious the disciple is to execute devotional service:

For this reason, my dear boy, you should not endeavor for this; it will not be successful. It is better that you go home. When you are grown up, by the mercy of the Lord you will get a chance for these mystic performances. At that time you may execute this function.

**PURPORT:** The great sage Nārada is instructing Dhruva Mahārāja just to test him. Actually, the direct order is that from any point of life one should begin rendering devotional service. But it is the duty of the spiritual master to test the disciple to see how seriously he desires to execute devotional service. Then he may be initiated.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.8.32*

## 5. The Spiritual Master Initiates the Disciple into the Chanting of the Maha-mantra

### For the holy name to have effect, it must be received from the spiritual master:

One has to learn about the beauty and transcendental position of the holy name of the Lord by hearing

the revealed scriptures from the mouths of devotees. Nowhere else can we hear of the sweetness of the Lord's holy name.

**PURPORT:** It is said in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *ataḥ śrī-kṛṣṇa-nāmādi na bhaved grāhyam indriyaiḥ* [Cc Mad 17.136]. Chanting and hearing of the transcendental name of the Lord cannot be performed by the ordinary senses. The transcendental vibration of the Lord's holy name is completely spiritual. Thus it must be received from the spiritual sources and must be chanted after having been heard from a spiritual master. One who hears the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* must receive it from the spiritual master by aural reception. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has forbidden us to hear the holy name of Kṛṣṇa chanted by non-Vaiṣṇavas, such as professional actors and singers, for it will have no effect. It is like milk touched by the lips of serpents.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 1.101

Upon initiation, the disciple receives the Hare Kāñḍa mantra from his spiritual master, whose chanting of the mantra renders it more powerful:

Now I shall chant one mantra which is not only transcendental, pure and auspicious but is the best prayer for anyone who is aspiring to attain the ultimate goal of life. When I chant this mantra, please hear it carefully and attentively.

**PURPORT:** Lord Śiva voluntarily came to benedict the sons of the King as well as do something beneficial for them. He personally chanted the *mantra* so that the *mantra* would be more powerful, and he advised that the *mantra* be chanted by the King's sons (*rāja-putras*). When a *mantra* is chanted by a great devotee, the *mantra* becomes more powerful. Although the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* is powerful in itself, a disciple upon initiation receives the *mantra* from his spiritual master, for when the *mantra* is chanted by the spiritual master, it becomes more powerful.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.24.31-32

A bona fide spiritual master initiates the disciple in the chanting of the holy name, which elevates him to spiritual ecstasy:

A bona fide spiritual master chants the holy names-Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare-and the transcendental sound vibration enters into the ear of the disciple, and if a disciple follows in the footsteps of his spiritual master and chants the holy name with similar respect, he actually comes to worship the transcendental name. When the transcendental name is worshiped by the devotee, the name Himself spreads His glories within the heart of a devotee.... The chanting of the holy name is so powerful that it gradually establishes its supremacy above everything in the world. The devotee who chants it becomes transcendently situated in ecstasy and sometimes laughs, cries and dances in his ecstasy.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

## **6. At the Time of Initiation, the Spiritual Master Accepts the Burden of the Disciple's Sinful Reactions** (and Must Also Suffer for Sins Subsequently Committed by the Disciple)

Immediately after the disciple's initiation, the spiritual master consumes all his sinful reactions:

As Kṛṣṇa takes away all the sinful reactions of a person immediately upon his surrender unto Him, similarly the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, the representative of Kṛṣṇa who acts as the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, takes all the resultant actions of the sinful life of the disciple immediately after the disciple's initiation. Thus if the disciple follows the principles instructed by the spiritual master, he remains purified and is not contaminated by the material infection.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore states that the spiritual master who plays the part of Kṛṣṇa's representative has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.31

**When the spiritual master accepts the disciple's sinful reactions, his own results of pious acts are diminished:**

Śrī Viśvarūpa said: O demigods, although the acceptance of priesthood is decried as causing the loss of previously acquired brahminical power, how can someone like me refuse to accept your personal request? You are all exalted commanders of the entire universe. I am your disciple and must take many lessons from you. Therefore I cannot refuse you. I must agree for my own benefit.

**PURPORT:** A *brāhmaṇa* becomes the priest of the populace for the sake of their elevation. One who accepts the post of spiritual master neutralizes the sinful reactions of the *yajamāna*, the one on whose behalf he performs *yajña*. Thus the results of the pious acts previously performed by the priest or spiritual master are diminished.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.7.35

**The spiritual master sometimes suffers due to the past sinful activities of his disciples:**

Śyāmasundara: One time you said that sometimes you feel sickness or pain due to the sinful activities of your devotees. Can sometimes disease be due to that? Caused by that?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You see, Kṛṣṇa says: *aham tvām sarva-pāṇebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*: [Bg. 18.66] “I will deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.” So Kṛṣṇa is so powerful that He can immediately take up all the sins of others and immediately make them right. But when a living entity plays the part on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, he also takes the responsibility for the sinful activities of his devotees. Therefore to become a guru is not an easy task. You see? He has to take all the poisons and absorb them. So sometimes-because he is not Kṛṣṇa-sometimes there is some trouble. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu has forbidden, “Don’t make many śiṣyas, many disciples.” But for preaching work we have to accept many disciples-for expanding preaching-even if we suffer. That’s a fact. The spiritual master has to take the responsibility for all the sinful activities of his disciples. Therefore to make many disciples is a risky job unless one is able to assimilate all the sins.... He takes responsibility for all the fallen souls. That idea is also in the Bible. Jesus Christ took all the sinful reactions of the people and sacrificed his life. That is the responsibility of a spiritual master. Because Kṛṣṇa is Kṛṣṇa, He is *apāpa-viddha*-He cannot be attacked by sinful reactions. But a living entity is sometimes subjected to their influence because he is so small. Big fire, small fire. If you put some big thing in a small fire, the fire itself may be extinguished. But in a big fire, whatever you put in is all right. The big fire can consume anything.

Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers

**Sometimes, by accepting the sinful reactions of his disciples, the spiritual master undergoes a sort of tribulation:**

As Kṛṣṇa takes away all the sinful reactions of a person immediately upon his surrender unto Him, similarly, the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, the representative of Kṛṣṇa who acts as the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, takes all the resultant actions of the sinful life of the disciple immediately after the disciple’s initiation.... Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore stated that the spiritual master who plays the part of Kṛṣṇa’s representative has to consume all the sinful reactions of his disciple. Sometimes a spiritual master takes the risk of being overwhelmed by the sinful reactions of the disciples and undergoes a sort of tribulation due to their acceptance. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu therefore advised that one not accept many disciples.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.21.31

**The danger, for a spiritual master, in accepting an unlimited number of disciples:**

*bahu-śiṣya nā kariba*

“One should not accept an unlimited number of disciples.”

**PURPORT:** Accepting an unlimited number of devotees or disciples is very risky for one who is not a preacher. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, a preacher has to accept many disciples to expand the cult



of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is risky because when a spiritual master accepts a disciple, he naturally accepts the disciple's sinful activities and their reactions. Unless he is very powerful, he cannot assimilate all the sinful reactions of his disciples. Thus if he is not powerful, he has to suffer the consequences, for one is forbidden to accept many disciples.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 22.118

**What kinds of sinful activities performed by a disciple cause the spiritual master suffering:**

**Girirāja:** Yesterday you said that the spiritual master may have to suffer due to the sinful activities of his disciples. What do you mean by sinful activities?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Sinful activities means that you promised, “I shall follow the regulative principles.” If you do not follow, that is sinful. That is the promise. Very simple. You break the promise and do nasty things; therefore you are sinful. Is it not?

**Girirāja:** Yes. But there are some things that we're instructed to do ...

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Hm-m?

**Girirāja:** There are other things which we're instructed to do which, even though we try to do, we cannot do perfectly yet.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** How is that? You try to do and cannot do? How is that?

**Girirāja:** Like chanting attentively. Sometimes we try to, but-

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Well, that is not a fault. Suppose you are trying to do something. Due to your inexperience if you sometimes fail, that is not a fault. You are trying. There is a verse in the *Bhāgavatam*-that if a devotee is trying his best but due to his incapability he sometimes fails, Kṛṣṇa excuses him. And in the *Bhagavad-gītā* also it is said: *api cet sudurācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk* [9.30]. Sometimes not willingly but due to past bad habits-habit is second nature-one does something nonsensical. But that does not mean he is faulty. But he must repent for that— “I have done this.” And he should try to avoid it as far as possible. But habit is second nature. Sometimes, in spite of your trying hard, *māyā* is so strong that it pushes with pitfalls. That can be excused. Kṛṣṇa excuses. But those who are doing something willingly are not excused. On the strength that I am a devotee, if I think, “Because I am chanting, I may therefore commit all this nonsense, and it will be nullified,” that is the greatest offense.

*Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*

**To counteract sinful reactions accepted from disciples, the spiritual master has to see bad dreams:**

Because of sinful activities, at night we have bad dreams, which are very troublesome. Indeed, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was obliged to see hell because of a slight deviation from devotional service to the Lord. Therefore, *duḥsvapna*-bad dreams-occur because of sinful activities. A devotee sometimes accepts a sinful person as his disciple, and to counteract the sinful reactions he accepts from the disciple, he has to see a bad dream. Nonetheless, the spiritual master is so kind that in spite of having bad dreams due to the sinful disciple, he accepts this troublesome business for the deliverance of the victims of *Kali-yuga*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.4.15

**The spiritual master suffers for the past sinful acts of the disciple, but Kāṁna neutralizes such sinful reactions for His servant engaged in preaching His glories:**

The Supreme Personality of Godhead can accept the reactions of anyone's sinful deeds and neutralize them because He is *pavitra*, pure, like the sun, which is never contaminated by any worldly infection. *Tejīyasām na doṣāya vahneḥ sarva-bhujo yathā* (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.33.29). One who is very powerful is not affected by any sinful activity. But here we see that mother Ganges fears being burdened with the sins of the people in general who would bathe in her waters. This indicates that no one but the Supreme Personality of Godhead is able to neutralize the reactions of sinful deeds, whether one's own

or those of others. Sometimes the spiritual master, after accepting a disciple, must take charge of that disciple's past sinful activities and, being overloaded, must sometimes suffer-if not fully, then partially-for the sinful acts of the disciple. Every disciple, therefore, must be very careful not to commit sinful activities after initiation. The poor spiritual master is kind and merciful enough to accept a disciple and partially suffer for that disciple's sinful activities, but Kṛṣṇa, being merciful to His servant, neutralizes the reactions of sinful deeds for the servant who engages in preaching His glories.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.9.5

**After initiation, the disciple must not cause trouble for his spiritual master by committing sinful acts:**

A devotee sometimes accepts a sinful person as his disciple, and to counteract the sinful reactions he accepts from the disciple, he has to see a bad dream. Nonetheless, the spiritual master is so kind that in spite of having bad dreams due to the sinful disciple, he accepts this troublesome business for the deliverance of the victims of *Kali-yuga*. After initiation, therefore, a disciple should be extremely careful not to commit again any sinful act that might cause difficulties for himself and the spiritual master. Before the Deity, before the fire, before the spiritual master and before the Vaiṣṇavas, the honest disciple promises to refrain from all sinful activity. Therefore he must not again commit sinful acts and thus create a troublesome situation.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.4.15

**If after initiation the disciple again commits sinful activities, his spiritual master has to suffer:**

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** He [Jesus Christ] took the sinful reactions of all the people. Therefore he suffered.... He said-that is in the Bible-that he took all the sinful reactions of the people and sacrificed his life. But these Christian people have made it a law for Christ to suffer while they do all nonsense. Such great fools they are! They have let Jesus Christ make a contract for taking all their sinful reactions so they can go on with all nonsense. That is their religion. Christ was so magnanimous that he took all their sins and suffered, but that does not induce them to stop all these sins. They have not come to that sense. They have taken it very easily. "Let Lord Jesus Christ suffer, and we'll do all nonsense." Is it not?

**Bob:** It is so.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** They should have been ashamed: "Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us, but we are continuing the sinful activities." He told everyone, "**Thou shalt not kill,**" but they are indulging in killing, thinking, "Lord Jesus Christ will excuse us and take all the sinful reactions." This is going on. We should be very much cautious: "For my sinful actions my spiritual master will suffer, so I'll not commit even a pinch of sinful activities." That is the duty of the disciple. After initiation, all sinful reaction is finished. Now if he again commits sinful activities, his spiritual master has to suffer. A disciple should be sympathetic and consider this. "For my sinful activities, my spiritual master will suffer." If the spiritual master is attacked by some disease, it is due to the sinful activities of others. "Don't make many disciples." But we do it because we are preaching. Never mind-let us suffer-still we shall accept them. Therefore your question was-when I suffer is it due to my past misdeeds? Was it not? That is my misdeed-that I accepted some disciples who are nonsense. That is my misdeed.

**Bob:** This happens on occasions?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Yes. This is sure to happen because we are accepting so many men. It is the duty of the disciples to be cautious. "**My spiritual master has saved me. I should not put him again into suffering.**" When the spiritual master is in suffering, Kṛṣṇa saves him. Kṛṣṇa thinks, "Oh, he has taken so much responsibility for delivering a fallen person." So Kṛṣṇa is there. *Kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati* [Bg. 9.31]. ["**O son of Kuntī, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes.**"] Because the spiritual master takes the risk on account of Kṛṣṇa.

**Bob:** Your suffering is not the same kind of pain...

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, it is not due to *karma*. The pain is there sometimes, so that the disciples may

know, “Due to our sinful activities, our spiritual master is suffering.”

**Bob:** You look very well now.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** I am always well ... in the sense that even if there is suffering, I know Kṛṣṇa will protect me. But this suffering is not due to my sinful activities.

*Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers*

## **7. Brahminical Initiation** (and *Gāyatrī Mantra*)\*

\*This section includes only those instructions on the *Gāyatrī mantra* encountered while gathering reference on initiation. As the subject of *Gayatrī mantra* was not separately researched, the instructions contained herein are merely representative.

### **Why Çréla Bhaktisiddhānta Ōhākura introduced the sacred thread initiation for Vaiñēavas:**

There are many instances in which a born *brāhmaṇa* took initiation from a person who was not born in a *brāhmaṇa* family. The brahminical symptoms are explained in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (7.11.35), wherein it is stated:

*yasya yal lakṣaṇam proktaṁ  
pumso varṇābhivyañjakam  
yad anyatrāpi dṛśyeta  
tat tenaiva vinirdiśet*

If a person is born in a *śūdra* family but has all the qualities of a spiritual master, he should be accepted not only as a *brāhmaṇa* but as a qualified spiritual master also. This is also the instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Ṭhākura therefore introduced the sacred thread ceremony for all Vaiṣṇavas according to the rules and regulations.

Sometimes a Vaiṣṇava who is a *bhajanānandī* does not take the *sāvitra-saṁskāra* (sacred thread initiation), but this does not mean that this system should be used for preaching work. There are two kinds of *Vaiṣṇavas-bhajanānandī* and *goṣṭhy-ānandī*. A *bhajanānandī* is not interested in preaching work, but a *goṣṭhy-ānandī* is interested in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness to benefit the people and increase the number of Vaiṣṇavas. A Vaiṣṇava is understood to be above the position of a *brāhmaṇa*. As a preacher, he should be recognized as a *brāhmaṇa*; otherwise there may be a misunderstanding of his position as a Vaiṣṇava.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.128*

### **The spiritual master offers the sacred thread (brahminical initiation) to a disciple who has become competent and purified by chanting, by his own judgment:**

Usually, initiation depends on the bona fide spiritual master, who directs the disciple. If he sees that a disciple has become competent and purified by the process of chanting, then he offers the sacred thread to the disciple just so that he will be recognized as one hundred percent equal with a *brāhmaṇa*. This is also confirmed in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* by Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī: “As a base metal like bell metal can be changed into gold by a chemical process, similarly any person can be changed into a *brāhmaṇa* by *dēkñā-vidhāna*, the initiation process.”

... Whether one has acquired the qualification of a *brāhmaṇa* depends on the judgment of the bona fide spiritual master. He bestows upon the disciple the position of a *brāhmaṇa* by his own judgment. When one is accepted as a *brāhmaṇa* in the sacred thread ceremony, under the *Pāñcarātric* system, then he is *dvija*, twice-born. That is confirmed by Sanātana Gosvāmī: *dvijatvaṁ jāyate*. By the process of initiation by the spiritual master, a person is accepted as a *brāhmaṇa* in his purified state of chanting the holy

name of the Lord. He then makes further progress to become a qualified Vaiṣṇava, which means that the *brahminical* qualification is already acquired.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.6

**When the spiritual master sees that his disciple is advanced in chanting the mahā-mantra and advanced in spiritual knowledge, he offers him the Kāma-gāyatrī mantra:**

Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshiped by the *Gāyatrī mantra*, and the specific *mantra* by which He is worshiped is called *Kāma-gāyatrī*. Vedic literatures explain that that sound vibration which can elevate one from mental concoction is called *gāyatrī*. The *Kāma-gāyatrī mantra* is composed of 24 1/2 syllables thus:

*klīm kāma-devāya vidmahe*

*uṣṭa-bāṇāya dhīmahi*

*an no 'naṅgaḥ pracodayāt*

This *Kāma-gāyatrī* is received from the spiritual master when the disciple is advanced in chanting *Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare*. In other words, this *Kāma-gāyatrī mantra* and *saṁskāra*, or reformation of a perfect *brāhmaṇa*, are offered by the spiritual master when he sees that his disciple is advanced in spiritual knowledge.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**The purpose of the Gāyatrī mantra:**

[In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*] Vyāsadeva purposefully invokes the *Gāyatrī mantra: dhīmahi*. This *Gāyatrī mantra* is especially meant for spiritually advanced people. When one attains success in chanting *Gāyatrī mantra*, he can enter into the transcendental position of the Lord. First, however, one must acquire the *brahminical* qualities and become perfectly situated in the mode of goodness in order to chant the *Gāyatrī mantra* successfully. From that point one can begin to transcendently realize the Lord, His name, His fame, His qualities, etc.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

**The significance of the Gāyatrī mantra:**

“In the spiritual realm of Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa is the spiritual ever-fresh Cupid. He is worshiped by the chanting of the Kāma-gāyatrī mantra with the spiritual seed *klē* à.”

**PURPORT:** *Gāyantam trāyate yasmāt gāyatrī tvām tataḥ smṛtā*: if one chants the *Gāyatrī mantra*, he is gradually delivered from the material clutches. That which delivers one from material entanglement is called *gāyatrī*. An explanation of the *Gāyatrī mantra* can be found in *Madhya-līlā*, Chapter Twenty-one, text 125:

*kāma-gāyatrī-mantra-rūpa, haya kṛṣṇera svarūpa,*

*sārdha-cabiśa akṣara tāra haya*

*se akṣara 'candra' haya, kṛṣṇa kari' udaya*

*tri-jagat kaila kāma-maya*

This *mantra* is just like a Vedic hymn, but it is the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. There is no difference between the *Kāma-gāyatrī* and Kṛṣṇa. Both are composed of twenty-four and a half transcendental letters. The *mantra* depicted in letters is also Kṛṣṇa, and the *mantra* rises just like the moon. Due to this, there is a perverted reflection of desire in human society and among all kinds of living entities. In the *mantra: klīm kāma-devāya vidmahe puṣṭa-bāṇāya dhīmahi tan no 'naṅgaḥ pracodayāt*, Kṛṣṇa is called Kāmadeva or Madana-mohana, the Deity who establishes our relationship with Kṛṣṇa. Govinda, or Puṣṭabāṇa, who carries an arrow made of flowers, is the Personality of Godhead who accepts our devotional service. Anaṅga, or Gopījana-vallabha, satisfies all the *gopīs* and is the ultimate

goal of life. This *Kāma-gāyatrī* (*klīm kāma-devāya vidmahe puṣpa-bāṇāya dhīmahi tan no 'naṅgaḥ pracodayāt*) simply does not belong to this material world. When one is advanced in spiritual understanding, he can worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead with his spiritually purified senses and fulfill the desires of the Lord.

... In *Brahma-saṁhitā* it is stated (5.27-28): ... “Then Gāyatrī, mother of the Vedas, having been manifested by the divine sound of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s flute, entered the lotus mouth of Brahmā, the self-born, through his eight earholes. The lotus-born Brahmā received the Gāyatrī mantra, which had sprung from the song of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s flute. Thus he attained twice-born status, having been initiated by the supreme primal preceptor, Godhead Himself. Enlightened by the recollection of that Gāyatrī, which embodies the three Vedas, Brahmā became acquainted with the expanse of the ocean of truth. Then he worshiped Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the essence of all the Vedas, with a hymn.”

The vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute is the origin of the Vedic hymns. Lord Brahmā, who is seated on a lotus flower, heard the sound vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute and was thereby initiated by the *Gāyatrī mantra*.... [One should] chant the *cinmayī Gāyatrī*, the spiritual mantras: *om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*, or *klīm kṛṣṇāya govindāya gopījana-vallabhāya svāhā*. *Klīm kāmādevāya vidmahe puṣpa-bāṇāya dhīmahi tan no 'naṅgaḥ pracodayāt*. These are the *Kāma-gāyatrī* or *Kāma-bīja* mantras. One should be initiated by a bona fide spiritual master and worship Kṛṣṇa with these transcendental mantras known as *Kāma-gāyatrī* or *Kāma-bīja*.... A person who is properly purified and initiated by the spiritual master worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, by this *mantra*. He chants the *Kāma-gāyatrī* with the *Kāma-bīja*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 8.138-39

### The origin of the Gāyatrī mantra:

Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshiped by the *Gāyatrī mantra*, and the specific *mantra* by which He is worshiped is called *Kāma-gāyatrī*. Vedic literatures explain that that sound vibration which can elevate one from mental concoction is called *gāyatrī*.... In *Brahma-saṁhitā* a nice description of the flute of Kṛṣṇa is given: “When Kṛṣṇa began to play on His flute, the sound vibration entered into the ear of Brahmā as the Vedic mantra oṃ.” This *om* is composed of three letters-A, U, and M-and it describes our relationship with the Supreme Lord, our activities by which we can achieve the highest perfection of love, and the actual position of love on the spiritual platform. When the sound vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute is expressed through the mouth of Brahmā, it becomes *Gāyatrī*. Thus by being influenced by the sound vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, Brahmā, the supreme creature and first living entity of this material world, was initiated as a *brāhmaṇa*. That Brahmā was initiated as a *brāhmaṇa* by the flute of Kṛṣṇa is confirmed by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. When Brahmā was enlightened by the *Gāyatrī mantra* through Kṛṣṇa’s flute, he attained all Vedic knowledge. Acknowledging the benediction offered to him by Kṛṣṇa, he became the original spiritual master of all living entities.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

### The word “klīm” is the transcendental seed of love of God:

The word *klīm* added to the *Gāyatrī mantra* is explained in *Brahma-saṁhitā* as the transcendental seed of love of Godhead, or the seed of the *Kāma-gāyatrī*. The object is Kṛṣṇa, who is the evergreen Cupid, and by utterance of *klīm mantra* Kṛṣṇa is worshiped.

Teachings of Lord Caitanya

## 8. Through Initiation, Any Person Can Be Elevated to Brahminical Status

### When a person is properly initiated, he can acquire the qualities of a brāhmaṇa:

The *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (298) gives the following quotation from the *Tattva-sāgara*:

*yathā kāñcanatām yati*



kāmsyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ  
tathā dikṣā-vidhānena  
dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām

“By chemical manipulation, bell metal is turned into gold when touched by mercury; similarly, when a person is properly initiated, he can acquire the qualities of a brāhmaṇa.”

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108

**Under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, anyone can become a qualified brāhmaṇa:**

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in his *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* says that a person, whatever he may be, can attain the perfection of a twice-born brāhmaṇa by undergoing the spiritual disciplinary actions under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master, exactly as a chemist can turn gun metal into gold by chemical manipulation. It is therefore the actual guidance that matters in the process of becoming a brāhmaṇa.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.15.47-48

**Anyone initiated by a Vaiṣṇava mantra can be accepted as a brāhmaṇa:**

In some villages there were no brāhmaṇas; nonetheless, devotees born in non-brāhmaṇa families came and extended invitations to Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya.

**PURPORT:** Actually a *sannyāsī* or a brāhmaṇa will not accept an invitation extended by a person born in a lower family. However, there are many devotees who are raised to the platform of brāhmaṇa by their initiation. These people are called *śūdra-mahājana*. This indicates that one who is born in a non-brāhmaṇa family has accepted the brāhmaṇa status by initiation. Such devotees extended invitations to Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya. A *Māyāvādī sannyāsī* will accept an invitation only from a brāhmaṇa family, but a Vaiṣṇava does not accept an invitation from a brāhmaṇa if he does not belong to the Vaiṣṇava sect. However, a Vaiṣṇava will accept an invitation from a brāhmaṇa or *śūdra-mahājana* if that person is an initiated Vaiṣṇava. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself accepted invitations from *śūdra-mahājanas*, and this confirms the fact that anyone initiated by a Vaiṣṇava mantra can be accepted as a brāhmaṇa. One can accept an invitation from such a person.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 17.60

**By proper initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, one can immediately become a brāhmaṇa:**

In *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī gives definite instructions that by proper initiation by a bona fide spiritual master one can immediately become a brāhmaṇa. In this connection he says:

yathā kāñcanatām yati  
kāmsyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ  
tathā dikṣā-vidhānena  
dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām

“As bell metal is turned to gold when mixed with mercury in an alchemical process, so one who is properly trained and initiated by a bona fide spiritual master immediately becomes a brāhmaṇa.”

Sometimes those born in brāhmaṇa families protest this, but they have no strong arguments against this principle. By the grace of Kṛṣṇa and His devotee, one's life can change. This is confirmed in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* by the words *jahāti bandham* and *śuddhyanti*. *Jahāti bandham* indicates that a living entity is conditioned by a particular type of body. The body is certainly an impediment, but one who associates with a pure devotee and follows his instructions can avoid this impediment and become a regular brāhmaṇa by initiation under his strict guidance. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī states how a non-brāhmaṇa can be turned into a brāhmaṇa by the association of a pure devotee. *Prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ*: Lord Viṣṇu is so powerful that He can do anything He likes. Therefore it is not difficult for Viṣṇu to change

the body of a devotee who is under the guidance of a pure devotee of the Lord.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.47

**Regardless of birth, if one is initiated by a proper person, he can be accepted as a twice-born brāhmaëa immediately:**

A civilized human being has three kinds of births. The first birth is by a pure father and mother, and this birth is called birth by semen. The next birth takes place when one is initiated by the spiritual master, and this birth is called sāvitra. The third birth, called yājñika, takes place when one is given the opportunity to worship Lord Viṣṇu....

**PURPORT:** It is stated that in this age of *Kali*, everyone is *śūdra* due to the absence of the *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*. This is the Vedic system. According to the *pāñcarātrika* system, however, even though everyone is a *śūdra* due to the absence of *garbhādhāna-saṁskāra*, if a person has but a little tendency to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, he should be given the chance to elevate himself to the transcendental platform of devotional service. Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement adopts this *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*, as advised by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, who says:

yathā kāñcanatām yati  
kāmsyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ  
tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena  
dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām

**“As bell metal, when mixed with mercury, is transformed to gold, a person, even though not golden pure, can be transformed into a brāhmaëa or dvija simply by the initiation process.”**

Thus if one is initiated by a proper person, he can be accepted as twice-born immediately. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, we therefore offer the student his first initiation and allow him to chant the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra*. By chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* regularly and following the regulative principles, one becomes qualified to be initiated as a *brāhmaṇa* because unless one is a qualified *brāhmaṇa* he cannot be allowed to worship Lord Viṣṇu. This is called *yājñika janma*.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.31.10

**Initiation itself does not elevate one to the brahminical stage; one has to discharge the duties and follow the regulative principles very rigidly:**

A Vaiṣṇava automatically becomes a *brāhmaṇa*. This idea is also supported by Sanātana Gosvāmī in his book *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, which is the Vaiṣṇava guide. Therein he has clearly stated that any person who is properly initiated into the Vaiṣṇava cult certainly becomes a *brāhmaṇa*, as much as the metal known as *kāṁsa* (bell metal) is turned into gold by the mixture of mercury. A bona fide spiritual master, under the guidance of authorities, can turn anyone to the Vaiṣṇava cult so that naturally he may come to the topmost position of a *brāhmaṇa*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī warns, however, that if a person is properly initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, he should not think that simply by the acceptance of such initiation his business is then finished. One still has to follow the rules and regulations very carefully. If after accepting the spiritual master and being initiated one does not follow the rules and regulations of devotional service, then he is again fallen.... In other words, simply becoming initiated does not elevate one to the position of a high-class *brāhmaṇa*. One also has to discharge the duties and follow the regulative principles very rigidly.

The Nectar of Devotion

## **9. Other Important Instructions Concerning Initiation**

**Lord Kāṁëa accepts the initiate to be as good as Himself:**

dīkṣā-kāle bhakti kare ātma-samarpaṇa

*sei-kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātma-*

“At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders unto the service of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa accepts him to be as good as Himself”

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.192*

**By surrendering to the guru, one is freed from sinful reactions:**

“In this way, through the association of the great sage Nārada Muni, the hunter was a little convinced of his sinful activity. He therefore became somewhat afraid due to his offenses. The hunter then admitted that he was convinced of his sinful activity, and he said, ‘I have been taught this business from my very childhood. Now I am wondering how I can become freed from these unlimited volumes of sinful activity.’ The hunter continued, ‘My dear sir, please tell me how I can be relieved from the reactions of my sinful life. Now I fully surrender unto you and fall down at your lotus feet. Please deliver me from sinful reactions.’”

**PURPORT:** By the grace of Nārada Muni, the hunter came to his good senses and immediately surrendered unto the saint’s lotus feet. This is the process. By associating with a saintly person, one is able to understand the reactions of his sinful life. When one voluntarily surrenders to a saintly person who is a representative of Kṛṣṇa and follows his instructions, one can become freed from sinful reaction. Kṛṣṇa demands the surrender of a sinful man, and Kṛṣṇa’s representative gives the same instructions. The representative of Kṛṣṇa never tells his disciple, “Surrender unto me.” Rather he says, “Surrender unto Kṛṣṇa.” If the disciple accepts this principle and surrenders himself through the representative of Kṛṣṇa, his life is saved.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.252-54*

**In the process of initiation, the disciple must surrender to the spiritual master, inquire, and hear from him:**

“The hunter replied, ‘If I break my bow, how shall I maintain myself?’ Nārada Muni replied, ‘Do not worry. I shall supply all your food every day.’ Being thus assured by the great sage Nārada Muni, the hunter broke his bow, immediately fell down at the saint’s lotus feet and fully surrendered. After this, Nārada Muni raised him with his hand and gave him instructions for spiritual advancement.”

**PURPORT:** This is the process of initiation. The disciple must surrender to the spiritual master, the representative of Kṛṣṇa. The spiritual master, being in the disciplic succession stemming from Nārada Muni, is in the same category with Nārada Muni. A person can be relieved from his sinful activity if he surrenders to the lotus feet of a person who actually represents Nārada Muni. Nārada Muni gave instructions to the hunter after the hunter surrendered.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.257-58*

**At the time of initiation, the devotee becomes situated on the transcendental platform:**

“At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders unto the service of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa accepts him to be as good as Himself. When the devotee’s body is thus transformed into spiritual existence, the devotee, in that transcendental body, renders service to the lotus feet of the Lord. “The living entity who is subjected to birth and death, when he gives up all material activities dedicating his life to Me for executing My order, and thus acts according to My direction, at that time he reaches the platform of immortality, and becomes fit to enjoy the spiritual bliss of exchange of loving mellows with Me.”

**PURPORT:** At the time of initiation, a devotee gives up all his material conceptions. Therefore, being in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is situated on the transcendental platform. Thus having attained knowledge and the spiritual platform, he always engages in the service of the spiritual body of Kṛṣṇa. When one is freed from material connections in this way, his body immediately becomes spiritual, and Kṛṣṇa accepts his service.

*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Antya-līlā 4.192-94*

**It is essential for a disciple to change his name after initiation:**

“My dear Sākara Mallika, from this day your names will be changed to Śrīla Rūpa and Śrīla Sanātana...”

**PURPORT:** Actually this is Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s initiation of Dabira Khāsa and Sākara Mallika. They approached the Lord with all humility, and the Lord accepted them as old servants, as eternal servants, and He changed their names. It is to be understood from this that it is essential for a disciple to change his name after initiation.

*śaṅkha-cakrādy-ūrdhva-puṇḍra-  
hāraṇādy-ātma-lakṣaṇam  
an nāma-karaṇam caiva  
aiṣṇavatvam ihocyate*

“After initiation, the disciple’s name must be changed to indicate that he is a servant of Lord Viṣṇu. The disciple should also immediately begin marking his body with tilaka (ūrdhva-puṇḍra), especially his forehead. These are spiritual marks, symptoms of a perfect Vaiṣṇava.”

This is a verse from the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa*. A member of the *sahajiyā-sampradāya* does not change his name; therefore he cannot be accepted as a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava. If a person does not change his name after initiation, it is to be understood that he will continue in his bodily conception of life.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 1.208

**If after accepting initiation one does not follow the rules and regulations of devotional service, he is again fallen:**

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī warns that if a person is properly initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, he should not think that simply by the acceptance of such initiation his business is then finished. One still has to follow the rules and regulations very carefully. If after accepting the spiritual master and being initiated one does not follow the rules and regulations of devotional service, then he is again fallen. One must be very vigilant to remember that he is the part and parcel of the transcendental body of Kṛṣṇa, and it is his duty as part and parcel to give service to the whole, or Kṛṣṇa. If we do not render service to Kṛṣṇa then again we fall down. In other words, simply becoming initiated does not elevate one to the position of a high-class *brāhmaṇa*. One also has to discharge the duties and follow the regulative principles very rigidly.

*The Nectar of Devotion*

**By following brahminical behavior, one may be offered sannyāsa initiation:**

According to Vedic injunctions, only a *brāhmaṇa* may be offered *sannyāsa*. The *Śaṅkara-sampradāya* (*ekadaṇḍa-sannyāsa-sampradāya*) awards the *sannyāsa* order only to caste *brāhmaṇas*, or born *brāhmaṇas*, but in the Vaiṣṇava system even one not born in a *brāhmaṇa* family may be made a *brāhmaṇa* according to the direction of the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (*tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*). Any person from any part of the world may be made a *brāhmaṇa* by the regular process of initiation, and when he follows *brahminical* behavior, observing the principle of abstaining from intoxication, illicit sex, meat-eating and gambling, he may be offered *sannyāsa*. All the *sannyāsīs* in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, who are preaching all over the world, are regular *brāhmaṇa-sannyāsīs*.

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 17.266

**As soon as a bona fide guru is encountered, one can be initiated without waiting for a suitable time or place:**

As far as the time of *dīkṣā* (initiation) is concerned, everything depends on the position of the guru. As soon as a bona fide guru is received by chance or by a program, one should immediately take the opportunity to receive initiation. In the book called *Tattva-sāgara*, it is stated:... “If by chance, one gets a sad-

guru, it doesn't matter whether one is in the temple or the forest. If the sad-guru, the bona fide spiritual master, agrees, one can be initiated immediately, without waiting for a suitable time or place."

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 24.331

### The importance of puraṣcaryā-viddhi for spiritual initiation:

The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (17.11-12), in discussing the *puraṣcaryā* process, quotes the following verses from *Agastya-saṁhitā*:... "In the morning, afternoon and evening, one should worship the Deity, chant the Hare Kāñḍea mantra, offer oblations, perform a fire sacrifice, and feed the brāhmaṇas. These five activities constitute *puraṣcaryā*. To attain full success when taking initiation from the spiritual master, one should first perform these *puraṣcaryā* processes."... In the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (17.4-5, 7) it is stated:... "Without performing the *puraṣcaryā* activities, one cannot become perfect even by chanting the mantra for hundreds of years. However, one who has undergone the *puraṣcaryā-vidhi* process can attain success very easily. If one wishes to perfect his initiation, he must first undergo the *puraṣcaryā* activities. The *puraṣcaryā* process is the life-force by which one is successful in chanting the mantra. Without the life-force, one cannot do anything; similarly, without the life-force of *puraṣcaryā-vidhi*, no mantra can be perfected."

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā 15.108





## His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda appeared in this world in 1896 in Calcutta, India. He first met his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī, in Calcutta in 1922. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, a prominent religious scholar and the founder of sixty-four Gauḍīya Maṭhas (Vedic institutes), liked this educated young man and convinced him to dedicate his life to teaching Vedic knowledge. Śrīla Prabhupāda became his student, and eleven years later (1933) at Allahabad he became his formally initiated disciple.

At their first meeting, in 1922, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura requested Śrīla Prabhupāda to broadcast Vedic knowledge through the English language. In the years that followed, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, assisted the Gauḍīya Maṭha in its work and, in 1944, without assistance, started an English fortnightly magazine, edited it, typed the manuscripts and checked the galley proofs. He even distributed the individual copies and struggled to maintain the publication. Once begun, the magazine never stopped; it is now being continued by his disciples in the West and is published in nineteen languages.

Recognizing Śrīla Prabhupāda's philosophical learning and devotion, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Society honored him in 1947 with the title "Bhaktivedanta." In 1950, at the age of fifty-four, Śrīla Prabhupāda retired from married life, adopting the *vānaprastha* (retired) order to devote more time to his studies and writing. Śrīla Prabhupāda traveled to the holy city of Vṛndāvana, where he lived in very humble circumstances in the historic medieval temple of Rādhā-Dāmodara. There he engaged for several years in deep study and writing. He accepted the renounced order of life (*sannyāsa*) in 1959. At Rādhā-Dāmodara, Śrīla Prabhupāda began work on his life's masterpiece: a multivolume translation of and commentary on the eighteen-thousand-verse *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa*). He also wrote *Easy Journey to Other Planets*.

After publishing three volumes of the *Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda came to the United States, in 1965, to fulfill the mission of his spiritual master. Subsequently, His Divine Grace wrote more than sixty volumes of authoritative translations, commentaries and summary studies of the philosophical and religious classics of India.

In 1965, when he first arrived by freighter in New York City, Śrīla Prabhupāda was practically penniless. It was after almost a year of great difficulty that he established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness in July of 1966. Before his passing away on November 14, 1977, he guided the Society and saw it grow to a worldwide confederation of more than one hundred *āśramas*, schools, temples, institutes and farm communities.

In 1968, Śrīla Prabhupada created New Vrindaban, an experimental Vedic community in the hills of West Virginia. Inspired by the success of New Vrindaban, now a thriving farm community of more than one thousand acres, his students have since founded several similar communities in the United States and abroad.

In 1972, His Divine Grace introduced the Vedic system of primary and secondary education in the West by founding the Gurukula school in Dallas, Texas. Since then, under his supervision, his disciples have established children's schools throughout the United States and the rest of the world. As of 1978, there are ten Gurukula schools worldwide, with the principal educational center now located in Vṛndāvana, India.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also inspired the construction of several large international cultural centers in India. The center at Śrīdhāma Māyāpur in West Bengal is the site for a planned spiritual city, an ambitious project for which construction will extend over the next decade. In Vṛndāvana, India, is the magnificent Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Temple and International Guesthouse. There is also a major cultural and educational center in Bombay. Other centers are planned in a dozen other important locations on the Indian subcontinent.

Śrīla Prabhupāda's most significant contribution, however, is his books. Highly respected by the aca-

democratic community for their authoritativeness, depth and clarity, they are used as standard textbooks in numerous college courses. His writings have been translated into twenty-eight languages. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, established in 1972 exclusively to publish the works of His Divine Grace, has thus become the world's largest publisher of books in the field of Indian religion and philosophy.

In just twelve years, in spite of his advanced age, Śrīla Prabhupāda circled the globe fourteen times on lecture tours that took him to six continents. In spite of such a vigorous schedule, Śrīla Prabhupāda continued to write prolifically. His writings constitute a veritable library of Vedic philosophy, religion, literature and culture.



### Guide to Sanskrit Pronunciation

Throughout the centuries, the Sanskrit language has been written in a variety of alphabets. The mode of writing most widely used throughout India, however, is called *devanāgarī*, which literally means “the city writing of the *devas*, or gods.” The *devanāgarī* alphabet consists of forty-eight characters, including thirteen vowels and thirty-five consonants. The ancient Sanskrit grammarians arranged the alphabet according to concise linguistic principles, and this arrangement has been accepted by all Western scholars. The system of transliteration used in this book conforms to a system that scholars in the last fifty years have almost universally accepted to indicate the pronunciation of each Sanskrit sound.

The short vowel *a* is pronounced like the *u* in *but*, long *a* like the *a* in *far*, and short *i* like the *i* in *pin*. Long *ī* is pronounced as in *pique*, short *u* as in *pull*, and long *u* as in *rule*. The vowel *ṛ* is pronounced like the *ri* in *rim*. The vowel *e* is pronounced as in *they*, *ai* as in *aisle*, *o* as in *go*, and *au* as in *how*. The *anusvāra* (*ṁ*), which is a pure nasal, is pronounced like the *n* in the French word *bon*, and *visarga* (*ḥ*), which is a strong aspirate, is pronounced as a final *h* sound. Thus *aḥ* is pronounced like *aha*, and *iḥ* like *ih*.

The guttural consonants—*k*, *kh*, *g*, *gh*, and *ṅ*—are pronounced from the throat in much the same manner as in English. *K* is pronounced as in *kite*, *kh* as in *Eckhart*, *g* as in *give*, *gh* as in *dig hard*, and *ṅ* as in *sing*. The palatal consonants—*c*, *ch*, *j*, *jh*, and *ñ*—are pronounced from the palate with the middle of the tongue. *C* is pronounced as in *chair*, *ch* as in *staunch heart*, *j* as in *joy*, *jh* as in *hedgehog*, and *ñ* as in *canyon*. The cerebral consonants—*ṭ*, *ṭh*, *ḍ*, *ḍh*, and *ṇ*—are pronounced with the tip of the tongue turned up and drawn back against the dome of the palate. *Ṭ* is pronounced as in *tub*, *ṭh* as in *light heart*, *ḍ* as in *dove*, *ḍh* as in *red-hot*, and *ṇ* as in *nut*. The dental consonants—*t*, *th*, *d*, *dh*, and *n*—are pronounced in the same manner as the cerebrals but with the forepart of the tongue against the teeth. The labial consonants—*p*, *ph*, *b*, *bh*, and *m*—are pronounced with the lips. *P* is pronounced as in *pine*, *ph* as in *uphill*, *b* as in *bird*, *bh* as in *rub hard*, and *m* as in *mother*. The semivowels—*y*, *r*, *l*, and *v*—are pronounced as in *yes*, *run*, *light*, and *vine* respectively. The sibilants—*ś*, *ṣ*, and *s*—are pronounced, respectively, as in the German word *sprechen* and the English words *shine* and *sun*. The letter *h* is pronounced as in *home*.



hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa, kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare  
hare rāma hare rāma, rāma rāma hare hare