



Śrī Kāmadā Ekādaśī

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## The Worship Of Spiritual Master

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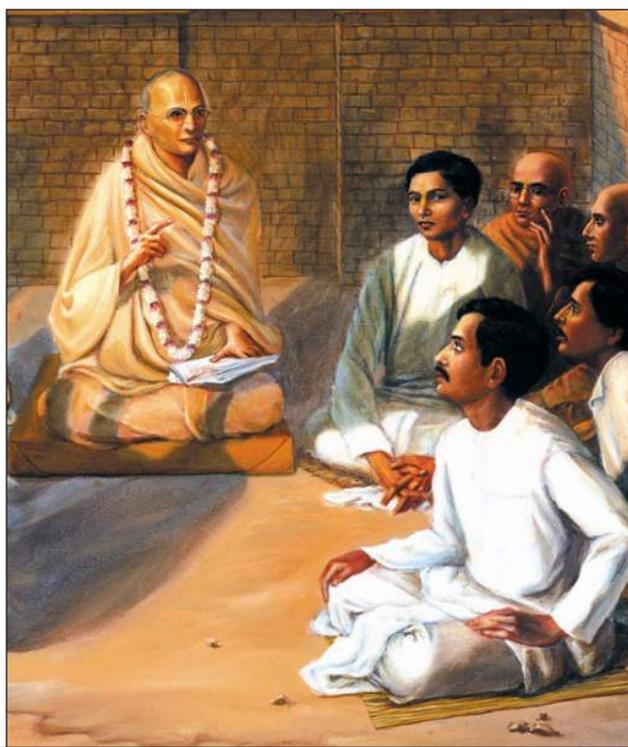
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### NARADA INSTRUCTS THE PRACETAS

*Conversation between Maitreya R̥ṣi and Vidura*

**The great saint Maitreya said:** After that, the Pracetas lived at home for thousands of years and developed perfect knowledge in spiritual consciousness. At last they remembered the blessings of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and left home, putting their wife in the charge of a perfect son. The Pracetas went to the seashore in the west where the great liberated sage Jajali was residing. After perfecting the spiritual knowledge by which one becomes equal minded toward all living entities, the Pracetas became perfect in Krishna consciousness. After practicing the *yogāsana* for mystic yoga, the Pracetas managed to control their life air, mind, words and external vision. Thus by the *prāṇāyāma* process they were completely relieved of material attachment. By remaining perpendicular, they could concentrate their minds on the uppermost *Brahman*. While they were practicing this *prāṇāyāma*, the great sage Narada, who is worshiped both by demons and by demigods, came to see them. As soon as the Pracetas saw that the great sage Narada had appeared, they immediately got up even from their *āsanas*. As required, they immediately offered obeisance and worshiped him. When they saw that Narada Muni was properly seated, they began to ask him questions.

**All the Pracetas began to address the great sage Narada:** O great sage, O *brāhmaṇa*, we hope you met with no disturbances while coming here. It is due to our great fortune that we are now able to see you. By the traveling of the sun, people are relieved from the fear of the darkness of night a fear brought about by thieves and rogues. Similarly, your traveling is like that of the sun, for you also drive away all kinds of fear. O master, may we inform you that because of our being overly attached to

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

family affairs, we had almost forgotten the instructions we received from Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Dear master, kindly enlighten us in transcendental knowledge, which may act as a torchlight by which we may cross the dark nescience of material existence.

**The great sage Maitreya continued:** My dear Vidura, being thus petitioned by the Pracetas, the supreme devotee Narada, who is always absorbed in thoughts of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, began to reply.

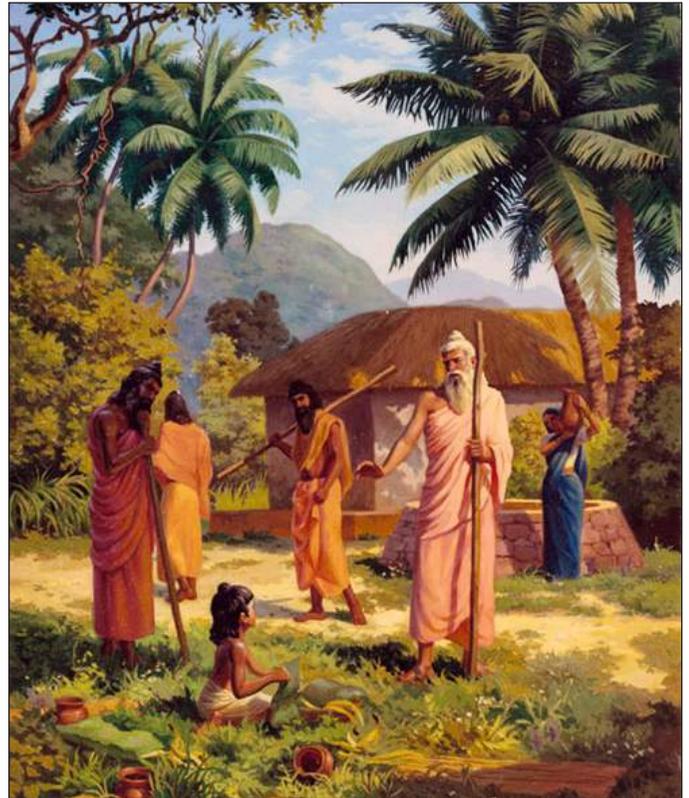
**The great sage Narada said:** When a living entity is born solely to engage in the devotional service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the supreme controller, his birth, all his fruitive activities, his life span, his mind and his words are all factually perfect. A civilized human being 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; this birth is called *sāvitra*. The third birth, called *yājñika*, takes place when one is given the opportunity to worship Lord Vishnu. Despite the opportunities for attaining such births, even if one gets the life span of a demigod, if he does not actually engage in the service of the Lord, everything is useless. Similarly, one's activities may be mundane or spiritual, but they are useless if they are not meant for satisfying the Supreme Lord. Without devotional service, what is the meaning of severe austerities, the process of hearing, the power of speech, the power of mental speculation, elevated intelligence, strength, and the power of the senses? Transcendental practices that do not ultimately help one realize the Supreme Personality of Godhead are useless, be they mystic yoga practices, the analytical study of matter, severe austerity, the acceptance of *sannyāsa*, or the study of Vedic literature. All these may be very important aspects of spiritual advancement, but unless one understands the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, all these processes are useless. Factually the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the original source of all self-realization. Consequently, the goal of all auspicious activities *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga* and *bhakti* is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As pouring water on the root of a tree energizes the trunk, branches, twigs and every other part of the tree, and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens all the senses and limbs of the body, simply worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead through devotional service automatically satisfies the demigods, who are parts of that Supreme Personality. During the rainy season, water is generated from the sun, and in due course of time - during the summer season-- the very same water is again absorbed by the sun. Similarly, all living entities, moving and inert, are generated from the earth, and again, after some time, they all return to the earth (as dust). Everything emanates from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and in due course of time everything enters into Him again. Just as the sunshine is non-different from the sun, the cosmic manifestation is also non-different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Supreme Personality is therefore all-pervasive within this material

creation. When the senses are active, they appear as part and parcel of the body, but when the body is asleep, when their activities are unmanifest, they appear separate. Similarly, the whole cosmic creation appears different and yet is non-different from the Supreme Person. My dear Kings, in the sky sometimes there are clouds, sometimes there is darkness, and sometimes there is illumination. They all appearance consecutively. Similarly, in the creation of the Supreme Absolute, His energies, the modes of passion, darkness and goodness appear consecutively. Sometimes they appear, and sometimes they disappear. Because the Supreme Lord is the cause of all causes, He is the Supersoul of all individual living entities, and He exists as both the remote and immediate cause. Since He is aloof from the material emanations, He is free from their interactions and is always the controller of material nature. You should therefore engage in His devotional service, thinking yourself qualitatively one with Him.

By showing mercy to all living entities, by restricting the senses from sense enjoyment and remaining satisfied in whatever condition one finds oneself, one can very quickly satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Janardana. Being completely cleansed of all material desires, the devotees are freed from all mental contamination. Thus they can think of the Lord constantly and address Him very feelingly. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, feeling Himself to be controlled by His devotees, does not leave them for a second, just as the sky overhead never becomes invisible. The Supreme Personality of Godhead becomes very dear to those devotees who have no material possessions but are fully happy in accepting His devotional service as their sole possession. Indeed, the Lord relishes the devotional activities of such devotees. Those who are puffed up with material education, wealth, aristocracy and fruitive activity are very proud of possessing material things, and they often deride the devotees. Even if such people offer the Lord worship, the Lord never accepts it. Although the Supreme Personality of Godhead is self-sufficient, He becomes dependent on His devotees. He does not care for the goddess of fortune, nor for the kings and demigods who seek the favors of the goddess of fortune. Where is that person who is actually grateful and will not worship the Personality of Godhead?

**The great sage Maitreya continued:** My dear King Vidura, Sri Narada Muni, the son of Lord Brahma, thus described all these relationships with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. And then returned to Brahmaloaka. Hearing from Narada's lips the glories of the Lord, which vanquish all the ill fortune of the world, the Pracetas also became attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Meditating on His lotus feet, they advanced to the ultimate destination. My dear Vidura, I have told you everything you wanted to know about the conversation between Narada and the Pracetas, the conversation describing the glories of the Lord. I have related this as far as possible.

— Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (BhāgavataPurāṇa) » Canto 4: The Creation of the Fourth Order » SB 4.31. Narada Instructs the Pracetas » Verses:1-25.



### INSTRUCTIONS FROM A BONAFIDE SPIRITUAL MASTER Sriḷa Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvatī Thakura

#### What is the difference between my spiritual master and me?

I am more insignificant than the most insignificant, and the spiritual master, who is always engaged in serving the Almighty is greater than the greatest.

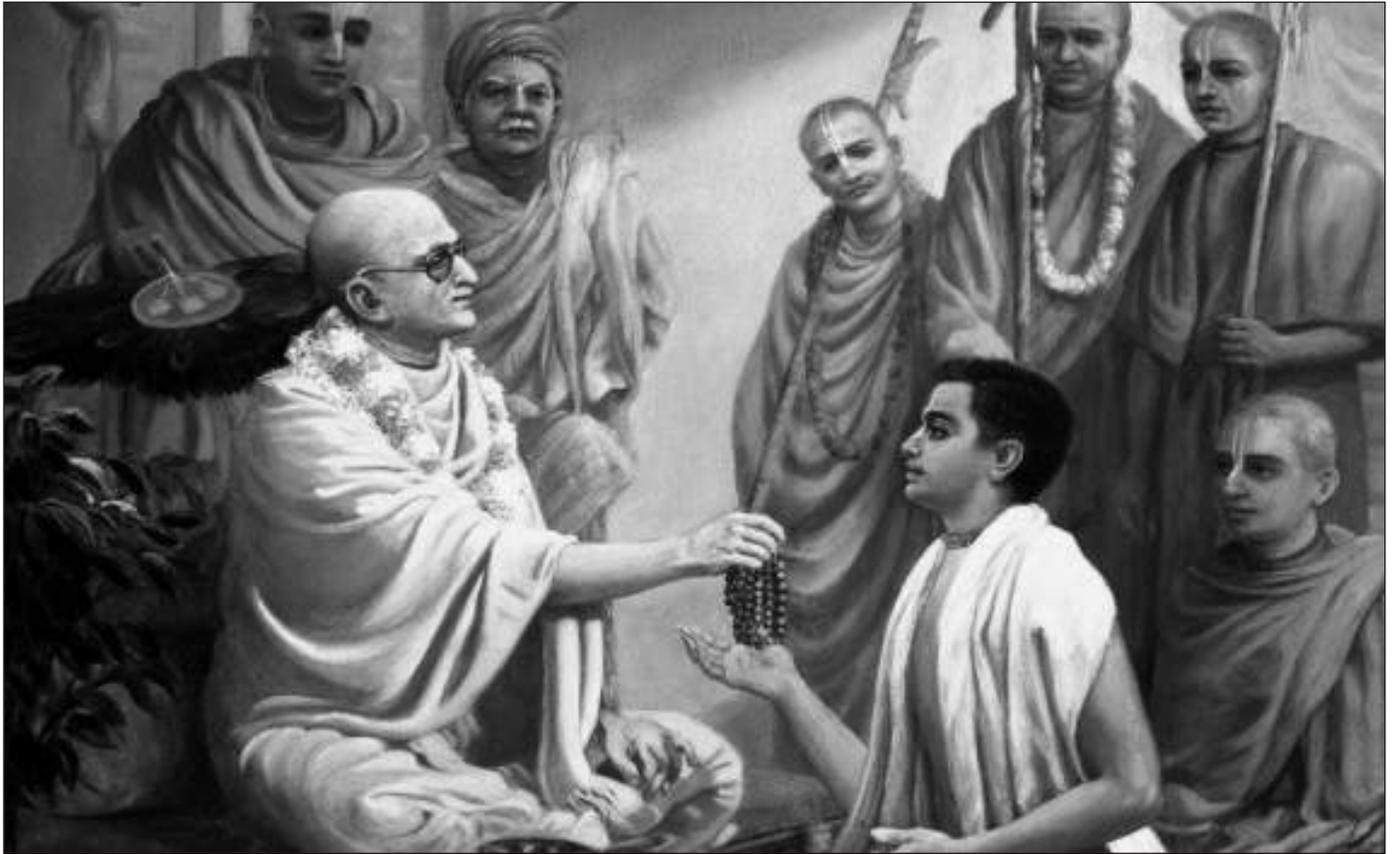
#### What does it mean to approach a spiritual master and inquire from him?

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā (Bhagavad-gītā. 4.34)* The word *praṇipāt* means to surrender and to listen with full attention. Without *praṇipāt* the hearing process is incomplete. Without *praṇipāt* there is no way to understand the transcendental Absolute Truth and topics about the spiritual master, Vaishnavas, and the *śāstras*.

The word *paripraśna* means “honest inquiry,” or to humbly inquire from the spiritual master. We should be prepared to fully accept the reply to our inquiry. Inquiring with a doubtful mind is not honest inquiry. To make a show of inquiring while under the control of false ego is also not honest inquiry. Unless we are fully surrendered, we cannot make honest inquiry. And unless a subject matter is clarified through honest inquiry we cannot begin our service.

#### How should I treat my spiritual master?

Serve your spiritual master with the same love and devotion as you show Krishna. Consider the spiritual master to be as good as the Supreme Lord. Do not think



him inferior to Him in any way. It is a disciple's duty to treat, worship, and serve the spiritual master as if he were God. If a disciple does not do so, he will fall from his position as a disciple. Only those who consider the spiritual master non-different from the Supreme Lord can understand the confidential purport of the scriptures, chant Hari's holy name, and preach *hari-kathā*. To teach about His own service, Lord Krishna appears in the form of the spiritual master. If we are fortunate enough, we can understand this flawless scriptural verdict. Otherwise, we will remain doubtful and continue to drown in the ocean of material existence.

The spiritual master is neither the predominating absolute nor the original predominated absolute. He is a manifestation of the original predominated absolute. Lord Krishna is the worshipable God and the spiritual master is the worshiper God. Lord Krishna is the predominating absolute and the spiritual master is the predominated absolute. Because the spiritual master, the worshiper God, is the personification of service to Krishna Himself, he is most dear to Krishna. This is the special characteristic of the spiritual master. Sri Krishna is the energetic and the spiritual master is His complete energy. The spiritual master is not an ordinary human being. He is the master of the living beings. The spiritual master is the supreme consciousness and a manifestation of the Lord's spiritual energy. But the living entities as minute spiritual sparks belong to the Lord's marginal energy and are part and parcel of the Lord.

**With how much determination should we serve the**

#### **spiritual master's lotus feet?**

A real disciple accepts his spiritual master as servitor God and most dear to Krishna. He never considers his spiritual master inferior to the Lord in any way. Thus a sincere disciple serves and worships his spiritual master as if he were God. Those who do not follow this principle fall from their position as disciples. Until we see the spiritual master as a manifestation of and non-different from the Supreme Lord, we will not be able to chant the Lord's name purely. A genuine disciple must possess firm determination and faith in his spiritual master, thinking, "I will serve my spiritual master and Lord Gauranga with utmost simplicity. I will follow my spiritual master's instructions, which have come down from the Supreme Lord. I will never disobey my spiritual master's orders being influenced by anyone in this world. If following my spiritual master means I must become proud or be born as an animal or go to hell forever, I will still never hesitate. I will not follow anyone other than my spiritual master. I will destroy the current of mundane thought by the strength of his instructions. If my spiritual master showers even a particle of pollen from his lotus feet upon the world, then millions of people will be delivered. There is no knowledge or proper code of conduct in the fourteen worlds that is more important than a particle of dust from the lotus feet of my spiritual master."

#### **What is the difference between the truth of the spiritual master and the truth of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī?**

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the original predominated absolute. She, the daughter of Vṛishabhānu, is the crest jewel of all *ācāryas* of *mādhurya-rasa* and of all lovers of Krishna.



Our spiritual master, who is an *ācārya* in the line of *mādhurya-rasa*, is Her dear companion. Thus he is an eternally perfected *Vraja-gopī*. By discussing the writings of Srila Narottama dasa Thakura, which state that *guru rupā sakhī bāme*, “on the left the *sakhī* in the form of the spiritual master is situated,” it is clearly understood that the spiritual master in his original *sakhī* form is the manifestation of the daughter of Vrishabhanu and is non-different from Her.

### What kind of instruction does a bona fide spiritual master give?

There is no scarcity of willing instructors in this world. They invariably advise us to pay special attention to our immediate needs. But this creates more bad than good because our needs go on increasing. While trying to fulfill our temporary needs we drown in an ocean of unlimited needs and difficulties. It is not beneficial for us to live in this world with either attachment or detachment. We should become free from the cheaters who, in the guise of saints, induce ordinary people to strive for religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, and liberation. They are simply trying to make ordinary people as apparently religious as they themselves. Instead, we should become intelligent enough to concentrate our mind on topics about Sri Caitanyadeva.

As an example, Brihaspati is the spiritual master of the demigods. He instructs the demigods in such a way that they can enjoy a better standard of life. Both Brihaspati’s sharp intelligence and his instructions on religious principles are simply meant simply to increase his disciples’ enjoying propensity. There are many good instructors in human society too— family priests, community leaders, country leaders, and relatives— whose instructions are similarly intended . There are also family spiritual masters such as Vasistha who instruct their disciples to renounce sense gratification. But a Vaishnava spiritual master instructs people only to worship Hari. He makes neither material enjoyment nor dry renunciation the goal of his instructions. Instead, he instructs others for their eternal spiritual benefit.

### What are the gifts of a spiritual master to a surrendered disciple?

The spiritual master gives a true supplicant a spiritual name. Since the spiritual master is non-different from the Supreme Lord and personifies devotional service, we should never neglect him or deal with him as an ordinary person. If we disregard the spiritual master, we commit a grave offense. Similarly, there is no difference between the transcendental sound vibration and the transcendental Lord. Krishna’s holy name and Krishna Himself are nondifferent. The holy name is also not a product of the material world and as such He is not an object of our vision; rather, He is the seer.

Only a bona fide spiritual master who is dear to Krishna can bestow Krishna on others. *kṛṣṇa-kathā* should be heard only from the Vaishnava spiritual master. No one but devotees can speak about the Lord. If we approach *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, *yogīs*, or worldly teachers to hear something, they

will only discuss maya. They accept neither the Lord’s transcendental existence nor the fact that the Lord is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss. Such people mistakenly consider both the Lord’s incarnations and the spiritual master to be mortal beings.

A spiritual master awards his surrendered disciples Krishna’s holy name and the mantras in relation to Krishna. *Kṛṣṇa mantras* are topmost. There is no *mantra* as powerful as a *Kṛṣṇa-mantras*. If we learn to chant these *Kṛṣṇa-mantras* perfectly, all our mental speculation will be destroyed. As long as we consider our spiritual master an ordinary being, we will not be able to understand the holy name’s glories. We will also not become spiritually successful if we consider Sri Caitanyadeva an ordinary human being. Simply by the spiritual master’s mercy can we understand the glories of Sri Gaurasundara and *Vraja-dhāma*.

The spiritual master has an eternal *kuñja* on the shore of Sri Radha kunda. There he has bound Krishna by the power of his service. Simply by his mercy we can attain the shelter of Govardhana Hill. Govardhana Hill is another form of Krishna. If we are filled with mental speculation we will see Govardhana only as a stone mountain. But the place where Vrishabhanu’s daughter enjoys Her pastimes is not an ordinary place made of the earth and stone of this world. It is transcendental and decorated with spiritual gems. It is by our spiritual master’s mercy that we can aspire to attain the intimate service of Sri Radha-Madhava.

All our inauspiciousness is destroyed and our auspiciousness created simply by the spiritual master’s mercy. It is impossible to know Krishna either by sinful endeavor or worldly morality. We can understand Him only through pure devotional service. It is only possible to learn how to practice this pure devotion by the spiritual master’s mercy.

*Kṛṣṇa-kathā* is certainly an invaluable asset. Actually, it is our only asset as we attempt to progress on the path leading to Goloka. *Kṛṣṇa-kathā* is non-different from Krishna Himself. Any topic not related to Krishna is actually useless. Therefore, *kṛṣṇa-kathā* should be preached extensively in this world. We can hear topics about Krishna or Vaikuntha from the lotus mouth of the spiritual master who is a resident of Vraja. At present, we spend our time thinking about our body, which is a bag of bones and flesh, and have given up topics about Krishna. Therefore, we identify with material objects and do not attain self-realization.

### Should we discuss the spiritual master’s instructions every day?

Among all the Vaishnavas, the spiritual master is topmost. It is essential to constantly listen to the instructions of the spiritual master, who is dear to Krishna. If we do not discuss or hear our spiritual master’s instructions every day but instead engage in other activities, we will simply invite distress. We should not imitate the ways of the spiritual master or the Vaishnavas. Such imitation is false association. Rather, we should follow in their footsteps. We

should associate with those devotees in whose hearts the Lord resides. Devotees and non-devotees, liberated souls and conditioned souls, perfect souls and imperfect souls—these are not one and the same. Raw rice is not fit for our eating; it becomes fit only after it is cooked. Similarly, we should associate with perfected devotees. That is both most desirable and auspicious.

— *AmṛtaVāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda Compiled by Śrīpāda Bhakti Maṅkha Bhāgavati Mahārāja. Adapted and Published by Īśvaradāsa Translated from Bengali by Bhūmipatīdāsa.*

## ŚRĪ GURU MAHIMĀ

*Srila Vishvanatha Chakravarti Thakura*

*śrī-guru-carāṇa-padma, kevala-bhakti-sadma  
bando mui sābadhāna mate  
jāhāra prasāde bhāi, e bhava tariyā jāi  
Krishna-prāpti haya jāhā hate*

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 mind, it is through the grace of the spiritual master that we cross over this ocean of material existence and obtain Krishna.

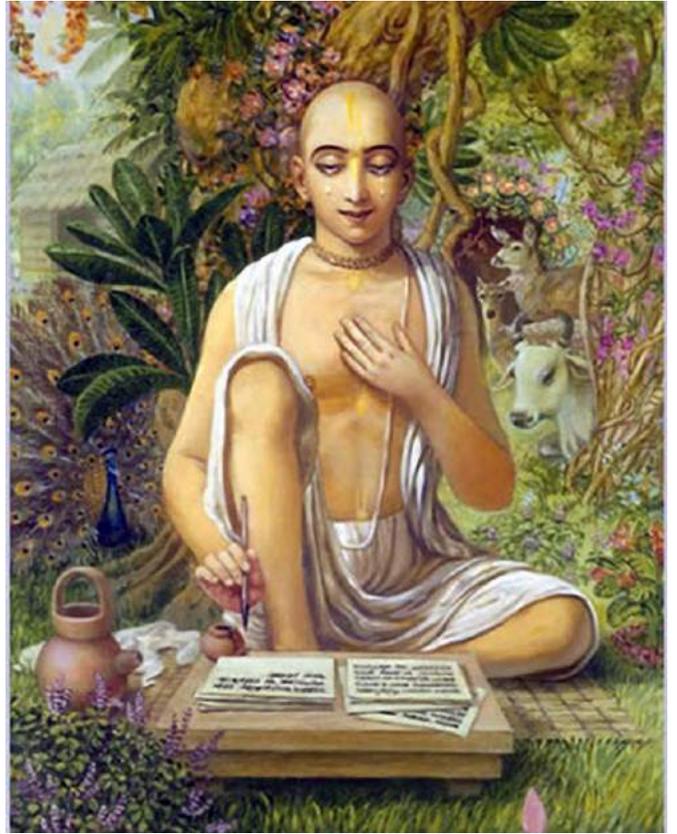
### PURPORT

It is impossible to achieve the mercy of the Supreme Lord or His devotional service without taking shelter of the lotus feet of the spiritual master. Therefore in order to enter the temple of devotional service, one must first take shelter of the lotus feet of the spiritual master. Hence, Srila Narottama dasa Thakura is offering his prayers to his spiritual master.

The words *śrī guru* mean a spiritual master complete with all spiritual opulence. The spiritual master is endowed with the potency to deliver his disciples from the grip of nescience and take them to the lotus feet of Sri Krishna. In other words, the spiritual master is the treasury of loving devotional service. The words *śrī-guru-carāṇa-padma* do not only mean the lotus feet of the spiritual master, but also it is used here for respect, just as in Sridhara swami *carāṇa* or Sri Goswami *carāṇa* etc.

The word *padma* (lotus) indicates that the spiritual master is the embodiment of love for Sri Krishna and full of transcendental sweetness. It is also understood that just as the honey of the lotus flower is relished by bumblebees, similarly, the sweet mercy of the spiritual master is relished by the devotees. Such a spiritual master is known as *kevala-bhakti-sadma*, the only shelter of unalloyed devotional service.

The words *kevala-bhakti* refer to pure devotional service devoid of fruitive activities, mental speculation and material desires. The word *mui* means “I am.” In line with the nature of pure devotional service, Srila Narottama dasa Thakura has used the word *mui* in order to express his humility. “I offer my obeisances unto the lotus feet of the spiritual master, (described above), with great care and attention.” One



should worship the spiritual master with great respect and reverence, and without any desire for material enjoyment. One should seek only the servitorship of the spiritual master and Sri Krishna.

*guru-mūkha-padma-vākya, citte te kariya aikya  
ārnā kariha mane āsā  
śrī-guru-carāṇe rati, ei se uttama-gati  
je prasāde pūre sarba āsā*

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 topmost means of spiritual advancement. By his mercy all desires for spiritual perfection are fulfilled.

### PURPORT

The spiritual master instructs one in the loving devotional service of Sri Krishna. The instructions from the mouth of the spiritual master are very powerful; they are capable of enabling one to achieve Lord Sri Krishna. The words of the spiritual master are always in accordance with the revealed scriptures. Therefore, those who are eager to attain Sri Krishna should cherish the words of the spiritual master in their hearts as their life and soul.

The word *vākya* in this text refers to the instructions on *prema-rasa-tattva*, the science of loving relationship in devotion to Krishna. The word *sakya* refers to one's ability to obtain Krishna. *Uttamagati* means the highest destination. *Uttamagati* may also refer to the best of all obtainable things, which is *prema-seva*, service in complete love.



Another reading of *citte te kariya aikya* is *hr̥di kari mahā sakya*. This means that whatever instructions the spiritual master gives to his disciples about their eternal constitutional relationship as that of a *mañjarī*, should be keenly kept within their hearts. The word *sarva āsā* indicates that one should be transcendently greedy to achieve the loving service of Sri Sri Radha-Krishna, such as massaging Their feet, or offering Them a *cāmara* in a *vṛndāvana nikuñja*, a grove decorated with jewels and pearls. With whomever the spiritual master is pleased, Sri Sri Radha and Krishna are also pleased. *yasya prasāda bhagavat prasādaḥ*. By the mercy of the spiritual master, one can attain the mercy of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, only by the mercy of the spiritual master is the loving service to Sri Sri Radha-Krishna attained.

*cakhu-dāna dilā jei, janme janme prabhu sei*  
*divya-jñāna hr̥de prakāśita*  
*prema-bhakti jāhā haite, abidyā bināsa jāte*  
*bede gāya jāhāra carita*

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.

#### PURPORT

“Sri Krishna is my Lord and I am His eternal servant.” This constitutional truth has been forgotten by the living entities from time immemorial. Taking advantage of this, the external energy of the Supreme Lord, *maya*, has entangled the living entities in unlimited material miseries and caused them to accept the material body made of ignorance, as their self. The spiritual master alone is able to deliver such living entities from the miseries of material existence and establish them in their true constitutional position. The phrase *cakhu dāna dilā jei* indicates that the spiritual master opens our darkened eyes which are covered with nescience and awards divine vision by which we can cross the ocean of material existence and become qualified to behold the higher spiritual reality.

The words *divya-jñāna* refer to the knowledge through which one can learn how to worship Krishna. It is understood that such knowledge can be revealed in ones’ heart only by the mercy of *śrī guru*. The word *divya-jñāna* also means transcendental knowledge in the form of initiation into the teachings of Sri Krishna. It is stated in *Hari Bhakti Vilāsa*;

*divya jñānam yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṁkṣyam*  
*tasmād dikṣeti sā proktā desike tattva kovidaiḥ*

When one is initiated into the knowledge of Krishna and his relationship with Krishna is revived, it is to be understood that he is educated in transcendental knowledge. The word *janme janme prabhu* means that the spiritual master is able to remove the coverings of nescience of the living entities

born in this material world, and he is also able to engage the living entities in the loving service of Sri Govinda, the transcendental cowherd boy of Braja Mandala, which is beyond the realm of *maya*. Therefore, whether one is in the practicing stage or one is in the perfected stage, the spiritual master is always one’s worshipable lord.

The words *vedegāya* indicate that not only Narottama dasa Thakura glorifies the spiritual master, but the Vedas and the supplementary Vedic scriptures also glorify the spiritual master. As stated by Lord Krishna to Uddhava in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.17.24, *ācārya mām vijānīyāt*, “One should consider the spiritual master non-different from Me.” Also the Vedas state : *ācārya van puruṣavedaḥ*, one who associates with the *ācārya* can become familiar with all the Vedic knowledge.

*śrī-guru karuṇā-sindhu, adhama janāra bandhu*  
*lokanātha lokera jībana*  
*hāhā prabhū kara dayā, deha mora pada-chāyā*  
*ebe jaśa ghuṣuk tribhūvana*

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

— *Śrī Prema Bhakti-candrikā* » Chapter One—*Śrī Guru Mahimā* » *Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura* » *Translations and Purports of Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura* » *Adapted and Published by Īsvara dāsa* » *Bengali Translator: Bhūmipati dāsa.*

#### IN THE ABSENCE OF A SPIRITUAL MASTER

*His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

One should always be conscious that a person who is reluctant to accept a spiritual master and spiritual initiation 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. 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 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. 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. It is imperative that a serious person accept a bona fide spiritual master in terms of the *śāstric* injunctions.

Sri Jiva Goswami advises that one not accept a spiritual master in terms of hereditary or customary 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 » Chapter 1: The Spiritual Masters » Verse: 35, Purport.

## SHOULD A PERSON ONLY ACCEPT A SPIRITUAL MASTER BORN IN A BRĀHMAṆA FAMILY ?

*Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura*

**What are the symptoms of a bona fide spiritual master? Can a person who has accepted a family preceptor later take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master?**

Due to the influence of time, people's conception regarding the spiritual master has been greatly polluted. Nowadays, people take instructions either from a family preceptor or anyone else, and as a result they are bereft of the shelter of the most worshipable bona fide spiritual master. It is stated in the scriptures that a person who is inquisitive about the nature of himself nature and the Supreme Lord should approach and surrender to a spiritual master who is firmly fixed both in the service of the Supreme Brahman and in the transcendental sound vibration. (*Sajjana-toṣaṇī 2/1*)

### Who is a qualified spiritual master?

One who is fully acquainted with spiritual truth and successful in spiritual life is qualified to become a spiritual master. (*Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*)

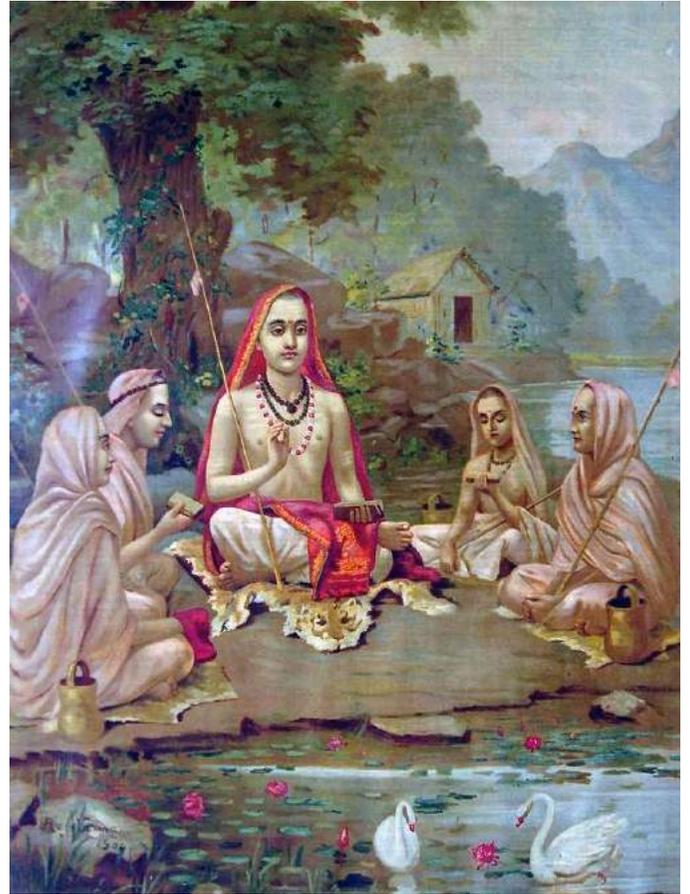
**Should a person accept a spiritual master who is born in a high family? Why is it stated in Hari-bhakti-vilāsa that a person should accept a spiritual master who is born in a brāhmaṇa family or who is a grhastha?**

Knowledge about Krishna is most essential for all living entities. A person who knows the science of Krishna, whether that person is a *brāhmaṇa*, *sūdra*, *grhastha*, or *sannyāsī*, is qualified to become a spiritual master. Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa instructs one not to take initiation from a person of the lower caste when a qualified person from a higher caste is present. This instruction is meant for Vaishnavas who are dependent on social custom; it is for those who wish to progress on the path of spiritual life according to worldly rules and regulations. But those who wish to obtain pure devotional service to Krishna, by carefully understanding the purport of *vaidhī* and *rāgānuṅga-bhakti*, should accept a spiritual master who fully knows the science of Krishna, regardless of his varṇa or *āśrama*.

(*Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya 8/127*)

**Are the principal qualifications of a spiritual master that he is a brāhmaṇa and a householder?**

*Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states that whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī*, or a *sūdra*, if he knows the science



of Krishna, he is qualified to become a spiritual master. One who possesses the internal and primary quality of a *guru* (knowing the science of Krishna) is qualified to become a spiritual master, even if he does not possess one or two of the external qualities (being a *brāhmaṇa* and a householder). It is good if a spiritual master possesses both the internal and the external qualities. But those who lack the primary internal quality, even though they possess the external qualities, are not qualified as spiritual masters. (*Sajjana-toṣaṇī 11/6*)

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# Bhāgavata

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