



## In Support of Varnasrama to Attain the Lord's Lotus Feet

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Guru



### Highlights of the issue:

-  Guru Paramapara System
-  Sri Guru
-  The Second Chance
-  Able to Cross Mountains
-  Balancing Guru-Bhakti and ISKCON Values
-  Who is a Guru?

## Who Can Become a Guru?

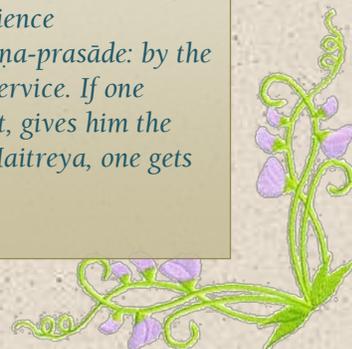
*gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt / pitā na sa syāj janani na sā syāt*

*daivam na tat syān na patīś ca sa syān / na mocayed yaḥ samupeta-mṛtyum [SB 5.5.18]*

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.

## Sincere Seeker Gets the Intelligence To Find a Suitable Guru

One [should] find a person who knows the science of God, or a tattva-vit. Tattva-vit means "one who knows the Absolute Truth." There are many pseudotranscendentalists, even at places of pilgrimage. Such men are always present, and one has to be intelligent enough to find the actual person to be consulted; then one's attempt to progress by traveling to different holy places will be successful. 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-caritṛāmṭa, 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 situated 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 his spiritual life. [SB 3.20.4 Purport]



## Srila Prabhupada Speaks on Guru Guru Parampara System

“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. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu therefore gives a definition of guru. *Yare dekha, tare kaha ‘krsna’-upadesa*: [Cc. Madhya 7.128] the bona fide guru is he who advises his disciples exactly in accordance with the principles spoken by Krsna. The bona fide guru is he who has accepted Krsna as guru.

This is the guru-parampara system. The original guru is Vyasadeva because he is the speaker of *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, wherein everything spoken relates to Krsna. Therefore guru-puja is known as Vyasa-puja. In the final analysis, the original guru is Krsna, His disciple is Narada, whose disciple is Vyasa, and in this way we gradually come in touch with the guru-parampara. One cannot become a guru if he does not know what the Personality of Godhead Krsna or His incarnation wants. The mission of the guru is the mission of the Supreme Personality of Godhead: to spread Krsna consciousness all over the world.” [Srimad Bhagavatam 8.24.48, purport]

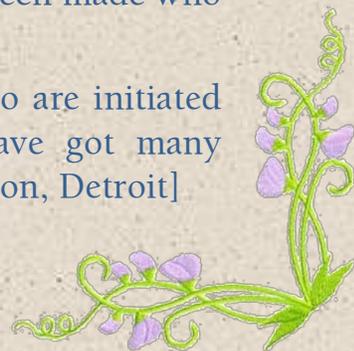


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**Prabhupada:** "Then, from Krsna, Narada. From Narada, Vyasadeva. From Vyasadeva to Madhvacarya, from Madhvacarya to Isvara Puri, Madhavendra Puri, then Caitanya Mahaprabhu, then His disciples, the six Goswamis, then Krsna dasa Kaviraja, then Baladeva Vidyabhusana. So we are taking account very rigidly from Caitanya Mahaprabhu, and I am the tenth generation from Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

**Mohsin Hassan:** Yeah, the tenth. After you, is it any decision has been made who will take over?

**Prabhupada:** Yes. All of them will take over. These students, who are initiated from me, all of them will act as I am doing. Just like I have got many Godbrothers, they are all acting." [July 18, 1971 Room Conversation, Detroit]



# HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Speaks on Guru

## Sri Guru

Om Surabhyai namah! Om Sri Gurave namah!

“Guru Tattva” or “truth/understanding about the spiritual master” is a major theme that is dealt with extensively in the Vedic literatures. We will only touch upon a few basic but essential points in this article. In keeping with the Vedic custom when dealing with such a weighty topic, the tradition is to offer humble respects to the spiritual master seeking his blessings for obtaining a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

### Guru Gives Krishna

*sri-guru-carana-padma kevala bhakati-sadma*

*bando mui savadhana mate*

*jahara prasade bhair ei bhava toriya jai*

*krishna prapti hoya jaha 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 brother (my dear mind)! It is through the grace of the spiritual master that we cross over this material existence and obtain Krishna.”

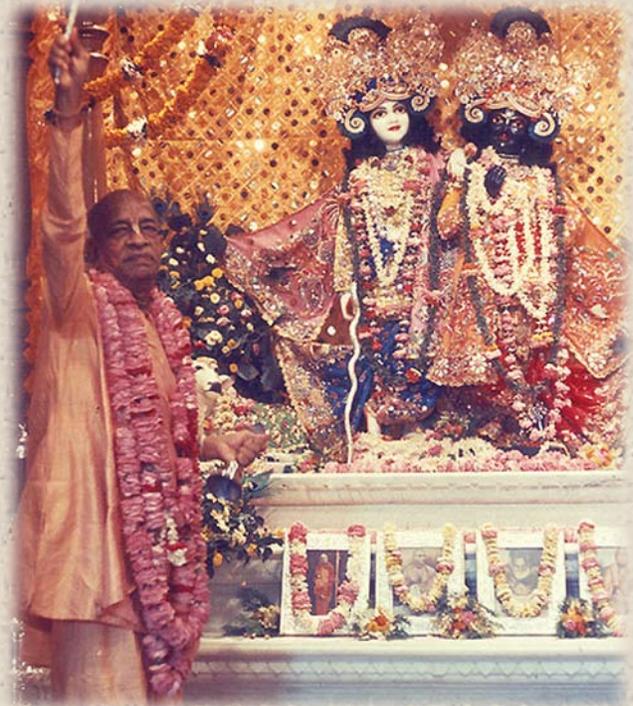
These are the words composed by one of the foremost Acaryas (Spiritual Masters), Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura, in his prayer *Sri Guru Vandana* (Prayers to the Spiritual Master) from the *Prema-bhakti-candrika*.

We can immediately get a glimpse of the utmost importance of guru in one’s life. Without the mercy or grace of the spiritual master, one cannot cross over this material existence and thus one cannot obtain the lotus feet of Lord Krishna. All the Vedic literatures stress the need of taking shelter of “Sri Guru” who can give one “divya jnana”, transcendental knowledge, by which one can realize both oneself and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna so that one can one day become qualified to return to our original home in the spiritual kingdom of God, *Vaikuntha loka*.

### Qualifications to Accept Guru

In the *Bhagavad-gita*, Lord Krishna explains to Arjuna that if one wants to understand about *Tattva* or the “absolute truth”, one must approach a bona fide spiritual master:

*tad viddhi pranipatena / pariprasnena sevaya*



*upadeksyanti te jnana / jnaninas tattva-darsinah*

*“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.” [Gita 4.34]*

The three qualifications for the sincere student are clearly revealed in this important verse. First comes “*pranipat*”, submissiveness of mind or humility. Without recognizing our fallen condition, we cannot approach a spiritual master. Once we demonstrate submissiveness, we become qualified to put forth questions, “*prasna*”, to such a bona-fide spiritual master. That is also the instruction given in the first aphorism of the Vedanta-sutra, *athato brahma jijnasa*, now that we have acquired this human form of life, we should be inquisitive about Brahman and thus unravel the meaning and purpose of life. Srila Prabhupada comments in this connection: “*This inquiry is necessary for those who are between the paramahamsas and the fools who have forgotten the question of self-realization in the midst of life in sense gratification.*” [SB 3.7.17] To receive the mercy of guru by which we can understand things, after approaching him with a submissive mind and being inquisitive, we must then render some service, “*seva*”. This is confirmed by Srila Rupa Goswami, another great Vaisnava Acarya, in his book *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu*:

*atah sri-krishna-namadi/ na bhaved grahyam indriyaih*

*sevonmukhe hi jihvadau / svayam-eva sphuraty adah*

*"No one can understand the transcendental nature of the name, form, quality and pastimes of Sri Krishna through his materially contaminated senses. Only when one becomes spiritually saturated by transcendental service to the Lord are the transcendental name, form, quality and pastimes of the Lord revealed to him."* (Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu 1.2.234)

### ***Only the Fortunate Find a Bona-fide Guru***

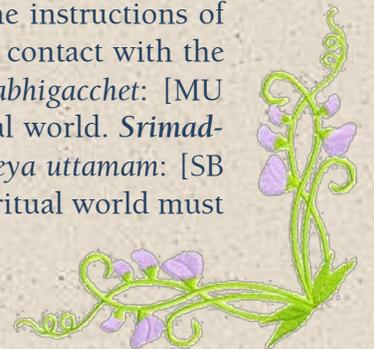
Srila Prabhupada comments on a verse found in the teachings of Lord Caitanya indicating the great fortunate of a living entity who finally finds shelter of a bona-fide guru:

*ei rupe brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva*

*guru-krishna-prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija*

[Cc. Madhya 19.151]

*“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 Krishna come in contact with a guru, a bona fide representative of Krishna. The Mayavadis indulging in mental speculation and the karmis desiring the results of their actions cannot become gurus. A guru must be a direct representative of Krishna who distributes the instructions of Krishna without any change. Thus only the most fortunate persons come in contact with the guru. As confirmed in the Vedic literatures, *tad-vijnanarthah sa gurum evabhigacchet*: [MU 1.2.12] one has to search out a guru to understand the affairs of the spiritual world. *Srimad-Bhagavatam* also confirms this point. *Tasmad gurum prapadyeta jinyasuh sreya 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 Krishna. From all angles of vision, therefore, the word guru is especially meant for the bona fide representative of Krishna and no one else. Padma Purana states, *avaisnavo gurur na syat*: one who is not a Vaisnava, or who is not a representative of Krishna, cannot be a guru. Even the most qualified brahmana cannot become a guru if he is not a representative of Krishna.” [SB 5-17-11]

*sat-karma-nipuno vipro/ mantra-tantra-viaaradah*

*avaisnavo gurur na syad / vaisnavah sva-paco guruh*

"A scholarly brahmana, expert in all subjects of Vedic knowledge, is unfit to become a spiritual master without being a Vaisnava, or expert in the science of Krishna consciousness. But a person born in a family of a lower caste can become a spiritual master if he is a Vaisnava, or Krishna conscious." (Padma Purana)

**Srila Narottama dasa Thakura's Prayers:**

*guru-mukha-padma-vakya, cittete koriya aikya, / ar na koriho mane aśha*

*sri-guru-carane rati, ei se uttama gati, / je prasade pure sarva aśha*

"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."

Thus, hearing from the spiritual master and keeping those instructions within ones heart should be the only desire of the faithful devotee. Developing a strong attachment to the spiritual master is the best means for tangible progress in spiritual life.

The last two lines of Srila Narottama dasa Thakura's *Sri Guru Vandana* are also full of transcendental meaning:

*cakhu-dan dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei, / divya jnana hṛde prokasito*

*prema-bhakti jaha hoite, avidyā vinasa jate, / vede gaya jahara 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."

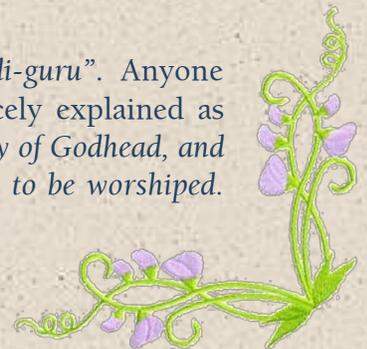
*sri-guru-karuna-sindhu, adhama janara bandhu, / lokanath lokera jivana*

*ha ha prabhu koro doya, deho more pada-chaya, / ebe jasha 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."

**Sevaka-Bhagavan and Sevyā-Bhagavan**

The original guru is Lord Krishna Himself and He is addressed as "adi-guru". Anyone following in the Lord's footsteps thus becomes guru. The difference is nicely explained as follows: "The spiritual master is called *sevaka-bhagavan*, the servitor Personality of Godhead, and Krishna is called *sevyā-bhagavan*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is to be worshiped.



*The spiritual master is the worshiper God, whereas the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, is the worshipable God. This is the difference between the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead.* [SB 7.15.27]

### **Guru as Good as God**

In September of 1966, in New York City, the first group of western devotees was about to receive initiation from Srila Prabhupada. The following incident is nicely narrated in the Srila Prabhupada-lilamrita Volume 2, "Planting the Seed", written by Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami:

*"And now," he said at length, "I will tell you what is meant by initiation. Initiation means that the spiritual master accepts the student and agrees to take charge, and the student accepts the spiritual master and agrees to worship him as God." He paused. No one spoke. "Any questions?" And when there were none, he got up and walked out.*

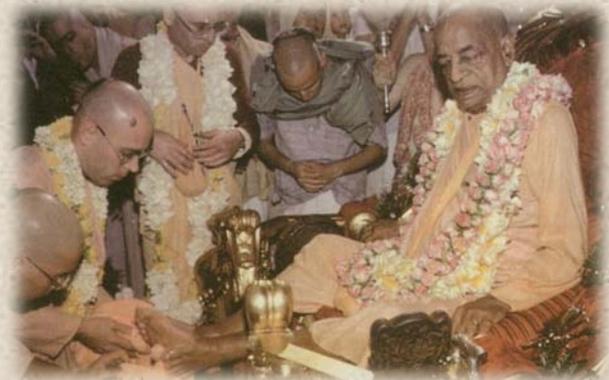
*The devotees were stunned. What had they just heard him say? For weeks he had stressed that when anyone claims to be God he should be considered a dog.*

*"My mind's just been blown," said Wally.*

*"Everybody's mind is blown," said Howard. "Swamiji just dropped a bomb.*

*They thought of Keith. He was wise. Consult Keith. But Keith was in the hospital. Talking among themselves, they became more and more confused. Swamiji's remark had confounded their judgment. Finally, Wally decided to go to the hospital to see Keith.*

*Keith listened to the whole story: how Swamiji had told them to fast and how he had read from his manuscript and how he had said he would explain initiation and how everybody had leaned forward, all ears... and Swamiji had dropped a bomb: "The student accepts the spiritual master and agrees to worship him as God." "Any questions?" Swamiji had asked softly. And then he had walked out. "I don't know if we want to be initiated now," Wally confessed. "We have to worship him as God."*



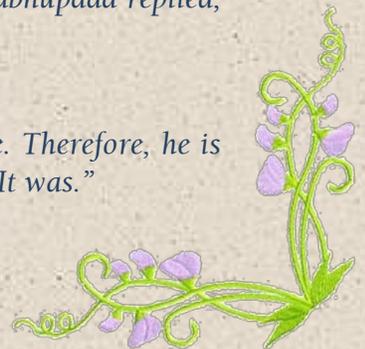
*"Well, you're already doing that by accepting whatever he tells you," Keith replied, and he advised that they talk it over with Swamiji... before the initiation. So Wally went back to the*

*temple and consulted Howard, and together they went up to Swamiji's apartment. "Does what you told us this morning," Howard asked, "mean we are supposed to accept the spiritual master to be God?"*

*"That means he is due the same respect as God, being God's representative," Prabhupada replied, calmly.*

*"Then he is not God?"*

*"No," Prabhupada said, "God is God. The spiritual master is His representative. Therefore, he is as good as God because he can deliver God to the sincere disciple. Is that clear?" It was."*





## The Second Chance



- Vrndavanlila dd

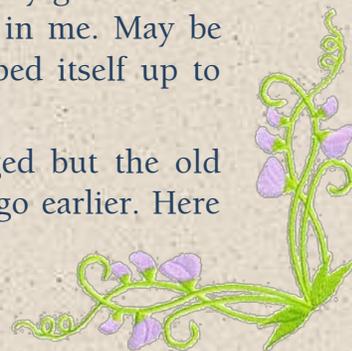
About fifteen years ago as I wrestled with the shafting pains of my advanced Tuberculosis, I tried to read *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Swami Yogananda. I was settled with the idea of fast approaching death and was trying to make the most of the limited moments that I had in my hand.

The spiritual hankerings of my soul had been driving me from one literature to another. Though this was not able to answer all the questions that I had, but it definitely poured fuel to the already dormant desire of getting a guru for myself. It ignited the insatiable fire in me. His quest to find a guru and then his wonderful relationship with his guru made the lacunae in my spiritual life very conspicuous to me. It firmly established the inevitability of a guru's presence in one's spiritual progress. Being an aspirant on this path, I wanted a guru in my life too. The doctor had not predicted a life longer than a fortnight, I suddenly developed a desire to live till I found and served my guru.

Every rising pain pushed me towards the impending death but along with that came my prayer. I had no concept of God, but still I prayed to Him, whom I did not know but I did with utmost submission and sincerity I was capable of. I prayed for a second chance and a guru to guide my life towards Him, whom I wanted to know. I lived...

Very soon, away from my parents, destiny brought me at the doorsteps of Hare Krishna temple in a sleepy town in Karnataka. I had never seen anybody doing dandavat pranam in front of the Lordships before. There was a picture of an elderly person clad in saffron and a chanting beads round his neck neatly kept on a big throne. Everybody called him as their guru and showed utmost respect to him. They called him "Srila Prabhupada". He had a dignified appearance, and he immediately attracted me. I also tried to see him as my guru, but he appeared very aloof. I did not give up. I began attending all the temple programs on a regular basis. I had begun chanting the mahamantra as instructed, reading the small books by Srila Prabhupada. While they answered many of my queries, they also exacerbated my desperation to seek a guru. Many times I would sit alone, praying and thinking how my guru would be and how I would meet him. Every new day kindled a new hope in me. May be today would be the day I have been waiting for...but again it wrapped itself up to wake me to a new hope.

The days went by I got a job offer from Chennai. The place changed but the old dreams lived on. This temple seemed to be different where I used to go earlier. Here



they had a tradition of inviting senior devotees and sannyasis to give lecture and share their wonderful realizations with others. The atmosphere was surcharged. Spiritually it was a very fulfilling center, but the dream of finding a guru was still eluding me. It lay hidden, confined within the walls of my heart.

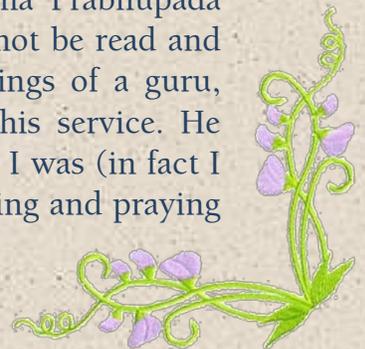
A few devotees whom I knew told me they had been already initiated and had a guru. I looked at them with utmost reverence. How lucky they were to have a guru! They used to be so excited when their gurus were expected to arrive. They would prepare so many things and engage in so many kinds of services to please their guru – making garlands, some delicious preparations, decorating the hall... even the most insignificant of the services like cleaning the temple floor also used to become so filled with excitement when their gurus were expected...Disciples of different visiting sannyasis suggested me to take shelter of their guru. They all looked so exalted, all of them were so compassionate beyond measure yet something within me said 'no'. I could not establish the instantaneous bond the way it had happened in the book. The scenes from *Autobiography of a Yogi* flashed on my mental plane and none of them was in consonance with the reality surrounding me.

Every passing day raised my anxiety. Many times I questioned myself if I was doing the right thing in simply waiting for a guru to appear miraculously in front of me? I waited perseverantly.

I had to abruptly leave Chennai for Bidar. Before leaving I prayed to Srila Prabhupada. Soon I was married and moved to Secunderabad. I asked my husband about his aspirations. He answered with unflinching faith – His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami. Then his holiness could not come to India and it was not sure when again he would be able to come to India again. Still my husband was sure about his guru. I envied his clarity and conviction, while waiting for my turn to achieve the same.

Three years went by, I had a daughter Radhika and we moved to Delhi pursuing a new job. One day we got a good news. Maharaj was coming to India and then even to our small house.

We lived on the third floor. The steps were steep and staircase was without ventilation. We wondered how he would climb with just one leg and supporting crutches. But when he came, he did not climb, he seemed to glide. He did not have a private room for himself, no cooler in Delhi summer but he seemed transcendental to all these material discomforts. He was at ease with everything and appeared to be a storehouse of energy though he was observing Nirjala fasting (the day being ekadasi). My husband did the *padapuja* for him. Suddenly I realized why Srila Prabhupada appeared so aloof to me. Spiritual knowledge is something which cannot be read and understood like any material science. It reveals itself with the blessings of a guru, when we surrender to his lotus feet and humbly put ourselves in his service. He appeared to be the one I had been seeking all these years. How foolish I was (in fact I am), I did not even know how to serve him for whom I had been waiting and praying



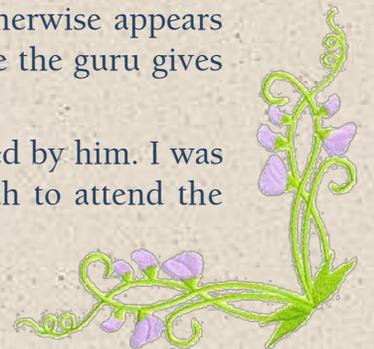
for so many years. Totally untrained I tried to serve him holding my little daughter in my arms. He shared so many details with us, just like a father. He had been instrumental in getting us married at Sri Sri Radha-Gopinath temple in Secunderabad even when he had been oceans apart and had never seen me.

He had gifted me *pati-guru* already. So wonderful! My husband had been serving him ever since he was a child of eight years, even before maharaj had taken sannyasa. I was reminded of the descriptions given by my father-in-law and my husband about him. They all revered him. The village still fondly remembered him by his brahmachary name- Raghava Pandit. I felt my search for a guru had come to an end. Maharaj was saying something but all the words were just falling flat on me. I was lost - Will he be kind enough to accept me as his disciple? - *hā hā prabhu koro doyā, deho more pada-chāyā*

His stay was short; he left the very next day predicting humourously that we would soon be back to Secunderabad within 6 months. He was purity and humility personified. Just two days later, my husband got a call directly from maharaj who was then at Vrindavan. He said softly – “There is an initiation ceremony on Radhashtami, two of you can come and take initiation.” Our hearts leapt with joy but to fall on the hard ground of reality. Both my husband and my daughter had been down with dengue. It was crippling and we were not sure how we would take up the 3-hours journey. Though ecstatic, my husband explained to him our inability to attend the ceremony. I was so near to getting a guru, and yet so far off – many a slips between the cup and the lips – *caḥhu-dān dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei*.

I got another job offer. We moved back to Secunderabad. The six months stay predicted by maharaj had come true, the last day of the period ended in the flight! Straight after landing at Begumpet airport, we set off for Sri Sri Radha-Gopinath temple. As we entered, maharaj was sitting erect on the vyasa-asana giving Bhagavatam class. His face beamed in the sunlight. His darshan flushed our faces. Interrupting his class, he warmly welcomed us back...what a personal touch. It reminded me of how the Supreme Lord Himself took care of each and every calf in the herd. So much so that He scratched them individually when and where they felt itchy, concerned about their well being and to know if they wanted to be taken to their mothers. He was so personal that each one of them thought that he was personally dear to the Lord. What a wonderful representative of the Lord I had! Srila Prabhupada had answered my parting prayer. We took darshan of Sri Sri Radha-Gopinath to our heart's content. Our eyes were moist. He defined personal relationship which we have to develop with the Lord. Guru makes this process so easy, which otherwise appears so abstract. What reading of reams and reams of scriptures cannot give the guru gives in a simple blessing – *divya jñāna hr̥de porākṣito*.

In a couple of months we were fortunate enough to be formally initiated by him. I was too happy. I had my two younger sisters come all the way from north to attend the



ceremony. My 4-year old daughter and so many devotee friends were present as a witness of the ceremony. Finally, I was initiated, connected to the transcendental guru parampara because of his mercy. Overwhelmed I sat on the steps, forgetting I had to go for *bhikshatan*. I was a beggar who had been gifted with an elephant, though a wondrous gift but beyond his capacity to maintain.

In the evening I had personal darshan of Guru Maharaj along with my husband and little daughter. Now even I had a guru. As he spoke I woke up to realization that getting a guru is not end in itself. It is just a beginning – an initiation into the spiritual process.

I tried my best to serve him but sometimes I got chastised also, with my limited intelligence I could not understand the bigger picture. I found him “unjust”. I prayed to him and I felt guided to Tamal Krishna maharaj’s *Servant of the Servants* – the incident where he mentions the reason why one of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples (his secretary) left the movement – He never shared the doubts that he had with his guru Srila Prabhupada. Reading it I immediately set to write my doubts to my gurudev. His reply was saturated with compassion and simplistically explained the profoundest of the truths:

“A Guru never abandons a disciple.”

“A Guru loves all the disciples equally.”

“Though you may feel that you are not at fault and blame others, yet understand the deeper truth that whatever happens we are somewhere the cause of that.”

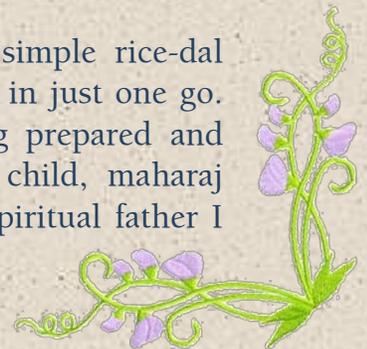
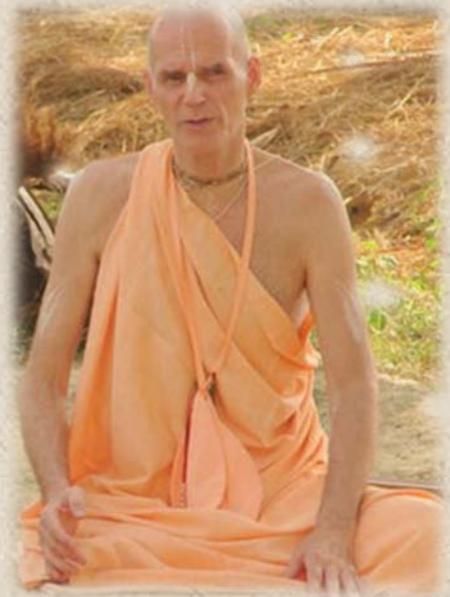
“Chastisement from a guru is a part of the purificatory process.”

“Even the Lord does not interfere with the individual’s freewill.”

His every sentence was like a nugget of knowledge – *guru mukha padma vākya, cittete koribo aikya/ āra nā kariho mane āsā*.

Once I told him how my husband and my father in law were so lucky. They still had a pile of handwritten letters from him, but I did not have even one. Like a doting father, his next letter was a handwritten one! In fact after that he sent so many handwritten letters.

My father in law had shared with me how maharaj’s cooking of simple rice-dal prasadam had made him quit all the bad habits and take to devotion in just one go. Greedy of spiritual progress, I shared my desire to take something prepared and offered by him, be it simple water. With the simple smile of a child, maharaj answered, “Yes, I will make an elaborate feast.” Such an indulging spiritual father I



have! No wonder Guru is the direct representative of the Supreme Lord, who is so loving – *śrī guru karuṇā sindhu, adhama janāra bandhu.*

Behind his simplicity lay a very determined persona who had sacrificed his leg in the process of trying to save the deities of Sridham Mayapur from the dacoits. Even on one leg he used to cycle long distances with a heavy bag of books behind on the bumpy village roads spreading the holy name and starting new namahatta centers in the interiors of north eastern India. His physical disability, barrier of language, austerity of village life and the cultural divide of east and the west...nothing could stop him from preaching. He started more than 1200 namahatta centers with just one leg! Everything is possible with the blessings of Sri Guru – *mukam karoti vacalam/ pangum langhiyate girim.* What an amazing journey with just one leg – *evam parampara praptam.*

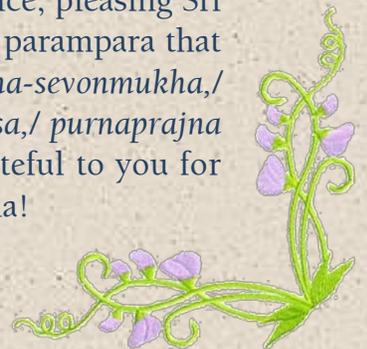
Once he expressed his desire to see us serving a live cow instead of keeping decorative cow statues on our altar. We did not know how gomata will come to us and how two jobless people would be able to serve her. His desire was so intense that within two months, gomata came. He lovingly named her Surabhi. We are thence engaged in her service, who is so dear to the Lord – *surabhir abhipalayantam.* He gave us a simple means of serving and pleasing the Lord. The Lord was so close to us. Who else can do this, but one who himself is close to Him. He can give Krsna, because he has Krsna- *Krsna dite paro, tomara sakti ache/ ami to kangala, Krsna Krsna boli/ dhai tava pache pache.*



His dedication to his Guru Srila Prabhupada is exemplary. His determination to fulfil Srila Prabhupada's mission is inspiring. Beautifully adding spiritual dimension to everything, he absorbed us in the service of the Lord and Guru by giving us various engagements according to our natural propensities.

It is my biggest foolishness that many times I forget the difficulty after which I got a guru and how careful I should be in serving him – *bando muṇi sāvadhāna mate – kaliyuga memory.* When I look back, I feel so fortunate in getting such a guru. Nothing can qualify me for what I got- causeless mercy.

There were occasions in my life when I used to think how lucky Arjuna was in getting instructions from the Lord Himself. Now with his mercy I have access to the Lord's direct representative. Gurudev, I am still conditioned, please give me the strength to follow your instructions and be kind enough to engage us in your service, pleasing Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga. You have mercifully connected me to the guru parampara that begins from the Lord Himself - *krsna hoite catur-mukha, hoy krsna-sevonmukha,/ brahma hoite naradera mati/ narada hoite vyasa, madhva kohe vyasa-dasa,/ purnaprajna padmanabha gati – Gurudev, please purify me enough to be atleast grateful to you for this. Pray I make the most of the second chance given to me. Hare Krsna!*



# Balancing Guru Bhakti and ISKCON Values

- HG Lakshmi Nrsinghadeva Das

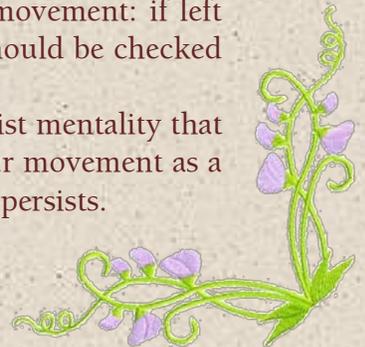
*S*ISKCON's code and ethics are based on Srila Prabhupada's teachings and the direction of GBC the governing body appointed by him to govern ISKCON. The personal life of devotees is again largely governed by the above two. The practicing devotees seek shelter of a spiritual master in ISKCON as part of their sadhana bhakti which also brings another dimension to their spiritual life namely the serving the spiritual master or diksha guru in his specific service to the movement. Today there are many Srila Prabhupada disciples serving as spiritual masters and guiding their disciples in Krishna Consciousness. As Krishna exhibits many a mellow or rasa in dealing with his devotees his devotees too are heterogenous in the way they relate with him. So this plurality within the ambit of teachings of Srila Prabhupada is undoubtedly strength of our movement and gives a spirit of unity in diversity. But on the dark side there are dangers of guru based groups with a sectarian outlook which could weaken the ideals that Srila Prabhupada envisioned for ISKCON. The following article by H.H. Bhakti Vikasa Swami titled "Dangers of Guru Groupism" is a candid analysis of this syndrome and some suggestions on how to keep the central point i.e. keeping Srila Prabhupada's ideals without having to compromise the plurality in the movement. This was published in Congregational Preaching Journal of ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry in Jan-Mar 04.

**By Bhakti Vikasa Swami**

By the mercy of Srila Prabhupada, more and more people worldwide are coming to Krishna consciousness. Congregations especially are increasing. Along with this naturally come challenges, but better to face the challenges that arise from preaching than to have no preaching.

A unique feature and strength of ISKCON is having many devotees awarding initiation. But this can also engender problems. One problem that negatively affects the development of preaching is that of "guru groupism." In some places there is no such competition, either due to enlightened leadership or more commonly because something resembling the old zonal acarya system is still prevalent, with new devotees having little choice in who they should take initiation from. Although devotees have been aware of guru groupism, some have come to accept it as part of life, and to openly discuss it has seemingly been taboo. However, I submitted this topic for open discussion among ISKCON leaders. I suggested that in our movement some disciples tend to form groups centered around their gurus. Thus, rather than functioning as a united organization centered on serving the mission of Srila Prabhupada, we tend to form smaller sub-groups within the institution, each with the petty agenda of increasing its numbers, and-in competition with other such groups-to canvass new devotees and to promote their guru as best. Guru groupies become preoccupied with competing for new recruits rather than educating devotees on the principles and practices of spiritual life as taught by Srila Prabhupad. Significantly, no one denied that such problem existed and discussion ensued as to the effects of this syndrome. His Holiness Lokanatha Maharaja commented that guru groupism is one of the greatest dangers facing our movement: if left unchecked it could lead to a complete splintering into various factions. It should be checked now, before it's too late.

Guru groupism tends to promote a neophyte, fanatical, divisive, and separatist mentality that cannot be healthy, neither for the individuals who subscribe to it, nor for our movement as a whole. Certainly there can be no real cooperation and unity if this syndrome persists.



Despite the above, my observation is that in many areas of the world devotees initiated by various ISKCON gurus tend to serve Srila Prabhupada's mission in a spirit of cooperation. Although each devotee has a personal relationship with the guru, it is a private matter that creates no separatism in the interactions with disciples of other gurus. These devotees tend to better respect all gurus and senior devotees and to identify themselves as members of ISKCON and followers of Srila Prabhupada, rather than as members of a guru-based subgroup.

Other points I raised:

(1) Many people come to Krishna consciousness because they want to get away from the superficiality of material life, in which everyone is competing with each other. When they read Srila Prabhupada's books they become inspired by the high ideals His Divine Grace articulates. But when such newcomers become subjected to the manipulative tactics of guru groupism, they think that the temple environment is the same as the material environment from which they seek relief. Upon encountering this neophyte competition, many intelligent people back off and leave Krishna consciousness altogether.

(2) On the positive side, it was noted that if disciples of different gurus could unite more, we could achieve wonderful results, considering the ripeness of many of the affected preaching fields.

(3) The stress should be on educating newcomers in what it means to be a disciple and what are the qualifications of a bona fide guru, thus enabling them to come to an intelligent decision based on genuine faith in guru. Without this, the number of disciples may increase, but the quality of guru-disciple relationships might be shallow and based on hype rather than genuine spiritual exchange.

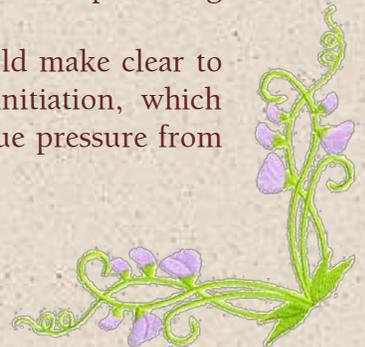
(4) Although every disciple has an individual relationship with the guru, our preaching should be as members of Srila Prabhupada's mission; we must understand that ISKCON's initiating gurus have no other mission than that established by Srila Prabhupada. Our preaching efforts should be on behalf of Srila Prabhupada for ISKCON, and we should feel happy if a new devotee feels attracted to any bona fide guru within ISKCON.

(5) Some devotees believe that canvassing for new initiates is a service to their guru. But it is actually a disservice to the guru to bring him people insufficiently educated in what it means to be a disciple. Later, such recruits' dubious activities would give the guru a bad reputation and extra karma. Another result of such aggressive canvassing is that later some devotees lament that they were unduly influenced or practically forced to take initiation without being given the chance to thoroughly examine the guru and make a thoughtful choice.

(6) Local leaders in areas where gurus spend little time become de facto gurus if all devotees under them are their junior Godsiblings. Although this may appear to be a smart managerial ploy, it rarely helps—either the de facto gurus or those under them—to mature in Krishna consciousness.

(7) Temple leaders should invite initiating gurus other than their own to visit their preaching area and let all devotees benefit from a multiplicity of association.

(8) The sustained input of gurus is required to rectify matters. Gurus should make clear to their disciples their duty to educate newcomers about the process of initiation, which includes making a personal decision based on knowledge and without undue pressure from others. (Source: <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=10196>)



# Who is a Guru?

- His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada

*om ajnana-timirandhasya / jnananjana-salakaya  
caksur unmilitam yena / tasmai sri-gurave namah*

[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.]

The word *ajnana* 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 Sri Krsna in *Bhagavad-gita*:

*na tad bhasayate suryo / na sasanko na pavakah  
yad gatva na nivartante / tad dhama paramam mama* (Bg. 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.]

## **From Darkness to Light**

The *guru's* business is to bring his disciples from darkness to light. At present everyone is suffering due to ignorance, just as one contracts a disease out of ignorance. If one does not know hygien[e] principles, he will not know what will contaminate him. Therefore due to ignorance there is infection, and we suffer from disease. .... Ignorance is no excuse. Similarly, a child, not knowing that fire will burn, will touch the fire. The fire does not think, "This is a child, and he does not know I will burn." No, there is no excuse. Just as there are state laws, there are also stringent laws of nature, and these laws will act despite our ignorance of them. If we do something wrong out of ignorance, we must suffer. ... Whether the law is a state law or a law of nature, we risk suffering if we break it.

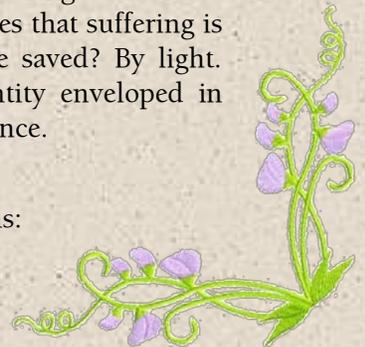
The *guru's* business is to see that no human being suffers in this material world. No one can claim that he is not suffering. That is not possible. In this material world, there are three kinds of suffering: *adhyatmika*, *adhibhautika* and *adhidaivika*. These are miseries arising from the material 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 mosquitoes 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 material 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. ... 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.

## **Guru is One**

One may ask whether the *guru* is absolutely necessary. The *Vedas* inform us that he is:

*Make Ardanavan Villages*



*tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhogicchet  
samt-panih srotriyam brahma-nistham (Mundaka Up. 1.2.12)*

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 Vyasadeva and Krsna taught 5,000 years ago is also being taught now. There is no difference between the two instructions. Although hundreds and thousands of *acaryas* have come and gone, the message is one. The real *guru* cannot be two because 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 Krsna, Vyasadeva, Narada, Arjuna, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and the Gosvamis. Five thousand years ago Lord Sri Krsna spoke *Bhagavad-gita*, and Vyasadeva recorded it. Srila Vyasadeva did not say, "This is my opinion." Rather, he wrote, *sri bhagavan uvaca*, that is, "The Supreme Personality of Godhead says." Whatever Vyasadeva wrote was originally spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Srila Vyasadeva did not give his own opinion.

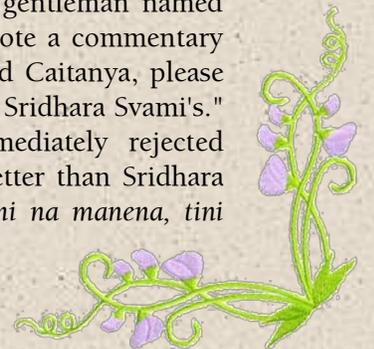
Consequently, Srila Vyasadeva is a *guru*. He does not misinterpret the words of Krsna but transmits them exactly as they were spoken. If we send a telegram, the person who delivers the telegram does not have to correct it, edit it or add to it. He simply presents it. That is the *guru's* business. The *guru* may be this person or that, but the message is the same; therefore it is said that *guru* is one.

In the disciplic succession we simply find repetition of the same subject. In the *Bhagavad-gita* Sri Krsna says:

*man-mana bhava mad-bhakto / mad-yaji mam namaskuru  
mam evaisyasi yuktvaivam / atmanam mat-parayanah*

"Engage your mind always in thinking of Me, become My devotee, offer obeisances and worship Me. Being completely absorbed in Me, surely you will come to Me." (Bg. 9.34) These very instructions were reiterated by all the *acaryas*—Ramanujacarya, Madhvacharya and Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The six Gosvamis also transmitted the same message, and we are simply following in their footsteps. There is no difference. We do not interpret the words of Krsna by saying, "In my opinion, the Battlefield of Kuruksetra represents the human body." Such interpretations are set forth by rascals. 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 bona fide *guru* will simply present what the supreme *guru*, God, says in bona fide scripture. A *guru* cannot change the message of the disciplic succession. Once there was a gentleman named Vallabhacharya, who was very devoted to Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Vallabhacharya wrote a commentary on *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and he presented it to Caitanya Mahaprabhu, saying, "Lord Caitanya, please hear my commentary on *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. You will find that it is far better than Sridhara Svami's." Sridhara Svami was a very ancient commentator Caitanya Mahaprabhu immediately rejected Vallabhacharya, saying, "Oh, are you claiming that you have written something better than Sridhara Svami?" Caitanya Mahaprabhu then chastised Vallabhacharya, saying, *svamike yini na manena, tini*



vesya. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu sarcastically used the word *svami*, which also means husband. He said, "I think that one who does not recognize the *svami* [husband] is a prostitute." In other words, "If you do not recognize Sridhara Svami, then you are a prostitute. How can I hear from a prostitute?"

### *No Research Necessary*

We must understand that we cannot carry out research to find the Absolute Truth. Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself said, "My Guru Maharaja 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. In *Bhagavad-gita* Sri Krsna says:

*evam parampara-praptam / imam rajarsayo viduh  
sa kaleneha mahata / yogo nastah parantapa* (Bg. 4.2)

[This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way. But in course of time the succession was broken, and therefore the science as it is appears to be lost.]

Taking on a *guru* is not simply a fashion. One who is serious about understanding spiritual life requires a *guru*. A *guru* is a question of necessity, for one must be very serious to understand spiritual life, God, proper action and one's relationship with God. When we are very serious about understanding these subjects, we need a *guru*. We shouldn't go to a *guru* simply because a *guru* may be fashionable at the moment. Surrender must be there, for without surrender we cannot learn anything. If we go to a *guru* simply to challenge him, we will learn nothing. But we must accept the *guru* just as Arjuna accepted his *guru*, Sri Krsna Himself:

*karpanya-dosopahata svabhavah / prcchami tvam dharma-sammudha-cetah  
yac chreyah syan niscitam bruhi tan me / sisyas te 'ham sadhi mam tvam prapannam* (Bg. 2.7)

[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.]

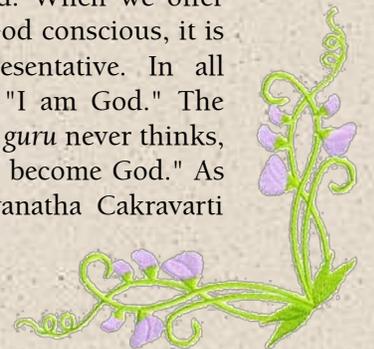
### *From "God" to Dog*

This is the process for accepting a *guru*. The *guru* is Krsna's representative, the former *acaryas'* representative. Krsna says that all *acaryas* are His representatives; therefore the *guru* should be offered the same respect one would offer to God. As Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says in his prayers to the spiritual master: *yasya prasada bhagavat-prasada*. "By the mercy of the spiritual master, one receives the benediction of Krsna." Thus, if we surrender to the bona fide *guru*, we surrender to God. God accepts our surrender to the *guru*.

In *Bhagavad-gita*, Krsna instructs:

*sarva-dharman parityajya / mam ekam saranam vraja  
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo / moksaisyami ma sucah*

"Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear." (Bg. 18.66) Someone may argue, "Where is Krsna? I shall surrender to Him." But no, the process is that we first surrender to Krsna's representative; then we surrender to Krsna. Therefore it is said, *saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastraih*: 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 *sastras*, 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 Visvanatha Cakravarti



says, *kintu prabhor yah 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 (*seva-bhagavan*). Therefore the *guru* is addressed as *prabhupada*. The word *prabhu* means "lord," and *pada* means "position." Thus *prabhupada* means "he who has taken the position of the Lord." This is the same as *saksad-dharitvena samasta-sastraih*.

Only if we are very serious about understanding the science of God is a *guru* required. We should not try to keep a *guru* as a matter of fashion. One who has accepted a *guru* speaks intelligently. He never speaks nonsense. That is the sign of having accepted a bona fide *guru*. We should certainly offer all respect to the spiritual master, but we should also remember how to carry out his orders. In *Bhagavad-gita* Sri Krsna Himself tells us the method of seeking out and approaching the *guru*:

*tad viddhi pranipatena / pariprasnena sevaya  
upadeksyanti te jnanam / jnaninas tattva-darsinah*

"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." (Bg. 4.34) The first process is that of surrender. We have to find an exalted person and willingly surrender before him. The *sastras* 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 relationship is established between the *guru* and disciple. Everything is provided, but we must take up the process seriously. Then we can be trained to become a bona fide disciple. First we must find a bonafide *guru*, establish our relationship with him and act accordingly. Then our life will be successful, for the *gurucan* enlighten the sincere disciple who is in darkness.

### *Perfecting Our Life*

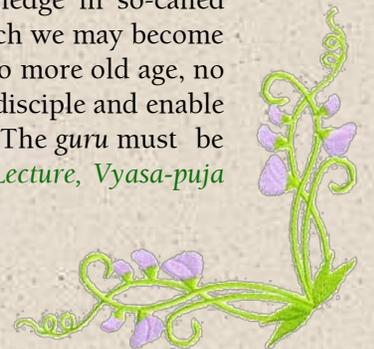
Everyone is born a rascal and a fool. ... Rascal *gurus* try to avoid these things. We must understand that we are all born rascals and fools and that we have to be enlightened. We have to receive knowledge to make our lives perfect. If we do not perfect our lives, we are defeated. What is this defeat? 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. ...*Bhagavad-gita* (14.26) says what the better position is:

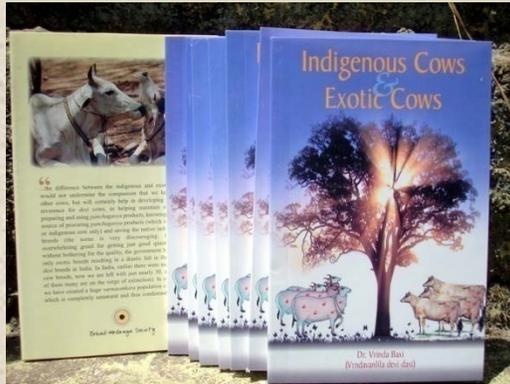
*mam ca yo 'vyabhicarena / bhakti-yogena sevate  
sa gunan samatityaitan / brahma-bhuyaya kalpate*

[One who engages in full devotional service, who does not fall down in any circumstance, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.]

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. [*Srila Prabhupada, Lecture, Vyasa-puja day, 1973, Bhaktivedanta Manor, England*]



• **Varnashrama Literature**

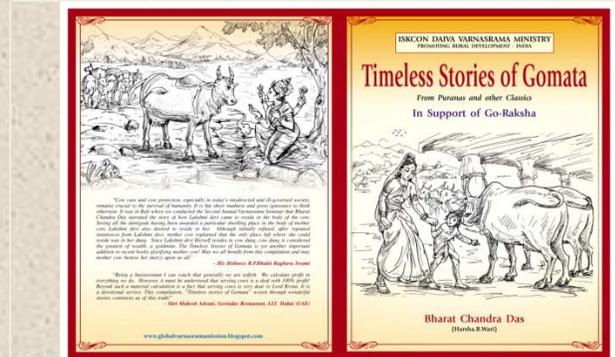


**Indigenous Cows & Exotic Cows**

It is exciting to know who was the cow who participated in Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, or who did severe penance to please the Lord or who appeared from the churning of the ocean. Are all the cows alike? Holy scriptures discriminate, as does Science – Bos Indicus and Bos Taurus. The book throws light on these aspects while discussing the different existing indigenous cow breeds of India; differences between indigenous cows and exotic cows; and difference between buffalo milk and cow milk. It gives both scientific and Vedic insight into the subject. It is likely to inspire love for mother cow with intelligence without generating negative feelings towards non-indigenous cows as the latter have their own place in the ecological set up. It is likely to help and guide the government to annul policies that have harmed our own indigenous cows and gomata and also help formulate policies which will help her from getting extinct. Its *Preface* has been written by H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami's (Head, Varnashrama Ministry, India) and *Introduction* by HG Balabhadra prabhu (Head, ISCOWP Ministry).

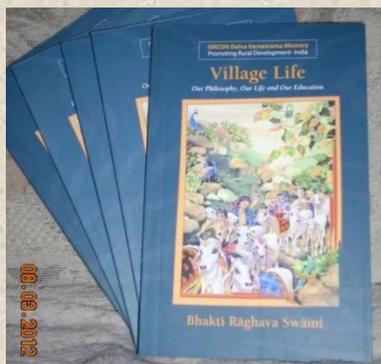
**Timeless Stories of Gomata: From Puranas and Other Classics**

It is a lovely compilation of different pastimes involving gomata, picked up from different *Puranas* and other Vedic scriptures by HG Bharat Chandra Das. It is certain to inspire necessary awe, reverence and love for the sacred cow, so dear to the Lord. Its presentation in lucid language, big font size, and A4 size of the book are features that are likely to appeal to both children and adults alike. Further, the 35 attractive illustrations by professional artist make it an irresistible buy.



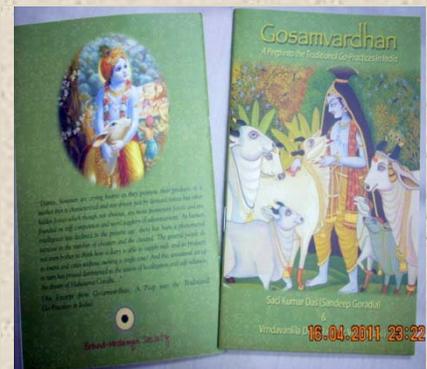
**Village Life: Our Philosophy, Our Life and Our Education**

It made waves at ISKCON Leadership Sangha and at the Fifth International Varnashrama Seminar at Sridham Mayapur. It is yet another interesting collection of H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami's (Head, Varnashrama Ministry, India) interesting essays in support of Srila Prabhupada's vision of simple life – Village Life – as demonstrated by the Lord Himself in His Vrndavan pastimes. Tasterfully compiled and edited by HG Vrndavanilila dd, the book is a call to return to our Vedic roots and addresses several practical aspects in one's daily life including astrology, development, celibacy, and role of women in a village set up, dung economy etc while assisting one to take up the simple life – daiva varṇāśrama dharma.



**Gosamvardhan: A Peep Into the Traditional Go-Practices in India**

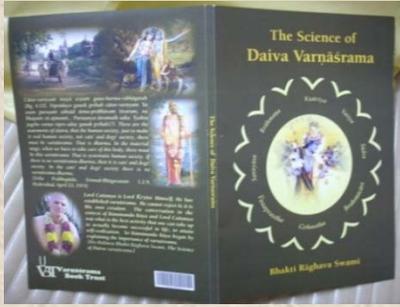
Authored by HG Sacikumar prabhu (with hands-on experience in farming and cow raising) and Vrndavanilila dd (Editor, *The Eight Petals*, a monthly e-newsletter in support of Daiva Varnashrama dharma). It makes an intensive reading as it pours information about the traditional practices related to cow conservation in traditional India and the fragility of present situation. It should be of great help for those who are just not interested in keeping the cows in goshala, but also in reviving an ecosystem that supports mother cow in her old glory and not as a liability. Its 'Introduction' has been written by Indian Minister for Daiva Varnashrama, HH Bhakti Raghava Swami and 'Foreword' by the Global Minister for Cow Protection & Agriculture, HG Balabhadra prabhu.



*Make Vrndavan Villages*



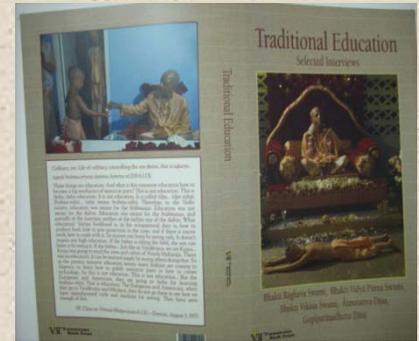
### The Science of Daiva Varṇāśrama



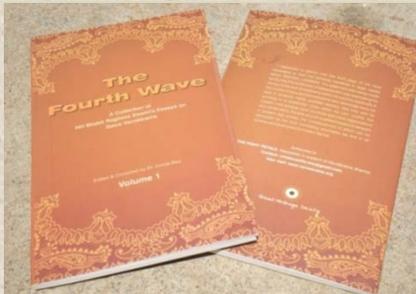
The book by His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami addresses the common doubts and misunderstandings related to varṇāśrama dharma. In order to make it convenient for the reader it has been divided into three sections, beginning with the very definition and understanding of the concept of varṇāśrama dharma as envisioned by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, to move to second section of the need or relevance of varṇāśrama followed by the third section dealing with the questions related to complications arising in the process of implementation of principles of daiva varṇāśrama dharma in the present situation.

### Traditional Education

Traditional Education which is usually viewed with denigration if not scorn has been very interestingly dealt. It very effectively brings out the science behind the method, structure, curriculum, efficacy and even *patrata* of traditional education. It finds itself on insightful answers given to 20 questions related to different aspects of education. It includes interviews by HH Bhakti Raghava Swami, HH Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami, HG Gopiparanadhan Das and HG Atmatattva Das. It also includes an interesting lecture given by HH Bhakti Vikas Swami on the same subject.



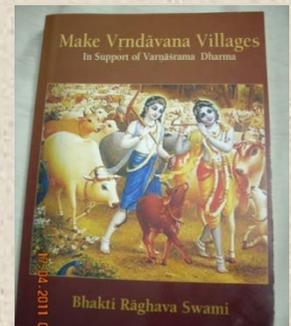
### The Fourth Wave



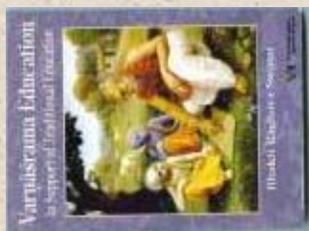
It is a wonderful collection of HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's essays on Daiva Varnasrama addressing a wide range of concerns of daily life beginning from the very definition of the term 'dharma', administration, family system, education, food, to technology. The 'Preface' for *The Fourth Wave* has been written by HG Patita Pavan Adhikary, a senior disciple of Srila Prabhupada, a strong daiva varnasrama supporter, a prolific writer, and an astrologer who has the distinction of having served as ISKCON Temple President and Director (Book Reviews) for BBT.

### Make Vrṇḍavan Villages

H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami, who heads the Varnasrama Ministry, India has authored several books on Varnasrama, including this. This book is meant to serve as a general introduction to some of the basic concepts of varnasrama-dharma. In essence, the subject matter deals with both the topic of education as well as social and spiritual upliftment through a well established and scientifically planned educational system and social structure which encompass all spheres and all dimensions of life. Its revised edition includes more information on the subject and exciting additions on cow.



### Varnasrama Education



The topic of education, a highly debated and controversial subject among many many educationalists and students alike, has always been of extreme importance and relevance to any society, especially in the most traditional oriental cultures. This books deals with the aspect of Education in the context of Varnasrama.

In addition to the above there are many more books in the pipeline and several documentary movies. For more information one can contact: [vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com](mailto:vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com) or [gourgopal.brs@gmail.com](mailto:gourgopal.brs@gmail.com)





• **Mails to the Editor**

(In response to "Freewill of a Molecule")

The issue regarding free-will cascades one from the lower consideration of individual choice and discrimination to the highest consideration of rasa wherein one is enrolled in the loving affairs of Sri Sri Radha Krishna. During the sadhana phase of Krishna consciousness, one must try to think, feel and will for Krishna seva. Choice and discrimination of matter and spirit creates the character of the devotee. Later, in the final reality, when blessed by the ecstatic connection with clear Krishna consciousness, one will surely forget one's self, in favor of the immersion in Krishna consciousness in its infinite permutations. Choice is replaced by the overwhelming love for Krishna. ... Lord Chaitanya's lila hints at the self-abandonment when love for Krishna reaches its highest expressions. ...

- **HG Pusta Krishna Das**

Nice article about free will, Vrindavanlila. Thanks. Cool how you presented different questions—"problems"—then offered quotes from Srila Prabhupada to help illustrate the solutions. I really like your conclusion, how Varnasrama dharma is the perfectly designed arrangement of the Lord to allow us to act within our own nature, varna and guna to become purified. Great point is that it's our own freewill whether we choose to live according to varnasrama dharma or not.

- **HG Phalini Dd**

Lovely article but after agreeing with everything said there I still have questions. What about people of demoniac and degraded "svabhava" who can't be placed in varnashrama? Should they act according to their own nature or according to promises made before their spiritual masters? That calls for some serious repression. What about gays? In the West they aren't considered degraded or devious anymore and are expected to follow that local implementation of varnashrama - get married, stay faithful, adopt children and so on.

- **HG Sitalatma Das**

(In response to HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's article "Beyond Cessation of Suffering") Despite the fact that the ultimate goal of life is to develop prema bhakti, Daivi Varnashrama is to be viewed as favorable for the performance of devotional service, and therefore to be accepted. Therefore Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, and other devotees involved in promoting the implementation of Daivi Varnashrama are to be encouraged in their service, all the more that it will become more and more of a crucial issue, as major catastrophies keep increasing in this material world, in this Kali yuga, in the form of the three types of material suffering inflicted on the living entities... When everything is still tolerable, the mode of ignorance characterized by laziness and sleep prompts us not to do anything, leave things as they are and just let events go by...But, when electricity power will break down, just to take a simple example, we'll see how life in the cities will become very precarious and difficult. Not to speak of when food and water supply start becoming scarce...! Then, even a good job and a nice house will become insignificant, if not of no use! So, instead of toiling hard like asses, why don't we build a sustainable model in the form of "simple living and high thinking" which will give us ample time to cultivate the higher values of life in the form of developing spiritual knowledge, praising and worshipping the Lord, and serving each others' highest spiritual welfare...?

- **HG Puskaraksha Das**

Thanks very much. We are enjoying all the readings and editions you send...

- **Bhakta Sanjay Ganti**

**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT**

As announced earlier, there was an interesting discussion on different aspects of 'Varnasrama'. The answers to widely asked questions will appear in the coming issues under "Varnasrama Discussion".

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*Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*

*Make Vrindavan Villages*

