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DIGNITY, GLORIES & GREATNESS OF VAISNAVAS

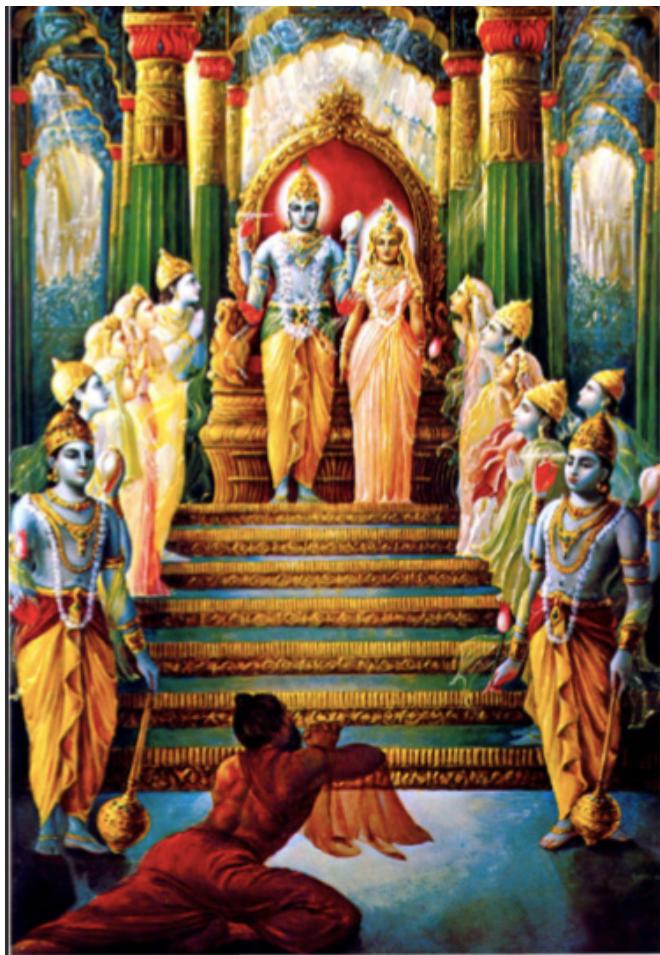
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DURAVASA LIFE SPARED
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Sukadeva Goswami said: When thus advised by Lord Visnu, Durvasa Muni, who was very much harassed by the Sudarsana cakra, immediately approached Maharaja Ambarisa. Being very much aggrieved, the *muni* fell down and clasped the King's lotus feet. When Durvasa touched his lotus feet, Maharaja Ambarisa was very much ashamed, and when he saw Durvasa attempting to offer prayers, because of mercy he was aggrieved even more. Thus he immediately began offering prayers to the great weapon of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Maharaja Ambarisa said: O Sudarsana cakra, you are fire, you are the most powerful sun, and you are the moon, the master of all luminaries. You are water, earth and sky, you are the air, you are the five sense objects [sound, touch, form, taste and smell], and you are the senses also. O most favorite of Acyuta, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, you have thousands of spokes. O master of the material world, destroyer of all

weapons, original vision of the Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto you. Kindly give shelter and be auspicious to this *brāhmaṇa*. O Sudarsana wheel, you are religion, you are truth, you are encouraging statements, you are sacrifice, and you are the enjoyer of the fruits of sacrifice. You are the maintainer of the entire universe, and you are the supreme transcendental prowess in the hands of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. You are the original vision of the Lord, and therefore you are known as Sudarsana. Everything has been created by your activities, and therefore you are all-pervading. O Sudarsana, you have a very auspicious hub, and therefore you are the upholder of all religion. You are just like an inauspicious comet for the irreligious demons. Indeed, you are the maintainer of the three worlds, you are full of transcendental effulgence, you are as quick as the mind, and you are able to work wonders. I can simply utter the word "namah," offering all obeisances unto you. O master of speech, by your effulgence, full of religious principles, the darkness of the world is dissipated, and the knowledge of learned persons or great souls is manifested. Indeed, no one can surpass your effulgence, for all things, manifested and unmanifested, gross and subtle, superior and inferior, are but various forms of you that are manifested by your effulgence. O indefatigable one, when you are sent by the Supreme Personality of Godhead to enter among the soldiers of the *Daityas* and the *Dānavas*, you stay on the battlefield and unendingly separate their arms, bellies, thighs, legs and heads. O protector of the universe, you are engaged by the Supreme Personality of Godhead as His all-powerful weapon in killing the envious enemies. For the benefit of our entire dynasty, kindly favor this poor *brāhmaṇa*. This will certainly be a favor for all of us. If our family has given charity to the proper persons, if we have performed ritualistic ceremonies and sacrifices, if we have properly carried out our occupational duties, and if we have been guided by learned *brāhmaṇas*, I wish, in exchange, that this *brāhmaṇa* be freed from the burning caused by the Sudarsana cakra. If the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is one without a second, who is the reservoir of all transcendental qualities, and who is the life and soul of all living entities, is pleased with us, we

wish that this *brāhmaṇa*, Durvasa Muni, be freed from the pain of being burned.

Sukadeva Goswami continued: When the King offered prayers to the Sudarsana cakra and Lord Visnu, because of his prayers the Sudarsana cakra became peaceful and stopped burning the *brāhmaṇa* known as Durvasa Muni. Durvasa Muni, the greatly powerful mystic, was indeed satisfied when freed from the fire of the Sudarsana cakra. Thus he praised the qualities of Maharaja Ambarisa and offered him the highest benedictions.

Durvasa Muni said: My dear King, today I have experienced the greatness of devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, for although I have committed an offense, you have prayed for my good fortune. For those who have achieved the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of the pure devotees, what is impossible to do, and what is impossible to give up? What is impossible for the servants of the Lord? By the very hearing of His holy name one is purified. O King, over-looking my offenses, you have saved my life. Thus I am very much obliged to you because you are so merciful.

Expecting the return of Durvasa Muni, the King had not taken his food. Therefore, when the sage returned, the King fell at his lotus feet, pleasing him in all respects, and fed him sumptuously. Thus the King respectfully received Durvasa Muni, who after eating varieties of palatable food was so satisfied that with great affection he requested the King to eat also, saying, "Please take your meal."

Durvasa Muni said: I am very pleased with you, my dear King. At first I thought of you as an ordinary human being and accepted your hospitality, but later I could understand, by my own intelligence, that you are the most exalted devotee of the Lord. Therefore, simply by seeing you, touching your feet and talking with you, I have been pleased and have become obliged to you. All the blessed women in the heavenly planets will continuously chant about your spotless character at every moment, and the people of this world will also chant your glories continuously.

Sri Sukadeva Goswami continued: Thus being satisfied in all respects, the great mystic yogi Durvasa took permission and left, continuously glorifying the King. Through the sky-ways, he went to Brahmaloka, which is devoid of agnostics and dry philosophical speculators. Durvasa Muni

had left the place of Maharaja Ambarisa, and as long as he had not returned for one complete year the King had fasted, maintaining himself simply by drinking water.

After one year, when Durvasa Muni had returned, King Ambarisa sumptuously fed him all varieties of pure food, and then he himself also ate. When the King saw that the *brāhmaṇa* Durvasa had been released from the great danger of being burned, he could understand that by the grace of the Lord he himself was also powerful, but he did not take any credit, for everything had been done by the Lord. In this way, because of devotional service, Maharaja Ambarisa, who was endowed with varieties of transcendental qualities, was completely aware of *Brahman*, *Paramātmā* and the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and thus he executed devotional service perfectly. Because of his devotion, he thought even the topmost planet of this material world no better than the hellish planets.

Srila Sukadeva Goswami continued: Thereafter, because of his advanced position in devotional life, Maharaja Ambarisa, who no longer desired to live with material things, retired from active family life. He divided his property among his sons, who were equally as qualified, and he himself took the order of *vānaprastha* and went to the forest to concentrate his mind fully upon Lord Vasudeva.

Anyone who chants this narration or even thinks of this narration about the activities of Maharaja Ambarisa certainly becomes a pure devotee of the Lord. By the grace of the Lord, those who hear about the activities of Maharaja Ambarisa, the great devotee, certainly become liberated or become devotees without delay.

- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Canto 09: "Liberation" > Chapter 05: Durvasa Muni's Life Spared > Verses: 1-28 , Translations by His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

UNDERSTANDING VAIŚNAVA

His Divine Grace

A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

It is said, *vaiśnavera kriyā mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya*: [Cc. Madhya 23.39] even a very intelligent man cannot understand the activities of a pure Vaiśnava. Therefore, because Durvasa Muni was a great mystic yogī, he first mistook Maharaja Am-

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya



barisa for an ordinary human being and wanted to punish him. Such is the mistaken observation of a Vaiṣṇava. When Durvasa Muni was persecuted by the Sudarsana cakra, however, his intelligence developed. Therefore the word *ātma-medhasā* is used to indicate that by his personal experience he would understand how great a Vaiṣṇava the King was. When Durvasa Muni was chased by the Sudarsana cakra, he wanted to take shelter of Lord Brahma and Lord Siva, and he was even able to go to the spiritual world, meet the Personality of Godhead and talk with Him face to face, yet he was unable to be rescued from the attack of the Sudarsana cakra. Thus he could understand the influence of a Vaisnava by personal experience. Durvasa Muni was certainly a great *yogī* and a very learned *brāhmaṇa*, but despite his being a real *yogī* he was unable to understand the influence of a Vaiṣṇava. Therefore it is said, *vaiṣṇavera kriyā mudrā vijñeha nā bujhaya*: even the most learned person cannot understand the value of a Vaiṣṇava. There is always a possibility for so-called *jñānis* and *yogīs* to be mistaken when studying

the character of a Vaiṣṇava. A Vaiṣṇava can be understood by how much he is favored by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in terms of his inconceivable activities.

- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Canto 09: "Liberation" > Chapter 04: Durvasa Muni's Life Spared > Verse: 20, Purport by His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

THE THREE TYPES OF VAISNAVAS Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

The Vaiṣṇava, who is attached to chanting the Holy Name, becomes recognised as a member of Sri Caitanya's family and dedicated to His lotus feet. The title of Vaiṣṇava is awarded to one who chants the Holy Name occasionally. The devotee who chants incessantly is called a *Vaiṣṇava-tara*, an elevated Vaiṣṇava, and the Vaiṣṇava who inspires others to chant the Holy Name simply by his presence is a *Vaiṣṇava-tama*, the most elevated.

These gradations have been explained in the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 15.111, 16, 72, 74, 75)

ataeva yānra mukhe eka kṛṣṇa nāma
 sei ta' Vaiṣṇava, kariha tānhāra sammāna
 kṛṣṇa nāma nirantara yāhāra vadane
 sei Vaiṣṇava śreṣṭha, bhaja tānhāra carane
 yānhāra darśane mukhe āise kṛṣṇa nāma
 tānhare jāniha tumi Vaiṣṇava pradhāna
 krama kari kahe prabhu Vaiṣṇava lakṣaṇā
 Vaiṣṇava Vaiṣṇavatara āra Vaiṣṇavatama

"Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu advised:
 One who is chanting the *Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra* is understood to be a Vaiṣṇava; therefore, you should offer all respects to him. A devotee who is always chanting the Holy Name of the Lord is to be considered a first class Vaiṣṇava, and your duty is to serve his lotus feet. The most elevated Vaiṣṇava is he whose very presence makes others chant Krishna's name. In this way, Lord Caitanya described the characteristics of the different levels of Vaiṣṇava: *Vaiṣṇava*, *Vaiṣṇava-tara* and *Vaiṣṇava-tama*."

It is the duty of every living entity to associate with all three types of saintly devotees. A Vaiṣṇava must at all times be respected; and the *Vaiṣṇava-tara* and *Vaiṣṇava-tama* must be served

with loving reverence. The householder Vaiṣṇava must celebrate festivals in the company of such Vaiṣṇavas. Whether the Vaiṣṇava is a householder or a renunciant, the devotee should respect him according to his level. When a devotee seeks sādhu-saṅga, saintly association, he must approach a more advanced Vaiṣṇava.

As is described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (B.r.s. 1.2. 92, 90):

*sajātīyāśaye snigdhe sādhau saṅgah svato vare
śrīmad bhāgavatārthānām āsvado rasikaiḥ saha*

"One should associate with devotees who are more advanced than oneself and endowed with a similar type of sentiment and attraction for the Lord. One should relish the purport of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam in the association of pure devotees who are steeped in spiritual life and realisation."

One must be very cautious not to judge a Vaiṣṇava based on his previous sins, residual sinful reactions, or a sudden fall-down into sinful activity. Srila Rupa Gosvami has warned in the *Upadeśamṛta* (Ua. 6):

na prākṛitatvam iha bhaka-janasya pasyet

"One must not see a Vaiṣṇava as a mundane person."

One must never discuss others' sinful activities except with good intentions to help. One must develop the quality of mercy towards all living entities. One is required to see oneself as meek and humble, thus enabling one to be respectful to everyone and not desire respect for oneself. The householder Vaiṣṇavas will accept material things without attachment, but with knowledge of their utility and relationship to Krishna's service. In this way, they will not be contaminated by materialism and they will be able to submerge themselves in the transcendental relish of chanting the Holy Name. As and when the taste for Krishna consciousness increases and correspondingly mundane attraction decreases to nil—then automatically a natural mood of renunciation develops and the anxiety of want disappears. This condition and state of consciousness cannot be achieved in any other way.

- *Daśa-mūla-tattva* of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura Translated by Sarvabhāvana dāsa

DIGNITY, GLORIES & GREATNESS OF VAISNAVA
Sri Vrindavan Das Thakura

*dhana nāhi, jana nāhi, nāhika pāṇḍitya
ke cinibe e sakala caitanyera bhṛtya*

He had no wealth, no followers, and no education. Who can recognize such servants of Lord Caitanya?

It is impossible to identify the characteristics of a Vaiṣṇava by material sense perception or external symptoms. It is not that one who possesses more wealth is a superior Vaiṣṇava. It is not that one who gathers more followers is a superior Vaiṣṇava. It is not that one who has more knowledge of the scriptures is a superior devotee of Visnu. The servants of Lord Caitanya may not have much wealth, may not gather many followers, and may not have the academic qualification of being expert in argument and counter-argument, but ordinary people have no qualification to understand why they are indifferent to such matters. The devotees consider the service of Sri Caitanya as superior to wealth, followers, and knowledge. Therefore it is impossible for ordinary people to estimate their dignity, glories, and greatness.

- *Chaitanya Bhagavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa* 9.233, including the purport of Sri Srimad Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura., Edited and Published by Pundarīka Vidyānidhi dāsa, Vrajraj Press

WHO IS A VAISNAVA?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanātha Saraswati Thakura

The spiritual master's servants are Vaiṣṇavas. Devotees who are initiated by bona fide gurus and who have taken complete shelter at their spiritual master's feet are Vaiṣṇavas. According to how well we serve the spiritual master, we see differences in the quality of our service to Krishna. Those who abandon their spiritual master or who are envious of him are a Vaiṣṇava. They are atheists possessed of a hellish mentality. Those who are envious of the spiritual master are also envious of the Supreme Lord. Actually, they are envious of the whole world. Only devotees who are fixed at the spiritual master's lotus feet and who are free of material desire are pure. A person who is free from the influence of wealth, women, and the tigress of



fame is a *Vaiṣṇava*. He is detached and pure and can defeat the entire world.

Is it possible to please Krishna without taking shelter of the spiritual master?

It is not possible to worship Krishna without taking shelter at the spiritual master's feet. The spiritual master is not an ordinary human being. He is as good as the Supreme Lord. That is why the spiritual master is described as God. He is the object of love and devotion. Those who know that the spiritual master is as good as the Supreme Lord are his genuine followers. Such followers are eligible for his mercy. Because the spiritual master, who is dear to Krishna, is pleased with unalloyed disciples, Krishna, his dear most friend, also becomes pleased with them.

Just consider how Hari, *guru*, and the *Vaiṣṇavas* are placed in succession. The spiritual master sits in the center, placing the Supreme Lord and the *Vaiṣṇavas* on his lap. By firmly catching hold of the spiritual master's lotus feet, we will automatically receive the mercy of the Lord and His devotees. If the spiritual master is pleased, Sri Hari and the *Vaiṣṇavas* will also be pleased. If we cannot become unalloyed devotees of the spiritual master, if we cannot make the spiritual master our life and

soul, then we will spoil everything and will not be able to receive the mercy of either the Lord or His devotees. Ultimately, we will be deceived and not attain the Lord's service.

Is the spiritual master an ordinary man?

The spiritual master is not a temporary, perishable lump of flesh and blood. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that the spiritual master is the Lord Himself. He is an incarnation of the Lord. Of his own sweet will, the spiritual master mercifully descends from the spiritual world to this world. He is eternally present both in the Lord's manifest and in unmanifest pastimes. He always acts as our guide and gives us proper intelligence.

The spiritual master is an extraordinary personality. He is eternal and full of knowledge and bliss. To consider him an ordinary human being is to be possessed of a hellish mentality. To think like this is an offense against the holy name. The spiritual master is self-realized; he knows the science of Krishna. He is dear to Sri Caitanya deva. He has appeared in this world to deliver fallen souls like us. He is not a *karmī*, *jñānī*, or *yogī*. He is an associate of the Lord in His pastimes. He is a topmost devotee. As God is eternal, so is the spiritual master. The transcendental Cupid, Krishna, is God. The

spiritual master is non-different from that same Krishna. He is a manifestation of Krishna.

When we consider the spiritual master as non-different from God, we recognize that the spiritual master is worshipable God. Although he is the worshipable Supreme Lord, he is most dear to the Lord. The spiritual master manifests the pastimes of worshiper God. The spiritual master and Krishna are simultaneously one and different. The spiritual master is sheltered, and Lord Krishna is the shelter. The spiritual master is servitor God and Sri Krishna is the object of service, the Personality of Godhead. The spiritual master is most dear to Lord Mukunda. In the vision of a self-realized disciple on the *rāga* path, the spiritual master is Krishna's energy and a manifestation of Vṛśabhanu's daughter. The spiritual master, who is dear to Krishna, is part of Krishna's internal energy; Lord Krishna is the supreme energetic. Krishna is the male or enjoyer, and the spiritual master is the female or beloved of Krishna.

Should we render service to the spiritual master every day?

We should serve the spiritual master at the beginning of every year, every month, every day, and every moment. If we do not serve the spiritual master constantly, we will certainly face difficulty. The moment we forget our *guru*'s service, we will forget ourselves.

Knowledge imparted by worldly teachers or instructors produces insignificant results, but the bona fide spiritual master does not bestow such insignificant results. The spiritual master bestows real auspiciousness. As soon as the living entities are bereft of the mercy of the sheltered God—the spiritual master—they are captured by material desires. If an instructing spiritual master does not instruct us how to take shelter at a *guru*'s lotus feet and how to deal with him, then we may lose the most coveted jewel even after having received it.

Chanting the Lord's holy name is the best form of worship. The spiritual master teaches us this process. But if we do not please the spiritual master, how will we gain the strength to worship the Lord? That is why I say that those who want to attain the Lord's shelter, who want real peace and freedom from material existence, should make the spiritual master's service their life and soul. They should serve the spiritual master constantly and

try their best to please him. Then they will not face any problems in life. They will attain all perfection.

Enjoyer-Krishna is half and Enjoyed-Krishna is the other half. The various pastimes performed by both are complete. Krishna is the complete manifestation of the enjoyer, and our spiritual master is the complete manifestation of the enjoyed. A spiritual master is one who personally demonstrates how to serve the Supreme Lord throughout life. That spiritual master is present in every object. We have no business other than to serve his lotus feet constantly.

Is it essential to associate and serve the spiritual master directly?

We should certainly communicate directly with the spiritual master. Those who do not wish to serve and associate with their spiritual master personally are bound to be cheated. Direct communication with *guru* is the first step on the path of divine service.

We should serve the manifestations of *guru* in every entity. If we cannot serve the *guru*, we cannot serve anyone. I must not hear anything until my divine master, Śrī Gurudeva, authorizes me to hear it.

Can we see the Supreme Lord without the spiritual master's help?

The spiritual master is the Lord's transcendental temple. The Supreme Lord lives in that temple. Lord Sri Krishna, who is controlled by His devotees' love, manifests Himself in the hearts of the spiritual master and the devotees. Scripture states, *śrutim apare smṛtim itare bhāratam anye bhajantu bhava-bhitāḥ, aham iha nandam vande yasyālinde param brahma*: "Let others, fearing material existence, worship the *Vedas*, the Vedic supplementary *Purāṇas*, and the *Mahābhārata*, but I shall worship Nanda Maharaja, in whose courtyard the Supreme Brahman is crawling." (*Padyāvalī* 126)

Many people say that they are eager to see the Supreme Lord, but they do not understand that the Lord's *darśana* is possible simply by taking *darśana* of the spiritual master. Unless we meet the spiritual master, we cannot meet the Supreme Lord. Devotional service does not begin without first taking shelter at a spiritual master's lotus feet.

The spiritual master is certainly the via media between Krishna and the living entity. Lord Krish-

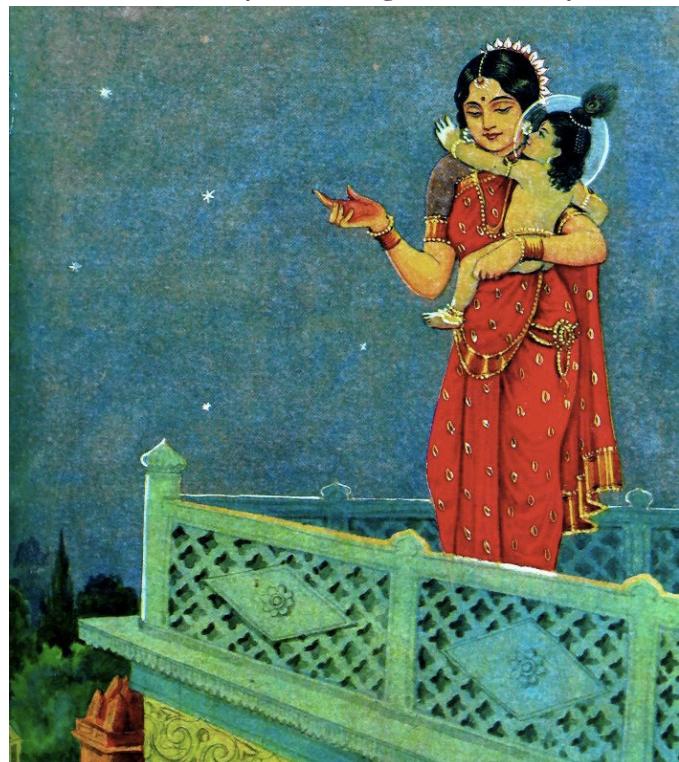
na sends His best servant, His best associate, to this world to distribute His unlimited mercy. The spiritual master is the personification of that mercy. Those who teach us to serve the Lord's Deity and to chant His holy names are spiritual masters. It is not enough to serve the spiritual master with awe and reverence only from a distance; we must serve him with strong faith and love. The best example of this is the intimate service Srila Raghunatha dasa rendered to Srila Svarupa Dāmodara Prabhu.

Will we face difficulty if we forget our spiritual master?

The moment I fall down from service to my spiritual master, who is protecting me at every moment by keeping me at his lotus feet, I will become distracted from the Absolute Truth. As soon as I fall away from my spiritual master's shelter, I will be captured by innumerable material desires. When I run to bathe, I will become busy protecting myself from cold. I will spend my time running to perform activities other than my spiritual master's service. If I do not remember my spiritual master's lotus feet—the lotus feet of that spiritual master who has always protected me from the material concept of life—at the beginning of every year, every month, every day, every moment, I will certainly find myself in trouble. I will pretend to become the spiritual master myself and expect others to adore me. This is the material conception of life. It is not that we should worship our spiritual master for only a day; we should serve him at every moment.

Is the spiritual master present in everything?

In order to bestow mercy on me, my spiritual master appears before me in various forms. They are all manifestations of my initiating spiritual master, who imparts transcendental knowledge. The light of the *jagad-guru* is reflected in various objects. My spiritual master is reflected in each and every object. Worshipable Krishna is half and worshiper Krishna is the other half. Their combined pastimes are complete. Krishna is the complete manifestation of the object of worship, and my spiritual master is the complete manifestation of the worshiper. All cognizant objects in which the reflection of transcendence falls are my spiritual master in different forms. My spiritual master is the one who always personally demonstrates how to



serve Krishna throughout my life. He is reflected in the hearts of all living entities, and he is present in all objects as the Lord's subordinate. Thus he is present in every item.

- *Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immoratality His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada Compiled by Sripada Bhakti Mayukha Bhagavat Maharaja Adapted and Published by Isvara dasa Translated from Bengali by Bhumipati dasa.*

!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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