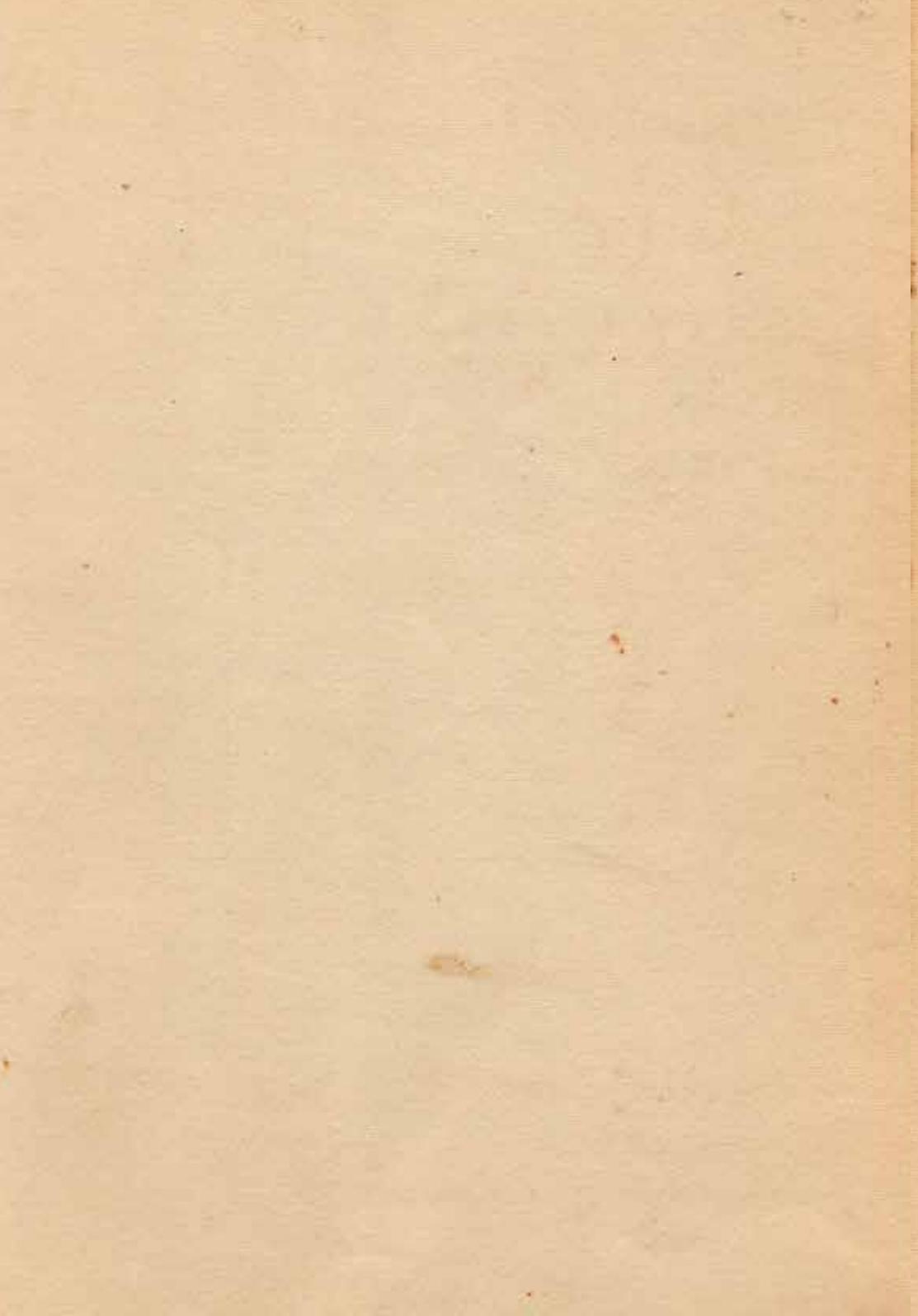


"...Surrender  
unto the  
Living  
Bhagavata..."



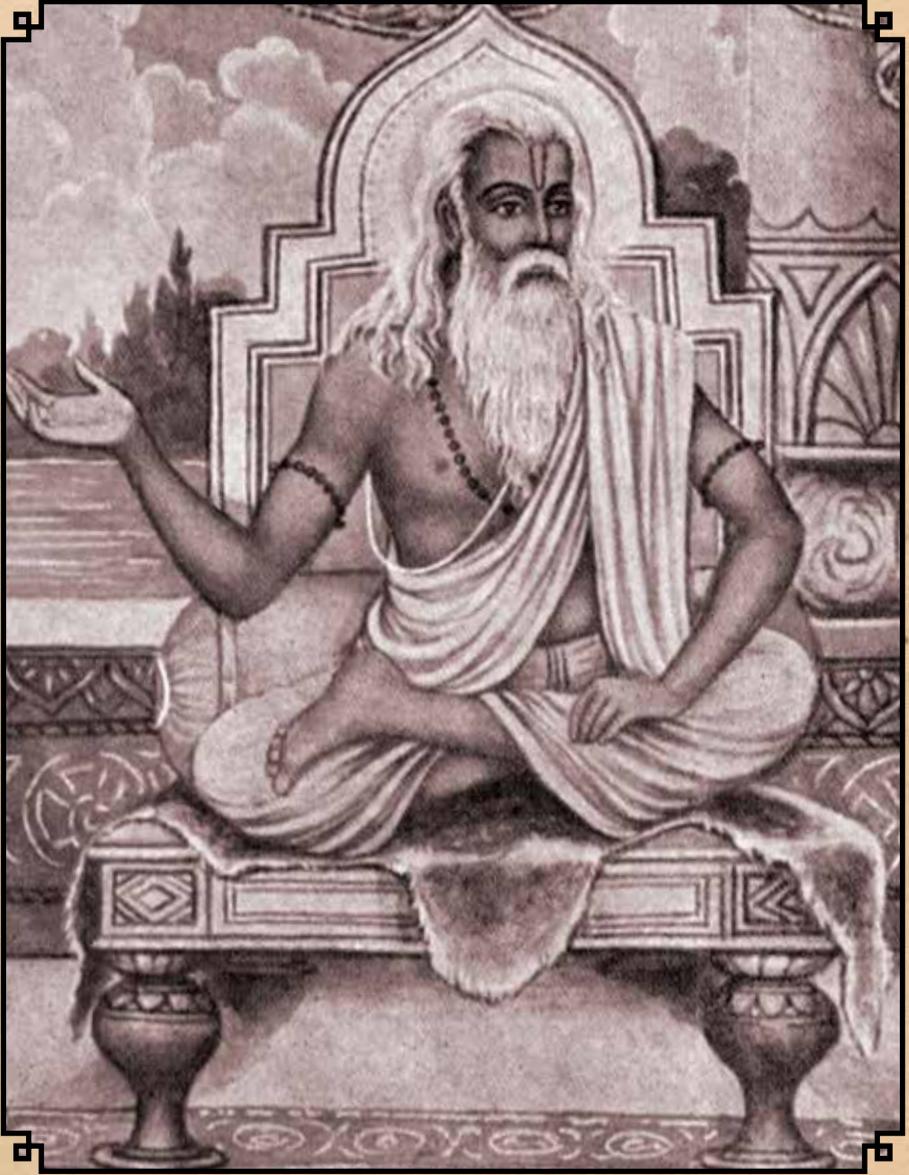
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**"...Surrender  
unto the  
Living  
Bhagavata..."**







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

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

— Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 25.122

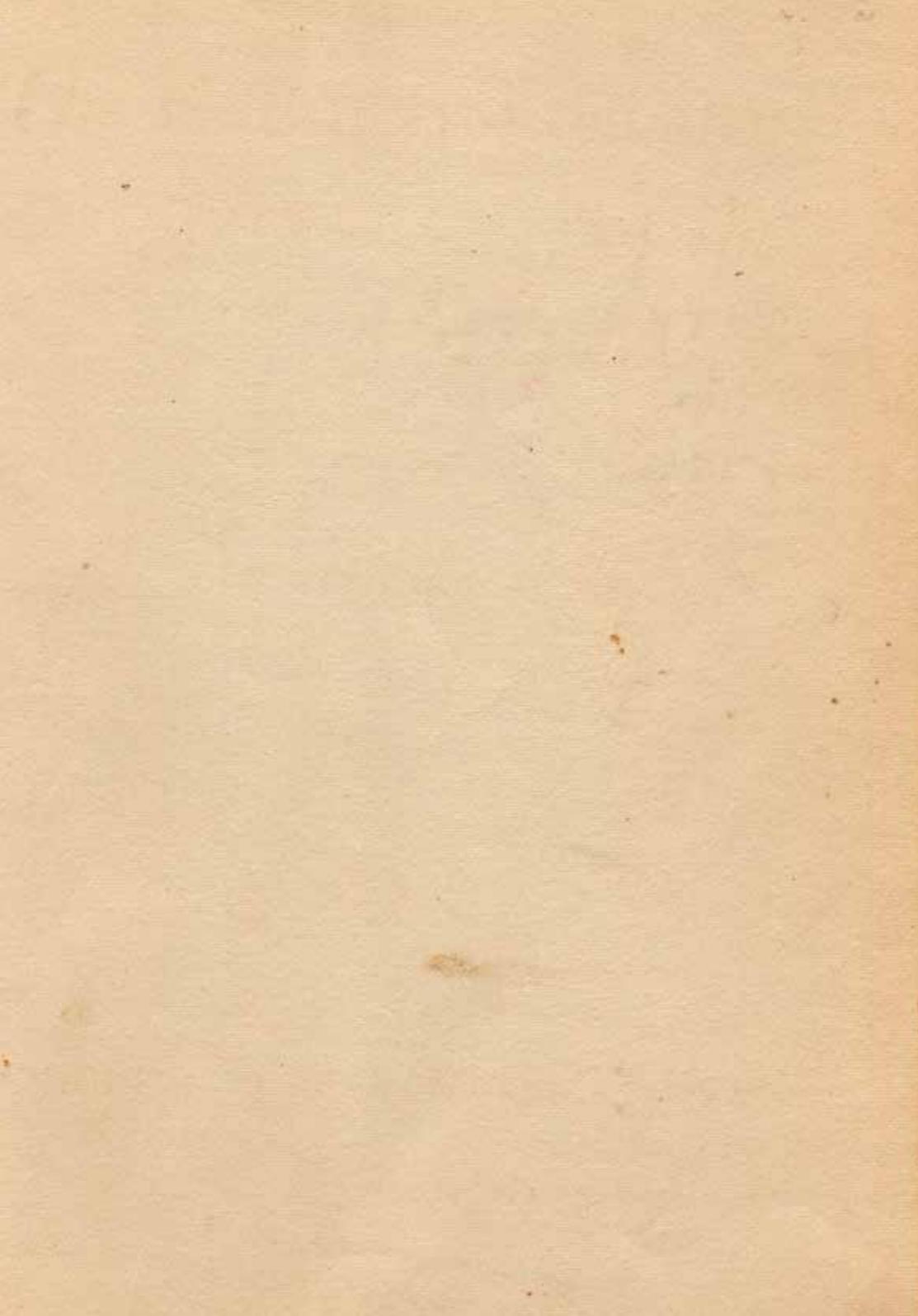


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## Foreword



The information in this publication has been compiled for those aspirants on the path of *bhakti* who may find themselves a little confused or perplexed regarding the initiation or re-initiation process.

Even those who are not interested in the path of *bhakti* say it is a virtue to be well informed. For our own benefit, in general we should fully understand every side of any issue, or specifically in this case we must endeavour to correctly understand our Gaudiya *siddhānta* as presented to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda and his predecessors. It is for this reason that in this book we present for you the other side to the current system of initiation currently being practiced and promoted, commonly known as *ṛtvik*.

After reading this booklet, it is then up to you to make your own decision; you make your own choice! As we all know, serious misunderstandings can baffle the aspirant on this divine path of *bhakti*.

The title for this booklet is based on the words of Śrīla AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda when he said:

“...A gramophone will not help...”<sup>1</sup>

“...you must approach a person who is life living Bhāgavata...”<sup>2</sup>

“... Gramophone or tape record speaker, that will not be...”<sup>3</sup>

“...You must be live speaker...”<sup>4</sup>



“...and take the lessons from live *bhāgavata*...”<sup>5</sup>

“...So, if one does not surrender unto the living *bhāgavata*, he cannot understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*...”<sup>6</sup>

Hence the title: “... Surrender Unto The Living Bhāgavata ...”

In the Vaiṣṇava community today, there are two major variants of this *ṛtvik* system. The first one being *ṛtvik-vāda* itself, whereby a living person offers initiation on behalf of an *aprakāṣa* Vaiṣṇava *sad-guru*, which is a system invented mainly as a response to a perceived suspension of the availability of a qualified Vaiṣṇava. The second major, yet generally unrecognised, system is *pracchanna-ṛtvik-vāda* – wherein it is not at all clear whether the initiating *ṛtvik* acts on his own behalf and takes the position of *guru* and simultaneously may only be a representative of a transcendental *ācārya*. The initiating *pracchanna-ṛtvik* acts sometimes as *guru* himself or at other times appears to claim to be acting on behalf of an *aprakāṣa* Vaiṣṇava *sad-guru*; this is referred to as covered *ṛtvik* or soft *ṛtvik*.

All care has been taken to check texts used to the original books, articles, and letters, and the lectures to the relevant and available audio files. The information contained in this booklet can also be found on our website [www.tattvadarshan.com](http://www.tattvadarshan.com). If you wish to contact us our email address is: [info@tattvadarshan.com](mailto:info@tattvadarshan.com).

Your servants,  
The editors.

Completed on Śrī Gaura Purnima  
Gaurabda 528 (16-03-2014)



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# Introduction



The information contained in this small book has been garnered from many sources, especially from the books of Śrīla AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and the writings of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. The subject matter of this booklet, which is in regards to the acceptance of a bona fide physically present living *sad-guru*, Śrī-guru, is the holiest of holy institutions in our Brahmā-Mādhva-Gauḍīya-sampradāya. This has been clearly explained by our Ācāryas and also by the Supreme Lord Himself in numerous texts.

## Tattva Darsinah Guru

The Supreme Lord Himself has said in the *Bhagavad-gītā*:

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

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching\* a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realised soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.”<sup>1</sup>

---

\***Editor’s note:** Please note the word ‘approach’ is used here. This word means, to get close to; to draw near to; to come within reach of. Hence, ‘approaching a spiritual master’ denotes person-to-person contact.



In his *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purport Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

“...The Vedic literature instructs: *tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam* [SB 11.3.21]. An intelligent man must be very inquisitive to know the transcendental science deeply. Therefore one must\* approach a *guru*, a spiritual master. Although Jaḍa Bharata explained everything to Mahārāja Rahūgaṇa, it appears that his intelligence was not perfect enough to understand clearly. He therefore requested a further explanation. As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34): *tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā*. The student must approach a spiritual master and surrender unto him fully (*praṇipātena*). He must also question him in order to understand his instructions (*paripraśnena*). One should not only surrender to the spiritual master but also render loving service unto him (*sevayā*) so that the spiritual master will be pleased with the student and explain the transcendental subject matter more clearly. A challenging spirit before the spiritual master should be avoided if one is at all interested in learning the Vedic instructions in depth.”<sup>2</sup>

Also in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* the great sage Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī has said:

*tasyānucaritam rājann  
ṛṣibhis tattva-darśibhiḥ  
śrutam hi varṇitam bhūri  
tvayā sītā-pater muhuḥ*

---

\***Editor’s note:** Please note the use of the word ‘must’, it is not optional. One ‘must’ approach, one ‘must’ also question and one ‘must’ also serve. Three main points of the verse above [Bg 4.34] and this purport, all very personal;

1. “The student must approach a spiritual master and surrender unto him fully (*praṇipātena*).” 2. “He must also question him in order to understand his instructions (*paripraśnena*).” 3. “...but also render loving service unto him (*sevayā*).” This again denotes person-to-person contact, the *guru* and the disciple, a personal relationship.

“O King Parīkṣit, the transcendental activities of Lord Rāmacandra have been described by great saintly persons who have seen the truth.\* Because you have heard again and again about Lord Rāmacandra, the husband of mother Sītā, I shall describe these activities only in brief. Please listen.”<sup>3</sup>

## The Duty Of Every Man

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja Goswami has written in his *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

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

“It is therefore the duty of every man—in every country, in every circumstance and at all times—to approach the bona fide spiritual master, question\*\* him about devotional service and listen to him explain the process.”<sup>4</sup>

## Accept The Shelter

Śrīla Rūpa Goswāmī has written in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

*guru-pādāśrayas tasmāt  
kṛṣṇa-dikṣādi-śikṣaṇam*

---

\***Editor’s note:** Please note the phrase ‘who have seen the truth’. Śrī Śukadeva Goswāmī is making the point that great saintly persons have actually *seen* the truth. Therefore such saintly realised persons are the only ones who can properly represent the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

\*\***Editor’s note:** Please note the words ‘question him’ and ‘listen to him explain’ are used here. The process of questioning, and hearing the answers. First one poses the question and then one hears the answer to one’s question from the bona fide spiritual master. This also denotes person-to-person contact.



*viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā  
sādhu-vartmānuvartanam*

“The first four limbs of *sādhana-bhakti* are: to accept the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide *guru*, to take *dīkṣā* and receive instructions on service to Kṛṣṇa from him, to serve him with intimacy and affection\* and to follow the path of the *sādhus*, under his guidance.”<sup>5</sup>

Also Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said:

*guru-pādāśraya, dīkṣā, gurura sevana  
sad-dharma-śikṣā-ṛcchā, sādhu-mārgānugamana*

“On the path of regulative devotional service, one must observe the following items: (1) One must accept a bona fide spiritual master. (2) One must accept initiation from him. (3) One must serve him. (4) One must receive instructions from the spiritual master and make inquiries\*\* in order to learn devotional service. (5) One must follow in the footsteps of the previous *ācāryas* and follow the directions given by the spiritual master.”<sup>6</sup>

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\***Editor’s note:** Please note the words ‘serve him with intimacy and affection’ once more denotes a personal relationship with the bona fide spiritual master. One has met the bona fide spiritual master, one has to ask, ‘how can I serve you?’ Then the bona fide spiritual master gives the (aspiring disciple or) the disciple instructions on what to do and what not to do. Again this denotes person-to-person contact.

\*\***Editor’s note:** Please note the words ‘make inquiries’ and ‘receive instructions’. Again the same points are delivered by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, again this denotes a commitment to a personal relationship with the bona fide spiritual master.

Also the use of the word ‘must’ as it is not an option, one has to do this. According to the Oxford Dictionary the word ‘must’ means: be obliged to; should (expressing necessity); something that should not be overlooked or missed.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is described:

*guru-śuśrūṣayā bhaktyā  
sarva-labdhārpaṇena ca  
saṅgena sādhu-bhaktānām  
īśvarārādhanena ca*

*śraddhayā tat-kathāyām ca  
kīrtanair guṇa-karmaṇām  
tat-pādāmburuha-dhyānāt  
tal-liṅgeṣārhaṇādibhiḥ*

“One must accept the bona fide spiritual master and render service unto him with great devotion and faith. Whatever one has in one’s possession should be offered to the spiritual master, and in the association of saintly persons and devotees one should worship the Lord, hear the glories of the Lord with faith, glorify the transcendental qualities and activities of the Lord, always meditate on the Lord’s lotus feet, and worship the Deity of the Lord strictly according to the injunctions of the *śāstra* and *guru*.”<sup>7</sup>

*tatra bhāgavatān dharmān  
śikṣed guru-ātma-daivataḥ  
amāyayānuvṛtṭyā yais  
tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ*

“Accepting the bona fide spiritual master as one’s life and soul and worshipping deity, the disciple should learn from him the process of pure devotional service. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari, the soul of all souls, is inclined to give Himself to His pure devotees. Therefore, the disciple should learn from the spiritual master how to serve the Lord without duplicity and in such a faithful and favourable way that the Supreme Lord, being satisfied, will offer Himself to the faithful disciple.”<sup>8</sup>



*bhayam dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād  
īśād apetasya viparyayo <smṛtiḥ  
tan-māyayāto budha ābhajet tam  
bhaktyaikayeśam guru-devatātmā*

“Fear arises when a living entity misidentifies himself as the material body because of absorption in the external, illusory energy of the Lord. When the living entity thus turns away from the Supreme Lord, he also forgets his own constitutional position as a servant of the Lord. This bewildering, fearful condition is effected by the potency for illusion, called *māyā*. Therefore, an intelligent person should engage unflinchingly in the unalloyed devotional service of the Lord, under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master,\* whom he should accept as his worshippable deity and as his very life and soul.”<sup>9</sup>

## Association With Advanced Devotees

In the *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa* it is written:

*bhaktistu bhagavad-bhakta-saṅgena parijāyate  
sat-saṅga-prāpyate pumbhiḥ sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ*

---

\***Editor’s comment:** Please note the use of the words ‘should learn from him’, ‘should learn from the spiritual master’ and ‘under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master’ denotes a personal commitment. The bona fide spiritual master personally teaches the disciple. This is the fruit of all proper *guru*-disciple relationships. The bona fide spiritual master speaks and the disciple listens, and as explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda in the comments on page VIII, one hears from the mouth, from the lips, ‘of the life living *Bhāgavata*.’ For instance, the word *Upaniṣad* means to sit closer to the *guru*/teacher. The whole of Vedic culture and learning is based upon this one point of hearing. Therefore the disciple would sit as close as possible to the spiritual master so as to hear with greater clarity. The Monier-Williams *Sanskrit Dictionary* adds that, *Upaniṣad* means ‘setting to rest ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the supreme spirit.’



“Devotional sentiments are evoked by the purifying association of advanced devotees. The *jīva* can come into close contact with a pure devotee only by accruing the pious results of many previous births.”<sup>10</sup>

Also in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is stated:

*kṛṣṇa-bhakti-janma-mūla haya ‘sādhu-saṅga’  
kṛṣṇa-prema janme, teṅho punaḥ mukhya aṅga*

“The root cause of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is association with advanced devotees.\* Even when one’s dormant love for Kṛṣṇa awakens, association with devotees is still most essential.”<sup>11</sup>

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated:

*satām prasaṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido  
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ  
taj-joṣaṅād āśv apavarga-vartmani  
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*

“In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.”<sup>12</sup>

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\***Editor’s comment:** Association with *sādhus* is the most important factor for advancement in devotional service, especially the association of highly elevated devotees. As stated above, “The root cause of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa is association with advanced devotees”.



## Life Living Bhagavata

Śrīla AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has also stated:

“...A gramophone will not help...” “...approach a person who is life living *Bhāgavata*...”<sup>13</sup>

“...through the mouth of the devotees.” “...not gramophone — through the mouth of, through the lips of real devotee...”<sup>14</sup>

“...Gramophone or tape record speaker, that will not be. You must be live speaker...”<sup>15</sup>

“...Hearing must be from *sādhu*, from devotee, from the lips of the devotee. Just like Śukadeva Gosvāmī was speaking to Mahārāja Parikṣit...”<sup>16</sup>

### Approach A Self Realised Vaisnava

Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, the private secretary of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said:

*yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne  
ekānta āśraya kara caitanya-caraṇe*

“If you want to understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,” he said, “you must approach a self-realised Vaiṣṇava and hear from him. You can do this when you have completely taken shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”<sup>17</sup>

In conclusion it is worth noting the rarity of great self-realised souls by the words of Lord Śiva spoken to Parvati:

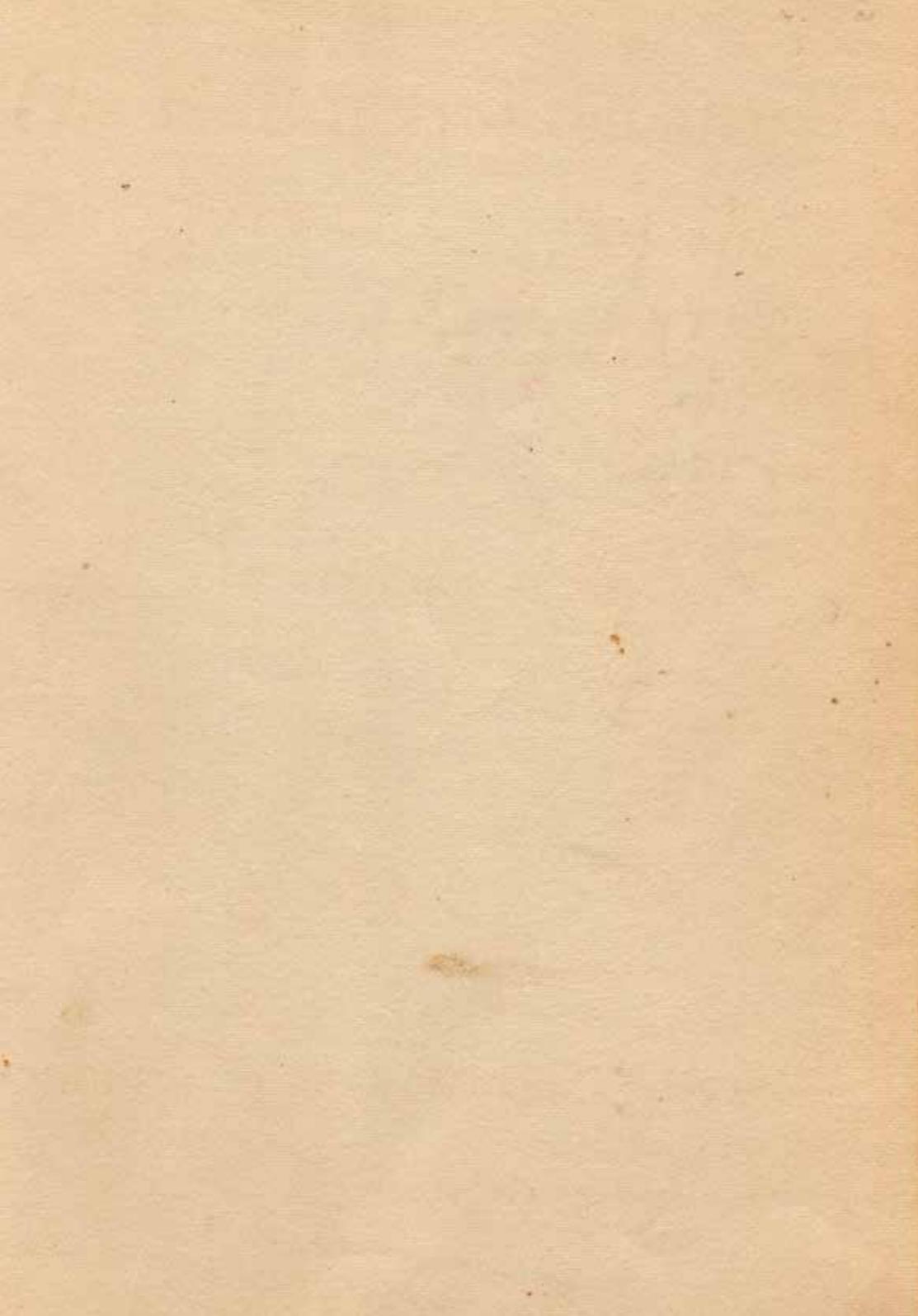


*guravo bahavaḥ santi  
śiṣya-vittāpahārahāḥ  
durlabhāḥ sad-gurur  
devi śiṣya-santāpahārahāḥ*

“One can find many *gurus* who can take away the wealth of their disciples, but there are few who can remove the miseries of their disciples.”<sup>18</sup>

The quotes in this booklet do not demonstrate an exhaustive list; there are many, many more quotes on this topic. If you have any quotes that can assist in this endeavour please send them to [info@tattoadarshan.com](mailto:info@tattoadarshan.com) for publishing. Please note that all quotes will need to be referenced.

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**. . . Surrender  
Unto The  
Living Bhagavata . . .**



**Not That You Have To Associate  
With The Author**

From a Morning walk with Śrīla Prabhupāda  
May 21, 1975 Melbourne, Australia

**Madhudviṣa:** ...cannot become a medical practitioner by simply reading the books. He must study under a medical practitioner. So in the case of your books, **is it possible to become a devotee without actually having personal association with you? Just by reading your books?**

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, it is not that you have to associate with the author.\* But one who knows, if you cannot understand you have to take lesson from him. Not necessarily that you have to contact with the author always.

---

\*Editor's note: Text in bold accentuated by the editor. This is an interesting point here made by Śrīla Prabhupāda, "...No, it is not that you have to associate with the author. But one who knows, if you cannot understand you have to take lesson from him..." On page VIII of the introduction of this book is described what Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, the private secretary of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, has said about who to go to for instructions. We do not need to go to the author, but we have to go to someone who knows the subject matter.



**Devotee:** Just like the textbooks are not written by the teachers; they're written by other professors.

**Devotee:** Usually you don't even meet the author.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** Simply one who knows the subject matter, he can explain.

**Madhudviṣa:** But can your, would your purports, would that serve as explanation besides...

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** No, no, anyone who knows the subject matter, he will be able to explain. Not necessarily the author is required to be present there. [break] ...to study from a medical man, I never said you have to study from the author. Or one who understood the author's purpose. Just like we are explaining *Bhagavad-gītā* as it is. Not that one has to learn directly from Kṛṣṇa. One who has understood Kṛṣṇa, from him. That is *paramparā* system.

## The Path Of Hearing

"Factually the path of *bhakti-yoga* is the path of hearing..." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.28.65)

*śunile khaṇḍibe cittera ajñānādi doṣa  
kṛṣṇe gāḍha prema habe, pāibe santoṣa*

"Simply hearing submissively will free one's heart from all the faults of ignorance, and thus one will achieve deep love for Kṛṣṇa. This is the path of peace" (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.107)

"My dear Lord, by expanding Your transcendental vibrations, You reveal the actual meaning of everything." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.24.40)

“Simply by hearing about Him, one develops love for Him. That is the gift of the Lord.” (Teachings of Lord Caitanya - Chapter 15 explanation of the *ātmārāma* verse)

*Tac chr̥ṇu*: “Hear from Me.” [*tat*—that; *śr̥ṇu*—try to hear] (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.1)

“The favour of the spiritual master is not received through any other part of the body but the ears.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7 purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda)

## In Touch With A Realised Spiritual Master

“...Therefore out of thousands and thousands of men, one may inquire about his spirit self and thus consult the revealed scriptures like *Vedānta-sūtras*, *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. But in spite of reading and hearing such scriptures, unless one is in touch with a realised spiritual master, he cannot actually realise the real nature of self, etc. And out of thousands and hundreds of thousands of men, someone may know what Lord Kṛṣṇa is in fact...” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.2.71 purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda)

## Accepting Guru

“Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has given directions, in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, on how to accept a bona fide spiritual master and how to deal with him. First, the desiring candidate must find a bona fide spiritual master, and then he must very eagerly receive instructions from him



and execute them. This is reciprocal\* service.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7 purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda)

“As for acceptance of the spiritual master, that is essential, because without the instruction of a bona fide spiritual master one cannot progress in the spiritual science. One should approach the spiritual master with all humility and offer him all services so that he will be pleased to bestow his blessings upon the disciple.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 13.8 purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda)

“When the living entity is lost in the forest of the material world, in the struggle for existence, his first business is to find a bona fide *guru*\*\* who is always engaged at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu. After all, if he is at all eager to be relieved of the struggle for existence, he must find a bona fide *guru* and take instructions at his lotus feet. In this way he can get out of the struggle.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.14.1 purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda)

“Therefore the process is that if you want to make progress in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then you have to find out a *guru* who is *mahātmā*\*\*\*. *Ādau gurvāśrayam*. That is the first business. *Ādau*, in the beginning, *gurvāśrayam*, to take shelter of a bona fide *mahātmā guru*. That is the Vedic instruction. *Tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum eva abhigac-*

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\***Editor’s note:** The Oxford Dictionary describes *reciprocal* as: given, felt, or done in return; binding each of two parties; expressing mutual action or relationship. Again person-to-person contact.

\*\***Editor’s note:** Please note the use of the words, ‘find a bona fide *guru*’ and ‘he must find a bona fide *guru*’. This is a personal specific relationship with a highly qualified *guru*. This is the act of finding.

\*\*\***Mahātmā:** A “great soul” an exalted Vaiṣṇava, devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, free from any material contamination.

*chet* [MU 1.2.12]. 'Must,' *abhigacchet*. This verb is used — "must." It is not, 'Oh, I can do without *guru*.' No, that is not possible. That is not possible. If you want to understand the transcendental science, spiritual science, you must approach. *Gacchet*. This, this form of verb used when there is the meaning 'must'." (Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture, Vṛndāvana August 10, 1974)

*guru-pādāśraya, dīkṣā, gurura sevana  
sad-dharma-śikṣā-prcchā, sādhu-mārgānugamana*

"On the path of regulative devotional service, one must observe the following items: (1) One must accept a bona fide spiritual master. (2) One must accept initiation from him. (3) One must serve him. (4) One must receive instructions from the spiritual master and make inquiries in order to learn devotional service. (5) One must follow in the footsteps of the previous *ācāryas* and follow the directions given by the spiritual master." (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, *Madhya-līlā* 22.115)

*ato gurum praṇamyaivam  
sarva-svam vinivedya ca  
grhṇīyād vaiṣṇavam mantram  
dīkṣā-pūrvam vidhānataḥ*

"It is the duty of every human being to surrender to a bona fide spiritual master. Giving him everything - body, mind and intelligence - one must take Vaiṣṇava initiation from him." (Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 2.10)

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



“It is therefore the duty of every man - in every country, in every circumstance and at all times - to accept the bona fide spiritual master, question him about devotional service and listen to him explain the process.” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 25.122)

*adīkṣitasya vāmoru kṛtaṁ sarvaṁ nirarthakam  
paśu-yonim avāpnoti dīkṣā-virahito janaḥ*

“Unless one is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, all his devotional activities are useless. A person who is not properly initiated can descend again into the animal species.” (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 2.6 quoted from the *Viṣṇu-yāmala*)

“One should always remember that a person who is reluctant to accept a spiritual master and be initiated is sure to be baffled in his endeavour to go back to Godhead. One who is not properly initiated may present himself as a great devotee, but in fact he is sure to encounter many stumbling blocks on his path of progress toward spiritual realisation, with the result that he must continue his term of material existence without relief. Such a helpless person is compared to a ship without a rudder, for such a ship can never reach its destination. It is imperative, therefore, that one accept a spiritual master if he at all desires to gain the favour of the Lord.

The service of the spiritual master is essential.... If one thinks that he is above consulting anyone else, including a spiritual master, he is at once an offender at the lotus feet of the Lord. Such an offender can never go back to Godhead...” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 1.35 purport Śrīla AC Bhaktivedanta Swami)



“...Even for a king like Mahārāja Parīkṣit there was need of a spiritual master for guidance. Without such guidance one cannot make progress in spiritual life. The spiritual master must be bona fide, and one who wants to have self-realisation must approach and take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master to achieve real success...”  
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.16.3 purport Śrīla Prabhupāda)

“...The principle of accepting a spiritual master, as mentioned in the seventh [eighth] verse, is essential. Even for one who takes to devotional service, it is most important. Transcendental life begins when one accepts a bona fide spiritual master. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, clearly states here that this process of knowledge is the actual path. Anything speculated beyond this is nonsense...” (*Bhāgavad-gītā* 13.8 purport Śrīla Prabhupāda)

## Vyasadeva Had Need Of A Spiritual Master

“Although formally Śrīla Nārada Ṛṣi is his spiritual master, Śrīla Vyāsadeva is not at all dependent on a spiritual master because in essence he is the spiritual master of everyone else. But because he is doing the work of an *ācārya*, he has taught us by his own conduct that one must have a spiritual master, even though he be God Himself. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Lord Śrī Rāma and Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, all incarnations of Godhead, accepted formal spiritual masters, although by Their transcendental nature They were cognizant of all knowledge.”  
(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.21 purport Śrīla Prabhupāda)



“There are many inexperienced persons who advocate self-realisation without the help of a spiritual master. They decry the necessity of the spiritual master and try themselves to take his place by propagating the theory that a spiritual master is not necessary.\* *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, however, does not approve this viewpoint. Even the great transcendental scholar Vyāsadeva had need of a spiritual master, and under the instruction of his spiritual master, Nārada, he prepared this sublime literature, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Even Lord Caitanya, although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, accepted a spiritual master; even Lord Kṛṣṇa accepted a spiritual master, Sāndīpani Muni, in order to be enlightened; and all the *ācāryas* and saints of the world had spiritual masters. In *Bhagavad-gītā* Arjuna accepted Kṛṣṇa as his spiritual master, although there was no necessity of such a formal declaration. So, in all cases, there is no question about the necessity of accepting a spiritual master. The only stipulation is that the spiritual master should be bona fide; i.e., the spiritual master must be in the proper chain of disciplic succession, called the *paramparā* system.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.7.39 purport)

## Approach A Bona Fide Spiritual Master

“So we have to follow the principle of religion; otherwise we are misguided. Just like a child has to be sent to school to understand, to become learned scholar. It is compulsory, not that I may send my child to school or if I like, I don’t send. No. It is compulsory. *Tad-vijñānārtham*

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\***Editor’s note:** It is seen that those who advocate the philosophy of *rtvik* initiation are themselves taking the place of a bona fide *guru* and are promoting a false and inconclusive process not supported by scripture or cultural precedent.



*sa gurum evābhigacchet* [MU 1.2.12]\*. This is Vedic injunction. If you want to be learned fully, especially if you want to learn the transcendental science, *gurum eva abhigacchet*: 'One must go to a *guru*.' *Guru*—the spiritual master as well as the teacher also, *guru*. So he must att..., he must go to a *guru*. *Tad viddhi pranipātena paripraśnena sevayā* [Bg. 4.34]. And going to *guru*, what you have to do? *Pranipātena*. You have to fully surrender. *Paripraśnena*. After surrendering, then you can enquire, you can put question. Otherwise, it is illegal. If you do not accept anybody as *guru*, then don't put question before him to waste his time and your time. This is the process. First of all find out whom you like to accept as *guru*. Then put question. But sometimes we have to talk with persons who is not student: outsider. That is preaching work. But *śāstra* says that one should approach a *guru*, and with surrender he would ask him, and *guru* will talk with a person who is surrendered. Otherwise, there is no necessity of talk, because he will not accept. One who has come to challenge the *guru*, so he will simply waste time. He will not accept. But a disciple who has surrendered, he will accept. Therefore talking is recommended between *guru* and disciple, not outsider. *Tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum eva abhigacchet* [MU 1.2.12].

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*\*tad-vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet  
samt-pāṇih śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham*

"To understand these things properly, one must humbly approach, with firewood in hand, a spiritual master who is learned in the Vedas and firmly devoted to the Absolute Truth." [Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12]

**Editors note:** Here the words, 'one must humbly approach' again the act of approaching, again personal and person to person contact. Also the phrase, '... Therefore talking is recommended between *guru* and disciple...' The *guru* speaks to the disciple and the disciple speaks to the *guru*, again person to person contact.



This is essential. And *guru* trains the disciple according to the Vedic principle. Therefore there are division of *varṇa* and *āśrama*." (Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.1.47 Lecture - Dallas, July 29, 1975)

"The path of spiritual realisation is undoubtedly difficult. The Lord therefore advises us to approach a bona fide spiritual master in the line of disciplic succession from the Lord Himself. No one can be a bona fide spiritual master without following this principle of disciplic succession\*..." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34 purport)

"...The Lord is the original spiritual master, and a person in the disciplic succession can convey the message of the Lord as it is to his disciple. No one can be spiritually realised by manufacturing his own process, as is the fashion of the foolish pretenders. The *Bhāgavatam* (6.3.19) says, *dharmam tu sākṣād bhagavat-praṇītam*: the path of religion is directly enunciated by the Lord. Therefore, mental speculation or dry arguments cannot help one progress in spiritual life. One has to approach a bona fide spiritual master to receive the knowledge. Such a spiritual master should be accepted in full surrender, and one should serve the spiritual master like a menial servant, without false prestige. Satisfaction of the self-realised spiritual master is the secret of advancement in spiritual life. Inquiries and submission constitute the proper combination for spiritual understanding. Unless there is submission and service, inquiries from the learned spiritual master will not be effective. One must be able to pass the test of the spiritual master, and when he sees

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\***Editor's note:** Please note this sentence, "...No one can be a bona fide spiritual master without following this principle of disciplic succession..." Therefore how can the disciplic succession (*sampradāya*) be followed if we maintain the idea that it has stopped or come to an end! '*Sampradāya* now ends!'



the genuine desire of the disciple, he automatically blesses the disciple with genuine spiritual understanding. In this verse, both blind following and absurd inquiries are condemned. One should not only hear submissively from the spiritual master, but one must also get a clear understanding from him, in submission and service and inquiries. A bona fide spiritual master is by nature very kind toward the disciple. Therefore when the student is submissive and is always ready to render service, the reciprocation of knowledge and inquiries becomes perfect." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34 purport)

"We have to receive mercy both from the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa. We cannot jump over to Kṛṣṇa. That is another nonsense. We must approach Kṛṣṇa through *guru*. That is *paramparā* system. Kṛṣṇa is not so cheap thing that you can jump over. Somebody says, 'Oh, why shall I accept *guru*? I can approach Kṛṣṇa directly.' No. Kṛṣṇa does not accept such... *Mad-bhaktah pūjābhyadhikah*. Kṛṣṇa says that 'First of all you become devotee of My devotee.'" (Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 2.2 in London, August 3 1973)

*ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha  
na me bhaktās ca te janāḥ  
mad-bhaktānām ca ye bhaktās  
te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ*

"[Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna:] 'Those who are My direct devotees are actually not My devotees, but those who are the devotees of My servant are factually My devotees.'" (*Ādi Purāṇa*, quoted in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* 11.28, and in *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 2.6)

“...The best way to establish our relation in transcendental sweetness is to approach Him [Lord Kṛṣṇa]\* through His recognised devotees. One should not try to establish the relation directly; there must be a via medium which is transparent and competent to lead us to the right path.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.9.22 purport)

## This Is Called The Parampara System

“...It is difficult, however, to understand *Bhagavad-gītā* without the help of the *guru*. Therefore the *guru* appears in the *paramparā* system...” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.24.53 purport)

“Here the process of devotional service is further explained. Kaśyapa Muni wanted to instruct Aditi in the same process recommended to him by Brahmā for satisfying the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is valuable. The *guru* does not manufacture a new process to instruct the disciple. The disciple receives from the *guru* an authorised process received by the *guru* from his *guru*. This is called the system of disciplic succession (*evam paramparā-prāptam imam rājarṣayo viduḥ* [Bg. 4.2]). This is the bona fide Vedic system of receiving the process of devotional service, by which the Supreme Personality of Godhead is pleased. Therefore, to approach a bona fide *guru*, or spiritual master, is essential. The bona fide spiritual master is he who has received the mercy of his *guru*, who in turn is bona fide because he has received the mercy of his *guru*. This is called the *paramparā* system. Unless one follows this *paramparā* system, the *mantra* one receives will be chanted for no purpose. Nowadays there are so many rascal *gurus* who manufacture their *mantras*

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\*Editor's note: The words [Lord Kṛṣṇa] have been added by the editor.

as a process for material advancement, not spiritual advancement. Still, the *mantra* cannot be successful if it is manufactured. *Mantras* and the process of devotional service have special power, provided they are received from the authorised person\*." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.16.24 purport)

## General Rules Are Not Changed

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written:

"After finding a qualified *guru*, a faithful disciple should serve him with firm conviction and without duplicity. One should accept initiation and *kṛṣṇa-mantra* after pleasing the *guru*. Those who are averse to taking initiation and only make a drama of pseudo-*kīrtana* while advertising themselves as Vaiṣṇavas certainly cheat themselves. It is not the duty of materialistic persons to renounce the process of initiation because a few great souls like Jaḍa Bharata did not take initiation. Initiation is a constitutional injunction for every birth of the living

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\***Editor's note:** Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote this at the end of his *Bhagavad-gītā* Preface. "...We hope, therefore, that people will derive the greatest benefit by studying *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* as we have presented it here, and if even one man becomes a pure devotee of the Lord we shall consider our attempt a success..."

[signed] A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami

12 May 1971

Sydney, Australia

So, has the *paramparā* stopped or not? Has Śrīla Prabhupāda been successful or not in maintaining the *sampradāya*? This is a serious question with serious ramifications. If we say that the *paramparā* has stopped then are we saying Śrīla Prabhupāda was not successful. If we say that Śrīla Prabhupāda was successful then the *paramparā*, knowledge handed down from bona fide *guru* to bona fide disciple [who later on becomes the bona fide *guru*] etc., must be ongoing. Therefore there must be, at least, one disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who is a bona fide *guru*.



entity. If initiation is not seen in the life of a perfected soul, it should not be taken as an example. General rules are not changed because something happens to a particular person in a special situation. Śrī Dhruva Mahārāja went to Dhruvaloka in his material body; seeing that, should one waste time hoping for the same? The general rule is a living entity gives up his material body and goes to Vaikuṅṭha in his spiritual body. General rules should be accepted by people in general. Whenever and whatever is desired by the Lord, who is full of inconceivable potencies, that only happens. Therefore we should never transgress the general rules. After pleasing the *guru* by serving him without duplicity, one should receive from him instructions on the Absolute Truth and initiation into chanting the holy name of the Lord. (*Follow the Mahājāna* by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, From *Śrī Bhaktyāloka*. The six qualities that enhance *Bhakti*.)

## Direct Communication With Guru

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda has stated:

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

**Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda:** “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.”

“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 Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa rendered to Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Prabhu." (*Amṛta Vāṇī* Nectar of Instructions for Immortality Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

**Dr. Patel:** *Sat-saṅga* is continuously coming in contact with such *gurus* like you or, I mean, reading that *śāstras*, also is a *sat-saṅga*.

**Prabhupāda:** But reading... By reading, you cannot understand. *Tad vijñānārthan sa gurum evābhigacchet:* [MU 1.2.12]. That is also *vidhiliṅ\**: "In order to understand that science, he must go to *guru*." (Śrīla Prabhupāda morning walk January 8, 1977 Bombay)

"Because when you make a spiritual master you have got personal touch. Not that in air you make a spiritual master. You make a spiritual master concrete. So as soon as you make a spiritual master, you should be inquisitive." (Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture in London September 3rd 1971)

## The Bona Fide Guru Is...

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

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\***Editor's note:** *Vidhiliṅ*. This form of verb is used in Sanskrit grammar, and the meaning [quite emphatic] is: "You must." Therefore one must go to *guru*. "...he must go to *guru*."



a spiritual master is that he must have realised the conclusion of the scriptures by deliberation and arguments and thus be able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, are to be understood as bona fide spiritual masters. Everyone should try to find such a bona fide spiritual master in order to fulfill his mission of life, which is to transfer himself to the plane of spiritual bliss.” (Nectar of Devotion Chapter Seven – Evidence Regarding Devotional Principles)

“My dear King, a disciple has to accept the spiritual master not only as spiritual master, but also as the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the Supersoul. In other words, the disciple should accept the spiritual master as God because he is the external manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.” (Nectar of Devotion Chapter Seven – Evidence Regarding Devotional Principles)

## The Caitya Guru

*kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne  
guru-antaryāmi-rūpe śikhāya āpane*

“Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone’s heart as the *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within. When He is kind to some fortunate conditioned soul, He personally gives one lessons to progress in devotional service, instructing the person as the Supersoul within and the spiritual master without.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.47)



“Every living entity is essentially a servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and the spiritual master is also His servant. Still, the spiritual master is a direct manifestation of the Lord. With this conviction, a disciple can advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The spiritual master is non-different from Kṛṣṇa because he is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa.” (*Sri Caitanya-caritamrita, Ādi-līlā 1.44* purport)

“Kṛṣṇa appears in two ways. He appears as *antaryāmi*, the Supersoul within himself, within oneself, and He appears as the spiritual master, externally. *Caitya-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*. *Caitya-guru*... As *caitya-guru*, as the supreme spiritual master, He is in everyone’s heart. And His representative... In order to help externally the sincere person, He sends the spiritual master. Therefore the spiritual master from outside and the *caitya-guru* from inside, they are helping. The Supreme Personality is helping a devotee, a real, serious devotee two ways: from within, from without. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* therefore says that *kṛṣṇera prakāśa*, manifestation of Kṛṣṇa, a spiritual master.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Gorakhpur February 10 1971)

*jīve sākṣāt nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe  
śikṣā-guru haya kṛṣṇa-mahānta-svarūpe*

“Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is none other than Kṛṣṇa Himself.” (*Sri Caitanya-caritamrita, Ādi-līlā 1.58*)



## God Sends You A Spiritual Master

**Mr. O'Grady:** The problem is to find this spiritual master.  
**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** That is not the problem. The problem is whether you are sincere. You have problems, but God is within your heart. *Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām* [Bg.18.61]. God is not far away. If you are sincere, God sends you a spiritual master. Therefore God is also called *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within the heart. God helps from within and from without. Everything is thus described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. This material body is like a machine, but within the heart is the soul, and with the soul is the Supersoul, Kṛṣṇa, who gives directions. The Lord says, "You wanted to do this; now here is the chance. Go and do it." If you are sincere, you say, "Now, God, I want You." Then He will give you directions. "Yes, now you come and get Me like this." This is His kindness. However, if we want something else, that is all right. We can have it. God is very kind. When I want something, He is in my heart directing me and telling me how to have it. So why should He not give directions on how to have a spiritual master? First of all we must again be eager to revive our God consciousness. Then God will give us a spiritual master. (*Science of Self Realisation* chapter 7 Exploring the Spiritual Frontier)

### So One Must Be Sincere

"So, finding a bona fide *guru* requires intelligence and sincerity. If you are serious about understanding the goal of life, spiritual knowledge, then Kṛṣṇa will help you. He is situated in everyone's heart, and he understands when you are sincerely seeking the Absolute Truth. Then He gives direction: 'Go to this person.'" (*The Quest for En-*

*lightenment* – Chapter Three The Spiritual Master - The Shelter from All Dangers by AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Śrīla Prabhupada)

“...So you must know, if you are so foolish that you go to a butcher shop and ask him to supply diamond or gold, then you’ll be cheated. You must know at least where to go and purchase gold or diamond. These are valuable things. So that requires little intelligence and sincerity. If we are sincere that ‘I want to purchase gold or diamond...’ This is crude example, but the spiritual inquiry... if one is actually serious about understanding the goal of life, spiritual knowledge, then Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone’s heart. He understands how this person is sincerely seeking. Then He’ll give direction that ‘You do this.’ He is giving direction in every respect. We want to do so many things, so Kṛṣṇa is giving us facility.

*īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām  
hr̥d-deśe ‘rjuna tiṣṭhati  
bhrāmāyan sarva-bhūtāni  
[Bg. 18.61]*

He is giving all facilities. But when one becomes actually very much eager to understand Kṛṣṇa, God, He is very glad to give instruction, that ‘You go to such and such person and you submissively inquire, and you’ll be...’ *Guru-kṛṣṇa kṛpāya pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* [Cc. Madhya 19.151]. By the mercy of *guru*, by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa, one can make advancement in spiritual understanding. So one must be sincere. Then every direction is there.” (From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda Washington DC July 8, 1976)



“The Personality of Godhead may not be present before one’s eyes, but if one is sincere in wanting such guidance the Lord will send a bona fide person who can guide one properly back home, back to Godhead.... The bona fide representative of God is as good as God Himself. Or, in other words, the loving representative of the Lord is more kind and more easy to approach. A sinful soul cannot approach the Lord directly, but such a sinful man can very easily approach a pure devotee of the Lord. And if one agrees to put himself under the guidance of such a devotee of the Lord, he can also understand the science of God and can also become like the transcendental pure devotee of the Lord and thus get his liberation back to Godhead, back home for eternal happiness.” (*Srīmad-Bhagavatam* 2.7.46 purport)

“... Where, then, is the difficulty in finding a *guru*? If one is sincere he can find the *guru* and learn everything. One should take lessons from the *guru* and find out the goal of life.”\* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.24.53 purport)

“...The Lord Himself appears as the spiritual master to a person who is sincere in heart about serving the Lord. Therefore the bona fide spiritual master who happens to meet the sincere devotee\*\* should be accepted as the most confidential and beloved representative of the Lord. If a person is posted under the guidance of such a bona fide

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\***Editor’s note:** We must be sincere, we must find bona fide *guru* and learn everything from him. Simple.

\*\***Editor’s note:** Śrīla Prabhupāda tells us that one must be sincere. Further, by explaining that ‘the bona fide spiritual master who happens to meet the sincere devotee’, he is clearly pointing out to us that our process is a living, personal process. The spiritual master meets the disciple and the disciple meets the spiritual master. Also another point is that if one receives guidance of *guru* that means he has the Lord’s grace - i.e. those who deny that we need such direct guidance under *guru* are taking their followers away from the Lord’s grace.

spiritual master, it may be accepted without any doubt that the desiring person has achieved the grace of the Lord." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.7 purport)

## Hearing Is Everything

"...One should be very careful to receive the message from the spiritual master through the ears and execute it faithfully. That will make one's life successful..." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7 purport)

"One has to receive the transcendental sound from the right source, accept it as a reality and prosecute the direction without hesitation. The secret of success is to receive the sound from the right source of a bona fide spiritual master. Mundane manufactured sound has no potency, and as such, seemingly transcendental sound received from an unauthorised person also has no potency. One should be qualified enough to discern such transcendental potency, and either by discriminating or by fortunate chance if one is able to receive the transcendental sound from the bona fide spiritual master, his path of liberation is guaranteed." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.8 purport)

"You are correct when you say that when the Spiritual Master speaks it should be taken that Krishna is speaking. That is a fact." (Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter, June 10th, 1969)

"The first thing is *śravaṇa*. *Śravaṇa* means hearing. One has to hear from authorities. That is the beginning of spiritual life or Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Just like Arjuna. He achieved his spiritual consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa con-



sciousness, by hearing from Kṛṣṇa. Similarly, one has to hear from Kṛṣṇa or from the representative of Kṛṣṇa. One who presents Kṛṣṇa's words as it is—from him one has to hear because at the present moment we have no opportunity to hear directly. To hear directly from Kṛṣṇa is there. The arrangement is there. Kṛṣṇa is situated in everyone's heart, and one can hear from Him very easily, anywhere and everywhere, but he must have the training how to hear. For that purpose one requires the help of the representative of Kṛṣṇa. ...So in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is also said that spiritual master is the direct manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa comes before the devotee as spiritual master just like sun enters your room by the sunshine. Although the sun does not enter your room or your city or your country—he is so many millions and millions of miles away—still, he can enter everywhere by his potency, the sunshine. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa enters everywhere by His different potencies. And to receive this light from Kṛṣṇa, one has to hear. Hearing is so important." (San Francisco March 16, 1967 Purport on *Bhajahū re mana* Tape reference - 670316PU.SF)

In 1959, just after entering the renounced order of life, Śrīla Prabhūda composed this narration:

“A pure living entity, being always subservient to the Almighty Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, should reverentially give an aural reception to the transcendental sound emanating from the mouth of a self-realised soul describing the glories of the Personality of Godhead. Only a self-realised soul can produce the powerful effect of transcendental sound. Devotees must live thoroughly honest lives in all respects by their body, mind, and words. These are the simple methods of culturing spiritual realisation to

its zenith." (*In Search of the Ultimate Goal of Life - Hear from Realised Souls*, pre 1967 by Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda )

"The transcendental form of eternal bliss and knowledge can be experienced by our original spiritual senses, which can be revived by chanting of the holy *mantras*, or transcendental sound representations. Such sound should be received from the transparent agency of the bona fide spiritual master, and the chanting may be practiced by the direction of the spiritual master. That will gradually lead us nearer to the Lord." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.38 purport)

"...One should be intelligent enough to understand or to hear *kathā* of Kṛṣṇa. Simply you have to do this. Just like you are all sitting here. It doesn't require that you have to pass M.A. examination, Ph.D. examination. God has given you the ear. Simply you sit down and hear from a realised person. The words are there, the message are there. Just like *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, especially. Everything is there to understand about God. Simply you have to increase your attachment for hearing. That is, that qualification required. Not that first of all you pass M.A. examination, then you come here and you can understand. No. Simply by hearing, hearing, hearing, you will become expert. *Kovida*. Simply. That... This process has been approved by Caitanya Mahāprabhu. *Sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatāḥ tanu-vān-manobhiḥ*. You can remain in your position, but try to hear the transcendental message from realised soul. Then gradually you will be enlightened and you will be free from this knot, this material bondage..." (*Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.15 Los Angeles August 18 1972)



[This is King Pṛthu speaking to the Lord], “My dear Lord, I therefore do not wish to have the benediction of merging into Your existence, a benediction in which there is no existence of the nectarean beverage of Your lotus feet. I want the benediction of at least one million ears, for thus I may be able to hear about the glories of Your lotus feet from the mouths of Your pure devotees.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.20.24 verse)

**Purport:** “...Mahārāja Pṛthu wanted to have a million ears to hear the glories of the lotus feet of the Lord. He specifically mentioned that the glories of the Lord should emanate from the mouths of pure devotees, who speak from the cores of their hearts. ...*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* became more relishable because it emanated from the mouth of Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī. One might think that these glories of the Lord can be heard from anywhere, from the mouths of either devotees or nondevotees, but here it is specifically mentioned that the glories of the Lord must emanate from the mouths of pure devotees. Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī has strictly prohibited hearing from the mouth of a nondevotee. There are many professional reciters of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* who speak the narrations very ornamentally, but a pure devotee does not like to hear from them because such glorification of the Lord is simply a vibration of material sound. But when heard from the mouth of a pure devotee, glorification of the Lord is immediately effective.

The words *satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido* (*Bhāg.* 3.25.25)\* mean that glorification of the Lord is potent when uttered from the mouth of a pure devotee...” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.20.24 purport)

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\***Editor’s note:** This verse clearly explains that we need to hear the glorification of the Lord in association with pure devotees, *suddha-bhaktas*.



“It is explained in the previous verse that one has to hear glorification of the Lord from the mouth of a pure devotee. This is further explained here. The transcendental vibration from the mouth of a pure devotee is so powerful that it can revive the living entity’s memory of his eternal relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead...

“...This awakening voice comes through the mouth of a pure devotee.

...For a conditioned soul, therefore, it is very important to hear from the mouth of a pure devotee, who is fully surrendered to the lotus feet of the Lord without any material desire, speculative knowledge or contamination of the modes of material nature.

“...Therefore, this process of hearing from the mouth of a pure devotee is very important for making progress in the line of spiritual understanding.” (From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.20.25 purport)

“Concerning your questions: Yes, it will help to read *Bhagavad-gīta* but you have to hear from the realised person. Without the help of *guru*, if you read independently, you may be misguided. ... Our system, the Vedic system, is to approach the right person and hear from him exactly as Arjuna listened from Krishna. Mental speculation will not help. Hearing is the main point. ...That is the difference, hearing from devotees, the sound vibration coming from the realised person. *Tattva-darsana*--hearing from one who has seen the truth. Reading or hearing from the realised person there is no difference, but hearing the sound vibration from the realised soul is still more effective, better.” (Letter to: Punjabi Premanand, Bombay 16 April, 1976)



“So hearing is very important. Hearing. Just like Arjuna heard from Kṛṣṇa.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda Room Conversation - May 10, 1969, Columbus, Ohio)

“...Kṛṣṇa’s another name is Ajita: He is never conquered. But any person who hears about Kṛṣṇa, *jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām*, simply mental speculation, giving up this bad habit, *jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā*, leaving aside, *namanta eva*, very humbly and meekly, if one hears from the realised soul about Kṛṣṇa, then in any position, *sthāne sthitāḥ*, because he is hearing from the realised soul, then one day it will be possible to conquer the unconquerable. *Prāyaśo ‘jita jito ‘py asi tais tri-lokyām...*” (Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.12, Bombay, April 1 1974)

“You hear from the realised soul. God has given you ear you can hear. It doesn’t require education. Formerly everyone was taking education simply by hearing. There was no book. Therefore all the Vedic knowledge is called śruti. ... Śruti. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is opening centres just to give you chance to hear about Kṛṣṇa, only hearing. *Sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vāṇ-manobhiḥ*. Simply by hearing, you become perfect. Just like Parīkṣit Mahārāja. At the time of point of his death, he had no time to perform any *yajña* or any big, big thing. He simply heard *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* carefully. *Śrī-viṣṇoḥ śravaṇe parīkṣid abhavad vaiyāsakiḥ kīrtane*. And he became perfect simply by hearing.” (Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.14 Bombay, India April 3, 1974)



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## We Have To Follow The Path Of Great Personalities

“*Bhāgavata* means this, one who is related with Bhagavān. *Bhāgavata*. From *bhagavat-śabda*, from the word *bhāgavata*, *bhāgavata*. So *bhāgavata* means the *grantha-bhāgavata*, the book *Bhāgavata*, and the devotee *bhāgavata*. So either you read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*... But *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should be relished, understood through person *bhāgavatam*. It is recommendation. Svarūpa Dāmodara, Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s secretary, personal secretary, he chastised one *brāhmaṇa*. He wrote something wrong, and after all, he gave him advice that ‘If you want to study *Bhāgavata*, then *bhāgavata paro giya bhāgavata sthāne(?)*, try to understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a devotee, not from a professional man who is earning his livelihood by reading *Bhāgavata*.’ He must be practical *bhāgavata*. Then you will gain. Sanātana Gosvāmī has also said that *avaīṣṇava-mukhodgīrṇam pūtam hari-kathāmṛtam*. *Hari-kathā*, *amṛta*, nectar, but still, although it is *amṛta*, it is not to be received from the mouth of a nondevotee. One must be practical devotee, pure devotee. When he speaks, you should receive *Bhāgavata*, the message of *Bhāgavata*, *Bhagavad-gītā* from him. ... And Svarūpa Dāmodara, secretary of Lord Caitanya, he has also the same thing, that *bhāgavata paro giya bhāgavata sthāne*. Those who are practical *bhāgavata*, life *bhāgavata*, from them, from him try to understand *Bhāgavata*.

“So Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s instruction, His secretary’s instruction, and Sanātana Gosvāmī’s... These are *mahājana*. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* [Cc. *Madhya* 17.186]. We have to follow the path of great personalities. Not of the fools and rascals. Then you’ll get the result.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.18 lecture Vṛndāvana October 29, 1972)



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## From The Mouth - From The Lips

“...A businessman is always very eager to go to a place where business is transacted. Similarly, a devotee is very eager to hear from the lips of liberated devotees. As soon as one hears the glories of the Lord from the liberated devotees, he immediately becomes impregnated with Kṛṣṇa consciousness...” (From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* purport 4.29.39-40)

*kṛṣṇa-nāmera mahimā śāstra-sādhu-mukhe jāni  
nāmera mādhurī aiche kāhān nāhi śuni*

“One has to learn about the beauty and transcendental position of the holy name of the Lord by hearing the revealed scriptures **from the mouths of devotees**. Nowhere else can we hear of the sweetness of the Lord’s holy name.” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 1.101)

“...My dear Lord, I therefore do not need any other benediction but the opportunity to hear **from the mouth of Your pure devotee**.” (From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 4.20.25)

“... Kṛṣṇa says that ‘Anyone who understands Me in truth ...’ So how you will understand? Simply if you hear about Him, then you will understand. Then you will understand. So hearing is not very difficult job. But you must hear from the realised soul. That is... *Satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvidah*. If you hear from a professional man, that will not be effective. Hearing must be from *sādhu*, from devotee, **from the lips of the devotee**. Just like Śukadeva Gosvāmī was speaking to Mahārāja Parīkṣit...” (*Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* June 12, 1972)



“Then what is required? *Namanta eva*. Just become submissive. Don’t think yourself as very great philosopher, theologian, scientist. Just be humble. ‘My dear sir, just be humble.’ *Namanta eva*. ‘Then what will be my business? All right, I shall become humble. Then how I shall make progress?’ Now, *namanta eva san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām*. ‘Just hear the message of God.’ ‘From whom?’ *San-mukharitām*: ‘**through the mouth of the devotees.**’ Not professional, **not gramophone — through the mouth of, through the lips of real devotee.**”\* (July 8, 1975 6.1.24 Chicago)

“...What is the process? *San-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām*: ‘You just try to understand the Supreme from the reliable source.’ *San-mukharitām. Sat-mukharitām. Mukharita* means **from the lips, from the lips of realised souls**. Just like Arjuna is understanding about God from direct Kṛṣṇa, from the lips of Kṛṣṇa. *Svayaṁ padmanābha-mukham, mukha-niḥśṛtaḥ*. So this is the process. So similarly, if we understand about God **through the lips of Arjuna** or his bona fide representative, that is the process...” (Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture *Bhagavad-gītā* 8.14-15 New York, November 16 1966)

“...So these things are sometimes inconceivable. But it is not inconceivable. It is possible to... Our real point is that Śukadeva Gosvāmī was not a grammarian, but he learned everything from his father by hearing. Therefore it is called *śrūyamāṇāyām*. If you hear from the right person, properly, then you become perfect. There is no need of literary education. Therefore Vedas are called *śruti*.

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\***Editor’s note:** You will notice that Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that this transcendental sound cannot be received from a professional reciter or from a gramophone recording. Both are material and both cannot hold the living transcendental sound vibration.



*Śruti* means... Formerly the students, they were learning everything. Their memory was so nice and sharp that simply by hearing **from guru's mouth** they would learn. In the Kali-yuga, because the memory is not so str... [break] ...Vyāsadeva recorded this in writing, that 'The rascals will come henceforward. They will have not very sharp brain, memory, so let me keep this literature in writing so that in future they may take advantage of it. Or somebody will read and they will hear. In this way their life will be successful.'" (Lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.8 - Vrindavana, September 7, 1976)

"...If you simply becomes a gramophone speaker, then it will not be effective. **Gramophone or tape record speaker, that will not be. You must be live speaker.** Your living condition should be spiritually, what is called, surcharged..." (Śrīla Prabhupāda room conversation Mauritius October 5, 1975)

**Guest:** If you could just explain to me the difference between the... I mean, how this fits in, the monistic or the idea of the unitary view that Kṛṣṇa is everything, all and in all. And then at the same time that the world, there is this world of illusion which is somehow distinct from Kṛṣṇa. Could you just explain this point to me?

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** This is very easy to understand. Just like you are recording my speeches in the tape recorder. When you play back it will speak just like I am speaking, **but I am not there.**\* Is it not fact?

**Guest:** Yes.

**Śrīla Prabhupāda:** It will **appear** now I am speaking from

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\***Editor's note:** Śrīla Prabhupāda's choice of words here is very specific. The meaning is clear, "It appears I am speaking from beyond this world." It appears when we hear the tape recording that he is there but as Śrīla Prabhupāda states, 'I am not there'.

beyond this world.”

(room conversation Śrīla Prabhupāda August 9th 1971  
London – 710809, rc.lon)

“But Kṛṣṇa says that *itīyam me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*, “These eight kinds of material elements, they are separated energy from Me.” Separated energy, you can understand very easily. Just like I am speaking and it is being recorded in the tape recorder. When the tape recorder is replayed again, you’ll find that I am speaking again. **But that speaking and my present speaking is different.\*** Therefore that speaking is separated energy. Now I am speaking directly. That is not separated, but when it is transferred to another matter that is separated energy.” (lecture in Bombay on March 30 1971 Śrīla Prabhupāda )

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravati Ṭhākura writes:

“... Uddhava says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.6\*\*:  
‘Kṛṣṇa reveals Himself through the *ācārya* (spiritual mas-

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\***Editor’s note:** It is different. He is not speaking directly. It is separated energy, separated from him, not him, it only appears to be him but he is not there.

\*\***Editor’s note:** It seems that we cannot get away from this point of hearing from the living *sādhu*. “...from the lips...” “...from the mouth...”

\*This is the verse quoted by Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravati Ṭhākura:

*naivopayanty apacitiṁ kavayas taveśa  
brahmāyūṣāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ  
yo ’ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann  
ācārya-caitya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti*

“O my Lord! Transcendental poets and experts in spiritual science could not fully express their indebtedness to You, even if they were endowed with the prolonged lifetime of Brahmā, for You appear in two features—externally as the *ācārya* and internally as the Supersoul—to deliver the embodied living being by directing him how to come to You.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.29.6)

ter) or through the agency of the Supersoul.' Thus some devotees attain knowledge about the moods of Kṛṣṇa and His Vrajā associates from the mouth of a *guru*, some from the mouth of a learned *rāgānuṣā* devotee..." (*Śrī Śrī Rāga-vartma-candrikā* By Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravati Ṭhākura, *Prathama Prakasha*)

## The Saffron Mercy Particles

"A pure devotee always engages in the service of the Lord, taking shelter of His lotus feet, and therefore he has a direct connection with the saffron mercy-particles that are strewn over the lotus feet of the Lord. Although when a pure devotee speaks the articulation of his voice may resemble the sound of this material sky, the voice is spiritually very powerful because it touches the particles of saffron dust on the lotus feet of the Lord. As soon as a sleeping living entity hears the powerful voice emanating from the mouth of a pure devotee, he immediately remembers his eternal relationship with the Lord, although up until that moment he had forgotten everything."\* (From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 4.20.25 purport)

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\***Editor's note:** This is why it is so very necessary to hear directly from a pure devotee. Such a pure Vaiṣṇava has direct contact with the Lord. So the phrase 'pure devotee' is not such a cheap term to be loosely bandied about. In his purport of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 4.24.20 Śrīla Prabhupāda states: "...or pure devotees, are also called great souls—but they are very rarely found. One can find many great souls amongst *yogīs* and *jñānīs*, but a truly great soul, a pure devotee of the Lord, who is fully surrendered to the Lord, is very rarely found..." Therefore it begs the question, can the sound on a tape, DVD, CD or MP3 have direct connection with the particles of saffron dust on the lotus feet of the Lord. (These being technical devices mere electrical impulses converted to sound through various items of mechanical equipment). Or do we need to hear directly from a living 'self realised soul'?

## The Person Bhagavata

“*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, or, for that matter, any other scientific literature, cannot be studied at home by one’s own intellectual capacity. Medical books of anatomy or physiology are available in the market, but no one can become a qualified medical practitioner simply by reading such books at home. One has to be admitted to the medical college and study the books under the guidance of learned professors. Similarly, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the postgraduate study of the science of Godhead, can only be learned by studying it at the feet of a realised soul like Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Although Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a liberated soul from the very day of his birth, he still had to take lessons of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from his great father, Vyāsadeva, who compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* under the instruction of another great soul, Śrī Nārada Muni. Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed a learned *brāhmaṇa* to study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from a personal *bhagāvata*.”\* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.8 purport)

“...So Kali-yuga is a very precarious condition: no knowledge, ignorance, and no *nirvṛtti*. Everyone is in *pravṛtti*. So whatever their condition may be, but if you want actually freedom from this material conditional life, then you should follow *ācārya*. *Ācāryavoān puruṣaḥ*. *Ācāryopāsanam*. Kṛṣṇa is personally acting as *ācārya*. He’s coming again as *ācārya*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He has got so many representatives *ācārya*: Śrī Rāmānu-

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\***Editor’s note:** Interestingly enough, Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a liberated soul from birth, but he still had to take lessons in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from his great father, Vyāsadeva, who compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* under the instruction of another great soul, Śrī Nārada Muni. We are thus taught that comprehending *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* cannot be done independently of surrendering at the lotus feet of the self-realised soul.



jācārya, Madhvācārya, Nimbārka, Viṣṇu Svāmī, so many ācāryas. *Evam paramparā-prāptam* [Bg. 4.2]. So take lesson from the ācāryas. Śukadeva Gosvāmī is ācārya. Vyāsadeva is ācārya. He's making the next ācārya by teaching him-*adhyāpayām āsa, śukam adhyāpayām āsa*—so that he is becoming ācārya. So we have to go the ācārya and take lesson....

“So Śukadeva Gosvāmī is the next ācārya, but one has to learn from the original ācārya. *Evam paramparā-prāptam imarṇ rājarṣayo viduḥ* [Bg. 4.2]. So unless we come to the *paramparā* system, ācārya after ācārya, there is no right education. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu's private secretary, personal secretary, Svarūpa Dāmodara, he advised, *bhāgavat para giya bhāgavat sthāne*. If you want to learn *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, you go to a person whose life is *Bhāgavatam*. *Grantha bhāgavata* and person *bhāgavata*—both of them *bhāgavatas*. So *bhāgavat para giya bhāgavat sthane*. One whose life is *Bhāgavatam* and nothing else, you should learn *Bhāgavatam* from him, not from the professional person who are earning livelihood by reading or reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. That will not be effective. You have to find out like Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Then this study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* will be effective.”\* (Lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.7.8 - Vrindavana, September 7, 1976)

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\***Editor's note:** It is interesting that Śrīla Prabhupāda has said: “He's making the next ācārya...” “...So we have to go the ācārya and take lesson...” “So Śukadeva Gosvāmī is the next ācārya...” Also in this lecture he has said: “...So unless we come to the *paramparā* system, ācārya after ācārya, there is no right education...” “...ācārya after ācārya...” And, “...You have to find out like Śukadeva Gosvāmī. Then this study of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* will be effective...” “...So we have to go the ācārya and take lesson...” This phrase implies the act of going to someone and that is the ācārya. So we have to go to an ācārya.




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“Śruta. The specific meaning of śruta means this knowledge has to be received through the ear, through the tongue. *Sevonmukhe hi jihvādau* [Brs. 1.2.234]. *Śrutagrhitayā*. It is never explained in the Vedic literature that the science of God can be understood by the eyes. No. It has been mentioned, **the tongue** and the ear. These are the sources. *Śrutagrhitayā*. One must hear the Vedic literature. The Vedic literature is called, therefore, *śruti*. *Śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham* [MU 1.2.12]. *Śrotriyam*. Formerly there was no book. The students used to hear from the spiritual master. *Śruta, śrotriyam*. That was perfect. There was no need of literacy. That ear is sufficient. *Śrutagrhitayā. Tac chraddadhānā munayo jñāna-vairāgya...*[SB 1.2.12]. And hearing, hearing, hearing, one becomes enlightened with knowledge, and the effect of knowledge is *vairāgya*. *Vairāgya*, detachment.” (Lecture Śrīla Prabhupāda *Bhagavad-gītā* 13.18 - Bombay, October 12, 1973)

## Transcendental Sound

“...By vibrating this transcendental sound, the meaning of everything, both material and spiritual, is revealed...” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.24.40 purport)

“The favour of the spiritual master is not received through any other part of the body but the ears.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7 purport)

“Whatever devotees speak, however, is above mundane sound vibration. Such sounds are invested with extraordinary power. As soon as they enter human ears, they awaken people’s spiritual consciousness. These sound vibrations can penetrate Brahmaloaka, pass over the Virajā River, and enter Vaikuṅṭha. The same sound



that appears in this world from Vaikuṅṭha takes us back to Vaikuṅṭha.”

“There is no way to connect ourselves with the transcendental object except by aural reception”

“I am in favour of transcendental sound. If you walk with the heavy burden of the rubbish you have accumulated balanced on your head, you will not be able to move an inch toward Vraja or the Lord. Those who are established as intellectual giants should suspend their philosophy for some time and hear transcendental sound.”  
(*Amṛta Vāṇī Nectar of Instructions for Immortality Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda*)

## Association Of The Bhagavatas

“This is the secret. Unless one is *svānubhāvam*, self-realised, life is *bhāgavata*, he cannot preach Bhāgavata. That is not... That will not be effective. **A gramophone will not help.** Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s secretary, Svarūpa Dāmodara, recommended, *bhāgavata pora giyā bhāgavata-sthāne*, that ‘If you want to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, you must approach a person who is life living Bhāgavata.’ *Bhāgavata pora giyā bhāgavata-sthāne*. Otherwise, there is no question of Bhāgavata realisation.” (Rome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.3 lecture May 27, 1974)

“...As Svarūpa Dāmodara has said, if one wants to learn the meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one must take lessons from a realised soul...” (Śrīla Prabhupada purport *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 7.53)

“...One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books. One must become a servant of a

Vaiṣṇava... One must accept a Vaiṣṇava guru (*ādau guru-āśrayam*), and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is. That is called the *paramparā* system." (Śrīla Prabhupada purport *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 7.53)

*naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā  
bhagavatya uttama-śloke bhaktir bhavati naiṣṭhikī*

"By regular attendance in classes on the *Bhāgavatam* and by rendering of service to the pure devotee, all that is troublesome to the heart is almost completely destroyed, and loving service unto the Personality of Godhead, who is praised with transcendental songs, is established as an irrevocable fact." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.18)

"Here is the remedy for eliminating all inauspicious things within the heart which are considered to be obstacles in the path of self-realisation. The remedy is the association of the *bhāgavatas*..." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.18 from purport)

"...One *Bhāgavata* is this book *Bhāgavata*, another *bhāgavata*, the person *bhāgavata*. Who lives on the book *Bhāgavata*, he is person *bhāgavata*. Two kinds of *bhāgavata*. So we have to learn *Bhāgavatam* from the living *bhāgavata*... The two *bhāgavatas*. You study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from living *bhāgavata*. So if one does not take or does not surrender unto the living *bhāgavata*, he cannot understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*."\* (Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.23 in L.A. June 20<sup>th</sup> 1972)

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\***Editor's note:** The words quoted here 'the living *bhāgavata*' and 'surrender unto the living *bhāgavata*' definitely denote personality. We need to have a personal relationship with the living *bhāgavata*.



“...So *bhāgavatāḥ*. *Bhāgavata* means one who has his relation with Bhagavān. From Bhagavān... Bhagavān comes from the word *bhāgavata*, and anything in relationship with Bhagavān, the Personality of Godhead, is called *bhāgavata*. Just like this book is called *bhāgavata* because it has nothing to do with any other thing except the activities of the Supreme Personality of... So *Bhāgavata*. So there are two kinds of *bhāgavata*: the book *Bhāgavata* and the person *bhāgavata*. So both of them are so pure that wherever *Bhāgavata* reading is going on... And *Bhāgavata* reading should be performed by the *bhāgavata*, person *bhāgavata*. Then it is very nice. *Bhāgavatās tīrtha-bhūtaḥ*. They are already purified, holy place of pilgrimage. *Mahad-vicalanāṁ nṛṇāṁ grhiṇāṁ dīna-cetasām*. **Therefore, the *bhāgavatas*, they travel all over the world to purify the ordinary human being because they are *dīna-cetasa*. *Dīna-cetasa*. *Dīna* means poor..”** (From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.13.10, Geneva June 1, 1974)

“...If we take advantage of this great Vedic literature, then we become fully aware of Bhagavān and the devotees of Bhagavān. Therefore it is named *Bhāgavatam*. But this *Bhāgavatam* has to be studied from the very beginning and take the lessons from **live *bhāgavata*...**” (From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.1, Delhi November 28, 1975)

“Kṛṣṇa continued, ‘One cannot purify himself by travelling to holy places of pilgrimage and taking bath there or by seeing the Deities in the temples. But if one happens to meet\* a great devotee, a *mahātmā* who is rep-

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\***Editor’s note:** Again here the verb ‘to meet’ is used. Meeting with someone is obviously very personal and as is written above, “...if one happens to meet a great devotee, a *mahātmā* who is representative of the Personality of Godhead, one becomes immediately purified...” This meeting with a *mahatma*, is all very personal.

representative of the Personality of Godhead, one becomes immediately purified.” (KṚṢṂA, *The Supreme Personality of Godhead* - 1970 Edition : Volume 2 : KB 2-29 / Sacrificial Ceremonies Performed by Vasudeva)

## A Realised Soul

*yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne  
ekānta āśraya kara caitanya-carane*

“If you want to understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,” he said, ‘you must approach a self-realised Vaiṣṇava and hear from him. You can do this when you have completely taken shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.’” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 5.131)

“...if one wants to learn the meaning of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, one must take lessons from a realised soul. **One should not proudly think that one can understand the transcendental loving service of the Lord simply by reading books.** One must become a servant of a Vaiṣṇava. As Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura has confirmed, *chāḍiyā vaiṣṇava-sevā nistāra peyeche kebā*: one cannot be in a transcendental position unless one very faithfully serves a pure Vaiṣṇava. One must accept a Vaiṣṇava *guru (āḍau guro-āśraya)*, **and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is.\*** That is called the *paramparā* system.” (Purport to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 7.53)

\***Editor’s note:** So, who is asking the questions and who is answering? This again denotes personal contact. The act of asking questions (by the disciple) and then receiving the answers (from the spiritual master) once again clearly denotes personal contact. As Śrīla Prabhupāda has written, “One must accept a Vaiṣṇava *guru (āḍau guro-āśraya)*, **and then by questions and answers one should gradually learn what pure devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is.**”



“Manu said that since he was advised and instructed by Kardama Muni, he was very much favoured. He considered himself lucky to receive the message by aural reception. It is especially mentioned here that one should be very inquisitive to hear with open ears from the authorised source of the bona fide spiritual master. How is one to receive? One should receive the transcendental message by aural reception. The word *karṇa-randhraiḥ* means ‘through the holes of the ears.’ The favour of the spiritual master is not received through any other part of the body but the ears.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7)

“The statement *kariyachi sravana* (‘I have heard it’) is very important in the sense that hearing is more important than directly studying or perceiving. If one is expert in hearing and hears from the right source, his knowledge is immediately perfect. This process is called *srauta-panthā*, or the acquisition of knowledge by hearing from authorities. All Vedic knowledge is based on the principle that one must approach a bona fide spiritual master and hear from the authoritative statements of the Vedas. It is not necessary for one to be a highly polished literary man to receive knowledge; to receive perfect knowledge from a perfect person, one must be expert in hearing. This is called the descending process of deductive knowledge, or *avaroha-panthā*.” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 16.52 purport)

## The Guru Gives The Instructions

“Service means you must take order from the master. That is service. Otherwise it is mental concoction. Actually, the servant requests, ‘How can I serve you?’ So when the master orders, ‘You serve me like this,’ then you do



that, that is service. And if you manufacture your service, that is not service. That is your sense gratification. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. You have to see how he is pleased. Now if he wants a glass of water and if you bring a nice glass of milk, you can say milk is better than water, you take it. That is not service. He wants water, you give him water. Don't manufacture better thing." (Śrīla Prabhupāda from a lecture, *Bhagavad-gītā* 15.15, August 5, 1976, New Mayapur - French farm)

"The real fact is that a bona fide spiritual master knows the nature of a particular man and what sort of duties he can perform in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and he instructs him in that way. He instructs him through the ear, not privately, but publicly. "You are fit for such and such work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. You can act in this way."\* (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7 purport)

"This combination, the instruction of the spiritual master and the faithful execution of the instruction by the disciple, makes the entire process perfect. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravati Ṭhākura describes in his explanation of the verse in *Bhagavad-gītā*, *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir*, that one who wants to be certain to achieve spiritual success must take the instruction\*\* from the spiritual master as to what his particular function is. He should faithfully try to execute that particular instruction and should consider that his life and soul. The faithful execution of the

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\***Editor's note:** Again this is clearly personal. We need personal instruction under the expert guidance of the spiritual master, as he knows the nature and needs of the individual disciple.

\*\***Editor's note:** From the above three quotes we can see that the disciple needs to take direct instruction from the bona fide spiritual master, that is best. Then he needs to carry out that instruction to the best of his ability. So what is our *guru* given *sevā* (service)?

instruction which he receives from the spiritual master is the only duty of a disciple, and that will bring him perfection..." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.22.7 purport)

## And Why Shall I Disclose To You?

**Indian man:** When did you become the spiritual leader of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What is that?

**Brahmānanda:** He's asking when did you become the spiritual leader of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: When my Guru Mahārāja ordered me. This is the *guru-paramparā*.

**Indian:** Did it...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Try to understand. Don't go very speedily. A *guru* can become *guru* when he's ordered by his *guru*. That's all. Otherwise nobody can become *guru*.

**Indian woman 2:** (Hindi)

Śrīla Prabhupāda: (Hindi) *Śādhi mām prapannam*. "I am surrendered to You. Whatever You say, I shall carry out." That's all.

**Indian man:** When did he tell you to...?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: What is the business, when did he tell me? And why shall I disclose to you? It is so very insignificant thing that I have to explain to you?

**Indian man:** No, I am just curious when...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: You should be curious within your limit. You should know that one can become *guru* when he is ordered by his *guru*, this much. (Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture on *Bhagavad-gītā* 7.2 Nairobi, October 12, 1975)\*

\***Editor's note:** It seems that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want to disclose when his own spiritual master told him to become *guru*. It was enough through word of mouth that Śrīla Prabhupāda said he did. Also Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, "...When my Guru Mahārāja ordered me. This is the *guru-paramparā*..." *Guru paramaparā* therefore means by word of mouth from *guru* to disciple! Lord Kṛṣṇa

## The Rtvik And The Yajamana

The most general meaning of the word *rtvik* is: priests conducting the ceremony, or the priests officiating at the sacrifice.

In the Puranic Encyclopedia a *rtvik* is described as: *amśapaya*: name of a priest (*rtvik*) qualified to **officiate at a sacrifice**. This priest officiated at the sacrifice (*yajña*) performed by Brahma at Puṣkara-kṣetra. (See Chapter 34 of *Padma Purāṇa*).

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* Śrīla Prabhupāda has written:

“...In this connection, four classes of priests, known as *rtvik*, are required. They are mentioned as *hotā*, *adhvaryu*, *brahma* and *udgātā*...” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.3.30 from the purport)

In his commentary to *sūtra* 57 of the *Vedānta-sūtra* Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa has written:

“The performer of a *yajña* assigns different priests to perform the different parts of the *yajña*. The priests are thus named according to the function they fulfill in the *yajña*.”

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spoke to Lord Brahma (His disciple), Lord Brahma to Śrī Nārada Muni (his son and disciple), Śrī Nārada Muni to Śrīla Vyāsadeva (his disciple), Śrīla Vyāsadeva to Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī (his son and disciple) and to Śrīla Madhvācārya (his disciple), Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī to Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī etc. etc. etc. Does anyone have the exact date when Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda gave the order to Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda to be *guru*? Does it really matter? The *guru* orders the disciple, and the Vaiṣṇavas never question such a relationship, i.e. do you have proof? A letter? A Vaiṣṇava will simply accept the word of another Vaiṣṇava.



“The performer of the *yajña* thus tells the priests, ‘You become the *adhvaryu* priest. You become the *hotā* priest. You become the *udgātā* priest.’ In this way a certain priest, even though he is expert in performing all the different functions, accepts the limited role in the *yajña*. He does not perform all the functions in the *yajña*. It is not possible for him to perform all the functions in all the different branches of the Vedas.

“The duties are distributed among the different Vedas. The *hotā* priest chants *mantras* of the Ṛg Veda, the *adhvaryu* priest chants *mantras* of the Yajur Veda, the *udgātā* priest chants *mantras* of the Sāma Veda, and the *brahmā* priest chants *mantras* of the Atharva Veda.

“In this way, according to the wish of the person performing the *yajña*, the different priests accept different roles in the *yajña* and different priestly rewards (*dakṣiṇā*) also.” (*Vedānta-sūtra* commentary by Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, *sūtra* 57)

The Supreme Lord participates in various ways in the sacrificial process and also Himself acts as *ṛtvik* on specific occasions. In his commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, *sūtra* 45-46, Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa has written:

*ārtvijyam ity auḍulomis tasmai hi parikrīyate*

*ārtvijyam*—the *ṛtvik* priest’s work; *ity*—thus; *auḍulomiḥ*—Auḍulomi; *tasmai*—for that; *hi*—indeed; *parikrīyate*—is purchased.

“Auḍulomi says He is like a *ṛtvik* priest. He sells Himself for that.” (*Vedānta-sūtra*, *sūtra* 45)

Purport by Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa

“The word “*iti*” is used in the sense of similarity. Thus the Supreme Personality of Godhead acts like a *ṛtvik* priest, for the Lord maintains the *nirapekṣa* devotees. Because He has been purchased by their devotional service, the Lord fulfills the bodily needs of His devotees. In the *Viṣṇu-dharma* it is said:

*tulasī-dala-mātreṇa  
jalasya culukena ca  
vikrīṇīte svam ātmānani  
bhaktebhyo bhakta-vatsalaḥ*

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who dearly loves His devotees, sells Himself to them in exchange for a *tulasī* leaf and palmful of water.’

“The *ṛtvik* priests are purchased for a certain task by the *yajamāna*’s payment of *dakṣiṇā*.\* Being an impersonalist, *Auḍulomi* equates devotional service with buying and selling. For these reasons the *nirapekṣas* are the best of the devotees.”

*śruteś ca*

*śruteḥ*—from the *Śruti-śāstra*; *ca*—also.

“From the *Śruti-śāstra* also.” (*Vedānta-sūtra*, *Sūtra* 46)

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\***Editor’s note:** “The *ṛtvik* priests are purchased for a certain task by the *yajamāna*’s payment of *dakṣiṇā*.” Thus they [the *ṛtvik* priests] receive payment to do a job. Pure devotional service as advocated by the representatives of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* is never performed for any type of material reward or gain but in all ways done only for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord.

Purport by Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa

“In the performance of *yajña* the *ṛtvik* priest gives his blessing to the performer of the *yajña* (*yajamāna*). In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (1.7.8-9) it is also said:

*tasmād u haivam-vid udgātā brūyāt kaṁ te kāmam āgāyāni*

‘Then the learned *udgātā* priest says: Of what desire shall I sing?’

“In this way the *ṛtvik* priest gives the result of the *yajña* to the *yajamāna*. As the *ṛtvik* priest thus maintains the *yajamāna*, so the Supreme Personality of Godhead maintains His devotee.”\* (Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa *Vedānta-sūtra* commentary chapter 3, *pada* 4, *sūtra* 45 - 46)

## The Yajamana

“The *yajamāna* is the person who sponsors and/or is the benefactor of a particular ceremony: i.e. in the case of the wedding it is the groom; in case of *saṁskāras* concerning the wife, it is the husband; and in case of those concerning the child, it is the father. In the case of a *brāhmaṇa*, he may perform his own ceremonies. However, if he is unable to do this, he may invite a Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa* to perform or guide the rites on his behalf (act as *ṛtvik*).” (*Sat Kriyā Sāra Dipikā* by Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī)

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\***Editor’s note:** This is the most general meaning of the word *yajamāna*—the performer of the sacrifice; and the *ṛtvik* is the assistant; *yajamāna*, the one on whose behalf he [the *ṛtvik*] performs *yajña*.

Also Śrīla Sanātana Goswāmī has written:

*rājānaṃ rāṣṭra-kṛtaṃ pāpaṃ  
rāja-pāpaṃ purohitam  
bharatānaṃ strī-kṛtaṃ pāpaṃ  
śiṣya-pāpaṃ guruṃ vrajet*

“The sins of the citizens are suffered by the king; the king’s sins by the *rāja-guru*; the wife’s sins by the husband and **the disciple’s sins by the guru.**” (*Hari Bhakti Vilāsa*’ quoting the ‘*Nīti Śāstra*)

In this regard Śrīla AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has written:

“Accepting an unlimited number of devotees or disciples is very risky for one who is not a preacher. According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, a preacher has to accept many disciples to expand the cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is risky because when a spiritual master accepts a disciple, **he naturally accepts the disciple’s sinful activities and their reactions.**\* Unless he is very powerful, he cannot assimilate all the sinful reactions of his disciples. Thus if he is not powerful, he has to suffer the consequences, for one is forbidden to accept many disciples.” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 22.118)

Thus according to the information presented here, the *ṛtvik* or officiating priest, only performs the *yajña* for the *yajamāna*, at a price. This has nothing to do with the process

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\***Editor’s note:** It is implied therefore that the system of *ṛtvik* initiation currently promoted does not actually accommodate the principal of the initiating *guru*’s acceptance of the disciple, particularly regarding the disposal of the disciples accumulated sinful burden.



of initiation. All the information that has been presented here points to this. The *ṛtvik* point of view may be presenting *ṛtvik-praṇālī* however it is definitely not *sampradāya-praṇālī*.\*

## Sampradya Vihina Ye

In the *Padma Purāṇa* the great sage Śrīla Vyāsadeva has stated:

*samprādya-vihinā ye  
mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ  
ataḥ kalau bhaviṣyanti  
catvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ*

*śrī-brahma-rudra-sanakā  
vaiṣṇavāḥ kṣiti-pāvanāḥ  
catvāras te kalau bhāvya  
hy utkale puruṣottamāt*

“Unless one is initiated by a bona-fide spiritual master in a bona-fide disciplic succession, the *mantra* he might have received is without any effect. For this reason four Vaiṣṇava disciplic successions, inaugurated by Lakṣmī-devī, Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, and the four Kumāras, will appear in the holy place of Jagannātha Purī, and purify the entire earth during the age of Kali.” (quoted from Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s *Prameya-ratnāvalī*)

Śrīla Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura has written:

*tatra yadi guru-viṣa-druśākārīśvare  
bhrāntaḥ kṛṣṇa-yaśo*

\*The word *praṇālī* means: system, method, line or methodology.



*vilāsa vinodaṁ nāṅgīkarati  
svayaṁ vā durabhimānī loka-stavaiḥ  
kṛṣṇatvaṁ prāpnoti  
tarhi tyājya eva*

“However, if the spiritual master acts enviously towards the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is averse to expanding the fame of Lord Kṛṣṇa or if he personally refuses to accept hearing or chanting about the glorious pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa or if the spiritual master, has become totally bewildered, listening to the false praises of ignorant persons and day by day is more materially contaminated and fallen then the spiritual master is to be abandoned.” (*Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta*, verse 64)

*katham eva gurus tyājya iti na  
kṛṣṇa-bhāva-lobhāt kṛṣṇa-prāptaye  
guror āśrayaṇaṁ kṛtaṁ tad-anantaraṁ  
yadi tasminn eva gurau asura-bhāvas tarhi  
kim kartaḥ  
asura guruṁ tyaktvā śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhaktimantaṁ  
gurum anyaṁ bhajet*

“Under those circumstances one should not doubt, ‘How can I give up my spiritual master?’ With a strong desire for achieving spontaneous devotional service and attaining the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, a devotee accepts the shelter of a spiritual master as the via media to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. However, after accepting the responsibility of serving the spiritual master, if that spiritual master takes on *asuric* qualities or a demoniac mentality then it is one’s duty to reject such a demon *asura-guru* and in his place accept a

Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master and worship him." (Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta, verse 65)

*tasya kṛṣṇa balād asārasya  
guror balam mardnīyam iti  
śrī śrī vaiṣṇavānām bhajana  
vicārā ya eva tu dṛṣṭa bahavaḥ  
śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanyāvātāre  
guru-nirūpaṇo siddhāntaḥ*

"By taking shelter of the strength of a pure Kṛṣṇa conscious spiritual master's devotional service, **the ill effects or contamination** of the previous demoniac spiritual master is counteracted and destroyed. These activities are recommended by all Vaiṣṇava authorities as the authorised conclusion of the *śāstra*. During the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu there have been many practical examples of the above."

"This concludes the deliberation by *sādhu-śāstra-guru* on the spiritual master and related matters." (Śrī Kṛṣṇa Bhajanāmṛta\*, verse 66)

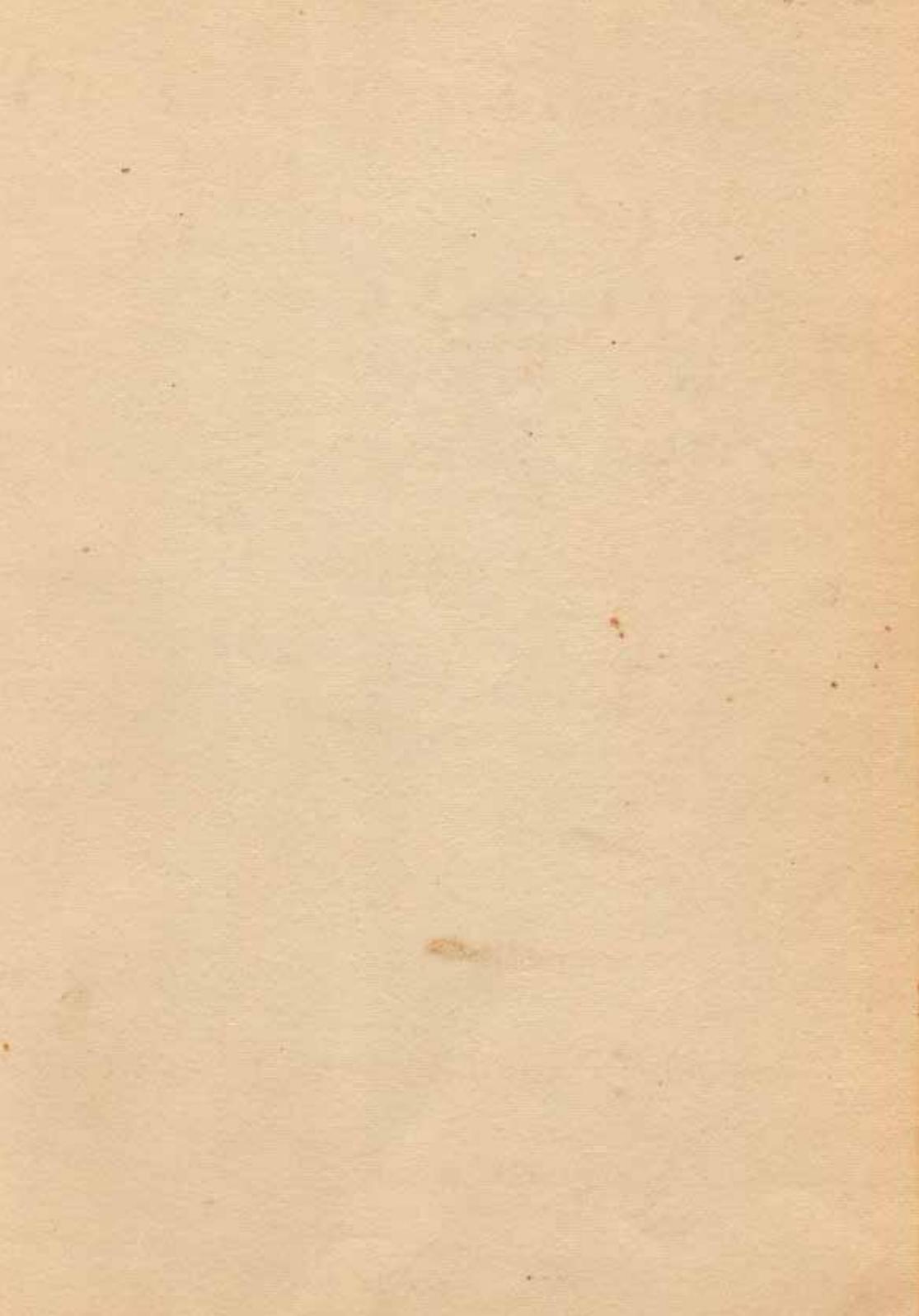
Also in the *Śrī Hari-Bhakti-vilasa* it is written:

*avaiṣṇavopadiṣṭena  
mantreṇa nirayaṁ vrajet  
punaś ca vidhinā samyag  
grāhayed vaiṣṇavād guroḥ*

\***Editor's note:** Śrī Bhajanāmṛta (The Nectar of Worship) is a treatise on pure devotion to the Supreme Lord written in Sanskrit prose by Śrīla Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura, a contemporary and very intimate associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. In 1899 Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura edited and published this book with his own Bengali translation. Śrī Locana dāsa Ṭhākura who is the author of *Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala* was a disciple of Śrīla Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura.



“One who receives his *mantra* from a *guru* who is a non-devotee or who is addicted to sensual pleasure is doomed to a life in hell. Such a person must immediately approach a genuine Vaiṣṇava *guru* and again accept the *mantra* from him.” (Śrī Hari-Bhakti-vilasa 4.144)





## Afterword



In the beginning of the *Bhagavad-gītā* second chapter Arjuna has this to say about his weakened condition:

*kārpaṇya-doṣopahata-svabhāvaḥ  
prcchāmi tvāṁ dharma-sammūḍha-cetāḥ  
yac chreyaḥ syān niścitaṁ brūhi tan me  
śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam*

“Now I am confused about my duty and have lost all composure because of weakness. In this condition I am asking You to tell me clearly what is best for me. Now I am Your disciple, and a soul surrendered unto You. Please instruct me.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 2.7)

Here Arjuna takes the position of the disciple of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Kṛṣṇa takes the position as Arjuna’s *guru*, and through him He instructs the whole world in the science of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. This is teaching by example. We know that through each chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna until he comes to the point of surrendering to the will of Kṛṣṇa, just as the disciple surrenders to the will of the bona fide spiritual master.



Then in the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Kṛṣṇa explains to Arjuna:

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

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master<sup>1</sup>. Inquire from him submissively<sup>2</sup> and render service unto him<sup>3</sup>. The self-realised soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34)

Arjuna is advised to learn the truth:

- <sup>1</sup>*praṇipātena* - by approaching a spiritual master,  
<sup>2</sup>*paripraśnena* - by submissive inquiries,  
<sup>3</sup>*sevayā* - by the rendering of service.

Again Kṛṣṇa’s instruction is all very personal and requires direct dealing between *guru* and disciple. Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a personal movement we are not impersonalists.

In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda states:

“...As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.34): *tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā*. The student must approach a spiritual master and surrender unto him fully (*praṇipātena*). He must also question him in order to understand his instructions (*paripraśnena*). One should not only surrender to the spiritual master but also render loving service unto

him (*sevayā*) so that the spiritual master will be pleased with the student and explain the transcendental subject matter more clearly..." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.12.3 purport)

Then in the thirteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna:

*Ācāryopāsanam* — *ācārya-upāsanam* - approach a bona fide spiritual master. (*Bhagavad-gītā* 13.8) In his purport to this verse Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "...The principle of accepting a spiritual master, as mentioned in the seventh [eighth] verse, is essential. Even for one who takes to devotional service, it is most important. Transcendental life begins when one accepts a bona fide spiritual master. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, clearly states here that this process of knowledge is the actual path. Anything speculated beyond this is nonsense..." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 13.8 purport)

Also, "...As for acceptance of the spiritual master, that is essential, because without the instruction of a bona fide spiritual master, one cannot progress in the spiritual science. One should approach the spiritual master with all humility and offer him all services so that he will be pleased to bestow his blessings upon the disciple..." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 13.8 purport)

Then in the eighteenth chapter Sañjaya states:

*sañjaya uvāca*  
*ity ahaṁ vāsudevasya*  
*pārthasya ca mahātmanaḥ*



*saṁvādam imam aśrauṣam  
adbhutaṁ roma-harṣaṇam*

“Sañjaya said: Thus have I heard the conversation of two great souls, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. And so wonderful is that message that my hair is standing on end.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.74)

*vyāsa-prasādāc chrutavān  
etaḍ guhyam ahaṁ param  
yogaṁ yogeśvarāt kṛṣṇāt  
sāksāt kathayataḥ svayam*

“By the mercy of Vyāsa, I have heard these most confidential talks directly from the master of all mysticism, Kṛṣṇa, who was speaking personally to Arjuna.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.75)

*rājan saṁsmṛtya saṁsmṛtya  
saṁvādam imam adbhutam  
keśavārjunayoḥ puṇyaṁ  
hr̥ṣyāmi ca muhur muhuḥ*

“O King, as I repeatedly recall this wondrous and holy dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, I take pleasure, being thrilled at every moment.” (*Bhagavad-gītā* 18.76)

Kṛṣṇa as the *guru* has instructed Arjuna in such a way that Arjuna surrenders to the will of Kṛṣṇa. Just as the bona fide spiritual master instructs the disciple and the disciple surrenders (or should surrender) to the will of the spiritual master. This is the personal relationship of the *guru* and the disciple. Direct instructions.



Sañjaya makes the point that this is all the mercy of his *guru*, Vyāsa. So Vyāsa is present and Sañjaya is present on the planet at the same time. The *guru* and the disciple are both personally present; they have met and have reciprocated.

Sañjaya also makes the point that Kṛṣṇa is personally speaking to Arjuna. The *guru* instructs the disciple personally. As previously stated in this book the *guru* disciple relationship is very personal, not impersonal. The *guru* speaks to the disciple and the disciple listens and then acts according to the instructions of the bona fide spiritual master. The *guru* and the disciple meet and when the *guru* feels that the aspiring disciple is ready he initiates the disciple. This is the natural flow of the *guru* and disciple relationship, this is the norm, not an exception to the rule. There are exceptions to the rule but as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written:

“...It is not the duty of materialistic persons to renounce the process of initiation because a few great souls like Jaḍa Bharata did not take initiation. Initiation is a constitutional injunction for every birth of the living entity. If initiation is not seen in the life of a perfected soul, it should not be taken as an example. General rules are not changed because something happens to a particular person in a special situation...” (*Follow the Mahājana* by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, from *Śrī Bhaktyāloka*. The six qualities that enhance Bhakti.)

Also as Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda has said:

“...We should certainly communicate directly with the spiritual master. Those who do not wish to serve and as-



sociate with their spiritual master personally are bound to be cheated. Direct communication with *guru* is the first step on the path of divine service.”

“It is not enough to serve the spiritual master with awe and reverence only from a distance...” (*Amṛta Vāṇī*, Nectar of Instructions for Immortality Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda)

Śrīla AC Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda has said:

“...So we have to learn *Bhāgavatam* from the living *bhāgavata*... The two *bhāgavatas*. You study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from living *bhāgavata*. So if one does not take or does not surrender unto the living *bhāgavata*, he cannot understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*...” (Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.23 in L.A. June 20<sup>th</sup> 1972)

As quoted in the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* there are two *bhāgavatas*:

*eka bhāgavata baḍa—bhāgavata-śāstra  
āra bhāgavata—bhakta bhakti-rasa-pātra*

“One of the *bhāgavatas* is the great scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and the other is the pure devotee absorbed in the mellows of loving devotion.” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 1.99)

*dui bhāgavata dvārā diyā bhakti-rasa  
tāñhāra hṛdaye tāñra preme haya vaśa*

“Through the actions of these two *bhāgavatas* the Lord instills the mellows of transcendental loving service into

the heart of a living being, and thus the Lord, in the heart of His devotee, comes under the control of the devotee's love." (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā* 1.100)

And in summation, Śrīla AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda has stated,

"...Similarly, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the postgraduate study of the science of Godhead, can only be learned by studying it at the feet of a realised soul like Śrīla Vyāsadeva. Although Śukadeva Gosvāmī was a liberated soul from the very day of his birth, he still had to take lessons of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from his great father, Vyāsadeva, who compiled the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* under the instruction of another great soul, Śrī Nārada Muni..." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.8 purport)

"...This is the secret. Unless one is *soānubhāvam*, self-realised, life is *bhāgavata*, he cannot preach *Bhāgavata*. That is not... That will not be effective. A gramophone will not help. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu's secretary, Svarūpa Dāmodara, recommended, *bhāgavata pora giyā bhāgavata-sthāne*, that 'If you want to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, you must approach a person who is life living *Bhāgavata*.' *Bhāgavata pora giyā bhāgavata-sthāne*. Otherwise, there is no question of *Bhāgavata* realisation..." (From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Rome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.3, May 27, 1974)

Therefore the personal secretary of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Goswami has said:

*yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne ...*



“If you want to understand *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*,” he said, “you must approach a self-realised Vaiṣṇava and hear from him...” (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā* 5.131)

## Notes & references

### Quotes in the Foreword are from:

1. A lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Rome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.3, May 27, 1974.
2. A lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Rome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.3, May 27, 1974.
3. Śrīla Prabhupāda room conversation Mauritius October 5, 1975.
4. Śrīla Prabhupāda room conversation Mauritius October 5, 1975.
5. A lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.5.1, Delhi November 28, 1975.
6. Śrīla Prabhupāda Lecture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.23 in L.A. June 20, 1972.

### Quotes in the Introduction are from:

1. *Bhagavad-gītā* verse 4.34.
2. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 5.12.3 purport Śrīla Prabhupāda.
3. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 9.10.3.
4. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* verse 25.122.
5. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* verse 1.2.74.
6. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* verse 22.115.
7. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verses 7.7.30-31.
8. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 11.3.22.
9. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 11.2.37.
10. *Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa* (found in *Jaiḥva Dharma* chapter 3 by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura).
11. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* verse 22.83.
12. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* verse 3.25.25.
13. From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Rome *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.3, May 27, 1974.
14. From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Chicago *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 6.1.24 July 8, 1975.
15. Śrīla Prabhupāda room conversation Mauritius October 5, 1975.
16. From a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Los Angeles *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.3.17 June 12, 1972).
17. *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Antya-līlā* verse 5.131.
18. *Purāṇa-vākya* quoted in *Gauḍīya Kanṭhāra* - Guru Tattva section.

All other quotes are listed in the main body of the text.



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No editing has been done to quotes in this book what so ever.

All text in this document in bold has been emphasised by the editors.

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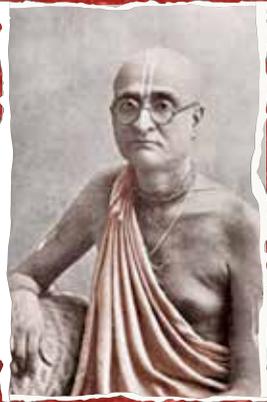
*yāha, bhāgavata paḍa vaiṣṇavera sthāne  
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"It is not the duty of materialistic persons to renounce the process of initiation because a few great souls like Jada Bharata did not take initiation. Initiation is a constitutional injunction for every birth of the living entity. If initiation is not seen in the life of a perfected soul, it should not be taken as an example. General rules are not changed because something happens to a particular person in a special situation."

- Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakura



"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. It is not enough to serve the spiritual master with awe and reverence only from a distance."

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"So we have to learn *Bhagavatam* from the living *bhagavata*... The two *bhagavatas*. You study *Srimad-Bhagavatam* from living *bhagavata*. So if one does not take or does not surrender unto the living *bhagavata*, he cannot understand *Srimad-Bhagavatam*."

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