

# Sri Guru-Tattva Part I

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## Introduction

## A Faithful Understanding

Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-*Acarya* of ISKCON, and the foremost exponent of the science of Bhakti yoga of the modern age, at times, gave a broad definition of “*guru*” as meaning “preacher”. However, the main thrust of his teachings on the subject of *guru-tattva* is to emphasize the very exalted qualifications required of a bona-fide spiritual master, or *sad-guru*. He must be a pure devotee, a self-realized, liberated soul. Ideally, he should be an *uttama-adhikari*, a *maha-bhagavata*.

Let us read Krishna’s instruction in the Bhagavad-gita. “*Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively, and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you, because he has seen the Truth.*” (Bg 4.34)

There are currently different conceptions of *guru*, but in this verse, the proper understanding of the qualifications of the bona-fide spiritual master is given. He must be self-realized, and have seen the Truth, so that he can impart transcendental knowledge to his disciple.

What is the Truth? *Tattva-vastu Krishna* — Krishna is the Absolute Truth. So a seer of the Truth must have seen Krishna. If we take another angle of approach, the Tattva, the Absolute Truth, the Advaya Jnana, the Nondual Substance, has three aspects; Brahman, Paramatma, and Bhagavan. (SB 1.2.11) Therefore, one must be at least a Brahman-realized soul, which means on the liberated, or *brahma-bhuta* stage, in order to be accepted as a bona-fide *sad-guru*. This comes at the *nistha*-bordering-*ruci* stage of the *madhyama-adhikara* level.

“*One has to raise himself at least to the stage of a second-class devotee, and thus become eligible to know the Absolute Truth.*” (SB 1.2.12) Srila Prabhupada repeatedly indicated this stage to be the minimum concessional level to be achieved before one should become an initiating spiritual master, or *diksa guru*.

# Guru-Tattva

There are different grades of spiritual masters, such as, *kanistha-dhikari*, not acceptable; *nistha*, barely acceptable; *ruci*, good; *asakti*, better; *bhava*, even better and *nitya-siddha*, topmost. There is great need for education in *guru-tattva*. The most urgent reason to provide this education presently is to help the spiritual aspirant comprehend the limiting implications of accepting a *guru* who is not highly qualified. The subject of *guru-tattva* is very vast. There is no subject matter that Srila Prabhupada spoke more about. It is the greatest disservice to the Vaisnava community to minimize how crucial it is for the *guru* to be highly qualified.

We judge a thing by the results. Lack of proper qualification for *diksa-guru* status has already been a cause of great difficulties, and even devastating disaster. This is echoed everywhere in *sastra*, the revealed scriptures, and in the Vaisnava world. If someone does not fit the *sastric* criteria of what is a *guru*, then he is at best a *varṇa-pradarśhaka guru*, or one who shows the path, even if he prematurely gives initiation.

The three levels of devotees are first class (*uttama*), second class (*madhyama*), and third class (*kanistha*) *adhikaris*. We have to base our understanding on the overall teachings of Srila Prabhupada and the *sastras* he teaches from, which state that the *diksa-guru* should undoubtedly be a pure devotee, a *tattva-darsi*, or one who has seen the Truth. He should be a self-realized liberated soul, or *uttama adhikari*. Such an exalted devotee comes down, or rather adjusts his vision, to the *madhyama* platform to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The *madhyama adhikara* level is a concession to be a *guru* and the *kanistha adhikara* stage is not acceptable. It is stated in the Harinama Cintamani by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura that one must take *diksa* from a Vaisnava, but that the “*madhyama* stage marks the beginning of Vaisnavism. A *kanistha-adhikari* is called *vaisnava-abhasa*, or near Vaisnava”.

## Qualifications of a Bona-Fide Spiritual Master (Sad-Guru)

There is only one *guru*, the *adi-guru*, the original preceptor, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who, as Sri Guru, is assuming different forms. One does not become *guru* because he wants to be one, because others push him to be one, or because of popular vote. Krishna decides who can represent Him, and not anyone else. The *guru* is ideally a *svarupa-shakti pusta parikara*, an eternal associate of the Lord. He is invested and imbued with the Lord’s delegation of *guru-shakti*. *Svarupa* means oneself. Krishna invests Himself in the proper person. Srila Prabhupada says that the *guru* is not the body of the *guru*, but the *guru* is the principle embodied in the spiritual master. “*Krishna and His representative are the same. The spiritual master is the principle not the body.*” (Letter 28.4.68)

So, in the *guru*, there's him, a perfect devotee, and there's Krishna's delegation. He is *guru* because Krishna has chosen him due to his pure love for Him and invested him with the power to represent Him. "*The Lord gives His pure devotee the power to distribute His own mercy (sva-kripa-sakti) as he likes.*" (Madhurya Kadambini, Ch1) So one has to be truly connected to Krishna to be thus empowered. Mercy comes through a fit person.

The Lord makes Himself known to us through the form of Sri Guru. It is said that, "*since we cannot see the Supersoul He appears as a liberated devotee.*" (CC Adi 1.58) And "*Although I know my spiritual master as a devotee of the Lord, I also know him to be a plenary manifestation of the Lord.*" (CC Adi 1.44) That is *guru*, and that should be learned. One shouldn't read "*diksa-guru*" when Srila Prabhupada simply speaks of preacher, and indulge in the fallacious logic, that since a *diksa-guru* is a preacher, all preachers are therefore qualified as *diksa-gurus*, without considering their *adhikara*, or eligibility as a *guru*.

## His exalted qualities

"*Generally a guru's symptom is that he's a perfect devotee, that's all.*" (Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers). A *guru* of theoretical knowledge can only partially help us. He must be established in the Absolute Truth. The best devotee is the *guru*. "*Unless one is pure devotee, how can he be guru? Spiritual master means representative of God, so who can become so? He is Krishna's representative because he is his most confidential servant.*" (Letter 23.10.72).

The company of a pure devotee alone is conducive to cultivate pure bhakti, so the Lord reveals his own *tattva*, the Truth about Himself, to those aspirant souls who have surrendered themselves unconditionally at the feet of a *niskincana bhagavat bhakta*, a completely surrendered soul. Krishna appears as Sri Gurudeva. "*He must provide the Transcendental Necessities.*" (CC Madhya 24.330)

A less than liberated soul shouldn't attempt the impossible task of trying to become the eternal spiritual master of another conditioned soul. That will deprive both of them from the real thing. If someone cannot deliver the necessities listed below and only imagines he can, like the Christians who are only imagining that they can give Christ to others, yet pretends he can deliver, he is actually cheating.

## Absorption of Karma

What is *diksa*? The guru gives *divya-jnana* and takes the sinful reactions of the disciple: *Diyate, ksyate*, something is given, something is taken; that is *diksa*. According to what? According to the *guru's* capacity. But *diksa* is not dependent on formalities or a ceremony. It is not a one-time affair. It is an on-going process. One is admitted in the school of *diksa*. One is a real *diksa-guru* only if he can both give this *divya-jnana* and

deliver from material bondage.

How is the *karma* taken? Srila Prabhupada gave the example of a fan being switched off, so the *guru* has to be a properly authorized agent of the Lord to be able to turn off the switch, not someone who has become a *guru* on his own initiative (Nectar of Devotion, p116) Krishna invests his pure devotees with the *bhakti-shakti* and *kripa-shakti*, the mercy potency. By the strength of the empowered *guru*, the sincere disciple is blessed. Then by practicing according to the *divya-jnana* received by the authorized *guru* and by chanting, sinful reactions are vanquished. The disciple is protected by the *guru* and that counteracts all sinful reactions. (SBhag 9.9.8)

Then there is the consideration of the disciple's surrender. "*Diksa tends to confer spiritual enlightenment by abrogating sinfulness. Its actual effect depends on the degree of willing cooperation on the part of the disciple and is therefore not the same in all cases... It imparts an initial impulse, the nature of which varies in accordance with the condition of the recipient.*" (Srila Sarasvati Thakura)

When the disciple surrenders fully, he is relieved from his sinful reactions. Since the surrender is usually partial, artificial, conditional, there's only partial relief on the disciple's part. Real initiation is not therefore automatically on the spot of the fire-*yajna*. It is considered complete upon achieving *bhava-bhakti*.

Srila Prabhupada mentions that one may even receive the seeds of material desires, *karma*, fruitive action, and *jnana*, cultivation of knowledge aiming at liberation, instead of the *bhakti-lata bija*, the seed of the plant of devotion, if the *guru* is not pleased: (see CC Madhya 19.152) Srila Prabhupada explains in Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers:

**Syamasundara das:** One time you said that sometimes you feel sickness or pain due to the sinful activities of your devotees. Can sometimes disease be due to that?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Krishna says: "I will deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear."

So Krishna is so powerful that He can immediately take up all the sins of others and make them right. But when a living entity plays the part on behalf of Krishna, he also takes the responsibility for the sinful activities of his devotees. Therefore to become a *guru* is not an easy task. He has to take all the poisons and absorb them. So sometimes, because he is not Krishna, there is some trouble. Therefore Caitanya Mahaprabhu has forbidden: "*Don't make many disciples.*" That's a fact. The spiritual master has to take the responsibility for all the sinful activities of his disciples. Therefore to make many disciples is a risky job unless one is able to assimilate all the sins. That idea is also in the Bible. Jesus Christ took all the sinful reactions of the people and sacrificed his life. That is the responsibility of a spiritual master. Because Krishna is Krishna, he is *apapa-viddha*. He cannot be attacked by sinful reactions. But a living entity is sometimes subjected to their influence because he is so small. Big fire, small fire. If you put some big thing in a small fire, the fire itself may be extinguished. But in a big fire, whatever you put in is all right. When the spiritual master is in suffering, Krishna saves him. Krishna thinks: '*Oh, he has taken so much responsibility for delivering a fallen person.*' So Krishna is there... because the spiritual master takes the risk on account of Krishna.... The pain is there sometimes so that the disciples may know, '*Due to our sinful activities*

*our spiritual master is suffering.”* (Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers)

So, again, it is a question of being authorized. If someone wrongly becomes a *guru*, he is liable to suffer. The real *guru* has so much love for Krishna that he wants that all give their love to Him, that the Lord may not be deprived of the love of his parts and parcels or *jiva-amsa* for Him. At the same time, because he loves Krishna and sees everyone as part and parcel of Krishna, his heart bleeds out of compassion for the fallen conditioned souls. That is *guru*. Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja said, “*Guru means to suffer on behalf of the conditioned souls.*” That’s another reason why he is so dear to Krishna. It is also mentioned in the Srimad Bhagavatam (8.4.15) that the *guru* has to see a nightmare due to the disciples’ sinful reactions. And, “*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 consequence for one is forbidden to accept many disciples.*” (CC Madhya 22.118)

Srila Prabhupada also says in a letter “*He is not a liberated person. He cannot initiate one in Krishna Consciousness. It requires special benediction from higher authorities.*” (Letter 4.6) Who are the higher authorities? Guru and Krishna. “*Self-appointed man cannot be guru. He must be authorized by the bona fide guru, then he is guru. He must be authorized by a superior, not be self-made.*” (Lecture 10.31.72) “*Nobody can become guru unless he carries the order of the Supreme.*” (Lecture 7.12.75)

Some say that a *guru* may fall down because he takes the disciple’s *karma*. But Srila Prabhupada explains the fall downs of such “*gurus*” differently: “*If one follows the order of his guru, there’s no question of falling down. As soon as a foolish disciple tries to overtake his guru and becomes anxious to occupy his post, then he immediately falls down.*” (SB 5.12.14) and, “*A bona fide guru will never become fallen.*” (Nectar of Devotion). And, “*The contamination of material qualities can’t even touch them.*” And, “*There is no possibility that a first class devotee will fall down even though he may be mixing with non-devotees to preach.*” (CC Madhya 22.71) And, “*One shouldn’t imitate the behavior of the uttama-adhikari for he will eventually become degraded.*” (Upadesamrita 5)

One shouldn’t hope nor pretend that he can somehow of other eradicate the sins of another conditioned soul when he is not yet pure himself.

Srila Narayana Maharaja also says that the *karma* is burned by the *guru*’s powerful mercy and by the Holy Name.

## Giving of Suddha-Nama

“*Chanting doesn’t depend on initiation.*” “*One doesn’t have to undergo initiation, one has simply to vibrate the Holy name.*” These quotes from the Caitanya Caritamṛta seem to indicate that the personal level of the *guru* has no bearing on the *mantra* he gives. But other quotes give further indications that this is not the case at all. The famous quote: “*sampradaya vibina ye...*” clearly indicates that the *mantra*’s potency does have something to do with the one who gives it. But the *sahajiyas*, or pseudo devotees, think

that the spiritual status of the *guru* or of the disciple doesn't matter, for the *maha-mantra* will work by its own power.

The point is that the Holy Name can take one up to at most liberation without initiation, but it will not give *prema*. When it is said that by chanting once Hare Krishna one can go back to Godhead, that refers to pure chanting. In Harinama-Cintamani it is explained that *namaparadha* chanting will give *dharma*, religiosity; *artha*, material wealth; and *kama*, sense pleasure. *Namabhāsa* chanting will give *mukti*, liberation from bondage, which means that it creates a platform for achieving liberation, as in the case of Ajamila, but only Suddha-Nama will deliver *prema*, love, the ultimate goal.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu prays in his Siksastakam: “*Oh, my Lord, You have made approach to You easy through Your Holy Name.*” That approach can be bridged only through His pure and favored representative. So accordingly, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati writes: “*One must take shelter at the feet of a spiritual guide who has realized and does see the form (Svarupa) of the Name. The mere letters forming the Name, namaksara, may be had at any place and from anybody, but the profound and unknown Truth behind those letters can only be exposed by the grace of a true guru, a pure devotee of Krishna. Only such a guru's grace can protect from the ten offenses, carry across from the early twilight of Nama, namabhāsa, to the pure light of Nama.*” (Nama-Bhajan)

“*Otherwise, simply the alphabets are coming out, but that's not the Name: namaksara bahir haya nama nahi haya.*” (Conversation 2.25.77) Srila Prabhupada explains: “*This chanting, don't make it cheap. It has got a science.... In the beginning you may be very liberal, and I have done it. The thing is that some way or other if you're near the fire you'll get some heat, but there is a process how to take heat. That you cannot reject: 'Because I'm getting little heat, it is sufficient.' That is sahajiya.... And if it is done by a pure Vaisnava, then they get the full benefit.*” (Conversation 2.25.77) and, “*The mantra must be received through the proper channel otherwise it will not act.*” (Letters Book, p 1)

The pure Name is the asset, the property of the pure Vaisnava *guru* only: The Holy Name proper comes only through the agent authorized by the Absolute. From that merciful saint's heart it enters the ear, then comes to the heart. From the heart, after proper cultivation of devotional sentiment under that saint's guidance, with his blessings it will appear on the tongue. The tongue cannot produce the Name (*atah sri krishna nama adi...*), it comes itself from the heart (*svayam eva sphuraty adah*). The mantra chanted with *namaparadhas* is not Krishna.

So, a *guru* who has not yet himself surpassed the level of *namabhāsa* cannot give more than *mukti*, what to speak of one who has not yet freed himself from *namaparadhas*. Since the Holy Name can take one up to *mukti* without initiation, the question can be raised: “*Why should one accept initiation from one who cannot give you more anyway?*” Indeed, one should not give *diksa* but only *siksa* until one meets the standard. If the prospective disciple has not met yet anyone who is fit, then he should wait.

Identification with the body and mind slackens at *nistha*, and real attraction to Krishna begins. *Nistha* is the end of *kanistha* and the beginning of *madhyama*. They border on each other, they overlap. So, *nistha* is clearly the barely minimum stage to initiate

disciples. *Madhyam adhikara* starts at *nistha*. Until then, one is a *kanistha adhikari*, with no eligibility or right (*adhikara*) to be a *diksa guru*. Only at full *nistha*, or the liberated stage, does one enter the world of *bhakti* proper (*mad-bhaktim labhate param*). (Some spiritual authorities place the stage of liberation, *brahma-bhuta*, or *jivan-mukta*, even higher.) One only begins to develop love for Krishna in *madhyam-adhikara*, as it is said that at *nistha* comes the first trace of love, *nistha haile upajaya premera taranga*. (CC Madhya 22.134) The *anarthas* of *kama* and *lobha* must be fully gone (*tada-rajās-tamo bhava kama lobhādayas ca ye*) and one fully established in goodness (*sthitam sattve prasidati*). The famous verse ‘*vikriditam vraja-vadhu...*’ which says that by hearing Krishna-gopi-lila one achieves pure *bhakti* and becomes free from lust refers specifically to the last tinges of subtle lust remaining in the heart once one has attained *nistha*. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura stresses the word *sraddhayanvita* and *dhira*, indicating firm faith, *paramarthika sraddha*, the hallmark of *nistha*.

At *nistha*, the stage of firm faith, there is no more oscillation of the mind, *aviksepa-satatyam*, and pure *nama-bhajan* begins. *Suddha-sattva* begins to develop at *nistha*. One cannot transmit Suddha-Nama if he doesn’t have the qualification (*adhikara*) to be a *guru*. How can the Pure be received through the impure? The *guru* must be factually non-different from Krishna. He must factually be *guru*. The disciple accepts the *guru* as good as God, so the *guru* must be as good as God. Remember: “*The chanting, however, must be heard from the lips of a pure devotee of the Lord...*” “*Everyone should be given a chance to hear the name chanted by a pure Vaisnava.*” (CC Madhya 22.105) “*Following in the footsteps of liberated souls who are able to vibrate real transcendental sound can lead one to the highest stage of devotion.*” (CC Adi 2.117)

## Bringing His Disciples to the Lotus Feet of Krishna

The reason the *guru* must be fully liberated is that only such a perfected devotee can introduce one to Krishna. “*The devotee is accepted in the confidential entourage of the Lord through the agency of the guru.*” (SB 1.5.39) So the bonafide *guru* can take you up to the highest, whereas a non-liberated soul cannot even take himself to that level. Entrance in Krishna’s entourage can only be attained through the mercy of a genuine spiritual master chosen by the Lord. Not, “*All I can do is take you to Srila Prabhupada.*” Can one even do that? We should take great care to confirm our assumptions with the *sastras* and preferably a living *sadhu*, lest we fall into wishful thinking.

If one claims he can reach Srila Prabhupada, be with him and bring him one’s own disciples, then that means he is able to enter in Krishna’s entourage, where Srila Prabhupada is. When he was asked if one could associate with him after his physical departure, Srila Prabhupada said that he would always be with us in his books, in his *vani*. This is true, and every disciple has a privileged access to his *guru*, but Prabhupada also answered, “*Yes, if you’re very pure.*” One shouldn’t misunderstand statements like, “*If one chants his rounds and follows the four regulative principles, he is guaranteed to make it back to Godhead*”, and assume he can make similar statements to his disciples without deeper consideration. Yes, normally, if one practices faithfully there is a great chance

that he will be purified by the time he leaves his body, if he has not made too much gross or subtle accommodation with *maya* on the way. And one who is not yet free from *anarthas* risks to become overburdened by prematurely assuming the position of *guru*.

## Give his Disciples Krishna

Since Krishna and His Name are non-different, this can be seen as redundant with the previous point, but since our realization of the non-difference between Nama and Nami is more theoretical than factual it has also been explained differently. “*A pure devotee is one who has attracted the Lord by his love so that the Lord cannot give up the devotee’s heart.*” (SB 11.2.55) And from his heart, the pure devotee *guru* can transfer Krishna and make Him appear in the heart of his disciple when it has been cleansed of all contamination. So, one who knows Krishna, sees Krishna, has Krishna bound up with the ropes of love, can make Krishna appear, that person is a *sad-guru*. “*Without initiation by a bona fide spiritual master, the actual connection with Krishna is never established.*” (Nectar of Devotion, Intro.) This statement doesn’t only refer to initiation from non-bona fide *sampradayas*. It can refer to any unqualified person.

## Give His Disciples Realized Divya-jnana

“*He must understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only then can one become a spiritual master. Diksa actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge.*” (CC Madhya 4.111) Giving *divya-jnana* doesn’t mean making sure the disciple reads and understands Srila Prabhupada’s books. Srila Jiva Goswami explains: “*Divya-jnana comprises knowledge of the original form of the Lord. It is conveyed in seed form within the mantra given by the guru, along with specific knowledge of the disciple’s particular relationship with the Lord.*” (Bhakti Sandarbha) If there’s no realization on the *guru*’s side, there’s no transmission of *divya-jnana*.

Also, the transmission of theoretical knowledge, knowledge given without realization cannot be effective. There must first be realization (*bhagavata tattva vijnana*) (SB 1.2.20) on the *guru*’s side. Then this transcendental knowledge is instilled in the heart of the sincere disciple (*divya-jnana hrde prokasita*).

Whatever the *acaryas* and the *sastras* teach has to be understood in truth (*tattva*). But neophyte devotees mostly only hover on the intellectual or mental plane, (*apara-vicara*). It is said that Lord Balarama’s plow is *guru-vakya*, the *guru*’s instructions, to cultivate the barren field of the heart. Balarama, or Lord Nityananda, is the principle of *guru*; the Gurudeva is the incarnation of Nityananda Rama’s mercy potency, so one must be a qualified empowered representative of the Lord to fulfill that role, and be able to cultivate the disciple’s heart and make it fertile for *bhakti* and real attraction to Krishna to be planted and cultivated. One must oneself have that real attraction, *ruci*, to transmit it. Before attraction, *karsana*, which is the root of the name Krishna, there must be cultivation, *akarsana*.



## Destroy His Disciples' Doubts

The purport to the famous verse “*tasmad gurum prapadyetam*” says: “*The bona fide guru must be nisnatam, deeply experienced in Vedic literature and in practical understanding of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. A so-called guru will be unable to dissipate the doubts of his disciples and therefore unable to execute the function of bringing the sincere student back to Godhead.*” (SB 11.3.21)

According to Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, “If the *guru* is not deeply versed in the *sastras* and is insufficiently skilled in explaining their inner meaning (*tattva-vicara*), the doubts of the disciple will not be dissipated. The disciple will thus become dejected and suffer assuredly a loss of faith. If the *guru* is not capable of direct spiritual perception (*aparoksa-anubhava*), whatever mercy he bestows will not properly fructify” (Commentary on the same verse, SB 11.3.21) Doubts are compared to demons in the Gita, and Arjuna asked Krishna to kill these demon-like doubts. So one must be an authorized representative of Krishna to do so.

## If One Is Not Qualified As Sad-Guru

He can, but theoretically shouldn't, be a *diksa-guru*. One can limit oneself to the position of *siksa-guru*. If there is someone of a higher caliber there is no need to give initiation. Everyone is not going to take *diksa* just from one person, no matter what anyone says, because Krishna inspires different devotees of different mentalities, levels of *sukriti*, accumulated piety, etc., to approach different *gurus*.

A *kanistha-adhikari* may also accept disciples, but if it is said about the *madhvam-adhikari*'s disciples that they cannot progress well due to insufficient guidance, then what can be said about a *kanistha guru*'s disciples? Because Prabhupada gave so many warnings, when we read in the Upadesamrita, purport to verse 5, that a *kanistha* may also accept disciples, it can be understood that it indicates mostly *siksa* and not *diksa*. That doesn't mean that just to be able to continue a mission, *gurus* can be artificially fabricated if we don't have qualified ones, neither that we have to manufacture a new philosophy.

Now, of course, it is up to the disciple's demand. If all that he wants is a *one-rupee-guru*, *ten-rupee-guru*.... But what is advised? “*If my mind takes the direction of the service of any other entity than that of the best of Krishna's servants, it would be impossible to find such another fool as myself.*” (Srila Sarasvati Thakura). The same thing is advised by Srila Prabhupada: “*A devotee should be careful to accept an *uttama-adhikari* as spiritual master.*” (Upadesamrita 5, purport). Such *guru* is always available. It's an eternal process. It is not that it existed in the past but no longer now. And one should further understand that one cannot progress very well towards the ultimate goal due to insufficient guidance. A less than fully self-realized *guru* can only partially deliver the Lord's message due to his own lack of knowledge and realization. He cannot transmit *divya-jnana*. “*Such a devotee must be a representative of Sukadeva Goswami, like Suta*

*Goswami.*” (SB 1.2.12) “Satam prasangam mama-virya samvido: *Only in the association of pure devotees can the words of Lord Krishna be fully potent.*” (SB 3.25.25).

A *madhyma-adhikari* can give the seed of *bhakti*; a *kanistha-adhikari* can only give *komala sraddha*, very weak faith. *Krishna se tomara krishna dite para, tomara sakati ache.* Because the guru does not have Krishna yet, the disciple should know that he does not have the power to give Him. Such a *guru* should mercifully encourage his disciples to look for a self-realized *siksa-guru*, thus giving them a chance to receive what they are entitled to as members of this *sampradaya*. “*A spiritual master unable to take his disciples back to Godhead should responsibly advise them to take shelter under someone who can. Actually, Srila Prabhupada advises that a person unable to take his disciples back home not act as a guru.*” (GBC “Guru-Ashraya” Paper) And, “*According to sastra, the duty of the guru is to take the disciple back to Godhead. If he is unable to do so, he shouldn’t be a guru.*” (SB.5.5.18)

Srila Prabhupada writes: “*If one is not factually detached from material attachment but still proclaims himself advanced in devotional service, he is cheating. No one will be happy to see such behavior.*” (CC Antya) One may think that it is his duty to initiate, that it is a risk to be taken on behalf of Srila Prabhupada, one’s Society and Krishna, but “no-man is an island.” One senior member taking a risk affects not only himself and his disciples but the whole Society and the world, for which Prabhupada wanted to set a perfect example. He was very concerned about that. The *guru* must give Krishna. The *prema-bhakti sutra* (rope of pure love) is tied at Krishna’s lotus feet and handed over to the disciple by the *sad-guru*. Unless one can hand it over, he should connect his disciples with someone who can. One may argue that the above statements are not practical but actually one must accept with full faith all that Srila Prabhupada taught, even if one can’t figure out how it will be “practically” effected.

To refrain from initiating and to concentrate on training one’s disciples, which in the case of a less qualified *guru* may mean to send them to a more advanced *siksa-guru* for training, doesn’t diminish one’s position. It is actually adding to one’s glorious position as a preacher to display such humility. In our Vaisnava disciplic line, we worship humility, not pride.

## What Should a Disciple or Aspiring Disciple Do?

### A. He should learn guru-tattva, including siksa-guru-tattva, and what is pure devotion.

**Education:** Studying systematically *guru-tattva*, (starting from the *bhakta* program) will hopefully dissipate all misconceptions. One will have the weighty task of applying the formula himself, but at least with a good basis of prior knowledge. If one becomes conversant with Srila Prabhupada’s books he’ll be less likely to be misled. One must deeply study the *sastra* and try to understand the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness; and he must come to a mature understanding of the qualifications of a bona fide *guru* and choose a *guru* accordingly. “*Before accepting a guru one should be assured of the spiritual master’s position.*” (Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madhya 24.330) One must not accept his spiritual guide out of mere sentiment or

blind fanaticism. Sentimentality and blind fanaticism are not to be taken as devotion. *Sri guru-carane rati ei sei uttama gati*. Attachment to the guru is not cheap. It develops by cultivation. Of course it will develop not just according to the disciple's devotional surrender, but according to the worthiness of the recipient. The disciple's genuine faith has the chance to develop insofar as the *guru* is truly qualified to represent the Lord and the disciplic succession. He should choose someone whom he has full faith is fully competent to connect him to Krishna by instruction, personal behavior, and realization. Artificial faith will not last, due to its having a false basis it will be easily shaken.

Should every *guru* be worshipped by the singing of the Gurvastakam prayers? Faith and worship are given according to the degree of worthiness of the recipient, not according to ritualistic tradition. One may come up with so many pragmatic arguments, but we shouldn't adjust the philosophy. Nothing should take precedence over the pure teachings of the *Acaryas*. Prabhupada's books all say the same thing about the qualifications of a bona fide *guru*. If one is properly educated and has already taken initiation, there's no reason to panic if there something he sees in his *guru* which is not supposed to be there. It is not that in the name of the disciple's welfare he should be trained to see someone as absolute who is not on that platform. Srila Prabhupada always spoke against blind faith. Don't we say that religion without philosophy is sentimental or fanatical? So, if one sees things in the *guru* that he thinks are not supposed to be there, he is entitled to approach him, with great humility, and express his heart, his doubts, and even, if necessary, ask his permission to approach someone more advanced for *siksa*. There is no question traditionally of rejecting a guru for a lack of knowledge or spiritual advancement. The Vaisnava process is to approach a *siksa-guru*. Rejection is only applicable in cases such as a fall down, or one's guide being envious of higher Vaisnavas. If one has been educated and warned then if, for instance, the so-called "*guru*" falls down, the trauma is minimized. The disciple can reason: "*I have to admit that when I accepted him as guru I was a young fool, and I couldn't properly distinguish. I also have to admit that there's no such thing as spiritual injustice. Somehow my karma, or lack of sincerity, seriousness or sukrti has earned me this; now let me sincerely pray to the Lord for sending me his true representative.*"

It's not so much a question of pointing out to the devotees who the qualified *gurus* are, as it is of teaching what the *sastras* and Srila Prabhupada said are the qualifications. Properly knowledgeable devotees will be able to make wise choices and will less run the risk of making a mistake. A bona fide *guru* is not some cheap commodity. How many were there during Srila Prabhupada's time? A qualified *guru* is one who is free from *anarthas*, self-realized, and able to take his disciples back to Godhead. The term "bona fide *guru*" shouldn't be misunderstood. The spiritual master must be self-realized according to *sastra*. Unless one is at least fully established on the platform of *nistha* he is not really a *guru* in the strict sense of the term. He cannot and should not be seen as *saksad-hari*. And *nistha*, which many incorrectly assume is the position of the rank-and-file fixed-up preacher, is not cheap, if one considers that it is above the *anartha-nivritti* stage and if one studies these *anarthas* in depth. It is by the Lord's grace that one gets a bona fide *guru*. A *guru* is an absolute necessity. He must be a pure, liberated devotee. Krishna will make an arrangement in due time for the meeting of such a *guru* if one is very

sincere and eager to get the real thing, and an aspiring disciple should therefore become sincere and eager and petition the Lord.

One should also know that when many people speak of *guru*, they don't know or consider what is *guru-tattva*, and that there are spiritual masters on different levels. What applies to a self-realized *maha-bhagavat* doesn't necessarily apply to any *diksa-guru*. On the other hand, we have to promote the faith if the *guru* is truly qualified, not suppress it. Some disciples may become overzealous, but that can be tolerated (*mat guru, sei jagat guru*: the famous disciples' complex). Every disciple thinks his *guru* is best and naturally tends to glorify him. It is up to the *guru* himself to correct his disciples if in the name of glorifying their *guru* they offend others. Initiation is not a light thing: There is no rush. Real initiation is in the heart, it's not just the formal *yajna*. First initiation in the Gaudiya Math is not taken as *diksa* per se. It is considered an encouragement, an admission into the school. Real *diksa* is considered initiation through *gayatri mantras*. Srila Prabhupada waited for eleven years. The Hari-Bhakti-Vilasa recommends mutual study between *guru* and aspiring *sisya*. Jiva Goswami advises not to accept a *guru* out of customary convention. One should wait until he is 100% convinced, with full faith that the *guru* is a pure representative of God who can deliver all the transcendental necessities. If you don't have such faith, don't take initiation. Wait and watch. As advised in the purport to Nectar of Instruction verse 5, don't settle for less than the best. Don't follow the flock of sheep logic. By *sastric* knowledge one can have an idea of who is qualified, but a new devotee has little such knowledge, so he must wait and develop some knowledge and experience, not act out of blind faith or sentiment and anxiety to have a name and be like the rest of his peers. Great care and caution should be exercised. All the signs of a fully qualified *guru* should be observed scrutinizingly. Great precaution should be taken before accepting someone as *guru*. There are many sincere, dedicated preachers, but those qualities don't automatically qualify them as *saksad-hari*. If one takes premature vows, there is the risk of loss of faith and of committing offenses. It's reasonable to wait and be somewhat mature before pronouncing vows that many have proved unable to follow.

**About Pure Devotional Service:** *Anyabhilasita-sunyam*, service rendered without motive other than Krishna's satisfaction, *sarvopadhi vinirmuktam*, free from false designations, is pure service. The *guru* must be a pure devotee, that's in all *sastras*. The *adhikaras* (qualifications) are according to the degree of eligibility to practice devotional service. How strictly can one follow, how can one be fully pure if there are still material desires in the mind? It is said that pure service unmixed with *karma* or *jnana* truly begins in the full *nistha* stage. To attain the platform of pure devotional service one has to become spiritually pure and attain the platform of *brahma-bhuta*." (CC Madhya 24.111) and "One who is free from the bodily concept of life, he is an eligible candidate for pure devotional service." (Nectar of Devotion p32) and "Pure devotees are of two types. The personal associates, *parisads*, *factual devotees*, and the neophytes, *sadhakas*, *prospective devotees*. Perfect servitors of the Lord are considered His personal associates, whereas devotees endeavoring to reach perfection are called neophytes." (CC Adi 1.64) It is not that one who does a lot of service is automatically to be considered a pure devotee. Faith determines the *adhikara* to perform pure *bhakti*. Accordingly, one whose faith is stronger is considered more

eligible than one whose faith is *komala*, still tender.

Faith here doesn't mean belief. It is defined as the firm conviction that Krishna-*bhakti* will fulfill all duties, needs and desires. Due to this conviction being there but not absolute a *kanistha-adhikari* is advised not to become a *diksa-guru* lest he develops faith in Maya's subtle proposals of happiness through having followers. Firm faith, or *paramarthika sraddha*, can only come after *anarthas* are gone, which means on the *nistha* stage. Until *nistha*, one is a *kanistha*. Under the modes of nature one identifies with the body and wants to enjoy what actually belongs to Krishna. Unless one is liberated from the three *gunas* he is bound to be envious, even if slightly so. Therefore, one shouldn't become a *guru* unless one is liberated, otherwise one will manifest this envy in the form of unconsciously identifying with his position as spiritual guide and wanting to enjoy the position. Consequently he will be somewhat attached to *pratistha* and want to enjoy the fame belonging to Krishna or His bona fide representative. Attracted to name and fame, he will assume the others are as well (*atmavan many ate jagaf*) and thus compete and risk offending much more qualified Vaisnavas.

## **B. He should pray to Krishna to send him a self-realized guru.**

One's sincere crying out to Krishna to mercifully appear as a bona fide self-realized spiritual master is the only option. The Lord reveals himself to the serious student in the form of a teacher who can rescue him. In Science of Self Realization Srila Prabhupada answered to a Mr. O'Grady's question on this point: "*The problem is to find this [bona fide] spiritual master*" "*That is not the problem. The problem is whether you are sincere. You have problems, but God is within your heart.... If you are sincere, God sends you a spiritual master.*" So, one should study *guru-tattva*, become very sincere, and especially cry to the Lord, admitting one's blindness, one's full dependence on Krishna to inspire him from within the heart to recognize a real *guru*. If the aspiring disciple thinks that he can recognize the *guru*, then he may well be cheated. "*You have to select a guru not by seeing but by your ear, by hearing*". (Lecture 8.12.66) And you'll feel a spontaneous attraction in your heart, Krishna's inner confirmation.

One symptom of a bona fide spiritual master is that he can destroy all your doubts. One should learn what is a *guru* and simultaneously pray to Krishna to send His representative. He may start by testing your determination and not send you one right away. Then he may also test your depth of desire by sending you an ordinary kind of *guru*. If you accept the first one without discrimination he may leave things there. But if you cry: "*Oh, no, Krishna, I want a real one, not just a good fixed-up devotee. I want an ocean of mercy, a kalpa-vriksha, one like it says in the books!*", then Krishna will send you a *maha-bhagavata* who is totally qualified, free from envy and *pratistha* and who can deliver you the transcendental necessities. An uninitiated devotee should wait until his faith is 100%. The newcomers or those in need of re-initiation should not rush before accepting anyone as *sad-guru*, but build their faith. This is not a light thing that one can rush, thinking he has a yardstick to measure who is *guru*? "*The current of thoughts prevalent in this world cannot assail Sri Gurudeva, who is too heavy for them. He has been able to keep them at a distance of innumerable crores of miles. He is guru, or the heaviest object, because his position is not shifting.*" (Srila Sarasvati Thakura)

It is said that just as the spiritual master will have to suffer if he takes unsuitable persons as disciples, if a disciple takes an unqualified *guru* he will accordingly suffer. It is a source of great anxiety and misery to see one's spiritual guide fall down, so in order to avoid these misfortunes one should be very cautious. One should only accept as *guru* someone from whom one can obtain Krishna by the process of surrender. *"You have to find out such an exalted person where you can willingly surrender."* (Lecture 22.8.73) and *"You should check whether he is guru or not. That is allowed. Guru and sisya should meet for one year. The sisya will hear and study whether he is actually fit for becoming guru... (and vice-versa). Before, study the guru, whether you can surrender. Don't accept a guru all of a sudden like a fanatic. Acceptance of guru must be selected after careful examination... One has to select a guru whose order-carrying you'll not commit a mistake.... If you accept the wrong person as guru and if he guides you wrongly then your whole life is spoiled. So one should accept a guru whose guidance will make one's life perfect.... The disciple must be sure that the guru can deliver all the transcendental necessities."* (CC Madhya 24.330)

*"Before the student accepts a guru he should examine him for one year. Without examination, the teacher-student relationship is only a disturbance.... The seriously inquisitive student must approach a guru who has attained shelter and faith in the Vedas and God, and surrender to him: tasmad gurum prapadyeta."* (PancaSamskara, Bhaktivinoda Thakura) One should not take *diksa* unless he has complete faith that his *guru* is able to take him to Krishna, that he has the qualifications required of a *sad-guru*. Until that faith is there, he should take *siksa*, study Prabhupada's books and *guru-tattva*, and not sentimentally think that whatever he reads about the *guru* automatically applies to his *guru* or just any *guru*. At the same time, as mentioned above, one should be fully dependent upon Krishna to inspire him, not thinking that by one's own power one will recognize Sri Guru.

### C. He should qualify himself as a true disciple.

So much is being spoken about the *guru*'s qualifications, but what about the disciple's? One must make sure he obtains the best type of *guru* available, but he must also worry if he is himself a qualified disciple. Once one has found a proper recipient for one's faith and surrender, one should fully surrender, not artificially, conditionally or partially. The Gita says *pranipat*, very humbly approach a *guru*. One's approach should be wholesome. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati had coined a phrase: *"Don't come to the guru with a return ticket to material life in your pocket."* When the disciple fully surrenders at the time of *diksa* to an authorized master, he gets that *sadhu*'s mercy, and Krishna accepts him as his servant. By the mercy of a true Vaisnava one gets all perfection. But one has to avail oneself of that mercy, open oneself to it, not put out an umbrella of attachments. The Vaisnavas are *patita-pavana*, the saviors of the fallen, not *kapatya-pavana*, the saviors of the insincere. Love of God will manifest if you perform *sadhana*, cultivation, if you allow the *guru* to cultivate your heart and make it a fertile ground. The empowered Vaisnava *guru* sends you a rope from above to pull you out of Maya's web, the prison-house of Durga. You have to hold that rope very tightly, not slackening, then you'll get mercy. Don't follow the path of independence. Independent people don't want to surrender, they want to give directions to the *guru*; what they say, they want the *guru* to say yes. They cannot catch the rope and be delivered. They want a

service that will please them, not *guru* and Gauranga. They discriminate about service: “*This service is not good for me. I don’t want that service.*” One should be crying for service. Service is granted, not taken. If you take, it is not service, it is *manodharma*.

One should beg to receive service from the *guru* that will please Krishna. Service is for the master’s pleasure, not the servant’s. Of course, if the master is pleased, the servant will be pleased. One must not lack the faith that one’s best interest is represented in his master. The servant who wants only his own happiness is not crying for service. He qualifies himself for being cheated. It is not enough to have a real *guru*. One must be a real disciple: *Sad-guru, sad-sisya*. One should be ready to undergo all tribulations, to pass the tests, to prove that he is cured of the disease of selfish enjoyment, then Krishna will hear his prayers and that disciple will receive mercy.

So, *guru anugati bhajan*. One cannot render service whimsically. It has to be done under the *guru*’s direction. One should develop a bond of strong affection for the spiritual master. Krishna says that he is most pleased with one who is always engaged in trying to serve his *guru* with affection and love. A real disciple thinks that Krishna has mercifully placed him in the hands of His dear servant, who knows what is best for him, who cares even more than himself about his real welfare. He sees everything as paraphernalia for the service of *guru* and Krishna: “*Everything is my guru’s, Krishna’s. It is meant for their service, not mine, I should not develop lust and greed for it.*” He should think that he has no better friend in this world than his *guru*. “*I am his servant, He is my master. He is my dearest friend, parent, relative. He is my father, he is my mother. He is Krishna’s dear friend, he must be served life after life.*” Such a disciple can understand all *tattvas*, he gets all suspiciousness, all mercy, by gradual installments up to final promotion to the highest perfection of love of God. The lotus feet of a real *sadhu-guru*, a true representative of Krishna should be served in this way. The dust of such a *guru*’s feet is so powerful that it goes up to the spiritual world. Therefore we pray that we may become a speck of dust at the lotus feet of a pure Vaisnava. You cannot be admitted in the school of *Hari-bhajan*, devotional service to Krishna, if you don’t develop the qualities of the *tmad api sunicena* verse. Mahaprabhu has given this formula. You will not translate *diksa* into a life of *bhajan* without these qualities.

## Sri Guru-Tattva Part II

In the Introduction to the first chapter of the Caitanya Caritamrita, Srila Prabhupada writes:

“*The spiritual master appears in two plenary parts, called the diksa-guru and the siksa-guru. They are identical because both of them are phenomenal manifestations of the Absolute Truth.... Anyone who gives instructions based on the sastras is*

*accepted as a guru. Although others give help in showing the way to beginners, the guru who first initiates one with the maha-mantra is to be known as the diksa-guru, and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Krishna consciousness are called siksa-gurus.” (CC Adi 1.34)*

And in the opening verses of his Kalyana Kalpataru, Srila Thakura Bhaktivinoda writes:

*“The diksa-guru shows his causeless mercy by giving his disciples instructions in chanting Harinama. By spiritual instructions he points the disciples in the direction of the truths pertaining to Krishna. But I consider the numerous siksa gurus to be more important, for they bestow mercy unlimitedly by training the neophytes in all the essential aspects of practical sadhana bhakti.”*

*Sadhana-bhakti* runs from *sraddha* through *asakti*.

Srila Jiva Goswami defines the *siksa-guru* in *Bhakti-sandharba*:

*“After hearing about the Lord one may desire to serve Him. He who teaches how to render that service, bhajan, is the siksa-guru.”*

Prabhupada mentions that the *siksa-guru* often becomes the *diksa-guru*. He also explains that there is no limit to the number of *siksa-gurus* one can accept. Since all devotees, including *gurus* are disciples, *siksa-guru-tattva* is most relevant for all. Our great *Acaryas* all approached *siksa-gurus*. *“Even when one’s dormant love for Krishna awakens, association with advanced devotees is still most essential.” (CC Madhya 22.83)* Association with advanced devotees mean to take *siksa* from them.

## Srila Prabhupada on the siksa-guru.

During his embodied presence, Srila Prabhupada made it clear to his disciples that he was both their *diksa-guru* and their *siksa-guru*. Although “*siksa-guru*” is a term we usually use to designate anyone giving some spiritual instruction, just like we use the term “*vartma-pradarshaka guru*” to designate anyone who first convinces someone about Krishna consciousness, that is not the traditional meaning. This can be seen from the following quotes: *“The diksa- and siksa-gurus are equal and identical manifestations of Krishna although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back to Godhead. Therefore, Krishnadasa Kaviraja Goswami accepted Lord Nityananda and the six Goswamis in the category of guru.” (CC Adi 1.34)* and, *“My siksa-gurus are the six Goswamis.” (CC Adi 1.37)* and, *“One should know the siksa-guru as the Personality of Krishna.... Lord Krishna manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee... The siksa-guru is a bona fide representative of Krishna. Sri Krishna Himself teaches us as the siksa-guru from within and without. There’s no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the diksa- and siksa-gurus. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.... Govindaji acts exactly like the siksa-guru by teaching Arjuna the Bhagavad Gita. He is the original preceptor because He gives us instructions and the opportunity to serve Him.... The siksa-guru is a personal representative of Govindadeva vigraha.” (CC Adi 1.47).* Not cheap, indeed.



Srila Prabhupada didn't speak very elaborately on the topic of the *siksa-guru*. From this we shouldn't jump to the conclusion that therefore he didn't consider acceptance of a *siksa-guru* very important. The few quotes that are there in his books are unequivocal and clear on this point. Perhaps he didn't speak about it more often because he didn't want to encourage his neophyte disciples to seek a *siksa-guru* from amongst the Gaudiya Math while he was physically present among us, or from *babajis*. Since he had written that there is no difference between *diksa-* and *siksa-gurus*, he perhaps also didn't want to give an opportunity to his senior disciples to make offenses by starting to equate their position with his just because they were teaching younger god brothers. They could have started to consider themselves *siksa-gurus* and not necessarily understand the subtleties of what he had written in the Caitanya Caritamrita. Later in this section I'll present my understanding that the statement that there's no difference between *diksa-* and *siksa-gurus* specifically means there's no difference on the absolute platform of both the *diksa-* and the *siksa-gurus* being liberated souls, as there is no *sastric* reference of a non-liberated *diksa-guru*, and not just that anyone who teaches spiritual knowledge is respected as *guru*. I will also develop the point that, as Prabhupada said, "*There are two kinds of siksa-gurus. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.*" (CC Adi 1.47)

## “Everyone needs a siksa-guru”

Prabhupada speaks about “saints” and also mentions the six Goswamis. This means that there are *siksa-gurus* who are physically embodied and therefore visible (they may or may not be eternally liberated souls), and there are *siksa-gurus* who are eternally liberated souls no longer physically embodied and visible, such as the six Goswamis and the other great *acaryas* whose teachings guide our devotional life. A grand-disciple of Prabhupada whose master fell down can take shelter of Prabhupada as this second kind of *siksa-guru* and pray to him as well as to Krishna to kindly help him by sending him a fully genuinely qualified *guru*. He'll first accept this great soul as a *siksa-guru* of the first kind (as any new *bhakta* usually does whether the *guru* is qualified or not), then take *diksa* when his faith is properly established. And a disciple of a not very advanced *guru* can do the same. Even if someone has accepted a *madhyam guru*, he still needs a connection with a living *uttama-adhikari*. The topic of *siksa-guru* is mentioned in the very first chapter of the Caitanya Caritamrta. "*In one sense, a siksa guru is any devotee who gives us good instructions. In some cases, however, the relationship with an advanced devotee who gives one instruction may be so profound that it practically equals in depth one's relationship with one's diksa guru.*" (ISKCON Journal)

The idea that one is maybe not getting from his “officially approved” *guru* everything one should get should be considered, as well as the obvious fact that there are *gurus* on very different levels. The devotees will start to scrutinizingly study the qualifications of a *sad-guru* and understand that ISKCON *diksa-gurus* are really nothing more than good preachers, not qualified *diksa-gurus*, and that one needs to look elsewhere.

# Srila Prabhupada, the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON

The fact that ISKCON *diksa-gurus* are not up to the standard of self-realization and its unfortunate consequences in the form of a rate of 50% of fall downs in their ranks has not only produced as an extreme reaction to an extreme situation the *ritvik-vada* of the VVR then of the IRM, but also “covert-ritvik-vada”.

Covert *ritvik-vada* includes the idea that since Srila Prabhupada is the Founder-Acarya of ISKCON, every member should focus on developing his relationship with Prabhupada, and that whatever a *diksa-guru* cannot give to his disciples will come magically from Prabhupada. But consider the following: Srila Bhaktisiddhanta is the Founder-Acarya of the Gaudiya-Math. Did Prabhupada ever say that his god brothers failed to connect their own disciples to the Founder-Acarya? Isn't the Society called ISKCON and not Gaudiya Math simply because of the narrow vision (at least at one time) of some of Prabhupada's godbrothers? Does the fact that Prabhupada registered ISKCON as a separate society and not as a branch of the Gaudiya Math make it a new *sampradaya*? Srila Prabhupada has never said anywhere that the *guru's* duty is to connect his disciples to his own *guru*. The main objective of a disciple of a genuinely qualified *guru* is to develop devotion to his *guru* and through him to Krishna. That everything goes through the *parampara* is a technicality. It's not the disciple's meditation. One should learn to identify *ritvik-vada* wherever it appears, even in well-meaning devotional sentiment towards Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada is automatically the *siksa-guru* of his grand-disciples and of everyone who accepts and follows his teachings. He is the *Maha Siksa Guru*, but it has to be clearly understood that it is only when one has reached a very, very elevated stage of spiritual development that one who is not his disciple by initiation can, if that is his particular case, have a direct *guru-sisya* relationship with Srila Prabhupada. Of course, in the natural course of spiritual development every ISKCON member will come to the stage of developing great attachment on the transcendental platform towards this most magnanimous personality who flooded the world with Krishna consciousness, just as it is said that at one stage one develops a loving relationship with the six Goswamis. It is not that one didn't have any relationship at all with them before that stage. We are Rupanugas and the other Goswamis are all our revered masters. But Srila Prabhupada said that “*the six Goswamis are represented by one's spiritual master.*” This means that until one reaches a sufficiently elevated stage one doesn't have direct access to these great souls. The same thing applies to Srila Prabhupada. It doesn't preclude, of course, that one can pray to him and take shelter of his instructions.

But doesn't Narottama das Thakura sing about Rupa Goswami? It can be understood that Narottama das doesn't approach Rupa Goswami as an ordinary *siksa-guru*. He addresses him as Sri Rupa Manjari. That means he approaches him as the Rasa-Acarya allowing one to enter the *manjari-bhava* of *madhurya-rasa*. One should also consider the most exalted level of Narottama das Thakura.

What about Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura? Doesn't he appear in our *guru-parampara* as a disciple of Narottama dasa Thakura, although he lived almost a century after him? He actually never claimed to be the disciple of Narottama, but sometimes only the names of the prominent *acaryas* have been mentioned in the *parampara*. Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura was a disciple of Sri Radharaman Cakravarti. Srila Bhaktisidhanta Sarasvati writes that Narottama das Thakura's lotus feet were desired by Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura.

## Prabhupada's disciples need a living siksa guru?

Srila Prabhupada, although he is already de facto the "*Maha Siksa Guru*" of everyone in ISKCON through his teachings, and he is already one kind of *siksa-guru* for his disciples, is not the only *siksa-guru* needed by all the members of ISKCON, including his disciples, who have not yet achieved perfection. Even when one has reached perfection he still receives guidance or *siksa* from a superior. The Guru Ashraya paper presented by the GBC, although mainly dealing with the topic of re-initiation, contains very valuable points on the necessity of a *siksa-guru*.

For instance: "*The devotee no longer has the opportunity to inquire from the spiritual master or to receive from him guidance, correction and confirmation in his spiritual life.*" It speaks there of one whose "*guru*" fell down, but if you think about it, this point could also be applied to Prabhupada's disciples who can still of course receive guidance, but not as easily correction and confirmation directly from His Divine Grace. Accordingly, we find the following in the Guru-Ashraya Isthagosthi published in ISKCON Journal #2: HH Jayadvaita Maharaja says, "*It's very painful to see in many places in our society so many people who are like ghosts, who have no faith in anyone except themselves.*" One devotee comments on this statement by saying: "*I don't see that this is a problem only among those initiated by fallen gurus.*" Jayadvaita Maharaja, agreeing, answers, "*Yes, this is the problem every one of us has to deal with, and the way we're trained to overcome this problem is to serve the servant of the servant.*" Then another *prabhu* quite accurately remarks: "*The instruction of guru-ashraya is needed not only by these devotees [who lost their master] but by disciples of Prabhupada who may say they have Prabhupada but don't have Prabhupada.... Everyone has to look for this shelter, otherwise people develop the attitude that 'I don't need it.'*" This again is approved by HH Jayadvaita Swami, "*That's really the essence of the whole thing.*" Then HH Trivikrama Maharaja says in the same Isthagosthi, "*Srila Prabhupada said that just reading the Bhagavatam is not enough, even with his purports, because who will explain what Srila Prabhupada means? I may say what he said in the purport and you may say 'No, no, Srila Prabhupada meant this.'*" And in his paper "Books are the basis but they are not the guru", Maharaja quotes the writer William Blake: "*Both you and I read the Bible day and night, but you read black and I read white.*" The need for further guidance is confirmed by the Caitanya Caritamrta Antya 7.53, that Maharaja also quotes in his paper "*If one wants to learn the meaning of Srimad Bhagavatam, one must take lessons from a realized soul. One shouldn't proudly think that one can understand transcendental loving service simply by reading books. One must become the servant of a Vaisnava.*"

It doesn't mean just to serve directly Prabhupada, as we all know the mood of our line is *dasanudasa*, to be the servant of the servant of the servant of Krishna. *"If we become arrogant after having adopted the path of devotion, if we worship only God and disregard the worship of His devotees, we could be put in many difficulties for our offense at the feet of His servants.... It is necessary to fully establish oneself in the state of guileless humility. If this is not done, one's prayer doesn't reach Krishna. If we cherish any plan of gaining the goal by means of any ability or merit of our own, then we're no longer in the condition to call upon God."* (Srila Sarasvati Thakura).

When one's *guru* leaves, preferably one will inquire from an advanced Vaisnava *siksa-guru* what Krishna specifically wants from him. Even if one has received precise direct instructions from his *guru*, he can certainly benefit from further guidance. We have to be careful of pride and realize that we are working on our master's capital, his extended grant, and we have nothing we can call ours (*Tomara karuna-sara*). And the Eleventh Canto of the Bhagavatam confirms, *"na hy ekasmad guror jnanam su-sthiram yat: Certainly not from one single master can one get complete knowledge."* It is not that one master cannot give everything, but that one has to receive it from different perspective viewpoints.

One should be humble enough to admit that he needs to approach a *tattva-vit sadhu* who will reveal to him something that his own reading of all *sastras* won't give him. Such association is glorified through all *sastras: mahatpada rajobhisekam*. *"To learn the transcendental science it is imperative that one always seek the company of saints and sages who are able to impart lessons of transcendental knowledge. The potent words of such realized souls penetrate the heart."*(CC Adi 1.59)

Our whole Vaisnava tradition rests on this principle: *Suddha-bhakta carana renu bhajana anukula*. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said: *"It is necessary to have the constant help of a spiritual teacher to show us the way. It is necessary to be constantly advised regarding the method of seeking the protection of the lotus feet of Sri Gurudeva... If the spiritual teacher doesn't constantly teach us all these matters, we're bound to lose in no time even the treasure that we may have received."* That clearly refers to a *siksa-guru*.

To understand *divya-jnana*, one must approach a *tattva-darshi*: One should hear Krishna-katha from the right source, from a self-realized lover of Krishna. Beg for mercy, admit you are blind and fully dependent on Krishna's and the Vaisnavas' mercy and you'll be able to understand *tattva* from a real *sadhu*. Krishna will come down as *sabda-brahman* through his words in your ear and down to your heart. *"If one becomes a sincere devotee and seriously engage in devotional service Krishna sends a siksa-guru to show him favor."*(CC Adi 1.58)

Only such a *sadhu* can make Krishna appear, as Krishna has no other business than to fulfill his devotee's desires. Then *tattva-jnana* will be revealed. *Tattva-jnana* doesn't mean general knowledge of our Vaisnava philosophy. It is a question of revelation. Who can claim that by mere reading of books one can understand? Reading doesn't preclude the need for a *siksa-guru* who will help one to nurture one's creeper of devotion up to complete blossoming and production of the coveted fruit of love of God. One can only benefit from that connection. And even if one is in illusion and

thinks he is a *sadhu* himself, which a real *sadhu* never does, still, “*it’s the nature of a sadhu to inquire.*” (CC Madhya 20.105)

Srila Prabhupada’s *vani*, instructions, are available through his books, tapes, etc. This however is in a passive sense. One can pray to Srila Prabhupada and may receive some answer from his books or from the Supersoul. There is indeed a great correlation between the *guru* and the Supersoul. Consider however that it can be called highly subjective. One may misunderstand, so a confirmation is welcome. Therefore, “*Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee.*” (CC Adi 1.58) The “passive” *siksa-guru*, the book, may help to remind you of the reality of Prabhupada’s teachings, but if you misunderstand, or read only on the surface (*apara-vicara*), the book will not become alive and come out to speak to you to remove your misconception or reveal its inner meaning (*tattva-vicara*).

Kaviraja Goswami writes in the explanation of the *atmarama* verse that there are *bhinna artha*, different meanings, “*There are gross meanings and subtle meanings, sthule and suksme.*” (CC Madhya 24.284). Also, “*Srimad Bhagavatam is as good as Krishna. In each and every verse and syllable there are various meanings.*” (CC Madhya 24.318) Therefore, in all Prabhupada’s books one finds the advice to associate with a living saint. A living *siksa-guru* will point out and explain your misunderstandings. *Sadhu* and *sastra* are necessary, but living *sadhu*, (the embodied scripture), is the principal. Of course, without the embodied scripture, the *bhagavata-bhakta*, the “passive” scripture, the *bhagavata-sastra*, is there to give you help. But of the two, more importance has been ascribed to the *sadhu*. Prabhupada writes, “*In this age, hearing is more important than thinking, because one’s thinking may be disturbed by mental agitation, but if one concentrates on hearing, he’ll be forced to associate with the sound vibration of Krishna.*” (SB 3.35.24)

Srila Prabhupada taught and groomed his disciples as much as he could and left it to their sincerity to approach another embodied form of Sri Guru, in addition to his loving care and blessings and availability through prayer, to be able to dive deeper into his teachings and thereby keep on progressing on the path towards the ultimate goal. He asked his friend and *siksa*-disciple Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja to help them, us. His books are there, and one can always pray to him, but, as the example of the fire given before, “*Don’t make it cheap. It has got a science. ‘Because I’m getting a little heat, it’s sufficient’. That is sahajiya.*”

*Sahajiya* doesn’t mean automatically a pretender faking ecstasy. *Sahaja* means “easy”. It refers to the tendency to complacently think one has it made, has no need to cultivate *laulyam*, hankering for more. One should not develop the mentality that he is saved because he is Prabhupada’s disciple or he is in ISKCON, or he’s doing so much service, so much preaching. Prabhupada said that one should always teach but also always learn, in a parallel process. So, more will be supplied to one who is crying for it, realizing he needs all the help he can grab for, and one way help comes is by the agency of a *siksa-guru*. And if one can approach a liberated *siksa-guru*, that’s all the best of course. “*A third-class devotee, therefore, has to receive the instructions of devotional service from the authoritative sources of Bhagavata. The number one Bhagavata is the established personality of devotee, and the other Bhagavatam is the message of Godhead. The third-*

*class devotee has therefore, to go to the personality of devotee in order to learn the instructions of devotional service.” (SB 1.2.12)*

A little above, I have quoted Srila Prabhupada saying in a purport to the CC, Adi-lila, that “*one should know the siksa-guru as the personality of Krishna*”. This obviously refers to a liberated pure devotee.

Illusions cultivated and reinforced by the passing of time are hard to give up. Habit is a second nature. So this idea of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples needing to take shelter of a *siksa-guru* may make one feel uneasy and may be very difficult for many to accept, especially if they had a lot of direct association with His Divine Grace. The reasons for this are manifold: First, often when we think of *siksa-guru* we think of it in the casual meaning of the term. We may thoughtlessly assume it is needed for Srila Prabhupada’s grand-disciples who lost their “*guru*” before they find another one, or perhaps for disciples of less-advanced *gurus*, or exceptionally for Prabhupada’s disciples who had little or no contact with His Divine Grace. Second, we usually think that it means accepting Srila Prabhupada himself as *siksa-guru*. Third, let’s face it, *siksa-guru tattva* is not a well known nor well-researched topic. Here I am sharing the research I have made as well as my understanding and realizations based on the fact that I happen to have had the good fortune to have accepted saints as *siksa-gurus* for the last 24 years, and thus have had some direct experience.

## I can’t get it all from Prabhupada? Prabhupada didn’t give everything?

Yes. Srila Prabhupada gave everything, but did we receive it all? It takes time to assimilate:

*“We can’t understand the mysteries of the Lord by our mundane endeavors. They are only revealed by His grace to the proper devotees. These mysteries are gradually disclosed to the various grades of devotees in proportion to the gradual development of their service attitude.” (CC Adi 1.52)*

### Humility is essential:

*“Nistha, steady progression in devotional service, can be attained only in the association of pure devotees.” (Nectar of Devotion p141) “Asakti can be invoked by association of pure devotees.” (Nectar of Devotion p141) and, “Bhava is achieved by association of pure devotees.” (Nectar of Devotion p132)*

One should always consider and understand that he is in need of help. If someone thinks he doesn’t need help from a superior living Vaisnava, he is going against the very spirit of Vaisnavism. It shows that he may know the general philosophy of *atma-jnana*, but he has not really entered the realm of Vaisnavism per se. No matter how much an intellectual genius one may be, no matter how much an expert manager or leader of men, the essential truths or *tattvas* of Vaisnavism can only be learned and realized by humbly approaching a Vaisnava *sadhu* for guidance and deeper training. If one has

missed this point his activities lack in depth and potency, just like when one fires blank cartridges.

So, one should think about it and ask himself: “*Who do you accept as a spiritual authority in your life that you can turn to for spiritual instruction or at least confirmation of your understanding?*” That’s what *siksa-guru* is all about. One may say that he is going to his god brothers, but one has to consider the level of whom he approaches. One may also say that he is getting or will get instruction directly from Prabhupada or the Supersoul within his heart, but the *acaryas* have said that only after one reaches the platform of full *nistha* can one take direction from the *caitya-guru*, and even on that platform one still needs to get confirmation from a realized soul. There are so many examples of most exalted Vaisnava *acaryas* who repeatedly sought confirmation from other such great personalities. They were never so proud that they relied only on their own spiritual abilities. Even Bhakti-sakti-avesa Avatar Srila Prabhupada referred to his *siksa-gurus*. This is acknowledged by all the *Acaryas*. In Caitanya Caritamrta, Antya 5.135, one reads the injunction, “Yaha bhagavata-pada vaisnavera sthane: *Approach a pure Vaisnava and learn the Bhagavata-tattva from him.*” Srila Prabhupada repeatedly stresses the constant need for association with a pure living *sadhu*. One therefore must at all costs find a valid and holy Vaisnava, confirm with him one’s understanding, and learn from him.

## I have to go and find another sadhu?

Yes, but please, why are you seeing a duality? Krishna says, “Acarya mam vijaniyam: *I am the Gurudeva.*” Sri Guru appears in different forms. He is not limited to Prabhupada’s body or to any *guru*’s body. Wherever you find real *siksa*, which is truly the essence, there you find the *guru*. *Parampara* doesn’t mean bodies but teachings, *siksa*, so *sadhu-sanga* is needed. We should always aspire for such connection. We should always hanker for more. It is said that greed should be rechanneled toward *sadhu-sanga*. That sort of greed should be cultivated, not renounced. Srila Prabhupada can teach you through a *sadhu*. The *siksa-guru* doesn’t replace Prabhupada. He helps to go deeper into his teachings, and into one’s relationship with him. It is said that Guru is one. What does that mean? By taking a *siksa-guru* one realizes the unity of the guru principle, Sri Guru.

## Who? Which sadhu?

First one has to realize the need, then become knowledgeable, and then apply the formula oneself. But the most important is to pray. Pray to Prabhupada, and cry for the Lord to mercifully appear as one who is capable of dissipating all doubts, fears and sins and teach the path of real *Saranagati*, by which pure love can be developed.

Without Nitai’s mercy one cannot give up material enjoyment, gross or subtle. So we need his mercy, a strong kick of Nitai through the pure *sadhu*, his authorized representative. Without that merciful kick one is not really receiving mercy. He’ll only get the kicks of Maha-Mava. Only the association of a pure *sadhu* can give *prema*. We require this at every moment. We should search in our heart for that desire and nourish it. Find a person *bhagavata*, cry to find one. A *kanistha* or *madhyam guru* shouldn’t be

satisfied with his position but should aspire for the association of higher saints to progress and to be protected. Such *sadhus* are rare indeed, but always available to one who so desires. It is not a question of my saying “this *sadhu*” or “that *sadhu*”. That is a matter of personal realization. One must speak of the philosophy of *guru-tattva*. The meeting between *guru* and disciple takes place according to subtle laws. You can bring a horse to water but you can’t make him drink. One can enthusiastically glorify a particular spiritual master in whom one sees all the exalted qualities described in the *sastras*, but that doesn’t mean that one automatically thinks or should think that everyone should surrender to that *sadhu*. Fortunately, Krishna takes care that it doesn’t happen that way: “*The Supreme Personality of Godhead can be seen or unseen according to his own transcendental desire. Similarly, a devotee, being jivan-mukta, can be seen or not, as he chooses.*” (SB 9.13.11) And Srila Gaura Kishora das Babaji said, “*Vaisnavas sometimes appear to exhibit mundane characteristics. When an exalted Vaisnava attracts people by his love and devotion and teaches them devotion to Krishna, the Lord considers: ‘It will be difficult for me to repay the debt to those who have surrendered to such Vaisnavas who are as dear to me as my life. I will become the servant of those who are too much affectionate to my pure devotees, and thus easily come under their control.’ With this fear, Krishna occasionally conceals the spiritual qualities of great souls from the public eye. The characteristics of genuine Vaisnavas are concealed from those who have interests contrary to pure devotional service. Thus they appear to the materialistic to have materialistic characters. In this mood, Krishna examines the living entity to see how much he is actually attracted to the Absolute Truth, and if he is He reveals the spiritual characteristics of the great souls. Hence, without the exercise of the independent will of a Vaisnava no one can know him, even after having seen in him all of the characteristics described by the scriptures.*”

This is a very deep topic. It was just touched earlier when it was mentioned that a new devotee shouldn’t think that he can recognize Sri Guru. In the temple we come to present ourselves before the Deities. We are praying to be bathed in their merciful glance. We are begging them to reveal Themselves. *Nayana patha gami bhava tume.*

Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja explained that just as Krishna is Adhoksaja, beyond the range of sense perception, similarly Sri Guru. One cannot see the *guru*. If one tries to see him with his defective senses then he’ll be cheated. When one thinks that he is the seer, then he commits a mistake. One is not the seer, he is the seen, just the opposite thing. The *sadhu-guru* is the seer. Everyone is boasting of his eyes, but what has he seen? When one thinks that he is the seer and that he will see, it means he wants to measure the *guru* through his defective senses. So how can he be his *guru*? With lips only one says he is seeing him as *guru*, but he hasn’t seen him really, and not accepted him really as *guru*.

In a train, for instance, we see the trees running very fast backwards, and we are attached to our vision. “*Seeing is believing.*” Trees are standing still, but we see them running backwards, aren’t we? But we’re not prepared to admit that we have defective vision, that we are blind. When one tries to see *guru* with these eyes, one will be cheated. Sri Guru is the seer, not us. We are to be seen, but we do the opposite. This is the conditioned nature. That defect lies with us, therefore by lips only we accept him as *guru*, but we haven’t really accepted him, and we have never seen him, and we cannot see the *guru* with this type of vision. How can we see the *guru*? If the *guru* will cast his



merciful glance on me, then I will be seen, I will get his mercy. That is his merciful casting of glance on me, mercifully seeing me, then I'll get some mercy, I'll develop that vision, then I'll be able one day to see his real form, otherwise not.

One can see the *guru* by the vision mercifully given by the *guru*, otherwise one only sees his external form and considers him a mortal being. Thereby he commits *guru-aparadha*, the third *namaparadha*, and Nama is not coming out from his mouth, only alphabet letters, because he wants to measure the *guru*, to see him through his defective senses. He thinks that he is serving his *guru*, he is offering worship to his *guru*, and he is chanting, but this is only his stage-acting.

It is said that *guru* has these two things, *vancana* and *kripa*, cheating and mercy. One who has *kapatya*, duplicity, outwardly poses as a great servitor of his *guru*, but he is pretending, he's serving himself, forwarding his own interest in the name of *guru-seva*, not serving the *guru*. Duplicity is gradually removed by hearing, by striving to hear with a simple heart. Our heart is like a stone. It needs the incessant rain of the mercy of a Vaisnava *sadhu*. One must consciously try to uproot that duplicity from the heart, otherwise one cannot hear, it doesn't go down to the heart, only stays on the intellectual or mental platform. So, one's service is not *bhakti*, it is *bhakti-unmukhi-sukriti*. So it may take many lives. Maharaja Bharata took three lives, and Prabhupada mentions that part of the reason why is that he didn't accept a *siksa-guru*. "*Despite a very rigid life of devotional service, Bharata Maharaja didn't consult a spiritual master. He became overly attached to the deer: Consequently he fell down.*" (SB 5.12.14)

### Lack of chastity?

The argument often given is that one is unchaste to one's *diksa-guru* if one accepts another *siksa-guru*. But where is this stated in *sastra*? It is said that one can only have one *diksa-guru*, but unlimited *siksa-gurus*. We are warned not to see the *guru* in mortal relativity (*na mrityu buddha, gurusu nara matir*). Again, one should deeply ponder on *guru-tattva*. What is *guru*? The flesh and bone? So, if one deepens his understanding and appreciation of what Sri Guru is, of what his Gurudeva gave him, won't the Gurudeva be satisfied? Where is the harm? Are you betraying your *guru* by approaching Sri Guru in another form?

### How to approach a *siksa-guru*?

According to the level of advancement of the *siksa-guru*, one will give faith, and surrender. Great respect no matter what his level is, but greater respect of course if he is a very exalted Vaisnava. If one's *diksa-guru* is not very advanced, among different devotees from whom one may take *siksa*, one of them may become very prominent and be seen on a par level with the *diksa-guru*. He may even take a much more important place and be treated as the main *guru*, or *mahanta guru*. In that case, the *niti*, the proper behavior in dealing with the *siksa-guru*, is the same as with the *diksa-guru*. If such *mahanta siksa-guru* is a liberated soul, one doesn't discriminate. Forms of address such as Gurudeva or Guru Maharaja are standard. This may be surprising for one who doesn't have such experience, but as one realizes as mentioned earlier the unity of Sri Guru, that becomes understood and appreciated.

When one's *guru* departs from this world, if one is not yet a *paramahansa* ready to initiate disciples or to give *siksa* to less advanced god brothers, he should pray to his

*guru* and to Krishna to send him help in the form of a *siksa-guru*. One should lament that he has not been able to assimilate all his *guru*'s teachings, that he has not been able to serve him properly and thus pray. One should never proudly think that he has understood everything. Sri Guru will appear in the form of a *sadhu* who will dissipate all doubts and teach one how to go deeper into the teachings. Krishna and Srila Prabhupada will send a *sadhu* to one who humbly cries for help. And one will be able to perceive that beyond the apparent duality it is one's *guru* who speaks in this way, having sent a bona fide *sadhu* to represent him.

One should not just approach a *sadhu* for *jnana*, specific knowledge, but approach him in the prescribed way: *pranipat*, *pariprasna*, and *seva*, and accept his discipline if one wants at all to progress further. The search for knowledge means that one, albeit unconsciously, thinks that Krishna is not unlimited and can be captured through finding out everything about Him. One should approach the *siksa-guru* in search of Krishna, not for knowledge of Krishna.

When Arjuna became despondent he was eager to receive enlightenment. He begged at Krishna's feet to stop the friendly talking and to accept him as *sisya*. Then Krishna started his upadesha. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati wrote: "*The real sadhu makes us speak out what we keep concealed in our hearts. He then applies the knife. The sensuous desires of men are like goats. The sadhu stands with the sacrificial knife in the form of unpleasant language.... The only duty of the sadhus is to cut away all the accumulated wicked propensities of every individual. This alone is the causeless natural desire of all the sadhus.*"

The problem is that many may have installed themselves in some kind of Krishna consciousness with greater or lesser degrees of accommodation with *maya*, grossly or subtly, a fact one may not easily admit, and find very unpalatable the idea of undergoing further training. That is why Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has insisted, *sada-sisya-taki*, *takiya sarvada*, and *guru anugati bhajan*: *One should always consider himself a student, and service should always be under a guru's guidance (whether diksa or siksa-guru)*. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati called himself a monitor, the leader of the students. One should always consider himself a disciple in discipleship under a senior Vaisnava. Srila Gaura Kishora das Babaji has explained the need for discipleship as follows:

*"Those sadhus who speak sharp words to drive away the witch of illusory energy are actually the only real devotees of Krishna and friends of the living entities.... If you want to perform devotional service properly, then you must accept the harsh language of the sadhu as the medicine by which Maya can be given up. By this one can obtain the necessary spiritual advancement to successfully chant the Holy Name."*

If, in spite of lip service to *trinad api sunicena* and *na dhanam na janam*, one is too proud and thinks that one doesn't need any help, that one had so much personal association and training with the Gurudeva, and that one is an advanced devotee, one may advance in *jnana* and expertise, but one's spiritual progress is checked. One stagnates. One can maintain a certain level due to *sadhana* and preaching activities and gain some recognition, but without the association of an *uttama-adhikari* Vaisnava, one cannot make much further progress. "*The second class devotee can gradually become a first class*

devotee by studying the sastras and by associating with a first class devotee. However, if the second class devotee doesn't advance himself by association with a first class devotee, he makes no progress." (CC Madhya 22.71) and, "A neophyte and intermediate devotee should always be eager to hear the mahabhagavata and serve him in all respects." (CC Madhya 16.74) This is confirmed in a purport of the Eleventh Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam: "A mahabhagavata, being empowered by the Lord, is endowed with the supernatural power to inspire and give success to the madhyam-adhikari who follows in his footsteps and to elevate kanisthas gradually to the intermediate platform. Such devotional power springs automatically from the ocean of mercy found within the heart of such a mahabhagavata." Srila Prabhupada also said, "those who are eka-guru-vadis will have difficulty making advancement in Krishna consciousness."

The need for further training even of *madhyam adhikaris* is expressed by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati: "It is the duty of the madhyam adhikari to extend himself as right hand of the uttama-adhikari." (Commentary on Srimad Bhagavatam 11.2) But, typically, the *kanisthas* are reluctant. "A neophyte devotee has very little taste for hearing from the authorities... but a sincere devotee must be prepared to hear." (SB 1.2.12). So, one can diagnose reluctance to approach someone for *siksa* as a mark of the *kanistha-adhikara*. Since the functional platform of preaching in our Society is the *madhyam-adhikara* platform, as Ravindra Svarupa Prabhupada wrote many years ago in his paper Ending the Fratricidal War: "We have maybe too conveniently concluded on these grounds that we are madhyam adhikaris and have complacently taken for granted that we have attained without much effort an advanced state of Krishna Consciousness."

The faulty reasoning is that a *madhyam-adhikari* preaches, so a preacher is a *madhyam-adhikari*. All *sastras* enjoin us to associate with *sadhus* (*sadhu-sanga*, *sadhu-sanga*, *sarva-sastre kaya*). Most devotees, maybe because there are so few genuinely qualified *sadhus* around, usually assume this to mean association with devotees. But when the *sastras* speak about "devotee", it always means pure devotee; when they speak about "guru", it always means a self-realized lover of God, not a *sadhaka*, a *baddha-jiva*; similarly, "*sadhu*" means one who is decorated with the six *angas* of *saranagati*.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati has defined *sadhu-sanga* in three ways: First, *sadhu-sanga* means to associate with a devotee much higher than oneself. Second, how much higher, and in which way should one associate? He should be a pure devotee, a *mahabhagavata*. One should provide him with facilities for service to the Lord, practice under his guidance, and learn from him the inner meaning of *sastra*. Third, *sadhu-sanga* means that one must imbibe the mood of the *sadhu*; that means to accept his instructions and practice them, without adding one's speculation, consideration, etc. to follow as it is. The *priti-laksana*, loving dealings, described in Upadesamrita apply specifically to a *sadhu*: offer him raw new things, and accept his *prasada*, reveal your mind to him, and inquire from him how to develop yourself as he did, serve him *prasadam* and honor his remnants.

### **Siksa and diksa are not opposed but complementary**

Some say that to take a *siksa-guru* necessarily means you minimize your *guru*, and that it is the duty of the *siksa-guru* to bring back the disciple to the *diksa-guru*, otherwise it's offensive to your *diksa-guru*. But there is no *sastric* basis for this conclusion unless one wants to read something not really there into the Bhajanamrita of Narahari Sarkar

where it is said that the disciple should share with his *diksa-guru* what he has learned from his *siksa-guru*, otherwise he is comparable to an ungrateful son who doesn't bring back his earnings to his parents. That's the closest one can get to this idea. Of course, to accept a *siksa-guru* shouldn't become a fad nor a cheap way out of surrender.

Bhaktivinoda Thakura says in Jaiva Dharma that if someone in a neophyte condition has accepted a *guru* thinking that the *guru* was a self-realized soul, and subsequently he has the realization that the *guru* is not going to bring him back to Godhead, then one should not reject him but, very humbly and with his permission, serve another advanced devotee.

In ISKCON Journal 2, HH Jayadvaita Maharaja, after warning against making offenses, says: “*One may genuinely benefit from serving an advanced devotee and get some nourishment that one is not getting elsewhere.*”

## Both are needed

Some say that a *siksa-guru* is only needed in rare and exceptional cases. Again, *sastra* differs from this opinion. In the invocation to Gitar Gan, Srila Prabhupada writes: “*I also bow down in honor to all of my siksa-gurus.*” It is explained that the *diksa-guru* sets your feet in Vrindavana and reestablishes your relationship with Krishna and that the *siksa-guru* allows you to move in the land of Vrindavana and teaches you how to serve Krishna. There is also mention of the *diksa-guru* as the representative of Madan Mohan Vighraha, teaching *sambandha*, and of the *siksa-guru* as the representative of Sri Govindaji, teaching *abhideya*, as quoted earlier. (CC Adi 1.47) Harinama establishes the relation with Krishna, *sambandha*, and it is kept and developed under the *siksa-guru*. Our parampara is also characterized by the fact that it is mainly a succession of *siksa* disciples more than of *diksa* disciples.

## There are two kinds of siksa gurus

There is no *sastric* evidence supporting the idea of a non-liberated *diksa-guru*, except a family priest, or *kula-guru*. But there are quotes describing two kinds of *siksa-gurus*, liberated and not. There are thus non-liberated gurus who can help by directing others on the path towards Krishna. Let everyone give *siksa*, teach, but *diksa* is ideally the prerogative of the self-realized, pure, liberated devotee. One can teach without initiating. One can impart relevant instructions and act as the mouthpiece of the *sad-guru*. This is effected by the power of the *sad-guru*, not by the limited power of one who still has *anarthas*. Thus one can teach a limited number of students with the clear understanding that he can thus assist the true preceptor; that is the proper understanding of a “monitor-guru”. The Vaisnava *acaryas* have opined that it was not exactly Cintamani who instructed Bilvamangala but rather his self-realized *diksa-guru*, Somagiri, who spoke to him through her.” (Path of perfection p 118)

Preachers should give *siksa* until self-realized, then only should they give *diksa*. The purports following the “*amara ajnaya guru hanam*” verse (CC Madhya 7.130) say: “*One has to learn humility and meekness.... One shouldn't try to be an artificially advanced devotee.... It is best not to accept any disciples....*” One can be a *guru* in the sense of teaching about Krishna, and should work on qualifying himself to develop the exalted

attributes of a *sad-guru*. Once they are achieved one will know what is what and be capable of truly helping others.

Just as the position of *diksa-guru* has been misunderstood, the understanding of *siksa-guru* is also muddled. It is said in CC Adi 1.47 that the *diksa-* and *siksa-gurus* are of equal status, and that it is offensive to consider them of different importance. But there are two kinds of *siksa-gurus*: liberated and not liberated. When it says that there is no difference between them, it only makes sense if both are of the same caliber, liberated. You cannot equate a non-liberated *guru* with a liberated one, a *kanistha* and an *uttama*, just because they are both called *gurus*. One may object to this by the argument that Bilvamangala Thakura paid respects to all his *gurus* equally, but this was because, as we just saw, it was his *diksa-guru*, Somagiri, who was speaking through the mouth of Cintamani, the first person who turned his consciousness towards Krishna. He was very grateful to her, who, in spite of her low condition had awakened his dormant God consciousness.

It is not that one shouldn't give great respect to a *guru* even of a lesser degree. We have written about not giving full faith, worship and surrender to an unqualified person, but this is not to imply that there should be any lack of respect. In Vedic culture, and one can still see this in India, the children touch the feet of their parents as one does with a *guru*. The natural superiors, such as elders, parents, *brahmanas*, teachers, are called *guru-janas*. They are always to be respected. Only if they prove unworthy can one reject them (Gita, 1st chapter), and that usually translates by avoiding rather than disrespecting.

We spoke earlier of non-physically embodied *siksa-gurus*, the past *acaryas*, including Srila Prabhupada, and of physically embodied *siksa-gurus*. Out of the second category, one kind of *siksa-guru* is not liberated. He can give guidance and specific knowledge in his field of expertise and guide his followers towards a more qualified *guru* for *diksa*. He should be highly respected by those he teaches. The other kind of *siksa-guru* is a liberated soul. Less qualified *gurus* send him their disciples for higher guidance that they cannot provide themselves. He also gives guidance on the path to less advanced godbrothers who had not reached the high level of *paramahansa* when their common *guru* departed. He should be treated as *guru*, without discriminating if he is a godbrother or not. If someone has difficulty taking *siksa* from his self-realized godbrother, he should meditate on the meaning of *dasanudasa*. He should also remember that all our *acaryas* presented themselves as most fallen and in need of mercy. One can renounce *konaka*, wealth, and *kamini*, attraction to the opposite sex, but the desire for *pratistha* is very tenacious. And duplicity is the lover of the desire for *pratistha*; they are inseparable. *Pratistha* makes one intolerant and envious. What is envy, *matsara*? It has been defined as the incapacity to tolerate the superiority of someone else. When someone advances on the path, a real Vaisnava rejoices, but one afflicted by duplicity and desire for *pratistha* has difficulty to tolerate or appreciate. But without being freed from duplicity and *pratistha* one cannot understand *Bhagavat-tattva*. “Only one who has developed pure Krishna Consciousness and served a pure devotee can understand Srimad Bhagavatam. Others cannot.” (CC Madhya 24.313)

Srila Gaura Kishora das Babaji also said that “*Krishna doesn't happily accept the service of those who are not attached to serving the pure Vaisnavas, however pure they may try to be themselves.*” Hari-Bhakti-Sudhodaya: “*By associating with a person, one develops his*

*qualities... therefore one should associate with more advanced devotees from one's own line."*  
And, of course, in the Bhagavatam: "*Nityam bhagavata sevaya*"

One must remember that Sri Guru is not the body of the *guru*. When the Bhagavatam compares to an animal one who identifies the body with the self (*sa eva gokharah*), it doesn't refer only to one who identifies himself with his body but also to a devotee who, because he identifies with the body, fails to recognize the Mahabhagavata Vaisnava, thinking he also moves in a body and is therefore in the same condition of bondage. Without falling into impersonalism and seeing the *guru* as just a receptacle of an impersonal principle of descending saving grace, one should look for the embodiment of Sri Guru, for the same current of pure Gaudiya Vaisnavism that flowed through Srila Prabhupada (or one's own *guru*). Find someone who is going to teach you practically what it means to cry for Krishna, as Prabhupada said we should. Mahaprabhu taught this, so find a *gaura-priya-jana*, one dear devotee of Mahaprabhu, someone who will push you, as Prabhupada (or your *guru*) did, to the point of full surrender.

# Sri Guru-Tattva Part III

## The Guru in ISKCON

*"He who, by the Lord's mercy or by the shower of the Lord's mercy through the mercy of a great saint, is completely free from all anarthas and firmly established in the realized knowledge of the scriptures and in the realization of the Absolute Truth, who is directly united with God and constantly engaged in His bhajan or service, he alone is definable as Guru."*

— Srila Sarasvati Thakura

In the person of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, we had the opportunity to observe the above qualities. Once His Divine Grace physically departed from this world, the question of the continuation of the *parampara* arose: ***From whom would one receive initiation in the line of devotion he had introduced to the whole world?***

## Can one initiate on behalf of a past Acarya?

After Prabhupada's disappearance, the *rittvik* system he had established to give initiation on his behalf while he was physically incapacitated met its natural death. One cannot initiate on a *guru's* behalf after his physical disappearance. Of course, a genuine *guru* always feels that he is not *guru* and that he is training junior devotees for the service of his own spiritual master, and therefore he gives them initiation with the inner feeling, that he may sometimes express outwardly out of humility, that he is doing so on his *guru's* behalf. This, however, is his inner *bhava* or devotional sentiment towards

the lotus feet of his *guru* and shouldn't be officialized as a philosophy. And it would be offensive for the disciple to see his spiritual master as just a priest, just a connecting link with his grand spiritual master. A bona fide disciple doesn't see like that. That is not the *guru-pranali*, or the bona fide Gaudiya Vaisnava system of disciplic succession. Only in *apasampradayas*, non-bona fide disciplic lines, is this system seen to be instituted. No bona fide Vaisnava line of disciplic succession accepts this system of "*Rittvik-vada*."

## A Little History

A few months before his physical departure, on May 28, 1977, leading members of the ISKCON Society approached Srila Prabhupada with questions, among which: "*Our next question concerns initiations in the future, particularly at that time when you are no longer with us.*" This question, if you analyze it, contains actually two questions: The first one was: What was to be done about initiation now (that Prabhupada was physically very ill and incapacitated to perform his regular activities) and in the near future until he would leave the world? His Divine Grace answered that he would name some *rittviks* or priests to initiate on his behalf with full discretion to decide who could take *diksa*, choose the person's spiritual name and chant on his beads, that's to say, full power of attorney as he had never given so far. The second question, asked in the same sentence than the first, was also pertaining to initiation, but after Prabhupada's disappearance. His Divine Grace answered that one could initiate when he would receive his order "When I order 'you become *guru*', he becomes regular *guru*."

Upon studying the transcription of the entire conversation, one can see that, although very clear, it could indeed lend itself to many possible interpretations. Unfortunately, a wrong interpretation was unanimously accepted. Knowing the heart of his leading disciples, who didn't really ask for any clarification, Srila Prabhupada didn't elaborate, as it is said "*Just as sometimes in autumn water flows down from the hills and sometimes doesn't, similarly, great saintly persons sometimes distribute clear knowledge and sometimes are silent.*" (SB 10.20.36) There have been different 'original versions' of the tape, which is strange...Another explanation is that this so-called 'appointment tape' has been 'doctored', as suggested by a professional analysis of it, but I am not going that way...

The next month, June 1977, Srila Prabhupada gave the list of those who could be the *rittviks*. He said that any senior *sannyasi*, whoever was nearest, could perform that function. Then he gave the actual list of names. This list was based on obvious geographical distribution, for the sake of practicality only. Srila Prabhupada also said that if necessary others could be added to that list of *rittviks*. But that list was mistaken to be not only a list of *rittviks* but a list of *gurus* as well: The eleven *rittviks* wrongly assumed that they were to automatically become *gurus* after Srila Prabhupada's departure.

## So, who could initiate? Didn't Srila Prabhupada appoint gurus?

Srila Prabhupada had appointed 11 *rittviks* up to the point of his departure, but he had

not given anyone of these eleven disciples the order to become a *diksa-guru*. He had already said many times that his own Guru Maharaja had not appointed anyone as a guru nor *Acarya*. The so-called guru-appointment was nothing more than a *ritvik*-appointment misunderstood or willingly twisted and presented as a *guru*-appointment. Only by qualification can one be a bona fide guru. However, ISKCON's leading secretaries unfortunately misconstrued that this appointment automatically bestowed upon them the fitness not only to be *gurus* but select *acaryas* ruling over the institution. Srila Prabhupada wanted all his disciples to carry on the *parampara* by becoming qualified first. The qualifications he had always stressed are found in all his books and other Vedic literatures. He never intended to restrict it to a select few, but it was misinterpreted as such. Thus, the Exclusive Successor *Acarya* theory erroneously became the basis of the continuation of the *parampara* in ISKCON. In addition to their becoming *diksa-gurus*, each "*acarya*" was allocated by the GBC a specific geographical zone in which he was the exclusive *diksa-guru*. Srila Prabhupada gave the order to initiate their own disciples to Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja and to HH Radha Govinda Maharaja.

Bhakti Caru Swami has admitted in private that he heard Srila Prabhupada order Tamal Krishna Goswami to make a GBC meeting and decide who would initiate after him. As TKG didn't obey, Prabhupada asked him if he should suggest a couple of names, and TKG admitted then to a third party that he was afraid it wouldn't be him but Kirtanananda prabhu and Satsvarupa prabhu. Then Prabhupada mentioned the two names quoted a little above. But TKG, who would later on claimed he was the only *acarya*, never obeyed the order...

## Siksa from the Gaudiya Math?

Srila Prabhupada had said before he departed that, although everything needed was in his books, if one had philosophical or technical questions he couldn't answer by reading his books, he could go and consult Srila Narayana Maharaja of Mathura, a disciple of Srila Kesava Maharaja from whom Srila Prabhupada had taken *sannyasa*, or his godbrother Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja of Nabadvipa, both belonging to different branches of the Gaudiya Matha, the spiritual institution founded by Srila Prabhupada's own spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.

## The repetition of a mistake

After the departure of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, as it usually happens after the departure of a great *Acarya*, a great confusion had arisen. Srila Sarasvati Thakura had not appointed anyone as the *Acarya* or head of his Mission to be his successor. He had advised his disciples to keep on preaching co-jointly. He told them to form a GBC until a self-effulgent *acarya* would manifest and would be put at the head of the Mission. The idea was that the *Acarya* would be the spiritual head and leader of the Mission, and the GBC would remain as the managerial body. (The same system was set up by Srila Prabhupada and we had the same experience in ISKCON during Prabhupada's times.) But his leading secretaries started to argue about who would



occupy the seat of *Acarya*. Two parties formed, each one backing a particular devotee. (Some other disciples, including Srila Prabhupada, didn't get involved and later on established their own separate missions and temples, but Srila Prabhupada always tried to persuade his godbrothers to reunite to preach conjointly.)

One party installed their "*acarya*" and drove out the members of the other party. That "*acarya*" later fell down; the other party came back and wanted to install their "*acarya*"; litigation dragged on for years; it was finally settled by civil court judgment and the two parties shared the Maths among themselves. "*Both the Bhag Bazaar party and the Mayapura party have unlawfully usurped the missionary institution of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati.*" (Conv 30.9.69) Srila Prabhupada had narrated that story to his disciples and he had warned not to make the same mistake in his ISKCON movement. Unfortunately, a similar thing happened, with eleven *acaryas* instead of one. Srila Prabhupada had also said upon various occasions that Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja, for whom he had both affection and respect, was one of the leading secretaries involved in the mistake. Not knowing how to install themselves in their new position, the eleven '*acaryas*' went to inquire from him, the very person whom Prabhupada had specifically warned not to take advice on this particular point, the continuation of the disciplic succession after the disappearance of the *Acarya*!

There are two versions of the story. One is that the eleven told Srila Sridhara Maharaja that Prabhupada had appointed them as *acaryas*. The other is that they told him that they had been appointed as *ritviks* only but that he said that *ritvik* is almost as good as *acarya*. Whatever the case may have been, Srila BR Sridhar Maharaja then advised them that the major temples should be kept neutral as places of worship for all the members to come together, managed by non-initiating devotees, and that the new gurus should go and open new temples. Thus each of them would have a place where their relationship with their disciples could go on unchallenged, in the proper mood of holiness needed for it to develop. He gave the example of a man who gets married and who needs at least one room for his family. As this was not at all the mood prevailing in ISKCON that they had always known, but the mood of the Gaudiya Matha that had practically exploded in various branches, each with its exclusive *acarya*, after the order of its founder had been disobeyed, the idea, as it was presented to them didn't appeal to the eleven at all. They kept the concept, though, but in a completely different dimension: They divided the world among themselves, and the one room became a big territory, a '*guru-zone*'.

## The zonal Acarya system revisited.

Ravindra Svarupa dasa has given a very good account of the unfolding of the events, published in the ISKCON Journal Nø 1 (1990) partly reproduced here. Comments between [ ] are mine. "*The conviction soon grew up that these eleven had been especially selected by Srila Prabhupada to be his spiritual and material successors... They viewed their private zones as their patrimony from Prabhupada...In other words, the idea of acarya as initiating guru had become fused with the idea of acarya as the head of a spiritual institution, and under that misunderstanding, each of the eleven took the same relation to his zone that Prabhupada had held in relation to ISKCON...As each initiating guru was*

*thought to require his exclusive territory, increasing the number of diksa-gurus became very difficult. In effect, a property requirement was added to the qualifications of guru. At least one of the existing gurus would have to sacrifice territory for a new guru to be authorized. So the number of diksa-gurus remained very small [no other devotees took up that position before 1982, and even then, only 3, then 5 more only three years later, in 1985] and each guru soon bore the burden of a very large number of disciples. All those who joined in a particular zone were considered providentially intended to be disciples of that local acarya. They “chose” their guru automatically when they moved in... An increasing number of Prabhupada’s disciples began to feel spiritually disenfranchised. With the passage of time, ISKCON filled more and more with the acaryas’ disciples, and each zone became increasingly centered on the person of the local acarya. The movement began to take on the aspect of a dozen or so separate societies. It began to fragment... It is no wonder that very soon a number of them found themselves in spiritual difficulties.... It took [many dark years] and the deviation or fall downs of six “acaryas” before the unauthorized zonal acarya system was finally dismantled.”*

## No proper focus

There had been complaints right from the beginning against the phenomenon of successor *acaryas*. As other devotees were seen to be at least as advanced or more than the selected few, there were legitimate complaints that only the eleven could be *gurus*, and not just *gurus*, but that they had become exclusive heirs of the mission of the common father, Srila Prabhupada. The focus was on that point, and unfortunately not on the actual qualifications required before one can assume the weighty responsibility of becoming the representative of God and deliver his disciples. So, more *gurus* were gradually added, but the basis on which they were added was only the comparison with other devotees already in the position of *guru*. And the unlawful basis on which the original eleven were in that position was never seriously reconsidered. The dissenters that did challenge the system were unfortunately dismissed as envious faultfinders and ostracized. Even during the “reform” of the mid-80s, the focus was still on a comparative basis and not on the *adhikara* or eligibility according to qualifications. The “*guru* reform” turned out to be only concerned with managerial issues: how individual GBC members should improve, who should be added to the body. Even though much of the fuel for reform came from concerns that the *guru* system was not at all proper, when the long anticipated 50 Man Committee met, there was no discussion of the qualifications of *guru*.

The gangrene of misconception kept on spreading. Prabhupada never appointed *gurus*. He only appointed temporary *ritviks*, and that should be clearly understood. I deal more on this point in part 5.

# Sri Guru-Tattva Part IV

## The Path of the Mahajanas.

In the Mahabharata, King Yudhistira was asked different questions by a Yaksha. One of them was: ***“What is most amazing in this world?”*** To which he answered that although one has seen so many people die before him, still he acts as if he was thinking that this will never happen to him personally. So, how amazing it is, that although the Gaudiya Math had tried to artificially create an *acarya* and Srila Prabhupada had warned against the same thing happening in ISKCON, as soon as he disappeared the GBC Body officially endorsed eleven devotees as *acaryas*! The Gaudiya Math had started with making one “*acarya*” and we were “blessed” with eleven!

How amazing it is that, although Srila Prabhupada warned not to become a *diksa-guru* prematurely, many devotees became *diksa-gurus* without any consideration of their aptitude on the basis of *sastric* injunctions!

And how amazing that in spite of many “*gurus*” falling down, more kept on taking that position, and others act as if they’re thinking it can’t happen to themselves!

Another question of the Yaksha was: ***“What is the path?”*** To which Yudhistira Maharaja gave the famous answer ***“Mahajano yena gatah sa panthah: The path of dharma is to follow the Mahajanas.”***

So, how amazing it is that although Srila Prabhupada Mahajana has spoken at length and with an amazing wealth of detail on the topic of the spiritual master, still, in the name of practicality, the path of diligently accepting ALL his instructions was not strictly followed!

How amazing it is that, although from the very beginning of the institutionalization of successor zonal *acaryas* there were legitimate protests against it, including in the Pyramid House Talks in 1980, where the fallacies of the *acarya*-appointment and zonal *acarya* theories were rightfully denounced, and this time by one of the eleven, we had to go through 6 more years of the worse before it was officially abolished!

## Misconception is poison

The first misconception surfaced as the so-called appointment of successor *acaryas* by Srila Prabhupada. As all devotees knew that a conditioned soul cannot be a *sad-guru*, a prerogative of the self-realized souls, the devotees were told that the eleven were very

advanced and, the second misconception, that Srila Prabhupada gave them by *kripa* whatever they were missing to achieve the perfect stage, making them *kripa-siddhas*.

The third misconception was that each of these so-called *kripa-siddha acaryas* had an exclusive *prabhu-datta-desa* as their territory. As the devotees refused to follow blindly and listened to the intelligence (*guru-sastra-sadhu*), protests came one after another, countered by more misconceptions such as the Mahajanas themselves losing occasionally sight of Krishna. When more and more devotees started to see the situation for what it was and refused to listen any longer, they insisted on reform. But the reform didn't go deeply into the philosophy, and new misconceptions surfaced, such as: *A sad-guru doesn't have to be a self-realized liberated pure lover of Krishna, or: Anyone who is about on the same level than those already in place can also become a guru. Any approved guru should be respected, whatever his level may be, as saksad-hari, etc. But we have to understand that these are all adjustments. When Bhaktivinoda Thakura says that spiritual life means constant adjustment, fine-tuning, he means adjusting oneself to the philosophy, not adjusting the philosophy! The original standard for guruship has been put aside; the obvious has become obscured, and the problems are patched up with concocted adjustments. And, as all these misconceptions have, in the ultimate issue, only a semblance of truth, they do not work.*

What is the root cause of this poison? The misconception that one doesn't need to be under anyone, that one doesn't need to approach a *sadhu* and accept him as *siksa-guru*, oneself being advanced enough.

After the departure of a great *acarya* there usually is a cloudy period during which the teachings become obscured, witness what happened to the Gaudiya Math after the departure of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura.

In Sajjana Tosani, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura also wrote that,

*"If one tries to establish the truth, so many lies will crop up in attempting to cover it. It is the will of the Lord, for, without darkness, how will the light be appreciated? Without opposition, how will the truth be glorified?"*

Trying to see the bright side, let's take it that this dark period of our history has simply been Krishna's plan to teach us valuable lessons, that this is all for the glory of pure devotion, which is not a cheap thing, and of the pure devotees, which are rare, and not a dime a dozen.

Everyone in 1978 still understood that the *guru* could only be on the topmost level, on the basis of the *tad viddhi pranipatena* verse of the Gita. It was a strict teaching in ISKCON that a *guru* is never subjected to the illusions of the common man. That is why, when the eleven *rittviks* Srila Prabhupada had named to initiate on his behalf, and this only for the remaining period of his physical presence with us, were presented as his exclusive appointed successors, they had to be rubber-stamped as "pure devotees", "*uttama-adhikaris*", "*kripa-siddhas*", etc.

## A new conception is introduced

The first inkling of a different understanding of the necessary qualifications to be recognized as a bona fide *diksa-guru* after Srila Prabhupada physically left, can be traced again to the Pyramid House Talks. There it was correctly mentioned about “*opening up this point of initiation, the guru, to whoever is qualified.*” Unfortunately there was no mention of the definition “qualified”. Although a bona fide spiritual master is a rare thing (“*durlabha sadgurur devi*” says the Padma Purana), we read: “*There would be 79 or 122 gurus instead of eleven where you have to show some super-excellent qualifications.*”

During the attempt for reform of the mid-eighties, this new idea that after all the guru doesn't have to be highly qualified surfaced again, this time in full force, to adjust to the situation, instead of adjusting ourselves to the scriptures. Thus unfortunately this new idea became officially accepted: the “Non-liberated Guru Theory”.

Yes, one can be a kind of *guru* without showing “super-excellent qualifications”: a *vartma-pradarshaka-guru*, (in the sense we usually use this word, meaning the first devotee who preached to someone and convinced him of Krishna Consciousness), or a *siksa guru* of sorts (also in the casual sense of the term). But even if in an exceptional circumstance one has become a *diksa-guru*, clearly one should not automatically be considered the sole *guru* nor the eternal spiritual master of those one initiates unless one has achieved those qualifications that are the hallmark of an *uttama adhikari* (coming down to the *madhyam* platform), since it is said that even a *madhyam-adhikari* can only give insufficient guidance. There is no sastric evidence that no matter what is the *guru's* level of advancement, he is supposed to be given absolute faith and surrender, and worshipped as “*saksad hari*”.

This “new philosophy” has different variations; therefore different devotees under this misconception have distinctly different understandings of the philosophical basis of the qualifications for guruship, unfortunately not based on *sastra*. The following five categories, representing different variations of the same misconception, delineate the most common understandings, and, while sometimes more than one of these theories are held in combination, they are not all mutually compatible:

1. **The Rittvik-to-Guru-Appointment Theory:** Srila Prabhupada appointed eleven *ritviks* who were to become automatically *diksa-gurus* upon his disappearance. (This is not a new philosophy, but a surprising remnant of the infamous, erroneous Successor-Acarya Theory.)
2. **The Whoever-Initiates-is-a-Paramahansa Theory:** All ISKCON *diksa-gurus* are *uttama adhikaris* (according to certain liberal definitions of given in Srila Prabhupada's books read superficially, *apara-vicara*).
3. **The Nistha-Bhakta Theory:** The ISKCON *diksa-gurus* are pretty much all nicely qualified as *madhyam adhikaris*. In any case, no one can really tell for sure. They may fall down but the risk of it is small. Because there are so many, the overall risk is minimized.
4. **The as-good-as-liberated Guru Theory:** Any good preacher can serve as *diksa-guru*, as he is as good as liberated. He doesn't have to be factually liberated or

otherwise specifically qualified. No one is truly qualified according to the *sastric* definitions anyway.

5. **The Monitor-Guru Theory:** Whatever is necessary for the disciples to receive somehow or other comes from Srila Prabhupada through him. If the *guru* falls down, never mind, ISKCON is giving everything, it's a family affair, take another one.

Although having some apparent validity with its seemingly practical solutions to the problems of how to deal with reality in the post-zonal-*acarya* world, this theory, upon close scrutiny, could be called “covered *ritvik-vada*”. The ISKCON leaders dutifully hammered down the VVR and IRM brands of *ritvik-vada*, which erroneously claim that Prabhupada being the only bona fide guru one can be sure of, is therefore the only *guru* of ISKCON, and everyone giving *diksa* is just a priest. But the new philosophy contains very similar ideas, such as the idea that the *diksa-guru* connects one with Prabhupada, who is therefore the most important factor in the disciple's ultimate success, or the concept that one initiates on Prabhupada's behalf, or on the GBC's behalf. However, Srila Prabhupada never taught any of these conceptions. He clearly defined the *guru's* qualifications, and not in these terms at all.

Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja told me that Prabhupada had asked him to “*cooperate, cooperate, tolerate, tolerate.*” When I asked him in late 1995 when does it become intolerable, he answered with sadness,

“*When the Vaisnava siddhanta is baffled. This is the case now. Their view on jiva-tattva is wrong as they say we fell from Krishna-lila out of envy, and the most holy guru-tattva is reduced to “prachanna rittvik-vada”, covert rittvik-vada.*”

## The consequences:

Great damage, the spiritual ruination of the Society was made by the bogus Successor-Acarya theory when a few devotees appointed themselves after a mere ten years of *sadhana bhakti* to the lofty position of *guru*. Not only of *gurus*, but of exclusive successors. Not only of exclusive successors, but of *uttama adbhikaris*! They didn't consider that there could be other devotees as advanced or more advanced than themselves in the Society or outside of it. They took prematurely the position of *diksa-gurus*, instead of petitioning Krishna and Prabhupada for help and submitting themselves for humble tutelage under a *siksa-guru*, and thereby failed to show a good example. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura teaches: “*sada-sisya-taki*, always remain under discipline.”

## But shouldn't there have been Gurus after Srila Prabhupada?

Yes, but not a rush to take his place. That's what Prabhupada called “*killing the guru*”! It should be clearly understood that to initiate while one is only on a low level of

*madhyam-adhikara* is an emergency measure, an exception, not the regular norm, and that many *kanistha-adhikaris* have become *diksa-gurus* by error. But one shouldn't disrespect a *guru* even if he happens not to be on a very high level. According to the advice given in *sastra*, his disciples should pray and look for a self-realized pure devotee to take *siksa* from. They should never be discouraged or intimidated from doing so. It is not *sastric* that “*guru is guru*, so he deserves absolute faith and worship whatever his level.” Faith and worship are one thing, respect is another one. As we said earlier, even *kanistha* or *madhyam-kanistha gurus* should be given respect. Anyone who gives instruction based on *sastras* is accepted as a *guru*, and, as such, greatly respected: “*Maybe of different degrees, but anyone who opens the spiritual eyes, he is guru.*” (Lecture 3,12.72) Srila Prabhupada taught us to address all devotees as *prabhu*, master. *Trinad api sunicena* is the motto of the Rupanuga line to which we belong.

### **But wasn't it right to fill the void after Srila Prabhupada left?**

The void was there but it was to be taken advantage of by developing service-in-separation and crying to Krishna to help us.

### **Aren't there genuine Gurus within ISKCON?**

The qualification to be *guru* has nothing to do with an appointment by Srila Prabhupada, as there never was such appointment. Appointments or votes have no jurisdiction on Transcendence. One is *guru* by qualifications only. One should apply the formula himself to evaluate, fully dependent on Krishna for His confirmation. There was at least one fully qualified one, Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja, whom Krishna finally took away, not tolerating his pure devotee being harassed year after year by so-called godbrothers envious of his obvious superiority.

The *guru* is the most holy Vaisnava institution, said Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja. *Guru-tattva* is one of the deepest *tattvas*. By keeping the issue of the actual position of the *guru* unclear, by not giving later the necessary explanation that the original eleven had become *diksa-gurus* out of a misunderstanding, and by eventually allowing so many more devotees to take similar positions, the institution has become nearly unrecognizable. A *sad-guru* is rare, but since there are so many *gurus* in ISKCON, some explanation of this phenomenon had to be found. The words “pure devotee”, “liberated”, and “*guru*” have been redefined by culling quotations from Srila Prabhupada's most broad statements on the subject, (and even that is shallow if these so-called liberal quotes are thoroughly analyzed). In 1987, instead of going to the root, the allopathic medicine path of dealing with symptoms was followed, not the ayurvedic path of going for the root cause. And it was a question of time only before the untreated cause produced new symptoms.

If ISKCON wants to really apply the *sastric* teachings and its own law, to be accepted as a bona fide *guru* one must be free from all *anarthas* such as *kamini*, *kancana*, *nisiddhacara*, *puja*, *kutinati*, *lobha*, and especially *pratistha*. The fact that 50% of their *diksa-gurus* have fallen down (and that's the official rate) speaks by itself...

### **What about the faith of the disciples?**

A situation has been created without deeply considering the consequences. But all the members, especially the initiated disciples, have the right to know the history of their

Movement. Prabhupada never made a mystery of what had happened in the Gaudiya Math, nor why he had to disassociate himself from most of his god brothers at a certain time. The disciple's genuine faith shouldn't be shattered. To know the truth will reinforce their faith. It will create real faith. If one loses faith, it means it was artificial or sentimental. Srila Prabhupada didn't teach us anything impractical that we can alter and adjust for the sake of practicality. By cheapening the position of guru, one risks killing the very spirit of authority in its most sacred form. We should always make sure that the guiding force in our life is *guru-sastra-sadhu*. One will benefit from being warned against philosophical deviations. There is *siddhanta*, proper conclusive understanding of *sastra* and there is always *apasiddhanta*, wrong understanding. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura even said that the preacher's first duty is to expose *apa-siddhantas*. Srila Prabhupada also said that the *Acarya's* first business is *sampradaya raksana*, to save the *sampradaya* from *apasiddhantas*. Prabhupada obviously wanted all his disciples to become guru but only when qualified to be so. What is implied by becoming a *diksa-guru* before being fully qualified? What are the limitations implied by accepting such a devotee as one's spiritual master? This is a current case in the present-day ISKCON.

## Observations

Although there are indications that Srila Prabhupada envisioned his disciples initiating after his departure even before having reached the required level of *uttama adbhikara*, still, he certainly gave stern warnings, such as: "*Anyone, if he is a pure devotee, he can deliver others, he can become spiritual master. But unless he is on that platform he should not attempt it. Then both of them will go to hell, like blind men leading the blind.*" (Letter to Tusta Krishna) Pure devotional service, as it was developed in the Part I, truly begins in the full *nistha* stage, or *ruci*.

There has been more than one hundred forty devotees initiating in ISKCON, and not all were on the same level.

### Can one be a *diksa-guru* if not self-realized?

It's not recommended, but it's going on. The disciples of non-self-realized masters can't make much advancement due to insufficient guidance (Upadesamrta 5, end of purport). Srila Prabhupada saw that the world badly needed Vaisnava *gurus*, but that almost all his disciples were far below the mark of *uttama adbhikari*, the standard level of a *guru*, so he made an emergency concession: *madhyam adbhikari*. *Madhyam adbhikara*, beginning at *nistha*, is the level where the *uttama adbhikari* comes down anyway to preach, (although he comes down on the *uttama* level of *madhyam-adbhikara*, *madhyam-uttama*, or *asakti*). Since Prabhupada didn't write his books just for us but for the next ten thousand years, he indicated the standard of *guru*: *uttama adbhikara*, beginning at *bhava*, but he made a concession out of expediency because he wanted things to go on. He gave strong warnings, though, not to venture initiating as a *kanistha adbhikari*. And even for *madhyam adbhikaris* he gave many indications that it's risky, that one should not start to initiate just at the threshold of the *madhyam adbhikara* (*madhyam-kanistha*), barely coming out from *anartha nivriti*, the end of *kanistha adbhikara*, but should wait to achieve a higher standard (*madhyam-madhyam*) for giving more than *siksa*, instruction.



Srila Prabhupada: “There are three classes of devotees and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class.... When one has attained the topmost position of mahabhagavata, he is to be accepted as guru. Only such a person is eligible to occupy the post of guru.” (CC Madhya 24 330)

It is indeed rare to find a pure liberated *guru*, a lover of God, but it is always available for a sincere seeker. It is most recommended and you should aspire for that and pray for it.

Of course, there is always a class of devotees who will find some excuse for criticizing. They actually don't want to surrender. They take the pretext of wanting higher things, but they are compared by Bhaktivinoda Thakura to someone who wants to get fruits without making the necessary efforts to climb in a tree. Such a fellow jumps from the ground, trying to grab some fruit. But all what he gets is sour or rotten fruits. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura called them *pukkur-curi wale*, pond-thieves. You cannot steal a pond. It's a hole filled with water. How can you steal it? Similarly one who thinks he can enter the higher realm of *bhakti* without having the *adhikara* or eligibility is a self-deceiver.

## Food for thought

*“A preacher's constant function is to directly and frankly oppose anyone who is hurting himself or others by misrepresenting the truth, either due to malice or to genuine misunderstanding, by preaching in the most unambiguous and unequivocal manner.... He shouldn't keep any partiality towards untruth.”*

—Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati

*“May we ever be ready to brush away from our hearts, by the rough application of hundreds of pointed broomsticks, the wicked design of being honored above other persons by the devotees of God. God will be merciful to us and we shall be blessed with the gift of devotion to His Divine Feet the very day that we are delivered from the evil desire of seeking advantages and honors from others. The ambition to lord it over others, to be great, is brought about when we allow ourselves to fall a victim to the temptations of the deluding energy of God. Those who aspire to be masters of the devotees are indeed most culpably arrogant. The idea that one should be master of God's devotees leads to inferno. 'Let the devotees serve me.' If we don't get deliverance from that bad attitude, there will be no benefit to us. To follow the devotees of God is the only path that leads to one's real good. Let there be birth after birth for us that we may walk in the path of the followers of Sri Rupa Goswami by being the particles of dust at the feet of the devotees of God. We are nurturing a desire to dedicate this good-for-nothing body in the Sankirtana sacrifice of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his associates.”*

—Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati

# Sri Guru-Tattva Part V

## Questions & Answers 1 – 50

### 1) Some say that we need many gurus. Didn't Srila Prabhupada say that we need millions of gurus?

Yes, many *sad-gurus* especially. But we can have millions of *vartha-pradarshaka-gurus*. It is just a matter of making clear the limitations implied by accepting someone not on a high level as one's *guru*. Nowhere in Prabhupada's teachings do we find even a remote encouragement to take full shelter from someone who is still battling with *anarthas* or to take initiation from someone who is not liberated. A more advanced *kanistha* can be treated with great respect by less advanced juniors but he should not initiate. Srila Prabhupada wanted all his disciples to qualify themselves first and then become 'regular' *gurus*. He said that, "*Those who initiate should be qualified otherwise there's no meaning to 'bona fide' guru*". He meant preachers, as in: "*Thousands of teachers of the science of Krishna are needed*." And warned: "*You must become guru but you must be qualified first of all. Then you can become. What is the use of producing some rascal guru. No rubber-stamp, then you'll not be effective. You can cheat but it won't be effective*." (Conv. 4.22.77)

### 2) How then was the parampara to be continued?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati said that our *parampara* is the *bhagavata-parampara*, meaning the *parampara* of *mahabhagavatas*, embodiments of the Srimad Bhagavatam's teachings, not a *parampara* of bodies, of *kanisthas*. And there may be sometimes an apparent gap. Srila Prabhupada himself didn't start to initiate until nearly thirty years after his *guru's* departure, except for one Indian disciple after about 15 years. The need to initiate in the name of the continuation of the *parampara* was artificially created. It didn't come from would-be disciples but from would-be *gurus*! Srila Prabhupada only told HH Radha Govinda Maharaja to initiate his own disciples, which he started to do very simply without any drums nor trumpets immediately upon Prabhupada's departure. Prabhupada also wrote the same to Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja, but Maharaja waited until 1985, when around 50 Oriya devotees were lining for initiation and wouldn't accept the then zonal *acarya*, to produce that letter, humbly requesting the GBC to be allowed to fulfill his *guru's* instruction. What a contrast with the eleven *ritviks* lying to all their godbrothers and claiming to have been appointed by Prabhupada and thus hijacking the mission, and then installing themselves with big pomp, high Vyasasanas and titles!

### 3) So who is guru?

The *guru* is where our inner demand and hankering can be fulfilled to the utmost. In the form of *guru*, *guru-rupe*, Krishna bestows His mercy. Not just any *guru*: *krishna-kripa murti*. One whose heart bleeds for the conditioned soul's suffering, who takes away that suffering, frees one from Maya's fort, creates a mediation between the *jiva* and Krishna; one who can make Krishna appear in the heart of the disciple, who has that potency because he has made his heart like Vrindavana and

has bound up Krishna with his love. There's no question of a bad *guru*; if he's bad, how can he be *guru*? Only one who has fully assimilated all his *guru*'s teachings, is self-controlled and firmly established in the Truth can be *guru*. *Guru* means perfect servitor. One without any desire for himself or anything outside loving service to the Lord.

**4) But where are such sadhus?**

The eternal *guru-parampara* is always present and is still in existence in full purity and potency. One should learn to give up one's doubtful nature to be able to recognize true representatives of Sri Guru. You need to have *sadhu-sanga*. Hanker for their association. Cry to Krishna. Develop greed for it, *laulyam*. There are such personalities. If you can come to feel low and destitute, then you can beg for it. If one doesn't feel low and humble, he can't come in connection with higher things. No one ever got mercy from the Lord without crying for it. Have you cried and begged for it? Is Krishna bankrupt? To develop real devotion you need the grace of a pure realized devotee. Everything else is a compromise.

**5) What type of faith should the disciple have towards the guru?**

Real faith, not sentimental or blind faith. The disciple of a bona fide *guru* doesn't accept him simply out of sentiment, convention, or ecclesiastical order, but rather because he is so. It is not that simply by faith a conditioned soul becomes his eternal link with Krishna. It is not that because one has taken the position of *guru* he has all exalted qualities extolled in sastras, but the other way around. So, as we said, faith according to the worthiness of the recipient of that faith.

**6) But isn't the disciple supposed to see his guru as good as God?**

If the *guru* is as good as God. Inasmuch as the *guru* can give Krishna he should be seen as absolute. The disciple must find the best available *guru* to obtain Krishna. Where is it said that no matter what level he is on, a *guru* must be seen as good as God?

**7) But isn't it natural for a disciple to be fixed in the conclusion that his guru can never be subject to criticism?**

Therefore one should make sure he takes a 100% Krishna conscious *guru*. As mentioned by Narahari Sarkar, one shouldn't be a blind follower. Even a *guru* can be approached, in the proper way, of course, if he shows signs that are incompatible with his exalted position. And if a disciple hears something disturbing to his mind, he should consult with trustworthy seniors.

**8) But I heard that guru simply means to repeat.**

Is it really parrot-like repetition Prabhupada had in mind? *"That will not act. Not actually penetrating. If you don't act yourself, your words will have no value."* (Lecture 12.6.73) Basically this type of statement simply indicates to be a *guru* by preaching, not by initiating. And Prabhupada is also just making a point: Repeat as it is, don't manufacture. *"You'll be a guru and everything but don't speak nonsense. That is our request."* (Lecture 5.31.76) *"Don't adulterate the Krishna-upadesa. You simply present what Krishna says as it is. Don't adulterate."* (Lecture 3.28.75)

**9) Does a guru really have to be liberated?**

Srila Prabhupada wrote: *“Because the bound cannot help the bound, the rescuer must be liberated. Therefore, only Lord Krishna or his bona fide representative, the spiritual master, can release the conditioned soul.”* (BG 7.14);  
*“The spiritual master must be liberated. It doesn’t matter if he has come from Krishnaloka or he’s liberated from here. But he must be liberated. Unless one is a resident of Krishnaloka he cannot be a spiritual master. A layman cannot become a spiritual master, and if he becomes so then he will simply create disturbance.”* (Letter 10.6.69);  
*“A spiritual master is always liberated. This position of spiritual master is achieved by three processes, sadhana-siddha, kripa-siddha, nitya-siddha.”* (Letter 21.6.70);  
*“Unless one can find one transcendental to the four defects, one shouldn’t accept advice.”* (SBhag 5.14.86); *“If you don’t get knowledge from a liberated person, that knowledge is useless. That is cheating...Without being liberated nobody can guide anyone. That is useless.”* (Morning Walk 1.4.77)

#### 10) Does a guru have to be that qualified?

An unqualified person cannot for long live up to his disciples’ expectations. One may guide his followers as a *varṇa-pradarśhaka guru* until he is firmly established on the full *nistha* platform. That’s what Srila Prabhupada had in mind. And he warned: *“He was given the path of becoming a paramahansa. If he wants to imitate the uttama-adhikari, then he’s a rascal.”* (Morning Walk 4.2.74) or, *“Come on, unfit person, become acarya. Then another man comes, then another and another. As soon as it was announced that Guru Maharaja is dead, ‘Now I’m so advanced that I can kill guru and become guru!’? Nonsense.”* Prabhupada said clearly: *“If you want to know positively without any mistake who is God, then you have to approach a person like Sukadeva Goswami. You should take lesson from a self-realized soul who has understood, who has seen the truth, jñaninas tattva-darsinah: So one must have seen the truth, realized the truth. That is guru: One who has seen the truth. Not that the world has changed and that now we can interpret in this way or that way. It’s all nonsense. You cannot change a single alphabet of the sastras. They cannot be changed.”* (Lecture 6.24.72)

#### 11) But I have read in the Bhagavatam about a person not liberated being as good as liberated by following.

That purport of SB 4.18.5 should be properly understood. It states: *“Presently people are so fallen that they cannot distinguish between a liberated soul and a conditioned soul. A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects.”* One should note that the overall emphasis of the purport is on taking direction from liberated souls. The very next sentence is: *“Consequently we have to take direction from liberated persons.”* Those who are stated not to be able to distinguish are not neophyte devotees, but rather materialistic persons, as Prabhupada states: *“It has become fashionable to disobey the unimpeachable directions given by the acaryas and liberated souls of the past.... Materialistic men are not interested in taking directions from a liberated person, but they are very much interested in their own concocted ideas, which make them repeatedly fail in their attempts. Because the entire world is now following the imperfect directions of conditioned souls, humanity is completely bewildered.”*

Prabhupada mentions in this purport, *“Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of material nature. Lord Caitanya therefore*

says: 'By My order you may become a spiritual master.' *One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following his instructions.*" Because of this, some have lightly concluded that this is a license for becoming a *diksa-guru* although one may be a *kanistha-adbhikari*. But you cannot divorce this purport from the bulk of his teachings about what a *guru* is, especially when the whole point of this purport is that everyone must take instructions from liberated souls!

What Prabhupada is actually saying is: "*Don't worry, you may not be liberated yet, but if you follow me you are as good as liberated and you will be promoted to the liberated stage.*" As far as 'strict following' and full faith' are concerned, that indicates the *nistha* stage, without a doubt. "*Nistha*" also translates as "strict". And if following is the only qualification required, then a new devotee is also following. Can he be a *guru*? Yes, as Narahari Sarkar said that in *kali-yuga* all Vaisnavas are *guru*. But that means that he can teach someone less advanced, not that he should become a *diksa-guru*!

**12) There is also an early letter from Prabhupada to one Janardan dasa.**

Yes, but again, the whole point of the letter is that the *guru* must be liberated. And when Prabhupada says at the end that one who is less qualified or not liberated may act as a *guru* by strictly following the disciplic succession, you have to consider again that this strict following is only truly possible on the *nistha* platform, a little below liberation. Again you have to see that it is an encouragement letter from Prabhupada: "*Don't worry about perfection, just follow strictly and that is your perfection. Don't worry if you're not a pure devotee yet, it's not that one can become a pure devotee overnight, but if you follow your guru strictly, then you'll become completely purified.*"

Finally, you can give this letter and the Bhagavatam quote above a completely different reading. It can be taken as Prabhupada speaking about himself out of humility, nothing more, as he always humbly said that his only credit was that he was strictly following his Guru Maharaja. Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja personally confirmed this point to me.

**13) Some say that all the ISKCON gurus are liberated.**

There are *gurus* on different levels. Not all *gurus* are equal. Why blur distinctions? Why do the *sastras* speak of *siksa-guru* then? Just for some specific *jnana*? Prabhupada: "*Who is liberated? One who knows Krishna, in truth.*" (Letter 69) "*Mere theoretical academic understanding that Krishna is everything doesn't qualify one as a first-class devotee. One must have actually developed love for Krishna.*" (Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura) Prabhupada also mentions that some people imagine themselves to be liberated. And if they're liberated, how come so many fall down?

**14) I heard someone say that "If one insists on finding an uttama-adbhikari, he will end up in Radha-kunda where jackals, wolves and hyenas are waiting to devour his spiritual life."**

Then why did he stress in his teachings that *uttama-adbhikara* is the standard?

**15) I heard that Srila Prabhupada wrote in one letter that "if one discriminates that this one is a pure devotee and that one is not a pure devotee, that means he is a nonsense."**

The second part of the same letter should also be quoted, where it is written: *“Anyone, if he is a pure devotee, he can deliver others, he can become spiritual master. But unless he is on that platform he should not attempt it. Then both of them will go to hell, like blind men leading the blind.”* In many letters quoted out of context Prabhupada is just making a point like, *“Guru means to repeat and to follow”*, but that is not exclusive of the other necessary qualifications. Or when he says that the guru is like a postman: *“I don’t have to be perfect as long as I follow my perfect master.”* Such statements are made out of humility and to make the point that if someone presents Krishna’s message without adulteration his audience will greatly benefit. Again, is parrot-like repetition what he meant? No, the repetition must be from realization. Therefore he writes: *“The conclusion is that a spiritual master who is 100% Krishna conscious is the bona fide spiritual master.”* (BG 2.18)

Another point is that letters are highly personal stuff and therefore subjective, plus dependent on time, place and circumstance. If you take Prabhupada’s statements about the *guru* in a chronological order, as for *varnasrama-dharma* for instance, you get a better perspective. He obviously wanted all his disciples to become *gurus* when qualified to be so. He wanted to flood the world with Krishna consciousness and many *gurus* are needed for that, granted, it’s just a question of keeping clear and not blurring the issue.

**16) In Easy Journey, there’s mention of monitor guru, and Srila Prabhupada writes that one can take a limited number of disciples when he has completed the first twelve steps.**

Yes, but step eleven says specifically that there shouldn’t be any more *namaparadhas*. So that means minimum *nistha* stage, *namabhasa*. And it also mentions a limited number of disciples.

**17) I heard that Srila Prabhupada said in 1968 that maybe by 1975 all his disciples could initiate. What does that mean?**

I understand that Srila Prabhupada didn’t expect to be still with us by that time. He had such an immense faith in the purifying power of the Holy name and in Mahaprabhu’s mercy. He thought that his disciples could advance very quickly. And they did, given their background. In the same spirit he spoke at first denigratingly of *varnasrama-dharma*, praised his disciples like anything, how they were pure devotees, how they had become completely purified by the power of the name. But after a few years of experience, he started, around 1974, to speak about *varnasrama-dharma* in a completely different way; and when he was asked by a puzzled disciple, *“Isn’t it an offense to refer to a Vaisnava according to varna?”* he replied, *“If they’re Vaisnavas; why are so many going? Vaisnava is not so cheap.”* So he spoke in 1968 in a particular way, but never spoke about it again. He had also said *“maybe”*.

**18) I heard that Prabhupada wrote that in the absence of the guru you can accept disciples without limitation, that it’s the law of the disciplic succession? Isn’t that like an explicit right?**

Yes, of course, but don’t omit the first part of that letter (Tusta-Krishna 12.2.75) where Prabhupada first gives both the qualification and the process to become qualified as a *guru*, and expresses his hope that he will qualify himself, as well as the later part where he says: *“Keep trained up very rigidly and then you can be a bona fide*

*guru.*” One shouldn’t try to establish a new *siddhanta* upon some isolated fragment of the ‘*sastras*’ that is taken ‘completely out of context.’

**19) Can we conclude that these few quotes of Srila Prabhupada that seemingly authorize a liberal guru policy contradict the sastra?**

Srila Prabhupada is an ideal *acarya*. He would never contradict the *sastra*. We say that *guru*, *sastra* and *sadhu* are saying the same: That a *guru* may only be considered as such if his teachings are confirmed by *sadhu* and *sastra*, and that a *sadhu* may only be accepted as such if what he says is confirmed by *guru* and *sastra*; so the answer must be “No.” Only a misinterpretation is at work here.

**20) Some say that Prabhupada said that one should take risks for Krishna and that’s how one becomes recognized.**

The risk mentioned by Prabhupada is of a qualified *guru* taking the risk of accepting an unqualified disciple, not the risk taken by becoming *guru* before being qualified: “*One who doesn’t like to take the risk [of accepting as a disciple someone who is not qualified] he doesn’t take the risk of preaching. But one who takes the risk, he’s recognized by Krishna immediately.... But he must know where to take risk and where it is to act foolishly.*” (Conversation 7.8.75)

**21) Sometimes I wonder who is really qualified.**

You may say that you don’t recognize anyone, but are you praying and begging to see one. Where is your faith? Is Krishna bankrupt? He only had one *mahabhagavata* left in his pocket, and now he’s broke? Indeed, pure devotional service is most rare, not *durlabha* but *sudurlabha*. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati has defined a pure devotee as a Vaisnava who has transcended all desires for enjoying wealth, women and distinction (Vaisnava Ke 11), but Srila Bhaktivinode Thakura says that this is an eternal process and that *mahabhagavatas* are always available. We had the good fortune to have one in ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada, then another one, Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja. Do you mean to say that all the new disciples in ISKCON are condemned to settle for second or third class? There are always unalloyed devotees on this planet. Just as there is no purpose to the universe without sun and moon, there’s no purpose to this earth planet without pure devotees. They are verily the ornaments of the Earth. This is what the *acaryas* have taught.

**22) Others say that there are many uttama-adhikaris in ISKCON.**

They might be referring here to the most broad statements of Srila Prabhupada, like in the Nectar of Instruction, but even these so-called broad statements, if you analyze them, are not cheap definitions, as mentioned before. What about the other qualifications and symptoms mentioned in *sastras*? *Uttama-adhikara* begins at *bhava*. If you read the descriptions of the *asakti-bhakta*, which is even the stage below *bhava*, in the Madhurya-Kadambini, you will be amazed. Anyway, an *uttama* Vaisnava doesn’t care to be recognized as such. His humility is not theoretical. It is coming from the soul, which is humble by nature. He genuinely feels the most fallen.

**23) Doesn’t it take an uttama-adhikari to recognize one?**

We accepted Srila Prabhupada as one. How? Are we such? No, but we accepted because he was decorated with the signs of a *mahabhagavata*. It’s not that there are

no symptoms. This is not a *sastric* argument: “*Oh, you must be very qualified yourself to tell that so many gurus are not qualified.*” Why does Srila Rupa Goswami advise to evaluate the Vaisnavas to deal properly with the three levels of *adhikara*? Why does Srila Prabhupada write that a disciple, specifically a new devotee, what to speak of a 20-plus year one, should be intelligent enough to recognize and accept an *uttama-adhikari* as *guru*? Why does Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati say that one must distinguish *guru* from *laghu*? (*Guru* means heavy, *laghu* means light.) Why does Srila Jiva Goswami say that since one should accept an *uttama-adhikari* as *guru*, many additional symptoms have been given so that one will not make mistakes in choosing a *guru*? (SB 11.2.48) True, one cannot see the inner *bhava* or sentiment, but *laksana*, symptoms, are also there.

**24) Some tell their disciples, “I’m only a *madhyam-adhikari*.”**

First, generally the disciples think it is out of humility. Second, *madhyam-adhikara* is vast and vague, but also not cheap. *Tattva-bhrama*, philosophical misconceptions, and *namaparadhas*, to name only two, are *anarthas*. Unless one is free from them, he is still in *kanistha-adhikara*, somewhere in *anartha-nivritti* stage, or enjoying the waves (*taranga-rangini*) of *bhajana-kriya*. Third, if one truly believes he’s unqualified or not very qualified, then he should send his disciples to someone more advanced for *siksa*. Maybe he doesn’t see anyone more advanced, so where is his humility? Last, but not least, we should not even consider ourselves as Vaisnavas, much less as *madhyamas*. Bhaktivinode Thakura sings: “*Ami to vaisnava, e buddhi haile: I should never let the thought that ‘I am a Vaisnava’ enter my heart and pollute it with false pride, and thereby glide down to hell.*” We should always consider ourselves as aspiring Vaisnavas.

**25) Some say that we have to be practical, that, “Utility is the principle.”**

Prabhupada was not practical? Practical means that one accepts the *guru*’s words even though he may not have the vision of how it will happen. Practical doesn’t mean to alter the process and jettison the *siddhanta*. It should be made clear that Srila Prabhupada’s departure created an emergency and that in an emergency you may do something wrong. To err is human. But once the error has been identified why insist on making it? What was wrongly done in an emergency shouldn’t become the standard. Practical adjustments contrary to the *siddhanta* are not bona fide. Also, we have seen the result in the past. Zonal *gurus* seemed practical too. Devotees were united around one single master and they had much association with him, but it was not bona fide and it created a lot of difficulties for many devotees, to say the least.

**26) But it is said that even at *ruci* there are still *anarthas*, even up to *prema*.**

Granted, but only a faint trace, like an odor. For instance, in Jaiva Dharma one Vaisnava inquires what is his level or *adhikara*. He then describes that when he chants the name, tears of ecstasy fill his eyes, and he is entranced, and rolls on the ground, but that he likes when the Vaisnavas see him like that. So he is told, “You are a *madhyam-adhikari*.” One may say, “See, he still has *pratistha*.” Yes, a faint aroma of it. But he is crying out of ecstasy as soon as he chants! Granted, Prabhupada didn’t do like that and, given the tendency for *sahajiya*-ism, he never talked much about it for obvious reasons, but he wrote about it in the Caitanya Caritamṛta, which he called the postgraduate study.



**27) I read that a disciple may go beyond his diksa-guru and elevate him.**

Yes, that's possible, if the *guru* is of a lower category, but only by a connection with a living *uttama adhikari*, as child Dhruva with Narada Muni could elevate his mother Suniti, who was considered his *vartma-pradarshaka-guru* since she had first shown him the path.

**28) What does transparent via medium mean?**

To consult a bona fide spiritual master means to consult Krishna. You cannot see Svayam Bhagavan Krishna directly, but you can see Him in his Guru-rupa. That's a form of God you can see and consult. Ideally the *guru* should be a Bhagavan-realized soul. Then he is transparent. "*A bona fide spiritual master who is fully cognizant of the methods of spiritual science learned in the spiritual scriptures and who is also a realized soul who has made a tangible connection with the Supreme Lord, is the transparent medium by which the willing candidate is led to the path of the Vaikunthas.*" (Easy Journey pp.32-33), and "*Transparent means that the via medium must be free of contamination. If it is transparent, one can see through it.*" (Science of Self Realization p.283) That's the standard, and full-fledged *nistha* is more or less tantamount to liberated, *brahma-bhuta*. That's the beginning of self-realization.

**29) Srila Prabhupada said not to be amazed who goes but to be amazed who stays.**

So some say that those who have stayed have shown they are sincere and those who have left have shown they were not sincere.

Srila Prabhupada was always concerned about those who had left. Even years after, he was inquiring about them. He wanted them to come back. The *guru* is filled with affection for his children-disciples. His heart is soft, not hard like ours, so insensitive and prone to reject without considering what is our share of responsibility for their departure from our ranks. It's a little too simplistic to write off those who leave us as too insincere or too attached to Maya. Some may have become so. I don't mean to be a lawyer for nonsense devotees. But we have to see that many devotees left due to mistreatment, poor example, etc., and we have to be willing to try to help them. If after treating them with kindness they prove to be hopeless cases, then we may consider some other course of action. But only then.

**30) How much should one accept the official version given by the authorities?**

You may have a misunderstanding about who is a spiritual authority. The GBC Body, for instance, was made the ultimate managerial authority by Srila Prabhupada, not the ultimate spiritual authority. Its role was defined by Prabhupada as making sure everything going on in his Society is on the basis of the triple authority, *guru-sastra-sadhu*. Prabhupada called it the watchdog of ISKCON. It is a fact that you have to confirm your understanding with your authorities, but make sure you accept the right persons as authorities. Everyone is advised to study the Vaisnava philosophy from all angles of vision. Srila Prabhupada said to surrender with one's intelligence, not to surrender one's intelligence. He never encouraged blind faith, blind following. *Pariprasna*, asking questions, is part of the process of acceptance of authority. Philosophical debate is healthy. Srila Prabhupada recommended it to strengthen one's mind and faith, mature one's understanding, etc. To discuss *guru-tattva* is of paramount importance. Of course, we have to try to do it in the most detached and dispassionate way possible, but if

some people get impassioned while speaking about it, passion shouldn't be a reason to reject the whole thing. You have to be careful, though, of being offensive, or too skeptical, or to fall into faultfinding. This process is eternal, and a qualified guru, although rare, is always available. Pray and cry for it.

**31) Some say that as the guru advances, his disciples advance, and the disciples seem healthy.**

Of course they make advancement. But *kanistha* disciples making advancement within *kanistha* is not necessarily an indication that the *guru* is bona fide or a liberated soul. What about those who haven't found a *guru* yet or whose 'guru' has fallen down? They also advance. All our congregation members who are following the path are also advancing. But it's all relative: "*Unless the guru is God-realized one cannot make progress in the transcendental science of the Lord.*" (SBhag.2.4.10) And "*Only a pure devotee can convert others to pure devotional service. It's therefore important for all the preachers in our movement to first become pure devotees.*" (CC Madhya 24.98) Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura says that disciples of *gurus* who are not self-realized will ultimately become dejected and lose faith. It's not so simple to dismiss such statements because some devotees are doing nicely. How nicely and for how long? And, as far as the *guru* is concerned, if one is not ready, it's very risky to take on a big load. It will be difficult to progress. It is mainly up to the disciple to determine whether his *guru* is qualified or not, but the senior's duty is to help him; *sastra* advises to study the eligibility of the *guru* (and of the disciple). The disciple shouldn't be lazy and foolish, thinking that everything is fine, the *guru* advances and so does he. And lower *gurus* need an *uttama siksa guru* to keep on advancing. That's the way it works.

**32) What does it mean that Mahaprabhu has ordered everyone to become a guru?**

How has Srila Prabhupada commented on this verse? The order is to preach to everyone. To preach to everyone does not automatically mean to become their *diksa guru*. "*It is better not to accept any disciples.*" It is said that in the presence of better qualified *gurus* one should not venture to accept disciples. (Hari Bhakti Vilas) And even when the order to become a *guru* is given, it doesn't mean it must be immediately taken up. Look at Srila Prabhupada's example. Look at Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja. It's not an appointment; it's an order to qualify oneself. Develop the qualifications first: "*One has to become purified by chanting.*" So, if one preaches, achieves the platform of offenseless chanting and liberation, he can then be a *diksa-guru*. Not that because he preaches he is automatically a bona fide *guru*. Mostly this means give *siksa*, like when Prabhupada quoted the *amara ajnaya* verse during a sannyasa initiation lecture (3.16.76): "*Present as it is Bhagavad Gita. Then you become a guru. You can become a guru in your family... wherever you are.*"

**33) What did it mean when Srila Prabhupada said to do as he did?**

There's a difference between following and imitating. "*One shouldn't try to imitate the powerful.*" (Gita Lecture 30.12.68); "*You cannot imitate, then you'll fall down.*" (Conversation 4.6.74) The same is repeated in Caitanya Caritamrta Madhya 17.185. One has first to be a consummate follower before he can even think of becoming one whom disciples will look up to as their lord and master. Prabhupada never appointed non-liberated disciples to occupy the seat of *guru*. Didn't he stress

so much the qualifications of *guru*?

**34) But are you sure that Prabhupada didn't appoint gurus?**

He didn't. He said: *"On my order. He is actually guru. But by my order."* And a little further: *"When I order 'you become guru' he becomes regular guru"*. (May 77 tape) So, when did he give that order? In July, right? Wrong. That's the time he gave the list of *ritviks*. The best proof of this conclusion is that when TKG asked him: *"But they are your disciples?"*, Prabhupada answered *"Yes."* and when he was giving the list of names, when he was asked: *"What about India?"* Prabhupada incredulously answered: *"In India? I am here."* So he was obviously referring only to *ritviks* (and only during his lifetime). A year before in an interview he had said: *"I am training each one of them as leader."* (7.14.76) Just like he had said one month earlier in April: *"Yes, I shall say who is guru, Now you become acarya. You become authorized. I am waiting for that. You become, ALL, acarya.... But the training must be complete."* You see, he didn't specify eleven people. He said *"ALL"*.

And when TKG said: *"The process of purification must be there,"* Prabhupada said, *"Oh yes, must be there. Caitanya Mahaprabhu wants that. Amara ajnaya guru hana. You become guru. But be qualified. Little thing, (chuckles), strictly follower."* TKG: *"Not rubber stamp."* Srila Prabhupada, *"Then you'll not be effective. You can cheat, but it will not be effective."* You see, again "strict follower", indicating *nistha*. Prabhupada chuckled because a *sadhu* can read the heart and he knew that many wanted to be *guru* at that time. Some had been contemplating the idea for years. So, in April he says this and the next month he appoints them as *gurus*? Just think! Later on, in October, Srila Prabhupada was told that a Bengali gentleman came for initiation, and Prabhupada said: *"I have deputed some of you to initiate.... I have stopped for the time being... this initiation. I have deputed my disciples. Is it clear or not?... You have got list of names? And if by Krishna's grace I recover from this condition, then I shall begin again or I may not, but in this condition to initiate is not good."* So, it is clear again he had only named *ritviks*, not *gurus*, and that it was just because he was physically unable. He seemed not to remember exactly who was on the list, proof that it was *ritviks*, nothing more, otherwise, as mentioned by TKG: *"You can bet your bottom dollar that if it had been more than that, Prabhupada would have spoken for days and hours and weeks on end about how to set up this thing with the gurus, but he didn't because he already had said it a million times. He said 'My Guru Maharaja did not appoint anyone. It's by qualification.'" (Pyramid House Talks)*

Prabhupada had also said: *"It's not that I'll give an order, 'Here is the next leader.' Anyone who follows the previous leadership is a leader. All my disciples are leaders as much as they follow purely. Leader means one who is a first class disciple. One who is perfectly following."* (BTG Vol 1977)

So, one must be qualified, strict follower (*nistha*) minimum AND receive the order. How is that order perceived? Prabhupada writes, *"It requires special benedictions from higher authorities."* and, *"By His order only one should become a spiritual master and cooperate with the Lord."* (SB 1.13.48) and, *"One who is not authorized by the Lord cannot become a spiritual master."* (SB 1.19.36) When one achieves higher stages of realization, in *madhyam adhikara*, he may receive the indication from his *guru* and Krishna to take that role. Until then he should work on qualifying himself, and that is best done if one has the backing or an advanced

bona fide *siksa-guru*.

In a late conversation with Prabhupada, his Godbrother, HH Bhakti Vaibhava Puri Maharaja asked Prabhupada why he had made eleven *gurus* instead of one and Prabhupada answered that he had not made *gurus* but *ritviks*. Puri Maharaja then said that they will become *gurus* after Prabhupada leaves and Prabhupada answered, "What can I do now? It is not in my power anymore."

Most of the original eleven, beginning with TKG in 1980, have already themselves admitted that they were not appointed. Srila Prabhupada did not appoint anyone and he did not forbid anyone. He gave the qualifications of a *guru* and issued warnings. He has given some encouragement, maybe even some license for less experienced *gurus* in low *madhyam-adhikara*, but not for presenting themselves as recipients of absolute surrender and faith, as *saksad-hari*! By the way, there, are five different interpretations of that May 1977 "appointment" tape! Only one can be correct though. And I am not speaking about the different "original versions" and of the apparent doctoring of that conversation...

If Prabhupada had appointed *diksa-gurus*, then why did they fall down? Srila Prabhupada lacked the spiritual intelligence to determine that the eleven were not immune to fall-downs? The only possible conclusion is that some disciples misunderstood and disobeyed his orders. Is it reasonable to think that Prabhupada would order unqualified persons to take up the duties of liberated souls, including a couple of known homo-sexuals? Why would Prabhupada suddenly contradict by an appointment what he had said all these years? Those who still accept that dubious theory have a problem in their relationship with him.

Another way to look at it is that Srila Prabhupada was well aware of the mentality and intentions of some of his disciples. He manifested his compassion by not giving a direct stem order, disobedience of which would be *guru-avajna*, big offense to his lotus feet. He didn't appoint any number of devotees as *gurus*, nor did he forbid anyone. He had given profusely detailed information on the subject and had issued severe warnings against imitation-guruship using terms such as "rascal", "cheater", "hell-bound", etc. He expected all his disciples to become *gurus*, but not by rubber stamp.

**35) It seems like you are saying that Srila Prabhupada was cheating some of his ambitious disciples?**

He said himself on different occasions that he was cheating. In Bombay, when the devotees approached him complaining about being cheated by the Indians, Srila Prabhupada first answered that he was also Indian; when the devotees protested that he was not cheating them, he replied that he had actually cheated all of us because we would have never come to that path if we had known what was in store. The saintly persons cheat, but in that cheating transaction the cheated party still benefits.

Srila Prabhupada said so many things people wanted to hear, and sometimes he would speak in a way because they were not ready to hear more. But that doesn't mean that it was automatically the *tattva* or *siddhanta* on that subject. Sometimes, for teaching or preaching, the *siddhanta* may not be completely or clearly given.

Also, the spiritual master may give instructions according to the personal motivations of the disciples: We already said that the guru has two things: *kripa*, mercy, and *vanchana*, cheating. Srila Gour Kishora das Babaji said: “*Our guru, Lord Nityananda, cheats pseudo-devotees by supplying their material wants but depriving them of love of Godhead.*” (Two Beyond Duality) In Brhad Bhagavatamrita, Sanatana Goswami writes that many devotees express that they didn’t receive mercy but cheating. So, not only does one need a qualified *guru* but one needs to be a qualified disciple. As *sat-guru* is rare, so is *sat-sisya*. Srila Prabhupada wanted every one of his followers to become *gurus* when they were qualified. And he clearly taught what were these qualifications, what was acceptable in an emergency and what wasn’t.

Prabhupada did not appoint *gurus* and that should be clearly understood and broadcasted.

### 36) How can one rectify a situation?

One should act in such a way that Mahaprabhu will rectify. One shouldn’t think that he himself can rectify. One can act with the hope that if Krishna will be pleased with the attempt then He may rectify. Dependence on Krishna is certainly the way to go. However that doesn’t preclude addressing controversial issues. It is actually the duty of a disciple to protest against deviation from the *guru’s* teachings.

### 37) Should there have been a World-Acarya?

(BACK THEN IN 1994 I HAD SENT TO THE GBC A LIST OF SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SITUATION. ONE OF THEM WAS TO HAVE SRILA GOUR GOVINDA SWAMI AS ACARYA.)

An *uttama-adhikari*, who alone is qualified to take the position of World-Acarya, could have stayed in the Society without taking the position of Acarya, provided he was not driven out by the politics of neophytes, whether Godbrothers or nephews. Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu in *Serving Srila Prabhupada’s Will* wrote: “*One can be a great acarya on the topmost platform as a diksa-guru without taking the seat at the head of the institution.*” That is perfectly correct, but we shouldn’t underestimate the importance of having a recognized really fully qualified *sadhu* from whom to get the proper *siddhantas* on different *tattvas*, to strengthen the Mission, and to prevent more deviations such as *sahajiya*-ism from creeping in. An aspiring disciple could refer to the standards he set as a sort of yardstick in order to ascertain the bonafides of his chosen *guru*. Whether he should have been put at the head of the institution is another thing.

Personal considerations should have been sacrificed for the sake of the mission. This can be seen as a test of humility and dedication. To give up one’s false pride that “*I am a senior Srila Prabhupada disciple personally trained by His Divine Grace. I had so much personal association with him. I’m a big preacher and I made so many devotees. I’m a big GBC man and I control so many countries. I’m a big guru and I have so many disciples.*” or, “*It can only be my Guru.*”

Given the narrow, competitive and envious nature of the Westerners, Srila Prabhupada had to devise a trick to give *sannyasa* to Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja: He made him the priest of his own *sannyasa* ceremony! There was 2 *dandas* and sets of *sannyasa* clothes, but only one candidate sitting at the *yajna*, Tripurari prabhu. Prabhupada asked the *sannyasa* candidates to come forward. He did first and

received his *danda* and clothes. Everyone was looking around, not knowing who was the other candidate. Then, from behind the fire, Gour Govinda prabhu got up and came forward, at everyone's great surprise. Then, for about 20 minutes he glorified Prabhupada, who sat back, reclining in his Vyasasana and then said, with tears in his eyes and a choked voice, "*This is how one should glorify the spiritual master.*" After, the "senior devotees" approached Prabhupada, reproaching him, "*Why did you give him sannyasa? He is a new man!*" to which Prabhupada replied, "*You are the new men! He is a pure Vaisnava from birth!*" So, imagine if Prabhupada has made him the *acarya*. They would have probably killed him!

### 38) Some say it could and can only be Prabhupada.

He was the Acarya during his physical presence, and, as the Founder-Acarya, he will always occupy a prominent position in the Movement. Everyone feels the need for an Acarya, a perfect *sadhu*. *Guru-sastra-sadhu* can't all be the same person. If Srila Prabhupada is the *guru*, his books *sastra*, what about *sadhu*? Acarya is natural. Some were presented as chosen Successor-Acaryas, each with his own private zone. Some went and go about it in an extreme way and it gives *ritvik-vada*. Some went to Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja. Some turned to his appointed Successor-Acarya, HH Govinda Maharaja. Some became Acaryas of their own separate missions. Some went to other Acaryas of the Gaudiya Math.

### 39) Isn't there traditionally a head in any institution?

Naturally. The Gaudiya Math broke down into different Societies, which all have a head. That it broke down is bad, not that each Society has a head. Unity gives great strength to a preaching mission: United we stand, divided we fall. Due to a misunderstanding some have, given a very bad name to the concept of Acarya, which is a completely bona fide option, thereby causing the famous pendulum effect: eleven "*acaryas*" to no Acarya: thesis to antithesis. The proper synthesis was one Acarya with *gurus* at least on the *nistha* stage. Everyone would have benefitted from this. When you see the disasters that followed the so-called appointment, the erroneous zonal *guru* system, and the other concocted theories, yeah, definitely an *acarya* of the caliber of Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja would have been a pure blessing!

The story could have been quite different if Srila Prabhupada's instructions and vision had only been understood. There should have been a waiting period, with the GBC doing its regular job and the preaching going on. Without the whole concoction about so-called appointments, those who would have reached the qualification of perfect followers, full-*nistha*, would have emerged quite naturally and would have quietly started to initiate without taking any specific position in our Society. Not being weighed down by all the trappings surrounding their false "*acarya*" position, the eleven could have more readily advanced, and some of those who unfortunately left maybe would still be there. In such a non-jealous atmosphere of love and trust a self-effulgent Acarya would have easily been accepted and recognized.

Srila Prabhupada explained us the mind of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta and gave us a stern warning not to try to create artificially *gurus*. It is a pity that it was not heeded: "If Guru Maharaja would have seen someone who was qualified at that time to be Acarya, he would have mentioned.... His idea was Acarya was not to be nominated

amongst the Governing Body. He said openly, “*You make a GBC and conduct the mission.*” So his idea was that amongst the GBC, who would come out successfully and self-effulgent, *acarya* would be selected. [One “*acarya*” was unauthorizedly selected who later fell down. ].... *The result is that now everyone is claiming to be acarya even though they may be kanistha adhikari. Therefore we may not commit the same mistake in our ISKCON camp.*” (Letter 28.4.74)

By telling us about his Guru Maharaja’s mind in this way, he was giving a hint that this is what we were supposed to do ourselves. Vaisnavas are simple like a child, not crooked. They don’t think themselves the controller. They feel like an instrument in the Lord’s hand. Having danced as Krishna made them dance, they leave it up to Him how He wants things to go on and whom He wants next to dance on the stage. Srila Prabhupada said about Srila Bhaktisiddhanta: “*His idea was ‘Let them manage; then whoever will be qualified for becoming Acarya, he’ll manifest. Why should I enforce it upon them?’ That was his plan. Let them manage by strong governing body, as it is going on. Then Acarya will come by his qualifications.*” (Letter 21.9.73) The completely pure devotee belongs to the intimate entourage of Srimati Radharani (*nikunjayuno ratikeli siddhyai*). He doesn’t try to take Her position, but leaves it up to Her to pick up whom She wants. She is in charge of the mercy-department, the source of saving grace, *svarupa-sakti*.

#### 40) Didn’t Srila Prabhupada warn against making an Acarya?

Against “making” one, yes, but not against recognizing one. What Srila Prabhupada warned against was “self-appointed *acaryas*,” to “artificially create a perfect man,” to “unauthorizedly appoint a successor-*acarya*,” to “fight over who would be the next *acarya*.” He never said that there wouldn’t or shouldn’t be an Acarya or there couldn’t be a perfect man. Srila Prabhupada warns, “*One should not be unnecessarily envious of his godbrothers. Rather, if a godbrother is more enlightened and advanced in Krishna Consciousness, one should accept him as almost equal to the spiritual master, and one should be happy to see such godbrothers advance in Krishna Consciousness.*” (SB 3.32.42)

#### 41) Isn’t it incompatible with the GBC?

Why? Since Srila Prabhupada wrote in his Will that “*the system of management will continue as it is now, and there is no need of any change*”, the GBC system could continue in parallel with an Acarya. It is not that the Acarya is automatically the authority for all material affairs, although all can benefit from his higher vision and connections, and he can be consulted. He is the authority for spiritual affairs, and the management is done locally by the local leaders under the supervision of the GBC. Elsewhere, Srila Prabhupada said the same: “*My spiritual master left advice that ‘You should work combinedly, and who is acarya, he will come out.’*” (Lecture 19.4.67) An Acarya was never ruled out by Srila Prabhupada. He did as Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati had done and established a GBC. In an interview he said, “*The committee may elect a person as chief... so it maybe. I may or they can nominate.*” (6.4.76)

Fighting against the unauthorized system of “Successor-Acaryas”, Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu strongly objected that there could not be a Successor-Acarya to Srila Prabhupada. There shouldn’t be a self-appointed, unauthorized one, granted, but that didn’t rule out the eventuality of a genuine, recognized one. In response to

Ravindraji, Hridayananda Swami rightfully wrote: *"There is no evidence that the Acarya position necessarily automatically contradicts the authority of a central GBC."* and further *"Srila Prabhupada never indicated that we should reserve the grand title of Acarya for him, but rather that we should qualify his Acarya-title as 'Founder-Acarya', clearly to distinguish himself from other Acaryas who would act within his ISKCON."*

**42) Some say that we didn't and don't need an Acarya. We have Srila Prabhupada.**

I don't want to obscure Srila Prabhupada's position in any way, especially for his initiated disciples. Srila Prabhupada is always there in *vani* for those who follow him strictly. His instructions on the guru are clear: take a living, bona fide guru. And he clearly defined what he meant by that. So, *"He lives forever and the follower lives with him."* Yes, so now it's time to study more closely his instructions. And go back to following them as it is. If you don't follow his instructions you cannot perceive how he is always there.

**43) By whom and how could an Acarya be recognized?**

First, we had to change our outlook. We had to understand the need for one and keep in the forefront the desire for the association of such an exalted soul, not try to suppress him, envy him, be afraid of him, slander him. And pray. Then Krishna would have revealed who it was at the appropriate time. Srila Prabhupada mentions about Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's idea that the GBC will elect the Acarya. I don't know if that means automatically by voting, as Prabhupada said that votes have no jurisdiction in that realm, although in the interview I quoted above he mentions the word 'elect', and 'nominate; or by simply begging and petitioning him to kindly accept the heavy weight of leading our prestigiously named Brahma-Madhva-Bhaktivedanta-Gaudiya sampradaya. An *uttama* Vaisnava doesn't feel anyone's competitor nor superior, but rather a servant of all.

**44) What makes you think that there was necessarily someone qualified as Acarya?**

Ravindra Svarupa Prabhu again: *"Couldn't Prabhupada have produced one such fit disciple?"* (ISKCON Journal) Virabahu Prabhu, in his book, *"Are we saying that Prabhupada was successful in everything, except in making even one disciple who could represent the parampara?"*

**45) You spoke a lot on the siksa guru. Why?**

As far as Prabhupada's disciples are concerned, it can be said that they need help to make them recognize mercy when it comes. That help can come in the form of a *siksa-guru*. The moment one thinks, *"I have my guru, I don't need anyone else."* his progress stops and he stagnates. This process is a living thing, and it's always available for one who cries for spiritual progress toward the lotus feet of Guru-Krishna. *"It is our duty to associate with a sadhu who is better than ourselves."* (Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Thakur) *"If one doesn't surrender to a living Bhagavata he cannot understand the Srimad Bhagavatam."* (Lecture 20.6.72) *"One has to take lessons from a live Bhagavata."* (Lecture 20.11.75) *"The more one makes progress under the guidance of the Bhagavatas, the more one becomes fixed up in the transcendental loving service of the Lord."* (SB 1.2.18)

There are so many instructions in Prabhupada's books, so how can one know which one apply to his particular case and level of advancement? *"The student must enquire*



from a guru. He must be very inquisitive, jijnasuh, otherwise, how he'll progress? If he remains dumb, what can the guru do?" (Lecture 23.9.69) "You're doing your service. How will you know if you're doing it properly or not? This you'll know from a guru." (Lecture 69) "Bhagavata-sevaya doesn't mean just to read Gita and Bhagavatam, but we have to study from the person Bhagavata. That is required. Go to the person Bhagavata who is a realized soul. You just associate with the person Bhagavata who is realized soul and hear from him the same book, the same knowledge." (Lecture 25.2.75) "Not only should we read Srīmad Bhagavatam, but we should also serve the person Bhagavata." (Teachings of Lord Kapila, ch9) "This is the secret. Unless one is self-realized, svanubhavana, his life is Bhagavata, he cannot preach Bhagavata. That will not be effective. And a gramophone will not help. Therefore, if you want to read Srīmad Bhagavatam, you must approach a person whose life is living Bhagavatam. Otherwise there's no question of Bhagavata realization." (Lecture 27.5.74) "As you take help from a lawyer to utilize the lawbook, you have to utilize the sastra by accepting a guru who can guide you. He is like a lawyer. If you don't accept, then go on suffering." (Lecture 24.66)

As far as disciples of present gurus are concerned, the point is that we have put too much emphasis on initiation. Gurus should be seen according to their spiritual stature. Whereas the initiating guru is not necessarily the foremost instructing guru, we have almost always taken it for granted that such should be the case. But pure and potent siksa is utterly essential for deliverance. There are gurus whose power of deliverance is limited, as explained in Nectar of Instruction, verse 5, end of purport. As long as one is afflicted by anarthas and can't guarantee his own deliverance, will the process of deliverance of his disciples be a mysterious thing on which his lack of advancement and concomitant qualifications have no bearing? "For knowledge you have to go to the right person, a tattva-darshi, which means one who has actually seen or experienced the Absolute Truth. Unless you find such a person, there very little chance of spiritual advancement." (Lecture 17.8 66)

Another point is that the siksa guru helps one to understand the teachings of one's diksa guru and to go deeper into them. It is not that he teaches something different, something one's guru never advised, another path. Prabhupada wrote that it's not that one calls guru someone who teaches something different from one's bona fide guru.

**46) But didn't Prabhupada say that there was no question of separation between the guru and the disciple? Why then speak of a siksa-guru?**

"There is no question of ever separation as long as the disciple follows the instruction of guru." (Conversation 7.21.75) That's one thing. Next, a siksa-guru doesn't conflict with the diksa-guru. To take shelter and instruction from a siksa-guru will help even his disciples increase their appreciation of Prabhupada's wonderful qualities and contributions.

**47) Some say that the leaders had a lot of association with Srila Prabhupada.**

Yes, but consider "Unless one is enlightened by the knowledge given by the spiritual master, he cannot see things as they are, even though he remains constantly with the guru." (CC Madhya 18.99) Prabhupada's limited physical association with his guru, and Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja's are proofs that physical association with the guru is not the be-all.

**48) But his leaders seemed to be so faithful to him.**

Yes, but Srila Prabhupada wrote about one of his godbrothers that *“he was doing very nicely during his Guru Maharaja’s presence, but after his disappearance he became a party man. It may always happen”*. Also, his leaders had faithfully served him, but some wanted so much a position. So maybe to encourage them he gave them a position. He was engaging everyone, and at the same time, due to his presence and immense spiritual strength, he could ensure a certain cooperative spirit.

**49) But they seemed very sincere.**

Yes, but they were not the only sincere devotees. And sincerity is not everything. Isn’t it said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions? One can be sincerely mistaken, sincerely misled. Also, the trappings surrounding the position into which some have set themselves prevent them from having a very objective vision. No amount of sincerity can save one from the overwhelming dangers of assuming a position way beyond his realization; without such practical realization sincerity is mere sentiment, wishful thinking.

**50) Some say that the leaders are advanced devotees who are recipients of Srila Prabhupada’s mercy.**

Mercy comes by installment. And if one claims he has gotten it, he is. a self-deceiver. All our *acaryas* have lamented that they couldn’t develop real devotion, couldn’t receive mercy. Also Mercy, may come in different ways: *“When childish people think themselves mahabhagavatas and act in defiance of the Vaisnava guru, such behavior simply holds them back from receiving the mercy of the Vaisnava guru. Bewildered by false ego, such self-acclaimed devotees gradually become fit to be ignored by pure devotees on the intermediate platform and are cheated of the mercy that comes from the devotee’s satisfaction.... Pure devotees display indifference to those who falsely imagine themselves to be visuddha-bhaktas or pure devotees. This indifference is an excellent manifestation of their mercy.”* (Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, quoted in SB 11.2)

# Sri Guru-Tattva Part VI

## Questions & Answers 51 to 100

**51) But those leading devotees seem to do so much service.**

Yes, but still you may consider the following: *“Typically the kanistha-adhikari is eager to engage his materialistic qualifications in the service of the Lord, mistaking such material expertise to be the sign of advanced devotion.”* (SB 11.2) Don’t just see externally. Some of those who left had so much sakti to spread this movement, but they were not bona fide gurus. It was material expertise. Also, preaching success based on misconceptions is shallow. Srila Prabhupada called his godbrothers kanisthas, although they had been practicing for 40 or 50 years. Another thing is

that even if one has supposedly progressed to the madhyam platform, he may later on regress due to aparadhas, especially guru-aparadha and Vaisnava-aparadha.

**52) Do the sastras mention about the possibility of a guru falling down?**

Again, there's no question of a bad *guru*. "Gurus" of a lower standard may fall down but they are only *gurus* by name. In our tradition no one was so irresponsible to take the position of *guru* without being qualified. It may have happened, but it is so rare that the *acaryas* themselves don't deal with it very extensively. It is not a topic that comes up again and again. Also, falldown may not be gross sensual falldown. It may mean remaining stuck on the platform of *misra-bhakti* and being denied access to pure *bhakti*. Ramacandra Puri was considered fallen even though he didn't grossly fall down. Krishnadas Kaviraja Goswami also mentioned that his brother "fell down" by disrespecting Lord Nityananda Prabhu.

**53) What about re-initiation?**

First, it is not a question of re-initiation but of initiation. The first one never took place. Take it as a dream. *Diksa*, initiation, is not a ceremony. As we said it earlier, it actually means the transmission of *divya-jnana* and the deliverance from material bondage. That is *diksa*. If one is unable to do these two things, he doesn't deserve the title of *diksa-guru*. One should see people as they are, rather than as they imagine themselves or their disciples imagine them to be. When a "*guru*" falls, he proves thereby that he was not a guru to begin with. He was not on the platform of self-realization. He was simply propagating the false idea that he was capable of delivering his disciples from birth and death, that he was senior and advanced, that he had high realizations, that his *siksa* had the potency of that of *uttama-adhikaris*, and that his disciples should depend exclusively on him for deliverance. So all his utterings or *mantras* are unfruitful and invalidated. Srila Jiva Goswami mentions that if the *guru* is fallen or an *avaisnava* he should be rejected and one should receive the *mantra* from a qualified Vaisnava *guru*. One may object that one can only have one *diksa guru* but Srila Jiva Goswami explains that when the previous *guru* is rejected and a new *guru* is accepted, that rejection indicates that the new *guru* becomes the singular *diksa guru* for that person. (Bhakti-sandarbha 207) The main idea of "re-initiation" is that one develops a relationship with a genuine sadhu and takes guidance from him. Whether this is formalized by some ceremony is up to the concerned parties. The entire, stress in the process of *diksa* is not on the externals but on the substance. One should make sure that the person he approaches is not another quack. Srila Prabhupada has advised, "*Unless one is personally a realized soul in the science of Krishna consciousness, a neophyte should not approach him to hear about the Lord. Such a person is supposed to be released from lust or material activities.*" (SB 10.1.4) A qualified *guru* is also described in the Bhagavatam: "*Only saintly persons can cut off the excessive attachment of the mind by their words.*" (SB 11)

**54) Is there any benefit in serving under a guru who is not fully qualified?**

Of course there is benefit. But also there's a gradation; it may be *sukriti*, or it may be more, it's a matter of the heart. According to the demand of one's heart one will approach different types of *gurus*, and accordingly one will get different benefits.

**55) But isn't the service of the devotees accepted by Krishna?**

There are different considerations here. First, Krishna is not bound to accept anything from anyone. Krishna is *bhava-grahi*, one who appreciates the inner sentiment, as well as *bhaktivinoda*, one who relishes the devotional feeling. He is not in any need of our service. Bhaktivinode Thakura even says that Krishna in His capacity as Nandakumara doesn't accept the prayers of one who is not decorated with the six *angas* of *saranagati*. In that case, what we think is *bhakti* may only be *sukriti*, which will help one to develop *bhakti*. It is all according to our surrender or lack of surrender. Sripad Madhvacarya says that without *saranagati* all the nine activities of bhakti are like an empty shell. Second, if we want a guarantee that Krishna will be pleased with our service, we have to make sure we contact a good agent to transmit It, otherwise, as the example of the authorized and unauthorized mailbox, there's a risk that the whole thing remains unfruitful.

It is said : “*Unless one is favored by a pure devotee, one cannot attain the platform of devotional service. To say nothing of Krishna-bhakti, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.*” (CC Madhya 22.51)

**56) What about someone whose guru fell down?**

Guru doesn't fall down. Self-appointed master may. The service performed belongs to *bhakti-unmukhi sukriti*. It will promote one to *bhakti*. There is benefit. But one must still have a genuine *guru* to get the full benefit.

**57) 57. You said that one should be minimum a full nistha-bhakta to initiate, and that it was not cheap since it means no more anarthas.**

To be freed from the four sinful propensities is a feature of *anartha-nivritti*. But *nistha* means complete freedom from all other material contamination. If one is a *nistha-bhakta*, *rajas* and *tamas gunas* are absent and it shows by the absence of the characteristics associated with these *gunas*. At full *nistha* one is more or less liberated, at least from the lower modes. Initiation is a very serious matter. One must have the power to transmit Krishna. He must have Krishna otherwise of what value is his *diksa*? -You cannot give what you don't have.

**58) You also spoke of uttama-adhikari coming down to madhyam.**

He is the tattva-darshi of the Bhagavad Gita. He has seen the Truth, Krishna. A madhyam-adhikari has heard about the Truth, but has not seen Him yet. And he may have misheard. He is not exactly as good as the uttama-bhakta, although he certainly gives very valuable help and guidance.

**59) Some say it is up to the disciple to evaluate.**

It certainly is. It is his life he has to surrender. But it is the duty of his well-wishing seniors to educate him. Do you have the right to let younger devotees take absolute shelter and surrender themselves to devotees whose spiritual whereabouts are doubtful? If you see someone in a dangerous position, shouldn't you help?

**60) It is said that one shouldn't judge.**

It means one shouldn't condemn. But the *sastras* advise to evaluate according to the symptoms described. Because there are symptoms, and the symptoms are given in *sastras*, Bhagavad Gita, Caitanya Caritamrta. Nectar of Instruction, Bhagavatam 3rd canto (*bhakti* in *gunas*), 11th canto (symptoms of *uttama*) But if you say that no one can judge and say anything, then you are inviting fraud. We may not know

absolutely for sure what exactly is someone's level, but we have to make some discrimination based on inference. External activities may not be the only criteria. Also, when you have a sample of the real thing, you can measure by comparison, like a yardstick.

**61) But Many of Srila Prabhupada's godbrothers could not recognize him.**

That is not because they were his godbrothers, but because some were neophytes (*kanisthas*) and didn't have the proper vision. Envy covered the eyes of some.

**62) How many qualified gurus were there during Srila Bhaktisiddhanta's or Srila Prabhupada's times?**

I'll answer ironically: *"Oh, very few, they didn't have the mercy. But now we're so advanced that we have more than our sampradaya has produced for centuries. We can even afford to lose a few, we have so many."*

**63) If one criticizes someone or something going wrong, is that Vaisnava-aparadha?**

It is difficult to make Vaisnava-*aparadha*. First you have to find a genuine *vaisnava*. When you are pointing out an *anartha* in someone, the fact that the devotee is enraged doesn't qualify you as an *aparadhi*. Vaisnava-*aparadha* means that you disrespect, enviously blaspheme or slander a *sadhu*, not when you call a spade a spade. *Sadhu-ninda*, the first *namaparadha*, specifically means this. One should be careful not to offend, but not be obsessed about Vaisnava-*aparadha* and create a mental prison. Vaisnava etiquette was never meant to be a tool for the suppression of the truth.

**64) Some speak of useless disciples?**

Yes, Prabhupada said that when some disciples don't stick to the *guru's* order and manufacture something else by infiltrating materially concocted ideas, that is considered deviation. *"Persons who deviate from the strict order of the guru are useless."* and *"Anyone who disobeys the order of the guru immediately becomes useless,"* and *"Both factions were asara, useless, because they had no authority, having disobeyed the order of the spiritual master."* (C. C. Adi 12.8 & 10)

Bhaktivinoda Thakura and Prabhupada also speak of *kali-celas*, disciples of Kali, pseudo-disciples. Mahaprabhu has bolted the doors of Kali, he has crushed the dog of Kali, so Kali had to become a Vaisnava in order to survive. He entered the *sankirtana* movement. Therefore we see so many *apa-sampradayas*, all dressed as Vaisnavas, but full of *kali-celas*. And even in Gaudiya Matha as well as within ISKCON, Prabhupada has said that there were many *kali-celas*. All the politics, power trips, quarreling for position, posing as what one is not, these are all signs that we have allowed Kali to enter. Prabhupada spoke about it in no uncertain terms.

**65) Can a guru reject a disciple?**

The *guru* is an ocean of mercy. Hari Bhakti Vilasa says: *Kripa-sindhu sa sampurnah*. We sing *"Sri guru karuna sindhu"*. Prabhupada said once that he was 80% lenient. But in certain circumstance the *guru* may reject a disciple. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta says: *"A good preceptor doesn't accept anyone who is not prepared to submit himself freely. He is duty bound to renounce a disciple who is not sincerely willing to follow his instructions fully. If he accepts as a disciple one who refuses to be wholly guided by him,*

*he is doomed to fall from his spiritual status.*" He was so much more strict, so much that Prabhupada once said that he would have never accepted any of us as his disciples. One may also imagine himself to be the disciple of a particular *guru*, but one may have never been accepted by such *guru*, or may have been rejected due to one's offenses.

There may also be a temporary rejection like in the case of Jiva Goswami having been rejected by Rupa Goswami for having slightly disrespected Vallabhacarya. It is said that it was his duty as a *guru*. However, after a short while he accepted him again. And Jiva Goswami is never criticized for having done his duty as a disciple and having stood up to defend his *guru's* dignity. Another point is that Sanatana Goswami played a part in Rupa Goswami's reacceptance of Jiva Goswami. A similar case is Chota Haridasa. When Mahaprabhu rejected him, all the Vaisnavas gave him support and pleaded the Lord on his behalf. Same thing with Kala Krishna dasa, Mahaprabhu's servant who had fallen down in South India with a Bhattahari woman. Mahaprabhu said he didn't want to deal with him anymore, but the devotees gave him shelter and service. Only envious non-Vaisnavas rejoice when someone is rejected.

**66) If the guru is on a lower platform of devotional service can he still plant the seed of bhakti, or since he's immature he cannot?**

That seed will not have the same potency. A *kanistha adhikari* can only give weak faith, *komala sraddha*. Srila BR Sridhar Maharaja, "*An ordinary guru may give the same mantra to his disciple, but what is the potency within the sound? What quality of conception or divine will is contained in that sound? That is all-important...Within the mantra the important thing is the type of thought or sentiment which is imparted through that sound...We have to follow the spirit; otherwise after Jahnavi devi, the wife of Lord Nityananda, up to Vipina Goswami, from whom Bhaktiwinoda Thakura took initiation, there are so many unknown lady gurus. Through them, the mantra came to Vipina Goswami, and from him Bhaktiwinoda Thakura received the mantra. We accept Bhaktiwinoda Thakura, but should we count all those ladies in our disciplic succession? What was their realization?*"

**67) But Prabhupada can do it through him, can't he?**

That's called covert *ritvik-vada*. Furthermore, if one has disobeyed his *guru*, how can he be a bona fide *guru*? He should connect his disciples with someone more advanced, so they may have a chance to get the transcendental necessities.

**68) How does one understand that he is liberated?**

In Bhagavad-gita, Arjuna asks that question twice: In 2.54, which was answered in verses 2.55-59, 61, 65, 68, 70 and in 14.21 which was answered in verses 14.22-26.

**69) When does one know that he can accept disciples?**

One invites downfall by desiring to be *guru*. One should always consider that Mahaprabhu's order has not come to him but to his *guru*. That's the proper attitude. The moment one thinks he is *guru*, he wants to enjoy. Only when you consider that your spiritual master is the one who is heavy, *guru*, can you be freed from the unhealthy desire to enjoy, whether grossly or subtly. He must receive the order from higher authorities, *guru* and Krishna. Here again we see the importance of having a *siksa guru* to confirm.

**70) Is the absolute necessity of the spiritual master conforming to the highest transcendental standard confirmed by all sastras?**

Yes, they sing the glories of the guru (*ebe yasa ghusuk tri-bhuvana*), but we are now facing a proposal that Prabhupada has authorized a sort of *guru* who doesn't have to have more than basic spiritual qualifications, and not only that, but that he should nonetheless be offered the same faith as the topmost saint. Where is the evidence? It may seem to exist at first glance, but should our whole *siddhanta* be changed by putting forward a few quotes which are highly subjective for interpretation?

**71) How does the guru accept prayers or offerings to his picture?**

The guru and the Supersoul are intimately connected. Indeed, a bona fide *guru* is the external manifestation of the Supersoul. When he accepts disciples, the *guru* expands, as Krishna expands as the *caitya-guru*. That is how he is aware and accepts prayers. He is a transparent via medium, so prayers properly offered through him go to Krishna. He has to be an authorized agent, a bona fide spiritual master to be empowered to do that. *Guru* is not cheap.

**72) How much worship should be given to the guru?**

According to his level. If he is truly qualified, *saksad hari*, then the sky is the limit. If he is not and he is worshipped as such, it is an offense, and Prabhupada wrote: "*No one will be happy to see it, and he will eventually become degraded.*"

**73) Can there be women gurus?**

Why not? We are not the body. If they transcend their body designation, they can be guru. There are examples in our line. But if they have as little transcended their background as most men, maybe they'd better not.

**74) If someone is a guru and speaks very highly of the exalted qualities of guru, how can one not think he speaks about himself?**

You could level the same charge against Prabhupada, or any of our great *acaryas*. A real *guru* never speaks about himself. He never considers himself a guru. He doesn't see his disciples as his. He sees them as an expansion of his own *guru*. He feels himself as their servant. His service is to train them. He sees them as so many masters. Of course, many will speak like that, but that's a very high vision, the vision of the *mahabhagavata*. But *mahabhagavata* is the standard. And one thing: One shouldn't display his envy by trying to find fault in the language or presentation of a pure *vaisnava*, for he is inspired by the Lord. The acts and expressions of the great *vaisnavas* cannot be easily understood. Of course, on the other hand, someone may not be qualified and speak about himself. In Kali-yuga hypocrites are rampant. And so many *kapatha-panthas* are there, wrong paths based on false logic. That's why you have to be very knowledgeable, and pray to Krishna to guide you, to send you His bona fide representative. But shouldn't one, whether he is guru or not, present *guru-tattva* according to the Vaisnava philosophy?

**75) But why insist? Why stress so much the highest standard?**

Because the *guru* is supposed to be most qualified. That's the standard. Something less should be clearly exposed as what it is, that is, second-best. No taboos, there has been too much confusion and pain, too much excess on the other side. A disciple

has a great responsibility to follow his *guru*'s instructions as it is, but to accept disciples is also very serious. A *guru* has a very heavy responsibility towards the disciples. *Guru na sa syat*. If someone cannot deliver his dependents, why has he taken that position? The *guru* must be able to transmit *bhakti-shakti* to his disciples, which will enliven the soul and engage him in *Krishna-seva*.

**76) I am a little confused. What kind of guru should one approach?**

Then just stick to the *sastric* recommendation given to one searching for the truth: *"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a bona fide spiritual master, inquire from him submissively, and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth."* (BG 4.34) And also the Mundaka Upanisad 1.2.12 *Tad-vijnanartam sa gurum... brahma nistham*: One should approach a spiritual master who is firmly established in the realization of the Absolute Truth and enquire from him about the highest good.

**77) What about the verse that says that one who knows the science of Krishna can be a guru: *Kiba vipra kiba nyasi...?***

You can give this verse two readings. It can be taken to indicate one who knows the theoretical science or one who has realized the object of the science. The word *tattva* is used, *yei krishna tattva vetta* as in the Gita verse *janma-karma ca me divyam evam yo veti tattvatah*. Commenting on this verse, Prabhupada says that one who knows Krishna in *tattva* is a perfect devotee: *"As far as the perfect devotee is concerned, the siddha, the Gita says that 'After leaving this body he comes to Me.'* (CC Madhya 20.397) He doesn't say that about one who knows the theory. And what level is that? Again minimum the full *nistha* stage; actually, the level where one attains *Bhagavata-tattva-vijnana* is much higher. (SB 1.2.20) Also, *"This is the science of Krishna, this Gita. If anyone knows perfectly, then he becomes the guru."* (Lecture 17.8.66) He must know the science of Krishna perfectly. One may still argue that scholarship constitutes perfect understanding, but the Bhagavatam says: *"Mere acquisition and excellence of the superficial meaning of the sacred Vedic words without being conscious of the inner essence of the teachings is as good as keeping a cow without milking capacity."* (SB 11.11.18)

So the second reading of the verse is to be accepted. The first reading is based on *apara-vicara*, apparent consideration, and the second on absolute consideration. Moreover, Mahaprabhu has specifically spoken this verse because of the *smarta brahmanas*' predominant influence on society during His advent, to establish the fact that a Vaisnava can be the *guru* of a *brahmana*, whatever his caste may be, which was opposed by the *smartas*, and the fact that he doesn't have to be a *grhastha*, whereas they insisted he had to. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati's purport on this verse that, *"One can thus become a guru, whether vartma-pradarshaka, siksa or diksa."* is to be understood in this sense. He ascribes to the word *vartma-pradarshaka* another meaning than the one commonly ascribed to in our society. For him, there is no question of a *guru* being anything less than a pure, full-fledged self-realized soul. For him *"Sri Gurudeva is the eternal associated counterpart of Nanda-kumara Krishna."*

**78) Why has ISKCON changed so much since Prabhupada left?**

The devotees didn't have an example of a bona fide *guru* except Prabhupada. He said to do as he did, but that was misunderstood. Instead of following in his



footsteps, they imitated him. Neophyte means big false ego, and although the leaders were the most senior, they were still very immature. False ego prevents one from accepting authority. And therefore one doesn't know how to give compassion towards one's subordinates. Coupled with a sense of insecurity as to how to discharge one's self-imposed duty, that gives rise to absolutism. It becomes imposing respect instead of commanding it. We are in favor of absolute authority, as Krishna is an autocrat. But if the person in charge is not qualified it creates havoc. And we can see the results. Mahaprabhu and Prabhupada, although certainly taking care of their movement are somewhat withholding Their mercy and blessings. That may sound odd to say since books are going out and temples are being built or opened, but these aren't the only things to look for in order to determine progress. Prabhupada said that when his Guru Maharaja saw that the number of his neophyte disciples augmented and they were fighting over facilities, he left this world disgusted.

During the Acarya's physical presence, the shortcomings are somewhat compensated by his extraordinary potency, but when he withdraws, that influence by which he did also withdraws. As we wrote earlier, when the *acarya* departs, there's a cloudy period. During Prabhupada's presence, devotees seemed to be more advanced than they actually were. Devotees couldn't really understand their own position. Prabhupada carried everyone, held everyone up. That could be clearly seen whenever he would be in a particular temple. The whole place would change due to his potency. When Prabhupada left, many lost a lot of their devotional temperament. Many were self-seeking and that was aggravated after he left. He was not there any longer to compensate it and correct them.

#### **79) What about if someone falls down after initiation?**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta says that "Initiation doesn't preclude the possibility of reversion to the non-spiritual state. If the disciple sins after initiation, he may fall into greater depths of degradation than the uninitiated. But initiation changes the outlook of the disciple on life. Although even after initiation temporary setbacks may occur, they don't ordinarily prevent the final deliverance. The faintest glimmering of the real knowledge of the Absolute has sufficient power to change radically and good the whole of our mental and physical constitution, and this glimmering is incapable of being totally extinguished except in extraordinarily unfortunate cases."

#### **80) Can we blame someone who hesitates to submit unconditionally to a guru, whether he is good or bad?**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta also answers that: *"It is of course necessary to be quite sure of the bona fides of a person before we accept him even tentatively as our spiritual guide. A preceptor should be a person who appears likely to possess those qualities that will enable him to improve our spiritual condition. The bad preceptor is a familiar character..."*

*"But the good preceptor claims our sincere and complete allegiance. He asks the struggling soul to submit not to the laws of this world that will only rivet his chains but to the higher laws of the spiritual realm. The good disciple makes a complete surrender of himself at the feet-of the preceptor. It is by unreserved submission to a good*

*preceptor that one can be helped to enter into the realm that is our real home.*

*“But the submission of the disciple is neither Irrational nor blind. It is complete on the condition that the preceptor himself continues to be altogether good. The disciple retains his right to renounce his allegiance the moment he realizes that the preceptor is a fallible creature like himself.*

*“Nor does a good preceptor accept anyone as his disciple unless the latter is prepared to submit himself freely.... Submission to the Absolute is not real unless it is also itself absolute. When we reserve the right of choice to follow or not to follow the guru, we actually follow ourselves, because even if we seem to agree to follow the guru, it is because he appears to be in agreement with ourselves.”*

**81) I have heard that the guru should be a nitya-siddha.**

That is the topmost category, the ideal *guru*. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta writes: “*The good preceptor belongs to the spiritual realm. Although he appears to belong to this world, he’s not really of this world. No one who belongs to this world can deliver us from wordliness. The good preceptor is a denizen of the spiritual world who has been enabled by the will of God to appear in this world in order to enable us to realize the spiritual existence.*” Prabhupada also mentions in a few places that the ideal *guru* descends from the spiritual world, that he has nothing to do with this world and comes down only out of compassion to reclaim the fallen conditioned souls. But although he stressed that there’s no question of a non-liberated *guru*, he said that he could be a *kripa-siddha* or *sadhana-siddha*, not only a *nitya-siddha*.

**82) What is guru-daksina?**

It is a token of thanks to the spiritual master for his mercy. What the *guru* wants, you should give, unhesitatingly. And what does he want? That we give up our enjoying mood, that from *guru-bhogi* we become *guru-sevi*. Actually, preaching is real *guru-daksina*. The only thing the *guru* asks from his disciple is that he practices himself and also teaches others. And one shouldn’t lose enthusiasm and become discouraged because the majority of people are not accepting the message of Godhead.

In fact, even when it is apparently the disciple who gives something to the *guru*, it is still the *guru*’s mercy, which manifests itself in his instruction that one should preach. The six enemies headed by lust don’t desert the heart even if one is externally away from bad association. The type of opportunity to give up the bad association of these six enemies that comes by preaching and practicing in allegiance to a Vaisnava is not to be had by any other method. And by preaching linked with practice, not only one’s benefit is achieved, but others are benefitted also, and that pleases the Lord.

**83) Does the guru always know what the disciple think?**

Srila Prabhupada: “*Krishna knows your inner thoughts. Nothing is secret for him. Do you think your guru cannot tell which disciple is cheating and which is not? How do you think you can avoid Paramatma witnessing all your activities and thoughts?*”

Don’t worry if your *guru* knows or doesn’t know everything about you, your thoughts, your deeds; you are supposed to express them, reveal them. If you cannot

see him regularly, send him a regular report. Some devotees complain that they don't have much association with their *guru*, but writing provides the opportunity to deeply meditate on the Gurudeva and one's commitment to him, in addition to receiving direct instructions in answer.

**84) What type of question should one ask a guru?**

When you approach a *sadhu*, you should be in a disciple's mood, that's the proper way to approach, not a challenging mood, or a mood to just check out the person. The proper attitude is to think that unless proven to the contrary he is a bona fide devotee. And if he is very elevated, if he is actually a *sadhu*, then one should behave practically like a disciple. That is the way recommended in *sastra*. Then one can benefit from *sadhu-sanga*. Real *sadhu-sanga* means to imbibe the mood of a *sadhu*, to surrender to his teaching in the sense of throwing oneself toward Krishna according to the method of surrender described by the *sadhu-guru*. You have to ask questions mainly pertaining to the level you're on. That is called relevant inquiry, pertinent questions. You may ask questions to satisfy your desire to understand things properly, clarify your understanding and confirm it, clear misconceptions and doubts. In fact there is only one question: How can we surrender and give up our mundane attraction? How can we attain the Absolute Good, who alone will make us fully happy?

But only a surrendered disciple has the right to ask questions. Without surrendering to the guru, Krishna-*katha* doesn't really enter the ears. One cannot understand nor get Krishna. No one gets direct mercy from Krishna. Only by full surrender, in full faith to a worthy spiritual preceptor, can one receive mercy. It is undoubtedly Krishna's mercy: the mercy comes from Him. But that mercy is received through the *sad-guru*. In the form of guru, Krishna bestows His mercy. Guru, *sad-guru*, not imitation, self-made *guru*, is Krishna-kripa-murti, the very embodiment of Krishna's mercy. His mercy is very powerful. But one has to be very eager. One has to cry in his heart, begging Krishna to appear as such a *sadhu*. One has to approach in the proper way. Then he gets protection from Maya and receives the real benefit of *sadhu-sanga*, which is Krishna *sanga*.

**85) What is the proper attitude should his "guru" fall down?**

To see one's guide going down is undoubtedly a big trial. As mentioned earlier, in the section on the duty of the disciple, one must understand that there is no spiritual injustice. A bad workman quarrels with his tools. One has to accept that one's karma has come to face him, and it cannot be avoided, or one's lack of *sukriti*. It has come from within oneself. One must do the proper thing, scrutinize oneself and find out one's status, how much one is hankering for the real thing. Then one must cry to Krishna, beg Him to be accepted as His servant, petition Him for mercy, and admit that one is blind and utterly dependent upon Him as one's well-wishing, eternal friend to make all arrangements for one's deliverance. Then Krishna will understand from one's heart that one is crying for Him, that one wants to go back to Him, so He will arrange for one to meet a genuine *guru*. Paramatma assumes a body and appears as the *guru* who is therefore said to be His external manifestation. Different temperaments, natures, moods, levels of *sukriti* are there, so the all-knowing Krishna will send a guru accordingly. A simple, non-duplicious person who just wants to serve, who accepts what Krishna says without twisting it, without

speculation, Krishna appears to him as *guru*. A duplicitous person, who is not really serious, Krishna sends him a cheater. But someone will say that it is not his fault, that he was sincere and had only noble thoughts and desires, that he has no fault, but Krishna is at fault, ISKCON is at fault. He is not prepared to admit his fault. Krishna doesn't send a guru to the crooked. Maya does. Krishna directs her to send him a cheater. So one must approach in utter simplicity.

#### 86) And when the guru leaves this world?

Srila Prabhupada says that the guru's order should become the life and soul of the disciple. One should pray that, "From now on, I am living on your orders. Let this be a true statement at all times." And one should take that opportunity to examine oneself, like one whose "*guru*" has fallen down: My guide and support in life has withdrawn. This is a test of my sincerity, my determination, my commitment. What I have received from my *guru*, how well did I receive it and understand it? Am I a real disciple or by name only? How much mundane contamination is there, mixed with the real thing? How much selfishness is there in me? How much do *anarthas* still plague me? What is to be eliminated, and what will be the best way to go about it? When asked by a devotee how should the disciples continue the mission after the disappearance of the spiritual master, Srila Sridhara Maharaja answered, "*You must not neglect your conscience... There may be disturbances. Rather we say there should be, there may even be fighting amongst devotees, but we should not leave the preaching of Mahaprabhu, despite all differences. Disturbance must come, because our most beloved guru has withdrawn from amongst us. Such a great curse has been thrown on our heads; should we like to live peacefully? In its wake, disturbances must come, and we must undergo them. Still, we must remain sincere; we must face the difficulty in a proper way. It has come to train us to go in the right direction. What we received from our spiritual master we understood only in a rough estimation... The time has come to purify us, to test whether we are real students, real disciples, or his disciples only in face and confession. What is the position of a real disciple? If we live in the society, what is the depth of our creed? In what attitude have we accepted his teachings? How deep-rooted is it within us? The fire has come to test whether we can stand. Is our acceptance real? Or is it a sham, an imitation? This fire will prove that.*" And then one must not think that he can do it alone. Prabhupada said that when the *guru* leaves, the disciple cries. He must cry for help. And Krishna will supply help, in one form or another. Help will come as a person.

#### 87) What prevents one from full surrender to the guru's feet?

Past *sukriti* enables one to surrender more fully; otherwise it takes longer, it's more gradual. But the *sadhu* creates *sukriti*. Prabhupada said he had created his disciple's good fortune or piety, By hearing from a *sadhu*, you earn *sukriti*, even if you didn't have much previously. Hearing, *sravanam*, is service. Then you can surrender more, then you develop more faith, then more surrender, doubts are eradicated. One doesn't surrender because one clings to material attachments, which are deeply rooted in the heart. Material desires are what keeps one from fully surrendering. That's duplicity, the deep-rooted desire to enjoy separately from Krishna. That means one's faith is still tender, *komala sraddha*, not very strong. So keep on hearing the most potent medicine of Hari-katha from the right source.

You have to understand and accept that Sri Guru is very dear to Krishna. Everything belongs to Krishna and Krishna's property is entrusted to His dear servants as they alone know how to fully engage it in their master's service without tampering with it. Without realizing that, it is not possible to surrender. You cannot become Krishna-das without becoming *guru-das*, and you cannot become real guru-das if you don't see and accept that everything should be offered to him for utilization in Krishna-seva.

**88) Some say that it is not important whether the guru has seen or is seeing Krishna.**

The Gita doesn't say that: Tattva darshinah, he has seen the Truth, Krishna. The sastra explains that the pure devotee sees Krishna everywhere, wherever he casts his glance. The Brahma-samhita's *Premanjana curita* verse says the same. And Prabhupada answered very directly to that question: "*Have you seen Krishna? Yes, daily, every moment.*" (Perfect questions, perfect answers).

**89) What about the Gaudiya Math?**

Let us be careful of offenses, both towards Prabhupada and towards the Gaudiya Matha devotees. Srila Prabhupada wrote: "*After Srila Bhaktisiddhanta disappeared, one party strictly followed his instructions but another group created their own concoction. His leading secretaries made plans to occupy the post of Acarya and split in two factions. Both factions became useless.*" Srila Prabhupada clearly says here that one party strictly followed, and that another group, which split in two, became useless. He doesn't say they were all useless. So one can research who was in which group...

**90) Srila Prabhupada mentioned that Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja and two others were responsible, as leading secretaries, for the downfall of the Gaudiya Math.**

Srila Prabhupada said different things at different times. He spoke both words of caution and words of praise. So it would be advisable not to needlessly strain our brains trying to understand and interpret what Srila Prabhupada or, for that matter, Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja, might or might not have said or meant, but rather concentrate on the practice of the devotional path they both glorified. But one should not neglect his *guru's* warnings and therefore one may not take from Maharaja certain ideas. The ISKCON leaders who were in charge at that time have specifically a big responsibility because they went to Sridhara Maharaja to ask his advice on the guru issue, whereas Prabhupada had specifically warned not to take these ideas from him. We can't blame devotees who took shelter at his feet when their own brothers denied them one in their father's house. He himself never canvassed from ISKCON members. He spoke of "relief work", meaning by this that he didn't want to interfere in our inner affairs but would only offer some help to those who were leaving ISKCON hopelessly and were in danger of falling back into the material world.

**91) Some say it was all right to take some philosophical knowledge, but it was a lack of chastity to leave ISKCON and go to his camp.**

It was all right to go to Srila BR Sridhara Maharaja for philosophical advice, as Prabhupada had indicated that one could approach him with such queries. In any case, the situation was created by the leaders. And when the leaders rejected Maharaja for political considerations, some devotees who had got attached to him chose to stay with him, having lost faith in the leaders.

**92) Sridhara Maharaja's followers want to dismiss anything negative Srila Prabhupada may have said about him.**

And his detractors want to dismiss anything positive. As his godbrother, Srila Prabhupada could speak, but given our position as nephews or grand-nephews, we shouldn't take sides and thereby venture on the path of offense. We should keep always the perspective that one must give proper respect to advanced devotees. Part of Vaisnava etiquette is to offer the same respect to the godbrother of one's *guru* as one offers to one's own *guru*.

**93) But didn't Prabhupada warned against the Gaudiya Math's influence?**

Whatever Srila Prabhupada spoke about the Gaudiya Math was said more than thirty years ago, and it had a lot to do with events happening more than half of a century ago. His last statements were of a conciliatory nature, "*The war is over.*" He even named some of his Godbrothers, that he had strongly addressed in no uncertain terms, as members of the Bhaktivedanta Charity Trust. He apologized in his last days for having used strong words against some of his Godbrothers to keep his own disciples in the fire of preaching and not let complacency and easy-going enter his mission. We shouldn't think that our uncles, cousins or nephews have stagnated for decades. Prabhupada's concern was mainly for his very young disciples when he said "*If they say one thing different from me it will cause great confusion.*" It is true that he also said, "*Don't go to my Godbrothers, they cannot help us, rather they are quite competent to harm us.*" But that should also be qualified and not taken as a blanket statement against associating with ALL of the Gaudiya Math. It was his reaction to isolated acts of disrespect from some Godbrothers who opposed him, or had reinitiated some of his disciples, or couldn't understand why he had accepted the title "Prabhupada" that all the *sannyasis* had agreed in a meeting (to which Prabhupada wasn't invited as he was then a householder), never to use themselves and keep reserved for Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati. He repeatedly tried to reunite his godbrothers to strengthen the preaching.

**94) What about the ISKCON gurus who went to Srila BV Narayana Maharaja in the late eighties and until ninety five?**

By going to him while Srila Gour Govinda Swami was still on the planet, the ISKCON *gurus* who went sent two messages: One is that they didn't really know Krishna-*tattva*. The second is that they believed no one in ISKCON did. Other ISKCON members could then reason, "*Why should I take from someone who doesn't really know? Let me go to someone who knows. And since they go to this sadhu, he obviously knows more than them. Yei krsna-tattva vetta sei guru haya, one who knows the science of Krishna can be a guru. And if he doesn't know, how can he be a guru? Why should I take from him?*"

When asked about this point, Srila Gour Govinda Maharaja answered by saying that there were two considerations: He said that from the institutional point of view it was not so good, because you need discipline to run a society; but that from the transcendental point of view there was no problem as Maharaja is a *mahabhagata*.

**95) Some of these ISKCON devotees apparently approached Srila Narayana Maharaja as a raganuga-guru or rasa-guru?**

It is not at all what these devotees said. They said they were studying *sastra* under him. Anyway, Srila BV Narayana Maharaja is highly qualified to be a bona fide teacher of raganuga-bhakti and if those devotees had been at a sufficient level of advancement to take instruction on that domain from him, (and since they were gurus they were supposed to be), one can ask where was the problem? The fact that they were flagged down by the GBC is in itself an admission by the GBC that they were not qualified.

By the way, if they went to Srila Maharaja and he was not bona fide, it means that they could not discriminate who is who and are therefore not qualified as spiritual guides. And since he is bona fide and they rejected him, it says the same. Catch 22!

**96) Others say they just take siksa from Narayana Maharaja.**

The principle of taking *siksa* is completely bona fide. Prabhupada specifically asked Srila Narayana Maharaja just prior to leaving this world to help him by continue training his disciples. The GBC later on concocted the idea that Prabhupada did say that at that time, but if it was now he wouldn't say it!!?? Lately they have tried to minimize their transcendental relationship in a very unpalatable and offensive way...

Srila Maharaja doesn't disagree with Prabhupada on anything. He just has a different style and mood. Srila Prabhupada said many things to protect his mission from some godbrothers or nephews who were envious, and also from disciples who were immature, unchaste, unsundered, and lacking a sense of discrimination. Given the fact that he had precisely warned not to take certain ideas from the Gaudiya Math and that these were precisely the ideas that were taken, one can understand why he had repeatedly issued warnings about his godbrothers. General statements always make room for exceptions, though, and again, we should be extremely careful not to commit Vaisnava-*aparadha*.

**97) In the quest for spiritual truth, one may join a religious mission to advance towards the ultimate goal of life.**

After some time, however, sectarian policies may appear to bar the path of progress. He may see that within the society, pragmatic concerns take precedence over spiritual ideals. If one feels the necessity to look elsewhere, his authorities may tell him that there are no higher truths to be found. One may also be warned that if he leaves the society, he will suffer serious repercussions. He may become an outcast, branded as a heretic for pursuing what he sincerely feels to be the ideal upon which the society was founded. Should he risk leaving the society, ignoring the advice of his immediate authorities, or should he try to remain within the society?

**Srila Sridhara Maharaja:** Progress means elimination and new acceptance. So, when there is a clash between the relative and the absolute standpoint, the relative must be left aside, and the absolute should be accepted...We must be sincere to our own creed...The form is necessary to help me in a general way to maintain my present position. At the same time, my conception of the higher ideal will always goad me to advance, to go forward...Spiritual life is progressive, not stagnant...The search for Sri Krsna is dynamic and living, so adjustment and readjustment is always going on...Our most precious gem is our ideal...Krsna's final instruction is *sarva*

*dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja*: 'If it is necessary, to maintain the highest ideal you must give up your friends. Surrender to me. I am the real purport of the scriptures.' The highest kind of idealists give up their country, their family, their friends, and everything else, but they can't give up their ideal...God consciousness is absolute. If society consciousness hinders the development of God consciousness, it should be left behind... 'Even a spiritual master, relative, parent, husband, or demigod who cannot save us from repeated birth and death should be abandoned at once.' What to speak of ordinary things, even the guru, may have to be abandoned...We need society only to help us. If our affinity to the society keeps us down, then that should be given up, and we must march on. There is the absolute consideration and the relative consideration. When they come into clash, the relative must be given up, and the absolute should be accepted. If my inner voice, my spiritual conscience decides that this sort of company cannot really help me, then I will be under painful necessity to give them up, and to run towards my destination, wherever my spiritual conscience guides me. Any other course will be hypocrisy, and it will check my real progress...We must be true to our own selves, and true to the Supreme Lord. We must be sincere.(Sri Guru and his grace)

#### **98) Should one venture to initiate before self-realization?**

Srila Sridhara Maharaja deals also with this point: *"We should think, 'I am fallible, but I am confident that what my guru has given to me is an uncommon, vital, and nectarine thing. And he has asked me to give it to others. It does not matter. I shall take the risk. He has ordered me. I am his servant. He will look after me.'* With this spirit of risk, the disciple will approach the responsibility thinking, *'I may go to hell, but I must carry out the order of my Gurudeva. I may die, but I must carry out the order of my commander.'* With this spirit he is to approach the task, and there will be no danger if this consciousness is maintained; but if he deviates from that connection and goes self-seeking for a mundane purpose, he'll be doomed.

*Otherwise, no destruction can touch him. This internal spirit should be maintained, and that is the real qualification of a disciple: 'Yes, I am ready to die to carry out the order of my Gurudeva. I feel that this is nectar, and I must distribute it to others to save them...'*

*If you can take this sort of risk, your guru will bless you, and you cannot be doomed. This sort of risk should be taken by the disciple and only on the force, on the basis of that spiritual inspiration. If he does so, he can never be doomed. The eye of the Lord is there. God is there. Guru is there. He cannot but be saved. They cannot leave him in danger and relish thinking, 'The person who is carrying out our orders is going to hell.' Can they tolerate such a thing? Are our guardians living or are they dead? We must be so much selfless that we can think, 'I may go to hell, but I must carry out my guru's order. So, through me, the work may go on. 'This sort of conviction in the process, in the mantra, gives us the strength to carry out the work of acarya. If I think, 'This medicine is helping me; I am in the curing process, and this medicine is helping me,' then, if I see a similar case, I may hand the medicine over to him...In good faith, with whatever knowledge we have, we must sincerely help others...*

*But we must be careful that whenever a guru of superior quality is there, we must help others to accept him. We must not be a trespasser. It is also mentioned in the Hari Bhakti Vilasa that when a greater person is available, those of a lower type should not venture to make disciples. Suppose a farmer has fertile land and two kinds of seed. The*



*good seed should be planted first. If the better seed is not available, then ordinary seeds may be sown. For the sake of the harvest, the better seed should be given the first chance. If we are detached, if we are pure in heart, and if we are selfless, the better seed should always be sown first. The lower kind of seed should be withdrawn. So, when a higher type of guru is available to any circle, the lower type of guru should not interfere."*

**99) What are the dangers in becoming a guru before being self-realized?**

Srila Sridhara Maharaja says that one faces two dangers: *"The first is partiality. Partiality means full freedom with his disciples. This relationship is also more attractive to him. The second danger is deviation. So, deviation and partiality – these two things can take one down. These are the two enemies. And one who takes that position must be particularly careful about these things... This position is dangerous. It is full of temptations. Therefore, a strong, sincere indomitable desire for the upper aspirations of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is the indispensable necessity. Otherwise, he can't maintain his position. He will go down. He has become master and will think, "I am the master of all I survey." In a particular circle, he is monarch. And monarchy can bring madness. That is a great temptation. If one is not sufficiently conscious of this fact, he will not be able to maintain his position. For one who has monarchy over men and money, it is very difficult to maintain a position as a servitor. The ego of mastership which is generally found within all of us comes to attack him... Generally the symptoms of deviation fall into three different classes: kanaka, kamini, and pratistha: money, women, and reputation. First, a guru loses his attraction for his own guru and sastra-upadesa, the advice of the sastra. Then, what he previously expressed, quoting the scriptures and the words of his own guru, gradually becomes absent in him. His attraction for the higher thing fades. That is pratistha, prestige. Kanaka, kamini, pratistha: money, women, and name and fame – these are the three tests to be put everywhere to see whether one is a sadhu or not, or what degree of sadhu he is. The first thing is deviation from his higher gurus. That should be detected. That is pratistha, pride. Then, he will show more tendency to amass money and not to spend it. Money may be collected, but that must be distributed for the service of the sampradaya, for the service of the Vaisnavas. But amassing money – this is the second sign of deviation. The third is attraction towards the ladies."*

**100) If one has received harinama from one guru and diksa from another one, how should he deal with these two gurus?**

Srila Sridhara Maharaja: *"The first importance should be given to the nama guru, or the guru who initiates one into the chanting of the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, and second to the guru who gives initiation into the gayatri mantra... Jiva Goswami has written that the name of Kṛṣṇa is the principle thing in the gayatri mantra... We accept the mantra only to help the nama-bhajana, the worship of the holy name... The mantra helps us to do away with the aparadhas, offenses, and the abhasa, or hazy conceptions in our bhajana... An example is given of larger and smaller circles. The holy name of Kṛṣṇa is the larger circle. It extends from the highest to the lowest. The mantra circle is a smaller circle within the larger circle. The mantra cannot reach to the lowest point. The holy name can extend itself down to the lowest position. The mantra gives us entrance into liberation, and then the name carries us further. This is the nature of our connection with the mantra and the name. The name extends to the lowest position, to the candalas and yavanas..."*

In the CC (Adi.7.73): *krsna-mantra haite habe samsara mocana krsna-nama haite pabe krsnera carana* “The Krsna gayatri mantra liberates one from repeated birth and death in this world; the holy name of Krsna gives one shelter at the lotus feet of Krsna.”

# Sri Guru-Tattva Part VII

## APPENDIX 1: The Qualities of a Sad-Guru

*Sad-guru*, which is what Srila Prabhupada translated as “bona fide spiritual master”, means one on the platform of eternity, *sat*, and therefore it means self-realized. All preachers are *gurus*, as they deliver the Lord’s message under the guidance of the Acaryas. But to deliver another conditioned soul is not possible for a conditioned soul: “*Actually a bona fide spiritual master is never a conditioned soul.*” (Letter 6.10.69). I have compiled a few more quotes for clarification:

### He must be self-realized:

*“Unless one is under the shelter of a self-realized guru, his understanding of the Supreme is simply foolishness.”* (Teachings of Lord Caitanya, p.201)

*“The qualification of the guru is that he must have realized the conclusion of the scriptures.”* (SB 11.3.21)

*“To become Krishna conscious one must take shelter of a realized soul... a self-realized spiritual master, a niskincana.”* (SB 7.5.32)

*“A serious devotee must first approach a spiritual master who is not only well versed in the Vedic literature but is also a great devotee with factual realization of the Lord.”* (SB 2.4.10)

*“One must approach a self-realized Krishna conscious person and touch his feet.”* (SB 4.26.20)

*“Unless one is self-realized and knows what his relationship is with the Supersoul, he cannot become a bona fide spiritual master.”* (SB 3.28.2)

*“The word ‘tattva-darshi’ refers to one who has perfectly realized the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”* (SB 5.15.4)

### He must be a pure devotee:

*“No one can get out of this struggle for existence without accepting a pure devotee of the Lord.”* (SB 5.14.1)

*“This confidential knowledge is extremely difficult to understand, yet it’s very easy if one takes shelter of a pure devotee.”* (SB 7.6.27)

*“One cannot be in a transcendental position unless one serves very faithfully a pure Vaisnava.”* (CC Antya 7.53)

*“One’s guide must be a spiritual master who is an unalloyed devotee strictly following the instructions of the previous acarya.” (CC Madhya 10.17)*

*“One has to hear from a pure devotee.” (SB 4 20.25)*

*“If one desires liberation from the clutches of maya, one must associate with a pure devotee mahatma.” (SB 5.5.2)*

*“Unless one is properly trained by a mahatma or unalloyed devotee of the Lord, there is no possibility of one’s understanding Krishna and His devotional service.” (SB 7.5.30)*

**He must be liberated:**

*“The specific qualification for becoming the representative of the Lord is to be unaffected by the modes of nature.... Since a brahmana is in the mode of goodness, to be a brahmana is not sufficient for becoming a representative of the Lord.” (SB 3.4.31)*

*“In the clutches of maya no one can be an authoritative instructor.” (Gita 2.13)*

*“The bona fide guru is freed from all material contamination.” (SBg 5.14.13)*

**He must be as good as Krishna:**

*“Help can only be given by a spiritual master like Krishna.” (Gita 2.8)*

*“He is on the level of Krishna.... Krishna is worshipable God and the spiritual master is worshiper God.” (Letter 9.26 69)*

**He must be Krishna’s confidential associate:**

*“He is always considered either one of the associates of Radharani, or a manifested representation of Srila Nityananda Prabhu.” (CC Adi 1.46)*

*“When a devotee is fully surrendered at the lotus feet of Krishna, Krishna accepts him as one of His confidential associates.” (CC Madhya 22.102)*

*“A bona fide guru is a most faithful and confidential servant of the Lord.” (CC Adi 1.44)*

**He sees Krishna:**

*“In the suddha-sattva or vasudeva state, the Lord is revealed without any covering.... Krishna is revealed in the heart of a devotee.... In pure Krishna Consciousness, the Lord is revealed.... When the senses are purified by the discharge of pure devotional service, the pure senses can see Krishna without covering.... By the bhakti-yoga process, one can clearly see the face of the Lord.” (SB 4.3.23)*

*“In the suddha sattva state one can always see Krishna eye to eye by dint of pure affection for the Lord.” (SBhag 1.2.19)*

*“The spiritual master has actually seen Krishna, therefore he can explain Him properly.” (SB 5.12.11)*

**He must be a paramahansa:**

*(SB 5.5.10)*

**He must be a mahabhagavata;**

*“There are three classes of devotees... the first class devotee is also called a mahabhagavata... only he is eligible to occupy the post of guru.” (CC Madhya 24.330)*

“Uttama-adhikari *delivers others from material existence.*” (CC Madhya 22.65)

**More symptoms of an uttama adhikari are given in the Bhagavatam:**

1 12.17; 1.18 16; 4.22.16; 7.4.37; 11.2 45-55;  
Caitanya Caritamrita Madhya 8.273; 16.74; 17.32; 24.330;  
Upadesamrita 5; Perfect Questions Perfect Answers p 55; Isopanisad 6; Madhurya  
Kadambini.

**He must be a resident of Krishnaloka:**

(Letter 6 10.69)

## APPENDIX 2: ANARTHAS

In the Caitanya Caritamrita, Madhya Lila, we read: “*Sometimes unwanted creepers, such as the creepers of desires for material enjoyment and liberation from the material world, grow along with the creeper of devotional service. The varieties of such unwanted creepers are unlimited.*” (158)

“*Some unnecessary creepers growing with the bhakti creepers are the creepers of behavior unacceptable for those trying to attain perfection, nisiddhacara, diplomatic behavior, kutinati, unnecessarily killing animals or the soul, jihva-himsana, profiteering according to material calculations, labha, mundane adoration, puja, and mundane importance, pratistha. All these are unwanted creepers.*” (159)

“**Nisiddhacara:** There’s a certain pattern of behavior prescribed for those actually trying to become perfect. In our Krishna consciousness movement we advise our students not to eat meat, not to gamble, not to engage in illicit sex and not to indulge in intoxication. People who indulge in these activities can never become perfect.

“**Kutinati:** Diplomatic behavior cannot satisfy the soul. It cannot even, satisfy the body or the mind. The culprit mind is always suspicious; therefore our dealings should always be straightforward and approved by Vedic authorities. If we treat people diplomatically or duplicitously, our spiritual advancement is obstructed.

“**Jiva-himsana** refers to the killing of animals or to envy of other living entities. The killing of poor animals is undoubtedly due to envy of those animals. There are many religious propagandists who do not know how the ultimate problems of life can be solved, and they also try to educate people in a form of sense gratification. This is also *jiva-himsana*. Real knowledge is not given, and religionists mislead the general populace.

“**Labha:** As far as material profits are concerned, one should know that whatever material profit one has must be abandoned at the time of death. Ignoring that there is life after death, mundane people waste their time amassing material profit which has to be left behind.

“**Puja:** Similarly, adoration by mundane people is valueless because after death one has to accept another material body. Material adoration and title are decorations that cannot be carried over to the next body. In the next life, everything is forgotten.

*“All these obstructions have been described as unwanted creepers. They simply present obstacles for the real creeper, bhakti-lata. One should be very careful to avoid all these unwanted things. Sometimes these unwanted creepers look exactly like the bhakti-lata creeper. They appear to be of the same size and the same species when they are packed together with the bhakti-lata creeper, but in spite of this, these creepers are called upasakha” (Purport)*

*“If one doesn’t distinguish between the bhakti-lata creeper and the other creepers, the sprinkling of water is misused because the other creepers are nourished while the bhakti-lata creeper is curtailed.” (160)*

“If one chants the Hare Krishna mantra while committing offenses, these unwanted creepers will grow. One shouldn’t take advantage of chanting the Hare Krishna mantra for some material profit. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura states that if one hears and chants without trying to give up offenses, one becomes materially attached to sense gratification. One may also desire freedom from material bondage like the *mayavadis*, or one may become attached to the *yoga-siddhis*. One may also be victimized by diplomatic or crooked behavior, or one may associate with women for illicit sex. Others may make a show of devotional service like the *sahajiyas*, or one may try to support his philosophy by joining some caste or identifying himself with a certain dynasty, claiming a monopoly on spiritual advancement. Thus, with the support of family tradition, one may become a pseudo-*guru* or so-called spiritual master. One may become attached to the four sinful activities. One may also try to carry out a professional business while chanting the Hare Krishna mantra or reading *Srimad Bhagavatam*, or one may try to increase his monetary strength by illegal means. One may also try to be a cheap Vaisnava by chanting in a secluded place for material adoration, or one may desire mundane reputation by making compromises with nondevotees, compromising one’s philosophy or spiritual life, or one may become a supporter of a hereditary caste system. All these are pitfalls of personal sense gratification. Just to cheat some innocent people, one makes a show of advanced spiritual life and becomes known as a *sadhu*, *mahatma* or religious person. All this means that the so-called devotee has become victimized by all these unwanted creepers and that the real bhakti-lata-bija has been stunted.” (Purport)

*“As soon as an intelligent devotee sees an unwanted creeper growing beside the original creeper, he must cut it down instantly. Then the real creeper of bhakti-lata-bija grows nicely, returns home, back to Godhead, and seeks shelter under the lotus feet of Krishna.” (161)*

*“If one is misled by unwanted creepers and is victimized, he cannot make progress back to Godhead. Rather, he remains within the material world and engages in activities having nothing to do with pure devotional service. Such a person may be elevated to the higher planetary systems, but because he remains within the material world, he is subject to the threefold material miseries.” (Purport)*

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura also explains that the desire for fruitive activities is so strong that one sometimes thinks of conducting business for improving devotional activities. However, the contamination is so strong that it may later degenerate into accepting things forbidden in *sastra*, diplomatic behavior, stopping the preaching, desire to be recognized as a great devotee, etc. In addition to these, a neophyte devotee risks to become victimized by desires for money and women and his

heart will become gradually harder and harder like that of a materialist, or like an alkaline field where nothing can grow.

The cleaning of the Gundica temple is referred to as cleaning the heart from *anarthas*. Anyabhilasa, extraneous desires in the form that “*as long as in this world I’ll merely gratify my senses*” are like thorn, pieces of thorny grass piercing the soul’s tender inclination toward exclusive devotion.

Endeavors for karma, in the form of sacrifice, austerity, charity, with the desire for heavenly enjoyment or enjoyment in this world, are like dust covering the mirror of the heart with heaps of dust in the form of many desires.

Efforts for the yoga of monism, and *jnana-yoga* are just like gravel.

When the heart of a *sadhaka* is completely cleansed of all these, whereas it was like a sun-scorched desert, it becomes devoid of the heat, of the scorching effect of the three-fold miseries born from material desires.

He whose *anarthas* have only been slightly destroyed will have punishment prescribed for him in the form of service to Sri Hari-Guru-Vaisnava.

Krishna has two kinds of *lila*, pastimes, eternal and occasional. The *lilas* of killing demons in Krishna-lila belongs to the category of occasional lila. They are a source of instruction for the *sadhakas*, and represent the destruction of the *anarthas*, each *lila* corresponding to a particular *anartha*. In the Sri Caitanya Siksamrita of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, we find the list of twenty *lilas*, among which are the following: Killing of Putana. Putana represents a deceitful guru. Breaking the cart, Sakatasura, which represents load bearing or attachment to the four principles of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksa*, vanity, and lethargy. Killing Trinavarta, vain glory from learning resulting in false logic and argumentation. Breaking the Arjuna trees representing pride and arrogance of aristocratic birth and wealth, giving rise to hatred, debauchery, shamelessness. Killing Bakasura, hypocrisy, false behavior. Killing Aghasura, which is removal of sinful mind given to violence and giving troubles to others. Subduing Kaliya, who represents vanity, malice, crookedness and unkindness. Killing Pralambha, licentiousness, personal gain, worship and honor. Killing Sankhacuda, greed for name and fame and morbid desire for the company of females. Killing Keshi which represents the vanity of being a great devotee and preceptor, and the pride of richness and worldly attainment. Killing Vyomasura represents leaving the company of deceitful devotees, etc.

All these obstacles are adverse to pure devotional service. The aspirant devotee in the very beginning should pray to the Lord to drive out these evils. If he does, his heart will be purified. If he cries out most humbly and piteously to Krishna, begging Him to drive out the trouble represented by those *asuras* whom He had destroyed from the domain of his heart, the Lord Hari Himself will remove those evils.

But it is said that the mystery of Vraja-bhajan is that the devotee will have to drive out himself, with his own efforts the troubles of those *asuras* whom Lord Balarama has killed. Dhenukasura is the evil of load-carrying, prejudice and superstition. This demon represents loss of knowledge of the *svarupa* of self, of the *svarupa* of Nama, of the relationship with the *svarupa* of the adorable Deity, ignorance and *avidya*. With the greatest care and endeavor the aspirant will have to remove this evil and restore his self-knowledge. Pralambhasura is the evil of licentiousness, lewdness for male or female, greed for wealth, effort for acquiring material prosperity and gain, desire for honor, for increasing one’s fame and reputation, and aspiration for selfish ends. These are very

pernicious evils and knowing these as strong impediments for Nama-bhajan, the aspirant, with his best care and effort will remove them. If humility becomes very deep and intense, Krishna will be merciful. In that case, feeling of Baladeva will arise in the devotee's mind and then these obstacles will be destroyed in no time. Then favorable and smooth cultivation of Bhajan will gradually improve. This process is naturally very secret and should be learned from a good preceptor with a clear mind."

In the Madhurya Kadambini of Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, the whole third chapter deals with anrtha-nivritti, the mitigation of inauspicious elements. The following is an extract from it:

"There are four types of *anarthas* according to their origin:

"Arising from past sins (*duskrtottha*): They fall in the category of five types of Miseries: ignorance, false ego, attachment (the desire to obtain material happiness and to decrease suffering), hatred (aversion to unhappiness or the causes of unhappiness), fear of death.

"Arising from previous pious works (*sukrtottha*): They are the desire for the enjoyments that arise from pious action and the desire for liberation.

Some sages also include them within the five types of miseries.

"Arising from offenses (*aparadhotta*), This refers to those due to *namaparadhas*, but not to *seva-aparadhas*, which are usually ineffective being nullified by chanting the Holy Name, by recitation of *stotras* and by constant service. If *nama-aparadhas*, both long-standing or recent, have been made unconsciously, but their presence is inferred by the effect, lack of advancement, one should chant the Holy Name constantly. By that chanting, one can attain steadiness in bhakti and thus gradually neutralize his *aparadhas*. If committed in full knowledge, however, there are some other procedures for their removal, according to the particular *aparadha*.

"Arising from *bhakti* (*bhaktiyuttha*). These are the unwanted creepers mentioned above."

**Anarthas have also been divided into four other categories as follows:**

**Tattva-bhrama:** Misconceptions about the Lord, *maya*, *jiva*, *sadhana*.

**Hridaya daurbalyam:** Weakness of heart.

**Asat-trsna:** Thirst for material enjoyment. Desire for happiness in this life, in heaven, desire for mystic *siddhis*, desire for liberation.

**Aparadhas:** *Namaparadhas*, *seva-aparadhas*, *dhama-aparadhas*, *vaisnava-aparadhas*.

**Anartha-nivritti**

According to Madhurya Kadambini, the different categories of *anarthas* have five different grades of nullification: limited or partial, pervasive, almost complete, complete, and absolute, according to the level of spiritual progress.

The nullification of *anarthas* arising from past sins is almost complete at *bhajana-kriya*, complete at *nistha*, and absolute at *asakti*.

The nullification of *anarthas* arising from *bhakti* is partial at *bhajana-kriya*, complete at *nistha*, absolute at *ruci*.

The nullification of *anarthas* arising from *aparadhas* is partial at *bhajana-kriya*, pervasive at *nistha*, almost complete at *bhava*, complete at *prema*, absolute with no possibility of their reappearance when one attains the Lord's association.

The Holy Name has an inestimable power of eradication of *anarthas*, but, being unhappy with offenses made against it (Him), the Holy Name doesn't manifest its

(His) full power in the offender. This is indeed the reason sinful tendencies continue in the offender. The case of the offender losing the mercy of the name is similar to a subordinate who is offensive to his vastly wealthy and capable master. The master treats him indifferently and denies him proper care. As a result, that servant comes to suffer poverty and distresses of all sorts. In the same way, the offending devotee at first suffers some miseries. As he does again sincere service to the devotees, *sastras* and *guru*, the name gradually manifests mercy and eliminates his evil tendencies. As a fruit-tree bears fruit only in the proper season, the Holy Name, though pleased with one who has become offenseless, reveals its (His) mercy to him only in due time.