

# Who Can Act As a Spiritual Master?

Only a devotee of Kṛṣṇa who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa can act as guru. Since *karmīs*, *jñānīs*, and impersonalists are nondevotees, they can never become gurus. Only one who worships the Personality of Godhead is able to become a spiritual master. Those who think proudly that they are Kṛṣṇa's servants cannot become spiritual masters unless they proudly identify themselves as disciples of a disciple. As long as we are proud to be Vaiṣṇavas, we cannot become guru. A person who acts as guru never claims to be a Vaiṣṇava or spiritual master. My spiritual master never considered himself a Vaiṣṇava. One who calls himself a Vaiṣṇava is branded a non-Vaiṣṇava.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has sung:

*āmi ta' vaiṣṇava, e-buddhi ha-ile, amānī nā haba āmi  
pratiṣṭhāsāsi', hṛdaya dūṣibe, ha-iba niraya-gāmī  
tumāra kinkara āpane jāniba, guru abhimāna tyaji  
tumāra uchhista pada jala renu, sadā niṣkapate bhaji  
nije śreṣṭha jāni', ucchiṣṭādi-dāne, habe abhimāna bhāra  
tāi śiṣya tava, thākiyā sarvadā, nā la-iba pūjā kāra*

If I think I am a Vaiṣṇava, I shall look forward to receiving others' respect. If the desire for fame and reputation pollutes my heart, I will certainly go to hell. I will give up the pride of being a guru and consider myself your eternal servant. I will sincerely accept your remnants and the water that has washed your lotus feet. By giving others the remnants of my food, I will think myself superior and be burdened by the weight of false pride. Therefore, always remaining your surrendered disciple, I will not accept worship from anyone else. (*Kalyāṇa Kalpataru*)

Only a pure devotee can be a spiritual master. A great personality sees the spiritual master everywhere. Such a person is himself qualified to become a spiritual master because he can induce everyone to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. Unless we are devotees ourselves, we cannot make others devotees. Therefore, to become guru, we must become devotees of Kṛṣṇa. We must always engage in Kṛṣṇa's service with all our senses. We are not qualified to act as spiritual master unless we are ourselves staunch disciples of our own spiritual master.

A pure devotee thinks himself to be humbler than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. He never says he has served his spiritual master enough and therefore no longer needs to offer service to his guru. He never thinks it is time for him to become guru. Although he may indeed act as spiritual master, he never becomes proud of it.

— Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, *Amṛta Vāṇī*, *The Spiritual Master* 65