

Śrī-Guru Bhakti

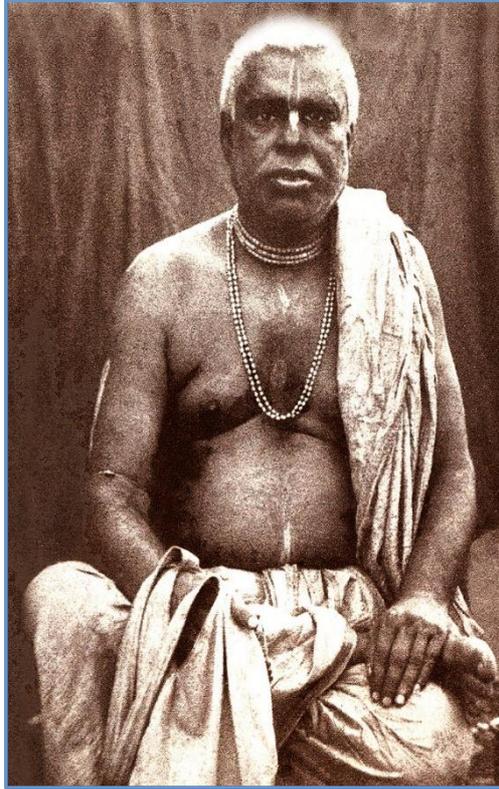
Entering into the Heart of the Matter

by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

The *jīva*, blinded by the delusion of *māyā*, and bound in the widespread network of material existence, wanders here and there. Having been captivated in the hope of happiness, he searches for such happiness in knowledge, intelligence, wealth, honour, etc., but by no means can he make himself happy. In this way many lives of the *jīvas* pass. As a result of earning stocks of *sukṛti* in many births, *śraddhā* for *bhajana* is transmitted within the heart of the *jīva*. Only in *bhajana* is there any possibility of his attaining happiness. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, and the *jīvas* are His eternal servants. *Śraddhā* is the very strong and determined faith that, by performing bhakti unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all the sufferings of the *jīva* are dispelled, and he becomes situated in *kṛṣṇa-dāsyā*, his constitutional position. Possessing such *śraddhā*, the *jīva* very soon takes the shelter of the lotus feet of a *sad-guru*. Then, by virtue of Śrī Guru's grace alone, he attains all types of perfection.

The boundlessly merciful Vaiṣṇavas are the supreme friends of the fallen *jīvas* in this world. Knowing the *jīvas* to be averse to Kṛṣṇa, they preach *bhakti-tattva* to them. Developing *śraddhā* in *bhakti-tattva*, the *jīvas* take shelter of a Vaiṣṇava's lotus feet. As Śrī Guru, he now instructs them on *bhagavad-bhajana*. When the disciple exhibits suitable qualification, having developed singleness in purpose and expertise in *bhajana*, Śrī Guru bestows his mercy upon him by granting

the power to view the storehouse of transcendence — Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Such is the endless mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas. As Śrī Gurudeva, the Vaiṣṇava blesses the extremely fallen and insignificant *jīva*, who is filled with hundreds of *anarthas*, tormented by *māyā* in various forms, and completely drowned in the ocean of material existence, with a place at his feet. He himself accepts the burden of this *jīva*'s life, which presently is devoid of *bhajana*. By the example of his own supremely pure character and strong *bhajana*, Śrī Guru captivates him and transmits potency into his heart. The disciple imbibes this strength and gradually moves forward along the path of *bhajana*. There is, indeed, no extent to the unlimited mercy of such a Guru. It is endless and wonderful, and for this reason Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya has written:



*śrī-guru karuṇā-sindhu, adhama janāra bandhu,
lokanāth lokera jīvana
hā hā prabhu koro doyā, deho more pada-chāyā,
ebe jaśa ghuṣuk tribhuvana*

*cakṣu-dān dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei,
divya jñāna hṛde prakāśito
prema-bhakti jāhā hoite, avidyā vināśa jāte,
vede gāy jāhāra carito*

Śrī Guru can be distinguished according to his two functions as *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*. *Dīkṣā-guru* is he from whom the *mantra* is obtained, and *śikṣā-guru* is he from whom *bhajana-śikṣā*, instruction on how to progress along the devotional path, is received.

¹ Our spiritual master is the ocean of mercy, the friend of the poor, and the lord and master of the devotees. O master! Be merciful unto me and give me the shade of your lotus feet. Your fame is spread all over the three worlds.

² He opens my darkened eyes and fills my heart with transcendental knowledge. He is my Lord birth after birth. From him ecstatic *prema* emanates; by him ignorance is destroyed. The Vedic scriptures sing of his character.

A disciple should show equal respect to both, and he should understand that both are the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's *sakti*. If he maintains a different opinion towards them, the disciple will be an offender. In *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Adi, 1.44-45.47) it is said:

*yadyapi āmāra guru—caitanyaera dāsa
tathāpi jāniye āmi tānhāra prakāśa* 3

*guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana sāstrera
pramāṇe
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-
gaṇe* 4

*śikṣā-guruke ta' jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa
antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha,—ei dui rūpa*
5

To consider Gurudeva to be directly the Supreme Personality of Godhead is an offensive mentality, because such an idea leads to the conception of the *jīva*'s oneness with *Īsvara*—like that of a *māyāvādī*. However, if one performs *bhakti* with the understanding that Śrī Guru is the special manifestation of Śrī Bhagavān Himself, or His *śakti*, then there will be no fault. "Śrī Bhagavān, who is the embodiment of *prema*, has manifested Himself within Śrī Gurudeva and has given me initiation." If this thought remains in the mind of the disciple, he will be blessed. He will then nurture firm faith in the words of Śrī Guru and develop unshakeable devotion to him.

Those *jīvas* who are possessed of faith should take shelter of a *sad-guru* with great care and effort. Having compiled information from various *śāstras*, Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has given the symptoms of Śrī Guru, and the symptoms of a disciple, in his book *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. The purport of all such words of *śāstra* is that one who has a strong character stemming from *bhakti*, who is a *viśuddha-bhakta* (a supremely pure devotee), and the best among the *bhagavatas* is alone the guru of the *jīvas*.

And only that disciple who is free from sins, who is pure-hearted and submissive is fit to receive instruction. If this advice is ignored, surely *anarthas* will appear on the path of devotion.

Śrīman Mahāprabhu has said in His own words:

*yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei
'guru' haya and guru yathā
bhakti- śūnya, tathā śiṣyagaṇa*
— "He who is enlightened in the science of Kṛṣṇa is Guru", and "Where the Guru is without *bhakti*, his disciples will be the same." Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's words always remain true in all respects; in this there is no doubt.

It is said in the *śāstra* that the guru will examine the disciple for a considerable amount of time, and the disciple will also observe the guru's character. In this manner, after understanding the purity of each other, both of them will establish a relationship. The guru-disciple relationship is not only for a few days; it will continue to exist even after this life. If the disciple cannot take shelter of a *sad-guru*, (even after having searched with great care),

then he becomes deviated from the path of the supreme goal due to the fault of neglect. If the guru is unfit, the disciple, having abandoned him, should accept a *sad-guru*. If the disciple is fallen, and Śrī Guru is unable to reform him, he can give him up.

It is appropriate for the disciple to follow with determined faith whatever instruction is given to him by Śrī Gurudeva. If the disciple fails to do so, and hears different instructions from various people, due to the fault of unnecessary hankering, he will be unable to do *bhajana*. If it appears that Śrī Guru has given an order contrary to *śāstra*, then, with a simple heart, the

When, by the
mercy of Śrī
Gurudeva, one
crosses over the
ocean of *anarthas*
and arrives in the
realm of *niṣṭhā*
and *ruci*, Śrī
Guru's mercy
flows very
forcefully. At that
time Śrī Gurudeva
becomes the very
wealth of a
disciple's life.

³ Although I know that my spiritual master is a servitor of Śrī Caitanya, I know Him also as a plenary manifestation of the Lord.

⁴ According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.

⁵ One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord.

disciple should express himself at his feet and then reconcile it with the words of *śāstra*. However, if one does not carry out Śrī Gurudeva's directions with special care and firmness, the disciple by no means can attain His mercy.

Simply by his desire, that Gurudeva who is the topmost of *bhagavatas* can transmit potency within the heart of the disciple and thus make him a *parama-bhagavat*. Naturally, however, such inclination does not arise in Śrī Gurudeva to instill that potency in an unfit disciple. That disciple who carries out the instructions of Śrī Guru with great vigilance soon becomes qualified to receive the wealth of Guru's mercy. Only then can he realize the real meaning of *guru-kṛpā*.

As long as *anarthas* remain in the process of *bhajana*, the disciple should continue to move forward on the path of *bhajana* as instructed by Śrī Gurudeva, prudently following the laws and prohibitions of *śāstra*. When, by the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva, one crosses over the ocean of *anarthas* and arrives in the realm of *niṣṭhā* and *ruci*, Śrī Guru's mercy flows very forcefully. At that time Śrī Gurudeva becomes the very wealth of his life. *Mamatā*, possessiveness, appears in the heart of the disciple towards his Gurudeva, and gradually attachment towards *bhajana* increases. As the attachment for *bhajana* increases, *mamatā* ripens and expands, and an unprecedented *dāsyā-rasa*, service mood towards Gurudeva, unfolds. At that time, with great attention the disciple fully offers his life at the feet of his Gurudeva.

As long as natural affection for Gurudeva does not rise in the disciple, it is imperative for him to render service unto Śrī Gurudeva to obtain his mercy. To fastidiously carry out the words of Śrī Gurudeva is his principal *sevā*. Many people do not exhibit any determination to execute the instructions of Śrī Gurudeva. However, they seem to remain very busy in some way or another, trying to massage the feet of Śrī Gurudeva or fanning him. If these services are done with natural inborn affection, much benefit is derived. However, if the disciple retains some insincerity within the heart, which manifests as a hope that, "By this type of *sevā* I will become dear to Śrī Gurudeva," then it will not be at all helpful for him. One cannot become dear to Gurudeva in that way. It is the carrying out of the order of Gurudeva that confers great satisfaction for the disciple. Massaging his feet and fanning him are surely not bad. The result of that type of service is that one develops the strength to follow the instructions of Śrī Guru, and by that alone one obtains his mercy. Self-satisfaction is ultimately achieved as a result of the *sevā* which is performed with natural, innate *prīti*, or affection.

(Translated from *Śrī Gauḍīya-patrikā*)

A Glimpse into Śrīla Prabhupāda's *Guru-bhakti*

Where are your pure teachings to be found at this
dark hour?

Standing as we are
on the shore of the ocean of spiritual
devastation, Only your lifesaving glance of
causeless mercy can save us from certain death.
Only by your infallible grace
can we perceive a way to somehow retrace our steps:
To return to a life of divine remembrance of the Holy
Name in great happiness
And implicit faith in your "Vaikuṅṭha message."
O blessed master, please awaken some good
intelligence in this insignificant servant of yours,
Increasing the fullness of his faith in your sublime message
day by day.
You compassionately took the suffering of misguided
humanity
upon your own holy head,
And I am feeling severe pangs of separation from your
lotus feet
on this day upon which you disappeared from our vision.
Śrī Viraha Aṣṭaka (V5)



Adored master,
You patiently reminded all of your disciples time and time
again
that devotional service to Lord Caitanya is not performed
exclusively in solitude.
You took great care to painstakingly explain to all of us
That just as the Lord out of His causeless mercy
preached everywhere and delivered Jagāi and Mādhāi,
So does the exact same preaching work need to be
continued in the present day.
The world has now become filled with countless Jagāis
and Mādhāis,
And it is clear to all that the only means for their
salvation is the path shown by Caitanya-Nitāi.

If you were to come again at this time, Śrīla Prabhupāda,
and personally reestablish the proper understanding of
all these things
in all the ten directions
The joy of the people would know no bounds.
Hearing the deeply resonant sound of your voice
loudly proclaiming the victory of Mahāprabhu's mission,
The demons and atheists would flee,
And the thirsty living entities
would drink the divine nectar-message of Lord
Gaurāṅga to their complete fulfillment.
The whole world would once again be set aright.
Whereas in your absence,
nothing of value is to be found anywhere.

Brokenhearted,
this Abhay makes his cry of appeal, O Gurudeva, in
the bitter throes of separation from your lotus feet.
You compassionately felt the suffering of the jivas to be
your own,
And I am indeed feeling lost and alone
on this day of your disappearance from our vision.
Śrī Viraha Aṣṭaka (V8)