

The Mood and Mindset of a Bonafide Disciple

Illuminations from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura

What mentality should a sincere disciple have?

Sincere disciples should be completely devoted to their guru. They should know their spiritual master to be as good as God and the only object of their love and devotion. “The spiritual master is my eternal master and I am his eternal servant”: this is how a disciple thinks. Service to the spiritual master is a disciple’s life, ornament, and means of survival. Disciples do not know anything except their spiritual master. They always think of their spiritual master while eating, sleeping, dreaming, and serving. They are fully convinced that the spiritual master is the fully independent Personality of Godhead.

A sincere disciple has the following mentality: “Even if my spiritual master does not accept service from such an unqualified person as myself, I will always be prepared to render unalloyed service at his feet with body, mind, and words. If he kicks me, I will think it is because of my incompetence; his kick will come because of my faults. He is always right. May temporary sense desires not distract me from his service even for a moment. My only prayer is that my spiritual master mercifully accepts my service. I pray never to fall into bad association or to fall away from his lotus feet. My only solace is that my spiritual master is more merciful to unqualified persons like me. With a desire to achieve his causeless mercy, I will become greedier for his service.”

How do pure devotees respect their spiritual master?

The spiritual master is known to ordinary people in one form and to his intimate devotees in another. The pure devotees recognize their spiritual master as the supreme well-wisher, as most dear to Kṛṣṇa, and as the object of their love and devotion, the object of their eternal service and their life and soul. The spiritual master is most dear to and nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa. It is not possible to achieve Kṛṣṇa’s service without serving the spiritual master. Only those who serve the spiritual master can be considered Vaiṣṇavas.

We cannot see the spiritual master’s lotus feet with sinful eyes. Considering the spiritual master an ordinary human being is a hellish mentality. The spiritual master is not an insignificant creature; he is not an ordinary human being. He is the Supreme Lord and is very dear to the Lord. He is a great personality, an exalted devotee, and an *ācārya* who can award Hari’s holy names to others.

How does a Vaiṣṇava who is fixed at his spiritual master’s lotus feet think?

Unless I realize that all the people in the world are worshipable, I cannot offer my respectful obeisances to my spiritual master. My spiritual master is the spiritual

master of the entire world. People who are envious of my spiritual master are also envious of the Supreme Lord and of every other human being. Until I feel this conviction in my heart, I cannot become a real servant of my spiritual master and cannot surrender at his lotus feet. Neither will I be able to understand that I am the most insignificant created being. Therefore I will not be able to chant the holy name of Hari thinking of myself as lower than a straw in the street and more tolerant than a tree. I will not be devoid of the desire for respect or prepared to offer respect to others. If I respect my spiritual master properly, I will be able to respect the whole world. This will make it possible for me to become free of the desire to receive respect for myself and thus able to glorify Lord Hari constantly.

How should I treat my spiritual master?

Serve your spiritual master with love and devotion just as you do Kṛṣṇa. Consider the spiritual master as good as the Supreme Lord. Do not think him inferior to the Lord in any way. It is a disciple's duty to treat, worship, and serve the spiritual master as if he were God. If a disciple does not do so, he will fall down from his position as a disciple. Only those who consider the spiritual master nondifferent from the Supreme Lord can understand the confidential purport of the scriptures, chant Hari's holy name, and preach *hari-kathā*. To teach about His own service Lord Kṛṣṇa appears in the form of the spiritual master. If we are fortunate enough, we can understand this flawless scriptural verdict. Otherwise, we will remain doubtful and continue to drown in the ocean of material existence.

The spiritual master is neither the predominating absolute nor the original predominated absolute. He is a manifestation of the original predominated absolute. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the worshipable God and the spiritual master is the worshiper God. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the predominating absolute and the spiritual master is the predominated absolute. Because the spiritual master, who is the worshiper God, is the personification of service to Kṛṣṇa Himself, he is most dear to Kṛṣṇa. This is the special characteristic of the science relating to the spiritual master. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the energetic and the spiritual master is His complete energy. The spiritual master is not an ordinary human being. He is the master of the living beings. The spiritual master is the supreme consciousness and a manifestation of the Lord's spiritual energy. But the living entities as minute spiritual sparks belong to the Lord's marginal energy and are part and parcel of the Lord.

How determined should we be to serve the spiritual master's lotus feet?

A real disciple accepts his spiritual master as servitor God, most dear to Kṛṣṇa. He never considers his spiritual master inferior to the Lord in any way. A sincere disciple serves and worships his spiritual master as if he were God. Those who do not follow this principle fall down from their position as disciples. Until we see the spiritual master as a manifestation of and nondifferent from the Supreme Lord, we will not be able to chant the Lord's name purely. A genuine disciple must possess firm determination and faith in his spiritual master, thinking, "I will serve my spiritual master and Lord Gaurāṅga with utmost simplicity. I will follow my spiritual master's instructions, which have come down from the Supreme Lord. I

will never disobey my spiritual master's orders under the influence of anyone in this world. If following my spiritual master means I must become proud or an animal or go to hell forever, I will never hesitate. I will not follow anyone other than my spiritual master. I will destroy the current of mundane thought by the strength of his instructions. If my spiritual master showers even a particle of pollen from his lotus feet upon the world, then millions of people will be delivered. There is no knowledge or proper code of conduct in the fourteen worlds that weighs more than a particle of dust from the lotus feet of my spiritual master."

— **Excerpts from *Amṛta Vāṇī***