

# A GENERAL OVERVIEW

## 1. Introduction

The following is an overview of the entire book. For the purpose of brevity, it is presented without references or quotes. Those devotees who do not have time to study the complete work may read it for general comprehension. Quotes and supporting evidence are to be found in the chapters contained in Part One.

## 2. Kṛṣṇa is the Original Guru

The material world has a twofold function: the first is to confine those conditioned souls desiring independence from the Lord, and the second is to reform their errant ways. The process of reform is inaugurated by Lord Kṛṣṇa through His personal appearance, at which time He teaches the method of returning back to Godhead. Thus, He is the original *guru*.

To perpetuate His teachings, Lord Kṛṣṇa compiles the Vedic literature as Vedavyāsa and establishes the *guru-paramparā*, the line of disciplic succession. In accommodating people of different natures, He manifests not one, but four disciplic successions. They express the same philosophical principles through slightly differing religious traditions. The leaders of these *paramparās* are Lakṣmī-devī, the Kumāras, Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva. They are known as the *ādi-gurus*, the original *gurus* of their line.

The common duty of each *sampradāya* is to transmit the message of the Lord as received from the *ādi-guru*. All subsequent *gurus* are obliged to pass on what they have heard without alteration, maintaining the integrity of their superiors. Receiving the teachings of one's *guru* in disciplic succession is known as *śikṣā* and is the active principle of any *paramparā*.

### 3. The Founder-Ācārya

Under the influence of time, the message of the disciplic succession may become altered, lost, or irrelevant to the public. To remedy this situation, Lord Kṛṣṇa appears personally, or empowers a confidential associate to revive His teachings to their pristine condition. Such a Vaiṣṇava is known as the founder-*ācārya*. He revives the teachings of his line, presents them according to time and circumstance, and directs the mission of the *sampradāya*. Thus, he reveals the most favorable means by which to save conditioned souls.

The Vaiṣṇavas who follow the founder-*ācārya* show their fidelity to him by strictly adhering to his teachings and enthusiastically adopting his mission. They see their connection to the preceding *ācāryas* through the founder, who empowers his strict followers to act as spiritual masters.

### 4. Vaiṣṇava Means Guru

In this way, all Vaiṣṇavas are obliged to accept the message of the Lord as it comes through the medium of the founder-*ācārya*. All Vaiṣṇavas have two notable characteristics: they speak what they hear from and follow *śāstra* according to the mood of the *ācāryas*. In this way, even if they are not active preachers, Vaiṣṇavas teach through their behavior and thus represent the Lord. By this principle it is said that all Vaiṣṇavas are *guru*.

## 5. Śikṣā is the Main Characteristic of All Gurus

Transmitting *śikṣā* is the primary function of the *guru-paramparā*. The practicing Vaiṣṇavas in a *sampradāya* must receive spiritual instructions, by which their faith and knowledge become securely established. To be consistent with their spiritual heritage, the main service of *gurus* is to transmit such knowledge to others.

While there are many categories of spiritual masters, it is a universal principle that they all give *śikṣā*. In this way, they are known as *śikṣā-gurus*. To emphasize aspects of devotional practice and performance of various functions, additional names like *dikṣā-guru*, *ādi-guru*, *nāma-guru*, *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, founder-*ācārya*, and so on, find usage.

An example of the functions which arise as a consequence of *śikṣā* is the *ādi-guru* who, for the purpose of establishing the original teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa, must found a *paramparā*. Other examples are the founder-*ācārya*, who redirects the *paramparā*, and the *dikṣā-guru*, who initiates the devotee with the holy name and Gāyatrī *mantra*. In all cases, they perform functions arising from the requirements to sustain the *śikṣā* process.

While Vaiṣṇavas perform a variety of essential services to elevate others, it is seen that all such services are related to or manifest as a consequence of *śikṣā*. Thus, in broad terms, the word *guru* means *śikṣā-guru*, and all *gurus*, regardless of their specific designation, are *śikṣā-guru*.

## 6. Guru as Good as God

The absolute nature of Śrī Kṛṣṇa dictates that He is non-different from His instructions. For this reason, *śāstra*, or the recorded instructions of the Lord, is revered as good as God. Similarly, anyone who embodies the teachings of scripture also becomes as good as, and as worshipable as, the Lord. That is the Vaiṣṇava! Thus, Vaiṣṇavas and their instructions are as worshipable as Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In their service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Vaiṣṇavas are revealed in two ways: their physical being and their teachings. These are called *vapuḥ* and *vāṇī*, respectively. In one sense, there is no difference between them, and therefore they are equally worshipable. From a comparative point of view, *vāṇī* is more important, for it continues beyond the physical constraints of *vapuḥ*.

## 7. Guru Defined

In its most fundamental aspect, the definition of *guru* is “anyone who transmits spiritual instructions on the basis of *śāstra*.” This definition is common to all types of *gurus*. Whether they teach by their behavior, without speaking a word, or are prolific professors of transcendental science, the teachings of all Vaiṣṇavas must be in tandem with revealed scripture. Therefore, no one can be a *guru* who deviates from the direction of the Lord.

While there are many distinguishing characteristics among Vaiṣṇavas, because they reveal the teachings of the Lord they should all be seen as His representatives. Large or small, the waves of the Ganges are equally holy; similarly, whatever their individual capacity, it is said that *guru* is one.

## 8. Divisions of Gurus

As representatives of Lord Kṛṣṇa and as teachers of the Truth, there is oneness among all *gurus*. However, from the perspective of service and individual characteristics, there are also distinctions among them.

It may be questioned why there is a need for understanding such distinctions, thus running the risk of discrimination among the immature. The answer is as follows:

The multiplicity of *gurus* is of great value in guiding the disciple in complementary ways. Without understanding their differing roles, a disciple will be unsuccessful in taking appropriate assistance. Furthermore, different *gurus* are of different capacities, according to their dispositions and empowerment. A disciple

must recognize such distinctions in order to know which *guru* will assist him to what degree, what he can fairly expect from them, and how he is expected to reciprocate.

While *śāstra* condemns foolish discrimination, intelligent discrimination is the foundation for spiritual development.

In discerning the differences among Vaiṣṇavas, it will be seen that they exhibit different degrees of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and varying degrees of commitment. Among all *gurus*, the founder-*ācārya* is again distinguished for his unique contribution to the family of Lord Caitanya’s devotees.

One should not be bewildered by a multiplicity of *gurus*. Lord Kṛṣṇa declares it our good fortune to gain their association. It remains with the disciple to associate with saints along the lines of proper *sad-ācāra*.

## 9. Roles of the Gurus

What are the roles of the different *gurus*?

In general, we see there are two main divisions, the *śikṣā-guru* and the *dikṣā-guru*. The *śikṣā-gurus* are the instructors and, according to the type of instruction they give, they are named accordingly.

The *vartma-pradarśaka-guru* is that devotee who gives initial instruction regarding the process of devotional service and points the disciple to the path of surrender. The *sādhus*, or Vaiṣṇavas, give guidance in executing aspects of devotional service, and they are *sannyāsis*, *brāhmaṇas*, parents, elders and teachers. Then there is the *śikṣā-guru*, who gives specific spiritual training for further elevation in devotional service.

These categories of *śikṣā-gurus* may be further divided into two, the liberated and the non-liberated. The non-liberated souls give guidance according to their level of realization, for they apply the teachings of *śāstra* according to their limitations. The liberated soul perfectly sees the need of the disciple, and his fully realized position allows him to give comprehensive instructions.

The *dikṣā-guru* is the instructor who most regularly taught the

disciple and through whom the disciple officially connected with the *paramparā*. He initiates the disciple in the chanting of the holy name and blesses him with the Gāyatrī *mantra*. He then continues to instruct the disciple for his progressive advancement.

## 10. Etiquette Between Dīkṣā-gurus and Śikṣā-gurus

The interactive roles of *dīkṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus* are of primary importance in the life of a disciple and the identity of the instructor.

The *dīkṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus*, while equal representatives of the Lord, position themselves to best serve the advancement of the disciple. This positioning places the initiator as the root of the disciple's devotions and the instructors as his assistants and extensions. These cooperative roles highlight the initiator as the primary spiritual force in a disciple's life, focusing his faith and directing his devotions. The disciple then respectfully sees all Vaiṣṇavas as representatives of his *dīkṣā-guru* and accepts their instruction as his instruction.

While for practical purposes the instructors assume an apparently subordinate role to the initiator, it is incorrect to think of them as being inferior in any way. Similarly, although the *dīkṣā-guru* takes the dominant role, he does so as a humble servant of *guru* and Kṛṣṇa, for the purpose of elevating the disciple. The relative roles of the *śikṣā-gurus* and *dīkṣā-gurus* are not an indication of their spiritual strength or commitment to the disciple, but rather a spiritual tradition observed by all Vaiṣṇavas. For the purpose of serving a common goal, they assume different roles, but in actuality they represent one spiritual principle.

This canon, wherein the *dīkṣā-guru* functions as the foundation of the disciple's devotions, and the instructors are his expansions and assistants, is being termed in this book "The Traditional Protocol of Śikṣā-guru and Dīkṣā-guru" (or Traditional Protocol).

## 11. Two Aspects of Traditional Protocol

There are exceptions to every rule, and so there are exceptions to Traditional Protocol. The exception takes place when the instructing *guru* (or *gurus*) may take the dominant role over the initiator in the devotional life of a disciple. To understand such exceptions, an analysis of the main components of Traditional Protocol is instructive.

Traditional Protocol has two main aspects. One is the adherence to the rule upon which it stands (the *dīkṣā-guru* is the main *guru*), and the other is the disciple's attachment for the *guru*. A study will reveal that, of the two, the adherence to the rules of etiquette dominates over personal attachment. It directs the application of Traditional Protocol.

What happens when the disciple is more attached to a *śikṣā-guru* than his initiator? Because the rules of etiquette (by which primary devotion is offered to the initiator) are dominant, the disciple continues to serve the initiator as his immediate spiritual guide. Although there is a change in the attitude of the disciple, it does not warrant an exception to the entire Traditional Protocol.

(For example, if, due to points of etiquette, a devotee is unable to accept initiation from the instructor of his choice, he may be initiated with little relationship to his *dīkṣā-guru*. In such a case, there may be every reason why the disciple should be more attached to the instructor than the initiator. Without compromising his attachment to his *śikṣā-guru*, he must still show proper conduct toward the *dīkṣā-guru*, revering him as his main spiritual connection.)

On the other hand, if there is just reason to make a change in the standard conduct toward the *dīkṣā-guru*, by which a *śikṣā-guru* becomes the spiritual focus, that certainly constitutes an exception to Traditional Protocol. In such a case, the initiator is either an instrument of the instructor or is disassociated from the relationship altogether.

(One prominent example is that of the initiator who has fallen from the path of devotional service. In such a case, a disciple must focus his attention on another Vaiṣṇava who is capable and qualified to fully guide his devotional efforts.)

While exceptions may continue to abound, the Traditional Protocol should be understood as the norm. How to discern whether there are exceptional circumstances is based on a variety of factors. In any case, a disciple should learn to be discriminating and act under the guidance of senior Vaiṣṇavas and proper *sad-ācāra*.

## 12. Relationship Between Śikṣā-gurus and Dikṣā-gurus

Because the *dikṣā-guru* is generally the focus of the disciple's devotional life, it is the role of the *śikṣā-guru* to give instructions in a way which enhances the disciple's faith in his initiator. As an expansion of the *dikṣā-guru*, the instructor will never give instructions outside the teachings of the initiator. In the spiritual family of a devotee, the initiator is considered the original *guru* and is like the father, one of a kind, while the instructors are like the many uncles.

Since both *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus* are representatives of the founder-*ācārya*, they must be careful to represent his teachings in a unified and cooperative effort. Needless to say, a *śikṣā-guru* who does not follow the founder-*ācārya* is not a relevant candidate as instructor. The two *gurus* must have a clear line of communication and must be careful that the disciple is not the medium of their interplay. Their instructions should invoke no disharmony in him, for such confusion will be counterproductive to their efforts.

## 13. Relationship Between Disciple and Gurus

The general principle is that the *dikṣā-guru* is the primary *śikṣā-guru* of a disciple. If the disciple wants to take instruction

from other Vaiṣṇavas, especially on elevated spiritual topics, he must have the permission of his initiator, and all instructions he receives must be confirmed with him.

In regard to regular service to the mission of the founder-*ācārya*, a devotee receives much instruction from his *śikṣā-gurus*. This is all proper and good and has the general sanction of the *dikṣā-guru*, who is also a servant of the mission. Unless practicality dictates, it is not necessary that all the instructions a devotee receives be confirmed with him.

There are multiple conditions under which a disciple may be directed toward a *śikṣā-guru* for ongoing instruction. The *dikṣā-guru* may be inaccessible for teaching, conditions like ill health may restrict him, or he may not have sufficient spiritual strength to give suitable teachings. In any case, a *śikṣā-guru* must be approved by the initiator, who should send a letter of recommendation along with the disciple. In such circumstances and according to proper *sad-ācāra*, a disciple may receive further training from *śikṣā-gurus*.

Traditional Protocol requires that whatever teachings the disciple receives from Vaiṣṇavas must be confirmed with the initiator. In fact, a disciple should hear the same teachings from the mouth of his *guru* with further elaboration. Under all circumstances, a disciple should maintain faith in his *dikṣā-guru* and never disobey him or leave him. He should worship and serve all Vaiṣṇavas, but be especially disposed to his own *guru*.

## 14. Other Śikṣā-gurus and Their Behavior

There are instructors other than Vaiṣṇavas, and even non-devotees may give relevant counsel. As an example, Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura received good advice from the prostitute Cintāmaṇi, and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* gives a list of twenty-two *śikṣā-gurus*, ranging from humans to birds, trees and inanimate material nature. Intelligent Vaiṣṇavas can take lessons, with caution, from these *śikṣā-gurus* and thus further their devotion.

Among the non-devotee instructors there are the profes-

sionals, artists and teachers who can educate Vaiṣṇavas in mundane sciences which can then be engaged in the service of the Lord. Such teachers should not be disrespected.

Because non-devotees do not exhibit proper conduct, it may be questioned how they are respected as *guru*. In answer, Vaiṣṇavas must accept that good counsel may be found anywhere, and they should learn to recognize and respect the source of such instruction. A devotee accepts their useful teaching but, being wary of their non-devotional behavior, does not associate with them very closely. In this way, from a distance they may also be respected as *śikṣā-gurus*.

## 15. Our Śikṣā-sampradāya

Before concluding with points of etiquette, it is important to say a few words about the nature of our *guru-paramparā*. It has been shown earlier that the main function of the *paramparā* is to transmit *śikṣā*. There are generally two opinions as to how such a lineage serves this purpose. One is called the *dikṣā-sampradāya* and the other the *śikṣā-sampradāya*.

The *dikṣā-sampradāya* is one in which transcendental knowledge and accompanying *dikṣā-mantras* are passed down from one *guru* to his duly initiated disciple. The course of the *paramparā* is valid only if it is traceable through *dikṣā*. This line has become commonly known as the lineage of the *bābājīs*.

The *śikṣā-sampradāya* is one wherein the line of transcendental knowledge is traced through the most elevated of self-realized souls. While all these Vaiṣṇavas are duly initiated, the line of the *paramparā* may or may not pass on to the initiated disciple of his *dikṣā-guru*. Its course follows the greatest manifestation of knowledge and realization as its next link, which may occur with a *dikṣā* disciple or a *śikṣā* disciple. The determining factor is the level of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and not the ecclesiastical convention. This is known as the *śikṣā-sampradāya* and is the heritage of our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line.

This confirms the pre-eminence of *śikṣā* over all other forms of spiritual connection. By the testament of the *śikṣā-sampradāya*, devotees can rest assured that *śikṣā* is the prime factor in understanding the etiquette of a *guru*-disciple relationship. It is a culture which requires further discussion and training in ISKCON.

## 16. Implementation in ISKCON

Our Society at present is engulfed in a *dikṣā*-dominated culture. We have successfully trained devotees to recognize the importance of the *dikṣā-guru*, but have not given importance to the essence of *dikṣā*, which is *śikṣā*. Consequently, the many *śikṣā-gurus* who guide a devotee's life have been neglected.

Sadly enough, we have not succeeded in reflecting the *śikṣā* culture of the Gauḍīya tradition. Devotees lack faith in anyone other than their own *dikṣā-guru*. Even Śrīla Prabhupada's position as founder-*ācārya* is not clearly understood or glorified by all, what to speak of so many other instructors within the Society now suffering from neglect.

The "nuclear family" of the West was long ago discovered to be inadequate in raising children. Similarly, in a spiritual culture where there is only one father, the *dikṣā-guru*, with no other respected seniors, our inadequacy in guiding the Society's dependents is apparent.

The principle of giving respect, authority, and empowerment to *sādhus* will raise the overall fortune of ISKCON. This book is meant to be an instrument in serving that purpose. This issue needs to be discussed at the highest level of leadership in the Society. Then, its conclusions should be disseminated in lectures and seminars in our temples and among the congregation.

## 17. Possible Excesses

The implementation of *śikṣā* is not meant to replace *dikṣā* but complement it. No doubt there will be excess and abuse. That

need not be an excuse to avoid implementation. The Society may study possible cases of abuse and take whatever precautions practical, without excessive bureaucracy.

It is a fact that:

- a) disciples may politicize between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*;
  - b) *śikṣā guru* may not be supportive of the *dikṣā-guru*, and vice versa;
  - c) *dikṣā-gurus* may treat the instructors as juniors rather than peers;
  - d) Vaiṣṇavas in the role of *śikṣā-guru* may canvas followers;
  - e) instructors may consider their role as *guru* defined by their abilities and not the empowerment of Śrīla Prabhupāda;
- ... and on and on.

This book has been prepared to give some practical guidelines. At the conclusion of *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, after discussing the fall-down of *gurus*, Narahari Sarakāra states, “During the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu there have been many practical examples of the above.” Abuse of proper standards took place at the time of Lord Caitanya. Yet the author describes Vaiṣṇava conduct, since sincere devotees will want to follow the pure path of the *mahājanas* and will shun any perversion to the proper *sad-ācāra*.

## 18. Concluding Note

Having read this Overview, the reader may notice an apparent fluctuation in emphasis. Upon reading the entire book it may be more evident that the initial emphasis on *śikṣā-guru* is followed by stressing the primary role of *dikṣā-guru*. How is such a change of emphasis consistent with the overall theme of this book, which is *śikṣā*? Let us review this briefly.

Chapters One to Three strongly emphasize *śikṣā* as the dominant principle of *guru* and glorify *śikṣā* as the main currency

in the *guru*-disciple relationship. It is *śikṣā* by which one acquires the transcendental knowledge by which ignorance is destroyed and by which one becomes established in his original position. All in all, these chapters make for a very strong emphasis on the *śikṣā-guru* as the main figure in spiritual practice. This is supported by the Gauḍīya tradition which traces the line of the *paramparā* through the most prominent spiritual teacher connected with the disciplic succession. *Śikṣā* is the primary factor, and the line of initiation is of secondary importance.

Chapter Four introduces a new perspective, which establishes another emphasis. The Traditional Protocol in the relationship between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* emphasizes the initiator over the instructor. That same theme is developed and fortified in Chapters Seven to Nine. Setting aside the exceptions to the rule, in terms of the roles they play the *śikṣā-guru* is subordinate to the initiator.

This Protocol should be viewed in light of the teachings of the earlier chapters. We are not reverting to a *dikṣā*-dominated system. On the contrary, having already defined *dikṣā* in terms of, and as an aspect of, *śikṣā*, the reality is that one *śikṣā-guru* plays the dominant role among all other *śikṣā-gurus*. That *śikṣā-guru* is the *dikṣā-guru*. The meaning is that one aspect of *śikṣā* (instructions given by him who bestows the *nāma* and *mantra*) takes prominence over other aspects. It is the cooperative effort of any *gurus* in complementing the service of a leader, for an overall result — the advancement of their disciple.

The *dikṣā-guru* is generally the first prominent *śikṣā* figure in a disciple’s life, and he later bestows the *dikṣā*, compulsory for all Vaiṣṇavas. To enforce the disciple’s faith in the first instructor, other *śikṣā-gurus* act as the *dikṣā-guru*’s limbs. The rest of the book then describes the etiquette entailed in these relationships.

All this does not change the fact that *śikṣā* is still the primary emphasis of the *guru-paramparā*, and Traditional Protocol is the

*sad-ācāra* meant to establish the sequential order by which *śikṣā* is acquired.

The apparent change of tone in the book should be viewed in this way. According to Śrīla Prabhupāda's instruction, this is the process for regularizing *śikṣā* and receiving it in ISKCON.

## PART 1



## ŚIKṢĀ AND THE EQUAL MANIFESTATIONS OF KRṢṂA

## The Principle of Guru

### 1. Introduction

The material world is not our natural home, for our constitutional position is to be Lord Kṛṣṇa's servants in the spiritual world. However, due to prolonged contact with the illusory energy, we have forgotten our true identity and, taking shelter of the temporary body, we are now suffering the threefold miseries. This condition is well known to all aspiring transcendentalists.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, the material world has two main functions: "Bewildering the conditioned souls and liberating the devotees are both functions belonging to *yoga-māyā*." (*Bhāg.* 10.1.69, purport) The illusory potency constrains the rebellious living entities where they cannot interfere with the eternal pastimes of the Lord, and she provides a facility where they can be rectified of their false independence.

*Māyā* exerts her influence on both categories of conditioned souls, the illusioned and those desiring liberation. To deliver both, Lord Kṛṣṇa comes to this material world and exhibits His extraordinary mercy by inducing the conditioned souls to cut their attachments to her.

## 2. Kṛṣṇa as the Original Guru

By speaking *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches the world through His friend Arjuna. He explains our erroneous identification with this body, the temporal nature of this world, and the process of devotional surrender to overcome illusion.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu took the role of a devotee and showed how to surrender to Kṛṣṇa as recommended in the *Gītā*. By instructing Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, Caitanya Mahāprabhu took the role of *guru*, and by hearing from Rāmānanda Rāya, He showed the topmost limit of *śikṣā*.

Prior to creation, the personified Vedas prayed to the Lord as their source and origin, for as stated in the *Gītā*, He is knowledge, the process of knowledge, and the end of knowledge. They became enlightened and understood their ultimate purpose from the primordial teacher of all.

Either in His personal appearance or through His expansions and incarnations, Lord Kṛṣṇa continues to teach conditioned souls the path back to Him. In the *Gītā* He states that He is the possessor of all knowledge, *sarvasya cāham* and *vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah*, (Bg. 15.15) and consequently, He is known as *guru*. The term *guru* refers to one who is heavy with knowledge. As Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “The literal meaning of the word *guru* is ‘heavy,’ heavy with knowledge and authority, because his knowledge and authority come from Kṛṣṇa.” (*The Journey of Self-Discovery*, 2.2)

Who can possess greater knowledge than Lord Kṛṣṇa, the spiritual master of Brahmā and the Kumāras? As He possesses all knowledge, He is the spiritual master of all, and as He existed before all others, He is celebrated as the original *guru*. Beginning with Lord Baladeva, all others are His representatives.

To preserve Lord Kṛṣṇa’s teachings and record His extraordinary pastimes, Vedavyāsa compiled the Vedas and made the revealed scriptures available for all time, for all souls. In the absence of the Lord’s incarnation and manifest pastimes, He

remains present in the form of transcendental sound known as *śabda*. This sound is not different from Him, for He is its very origin. Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes Madhvācārya saying, “The transcendental words of the Vedas emanated from the mouth of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (*Bhāg.* 6.1.40, purport)

Thus, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the primordial *guru* for all creation, for it is He who originated the message by which His lost children can again attain to the plane of transcendence and bliss.

## 3. The Guru-paramparā

To assist the Lord in His mission of reclaiming lost souls, all His associates play varying roles. Lord Baladeva is the first expansion of the Lord. He makes it His mission to teach others how to understand and follow the Lord’s orders. This is well documented in His pastimes as Lord Nityānanda, the savior of Jagāi and Mādhāi.

Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva, the Kumāras and Lakṣmī-devī all desire to assist the Lord in this same mission. To offer a chance of service, He instructs and empowers His devotees to establish their lines of disciplic succession, and consequently, there are four Vaiṣṇava *paramparās* current within this universe. Their founders are known as the *ādi-gurus*, for they are the first to receive the weight of Vedic knowledge. Assisted by their own associates, they continue to disseminate the message of Godhead, and all those who participate in that mission also become *guru*. In this way, the *guru-paramparās* come into being.

The teachings of Lord Caitanya have unified the four disciplic successions, amalgamating the essence of their philosophies into what is currently the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. Thus, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas consider the teachings of Lord Caitanya to represent the complete and ultimate message of Godhead.

To receive the message of the Lord and benefit from its teachings, one must also come in contact with the disciplic succession and be accepted by an authorized link in the chain of *paramparā*.

#### 4. Ādi-guru and Founder-Ācārya

According to the *Gītā*, when the disciplic succession is broken or its message becomes lost, Lord Kṛṣṇa appears to reestablish it: *yadā yadā hi dharmasya, tadātmānam sṛjāmy aham*. He may do this personally, or through his empowered servants. The empowered devotees who originally establish the four *sampradāyas* are known as the *ādi-gurus*, and the Vaiṣṇavas who correct discrepancies in the teachings and the direction of the mission are called founder-*ācāryas*.\*

In the purports of *Bhagavad-gītā* 4.6 and 7, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the word *ātma-māyayā* and *sṛjāmi*, respectively. In both cases, he indicates the words relate to the divine nature of the Lord's appearance. The same internal potency directs the appearance of the founder-*ācārya*, who conducts his service by the will of the Lord.

What is the service of the founder-*ācārya*? *Dharmasya glāniḥ*. He corrects the twofold discrepancies in religious principles, which are the deviations in the pure teachings of the *paramparā* and misunderstandings in the purpose of its mission. The founder-*ācārya* appears to revitalize these teachings and inspire the mission of Lord Caitanya.

Examples of founder-*ācāryas* are Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhva, and, more recently, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Because of his role in revitalizing the *paramparā*, members of a disciplic line greatly revere the founder-*ācārya*. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that devotees who succeed the founder-*ācārya* are duty-bound to see the teachings of the *paramparā* through his instructions. By fidelity to his directions, Vaiṣṇava *gurus* receive

\* In his *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura uses the words “*ādi-guru*” and “founder-*ācārya*” interchangeably. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda used the title “Founder-*Ācārya*” as the founder of ISKCON, which, according to his written words, is a branch of the Gauḍīya tradition. [“ISKCON branch” (Cc. *Ādi* 12.73, purport)] Because we do not opine that ISKCON is a *sampradāya* of its own, based on Śrīla Prabhupāda's usage, we have given separate definitions to founder-*ācārya* and *ādi-guru*.

empowerment to serve the mission. If they deviate from his teachings, they lose their service and become disconnected from his line.

In conclusion, the founder-*ācārya* is not a functionary among a myriad of Vaiṣṇavas in the *paramparā*. He represents the Lord's power of attorney to right the disciplic line and impresses upon it his transcendental trademark, the guiding beacon for all devotees who lay claim to his heritage.

#### 5. Accepting a Guru

All Vaiṣṇavas have followed the principle of accepting a *guru* since time immemorial. There is no known exception to this, and even Lord Kṛṣṇa, the *guru* of all, accepted Sāndīpani Muni as His spiritual master. What, then, to speak of others?

Scripture states, *tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet*. This statement of the *Upaniṣads* is an obligatory declaration, “...one must accept a *guru*!” Why? Lord Kṛṣṇa, as the highest authority, states:

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

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth.” (Bg. 4.34)

If one wants to understand the science of transcendence, one must approach a spiritual master in the mood of a menial servant and satisfy him by a submissive attitude. To such an inquisitive soul, Kṛṣṇa explains, the seers (*darśinaḥ* — in the plural form), will give initiation (*upadekṣyanti*) and impart knowledge (*te jñānam*).

Spiritual life entails understanding reality, both apparent and absolute, as well as the source of both, the Supreme Lord. Unlike the empirical system, the acquisition of transcendental knowledge

is a descending process which must be acquired from one who is in possession of it. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains, “The word *guru* means ‘heavy,’ heavy with knowledge. And what is that knowledge? *Tad-vijñāna*.” (*Teachings of Lord Kapila*, 4) Therefore, if one wants to understand the Absolute Truth, one must approach a *guru*. Then, the devotee must endear himself to the spiritual master, who, being satisfied, becomes kind enough to reveal the Truths of transcendence.

How has the *guru* acquired such knowledge? Through the same process as the aspirant. He received knowledge from his *guru*, who received it from his *guru*, and so on, back to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the original *guru*, the source of all knowledge. This chain of Vaiṣṇavas transmitting knowledge from its original source is known as the *guru-paramparā*.

## 6. Guru Gives Transcendental Knowledge

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s translation of the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse 4.34 is given verbatim above. It is instructive to note that he does not include the translation of the word *upadekṣyanti* (“they will initiate”) in the verse translation, nor does he mention it in the subsequent purport. Instead, he emphasizes the transmission of knowledge.

We raise this point not to belittle the process of *dikṣā*, but to underscore Śrīla Prabhupāda’s apparent emphasis. That emphasis is upon the transmission of transcendental knowledge as the foremost commodity in understanding the Absolute Truth. We will discuss this point repeatedly and in detail in this chapter, for its importance cannot be underestimated as the pivot upon which spiritual life turns. It is for this reason that such *tattva* is emphasized repeatedly in *śāstra* and may readily be supported with numerous quotes.

Supporting evidence from *śāstra* and Śrīla Prabhupāda which endorse this principle are as follows:

1. *Om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā*. “My spiritual

master opened my eyes with the salve of knowledge.” (*Prema-bhakti-candrikā*)

2. *Śabde pare ca niṣṇātām brahmaṇy upasamāśrayam*. “The qualification of the *guru* is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions.” (*Bhāg.* 11.3.21)

3. *Sa gurum... śrotriyam brahma-niṣṭham*. “The symptom of such a *guru* is that he is expert in understanding the Vedic conclusion.” (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12.)

4. *Cakhu-dān dilo jei, janme janme prabhu sei, divya-jñān hṛde prokāśito*. “He who has given me the gift of transcendental knowledge is my Lord, birth after birth.” (*Prema-bhakti-candrikā*)

5. “*Dikṣā* means *divya-jñāna kṣapayati iti dikṣā*. (?) Which explains the *divya-jñāna*, transcendental, that is *dikṣā*. *Di*, *divya*, *dikṣāna*. *Dikṣā*. So *divya-jñāna*, transcendental knowledge... If you don’t accept a spiritual master, how you’ll get transcen...?” (Conversation, Bhubaneswar, January 27, 1977)

6. “Those who are initiated this evening, I have several times explained what is the meaning of initiation. Initiation means beginning of receiving transcendental knowledge.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, April 4, 1976)

The gift of transcendental knowledge is the greatest and purest commodity a devotee may acquire. The knowledge imparted by the *guru* is not his fanciful fabrication, but is the original knowledge of transcendence (e.g., *Bhagavad-gītā*), spoken by the Lord through His representative. In this way, the integrity of the *paramparā* is maintained, avoiding alteration to its original message. Transmitting knowledge simply means passing on what has been received from one’s own spiritual masters.

We reiterate that the quotes above substantiate that the transmission of transcendental knowledge is the primary characteristic of the *guru-paramparā*. That being the case, the foremost duty of all *gurus* is the same — to impart knowledge.

In his usually concise and eloquent style, Śrīla Prabhupāda has defined *śikṣā* as the process of accepting knowledge in *paramparā*.

“We hear the instructions of Kṛṣṇa via the unbroken chain of disciplic succession (*guru-paramparā*). Acceptance of these instructions is called *śikṣā*, or voluntarily following the instruction of the spiritual master.” (A *Second Chance* 13)

From the beginning of this chapter, we have seen that Lord Kṛṣṇa directs His wayward sons through His divine instructions. That knowledge is recorded in Vedic literature by Vyāsadeva and passed on through the chain of disciplic succession, under the authority of the *ādi-guru* of a *sampradāya* and the supervision of the founder-*ācārya*. Devotees in the line of the founder-*ācārya* take his teachings as their life and soul and, by transmitting them unchanged, they become qualified to be *guru*. The constant transmission and acceptance of transcendental knowledge is known as *śikṣā*.

The emerging importance of transcendental knowledge as the main commodity of spiritual life should be clear. Let us now examine how *śāstra* values those great souls who impart this transcendental knowledge to us.

## 7. Guru and His Śikṣa as Good as God

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead is worshipped by living entities in these fourteen planetary systems, the innumerable *brahmāṇḍas* in all creation, and the Vaikuṅṭha worlds beyond the region of the *mahat-tattva*. His transcendental instructions, recorded as the Vedic literature, are sacred *śāstra* and are as worshipable as Himself. *Gītā-māhātmya* (19) states, *tasmād dharma-mayi gītā sarva-jñāna-prayojikai*. “Therefore, the *Gītā* should be offered all respects at all times and in all places.” What is spoken by the Lord is as worshipable as Himself.

Certainly this concept is consistent with the absolute nature of the Supreme. Those things in direct relationship with Him are non-different from Him. In the ultimate sense, they deserve the same regard as that awarded to Him. Lord Śiva confirms this with the words *tadīyānām samarcanam*. (*Padma Purāṇa*)

Consequently, a Vaiṣṇava or a spiritual master who carries and lives by the all-worshipable message of the all-worshipable Lord is also equally worshipable. Because his very being is the embodiment of the directions of *śāstra*, the true devotee is qualitatively non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Speaking in the *Bhāgavatam*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says, *ācāryam mām vijānīyāt*. “The *ācārya* must be respected as Myself.” (*Bhāg.* 11.17.27)

Thus, a Vaiṣṇava sees the Supreme Lord in the instructions of the spiritual master and does not differentiate between the instructions of *guru* and those of the Lord. Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “This means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāñī-sevā*.” (*Bhāg.* 4.28.51, purport)

In this way, we revere the *guru* as good as God, for by the transcendental knowledge received from him, our ignorance-laden eyes are opened, and we receive the opportunity to see Him. By introducing the singing of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s *Gurvāṣṭakam* for *maṅgala-ārati*, Śrīla Prabhupāda established the first meditation of the day — the spiritual master. The seventh verse of this song states:

*sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair  
uktas tathā bhāvya eva sadbhiḥ  
kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya  
vande guroḥ śrī-caranāravindam*

Explaining the principle of *sākṣād-hari* in Paris in 1976, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “*Guru* means Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa means *guru*. Not Māyāvāda, but *guru* means one who follows Kṛṣṇa, he is *guru*. *Sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktas tathā bhāvya eva sadbhiḥ*. So *guru* is directly God, *sākṣād-hari*. *Sākṣāt* means directly. In every *śāstra* it is said the *guru* is one, Kṛṣṇa. So, it is stated in the *śāstra*, and it is accepted by authorities. And *sadbhiḥ*, ‘by great personalities.’ *Tathā* means ‘accordingly,’ *bhāvya eva sadbhiḥ*, those who are actually in transcendental platform, they should

accept it. So, why? *Kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva*, he is the most confidential servant. He's therefore servant-God. *Kintu prabhor yaḥ priya eva tasya*. So why he has become *priya*? That is, Kṛṣṇa says personally, *na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścīn me priya-kṛttamaḥ*: nobody is dearer than him in the whole world. Why? *Ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ mad-bhakteṣv abhidha...* 'Who preaches this gospel of *Bhagavad-gītā* among My devotees.' So the *guru* has got two businesses. He has to make devotees and teach them the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Therefore he's so dear." (Conversation, Paris, July 31, 1976)

Śrīla Prabhupāda's explanation is complete. He clarifies how the teacher of the Lord's message is as good as the Lord Himself. As stated in the verse, this is the version of all scriptures.

How the *guru* is to be worshipped and the technicalities of such convention are not the topic of this book. There are some aspects of this etiquette described later, as they relate to the principle of *śikṣā* and the relative degrees of worship offered to *gurus*. More details are given by Sanātana Gosvāmī in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, and these principles are to be found in the general practices of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. In establishing ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced such etiquette, as affirmed by such practices as the daily *guru-pūjā* now conducted in all temples worldwide.

The responsibility of serious disciples is to be aware of such proper behavior, for Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "One should live among devotees, saintly persons, to learn the etiquette and proper behavior of devotional service." (*Bhāg.* 7.7.30-31, purport)

While this book is not meant to enumerate the many details of *guru* worship, its purpose is certainly served by exalting the foremost principle of such *pūjā*. What is that? *Guru-mukha-padma-vākya*, *cittete koriyā aikya*, *ār nā koriho mane āsā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, "Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura advises everyone to stick to the principle of carrying out the orders of the spiritual master. One should not desire anything else."

Of all means of worship, adhering to the order of the *guru*

is the sum and substance. All other methods of service are secondary. This is certainly the conclusion of *sādhu*, *śāstra* and *guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has placed great stress on this point, citing his personal success in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In fact, he considered the unflinching faith in the instructions of the *guru* the secret of success.

"This is the secret of success. After being initiated and receiving the orders of the spiritual master, the disciple should unhesitatingly think about the instructions or orders of the spiritual master, and should not allow himself to be disturbed by anything else." (*Bhāg.* 4.24.15, purport)

In speaking about his Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Prabhupāda clarified that his qualification for initiation was his inclination to hear: "So Prabhupāda immediately replied, 'Yes, I have marked him. He does not go away, he hears. This (indistinct). Yes, I will accept him as disciple.' Then I was initiated." (Conversation, March 17, 1973)

More need not be said on this topic. If one takes the instructions of the *guru* to heart, all other details of devotional life are revealed. "The meaning of the words of *Bhagavad-gītā* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* are revealed to one strictly following the orders of the spiritual master." (Cc. *Madhya* 9.98, purport)

Conversely, if one is expert in all the rituals of *guru-pūjā*, but is not interested in hearing from *guru*, he has missed the essence of his connection. "If one desires to advance in spiritual life but he acts whimsically, not following the orders of the spiritual master, he has no shelter." (*Bhāg.* 7.12.11, purport)

## 8. The Second Aspect of Śikṣā

*Śikṣā*, as the acceptance of the instructions descending through the chain of disciplic succession, has already been introduced in this chapter. There is another feature of *śikṣā* which requires elucidation. That aspect of *śikṣā* is known as *dīkṣā*, or initiation.

The reader may note with emphasis that, contrary to current convention in ISKCON, *dikṣā* is being defined here as an aspect of *śikṣā*. We do this to stress the importance of *śikṣā* and refocus devotees' perspective on the meaning of *dikṣā*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained that initiation “means beginning of receiving transcendental knowledge.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, April 4, 1976) According to this definition, it is certainly an aspect of *śikṣā*. This section will give further support for the above argument from the writings of His Divine Grace and Jīva Gosvāmī.

One may question what bestowing the holy name and Gāyatrī *mantra* has to do with *śikṣā*. In answer, we cite that the purpose of all instruction is remembrance of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The process by which such constant remembrance is achieved is the chanting of His holy name, qualities and pastimes. Since *dikṣā* is the means to receive and chant the Lord's names, it is the instrument through which we execute the *śikṣā* of the *sampradāya*. Thus, it is an element of *śikṣā*, and we have called it the “second aspect.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda not only explains the relationship between *śikṣā* and *dikṣā*, but defines *dikṣā* in terms of *śikṣā*. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya 4.111, purport), he states, “*Dikṣā* actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.”

The clear emphasis is that initiation means acquiring transcendental knowledge — *śikṣā*. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda claims that the process of initiation takes place through the reception of *śikṣā*. Since *dikṣā* is primarily defined in terms of *śikṣā*, we argue that they are inseparable and inter-related functions, in which initiation is an aspect of *śikṣā*.

In further elaboration upon the teachings of Jīva Gosvāmī in this regard, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *The Nectar of Instruction* (5):

The process by which a devotee becomes attached to Kṛṣṇa is described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Antya 4.192):

*dikṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa*  
*sei-kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātma-sama*

“At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders to the service of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa accepts him to be as good as He Himself.”

*Dikṣā*, or spiritual initiation, is explained in the *Bhakti-sandarbha* (868) by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī:

*divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt*  
*kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam*  
*tasmāt dikṣeti sā proktā*  
*deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ*

“By *dikṣā* one gradually becomes disinterested in material enjoyment and gradually becomes interested in spiritual life.”

A spiritual master simply must be conversant in the essence of the *sāstra*; he must understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Only then can one become a spiritual master.

“*Dikṣā* actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.” (Cc. *Madhya* 4.111, purport)

“It is the spiritual master who delivers the disciple from the clutches of *māyā* by initiating him into the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. In this way, a sleeping human being can revive his consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In other words, the spiritual master awakens the sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Viṣṇu. This is the purpose of *dikṣā*, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness.” (Cc. *Madhya* 9.61, purport)

The sequence of Prabhupāda's instructions is significant. He

first emphasizes that *dikṣā* means being “initiated” with transcendental knowledge, *śikṣā*. He continues by including initiation by the holy name and the Gāyatrī *mantra*, by which one is purified and awakened to his original position as a servant of the Lord. Then, at the conclusion of the purport, he states, “Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness.” Again the emphasis is on receiving pure knowledge! Nowhere is *dikṣā* separated from *śikṣā* in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words. In fact, it is the ingredient, means, and conclusion of *dikṣā*. As such, we have explained *dikṣā* as an aspect of *śikṣā*, keeping in harmony with His Divine Grace’s statements.

## 9. Vāṇī (Śikṣā) More Important than Vapuḥ

In an earlier section it has been shown that there is no spiritual difference between the spiritual master and his instruction. In his purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi 1.35, Prabhupāda says, “There is no difference between the spiritual master’s instructions and the spiritual master himself. In his absence, therefore, his words of direction should be the pride of the disciple.”

In this section the relative importance of *śikṣā* and the physical presence of the *guru* are discussed. Śrīla Prabhupāda has often spoken on these topics and has defined them in the following way: “Form is called *vapu* and teachings is called *vāṇī*.” (Letter, December 14, 1972)

Before discussing *vapuḥ*, we would like to clarify the matching of the words *vāṇī* and *śikṣā*. There is some technical difference between the two. *Śikṣā* generally refers to the philosophical or theological teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and *vāṇī* refers to the individualized instructions a *guru* gives the disciple. Such instructions are often of a personal nature, wherein general *śikṣā* is applied to the execution of a particular service (e.g., Śrīla Prabhupāda received the order to print books). Śrīla Prabhupāda often refers to the word *vāṇī* as “order.” Therefore, *śikṣā* is the general teachings and *vāṇī* is their personal and practical applica-

tion. Because in the absolute sense there is no difference between them, for the sake of simplicity we will use the words interchangeably.

Returning to the topic of *vapu*, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the word *vapu* refers to the physical form of the *guru*, his manifest body. Although both are important, because *vāṇī* continues in the absence or demise of the *vapu*, it is considered superior.

In his concluding words to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “There are two ways of association, by *vāṇī* and by *vapuḥ*. *Vāṇī* means words, and *vapuḥ* means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but *vāṇī* continues to exist eternally. Therefore, we must take advantage of the *vāṇī*, not the physical presence.”

Again, in a letter (one instance among many such statements), he says, “To carry out the teachings of *guru* is more important than to worship the form, but none of them should be neglected. Form is called *vapu* and teachings is called *vāṇī*. Both should be worshipped. *Vāṇī* is more important than *vapu*.” (Letter, December 14, 1972)

“*Vāṇī* is more important than *vapuḥ*.” This point is exceedingly important for many reasons. One is that it reemphasizes the spiritual master as the very embodiment of spiritual knowledge. Hearing his teachings and treasuring his instructions are the pre-eminent means for his association. That is *vāṇī*.

Second, if we place proper emphasis on *guru śikṣā*, the risk of superficial attachment by disciples to the external characteristics of *vapuḥ*, independent of *vāṇī*, will be minimized. Śrīla Prabhupāda says both factors are important. But *vapuḥ* is worshipable because it is the instrument through which *vāṇī* appears. Thus, *vāṇī* or *śikṣā* is the essence, and of foremost importance.

In the previous sections it has been shown that the most prominent feature of the *guru* is *śikṣā*. Now, the study of *vāṇī* and *vapuḥ* have highlighted two further aspects of *śikṣā*, which are that *śikṣā* is:

- a) the primary connection between the *guru* and disciple, and
- b) even more important than the physical presence of the *guru*.

## 10. Definition of Guru: Anyone Who Gives Instructions on the Basis of Revealed Scriptures

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the active principle of the *guru*. That principle is known as *śikṣā*, the transmission of spiritual knowledge. *Śāstra* has confirmed that *śikṣā* (or *vāñī*) is not a subsidiary point, but the essence of spiritual life, indeed, the secret of success. The dominant feature of *śikṣā* is further confirmed in that it is as worshipable as the Lord, the primary connection in the *paramparā*, and of greater importance than *vapuḥ*.

Below we quote a cardinal statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda, summarizing and concluding this chapter. His words confirm the paragraph above and present a simple, rule of thumb definition of the *guru*.

“Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has composed this Sanskrit verse for the beginning of his book, and now he will explain it in detail. He offers his respectful obeisances to the six principles of the Absolute Truth. *Gurūn* is plural in number because anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.34, purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s definition of *guru* is certainly fascinating. He writes that *anyone* who transmits transcendental knowledge on the basis of *śāstra* is *guru*.

We have already established that the prime duty of a *guru* is to give *śikṣā*. Now what Śrīla Prabhupāda says is that anyone who gives *śikṣā* is *guru*. Here we have a reversible equation. The *guru* gives spiritual knowledge based on revealed scripture, and anyone who gives spiritual knowledge based on revealed scripture is *guru*.

The reversed version of this equation, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s definition, is the purport of this book in one line. It is the fiber of

the “*śikṣā* culture” we would like to see introduced into ISKCON. If our dear readers remember only this one definition, our efforts stand on the threshold of success. “Anyone who gives instructions on the basis of revealed scriptures is *guru*.” Please remember that; it is essential.

## Two Types of Guru

### 1. Two Types of Guru

Chapter One established the general principle common to all *gurus*, which is the transmission of transcendental knowledge, *śikṣā*. On that basis, our study has defined the *guru* as anyone who gives instructions on the basis of revealed scriptures. This general definition deals with the spiritual master in quantitatively unqualified terms, while scripture often refers to a multiplicity of *gurus*.

For instance, the *Gītā* verse beginning with *tad viddhi praṇi-pātena* refers to *gurus* in the plural sense, with the words *upa-dekṣyanti* and *darśinaḥ*. Similarly, in the first introductory verse of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* beginning with *vande gurūn*, the word *gurūn* is in the plural tense.

In his purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains this plurality in a numerical and categorical sense. Not only are there many *gurus* who give *śikṣā*, but they are also classified according to further characteristics. The entire verse and part of the purport are quoted below. (Cc. *Ādi* 1.34)

vande gurūn īśa-bhaktān  
 īśam īśāvatārakān  
 tat-prakāśāms ca tac-chaktiḥ  
 kṛṣṇa-caitanya-saijñakam

## TRANSLATION

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the spiritual masters, the devotees of the Lord, the Lord's incarnations, His plenary portions, His energies, and the primeval Lord Himself, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya.

## PURPORT

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has composed this Sanskrit verse for the beginning of his book, and now he will explain it in detail. He offers his respectful obeisances to the six principles of the Absolute Truth. *Gurūn* is plural in number because anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master. Although others give help in showing the way to beginners, the *guru* who first initiates one with the *mahā-mantra* is to be known as the initiator, and the saints who give instructions for progressive advancement in Kṛṣṇa consciousness are called instructing spiritual masters. The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead. Therefore, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī accepted Nityānanda Prabhu and the six Gosvāmīs in the category of *guru*.

In addition to the different instructors, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes a categorical division among the *gurus*. They are spoken here as the instructing spiritual master, or *śikṣā-guru*, and initiating spiritual master, or *dikṣā-guru*. A letter dated January 5, 1969,

to Dayānanda Prabhu confirms the same divisions: “The Spiritual Master is divided into two parts; namely, *śikṣa guru* and *dikṣa guru*.”

This description of the *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* is the topic of this chapter.

## 2. Both Gurus are Equal Manifestations of the Lord

In the quote above Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, “The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead.”

According to this explanation, although there are two types of *gurus* with “different dealings,” they are “equal and identical” manifestations of the Lord. They have one common function, and that is to guide their disciples back to Godhead.

It should be noted with profit that Śrīla Prabhupāda establishes a oneness and difference between the two *gurus*. As a consequence of the difference in dealings, devotees lacking spiritual maturity consider one *guru* as being superior and the other inferior. Generally, the *dikṣā-guru* is very highly thought of and the *śikṣā-gurus* are usually neglected. This is certainly incorrect and un-Vaiṣṇava-like.

It is important to accentuate the transcendental equality of these *gurus*. The twofold division of *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru* should not be taken as an absolute differentiation relating to superiority or inferiority. While some of their functions differs, the principle of *guru* remains one — *śikṣā*. They are both considered as representatives of the Supreme Lord, for they both give “spiritual instructions based on the revealed scripture.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a stern warning to those who neglect the transcendental equality of these *gurus* in a later purport. He says, “If one foolishly discriminates between them [the *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*] he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport)

To avoid such foolish discrimination, *śāstra* goes to great length to explain that all *gurus* are non-different from the Supreme Lord. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 1.44-46) explains:

*yadyapi āmāra guru — caitanyera dāsa*  
*tathāpi jāniye āmi tānhāra prakāśa*

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

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

“According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is non-different from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.”

*ācāryaṁ māṁ vijānīyān nāvamaṇyeta karhicit*  
*na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ*

“One should know the *ācārya* as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.”

The above quotes refer to the *guru* in unqualified terms. This would naturally lead one to consider that it refers to all types of *gurus*, not just one. However, if confirmation on this point is required, we may refer to a rule of thumb given by Śrīla Prabhupāda later in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. “The word *guru* is equally applicable to the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*.” (Madhya 8.128, purport)

In the purport quoted below, Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms that both *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* are considered to be manifestations of the Supreme Lord. That means one is in no way inferior to the other.

“There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.” (Cc. Ādi 1.47, purport)

In the above statement Śrīla Prabhupāda emphatically affirms that both *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* are identical with the Supreme Lord. To discriminate between them as representatives of the Lord based on their different dealings is foolish. Although the method of their service in training disciples may vary, their authority is divine and equal.

Consider our mother and father. Certainly their dealings within the family and with their children differ. Yet they are both indispensable in the happy upbringing of their dependents. To discriminate based on their physiology, strength and household role is to be truly blind to their invaluable family contribution.

### 3. Examples of Śikṣā-guru and Dikṣā-guru

Revealed scripture and Vaiṣṇava tradition exemplify the cooperative effort of *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* in the lives of devotees. Some historical examples are given below.

In the Fourth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the wonderful story of Dhruva Mahārāja, a favorite narration of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The example of Dhruva’s *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-guru* is explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

“Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Sunīti. It was Sunīti who had given him the clue which had now enabled him to be personally carried to the Vaikuṅṭha planet by the associates of Lord Viṣṇu. He now remembered her and wanted to take her with him. Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, Sunīti, was his *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*. *Vartma-pradarśaka-guru* means ‘the *guru*, or the spiritual master, who shows the way.’ Such a *guru* is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*. Although Nārada Muni was his *dikṣā-guru* (initiating spiritual master), Sunīti, his mother, was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the

Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the *śikṣā-guru* or *dikṣā-guru* to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process.” (Bhāg. 4.12.32, purport)

Dhruva’s mother, Sunīti, was his *śikṣā-guru* and Nārada Muni was his *dikṣā-guru*. By the help of his mother, Dhruva was able to gain the association of Nārada and consequently, gain the *darśana* of Lord Nārāyaṇa.

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Ādi 1.36, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī establishes that the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana are the *śikṣā-gurus* of all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Śrīla Prabhupāda further explains that one who does not accept them as such cannot be recognized as a Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava. (It is interesting to note that Śrīla Prabhupāda rejects even a properly initiated Vaiṣṇava, if he neglects his Gosvāmī *śikṣā-gurus*.) A few verses later the author states that Lord Nityānanda is his *dikṣā-guru*.

Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura accepted the prostitute Cintāmaṇi and Lord Kṛṣṇa as his *śikṣā-gurus* and Somagiri as his *dikṣā-guru*. By their combined effort he achieved perfection in Vṛndāvana.

In our recent Vaiṣṇava lineage, we see that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was the *śikṣā-guru* of Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, who in turn was the *dikṣā-guru* of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. In turn, *vaiṣṇava-sārvabhauma* Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī was the *śikṣā-guru* of all three aforementioned Vaiṣṇavas.

There are numerous examples of both *gurus* in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava lineage, and we shall make mention of some of them in later chapters.

#### 4. Categories of Śikṣā-guru and Dikṣā-guru

In addition to the two types of *gurus* in the previous section, (*śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*) there are qualitative distinctions within the general *guru* category which are relevant to both. These are:

- a) the degree of advancement of the *guru*, and
- b) the degree of commitment of the *guru*.

These topics will be discussed in detail in Chapters Eight and Nine, respectively. However, a preliminary study is undertaken here to give a working knowledge of the subject, since reference to them recurs in the following chapters. Śrīla Prabhupāda has also introduced this subject early on in a purport in *Ādi-līlā* (1.47).

First is the study on the spiritual advancement of the *guru*.

##### a) Degree of Advancement

Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained that *gurus* may be selected from different categories of Vaiṣṇavas. In 1968, he wrote to Janārdana as follows: “Generally the spiritual master comes from the group of such eternal associates of the Lord; but anyone who follows the principles of such ever-liberated persons is as good as one in the above mentioned group. (...) A person who is liberated acharya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the disciplic succession.”

In *The Nectar of Instruction* Śrīla Prabhupāda says much the same thing. He adds that the *guru* of lesser spiritual strength is not as capable to direct the disciple. “One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples, but such disciples must be on the same platform, and it should be understood that they cannot advance very well toward the ultimate goal of life under his insufficient guidance.” (*The Nectar of Instruction* 5, purport)

Once again in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Śrīla Prabhupāda defines the two categories of *gurus*, the liberated and the other. “There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. 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. Thus, the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding." (Cc. *Ādi*. 1.47, purport)\*

From these quotes it appears that in the matter of spiritual strength, spiritual masters are divided into two general categories. One is the liberated or *mahā-bhāgavata*, and the second is the non-liberated, who may be either a neophyte or an intermediate devotee. This principle is applicable to all types of *gurus*, including *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*.

A relevant study may be undertaken regarding the level of competence of the non-liberated *guru* in directing the disciple. It is unarguable that the liberated *guru* is more qualified to give realized instruction and direct the devotions of a disciple. Although Chapter Thirteen discusses etiquette relating to *gurus* of varying strength, the details of their relative competence is not the topic of this book. The fact remains that as representatives of God, whether liberated or not liberated, *gurus* are meant to be respected as good as God. There may be a difference as to how to offer respect and how much respect is to be offered, but without doubt they must be revered as a representative of the Lord. Why? Because it has been established earlier that "anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master."

The conclusion is that there are *gurus* of varying spiritual strength, and they can be classified as being liberated and non-liberated. In either case, they should be seen as non-different than Lord Kṛṣṇa and respected *sākṣād-hari*.

In the following quote Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates that the disciple must always see the *guru* as the representative of the Lord, even if he presents himself as a lowly Vaiṣṇava. "The rela-

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\*Appendix 11 discusses in detail the import of Śrīla Prabhupāda's words in terms of different levels of *śikṣā-guru*, and the teaching they give. We request the reader to refer to it, as this purport is quoted frequently in this book.

tionship of a disciple with his spiritual master is as good as his relationship with the Supreme Lord. A spiritual master always represents himself as the humblest servitor of the Personality of Godhead, but the disciple must look upon him as the manifested representation of Godhead." (Cc. *Ādi* 1.46, purport)

Now follows discussion of the *gurus* of varying commitment.

### b) Degree of Commitment

In his description of the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that he is the one who "invokes" the disciple's interest in spiritual life. He is a *śikṣā-guru*. What is of special interest is that this *guru* might do no more than awaken someone's inclination to practice spiritual life or "show the way." The commitment to the disciple may be no more than a preparative one.

We should not misconstrue that such a Vaiṣṇava is not dedicated to Lord Caitanya's mission. He brings devotees to the process, but does not take them beyond the stage of introduction. This is not dissimilar to the role of a preacher or book distributor. He "invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions." (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport) Mother Sunīti directed Dhruva to find the Lord in the forest and contributed no further towards Dhruva's spiritual life. This is a *guru* of one level of commitment.

Then there is the *śikṣā-guru*, who Prabhupāda refers to as a "teacher," "saint," or "*sādhu*". He gives instruction regarding the process and philosophy, but makes no commitment beyond an educational role. Certainly such a service is highly valued by the Society and is the typical duty of the *brāhmaṇas*, the recognized spiritual master of the *varṇas*.

In addition to those *gurus* whose commitment is to education or an introduction to the path of devotion are the Vaiṣṇavas who take the responsibility of accompanying the disciple back to Godhead. Śrīla Prabhupāda identifies these devotees: "The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical

manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead.” (Cc. Ādi 1.34, purport)

And:

“Thus the *guru* takes on a very great responsibility. He must guide his disciple and enable him to become an eligible candidate for the perfect position — immortality.” (*The Science of Self-Realization*)

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives further insight into the dealings and psychology of such a *guru*. He explains that his commitment is similar to that of a parent to his child: “He is like a parent. Without the attentive service of his parents, a child cannot grow to manhood; similarly, without the care of the spiritual master, one cannot rise to the plane of transcendental service.” (Cc. Ādi 1.46, purport)

Until now we have shown varying degrees of commitment by the *guru*. The *śikṣā-gurus* have liberty to be in any category, according to their will. A question may arise whether the *dikṣā-guru* can take manifold commitments as in the case of the instructors. The answer is that the *dikṣā-guru* generally takes full responsibility for his disciple.

The explanation for this is as follows.

The *dikṣā-guru* is that devotee who has given the most regular *śikṣā* to his follower. By that standard their relationship is neither incidental nor cursory, but long-standing, strong and intimate. He has devoted considerable time and energy to ensuring his disciple’s advancement and has made an additional commitment by offering him initiation. Having a spiritually-vested interest to see his efforts bear fruit, and having already exhibited his resolution to his dependent, he is the fully committed *guru* who remains with the disciple until perfection.

This principle of commitment is enunciated by Lord Rṣabhadeva in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.5.18)

*gurur na sa syāt sva-jano na sa syāt  
pitā na sa syāt janani na sa syāt  
daivam na tat syān na patiś ca sa syān  
na mocayed yaḥ samuṣeta-mṛtyum*

“One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother, or a worshipable demigod.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on this verse in the following way: “...Everyone should be very responsible and take charge of his dependents just as a spiritual master takes charge of his disciple or a father takes charge of his son. All these responsibilities cannot be discharged honestly unless one can save the dependent from repeated birth and death.”

A father in the traditional sense is obliged to his son for life. He never considers his obligation “done” and will sacrifice for his dependent until the last. The position is clear. Only the *guru* who takes full responsibility for the disciple can save him from birth and death. The others point the way, but may not be there to help apply the general knowledge of scriptures in all times and conditions.

In the following quotes, Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms that the initiator must ensure the disciple’s ultimate success in spiritual life. This is not an immediate ritualistic function or short-term instruction. It is a serious commitment, of long duration and arduous effort.

“From this verse we can understand the meaning of initiation and the duties of a disciple and spiritual master. The spiritual master teaches the disciple how to give up materialistic life and ultimately follow the path back home, back to Godhead.” (*Bhāg.* 6.5.21, purport)

In the next letter Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the initiator, gives a guarantee of success on behalf of a disciple, provided he follows the recommended process.

“I am herein accepting you as my initiated disciple. Now you

must agree to very rigidly follow the rules and regulations as well as working under the instruction of my representatives, such as your GBC representative and Temple President, and if you follow this procedure very strictly then your life will be glorious and you will go back to Home, back to Godhead, this I can guarantee.” (Letter, February 16, 1973)

This is certainly a commitment. It is interesting to note that part of the process Prabhupāda outlines is to work under the directions of his representatives, the *śikṣā-gurus*. In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time, responsibility for directing day to day service was almost always assigned to senior devotees.

The overall indication is that *śikṣā-gurus* may be of varying degrees of commitment towards the disciple (including fully committed). On the other hand, the *dikṣā-guru* must take full responsibility to ensure the sincere disciple’s success in spiritual life. Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that the spiritual master is willing to return again to the material world to deliver the sincere disciple.

The commitment of the initiating *guru* has been discussed at length to emphasize the responsible role he must take. The *dikṣā-gurus* in ISKCON who presently travel world-wide and accept many disciples must be aware of the grave commitment to which they are bound.

To summarize this section, *gurus* are of varying characteristics. There are the liberated and non-liberated spiritual masters, and among them some are fully committed to the deliverance of the disciple and others exhibit lesser degrees of commitment. How to respond to *gurus* of varying spiritual strength and varying commitment will be discussed in later chapters.

## 5. The Founder-Ācārya or Ādi-guru

To complete any discussion of *gurus*, mention must be made of the founder-*ācārya*. A crying need is regularly expressed within ISKCON to clarify Śrīla Prabhupāda’s position in relation to

successive generations of *gurus*. Although the theme of founder-*ācārya* is the subject matter for another publication, it must also be given thorough treatment in this study of *śikṣā-guru*. After all, he is the pre-eminent instructor for all his followers.

This section contains a brief study of the founder-*ācārya*. A more detailed description of his role and position are to be found in Chapter Seven. Chapter One has defined both *ādi-guru* and founder-*ācārya*. Since the role of the *ādi-guru* is historically far removed, we shall continue to discuss only the founder-*ācārya*, with specific reference to Śrīla Prabhupāda where possible.

As the founder-*ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda placed himself within the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition and saw himself and ISKCON within the existing Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*. As shown in the following quote, (one of many) Śrīla Prabhupāda did not envisage ISKCON as a new *sampradāya* of which he was the *ādi-guru*. “According to our process, we follow the Brahmā *sampradāya*. And Brahmā is one of the *mahājanas*. So Brahmā has his disciplic succession, *paramparā*. (...) In this way, we come to Caitanya Mahāprabhu. (...) Then others, then our Guru Mahārāja. But the same thing we are speaking. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*. We are not manufacturing anything. That is the *guru-paramparā* system.” (Evening *darśana*, Tehran, August 12, 1976)

When he was personally leading ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly established himself as the founder-*ācārya* of the Society. To institutionalize his role, he requested his title to be present on all books, letter-head and official ISKCON publications. Śrīla Prabhupāda also gave instructions regarding the position of the founder-*ācārya* and his followers’ responsibilities. Some of his directions are as follows.

“As the Founder-Acarya and final authority on all ISKCON matters, please be informed that until you receive authorization from me you may kindly wait in these matters of loans until further notice from me.” (Letter, July 21, 1976)

The excerpt above establishes that on “all matters” the

instructions, teachings and mission statement of the founder-*ācārya* is the “ultimate authority” for members of ISKCON.

“This is to inform you that I, the undersigned, am the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and the world leader for all of its branches.” (Letter, January 16, 1977)

This letter indicates the founder-*ācārya* is the “world leader” of the Society. Combined with the above quote, this position is clearly a perpetual one.

“There shall be a Governing Body Commission whose purpose is to act as the instrument for the execution of the will of the Founder-Acarya, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.” (Letter, November 17, 1974)

This letter defines the duty of ISKCON’s leaders and members as being to assist in executing the will of His Divine Grace. This places all followers of the founder-*ācārya* in a subordinate and subservient role, with the explicit purpose of utilizing their individuality to fulfill the mission he has manifest through his instructions.

To summarize the above statements, the founder-*ācārya* is that great devotee whose instructions remain the ultimate authority and direction for his followers, whose mission is to respect and preserve his legacy in all respects.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in the sixth chapter of his *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* has specifically written on the subject of the *ādi-guru*, or founder-*ācārya*. He writes:

“The teachings left by the founder-*ācāryas* of the *sampradāyas* are to be especially honored. Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Nimbārkaācārya and Śrī Viṣṇu Svāmī are the four original *ācāryas* of the four Vaiṣṇava lines. One should accept only their teachings and conclusions, and not others. One should receive spiritual initiation in one of these four *sampradāyas* and not others.

“A devotee must understand that the *ādi-guru*, original spiritual master of the *sampradāya*, is the *śikṣā-guru*, and only his teachings are to be accepted, and not those of other scholars and

teachers. And only a saintly devotee who has understood the teachings of the *śikṣā-guru* is eligible to be a *dikṣā-guru* for others.”

The words of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura confirm and detail the definition derived from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements. Below is a list of some important points derived from both Śrīla Prabhupāda’s and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s instructions.

1. The founder-*ācārya* is the compulsory *śikṣā-guru* for his followers.
2. His followers should understand his teachings and be faithful to them.
3. His followers should not revert to the teachings of any other teachers or Vaiṣṇavas who are not his followers.
4. All *gurus* succeeding him, whether *śikṣā-gurus* or *dikṣā-gurus*, derive their authority from the founder-*ācārya* through allegiance to his teachings.

A question may be raised regarding the duration of the founder-*ācārya*’s authority. Based on the definition given above, it is clear that his followers are duty-bound to adhere to the theme of his teachings. But what happens if they do not, and the *paramaṣarā* line requires renewal? Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa will send another Vaiṣṇava to do that service who, in consideration of the time and circumstances, will fulfill the desires of the predecessor *ācāryas*.

This is the example of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the founder-*ācārya* of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, and Śrīla Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON. According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s disciples deviated from his will in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and so Śrīla Prabhupāda founded ISKCON to fulfill this mission. However, the members of ISKCON follow Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions, and are confident that through them they are faithful to the will of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

In summary, we can say that the followers of the founder-*ācārya* are always duty-bound to adhere to his teachings. If fate

has it that they deviate, then Kṛṣṇa will arrange for another founder-*ācārya* to correct the situation, and his followers should feel satisfied that by following him they follow the predecessor *ācāryas*.

To conclude this section, the founder-*ācārya* plays an important role in the lives of both *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*. He is the compulsory *śikṣā-guru* for his followers, (although he is the *dikṣā-guru* for his own initiates) and their spiritual credibility lies in their ability to strictly adhere to and represent his teachings.

## 6. Are Many Gurus Necessary?

With ISKCON tradition being the way it is, the question may arise whether relationships with more than one *guru* is an artifice or an excellence. There is a famous incident wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda was asked by his disciples about their acceptance of a *śikṣā-guru*. The question arose after one of Śrīla Prabhupāda's Godbrothers advertised himself as their *śikṣā-guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda, disapproving of his methodology, replied, "I am your *śikṣā* and *dikṣā-guru*."

Taking into consideration his other instructions, both written and oral, this comment appears circumstantial. It should not be understood to mean that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the only *śikṣā-guru*. For instance, Śrīla Prabhupāda expected his GBC men to act as *śikṣā-gurus*. "The GBC should all be the instructor gurus." (Letter, August 4, 1975) He also allowed his senior disciples to be viewed as instructors. "If K. Maharaja speaks what I speak, then he can be taken as *sikṣa-guru*." (Letter, July 20, 1974) In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, he wrote, "...if a Godbrother is more enlightened and advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one should accept him as almost equal to the spiritual master..." (*Bhāg.* 3.32.42, purport)

In his books Śrīla Prabhupāda also confirmed variety in *guru-tattva*. He made no statement to indicate that the *dikṣā-guru* was the exclusive spiritual master, nor did he indicate that a *śikṣā-guru* could not be accepted according to proper etiquette. However,

Śrīla Prabhupāda did condemn unauthorized *śikṣā*, unauthorized *dikṣā*, and all forms of pseudo-spirituality which transgressed proper *sad-ācāra*. But then, he did that with all bogus things.

His Divine Grace did not restrict or promote a multi-*guru* system. He respected the Gauḍīya tradition and supported it as all *ācāryas* had done. Whether a devotee contacted one or many *gurus* in his life was left to us as an individual affair.

The ultimate authority, Lord Kṛṣṇa, gives His opinion on the question cited above. In the Eightieth Chapter of *Kṛṣṇa Book*, He instructs Sudhāmā, saying, "My dear friend, everyone should consider his father to be his first teacher, because by the mercy of one's father one gets this body. The father is therefore the natural spiritual master. Our next spiritual master is he who initiates us into transcendental knowledge, and he is to be worshipped as much as I am. The spiritual master may be more than one. The spiritual master who instructs the disciple about spiritual matters is called *śikṣā-guru*, and the spiritual master who initiates the disciple is called *dikṣā-guru*. Both of them are My representatives. There may be many spiritual masters who instruct, but the initiator spiritual master is one. A human being who takes advantage of these spiritual masters and, receiving proper knowledge from them, crosses the ocean of material existence is to be understood as having properly utilized his human form of life."

Lord Kṛṣṇa calls the father the first spiritual master. He does not raise any obstacle to accepting a second *guru*, the *dikṣā-guru*, or a multiplicity of *śikṣā-gurus*. In fact, he applauds the devotees who take advantage of these spiritual masters to achieve spiritual success.

After all, how is it that we come to meet a *guru*, or many *gurus*? By the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 19.151) states:

*bhramāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva  
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*

“One who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.” And Śrīla Prabhupāda comments: “If one desires something, Kṛṣṇa fulfills one’s desire. Kṛṣṇa, who is situated in everyone’s heart, gives him the chance to meet a bona fide spiritual master. This is called *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāda*.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa is within our hearts and knows our every desire. As the ultimate Guru, He knows what and who we need to convince us to surrender to Him. If He makes available both *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* to guide and instruct us, what fault can there be in accepting His Divine Grace? The fact is, a sincere devotee is expected to do just that, but at all times it must be according to the proper etiquette.

## 7. Summary

*Gurus* are of two categories, the instructor, or *śikṣā-guru*, and the initiator, or *dikṣā-guru*. Both are equal manifestations of the Supreme Lord. These *gurus* may be either liberated or not liberated, depending on their individual attainment. The liberated *guru* guides his disciple from the absolute\* platform, while the non-liberated *guru* gives relevant instruction according to his current realization.

*Śikṣā-gurus* are of two types. One is fully committed to guiding the disciple back to Godhead, and the other is willing to give relevant instructions under limited conditions. The *dikṣā-guru* is fully committed to the deliverance of his disciple. The founder-*ācārya* is the *śikṣā-guru* for all Vaiṣṇavas in his line, and adherence to his instructions and mission is the qualification of those *gurus*.

A devotee is fortunate to gain the association of such *gurus*. He should know the proper convention for showing respect to all categories of *gurus* and the science of benefiting from their teachings. In this way, he can perfect his human form of life.

\* In this sense the word *absolute* means free from the influence of the modes of nature, faultless.

## Chapter Three

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# Gurus with Different Dealings

## 1. Knowing the Science of Kṛṣṇa

Earlier chapters have emphasized that the active principle of *guru-tattva* is *śikṣā*. In turn, *śikṣā* has been defined as the acceptance of knowledge on the basis of revealed scripture. Śrīla Prabhupāda has also explained that for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, *śikṣā* is knowledge of the science of Kṛṣṇa. He writes, “Śrīla Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also states that if (one) is conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa, he can become a spiritual master as *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *dikṣā-guru*, or *śikṣā-guru*.” (Cc. *Madhya* 8.128, purport)

In Ahmedabad in 1970, Śrīla Prabhupāda confirmed that a *guru* must be a Vaiṣṇava and a knower of Kṛṣṇa. “If a Vaiṣṇava, one who knows *viṣṇu-tattva*, *kṛṣṇa-tattva*, even if he’s born in the family of *śva-paca*, the dog-eaters, *caṇḍāla*, he can be accepted as *guru*. So the real test is whether the *guru* is a Vaiṣṇava, whether he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.”

The purpose of giving *śikṣā* is to guide the disciple back to Godhead. Those devotees who adopt that role are very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa and are to be seen as representatives of the Lord. The previous chapter has described the different types of *gurus*,

namely *śikṣā*, *dikṣā* and founder-*ācārya*. Their common function is to give *śikṣā* but, according to their individual roles, they also have additional transactions unique to their category. This chapter will discuss the “different dealings” among these classes of *gurus*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.34, purport)

Up to now, this book has emphasized the oneness among *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*. As Śrīla Prabhupāda says, they are “equal” and “identical” manifestations of Kṛṣṇa. Without belittling this principle, we shall now discuss the different duties they are assigned by the Lord in guiding their dependents.

## 2. Śikṣā-guru

Whether liberated or non-liberated, the *śikṣā-gurus* all have certain common roles which have been defined by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his teachings. We shall now begin a process which will be repeated throughout the book. It is the methodology by which the Codes of Etiquette are derived. According to the topic under discussion, relevant statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda (or other sources) will be quoted. Following the quotes, certain conclusions will be drawn, comprising the essence of those statements and the rough form of the Codes of Etiquette. When all such unedited conclusions in the book are complete, they will be correlated and edited to form the final form of the Codes as recorded in Chapter Thirteen.

Now we shall begin by studying the dealings of the *śikṣā-guru*.

1. *kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, sūdra kene naya  
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vetta, sei guru haya*

“Whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī*, or a *sūdra*, regardless of what he is, he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.” (Cc. *Madhya* 8.128)

2. “...if one becomes a sincere devotee and seriously engages in devotional service, Lord Kṛṣṇa sends an instructing spiritual master to show him favor and invoke his dormant propensity for serving the Supreme. The preceptor appears before the external senses of the fortunate...” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.58, purport)

3. “In the beginning of that book he has offered his obeisances to his different *gurus*, and it is to be noted that he has adored them all equally. The first spiritual master mentioned is Cin-tāmaṇi, who was one of his instructing spiritual masters because she first showed him the spiritual path.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.57, purport)

4. “Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, Sunīti, was his *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*. *Vartma-pradarśaka-guru* means the ‘guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way.’ Such a *guru* is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*. Although Nārada Muni was his *dikṣā-guru* (initiating spiritual master), Sunīti, his mother, was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the *śikṣā-guru* or *dikṣā-guru* to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to śāstric injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dikṣā-guru*.” (*Bhāg.* 4.12.32, purport)

5. “The expert spiritual master knows well how to engage his disciple’s energy in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, and thus he engages a devotee in a specific devotional service according to his special tendency. A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master, because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden. There is no limit, however, to the number of instructing spiritual masters one may accept. Generally, a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.35, purport)

6. “Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself teaches us as the instructing spiritual master from within and without. From within He teaches as Paramātmā, our constant companion, and from without He teaches from the *Bhagavad-gītā* as the instructing spiritual master. There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. 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. Thus, the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding. The *ācārya* in the true sense of the term, who is authorized to deliver Kṛṣṇa, enriches the disciple with full spiritual knowledge and thus awakens him to the activities of devotional service.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport)

7. “When, by learning from the self-realized spiritual master, one actually engages himself in the service of Lord Viṣṇu, functional devotional service begins. The procedures of this devotional service are known as *abhidheya*, or actions one is duty-bound to perform. Our only shelter is the Supreme Lord, and one who teaches how to approach Kṛṣṇa is the functioning form of the Personality of Godhead. There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport)

8. “Śrī Govindajī acts exactly like the *śikṣā-guru* (instructing spiritual master) by teaching Arjuna the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the original preceptor, for He gives us instructions and an opportunity to serve Him. ...the instructing spiritual master is a personal representative of Śrīla Govindadeva *vigraha*.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport)

9. “He is like a parent. Without the attentive service of his parents, a child cannot grow to manhood; similarly, without the care of the spiritual master, one cannot rise to the plane of transcendental service.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.46, purport)

Distilling the main elements from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements, the results are listed below.

1. A devotee contacts a *guru* by the arrangement of the Lord.
2. One who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa is a *guru*.
3. The *śikṣā-guru* who first gives information about spiritual life is known as the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*.
4. There is no limit to the number of instructing spiritual masters a devotee may have.
5. The *śikṣā-guru* gives instructions for elevation in devotional service. He enriches the disciple with full spiritual knowledge and thus awakens him to the activities of devotional service known as *abhidheya*, or actions one is duty-bound to perform.
6. The instructor engages the devotee in service, according to the disciple’s nature.
7. There are two types of *śikṣā-guru*, the liberated and the non-liberated. Each gives instruction according to his realization.
8. The non-liberated *śikṣā-guru* is he who invokes the disciple’s spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions commensurate to his own realization.
9. The liberated *śikṣā-guru* is fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service and gives instructions in the science of devotion from the absolute platform.
10. Śrī Govindajī acts exactly like the *śikṣā-guru* by teaching Arjuna the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He is the original preceptor, for He gives instructions and an opportunity to serve Him. Thus the instructing spiritual master is a personal representative of Śrīla Govindadeva *vigraha*.
11. As the one who teaches how to approach Kṛṣṇa, the *śikṣā-guru* is the functioning form of the Personality of Godhead.
12. Generally the *śikṣā-guru* who constantly instructs the disciple later becomes the *dikṣā-guru*.
13. These two *śikṣā-gurus* may be of varying levels of commitment to their dependent. One level is the *guru* fully dedicated to guiding the disciple until they terminate their term of material

existence; on levels of lesser commitment are *sādhus* who give guidance and instruction as appropriate.

In summary, the *śikṣā-guru* denotes different Vaiṣṇavas, all learned in the science of Kṛṣṇa, who are instrumental in the spiritual advancement of an aspirant. There may be many such instructing spiritual masters. The one who first arouses a devotee's interest in spiritual life is called the *varṇma-pradarśaka-guru*. The Vaiṣṇava who regularly instructs a devotee generally becomes the *dikṣā-guru*, and in the absence of the *dikṣā-guru* or on his order a disciple may take instruction from other advanced Vaiṣṇavas on how to cultivate his relationship with Kṛṣṇa. The *śikṣā-guru* may either of two types, liberated or non-liberated. His instructions relate to his level of advancement. Some *śikṣā-gurus* make a life-long commitment to the disciple, like the *dikṣā-guru*, while others may give relevant teachings or instruction. The instructors who do not make a full commitment to the disciple's progress are *sādhus* or saints. The *śikṣā-guru* who is fully committed is *guru* in the full sense in that he offers unconditional shelter. The *śikṣā-guru* is known as the representative of Govindajī and professor of *abhidheya-jñāna*, that knowledge by which one's relationship with the Lord is cultivated.

This completes the study of the dealings of *śikṣā-guru*. Because of his prominent position the founder-*ācārya śikṣā-guru* is discussed separately in the following section.

### 3. Founder-Ācārya

Although the position of the founder-*ācārya* has been described in the previous chapter, some additional points are mentioned here to clarify and expand his role in the lives of his followers.

In Chapter Two, Section 5, one of the conclusions was that *gurus* in the line of the founder-*ācārya* gain their authority by executing his will. Thus the roles assigned by *śāstra* to the *dikṣā-*

*guru* and *śikṣā-guru* must be seen in light of other relevant instructions given by the founder-*ācārya*. In other words, the followers of the founder-*ācārya* must see the directions of *śāstra* through his teachings. That is the meaning of *mahājano yena gataḥ sa paṅthāḥ*. (*Mahābhārata*)

In a lecture in 1975, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained this principle at length:

“So if you don't go through Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, it will be very difficult to understand Kṛṣṇa. That is practical. Just like you young boys and girls from Western countries. You have taken up Kṛṣṇa so seriously. Why? Because we are trying to understand Kṛṣṇa through Caitanya Mahāprabhu. So we should follow this principle. Therefore, in spite of *Bhagavad-gītā* being read all over the world for the last two hundred years, not a single person became a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. This is the defect. So let us try to understand Kṛṣṇa through Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The cult of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is that you become, every one of you, you become a *guru*. How to become *guru*? Now, *yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa*. Simply that qualification is sufficient. Don't adulterate the *kṛṣṇa-upadeśa*. You simply present what Kṛṣṇa says, as it is. Then every one of you will become a *guru*. Don't adulterate 'I think,' 'In my opinion.' These nonsense things should be given up. And Śrī *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is written for this purpose, so that a person who is serious about Kṛṣṇa consciousness may understand Kṛṣṇa through the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This is wanted. You cannot jump over Kṛṣṇa consciousness without going through the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. And to go through Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu means to go through the six Gosvāmīs. This is *paramparā* system. Therefore, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, *ei chay gosāi jār — tār mui dās, tā-sabāra pada-reṇu mora pañca-grās*. This is *paramparā* system. You cannot jump over. You must go through the *paramparā* system. You have to approach through your spiritual master to the Gosvāmīs, and through the Gosvāmīs you will have to approach Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and through Śrī Caitanya

Mahāprabhu you have to approach Kṛṣṇa. This is the way. Therefore, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura said, *ei chay gosāi jār — tār mui dās*. We are servant of servant. That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instruction, *goṇi-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ*. The more you become servant of the servant, the more you are perfect. And if you all of a sudden want to become master, then you go to hell. That's all." (Lecture, Māyāpur, March 3, 1975)

In *The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 6, Śrīla Prabhupāda translates the fourth principle of devotional service as "following in the footsteps of great *ācāryas* (teachers) under the direction of the spiritual master." This statement propounds the same principle enunciated in the lecture quoted above. A Vaiṣṇava should follow the teachings of the predecessor *ācāryas*, through the teachings of the founder-*ācārya*.

From Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions and those of Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura (quoted earlier from *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*), the following points have been summarized:

1. The founder-*ācārya* is he who renovates one of the four *sampradāyas*.
2. The founder-*ācārya* is the *śikṣā-guru* for the followers in his *sampradāya* (until another founder appears).
3. He has taken responsibility to guide and deliver all those who follow him.
4. His followers should understand his teachings and be faithful to them.
5. Followers of the *ādi-guru* should not revert to the teachings of any other teachers or Vaiṣṇavas who are not strict followers of the founder-*ācārya*.
6. Both *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* derive their authority from the founder-*ācārya* through allegiance to his teachings. It is their duty to represent the teachings of the *ādi-guru*.
7. All devotees should understand and follow the teachings of the *ācāryas* through following the instructions of the founder-*ācārya*.

In brief, the founder-*ācārya* is the *śikṣā-guru* for all devotees succeeding him. His extraordinary position as an empowered preacher and associate of the Lord are evidenced by his unique capacity in executing the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Consequently, his order cannot be transgressed, nor his teachings altered.

#### 4. Dikṣā-guru

The next category of *guru* is the initiator, the *dikṣā-guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has given many instructions on his role, and some representative passages are listed below. The ensuing conclusions are listed at the end.

1. "A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master, because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden. Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on." (Cc. *Ādi* 1.35, purport)

2. "The *Manu-saṁhitā* (2.140) explains the duties of an *ācārya*, describing that a bona fide spiritual master accepts charge of disciples, teaches them the Vedic knowledge with all its intricacies, and gives them their second birth. The duty of the spiritual master is to initiate a disciple with the sacred thread ceremony, and after this *samskāra*, or purificatory process, the spiritual master actually begins to teach the disciple about the Vedas. Only out of His immense compassion does the Personality of Godhead reveal Himself as the spiritual master. (...) He is the Supreme Personality of Servitor Godhead." (Cc. *Ādi* 1.46, purport)

3. "It is the spiritual master who delivers the disciple from the clutches of *māyā* by initiating him into the chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. In this way, a sleeping human being can revive his consciousness by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. In other words, the spiritual master awakens the

sleeping living entity to his original consciousness so that he can worship Lord Viṣṇu. This is the purpose of *dikṣā*, or initiation. Initiation means receiving the pure knowledge of spiritual consciousness.” (Cc. *Madhya* 9.61, purport)

4. “Unless one is fit according to the estimation of the spiritual master, one cannot accept a *mantra* from the *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* or the *vaidika-vidhi*. When one is fit to accept the *mantra*, he is initiated by the *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* or the *vaidika-vidhi*. In any case, the result is the same.” (Cc. *Madhya* 24.331, purport)

5. “**Student:** Is this the ceremony which is often referred to as *mantra-dikṣā*?”

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. *Mantra-dikṣā*. Yes. The first ceremony is *hari-nāma-dikṣā*, and then *mantra-dikṣā*. *Hari-nāma-dikṣā*, all these boys present, they were, one year before, they were initiated for chanting, and now they are being second time initiated by *mantra-dikṣā*, yes. Any other questions?” (Lecture, Boston, December 27, 1969)

6. “When a person is initiated, it is assumed that he has become a *brāhmaṇa*; without being initiated by a proper *brāhmaṇa*, one cannot be converted into a *brāhmaṇa*. (...) *Dikṣā* actually means initiating a disciple with transcendental knowledge by which he becomes freed from all material contamination.” (Cc. *Madhya* 4.111, purport)

7. “Those who are initiated this evening, I have several times explained what is the meaning of initiation. Initiation means beginning of receiving transcendental knowledge.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, April 4, 1976)

8. “The *dikṣā-guru* initiates a person into the chanting of the holy name and the *dikṣā-mantra*. The *nāma-guru*, or *dikṣā-guru*, teaches scriptural conclusions and reveals the esoteric nature of the holy name.” (*Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, Chapter 6)

9. “Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī is the ideal spiritual master, for he delivers one the shelter of the lotus feet of Madana-mohana. (...) The initiating spiritual master is a personal manifestation of Śrīla Madana-mohana *vigraha*. (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport)

10. “The *jñāna-rūpa*, torchlight, he’s *guru*. So maybe of different degrees, but anyone who opens the spiritual eyes, he’s *guru*. So... But it doesn’t matter that degree. Actually, if the *guru* teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then he may be in lesser degree, but he’s accepted as *guru*.” (Lecture, Ahmedabad, December 13, 1972)

The main points extracted from these quotes are listed below. They cite the role of the *dikṣā-guru* and indicate the function of *dikṣā*.

1. One must know the science of Kṛṣṇa to be a spiritual master.
2. A devotee may have only one initiating *guru*.
3. Generally, the devotee who constantly instructs the disciple regarding his relationship with the Lord becomes the *dikṣā-guru*.
4. The *dikṣā-guru* is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord.
5. The *dikṣā-guru* takes charge of the disciple, instructs him in the rites of devotional life, and initiates him by bestowing the sacred thread.
6. Initiation means to deliver the *mahā-mantra* to the disciple. When the disciple becomes purified by chanting the holy name, he is initiated with the *Gāyatrī mantra*.
7. After initiation, the disciple becomes qualified to worship the Deity and receives instruction in the meaning of the Vedas.
8. The *dikṣā-guru* is committed to seeing his disciple go back to Godhead.
9. The *dikṣā-guru* trains a devotee to become a qualified *brāhmaṇa*.
10. The *dikṣā-guru* is a manifestation of Madana-mohana, and the ideal *dikṣā-guru* is Sanātana Gosvāmī.
11. Like the instructor, the *dikṣā-guru* may be liberated or not liberated.

In summary, the Vaiṣṇava who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa and

regularly instructs an aspirant generally becomes that devotee's *dikṣā-guru*. One may have only one *dikṣā-guru*, whom the disciple sees as good as the Lord. The *guru* instructs the devotee in detachment from the material world and attachment to Kṛṣṇa. This is known as *sambandha-jñāna*. When he sees the disciple sufficiently mature, he bestows upon him the holy name of the Lord. By regular repetition of the name, the conception of being the servant of the Lord awakens within the heart of the disciple, and the *guru* initiates him with the *Gāyatrī mantra*, which assists the student to chant the holy name and strengthens his spiritual identity. To train the devotee in the service of the Lord, the *dikṣā-guru* instructs him in the process of Deity worship. In this way, he is fully equipped to become free from the shackles of matter and learns the science of *yukta-vairāgya*. By utilizing all his senses in the service of the Deity, the devotee cultivates love of God. *Dikṣā* is not solely the ceremony that marks the receiving of the name and *mantras*. It is an on-going process. The initiator is committed to seeing the disciple back to Godhead and is the representative of Madan-mohana and a follower of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī.

## 5. Summary

Chapter Three analyzed the roles of the *śikṣā-guru*, founder-*ācārya* and *dikṣā-guru*. The characteristic dealings of these devotees should be understood, for there are distinctive traits among them. The means by which they guide a devotee, the nature of their teachings, and the degree of their commitment are summarized. The founder-*ācārya* is singularly unique among *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus* in his function of reviving the *sampradāya*. Once again, having noted the different dealings of the *gurus*, the reader should keep in mind their oneness as representatives of the Lord.

## PART 2



## THE DIFFERENT DEALINGS OF GURUS

## Reviewing Oneness and Difference Between Śikṣā-gurus and Dīkṣā-gurus

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this book is to define the *śikṣā-guru* and introduce his role in a pragmatic way to ISKCON. Such innovation requires practical rules for implementation, which are readily found in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition. Our intent is to present this etiquette on the basis of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions and other śāstric authority. The implementation of these rules in a Society as diverse as ISKCON will require additional elaboration by way of by-laws and detailed regulations. Although such legislation is beyond the scope of this book, it is our purpose to present the general practices of our Vaiṣṇava tradition.

We have already explained the oneness between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dīkṣā-gurus*, as well as the difference in their dealings. However, there continues to be much misunderstanding in ISKCON due to the values read into the differences. To use a colloquial word, *śikṣā-gurus* have been marginalized.

This chapter is meant to review the oneness and the difference among the *gurus* in order to further clarify their positions.

It will also serve as a preface for the next chapter, which details the nature of the *guru*'s relationship and places the *gurus* in apparently primary and secondary roles. If not studied with balance, the concept of Traditional Protocol (in Chapter Five) can be utilized as a means to once again downgrade the role of the *śikṣā-guru*.

Understanding the oneness and difference relating to *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* is very important in the formulation of the Codes of Conduct (or Etiquette) governing them and the disciple.

The question may arise, "What need is there for further clarification? How can there be any misunderstanding?" Our answer is that even in the interaction between liberated souls, differences of opinion abound. What to speak, then, of non-liberated devotees and disciples who, by definition, require guidance in serving their *gurus*?

Narahari Sarakāra states in *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* (3-4), "During this Kali-yuga, all levels of devotees, including *uttama*, *madhyama* and *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs* shall always be in anxiety, and it will be at all times. They shall almost feel uncertainty in their hearts regarding the correct understanding of the eternal truths of devotional service."

## 2. Preliminary Considerations

A thorough study of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions reveals a clear relationship between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*. It is important to discuss the nature of this relationship to understand both the dealings of *gurus* and how to associate with them.

The sources of evidences to date (in addition to *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* and *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*) are the letters, conversations and books of Śrīla Prabhupāda. We shall now introduce another reference, which is the book *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya* by Professor N.K. Sanyal, a Godbrother of Śrīla Prabhupāda. (Please consult Appendix 7 for authentication of all source material.)

In reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's letters and conversations, the emphasis which emerges in dealings between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* is as follows.

Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes that the *dikṣā-guru* is the "original" or "real" spiritual master. The *śikṣā-guru* supports his teachings and assumes a subordinate role to the initiator. A few examples are given below and others are found in the following chapters.

"It is only that I can call Spiritual Master someone who is teaching me purely what my initiating Spiritual Master has taught. Do you get the sense?" (Letter, November 20, 1971)

"If K. Maharaja speaks what I speak, then he can be taken as *sikṣa guru*. *Guru sastra sadhu*. The spiritual master is one, that is a fact. K. Swami may be taken as *sadhu*, not spiritual master, or as *instructor guru*." (Letter, July 20, 1974)

"*Śikṣā-guru* does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the *dikṣā-guru*. He is not a *śikṣā-guru*. He is a rascal. Because that is offense. *Guror avajñā*. First offense is *guror avajñā*, defying the authority of *guru*. This is the first offense. So one who is offensive, how he can make advance in chanting? He cannot make. Then everything is finished in the beginning. *Guror avajñā*. Everything is there. If one is disobeying the spiritual master, he cannot remain in the pure status of life. He cannot be *śikṣā-guru* or anything else. He is finished, immediately." (Lecture, Honolulu, July 4, 1974)

Śrīla Prabhupāda's emphasis here is quite clear. And yet, in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 1.47, purport) he wrote, "There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service."

Is there a paradox here? First, Prabhupāda clearly places the role of the *śikṣā-guru* as being subservient to the initiator, and then he states that there is no difference between them. In fact, they are "equal" and "identical" to the Lord. To top it off, Śrīla

Prabhupāda warns of committing Vaiṣṇava (or *guru*) *aparādha* by foolishly discriminating between them. This is the subject of this chapter. How is it that the *dikṣā-guru* is generally the major spiritual influence in a disciple's life, and yet the *śikṣā-guru* is equal to him?

In our attempt to establish the equality of the multitude of instructing *gurus* in a disciple's life, we must remain true to Śrīla Prabhupāda's clear emphasis, without compromise. At the same time, there needs to be a clear communication to the untrained devotees that to "foolishly discriminate," thinking the *dikṣā-guru* superior and the instructors insignificant, will result in offenses and cause severe obstruction in our devotional lives.

By discussing these devotional principles thoroughly, it is our hope to lay to rest such misconceptions and avoid offenses.

### 3. Examples of Oneness and Difference

The following set of quotes exemplifies the two types of statements referred to above. One places the initiator prominent to the instructor, and the other calls them equal.

"So He accepted spiritual... Not spiritual master, but a *sannyāsa-guru*. That is also master, but he's not spiritual master. But he's also considered as *sannyāsa-guru*, spiritual master who offers him *sannyāsa*. Just like myself, I took initiation from my Guru Mahārāja, but I took *sannyāsa* from a Godbrother who is a *sannyāsī*. So, my original *guru* is that spiritual master who initiated me, but he's also a *śikṣā-guru*. Like that. Teacher." (Conversation, San Francisco, April 5, 1967)

And:

"According to śāstric injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*." (Bhāg. 4.12.32, purport)

The first quote indicates the *dikṣā-guru* is the "original" *guru* and the *sannyāsa-guru*, the *śikṣā-guru*, is "not spiritual master" but is "teacher". This is certainly a clear distinction between the *śikṣā-guru* and the *dikṣā-guru*. The second quote reflects the

understanding we have presented so far, that there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*.

Another example similar to the one given above is:

"To answer your last point, one who teaches can be treated as Spiritual Master. It is not that after we become initiated we become perfect. No. It requires teaching. So if we take instruction from them, all senior Godbrothers may be treated as *guru*, there is no harm. Actually, you have only one Spiritual Master, who initiates you, just as you have only one father. But every Vaisnava should be treated as *prabhu*, master, higher than me, and in this sense, if I learn from him, he may be regarded as *guru*. It is not that I disobey my real Spiritual Master and call someone else as Spiritual Master. That is wrong. It is only that I can call Spiritual Master someone who is teaching me purely what my initiating Spiritual Master has taught. Do you get the sense?" (Letter, November 20, 1971)

This describes the difference, and the following quote shows the oneness.

"There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service." (Cc. Ādi 1.47, purport)

In the first quote, Śrīla Prabhupāda uses graphic terminology, referring to the *dikṣā-guru* as the "real" spiritual master. The emphasis establishes the *dikṣā-guru* as the primary spiritual power and the *śikṣā-gurus* as subservients. The second quote, a familiar purport from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, places both *gurus* on an equal footing.

A final set of quotes is now given from the source book referred to earlier by Professor N.K. Sanyal. Here it is:

"*Upanayana* is the process of being conducted to the Guru. This refers to the function of the *śikṣā-guru*. The *śikṣā-gurus* may be many, but the *dikṣā-guru* is only one.

"The *śikṣā-gurus* are the associated counterparts of the *dikṣā-*

*guru*, who is the associated counterwhole of the Divinity Himself. There is thus only one *dikṣā-guru* who is associated with his infinity of agents or limbs, whose function is to lead the intending disciple to the *dikṣā-guru*. The *dikṣā-guru* may, indeed, be also the *śikṣā-guru*, but not necessarily so. The distinction between the *śikṣā-guru* and the *dikṣā-guru* is one relating to their respective spiritual functions, which does not involve any unwholesome implication of inferiority in the mundane sense. The *śikṣā-guru* is, therefore, to be as much obeyed by the disciple as the *dikṣā-guru* himself.

“The function of *dikṣā*, in its ritualistic aspect, consists of the process of imparting the *mantra* by the *dikṣā-guru*, which is spoken by him into the ear of the disciple, without being allowed to be heard by any other person. It is the method of Truth communicating Himself to an individual soul in the form of the Transcendental Sound appearing on the lips of His devotee. The *mantra*, as we have explained elsewhere, is the Holy Name in the form in which He is coupled with the process of self-dedication of an individual to the *guru*. It is a specific matter that delivers the particular individual from the grip of all mental delusion by making him throw himself on the protection of the Name, under the exclusive direction of the *guru*. The process of initiation is not a limited one. It is as much a continued process as the process of being helped by the *śikṣā-guru* for approaching the *dikṣā-guru*.

“No one of these processes is capable of terminating in a limited result. They are eternally co-present in a relation that is progressive but without being hampered by the unwholesome imperfection of the principle of limitation.” (Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, pp. 676-7)

Herein, the author strongly emphasizes the *dikṣā-guru* in the primary role and the *śikṣā-gurus* as his “limbs” or “agents.” In fact, the role of the *śikṣā-gurus* is defined as one who leads the disciple to the *dikṣā-guru*. At the same time, the statements of Professor Sanyal echo Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions in *Caitanya-*

*caritāmṛta*, wherein the *gurus* are described as having “different dealings.” He says, “The distinction between the *śikṣā-guru* and the *dikṣā-guru* is one relating to their respective spiritual functions.” Professor Sanyal further confirms their equality by saying “do not involve any unwholesome implication of inferiority in the mundane sense,” and, “They are eternally co-present in a relation that is progressive but without being hampered by the unwholesome imperfection of the principle of limitation.”

Reconciliation of these two categories of instructions is necessary to formulate the Codes of Etiquette.

#### 4. Understanding the Oneness and Difference

Our need is to understand and adhere to the simultaneous oneness and difference in the dealings of the *śikṣā-guru* and the *dikṣā-guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates the simultaneous, non-exclusive nature of these qualities in his purport to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 1.34). He states, “The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings.”

The key point is the observance of the oneness, although there is a simultaneous difference in dealings. The disciple must be trained to see that Lord Kṛṣṇa has appeared to him in the form of the *śikṣā-gurus* and the *dikṣā-guru*. This is oneness. Simultaneously, without negating their ontological equality, he must know that their dealings are different. In one aspect of that difference, the instructor plays a complementary, even subordinate role to the initiator.

The discrimination dictated by differing roles is warranted and encouraged by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He says in *The Nectar of Instruction* (5), “In this verse Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises the devotee to be intelligent enough to distinguish between the *kaniṣṭha-adhikāri*, *madhyama-adhikāri* and *uttama-adhikāri*.” Foolish discrimination by which the spirituality of Vaiṣṇavas is determined by their differing roles, external characteristics, or material qualities is

condemned. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “It is not that because one man is older than me, therefore he will be greater devotee.” (Lecture, Māyāpur, February 10, 1976) As with many other examples in the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda*, Vaiṣṇavas must learn to correlate the opposing qualities of oneness and difference among *gurus*.

For example, although Lord Viṣṇu is non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa, because He manifests fewer qualities and takes on the service of maintainer, They are said to be different. In another example, the spiritual master is *sākṣād-hari*, as good as God, yet his ontological position as a *jīva* differs from that *viṣṇu-tattva* nature of God. In the same way, the *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*, although different in dealings, are equal manifestations of the Lord.

If devotees can be trained to recognize and respect the simultaneous oneness and difference, there will be little chance of distinction on the basis of mundane considerations.

## 5. Explanation of Oneness

The previous chapters have asserted there to be no difference between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*. Why? They are both representatives of the Lord. Yet, some arguments arise, claiming that only the *dikṣā-guru* or the *mahā-bhāgavata* is *sākṣād-hari*, and the *śikṣā-guru* and non-liberated *guru* fall into another (unnamed) category.

To clarify the points of oneness among *gurus*, we shall deal with these queries briefly. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states that the *guru* is a manifestation of the Lord:

*yadyapi āmāra guru — caitanyera dāsa  
tathāpi jāniye āmi tāṅhāra prakāśa*

“Although I know that my spiritual master is a servitor of Śrī Caitanya, I know Him also as a plenary manifestation of the Lord.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.44)

The word ‘manifestation’ indicates that he is also non-different than the Lord. In fact, the disciple sees Kṛṣṇa in his *gurus*.

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

“According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the spiritual master is non-different from Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of the spiritual master delivers His devotees.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.45)

If one argues that only the *dikṣā-guru* is non-different from the Lord, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja answers asserting that the *śikṣā-guru* is also non-different.

*śikṣā-guruke ta’ jani kṛṣṇera svarūpa  
antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha, — ei dui rūpa*

“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.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47)

On the principle that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, if the *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru* are both manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, they are equal to each other.

In regard to the second allegation, which states that equality with the Lord refers only to the liberated *guru*, Narahari Sarakāra replies, “It is well known from the authorized Vedic literature that in this Kali-yuga, through the power of the holy name of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all Vaiṣṇavas are equal and qualitatively non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa. However, it is seen amongst the Vaiṣṇavas that sometimes, in some places, some Vaiṣṇavas appear greater or lesser.” (*Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* 17) He states that although there may be quantitative difference among Vaiṣṇavas, qualitatively they are *sākṣād-hari*. (Remember, Vaiṣṇava means *guru*.)

In support of the same argument, in the purport to verse 1.47

of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Ādi-līlā*, quoted above, Śrīla Prabhupāda comments on the *śikṣā-guru* as the representative of Kṛṣṇa by immediately defining their liberated and non-liberated categories: “Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. 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.”

Thus, it should be understood that, in a qualitative sense, regardless of their individual stature, “There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport)

## 6. Difference in Dealings

This issue is sensitive in nature. It is here that novices misinterpret the prominent dealings of the initiator as a sign of devotional superiority. This is foolish discrimination. Although the *dikṣā-guru* takes the prominent spiritual role among other *gurus*, he is great and they are great, for they all guide us back to Godhead.

Below is a list of recorded differences in the dealings of the great *dikṣā-gurus* and great *śikṣā-gurus*.

	Śikṣā-guru	Dikṣā-guru
1.	No limit to their numbers	May only be one
2.	Generally teaches <i>abhidheya-jñāna</i> *	Teacher of <i>sambandha-jñāna</i> *
3.	Of varying commitment	Usually committed to liberating <i>śiṣya</i>

\* *Sambandha*, *abhidheya* and *prayajana* are three divisions of devotional service. The definition given by Śrīla Prabhupāda of *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* specifies

4.	Representative of Govindajī	Representative of Madana-mohana
5.	Appears at any time	Generally the first <i>śikṣā-guru</i> to give regular <i>śikṣā</i>
6.	Does not give <i>Gāyatrī mantra</i> but may give <i>sannyāsa</i> and <i>upanayana</i>	Initiates with <i>nāma</i> , <i>mantra</i> and thread
7.		Is the medium for rituals and offerings**

Point 5 indicates the chronology at which the *dikṣā-guru* dominates the disciple’s life. The systematic appearances of *gurus* in the life of a devotee are elaborated below.

1. The first *guru* is the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*.
  2. Then follow *śikṣā-gurus* or *sādhus* who give training and teachings in devotion.
  3. The foremost among the *śikṣā-gurus* generally becomes the *dikṣā-guru*. He makes the commitment to deliver the disciple.
  4. Then follow other *śikṣā-gurus*, who give further training.
- The differences in dealings of *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* are listed above. This gives a graphic visualization of what Śrīla Prabhupāda means by saying they have “different dealings.”

Although their dealings differ, instructors and initiators have intersecting and interactive roles as well. The most significant is

their roles as teachers of *sambandha* and *abhidheya*, respectively. When the *dikṣā-guru* is the prominent instructor, he not only establishes the eternal connection (*sambandha*) between the soul and Kṛṣṇa (by *dikṣā*), but through his *śikṣā* guides the disciple through *abhidheya*, learning to act in that relationship, and might also establish the disciple in his eternal *rasa*, *svarūpa* (*prayajana*).

\*\* *Dikṣā-guru* is the medium through whom the disciple approaches the Lord in worshipping the Deity, and other Vedic and pañcarātric functions.

their common allegiance to *śikṣā*. Others were mentioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda and Professor Sanyal and can be summarized as follows:

1. The *vartma-pradarśaka-guru* and *śikṣā-gurus* direct the disciple to the *dikṣā-guru*.
2. The *śikṣā-guru* strengthens the teachings of *dikṣā-guru* and never speaks against him.
3. The *dikṣā-guru* is considered the original or real *guru*, the counterwhole of the Lord.
4. The *śikṣā-guru* is the counterpart of *dikṣā-guru* and his agent, or limb.
5. The *śikṣā-guru* instructs according to the teachings of the *dikṣā-guru*.

For brevity we have omitted the derivation of these points. The following paragraph is a comprehensive description of the *dikṣā-guru*'s role in the life of the disciple, and how the *śikṣā-gurus* interact with him.

The *dikṣā-guru* is the basic spiritual focus in a disciple's life. He is the first and (if well chosen) the primary guide, the original *guru*. The *śikṣā-gurus* who instruct the disciple, act and view themselves as assistants to the *dikṣā-guru*. They continue and complete the work begun by the initiator.

The instructors recognize the *dikṣā-guru* as the Vaiṣṇava to whom the disciple is most indebted. It is he who has saved his dependent with the torchlight of transcendental knowledge and made the commitment to guide him back to Godhead. He is the one initiator who has bestowed the holy name and the Gāyatrī *mantra*, and for his sacrifice he occupies a unique position among other *gurus* in the disciple's heart. In the process of *arcana* or the performance of a sacrifice, he is worshipped first.

The *dikṣā-guru* is the recipient of the disciple's full faith, a rare commodity in the age of quarrel. Understanding this, the *śikṣā-gurus* increase the faith of the disciple in the *dikṣā-guru*, the foun-

ation of his devotion. In that way his devotional creeper will flourish, and his faith and devotion to his instructors blossom.

Whatever instruction the *śikṣā-gurus* give continues and complements the instructions of the *dikṣā-guru*. For these reasons, the *śikṣā-guru* is seen as an extension or limb of the *dikṣā-guru*. This does not imply that the *śikṣā-guru* is of lesser spiritual strength — he may be much greater — but to maintain the tradition of Vaiṣṇavas, he follows his own defined role.

The disciple must worship his *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-gurus* as representatives of the Lord. That means worshipping them as good as God. He may follow the etiquette of quantitative respect to Vaiṣṇavas of varying strength, (as will be discussed in the following chapters) but he should not evaluate such strength on the sequence of their dealings.

As a final point, some may question the ability of the non-liberated *dikṣā-guru* to commit to his disciple's liberation. This book was not intended to argue this issue in depth; however, in later chapters the concept of being liberated by following one's liberated *guru* sheds light on this question. We also refer the reader to Appendix 5, which cites a nice statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda in this regard.

## 7. Summary

The principle enunciated above, wherein the *śikṣā-guru* acts as an agent of the *dikṣā-guru* in saving the disciple, will be referred to in this book as the "Traditional Protocol of *Dikṣā-guru* and *Śikṣā-guru*," or "Traditional Protocol" in short. It is the subject of the next chapter. (See Appendix 4 for further reasoning in support of the Traditional Protocol.)

It may be that, for certain reasons, the *śikṣā-guru* will play a more dominant role in the life of the disciple. This is not impossible, but it will be so through the medium of an etiquette revealed according to the rules of Traditional Protocol.

Although there are exceptions to this rule, we should focus on

the general tradition left to us by our *ācāryas* and Śrīla Prabhupāda. We hope this chapter has clearly presented the differences between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*, why these differences exist, and how they result in the instructors being agents of the initiator. All this is done within the ideal of both *gurus* as empowered representatives of the Lord.

## Chapter Five

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# Understanding Traditional Protocol

## 1. Introduction

A respected Vaiṣṇava warned that excessive definition of the inconceivable nature of *guru-tattva*, being beyond the powers of the author, may result in confusion on the topic. We certainly honor such a view in consideration of our limited capacities. Still, in describing the relationship between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*, we have introduced the terminology of Traditional Protocol and are making an attempt to itemize the ensuing Codes of Etiquette. Our reasoning is that a certain degree of crystallization of general principles must take place in a Society wherein Vaiṣṇava tradition is, at best, a new way of life, if not conspicuous by its absence. Such efforts may be imperfect and may require revision, but our conviction is that a start must be made somewhere. For this reason, we have undertaken the writing of this book and the itemization and detailing of the etiquette of *śikṣā-guru*, according to our best understanding of *guru*, *śāstra* and *sādhu*.

Chapter Four explained Śrīla Prabhupāda's view that the instructor spiritual masters act as assistants and limbs of the *dikṣā-*

*guru*. This positioning of the *gurus* and disciple is the foundation of their interaction and has been termed the Traditional Protocol.

## 2. The Two Aspects of Traditional Protocol

To better understand Traditional Protocol, as well as the exceptions to its application, we shall delve into it further. A consequence of such examination will result in additional guidelines, which will be included in the Codes of Etiquette.

In Vaiṣṇava epistemology, knowledge of any object begins by a study of its two main constituents. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Madhya 20.356) explains these two elements in the following way:

‘*svarūpa*’-*lakṣaṇa*, āra ‘*taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*’  
ei dui *lakṣaṇe* ‘*vastu*’ jāne muni-gaṇa

“By two symptoms — personal characteristics and marginal characteristics — the great sages can understand an object.”

In a lecture on December 28, 1966, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the above verse: “The symptoms are analyzed in two divisions. *Svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* means the symptom which (is) always present. That is called *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*. And *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*, the symptoms which are sometimes present and sometimes not present.”

To have a comprehensive understanding of Traditional Protocol we must investigate its personal and marginal characteristics. Because Traditional Protocol is about the dealings with the spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions in this regard should be examined. He states, “Affection for the spiritual master and following the instructions of the Spiritual Master are the same.” (Letter, August 20, 1974)

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates that the two factors in the *guru*-disciple relationship are affection and following his instructions. Once again, he states:

“An advanced devotee is attracted by the service rendered by an eternal servitor of the Lord. This attraction is called

spontaneous attraction. Technically, it is called *svarūpa-upalabdhi*. This stage is not achieved in the beginning. In the beginning, one has to render service strictly according to the regulative principles set forth by the revealed scriptures and spiritual master. By continuously rendering service through the process of *vaidhī-bhakti*, one’s natural inclination is gradually awakened. That is called spontaneous attraction, or *rāgānuga-bhakti*.” (Cc. Madhya 22.153, purport)

Here the same two factors are repeated — attraction to the *guru* and following his instruction. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that pure attachment manifests at a later stage of devotion and is not present in the beginning. From this we may conclude that because attachment is not always present, it is the marginal characteristic, *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*. Similarly, because obedience to the orders of the spiritual master is present throughout all stages of the relationship, it is the personal characteristic, *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*.

Since Traditional Protocol is the etiquette between *guru* and disciple, the characteristics derived above are most relevant. Its primary characteristic, *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*, is adherence to the proper codes of conduct (which means the *dikṣā-guru* is the primary focus of devotions) and the marginal characteristic is the attachment the disciple feels towards his *gurus*.

## 3. The Balance of the Two Elements

From the definitions given in the previous section by Śrīla Prabhupāda, the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* dominates the characteristics of Traditional Protocol, for it is that characteristic which is always present, whereas the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* is only occasionally present. Thus, the application of Traditional Protocol is dependent on proper etiquette, while attachment to the spiritual master, though real, is a secondary consideration.

It will be useful to verify the above conclusion, and we have done so in Appendix 6. The reader is encouraged to read this derivation. The application of Traditional Protocol and the

exceptions to it are governed by the relative dominance of its two elements under varying circumstances. Therefore, in the relationship between *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus*, as well as the disciple's attitude towards them, it is valuable to have an understanding of the relative influence of these elements.

As there are exceptions to every rule, there are exceptions to Traditional Protocol. In order to ensure that foolish disciples do not concoct exceptions at whim, we have explained why the codes of proper behavior lead the inclination of the heart. (Appendix 6) Exceptions there may be, but they too are based on principles which, though not conforming to the standard, are based on principles nonetheless, and are not an invitation to unbridled anarchy.

#### 4. Rules Governing Attraction to Guru

A more detailed look at the attachment possessed by a devotee towards his spiritual masters will pave the way for a study of exceptions to Traditional Protocol. We shall also discuss the relevance of such attachment in the matter of selecting the *dikṣā-guru* (or any *guru*, for that matter). This will clarify the importance of both attachment (*tatastha-lakṣaṇa*) and the display of respect (*svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*) in the *guru*-disciple relationship, and will establish parameters to guide disciples.

##### Attachment in Traditional Protocol

For the *vaidhī-sādhaka* who has not yet reached the liberated stage, his incentive to follow the order of the spiritual master(s) and the observance of proper etiquette are directed by the injunctions of *śāstra*. Although a liberated *rāgānuga-bhakta* serves his *guru* due to attachment, he also follows the codes of conduct relevant to the *vaidhī-bhakta*. The practice of true Vaiṣṇavas, regardless of their spiritual stature, is to maintain the proper codes of conduct.

Liberated or conditioned, all devotees follow the principle of

revering their *dikṣā-guru*, regardless of their attachment to him or to other instructors. This does not obviate the attachment experienced by a devotee, but indicates that the primary moving factor in the relationship is proper conduct, *sad-ācāra*.

##### Attachment in Selection of a Guru

The selection of a *dikṣā-guru* is a grave step in one's spiritual life. According to the tradition of surrendering to one's *śikṣā-guru*, it is a natural progression based upon a mature relationship. In ISKCON, where other factors are at work in such a connection, devotees would be well advised to select their *dikṣā-guru* with care. Newly developed attachment to a *guru* is not as reliable a foundation for a relationship as knowledge of him, acquired through hearing and prolonged association.

Because non-liberated souls have the tendency to err, one should carefully select a *guru* according to the regulations of *śāstra*. A preliminary attachment may be contaminated with many mundane considerations, and cannot be the sole foundation for conclusive action. Examples of immaterial factors which falsify a relationship are attachment to amiable personal habits, charm or charisma, expertise in devotional arts, (such as singing) or a humorous delivery in class.

In the matter of selecting a *guru*, the dominant attraction should be how well the spiritual master follows his *gurus* and the founder-*ācārya*. Attachment based on external characteristics makes for a weak spiritual foundation and will lead to difficulty for the disciple in the long run.

##### Attachment in the Service of the Guru

Having selected one's spiritual master with due care, one should continue to follow the direction of one's *gurus* and all points of etiquette delineated by *śāstra*. Other forms of attachment which arise for one Vaiṣṇava or another should always be made subordinate to proper conduct, especially if its consequences contradict any code of etiquette. Although pure attachment is the

ultimate goal, the practitioner should regulate the service and worship of his *gurus* by the all-perfect direction of *śāstra*.

The liberated souls who have developed spontaneous attachment are beyond error, and their emotions and attachments are real and reliable guides in spiritual progress. The example of the four Kumāras is instructive: when they smelled the fragrance of the *tulasī* leaves on the Lord's lotus feet, they felt a new, unparalleled ecstasy. Being beyond attraction to material sense pleasure, they concluded that their spiritual experience was a consequence of an impetus (Lord Nārāyaṇa) higher than the impersonal Brahman to which they were accustomed. Thus, they followed the path of devotion to the Supreme Person, on the basis of their intuitive experience.

Whether they are practitioners or liberated souls, Vaiṣṇavas do not abandon the tradition chalked out by the *mahājānas*. Even Lord Kṛṣṇa asserts that he follows the prescribed duties of this world, to set the right example:

*utsīdeyur ime lokā na kurvām karma ced aham  
sankarasya ca kartā syām upahanyām imāḥ prajāḥ*

“If I did not perform prescribed duties, all these worlds would be put to ruination. I would be the cause of creating unwanted population, and I would thereby destroy the peace of all living beings.” (Bg. 3.24)

### Summary

The rules governing attraction to *guru* have been specified to assist the devotees. They show that true attachment varies with the degree of freedom from the modes of nature and, therefore, devotees should be careful to always adhere to the prescribed codes of conduct.

This is the rule of thumb: showing respect, selecting a *guru*, or rendering service should be done according to the rules of *sad-ācāra*. If personal attachment to the *guru* confirms the same

course of action, it may be accepted; if not, it should be subordinated to the proper course of duty.

The attachment of Vaiṣṇavas is to the injunctions of *śāstra* and the order of the spiritual master, not apparent personal characteristics. Such determination will give the spiritual strength to withstand the tribulations which arise in the practice of *sādhana-bhakti*. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Following the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the only duty of the disciple, and this completely faithful execution of the order of the bona fide spiritual master is the secret of success.” (*Bhāg.* 2.9.8, purport)

## 5. A Change of Attachment

In this chapter we want to understand Traditional Protocol. Since attachment to the *dikṣā-guru* is the marginal characteristic, when the attachment of the disciple is primarily to someone other than the initiator it does not constitute an exception to Traditional Protocol.

Traditional Protocol directs the primary attachment of the *sādhaka* towards the *dikṣā-guru*. In the mature stage of devotion this attitude may change, as a consequence of great inspiration and intimate association with the instructor(s). However, even in the preliminary stages of devotion, when the disciple is distant from the liberated stage, there are a variety of reasons for the marginal aspect to be directed toward the *śikṣā-guru(s)*. Among many such reasons, the following are included:

- a) If the *dikṣā-guru* has been accepted out of formality.
- b) Due to points of etiquette.
- c) If, due to circumstance, the *dikṣā-guru* cannot give guidance.

These shall be discussed briefly below.

### a) When the Dīkṣā-guru has been Accepted out of Formality

There are a number of variations on this theme. Regarding the person who becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*, Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “It is the duty of the *śikṣā-guru* or *dīkṣā-guru* to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to s̄āstric injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*.” (Bhāg. 4.12.32, purport)

Due to peer pressure, impure attachment, or some other cause a devotee has accepted initiation from a Vaiṣṇava *guru* with no substantial *śikṣā* and has no meaningful relationship with him. What is he to do? It is the primary duty of the disciple to patiently cultivate an attachment to the initiator through service. If the *guru* is inaccessible to cultivation and unwilling to reciprocate, an attachment may develop to some other Vaiṣṇava. Although the disciple made no plan to neglect his *guru*, this may happen due to lack of reciprocation with the initiator; then, Lord Kṛṣṇa makes an arrangement to satisfy his spiritual needs.

In the above example, as long as the initiator is in good standing the disciple should not reject him, but offer the respect due to his spiritual link. Although the personal relationship is thin, he will show full respect to his *guru*, while his over-riding attachment is to his instructor. In turn, while assisting the disciple, the *śikṣā-guru* continues to support the disciple’s faith in the initiator.

The relationship is less than ideal, but it is the consequence of accepting someone out of formality.

Another variation on this theme is the devotee who has received *dīkṣā* at a young age, as a matter of family tradition, but from a bona fide Vaiṣṇava. Having had little or no further association with his *guru*, he later meets a great Vaiṣṇava who inspires him to the service of Lord Caitanya and gives him practical shelter. It may be natural that the affections of the disciple will be drawn towards the instructor. Still, according to the conduct of Traditional Protocol, the initiator should be duly respected, although the marginal aspect is focused on the *śikṣā-guru*.

In the case of more extreme circumstances, such as when the formal *dīkṣā-guru* is fallen or becomes a non-devotee, he may then be rejected. This topic is dealt with in the following chapter.

### b) Due to Points of Etiquette

There are principles of etiquette which also justify that a disciple has greater attachment to his *śikṣā-guru* than *dīkṣā-guru*. Here are a few:

Śrīla Prabhupāda has said that a disciple cannot initiate in the physical presence of his *guru*. He called this the “law of the disciplic succession.” (There is a GBC position paper dated 1993 on this topic, and the reader may refer to it.) His Divine Grace wrote, “But as a matter of etiquette, it is the custom that during the lifetime of your spiritual master, you bring the prospective disciples to him, and in his absence or disappearance you can accept disciples without any limitation. This is the law of disciplic succession.” (Letter, December 2, 1975)

In light of this law, a devotee may have been brought to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and trained in the science by a good Vaiṣṇava. He has great faith and attachment for that devotee whose *dīkṣā-guru* is physically present, although not necessarily in the near vicinity. Because the devotee has little relationship with the initiator, he has little opportunity to become acquainted with him, and his primary attachment continues to be to his *śikṣā-guru*.

In such a circumstance, the instructor is duty-bound to present the disciple before his *guru*. By mutual agreement with his dependent and the *dīkṣā-guru*, the instructor may order his disciple to take initiation from his spiritual master. In such a situation, due to his past association and on-going training with the instructor, the disciple will be more attached to him than his *dīkṣā-guru*. Although that is the natural flow of sentiment, the proper behavior of the Traditional Protocol will continue nonetheless.

### c) If the Dikṣā-guru Cannot Give Guidance to the Disciple

Say a disciple was properly initiated by a Vaiṣṇava who was well qualified. After receiving initiation, due to force of circumstances, the *dikṣā-guru* does not or cannot suitably guide the disciple. In fact, he has little commitment to his welfare. This may be due to ill health, separation by distance, distraction due to service, or other conditions. At that time, the disciple lacks the security and shelter of being guided back to Godhead, and he may seek permission from his *guru* to find shelter in a *śikṣā-guru* to protect him from the material energy.

As a natural development, the *śikṣā-guru* may become the focus of a greater attachment than the rarely-seen *dikṣā-guru*. This will be an exception to the direction of the marginal characteristic, but the disciple, seeing his *śikṣā-guru* as an arrangement of his initiator, will adhere to Traditional Protocol and show him preferential worship.

## 6. Summary

The above examples are exceptions to the internal aspect of Traditional Protocol. This means there is a greater attachment to the *śikṣā-guru* than the *dikṣā-guru*. Because of the marginal nature of this attachment, its exception does not constitute a change to the entire principle of Traditional Protocol. In the cases cited above, the initiator must be offered the proper respect defined by etiquette, provided he is a Vaiṣṇava in good standing. However, if there is cause to neglect or reject the *dikṣā-guru*, then the prescribed conduct with him may be given up. This is further discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Six

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# Exception to Traditional Protocol

## 1. Introduction

Because the personal characteristic is the dominant factor in Traditional Protocol, an exception to its application is an exception to the general practice. That means the position of the *dikṣā-guru* becomes secondary to the instructor, and there is just reason to abandon the customary etiquette.

According to Traditional Protocol, the *śikṣā-gurus* act as the extensions and assistants of the initiator. An exception to this rule means the *śikṣā-guru* plays the prominent role and the *dikṣā-guru* is either subordinate or absent. There are two main reasons why this takes place:

- a) If the *dikṣā-guru* has fallen from the path of devotion.
- b) Due to points of etiquette.

There may be other exceptional cases not cited here. If the general principles of etiquette are understood, they can be applied in all circumstances.

## 2. If the Dīkṣā-guru has Fallen from the Path of Devotion

ISKCON law follows Gauḍīya tradition. If one's *guru* has left the path of devotional service, one must take shelter of another *guru*, for a devotee cannot be without shelter. This is supported by the following statement by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura from *Jaiva-dharma*.\*

“It is true that the *dīkṣā-guru* should not be rejected. But there are two instances where one may legitimately reject him.

“First, a disciple may have accepted a spiritual master without thoroughly ascertaining whether the spiritual master was a Vaiṣṇava practically conversant with transcendental knowledge. Later, however, the disciple may realize that the absolute objective will not be accomplished through the instructions of that *guru*. In that case, the *guru* should be rejected.

“There are many items of scriptural evidence in this regard. (...)

“The second instance in which one may reject the *guru* is when the *guru* was, at the time of one's initiation, a Vaiṣṇava conversant in the Absolute Truth but later, due to bad association, became a *māyāvādī* or an offender to the Vaiṣṇavas. That *guru* should be rejected. If the *guru* is not a *māyāvādī* or offender to Vaiṣṇavas, nor addicted to sinful life, then one should not reject him, even if he has a lack of knowledge. Rather, showing him due respect, with his permission one should take spiritual instructions from an advanced devotee and serve that devotee properly.”

If an unfortunate circumstance evolves wherein a devotee loses the shelter of his *dīkṣā-guru*, he may seek that shelter elsewhere. In this case, the *śikṣā-guru* will play the major role in a

\* For a full explanation on this subject please refer to the GBC position paper on re-initiation, 1990.

disciple's life and the Traditional Protocol becomes reversed. The instructor becomes the main object of the disciple's attentions, and the etiquette once invested in the *dīkṣā-guru* is now redirected to the *śikṣā-guru*.

## 3. Rejecting the Guru

The circumstances cited in Section 2 of this chapter refer to the *guru* falling due to indulgence in sense gratification, becoming a *māyāvādī*, or offending Vaiṣṇavas. Because he abandons the path of devotional practice, he disqualifies himself by his very behavior, and separates himself from *vaiṣṇava-saṅga*. A similar but more subtle case is the initiator who misbehaves but does not abandon the devotional path, continuing in the guise of a Vaiṣṇava. At that time, the *guru* may be rejected, and this difficult responsibility becomes invested in the disciple.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī elaborates on the verses referred to by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and gives an interesting perspective as to the reasons why a *guru* may be rejected:

“At first one may have taken shelter of a *guru* who did not have the symptoms previously mentioned [in *Bhakti-sandarbha*], such as *śabde pare ca niṣṇātam* [*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.21]. And now, because the *guru* is envious and contaminated, one does not receive permission from him to serve an advanced devotee. Thus, the *guru* has made trouble for the disciple in both ways. The unqualified *guru*, then [and not the disciple], has been the first to violate the injunctions of the scriptures, and that *guru* should not be considered.” (GBC position paper)

Here, the grounds to reject the *dīkṣā-guru* are not only his lack of spiritual standing, but his envy of exalted Vaiṣṇavas. Unaware of his own bewilderment, he forbids his disciple to accept teachings from a more qualified *guru*, and thus becomes a candidate to be rejected by his followers.

### A Cautionary Note on the Envious Guru

We would like to insert a note of caution in regard to the above circumstance. A *guru* who forbids his disciple to take shelter of a *śikṣā-guru* should not automatically be seen as an envious Vaiṣṇava, fit to be rejected. A true disciple is reluctant to value his own discrimination over and above his *guru*'s. There may be many reasons, known to one's *guru* but imperceptible to the disciple, why a Vaiṣṇava should not be accepted as an instructor. In April of 1968, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote of one Godbrother from whom his disciples solicited shelter, "For the present, you may know that this gentleman is very much materially ambitious. He wants to utilize Krishna Consciousness for his material name and fame. Sometimes he greatly offended our Guru Maharaja, and it so happened that at the last stage, practically Guru Maharaja rejected him. So that is a great history; it is not possible to say everything in this letter, but for the present, be satisfied with these words, and later we shall talk more and more. On the whole, you may know that he is not a liberated person, and therefore, he cannot initiate any person to Krishna Consciousness." (Letter, April 26, 1968)

The conclusion of our warning is that a qualified *dikṣā-guru* has every right to select the instructors for his disciple, without being labeled envious. Should a follower suspect the disqualification cited by Śrī Jīva, he should approach other senior Vaiṣṇavas and ask for their guidance. As always, one should act according to the direction of the devotees.

On the other hand, the *dikṣā-guru*, empowered by the founder-*ācārya* to serve in the Society, must recognize the need of his disciple to interact on a daily basis with many Vaiṣṇavas and *gurus*. He should be careful in exerting his discretionary powers, in restricting the disciple's *sādhu-saṅga* in a close knit and active society as ISKCON. Should such a situation arise, the GBC is the final authority regarding the suitability of *śikṣā-gurus* for ISKCON members.

### Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura Rejects his Dikṣā-guru

Another example, cited later in this book, is Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's rejection of his *dikṣā-guru*. As a result of a disagreement over the status of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was said to have neglected Vipin Vihari Gosvāmī, his initiator. Consequently, he took shelter of Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī and wrote:

*dikṣā-guru-kṛpā kori mantra-upadeśa  
koriya dekhan kṛṣṇa-tattvera nirdeśa*

"The initiating spiritual master shows his causeless mercy by giving his disciples instructions in chanting the *hari-nāma mantra*. By so doing he points the disciples in the direction of the truths pertaining to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa."

*śikṣā-guru-br̥nda kṛpā koriya āpār  
sādhake śikhan sādhaner aṅga-sār*

"But I consider the numerous instructing spiritual masters to be more important, for they show unlimitedly more mercy by training the neophyte devotees in all the essential aspects of practical devotional service." (*Kalyāna-kalpataru*, Introduction)

Here is another example wherein the *śikṣā-guru* becomes more prominent in the presence of *dikṣā-guru*, due to the latter's offense of disrespecting a Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*. There are other similar reasons a disciple will reject his *guru* and take shelter of one more qualified. The common theme is that the *dikṣā-guru* has fallen, due to losing his devotional qualification, and thus becomes fit to be rejected. In such cases, it is appropriate that a devotee focuses all attention on a *śikṣā-guru*, and the Traditional Protocol is revoked (or rather, diverted to the instructor).

#### 4. Due to Points of Etiquette

There are substantial conditions of *sad-ācāra* which cause exceptions to Traditional Protocol. These are not as grave as the fall of the *guru* or his rejection, cited earlier. Some examples are given below:

If the *śikṣā-guru* of the disciple is also the *śikṣā-guru* of the initiator (of the disciple), etiquette dictates that the *dikṣā-guru* take a humble position in the presence of his spiritual master. Thus, he will direct the disciple towards the *śikṣā-guru*, who may take the prominent position while physically present on the planet. Śrīla Prabhupāda has explained the situation:

“According to scriptural injunction, one should be very careful of transgressing the law of *maryādā-vyatikrama*. The rule is that in the presence of a higher personality one should not be very eager to impart instructions, even if one is competent and well versed.” (*Bhāg.* 3.4.26, purport)

In this way, the initiator becomes the assistant to the instructor, and the roles become reversed.

We should not take it as a forgone conclusion that the *śikṣā-guru* will want to take responsibility to guide the initiate of the *dikṣā-guru* (his *śiṣya*). He may instruct them to continue according to Traditional Protocol. However, it is the duty of the *dikṣā-guru* to act in the proper way and leave the decision to his superior *guru*.

Another situation is when the *dikṣā-guru* directs a disciple to take full shelter from an advanced instructor. In his estimation, such an arrangement is preferable to Traditional Protocol for a variety of possible reasons. One is due to a lack of compatibility on part of initiator and disciple; another is the practicality wherein a devotee wants to take shelter of another institution and its members. An example is given below wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed one of his first initiated disciples to take second initiation from his Godbrother:

“If you want to take initiation from M. Gosvami Maharaja I have no objection.” (Letter, Januray 10, 1975)

Although this example is unusual in that Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed a disciple to take initiation from a Godbrother, a similar circumstance may be envisaged by giving permission to take *śikṣā*. In either case, the role of the *dikṣā-guru* is eclipsed, and Traditional Protocol is reversed.

#### 5. Summary

There are many circumstances which may constitute an exception to Traditional Protocol. We have cited a few. As Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “To be well-versed in the transcendental science necessitates awareness of the techniques of spiritual science.” (*Bhāg.* 3.4.26, purport) One should know the general principles, and that will facilitate the application of all qualifying factors.

## PART 3



QUANTITATIVE  
ATTRIBUTES OF GURUS

## The Distinctive Role of the Founder-Ācārya

### 1. Introduction

Part Two of this book studied the differences among *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru* in terms of their dealings. The observed parameters were formulated in what was termed the Traditional Protocol, and the exceptions to the marginal and personal characteristics of that principle were described.

Part Three continues the study of distinctive characteristics among *gurus*. The differences under scrutiny are no longer according to category, but are individual and relate to all classes of Vaiṣṇava *gurus*. The resultant etiquette will help us further understand the principles of *guru* and will serve as valuable instruments in the area of *sad-ācāra*.

One perspective of the different *gurus* is the vision of their oneness, and another is that of their differences. This study of the differences should allow devotees to better understand the position of *gurus* as well as the role of their disciples, and thereby avoid any misconceptions which are born of ignorance. We should not fear that understanding the relative position of

Vaiṣṇava *gurus* will open a Pandora's box of offenses. Although Śrīla Prabhupāda has warned that one should not foolishly discriminate between the *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus*, he did not say one should exercise no discrimination at all. In *The Nectar of Instruction* (5, purport) he writes, "One must select proper persons with careful discrimination." Selection and careful discrimination are not to be achieved without adequate training and good intelligence. Furthermore, remaining in ignorance for fear of offense is another type of foolishness. One should be aware of what constitutes proper discrimination, and such intelligent scriptural acumen will certainly protect one from any risk of transgression. As Narahari Sarakāra states:

"It is certainly true that all Vaiṣṇavas are on the same transcendental platform. However, although amongst Vaiṣṇavas there may be a difference in strength, how will the less intelligent ascertain the actual strength of a saintly person? Since they don't know how to distinguish, rather than risk their destruction for neglecting a potentially spiritual personality, they treat everyone on the same level." (*Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, 29)

In the quote above, the author refers to those who cannot distinguish the relative positions of Vaiṣṇavas as unintelligent. In later verses, he applauds those who have developed proper discernment, according to *śāstra* and tradition. Still, he explains that the lack of knowledge does not implicate one in offense, provided the practitioner worships all Vaiṣṇavas in the same exalted manner. However, better than the blind equal treatment by the uneducated is the ability to discriminate and respect Vaiṣṇavas in proportion to their qualifications. The development of such discriminatory ability is the purpose of the following chapters and, in truth, the entire book.

For the sake of simplicity, we have categorized the principle differences among *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*, as revealed in our research. They are as below:

1. The Traditional Protocol of *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*.
2. The special role of the founder-*ācārya*.
3. The relative spiritual strength of Vaiṣṇavas.
4. The degree of commitment the *guru* makes to the disciple.
5. Other exceptional circumstances.

A study of the distinctions among Vaiṣṇava *gurus* may reveal the spiritual glory of the *śikṣā-guru* over the *dikṣā-guru*, or conversely, it may enhance the *dikṣā-guru's* prominence over others. In all circumstances, it will illuminate the position of the founder-*ācārya* as one unique among his followers. Though hinting at the imminent differences in the following examples, we should emphasize that they must be seen in harmony with the basic principle of oneness among all *gurus*, as equal manifestations of the Lord.

One question may be raised: "How are the distinctions under study any different from the exceptions to Traditional Protocol in the previous chapter?" In answer, we should recall that exceptions to Traditional Protocol replace the *dikṣā-guru* with a *śikṣā-guru* as the primary object of worship for the disciple. The distinctions discussed in this chapter do not effect such a change, but cultivate discriminatory visions by which devotees will understand the practice of etiquette in the presence of their *gurus*.

## 2. Traditional Protocol

In the list above, the Traditional Protocol of *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru* has been extensively discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. It requires no further elaboration. In general, the *dikṣā-guru* is the basic spiritual force in a disciple's life and the instructors act as his assistants and agents.

In this chapter, we shall study further the position of Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON and his special position in relation to all other Vaiṣṇavas.

### 3. The Special Role of the Founder-Ācārya

The position of the founder-*ācārya* is both unique and exceedingly prominent. We have distinguished the founder-*ācārya* from the *ādi-guru* in the fourth section of Chapter One. To clarify the terminology of founder-*ācārya*, a few more words must be spoken in this regard.

We have explained that the original founder of a *sampradāya*, like Lord Brahmā, is *ādi-guru*, and the devotee who revitalizes the disciplic succession, or a branch thereof, to fulfill the will of the Lord is the founder-*ācārya*. While this terminology is somewhat subjective, the only reference is Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, in which both titles are equated. But that is not the main topic of discussion here.

The title of founder and founder-*ācārya* are also seen to refer to the founder of new spiritual institutions, a temple or *maṭha*. However, the activities of both the founder and his followers may not indicate any great degree of empowerment by Lord Caitanya, or much uplifting of the *sampradāya* other than continuing the old under a new banner. While the title founder-*ācārya* may also be used in this sense in common parlance, when found in this book it refers to the empowered Vaiṣṇavas described in the earlier paragraph, such as Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Śrīla Prabhupāda. They are founder-*ācāryas*.

We can assert with little controversy that Śrīla Prabhupāda is the founder-*ācārya* of ISKCON, and as a branch of Lord Caitanya's *sampradāya*, he can also be called its *ādi-guru*. In this way, we can equate the *ādi-guru* and founder-*ācārya* in relation to Śrīla Prabhupāda, as per Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's writings.

He says in *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, "A devotee must understand that the *ādi-guru*, original spiritual master of the *sampradāya*, is the *śikṣā-guru*, and only his teachings are to be accepted and not those of any other scholar or teacher." The above statements extol the role of the founder-*ācārya*. As Lord Kṛṣṇa is everyone's *śikṣā-guru* by his teachings in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the *śikṣā-guru* for all members of ISKCON.

Because the founder-*ācārya* is so prominent and the object of his followers' respect, there is a great distinction between him and other Vaiṣṇavas. As a consequence, all devotees are pleased to be subordinate to him, and they extol his unique qualities as follows. The founder-*ācārya*:

- (a) possesses great spiritual strength;
- (b) his teachings supersede all others and are compulsory for his followers;
- (c) holds a unique post;
- (d) is the *ācārya*, or leader, of all Vaiṣṇavas when physically present;
- (e) awards power of attorney to his followers through adherence to his teachings.

We shall study these distinctive qualities of the founder-*ācārya*, who in reality is Śrīla Prabhupāda. Although this book attempts to deal with general principles, it is clear that the word founder-*ācārya*, for members of ISKCON, refers to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

### 4. The Great Spiritual Strength of the Founder-Ācārya

One outstanding distinctive trait of the founder-*ācārya* is his extraordinary spiritual strength. This is readily visible in terms of his achievements in preaching and spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, "In this Age of Kali, real religious propaganda should induce people to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. This is possible for someone who is especially empowered by Kṛṣṇa. No one can do this without being especially favored by Kṛṣṇa." (Cc. *Madhya* 25.9, purport)

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda says that only one who is "especially empowered by Kṛṣṇa" can achieve great preaching results. The unparalleled example of such empowerment is His Divine Grace

himself, whose achievements have no equal in the history of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. On the basis of such great service, one can only interpolate the spiritual power invested in Śrīla Prabhupāda and wonder in awe.

The founder-*ācārya*, by his great preaching breathes new life into the *sampradāya*. Consequently, many souls are inspired to adopt the path of Lord Caitanya and such preaching indicates his great spiritual strength. Śrīla Prabhupāda also wrote, “Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura said that the position of a Vaiṣṇava can be tested by seeing how good a touchstone he is — that is, by seeing how many Vaiṣṇavas he has made during his life.” (Cc. *Madhya* 24.277, purport)

Śrīla Prabhupāda had indicated that an empowered Vaiṣṇava is in an exalted position even among his Godbrothers. By the above standard, all other Vaiṣṇavas during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time were clearly of lesser spiritual strength than he. This was recognized by members of ISKCON; however, other Vaiṣṇavas rarely gave Śrīla Prabhupāda the credit he was due. Such a concept is reflected in a very explicit purport, wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda explains how all devotees, including the Godbrothers, are in the position of disciples in the presence of the founder-*ācārya*. Because of its importance, we quote this section in full:

“Unfortunately we are surrounded by neophyte Godbrothers who do not appreciate the extraordinary activities of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world. They simply try to bring us to their platform, and they try to criticize us in every respect. We very much regret their naïve activities and poor fund of knowledge. An empowered person who is actually engaged in the confidential service of the Lord should not be treated as an ordinary human being, for it is stated that unless one is empowered by Kṛṣṇa, one cannot spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world.

“When one thus criticizes a pure devotee, he commits an offense (*vaiṣṇava-āparādha*) that is very obstructive and dangerous for those who desire to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. A

person cannot derive any spiritual benefit when he offends the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava. Everyone should therefore be very careful not to be jealous of an empowered Vaiṣṇava, or a *śuddha-vaiṣṇava*. It is also an offense to consider an empowered Vaiṣṇava an object of disciplinary action. It is offensive to try to give him advice or to correct him. One can distinguish between a neophyte Vaiṣṇava and an advanced Vaiṣṇava by their activities. The advanced Vaiṣṇava is always situated as the spiritual master, and the neophyte is always considered his disciple. The spiritual master must not be subjected to the advice of a disciple, nor should a spiritual master be obliged to take instructions from those who are not his disciples. This is the sum and substance of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s advice in the sixth verse.” (*The Nectar of Instruction* 6, purport)

## 5. His Teachings Supersede All Others and Are Compulsory for his Followers

There are many great Vaiṣṇavas who give invaluable teachings or record their deep realizations in books. However, the teachings of the founder-*ācārya* are distinct and in a category of their own. Because he clarifies the points of *siddhānta* and establishes the preaching mission, his teachings are the standard by which all others’ teachings are measured and to which all others’ teachings must, in principle, conform.

For instance, it is said that Śrīla Prabhupāda had indicated his Bhaktivedanta Purports would be the “law books for the next ten thousand years.” Although legislation may be added to existing laws, it is always done so on the basis of a basic constitution. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions are the constitution of ISKCON, within which all other philosophy, theology, administration and missionary goals must fit.

The teachings of the founder-*ācārya* are compulsory for all members of that *sampradāya*. The teachings of other *gurus* are obligatory for their disciples, but not binding on others. The teachings of the founder-*ācārya* are not optional. Without knowl-

edge of his mission, its members will be remiss in their responsibilities. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “All of the leaders should study my books very carefully.” (Letter, January 22, 1976) This is a unique feature of the founder-*ācārya*, which distinguishes him from all other *gurus*. By dint of his teachings, his followers are in a subordinate position, as much as the followers of Rūpa Gosvāmī follow him with the title of *rūpānuṅgas*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in the Preface to *The Nectar of Devotion*, “The present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is also based on the authority of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. We are therefore generally known as *rūpānuṅgas*, or followers in the footsteps of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. It is only for our guidance that Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī prepared his book, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which is now presented in the form of *The Nectar of Devotion*. Persons engaged in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement may take advantage of this great literature and be very solidly situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

In these lines, Śrīla Prabhupāda identifies Rūpa Gosvāmī as the Founder of the Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement (Gauḍīya *sampradāya*) with the words “based on the authority of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī.” He then states that all his followers are distinct by the name of *rūpānuṅgas* and study *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* for their spiritual advancement. Thus, the teachings of the founder-*ācārya* remain the pre-eminent guidance for his followers.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then states that members of ISKCON may take advantage of *The Nectar of Devotion*, which is his rendering of the original work, and “be very solidly situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” Thus, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books and teachings are for all the members of ISKCON.

Another point which follows from this quote is contained in the statement, “Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī prepared his book *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, which is now presented in the form of *The Nectar of Devotion*.” Herein Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the teachings of the *ācāryas* are to be understood through his teachings. Later in *The Nectar of Devotion*, Chapter 6, in defining the fourth item

of devotional service, Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Following in the footsteps of great *ācāryas* under the direction of the spiritual master.” The founder-*ācārya* presents the teachings of the Lord and other *ācāryas*, and his followers have access to these teachings through his. Subsequently, they base their teachings on those of the founder-*ācārya*.

## 6. He Holds a Unique Post

The founder-*ācārya guru* is distinct by his spiritual strength, teachings, and achievement. He is also unique by dint of the unique position which he holds. A person is prominent by personal qualification or the position which he occupies. Both of these apply to the founder-*ācārya*, for it is rare that such elevated Vaiṣṇavas come to render such service.

Respect for the important position held by a devotee is exemplified in the following conversation regarding Lord Brahmā, the founder of our *sampradāya*, who was apparently afflicted by material desires.

**Prabhupāda:** The Lord Brahmā became lusty after his daughter. And Lord Śiva became so mad after Mohinī-mūrti. So what to speak of us insignificant creatures. So lusty desire is there. That is material world. Unless one is fully Kṛṣṇa conscious, this lusty desire cannot be checked. It is not possible.

**Devotee (1):** So how is it that Lord Brahmā is a pure devotee...

**Prabhupāda:** No, he is not pure devotee.

**Devotee (1):** He’s not.

**Prabhupāda:** Anyone who is in the material world, he is not pure devotee. He has to become a pure devotee. But there are pure devotees. They come. They are not subjected to all this. They come for the deliverance of the fallen souls. They are above Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva.

**Devotee (2):** So, Śrīla Prabhupāda, isn’t Lord Brahmā the original spiritual master in our *sampradāya*?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Simply you should imitate their instruction. (Morning Walk, Perth, May 11, 1975)

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that Lord Brahmā need not be a pure devotee nor in the category of an empowered *mahā-bhāgavata*. By the Lord's will, he is in a position as the head of our *sampradāya* and thus, he should be offered due respect as a great devotee. His instructions are followed because he has been recognized and empowered by the Lord. Even though successive Vaiṣṇavas may exhibit greater empowerment or higher personal realization, they offer him due respect for the position he holds as the *ādi-guru*.

Another example is that of Vallabhācārya who wanted to offer an explanation of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* excelling that of Śrīdhara Svāmī, the original commentator. Lord Caitanya rejected his proposal, for the etiquette is that all *ācāryas* follow the first commentator and do not try to excel him. This position is one of great respect, and whatever the spiritual strength of successors, they should not try to supersede the original commentator. They should see him as *svāmī* or master, and be satisfied being subordinate to his teachings.

In the same way, the position of the founder-*ācārya* is so respected that even though devotees in successive generations may be of great spiritual power, they do not transgress or contradict his teachings, but always remain as his humble servants, being in his debt.

## 7. When Physically Present He is the Ācārya

The use of the singular word *ācārya* refers to that great person who, by his personal example, teaches the science of devotion to all present. When the founder-*ācārya* is present, he exemplifies the teachings of the *śāstra* and predecessor *ācārya*, and his associates may have first-hand experience of the practical application of his teachings. He is the embodiment of transcendental knowledge.

In addition, he becomes the living head of the *sampradāya* and sets the example as a *dikṣā-guru*, *śikṣā-guru*, *vartma-pradarśaka-guru* and founder-*ācārya*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda said: "As the Founder-Acarya and final authority on all ISKCON matters please be informed that until you receive authorization from me you may kindly wait in these matters of loans until further notice from me." (Letter, July 29, 1976)

"This is to inform you that I, the undersigned, am the Founder-Acarya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and the world leader for all of its branches." (Letter, January 16, 1977)

Being present, the founder-*ācārya* is the final authority on all matters. He resolves issues and philosophical disputes, and is the world leader of the Vaiṣṇavas. For this reason, he is distinct from all other devotees.

During the time of Śrīla Prabhupāda, all members of ISKCON recognized him as the final word on all issues. He was unique as the leader and supremely Kṛṣṇa conscious *guru* and *ācārya*. Even outside of ISKCON, some Vaiṣṇavas praised Śrīla Prabhupāda as the world *ācārya*, but few followed him as such.

In his final days, Śrīla Prabhupāda was visited by many Godbrothers. They said, "You are the eternal leader. You rule over us, guide us, and chastise us." (*Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Volume 6) Śrīla Prabhupāda had envisioned that his disciples would initiate in his presence. He wrote, "Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program." (Letter, December 3, 1968) Although this program did not come to pass, if it had, certainly Śrīla Prabhupāda would have remained like a moon among so many stars. Moons stand out by their own power. He called it "self-effulgent." Because of the self-effulgence of the founder-*ācārya* when he is physically present, he is the leader of all the Vaiṣṇavas. He is the *ācārya*.

## 8. Awards the Power of Attorney to his Followers

The founder-*ācārya* is empowered by the predecessor *ācāryas* and the Lord. Those who follow him are empowered by the Lord and the *ācāryas* through him. He is their representative. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes: “One should see the six Gosvāmīs in one’s spiritual master.” (*The Nectar of Devotion*) This is a clear distinction between him and all others. He is the source of their strength. No one can be empowered and circumvent his authority. Thus, on countless occasions Śrīla Prabhupāda had stated: “You must go through your *guru* to the *ācāryas* to Lord Caitanya to Kṛṣṇa” and “Do not try to jump over.”

This point cannot be emphasized too much. All *gurus* must recognize that they are dependent on their founder, as an edifice is dependent on its foundation. Without it, everything collapses.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says, “Only a saintly devotee who has understood the teachings of the *śikṣā-guru* (*ādi-guru* and founder-*ācārya*) is eligible to be a *dikṣā-guru* for others.” (*Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, Chapter 6)

In the story *punar mūṣhiko bhava*, known as “again become a mouse,” Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that even the most insignificant creature can be empowered by a great personality. But if he becomes ungrateful, he may lose his power of attorney and again become a mouse. By Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy, Vaiṣṇavas may act as his representatives and the representative of the Lord, but the same person who gave such authority can again take it away if one is unfaithful to his authority.

## 9. Summary

This book is not meant to detail the intricacies of the founder-*ācārya*. Still, his role as *śikṣā-guru* and source of empowerment for his followers is of such importance that no discussion on *guru-tattva* would be complete without examining the nature of his service.

Since we have been examining the differences among Vaiṣṇava *gurus*, it has been important to understand the unique role of Śrīla Prabhupāda, our founder-*ācārya*, and our great dependence on him. When we remember his extraordinary spiritual strength, his all-worshipable instructions, his unique position, his perfect example, and his being everyone’s well-wisher, we will remember our own insignificant position. In this way, the perspective of other *gurus* will be as his servants and followers, and there will remain little risk of mistakenly imitating his exalted position — a mistake which history has documented as having disastrous consequences.

## Vaiṣṇavas of Varying Spiritual Strength

### 1. Introduction

Chapter Seven explained the distinctive feature of the founder-*ācārya* and the many characteristics by which he is distinguished from all other Vaiṣṇavas in his line. The next consideration by which differences are seen amongst *gurus* is their relative spiritual strength. This topic is often discussed within devotee circles, and is extremely relevant to the subject at hand. However, the abilities of such devotees to deliver disciples, transmit *mantras*, know the science of Kṛṣṇa, and similarly related topics will not be discussed in any detail in this book. They are more suitable for a work more specifically dealing with that topic.

Just as Kṛṣṇa manifests a varying quantity of his unlimited potencies to varying degrees within His incarnations (although they are all one), similarly, He invests different degrees of spiritual power in different Vaiṣṇavas. Thus, it is seen that there are Vaiṣṇavas and *gurus* of varying spiritual strength.

Although the degree of spiritual potency appearing in a devotee can be as varied as the number of Vaiṣṇavas, in general they

are categorized into three. Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “There are three different kinds of devotees, namely *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, *madhyama-adhikārī* and *uttama-adhikārī*: the neophyte, the preacher and the *mahā-bhāgavata*, or the highly advanced devotee. (Bhāg. 4.22.16, purport) All of these Vaiṣṇavas may also be *guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “One should not become a spiritual master unless he has attained the platform of *uttama-adhikārī*. A neophyte Vaiṣṇava or a Vaiṣṇava situated on the intermediate platform can also accept disciples.” (The Nectar of Instruction 5, purport)

How is the disciple meant to relate to his *gurus* who are representatives of Kṛṣṇa and yet of differing spiritual strengths? Then again, how do Vaiṣṇavas of different spiritual stature deal with each other? Is everyone treated equally, or individually? If one devotee is recognized as greater than another, will that not demean the lesser devotee?

While these questions pose a spiritual challenge, a Vaiṣṇava is not meant to shy away from his God-given responsibilities. Studying Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions, we find that His Divine Grace expected devotees to utilize their intelligence to resolve these questions to the satisfaction of our tradition. Śrīla Prabhupāda states that it is the duty of the disciple to discriminate among different levels of devotees. “In this verse Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises the devotee to be intelligent enough to distinguish between the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, *madhyama-adhikārī* and *uttama-adhikārī*.” (The Nectar of Instruction 5, purport)

In addition to explaining the principles underlying the gradation of Vaiṣṇavas’ spiritual strengths, *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* reveals some details on the suitable etiquette by which they are shown respect. Excerpts from the relevant verses are quoted in the next section, with brief comments on each.

## 2. Evidence from Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta

“It is well known from the authorized Vedic literature that all

Vaiṣṇavas are equal and qualitatively non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa. However, it is seen that some Vaiṣṇavas appear greater or lesser. In such cases how is it to be understood?” (17)

*Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* begins by establishing that Vaiṣṇavas are truly all equal and yet, they may appear greater or lesser. What is the understanding in this regard?

“Amongst all of the assembled Vaiṣṇavas, there is the initiating *guru* and instructing *guru*. In regard to them, what type of behavior is authorized?” (18)

These Vaiṣṇavas include the *gurus* whom we are concentrating on. Clearly, the author states that they may also be of greater or lesser stature.

“It is certainly true that all Vaiṣṇavas are on the same transcendental platform. However, although amongst Vaiṣṇavas there may be a difference in strength, the less intelligent don’t know how to distinguish the character of greater spiritual personalities from lesser spiritual personalities. They treat everyone on the same level.” (29)

He disapproves of materialists and the less intelligent who, out of ignorance, treat all devotees the same. Śrīla Prabhupāda has stated that a devotee should be “intelligent enough” to distinguish among Vaiṣṇavas of varying strength. In fact, Narahari Sarakāra states that this is the duty of a practicing Vaiṣṇava. He should know this art.

“However, all those practicing Vaiṣṇavas who are expert in the science of devotional service can understand in whose body what quantity of Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual potency is present. Being able to understand, they offer special treatment, considering the scriptural injunctions in this regard.” (30)

Such Vaiṣṇavas should be expert enough to recognize varying types of Vaiṣṇavas and apply relevant scriptural injunctions accordingly.

“If one can distinguish between the greater or lesser spiritual strength of a person but does not accordingly offer respect, then that person shall be held guilty for that offense.” (31)

A non-devotee may be excused for treating all Vaiṣṇavas equally. But if one is aware of the etiquette and does not follow it, he is considered an offender. Now he gives some practical advice, in the following verses, how this distinction is to be practiced.

“If two Vaiṣṇavas come at the same time, first one has to offer respect to the Vaiṣṇava of greater strength, then offer to the Vaiṣṇava of lesser strength.” (32)

This indicates that according to the spiritual stature of the Vaiṣṇava, (or *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*) one should offer respect to the senior first and the junior second. For example, if in the presence of one’s *dikṣā-guru*, Rūpa Gosvāmī appears, the disciple would offer respect first to Rūpa Gosvāmī, then his own *guru*.

One may ask, “What happens if the *gurus* of varying strength appear at different times?” He replies.

“Equal respect should not be offered to both, even if they are not present at the same time.” (33)

In all circumstances, respect should be commensurate with the stature of the devotee. Examples are offering a higher or lower sitting place, giving a greater amount of *dakṣiṇā*, or a more elaborate reception.

“However, in spite of knowing these truths, if they (devotees) do not appropriately offer worship to a greater or lesser degree,

then they will be spiritually ruined. If they consider the respective spiritual strength(s) and accordingly offer respect, they will certainly advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (36)

Once again he repeats that to follow this procedure is to advance, to neglect it risks one’s spiritual life. It is incumbent on the devotee to be able to discriminate between his *gurus* in this circumstance.

One may ask, “What is the condition of those devotees who cannot discriminate among the relative spiritual strengths of *gurus*. What should they do?”

“As in the Ganges there are many waves, and some of these waves are larger than other waves but all of the waves are considered to be sacred, similarly, all types of Vaiṣṇavas, those who are spiritually strong and those who are not so strong, can be offered equal worship.” (41)

If a devotee cannot understand the spiritual strength of a Vaiṣṇava, then he is not at risk if he treats them equally. He should show respect due to the representative of the Lord.

Before completing his instructions, Narahari Sākāra now includes some special considerations regarding the spiritual masters.

“All Vaiṣṇavas are considered as *guru* or spiritual master.” (42)

As a general principle, all Vaiṣṇavas are considered *guru*, as they are representatives of the Lord. Although they should be respected as such, amongst them some Vaiṣṇavas are special. Who are they?

“Amongst all of the Vaiṣṇavas, the initiating *guru* (*dikṣā-guru*) and instructing *guru* (*śikṣā-guru*) are special.” (43)

Once again it is interesting to note how distinction stands out

within oneness. One's own *gurus* should be considered special among all other Vaiṣṇava *gurus*. Then what does that mean?

“It is proper to offer these two special respect.” (44)

The author explains that special respects should be shown to one's own *gurus*. How is that to be done?

“Amongst all of the other spiritual masters, these two (*dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*) spiritual masters' orders are to be followed.” (45)

Special respect is shown by giving priority to their instructions, in preference to those of others. In the following verse, the author explains how Vaiṣṇavas are treated as equal and different from one's *guru*.

“In all circumstances, all Vaiṣṇavas are offered respect like one offers respect to one's spiritual master. However, with body, mind and words one serves one's own spiritual master.” (50)

Vaiṣṇavas, *sādhus*, or one's *śikṣā-guru* should be respected as one respects one's spiritual master, taking into consideration the aforementioned etiquette regarding their relative spiritual strengths.

But there is a difference in one's inner relationship with one's own *guru*. To him one gives one's all in all, one's heart — body, mind and words.

The conclusion is that offering more respect to a Vaiṣṇava more empowered than one's *guru* should be done. But the relationship with *dikṣā-guru* should remain paramount.

“One should not give him up (one's own *guru*), but should remain faithfully with him, because all authorities say that the shelter of one's own spiritual master is best and perfect (even if another spiritual master is more powerful).” (51)

“If a father or spiritual master or husband is not possessed of outstanding qualities, even then they are always worshipable.” (54)

While contemplating the above *ślokas*, a valuable consideration arises. The relative spiritual strength of *gurus* cannot be neglected. The relationship between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru* must incorporate this principle. Even though, in principle, *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* are equal as representatives of the Lord, when their relative spiritual strengths are obvious, the difference therein must be respected. However, the tradition that *śikṣā-guru* acts as an assistant to the *dikṣā-guru*, who is seen as the original spiritual master of the disciple, remains.

In conclusion, a disciple should continue to give his heart and soul to his *dikṣā-guru*, regardless of his spiritual strength. Externally he may show greater respect to another, but his heart is for his own *guru*.

“Taking shelter of the above-mentioned persons, one may even disagree with those senior to oneself.” (55)

“Learned Vaiṣṇava authorities say that these instructions are the perfection of religiosity.” (58)

### 3. Certain Questions Remain

While the statements of Narahari Sarakāra are authoritative and conclusive, certain controversy may arise as a consequence of their implication. We had raised these questions earlier, in the first section of this chapter. The most prominent doubt is whether a disciple will be able to revere a Vaiṣṇava, his *śikṣā-gurus*, or even his *dikṣā-guru*, as good as God, if he considers him of lesser spiritual stature than another?

In many quotes, Śrīla Prabhupāda points out that the disciple always sees his spiritual master as good as the Lord, regardless of apparent imperfections in his behavior or character. How is such a thing possible? Because it is from this person from whom he

receives knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, and because knowledge of Kṛṣṇa is as worshipable as Him, the carrier of the knowledge becomes equally worshipable.

In Honolulu Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “And *guru*, the spiritual master, ‘He is an ordinary man,’ these are forbidden. So why *guru* is to be considered *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair*, exactly (like) the Supreme Personality of Godhead? That reason is given there. That reason is that he is giving the Kṛṣṇa knowledge; therefore, he is as good as Kṛṣṇa. Even though his family members or his friend is thinking, ‘Oh, he has now become *guru*,’ still he should be considered the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That reason is also given there, that even Kṛṣṇa was taken as ordinary man, but does it mean that He has become ordinary? Similarly any..., our movement, it may appear just like other movement, but because the movement is giving Kṛṣṇa, that means it is as good as Kṛṣṇa.” (Conversation, May 3, 1976)

Although outsiders, or even Godbrothers, may consider the spiritual master an ordinary person, the vision of a disciple is different. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the perception of all people will not be the same. “The relationship with the spiritual master must always be continued with the greatest respect and veneration, without forgetting His exalted position; like father and son.” (Letter, January 16, 1969) The example of father and son is very appropriate. A man may appear to be one person among many ordinary people in a crowd, but to his son he is the only father. Continuing the same example, even though there are much stronger men in the world than the father, to the son he is still extraordinary. Why? Due to the nature of their relationship. In the same way, by dint of the relationship between *guru* and disciple, whereby the disciple has been reared on the milk of transcendental knowledge, awareness of another Vaiṣṇava’s superiority does not diminish the glory of his own *guru*.

And, even if the spiritual master exhibits mundane characteristics, the disciple continues to revere him as his worshipable Deity. “It is the injunction of the Vedas that the Spiritual Master

should not be treated as ordinary man, even if sometimes the Spiritual Master behaves like ordinary man. It is the duty of the disciple to accept Him as Superhuman Man.” (Letter, July 31, 1970)

In studying Śrīla Prabhupāda’s innumerable instructions on the position of the spiritual master, it is found that his teachings remain consistently this: the *guru* is meant to be worshipped as good as God. He does not indicate that some other form of regard should be adopted, even if the *guru* is less than an *uttama-adhikārī*. “One who eradicates the *ajñāna*, *andhakāra*, darkness. In the darkness, if somebody brings lamp, *ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-salākayā*... The *jñāna-rūpa*, torchlight, he’s *guru*. So maybe of different degrees, but anyone who opens the spiritual eyes, he’s *guru*. But it doesn’t matter that degree. Actually, if the *guru* teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then he may be in lesser degree, but he’s accepted as *guru*. There is no question of rejection. Because Kṛṣṇa is actually *jñāna*. One who teaches Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, ‘One has to know Kṛṣṇa, one has to surrender to Kṛṣṇa,’ this kind of teaching is required.” (Lecture, Ahmedabad, December 13, 1972)

Therefore, the spiritual master will always be worshipped as good as God. But the degree of worship may vary with the relative strength of the devotee, just as the ambassador of a country is respected as good as the country’s leader. However, the ambassador of an important country like the USA will receive a greater degree of respect than the ambassador of a small country like Mauritius. But in either case, they are respected as good as the head of state.

To detail the argument of worshipping all *gurus* as good as God, we have recorded the version of Śrīla Prabhupāda in Appendix 8. We request the reader to refer to this. It addresses the often-raised misconception that worship “as good as God” applies only to the most exalted of devotees.

#### 4. Summary

*Gurus* are of varying spiritual strength. In general, they are classified into three divisions, either *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*, *madhyama-adhikārīs* or *uttama-adhikārīs*. Within these divisions there are also many gradations of advancement and realization. In this way, a clear difference exists among Vaiṣṇava *gurus*, according to the degree of Kṛṣṇa consciousness they possess. Such a distinction should be perceived in tandem with their oneness as representatives of the Lord. Although the relative degrees of worship shown to them will vary according to their stature, from the absolute point of view they are to be seen as good as God. In this way, the proper *sad-ācāra* is observed in relation to different Vaiṣṇavas.

#### Chapter Nine

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## Gurus Varying in Their Commitment

### 1. Introduction

This chapter considers the varying degrees of commitment shown by Vaiṣṇavas to the ongoing progress of their disciple. In addition to the spiritual strength of a *guru* mentioned in Chapter Eight, this constitutes a significant difference in the nature and behavior of Vaiṣṇavas.

In general, there are two types of devotees: those who are committed to the spiritual life of others and those who are committed to their own spiritual welfare. They are called the *ghoṣṭy-ānandī* and *bhajanānandī*, respectively.

“So generally, *ghoṣṭy-ānandī* means one who wants to increase the number of devotees. He’s called *ghoṣṭy-ānandī*. And one who is self-satisfied, that ‘Let me do my own duty,’ he is called *bhajanānandī*. So my Guru Mahārāja, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, he was *ghoṣṭy-ānandī*.” (Lecture, Māyāpur, April 6, 1975)

“The word *bhajanānandī* refers to the devotee who does not move, but remains in one place. Such a devotee is always engaged

in the devotional service of the Lord. He chants the *mahā-mantra* as taught by many *ācāryas*, and sometimes goes out for preaching work. The *ghoṣṭy-ānandī* is one who desires to increase the number of devotees all over the world. He travels all over the world just to purify the world and the people residing in it.” (*Bhāg.* 4.30.37, purport)

Prabhupāda mentions that *bhajanānandīs* preach but their world view centers about their own personal predicament. If they are *sādhakas*, they are concerned with their own advancement, and if they are *siddhas*, they are content to reside in a holy place and speak to those who seek them out. Their commitment is primarily to themselves.

On the other hand, the *ghoṣṭy-ānandī* is principally concerned for the welfare of others. From the perspective of preaching, the *ghoṣṭy-ānandī* is considered the better of the two. Even if the *bhajanānandī* is perfect and the preacher is a practitioner, because of the latter’s selfless attitude, he is considered more completely situated.

“*Bhajanānandī* is interested for his own welfare, or they think it that he is not competent enough to preach, and other stage is a devotee taking all risk, preaching for the benefit of the whole human society. He is called *ghoṣṭy-ānandī*, increasing the number of devotees. That is preferred by Kṛṣṇa. So if you want very quickly recognition by Kṛṣṇa, go on preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Even if it is imperfectly done, but because you are sincere in your capa..., whatever capacity you have got, if you preach, then Kṛṣṇa will be very much pleased.” (Lecture, Delhi, March 26, 1976)

Śrīla Prabhupāda has delineated two extremes among Vaiṣṇavas, one committed to others and one committed to himself. In his preaching, he repeatedly emphasizes the distinction amongst them on this basis. In this chapter we shall investigate in more detail what constitutes commitment on the part of a *guru*. By such analysis, a disciple will readily recognize the responsibility his *gurus* are willing to take for him. In this way, he can distinguish who among them is sacrificing the most for him, and

conversely, he will know for whom he is obliged to sacrifice the most.

This book is specifically meant for devotees in ISKCON. Because in our Society Vaiṣṇavas are generally *ghoṣṭy-ānandī*, lesser degrees of commitment do not imply one is a *bhajanānandī*. Such distinction should be seen as variety among the preachers, an expression of their individual natures.

Whatever their personality, all *gurus* are said to represent the Lord. In delivering their disciple, they contribute in different ways and to different degrees, towards achieving a common goal. The extent to which a *guru* feels and acts accountable for the liberation of his disciple has been called “commitment.” The different factors which contribute to such a commitment are:

1. Taking responsibility for the disciple
2. Taking risk on behalf of the disciple
3. Providing facility for the disciple

There may be other factors. We have singled out these three.

## 2. Taking Responsibility for the Disciple

In giving transcendental knowledge to their disciples, Vaiṣṇava *gurus* have both immediate and an ultimate goals in mind. Defined simply, an immediate goal is transmitting knowledge that, in time, will mature to its full application. The ultimate goal, the purpose of all teachings, is to end the cycle of birth and death, and return back to Kṛṣṇa.

When a spiritual master guides the disciple to anything other than the ultimate goal, he is said to take limited responsibility. When the spiritual master continues instructing his disciple, patiently guiding him until the mature creeper of his devotion sprouts into love of God, he is said to have taken full responsibility.

There are many examples of those who take varying degrees of responsibility for their disciple.

a) A teacher instructs a certain subject over a given period of time, after which the disciple graduates, never to continue that association. Although he remains indebted for the knowledge he has received, his tutor has taken a limited responsibility to give him a specific education, but no more.

b) A *śikṣā-guru* may give instruction and training in aspects of the philosophy for the elevation of the disciple, but does not supervise its practical application or the consequences of his teachings. He has taken responsibility to teach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without ensuring the long-term benefits of his training. Or, he teaches the different sciences of *bhakti* to his disciples but does not take responsibility for their overall development in spiritual life.

c) While parents tend to have a life-long personal responsibility for their children, it is not always so from the spiritual point of view. Their immediate goal may be to qualify a child for *gurukula*, after which the *guru* will continue the work they began. Theirs is also a limited responsibility.

d) *Sannyāsīs*, *brāhmaṇas* and seniors act as instructors for a short time by giving *Bhāgavatam* class to many devotees. While they inspire and instruct, their teachings are not specific to any individual, and at the conclusion of the lesson, it ends. This type of instruction is also of limited responsibility.

These examples were of *gurus* who accept limited responsibility for the disciple. Next is the *guru* who takes the vow to guide his dependent back to Godhead. To achieve this end, he is willing to return to this material world. This is accepting full responsibility. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, “Once accepted, the spiritual master takes responsibility for the disciple. And disciple also must be obedient to the spiritual master for life, for good. That is the relationship.” (Lecture, Los Angeles, September 24, 1972)

This type of connection with the spiritual master is very intimate. Due to a strong personal relationship, to achieve the ultimate goal the *guru* is even willing to take on the sinful reaction of

the disciple. “Similarly, the Spiritual Master, when He accepts a disciple and the disciple surrenders unto Him, He has got the responsibility of absorbing the sinful reaction of His disciple’s life.” (Letter, September 19, 1969)

The ultimate example of responsible guruship was Śrīla Prabhupāda. He sacrificed himself to deliver the world, and devotees are eternally in his debt for assuming such a responsibility. He said, “As for myself, my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Om Viṣṇupāda Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, ordered me to take up the responsibility of spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western world.” (*The Science of Self-Realization*, Chapter 8)

*Gurus* vary in the shelter they offer to their disciples. A devotee who knows that one *guru* will protect him under all circumstances, while another *guru* will teach without significant responsibility, will understand the difference amongst them and certainly reciprocate in kind.

### 3. Risk Taken for the Disciple

Śrīla Prabhupāda said he “walked through fire” to establish ISKCON. The risks he took are legendary and beyond the call of duty, even for great transcendentalists. Under the order of his spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda left his family to live alone. Leaving the transcendental shelter of Vṛndāvana, Prabhupāda crossed the ocean, risked heart attacks, the taunting of uncultured westerners, the loneliness of a stranger in New York, the toll of world-travel at age seventy, the conspiracies of Godbrothers, and the foolishness of disciples. His story is told in varied biographies, all agreeing at least on this — that no one took greater risk for his disciples than Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time there appeared a number of self-appointed *śikṣā-gurus*, who never really considered leaving the sanctuary of their *mathas* nor took seriously Lord Caitanya’s order to spread the holy name. Neither would they associate with

Westerners, nor risk dying outside Vraja or Māyāpura. However great they were, they would not take many risks for others.

Śrīla Prabhupāda took the risk! This cannot be argued, and thus he is distinct from all others. He wrote, “So far I am concerned I always take risk for Krishna. I came here in your country risking my life. And still, although I am physically unfit, I am trying to execute the orders of my Guru Maharaja as far as possible.” (Letter, February 12, 1968)

The relationship between spiritual master and disciple is a reciprocal one. The disciple naturally responds to the burden the spiritual master takes in delivering him. When the disciple sees that for him the *guru* is taking all risk, how can he not see him as different from others, who sacrifice less? As Śrīla Prabhupāda has said, “So we, our business is to become a little recognized by Kṛṣṇa. So we shall go on preaching like this at all risk.” (Lecture, Ahmedabad, December 9, 1972)

#### 4. Providing Facility for the Disciple

A *ghoṣṭy-ānandī* preaches world-wide. In addition to instructing his followers, he must ensure they have facility to protect the continuity of their practice. This means systematizing teachings, writing books, establishing temples, installing Deities, founding a social system, instituting education, directing self-sufficiency, and forming an institutional structure with a suitable hierarchy that will facilitate and perpetuate all those things.

Once again, there is no example to parallel that of Śrīla Prabhupāda. His establishing ISKCON was to facilitate the spiritual lives of generations of his followers. Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “The first business of the *sannyāsī* is to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but if, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, facilities are available, then he may construct temples and monasteries to give shelter to the serious students of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Otherwise such temples and monasteries are not needed.” (*Bhāg.* 7.13.8, purport)

“We require many Deities for our temples, as well as for our

many devotees who want to worship Radha-Krishna at home. So we want to introduce this Deity worship in this country.” (Letter, October 13, 1968)

“Similarly, we have established the International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness to give people an opportunity to associate with those who have not forgotten Kṛṣṇa.” (*The Nectar of Instruction* 2, purport)

We are living in a modern age. No longer are *guru* and disciple relationships confined to a banyan tree on the outskirts of a village. The residents of Kali-yuga face great challenges in practicing and realizing the teachings of the sages. A *guru* must recognize that his disciple’s success extends beyond attentive hearing of the truth. He must be able to facilitate their retaining, cultivating, and living out what they have learned, wherever in the world they may be.

When Vaiṣṇavas maintain and expand the facilities given by Śrīla Prabhupāda, for the benefit of their followers, it is understood that they are undergoing the hardship of engaging the material energy in the service of Kṛṣṇa, for the benefit of their disciples. A disciple will see which Vaiṣṇava has provided him with the instruments by which the ultimate goal can be achieved, and will show his appreciation accordingly.

#### 5. Summary

As always, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the ideal example. In the following letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda shows his great tolerance, kindness, and gratefulness to a disciple who has temporarily abandoned him. This is the limit of commitment.

“I may inform you that I always think of him and pray to Krishna for his good sense. That is my duty. Anyone who comes to me for my help or wants advance in Krishna Consciousness, and whom I initiate and accept as my disciple, I must pray for him and his welfare always. So K. personally served me, especially during my illness, which I always remember. But because somehow or

other he has misunderstood our activities, that does not mean that I am no longer his well-wisher. I write at the end of my letters to my disciples, 'Your ever well-wisher,' and as such, I cannot become otherwise than being ever well-wisher of my disciples, even though he may leave me. So I was praying to Krishna that He may save K. from his misunderstanding, and if ever he chanted Hare Krishna at least once in sincere heart, I am sure Krishna would not allow him to go out of his influence." (Letter, April 26, 1968)

We have shown three factors which constitute the degree of commitment a *guru* makes towards his followers. A disciple will view his *gurus* according to what they have committed for his spiritual welfare. Kṛṣṇa says, *ye yathā māṁ prapadyante*, or "as they surrender unto Me, I reciprocate accordingly." It is human nature that the greater the responsibility, risk and facility for a dependent, the greater is the reciprocation. Such characteristic is present in Lord Kṛṣṇa; thus, it must be present in His parts and parcels. Just as the faith of the disciple is tested by commitment to his *guru*, similarly, the commitment by the *guru* will increase the faith and sacrifice of the disciple.

In the matter of selecting a *dikṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-gurus*, a disciple is wise to consider which *guru* will truly enthuse his devotions by being fully committed to his liberation. Such great Vaiṣṇavas invoke great surrender from their followers, for they are fully surrendered to their *guru* and the will of Lord Caitanya.

In this way, devotees should be able to perceive the distinction among *gurus* based on their commitment to their followers.

## Other Differences Among Gurus

### 1. Introduction

Differences among Vaiṣṇava *gurus* are clearly manifest under many circumstances. The main ones have been mentioned earlier, and a few others will be described here. It is most important that a devotee understand the underlying principles of etiquette, so that he may be able to recognize the unique characteristics of Vaiṣṇavas and be able to appreciate them accordingly. Other circumstances which effect different dealings with *gurus* are:

- a) When the *śikṣā-gurus* are the disciples of the *dikṣā-guru*.
- b) If an elder *guru* is present.
- c) Social considerations.

### 2. When the Śikṣā-gurus are the Disciples of the Dikṣā-guru

What happens if the *śikṣā-guru* of a disciple is in the presence of his own initiating *guru*? Considering points of etiquette, the disciple will offer greater respect to the *dikṣā-guru*, and his *śikṣā-guru* will also take a humble role in the presence of his initiator.

Although the law of the disciplic succession states that a disciple should not initiate in the physical presence of the *dikṣā-guru*, there is no objection to him giving instructions to others, especially when ordered by the *dikṣā-guru*. Therefore, a Vaiṣṇava will preach to fulfill the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and, in this way, please his own *guru*.

However, when in the presence of his spiritual master, the *śikṣā-guru* will exhibit a naturally subordinate role, even if he is of great spiritual strength. Professor Sanyal's statement is: "There is thus only one *dikṣā-guru*, who is associated with his infinity of agents or limbs whose function is to lead the intending disciple to the *dikṣā-guru*." (Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya) Although in ISKCON devotees are not guided to initiation by anyone's direction, a devotee will encourage his disciples to hear from his own spiritual master when in his presence.

The disciple should show special respect to the initiator *guru* and recognize his superior position, which has become pronounced by being the *dikṣā-guru* of his own *śikṣā-guru*.

### 3. If an Elder Guru is Present

Does the age or seniority of a *guru* have an impact on protocol, and if so, how? Śrīla Prabhupāda deals with this point extensively while discussing Maitreya and Uddhava in the Third Canto. He makes it clear that among Vaiṣṇavas of equal spiritual stature, seniority of age is a distinguishing feature. Those who are younger should not initiate or instruct when an elder is nearby. Similarly, one should not give instructions in the presence of a senior unless ordered to do so. Such behavior is known as impertinence. Here is Śrīla Prabhupāda's quote:

"Although one may be well versed in the transcendental science, one should be careful about the offense of *maryādā-vyatikrama*, or impertinently surpassing a greater personality. According to scriptural injunction, one should be very careful of transgressing the law of *maryādā-vyatikrama* because by so doing

one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of all the world. To be well versed in the transcendental science necessitates awareness of the techniques of spiritual science. Uddhava, being well aware of all these technicalities of transcendental science, advised Vidura to approach Maitreya Ṛṣi to receive transcendental knowledge. Vidura wanted to accept Uddhava as his spiritual master, but Uddhava did not accept the post because Vidura was as old as Uddhava's father, and therefore Uddhava could not accept him as his disciple, especially when Maitreya was present nearby. The rule is that in the presence of a higher personality one should not be very eager to impart instructions, even if one is competent and well versed. So Uddhava decided to send an elderly person like Vidura to Maitreya, another elderly person, but he was well-versed also because he was directly instructed by the Lord while He was about to quit this mortal world. Since both Uddhava and Maitreya were directly instructed by the Lord, both had the authority to become the spiritual master of Vidura or anyone else, but Maitreya, being elderly, had the first claim to becoming the spiritual master, especially for Vidura, who was much older than Uddhava. One should not be eager to become a spiritual master cheaply, for the sake of profit and fame, but should become a spiritual master only for the service of the Lord. The Lord never tolerates the impertinence of *maryādā-vyatikrama*. One should never pass over the honor due to an elderly spiritual master in the interests of one's own personal gain and fame. Impertinence on the part of the pseudo-spiritual master is very risky to progressive spiritual realization." (Bhāg. 3.4.26, purport)

It is also interesting to note that juniors should hesitate to instruct or initiate seniors. It does not mean they are forbidden, but it should be done only if there is no alternative. Both these principles — instructing in the presence of an elder and instructing an elder — fall in the category of *maryādā-vyatikrama*. Distinction between *gurus* under these circumstances is compulsory.

#### 4. Social Convention

*Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, verse 52, explains; “Just as one respects one’s father as a *guru*, his (the father’s) older and younger brothers are also similarly respected, but nonetheless, the father is worthy of most respect. Notwithstanding the above, if the father’s *guru*, even if he is family related, comes, one should double the respect, as he is the spiritual father of the father, or the *guru* of the *guru*. He is offered twice the *pūjā* or respect. This behavior is recognized as appropriate by all authorities.”

Narahari Sarakāra states that the *parama-guru*, or *guru* of the *guru*, should be offered even more distinctive respect than one’s own *guru*. Further respect is due when the *parama-guru* is the *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru* of the *dikṣā-guru*.

The next point is that even if the relationship is conventional, or in other words, when the *parama-guru* is an initiator with little spiritual relevance, a family *guru*, still a distinction should be made, to show proper example. Internally one may understand that the real worthy person is he who is spiritually qualified; nevertheless, due to seniority, additional respect is shown.

## PART 4



## LIBERATED AND NON-LIBERATED GURUS

## Examples of Non-Liberated Gurus

### 1. Introduction

The basic definition of *guru* given by Śrīla Prabhupāda was “Anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a spiritual master.” On this axiomatic foundation, taking into consideration their different dealings, we have studied the founder-*ācārya*, the *śikṣā-guru* and the *dikṣā-guru*, mainly in light of how these *gurus* bestow *śikṣā*. After all, the theme of this book is the *śikṣā-guru*.

To do justice to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings and be relevant to ISKCON’s needs, other *śikṣā-gurus* must be detailed. Where do *sannyāsīs*, *brāhmaṇas*, parents, teachers and all manner of seniors fit? To introduce the *śikṣā* culture we desire, it is necessary to see how these instructors should be respected and what their roles are in the Society.

Before proceeding, it is important to define the categories of *śikṣā-guru* further. The following sections discuss the definition of liberated and non-liberated *śikṣā-gurus*.

## 2. The Liberated

In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote that the *śikṣā-guru* may be liberated or non-liberated. Some clarification is required here. What level of spiritual advancement is indicated by the word liberated and who falls into the category of the non-liberated?

The word liberated has multiple meanings, and Śrīla Prabhupāda uses it to denote varying stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. One who possesses love of God is certainly in the category of the liberated, and so is one who is on the platform of *bhāva*. On the other hand, while freedom from material suffering does not denote an elevated stage of spiritual achievement, it too is referred to as liberation. Our purpose here is not to argue the relative merits of such stages of advancement. We desire a definition of the liberated *śikṣā-guru* that draws a clear borderline between the liberated and those who are not.

From the spiritual point of view, the minimum standard of liberation is generally acknowledged as freedom from the modes of material nature. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa confirms this with the following words:

*mān ca yo 'vyabhicāreṇa bhakti-yogena sevate  
sa guṇān samatītyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*

“One who engages in full devotional service, unflinching in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman.” (Bg. 14.26)

Śrīla Prabhupāda also states:

“Guru must be liberated. Because without complete knowledge of Kṛṣṇa, without being free from the contamination of the three modes of material nature. (...) One cannot understand Kṛṣṇa on account of his being engrossed with these three material modes of nature. And Kṛṣṇa says, ‘One who understands Me rightly, he becomes immediately free.’” (Lecture, Gorakhpur, February 16, 1971)

In the lecture quoted above, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the qualification of the *guru* as having complete knowledge of Kṛṣṇa. One who is under the influence of the material modes cannot have such perfect knowledge, because of their contaminating effect.

We therefore adopt this definition of the liberated: “Being free from the contamination of the modes of material nature.” Thus, when referring to the liberated *guru*, we should understand that (at least) he is free from the influence of the modes of nature. Obviously, higher stages of advancement include the aforementioned liberated position.

A question may arise in regard to the above definition of liberated *guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda has also stated that non-liberated souls who are strictly following a liberated soul may also be free from the influence of the modes. Where do they stand — in the category of liberated or non-liberated?

“At the present moment it has become fashionable to disobey the unimpeachable directions given by the *ācāryas* and liberated souls of the past. 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: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to become illusioned, he has a tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. Consequently, we have to take direction from liberated persons. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. 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 the 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.” (*Bhāg.* 4.18.5, purport)

The content of our argument is not altered by the proposition

that a strict follower of a liberated soul is also liberated. The above quote from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* establishes how a devotee becomes liberated — by being a strict follower. However, the definition of liberation remains unchanged, as confirmed by Prabhupāda’s statement, “...his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of the material nature.” In answer, we say that whether the *guru* is liberated by dint of his own spiritual qualification, or by strictly following a liberated soul, in either case he is liberated, for he remains free of the influence of the modes of nature. Our definition remains sound.

### 3. The Non-Liberated

The next topic is those who are not liberated. By definition that means they are still under the contamination of the material qualities. In a lecture on the appearance day of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained three stages of knowledge relating to liberation.

“First-class knowledge means beyond liberation. Second-class knowledge is trying for liberation. Third-class knowledge means in bondage, like animal. The animals, they are bound up by the particular type of body and has no, I mean to say, possibility of becoming liberated.” (Lecture, London, September 23, 1969)

Our attention now is for those in the later two categories. They are those trying for liberation, and those bound, like animals, with no inclination to be liberated. As will be seen, the teachings of *śāstras* and the *ācāryas* show that both these categories of non-liberated beings (and even non-beings) may serve as *śikṣā-gurus*.

Those striving for liberation, the *sādhaka* Vaiṣṇavas, can also be categorized into three groups. From the perspective of a practitioner in ISKCON, they are the less advanced, peers, and non-liberated superiors. Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms such discrimination as appropriate behavior for a Vaiṣṇava, in his purport to the fifth verse of *The Nectar of Instruction*: “One must select

proper persons with careful discrimination. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī therefore advises that we should meet with the Vaiṣṇavas in an appropriate way, according to their particular status.”

Next are those with no interest in spiritual life. They may be categorized into one group. Adding the non-liberated *sādhakas* and the ignorant, there are altogether four categories of non-liberated souls. They are those who have no interest in spiritual life, the inferior *sādhakas*, the equals, and those more advanced.

We have seen the categories of non-liberated *śikṣā-gurus*. Let us now understand exactly who they are and how they act in the capacity of *guru*.

### 4. Non-Liberated Gurus

Śrīla Prabhupāda has spoken on the categories of *śikṣā-gurus* in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. “There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. 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. Thus the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47, purport)

Throughout his books, Śrīla Prabhupāda has given examples of who such non-liberated *gurus* are: the *sannyāsī*, *brāhmaṇa*, husband, parent, teacher and, in fact, anyone who teaches or takes responsibility for another. In His instructions to Uddhava in the Eleventh Canto, Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches that animals and even inanimate objects may be taken as *guru* by a contemplative intelligence.

A more general description of *guru* is given by Śrīla Prabhupāda in a lecture: “First of all, it is said about *guru*, anyone who takes care of his subordinate, he is *guru*.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 6, 1976) According to this, anyone committed to the welfare of a subordinate is a *guru*. This gives access to superiors of both social and spiritual orders to be seen in such a light. The

overall effect of such care should be that either directly or indirectly a warden “invokes the disciple’s spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.” In a properly structured society (*varṇāśrama*), everyone’s purpose is to please Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus, all instructions are relevant to invoking a dependent’s spiritual consciousness.

Similarly, one whose intelligence is trained to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere and to see everything in Kṛṣṇa will see even non-devotees, animals, and material nature as a stimulus for the Lord’s remembrance. This consciousness promotes a culture of respect and appreciation for all aspects of creation, both moving and non-moving. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the vision of learning to see Kṛṣṇa through his energies in the following way:

“As long as we are in the material world, we are seated on the material energy, and therefore we are situated in Kṛṣṇa, because Kṛṣṇa’s energy is not separate from Kṛṣṇa. Therefore it is stated, ‘The self-realized man sees Me everywhere.’ Seeing Kṛṣṇa everywhere means seeing every living being, as well as everything else, in relationship to Kṛṣṇa. In the Seventh Chapter of *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.8), Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna how He can be seen in various manifestations: ‘O son of Kuntī [Arjuna], I am the taste of water, the light of the sun and the moon, the syllable *om* in the Vedic *mantras*; I am the sound in ether and ability in man.’

“Water is drunk by all living entities, and is needed by birds, beasts, and man. Once a person has learned the philosophy of *Bhagavad-gītā*, whenever he drinks water, he sees Kṛṣṇa. And when does a day pass when we do not drink water? This is the way of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ‘I am the light of the sun and the moon.’ So whether in the day or the night, we see either sunshine or moonshine. How, then, can we forget Kṛṣṇa? This, then, is the way of perfect *yoga*. We have to see Kṛṣṇa everywhere and at all times.” (*The Path of Perfection*, Chapter 6)

Because manifestations of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s energy help us see Kṛṣṇa everywhere, they are our *śikṣā-gurus*.

The following series of quotes confirm the status of non-

liberated beings as *śikṣā-gurus*. Although they clearly refer to the non-liberated, it should be understood that such persons may also be in the category of the liberated. In either case, they are *guru*.

In *Kṛṣṇa Book*, Lord Kṛṣṇa has called the father the first teacher and the natural spiritual master. Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “The father or the head of the family is *guru* to the children, to the wife. In India still, the wife addresses the husband as *pati-guru*. And father is *guru*. That is natural.” (Conversation, Tehran, March 13, 1975)

The mother is also the natural *guru* of her children, but under certain circumstances she can also be the *guru* of the husband. “The actual system is that the husband is Spiritual Master to his wife, but if the wife can bring her husband into practicing this process, then it is all right that the husband accepts wife as Spiritual Master.” (Letter, June 14, 1969)

It is well known that the *brāhmaṇas* are the *guru* of all social orders. “So generally *brāhmaṇa* is accepted as *guru* by other orders of society.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, October 3, 1976)

*Sannyāsīs* are respected as the *gurus* of both the spiritual and social orders, even above the *brāhmaṇas*. “*Sannyāsī* is supposed to be the *guru* of everyone. There are four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*. *Brāh...* (break) ...and *kṣatriya*. And in the spiritual order, the *sannyāsī* is *guru* of all, even of the *brāhmaṇa*.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, October 2, 1976)

Teachers by definition give instruction, and if that is to direct others to Kṛṣṇa, then they are *guru*. “That teacher is *guru*, and he is representative of Kṛṣṇa. He does not say anything else.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, November 2, 1976)

Of course all devotees are spiritual masters regardless of their stature, for it is said that all Vaiṣṇavas are *guru*, “Yes, a *sikṣa guru* is anyone who can give spiritual advancement. Any senior devotee can be an instructor in spiritual subject matters.” (Letter, July 7, 1974)

Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated that his books, as his written words, were our *śikṣā-guru*. He and the whole *guru-paramparā* is

speaking through them. “You take instruction from my books, and if you are unable to understand any portion of the books, then you can get it explained by any senior devotee.” (Letter, July 7, 1974)

Śrīla Prabhupāda had frequently quoted the following verse from Cāṇakya Paṇḍita to exemplify that good instruction should not be rejected because of its unpalatable source. In fact, Prabhupāda referred to this as a “śāstric injunction.” If someone gives good counsel, they should be seen as *guru*.

*viśād apy amṛtam grāhyam amedhyād api kāñcanam  
nīcād apy uttamām vidyām strī-ratnam duṣkulād api*

“One should accept nectar even from poison and gold even from a filthy place. One should accept knowledge even from a low-born person, and a good wife even if she comes from a low family.” (*Nīti-darpaṇa* 1.16)

The following quotes from the Eleventh Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* exemplifies how prostitutes, animals and inanimate things like the sun and moon can be seen as *śikṣā-guru*. The word *guravaḥ*, indicating the plural sense of both *guru* and *śikṣā*, is explicit in the Sanskrit.

*śrī-brāhmaṇa uvāca  
santi me guravo rājan bahavo buddhy-upāśritāḥ  
yato buddhim upādāya mukto 'tāmīha tān śṛṇu*

“The *brāhmaṇa* said: My dear King, with my intelligence I have taken shelter of many spiritual masters. Having gained transcendental understanding from them, I now wander about the earth in a liberated condition. Please listen as I describe them to you.”

*pr̥thivī vāyur ākāśam āpo 'gnis candramā raviḥ  
kapoto 'jagaraḥ sindhuḥ patāngo madhukṛd gajāḥ*

*madhu-hā hariṇo mīnaḥ piṅgalā kuraro 'rbhakaḥ  
kumārī śara-kṛt sarpa ūrmanābhiḥ supēśakṛt*

*ete me guravo rājan catur-vimśatir āśritāḥ  
śikṣā vṛttibhir eteṣām anvaśikṣam ihātmanaḥ*

“O King, I have taken shelter of twenty-four *gurus*, who are the following: the earth, air, sky, water, fire, moon, sun, pigeon and python; the sea, moth, honeybee, elephant and honey thief; the deer, the fish, the prostitute Piṅgalā, the *kurara* bird and the child; and the young girl, arrow maker, serpent, spider and wasp. My dear King, by studying their activities I have learned the science of the self.” (*Bhāg.* 11.7.32-35)

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* states that by their indirect teachings even impersonalists and non-devotional philosophers may be seen as *śikṣā-gurus*. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states, “However, in worshipping one’s *ācārya*, one may take help from good and bad examples. By observing examples of good behavior one will be strengthened in devotional service, and in seeing negative examples one will be forewarned and avoid danger. In this way, one may accept many ordinary material objects as one’s spiritual masters, considering them as *śikṣā-gurus*, or *gurus* who give important lessons for spiritual advancement.”

Continuing on this same theme Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī states, “The words *gīyate bahudharṣibhiḥ*, the Absolute Truth is glorified in many ways by the sages, indicate the personal and impersonal understandings of the Absolute Truth. In other words, some sages describe only the Lord’s impersonal effulgence, which is without spiritual variety, whereas others describe the Lord’s manifest form as the Personality of Godhead. Thus, merely by hearing from many different authorities, one cannot actually learn the highest perfection of life. The proliferation of differing spiritual authorities is useful only to counteract the living entity’s tendency to be grossly materialistic. Different spiritual philosophers create faith in the existence of the soul and may be accepted at that level.” (*Bhāg.* 11.9.31, purport)

Overall, the theme from the above statements reveals that anyone and anything from whom one gleans knowledge by which the Lord is approached is *śikṣā-guru*. We should keep in mind the teachings of *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, which direct the discriminating devotee to respect his *gurus* according to their relationship with Kṛṣṇa. There will be differences in such esteem, but in the main, they must all be respected as *guru*.

Appreciating Kṛṣṇa's energy everywhere is possible for one with purified intelligence. Thus, one should not neglect the very means by which other *gurus* are detected. For this reason, the *Bhāgavatam* states that one's intelligence is to be considered as *śikṣā-guru*. "An intelligent person, expert in perceiving the world around him and in applying sound logic, can achieve real benefit through his own intelligence. Thus, sometimes one acts as one's own instructing spiritual master." (*Bhāg.* 11.7.20, purport)

## 5. Summary

The last quote from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is quite appropriate. One must be "expert in perceiving the world." One who has developed such expertise certainly has many *gurus* and cannot help but advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Lord Kṛṣṇa is very kind. He teaches us everywhere, through everything and everyone. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that one has to cultivate such a vision, and that is the purpose of *sādhana-bhakti*. In brief, we have no shortage of guides in spiritual life, and devotees can appreciate the many *śikṣā-gurus* sent to us by the Lord, both among the liberated and the non-liberated beings (including non-beings).

## Chapter Twelve

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# Conduct of the Non-Liberated Guru

## 1. Introduction

A natural question arises regarding the varied conduct of the many *śikṣā-gurus* mentioned in Chapter Eleven. The traditional principle of *guru* is one who teaches the import of scriptures and also abides by them. In the examples cited earlier, the behavior of these *śikṣā-gurus* is often questionable, or utterly unacceptable.

Certainly animals, insects, the sun, the moon, or prostitutes cannot be said to be setting any steady example for a Vaiṣṇava to follow. How can they be called *guru*? What about the *sādhakas* or the non-liberated *gurus* possessed or varied conduct and seen to be deficient in many ways? How is one to learn from them?

These questions must be answered in two ways: as they relate to the non-devotee *guru* and as they relate to those Vaiṣṇava *gurus* aspiring for liberation.

## 2. Conduct of the Non-Vaiṣṇava

The primary definition of *guru* was "anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures is accepted as a

spiritual master.” Similarly, Prabhupāda has explained that the non-liberated *śikṣā-gurus* “invoke the disciples spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.”

The non-devotees achieve the invoking of spiritual consciousness by means of indirect, involuntary, or unknowingly-given instructions taken to advantage by the intelligent observer. In the best of circumstances, theirs is good counsel from a bad source. Although ideal Vaiṣṇava conduct is generally absent in them, certain good examples, behavior, or instruction are present. Under such circumstances, a devotee must take the wise teaching without emulating any undesirable conduct. Although all beings have valuable characteristic traits, because they do not strive to serve the Lord, their overall behavior is considered abominable. In general, this should not be followed.

Because a devotee sees Kṛṣṇa manifesting good instructions from a bad source, he learns to “take gold from a filthy place.” Seeing the original spiritual master of all speaking to him, he respects the medium of such instruction as good as the Lord, although he keeps a respectable distance from it.

*viṣād apy amṛtam grāhyam amedhyād api kāñcanam  
nīcād apy uttamām vidyām strī-ratnam duṣkulād api*

In commenting on this *śloka* of Cāṇakya Paṇḍita (*Niti-darpaṇa* 1.16), Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Cāṇakya Paṇḍita says that one must catch what is right from any source. If there is a glass of poison with some nectar in it, he says, one should take out the nectar and leave the poison. In the same way, if one finds gold in a filthy place, he should take it. Similarly, although according to the Vedic system of education one must be given instruction by intellectual persons like *brāhmaṇas*, if someone lower on the social scale has learned the truth, one should accept him as a teacher and learn from him. One should not think that just because one is lowly born he should not be accepted as a teacher.” (*Kṛṣṇa Consciousness: The Matchless Gift* 6)

### 3. Behavior of a Vaiṣṇava

Next are those Vaiṣṇavas who strive for liberation. By their aspiration, they are qualified to teach, but their behavior may at times be less than exemplary. Although they are obliged to follow the strictures of *śāstra*, their conduct will correspond to their level of achievement, which is not ideal. For this reason, a devotee will discriminate according to the relative status of such *sādhakas*, and will know whether their behavior is to be followed or not.

According to Rūpa Gosvāmī’s instructions, the behavior of juniors should be ignored, while the conduct of peers and seniors is suitable to enhance one’s devotion. Although they are Vaiṣṇavas, those less advanced will make mistakes that an advanced *sādhaka* has already corrected. Therefore, their example is not beneficial to one’s own progress. Other devotees are equal or ahead in their practice, and have equal or superior *sad-ācāra* to one’s own. From their behavior much can be learned. In any case, whatever position *sādhakas* occupy, the defects in their characters which prohibit perfect behavior are of no greater consequence than those found in oneself. It is not essential that one be perfect to teach. But teachers worth following are those whose behavior is equal to or better than one’s own.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Cleansing oneself as well as teaching others to be clean; these two things must be there simultaneously. None of us have perfect desires, but we are trying to be perfect and teach others to be perfect as far as possible. They cannot be separated but must go together as parallel lines. Siksa and diksa. Siksa means learning. Diksa, or initiation, means the beginning of spiritual realization. So every disciple must make his own spiritual progress positively and help others to do so.” (Letter, April 30, 1971)

A disciple may see defects in others, but he must not judge a Vaiṣṇava by them. After all, devotees have taken up devotional service just to become free from such faults. That is their sincerity. Should someone judge Vaiṣṇavas by their defects, he will be known as a fault-finder. By such malpractice, he may later become

an *aparādhī* and incapable of taking good instruction from anyone.

“The difference between a devotee and a non-devotee is this, just like the bee and the fly: the bee always is attracted by the honey and flies go to the open sores. So the devotee is only attracted by the good qualities in other people and does not see their faults. He is friend to everyone and in this way he finds his life sublime.” (Letter, November 18, 1971)

Our evaluation of Vaiṣṇavas should be based on their good qualities and valuable instructions. This approach is positive, spiritual, and allows one to respect them as Prabhu or master. Unlike non-devotees, Vaiṣṇavas are striving for the same spiritual goals. Even though they commit mistakes on the path, by their sincere attempts to follow the ideal, their efforts will be crowned with success.

This addresses in brief the question regarding the behavior of non-liberated *śikṣā-gurus*, the struggling Vaiṣṇavas.

#### 4. Summary

This chapter details the behavior of the *śikṣā-guru*. Since the principle of *guru* is *śikṣā*, anyone who gives instruction or shows any example conducive to spiritual development should be seen as *guru*.

The behavior of non-devotees generally does not reflect the teachings one can glean from them. As a principle, one should not take their association. On the other hand, the non-liberated Vaiṣṇava’s example can be followed by the discriminating devotee. Occasional defects should not be seen as an absolute disqualifier of their conduct. In a conversation discussing the “mistakes” made by the *ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda replied to the questions in the following way:

**Devotee:** Because we see... For instance, sometimes the *ācārya* may seem to forget something or not to know something, so from our point of view, if someone has forgotten, that is...

**Prabhupāda:** No, no, no. Then...

**Devotee:** ... an imperfection.

**Prabhupāda:** That is not the... Then you do not understand. *Ācārya* is not God, omniscient. He is servant of God. His business is to preach *bhakti* cult. That is *ācārya*.

**Devotee:** And that is the perfection.

**Prabhupāda:** That is the perfection. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

**Devotee:** So we have a misunderstanding about what perfection is?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Perfection is here, how he is preaching *bhakti* cult. That’s all. (Morning Walk, Māyāpur, April 8, 1975)\*

Then there is the case of seeing mistakes where they do not exist. Such is the case with Lord Kṛṣṇa and his eternal associates. For instance, Śiśupāla criticized the Lord to no end, and some spiritualists consider the *gopīs* irreligious for accepting Kṛṣṇa as their paramour. Obviously, it is their mistaken perception that they envisage faults where there are none.

Thus, it may be said that Vaiṣṇavas from the non-liberated category possess varying degrees of imperfection, real or apparent. A sincere disciple must learn how to discern the good from the undesirable and extract the essence, transcendental knowledge. By such knowledge, one will acquire pure devotion by which one can achieve Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The *śikṣā* culture includes seeing Kṛṣṇa’s hand in all things and all beings. Through respect for the Lord, a Vaiṣṇava must show respect for His creation, and those who have contributed to one’s store of spiritual well-being can be revered as *guru*, whether they are devotee, human, beast, or inanimate nature. This is the foundation of etiquette towards non-liberated *śikṣā-gurus*.

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\* This quote is used to substantiate that defects in the non-liberated do not disqualify them as suitable examples. It does not indicate Śrīla Prabhupāda as anything but a liberated soul.

## 5. Points of Etiquette

The points of etiquette from Chapter Eleven and Chapter Fourteen may be recorded as follows:

- a) In regard to *śikṣā-gurus*, there are varying grades of instructors.
- b) Their instructions either directly reflect the teachings of *śāstra* or are relevant teachings, indirectly pointing towards transcendence.
- c) In either case, all manner of *gurus* should be respected, although the method of respect may vary.
- d) There are generally two classes of *śikṣā-gurus*: the liberated and the non-liberated.
- e) Liberation is defined as freedom from the modes of material nature.
- f) Of the non-liberated instructors there are four categories:
  1. the lowest are those unconcerned about liberation, and
  2. the other three are *sādhakas*:
    - juniors,
    - peers and
    - superiors.
- g) There is a wide variety of *śikṣā-gurus*, some liberated, many non-liberated. The following is a partial list:
  1. *sannyāsīs*
  2. *brāhmaṇas*
  3. Vaiṣṇavas
  4. parents
  5. teachers
  6. *śāstra*
  7. non-devotees, animals, trees, birds, nature, inanimate objects
  8. one's intelligence
  9. various philosophers
- h) The conduct of the *śikṣā-gurus* will depend on their status.

Among *sādhakas*, the general rule of thumb is that the behavior of juniors should not be followed. Peers and seniors should be suitable examples.

- i) Although some defect may also be seen in the character of the non-liberated, it should be overlooked.
- j) The behavior of non-devotees should be shunned.

## PART 5



THE CODES OF ETIQUETTE  
AND OTHER COMMENTS

## The Codes of Etiquette

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this book was not simply to present the philosophy of *śikṣā-guru*. It is also meant to give a working model or a set of simple rules which summarizes the topic at hand. These are entitled *The Codes of Etiquette* and are the conclusion of the book. Below we list the chapters in which points of etiquette have already been catalogued.

#### Chapter Two

Preliminary characteristics of the founder-*ācārya* are listed in four points in Section 5.

#### Chapter Three

In Sections 2 to 4, the general nature of the *śikṣā-guru* is recorded in thirteen points; the seven characteristics of the founder-*ācārya*'s relationship to his followers and Vaiṣṇava *gurus* are also listed, as well as eleven points listing the role of the *dikṣā-guru* and the function of *dikṣā*.

### Chapter Four

The differences in dealings between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* are listed in Section 6, in a table containing seven points, and the relationship of the *śikṣā-guru* to the initiator is listed in five points.

Appendix 9 contains a further thirty-six points of etiquette derived from the full quotations referred to in Chapter Four.

### Chapter Twelve

Section 5 contains a list of nine points which summarizes the conclusions on non-liberated *śikṣā-gurus* from Chapter Eleven and their behavior from Chapter Twelve.

Altogether, there are ninety-two listed items of etiquette. In addition to these are many relevant statements and conclusions throughout the book. They all contribute to the understanding of the *śikṣā-guru*. The Codes of Etiquette are the combination of these prominent points in the form of a basic Handbook. We hope they will spark the foundation of a culture of *śikṣā-guru* within ISKCON.

The mechanics of evaluating (what will henceforward be called) “The *Śikṣā-Guru* Codes of Etiquette” is tedious and will not be included here. We reviewed the points of conduct, extracted other important conclusions, edited repetition, categorized topics, and displayed points in a sequential order. Where necessary, a few explanatory notes were included.

Although written for the benefit of ISKCON’s members, the Codes of Etiquette are general, and do not reflect the details of the Society’s institutional needs. We are limited in our abilities and are trying to act within our capacity. The hope is that the Codes of Etiquette will serve to introduce an improved culture of respect for all *śikṣā-gurus* who guide us in our spiritual lives.

## 2. Śikṣā-guru Codes of Etiquette

As mentioned in the above introduction, the following codes do not encapsulate all circumstances or individuals in ISKCON.

Some basic contextual examples may be given, but in the main we deal with principles and leave the application to be formulated by others.

The Codes of Etiquette are presented in the form of questions. They have been grouped into eight different parts for ease of comprehension. In their formulation, they contain preliminary explanatory notes and then the points of etiquette.

Note: Unless specified the word *śikṣā-guru* should be understood to refer to liberated or non-liberated Vaiṣṇavas. Non-devotees and other teachers are always specifically mentioned.

## Part One General Principles

### 1. Who is a Śikṣā-guru?

The basic definition of *guru* is anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures. The acceptance of such instructions from the spiritual master is called *śikṣā*, and consequently one who transmits transcendental knowledge to another is known as a *śikṣā-guru*.

### 2. How Does One Recognize a Śikṣā-guru?

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the original *guru* of everyone, gives His instructions in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. How to follow these teachings have been exemplified by Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and those who repeat them, bringing us closer to the goal of life, are the *śikṣā-gurus*. Because the primary characteristic of a Vaiṣṇava is to bestow transcendental knowledge upon others, all Vaiṣṇavas are accepted as *guru*.

### All Vaiṣṇavas are Śikṣā-gurus

According to the need of a disciple, Vaiṣṇava *gurus* take responsibility for different aspects of *śikṣā*. In this way, they are known according to their specific dealings, but in actuality they are all *śikṣā-gurus*. For instance, the devotee who first gives *śikṣā* is

the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, the saints who give *śikṣā* in devotional practice are known as *sādhus*, the *śikṣā-guru* who gives initiation with the holy name and Gāyatrī *mantra* is known as the *dīkṣā-guru*, and those Vaiṣṇavas who elevate one to transcendence by their teachings are also *śikṣā-guru*.

In this way, all Vaiṣṇavas are *śikṣā-gurus*.

### 3. Specifically Who Are the Śikṣā-gurus?

Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Caitanya, Their incarnations and energies, and the holy name are *śikṣā-gurus*. As the original *guru* of everyone, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his varied manifestations are the *śikṣā-gurus* for all Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, for all time.

#### The Teachings of the Vedas and the Ācāryas

Śrīla Vyāsadeva and the Vedas are *śikṣā-gurus*, as they impart perfect knowledge. Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and his books are the instructors for all his followers.

#### The Six Gosvāmīs and Successive Ācāryas

All Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas accept the six Gosvāmīs as their *śikṣā-gurus*. The members of ISKCON should understand their instructions through our founder-*ācārya* and *śikṣā-guru*, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

#### The Founder-Ācārya

He is the compulsory *śikṣā-guru* for all successive generations of devotees in his *sampradāya*. For the members of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the founder-*ācārya* and *śikṣā-guru*. The duty of all the Society's members is to study his teachings (books, lectures) and be familiar with them.

#### The Vartma-pradarśaka-guru

The devotee who invokes one's dormant interest in spiritual life, directing one to the path of perfection, is known as the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*. He is the first *śikṣā-guru*.

### A Devotee in a Position of Responsibility in ISKCON

Because they give guidance for service, support in personal development, encouragement for preaching, inspiration through their leadership, and general training, the GBC body, GBC secretary, Temple President, department heads, and other responsible leaders are all *śikṣā-gurus*.

### Sannyāsīs, Brāhmaṇas, Seniors, Elders, Parents

Seniors from a social (e.g., *brāhmaṇas*), spiritual, or conventional (e.g., parents) viewpoint, who give instructions, set a suitable example, and inspire the disciple forward should be seen as *śikṣā-gurus*.

### A Godbrother or Godsister who is More Advanced

Those Vaiṣṇavas or Vaiṣṇavīs who are more advanced, who give their mercy through instruction, inspiration and support, either through formal teachings or informal guidance, should be considered as *śikṣā-gurus*. It is by their efforts that one stays on the path of devotion.

### Devotees who Instruct in Devotional Service

Those Vaiṣṇavas who give instruction occasionally (e.g., *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* class) or systematically for a short time (e.g., VIHE courses) are also *śikṣā-gurus*.

### The Vaiṣṇavas who Teach Devotional Arts

Those Vaiṣṇavas who instruct in the arts of devotional service (i.e., Deity worship, book distribution, temple administration, cow protection, etc.), the execution of which fulfills the mission of ISKCON, should be considered as *śikṣā-guru*.

### The Dīkṣā-guru

Among the *śikṣā-gurus*, he from whom one receives regular, on-going instruction, invoking great faith in the disciple, generally becomes the initiator. He is the instructor who has taken the

additional service of giving initiation. Among *gurus*, he is especially revered.

### An Advanced Devotee

Many senior Vaiṣṇavas assist in training a disciple. There may be a specific Vaiṣṇava (or Vaiṣṇavas) chosen by the *dikṣā-guru* (or *śikṣā-guru*) to take responsibility for the education of a disciple. Because one's advancement continues through his teachings, he is a *śikṣā-guru*.

### Non-Devotee Instructors

Instruction may be received from non-devotees in relevant sciences or specific skills which are utilized in the service of the Lord (i.e., accounting, administration, etc.). Because such teachers are indifferent to *bhakti*, their general behavior is not exemplary. For their teachings, however, they should be appreciated and respected as *guru*.

### Non-Humans

As the creation of the Lord, non-humans — both animate and inanimate — are designed to elevate the discriminating devotee through purified intelligence. Thus, the creation and its parts are instructors and are worthy of due respect.

## Part Two Details of Śikṣā-guru

### 4. How Does One Contact a Śikṣā-guru?

By the arrangement of the Lord, living entities acquire association suitable for their continued advancement in spiritual life.

#### By Kṛṣṇa's Mercy

Due to unknown pious acts or by the grace of a Vaiṣṇava, one comes in contact with a devotee who reveals the path of *bhakti*.

Such a devotee, known as the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, is the mercy of the Lord and instrument of the founder-*ācārya*.

### Through the Mission

When one's interest is awakened, one seeks the association of devotees in a center, temple, or place of congregation. Here, one receives suitable instructions from the leaders of Lord Caitanya's mission, through the agency of the founder-*ācārya*. These *śikṣā-gurus* who give training and teachings are the senior Vaiṣṇavas acting as mentors, authorities, or guides.

### By the Direction of Sādhus

Among many Vaiṣṇavas, a devotee becomes especially inspired by the teachings and example of one instructor in whom he has strong faith. Under the guidance of other *śikṣā-gurus*, he surrenders unto him, taking initiation into the holy name and *Gāyatrī mantra*. In this way, a devotee makes a connection with his *dikṣā-guru*.

### By the Order of the Dikṣā-guru

If, due to circumstance, the *dikṣā-guru* cannot continue instruction, he may direct the disciple to one or more instructors for continued devotional training. Through all stages of spiritual life a devotee requires guidance from his *gurus*.

### 5. What Are the Dealings of the Śikṣā-guru?

The prime function of a *śikṣā-guru* is to bring the disciple closer to Lord Kṛṣṇa by repeating the teachings of *sāstra*. His role, in tandem with other spiritual masters, is a cooperative and comprehensive one, devoid of any spirit of competition and free of contradiction.

### Generally Teaches Abhidheya-jñāna

Through training, instruction and lectures the *śikṣā-guru* acts to elevate the disciple in devotional service, enriching him with

full spiritual knowledge and awaking him to the activities of devotional service known as *abhidheya*, actions one is duty-bound to perform. The *śikṣā-guru* inspires the *śiṣya* to fulfill the orders of his initiator, the founder-*ācārya* and other *gurus*.

#### An Assistant to the Dīkṣā-guru

Even if more spiritually elevated than the initiator, all *śikṣā-gurus* act as extensions or limbs of the *dīkṣā-guru*, assisting in his work of liberating the disciple.

### 6. What Are the Distinguishing Characteristics of Gurus?

Although a disciple sees distinction among *gurus*, he always knows them to be equal and identical manifestations of the Supreme Lord. This is unity in diversity.

#### Strength and Commitment

Through the discriminating eyes of *śāstra*, a Vaiṣṇava sees the following characteristics of *gurus*: their position relative to the founder-*ācārya*, their spiritual strength, their degree of commitment (to the disciple), and other subsidiary qualities.

If a devotee is not able to perceive the relative degrees of such qualities present in different *gurus*, he should continue to worship them equally, as the representatives of the Lord, and never neglect them.

## Part Three Characteristics of Śikṣā-gurus

### 7. By What Characteristics is a Guru's Spiritual Strength Known?

Vaiṣṇavas are said to be of different levels of advancement, according to the degree of spiritual potency which Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests in them. One who is versed in transcendental science can see this and worships such *gurus* accordingly.

#### Liberated and Non-Liberated

There are two general categories of Vaiṣṇavas, the liberated and the non-liberated. Both give instruction according to their realization.

The liberated *śikṣā-guru* is fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service and gives instructions in terms of the objective way of understanding. The non-liberated *śikṣā-guru* invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions and reveals the subjective way of understanding.

#### Learning, Faith, etc.

The general indications of a *guru's* spiritual potency are his degree of learning, the strength of his faith, his absorption in chanting and hearing, and his ability to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness among non-devotees.

### 8. What Characterizes the Commitment of Gurus?

*Śikṣā-gurus* vary in the commitment they make to their disciples. Such commitment is determined by their service, nature, spiritual capability, and relationship (with the disciple).

#### The Resolution to see the Disciple Delivered

Those Vaiṣṇavas whose instructions are time-bound, with limited commitment towards the deliverance of the disciple, are known as *sādhus*. Other Vaiṣṇavas, who fully commit themselves to their dependent's liberation, will even volunteer to return to this world on his behalf.

#### Three Factors

Commitment can be understood by the degree of responsibility (measured in time) taken, the amount of risk (in sacrificing personal comforts) undergone, and the facilities (books, temples and Deities) furnished by the *guru* for the advancement and deliverance of the disciple.

Disciples should respect all those who help them on the

path, but special respect should be given to those who commit themselves to the path's end.

### 9. How is the Conduct of Instructors to be Understood?

There are three categories of *śikṣā-gurus*: the liberated Vaiṣṇava, the non-liberated *sādhu*, and the non-devotees (animate or inanimate).

#### According to Their Advancement

The conduct of the liberated cannot be imitated, but must be followed in tandem with their instructions. Among the non-liberated *sādhus*, juniors should not be followed, while peers and seniors, despite minor defects in character, are suitable sources of inspiration. The teachings and behavior of non-devotees may be instructive to Vaiṣṇavas, but their general conduct should be shunned, as they have little inclination to serve the Lord.

## Part Four Selecting the Śikṣā-guru

### 10. When is One Directed to Accept a Śikṣā-guru?

A devotee is directed by the Lord, the Vaiṣṇavas, or the *dikṣā-guru* to accept instruction, and at varying times and for different reasons, they may include: when working cooperatively with others for the service of Lord Caitanya's mission, when the *dikṣā-guru* is absent, and when the disciple's faith in the initiator needs to be strengthened.

In addition, if the initiator is not adept in the devotional arts, if he is of insufficient spiritual strength to give instruction, or if his *svarūpa* differs from his advanced disciple's, he directs his follower to a suitable *śikṣā-guru*.

### 11. By Which Criteria Are Śikṣā-gurus Selected?

The *śikṣā-guru* should be a faithful follower of his own spiritual

masters, should exhibit the behavior expected of a Vaiṣṇava, and should be versed in the science of Kṛṣṇa. Regardless of his spiritual strength, a *śikṣā-guru* must be a representative of the founder-*ācārya* and devoted to his mission.

(If, by the direction of superiors, guidance is sought outside the mission, it must be examined through the teachings of one's own *gurus* and those of the founder-*ācārya*.)

#### Observes Sad-ācāra

The *śikṣā-guru* understands and observes the Traditional Protocol of *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*, and supports the disciple's service to the initiator. He is careful not to speak against the teachings of the initiator.

Even though very exalted, Vaiṣṇavas not possessed of these qualities should not be accepted as *śikṣā-gurus*. Due to a different disposition, they should be offered respect from a distance.

### 12. What Disqualifies One from Being a Śikṣā-Guru?

One who does not follow the proper *sad-ācāra* or abandons Vaiṣṇava practices is disqualified as *guru*.

#### Transgression of Etiquette

One is disqualified from being an instructor if he speaks contrary to *sādhu*, *śāstra* and *guru*, encourages a disciple to disobey his *gurus*, speaks against their teachings, or gives *mantras* without authorization. Even if one is of greater spiritual strength and more learned than others, by acting outside the proper etiquette, one disobeys one's own *guru*, and is disqualified to give instruction.

#### Falling from Bhakti

In addition, those who are not faithful to the teachings, mission and will of the founder-*ācārya*, who have fallen from the path of devotion, and who become offensive, are also naturally disqualified as *guru*.

## Part Five The Dīkṣā-Guru

### 13. What Are the Dealings of the Dīkṣā-guru?

For a better understanding of the *śikṣā-guru*, one should also know what service is rendered to the Lord by the *dīkṣā-guru*.

#### Gives Initiation and Trains

The *dīkṣā-guru* takes charge of the disciple, instructs him in the process of devotional service, and initiates with the holy name and Gāyatrī *mantras*. After initiation, he continues to train the disciple in the knowledge of the Vedas and the worship of the Deity. In the mood of a protective father, the initiator takes charge of guiding his disciple back to Godhead.

In ISKCON, the *dīkṣā-guru* is happy to see his disciple receive training and guidance from senior members of the Society. If unable to perform his function of personal guidance, he may recommend that the disciple take shelter of a *śikṣā-guru(s)* for ongoing training.

### 14. How Are Śikṣā-guru and Dīkṣā-guru One?

Although their dealings are different, *śikṣā-gurus* and *dīkṣā-gurus*, who are both equal and identical representatives of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, work cooperatively to guide the disciple back to Godhead. They should not be seen as superior or inferior due to distinctions in their service, for their unity remains undisturbed by nature of their *tattva*. Conversely, the *gurus* must be conscious of their proper conduct to ensure that the disciple sees their unified efforts in his deliverance.

## Part Six The Relationship of Dīkṣā-guru and Śikṣā-guru

### 15. What is the Relationship Between Dīkṣā-guru and Śikṣā-guru?

In the cooperative effort to elevate the disciple, the prevailing *sad-ācāra* directs the multiple *śikṣā-gurus* to act as assistants and limbs of the *dīkṣā-guru*. In this way, the disciple sees the shelter of the initiator first and hears his instructions manifest through the medium of the instructors. In this book, this relationship between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dīkṣā-gurus* is called the Traditional Protocol of *Dīkṣā-guru* and *Śikṣā-guru*.

#### Assists Work of Initiator

Although their dealings are those of a leader (the initiator) and his supporters (the instructors), the relationship between *dīkṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus* avoids competition, petty politics, and all forms of discrimination. It is a harmonious relationship in consideration of the disciple's spiritual life.

#### Both Support Traditional Protocol

In their personal interactions, the *śikṣā-gurus* and *dīkṣā-gurus* must both support the Traditional Protocol wholeheartedly. If there are exceptions to the Protocol (as when the *śikṣā-guru* takes the primary role), it is first worked out by the *gurus*, and then cooperatively presented to the disciple. The *dīkṣā-guru* encourages the disciple in taking instruction from other Vaiṣṇavas, and the *śikṣā-gurus* promote the initiator as the root of the disciple's devotional creeper.

#### Work Cooperatively

The *gurus* conduct their dealings in a visibly cooperative way, resolving disagreements among themselves without involving the disciple. Their common ground of understanding is the teachings

of the founder-*ācārya*, and thus, neither are independent agents, being obliged to remain subordinate to the leadership of the mission as its humble servants.

The relationship described above is equally relevant for the *dikṣā-guru* and the *sādhu* as for the *dikṣā-guru* and the shelter-giving instructors.

### 16. What is the Significance of Attachment to the Guru?

There are two aspects in the relationship between *guru* and disciple: the marginal aspect, which is the attachment of the disciple, and the personal aspect, which is following the instructions of the *guru*.

#### Secondary to Following Instructions

Although attachment to the spiritual master is wanted at all stages of spiritual life, it is not always present in the relationship. Furthermore, pure affinity manifests only when one is free from the contamination of material nature. Thus, in the *guru*-disciple relationship attachment plays a secondary role to proper *sad-ācāra*, or obligatory behavior.

#### The Initiator Remains Main Guru

Applied to Traditional Protocol, this means a disciple experiencing greater attachment to a *śikṣā-guru* than to his initiator must continue to revere the *dikṣā-guru* as his primary object of worship.

This constitutes proper etiquette. The personal aspect of following Traditional Protocol is always dominant in the relationship, while the marginal attachment may or may not follow in its wake.

### 17. Are There Exceptions to Traditional Protocol? (Can the Śikṣā-guru Play the Dominant Role?)

Although attachment to the *śikṣā-guru* does not constitute a reason that he be the primary spiritual link for the disciple, there

are other conditions which constitute exceptions to Traditional Protocol.

If the *dikṣā-guru* falls from the path of devotion, if a qualified *dikṣā-guru* was accepted out of formality, or if force of circumstance restricts guidance from the initiator, at such times the *śikṣā-guru(s)* may take the prominent role in guiding the disciple, and if the *dikṣā-guru* is present, he becomes the instrument of the instructor.

### 18. Under What Circumstances might the Disciple Be More Attached to the Śikṣā-guru?

There is a variety of situations wherein the marginal aspect of the Traditional Protocol may be directed toward the *śikṣā-guru(s)* (i.e., the disciple is more attached to the instructor). These occur when a qualified *dikṣā-guru* has been accepted out of formality, when a *dikṣā-guru* has been accepted due to etiquette, or when the initiator gives little association to the disciple.

Under such circumstances, the attachment of the disciple may naturally focus on the *śikṣā-guru*. This is acceptable, provided he continues to show appropriate respect to the *dikṣā-guru*.

## Part Seven The Founder-Ācārya

### 19. What Are the Special Characteristics of the Founder-Ācārya?

The founder-*ācārya* is unique among all other Vaiṣṇavas. He is empowered by Lord Caitanya for His service, and all other *gurus* receive empowerment through him. He sets the goals of the mission and the tenor of its teachings. Thus, he is given exceptional respect by those who are his direct disciples and his subsequent followers.

## 20. What is the Relationship Between the Gurus and the Founder-Ācārya?

All Vaiṣṇavas must treasure the spiritual heritage they inherit through the medium of the founder-*ācārya*.

They receive empowerment through him. The founder-*ācārya* is the compulsory *śikṣā-guru* for his followers. Because Lord Kṛṣṇa delivers all those who follow His representatives, the duty of all followers of the founder-*ācārya* is to understand his teachings and be faithful to them. Therefore, lessons from all others, even the predecessor *ācāryas*, should be understood through his instructions. In this way, both *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* derive their authority by allegiance to his teachings.

### They All Revere Him

Because of his exalted position, the founder-*ācārya* is worshipped as a regular function by the Vaiṣṇavas in his line. He is not seen as “another *guru*.” Remembering their humble position, Vaiṣṇava *gurus* do not imitate him, for he is always uniquely distinct by his great teachings and achievements.

The relationship with the founder-*ācārya* is dependent upon following his teachings; therefore, devotees should refrain from concocting a relationship that is not in tandem with his example and instructions.

## 21. How Does the Non-Liberated Guru Liberate His Disciple?

By adhering to the instructions of the founder-*ācārya* (or a liberated soul), even the non-liberated *guru* acts as one liberated (although he must constantly be aware of his position relative to the liberated *guru*, and conduct himself accordingly, being attentive to avoid accepting any inappropriate modes of worship). The disciples who follow such a careful follower of the founder-*ācārya* can achieve liberation.

## Part Eight Points of Etiquette

### 22. What is the Obligation of the Disciple to the Dikṣā-guru While Taking Śikṣā?

When a devotee serves the mission of the founder-*ācārya*, he is given the general order by his *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-guru* to take instructions and training as needed. It is to be understood that he need not review the details of his training with his *gurus* before implementation.

#### Gain Permission

If a devotee requires additional spiritual training, upon the order of the *dikṣā-guru* he may take further instruction under appropriate circumstances and following *sad-ācāra*. The circumstances include when the *dikṣā-guru* is not present to instruct, when he lacks adequate spiritual strength, and other discretionary conditions. The appropriate mood is to view initiation as an ongoing process of instruction, of which the guidance of instructors is an element arranged by the initiator.

#### Confirm Teachings

Having received instructions from the *śikṣā-guru*, the disciple must present them before the initiator for confirmation. Then, one should accept additional instruction on those same topics as a matter of Vaiṣṇava principle. Any teachings gleaned from another Vaiṣṇava should always be confirmed with one's own *guru*. A disciple who directly accepts instructions, even if they are proper and complete, will not enjoy the mature benefit of his studies.

#### Always Remain Faithful

Is such etiquette valid if the instructor is of greater spiritual strength than the initiator? The answer is yes! Even the faultless instructions of a more powerful *śikṣā-guru* should be confirmed with one's own spiritual master.

### Never Disobey Him

In this regard, a disciple must never disobey the orders of his *guru*. While all Vaiṣṇavas are to be respected as *guru*, still one's full absorption should be for one's own *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-gurus*. Even if another Vaiṣṇava is more senior and learned, one should always serve one's own *guru* and never give him up. It is said that even in the presence of a senior Vaiṣṇava, the shelter of one's own *guru* is best and perfect.

### Avoid Disagreement Between Seniors

In the case of disagreement between Vaiṣṇava *gurus*, one should maintain the shelter of one's own *guru*, even if he is not possessed of outstanding qualities (but is faithful to his *guru* and the founder-*ācārya*).

The etiquette mentioned above applies when a disciple approaches his shelter-giving *śikṣā-guru(s)* for permission to receive instruction from another elevated Vaiṣṇava.

### 23. How Does the Dikṣā-guru Direct the Disciple to the Śikṣā-guru?

If a *dikṣā-guru* cannot duly train his disciple, he may formally request an instructor to do so. The procedure for such a transfer of responsibility should include the *dikṣā-guru* discussing the issue with his disciple, their arriving at a mutual agreement, the initiator communicating their desire to an instructor, and the *śikṣā-guru* accepting the proposal in writing. A personal meeting among all three Vaiṣṇavas to inaugurate such training, if possible, is appropriate. In this way, through clear communication, a transmission of authority from the *dikṣā-guru* to *śikṣā-guru* takes place.

### 24. Practical Aspects of Etiquette

#### *Worship According to Relative Strength of Gurus*

While all Vaiṣṇavas should be seen as qualitatively non-different from Kṛṣṇa, it may be seen that they exhibit greater or lesser spiritual strength.

If one cannot distinguish between their relative spiritual strengths, then one should offer the same respect to all devotees. If one can discriminate as to who is more or less advanced, then proportionate treatment should be offered, and then one is sure to progress in devotion. But if one possesses such discrimination and fails to offer greater or lesser worship, he is guilty of committing an offense and must reap the fruit of his misbehavior.

### The Order and Quantity of Worship

The order of worship is in relation to the spiritual strength of the Vaiṣṇavas.

If two Vaiṣṇavas come at the same time, one of greater strength, one of lesser spiritual strength, first one should offer respect to the Vaiṣṇava of greater strength and then offer to the Vaiṣṇava of lesser strength. In addition, the degree of worship offered should be proportional to the spiritual strength of the devotee.

If such Vaiṣṇavas come at different times, then equal respect should not be offered. They should be worshipped according to their station. For instance, the *guru* of one's own *guru* is offered twice the respect one offers one's own *guru*.

### Criticism of Vaiṣṇavas Prohibited

Since no person is free from the influence of Kali-yuga, no one's behavior or actions are perfect and pure.

Thus, one should not find fault with a Vaiṣṇava for defects in his activities or behavior. Neither should one ever engage in criticizing a Vaiṣṇava or neglecting a Vaiṣṇava, even in jest.

### Worship of One's Own Guru Among Vaiṣṇavas

All Vaiṣṇavas are considered as *guru* or spiritual master.

In all circumstances, all Vaiṣṇavas, such as the Godbrother of the spiritual master, are offered respect like one offers to a spiritual master. Nevertheless, amongst all of the Vaiṣṇavas, the initiating *guru* and instructing *guru* should be offered special

respect. These two spiritual masters' orders should be specifically followed and with one's body, mind and words one should render them special service.

### Taking Instruction from a Śikṣā-guru

If one's initiating or instructing spiritual masters are of small spiritual potency, one may listen to teachings from the mouth of other great Vaiṣṇavas.

Thereafter, the disciple must return to his spiritual master to confirm these instructions. After presenting them, he should hear the same teachings again from his *guru*, with appropriate instructions. If he directly accepts these instructions, without confirmation, he is considered a bad disciple and a sinner.

### Keeping Faith in One's Own Guru

One should not disobey the order of the spiritual master.

If, in the performance of one's devotional activities, one has disobeyed the spiritual master, one should not give him up. One should remain faithfully with him, for the shelter of one's own spiritual master is best and perfect (even if another spiritual master is more powerful).

One should not mistakenly think that if one's spiritual master is very powerful, then he is powerful, and if his spiritual master is less powerful, then he is weak, and thus abandon one's own *guru* to seek out one more powerful. A sincere disciple will never forsake his own *guru* (who is well-behaved and not fallen).

### If One's Guru is Criticized

If the spiritual master is criticized by his older or younger Godbrothers, one should remain under his shelter.

A disciple must depend upon the strength and shelter of the spiritual master for advancing in devotional service. For example, if a father or husband is not possessed of outstanding qualities, still he is always worshipable.

### Like Father, Like Son

It should be noted that according to the attitude of the spiritual master, the disciple gains the same attributes.

### Personal Service

In addition to revering the order of the spiritual master, if possible one should personally serve him by giving bodily comforts, helping him in bathing, dressing, sleeping, eating, and so on. The general attitude should be that a disciple serves the spiritual master as a menial servant. Therefore, whatever one has in his possession should be dedicated to the spiritual master. However, it should be offered with love and affection, not for material adoration.

### Showing Respect

As a principle, as soon as one sees a Vaiṣṇava one must immediately offer him respect, indicating the Supersoul sitting within. Even if one is a great devotee, if according to social convention one is inferior, it is one's duty to carry out the order of the superior with great respect.

In regard to one's spiritual master, as soon as one sees him one must show respect. Traditionally, such submission to the *guru* is shown by falling flat before him. In fact, as many times as one sees one's *guru* one should offer *daṇḍavats*.

In addition, the things used by the spiritual masters, such as their seats and eating places in particular, should not be used by anyone else.

The method of respecting different Vaiṣṇavas is generally performed in the following way: an initiated devotee mentally honors the uninitiated who chants the name of Lord, he offers humble obeisances to the devotee who has taken *dīkṣā* and is engaged in worshipping the Deity, and he faithfully serves that pure devotee who is advanced in undeviating devotional service and whose heart is completely devoid of the propensity to criticize others.

### Speaking in the Presence of the Guru

A disciple should always think himself a fool in the presence of his spiritual master and should never take the liberty to speak without invitation. If the *guru* gives the order, the disciple should first offer his respect to the spiritual master and then begin to speak.

In the matter of writing books, if the spiritual master has written a commentary, or written on a topic, a disciple is reluctant to write again.

### Receiving the Guru

The spiritual master should be properly received, even if he comes unexpectedly. Even if one is an exalted person, one must stand up and show respect when a Vaiṣṇava enters an assembly or one's home. At that time, the disciple should wash his *guru's* feet with devotion, and both husband and wife should drink the water and sprinkle it on their heads.

### Forms of Address

The spiritual master may be addressed as Śrīpāda, initiated Vaiṣṇavas are addressed as Prabhu, and when many *prabhus* remain under the shelter of the lotus feet of another *prabhu*, the address Prabhupāda or Viṣṇupāda is given. The Spiritual Master is also addressed as His Divine Grace, a Godbrother is addressed as His Grace, and any *sannyāsi* is addressed as His Holiness.

### Accepting disciples

Regardless of how learned one is, everyone must accept a *guru*. When one has pleased his spiritual masters and received initiation, one may make disciples. But as a matter of etiquette, one will not do so in the presence of one's spiritual master.

### Instructions for Gurus

A spiritual master should not make a livelihood from accepting disciples and giving *dīkṣā*.

When a disciple offers obeisances to the spiritual master, he in return offers obeisances to the Supersoul situated in the heart of the disciple. Being in a superior position as the teacher, the spiritual master may chastise the disciple as appropriate.

## Our (Śikṣā) Sampradāya

### 1. Introduction

The primary role of disseminating the message of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the *guru-paramparā* has been discussed at great length, and it may appear redundant to emphasize once again that ours is a *sampradāya* based on *śikṣā*. The mission of the *guru-paramparā* is to transmit transcendental knowledge, therefore how can it be based on anything else? Śrīla Prabhupāda has confirmed the same understanding, although there is no record of his using the word “*śikṣā-sampradāya*” as in the title above. We use it for emphasis alone. The word *sampradāya* is sufficient in itself, for its implicit meaning is *śikṣā-sampradāya*. However, some understand the *paramparā* to work in a different way, and for this reason, this issue is being clarified.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “We hear the instructions of Kṛṣṇa via the unbroken chain of disciplic succession (*guru-paramparā*). Acceptance of these instructions is called *śikṣā*, or voluntarily following the instruction of the spiritual master.” (*A Second Chance*, 13)

The *guru-paramparā* takes the *śikṣā* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, known as the Vedas, and passes it down from *guru* to disciple. The

misconception regarding the *śikṣā-sampradāya* focuses on the words “unbroken chain” in the quote above by Śrīla Prabhupāda. What constitutes perfect continuity in the *guru-paramparā*? Is it the succession of disciples, duly initiated by their *dikṣā-guru*, which traces its origins through the transmission of sacred *mantras* back to Lord Kṛṣṇa? That is the opinion of some, but not the line of Bhaktisiddhānta Ṭhākura.

## 2. Dikṣā-sampradāya

This, then, is the focus of the question: are the most qualified recipients of transcendental knowledge obliged to take *śikṣā* and *dikṣā* from the same Vaiṣṇava? When the answer is yes, that conception represents a *dikṣā-sampradāya*. Its implication is that only the combination of *śikṣā*, *nāma* and *mantra* from the lips of the same liberated *guru* will result in effective realization. Such Vaiṣṇavas say this is the only way in which the *guru-paramparā* may be traced unbroken. Because of its emphasis on *dikṣā*, it is known as a *dikṣā-sampradāya*.

There is one major defect, among many, in this argument. What law guarantees that the most qualified disciples take *dikṣā* from the most qualified *gurus*? If a spiritual master is very powerful, but his duly initiated disciples are not fully realized, how do they transmit the complete *siddhānta* of the *sampradāya*? They cannot, and the disciplic succession does indeed become broken.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is directly in the line of the Brahmā-sampradāya. Nārada Muni received instructions from Lord Brahmā and in turn, transmitted the instructions to Vyāsadeva. Vyāsadeva instructed his son Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who spoke *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is based on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavad-gītā*. Because *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* was spoken by Śukadeva Gosvāmī and *Bhagavad-gītā* was spoken by Kṛṣṇa, there is no difference between them. If we strictly follow the principle of disciplic succession, we are certainly on the right path of spiritual liberation, or eternal engagement in devotional service.” (*Bhāg.*

7.11.4, purport) He emphasizes that our Movement is based on the knowledge of *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Bhāgavatam*, and the transmission of that knowledge constitutes the right path.

## 3. Śikṣā-sampradāya

This is our spiritual heritage. In 1969 Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote in a letter, “Regarding the disciplic succession coming from Arjuna, disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion.” (Letter, October 31, 1969) Herein Śrīla Prabhupāda is emphasizing that the substance of the *guru-paramparā* is not based upon connection through initiation but acceptance of the disciplic conclusion. He continues in this same letter, “We are not exactly directly from Vyāsadeva, but our Gurudeva is a representative of Vyāsadeva. Because Vyāsadeva and Arjuna are of equal status, being students of Krishna, therefore we are in the disciplic succession of Arjuna. Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s line of reasoning is that acceptance of the disciplic conclusion constitutes being in the disciplic succession. He stresses that the qualification of simultaneous *dikṣā* and *śikṣā* is not a prerequisite. Of course, that does not mean that the members of the *guru-paramparā* need not be initiated. They must, and Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 15.108, purport):

“The *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (2.6) quotes the following injunction from the *Viṣṇu-yāmala*:

*adikṣitasya vāmoru kṛtam sarvaṁ nirarthakam  
paśu-yonim avāpnoti dikṣā-virahito janah*

“Unless one is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, all his devotional activities are useless. A person who is not properly initiated can descend again into the animal species.”

However, the source of *dikṣā* need not be the same as the

source of *śikṣā*. What is of importance is spiritual purity and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Where that is found to a superlative degree, that is where the *paramparā* flows. In examining the Gauḍīya tradition of Śrīla Prabhupāda, we can see many examples which substantiate that the line of the disciplic conclusion establishes continuity, not *dikṣā*.

#### 4. Examples

**“Devotee:** Does our line of succession go directly to Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī or to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura?

**Prabhupāda:** No. Because he was treating Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura his *śikṣā-guru*, preceptor *guru*, so it is in the line.” (Conversation, Montreal, August 26, 1968)

Although Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura not connected by *dikṣā*, still, the former accepted the latter as his *śikṣā-guru*. Śrīla Prabhupāda states that the line of our succession goes directly to Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, through Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. In other words, the *guru-paramparā* is found where *śikṣā* is transmitted through confirmed *mahā-bhāgavatas*.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was initiated by Vipin Bihari Gosvāmī, and Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī by Bhagavān dāsa Bābājī, but both *dikṣā-gurus* were omitted from the line of *paramparā* as given by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Although Vipin Vihari was in the line from Vamśī Vadana, an associate of Lord Caitanya, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura considered Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī more qualified in the matter of *siddhānta*. Thus, his son omitted the *dikṣā-guru* from the list and described the line of *paramparā* through the instructor.

In the estimation of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, it was Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī who carried the full substance of the *sampradāya* to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, wherefrom it passed on to Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī, to Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, and we are receiving it through its next link, Śrīla Prabhupāda. In this way, the

path of the disciplic conclusion can be traced intact through fully realized Vaiṣṇavas. Many devotees may be in the *paramparā* and contribute to its glory, but the most advanced among all the Vaiṣṇavas is the *ācārya*, the leader of all devotees, in whom is invested all the weight of the disciplic succession from the previous *ācāryas*.

#### 5. Line of Śikṣā is Independent

There are instances when the line of *śikṣā* comes through the *dikṣā-guru*, and when it does not. The previous example shows when it does not, and the example of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura shows when it does. The *guru-paramparā* is independent. Lord Kṛṣṇa is the supreme independent Being, His words are also independent, and the direction they take is not determined by dry convention, but by dynamic spiritual receptivity. Thus, the principle remains that the *paramparā* primarily follows the line of *śikṣā*, which may or may not coincide with *dikṣā*. This is our *śikṣā-sampradāya*.

“Brahma-Madhva-Gauḍīya-Brahma-sampradāya. Originally from Brahmā. Brahmā instructed Nārada. You’ll find in the *Bhāgavata*. Brahmā is instructing Nārada. Now you see Nārada is instructing Vyāsadeva. Similarly, Vyāsadeva instructed Madhva Muni. Now, Madhva Muni, by disciplic succession, Mādhavendra Puri. Now, Mādhavendra Puri instructed Īśvara Purī. Īśvara Purī instructed Lord Caitanya. Lord Caitanya instructed the six Gosvāmīs. The six Gosvāmīs instructed Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. Kṛṣṇadāsa instructed Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Viśvanātha Cakravartī. Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī. In this way, there is a clear line of disciplic succession.” (Lecture, New Vṛndāvana, July 11, 1969) Instruct, instruct, instruct. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s emphasis is on who instructed whom, not who initiated whom.

This issue is relevant, although some may relegate it to past history. Throughout this century and to this very day, the stance

of a certain class of *bābājīs* has been to challenge the *śikṣā-sampradāya* of the Sārasvata family. Closer to home, the ISKCON tradition has been to place all emphasis on initiation and give little importance to *śikṣā*, or *śikṣā-gurus*. This doctrine reflects shades of the *dikṣā-paramparā*. In the estimation of the author, it is reason for caution, if not concern.

## Chapter Fifteen

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# The Relevance of Śikṣā to ISKCON

### 1. Introduction

It is generally easier to enumerate theoretical principles than to put them into practice. Once implementation takes place, long lists of questions, objections and problems can once again be raised against the theory itself. Therefore, the first need is to carefully consider the contents of this book and be convinced of its siddhāntic accuracy. If the leadership of the Society values these conclusions, then a united front will succeed in bringing theory into practice.

### 2. Recognizing a Need

There is a serious lack of empowerment of spiritual authority within the Movement. In the eyes of practitioners and laymen, the initiating *gurus* continue to be the dominant spiritual force within ISKCON. As a consequence, spiritual guidance of the Society's members remains dependent on a few overworked Vaiṣṇavas. They are the *dikṣā-gurus*.

Although there are many other qualified devotees in the field, our Society has failed to officially recognize them and their important contribution. And official it must be, for ISKCON is a culture wherein devotees are accustomed to hearing things from the top, communicated in the form of resolutions and printed on paper for all to see. The GBC must recognize the importance of non-initiating devotees who serve as *śikṣā-gurus* and communicate the appreciation of their role to the rest of the Society. Then that role of *śikṣā-guru* should be defined and standardized as much as other services are within our fledgling constitutional framework.

Such implementation will go a long way towards recognizing the services of devotees. Many second-level leaders (and lower) feel the burden of responsibility in guiding and training Vaiṣṇavas, but receive little appreciation for their services. The strong continue undaunted, while others have become discouraged, and many have left their positions. Credit should be given where credit is due. Devotees should be trained to recognize their *śikṣā-gurus* and learn to respect and address them as such. In turn, leaders will be inspired for service and encouraged to maintain high spiritual standards for their own and others' benefit.

Our *dikṣā-gurus* cannot possibly meet the needs of a growing worldwide Society. How many devotees' lives can they effectively chaperone? How many are being carefully trained now? Are ISKCON's members generally seen as spiritually fit, *śāstrically* well versed, inspired for the mission, and connected to their *gurus*? What about practical guidance within their *āśramas*, the transitions between them, and then beyond? Are we doing justice to their commitment through the limited training they generally receive from initiating *gurus*? As one of those *dikṣā-gurus*, this author would say no!

There is a need for more *gurus*. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "We require many millions of *gurus* to enlighten them." (Lecture, Honolulu, May 21, 1976) And increasing the number of initiators is not the whole solution. Responsibility must be passed to the

instructors, for that is our Gauḍīya tradition, the example of the *ācāryas*, and the history of our *sampradāya*.

### 3. First the Leaders

Leadership for ISKCON starts with the GBC. They need to be convinced of the need for an increased *śikṣā* culture. If the content of this book serves that purpose, by applying the Codes of Etiquette, they must implement them in their own spheres of service. We cannot legislate for the masses that which the leadership does not exemplify.

GBC members must train lower-level leaders in what it means to be *śikṣā-guru*. It is not merely an appointment. One requires to be qualified, and qualified both in terms of *ācāra* and *prācāra*. Śrīla Prabhupāda says: "Actually, a *sādhu*, a saintly person, must be saintly in his behavior (*sādhavaḥ sad-ācārāḥ*). Unless one adheres to the standard behavior, one's position as a *sādhu*, a saintly person, is not complete. Therefore, a Vaiṣṇava, a *sādhu*, must completely adhere to the standard of behavior. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says that a Vaiṣṇava, a person initiated into the Vaiṣṇava cult, should be offered the respect befitting a Vaiṣṇava, which means that he should be offered service and prayers. However, one should not associate with him if he is not a fit person with whom to associate." (*Bhāg.* 7. 7.31, purport)

Of course, we as GBC members must always improve and increase our own standards in all ways. Śrīla Prabhupāda had instructed the GBC long ago to act as *śikṣā-guru*. It is not that devotees need go through a time-consuming training to put the principles of *śikṣā-guru* in place. Implementation should be immediate, although it may be selective, and the problems that arise can be worked out during the process.

#### 4. Next the Society

ISKCON has tried and proven procedures for disseminating information through its ranks. The *śikṣā* culture needs that type of propagation. There will be a need to formulate additional policies to the Codes of Etiquette for a successful transition to the realm of practice. The Society should organize seminars to systematically educate the devotees to be disciples first and *gurus* second. An etiquette of respect and faith must replace the present air of skepticism if ISKCON is to have an atmosphere that fosters spiritual growth. Devotees need to worship those who give them knowledge; otherwise, they will respect neither the knowledge nor its ultimate source.

In this way, a major pillar of Vaiṣṇava etiquette will have been incorporated into the Society, which will certainly satisfy many devotees, facilitate our preaching, and thereby please Śrīla Prabhupāda.

#### 5. Points of Consideration for the GBC

In the limited view of the author, there are established practices of the Society which may require review in the light of these principles of *śikṣā*. Some of the major customs which could use review are mentioned below.

##### Re-initiation

Our present policy in the case of a disciple whose *dikṣā-guru* has fallen is compulsory re-initiation. The principles of *śikṣā* do not appear to demand such ironclad obligation.

If the *dikṣā-guru* was in good standing when he gave *mantra*, then that aspect of *dikṣā* has been properly performed. The disciple has received the *mantras*. It is questionable why he must receive it again.

The ongoing aspect of *dikṣā* — the continuation of *śikṣā* — can be fulfilled by a qualified instructor. There seems little reason

to legislate taking the *mantra* again (when in many cases no ongoing *śikṣā* is given anyway). A Vaiṣṇava should not be barred from taking *dikṣā*, neither should he be obliged. Certainly, he should again find shelter as he had in his initiator, and by the development of that natural relationship, his spiritual need will be fulfilled. If, as a consequence of such shelter, the disciple desires to reaffirm his vows, or take *mantra* again, then there is no harm.

##### Who Becomes the Dikṣā-guru?

Who does become the *dikṣā-guru*? Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the traditional principle: “Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on.” (Cc. *Ādi* 1.35, purport) This was the example we saw in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time. He was the *śikṣā-guru* through his lectures, books and tapes, and most naturally became the initiator as well.

But in our Society are the *dikṣā-gurus* the ones who give the most *śikṣā*? Rarely. If the Society adopts this standard, devotees should be trained to search for their *dikṣā-gurus* among those who have brought them to and trained them in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their local *sādhus*. They should not equate the qualifications of a *guru* with charisma. Nor should they project idealistic expectations on a potential *dikṣā-guru* due to lack of acquaintance and reject their real *gurus* due to a realistic experience of their human nature.

In addition, *dikṣā-gurus* should accept only as many disciples as they can instruct. There is little value in a ritualistic initiation without accompanying training, a training that leaves the devotee satisfied in spiritual life and is on par with the standards set by the Society.

##### More Initiators?

The mathematics of successful preaching will dictate how many initiating *gurus* ISKCON needs. If the *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* work in close harmony, perhaps it is possible to have 60,000

disciples like Durvāsā Muni. On the other hand, perhaps the concept of many generations of disciples initiating simultaneously should be reviewed. Whatever the solutions, they must mean that our devotees get adequate spiritual training and be firmly fixed in *siddhānta*.

### Ritual Encumbrances?

There are certain entrenched traditions in ISKCON, characteristic of our *dikṣā* culture, which devotees are petitioning be reviewed. Some of these are the extent of *guru* worship, the plurality of *āsanas*, the grandeur of Vyāsa-pūjās, the expenses of Vyāsa-pūjā books, and so on.

Although we may be following an example set by Śrīla Prabhupāda, little adjustment has been made for the relative advancement of our own *gurus* in the immense shadow of His Divine Grace. In the name of developing *guru-niṣṭhā* (*dikṣā-guru-niṣṭhā*), devotees neglect to respect Vaiṣṇavas, seniors, and even our *ācāryas*.

It is the opinion of the author that the *niṣṭhā* or faith that must first be taught is for *śikṣā*, transcendental knowledge. Then, honor should be learned towards those who give *śikṣā*, despite their defects. This honor must include simple, traditional civilities like offering obeisances, folding hands, and speaking kind words to respectable seniors. The other ritualistic considerations can follow suit, but in a premature stage they may just pose as obstacles to focusing on the real issue of spiritual life, *śikṣā*.

## 6. Some Benefits

There are many benefits of introducing a *śikṣā* culture into ISKCON. By a proper understanding of *śikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*, devotees will not be misled by the plethora of *dikṣā* and *śikṣā* deviations which fester in and around the Society.

### Ṛtvik-ācārya.

There is the *dikṣā* deviation known as the *ṛtvik* system. Ignorant of Vaiṣṇava tradition, devotees are misled into thinking that Prabhupāda continues to perform *dikṣā* in his physical absence. Emphasis on a concocted initiation system gains following where devotees neither understand *śikṣā* nor recognize it as a real connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda. Frustrated seniors, whose guidance has been relegated to an inferior “advice” and are disillusioned by the results of a *dikṣā* system in ISKCON, are easy prey and likely propagators of this philosophy.

We believe a *śikṣā* culture would go a long way to reaffirming all devotees’ connection with Śrīla Prabhupāda and validating the work and teachings of non-initiating Vaiṣṇavas. Creating a better balance between *śikṣā* and *dikṣā* would refine those who see initiation as the ultimate spiritual connection and confirm the practice of non-liberated *gurus* giving *dikṣā*.

### Self-appointed Śikṣā-gurus

Śrīla Prabhupāda said a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Devotees who know little about *śikṣā* tradition have been enticed to leave the shelter of ISKCON to take *śikṣā* elsewhere. Although we try to stem the tide by resolutions, because we do not honor our own *śikṣā-gurus* and provide little training in the principles, prohibitive legislation is proving ineffective.

Devotees must be taught: that Vaiṣṇavas do not become self-proclaimed instructors of ISKCON against its will; that the teachings of the *śikṣā-guru* must be in line with the *dikṣā-guru* and founder-*ācārya*; that *śikṣā-gurus* do not speak against the *dikṣā-guru* and the institution; that *śikṣā-gurus* must be approved by the founder-*ācārya* (Śrīla Prabhupāda), the Society, and the *dikṣā*; that withholding permission to take *śikṣā* does not certify an initiator’s envy; that the spiritual strength of an instructor does not give license to transgress Vaiṣṇava etiquette or Traditional Protocol. Perhaps then the devotees would know better and not be led down the proverbial garden path. But such instruction

must be preventative, not reactive, at the eleventh hour, in the heat of confrontation, when all statements are taken as politics rather than revered as the teachings of our *ācāryas*.

### Summary

The principle of *śikṣā* establishes an increased culture of love and trust.

It increases the devotional exchange among devotees and allows us to view each other as *prabhu* or master. In a time when faith is difficult to invoke and everyone questions one another, such an approach should be only too welcome.

It is the hope of the author that in some way this book is able to contribute to laying the foundation for an improved ISKCON. The practical implementation of the codes of etiquette and the philosophy behind them are meant to bring about a qualitative development in the spiritual lives of all ISKCON's members.

## 7. Excesses and Abuse

All Vaiṣṇavas know that in Kali-yuga everything is subject to abuse and corruption. No doubt, the Traditional Protocol as well as the Codes of Etiquette of this book are not immune to excess. The sincere and honest Vaiṣṇava makes mistakes in the execution of his duty, but once corrected, he mends his ways and continues serving to his best capacity. After all, Lord Kṛṣṇa states that every endeavor is covered by fault.

Those who are ill-motivated or duplicitous may see the introduction of a *śikṣā* culture as an added opportunity for gain. No doubt such things will transpire. Still, we should follow the path shown by our *ācāryas* and do the best under the circumstances. "People should not expect that even in the Krishna Consciousness Society there will be Utopia. Because devotees are persons, therefore there will always be some lacking." (Letter, February 4, 1972)

Below is a list of a few possible excesses with short explanations. Being aware of them, Vaiṣṇavas may be on the lookout and

take appropriate measures wherever they see bad behavior manifesting.

a) At present, our *dikṣā-guru* culture almost completely neglects all other *sādhus* in the life of a Vaiṣṇava. This is incorrect and requires rectification. One could expect increased excesses if *dikṣā-gurus* exercise superiority over the instructors on the strength of Traditional Protocol.

b) If the *śikṣā-guru* is not sensitive to the cooperative nature of his relationship with the *dikṣā-guru*, the disciple will become the victim of more in-house *guru* politics.

c) Disciples in turn may politicize between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*, pitting the instructions of one against the other.

d) With increased emphasis on *śikṣā* in ISKCON, devotees may indiscriminately take *śikṣā* from anyone outside the Society. (Of course, this phenomenon is rampant already.)

e) If *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* do not have a clear line of communication between each other, a sole connection through the disciple will be tantamount to his spiritual abuse.

f) If *gurus* promote themselves on the basis of their abilities rather than as humble servants of the founder-*ācārya*, there will arise power games among *gurus* and disciples. This we have already seen.

g) If oneness and difference among *gurus* is not properly understood, disciples may exclusively worship their *guru(s)* or worship all *gurus* equally, without consideration for their own masters.

In the conclusion of *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, it is stated that excess in Vaiṣṇava protocol and the fall-down of *gurus* took place during Lord Caitanya's time. We have seen the same occurring to this very day. As time passes, devotees will incorporate the culture of *śikṣā* into their lives and, despite some anomalies, ISKCON will be healthier than today. We should not avoid change because it may be abused or cause difficulty. The basic question should be whether this is what Śrīla Prabhupāda instructed and whether it

is what he wants. If the answer is yes, the rest is just detail. As time goes on, what Śrīla Prabhupāda desires will certainly take place. ISKCON is his Movement, he is still guiding it, and it is the vehicle that can save the world.

## Chapter Sixteen

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### Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the main points of the book for emphasis. It is these points that we feel will carry the message of a *śikṣā* culture and inspire Vaiṣṇavas to incorporate it within their lives.

But before we do, the author would like to reveal his own development in the penning of this book. At the beginning, we had a different conception of *śikṣā-guru*. Our idea was that *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus* were autonomous representatives of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who, in the course of a devotee's spiritual life, exercised their influence according to their unfettered will. Perhaps it was his spiritual need or the arrangement of Lord Kṛṣṇa that would direct the flow of a devotee's spiritual fortunes, sometimes to the initiator, sometimes to the instructors. If one found a very exalted instructor, then by all means one should soak up the nectar, at all cost, for who has the right to regulate the flow of transcendental knowledge and the right to be Kṛṣṇa conscious?

In retrospect, this scenario sounds horrendously selfish and anarchistic. But there it is; that is what we understood. It must be admitted that certain Gauḍīya publications helped formulate this perspective. But once we set out to study Śrīla Prabhupāda's

instructions, read other relevant texts, and discussed with senior devotees, the picture changed. At first, we rejected the apparent conclusion. In time, for lack of other authorized alternatives, we struggled with it and, once convinced it was Śrīla Prabhupāda's will, we embraced it. The lesson? Don't sit down to write with preconceptions. First, do unbiased research and, when the study is over, compile it into a book. Lesson learned.

We are still concerned that the emphasis on the *dikṣā-guru* and the position of the instructors as his agents not be misunderstood. We do not want to fuel abuse of the very purpose of this book, the glories of the *śikṣā-gurus*. Enough said; it is time to summarize and conclude this book.

Śikṣā means to “hear the instructions of Kṛṣṇa via the unbroken chain of disciplic succession (*guru-paramparā*). Acceptance of these instructions is called *śikṣā*, or voluntarily following the instruction of the spiritual master.” Śikṣā is the principle of the disciplic succession and the primary function of a *guru*. Anyone who gives such *śikṣā* should be accepted as spiritual master. There are many types of spiritual masters, according to the varying functions of *śikṣā* that they perform.

Foremost is the founder-*ācārya*, who is the instructor for all his followers and directs the mission of the *sampradāya*. Following him are the *śikṣā-gurus*, who give instructions, and the *dikṣā-gurus*, who initiate the disciple with the holy name and Gāyatrī *mantras*. The initiation is a particular function of the *dikṣā*, but all these *gurus* are instructors.

Although they may have different dealings, both initiating and instructing *gurus* should be considered equal and identical representatives of the Lord. They should be worshipped as good as God. Respect for those who give the gift of *śikṣā* and bring us closer to Kṛṣṇa is compulsory in a spiritual culture.

Because the quantitative nature of Vaiṣṇavas' characteristics vary, they should be acknowledged according to the degree of their spiritual strength and commitment. They should be respected according to the proportion of such qualities manifest

in them. Nonetheless, a disciple must maintain special attachment for his own *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-gurus*.

The *śikṣā-gurus* are many. The *sādhus* who introduce and guide one in spiritual life are all praiseworthy. Among them, the one who contributes most to one's spiritual growth generally becomes the initiator. He is known as one's own, original *guru*.

A devotee may receive ongoing instruction from *sādhus* or be directed to an advanced Vaiṣṇava for *śikṣā*. Still, he considers his *dikṣā-guru* as his main connection with the Lord. All others act like assistants to the initiator, although from the absolute point of view they are equal and non-different. While there may be exceptions to this practice, it remains as the norm and is known as the Traditional Protocol of *Śikṣā-gurus* and *Dikṣā-gurus*.

The spiritual masters must be aware of their grave responsibility and work cooperatively, free from personal ambition. They should strictly follow the teachings of the founder-*ācārya* and direct their disciple to Lord Caitanya through him. They should encourage their disciple to respect those who give *śikṣā*, whoever and wherever they may be.

This presentation is by no means an exhaustive study on the subject. Certainly volumes can and should be written to study in detail the philosophy of *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*. Such knowledge will bring enlightenment into the Society, and devotees will be properly situated in the practices of devotional service. As Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī has said, “One who is lazy in properly understanding the Vaiṣṇava philosophical conclusions can never become free from *anarthas*, the unwanted bad habits and philosophical misconceptions that impede devotional service.” (*Prakṛta-rasa-śata-duṣiṇi*)

This harmonious interaction of Vaiṣṇavas on the basis of *śikṣā*, as directed by the injunctions of scripture, will be a cornerstone of love and trust. It is the hope of the author that it will be implemented in ISKCON. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

## APPENDICES



## Nāma-guru

*Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*  
by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

In *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura describes the *guru* who initiates the disciple into the practice of chanting the holy name as the *nāma-guru*.

He states, “The *nāma-guru* teaches scriptural conclusions and reveals the esoteric nature of the holy name. He initiates the disciple into the *mantra* of the holy name. The *dikṣā-guru* will generally be the *nāma-guru* and the *dikṣā-mantra* is actually the holy name. The *mantra* loses its meaning and purpose if it is separated from the holy name; simply by uttering the holy name of the Lord, the *mantra* is automatically chanted.”

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says bestowing the name and initiation with the *Gāyatrī mantra* are two separate functions which are generally performed by the same *guru*, although not always. The one who first initiates with the holy name is the *nāma-guru*, and he who then initiates with the *Gāyatrī mantra* is the *dikṣā-guru*.

In ISKCON, this system of twofold initiation is current, and it is our customary tradition to perform both functions by the same spiritual master, who is known as the *dikṣā-guru*. In this way, the *dikṣā-guru* is also the *nāma-guru*.

In a letter cited in Chapter Six, Section 4, Śrīla Prabhupāda allowed a disciple who had received first initiation from him to take *mantra* from a Godbrother. This is an isolated incident, and in this case, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the *nāma-guru* and his Godbrother the *dikṣā-guru*. *Dikṣā* always refers to receiving Gāyatrī *mantra*.

Appendix 2

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## Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta

by Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura

The following are relevant quotes regarding *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru* from *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* by Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura, translated by Subhāga Swami, published by the Bhaktivedanta Swami Charity Trust in 1987.

Verses 16-19 are by way of Introduction. Verses 20-41 deal with the Vaiṣṇava etiquette relating to *gurus* of varying spiritual strength. Verses 42-58 explain the relationship between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*.

We have quoted the most important verses below.

“At the outset of this work, my humble prayer is that all pure, non-envious devotees of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, may listen to these authorized words as I have heard them from the great Vaiṣṇava authorities of the disciplic succession. (16)

“It is well known from the authorized Vedic literature that in this Kali-yuga, through the power of the holy name of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all Vaiṣṇavas are equal and qualitatively non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa. However, it is seen that, amongst the

Vaiṣṇavas, sometimes in some places some Vaiṣṇavas appear greater or lesser. In such cases how is it to be understood? (17)

“Amongst all of the assembled Vaiṣṇavas there is the initiating *guru* and instructing *guru*. In regard to them, what type of behavior is authorized?” (18)

“Now listen to the authorized conclusion of the previous authorities. (28)

“It is certainly true that all Vaiṣṇavas are on the same transcendental platform. However, although amongst Vaiṣṇavas there may be a difference in strength, how will the less intelligent, materially attached sense gratifiers who become afraid just by seeing the horrifying appearance of beggar mendicants ascertain the actual strength of a saintly person? Since they cannot distinguish between a lesser spiritual force and a greater spiritual force, they do not know how to deal appropriately with different saintly persons. Therefore, they treat everyone the same. Since they don’t know how to distinguish the character of greater spiritual personalities from lesser spiritual personalities, rather than risk their destruction for neglecting a potentially spiritual personality, they treat everyone on the same level. (29)

“However, all those practicing Vaiṣṇavas progressing on the path of devotional service who have heard and understood the conclusion of the revealed *śāstras* and are therefore endowed with special intelligence, are able to recognize who is more spiritually powerful and who is less spiritually powerful. Those who are expert in the science of devotional service can understand in whose body what quantity of Kṛṣṇa’s spiritual potency is present. Being able to understand who has less spiritual potency and who has more spiritual potency, they offer special treatment, considering the scriptural injunctions in this regard. (30)

“If one can distinguish between the greater and lesser spiritual strength of a person but does not accordingly offer respect, then that person shall be held guilty for that offense. (31)

“For the reason mentioned before, if two Vaiṣṇavas come at the same time, one of greater strength, one of lesser spiritual

strength, first one has to offer respect to the Vaiṣṇava of greater strength, then offer to the Vaiṣṇava of lesser strength. (32)

“Should the respect due to a Vaiṣṇava of greater strength or to a Vaiṣṇava of lesser strength be offered on the same level if they come at a different time? Equal respect should not be offered to both, even if they are not present at the same time. (33)

“If a volcano type of fire is burning, the wise man will not first put out (...) first one has to be able to extinguish the volcano fire; then a candle of deep light can easily be extinguished. Similarly, if one is able to appropriately receive and respect Vaiṣṇavas possessed of great spiritual force to their satisfaction, then one shall easily be able to satisfy those Vaiṣṇavas of lesser potency. (34)

“If a person of small spiritual advancement sees a great devotee endowed with considerable spiritual potency being worshipped and given respect, should the less advanced person become angry upon seeing this? For this offense against the more advanced person’s spiritual position, the foolish offender will ruin whatever spiritual potency he possesses. Subsequently, in the future, such angry persons simply plan how they can punish those who have participated in such worship. (35)

“Those who are well-versed in all of these matters, having heard properly from authorities, those Vaiṣṇavas who are enthusiastically engaged in worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead and all those transcendentalists who are practicing the spiritual path, know the truths in regard to these matters. However, knowing these truths, if they do not appropriately offer worship to a greater or lesser degree, according to the person’s spiritual potency, then they will be spiritually ruined. However, if they consider the respective spiritual strength or lack of strength and accordingly offer respect, then they will certainly advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. (36)

“For those who take shelter of the great Sumeru mountain, what can others do to harm them? Others should offer them worship as devotees with respect and service. (37)

“One should never engage in criticizing a Vaiṣṇava or neglecting a Vaiṣṇava, even in joking, for Vaiṣṇavas are so glorious that there is nothing to regret even if one sacrifices one’s life for their benefit. (38)

“No one should find fault with a Vaiṣṇava for his activities or behavior. What person is free from the influence of Kali-yuga or has perfect pure behavior and action? (39)

“Because the Vaiṣṇava devotees of the Lord are always meditating on Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the contamination of sinful activities cannot come upon them. Because the Vaiṣṇava’s body has the fire of Kṛṣṇa consciousness within it, even if they are fallen, this fire of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will burn up to ashes any material contamination. (40)

“However, those who are not able to understand the respective levels of spiritual potency may take shelter of this example. As in the Ganges there are many waves, and some of these waves are larger than other waves but all of the waves are considered to be sacred, one wave being not considered more holy than another wave, similarly, all types of Vaiṣṇavas, those who are spiritually strong and those who are not so strong, can be offered equal worship. Considering this perspective, in such circumstances that can be accepted as perfect worship. Here completes the conclusion in this regard. (41)

“All Vaiṣṇavas are considered as *guru* or spiritual master. (42)

“Amongst all of the Vaiṣṇavas, the initiating *guru* (*dikṣā-guru*) and instructing *guru* (*śikṣā-guru*) are special. (43)

“It is proper to offer these two special respect. (44)

“Amongst all of the other spiritual masters, these two (*dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*) spiritual masters’ orders are to be followed. (45)

“If one’s initiating spiritual master and instructing spiritual master are of small spiritual potency, or in other words, if they do not possess a special power to give spiritual instruction on worship for devotional service, then one may listen from the mouth of other great advanced Vaiṣṇavas and understand the

special instructions. However, thereafter, the disciple must go to his spiritual master for his confirmation or instructions. (46)

“One should not disobey the order of the spiritual master. (47)

“Just as a faithful son may go out for earning money and subsequently brings to his father the wealth gained, later the son may ask for some allowance from the father and whatever he receives from the father he is entitled to spend for his own enjoyment. Similarly, a disciple may hear some instructions from another advanced Vaiṣṇava, but after gaining that good instruction he must bring it and present it to his own spiritual master. After presenting them, he should hear the same teachings again from his spiritual master with appropriate instructions. (48)

“If the son earns money but does not give it to the father and instead, directly enjoys the wealth, he is considered to be a fallen son and a sinful person. Similarly, a disciple who listens to the words of other Vaiṣṇavas, even if their instructions are proper and true, but does not reconfirm these teachings with his own spiritual master and instead directly, personally accepts these instructions, is considered a bad disciple and a sinner. (49)

“For this reason, in all circumstances, all Vaiṣṇavas are offered respect like one offers respect to one’s spiritual master. However, with body, mind and words one serves one’s own spiritual master. (50)

“Even if, in the performance of one’s devotional activities, one has disobeyed the spiritual master, still one should not give him up, but should remain faithfully with him, because all authorities say that the shelter of one’s own spiritual master is best and perfect (even if another spiritual master is more powerful). (51)

“Kindly understand this example:

Just as one respects one’s father as a *guru*, his (the father’s) older and younger brothers are also similarly respected, but nonetheless, the father is worthy of most respect. Notwithstanding the above, if the father’s *guru*, even if he is family related, comes, one should double the respect, as he is the spiritual father of the father, or the *guru* of the *guru*. He is offered twice the *pūjā* or

respect. This behavior is recognized as appropriate by all authorities. (52)

“Just as if, during daily life, the brothers (older or younger) of the father criticize him, still one takes shelter of one’s father, similarly, one remains under the shelter of one’s own spiritual master, even if he is criticized by his older or younger Godbrother. Just as one depends upon one’s father for one’s livelihood, one must depend upon the strength and shelter of the spiritual master for advancing in devotional service. (53)

“If a father or spiritual master or husband is not possessed of outstanding qualities, even then they are always worshipable. (54)

“Taking shelter of the above-mentioned persons, one may even disagree with those senior to oneself. (55)

“In this world, what kind of person is there who can remain alive at the expense of his father’s or *guru*’s defamation or disgrace? (56)

“Everyone considers that if their spiritual master is very powerful, then he himself is powerful, but that if his spiritual master is less powerful, then he is, therefore, weaker, and according to the attitude of the spiritual master, the disciple gains the same attributes. Those disciples who are intelligent can understand the desires of their spiritual master directly through their intelligence. Other disciples, who are less intelligent, understand by directly hearing instructions from the spiritual master. These activities are being practiced since time immemorial. (57)

“Vaiṣṇava authorities say that these instructions are the perfection of religiosity.” (58)

### Appendix 3

## Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya

by Prof. N.K. Sanyal

“*Upanayana* is the process of being conducted to the Guru. This refers to the function of the *śikṣā-guru*. The *śikṣā-gurus* may be many, but the *dikṣā-guru* is only one. The *śikṣā-gurus* are the associated counterparts of the *dikṣā-guru*, who is the associated counter-whole of the Divinity Himself. The *dikṣā-guru* may, indeed, be also the *śikṣā-guru*, but not necessarily so. The distinction between the *śikṣā-guru* and the *dikṣā-guru* is one relating to their respective spiritual functions, which do not involve any unwholesome implication of inferiority in the mundane sense. The *śikṣā-guru* is, therefore, to be as much obeyed by the disciple as the *dikṣā-guru* himself.

“The function of *dikṣā*, in its ritualistic aspect, consists of the process of imparting the *mantra* by the *dikṣā-guru*, which is spoken by him into the ear of the disciple without being allowed to be heard by any other person. It is the method of Truth communicating Himself to an individual soul in the form of the Transcendental Sound appearing on the lips of His devotee. The *mantra*, as we have explained elsewhere, is the Holy Name in the Form in which He is coupled with the process of self-dedication of an individual to the *guru*. It is a specific matter that delivers the particular

individual from the grip of all mental delusion by making him throw himself on the protection of the Name, under the exclusive direction of the *guru*. The process of initiation is not a limited one. It is as much a continued process as the process of being helped by the *śikṣā-guru* for approaching the *dikṣā-guru*. No one of these processes is capable of terminating in a limited result. They are eternally co-present in a relation that is progressive but without being hampered by the unwholesome imperfection of the principle of limitation.” (Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, pp. 676-7)

Appendix 4

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## Further Arguments in Support of Traditional Protocol

Since Traditional Protocol defines the nature of the interactive roles between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus*, it is of primary importance in the theme of this book. It is the pivot for the practical working of *gurus*. This appendix reviews references and makes further arguments in support of its basic principle; the *dikṣā* is the primary spiritual force and the *śikṣā-gurus* act as his assistants.

In his instructions, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes his stance on this issue clear. The *śikṣā-guru* is meant to support the *dikṣā-guru*. Nowhere could we find any direct instruction from Prabhupāda which licenses the *gurus* to exercise their authority equally, or that the instructor is meant to be most prominent. There are many statements about the *śikṣā* nature of the *sampradāya*, and the general equality of *gurus*, abundantly discussed and quoted in this book. But in the practical relationship of *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus* while saving their dependent, Prabhupāda opines one view.

“*Śikṣā-guru* does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the *dikṣā-guru*. He is not a *śikṣā-guru*. He is a

rascal, because that is offense. *Guror avajñā*. First offense is *guror avajñā*, defying the authority of *guru*. This is the first offense. So one who is offensive, how he can make advance in chanting? He cannot make. Then everything is finished in the beginning. *Guror avajñā*. Everything is there. If one is disobeying the spiritual master, he cannot remain in the pure status of life. He cannot be *śikṣā-guru* or anything else. He is finished, immediately.” (Lecture, Honolulu, July 4, 1974)

In the next quote, Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes a difference between the *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru* with the phrase “not spiritual master.” He emphasizes the nature of the relationship by asserting that the instructor must confirm the statements of *dikṣā-guru*. It is a complementary role. The instructor complements the initiator.

“If K. Maharaja speaks what I speak, then he can be taken as *sikṣa guru*. *Guru sastra sadhu*. The spiritual master is one, that is a fact. K. Swami may be taken a *sadhu*, not spiritual master, or as instructor *guru*.” (Letter, July 20, 1974)

*Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* confirms that regardless of their relative spiritual strength, the *śikṣā-gurus* act as support for the *dikṣā-guru*. Some excerpts from verses are included here:

“If one’s initiating spiritual master and instructing spiritual master are of small spiritual potency, or in other words, if they do not possess a special power to give spiritual instruction on worship for devotional service, then one may listen from the mouth of other great advanced Vaiṣṇavas and understand the special instructions. However, thereafter, the disciple must go to his spiritual master for his confirmation or instructions.” (46)

This verse points out that a disciple may take instruction from a *śikṣā-guru* to complete his devotional training, but those teachings must be reconfirmed by the *dikṣā-guru*. Therefore, the emphasis returns to the initiator as the checkpoint and final authority.

“Just as a faithful son may go out for earning money and subsequently brings to his father the wealth gained, later the son may

ask for some allowance from the father and whatever he receives from the father he is entitled to spend for his own enjoyment. Similarly, a disciple may hear some instructions from another advanced Vaiṣṇava, but after gaining that good instruction he must bring it and present it to his own spiritual master. After presenting them, he should hear the same teachings again from his spiritual master with appropriate instructions.” (48)

In addition to having the teachings reconfirmed, the *dikṣā-guru* may give additional instructions. This clearly points out that the *śikṣā-guru*’s function is not an independent one. He complements the role of the initiator. It is interesting to note the author’s repeated emphasis to the greater spiritual power of the instructor. Even though he is more advanced, the disciple must once again hear his teachings from the less advanced initiator. This certainly emphasizes the duty of the disciple to his *dikṣā-guru* and the relative functions of the two spiritual masters.

“If the son earns money but does not give it to the father and instead, directly enjoys the wealth, he is considered to be a fallen son and a sinful person. Similarly, a disciple who listens to the words of other Vaiṣṇavas, even if their instructions are proper and true, but does not reconfirm these teachings with his own spiritual master and instead directly, personally accepts these instructions, is considered a bad disciple and a sinner.” (49)

Very weighty words are used to accentuate the disciple’s condition if he neglects proper behavior.

“For this reason, in all circumstances, all Vaiṣṇavas are offered respect like one offers respect to one’s spiritual master. However, with body, mind and words one serves one’s own spiritual master.” (50)

Although all Vaiṣṇavas may be worshipped like one’s own *dikṣā-guru*, even though others are more advanced, and although one receives exalted teachings elsewhere, still one is dedicated life and soul to one’s *dikṣā-guru*, for one is eternally indebted to him.

“Even if, in the performance of one’s devotional activities, one

has disobeyed the spiritual master, still one should not give him up, but should remain faithfully with him, because all authorities say that the shelter of one's own spiritual master is best and perfect (even if another spiritual master is more powerful)." (51)

Here, Narahari Sarakāra uses a similar terminology as Śrīla Prabhupāda, "real *guru*." He calls the *dikṣā-guru* "one's own," and emphasizes that his shelter should be considered as best. Concluding here with verse 53:

"Just as if, during daily life, the brothers (older or younger) of the father criticize him, still one takes shelter of one's father, similarly, one remains under the shelter of one's own spiritual master, even if he is criticized by his older or younger Godbrother. Just as one depends upon one's father for one's livelihood, one must depend upon the strength and shelter of the spiritual master for advancing in devotional service." (53)

These words of advice are invaluable for Vaiṣṇavas on the path of devotion. Spiritual life indicates gratefulness and fidelity to one's *gurus*, having equal faith in them and in Lord Kṛṣṇa. In this way, all things are achieved. Narahari Sarakāra certainly places great emphasis on the relationship with the *gurus* to whom a disciple first commits. If one cannot maintain allegiance to them, how will one remain bonded to the *śikṣā-gurus* or Lord Kṛṣṇa? Therefore the *dikṣā-guru* comes first, and other instructors complement his service.

A last piece of evidence from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is very relevant. The verse and purport citing Śrīdhara Svāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura are recorded in total below. What emerges is a clear emphasis on faithfulness to one's initiator as the practice of our prominent *ācāryas*. We see that the same characteristic was true in Śrīla Prabhupāda's life. Śrīla Prabhupāda made little, if any, mention of any *guru's* influence on him, other than Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Here is the quote (*Bhāg.* 11.9.31):

*na hy ekasmād guror jñānaṁ  
su-sthīram syāt su-ṭuṣkalam  
brahmāitad advitīyam vai  
gīyate bahudharṣibhiḥ*

#### TRANSLATION

**Although the Absolute Truth is one without a second, the sages have described Him in many different ways. Therefore one may not be able to acquire very firm or complete knowledge from one spiritual master.**

#### PURPORT

Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī comments on this verse as follows. "The statement that one requires many spiritual masters certainly needs explanation, since practically all great saintly persons of the past did not take shelter of many spiritual masters, but rather accepted one. The words *gīyate bahudharṣibhiḥ*, the Absolute Truth is glorified in many ways by the sages, indicate the personal and impersonal understandings of the Absolute Truth. In other words, some sages describe only the Lord's impersonal effulgence, which is without spiritual variety, whereas others describe the Lord's manifest form as the Personality of Godhead. Thus, merely by hearing from many different authorities, one cannot actually learn the highest perfection of life. The proliferation of differing spiritual authorities is useful only to counteract the living entities' tendency to be grossly materialistic. Different spiritual philosophers create faith in the existence of the soul and may be accepted at that level. But as will be clarified in later verses, the spiritual master who ultimately gives perfect knowledge is one."

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments as follows on this verse. "Since it is commonly understood that one is to accept a

single spiritual master, why is it recommended that one learn from many so-called spiritual masters appearing in the forms of ordinary material objects? The explanation is that one's worshipable spiritual master will instruct one in many departments of knowledge by giving lessons gleaned from ordinary objects. As recommended by the *brāhmaṇa avadhūta*, one can strengthen the teachings received from one's *ācārya* and avoid transgressing his orders by observing ordinary things in nature. One should not mechanically receive the teachings of one's *guru*. The disciple should be thoughtful and, with his own intelligence, realize in practice what he has heard from his spiritual master, by observing the world around him. In this sense, one may accept many *gurus*, though not those who preach against the knowledge received from the bona fide spiritual master. In other words, one should not hear from persons like the atheist Kapila."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura also comments on this verse, as follows. "It is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *tasmād gurum praṇadyeta jijnāsuḥ śreya uttamam*: 'Therefore one should approach a bona fide spiritual master if one actually desires to achieve the highest perfection in life.' Similarly, in Chapter Ten, verse 5 of this canto, the Personality of Godhead Himself states, *mad-abhijñāṁ gurum śāntam upāsīta mad-ātmākam*: 'One must serve a bona fide spiritual master who is in full knowledge of My personality and who is not different from Me.' There are many similar verses in Vedic literature indicating that one must take shelter of a single bona fide spiritual master. We also have the examples of innumerable great saintly persons who did not accept more than one spiritual master. Thus, it is a fact that we should accept one bona fide spiritual master and receive from him the particular *mantra* that one is to chant. I, myself, certainly follow this principle and worship my bona fide spiritual master. However, in worshipping one's

*ācārya*, one may take help from good and bad examples. By observing examples of good behavior, one will be strengthened in devotional service, and in seeing negative examples one will be forewarned and avoid danger. In this way, one may accept many ordinary material objects as one's spiritual masters, considering them as *śikṣā-gurus*, or *gurus* who give important lessons for spiritual advancement."

Thus, in the Lord's own words, *mad-abhijñāṁ gurum śāntam upāsīta mad-ātmākam*: one should approach a single bona fide spiritual master who is in full knowledge of the Lord's personality and sincerely worship him, considering him to be *mad-ātmākam*, or non-different from the Lord Himself. This statement does not contradict what the Lord has presented in the teachings of the *avadhūta brāhmaṇa*. If one receives the teachings of one's *ācārya* but keeps them locked up in his brain as theoretical dogma, one will make little advancement. To develop steady, complete knowledge one must see the teachings of one's *ācārya* everywhere; thus, a Vaiṣṇava offers all respects to anyone or anything that gives him further enlightenment in the path of worshipping his bona fide *ācārya*, who is non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The *ācāryas* all concur that generally a devotee has one spiritual master who is the initiator. Śrīdhara Svāmī states, "Practically all great saintly persons of the past did not take shelter of many spiritual masters, but rather accepted one." Jīva Gosvāmī states, "It is commonly understood that one is to accept a single spiritual master." Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states, "There are many similar verses in Vedic literature indicating that one must take shelter of a single bona fide spiritual master. We also have the examples of innumerable great saintly persons who did not accept more than one spiritual master. Thus, it is a fact that we should accept one bona fide spiritual master and receive from him the

particular *mantra* that one is to chant. I, myself, certainly follow this principle and worship my bona fide spiritual master.” They emphasize one *dikṣā-guru* who serves as the main shelter. The purport concludes, “To develop steady, complete knowledge one must see the teachings of one’s *ācārya* everywhere; thus, a Vaiṣṇava offers all respects to anyone or anything that gives him further enlightenment in the path of worshipping his bona fide *ācārya*, who is non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

In summary, it is clear that a disciple always sees the shelter and mercy of his original, *dikṣā-guru* as first and foremost, even if he has the mercy of so many other Vaiṣṇavas. This is stated to be the proper *sad-ācāra*. Similarly the *gurus* cannot but echo the same principle. The *śikṣā-gurus* see themselves in the role of assistants to *dikṣā-guru*, bringing the disciple closer to him. The principle enunciated above is called the “Traditional Protocol of *Dikṣā-guru* and *Śikṣā-guru*,” or “Traditional Protocol” in short.

Appendix 5

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## Non-Liberated Gurus Liberating Their Disciple

Here we respond briefly to the question of a non-liberated *dikṣā-guru* directing his disciple back to Godhead. Can he make the grave commitment required of the initiator?

We do not intend to delve into the issue at length. However, we do feel obliged to touch on the point briefly. The answer is yes; a non-liberated *dikṣā-guru* may take full responsibility for guiding his disciple back to Godhead. How? Because Lord Caitanya is the deliverer, and He can deliver anyone he wants through an agent who acts according to His will.

This is really the crux of the issue. Often there is talk of only liberated souls having the ability to liberate their followers. There are intrinsic defects in this argument, one of which is that a liberated soul never thinks himself as such. Nor does he consider himself capable of liberating anyone; therefore he simply prays to the Lord to save them. Since Lord Caitanya has already appeared with the intent of liberating everyone, the prayers of the liberated are already answered, and any Vaiṣṇava who is connected to the Lord will be delivered.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains the nature of Gauḍīya *dīkṣā* based on Lord Caitanya's magnanimous desire in the lecture below. From his words it is clear that a *guru* in good standing, who facilitates his disciple in following the Lord's requirements, will go back to Godhead, and can assure his dependents the same result.

“So we have got many śāstric evidences how one can become completely sinless simply by chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* and observing very strictly the four prohibitive rules and regulations. I hope those who are initiated today, you have promised before Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Deity, before Vaiṣṇava, and before the fire to give up these habits and do not take to... Even if you are practiced now, you do not take it again. This is the process of Caitanya Mahāprabhu's initiation. Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared to deliver all the sinful men. *Pāpī tāpī yata chilo, harināme uddhārilo, tāra sākṣī jagāi* and *mādhāi*. Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura said that ‘Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (is) so merciful that He delivered all kinds of sinful men, *pāpī tāpī*, all types of suffering from material disease.’ And what is the medicine? *Pāpī tāpī yata chilo, harināme uddhārilo*. And evidence? *Tāra sākṣī jagāi* and *mādhāi*. You see Jagāi-Mādhāi. So Caitanya Mahāprabhu exhibited one example, to deliver Jagāi-Mādhāi. Jagāi-Mādhāi means they were born in a very aristocratic *brāhmaṇa* family but by bad association, they became illicit sex, woman-hunter, drunkards and meat-eaters and gamblers. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu, through the mercy of Nityānanda Prabhu, delivered them. And the only promise was that ‘You promise no more this sinful life. Then I accept you.’ So if we give up our sinful activity, immediately Caitanya Mahāprabhu takes you. There is no condition, because in this age everyone is addicted to sinful life, but he simply promises that ‘Henceforward I shall not act anything sinfully,’ these four principles. Then you go back to home, back to Godhead.” (Lecture, Vṛndāvana, April 4, 1976)

Clearly, Śrīla Prabhupāda indicates that this is Lord Caitanya's system of initiation. Follow the principles of pure conduct and He will deliver the disciple. A non-liberated *guru* has only to strictly

stick to this principle and he will connect his disciple to the mercy of Lord Caitanya. As Lord Caitanya is the deliverer, the *guru* who connects the disciple to the Lord is, in effect, delivering the disciple. On the basis of his faith in the above principle and his strong connection with his *guru*, a non-liberated Vaiṣṇava may rightly commit to delivering his disciple.

## Good Conduct and Attachment to the Guru: Which is Dominant?

Verifying the dominance of the personal characteristic over the marginal characteristic of Traditional Protocol can be achieved through a study of the *lakṣaṇas* in different stages of devotion. If such a study of *śāstra* reveals the prominence proposed in Chapter Five, Section 3, it will confirm our hypothesis.

Devotional service is divided into two parts, *vaidhī-bhakti* and *rāgānuṅga-bhakti*, and their primary and secondary symptoms are described in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.

The definition of *vaidhī-bhakti*, accompanied by Śrīla Prabhupāda's invaluable purport, is as follows (*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya* 22.109):

*rāga-hīna jana bhaje śāstrera ājñāya*  
'*vaidhī bhakti*' *bali*' *tāre sarva-śāstre gāya*

## TRANSLATION

Those who have not attained the platform of spontaneous attachment in devotional service, render devotional service under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master according to the regulative principles mentioned in the revealed scriptures. According to the revealed scriptures, this kind of devotional service is called *vaidhī-bhakti*.

## PURPORT

In the beginning, one has to hear from a bona fide spiritual master. This is favorable for advancing in devotional service. According to this process, one hears, chants, remembers, and engages in Deity worship, acting under the directions of the spiritual master. These are the essential primary activities of devotional service. Devotional service must not be executed for some material purpose. One should not even have a desire to merge into the Absolute Truth. One has to render such service out of love only. *Ahaitukī, apratihātā*. Devotional service must be without ulterior motives; then material conditions cannot check it. Gradually one can rise to the platform of spontaneous loving service. A child is sent to school by force to receive an education, but when he gets a little taste of education at an advanced age, he automatically participates and becomes a learned scholar. One cannot force a person to become a scholar, but sometimes force is used in the beginning. A child is forced to go to school and read and write according to the instructions of his teachers. Such is the difference between *vaidhī-bhakti* and spontaneous *bhakti*. Dormant love for Kṛṣṇa exists in everyone's heart, and it simply has to be awakened by the regulative process of devotional service. One has to learn to use a typewriter by following the regulative principles of the typing book. One

has to place his fingers on the keys in such a way and practice, but when one becomes adept, he can type swiftly and correctly without even looking at the keys. Similarly, one has to follow the rules and regulations of devotional service as they are set down by the spiritual master; then one can come to the point of spontaneous loving service. This love is already there within the heart of everyone (*nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema*).

Spontaneous service is not artificial. One simply has to come to that platform by rendering devotional service according to the regulative principles. Thus one has to practice hearing and chanting, and follow the other regulative principles by washing the temple, cleansing oneself, rising early in the morning, attending *maṅgala-ārati*, and so on. If one does not come to the platform of spontaneous service in the beginning, he must adopt regulative service according to the instructions of the spiritual master. This regulative service is called *vaidhī-bhakti*.

From the verse and explanation above, it is clear that in the practice of *vaidhī-bhakti* the adherence to the rules of devotional service is prominent due to an absence of natural attachment. Applying this principle to Traditional Protocol means the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* is adherence to the rules of conduct and the marginal aspect is attachment to the *guru*. This confirms the proposition stated earlier as it applies to this aspect of devotional service.

Next, let us examine what the description of spontaneous devotional service is and what are its elements.

*iṣṭe 'gādha-tṛṣṇā' — rāgera svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*  
*iṣṭe 'aviṣṭatā' — ei taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*

“The primary characteristic of spontaneous love is deep attachment for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Absorption in Him is a marginal characteristic.” (Cc. *Madhya* 22.151)

The indication is that in spontaneous devotional service, the

liberated stage of *sādhana-bhakti*, the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* is attachment, and the marginal aspect is “absorption,” or the ecstasy experienced by the practitioner.

This appears to raise two obstacles. The first obstacle is reconciling how attachment is the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* in *rāga-bhakti*, and the second is the position of a third element, ecstasy, hitherto unmentioned. If Traditional Protocol is a comprehensive principle, then it should apply to all types of devotional service and be consistent and free of defects in application.

Both problems are resolved by the following verses, which explain the internal and external practices of *rāga-bhakti*.

*bāhya, antara, — ihāra dui ta’ sādhana*  
*‘bahye’ sādhaḥka-dehe kare śravaṇa-kīrtana*

*‘mane’ nija-siddha-deha kariyā bhāvana*  
*rātri-dine kare vraje kṛṣṇera sevana*

“There are two processes by which one may execute this *rāgānuṅga-bhakti*: external and internal. When self-realized, the advanced devotee externally remains like a neophyte and executes all the śāstric injunctions, especially those concerning hearing and chanting. But within his mind, in his original, purified, self-realized position, he serves Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in his particular way. He serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, all day and night.” (Cc. *Madhya* 22.156-57)

*sevā sādhaḥka-rūpeṇa siddha-rūpeṇa cātra hi*  
*tad-bhāva-lipsunā kāryā vraja-lokānusārataḥ*

“The advanced devotee who is inclined to spontaneous loving service should follow the activities of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. He should execute service externally as a regulative devotee, as well as internally from his self-realized position. Thus, he should perform devotional service both externally and internally.” (Brs. 1.2.295).

Reviewing the *śloka* beginning with *iṣṭe ‘gāḍha-trṣṇā’* in light of the last two verses, the definition appears to be of the internal aspect of *rāga-mārga*, free of any other considerations. However, Traditional Protocol is concerned with the rules by which a disciple views his *dikṣā-guru* and how the *śikṣā-guru* acts in that relationship. It is very much an external phenomenon and, adopting the perspective of *rāga-bhakti* from the external viewpoint, these two inconsistencies are resolved.

The external practice of *rāga-bhakti* explained how one “executes all the śāstric injunctions” and serves as a “regulative devotee.” This means the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* is observance to the codes of conduct. This clearly resolves the first obstacle.

The second obstacle was the introduction of ecstasy or absorption as a new element in the study of devotional characteristics. However, taking the view from the point of the external application of *rāga-bhakti*, both deep attachment and absorption can be grouped under the same common heading of attachment (which is the *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* of Traditional Protocol). The logic to support such a move is the close interrelation of these two things. In relation to the principles of etiquette, they may be readily seen as one, attachment.

We apologize for the complexity of the derivation above, but it is important to verify the applicability of Traditional Protocol. This understanding is supported by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his paraphrasing of Rūpa Gosvāmī’s statement in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (2.296) as follows: “Learned *ācāryas* recommend that we follow the regulative principles even after the development of spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa.” This indicates that the principles of *vaidhī-bhakti* are also practiced at the stage of spontaneous devotion, although the mood of that practice is different.

In conclusion, the primary characteristic of Traditional Protocol is the adherence to the rules of conduct, which remains the dominant factor even at the stage of spontaneous devotion. What constitutes a difference between *rāga-bhakti* and *vaidhī-bhakti* is the mood of service, not the actual behavior. In *vaidhī-bhakti* the motive for service is obedience to *guru* and *śāstra*, while in *rāga*

the motive for service is attachment to *guru* and the Lord. In either case, from the external point of view, the adherence to proper conduct does not change, nor does it infringe on the internal development of the advanced devotee.

Thus, in either the practice of *vaidhī-bhakti* or *rāga-bhakti*, the dominant visible characteristic of Traditional Protocol is the proper conduct of the devotee. Consequently, a devotee always follows the proper conduct in serving his *dikṣā-guru* as his primary spiritual link with the Lord.

Devotees must be careful never to sacrifice proper etiquette. Respect should be shown to one's *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-gurus* according to the direction of *śāstra* and Vaiṣṇava tradition. Such regulative practices should never be sacrificed in the name of a newfound attachment, either at the practicing or liberated stage.

## Appendix 7

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# Verification of Source Material

Source material outside Śrīla Prabhupāda's books is always under the scrutiny of such inquiry as, "Did Prabhupāda approve it?" Such an approach is more than reasonable, considering our obligation to adhere to His Divine Grace's teachings. We shall substantiate the use of the following books, which have served as reference material. They are:

1. *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura
2. *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya* by N.K. Sanyal
3. *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* by Narahari Sarakāra

### ***Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi* by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura**

Śrīla Prabhupāda is not recorded as having made any direct reference to this book. However, in Los Angeles he did instruct one of his disciples, "I want all the books of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura translated into English."

In the introduction to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, "Many devotees of Lord Caitanya, like Śrī Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and many other great and renowned scholars and

devotees of the Lord, have prepared voluminous books. Such literatures are all based on the *śāstras*. They are unique in composition and unrivaled in presentation. Unfortunately, the people of the world are still ignorant of them, but when these literatures come to light the world, and when they are presented before thinking people, then India's glory and the message of love will overflow this morbid world."

Clearly, Śrīla Prabhupāda desired the works of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura read by the world and his disciples. We feel we are on safe ground quoting the translations of H.H. Bhānu Mahārāja and H.G. Sarvabhāvana Prabhu on *Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi*.

### Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya by N.K. Sanyal

Śrīla Prabhupāda has commented on both the book and author in a letter. "I am glad to learn that Donald has purchased Prof. Sanyal's book, *Kṛṣṇa Caitanya*. Late Prof. N.K. Sanyal was my Godbrother, and his book *Kṛṣṇa Caitanya* is approved and authoritative. Keep it very carefully, and we may publish in *Back to Godhead* some articles from the book. It will help us a great deal, because my Spiritual Master has given His approval to this book. Please keep it carefully, and when I return I shall see to it." (Letter, March 14, 1967)

Although no articles were published, there is no further record wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda changed his view on the authenticity of this book.

### Śrī Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta by Narahari Sarakāra

The present manuscript was translated by H.H. Subhāga Mahārāja and is only a part of the entire work. Some devotees have questioned the validity of this book and its author, saying Narahari Sarakāra was not in our line.

Śrīla Prabhupāda makes no mention of the book and no commentary on its author. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (Ādi 10.78-79, purport) he translates, "Narahari dāsa Sarakāra was a very famous devotee. Locana dāsa Ṭhākura, the celebrated author of Śrī

*Caitanya-maṅgala*, was his disciple. In the *Caitanya-maṅgala* it is stated that Śrī Gadādhara dāsa and Narahari Sarakāra were extremely dear to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura sings of Narahari Sarakāra in his *Gaura-ārati*, with the words "*narahari-ādi kori camara dhulāya*." Narahari Sarakāra and other associates of Lord Caitanya fan Him with *cāmaras*. It seems our *ācārya* accepts him.

In the Eleventh Canto (11.1.24, purport), Hṛdayānanda Mahārāja accepts the book as authoritative. "Śrī Narahari Sarakāra Ṭhākura, in his book *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, has corrected the improper statements of the *gaurāṅga-nāgarī-vādīs*, *sakhībheka-vādīs*, and others of the eleven pseudo-disciplic chains that claim to follow Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu."

In *Prārthanā*, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, who is a prominent *ācārya* in our line, authorized by Śrīla Prabhupāda, accepts Narahari Sarakāra. He writes, *advaita ācārya bala, gadādhara mora kula, narahari bilāsai mora*. "Advaita Ācārya is my strength, Gadādhara is my family, and Narahari Sarakāra is my glory." It would seem that Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's satisfaction with Narahari Sarakāra should be sufficient endorsement for us.

From the arguments above, either by direct reference, through general instructions, or inference from Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, these three books have sufficient merit to stand as source material for this book.

## Sākṣād-hari, As Good As God

The idea that all Vaiṣṇavas are *guru* and that all *gurus* are worshipped as good as God is a sensitive point in ISKCON at present. Senior devotees have fallen from their positions, and devotees question the wisdom of such a perspective at this historical time. Everyone accepts that a *mahā-bhāgavata* like Śrīla Prabhupāda should be given worship as good as God. But what about the *madhyama*, what to speak of *kaniṣṭha*, *gurus*? Devotees have suggested that such Vaiṣṇavas may be revered as “representatives of the Lord” and should be “given all respect,” but not seen in the light of *sākṣād-hari*.

This Appendix could be abridged by leaving the onus of proof on the proponents of such ideology. After all, it is their proposal that there is some way to regard certain *gurus* other than *sākṣād-hari*. So, let such philosophical evidence be produced. I have not seen any. However, since the refutation of such an idea was conceived by the author, we will take the time to show that, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, *gurus* of any degree of advancement should be revered as good as God. While there may be differences in the quantitative details of such worship, they are all valued as *sākṣād-hari*.

The unfortunate incidents which mar ISKCON's past are a reality, yet there seems little scope for adjusting such a critical aspect of our philosophy as *guru-tattva*. In the discussion of *guru-tyāga* (rejection of fallen *gurus*), Narahari Sarakāra writes in *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, "During the pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu there have been many practical examples of the above." Many *gurus* fell at that time; still, we see Śrīla Prabhupāda did not make adjustments to his teachings in this regard, but stuck to the principles enunciated in scriptures.

Śrīla Prabhupāda referred to the words "*guru*" and "spiritual master" roughly 15,000 times. When he did so, it was mostly in a general sense, without specifying functional (*dikṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-guru*) or personal characteristics (advancement, etc.). In these statements, His Divine Grace made it abundantly clear that worshipping the *guru* as *sākṣād-hari* was not an option, but a must for any serious devotee. "The spiritual master is as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and therefore one who is very serious about spiritual advancement must regard the spiritual master in this way. Even a slight deviation from this understanding can create disaster in the disciple's Vedic studies and austerities." (*Bhāg.* 7.15.27)

Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Therefore it is said, *sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair*. *Guru* is the mercy incarnation of God. *Sākṣāt*, direct. *Hari-tvena*, he is Hari, God. *Samasta-śāstrair*. It is not that somewhere it is stated, somewhere it is not stated. No. In all Vedic literature. *Sākṣād-dharitvena samasta-śāstrair uktau*. *Uktau* means 'it is said.' And *tathā bhāvayata eva sādभिः*. *Sadbhiḥ*, those who are real devotees, they accept this. 'Yes, *guru* is exactly representative of Kṛṣṇa, mercy representative.' But from the *guru*'s side, a disciple may respect... May respect, must respect. It is not 'may.' Must respect *guru* as God." (Lecture, Los Angeles, October 1, 1972)

So, according to the scriptures, the worship of *guru* as good as God is compulsory. Now, how is that someone is recognized by Kṛṣṇa as being *guru*? Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly answers that

one who preaches on Kṛṣṇa's behalf is immediately recognized by Him. "So *guru* is directly God, *sākṣād-hari*. *Sākṣād* means directly. *Kintu prabhōr yaḥ priya eva tasya*. So why he has become *priya*? That is, Kṛṣṇa says personally, *na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścīn me priya-kṛttamaḥ*: [Bg. 18.69] Nobody is dearer than him in the whole world. Why? *Ya idaṁ paramaṁ guhyaṁ mad-bhakteṣu abhida...* [Bg. 18.68] 'Who preaches this gospel of *Bhagavad-gītā* among My devotees.' So, the *guru* has got two businesses. He has to make devotees and teach them the principles of *Bhagavad-gītā*. Therefore he's so dear, because he acts very confidentially on behalf of Kṛṣṇa, therefore he's as good as God. This is *bhakti*." (Conversation, July 31, 1976)

Those who preach Kṛṣṇa's message are *guru*, and by such invaluable service, they become dear to the Lord. Being in such close proximity to Him (being dear to Him), they are non-different from Him and are equally worshipable. Can anyone be such a preacher and hence, a *guru*? Do *gurus*, large and small, become so dear to the Lord?

Śrīla Prabhupāda affirms that anyone who teaches the message of Lord Kṛṣṇa, regardless of his stature, is *guru* and hence, very dear. "So maybe of different degrees, but anyone who opens the spiritual eyes, he's *guru*." (Lecture, Ahmedabad, December 13, 1972) And "One may be very illiterate, no education, no scholarship, may not be born in a *brāhmaṇa* family — there are so many qualifications. He may be rascal number one. But still he can become spiritual master. How? Simply strictly follow whatever is said by Caitanya Mahāprabhu." (Lecture, London, August 22, 1973) And "How shall I become *guru*? I have no qualification. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, 'You don't require any qualification. You simply require one qualification, that you repeat the instruction of *Bhagavad-gītā*. That's all.'" (Lecture, Māyāpur, March 16, 1976) And on and on and on. Śrīla Prabhupāda has repeated that all manners of Vaiṣṇavas can serve as *guru* by repeating the message of the Lord. "It is not very difficult."

From Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements it is clear that all levels of

devotees can serve as *guru*, and *guru* must be seen as *sākṣād-hari*. Conclusion: it is compulsory that Vaiṣṇava *gurus* of all spiritual strengths be worshipped as good as God.

Another, last minute argument is that *sākṣād-hari guru* only refers to *dikṣā-gurus*, not *śikṣā-gurus*. But we have already quoted Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement earlier that "The word *guru* is equally applicable to the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*." (Cc. *Madhya* 8.128, purport) In the light of overwhelming evidence, and in the absence of any contrary information, it must be accepted that all *gurus*, of all categories and of all stages of spiritual development, are *sākṣād-hari*. They are to be worshipped as good as God. No doubt they are not God but, as His representatives and confidential servants, they are awarded the same respect as He.

Having established the above, we should conclude with a statement for clarification and balance. It is a fact that the worship of a devotee should be in proportion to his advancement and his subsequent ability to digest such honor. ISKCON has witnessed the consequences of worshipping *gurus* beyond their level of advancement.

But it is a mistake to think that there is only one standard of worship within the context of *sākṣād-hari*. Due to such a misunderstanding, we are prone to make erroneous adjustments to solve our historical problems and relegate our *gurus* to dysfunctional peons who will be incapable of functioning in any capacity. To clarify this issue we have made our arguments in this Appendix.

*Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* shows that there is variety and gradation in the worship of *guru*, while revering them all as *sākṣād-hari*. While their ontological position as good as God remains one, the consequential respect is diverse and graded. Adjustment can be made and must be made to the degree of respect offered Vaiṣṇava *gurus*. But it must be done within the concept of *sākṣād-hari*, without tampering with their *tattva* and our philosophy.

## References and Codes of Etiquette from Chapter Four

### 1. Relationship Between Śikṣā-gurus and Dikṣā-gurus

Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions are quoted in relevant length, and the ensuing points of etiquette have been listed as being fourteen in number. These are followed by other quotes which list the relationship of the disciple with his *gurus*, and includes quotes from *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*.

a) "I suspect that you have interest in taking instruction from some siksa guru, but in this connection, because you are my disciple and I think, a sincere soul, it is my duty to refer you to someone who is competent to act as siksa guru. This B. Maharaja, perhaps you do not know, has been rejected by Guru Maharaja. So, I cannot recommend him as siksa guru. I think that he has no actual spiritual asset. So, if you are actually serious to take instructions from a siksa guru, I can refer you to one who is most highly competent of all my God-brothers. This is S. Maharaja, whom I consider to be even my siksa guru, so what to speak of the

benefit that you can have from his association. I can give you letter of introduction as well as I will send him letter to allow you to stay there with him.” (Letter, January 31, 1969)

b) “Therefore there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru*, because if he’s actually *guru*, he’ll not say anything which Kṛṣṇa has not spoken.” (Conversation, Bhubaneswar, January 31, 1977)

c) “If K. Maharaja speaks what I speak, then he can be taken as *sikṣa guru*. *Guru sastra sadhu*. The spiritual master is one, that is a fact. K. Swami may be taken as *sadhu*, not spiritual master, or as instructor *guru*. I don’t think he is saying anything against our principles, so what is the wrong?” (Letter, July 20, 1974)

d) “*Śikṣā-guru* does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the *dikṣā-guru*. He is not a *śikṣā-guru*. He is a rascal. Because that is offense. *Guror avajñā*. First offense is *guror avajñā*, defying the authority of *guru*. This is the first offense. So one who is offensive, how he can make advance in chanting? He cannot make. Then everything is finished in the beginning. *Guror avajñā*. Everything is there. If one is disobeying the spiritual master, he cannot remain in the pure status of life. He cannot be *śikṣā-guru* or anything else. He is finished, immediately.” (Lecture, Honolulu, July 4, 1974)

e) “So He accepted spiritual... Not spiritual master, but a *sannyāsa-guru*. That is also master, but he’s not spiritual master. But he’s also considered as *sannyāsa-guru*, spiritual master who offers him *sannyāsa*. Just like myself, I took initiation from my Guru Mahārāja, but I took *sannyāsa* from a Godbrother who is a *sannyāsi*. So my original *guru* is that spiritual master who initiated me, but he’s also a *śikṣā-guru*. Like that. Teacher.” (Discourse, San Francisco, April 5, 1967)

f) “To answer your last point, one who teaches can be treated as Spiritual Master. It is not that after we become initiated we become perfect. No. It requires teaching. So, if we take instruction from them, all senior Godbrothers may be treated as *guru*, there is no harm. Actually, you have only one Spiritual Master, who initiates you, just as you have only one father. But every

Vaiṣṇava should be treated as *prabhu*, master, higher than me, and in this sense, if I learn from him, he may be regarded as *guru*. It is not that I disobey my real Spiritual Master and call someone else as Spiritual Master. That is wrong. It is only that I can call Spiritual Master someone who is teaching me purely what my initiating Spiritual Master has taught. Do you get the sense?” (Letter, November 20, 1971)

g) “On the whole, you may know that he is not a liberated person, and therefore, he cannot initiate any person to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It requires special spiritual benediction from higher authorities.” (Letter, April 26, 1968)

### Points of Etiquette

The following points emerge from the quotes above. Some are recommendations; others are prohibitions.

1. A *sādhu* who says what the *dikṣā-guru* says can be accepted as *śikṣā-guru*.
2. By repeating what the *dikṣā-guru* says, the *śikṣā-guru* and the initiator are one.
3. The *dikṣā-guru* may be seen like one’s father, while other Vaiṣṇavas are *prabhus* or masters, almost equal to *guru*.
4. The *śikṣā-guru* never says anything the *dikṣā-guru* or Kṛṣṇa has not spoken, although he may expand on the principles given by the *dikṣā-guru*, helping the devotee to understand how to apply the instructions of the *dikṣā-guru*.
5. Neither will the *śikṣā-guru* say anything against teachings of *dikṣā-guru*.
6. If he does so, he is committing *guru-aparādha*.
7. Subsequently, he may lose his qualification as a *śikṣā-guru*.
8. The “original *guru*” or primary *guru* is the *dikṣā-guru*.
9. The *śikṣā-guru* assists the *dikṣā-guru* by inspiring the *śiṣyā* to fulfill the order of the *dikṣā-guru* (e.g., taking *sannyāsa*).
10. Should the disciple be in need of a *śikṣā-guru*, the *dikṣā-guru* recommends to him a suitable Vaiṣṇava.

11. The *dikṣā-guru* must send a recommendation to the *śikṣā-guru* proposing he accept the devotee as a disciple.

12. The disciple is duty-bound to take the instruction of the *dikṣā-guru*.

13. A Vaiṣṇava who has been disobedient to his *guru* cannot act in the capacity of a *śikṣā-guru*.

14. The *dikṣā-guru* may indicate whether the *śikṣā-guru* is liberated or not.

## 2. Relationship Between the Disciple, Dikṣā-guru and Śikṣā-gurus

Here we review Prabhupāda's instructions on the dealings of the disciple with his *gurus*. The instructions of *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta* by Narahari Sarakāra (found in Appendix 2) are very informative in this regard and contain many relevant instructions on the *śikṣā-dikṣā* relationship.

In addition to understanding what the interaction between advanced Vaiṣṇavas is, a disciple should also know how to relate to great souls according to their station. It is the responsibility of a Vaiṣṇava to know such *sad-ācāra*. This is the responsibility one assumes as a follower.

### Quoting from Śrīla Prabhupāda

1. "So initiation means the beginning. The very word initiation means if you are engaged in some work, just in the beginning, that is called initiation. Initiation is not the end. Initiation means you agree to enter into the world of enlightenment. And if you make progress, then more you make progress, more you become enlightened." (Lecture, Los Angeles, December 13, 1968)

2. "If K. Maharaja speaks what I speak, then he can be taken as siksa guru. Guru sastra sadhu. The spiritual master is one, that is a fact. K. Swami may be taken as sadhu, not spiritual master, or as instructor guru. I don't think he is saying anything against our principles, so what is the wrong?" (Letter, July 20, 1974)

3. "...if a Godbrother is more enlightened and advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one should accept him as almost equal to the spiritual master ..." (Bhāg. 3.32.42, purport)

4. "Then so *śikṣā* and *dikṣā-guru*... A *śikṣā-guru* who instructs against the instruction of spiritual..., he is not a *śikṣā-guru*. He is a demon. *Śikṣā-guru*, *dikṣā-guru* means... Sometimes a *dikṣā-guru* is not present always. Therefore, one can take learning, instruction, from an advanced devotee. That is called the *śikṣā-guru*. *Śikṣā-guru* does not mean he is speaking something against the teachings of the *dikṣā-guru*. He is not a *śikṣā-guru*. He is a rascal." (Lecture, Honolulu, July 4, 1974)

5. "I suspect that you have interest in taking instruction from some siksa guru, but in this connection, because you are my disciple and I think, a sincere soul, it is my duty to refer you to someone who is competent to act as siksa guru. This B. Maharaja, perhaps you do not know, has been rejected by Guru Maharaja. So I cannot recommend him as siksa guru. I think that he has no actual spiritual asset. So, if you are actually serious to take instructions from a siksa guru, I can refer you to one who is most highly competent of all my Godbrothers. This is S. Maharaja, whom I consider to be even my siksa guru, so what to speak of the benefit that you can have from his association. I can give you letter of introduction as well as I will send him letter to allow you to stay there with him." (Letter, January 31, 1969)

6. "**Prabhupāda:** So *śikṣā-guru* becomes *dikṣā-guru*. But *guru* means one who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa and teaches properly. That's all.

**Guest (1):** Are you knowing people take *dikṣā* from many *gurus*?

**Prabhupāda:** No, *dikṣā-guru* is one. But *śikṣā-guru* can be many.

**Guest (1):** But suppose *dikṣā-gurus* or people take one *mantra* from one *guru* and other one...

**Prabhupāda:** Then you have not selected *guru*. You have

selected some rascal.” (Conversation, Bhubaneshwar, January 31, 1977)

7) “To answer your last point, one who teaches can be treated as Spiritual Master. It is not that after we become initiated we become perfect. No. It requires teaching. So if we take instruction from them, all senior God-brothers may be treated as guru, there is no harm. Actually, you have only one Spiritual Master, who initiates you, just as you have only one father. But every Vaisnava should be treated as prabhu, master, higher than me, and in this sense, if I learn from him, he may be regarded as guru. It is not that I disobey my real Spiritual Master and call someone else as Spiritual Master. That is wrong. It is only that I can call Spiritual Master someone who is teaching me purely what my initiating Spiritual Master has taught. Do you get the sense?” (Letter, November 20, 1971)

These are the quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda. Now let us consider the following statements from *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*. The full reference is to be found in Appendix 2.

#### Quoting from *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*

“If one’s initiating spiritual master and instructing spiritual master are of small spiritual potency, or in other words, if they do not possess a special power to give spiritual instruction on worship for devotional service, then one may listen from the mouth of other great advanced Vaiṣṇavas and understand the special instructions. However, thereafter, the disciple must go to his spiritual master for his confirmation or instructions. (46)

“One should not disobey the order of the spiritual master. (47)

“Just as a faithful son may go out for earning money and subsequently brings to his father the wealth gained, later the son may ask for some allowance from the father and whatever he receives from the father he is entitled to spend for his own enjoyment. Similarly, a disciple may hear some instructions from another advanced Vaiṣṇava, but after gaining that good instruction he must bring it and present it to his own spiritual master. After presenting

them, he should hear the same teachings again from his spiritual master with appropriate instructions. (48)

“If the son earns money but does not give it to the father and, instead, directly enjoys the wealth, he is considered to be a fallen son and a sinful person. Similarly, disciple who listens to the words of other Vaiṣṇavas, even if their instructions are proper and true, but does not reconfirm these teachings with his own spiritual master and instead directly, personally accepts these instructions, is considered a bad disciple and a sinner. (49)

“For this reason, in all circumstances all Vaiṣṇavas are offered respect like one offers respect to one’s spiritual master. However, with body, mind and words one serves one’s own spiritual master. (50)

“Even if in the performance of one’s devotional activities one has disobeyed the spiritual master, still one should not give him up, but should remain faithfully with him, because all authorities say that the shelter of one’s own spiritual master is best and perfect (even if another spiritual master is more powerful).” (51)

#### Points of Etiquette

From Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions we distill the following points:

1. Initiation is the preliminary stage of an ongoing process of instruction. The more one practices it, the more one becomes enlightened.
2. A Vaiṣṇava is recognized as a *śikṣā-guru* if he speaks what the *dikṣā-guru* speaks.
3. If a Godbrother is more advanced, he can be seen as *guru*.
4. One who teaches is a *śikṣā-guru*.
5. One may take instruction from a *śikṣā-guru* in the absence of the *dikṣā-guru*.
5. The *śikṣā-guru* is an advanced devotee.
6. However, if the *śikṣā-guru* instructs against instructions of *dikṣā-guru*, then he is a rascal.
7. The *dikṣā-guru* recommends the disciple to a *śikṣā-guru*.

8. The disciple must take the advice of the *dikṣā-guru* as to who is competent to be *śikṣā-guru*.

9. One who is disobedient to his own *guru* cannot function as *śikṣā-guru*.

10. One cannot take other *dikṣā-gurus*.

11. One cannot hear *mantras* from other *dikṣā-gurus*.

12. One cannot disobey the *dikṣā-guru* in the name of following the *śikṣā-guru*.

Additional points, derived from the instructions of *Kṛṣṇa-bhajanāmṛta*, are as follows.

1. One may take instruction from another Vaiṣṇava with the permission of one's *guru* (*śikṣā* or *dikṣā*).

2. One reason for accepting a *śikṣā-guru* may be that one's *dikṣā-guru* does not have sufficient spiritual strength to give adequate instruction.

3. All instruction received from the *śikṣā-guru* should then be presented before one's *guru* for confirmation.

4. In any case, one should not disobey the orders of one's own *guru*.

5. Then, one should accept additional instruction from one's own *guru*.

6. If a disciple fails to hear further from his own *guru*, then he is considered fallen, regardless of the authenticity of the *śikṣā-guru* and his instructions.

7. In fact, any teachings gleaned from another Vaiṣṇava should be confirmed with one's own *guru*.

8. A disciple should not directly accept instructions, even if they are proper and complete. If he does so, he is a sinner.

9. Thus, although all Vaiṣṇavas should be offered respect like one's *guru*, still one's full absorption should be for one's own *guru*.

10. Even if another Vaiṣṇava is more senior and learned, one should always serve one's own *guru* and never give him up.

11. Even in the presence of a senior Vaiṣṇava, the shelter of one's own *guru* is best and perfect.

12. In the case of disagreement between Vaiṣṇava *gurus*, one should maintain the shelter of one's own *guru*, even if he is not possessed of outstanding qualities.

### 3. Summary

The subject of *śikṣā-guru* and *dikṣā-guru* relationships is presented in Chapter Four. The above thirty-eight codes are rough drafts which will be correlated and finally formulated in Chapter Thirteen, which contains all the Codes of Etiquette gleaned from all the chapters of this book.

## Summary of This Book to the GBC

For the purposes of introducing aspects of a *śikṣā* tradition within ISKCON, the GBC executive requested the author to present an abbreviated version of this book for devotees in general. At the time of printing, this summary is merely a proposal, which in all likelihood will undergo serious editing before gaining acceptance as official ISKCON doctrine (if it does so at all). We have included it here as an Appendix.

### 1. The Founder-Ācārya

ISKCON's founder-*ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda, is the primary and compulsory *śikṣā-guru* for all Vaiṣṇavas (*gurus* and disciples) in the Society, who may directly receive empowerment from him through allegiance to his teachings. Because of his position as that personality empowered by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to fulfill His divine prophecy that Kṛṣṇa consciousness be spread throughout the world, Śrīla Prabhupāda is given unique and exceptional

worship and respect by his direct followers as well as all subsequent followers.

Members of ISKCON should understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and be faithful to them. Lessons from all others, even our exalted predecessor *ācāryas*, should be understood through his instructions.

According to Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lord Kṛṣṇa takes responsibility for delivering sincere souls through His representatives. By adhering to Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, even the non-liberated *guru* acts as one liberated, (although he must constantly be aware of his position relative to the liberated *guru*, and conduct himself accordingly, being attentive to avoid accepting any inappropriate modes of worship). The disciples who follow such a careful follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda can achieve liberation.

## 2. The Śikṣā-guru

The basic definition of *guru* is anyone who gives spiritual instructions based on the revealed scriptures. The acceptance of such instructions from the spiritual master is called *śikṣā*, and consequently one who transmits transcendental knowledge to another is known as a *śikṣā-guru*.

By taking responsibility for different aspects of *śikṣā*, Vaiṣṇavas are known according to their specific dealings. The devotee who first gives *śikṣā* is the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, and the saints who give general instruction in devotional practice are known as *sādhus* or *śikṣā-gurus*. The *śikṣā-guru* who gives initiation with the holy name and Gāyatrī *mantra* becomes known as the *dikṣā-guru*, and those Vaiṣṇavas who elevate one to transcendence by their teachings are also *śikṣā-guru*.

Any Vaiṣṇava who gives instruction, shelter, and inspiration should be considered as *śikṣā-guru*. Because the transcendental knowledge which originates from Śrī Kṛṣṇa comes to a devotee through his *śikṣā-gurus*, he deeply reveres them as confidential servants of Kṛṣṇa (and worships them according to their station).

## 3. The Dikṣā-guru

Among many *śikṣā-gurus*, the one who through personal association and regular instruction inspires great faith in a devotee later becomes the *dikṣā-guru*. It is Lord Kṛṣṇa's system that a conditioned soul must surrender to and take initiation from His representative, a *guru* in *paramparā*.

Although their dealings are different, both the *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* are representatives of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (and Śrīla Prabhupāda) acting to guide the disciple back to Godhead. The disciple should not see them as superior or inferior on the basis of the difference in their dealings.

The duty of the *dikṣā-guru* is to train the disciple in the process of devotional service and initiate him by giving the holy name and sacred thread. After initiation he further instructs the disciple in the meaning of the Vedas and remains committed to his liberation from repeated birth and death.

In ISKCON the *dikṣā-guru* is happy to see a disciple receiving training and guidance from many other *śikṣā-gurus*, for this is opulence of the Society. He may also recommend a disciple to a *śikṣā-guru(s)* for specific tutoring, which for some reasons he is not able to give.

## 4. Relationship Between Śikṣā-gurus and Dikṣā-gurus

Since faith is the basic ingredient of spiritual life, the dealings among *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus* increase and focus the faith of the disciple in a cooperative relationship. The general *sad-ācāra* is that the multiple *śikṣā-gurus*, regardless of their spiritual strength, act as associates of the *dikṣā-guru*. They promote the initiator as the prominent force in the spiritual life of the disciple, who sees first and foremost the mercy and shelter of his *dikṣā-guru*.

If there are exceptions to this protocol it is primarily evaluated by the *gurus* who conduct their dealings in a visibly cooperative

way. Their common ground of understanding is the directions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. They are not independent agents, for both are subordinate to the leadership of the mission as its servants.

The *dikṣā-guru* wholeheartedly supports the disciple's faith in, and association with, his instructors. He respects the *śikṣā-gurus* as equal manifestations of Godhead.

Although the relationship between *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru* may appear to be one of leader and subordinate, a disciple should be careful to see their spiritual unity while engaged in different dealings.

## 5. Exception to Dikṣā-guru and Śikṣā-guru Protocol

In the association of many great devotees, a disciple may in time develop greater attachment to his *śikṣā-guru(s)* than for the initiator. Vaiṣṇava etiquette dictates that under such circumstances his primary object of worship continues to be the *dikṣā-guru*. By the arrangement of the *dikṣā-guru*, or due to circumstance, a *śikṣā-guru* may take the prominent place in the life of a disciple. This may happen if the *dikṣā-guru* falls from the path of devotion, if a qualified *dikṣā-guru* was accepted out of formality, or if force of circumstance restricts guidance from the initiator. At such times the *śikṣā-guru* takes the prominent role, and if the *dikṣā-guru* is present, by consent he becomes the voluntary instrument of the instructor(s).

## 6. Qualification of Gurus

Both *śikṣā-gurus* and *dikṣā-gurus* must be the faithful followers of their own spiritual masters and exhibit behavior of a Vaiṣṇava. They should be versed in the science of Kṛṣṇa and speak in with accordance with *sādhu*, *sāstra* and *guru*. They must be pure representatives of Śrīla Prabhupāda and should be in full harmony with his mission and institution.

Understanding the proper etiquette, the *śikṣā-guru* never

speaks against the teachings of the (qualified) initiator. In turn the initiator (*dikṣā-guru*) does not misuse his position to undermine the instructions of the *śikṣā-guru(s)* but seeks to harmonize his instructions with those of the *śikṣā-guru(s)* for the welfare of the disciple.

Those who do not possess these qualifications and who are fallen from the path of devotion should not be accepted as *śikṣā-guru* or *dikṣā-guru*. Further, one who encourages a disciple to disobey his *gurus*, speaks against their teaching, gives *mantras* without authorization and is not faithful to the teachings, mission and will of the founder-*ācārya*, is disqualified from being a *śikṣā-guru* or *dikṣā-guru*. Even very exalted devotees, although more advanced than one's own *gurus* should not be approached as *śikṣā-gurus* if they neglect the *sad-ācāra* above. They may be respected as *sādhus*, but due to differing obligations, devotees should not mix too closely with them.

## 7. Taking Instructions from the Śikṣā-gurus

It is the tradition that instructions given by Vaiṣṇavas should be confirmed with the *dikṣā-guru*. However, when a devotee serves in the society of Vaiṣṇavas (for the mission of the founder-*ācārya*), he may take general instruction and training without reviewing its details with his *dikṣā-guru*. (As the *śikṣā-gurus* are the trustees of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the GBC and the *dikṣā-guru*, their authority as representatives of Kṛṣṇa is on par with the initiator.)

If in the course of his executing the instructions of his *dikṣā-guru*, a devotee feels he requires specific personal spiritual training and counsel in the context of a special relationship with a *śikṣā-guru*, he should follow the proper *sad-ācāra*. He should take permission from the *dikṣā-guru*. Upon receiving it, he may take instruction from a *śikṣā-guru*. But the teachings thus received (even if from a more elevated instructor) should re-presented to the initiator for confirmation, unless the initiator instructs otherwise. (The same holds true if one is under the guardianship of a

*śikṣā-guru* in the absence of a *dikṣā-guru*. One should present instructions to one's primary *śikṣā-guru* for confirmation.) A disciple who directly accepts instructions without regard for his primary *guru*, even if the instructions are proper and complete, transgresses Vaiṣṇava tradition and will not gain mature benefit from learning thus acquired.

## 8. Keeping Faith in One's Own Gurus

Even if the prominence of the *śikṣā-guru* takes place in the heart of the disciple, he will never give up a *dikṣā-guru* (provided he is not fallen or otherwise deemed unqualified by the GBC) but continues to confirm instructions with him, even if the initiator *guru* is apparently less advanced, etc.

A disciple must be careful not to disobey the orders of his *guru*.

While all Vaiṣṇavas should be offered respect like one's *guru*, still one's full absorption should be for one's own *dikṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru(s)*. Even if another Vaiṣṇava is more senior and learned, one should always serve one's own *guru* and never give him up. In the presence of a senior Vaiṣṇava, the shelter of one's own *guru* is best and perfect. In the case of disagreement between Vaiṣṇava *gurus*, one should maintain the shelter of one's own *guru* (who retains his allegiance to the Society), even if he is not possessed of the most outstanding qualities.

## 9. The GBC and Suitability of Śikṣā

The ability to discriminate regarding, the spiritual strength, commitment, example and fidelity (to the Society) of a *guru*, lies with the *madhyama-adhikārī*. When a devotee cannot determine whether a Vaiṣṇava is a suitable candidate to give *śikṣā* he must take direction from his *dikṣā-gurus* and *śikṣā-gurus*. They will clarify the suitability of a Vaiṣṇava to give *śikṣā* for members of the Society. As always, the GBC is the ultimate authority to resolve

such matters, and followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda will find suitable guidelines within the parameters given by Vaiṣṇava *sad-ācāra* and the by laws of the Society's Governing Body. In all circumstance all Vaiṣṇavas should be treated with all due respect.

## 10. The Worship of Gurus

One who serves as a *guru* within ISKCON, even though a follower and representative of Śrīla Prabhupāda, should be cautious not to emulate the worship that Śrīla Prabhupāda receives as the founder-*ācārya*. Śrīla Prabhupāda's worship is a regular function of all the Vaiṣṇavas and it exceeds the homage (e.g., Vyāsa-pūjā) offered to all others. His books, instructions and legacy (tapes, etc.) are promoted worldwide as the primary treasure of the Society, while the contributions of other Vaiṣṇavas are all subservient to his.

A *dikṣā-guru* or *śikṣā-guru* may receive respect from his disciples according to the Society's standards and his own level of advancement. He should train his followers how to show respect and honor to all Vaiṣṇava, according to their station, avoiding exclusivity in their worship of Vaiṣṇava *gurus*. Such training must begin by focusing the disciples in their relationship with Śrīla Prabhupāda, for all *gurus* within ISKCON view themselves as representatives of and servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda and perceive any assistance that they may offer as mercy descending from Kṛṣṇa through Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *guru-paramparā*.

## Our Understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Purport to Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 1.47

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

“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.” (Cc. Ādi 1.47)

In his purport to the above verse, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself teaches us as the instructing spiritual master from within and without. From within He teaches as Paramātmā, our constant companion, and from without He teaches from the *Bhagavad-gītā* as the instructing spiritual master. There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. 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. Thus the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding. The *ācārya* in the true sense of the term, who is authorized to deliver Kṛṣṇa, enriches the disciple with full spiritual knowledge and thus awakens him to the activities of devotional service.”

There are certain points in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements that are open to multiple interpretation. In this book we have adopted one understanding of the words, ‘other’ (in the phrase “...and the other is he who invokes the disciple’s spiritual consciousness”), and ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ (in the phrase, “...objective and subjective ways of understanding”).

We do not want to burden the reader with intricate arguments to prove a point. The purpose of this Appendix is to confirm this book’s usage of these words as acceptable, and consistent with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings.

## 1. The Word ‘Other’

We have understood Śrīla Prabhupāda to talk about “...two kinds of instructing spiritual masters”, one is liberated and the “other” invokes the disciples spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. We have taken the word other, to refer to non-liberated instructing spiritual masters.

The reasons for this are as follows:

1) Śrīla Prabhupāda invokes a strong contrast between the liberated soul (who is fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service), and the “other” who invokes spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. The use of the words ‘invoke’ and ‘relevant,’ indicate a relative approach to *śikṣā* and a lesser stature of *guru*, hence, we assume it refers to a non-liberated soul.

2) This contrast is further confirmed by the last sentence in which Prabhupada speaks of the “...*ācārya* in the true sense of the term” and then goes on to define his exalted service. The

words “true sense” indicate that His Divine Grace is writing of two *gurus* of distinctly different caliber.

3) The understanding of the words “objective” and “subjective” we have accepted, are also consistent with two types of instructors, the liberated and non-liberated.

Hence we have understood the word “other”, to refer to the non-liberated instructing *guru*.

## 2. Objective and Subjective Ways of Understanding

We have taken the Oxford dictionary meaning of the word ‘objective’, which states “...dealing with outward things, exhibiting actual facts uncolored by exhibitors’ feelings or opinions.” From this, the objective way of understanding (which Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly equates with the liberated instructor), has been taken as that knowledge taught from the absolute platform, wherein the instructor describes spiritual reality as it truly exists.

The dictionary meaning of ‘subjective’ is, “...depending on personal idiosyncrasy or individual point of view, not producing the effect of literal and impartial transcription of external realities.” From this, the subjective way of understanding, (which is equated with the ‘other’ instructor), has been taken as the knowledge taught according to the instructor’s relative state of realization, which does not necessarily conform to the complete version of transcendental reality.

In this way the objective way of understanding is the absolute teachings of the liberated soul and the subjective way of understanding, is the relative teachings of the non-liberated instructor.

## 3. Summary

The concept of the non-liberated *guru* is consistent with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings. He writes, “...there are persons who are

less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acarya by strictly following the disciplic succession.” (Letter, April 26, 1968). However, Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly states that their instructions are not as efficient in guiding the disciple as those of the liberated. (*The Nectar of Devotion*, 5)

There are other possible understandings of these words, and we shall mention them below. However, which ever version is acceptable to the reader, it should be noted that neither change

a) the definition of liberated or non-liberated *vaiṣṇavas* used in the book,

b) the freedom of both liberated and non-liberated *vaiṣṇavas* to act as *guru*,

c) the principles of *śikṣā* enunciated in this book.

Here are some other readings of this purport.

It can be safely argued that liberated souls can also teach according to the subjective way of understanding, as a matter of choice or circumstance.

Another example maintains that the liberated souls who are absorbed in meditation are of the *bhajanānandī*'s school and hence they do not give direct instructions, but are instructive living examples to those who see them (the objective way). From this it follows that the liberated souls who actually give relevant verbal instructions to their disciples (the subjective way of understanding) are the *ghoṣṭy-ānandīs*.

In these examples, two types of instructors are mentioned without a liberated/ non-liberated distinction and a slightly different understanding of subjective and objective.

A different understanding of subjective and objective has been tendered by extending the context of the words' meaning to refer to Paramātmā, and the two kinds instructing spiritual masters. In this case subjective understanding comes from the Supersoul, and the objective understanding are the external teachings of both liberated and non liberated instructors.

We do not propose to argue the relative merits of such inter-

pretations. Suffice it to say that they do not constitute a material change in understanding the principles (listed above) of liberated and non liberated *gurus*. At worst, this quote (Cc. *Ādi* 1.47) can be considered arguable evidence for substantiating the principle of non-liberated *gurus*, although substantial other evidence continues to support the argument.

In summary then, we propose that Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport reads in the following way. (Additions included in parenthesis.)

“Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that the instructing spiritual master is a bona fide representative of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself teaches us as the instructing spiritual master from within and without. From within He teaches as Paramātmā, our constant companion, and from without He teaches from the *Bhagavad-gītā* as the instructing spiritual master. There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and the other (the non liberated) is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions. Thus the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective (absolute) and subjective (relative) ways of understanding. The *ācārya* in the true sense of the term, who is authorized to deliver Kṛṣṇa, enriches the disciple with full spiritual knowledge and thus awakens him to the activities of devotional service.”

This reference is found in the following chapters: Chapter Two, Section 4; Chapter Three, Section 2; Chapter Eleven, Section 4; and Chapter Thirteen, Code 7.