

|| śrī-śrī-gaura-gadādharaṁ vijayetaṁ ||

# uttamā-bhakti-sudhā-laharī

## Nectarean Waves of Supreme Devotion

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### MAHĀRĀJĪ: ONE OF THE MANIFESTATIONS OF KṚṢṆA

posted by New Śrī Haridās Nivās, Spain

Dear readers,

We hope to please you with this issue of Laharī that is dedicated to the glorious day of Guru-Pūrṇimā. It is our heartfelt wish to convey to you conscientiously what has been said, heard and written by the great sages who have been authorized to speak about these sweet transcendental topics in their line of disciplic succession.

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*śrī-rādhāyaḥ praṇaya-mahimā kīḍṣo vānayaivā-  
svādyo yenādbhuta-madhurimā kīḍṣo vā māḍiyah  
saukhyam cāsyā mad-anubhavataḥ kīḍṣam veti lobhāt  
tad-bhāvāḍhyaḥ samajani śacī-garbha-sindhau harīnduh*  
(Ādi 1.6)

With the desire to understand of what kind is the glory of the love of Śrī Rādhā, of what kind is His astounding sweetness which She alone relishes, and of what kind is the happiness that She feels on experiencing the love that He feels towards Her - Hari, endowed with the wealth of Śrī Rādhā's emotions, gets born from the womb of Śrīmatī Śacīdevī, like the moon appears from behind the ocean.

*gadādhara-paṇḍitādi - prabhura nija-śakti  
tān' sabāra caraṇe mora sahasra praṇati*  
(Ādi 1.41)

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Those headed by Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍita are the internal potency of the Lord. I offer thousands of obeisances to the lotus feet of all of them.



*kṛṣṇa, guru, bhakta, śakti, avatāra, prakāśa  
kṛṣṇa ei chaya-rūpe, karena vilāsa*  
(Ādi 1.32)

Kṛṣṇa enjoys manifesting Himself in these six forms: as the Lord, gurus, devotees, śaktis, avatāras and plenary portions.

*yāvān aham yathā-bhāvo yad-rūpa-guṇa-karmakaḥ  
tathaiva tattva-vijñānam astu te mad-anugrahāt*  
(Ādi 1.52, ŚB 2.9.32)

(Viṣṇu to Brahmā) May you attain, by My mercy, the true realization of My dimensions, moods, forms, qualities and actions.

*aham evāsam evāgre nānyad yat sad-asat-param  
paścād aham yad etac ca yo 'vaśiṣyeta so 'smy aham*  
(Ādi 1.53, ŚB 2.9.33)

I alone existed prior to the creation of the universe, and nothing else – no gross, subtle or primordial phenomena. I alone exist as the universe after the creation, and I alone remain after the destruction.

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*rte 'rtham yat pratiyeta na pratiyeta cātmani  
tad vidyād ātmano māyām yathābhāso yathā tamaḥ*  
(Ādi 1.54, ŚB 2.9.34)

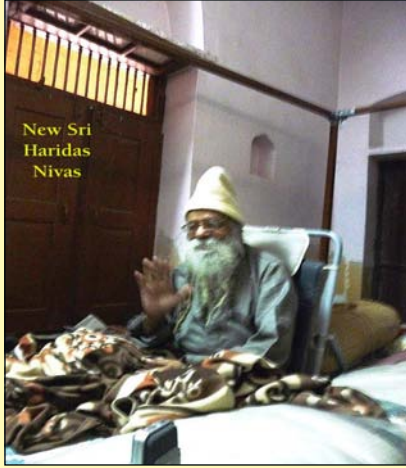
If something which in reality does not exist appears in Me, or if it exists and does not appear in Me, it should be known to be My *māyā* in form of illusion and darkness.

*yathā mahānti bhūtāni bhūteṣūccāveṣv anu  
praviṣṭāny apraviṣṭāni tathā teṣu na teṣv aham*  
(Ādi 1.55, ŚB 2.9.35)

Just as gross elements enter and at the same time do not enter into the beings, whether inferior or superior, I too exist and at the same time do not exist in them.

*etāvad eva jijñāsyam tattva-jijñāsunātmanah  
anvaya-vyatirekābhyām yat syāt sarvatra sarvadā*  
(Ādi 1.56, ŚB 2.9.36)

He who really wants to experience My reality should learn about it from Śrī Guru. It is obtained by following injunctions and prohibitions, everywhere and always.



*granthera ārambhe kari 'maṅgalācaraṇa'  
guru, vaiṣṇava, bhagavān, - tinera smarāṇa*  
(Ādi 1.20)

In the beginning of this work, by remembering guru, devotees and the Lord I have invoked their blessings.

*yadyapi āmāra guru - caitanyera dāsa  
tathāpi jāniye āmi tānhāra prakāśa*  
(Ādi 1.44)

Although I know that my spiritual master is a servant of Śrī Caitanya, I know Him also to be a manifestation of the Lord.

*guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana sāstrera pramāṇe  
guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe*  
(Ādi 1.45)

According to the authority of the scriptures, spiritual master is a form of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives mercy to His devotees in form of guru.

*cintāmaṇir jayati somagirir gurur me  
śikṣā-guruṣ ca bhagavān śikhi-piṅcha-mauliḥ*

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*yat-pāda-kalpataru-pallava-śekhareṣu  
līlā-svayaṁvara-rasaṁ labhate jayaśrīḥ*  
(Ādi 1.57)

All glory to my guru Somagiri who is the touchstone. All glories to my *śikṣā-guru*, Bhagavān, Who has peacock feathers in His diadem. At His beautiful feet, that are like wish-fulfilling trees, Rādhā enjoys the pastimes filled with conjugal *rasa*.

*satām prasaṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido  
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyanāḥ kathāḥ  
taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani  
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*  
(Ādi 1.60, ŚB 3.25.25)

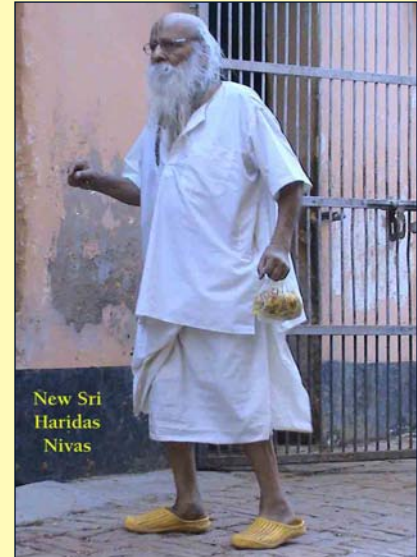
When associating with My devotees, topics of My glorious pastimes become an elixir for the heart and ears. By serving them, one quickly develops faith, liking and *bhakti* in this path which destroys ignorance.

*īśvara-svarūpa bhakta tānra adhiṣṭhāna  
bhaktera hṛdaye kṛṣṇera satata viśrāma*  
(Ādi 1.61)

The devotee has the nature of the Lord and is His abode. Kṛṣṇa always rests in the heart of His devotee.

*bhavad-vidhā bhāgavatās tīrtha-bhūtāḥ svayaṁ vibho  
tīrthī-kurvanti tīrthāni svāntaḥ-sthena gadābhṛtā*  
(Ādi 1.63)

Devotees like you are holy places personified. You purify the holy places because Kṛṣṇa is situated within you.



*dīvyad-vṛndāraṇya-kalpa-drumādhaḥ-  
śrīmad-ratnāgāra-simhāsana-sthau  
śrīmad-rādhā-śrīla-govinda-devau  
preṣṭhālibhiḥ sevyamānau smarāmi*

I remember Śrī-Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, Who are served by Their most intimate female friends, and Who are seated on a throne studded with gems under a wish-fulfilling tree, in a pavillion made of jewels situated in the resplendent forest of Vṛndāvana. (Ādi 1.16)

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*śrīmān rāsa-rasārambhī vaṁśīvaṭa-tāta-sthitah  
karṣan veṇu-svanair gopīr gopināthah śriye 'stu nah  
(Ādi 1.17)*

The all-opulent Gopinātha, Who engages in the *rāsa* dance and tastes its *rāsa*, is on the bank of the Yamunā in Vaṁśīvaṭa, and attracts the *gopīs* with the sound of His flute. May He shower auspiciousness on us.

*naivopayanty apacitīm kavayas taveśa  
brahmāyusāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ  
yo 'ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubham vidhunvann  
ācārya-caitya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti  
(Ādi 1.48, ŚB 11.29.6)*

O Lord! Discriminative persons, who are greatly blissful on remembering what You have done for them, cannot fully express their indebtedness to You, even if they were endowed with the lifetime of Brahmā - You appear externally as guru and internally as Paramātmā, destroying materialistic impressions and revealing the path towards You.



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It is clear that considering everything the Lord has provided to us, we can only be grateful for having given us His representative (Guru).

Anything one can say about Guru will never be sufficient. This has already been made clear in the past in many literary works by the great Vaiṣṇavas. This fact will come alive, or its scriptural meaning will get manifest, when our living together (in any of its forms) with such a great soul becomes a reality in our lives.

This is so because the influence of his saintly association sheds light on our lives, for only he has the capacity to transmit to us - due to being continually immersed in the mellows of pure devotional service and due to his causeless mercy - this sublime love which we constantly hanker for.

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Nowadays we can say that we are really rich and happy in the company of such a great soul as His Holiness Śrī Haridās Śāstrī Mahārājī, who is present on this earth, and who benefits us in all circumstances of our life.

Because of all this we can sweetly conclude that Kṛṣṇa could not have done it better :) when He manifested His internal potency in such a servant, exceeding thus all our expectations of His mercy on us.

## THERE IS NO HIGHER PRINCIPLE THAN GURU (1)

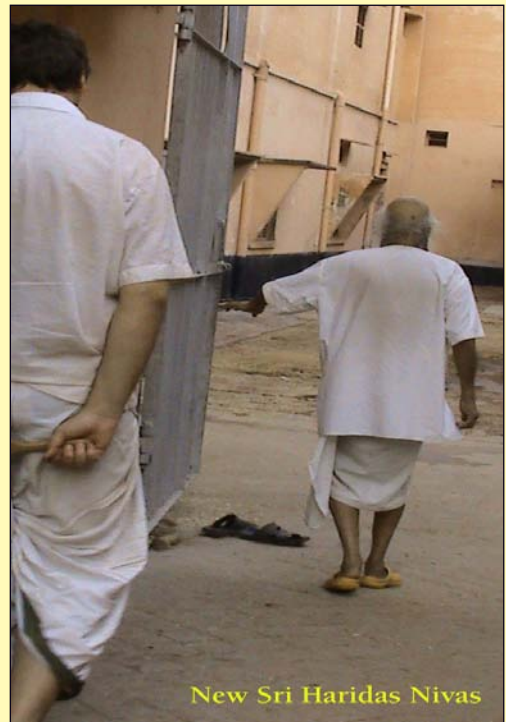
*posted by New Śrī Haridās Nivās, Spain*

As it was demonstrated by the Lord Caitanya Himself, the *ślokas* of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam can be understood in many ways. Śrīnivāsa Ācārya has written a commentary on the famous *catuḥ-ślokī* verses, which form the essence of the whole Bhāgavatam, where he elucidates points which are not usually mentioned.

On the occasion of Guru-Pūrṇimā, we present his commentary on the last *catuḥ-ślokī* verse, which he shows in the light of *guru-tattva*. Śrīnivāsa Ācārya's words come in green, and are accompanied by Śrī Haridās Śāstrī's translation-commentary, as found in Śrī-Kṛṣṇa-Bhajanāmṛta tathā Catuḥślokī-Bhāṣyam, pp. 52-53. The translation of the verse in question was done in accordance with Śrīnivāsa Ācārya's commentary.

*eṭāvad eva jijñāsyam tattva-jijñāsunātmanah  
anvaya-vyatirekābhyām yat syāt sarvatra sarvadā  
ŚB 2.9.35*

**He who desires to know My reality should inquire about it this much, by following with enthusiasm his Guru, everywhere and always.**



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tad evaṁ madhureṇa samāpayet—etāvad eveti | ātmano mama tattvaṁ pūrvoktaṁ sugopyaṁ sarva-guhyatamaṁ parama-rahasyaṁ jijñāsunā jñātum icchunā śiṣyeṇa etāvad eva jijñāsyāṁ—punaḥ punar jñātavyaṁ, kutaḥ paramastu? parama-sādhana-parama-puruṣārtha-vicāranipuṇa-śrī-bhāgavata-rakta-rasikāsaṅga-saṅgi-prasanno-jjvala-citta-jīvanī-bhūta-govinda-pāda-padma-sudhāsvā-daka-śrī-caitanya-candra-caraṇābja-cañcarīka-śrī-rād-hā-pada-nakha-candra-cakora-śrī-gurutaḥ śikṣaṇīyaṁ, pūrvoktam eva, śrī-kṛṣṇa-līlā-rahasya-svakīyā-parakīyā, gopīṣu parakīyā-bhāvādikāṁ nānyat |

kena prakāreṇa? ity āha—anvaya-vyatirekābhyāṁ | anvayena anugamanena anusevayety arthaḥ | vyatirekeṇa viśiṣṭena atirekeṇa autkaṭyena | yat śrī-guror anugama-nāṁ sarvatra sarva-bhajana-sādhane anusaraṇaṁ sarvadā sarva-kālena jīvane maraṇe vipadi sampadi dūre nikaṭe dinādaṁ niśādaṁ saṅkīrtanādaṁ mahā-prasāde anuśīlane ity ādi |

Śrī Haridās Śāstrī: Now the author concludes this topic in a sweet manner. Having awoken to the need for inquiring into My (Śrī Kṛṣṇa's) innermost secret and supremely confidential Reality spoken of before, the disciple should investigate this matter again and again.

The only solid ground for such an inquiry can be found at the lotus feet of Śrī Guru. It is also impres-cindible for Śrī Gurudeva to be perfectly familiar with reflecting on the topic of the supreme path to the supreme goal and similar matters.

Moreover, he is attached to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, is wholly devoted to association with *rasika* devotees and has, therefore, pure and bright mind. He relishes the nectar of the lotus feet of Śrī Govinda (Who is the essence of life), is the bumblebee at the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Candra, and as the *cakora* bird relishes the moons of Śrī Rādhā's feet nails. The secret of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* is to be inquired only from this kind of Śrī Gurudeva, who is expert in adoring Śrī Gaura and Śrī Govinda.

This secret *līlā* is twofold – *svakīyā* and *parakīyā*. It should be known that in the case of *gopīs* there is only *parakīyā*, and nothing else (no *svakīyā*).

How should it be learnt? The author describes the manner of how to do it – by *anvaya* and *vyatireka*. *Anvaya* means **following** (*ānugatya*), which translates as **constant service**, and *vyatireka* indicates **abundance** (*autkaṭya*), in other words **tremendous eagerness**.

Thus, the secret of Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* can only be known by performing service constantly, following, with great eagerness, the lotus feet of Śrī Guru. For this reason, following one's Gurudeva everywhere and always is an absolutely necessary *dharma*.

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"Everywhere" indicates the whole *bhajana-sādhana*, and "always" means at all times, i.e. while living and while dying, when having success and when in adversity, while being far and while being near him, at dawn and at dusk, when starting *saṅkīrtana* and when honoring *prasādam* - in short, one needs to follow one's Gurudeva at every step and at every moment, while constantly carrying out his work.



The uniform evidence of this can be found in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and many other scriptures:

*tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

He who desires to know about the highest welfare should surrender to Guru who is deeply versed in *śāstras*, has realized them and is peaceful, having taken shelter in Brahman (i.e. he practises what he has learnt and realized). (ŚB 11.3.21),

*tatra bhāgavatān dharmān śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ amāyānuvṛtṭyā yais tuṣyed ātmātma-do hariḥ*

He should learn *bhāgavata-dharmas* from the Guru who is his very self and adorable deity, by following him and having no personal agenda. That will please Hari, Who gives Himself to His devotees. (ŚB 11.3.22)



*gurur eva ātmā daivataṁ ca | tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*  
Guru alone is one's self and one's worshipable deity. I pay obeisances to that Śrī Guru.

*nanv artha-kovidā brahmaṇ varṇāśrama-vatām iha ye mayā guruṇā vācā taranty aṅjo bhavārṇavam*

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(Kṛṣṇa to Sudāma) O *brāhmaṇa*, among the followers of *varṇāśrama* those are knowledgeable about their true welfare who easily cross the ocean of wordly existence by following the words of the Guru who is but Me. (ŚB 10.80.33)

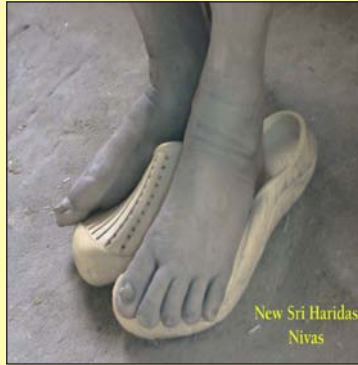
*sa vai sat-karmaṇām sākṣād dvijāter iha sambhavaḥ ādyo 'nga yatrāśramiṇām yathāham jñāna-do guruḥ*

(Kṛṣṇa to Sudāma) My dear friend, he who has given one his physical birth is his first guru, and he who has initiated one as a twice-born, engaging him in his prescribed duties, is indeed directly his guru. But he who bestows transcendental knowledge to the members of all *āśramas* is the best Guru. Indeed, He is as good as My own self. (ŚB 10.80.32)

*guror anugraheṇaiva pūrṇaḥ*

*hari-guru-caraṇāravinda-yugalānuśīlanena*

One gets complete only by the mercy of the Guru, performing devoted service to the lotus feet of Hari and Guru.



*balavān ādaro yasya na syād guru-pādāmbuje śrutair apy asya sac-chāstraiḥ kṛṣṇe bhaktir na jāyate*

*Bhakti* unto Kṛṣṇa is not born in those who do not hold their Guru in greatest respect, even if they study *śrutis* and other genuine *śāstras*.

*harir eva guruḥ, gurur eva hariḥ*

Hari is indeed Guru, Guru is indeed Hari.

*nṛ-deham ādyaṁ su-labhaṁ su-durlabhaṁ plavaṁ su-kalpaṁ guru-karṇadhāraṁ mayānukūlena nabhasvateritaṁ pumān bhavābdhiṁ na taret sa ātma-hā*

(Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava) Having attained the human body, which is rarely obtained, but can be achieved easily by good fortune, and which is like a well-constructed boat, with the Guru as the captain, pushed by the favorable wind of serving Me, a person who does not cross the ocean of material existence is a killer of himself. (ŚB 11.20.17)

*guruṣu nara-matiḥ*

He who sees the Guru as an ordinary human being goes to hell. (Padma-Purāṇa)

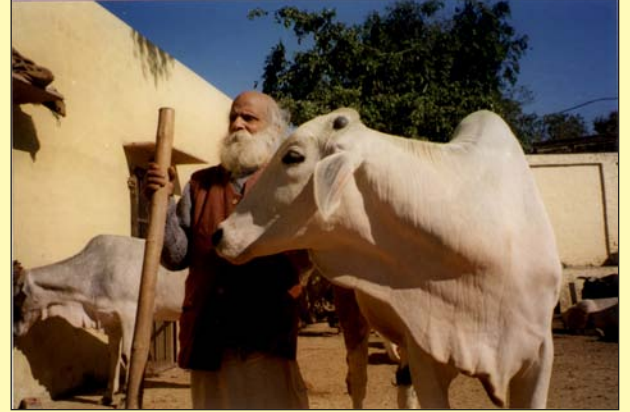
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*guror avajñā śruti-śāstra-nindanaṁ*

(The two greatest *nāma-aparādhas* are) disrespect of Guru and criticizing *śruti* and *bhakti-śāstra*. (Padma-Purāṇa)

*ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyān nāvanmanyeta karhicit na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ*

(Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava) One should know the *ācārya* to be Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary person, since Guru contains all the *devatās*. (ŚB 11.17.27)



*kiṁ bahunā? nāsti tattvaṁ gurau param iti dik ||35||*

(Thus) it is absolutely essential to surrender at the feet of Śrī Gurudeva and to study *bhāgavata-dharma* only from him who is one's *ātmā*, i.e. supreme friend, and *devatā*, i.e. supreme object of adoration. Why say more? There is no *tattva* superior to that of Guru.

## THERE IS NO HIGHER PRINCIPLE THAN GURU (2)

*posted by New Śrī Haridās Nivās, Spain*

To support Śrīnivāsa Ācārya's point about there being no higher *tattva* than that of Guru, we offer the following statements by our teachers.

--In his *Sādhana-Dīpikā*, Śrī Rādhākṛṣṇa dās analyzes *rāgānuga-bhakti* as defined by Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu* 1.2.270. He says that *tac ca śrī-kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhānugatanīṣṭhaṁ tad evānugatyaṁ iti phalitārthaḥ | tac ca tad-anugatatte sati tādrśa-kāyavān-mānasīya-sevā-karṣṭvaṁ ceti* - "The essence of *rāgānuga* (*rāga+anuga*) is to follow the beloved of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which means becoming a follower of one's Gurudeva and performing service (to him) through one's body, speech and mind."

He goes on to analyze other related verses and states categorically *tathā śrī-kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha-guru-samsargeṇaiva tad-bhāvotpattiḥ syāt | nānyatheti bhāvaḥ* (10.15) - "It is only by the union with the Guru, the beloved of Kṛṣṇa, that the *bhāva* (of a Kṛṣṇa's associate) can originate. There is no other way."

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Later on, he concludes *tasmāt śrī-guror āvaśyakatvam | tac-caraṇāvalambanam vinā premotpattir na bhavāti niṣkarṣārthaḥ* (10.19) - "Therefore, the conclusion is drawn that Śrī Gurudeva is necessary and without taking shelter of his lotus feet *premā* will not originate." (For the full treatment of the topic, see Laharī 3 and 4).

--In the similar vein, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa quotes this verse from *smṛiti* in his Govinda-Bhāṣya (3.3.45)

*guru-prasādo balavān na tasmād balavattaram tathāpi śravaṇādīś ca kartavyo mokṣa-siddhaye*

"The Guru's mercy is most important. Nothing is more important than that. Still, in order to attain liberation one should certainly engage in devotional practices such as hearing etc."

--Indeed, Rūpa Gosvāmī shows in Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu (1.2.83) that the direct relationship with the Guru forms but the door for entering into *uttamā bhakti* (see Laharī 1 for a more detailed discussion). In other words, without the Guru one cannot be said to perform *uttamā bhakti*.



--Actually, service to Guru eliminates the necessity of other spiritual practices:

*asaṅkalpāj jayet kāmam krodham kāma-vivarjanāt arthānartheṣayā lobham bhayam tattvāvamarśanāt ānvīkṣikyā śoka-mohau dambham mahad-upāsayā yogāntarāyān maunena hiṁsām kāmādy-anīhayā kṛpayā bhūtajam duḥkham daivam jahyāt samādhinā ātmajam yoga-vīryeṇa nidrām sattva-niṣevayā rajas tamaś ca sattvena sattvam copaśamena ca etat sarvam gurau bhaktyā puruṣo hy aṅjasā jayet*

ŚB 7.15.22-25

Śrī Nārada told King Yudhiṣṭhira, "To conquer lust one must give up one's determination to enjoy, to win over anger one must give up lust, to overcome greed

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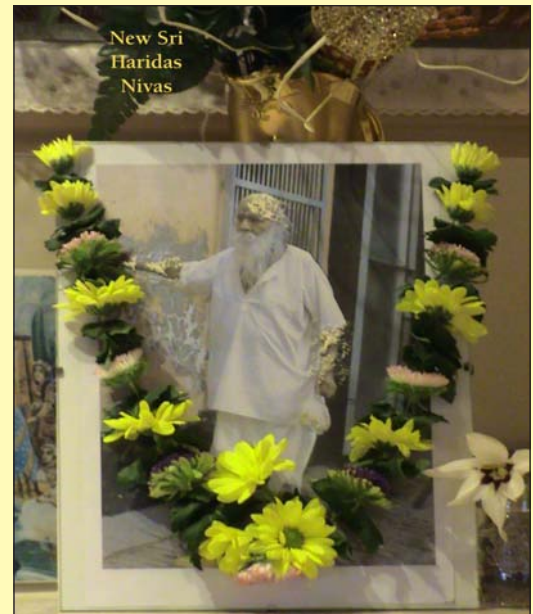
one must see the uselessness of objects of greed, and to give up fear one needs to reflect on the Absolute Reality.

By considering what is *ātmā* and *non-ātmā* one can conquer lamentation and illusion, by serving a great soul one can become prideless, by a vow of silence one can avoid obstacles on the path of *yoga*, and by giving up desire for sense gratification one can subdue violence.

Suffering caused by other living entities can be mitigated by doing beneficial acts for them, suffering caused by the elements can be alleviated by entering into *samādhi* (uniting the mind with Bhagavān), and suffering caused by one's own body and mind can be tempered by practice of *yoga*. Sleep is overcome through *sāttvika* food.

One wins over *rajas* and *tamas* by a predominance of *sattva*, and one conquers *sattva* by being indifferent to the results of *sattva*. However, **one overcomes all of these obstacles easily by devotion to Guru.**"

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments: *aṅjasā śīghram āyāsābhāvena sarvam jayet | sarva-rogoपाśamanam mukhyam ekam eva mahausadham ivety arthaḥ | tatra kāmādi-jayo jñāninām guru-bhakter anusamhitam phalam śuddha-bhaktānām tv ānuṣāṅgikam iti viśeṣo draṣṭavyaḥ* "One overcomes all obstacles quickly and easily by *bhakti* to Guru. **This is like taking just one principal medicine which cures all other diseases.** For the *jñānīs*, destruction of lust and other obstacles is a sought result of devotion to Guru. For the pure devotees, destruction of lust is a secondary result of devotion to Guru. That is the difference."



--In the ŚB verse 11.2.21 quoted in the preceding article, it is said that one of the characteristics of a genuine Guru is not only that he thoroughly knows *śāstras* but that he has also realized them.

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Śrīdhara Svāmī comments, śābde brahmaṇi vedākhye niṣṇātam, anyathā saṁśaya-nirāsakatvāyogyatvād dhetoh, pare brahmaṇi aparokṣānubhave ca niṣṇātam, anyathā yato bodha-samcārābhāvāt –

“(Firstly,) he is learned in the scriptures such as Vedas and others, otherwise he will not be able to dispel the doubts (of his disciples). (Secondly), he has direct experience (aparokṣa-anubhava) of the Absolute Truth, otherwise he will not be able to transmit the understanding (to his disciples).”

This means that mere theoretic study of śāstra is of little use for a spiritual practitioner, since he needs help of Guru for real understanding to be transmitted unto him.

--Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad (6.28) puts it this way:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau  
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanāḥ*

“Only to those great souls who are devoted to both the Supreme Lord and the spiritual master are the imports of Vedic knowledge revealed.”

--Finally, Śrīdhara Svāmī sums it up beautifully at the end of his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā:

*sva-prāgalbhya-balād vilōḍya bhagavad-gītām tad-  
antargatam tattvam prepsur upaiti kim  
guru-kṛpā-piyūṣa-dṛṣṭim vinā  
ambu svāñjalinā nirasya jaladher āditsur  
antar-maṇīnāvarteṣu na kim nimajjati janaḥ  
sat-karṇadhāram vinā*



“Does a person who desires to attain the Truths contained within the Bhagavad-Gītā by trying to understand them on the strength of his own proficiency, realize them without the gracious nectarean look of the Guru?”

Is a person who desires to get the jewels that lie at the bottom of the ocean by bailing out the water with the hollow of his hands, not doomed to failure unless he is helped by an able seaman?”

*next article continues in the column on the right*

## THERE IS ONLY ONE MAIN GURU

*posted by New Śrī Haridās Nivās, Spain*

There is a tendency to believe that one can have more spiritual masters, and this seems corroborated also by the statements of śāstra. The following lines will analyze some of them, and will show that actually they refer only to one principal guru.

--In Tattva-Sandarbha, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī writes

*atha natvā mantra-gurūn gurūn bhāgavatārtha-dān  
śrī-bhāgavata-sandarbhām sandarbham vaśmi lekhitum*

After offering obeisances to my initiating spiritual master and to those spiritual masters who taught me the meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, I wish to write this work called Śrī Bhāgavata-Sandarbha.

In the Sanskrit original, the expression *mantra-guru* (initiating spiritual master) comes in plural. When asked about it, Mahārājī clarified that in Sanskrit grammar, plural may be used in a honorific way when referring to a single great personality, which is the case also here. Therefore, the *mantra-guru*, though used in plural, is only one, and has been rendered in singular in its English translation.

--Śrīla Narahari Sarkār Ṭhākur writes in Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Bhajanāmṛta: *yadi tāv alpa-balau tathāpy anya-mahātām mukhāc chikṣā-viśeṣam jñātvāpi gurave deyam | tad eva guruṣu paṭhanīyam na tu gurau helā kartavyā, yathā sneha-bhājana-putro'rthopārjanam pitre dattvā prārthya ca svayam bhunkte | yadi svayam ānīya khādati, tataḥ kuputraḥ pāpī syāt | tasmāt sarvatra vaiṣṇavānām guroḥ samādhikārā pūjā kāryā | tathāpi kāya-mano-vākyaair guror eva sevnam kuryāt |*

“If one’s *dikṣā guru* and *śikṣā guru* [Mahārājī explains that one’s living *dikṣā guru* is at the same time one’s *śikṣā guru*] are spiritually weak, then even if one gets to know some specific information from the lotus mouth of another great soul, still he must offer it to his Guru and study it under him, else it would amount to disrespecting him.

The same attitude can be observed in a loving son who gives all that he earns to his father and enjoys it himself only after requesting and getting his father’s permission. On the other hand, the son who eats on his own what he has brought himself is a bad son and a sinner.

Therefore, while it is true that all the Vaiṣṇavas should be seen on the same level as Guru and worshiped as such, still one should serve with (all of) one’s body, mind and speech one’s own Guru only.”

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--In the Bhagavad-Gītā, the famous 4.34 verse speaks about Gurus in plural:

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

Acquire that through prostration, inquiry and service. The wise who are knowers of the Truth will teach you that knowledge.



However, this does not mean that one should have many Gurus. Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī comments: *bahu-vacanāṁ cedam ācārya-viśayam ekasminn api gauravātiśayārtham na tu bahutva-vivakṣayā | ekas-mād eva tattva-sākṣātkāravata ācāryāt tattva-jñānoda-ye satyācāryāntara-gamanasya tad-artham ayogād iti draṣṭavyam |*

“The *ācārya* is mentioned here in plural case but still he is one. The plural case was only used here to show the immense respectability (of the Guru), and not to convey the idea of many Gurus. The knowledge about Absolute Reality arises from a single Guru alone who has directly realized that Absolute Reality. It is not proper to go to other *sad-gurus* for this purpose.”

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī also refers only to one Guru in his comment: *praṇipātena jñānopadeṣṭari gurau daṇḍavan-namaskāreṇa | bhagavan! kuto'yaṁ me saṁsāraḥ? katham nivartisyate? iti paripraśnena ca | sevayā tat-paricaryayā ca | tad vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham iti śruteḥ |*

“*Praṇipātena* (through prostration) means offering prostrated obeisances to the Guru who teaches knowledge. *Paripraśna* (inquiry) is: ‘O Bhagavān (Gurudeva)! Why am I in the material world? How can I stop material life?’ *Sevayā* (through service) means serving him (or her).” *Śruti* says “With firewood in his hands, one should approach a Guru who is learned and realized, in order to acquire realized knowledge”.

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--Another verse which suggests the notion of many spiritual masters comes in ŚB 11.9.31 where a *brāhmaṇa* speaking to King Yadu explains that various objects serve him as gurus. In this connection, he says

*na hy ekasmād guror jñānam susthiraṁ syāt supuṣkalam  
brahmaitad advitīyaṁ vai gīyate bahudharṣibhiḥ*

Although the Lord is one without a second, the sages have described him in many different ways. Therefore one may not be able to acquire firm and complete knowledge from one Guru.

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments: *nanu mad abhi-jñāṁ guruṁ śāntam upāsīta iti, tasmād guruṁ pra-padyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam ity ādy uktibhya eka eva gurur āsrayaṇiyo'vagamyate | nāpi śvetaketu-bhr-gu-pramukhair bahavo gurava āśritāḥ | satyaṁ ma-māpi mantropadeṣṭā gurur eka eva upāsyo vartate | kintūpāsanāyām ānukūlya-prātikūlya-drṣṭāntībhūtā ete padārthāḥ parāmrśya gurū-krtā ity anvaya-vya-tirekābhyāṁ me śikṣā-gurava evaite jñeyāḥ | tathāpi svāmi-caraṇair upanibaddhau śloka—*

*kapota-mīna-hariṇā kumārī-gaja-pannagāḥ |  
pataṅgaḥ kuraraś caṣṭau heyārthe guruvo matāḥ ||  
madhukṛṇ madhuhartā ca piṅgalā ca dvayos trayāḥ |  
upādeyārtha-vijñāne śeṣāḥ pṛthvy-ādayo matāḥ || iti |*

*śikṣā-gurūṇāṁ tu bāhulyam eva prāyo jñāna-dārdhya-prayojakam ity āha—na hīti | nanu śikṣā-guravo'py abhijñā-janā eva bhavyair āśriyante ? satyam, abhijñā-janānām hi gautamādi- nānā-matānusāritvān mayā svajātiyas te kutra kutra katy anveṣṭavyā ? ity āha—brahmeti | advitīyam yad brahma etat khalu sa-viśeṣa-nirviśeṣa-bheda-vibhedair bahudhaiva ṛṣibhir gīyate iti | nāsāv ṛṣir yasya matam na bhinnam ity abhiyukta-vākyaḥ ca | mayā vyavahārikā eva padārthāḥ śikṣā-gu-ravaḥ krtā iti bhāvaḥ ||31 ||*

“It is said ‘One should worship a peaceful Guru who knows Me’ (ŚB 11.10.5) and ‘The person inquisitive about the highest welfare should surrender to Guru.’ (ŚB 11.3.21) From these statements it is understood that one should accept only one Guru. Śvetaketu, Bhr-gu and others did not accept many Gurus, either. And true, my *mantra*-giving Guru, too, is my only worshi-pable. But considering things which act as examples of what is favorable or unfavorable for performing wor-ship and service, I have made those things my gurus. They are my *śikṣā-gurus*, teaching by negative or posi-tive example. Śrīdhara Svāmī has provided this verse:

“The pigeon, fish, deer, young girl, elephant, snake, moth and *kurara* bird are eight gurus teaching what to avoid. The three gurus - bee, honey col-lector, and Piṅgalā - teach what to avoid and what to accept. Others, such as the earth, teach what should be accepted.”

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The purpose of having many śikṣā-gurus is generally to strengthen one's knowledge. That is explained in this verse. 'But should we not accept as śikṣā-gurus those who have knowledge?' That is true, but because knowledgeable persons have many philosophies, where will I find someone with the same philosophy as mine? Brahman which is only one is glorified in many ways—personal and impersonal—by the sages. It is also said that 'a person is not a sage if he does not have a different opinion' (Mahābhārata, Vana-Parva 313.117). Therefore I have accepted common objects alone as my śikṣā-gurus."

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments in his Krama-Sandarbha: ...tat-tan-matena mati-bhaṅgād ity arthaḥ | tasmān mahā-gurūpaḍiṣṭa-mata-poṣāya tad-viruddha-mata-nirasanāya ca sva-buddhyā mananārthaṁ vyāvahārika-padārthā eva gurutvena sambhāvitāḥ, na tu kāpilādi-matāntara-sthāpakā iti bhāvaḥ |

"By hearing many different opinions our purpose gets disturbed. Therefore, ordinary objects indeed, and not persons establishing different doctrines like that of Kapila, are considered to be gurus, for duly reflecting on them with one's intelligence one strengthens the philosophy taught by one's principal Guru (mahā-guru) and refutes views that oppose him."

--As seen in many instances mentioned in this Laharī, words referring to Guru often come directly in singular case. Let us conclude this topic by ŚB 11.3.48 and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's authoritative statements:

*labdhvānugraha ācāryāt tena sandarśitāgamah mahā-puruṣam abhyarcen mūrtyābhimatayātmanah*

Having obtained the mercy of his Guru, and having been shown the injunctions of Āgamas by him, one should worship the Supreme Lord in the particular personal form he finds most attractive.



Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments: mantra-gurus tv eka evety āha—labdhvānugraha iti | anugraho mantra-dīkṣā-rūpaḥ | āgamo mantra-vidhi-śāstram | asyaikatvam eka-vacanatvena bodhyate | "This verse says that mantra-guru is only one. The "mercy" refers here to ini-

tiation into mantra. The "Āgamas" refer to śāstras that describe rules concerning the mantra. The fact that the mantra-guru is one is shown by the word ācārya in singular case."



To sum up, we can conclude that one can only have one principal Guru, who initiates him into mantra (dīkṣā) and teaches and transmits him knowledge (śikṣā). If one obtains some information from other persons or objects, he must compare it against what he has learnt from his Guru and consult it with him. In this way he can remain unshaken in his purpose, develop a stable relationship with a beloved of Kṛṣṇa, and experience the Absolute Reality.



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