

Tridandi Swami Sri Srimad Bhaktivedanta Narayana Maharaja

WHAT IF GURU IS NOT PURE?

Murwillumbah, Australia: December 3, 2002 (evening – part 2)

Suppose a person unfortunately took initiation from an unqualified guru who was not on the stage of a mahabhagavat. That guru was not realized in the established truths. The word sabde means sastras like the Vedas, Upanisads, and so on. It also means the holy name. Pare means Krsna. That guru had no realization of Krsna or His names or His glories as told in sastra, and he was only on the level of kansitha-adhikari – but still he thought he was guru. He had many worldly desires, such as the desire for name, fame, and wealth, and someone unfortunately took harinama and diksa from him. * [See Endnote 1]

Do the verses that glorify the qualifications of guru apply to that guru or not? Should the disciple obey that guru with the attitude of surrender ordered by all the sastras? Should he follow that guru totally or not? Can a person acquire pure cow milk from a male donkey? Can a person get sweet mangos from a thorn tree? What is the disciple's duty towards that kind of guru?

Suppose a person unfortunately took initiation from an [Syamarani dasi:] Srila Gurudeva has ordered me to reply this question: sastra speaks about the glories of guru and how one must surrender to guru. Should one surrender to a guru who is not pure and who does not have the qualities of a sad-guru?

The three main qualifications of the bona fide guru are given in the verse:

tasmad gurum prapadyeta
jijnasuh sreya uttamam
sabde pare ca nisnatam
brahmany upasamasrayam

The guru must have three qualities. He must have heard sabda-brahma, the transcendental sound, the holy names and the words of sastra, from his bona fide guru, and he must have realized it. He will be realizing whatever is written in the sastra and he will be realizing the holy name. He will not be chanting nama-aparadha or nama-abhasa. He will be chanting suddha-nama, and that means he will be a suddha-bhakta.

He will be learned in all the sastras. The three types of devotees are kanistha-adhikari, madhyama-adhikari, and uttama-adhikari. Even the madhyama-adhikari bhakta does not fully understand all the sastras. He knows something, but he does not know all the sastras thoroughly. Therefore, it is not he who is explained when that sad-guru is explained in this verse. One must be in full knowledge of the science of Krsna.

In the eleventh canto of Srimad-Bhagavatam it is stated that the devotee who is one hundred percent fixed in the knowledge of sastra and can convince others is an uttama-guru. Such a guru is a sad-guru.* [See Endnote] It is also stated in Caitanya-caritamrta:

kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, sudra kene naya
yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya

["Whether one is a brahmana, a sannyasi or a sudra—regardless of what he is—he can become a spiritual master if he knows the science of Krsna" (Caitanya Caritamṛta, Madhya-līla 8.128)]

One who is bound cannot untie the ropes of someone else who is bound. He himself must be unbound. He must be fully liberated. He will not only know sastra, but he must be detached from material life. This is the third symptom of guru described in the verse "tasmad gurum prapadyeta..." He will have no anxieties and no desire for material happiness. He is called a vimala Vaisnava. Guru means vimala, or suddha (pure) Vaisnava. Only by the mercy of a suddha Vaisnava is all perfection in bhakti possible, and therefore, in his own prayers to Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Kṛṣṇa, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura is teaching us how to pray. In his song "Vimala Vaisnava", he prays, "kandīya kandīya – Living in this Godrūma forest I am simply weeping. O Bhagavan, O Caitanya Mahāprabhu, I am only living to get this mercy from you." What mercy does he want?

hari hari kabe more ha'be hena dina, vimala vaisnave,
rati upajibe, vasana haibe ksina

["O Hari! O Mahāprabhu! When will the fortunate day come when rati, deep love and attachment, will come in my heart for the lotus feet of the pure-hearted Vaisnavas? At that time I will honor and serve them, and thus all my material desires and anarthas, especially lust and anger, will go." (Vimala Vaisnava, first verse).]

Please give me the mercy so that I will develop rati, strong love and attachment. This rati does not mean bhava; it means prema. Please give me love and affection for vimala Vaisnava. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura is praying to have love for that type of guru. Suppose one accepts a guru who is sincere but not self-realized, and then later on one meets a pure devotee and realizes that the guru from whom he took dikṣā is not pure and does not have all the qualities of sad guru. He will then go to his non self-realized guru and say, "I have found a pure devotee. Will you bless me that I can have his association?" If that guru replies, "Yes, go, and I will follow right behind you," then that disciple can honor him and at the same time go to that first class guru for complete shelter. On the other hand, if that guru says, "No, only follow me," then he should at once be rejected. In Bhakti-sandarbhā (Anuccheda 238), Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has given the injunction that if one's guru is envious of an exalted Vaisnava one should immediately reject that guru and find a maha-bhagavat Vaisnava guru.

If the guru is a vimala Vaisnava, then "vasana haibe ksina" – by having affection for that suddha-bhakta, that vimala Vaisnava, all my material desires and all my anarthas will disappear. There are four kinds of anarthas – misconceptions, offences, thirst for material enjoyment, and weakness of heart in the form of envy, desire for name and fame, and evil-mindedness. This occurs only by the mercy of that vimala Vaisnava, and only by

having love and affection for him – by guru-devatatma – seeing him as more dear than our very atmas.

Then what will take place?

antare-bahire, sama vyavahara amani manada ha'bo
krsna-sankirtane, sri-krsna-smarane, satata majiya ra'bo

["With a heart free from duplicity, my outer behavior will correspond to my inner feelings and thoughts. Seeing myself as completely insignificant, I will give all respect to others, seeking no honor in return. Always dancing and singing the holy names, I will remain constantly absorbed in remembering Sri Krsna's beautiful pastimes." (Vimala Vaisnava verse 2)]

One cannot make advancement if he associates with devotees who are visayis. When sastra orders one to be free of association of visayis, this does not only mean karmis or yogis. It also means devotees who are materialistic. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura is instructing us to give up even that association and take shelter of the vimala Vaisnava. By that, we will be able to discriminate between different levels of devotees and respect them according to their capacity in bhakti. We will respect them without desiring any respect for ourselves. My bodily activities will then go on as a matter of habit and I will then be able to remember Krsna. While chanting Krsna's holy names His pastimes will continuously come in my heart like a waterfall or a steady stream of honey poured from a jar.

In this verse, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura is teaching us how to pray, and what to pray for. He says, "I am only living for that." By having love and affection for such a guru, I will automatically know what to give up and what to accept. I will automatically accept the right things and I will automatically give up that which is bad for me. Then at the time of death, I will leave this body very happily remembering Krsna. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura concludes this song by saying, "O Caitanya Mahaprabhu, I am living only so that you will give me this mercy – that I can have love for such a vimala Vaisnava."

bhaktivinoda, ei asa kori, bosiya godruma-bane
prabhu-krpa lagi, vyakula antare, sada kande sangopane

["Residing alone in the forest of Godruma and continuously weeping, Bhaktivinoda anxiously prays, 'I am living only with the hope that Mahaprabhu will bestow his mercy on me.'" (Vimala Vaisnava, verse 5)]

[Srila Narayana Maharaja:] We must consider that the presence of uttama-adhikari (mahabhagavata), madhyama-uttama-adhikari (those approaching the stage of bhava), and even madhyama-madhyama-adhikari (one at the stage of asakti) devotees are very rare in this world. It is very rare, therefore, to have a guru of this caliber. What should we do under these circumstances? We will have to take a guru. If a guru is not "sabde

pare ca nisnatam", if he has not realized the established truths delineated in the Vedas, Upanisads and other sastras, but he has very strong faith in his pure guru and is sincerely following him, then, even if he is a madhyama-adhikari – or even kanistha-madhyama – do not reject that guru. If he is always serving his own mahabhagavat guru and is obedient both internally and externally to him, then do not reject him. We can give up our guru only with the consideration given by Srila Sanatana Gosvami in his Hari-bhakti-vilasa:

avaishnava-mukhodgirnam putam hari-kathamrtam
sravanam naiva kartavyam sarpocchistam yatha payah

["One should not hear anything about Krsna from a non-Vaisnava. Milk touched by the lips of a serpent has poisonous effects; similarly, talks about Krsna given by a non-Vaisnava are also poisonous."]

If a guru is not serving his own gurudeva, and he has left the process given by him, and his guru is not satisfied by his behavior – only in that case can we reject him. However, if the guru is a madhyama-adhikari and sincere, if he is very obedient and following the footsteps of his guru, then he will gradually become uttama-adhikari. So we should not reject him. At the same time, if he is not perfect and thus cannot remove all our doubts about Krsna Consciousness, what should we do?

We should offer pranama to him and ask his permission to have the association of a mahabhagavata devotee: A disciple may ask, "May I go to Srila Jiva Gosvami"? or "May I go to Srila Rupa Gosvami?" or, "May I go to a high class of Vaisnava?" If the guru says, "No, you cannot go," you should give him up. On the other hand, if he says, "Certainly you can go, and I will also come," then he is a real guru. A guru who sends his disciple to a superior guru for instruction may also be an uttama-mahabhagavata, as there are various stages of mahabhagavata, and that guru is certainly not to be rejected. Srila Narottama dasa Thakura was a disciple of Srila Lokanatha dasa Gosvami, but he took permission from him to take shelter of Srila Jiva Gosvami; and Srila Syamananda prabhu also took permission from Srila Hrdaya-caitanya dasa Gosvami for that same shelter of Srila Jiva Gosvami.

There are three levels of devotees who can act as sad-guru, and they are: 1) bhagavat-parsada-deha-prapt, 2) nirdhuta-kasaya, and 3) murcchita kasaya.* [See Endnote 2]

This human life is so rare, so do not waste your time.

labdhva sudurlabham idam bahu-sambhavante
manusyam arthadam anityam apiha dhirah
turnam yateta na pated anumrtyu yavan
nihsreyasaya visayah khalu sarvatah syat

["After many, many births and deaths one achieves the rare human form of life, which, although temporary, affords one the opportunity to attain the highest perfection. Thus a

sober human being should quickly endeavor for the ultimate perfection of life as long as his body, which is always subject to death, has not fallen down and died. After all, sense gratification is available even in the most abominable species of life, whereas Krsna consciousness is possible only for a human being" (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.9.29).]

Try to follow all these principles, and gradually you will develop your Krsna consciousness.

Gaura Premanande

Editorial advisors: Pujypad Madhava Maharaja and Sripad Brajanatha dasa

Editor: Syamarani dasi

Transcriber and typist: Basanti devi dasi

[* Endnote 1 – "That religious undertaking which bestows divya-jnana or transcendental knowledge and destroys papa (sin), papa-bija (the seed of sin), and avidya (ignorance) to the root is called diksa by learned authorities in the absolute truth." (Hari-bhakti-vilasa, 2.9) Di means transcendental realization of ones relationship with Krsna, and Ksa means destruction of the above mentioned obstacles. Therefore, unless one gets initiated from a mahabhavat devotee, he is not receiving diksa in the real sense.]

[*Endnote 2 – "It should be understood that a madhyama-adhikari, a second-class devotee, is fully convinced of Krsna consciousness but cannot support his convictions with sastric reference. A neophyte may fall down by associating with non-devotees because he is not firmly convinced and strongly situated. The second-class devotee, even though he cannot support his position with sastric reference, can gradually become a first-class devotee by studying the sastras and associating with a first-class devotee. However, if the second-class devotee does not advance himself by associating with a first-class devotee, he makes no progress. There is no possibility that a first-class devotee will fall down, even though he may mix with non-devotees to preach. Conviction and faith gradually increase to make one an uttama-adhikari, a first-class devotee."(Caitanya-caritamrta Madhya-lila 22.71 purp.)]

[*Endnote 3 – "Bhagavat-parsada-deha-prapta – After giving up the gross material body, those who have perfected themselves through the practice of bhakti obtain sac-cit-ananda spiritual forms which are just suitable for the service of the Lord as associates (parsadas). Such persons are the best of all uttama-bhagavatas.

"Nirdhuta-kasaya – Those who, although still residing within the gross material body made of five elements, have no trace of material desire (vasana) nor any material impressions (samskaras) within their hearts are called nirdhuta-kasaya (who have thrown off all material impurities). They belong to the intermediate class of uttama-bhagavatas.

"Murcchita-kasaya – Those siddha-mahapurusas pursuing the path of bhakti in whose hearts there remains a trace of desire (vasana) and impressions (samskaras) based on the

material mode of goodness are known as murcchita-kasaya. Due to influence of their bhakti-yoga, these vasanas and samskaras remain in a dormant or unconscious state. As soon as there is a favorable opportunity, their worshipful object, Sri Bhagavan, somehow causes their desire to be consumed and attracts them to His lotus feet. Such elevated souls belong to the preliminary stage (kanistha) of uttama-bhagavatas. (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu)]

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