



Dear Devotees,

Please accept my most humble obeisances. This Vaishnava assembly consists of some very highly qualified devotees, and certainly Bhagavan Prabhu and Bhakta das Prabhu are amongst them. Bhakta das' comments are very mature and insightful, and I also appreciate much of what Bhagavan has said in his short discussion. It is true you cannot wake a person who is pretending to be asleep, and the argumentative self-righteousness is self-defeating. However, the last paragraph, the short discussion on the guru, troubles me. It reminds me of discussions that I had so many years ago with my former husband Goursundar.

Since I am not really a part of any of the various "camps" of today, either ritvik or non-ritvik, I really don't claim to know what Krishna has in mind for His movement, other than the absolute certainty that it will go on as predicted by Sri Chaitanya Dev. Just as we could not foresee everything 35 years back, so also we can't foresee everything now. How it will all unfold is beyond our ability to foresee. I think we should remain open to possibilities, and faithful to our guru.

What concerns me is the great similarity between this perspective on the guru with that of my former husband's view. With all due respect to Bhagavan Prabhu, who has done much to spread Lord Chaitanya's movement and who we all know was one of the "chosen eleven", still I feel uncomfortable with this perspective on the guru.

My former husband Goursundar was also as charismatic and as brilliant as Bhagavan Prabhu. He wrote books, had a following, devotees adored him as a "pure devotee" long before the days of Iskcon gurus. No doubt if he had stayed around, he would have been one of the "chosen." Of course, he did not actually take disciples, as Prabhupada was still very present, and he did not misuse his power in many of the ways that later gurus did. But the potential was there.

Fortunately for him, he left the movement some years before Srila Prabhupada left this world, and gave up his GBC and leadership roles. He didn't want it. It was burdensome to him, and he also foresaw much of what was going to happen. He was a brilliant scholar and a mystic as well. Srila Prabhupada often said "he suffered from the disease of too much intelligence", the flaw that led to his falldown, "thinking he knows more than his guru."

What I find troubling here is that the last few sentences of Bhagavan Prabhu's article sound very much like the philosophy espoused by Goursundar so many years ago. The focus is on the connection with Supersoul in the heart, rather than on the guru; truly this connection does exist, and it sounds really good. But please let me tell you my personal experience with this.

Prabhupada was the only Guru at that time, so it was more about focusing on Supersoul rather than on Prabhupada as a person directly. Not making a guru cult in other words. So because Goursundar was so brilliant, and such an excellent speaker, (and my former husband as well), I became very confused by what he was speaking. I was quite attached to Prabhupada, the person Prabhupada, like a father, a master, my guru, all of the above. So I felt frightened, for my simple love for Prabhupada as the personality he was, felt threatened. I believed my relationship with him was eternal and I did not wish to believe otherwise. Mine was a perspective of utmost simplicity, and since Goursundar was my husband of many years, though estranged at the time (he had recently left Prabhupada, left Iskcon and me as well), I was very susceptible to whatever he spoke. In a sense, he was like a guru to me.

So when Srila Prabhupada came to Hawaii soon after, I went to his quarters at the Honolulu temple and privately asked him about this exact same philosophy. I told him what Goursundar was saying, that we should connect with Supersoul, that the eternal guru was Supersoul, that making a guru with a personality cult was not as it should be, and so forth. It was a very good argument. But Prabhupada's response shocked me.

He slammed his hand down on his desk, hard, and said loudly, "Who has told you to see Goursundar? I say, you stay away from Goursundar!"

He was more than firm. He then pointed to his bookcase and said, "Take out that book." I did as I was told. "Now read the prayers to the Spiritual Master." I read. And he commented on each verse of the Sri Guru Charana prayers.

(You may now be wondering where is the recording of this. If there is one, as I gave all my tapes to archives many years ago, perhaps it will turn up soon as they are now being edited. For I too would like to hear it again. It would clear up so many of the present day misconceptions.)

The most significant thing that impressed me at the time was his absolute reassurance that my relationship with him was and is eternal, as a person, as the personality that he is. He left no doubt in my mind on that day.

The other most significant thing that impressed me is how he explained that the Guru is omniscient and omnipresent in that Krishna is in the heart of all beings, and the Guru is constantly with Krishna, and can therefore be in constant contact with his disciples wherever they are. In that way, he explained, the Guru can be present in the heart of the disciple, and can know what he is doing and thinking; thus he can be omniscient and omnipresent as God is in everyone's heart, and by his constant connection with Krishna, he can also be so.

This was not new to me. All of us who have been with Srila Prabhupada have certainly experienced this to some degree or another, feeling he can look into your soul and know everything about your past and present and future, your motives, your most hidden desires. But this was an actual explanation of this that I had not heard before. Clearly, Srila Prabhupada did not appreciate the philosophy that Goursundar was speaking, a subtle impersonalism that placed the guru beneath the importance of Supersoul.

Certainly I agree that the "guruwars" are ridiculous, since everyone is going to think his father is best. But to relegate the Acharya, Srila Prabhupada, to any lesser role, and talk about connection with Supersoul independent of him, this has a dangerous hint of impersonalism, and perhaps even anger or disillusionment with one's guru.

For this reason, Bhagavan Prabhu, with all due respect for you are certainly a great personality and served Srila Prabhupada in wonderful ways, I cannot agree with the later part of your article.

Srila Prabhupada made it very clear to me on that day that the Guru, Acharya, is to be kept first and foremost in one's heart. Yes, Supersoul is there, but who are we to be able to contact Supersoul? Yogis try for lifetimes for this connection, performing austerities and meditation and penance. For us, it is the mercy of Srila Prabhupada that is our salvation.

It is only by the mercy of Krishna that we get Guru, and by the mercy of Guru that we get Krishna. We cannot know Krishna otherwise. And if due to our lack of adhikar, spiritual eligibility, Krishna directs us to some second class guru, that is our unfortunate fate. And if by the direction of Krishna as Supersoul we are directed to some great Acharya like Srila Prabhupada, that is our great good fortune.

Krishna in the heart is the one who dictates who will be our guru, "you go here or go there." Whoever is meant to be our guru, that is God's business, not ours. We should not try to interfere in God's business.

In my humble opinion, those of us who have the unexplainable good fortune of recognizing Srila Prabhupada as our Guru Maharaja should worship him with every breath, and every fiber of our being, throughout our life, no matter what circumstances we are in due to our past karmas. Srila Prabhupada was indeed like this with his Guru Maharaj. He worshipped his Guru Maharaja daily, whether he was in a rat-infested building in the Bowery or a palatial temple in India. He never swerved.

He always kept a picture of his Guru Maharaja nearby, and said he was with him at every moment. He used to say, "I never feel separation from my Guru Maharaj", not that "I never feel separation from Krishna." When he would leave for some other place, I would inevitably cry, and he would always tell me, "Don't think I am ever separated from you. I never feel I am separated from my Guru Maharaj. He is always with me."

It is this mood that is real to me, and this may be a much safer mood to cultivate for everyone who is a follower of Srila Prabhupada, whether they had the good fortune of meeting him or not.

This is not a personality cult. Srila Prabhupada is indeed the extraordinary Acharya of the Golden Age. He is the "Mor Senapati Bhakta", the "Military Field Commander" who was predicted by the Lord Himself to lead Lord Chaitanya's sankirtan army. Time will tell; everyone will come to know of his greatness. That also is predicted.

In Chaitanya Mangala, it is recorded that Narada Muni, while visiting the spiritual world, came upon Lord Gouranga. Shri Gouranga Dev told him of His mission to destroy the sinful activities of the Kali Age.

He said, "With the powerful chopper of Nama-Samkirtan, I shall cut the hard knots of demoniac desires from the hearts of everyone. Even if the sinners reject religion or flee to foreign countries, still they will get My mercy. I will send 'mor senapati-bhakta' to go there and deliver them." Mor means "My", senapati means "military field commander," and bhakta means "devotee." So, "Mor Senapati-Bhakta" refers to that great devotee who will lead Lord Chaitanya's sankirtan army, who is empowered by the Lord to spread Krishna consciousness all over the world. That Mor Senapati Bhakta is Srila Prabhupada, and even some may not yet recognize it, in time they will. This is the greatest benediction of our time.

Brahma Vaivarta Purana also describes a conversation that took place in Dvaraka between Lord Krishna and Srimati Ganga devi. Ganga devi came to express her fears at the advent of the Kali Age, and the imminent departure of the Lord back to His Eternal Abode. In anxiety, she spoke on behalf of all the sacred rivers, saying:

"Oh Lord, we can see that Your pastimes are about to end, and people are becoming more and more materialistic. You have been very merciful to us. After You leave, however, all the sinful people of Kali Yuga will bathe in our waters, and we will become overwhelmed with sinful reactions."

Lord Krishna smilingly replied, "My dear Ganga Devi, please be patient. After five thousand years My mantra-upasaka (worshiper of the Holy Name) will appear in this world and spread the chanting of the Holy Names everywhere. Not only in Bharata-Varsha (India) but also all over the world people will chant Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare. Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare."



“By this chanting, the whole world will become eka-varna, having one designation, namely, Hari-Bhaktas, devotees of Lord Hari. And because the devotees of Lord Hari are so pure, anyone who contacts them will become purified from sinful reactions. These pure devotees will visit Bharata-Varsha and purify you from sinful reactions by bathing in your sacred waters. This period of worldwide chanting of Hare Krishna will continue for ten thousand years.”

This Mantra-Upasaka is Srila Prabhupada, the Lord's Senapati Bhakta. The ten thousand year period is just beginning, the Golden Age within Kali Yuga. Doesn't this put things into perspective?

Yours in the service of Srila Prabhupada,

Govinda dasi