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Highlights

• THE PROCESS TO REALIZE ONE'S SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

• WHO CAN TOUCH A SANNYASI'S FEET?

By Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Prabhupada

• PREACHERS AND FOOT TOUCHING

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• APPROACH A PREMI BHAKTA

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

THE PROCESS TO REALIZE ONE'S SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

In his book, *Bhajana-rahasya*, Thakur Bhaktivinode has described that the hare kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra consisting of sixteen names joined in eight pairs has been explained by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the eight verses of His Śikṣāṣṭaka. Bhaktivinode says that each verse of Śikṣāṣṭaka corresponds with a level of advancement in bhajan and bhakti, culminating in the realization of one's eternal spiritual form.



*chaya śloka bhajite anartha dūre gela
tabe jāna siddha-dehe adhikāra haila*

*adhikāra nā labhiyā siddha-deha bhāve
viparyaya buddhi janme śaktira abhāve*

By the time one reaches the level of the sixth verse [of the Śikṣāṣṭaka prayers, which Bhaktivinode describes as relating to the platform of *bhāva*], one's contaminations have mostly disappeared, and one therefore has the right to worship in one's *siddha-deha*. If anyone tries to meditate on his spiritual body without having this qualification, his intelligence will be turned upside-down due to his lack of strength. (Śrī Bhajana-rahasya 1.10.9-10)

*śraddhā kari nāma bhaje sādhu-kṛpā pāñā
itare virāga nitya svarūpa bujhiyā*

*ihāke-i bali bhakti-yoga anuttama
bhakti-yoge-sarva-siddhi yadi dhare krama*

One who engages faithfully in the worship of the holy name and thus attains the mercy of a *sādhu* becomes indifferent to other things and comes to understand his eternal identity (*nitya svarūpa*). This is called *bhakti-yoga* in its highest form. One can attain all perfections if one follows the process in its proper sequence. (Śrī Bhajana-rahasya 2.14.1-2)

*ataeva nāma mātra vaiṣṇavera dharma
name prasphuṭita haya rūpa, guṇa, karma*

The holy name is the only dharma accepted by *vaiṣṇavas*. From the holy name blossoms form, qualities and activities. (Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi 1.30)

*premera kalikā nāma, adbhuta rasera dhāma,
hena bala karaye prakāśa
īṣat vikaśi' punaḥ, dekhāya nija-rūpa-guna,
citta hari' laya kṛṣṇa-pāśa*

*pūrna vikaśita hañā, braje more jāya lañā,
dekhāya more svarūpa-vilāsa
more siddha deha diyā, kṛṣṇa-pāśe rākhe giyā,
e dehera kare sarva-nāśa*

The holy name is the bud of the flower of divine love, and is the very abode of astonishing mellows. Such is the power He manifests that when His holy name starts to blossom a little further, it then reveals His own divine form and qualities. Thus my heart is abducted and taken directly to Krishna.

Blossoming fully, the flower of the holy name takes me to Vraja and reveals to me His own love-dalliance. This name gives to me my own eternal spiritual body, keeps me right by Krishna's side, and completely destroys everything related to this mortal frame of mine. (*Saraṅāgati*, *Śrī Nāma-māhātmya*. Also cited in *Jaiva Dharma*, chapter twenty-five.) ❀

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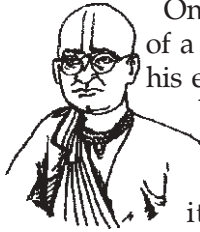
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WHO CAN TOUCH A SANNYASĪ'S FEET?

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
Thakur Prabhupada*



One should not touch the lotus feet of a saintly person or *sannyāsī* with his enjoyment-prone body or sinful body. If the saintly person becomes displeased because of our touching his lotus feet, then it will certainly create inauspiciousness for us. *Sannyāsī* devotees do not like people touching their feet. It has currently become a fashion — a disease — to touch the lotus feet of guru and *sādhu*. We should pay close attention to whether the spiritual master and Krishna are being pleased by each one of our actions. If we do not do so, then we will dig our own grave.

Let me tell those who, under the control of their emotions, attempt to touch the feet of a *sannyāsī* like me. In the language of my spiritual master, "Why should they dare to stretch their hands to take dust from the feet of the saintly persons? Is such boldness proper? What qualification do they have? What right?"

An attached householder, who has no real interest in serving the saint, is certainly unjustified in touching his lotus feet. Better that we offer one another obeisances from a distance. If an attached householder forcibly tries to touch the saint's feet, it means his mind is attracted to gross matter. That will cause him more harm than good. Those who desire fortune should carefully refrain from committing such offensive activities. ❀

— *Amṛta Vani*, p. 261. Touchstone Media. Mumbai. 2004

PREACHERS AND FOOT-TOUCHING

*His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada*

Cc. ādi 17.243-245

One day [in the House of Srivas Thakur] when Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu had finished His dancing, a woman, the wife of a *brāhmaṇa*, came there and caught hold of His lotus feet again and again, the Lord became unlimitedly unhappy.

PURPORT



This holding of a great personality's lotus feet is certainly very good for the person who takes the dust, but this example of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's unhappiness indicates that a *vaiṣṇava* should not allow anyone to take dust from his feet.

One who takes the dust of a great personality's lotus feet transfers his sinful activities to that great personality. Unless the person whose dust is taken is very strong, he must suffer the sinful activities of the person who takes the dust. Therefore, ordinarily it should not be allowed. Sometimes in big meetings people come to take the same advantage by touching our feet. On account of this, sometimes we have to suffer from some disease. As far as possible, no outsider should be allowed to touch one's feet to take dust from them. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu personally showed this by His example, as explained in the next verse.

Immediately He ran to the river Ganges and jumped in to counteract the sinful activities of that woman. Lord Nityananda and Haridasa Thakur caught Him and raised Him from the river.

PURPORT

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is God Himself, but He was playing the part of a preacher. Every preacher should know that being allowed to touch a *vaiṣṇava*'s feet and take dust may be good for the person who takes it, but it is not good for the person

who allows it to be taken. As far as possible, this practice should ordinarily be avoided. Only initiated disciples should be allowed to take this advantage, not others. Those who are full of sinful activities should generally be avoided.

Letter of 11 April 1970

You do not allow anyone to touch your feet — this is a very good attitude — but if they want to insist on touching your feet and there is no other way to avoid it, you can simply remember your predecessor *ācāryas* and spiritual masters and accept them and return *namaskāra* with folded hands. That is the *vaiṣṇava* etiquette. ❀

APPROACH A PREMI BHAKTA

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Who is a real *sādhu*? A real *sādhu* is completely surrendered unto Krishna. He has no other desire than to serve Krishna with pure love, twenty-four hours, day and night, *ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-śīlanam*. One who has gotten *prema-bhakti*, who has gotten Krishna, is a real *sādhu*. One should accept such a *sādhu*, then he can approach Krishna. One cannot approach directly. *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*madhya* 19.151) states:

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

This is Mahaprabhu's teaching to Sanatan Goswami: After undergoing *lakhs* and *lakhs* of species of life, through *lakhs* and *lakhs* of universes, if someone is *bhāgyavān*, fortunate, he gets the mercy of Krishna and guru, and the seed of *bhakti* is sown in his heart.

This word *bhāgyavān*, fortunate, is significant. What is genuine good fortune? That person who meets guru, the bona-fide representative of Krishna, is fortunate. Only one who has gotten Krishna, who has bound up Krishna in his heart, only he can make Krishna appear in the heart of his devoted disciple. No one else can give you Krishna. If someone has not gotten, how can he give? If you have one dollar, you can give fifty cents, sixty cents or one dollar. But if you don't have, then how can you give?

Similarly, we should approach someone who has obtained Krishna, who has developed *prema-bhakti* and has bound up Krishna in his heart. Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode has written (*Śaraṇāgati, Bhajana-lālasā*, song 7):

*kṛṣṇa se tomāra, kṛṣṇa dite pāra
tomāra śakati āche
āmi to' kāṅgāla, kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa bali',
dhāi tava pāche pāche*

O *vaiṣṇava* *ṭhākura*, Krishna belongs to you because you have bound Him up in your heart by the rope of *prema*. Only you can give me Krishna because you have gotten Him. I am *kāṅgāla*, a pauper. I am bereft of Krishna. So I am running behind you begging your causeless mercy, "Please give me Krishna! Please give me Krishna."

Kaṭha Upaniṣad (1.2.23) says:

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā viorṇute tanūm soām*

One may hear *pravacanas*, lectures, from so many persons, but if they are not realized souls, if they have not gotten Krishna, not developed *prema-bhakti*, one will not be able to understand this *paramārtha-tattva*, this supreme goal. One cannot understand this *tattva* by dint of his merit, scholarship, or intelligence. It can be understood only by one who is always crying in his heart, "Oh Krishna, how can I know You? How can I approach You?" Krishna is there in the heart. He understands, "This soul is crying for Me." So He arranges for that person to meet a bona-fide guru who can give him Krishna, who can teach him about *kṛṣṇa-tattva*. That dear devotee, who is Krishna's bona fide representative, is the manifestation of *paramātmā*. That is *guru-tattva*. *Paramātmā* only manifests Himself as guru before a person who is crying for Krishna in his heart. "How can I get Krishna? How can I approach Krishna? How can I serve Krishna? Without Krishna's dear devotee, His representative the guru, I cannot do so. I don't know who is guru. I am a conditioned soul having four defects. I cannot recognize such a person with my

defective senses. But Krishna, You know who is Your dear devotee. Unless You help me, how can I come to You?" This is the prayer to be offered to Krishna. By Krishna's mercy, one will meet such a guru who is Krishna's dear devotee and bona fide representative. Take shelter of him and completely surrender — *gurupādāśraya dīkṣā*. As *Gītā* says, *praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā* — serve him, please him, satisfy him, and then humbly ask questions relating to *tattva*. By his causeless mercy, he will impart *tattva-jñāna*. This is the process. Take shelter of him and do *bhajana* under his guidance.

You don't know how to do *bhajana*. Krishna is the *bhajanīya-vastu*, the worshipable object. Guru will teach you how to serve Krishna, how to surrender unto His lotus feet, how to please Him. He will teach you by his own example, not theoretically. Under his guidance, you will do *sādhana, bhajana*. Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*madhya* 22.25) states:

*tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje kare gurura sevana
māyā-jāla chuṭe, pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

If the conditioned soul engages in the service of the Lord and simultaneously carries out the orders of his spiritual master and serves him,



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he can get out of the clutches of *māyā* and become eligible for shelter at Krishna's lotus feet.

Heavy Responsibility

Such a guru, who is a bona-fide representative of Krishna, has come down from Krishna's abode. There is a *prema-bhakti-sūtra*. *Sūtra* means "rope" or "thread". One end of the *prema-bhakti-sūtra* is attached to the lotus feet of Krishna in Goloka Vrindavan. The guru has come with the other end of that rope here. The conditioned souls, fallen in the deep, dark well of material existence, are suffering. Such a guru is outside the well. He's not under the grip of *māyā*. He throws his end of the rope to the conditioned souls in the dark well of material existence and says, "Clasp it very tightly." Then he pulls you up. This is the process. The guru does this. It is not an easy affair to deliver even one conditioned soul from the fort of *māyā*. The guru has to spend gallons and gallons of spiritual blood to deliver just one soul. It is a heavy responsibility. If even one conditioned soul is delivered, the guru feels so much happiness.

It is a reciprocal affair. It is not one-sided. You should clasp the end of the rope very tightly. That means you should follow the guru's instruction as it is. Don't twist it. Don't add any of your deliberation to it. Whatever he says, just do exactly that. He gives some "do's" and some "don'ts". You must strictly follow his instructions. Don't be lazy. Then the guru will pull you up. Otherwise, if you are not serious, if you are lazy, careless, or superfluous, you will never accept guru's instruction. Or you half accept it and half reject it. You add your own deliberations and twist it. Then you cannot be helped. If you are very serious, very strict, then guru will pull you up. That is his duty. Otherwise, guru may lift you up, then you deviate or become lenient and then you again fall down. Seeing this, the guru feels great pain in his heart, "I spent so many gallons of blood to deliver him, but this fellow didn't follow, so he fell down." To deliver just one soul from *māyā's* fortress is a very difficult task. It is a heavy responsibility. This is guru. ❀

— Excerpted from chapter seven of "The Process of Inquiry". Gopal Jiu Publications. Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India. 1998.