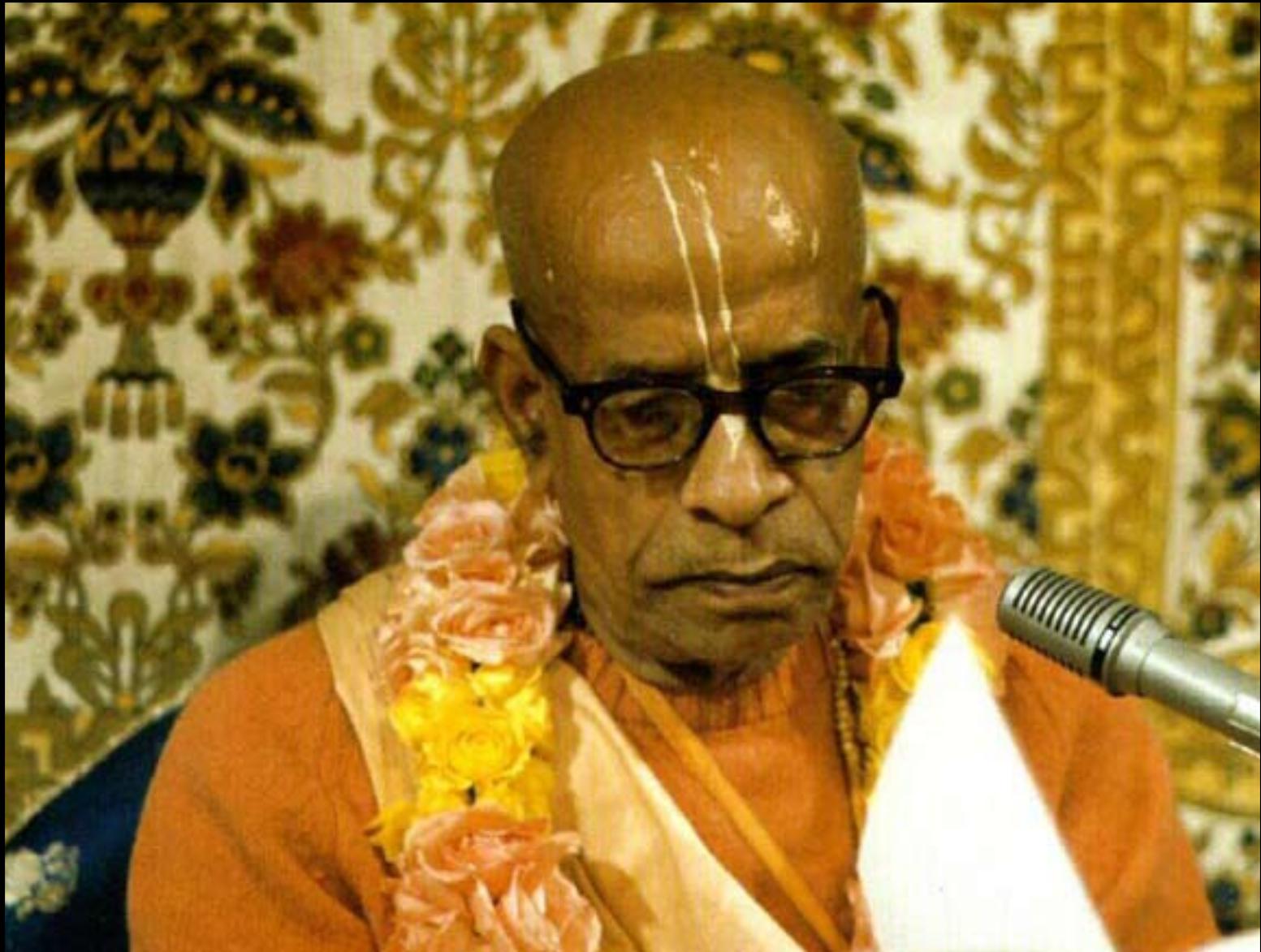


a response to: 'The Process of Inquiry' - ch6

# Srila Prabhupada Is Living



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## Srila Prabhupada Is Living

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*JRM Replies to Gour Govinda Swami*



**“So although a physical body is not present, the vibration should be accepted as the presence of the Spiritual Master, vibration. What we have heard from the Spiritual Master, that is living.”**

**(General lectures, 69/01/13)**



**by Krishnakant**

# Srila Prabhupada Is Living:

## IRM Replies to Gour Govinda Swami

2nd March 2003

The following is a response to a section from Chapter 6 of *'The Process of Inquiry'*, a book containing the teachings of Gour Govinda Swami, a GBC 'Guru' who physically departed this world in 1996. This tract from Gour Govinda Swami's teachings has recently been quoted extensively to try and counter the IRM understanding that Srila Prabhupada's guidance alone is sufficient for our spiritual advancement. It has even appeared on the GBC Com messaging forum.

The text being responded to shall be boxed, with the IRM's response following.

**Devotee:** Srila Prabhupada always emphasized that he was eternally present in his books, instructions, tapes, and letters. So when you say we should take association of a *sadhu* can we do that through Srila Prabhupada's books?

**Gour Govinda Swami:** If Prabhupada says he is there, then you try to see him, associate with him, and listen from him. Do you see Prabhupada? Do you hear from Prabhupada? Is he speaking to you?

Here Gour Govinda Swami asks if we can still associate and hear from Srila Prabhupada, even though he is not physically present, and one may not be able to 'see' him. Let us read what Srila Prabhupada states on this subject:

**"So we should associate by vibration, and not by the physical presence. That is real association."**

(Lectures SB, 68/08/18)

**"It is sometimes misunderstood that if one has to associate with persons engaged in devotional service, he will not be able to solve the economic problem. To answer this argument, it is described here that one has to associate with liberated persons not directly, physically, but by understanding, through philosophy and logic, the problems of life."**

(SB 3:31:48)

**"Paramahansa:** My question is, a pure devotee, when he comments on *Bhagavad-gita*, someone who never sees him physically, but he just comes in contact with the commentary, explanation, is this the same thing?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. You can associate with Krsna by reading *Bhagavad-gita*. And these saintly persons, they have given their explanations, comments. So where is the difficulty?"

(Morning Walk, Paris 11/6/74)

**"The influence of the pure devotee is such that if someone comes to associate with him with a little faith, he gets the chance of hearing about the Lord from authoritative scriptures like *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and *Bhagavad-gita*. This is the first stage of association with the pure devotee."**

(Nectar of Devotion, (1982 Ed.), p146)

**"So although a physical body is not present, the vibration should be accepted as the presence of the Spiritual Master, vibration. What we have heard from the Spiritual Master, that is living."**

(General lectures, 69/01/13)

**"These are not ordinary books. It is recorded chanting. Anyone who reads, he is hearing."**

(Letter to Rupanuga Das, 19/10/74)

**"Krsna and his representative are the same. Similarly, the spiritual master can be present wherever the disciple wants. A spiritual master is the principle, not the body. Just like a television can be seen in thousands of place by the principle of relay monitoring."**

(Letter to Malati, 28/5/68)

**“Narayana:** So those disciples who don’t have the opportunity to see you or speak with you...

**Srila Prabhupada:** That he was speaking, **vani and vapuh**. Even if you don’t see his body, you take his words, **vani**.”

(Room conversation, 21/7/75)

So in conclusion, Srila Prabhupada very clearly teaches:

1. Not being able to see the physical body of the Guru is no bar to being able to hear and associate with him via his books
2. That taking this non-physical association is real association. More importantly, he never responds that one must take the association of some other ‘living’ person to compensate for the lack of physical presence of the Guru.

Having seen Srila Prabhupada’s clear conclusion on the questions posed by Gour Govinda Swami, let us see how Maharaja goes onto answer his own questions, and more importantly, see if they are in line with Srila Prabhupada’s teachings as given above.

**Devotee:** Through his books.

**Gour Govinda Swami:** Through his books, yes. All *sadhus* speak through their books. Jiva Goswami, Rupa Goswami, Sana-tana Goswami, Bhaktivinode Thakur, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, and Srila Prabhupada all say that they speak through books. This is not a new thing. This is our Vaisnava procedure. But you should see him. Can you see Bhaktivinode Thakur? Can you see Jiva Goswami? You may say, “Oh I have read their books; I have their association.” That won’t help you.

1. Here Gour Govinda Swami directly contradicts the teachings of Srila Prabhupada by saying that taking the association of Srila Prabhupada via his books will not ‘help’ us. We have just seen Srila Prabhupada say that reading the books is the same as physically associating with the pure devotee:

**Paramahansa:** My question is, a pure devotee, when he comments on *Bhagavad-gita*, someone who never sees him physically, but he just comes in contact with the commentary, explanation, is this the same thing?

**Srila Prabhupada:** Yes. You can associate with Krsna by reading *Bhagavad-gita*. And these saintly persons, they have given their explanations, comments. So where is the difficulty?”

(Morning Walk, Paris 11/6/74)

2. Of course, the biggest flaw with Maharaja’s arguments and which defeats his whole thesis is that HIS help is being offered via the words written in HIS books even though HE is no longer physically present. This means that by his OWN philosophy, everything he states can be rejected since it has not been heard directly from a ‘living *sadhu*’, but from the books of a ‘departed’ *sadhu* whom we can no longer see.
3. Conversely if we can take instruction from Gour Govinda Swami’s books, we can definitely take instruction from the books of Srila Prabhupada.

Thus we have the comical situation of a ‘*sadhu*’ who is no longer physically present and whom we supposedly can no longer see, telling us via his books that instruction from the books of Srila Prabhupada cannot help us because Srila Prabhupada is no longer physically present. This is a classic logical fallacy known as **self-referential incoherence** and self-defeats whatever Maharaja says. Of course, there is nothing new in the GBC putting forward a self-contradictory argument, as anyone who has read the IRM’s papers will know.

**Gour Govinda Swami:** You cannot understand what they have said merely by reading their books. Your consciousness is very low, so you cannot understand their words.

1. This statement is contradicted by Srila Prabhupada, for as we have already seen, reading the books is the same as physically associating with the Guru. Further, Srila Prabhupada also says:

**“In my books the philosophy of Krsna Consciousness is explained fully so if there is anything you do not understand, then you simply have to read again and again. By reading daily the knowledge will be revealed to you and by this process your spiritual life will develop.”**

(Letter to Brahmarupa Dasa, 22/11/74)

2. This statement by Gour Govinda Swami is also specifically contradicted by Gour Govinda Swami himself later on, when he says:

**“I think you cannot completely understand what I say”**

What is the point of arguing that we cannot understand Srila Prabhupada’s books using arguments which admittedly we also cannot understand? Why then would listening to Gour Govinda Swami be superior to listening to Srila Prabhupada?

3. This statement is also generally contradicted by Gour Govinda Swami, for as we have pointed out, we are only able to accept Gour Govinda Swami's statement that we cannot understand Srila Prabhupada's books 'merely by reading' them, via 'merely reading' Gour Govinda Swami's books. This is a self-contradictory statement and can thus be rejected.

**Gour Govinda Swami:** Why are you thinking so foolishly? So many books were already there, so why has Srila Prabhupada said this? You are thinking, "We need only to read books. There is no need of associating with a *sadhu* who is physically present."

1. NO, Srila Prabhupada has said that '*we need only to read books*' – namely, his:

**"So utilise whatever time you find to make a thorough study of my books. Then all your questions will be answered."**

(Letter to Upendra, 7/1/76)

**"If it is possible to go to the temple, then take advantage of the temple. A temple is a place whereby one is given the opportunity to render direct devotional service to the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna. In conjunction with this you should always read my books daily and all your questions will be answered and you will have a firm basis of Krishna Consciousness. In this way your life will be perfect."**

(Letter to Hugo Salemon, 22/11/74)

**"Every one of you must regularly read our books at least twice, in the morning and evening, and automatically all questions will be answered."**

(Letter to Randhira, 24/01/70)

**"In my books the philosophy of Krsna Consciousness is explained fully so if there is anything you do not understand, then you simply have to read again and again. By reading daily the knowledge will be revealed to you and by this process your spiritual life will develop."**

(Letter to Brahmarupa Dasa, 22/11/74)

2. Gour Govinda Swami would be the one thinking '*so foolishly*'; for we can only accept his arguments that we cannot '*only read books*', by following the process of '*we need only to read books*' – his. Unless he believes his arguments become invalid as soon as he departs since he is then no longer physically present, in which case his arguments would still become '*foolish*' for they would then no longer be applicable.
3. And if one must associate with a '*sadhu* who is physically present', then we would of course need to begin by finding someone other than Gour Govinda Swami to associate with, from whom to understand what needs to be done.

**Devotee:** So we have to associate with a living *sadhu*?

**Gour Govinda Swami:** Definitely. There is always one there.

As we have seen, Srila Prabhupada has taught that:

**"What we have heard from the Spiritual Master, that is living"**

(General lectures, 69/01/13)

and

**"A spiritual master is the principle, not the body"**

(Letter to Malati, 28/5/68)

And Srila Prabhupada has never taught that we 'have' to associate with someone who is '*physically present*' to compensate for him not being physically present.

**Gour Govinda Swami:** Out of mercy, the *sadhu* will impart this *tattva-jnana* to you. This is the only process. Unless you get association with a living *sadhu*, what can you do? Will you put some question to Srila Prabhupada and Srila Prabhupada will answer you? This process is a living thing. It is always there, and it is always current. It is not that inquiry was done a certain way in the past and now things are done differently. No! It is an eternal process, *panipatena pariprasnena sevaya*.

1. We have seen that YES, you CAN put your questions to Srila Prabhupada and have him answer you via his books:

**"So utilise whatever time you find to make a thorough study of my books. Then all your questions will be an-**

swered.”

(Letter to Upendra, 7/1/76)

“you should always read my books daily and all your questions will be answered”

(Letter to Hugo Salemon, 22/11/74)

“Every one of you must regularly read our books at least twice, in the morning and evening, and automatically all questions will be answered.”

(Letter to Randhira, 24/01/70)

2. We agree that ‘it is not that inquiry was done a certain way in the past, and now things are done differently’. In the past, the vast majority of Srila Prabhupada’s disciples never ever met him. Those who did, apart from a handful, had very limited association with him. And no one has been able to inquire physically from Srila Prabhupada for the last 25 years. So inquiry in the past was done for most devotees via reading Srila Prabhupada’s books, supplemented by asking one’s Godbrothers. So we agree that this same process should continue now.
3. Gour Govinda Swami himself did not have Srila Prabhupada personally explain to him the 700 verses of the *Bhagavad-gita*, the 18,000 verses of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, the many verses of the *Caitanya-caritamrta* etc. via a ‘**physically present living process**’. No one did. Thus we are told by Maharaja that we can only have ‘*tattva-jnana*’ imparted to us by inquiring from someone via a ‘**physically living process**’, even though Maharaja himself did not have ‘*tattva-jnana*’ imparted to him via a ‘**physically living**’ process. This is of course a contradictory proposition, for it gives rise to the obvious question that if Gour Govinda Swami was able to learn this ‘*tattva-jnana*’ primarily from ‘**merely reading**’ Srila Prabhupada’s books, why can’t we?
4. Gour Govinda Swami is himself ‘**imparting this tattva-jnana**’ about how we should have ‘*tattva-jnana*’ imparted’ not by having us personally inquire from him, but by having it published in a book for us to read. So by Gour Govinda Swami’s own statement, his statements on this subject matter, as with everything else we may ever hear or read from him, can be rejected.

## CONCLUSION

- We have conclusively shown that Gour Govinda Swami’s statements are contradicted by the teachings of Srila Prabhupada.
- We have conclusively shown that Gour Govinda Swami’s statements are contradicted by his own statements.
- We have conclusively shown that Gour Govinda Swami has put forward a philosophy which states that we must reject anything and everything he has ever said on any subject, unless we had personally heard it coming from his lips vibrating via the ‘physically present living process.’

We are of course happy to oblige Maharaja on this aspect of his philosophy, and instead keep ourselves attached to the lotus feet of the true living Guru, Srila Prabhupada.

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