

# Physically Departed / Spiritually Present

By: Prabhupada Anugas

**Devotee:** Srila Prabhupada when you're not present with us , how is it possible to receive instructions? For example in questions that may arise...

**Prabhupada:** "If I depart there is no cause for lamentation. I will always be with you through my books and orders. I will always remain with you in that way."  
(BTG 13:1-2, December 1977) ([Living Still in Sound](#))

**Prabhupada:** Well the questions are answ... **answers are there in my books.**  
(Morning Walk, Los Angeles, 13/5/73)

**Prabhupada:** 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*)

You read the books, Then you'll understand.

**Interviewer:** You are the translator of many books, from what I understand.

**Prabhupada:** Yes. So that translation, the book, will speak how I have translated.

**Interviewer:** Um hm. I was wondering...

**Prabhupada:** You read the books, Then you'll understand. Instead of asking me, you better read the books. That is real understanding. (Interview with Newsweek – July 14, 1976, New York)

In my books the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness is explained fully so **if there is anything which 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.** Krishna Consciousness is not a hackneyed thing but it is something which is our natural and original consciousness. Presently our consciousness is clouded just like a mirror becomes covered with dust So the cleansing process is this chanting and hearing and doing some service and trying to please the Spiritual Master. By this process our consciousness becomes clear and we are able to understand everything. (Letter to: Bahurupa – Bombay 22 November, 1974)

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: Ranadhira – Los Angeles 24 January, 1970)

**So utilize whatever time you find to make a thorough study of my books. Then all your questions will be answered.** (Letter to: Upendra – Nellore 7 January, 1976)

**I have instructed everything in my books.** (Letter to: Dina Dayala, Mayapur, 25 February, 1976)

"Please continue reading my books seriously and everything will be revealed to you." SPL (VI 1987) Babhru and Satyaki 18/09/75

In my books the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness is explained fully so if there is anything which 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....You may please me the most by reading my books and following the instructions therein and by becoming fully Krishna Conscious in this life time. (Letter to: Bahurupa, Bombay, 22 November, 1974)

## Physically Departed

750716pc.sf Conversations

**Reporter (2):** What will happen to the movement in the United States when you die?

**Prabhupada:** I WILL NEVER DIE.

**Devotees:** Jaya! Hari bol! (laughter)

**Prabhupada:** I SHALL LIVE FROM MY BOOKS, AND YOU WILL UTILIZE.

**Reporter (2):** Are you training a successor?

**Prabhupada:** Yes, my Guru Maharaja is there. Where is my photo of Guru Maharaja? I think... Here is.

## Guidance after physical departure

**Indian Lady:** ... is that spiritual master still guiding after death?

**Prabhupada:** Yes, yes. Just like Krsna is guiding us, similarly spiritual master will guide us. (*General lectures, 69/09/23*)

### 770517ar.vrn Conversations

Prabhupada: So I cannot speak. I am feeling very weak. I was to go to other places like Chandigarh program, but I cancelled the program because the condition of my health is very deteriorating. So I preferred to come to Vrndavana. **If death takes place, let it take here. So there is nothing to be said new. Whatever I have to speak, I have spoken in my books. Now you try to understand it and continue your endeavor. Whether I am present or not present, it doesn't matter.**

As Krsna is living eternally, similarly, living being also lives eternally. But KIRTIR YASYA SA JIVATI: "ONE WHO HAS DONE SERVICE TO THE LORD LIVES FOREVER." So you have been taught to serve Krsna, and with Krsna we'll live eternally. Our life is eternal. Na hanyate hanyamane sarire. A temporary disappearance of this body, it doesn't matter. Body is meant for disappearance. Tatha dehantara-praptih. So live forever by serving Krsna.

## Spiritually Present

**Prabhupada:** I am always with you. **Never mind if I am physically absent.** (Letter to Jayananda, 16/9/67)

**Prabhupada:** "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.**"

**"I shall remain your personal guidance, physically present or not physically,** as I am getting personal guidance from my guru maharaja" (Srla Prabhupada to Tamal Krishna, 14 July 1977)

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)

But always remember that I am always with you. As you are always thinking of me, I am always thinking of you also. Although physically we are not together, we are not separated spiritually. **So we should be concerned only with this spiritual connection.** (Letter to Gaurasundara, 13/11/69)

**Prabhupada:** "Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada passed away from this material world on the last day of December 1936, I still consider his Divine Grace to be always present with me by his vani, his words.

So we should associate by vibration, and **not by the physical presence. That is real association.** (Lectures SB, 68/08/18)

**There are two ways of association – by vani and by vapuh.** Vani means words and vapuh means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but vani continues to exist eternally. Therefore, one must take advantage of the vani, not the physical presence." (CC, Antya 5 Conclusion)

**Therefore we should take advantage of the Vani, not the physical presence.**  
(Letter to Suci Devi Dasi, 4/11/75)

## Srila Prabhupada on Vapuh Versus Vani

**Physical presence is immaterial.** Presence of the transcendental sound received from the Spiritual Master should be the guidance of life. That will make our spiritual life successful. If you feel very strongly about my absence you may place my pictures on my sitting places and this will be source of inspiration for you. (Letter to Brahmananda and other students, 19/1/67)

There are two conceptions, the physical conception and the vibrational conception. The **physical conception is temporary.** The vibrational conception is eternal.[...] When we feel separation from Krsna or the Spiritual Master, we should just try to remember their words or instructions, and we will no longer feel that separation. **Such association with Krsna and the Spiritual Master should be association by vibration not physical presence. That is real association.** (Elevation to Krsna Consciousness, (BBT 1973), Page 57)

**Devotee:** ...so sometimes the Spiritual Master is far away. He may be in Los Angeles. Somebody is coming to Hamburg Temple. He thinks 'How will the Spiritual Master be pleased?'

**Srila Prabhupada:** Just follow his order, Spiritual Master is along with you by his words. **Just like my Spiritual Master is not physically present, but I am associating with him by his words.** (SB Lectures, 71/08/18)

Just like I am working, so my Guru Maharaja is there, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati.

**Physically he may not be, but in every action he is there.** To serve master's word is more important than to serve physically. (Room Conversation, Vrindavan, 2/5/77)

**So, spiritually, there is no question of separation, even physically we may be in far distant place.** (Letter to Syama Dasi, 30/08/68)

I went to your country for spreading this information of Krsna Consciousness and you are helping me in my mission, **although I am not physically present there but spiritually I am always with you.** (Letter to Nandarani, Krsna Devi and Subala, 3/10/67)

We are not separated actually. There are two – Vani or Vapuh – **so Vapu is physical presence and Vani is presence by the vibration, but they are all the same.** (Letter to Hamsadutta, 22/6/70)

So in the absence of physical presentation of the spiritual master, the Vaniseva is more important. **My Spiritual Master Sarsavati Goswami, may appear to be physically**

**not present, but still because I try to serve his instruction, I never feel separated from him.** (Letter to Karandhara, 22/8/70)

I also do not feel separation from my Guru Maharaja. When I am engaged in his service, his pictures give me sufficient strength. **To serve master's word is more important than to serve him physically.** (Letter to Syamasundara, 19/7/70)

**SB 4.28.47** - The disciple and spiritual master are never separated because the spiritual master always keeps company with the disciple as long as the disciple follows strictly the instructions of the spiritual master. **This is called the association of vani (words).** **Physical presence is called vapuh.** As long as the spiritual master is physically present, the disciple should serve the physical body of the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master is no longer physically existing, the disciple should serve the instructions of the spiritual master.

## I am the Spiritual Master of this institution

"Yes, I am the Spiritual Master of this institution, and all members of the society, they're supposed to be my disciples. They follow the rules and regulations which I ask them to follow, and they are initiated by me spiritually."

Srila Prabhupada left this world on **November 14th 1977** in Krishna's holy land of Vrindavan. He had been translating his books and instructing his disciples to the very last, and left in the most auspicious circumstances, surrounded by his disciples chanting the maha-mantra.

He left behind a massive legacy of [teachings in the form of numerous books](#), audio and video taped lectures and conversations, as well as a worldwide Movement. He said he had given everything necessary to go back home, back to Godhead, we just had to read his books, chant and follow his instructions. He taught that there was no difference to serving him when he was physically present, to doing so when he was absent. **He would remain spiritually present in his books and instructions.**

Just before his physical departure Srila Prabhupada set up a system of [initiation employing the use of rittvik](#) (ceremonial priests) who would continue to initiate on his behalf, without the need for any physical involvement from Srila Prabhupada. In this way, Srila Prabhupada could continue to initiate new disciples for as long as his Movement existed. **Although some of his disciples became confused after his departure as to how initiation should continue, thankfully this situation is slowly being rectified to restoring Srila Prabhupada as the sole initiating guru for the Movement;** just as Srila Prabhupada intended:

**"Yes, I am the Spiritual Master of this institution, and all members of the society, they're supposed to be my disciples. They follow the rules and regulations which I ask them to follow, and they are initiated by me spiritually."**

Thus Srila Prabhupada has left an open invitation for all future generations to become his direct initiated disciple if they so wish. Any sincere seeker of the truth who appreciates Srila Prabhupada's glorious life and achievements, and carefully studies his teachings, must surely find this an attractive proposition.

Srila Prabhupada's specific instructions for carrying out initiations in Iskcon after his physical disappearance as asked directly of him by his Governing Board Commissioners on [May 28, 1977](#) was that he would soon recommend some of his disciples to act as officiating acaryas or ritviks representatives. In the following week on June 4, 1977 he wrote in his will that Iskcon directors would have to be his duly initiated disciples. This also confirms his no change "henceforward" order sent to all GBCs and temple presidents

the following month ([July 9, 1977](#)) proclaiming his 11 chosen ritvik representatives that would initiate future disciples on his behalf even after his physical disappearance. These three separate instructions are Srila Prabhupada's actual replies to the direct question from his GBC disciples in charge of ISKCON management on how they should carry on initiations. Over the next 4 months until his physical disappearance, Srila Prabhupada never changed these orders either written or spoken.

**Srila Prabhupada:** "Yes; I shall recommend some of you. After this is settled up, I shall recommend some of you **to act as officiating acharyas.**"

Tamala Krsna: "Is that called **ritvik**-acharya?"

**Srila Prabhupada:** "**Ritvik yes.**"

Srila Prabhupada clearly defined **officiating** acaryas as **ritviks** who initiate disciples on behalf of the spiritual master.

**Srila Prabhupada:** "...continue to become ritvik and act on my behalf." (July 31th)

**Ritviks are the priests authorized by the spiritual master or his institution to accept students on behalf of ISKCON and Srila Prabhupada.** Srila Prabhupada made this perfectly clear. This understanding of the procedure Prabhupada prescribed is consistent with references to ritviks mentioned in Srila Prabhupada's books. ([Why the ritvik-system is bonafide](#))