

Glorification of Śrī Gurudeva

Often we are asked by people who enter into Hinduism by reading the Bhagavad Gītā where all the Vaiṣṇavas' worship of the Guru is mentioned. Though there is only one verse in the Gītā that hints at it there are many many verses in other scriptures. Here is a list, starting with:

The Guru in Śrīmad Bhāgavata :

*yair idṛṣī bhagavato gatiṛ ātma-vāda
ekāntato nigamibhiḥ pratipāditā naḥ
tuṣyantv adabhra-karuṇāḥ sva-kṛtena nityam
ko nāma tat pratikaroti vinoda-pātram*

Mahārāja Pṛthu told Sanatkumāra: „May you — who are well versed in the Vedas and have in your profuse compassion precisely explained to us, in the course of your dissertation on the Supreme Lord, the true nature of God as depicted above — may you ever be pleased with your own acts (of delivering the afflicted). What else can be a reward for you but handfuls of water?” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.22.47)

Śrīdhara Svāmī comments: *saty api svatve sarvasvenāpi na guroḥ pratyupakartuṁ śakyam ity āha—yair iti* — „Even by offering everything you have you cannot repay the Guru.” *yad vā, vinoda-pātram upahāsāspadam. pratyupakāre pravṛttau janānām upahāsāspadam bhaved ity arthaḥ* „Other than the ‘handfuls of water’ interpretation one can read the verse thus: instead of *vinā uda-pātra* (without handfuls of water) one can also read *vinoda-pātram*, or ‘object of ridicule’. In other words, anyone who says that there is any way to repay the Guru is a ridiculous person.”

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda's Sārārtha Darśinī-comment on Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.28.34 –
*sutāt hitveti pativratā patyur iva guroḥ sevāyām pravṛttaḥ śiṣyaḥ śravaṇa
kīrtanādīnyapi bhogān tad utthāna premānandān api grhān tad ucita vivikta sthalam api
nāvāpekṣate. śrī guru sevayaiva sukhena sarva sādhyā siddhyartham ityupadeśa
vyañjitaḥ.....guru sevāyā eva vedena sarvādhikasyoktatvā*

“A devoted and chaste wife, while absorbed in the service of her husband, does not care even for her son. Similarly, a disciple deeply absorbed in the service of the *guru* does not even depend on hearing and chanting, knowing that by *guru-sevā* he can easily attain complete perfection in devotion. Just as a devoted wife does not want any sense enjoyment and home comfort, a disciple completely absorbed in *guru-sevā* does not seek even *premananda* arising out of hearing and chanting nor even seek secluded places suitable to his *bhajana*. The Vedas say that service to the Guru is the greatest.”

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's comment on Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.28.50

śrī-guror deha-saṁskāraṁ kṛtvā śrīmad-guru-caraṇa-viyukto'haṁ tadīya-guṇānusmaraṇa-maya-śoka-dāvāgni-dagdha-deho prāṇaṁ dhartum aśaknuvaṁs tad-upadiṣṭa-śravaṇa-kīrtanādi-bhaktāu naiva śaktiṁ dhāsyāmi. tasmād adyaiva mariṣyāmi śiṣyo manasi niścinoṭīti darśayāmāsa

« After performing the cremation of Śrī Gurudeva, the disciple thinks « I am burning in the fire of separation from Gurudeva's lotusfeet. My body scorches in the fire of lamentation as I remember His attributes and I have no power to stay alive, nor am I able to perform *bhakti* in the type of hearing and chanting which Śrī Gurudeva had advised. » Thus the disciple decides : « Today I will die. »

Viśvanātha Cakravartī's comment on Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.28.51:

sva-guru-viraha-vyākulī-bhāva-dasāyām iva śiṣyasya bhagavad-darśanaṁ syād iti dyotayati.

„In the condition of separation from his Guru, the disciple is so upset that he gets the *darśana* of the Lord.”

*sa vai priyatamaś cātmā yato na bhayam aṅv api
iti veda sa vai vidvān yo vidvān sa gurur hariḥ*

« Indeed, He is the most loved one, the very Self, from whom there is not even the slightest fear. He alone is wise, who knows this truth, and he who is wise is the Guru, who is Lord Hari Himself. » (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.29.51)

*yadīsvare bhagavati yathā yair aṅjasā ratīḥ
guru-śuśrūṣayā bhaktyā sarva labdhārpaṇena ca*

(Among) the means for easily attaining love of God is serving the Guru with devotion and offering Him all that one gains.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.7.29-30)

Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda comments: *guroḥ śuśrūṣayā snapana saṁvāhanādīkayā* — “The word *śuśrūṣā* means bathing and massaging the Guru (practical services)”.

*asaṅkalpāj jayet kāmaṁ krodhaṁ kāma-vivarjanāt
arthānartheṣayā lobhaṁ bhayaṁ tattvāmarśanāt
ānvīkṣikyā śoka-mohau dambhaṁ mahad-upāsayā
yogāntarāyān maunena hiṁsāṁ kāmādy-anīhayā
kṛpayā bhūtajam duḥkhaṁ daivam jahyāt samādhinā
ātmajam yoga-vīryeṇa nidrāṁ sattva-niṣevayā
rajas tamaś ca sattvena sattvaṁ copaśamena ca
etat sarvaṁ gurau bhaktyā puruṣo hy aṅjasā jayet*

Śrī Nārada told King Yudhiṣṭhira: "To give up lust one must give up one's determination to enjoy, to give up anger one must give up lust and to give up greed one must see the evil of money. Fear can be given up by considering the truth, lamentation and

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

illusion can be given up by considering what is material and what is spiritual (rational thinking), pride can be given up by serving a great soul and obstacles in *yoga*-practise (which serves the purpose of fixing the mind) can be overcome by perfecting a vow of silence. Violence is conquered by giving up endeavours for sense-gratification, suffering caused by other living entities can be mitigated by developing the quality of compassion, suffering caused by the elements can be mitigated by entering into *samādhi* (psycho-religious trance) and suffering caused by the own body and mind can be mitigated by practising the eight-fold path of mystic *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*). When the mode of goodness increases sleep is conquered, along with the modes of passion and indolence, and by controlling the senses the mode of goodness is transcended. But **all these vices and obstacles together can be conquered simply by devotion to the guru.**"

(Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.15.22-25)

*yasya sākṣād bhagavati jñāna dīpa prade gurau
martyāsaddhiḥ śrutam̐ tasya sarvam̐ kuñjara śaucavat*

« Whoever sees the Guru, the bestower of the lamp of divine knowledge, who is God Himself, as a mere mortal, has all his learning lost, just as an elephant throws dust all over himself after bathing. » (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.15.26)

Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda comments on this verse -

*sākṣād bhagavatīti bhagavad aṁśa-buddhir api gurau na kāryeti bhāvaḥ. yad vā
upāsyē bhagavatyeva sākṣād vidyamāne martyā'sad dhīḥ martya iti durbuddhis tasya
śrutam̐ bhagavan mantrādikaṁ śāstrādikaṁ śravaṇa mananādikaṁ ca vyartham̐ ityarthah̐*

« Sākṣād Bhagavan means one should not even see the Guru as a particle of God, but as God Himself. It is foolish if one sees God, who is directly present (in the form of the Guru) as a mortal. If a fool thinks the Guru is an ordinary mortal not only his learning, but also his practise of his *mantra*, his hearing and his meditation on the Lord are all in vain. »

*eṣa vai bhagavān sākṣāt pradhāna-puruṣeśvaraḥ
yogeśvarair vimṛgyāṅghrir loko yaṁ manyate naram*

“He whose lotus-feet are sought by the greatest masters of Yoga, who is the Lord of material nature and all living beings has appeared in the form of Gurudeva, whom the people mistake for an ordinary human being.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.15.27)

Why is Gurudeva mentioned in the translation and not in the verse? Because the *ācāryas* explain the verse as such. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains: *eṣa śrī-kṛṣṇa-lakṣaṇo'pi. tataḥ prakṛta-dṛṣṭir na bhagavat-tattva-grahaṇe pramāṇam̐ iti bhāvaḥ.* “This is also the symptom of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (so if it isn't about Kṛṣṇa it is about Guru, who was discussed in the preceding 5 verses). It shows that a mundane view can never help establish the truth about God.”

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī confirms this more elaborately in his own comment: *nanu guroḥ pitṛ putrādayaḥ prativēśināś ca tam̐ naram̐ eva manyante katham̐ eka evāyam̐*

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

śiṣyas taṁ parameśvaraṁ manyante? ata āha — eṣa iti bhagavān yadunandano raghunandano vā vai niścitam eva pradhāna puruṣayor īśvaraḥ yaṁ lokas tad avatāra kālotpanno janaḥ naraṁ manyate tena kiṁ sa naro bhavati? api tu parameśvara evetyevaṁ guror apīti bhāvah “If his parents, children and neighbors consider the Guru to be a human being then how can one disciple consider him to be the supreme controller (*parameśvara*)? To this it is said: When the master of the material nature and the living beings descends as Yadunandana (Kṛṣṇa) or Raghunandana (Rāma) and people who meet Him while He is down here on earth, take Him to be a human being, does that mean that He **is**? He is certainly the supreme controller, and so is the Guru.”

gurvarka labdhopaniṣat sucakṣusā ye te tarantīva bhavānṛtāmbudhim

« Those who have received good eyes from the sun-like Guru cross over the false ocean of material existence. » (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.14.24)

*sa vai sat karmaṇāṁ sākṣād dvi-jāter iha sambhavaḥ
ādyo'ṅga yatrāśramiṇāṁ yathāhaṁ jñānado guruḥ*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: “O friend, the father from whom one gets the body is the first Guru in this world. Next comes the teacher who invests one with the sacred thread and teaches him his duties. Finally comes the Guru who teaches divine knowledge. He is just like Me.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.80.32)

*nāham iyyā-prajātibhyāṁ tapasopāśamena vā
tuṣyeyaṁ sarva-bhūtātmā guru-śuśrūṣayā yathā*

Kṛṣṇa says: “I am not satisfied with *grhastha dharma*, a birth as a *brahmin*, *brahmacārī dharma*, *tapasya* (living in the forest) or *sannyāsa dharma* as I am with service rendered to the Guru who bestows divine knowledge.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.80.34)

Śrī Sanātana and Jīva Gosvāmīs comment on 10.80.35: *śrī guru sevā mātmyam uktvā loka-śikṣārtham* “To teach the people the service of the Guru is described here.”

*vijita hr̥ṣīka vāyubhir adānta manas turagam
ya iha yatanti yantum ati lolam upāya khidaḥ
vyasana śatānvitāḥ samavahāya guroś caraṇam
vaniḥ ivāja santyakṛta karṇadharā jaladau*

“The mind is like an reckless horse that even persons who have conquered their senses and breath cannot control. Those in this world who try to subdue the uncontrolled mind, but who abandon the feet of the Guru, encounter hundreds of obstacles in their cultivation of various adverse practices. O birthless Lord! They are like merchants on a boat in the ocean who have failed to appoint a captain.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.87.33)

budha ābhajet tam bhaktyaikayeśa gurudevātātmā

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

“An intelligent person will worship the Guru, who is both the Lord Himself and His dearest servant, with exclusive devotion.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.2.37)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments: *kiṁ ca guru-devatātmā gurur eva devatā īśvara ātmā preṣṭhaś ca yasya* ‘devatā means that the Guru is God Himself and ātma means he is dear to the Lord.’

*tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam.
śābde pare ca niṣṇātam brahmaṇyupasamāśrayam*

“Therefore one should take shelter of a Guru and inquire from him about the highest welfare. Such a Guru should be versed in scripture, have realized the Absolute Truth and be free from attachment and revulsion.”

Śrīdhara Swāmī comments: *uttamaṁ śreya jñātum icchuḥ. śābde brahmaṇi vedākye nyāyato vyākhyānato niṣṇātaṁ anyathā bodha sañcārāyogāt. para brahma niṣṇātatva dyotakam āha upasamāśrayam iti* "He who desires to learn about the most auspicious devotional principles, should take shelter of the feet of Śrī Guru, who knows the scriptures and who has practical experience of God through his practice of devotion. If Śrī Gurudeva does not know the truth, he cannot erase the student's doubts about *bhajana*-matters, and if he is not devoted he cannot infuse *bhajana*-experiences into his student." (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.3.21)

*tatra bhāgavatān dharmān śikṣed gurv-ātma-daivataḥ
amāyayānuvṛtṭyā yais tu syed ātmātma-dō hariḥ*

“There one should learn the way of life of the great devotees by serving the Guru without duplicity, loving him as one’s own self and thus satisfy Lord Hari, who is the Self and who is able to give Himself away to the devotee.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.3.22)

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments: *amāyayā nirdambhayānuvṛtṭyā tad-anugatyā śikṣet* ‘amāyayā means without duplicity and anuvṛtṭyā means one should learn while following the teacher obediently.’

With all the talk that you can adopt as many Gurus as you want, with apparent support from the 11th canto, it is interesting to see in the *ācāryas*’ commentaries that a Vaiṣṇava still accepts only one personal Guru and remains loyal to him:

*labdhvānugraha ācāryāt tena sandarśitāgamaḥ
mahā-puruṣam abhyarcen mūrtyābhimatayātmanah*

“Having attained the mercy of the *ācārya* and having been shown the scriptures by him one should worship the Supreme Lord in the image of his choice.”

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments: *anugraho mantra-dīkṣā-rūpaḥ. asyaikatvam ekavacanatvena bodhyate* “The word *ācārya* is in singular case. The mercy is bestowed in the form of initiation.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.3.48)

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

*ātmano gurur ātmaiva puruṣasya viśeṣataḥ
yat pratyakṣānumānābhyāṁ śreyo'sāv anuvindate*

“The Supreme Self is the guide of the individual self, especially in the case of man, inasmuch as by sense perception and assumption he can accomplish his own welfare.”

Though it appears here that one can just rely on the Supersoul without surrendering to a personal Guru, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī adds in his Krama-sandarbha commentary on this verse: *gurv-anusaraṇe pravartaka ity arthaḥ* “This means it should prompt one to seek and follow a single, personal Guru” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.7.20)

Although Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.9.31 (*na hyekasmād gurur jñānaṁ susthiram*) seems to say one cannot get full knowledge from one single Guru alone, all commentator-*ācāryas* have said this does not mean one should erect a forest of Guru-pictures on one's altar -

Śrīdhara Swami comments:

jñāna-pradaṁ gurum eveti jñāna-pradaṁ gurum ekam eva vakṣyati, mad-abhijñānaṁ gurum śāntam upāsita [bhā.pu. 11.10.5] iti. uktam ca, tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam [bhā.pu. 11.3.22] iti.

The word *jñāna-pradam guru*, or the Guru who bestows divine knowledge, is in singular case in verses 11.10.5 and 11.3.21. »

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's Krama Sandarbha comment:

nanv eka eva yogyo guruḥ kartavyaḥ. tasmād eva sa-parikaram jñānaṁ setsyati. kiṁ vā, matāntara-jñā evānye praṣṭavyāḥ. kiṁ gurv-ābhāsair vyāvahārika-padārthair ity āśaṅkyāha-na hiti. ekasmān mukhyād guror labdham supuṣkalam susthiram yaj jñānaṁ tad api na syāt na sampadyate. kutaḥ? tatrāha-brahmeti. tat-tan-matena mati-bhaṅgād ity arthaḥ. tasmān mahā-gurūpadiṣṭa-mata-poṣāya tad-viruddha-mata-nirasanāya ca svabuddhyā mananārtham vyāvahārika-padārthā eva gurutvena sambhāvitāḥ, na tu kāpilādi-matāntara-sthāpakā iti bhāvaḥ

« Actually one should surely accept one single qualified Guru and perfect one's knowledge through him. Should one then inquire from teachers who have differing opinions? Why is it then recommended that one learn from many so-called spiritual masters appearing in the forms of ordinary material objects? The Avadhūta replies to this that even if one receives steady and profuse knowledge from a single, major Guru, it cannot be accomplished by hearing from him alone. That is made clear in the second half of the verse — “though *brahman* is unique, it is sung of by the seers in many different ways.” By hearing so many different opinions our purpose and resolution is ruptured. Therefore while hearing all these different teachers (by observing all these ordinary objects) one should use one's discriminating intelligence and due reflection to nourish and strengthen the opinion of the great teacher (one's own Guru) and to refute opposing views. Consulting so many teachers should not serve to establish opposing views like those of Kapila and others.”

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda comments:

nanu mad abhijñānaṁ gurum śāntam upāsita [bhā.pu. 11.10.5] iti, tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam [bhā.pu. 11.3.22] ity ādy uktibhya eka eva gurur

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

āśrayaṇīyo'vagamyate. nāpi śvetaketu-bhṛgu-pramukhair bahavo gurava āśritāḥ. satyaṁ mamāpi mantropadeṣṭā gurur eka eva upāśyo vartate. kintūpāsanāyām ānukūlya-prātikūlya-dṛṣṭāntibhūtā ete padārthāḥ parāmaṛśya gurū-kṛtā ity anvaya-vyatirekābhyāṁ me śikṣā-gurava evaite jñeyāḥ..... śikṣā-gurūṇāṁ tu bāhulyam eva prāyo jñāna-dārḍhya-prayojakam ity āha-na hiti.....

“From two other Bhāgavata verses mentioned before and after (11.3.21-22 and 11.10.5) it is clear that one should take shelter of one single Guru alone. Even great sages like Śvetaketu or Bhṛgu did not take shelter of many Gurus. Truly, only the Guru who gave me my *mantra* (the *dikṣā-guru*) is worshipable for me. Śikṣā-Gurus with their direct and indirect teachings can surely serve to point out what factors are favorable and unfavorable for my worship, though. Accepting many instructing teachers is done for strengthening one's knowledge.”

mad-abhijñāṁ gurūṁ śāntam upāsita mad-ātmakam

« A devotee should worship the serene Guru who knows Me as being identical with Me. » (Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.10.5)

*ācāryo'raṇir ādyaḥ syād ante-vāsy uttarāraṇiḥ
tat-sandhānaṁ pravacanaṁ vidyā-sandhiḥ sukhāvahaḥ*

“The Guru is the lower piece of wood, the disciple the upper one, and the Guru's spoken instruction is the churning rod. Divine knowledge is the blissful fire created by the friction.” (Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.10.12)

*ācāryaṁ māṁ vijānīyān nāvamānyeta karhicit
na martya buddhyāsūyeta sarva devamayo guruḥ*

"You should know the *ācārya* to be Me, never slight or disrespect him or find faults in him, considering him to be an ordinary mortal, for Śrī Gurudeva is the aggregate of all the Gods." (Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.17.27)

Uddhava asked Kṛṣṇa: *ko bandhu?* « Who is the friend? » (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.19.31)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replied : *bandhur gurur ahaṁ sakhe* « O friend, the greatest friend is the Guru, who is none other than Me. » (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.19.43)

nṛ-deham ādyaṁ sulabhaṁ sudurlabhaṁ plavaṁ sukalpaṁ guru-karṇa-dhāram

« The human body is a great gift and is very rare; it is the primary boat to cross the ocean of ignorance, and the Guru is its captain. » (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.20.17)

*naivopayanty apacitiṁ kavayas taveśa
brahmāyusāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ*

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

*yo`ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann
ācārya-caittya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti*

Uddhava tells Śrī Kṛṣṇa: „Oh Lord, even great wise persons cannot get square with You, even if they had gotten a lifetime of Brahmā. They rejoice when recalling Your generosity, for You have appeared externally as the Guru and internally as the Supersoul to remove all obstacles to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and reveal You to us.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.29.6)

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda’s *ṭīkā* on Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.29.34:
niveditātmā mat-svarūpa-bhūtāya man-mantropadeśakāya gurave — „Surrender to me means surrendering to the Guru who instructs in My *mantra* (the *dīkṣā-guru*) and who is My very form.”

The Guru in the Bhagavad-Gītā:

The only Guru-verse in Bhagavad Gītā (*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā*, 4.34) seems to indicate that the Guru here is plural (the words *upadekṣanti*, *jñānina* and *tattva darśina* are all in plural case). However, the commentators all agree that here too the worshipable Guru is in the singular. Śrī Madhusūdana Sarasvatī comments:

bahu-vacanaṁ cedam ācārya-viśayam ekasminn api gauravātiśayārthaṁ na tu bahutva-vivakṣayā. ekasmād eva tattva-sākṣātkāravata ācāryāt tattva-jñānodaye satyācāryāntara-gamanasya tad-artham ayogād iti draṣṭavyam

„The *ācārya* is mentioned here in plural case but still he is one. The plural case was only used here in an honorary way. It does not mean that one should have many Gurus. Divine knowledge is arising from a single Guru who has seen the truth. It is to be seen here that it is unfit to go to other Gurus for this purpose.”

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments:

praṇipātena jñānopadeṣṭari gurau daṇḍavan-namaskāreṇa. bhagavan! kuto’yaṁ me saṁsāraḥ? kathaṁ nivartisyate? iti paripraśnena ca. sevayā tat-paricaryayā ca. tad vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham iti śruteḥ

„*Praṇipātena* means offering prostrated obeisances to the knowledge-instructing Guru. The *paripraśna* (inquiry) is: „Bhagavan (Gurudeva)! Why am I in the material world? How can I stop material life?” *sevayā* means serving him or her.” Then he quotes the Upaniṣad-verse *sa gurum evābhigacchet* „To know this, one should approach a Guru who is learned and realized”. All of this is in singular case.

The Guru in the Upaniṣads :

ācāryavān puruṣo veda

"Transcendental principles are understood by he who has taken shelter of Śrī Guru's lotus feet and who is surrendered to his service." (Chāndogya Upaniṣad)

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

*yasya deve parābhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau;
tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanah*

"To those great souls who recite the Vedas with equal devotion to Guru and God, the purport of all this (Vedic) knowledge will be revealed". (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23)

tad vijñānārtham sa gurum evābhigacchet samit pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma niṣṭham

"For the sake of acquiring knowledge, approach a Guru who is learned in the scriptures and fixed in spiritual consciousness, with firewood in the hand »
(Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.12)

*uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata kṣurasya dhārā niṣitā duratyaya durgam
pathas tat kavayo vadanti*

“Get up! Wake up! Seek the guidance of an illumined teacher and realize the Self. Sharp like a razor's edge, the sages say, is the path, difficult to traverse. “ (Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.3.14)

The Guru in the Gosvāmīs' books :

In Śrī Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu (1.2.74) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described 64 limbs of *bhakti*, starting with taking shelter of the lotus feet of a *guru*, accepting an initiation-*mantra* from him, learning the intricacies of *bhajana* from him and serving him with love and faith. He mentioned three gates through which we enter the temple of devotion:

guru padāśrayas tasmāt kṛṣṇa dīkṣādi śikṣānam viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā.

Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta, 2.3.5-6 :

*snātvā sva-datta-mantrasya dhyānādi-vidhim uddiśan |
kiñcin mukhena kiñcic ca sañketenābhyavedayat ||5||
jagāda ca nijaṁ sarvam idaṁ preṣṭhayā te'dadam |
sarvam etat-prabhāvena svayaṁ jñāsyasi lapsyase ||6||*

“Having bathed, Śrī Guru instructed me in the rules of how to practise my *mantra* and how to meditate on it. Some instructions he gave me verbally and some through gestures. He said : ‘I have given you, my dear one, everything. Whatever other secrets there are you will learn it spontaneously, by the power of this *mantra*. «

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary :

*nanu sañketopadeśena tatra ca kṣaṇikena katham tat tad aśeṣa-vidhi-jñānam
sidhyet. satyam tasyaivānugrahād ityāha - jagādeti. sarvam uddiṣṭam anuddiṣṭam api*

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

sādhanaṁ sādhyam ca. etasya mad dattasya sāṅga mantrasya prabhāveṇa svayam eva jñāsyasi prāpsyāpi ca ātmasāt kariṣyasi.

"If you say, 'how can the Guru, with just some gestures and instructions, within a moment, accomplish (the *śiṣya*'s) endless knowledge of divine truths? (Then to that the response is:) Truly, it all happens by his grace alone - (attainment and realization of) all the *sādhana* and *sādhyā* (means and goals) that are described and not described. (The Guru says :) "By the power of the *mantra* I gave and its ritual applications (*sāṅga*) you will know everything spontaneously, and after you received it you will make it your own (realize it) too."

Brhad Bhāgavatāmṛtam (2.4.3-4)

*bhaktiṁ nava-vidhāṁ samyag jñātvedam vanam āgataḥ |
apaśyaṁ sahasaivātra śrīmad-guru-varaṁ nijam ||3||
pūrva-vad rājamāno 'sau dṛṣṭvā māṁ praṇataṁ mudā |
sāśīr-vādam samāliṅgya sarva-jño 'kṛpayat-tarām ||4||*

Gopa-kumāra said: "Having learned the nine types of devotion I came to this forest Vṛndāvana where I suddenly saw my own Śrī Guru. He shone just like before. Seeing me offering my obeisances to him he was very glad, blessed me and embraced me. Then that omniscient one was most kind (to instruct me in the secrets of *bhakti*)."

Note: The word '*nijam*', 'my own', shows that Śrī Guru did not appear in the form of some other person replacing him/her — it was the very same person.

Sanātana Gosvāmī comments on verse 4:

asau guru-varaḥ pūrvavad rājamāna iti nirvikāritvādi bhagavad avatāra-lakṣaṇam māthura vrajabhūmi rasikatvam ca darśitam.

"(Though Gopakumar had been to the heavens and a long time had passed, meaning thousands of years), Śrī Guru was unchanged, which shows that he/she is an *avatāra* of the Lord and a *rasika* of Mathurā and Vrajabhūmi as well." This confirms the eternity of the Guru as a distinct individual (not just a *tattva*), as glorified in Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's song: '*janme janme prabhu se*' ('He is my master, birth after birth').

The rest of Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary is interesting and important, too —

akṛpayattarām atyantam kṛpām kṛtavān akhilaṁ parama rahasyam bhakti-tattvam anubhava paryantam upādiśad ityārthaḥ yataḥ sarvajñaḥ

"He was very compassionate, so he instructed me in all the greatest secrets of *bhakti*, including the realizations about it. (This was possible because) it came from the omniscient."

Brhad Bhāgavatāmṛtam (2.4.81-87) :

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

*śrī-bhagavān uvāca—
svāgataṁ svāgataṁ vatsa diṣṭyā diṣṭyā bhavān mayā |
saṅgo'tra tvad-ikṣāyāṁ ciram utkaṅṭhitena hi ||81||
bahūni gamitāny aṅga janmāni bhavatā sakhe |
kathaṅcid api mayy abhi-mukhyaṁ kiṅcid akāri na ||82||
asminn asminn ihehaiva bhave bhāvī mad-unmukhaḥ |
ity āśayā tavātyantaṁ nartito'smi sadājñāvat ||83||
chalaṁ ca na labhe kiṅcid yenādyam paripālayan |
nibandham sva-kṛtaṁ bhrātar ānayāmy ātmanaḥ padam ||84||
tat te mayy akṛpāṁ vīkṣya vyagro'nugraha-kātarah |
anādiṁ setum ullaṅghya tvaj-janmedam akārayam ||85||
śrīmad-govardhane tasmin nija-priyatamāspade |
svayam evābhavaṁ tāta jayantākhyah sa te guruḥ ||86||
kāmaṁ dīrghatamaṁ me'dya cirāt tvaṁ samapūrayaḥ |
svasya me'pi sukhaṁ puṣṇann atraiva nivasa sthiraḥ ||87||*

The Lord said: "O my son! Welcome, welcome! I have been eager to see you for so many days! O friend! You have gone through many births, but still you did not show even the slightest interest in Me. In this birth you have turned towards Me, and hoping for this I have been constantly dancing like an ignorant person. O brother! I could not find any trick by which I could bring you here, violating the injunctions of the Vedas and so. O child! I was very upset that you ignored Me for so long. Being so eager for your mercy I violated the beginningless religious principles that were made by Myself and made you take birth near My own beloved Śrī Govardhana, while I descended there as your *guru*, named Jayanta. Today you have fulfilled My long-standing desires! Just stay here and increase My happiness and yours!"

Haribhakti Vilāsa :

*trāyasva bho jagannātha guro saṁsāra vahninā;
dagdham mām kāla daṣṭam ca tvām aham śaraṇam gataḥ*

"O Śrī Guru! O embodiment of the Lord's deep compassion! Save me, who am scorched by the fire of material existence and grabbed by the force of time! O Lord! I am surrendered unto You!" (Vaiṣṇava tantra, Haribhakti Vilāsa 1.102)

rikta-pāṇir na paśyeta rājānam bhiṣajam gurum

“One should not see the king, a doctor or the Guru with empty hands.”
(Smṛti Mahārṇava, quoted in Haribhakti Vilāsa 4, 343)

gurur yena parityaktas tena tyaktaḥ purā hariḥ

“A person who gives up the Guru has already given up Lord Hari in advance.”
(Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa, Haribhakti Vilāsa 4.364)

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, Bhakti Sandarbha 209-

*guru-bhaktiyā sa milati smaraṇāt sevyaḥ budhaiḥ
milito'pi na labhyeta jīvair ahamikā-paraiḥ*

„An intelligent person who practises *smaraṇam* through devotion to the Guru will attain the Lord, but persons who are filled with selfishness and pride will not, even if He came close by.” (Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa)

Bhakti Sandarbha 237-

*tatra yadyapi śaraṇāpattyaiva sarvaṁ siddhyati. śaraṇaṁ taṁ prapannā ye dhyāna
yoga vivarjitāḥ. te vai mṛtyum atikramya yānti tad vaiṣṇavaṁ padam. iti gāruḍāt tathāpi
vaiśiṣṭya lipsuḥ śaktas cet tataḥ bhagavac chāstropadeṣṭṛṇāṁ bhagavan mantropadeṣṭṛṇāṁ
vā śrī guru-caraṇānāṁ nityam eva viśeṣataḥ sevāṁ kuryāt. tat prasādo hi sva sva nānā
pratikāra dustyājyānārtha hānau parama bhāgavat prasāda siddhau ca mūlam.*

"Although all worship reaches perfection by surrendering to the Lord, since in the Garuḍa Purāṇa it is written: "Those who surrender to the Lord will transcend the mortal world even without practising *yoga* or meditation, and will attain the planet of Lord Viṣṇu. Of this there is no doubt.", still someone who desires a special perfection in worship will always particularly serve and worship the lotus feet of his *guru*, either the *guru* who teaches him the holy scriptures about the Personality of Godhead, or the *guru* who initiates him in the sacred *mantras* of the Personality of Godhead. The mercy of the topmost devotee is the root cause of destruction of those bad habits that the practitioner could hardly give up through many of his own endeavours."

yo mantraḥ sa guruḥ sākṣāt yo guruḥ sa hariḥ svayam

"The *mantra* is nondifferent from the *guru* and the *guru* is again non-different from the Supreme Lord Hari." (Vāmana Kalpa)

*harau ruṣṭe gurur trātā gurau ruṣṭe na kaścana;
tasmāt sarva prayatnena gurum eva prasādayet.*

“When Śrī Hari is angry, Śrī Guru can protect the devotee, but when the Guru is angry no one can save him; hence Śrī Guru must be pleased by all means.”

*prathamam tu guruḥ pūjyaḥ tataś caiva mamārcanam
kurvan siddhim avāpnoti hy anyathā niṣphalam bhavet*

« First the Guru is to be worshipped, then Me (Kṛṣṇa). Then perfection will be attained and not otherwise. »

*vaiṣṇavaṁ jñāna-vaktāraṁ yo vidyād viṣṇuvad gurum
pūjayed vān-manah-kāyair sa śāstrajñāḥ sa vaiṣṇavaḥ*

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

*śloka-pādasya vaktāpi yaḥ pūjyaḥ sa sadaiva hi
kiṁ punar bhagavad-viṣṇoḥ svarūpaṁ vitanoti yaḥ*

“He who sees the Guru as equal to Viṣṇu and worships him with body mind and words is truly a knower of scripture and a Vaiṣṇava. He who speaks even one line of a *śloka* is ever-worshipable, what to speak of someone who bestows the true form of Lord Viṣṇu?” (Nārada-pañcarātra)

*bhaktir yathā harau me'sti tad variṣṭhā gurau yadi;
mamāsti tena satyena sandarśayatu me hariḥ*

"If I have more devotion for my Guru then for Śrī Hari, then on the strength of that truth Śrī Hari will grant me His audience." (Devahūti devī in the Padma Purāṇa)

*yathā siddha-rasa-sparśāt tāmraṁ bhavati kāñcanam
sannidhānād guror evaṁ śiṣyo viṣṇumayo bhavet*

“Just as copper is turned into gold by the touch of *siddha-rasa*, the disciple becomes Kṛṣṇa-conscious by being in the company of the Guru.” (Āgama)

Bhakti Sandarbha 238 :

*śrī gurvājñayā tat sevanāvirodhena ca anyeṣāṁ api vaiṣṇavānāṁ pūjanam śreyah
anyathā doṣaḥ syāt. yathā śrī nāradoktau - gurau sannihite yastu pūjayed anyam agrataḥ.
sa durgatim avāpnoti pūjanam tasya niṣphalam*

“It is good to worship other Vaiṣṇavas only if it is on the order of Śrī Guru and does not contradict his service. Otherwise it is a fault, as is said by Śrī Nārada: “Whoever worships others in front of the Guru attains a bad destination and his worship will be fruitless.”

Bhakti Sandarbha 283 :

*divyaṁ jñānam yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya sañkṣayam
tasmād dikṣeti sā proktā deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ
ato guruṁ praṇamyaiṅ sarvasvaṁ vinivedya ca
grhṇīyād vaiṣṇavaṁ mantraṁ dikṣā-pūrvam vidhānataḥ*

That which bestows divine knowledge and destroys sins is called *dikṣā* by the wise. Therefore one should offer obeisances to the Guru and offer him everything before accepting Vaiṣṇava-*mantra-dikṣā* according to the rules.” (Hari Bhakti Vilāsa 2.9-10) From Āgama

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments: *divyaṁ jñānam hy atra śrīmati mantre bhagavat-svarūpa-jñānam, tena bhagavatā sambandha-viśeṣa-jñānam ca.* “The divine knowledge is knowledge of the true form of God which lies in the beautiful *mantra* and through which one gains specific knowledge about one’s relationship with Him.”

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's Mukṭā-carita :

*nāma śreṣṭham manum api śacī-putram atra svarūpaṁ
rūpaṁ tasyāgrajam uru puriṁ māthurīṁ goṣṭha-bāṭim
rādhākuṇḍaṁ girivaram aho rādhikā mādhavāsām
prāpto yasya prathita kṛpayā śrī gurum taṁ nato'smi (4)*

I bow down to my blessed Śrī Guru, by whose grace I have received the greatest name in existence, the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, the 18-syllable Gopāla-mantra, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the son of Mother Śacī, Svarūpa Dāmodara, Rūpa Gosvāmī, his elder brother Sanātana Gosvāmī, the great city of Mathurā, the pastures of Vraja, Rādhākuṇḍa, the best of mountains Govardhana, and the hope of attaining Rādhikā and Mādhava.....

guru-varaṁ mukunda preṣṭhatve smara param ajasraṁ nanu manaḥ

“Oh mind! Please remember that the best of spiritual teachers is dear to Lord Mukunda!” (Manaḥ Śikṣā, Śrīla Raghunātha dās Gosvāmī, verse 2)

The Guru eulogized by the Ācāryas:

*parānanda guro bhavat pade
padaṁ mano me bhagaval labheta
tadā nirastākhila sādhana śramaḥ
śrayeya saukhyaṁ bhavataḥ kṛpātaḥ*

“O most blissful Guru! When my mind attains a place at your lotus-feet, all the tiresome labor of my spiritual practises (*sādhana*) will be finished, and by your Grace I will experience supreme happiness!” (Śrīdhara Swāmi)

*yadyapi āmāra guru caitanyera dāsa
tathāpi jāniye āmī tāhāra prakāśa*

“Although my *guru* is the servant of Śrī Caitanya, still I know him to be the Lord's manifestation.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi 1, 44)

*guru kṛṣṇa rūpa hon sāstrera pramāṇe
guru rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā korena bhaktaḡaṇe*

“The *guru* is another form of Kṛṣṇa, that is proven by the scriptures. Kṛṣṇa bestows His mercy upon the devotees in the form of the *guru*.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi 1, 45)

*tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje, koro gurura sevana;
māyā-jāla chute pāy kṛṣṇera caraṇa*

The importance of the Guru confirmed in the scriptures.

“Therefore, worship Kṛṣṇa and serve the Guru. Then the net of illusion will break and you will attain Kṛṣṇa’s lotus-feet.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya 22.25)

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda’s comment on Bhagavad Gītā 2.41 -

mama śrī gurūpadiṣṭam bhagavat kīrtana smaraṇa caraṇa paricaraṇādīkam etad eva mama sādhanam etad eva mama sādhyam etad eva mama jīvātuḥ sādhana sādhyā daśayos tyaktum aśakyam etad eva me kāmīyam etad eva me kāryam etad anyam na me kāryam nāpyabhilaṣanīyam svapne'pītyatra sukham astu duḥkam vāstu saṁsāro naśyatu vā na naśyatu tatra mama kāpi na kṣatir ityevam niścayātmikā buddhir akaitava bhaktāv eva sambhavet

"The devotional practise of glorifying the Lord, remembering Him and serving His lotus-feet, as it has been instructed to me by my spiritual master is my goal and my life. It is impossible for me to give this up under any circumstance. This is what I desire and this is my duty. I have no other duty than this and I don't desire anything else, even in dreams! It may make me happy, it may make me unhappy, it may liberate me from material existence or it may not - that makes no difference to me at all" - such firm determination is possible in unadulterated devotion."

*guru-prasādo balavān na tasmād balavattaram
tathāpi śravaṇādīś ca kartavyo mokṣa-siddhaye*

"The Guru's mercy is most important. Nothing is more important. Still, in order to attain liberation one should certainly hear the glories of the Supreme Lord and serve Him in many ways."

(Smṛti śāstra quoted by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his *ṭīkā* of Vedānta sūtra 3.3.45)

*gu-kāras cāndhakāraḥ syāt ru-kāra tan nirodhakaḥ
andhakāra nirodhitvāt gurur ityabhidhīyate.*

"The syllable *gu* indicates darkness (nescience) and *ru* indicates removal of darkness (nescience). One who removes darkness - ignorance - is called Guru."

*gu-kāraścāndhakāraḥ syāt ru-kāras teja ucyate,
ajñāna nāśakam brahma gurur eva na saṁśayaḥ*

(Viśvasāra-tantra)

The syllable 'Gu' signifies darkness-ignorance and 'Ru' signifies light. Therefore, it is undoubtedly true that self-effulgent Para-brahma, whose light removes darkness-ignorance, is Guru."