

KARTIK INSPIRATIONS 2024

HE WHO GAVE ME EVERYTHING

Welcome to our *Kartik inspirations*. We've come a long way together, and I hope this month of Kartik has brought you new insights and deeper levels of spiritual practice.

Today is a good day to pause and reflect—to remember how we were able to walk this spiritual path, whose mercy opened the door for us, who gave us the lamp of knowledge to move forward, who held our hand when we stumbled, who explained spiritual instructions on how to live as a devotee. Of course, I am speaking of the spiritual master.

Today, dear devotees and friends, is the disappearance day of my own spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada. I am grieving that the sun of my guru has set on the horizon, but I am also reflecting on his merciful gifts.

There is a beautiful song by the Vaisnava poet Surdas, that I'm contemplating today. I first heard this from His Holiness Indradyumna Maharaja,

"I offer my obeisances to my spiritual master who gave me a beautiful *kanthi-mala*."

» These are the *tulasi* neck beads that I wear, which uplift me to the position of a servant of the Lord.

"He has given me effulgent *tilak*,"

» the sacred mark that I belong to the Lord and that He resides in the temple of my body; my body has become His temple.

"My spiritual master has given me the beautiful form of a devotee."

» He has dressed me, so to say, in the dress of devotion.

"And he has offered me his shelter. In one of his hands, my spiritual master holds my hand, and with his other hand, he holds the lamp of knowledge, illuminating the path to cross over the dark ocean of material existence.

Surdas says, 'My guru deserves the greatest respect because he can rescue one in the blink of an eye. Only he can do this. I bow down to him again and again, and yet again.'

Gratitude toward one's spiritual master, one's teacher, and the great souls who have walked this path before swings the door wide, wide open so that the word 'impossible' is no longer in our vocabulary.

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VAISNAVA POET SURDAS

Śācinandana

ŚACINANDANA SWAMI