

Bhakti - tattva - viveka

śrī śrī guru-gaurāṅgau jayataḥ

Bhakti - tattva - viveka

DELIBERATION UPON THE TRUE NATURE OF DEVOTION

composed by
Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

translated from the Hindi edition of
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja



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PREFACE

[translated from the Hindi edition]



The unlimited glories of devotion unto the Supreme Lord (*bhagavad-bhakti*) are visible in the Purāṇas, Śrutis, Smṛtis, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as in the literatures of famous Vaiṣṇava preceptors (*ācāryas*). By understanding the constitutional nature of unalloyed devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*) and genuinely engaging in its practice, one can easily cross the ocean of nescience and achieve life's ultimate goal of love for the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema*). What to speak of the genuine practice of *śuddha-bhakti*, even the attainment of a slight semblance of *bhakti* can award the fourfold boons of economic development (*artha*), religiosity (*dharmā*), sense gratification (*kāma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*). Therefore, people in general become attracted towards the cultivation of *bhakti*. But due to being ignorant of the true nature of unalloyed devotion, they usually come in contact with pretentious devotees who desire

only wealth, women and fame, and under their influence either practise false devotion or adopt devotional sentiments that are against the principles of pure devotion, all the while imagining them to be pure *bhakti*. Coming under the influence of those desiring impersonal liberation, they practise either a shadow or a reflection of real *bhakti* and deceive themselves. Thus they do not achieve the real fruit of *bhakti*.

Hence, the *ācārya* of the profound science of devotional mellows, the most merciful Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, has explained in his book *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* the true nature of unalloyed devotion on the basis of scriptural evidences. Moreover, he has described the nature of *chala-bhakti* (pretentious devotion), *ābhāsa-bhakti* (a semblance of devotion), *pratibimba-bhakti* (a reflection of devotion), *karma-miśrā-bhakti* (devotion mixed with fruitive action), *jñāna-miśrā-bhakti* (devotion mixed with impersonal knowledge), *āropa-siddha-bhakti* (endeavours that are indirectly attributed with the quality of devotion), *saṅga-siddha-bhakti* (endeavours associated with or favourable to the cultivation of devotion) and so on. In the realm of devotion, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is unanimously accepted as the most authoritative literature, but it was composed in Sanskrit, an ancient language that is comprehensible to very few people in modern times. So for the benefit of human society, in his *Bhakti-tattva-viveka* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has presented the grave and deep conceptions of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* in the Bengali language in a straightforward and easily understandable manner.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is an intimate eternal associate of the saviour of the masses in the age of Kali, Śācīnandana Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. After the associates of Śrī Gaurahari, such as the Six Gosvāmīs, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, left this world and entered the unmanifest pastimes, the one hundred years that followed are considered a dark period for the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line. This is because during this period in the Gauḍīya line no powerful *ācārya* appeared who could carry forward the teachings of Śrīman Mahāprabhu in their pure form as was done previously. As a result, in a short span of time, on the pretext of following and preaching the doctrine of divine love taught by Śrīman Mahāprabhu, many false sects like Āula, Bāula, Kartābhajā, Neḍā-nedī, Sāi, Sahajiyā, Sakhī-bhekhī, Smārta and Jātigosāi appeared and, while engaged in abundant misbehaviour, began preaching their own imaginary and materially motivated, deceitful principles. They defamed Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism to such an extent that educated and respectable people started viewing it with abhorrence. Gradually the Gauḍīya conception of devotion began to disappear.

At this time, in the year 1838, Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura auspiciously appeared in a well-educated and cultured family in the village of Vīra-nagara, which is near Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma in West Bengal. By compiling approximately one hundred authoritative books on the science of *bhakti* in Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, English and other languages, he ushered in a new era in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line and re-established its lost glory. For this great effort, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas will remain eternally

indebted to him. In the modern age, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura set in motion once again the *bhakti-bhāgīrathī*, the mighty flowing river of pure devotion, and for this he is well known as the Seventh Gosvāmī.

This *Bhakti-tattva-viveka* is a collection of four essays he composed originally in Bengali on the deliberation of devotional principles. The first Hindi edition of this material was serialized in issues from the fourth and fifth years (1958–9) of *Śrī Bhāgavata Patrikā*, a spiritual magazine in Hindi published monthly from Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha in Mathurā. On the request of our faithful readers and by the inspiration of the present-day *ācārya* of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Vāmana Mahārāja, it is now being presented in book form.

By the causeless mercy of the founder of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti and its subordinate Gauḍīya Maṭha branches throughout India, the most worshipful *ācārya-keśarī jagad-guru om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Gauḍīya devotional literatures are being published by the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. On the most auspicious occasion of the anniversary of his appearance day, this edition is being presented as an offering placed into his lotus hands. Being the great embodiment of affection and forgiveness, may he transmit the potency of his mercy into the core of our hearts so that we can render maximum service to his innermost desire. This is our humble prayer at his lotus feet.

Lastly, I humbly request the faithful readers to deliberate upon this literature with great concentration. By understanding the true nature of unalloyed devotion, one can relish the ultimate

goal of all scriptures, the pure nectar of *kṛṣṇa-prema* as exhibited and preached by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

An aspirant for a particle of mercy
of Śrī Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas,

Tridaṇḍi-bhikṣu Śrī Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa

The holy day of Śārādīya-pūrṇimā, 1990
Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha
Mathurā, Uttar Pradesh, India

INTRODUCTION

[to the second English edition]



It gives us great pleasure to present this second English edition of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Bhakti-tattva-viveka* before our faithful readers. This edition is a direct translation of the Hindi edition, which was directly compiled and translated from the original Bengali by our illustrious spiritual master, *om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja. The first Hindi edition was published in 1990 and the first English edition in 1997.

Owing to its clear and precise presentation of the science of devotion unto the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in simple and easily comprehensible language, this small book has long been a favourite of Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. Quoting abundantly from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura shows how to discriminate between genuine pure devotion to the Lord and

the many forms of adulterated devotion. This subject matter is particularly relevant in modern times, when the exalted spiritual teachings of ancient India are receiving greater exposure than ever. The concepts explained herein will effectively guide sincere spiritual aspirants along the devotional path by providing them with a clear picture of true devotion and helping them to identify those rare souls who embody such devotion.

Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja has a strong determination to see the writings of the great Gauḍīya *ācāryas* published in English and widely distributed. This he shares in common with his dear friend and instructing spiritual master, Śrī Śrīmad A.C. Bhaktivedānta Svāmī Prabhupāda, who single-handedly and in a relatively short period of time spread the teachings of Kṛṣṇa consciousness around the entire world. Śrīla Prabhupāda's translations and writings set the standard for the literary presentation of Vaiṣṇava philosophy, and we hope and pray that our current efforts, and this volume in particular, are pleasing to him.

This second English edition differs from the first in that it has been carefully re-edited for linguistic and philosophical clarity. It also sports a new design and has been typeset to a higher standard. Grateful acknowledgement is extended to Lavaṅga-latā dāsī for copy-editing this new edition, to Rṣabhādeva dāsa, Śānti dāsī and Giridhārī dāsa for proofreading the final manuscript, to Atula-kṛṣṇa dāsa for checking the Sanskrit, to Kṛṣṇa-prema dāsa for designing the new cover and to Subala-sakhā dāsa for providing the new photograph of Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. On behalf of the many devotees serving in Gauḍīya Vedānta Publications, we

offer this edition into the hands of our beloved Gurudeva, Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, praying that he will always bless us with the capacity to fulfil his inner heart's longing.

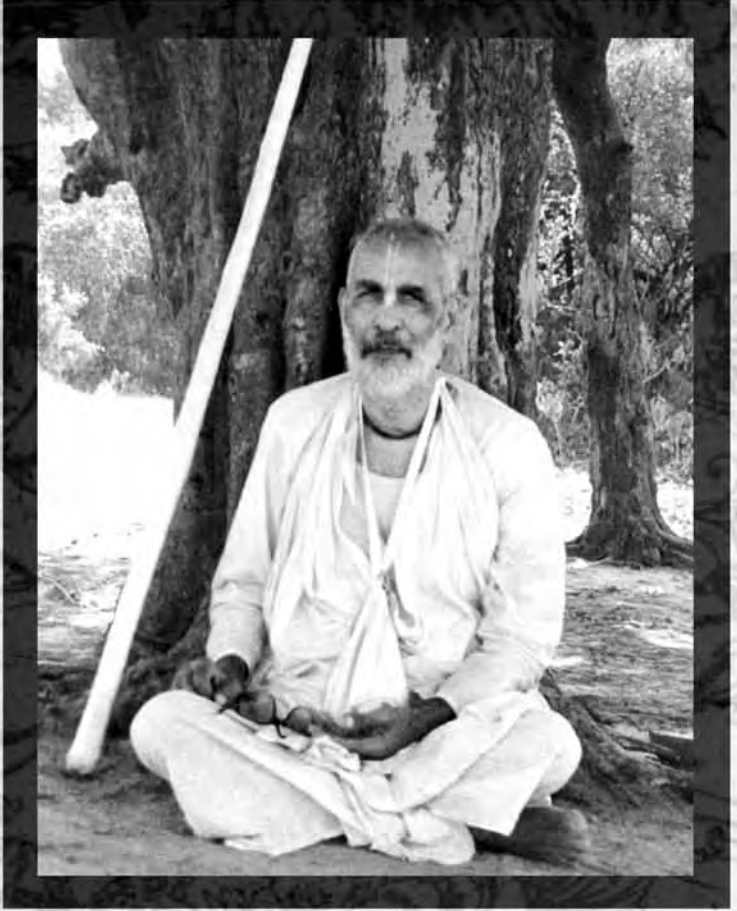
An aspirant for the service of the lotus feet
of Śrī Guru and the Vaiṣṇavas,

Prema-vilāsa dāsa

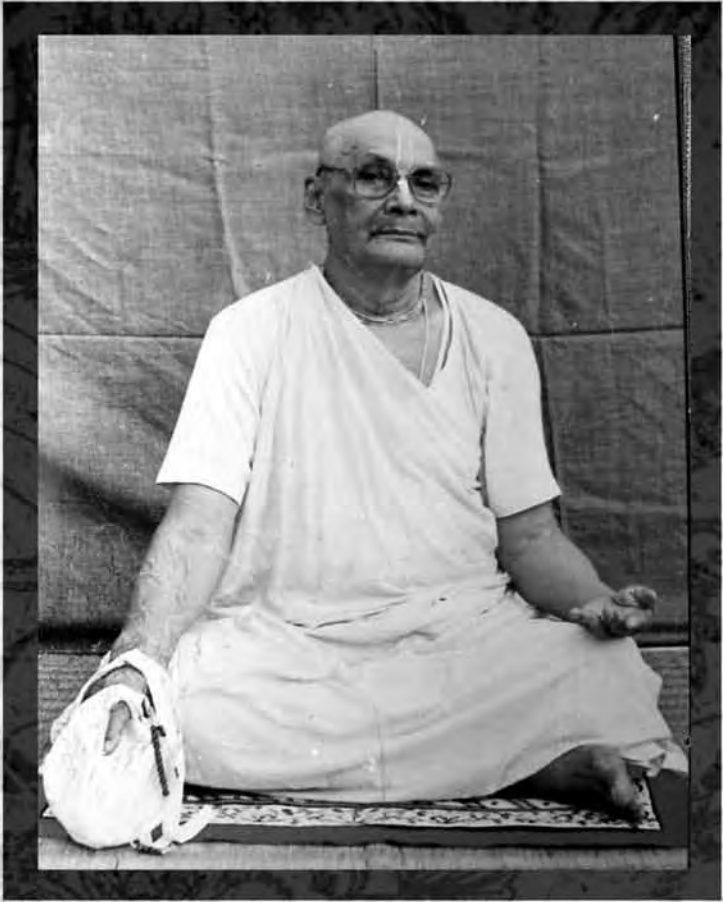
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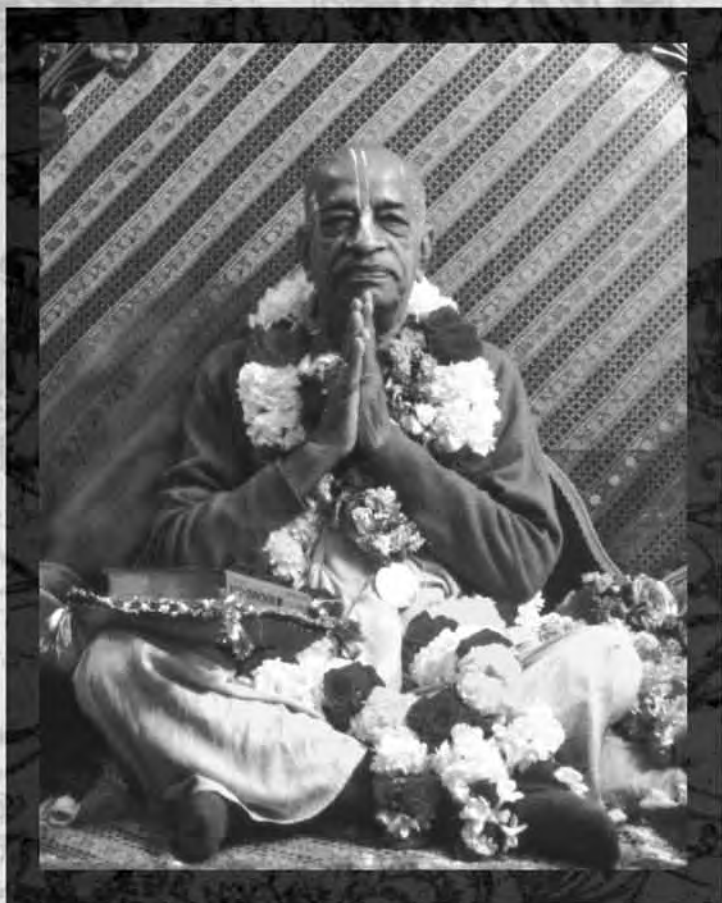
Gopīnātha-bhavana, Śrī Vṛndāvana



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA NĀRĀYAṆA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



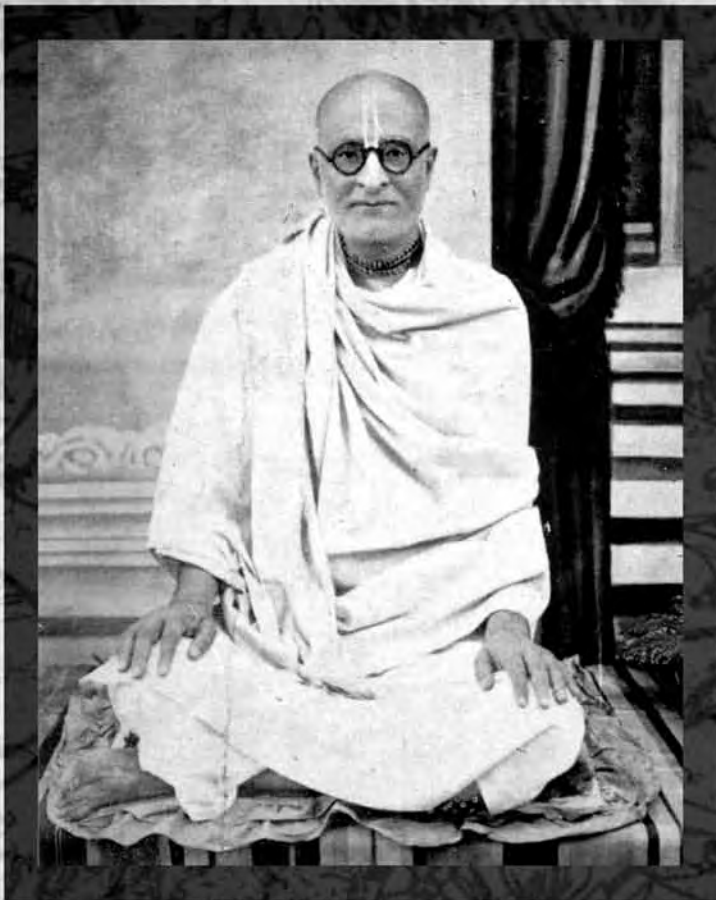
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nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTIVEDĀNTA SVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



nitya-lilā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTI PRAJÑĀNA KEŚAVA GOSVĀMĪ MAHĀRĀJA



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
ŚRĪ ŚRĪMAD BHAKTISIDDHĀNTA SARASVATĪ PRABHUPĀDA



nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa om viṣṇupāda
SACCIDĀNANDA ŚRĪLA BHAKTIVINODA ṬHĀKURA

Bhakti - tattva - viveka

CHAPTER One

THE INTRINSIC NATURE OF BHAKTI



*yugapad rājate yasmin
bhedābheda vicitratā
vande taṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanyaṁ
pañca-tattvānvitaṁ svataḥ
praṇamya gauracandrasya
sevakān śuddha-vaiṣṇavān
bhakti-tattva vivekā khyarṇ
śāstraṁ vaksyāmi yatnataḥ
viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsasya
kṣudrasyākiñcanasya me
etasminn udyame hy ekaṁ
balaṁ bhāgavatī kṣamā*

I offer obeisances unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is naturally manifest with His four primary associates in the *pañca-tattva* and in whom the contrasting qualities of unity (*abhedā*) and distinction (*bhedā*) simultaneously exist. After offering obeisances unto the servants of Śrī Gauracandra, who are all pure Vaiṣṇavas, I undertake with utmost care the writing of this book known as *Bhakti-tattva-viveka*. Being an insignificant and destitute servant of all the Vaiṣṇavas in the world (*viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsa*), in this endeavour of mine I appeal for their divine forgiveness, for that is my only strength.

Most respectable Vaiṣṇavas, our sole objective is to relish and propagate the nectar of pure devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*) unto Lord Hari. Therefore our foremost duty is to understand the true nature of *śuddha-bhakti*. This understanding will benefit us in two ways. First, knowing the true nature of pure devotion will dispel our ignorance concerning the topic of *bhakti* and thus make our human lives successful by allowing us to relish the nectar derived from engaging in *bhakti* in its pure form. Secondly, it will enable us to protect ourselves from the polluted and mixed conceptions that currently exist in the name of pure devotion.

Unfortunately, in present-day society, in the name of *śuddha-bhakti* various types of mixed devotion, such as *karma-miśrā* (mixed with fruitive action), *jñāna-miśrā* (mixed with speculative knowledge) and *yoga-miśrā* (mixed with various types of *yoga* processes), as well as various polluted and imaginary conceptions, are spreading everywhere like germs of plague. People in general consider these polluted and mixed conceptions to be *bhakti*,

respect them as such, and thus remain deprived of unalloyed devotion. These polluted and mixed conceptions are our greatest enemies. Some people say that there is no value in *bhakti*, that God is an imaginary sentiment only, that man has merely created the image of a God in his imagination and that *bhakti* is just a diseased state of consciousness that cannot benefit us in any way. These types of people, though opposed to *bhakti*, cannot do much harm to us, because we can easily recognize them and avoid them. But those who propagate that devotion unto the Supreme Lord is the highest path yet behave against the principles of *śuddha-bhakti* and also instruct others against the principles of *śuddha-bhakti* can be especially harmful to us. In the name of *bhakti* they instruct us against the actual principles of devotional life and ultimately lead us onto a path that is totally opposed to *bhagavad-bhakti*. Therefore with great endeavour our preceptors have defined the intrinsic nature (*svarūpa*) of *bhakti* and have repeatedly cautioned us to keep ourselves away from polluted and mixed concepts. We shall deliberate on their instructions in sequence. They have compiled numerous literatures to establish the *svarūpa* of *bhakti* and, amongst them, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is the most beneficial. In defining the general characteristics of unalloyed devotion, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written there (verse 1.1.11):

*anyābbhilāṣitā-śūnyaṁ
jñāna-karmādy anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam
bhaktir uttamā*

The cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or in other words the uninterrupted flow of service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, performed through all endeavours of the body, mind and speech, and through the expression of various spiritual sentiments (*bhāvas*), which is not covered by *jñāna* (knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and *karma* (reward-seeking activity), and which is devoid of all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is called *uttama-bhakti*, pure devotional service.

In the above verse, each and every word has to be analysed; otherwise we cannot understand the attributes of *bhakti*. In this verse, what is the meaning of the words *uttama-bhakti*? Do the words *uttama-bhakti*, meaning “topmost devotion”, also imply the existence of *adhama-bhakti*, inferior devotion? Or can they mean something else? *Uttama-bhakti* means the stage where the devotional creeper is in its completely pure or uncontaminated form. For example, uncontaminated water means pure water, meaning that in this water there is no colour, smell or adulteration of any kind caused by the addition of another substance. Similarly the words *uttama-bhakti* refer to devotion that is devoid of any contamination, adulteration or attachment to material possessions and that is performed in an exclusive manner. The usage of qualifying adjectives in this verse teaches us that we should not accept any sentiments that are opposed to *bhakti*. The negation of sentiments that are opposed to *bhakti* inevitably directs us towards the pure nature of *bhakti* itself. Perhaps by merely using the word *bhakti* alone this meaning

is indicated, since the word *bhakti* already contains within it all these adjectives anyway. Then has Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, the *ācārya* of the profound science of devotional mellows (*bhakti-rasa*), employed the qualifying adjective *uttama* (topmost) for no reason? No – just as when desiring to drink water people generally ask, “Is this water uncontaminated?” – similarly, in order to describe the attributes of *uttama-bhakti*, our preceptors considered it necessary to indicate that people mostly practise *miśra-bhakti*, mixed devotion. In reality, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is aiming to describe the attributes of *kevala-bhakti*, exclusive devotion. *Chala-bhakti* (pretentious devotion), *pratibimba-bhakti* (a reflection of devotion), *chāyā-bhakti* (a shadow of devotion), *karma-miśra-bhakti* (devotion mixed with fruitive action), *jñāna-miśra-bhakti* (devotion mixed with impersonal knowledge) and so on are not *śuddha-bhakti*. They will all be examined in sequence later on.

What are the intrinsic attributes (*svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*) of *bhakti*? To answer this question it is said that *bhakti* is *anukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlana*, the cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In his *Durgama-saṅgamanī* commentary on *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has explained that the word *anuśīlanam* has two meanings. First, it means cultivation through the endeavours to engage and disengage one’s body, mind and words. Secondly, it means cultivation towards the object of our affection (*prīti*) through *mānasī-bhāva*, the sentiments of the heart and mind. Although *anuśīlana* is of two types, the cultivation through

mānasī-bhāva is included within cultivation by *ceṣṭā*, one's activities. Hence, one's activities or endeavours (*ceṣṭā*) and one's internal sentiments (*bhāva*) are mutually interdependent, and in the end it is the *ceṣṭā* that are concluded to be the sole characteristic of cultivation. Only when the activities of one's body, mind and words are favourably executed for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa is it called *bhakti*. The demons Kāmsa and Śiśupāla were always endeavouring towards Kṛṣṇa with body, mind and words, but their endeavours will not be accepted as *bhakti* because such endeavours were unfavourable to Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. Unfavourable endeavours cannot be called *bhakti*. The word *bhakti* is derived from the root verb form *bhaj*. It is said in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (*Pūrva-khaṇḍa* 231.3):

*bhaj ity eṣa vai dhātuh
sevāyām parikīrtitaḥ
tasmāt sevā budhaiḥ proktā
bhaktiḥ sādhana-bhūyasī*

The verbal root *bhaj* means “to render service”. Therefore thoughtful *sādhakas* should engage in the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with great endeavour, for it is only by such service that *bhakti* is born.

According to this verse, loving devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is called *bhakti*. Such service is the intrinsic attribute of *bhakti*.

In the main verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.11), the word *kṛṣṇānuśīlanam* has been used. The purport of this is that Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the sole, ultimate objective indicated by the term *kevala-bhakti* (exclusive devotion).

The word *bhakti* is also used for Nārāyaṇa and various other expansions of Kṛṣṇa, but the complete sentiments of *bhakti* that can be reciprocated with Kṛṣṇa cannot be reciprocated with other forms. This point can be analysed in detail on another occasion when the topic is more suitable for it. For the time being it is necessary to understand that the Supreme Lord in His Bhagavān feature is the only object of *bhakti*. Although the Supreme Absolute Truth (*para-tattva*) is one, it is manifested in three forms; that is, Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. Those who try to perceive the Absolute Truth through the cultivation of knowledge (*jñāna*) cannot realize anything beyond Brahman. Through such spiritual endeavour they try to cross material existence by negation of the qualities of the material world (a process known as *neti-neti*); thus they imagine Brahman to be inconceivable, unmanifest, formless and immutable. But merely imagining the absence of material qualities does not grant one factual realisation of the Absolute Truth. Such spiritualists think that because the names, forms, qualities and activities in the material world are all temporary and painful, Brahman – which exists beyond the contamination of matter – cannot possess eternal names, form, qualities, pastimes and so on. They argue on the basis of evidence from the Śrutis, which emphasize the absence of material attributes in the Supreme, that the Absolute Truth is beyond the purview of mind and words, and that it has no ears, limbs or other bodily parts. These arguments have some place, but they can be settled by analysing the statement of Advaita Ācārya found in the *Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka* (6.67) written by Kavi Karṇapūra:

*yā yā śrutir jalpati nirviṣeṣam
 sā sāvidhatte saviṣeṣam eva
 vicāra-yoge sati hanta tāsāṁ
 prāyo balīyaḥ saviṣeṣam eva*

In whatever statements from the Śrutis where the impersonal aspect of the Absolute Truth is indicated, in the very same statements the personal aspect is also mentioned. By carefully analysing all the statements from the Śrutis as a whole, we can see that the personal aspect is emphasized more. For example, one Śruti says that the Absolute Truth has no hands, no legs and no eyes, but we understand that He does everything, travels everywhere and sees everything. The pure understanding of this statement is that He doesn't have material hands, legs, eyes and so on as conditioned souls do. His form is transcendental, meaning that it is beyond the twenty-four elements of material nature and purely spiritual.

By the cultivation of *jñāna* it will appear that impersonal Brahman is the Supreme Truth. Here the subtlety is that *jñāna* itself is material, meaning in the material world whatever knowledge we acquire or whatever philosophical principle (*siddhānta*) we establish is done by depending solely upon material attributes. Therefore, either that principle is material or by applying the process of negation of the material (*vyatireka*) we conceive of a principle that is the opposite of gross matter, but by this method one cannot achieve the factual Supreme Truth. In his *Bhakti-sandarbhā* Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has outlined the relative truth that is attained by those who pursue the path of impersonal knowledge as follows:

prathamataḥ śrotrṇām hi vivekas tāvān eva, yāvatā jaḍātiriktaṁ cin-mātraṁ vastūpasthitaṁ bhavati. tasmimś cin-mātre 'pi vastūni ye viśeṣāḥ svarūpa-bhūta-śakti-siddhāḥ bhagavattādi-rūpā varttante tāms te vivektuṁ na kṣamante. yathā rajanī-khaṇḍini jyotiṣi jyotir mātratve 'pi ye maṇḍalāntar bahiś ca diva-vimānādi-paraspara-prthag-bhūta-raśmi-paramāṇu-rūpā viśeṣās tāms carma-cakṣuṣa na kṣamanta ity anvayaḥ tadvat. pūrvavac ca yadi mahat-kṛpā-viśeṣeṇa divya-drṣṭitā bhavati tadā viśeṣopalabdhiś ca bhavet na ca nirviśeṣa-cin-mātra-brahmānubhavana tal-līna eva bhavati. (214)

idam eva (Bhagavad-gītā 8.3) “svabhāvo 'dhyātmam ucyate” ity anena śrī-gītāsūktam. svasya śuddhasyātmano bhāvo bhāvanā ātmany adbhikṛtya vartamānatvād adhyātma-śabdenocyate ity arthaḥ. (216)

In the beginning the students who are pursuing the path of *jñāna* require sufficient discrimination to comprehend the existence of a transcendent entity (*cinmaya-vastu*) that is beyond the contamination of gross matter. Although the specific attributes of Godhead established by the potencies inherent within the Lord's very nature are intrinsically present within that transcendent entity, the adherents of the path of *jñāna* are unable to perceive them. For example, the sun is a luminary that dispels the darkness of night. Although its luminous quality is easily understood, the inner and outer workings of the sun planet, the difference that exists between individual particles of light, and the specific distinguishing features of the innumerable atomic particles of light are all imperceptible to human eyes. Similarly, those who view the transcendent entity through the eyes of impersonal knowledge are unable to perceive the Lord's divine personal attributes. If, as previously described, one acquires

transcendental vision by the special mercy of great devotees, one will be able to directly recognize the Lord's personal attributes. Otherwise, by realisation of the impersonal existential Brahman, one will attain only the state of merging into that Brahman. (*Anuccheda* 214)

This knowledge is stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.3): “*svabhāvo 'dhyātmam ucyate* – the inherent nature of the living entity is known as the self.” The meanings of the words *svabhāva* and *adhyātmā* are as follows. *Sva* refers to the pure self (*śuddhātmā*), and the word *bhāva* refers to ascertainment. Hence the ascertainment of the pure living entity as a unique individual, eternally related to the Supreme, is known as *svabhāva*. When the self (*ātmā*) is made the principal subject of focus and thus given the power to act in its proper function, it is known as *adhyātmā*. (*Anuccheda* 216)

The purport of this is that when spiritual knowledge is acquired through the process of negation (*neti-neti*), the Absolute Truth, which is transcendental to the illusory material potency (*māyā*), is realized only partially. The variegated aspect of transcendence, which lies much deeper within, is not realized. If one who follows this process meets a personalist, self-realized Vaiṣṇava spiritual master, then only can he be protected from the impediment (*anartha*) of impersonalism.

Those who pursue the path of *yoga* in the end arrive only at realization of the all-pervading Supersoul, Paramātmā. They cannot attain realisation of the Supreme Lord in His ultimate manifestation. Paramātmā, Īśvara, personal Viṣṇu and so on are the objects of research in the *yoga* process. In this process we can

find a few attributes of *bhakti*, but it is not unalloyed devotion. Generally, religious principles in this world that pass for the topmost spiritual path are all merely *yoga* processes that strive for realisation of the Paramātmā feature. We cannot expect that in the end all of them will ultimately lead us to the topmost path (*bhāgavata-dharma*), because in the process of meditation there are numerous obstacles before one finally realizes the Absolute Truth. Besides, when after practising either *yoga* or meditation for some time one imagines that “I am Brahman”, there is the maximum possibility of falling into the trap of impersonal spiritual *jñāna*.

In this process, realisation of the eternal form of Bhagavān and the variegated characteristics of transcendence is not available. The form that is imagined at the time of meditational worship (*upāsana*) – whether it be the gigantic form of the Lord conceived in the shape of the universe or the four-armed form situated within the heart – is not eternal. This process is called *paramātma-darśana*, realisation of the Supersoul. Although this process is superior to the cultivation of impersonal *jñāna*, it is not the perfect and all-pleasing process. *Aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, *haṭha-yoga*, *karma-yoga* and all other *yoga* practices are included within this process. Although *rāja-* or *adhyātma-yoga* follows this process to a certain extent, in most cases it is merely included within the process of *jñāna*. The philosophical conclusion is that realisation of the Supersoul cannot be called *śuddha-bhakti*. In this regard it is said in *Bhakti-sandarbha*: “*antaryāmitvamaya-māyā-śakti-pracura-cic-chakty āśāviṣṭaṁ paramātmēti* – after the creation of this universe, the expansion of the Supreme Lord who enters

it as the controller of material nature and who is situated as the maintainer of the creation is known as Jagadīśvara, the all-pervading Paramātmā.” His function is related more to displaying the external potency rather than the internal potency. Therefore this aspect of the Absolute Truth is naturally inferior to the supreme and eternal Bhagavān aspect.

Absolute Truth realized exclusively through the process of *bhakti* is called Bhagavān. In *Bhakti-sandarbha* the characteristics of Bhagavān are described: “*pari-pūrṇa-sarva-śakti-viśiṣṭa-bhagavān iti* – the complete Absolute Truth endowed with all transcendental potencies is called Bhagavān.” After the creation of the universe, Bhagavān enters it through His partial expansion as Paramātmā: as Garbhodakaśāyī, He is situated as the Supersoul of the complete universe, and as Kṣīrodakaśāyī, He is situated as the Supersoul in the hearts of the living entities. Again, in direct distinction from the manifested material worlds, Bhagavān appears as the impersonal Brahman. Hence, Bhagavān is the original aspect of Godhead and the Supreme Absolute Truth. His intrinsic form (*svarūpa-vigraha*) is transcendental. Complete spiritual bliss resides in Him. His potencies are inconceivable and beyond any reasoning. He cannot be fathomed by any process fabricated by the knowledge of the infinitesimal living entity (*jīva*). By the influence of His inconceivable potency, the entire universe and all the living entities residing within it have manifested. *Jīvas* manifesting from the marginal potency (*taṭastha-śakti*) of Bhagavān become successful only by following the path of engaging exclusively in His loving transcendental service. Then by the practice of chanting the holy name (*nāma-bhajana*), one can realize through one’s transcendental

eyes the unparalleled beauty of Bhagavān. The processes of *jñāna* and *yoga* are incapable of approaching Bhagavān. When approached through the cultivation of impersonal knowledge, the Lord appears as the formless and effulgent impersonal Brahman, and if He is seen through the *yoga* process, He appears as Paramātmā invested within this material creation. *Bhakti* is supremely pure. It is very painful for Bhakti-devī, the personification of *bhakti*, to see the Supreme Personality in His lesser manifestations. If she sees this anywhere, she cannot tolerate it.

Out of these three manifestations of the Absolute Truth, it is only the manifestation of Bhagavān's personal form that is the object of *bhakti*. But even within Bhagavān's personal manifestation there is one important distinction. Where the internal potency (*svarūpa-śakti*) displays its complete opulence (*aiśvarya*), there Bhagavān appears as Vaikuṇṭha-nātha Nārāyaṇa, and where the internal potency displays its supreme sweetness (*mādhurya*), there Bhagavān appears as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Despite being predominant almost everywhere, *aiśvarya* loses its charm in the presence of *mādhurya*. In the material world we cannot draw such a comparison; no such example is visible anywhere. In the material world *aiśvarya* is more influential than *mādhurya*, but in the spiritual world it is completely the opposite. There *mādhurya* is superior and more influential than *aiśvarya*. O my dear devotees, all of you just deliberate upon *aiśvarya* one time, and then afterwards lovingly bring sentiments of *mādhurya* into your hearts. By doing so you will be able to understand this truth. Just as in the material world when the sun rises and consumes the moonlight, similarly when a taste of the sweetness of *mādhurya* appears in a devotee's heart,

he no longer finds *aiśvarya* to be tasteful. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.59):

*siddhāntatas tv abhede 'pi
śrīśa-kṛṣṇa-svarūpayoḥ
rasenotkrīyate kṛṣṇa-
rūpam eṣā rasa-sthitiḥ*

Although from the existential viewpoint Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa are non-different, Kṛṣṇa is superior due to possessing more *rasa*. Such is the glory of *rasa-tattva*. This topic will be made clear later in this discussion. But for now it is essential to understand that the favourable cultivation of activities meant to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*ānukūlyena anuśīlanam*) is the sole intrinsic characteristic (*svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*) of *bhakti*. Thus this confirms the same statement made in the verse under discussion from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.11).

To remain devoid of desires separate from the desire to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*anyābbilāṣitā*) and free from the coverings of *jñāna* and *karma* (*jñāna-karmādy anāvṛtam*) are the marginal characteristics (*tatastha-lakṣaṇa*) of *bhakti*. *Viṣṇu-bhakti pravakṣyāmi jayā sarvam avāpyate* – in this half verse from *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, the marginal characteristics of *bhakti* are reviewed. Its meaning is that by the practice of the aforementioned *viṣṇu-bhakti*, the living entity can attain everything. The desire to attain something is called *abbilāṣitā*. From the word *abbilāṣitā* one should not derive the meaning that the desire to progress in *bhakti* and to ultimately reach its perfectional stage is also to be rejected. “Through my practice of *sādhana-bhakti* I will one day attain the elevated stage

of *bhāva*” – it is highly commendable for a devotee to maintain such a desire, but apart from this desire all other types of desire are fit to be rejected. There are two types of separate desire: the desire for sense gratification (*bhukti*) and the desire for liberation (*mukti*). Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.22):

*bhukti-mukti-sprhā yāvat
piśācī hr̥di vartate
tāvad bhakti-sukhasyātra
katham abhyudayo bhavet*

As long as the two wishes of the desires for *bhukti* and *mukti* remain in a devotee’s heart, not even a fraction of the pure happiness derived from *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti*¹ will arise. Both bodily and mental enjoyment are considered *bhukti*. To make an extraneous effort to remain free from disease or to desire palatable foodstuffs, strength and power, wealth, followers, wife, children, fame and victory, are all considered *bhukti*. To desire to take one’s next birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family or in a royal family, to attain residence in the heavenly planets or in Brahmaloka or to obtain any other type of happiness in one’s next life is also considered *bhukti*. Practice of the eightfold *yoga* system and to desire the eight or eighteen varieties of mystic perfections are also

1 All favourable endeavours such as hearing, chanting, remembrance and so on, as well as the manifestation of the spiritual sentiments which occur beginning from the stage of *bhāva*, which are completely devoid of all desires separate from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and which are freed from the coverings of *jñāna* and *karma*, are known as *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti*. In other words all endeavours of the body, mind and words that are related to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and that are performed exclusively and directly for His pleasure without any intervention are known as *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti*.

categorized as *bhukti*. The greed for *bhukti* forces the living entity to become subordinate to the six enemies headed by lust and anger. Envy easily takes over the heart of the living entity and rules it. Hence, to attain unalloyed devotion one has to remain completely aloof from the desire for *bhukti*. To abandon the desire for *bhukti*, a conditioned soul need not reject the objects of the senses by going to reside in the forest. Merely going to reside in the forest or accepting the dress of a renunciant (*sannyāsī*) will not free one from the desire for *bhukti*. If *bhakti* resides in a devotee's heart, then even while living amidst the objects of the senses he will be able to remain detached from them and will be capable of abandoning the desire for *bhukti*. Therefore Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.254–6):

*rucim udvahas tatra
 janasya bhajane hareḥ
 viṣayeṣu gariṣṭho 'pi
 rāgaḥ prāyo vilīyate
 anāsaktasya viṣayān
 yathārham upayunñjataḥ
 nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe
 yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate
 prāpañcikatayā buddhyā
 hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ
 mumukṣubhiḥ parityāgo
 vairāgyaṁ phalgu kathiyate*

When the living entity develops a taste for *kṛṣṇa-bhajana*, at that time his excessive attachment for the objects of the senses starts gradually fading. Then with a spirit of detachment he accepts the objects of the senses only according to his needs, knowing those objects to be related to Kṛṣṇa and behaving accordingly. This is called *yukta-vairāgya*. The renunciation of those who, desiring liberation from matter, reject the objects of the senses considering them to be illusory is called *phalgu*, useless. It is not possible for an embodied soul to completely renounce the objects of the senses, but changing the enjoying tendency towards them while maintaining an understanding of their relation to Kṛṣṇa cannot be called sense gratification. Form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*), smell (*gandha*), touch (*sparsa*) and sound (*śabda*) are the objects of the senses. We should try to perceive the world in such a way that everything appears related to Kṛṣṇa, meaning that we should see all living entities as servants and maidservants of Kṛṣṇa. See gardens and rivers as pleasurable sporting places for Kṛṣṇa. See that all types of eatables are to be used as an offering for His pleasure. In all types of aromas, perceive the aroma of *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. In the same way, see that all types of flavours are to be relished by Kṛṣṇa, see that all the elements we touch are related to Kṛṣṇa, and hear only narrations describing the activities of Kṛṣṇa or His great devotees. When a devotee develops such an outlook, then he will no longer see the objects of the senses as being separate from Bhagavān Himself. The tendency to enjoy the happiness obtained from sense gratification intensifies the desire for *bhukti* within the heart of a devotee and ultimately deviates him from the path of *bhakti*. On the other hand, by accepting all the objects of this world as

instruments to be employed in Kṛṣṇa's service, the desire for *bhukti* is completely eradicated from the heart, thus allowing unalloyed devotion to manifest there.

As it is imperative to abandon the desire for *bhukti*, it is equally important to abandon the desire for *mukti* (liberation). There are some very deep principles and conceptions regarding *mukti*. Five types of *mukti* are mentioned in the scriptures:

sālokya-sārṣṭi-sāmīpya-

sārūpyaikatvam apy uta

dīyamānaṁ na grhṇanti

vinā mat-sevanaṁ janāḥ

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.29.13)

[Śrī Kapiladeva said:] O my dear mother, despite being offered the five types of liberation known as *sālokya*, *sārṣṭi*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya* and *ekatva*, my pure devotees do not accept them. They only accept my transcendental loving service.

Through *sālokya-mukti* one attains residence in the abode of Bhagavān. To obtain opulence equal to that of Bhagavān is called *sārṣṭi-mukti*. To attain a position in proximity to Bhagavān is called *sāmīpya-mukti*. To obtain a four-armed form like that of Bhagavān Viṣṇu is called *sārūpya-mukti*. To attain *sāyujya-mukti* (merging) is called *ekatva*. This *sāyujya-mukti* is of two kinds: *brahma-sāyujya* and *īśvara-sāyujya*. The cultivation of *brahma-jñāna*, impersonal knowledge, leads one to *brahma-sāyujya*, merging into the Lord's effulgence. Also, by following the method prescribed in the scriptures that deal with self-realisation,

one attains *brahma-sāyujya*. By properly observing the Pātāñjali *yoga* system, one attains the liberation known as *īśvara-sāyujya*, merging into the Lord's form. For devotees both types of *sāyujya-mukti* are worthy of rejection. Those who desire to attain *sāyujya* as the perfectional stage may also follow the process of *bhakti*, but their devotion is temporary and fraudulent. They don't accept *bhakti* as an eternal occupation and merely consider it to be a means to attain Brahman. Their conception is that after attaining Brahman, *bhakti* does not exist. Therefore the *bhakti* of a sincere devotee deteriorates in the association of such spiritualists. Unalloyed devotion never resides in the hearts of those who consider *sāyujya-mukti* to be the ultimate perfection. Regarding the other types of liberation, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī explains (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.55–7):

*atra tyājyatayaivoktā
 muktiḥ pañca-vidhāpi cet
 sālokyādis tathāpy atra
 bhaktyā nāti virudhyate
 sukhaiśvaryottarā seyaṁ
 prema-sevottarety api
 sālokyādir-dvidhā tatra
 nādyā sevā-juṣaṁ matā
 kintu premaiika-mādhurya
 juṣa ekāntino harau
 naivāṅgī kurvate jātu
 muktiṁ pañca-vidhāṁ api*

Although the aforementioned five types of liberation are worthy of rejection by devotees, the four types of *sālokya*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya* and *sārṣṭi* are not completely adverse to *bhakti*. According to the difference in a particular devotee's eligibility to receive them, these four types of liberation assume two forms: *svasukha-aīśvarya-pradānakārī* (that which bestows transcendental happiness and opulence) and *prema-sevā-pradānakārī* (that which bestows loving transcendental service unto Bhagavān). Those who reach the Vaikuṇṭha planets through these four types of liberation obtain the fruit of transcendental happiness and opulence. Servitors of the Lord never accept such liberation under any circumstance, and the loving devotees (*premi-bhaktas*) never accept any one of the five varieties of *mukti*. Therefore within pure unalloyed devotees the desire for liberation does not exist. Thus to remain free from the desires for liberation and sense gratification is *anyābbhilāṣitā-śūnya*, being devoid of any desire other than that to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is one of the marginal characteristics (*taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*) of *bhakti*.

To remain uncovered by tendencies such as those for *jñāna* (the cultivation of knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and *karma* (fruitive activity) is another marginal characteristic of *bhakti*. In the phrase *jñāna-karmādi*, the word *ādi*, meaning “and so forth”, refers to the practice of mystic *yoga*, dry renunciation, the process of enumeration (*sāṅkhya-yoga*) and the occupational duties corresponding to one's caste or creed. It has already been mentioned that the favourable cultivation of activities to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called *bhakti*. The living entity is transcendental, Kṛṣṇa is transcendental, and *bhakti-vṛtti* – the tendency of pure

devotion through which the living entity establishes an eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa – is also transcendental. When the living entity is situated in his pure state, only then does the intrinsic attribute (*svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*) of *bhakti* act. At that time there is no opportunity for the marginal characteristics of *bhakti* to act. When the living entity is conditioned and situated in the material world, along with his constitutional identity (*svarūpa*) two more marginal identities are present: the gross and subtle bodies. Through the medium of these, the living entity endeavours to fulfil his various desires while residing in the material world.

Therefore, when introducing someone to the conception of unalloyed devotion, we have to acquaint him with the concept of *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnya*, being devoid of any desire other than the desire to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the transcendental world this type of identification is not required. After becoming entangled in the ocean of material existence, the living entity becomes absorbed in various types of external activities and is thereby attacked by a disease called “forgetfulness of Kṛṣṇa”. Within the *jīva* suffering from the severe miseries caused by this disease arises a desire to be delivered from the ocean of material nescience. At that time, within his mind he condemns himself, thinking, “Alas! How unfortunate I am! Having fallen into this insurmountable ocean of material existence, I am being thrown here and there by the violent waves of my wicked desires. At different times I am being attacked by the crocodiles of lust, anger and so forth. I cry helplessly at my miserable condition, but I don’t see any hope for my survival. What should I do? Do I not have any well-wisher? Is there any possible way I can be rescued? Alas! What to do?

How will I be delivered? I don't see any solution to my dilemma. Alas! Alas! I am most unfortunate." In such a distressed state of helplessness, the living entity becomes exhausted and falls silent.

Seeing the *jīva* in this condition, the most compassionate Śrī Kṛṣṇa then mercifully implants the seed of the creeper of devotion (*bhakti-latā-bīja*) within his heart. This seed is known as *śraddhā*, faith, and it contains within it the undeveloped manifestation of *bhāva*, the first sprout of divine love for Bhagavān. Nourished by the water of the cultivation of devotional activities headed by hearing and chanting, that seedling first sprouts, then grows leaves, and then finally flowers as it assumes the full form of a creeper. When in the end good fortune dawns upon the living entity, the creeper of devotion bears the fruit of *prema*, divine love.

Now I will explain the gradual development of *bhakti*, starting from its seed-form of *śraddhā*. It is to be understood clearly that as soon as the seed of faith is sown in the heart, immediately Bhakti-devī appears there. *Bhakti* at the stage of *śraddhā* is very delicate like a new-born baby girl. From the very time of her appearance in a devotee's heart, she has to be very carefully kept in a healthy condition. Just as a householder protects his very tender baby daughter from sun, cold, harmful creatures, hunger and thirst, similarly the infant-like *Śraddhā-devī* must be protected from all varieties of inauspiciousness. Otherwise the undesirable association of impersonal knowledge, fruitive activity, mystic *yoga*, attachment to material objects, dry renunciation and so forth will not allow her to gradually blossom into *uttama-bhakti* and will instead make her grow into a different form. In other words, faith will not eventually

develop into *bhakti* but will merely assume the form of *anarthas*, impediments to pure devotion. The danger of disease remains until the tender Śraddhā-devī becomes free from the influence of *anarthas* and transforms into *niṣṭhā*, resolute determination. This occurs from being nurtured by the affectionate mother of the association of genuine devotees and from taking the medicine of *bhajana*. Once she has reached the stage of *niṣṭhā*, no *anartha* whatsoever can easily harm her.

If Śraddhā-devī is not properly nurtured with the utmost care, she will be polluted by the germs, termites, mosquitoes and unhealthy environment of *jñāna-yoga* (the cultivation of knowledge), *vairāgya* (dry renunciation), *sāṅkhyā-yoga* (the process of enumeration) and so forth. In the conditioned stage, the pursuit of knowledge, renunciation and so on are unavoidable for the living entity, but if knowledge is of a particular variety that is unfavourable to devotion, it can ruin *bhakti*. Hence, according to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, the word *jñāna* here refers to the pursuit of impersonal Brahman. *Jñāna* is of two types: spiritual knowledge that is directed towards obtaining *mukti*, and *bhagavat-tattva-jñāna*, which arises simultaneously along with *bhakti* within the heart of the living entity. The first type of *jñāna* is directly opposed to *bhakti* and it is essential to stay far away from it. Some people say that *bhakti* arises only after the cultivation of such spiritual knowledge, but this statement is completely erroneous. *Bhakti* actually dries up by the cultivation of such knowledge. On the other hand, knowledge concerning the mutual relationship (*sambandha*) between the Supreme Lord, the living entity and the illusory energy, which arises within the heart of the living

entity through the faithful cultivation of devotional activities, is helpful for *bhakti*. This knowledge is called *abhaituka-jñāna*, knowledge that is devoid of ulterior motive. Sūta Gosvāmī says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.7):

*vāsudeve bhagavati
bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ
janayaty āśu vairāgyaṁ
jñānaṁ ca yad abhaitukam*

Bhakti-yoga that is performed for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord Vāsudeva brings about detachment from all things unrelated to Him and gives rise to pure knowledge that is free from any motive for liberation and directed exclusively towards the attainment of Him.

Now, by carefully reviewing all the previous statements, we can understand that to remain uncovered by *jñāna*, *karma* and so forth – which means accepting them as subservient entities – and to engage in the favourable cultivation of activities meant to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa that are devoid of any other desire, is called *uttama-bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the only means by which the living entity can obtain transcendental bliss. Besides *bhakti*, all other methods are external. With the assistance of *bhakti*, sometimes fruitive activity (*karma*) is identified as *āropa-siddha-bhakti*, endeavours that are indirectly attributed with the quality of devotion, and sometimes the cultivation of impersonal knowledge (*jñāna*) is identified as *saṅga-siddha-bhakti*, endeavours associated with or favourable to the cultivation of devotion. But they can never be

accepted as *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti*, devotion in its constitutionally perfected stage.

Svarūpa-siddha-bhakti is *kaitava-sūnya*, free from any deceit and full of unalloyed bliss by nature, meaning that it is devoid of any desire for heavenly enjoyment or the attainment of liberation. But in *āropa-siddha-bhakti*, the desires for sense gratification (*bhukti*) and liberation (*mukti*) remain in a hidden position. Therefore it is also called *sakaitava-bhakti*, deceitful devotion. O my dear intimate Vaiṣṇavas, by your constitutional nature you are attracted to *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti* and have no taste for *āropa-siddha-bhakti* or *saṅga-siddha-bhakti*. Although these two types of devotion are not actually *bhakti* by their constitution, some people refer to these two types of activities as *bhakti*. In fact they are not *bhakti*, but *bhakti-ābhāsa*, the semblance of real devotion. If by some good fortune through the practice of *bhakti-ābhāsa* one develops faith in the true nature of *bhakti*, then only can such practice transform into unalloyed devotion. But this does not happen easily, because by the practice of *bhakti-ābhāsa* there exists every possibility of remaining bereft of unalloyed devotion. Therefore, in all the scriptures, the instruction is to follow *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti*.

In this short article, the intrinsic nature of unalloyed devotion has been explained. Having carefully reviewed all the instructions of our predecessor *ācāryas*, in summary form we are presenting their heartfelt sentiments in the following verse:

*pūrṇa-cid-ātmake kṛṣṇe
jīvasyāṇu-cid-ātmanah*

*upādhi-rabitā ceṣṭā**bhaktiḥ svābhāvikī matā*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the complete, all-pervading consciousness who always possesses all potencies, and the *jīva* is the infinitesimal conscious entity who is likened to a single particle of light situated within a ray of the unlimited spiritual sun. The natural and unadulterated endeavour of the infinitesimal conscious entity towards the complete consciousness is called *bhakti*. The living entity's persistence towards *anyābbhilāṣa* (acting to fulfil desires other than the desire to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa), *jñāna* (the cultivation of knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and *karma* (fruitive activity) is called “acquiring material designation”. We should understand that the natural inherent endeavour of the *jīva* can only mean the favourable cultivation of activities to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

CHAPTER Two

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SEMBLANCE OF BHAKTI



*yad bhaktyābhāsa-leśo 'pi
dadāti phalam uttamam
tam ānanda-nidhiṁ kṛṣṇa-
caitanyaṁ samupāśmahe*

We worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who is an ocean of transcendental bliss. Even a faint trace of devotion unto Him yields the highest result.

My dear devotees, in the previous chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature (*svarūpa*) and extrinsic characteristics (*taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*) of *bhakti*. In this chapter we will discuss *bhakti-ābhāsa*, the semblance of devotion. We have already discussed a little about *bhakti-ābhāsa* while reviewing the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* of *bhakti*, and indeed, *bhakti-ābhāsa* is actually included within the category of

the *tatastha-lakṣaṇa* of *bhakti*. But since it is not really suitable for the semblance of devotion to be thoroughly analysed in a section where both the intrinsic nature and extrinsic characteristics of *bhakti* are being described, it has become necessary to write a separate chapter on the topic of *bhakti-ābhāsa*. We hope that this article will serve to further clarify the subject matter of the previous chapter.

It has already been stated that the natural and unadulterated endeavour of the infinitesimal consciousness, the *jīva*, towards the complete consciousness, Kṛṣṇa, is called *bhakti*. *Jīvas* are situated in two stages, the liberated stage and the conditioned stage. In the liberated stage the living entity is free from all varieties of material relationships and is situated in his pure, constitutional position. In such a stage the *jīva* remains free from any material designation and hence within him there is no opportunity for the marginal characteristics of *bhakti* to exist. In the conditioned stage the *jīva* forgets his constitutional identity as his spiritual intelligence is deluded by the coverings of the subtle and gross bodies. In this stage the *jīva* acquires various material designations. When a mirror is free from dust, it gives a clear reflection of any object, but when it is covered with dust, it does not give a clear reflection. In such a condition we can say that the mirror has acquired a designation. When something covers the nature (*svabhāva*) of an object, then that covering is called the object's designation. Material nature covers the pure constitutional nature of the *jīva*, and that covering is the *jīva*'s designation. It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.37):

*bhayaṁ dvitīyābhiniveśataḥ syād
 iśād apetasya viparyayo 'smṛtiḥ
 tan-māyayāto budha ābhajet taṁ
 bhaktyaikayeśaṁ guru-devatātmā*

The *jīva*'s innate tendency of unalloyed devotion towards the complete consciousness, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is his eternal occupational duty (*nitya-dharma*). When the same *jīva* becomes opposed to Bhagavān, then he is gripped by fear and his intelligence is lost. *Māyā* is the external potency of Bhagavān (*apara-śakti*). Considering the existence of this material world, which has manifested from the external potency, to be an independent element from Bhagavān, the unfortunate living entity falls into material existence. Intelligent people, accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master, engage themselves in the exclusive *bhajana* of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari.

From the verse on the previous page, we can conclude that the living entity's absorption in the material energy (*māyābhiniveśa*) imposes a false designation upon him. In such an adulterated stage, the devotion of the living entity easily deteriorates and appears as *bhakti-ābhāsa*. Those who desire nothing other than entrance into unalloyed devotion should completely cross over *bhakti-ābhāsa* and take shelter of *kevala-bhakti*, exclusive and uninterrupted devotion. For this reason we are reviewing the topic of *bhakti-ābhāsa* in great detail. This in-depth analysis of the semblance of devotion is extremely confidential; only intimate devotees are qualified to hear it. This is because those

who consider *bhakti-ābhāsa* to be *bhakti* will never be pleased upon reading this book until they become truly fortunate. I am feeling immense pleasure in presenting this topic before the intimate devotees.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has not given a separate analysis of *bhakti-ābhāsa* in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Within the first half of the verse *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam*, he has given a complete yet hidden explanation of *bhakti-ābhāsa*. While discussing the topic of *rati-ābhāsa*, the semblance of ecstatic spiritual emotion, in his review of the principle of *rati*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has nicely explained *bhakti-ābhāsa*. I am presenting this deliberation on the semblance of devotion upon the basis of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's conception.

Bhakti-ābhāsa exists prior to the stage of *śuddha-bhakti*. From *bhakti-ābhāsa*, the stages of unalloyed devotion and *rati* within unalloyed devotion appear in sequence. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.3.45): “*pratibimbas tathā chāyā ratyābhāso dvidhā mataḥ* – there are two types of *bhakti-ābhāsa*: *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* and *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*.” The difference between the two is that *pratibimba* remains apart from the original object and appears as another separate entity, while *chāyā* is completely dependent on the original object and from a position of proximity to it appears as a partial manifestation of the original object. When a tree is reflected in water, the tree that is visible in the water is called the *pratibimba*, or reflection, of the original tree. The reflection is never in touch with the original object. The existence of the reflection is due solely to the existence of the original object; still, the reflection is accepted as a separate

entity. The form that appears because of the tree's blockage of the path of light and that resembles the form of the tree itself is called the *chāyā*, or shadow. The existence of the *chāyā* is entirely dependent upon the original object. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī says *tasmān nirupādhivam eva rater mukhya-svarūpatvaṁ sopādhivam ābhāsatvaṁ tattva-gaūṇyā vṛttyā pravartamānatvam iti*, which means that when *bhakti* is unadulterated, it is *svarūpa-bhakti*, devotion in its intrinsic state, but when *bhakti* is adulterated, then it is called *bhakti-ābhāsa*. *Bhakti-ābhāsa* is manifested by the *gaūṇa-vṛtti*, the secondary inclination of the living entity. The living entity's intrinsic inclination is called the *mukhya-vṛtti*, and the inclination that is obstructed or covered is called the *gaūṇa-vṛtti*. *Pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* and *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* are both categorized as *gaūṇa-vṛtti*, or secondary tendencies. When *bhakti* reaches its pure form, it is completely free from the tendencies of *pratibimba* (reflection) and *chāyā* (shadow). At that time only the original object itself, pure spontaneous devotion, is manifest.

PRATIBIMBA-BHAKTI-ĀBHĀSA

The semblance of devotion known as *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* can be divided into three categories: (1) *nirviśeṣa-jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa*, (2) *bahirmukha-karmāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa* and (3) *viparītavastu-bhakti-buddhi-janita-bhakti-ābhāsa*.

(1) In *nirviśeṣa-jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa*, *bhakti* remains hidden by a covering of impersonal knowledge (*nirviśeṣa-jñāna*). At that time

a curtain of impersonal knowledge exists between the *sādhaka* and *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti*², making direct realisation of *bhakti* in its inherent form impossible.

The conception of impersonal knowledge is that within transcendental reality (*cit-tattva*), names, forms, qualities, pastimes and other attributes do not exist. According to this philosophy, these attributes exist only in material objects; when the *jīva* becomes liberated from material existence, he merges into undifferentiated Brahman. Wherever such impersonal knowledge exists, unalloyed devotion cannot manifest there. *Kṛṣṇānuśīlana*, the cultivation of devotion unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is called *śuddha-bhakti*. But the activities of *bhakti* are not possible in impersonal liberation because neither Kṛṣṇa, His servant the living entity, nor devotional endeavours are present. If someone believes that when the perfectional stage of liberation is achieved *bhakti* no longer exists due to the destruction of the mind, body and false ego, but simultaneously they continue to follow the process of *bhakti* to achieve such perfection, then how can their devotion to Kṛṣṇa be called eternal and free from deceit? Such a person tries to please Kṛṣṇa for the time being and in the end attempts to extinguish Kṛṣṇa's existence. In precisely the same way, the demon Vṛkāsura pleased Lord Śiva with his worship, and after obtaining a boon from Śiva that he could kill anyone by merely placing his hand on their head, he tried to kill Śiva himself. The devotion of such a person is deceitful and temporary due to his ignorance of the intrinsic nature of eternally perfected devotion

2 Refer to the footnote on p. 15 for a definition of this term.

(*nitya-siddha-bhakti*). In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.3.44, 46) Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described the attributes of such deceitful *bhakti*:

*kintu bāla-camatkāra-
kāri tac-cibna-vīkṣayā
abhiññena subodho 'yaṁ
ratyābhāsaḥ prakīrtitaḥ
aśramābhīṣṭa-nirvāhī
rati-lakṣaṇa-lakṣitaḥ
bhogāpavarga-saukhyāñśa-
vyañjakah pratibimbakah*

By observing the symptoms of shedding tears and trembling in persons who desire material enjoyment and liberation, it may seem that they have developed *kṛṣṇa-rati*, ecstatic emotion based on excessive attachment for Kṛṣṇa. But only foolish people, who are easily influenced by a show of external symptoms, will consider such so-called *rati* genuine. Those who are knowledgeable know it to be *rati-ābhāsa*. Such a person's trembling and shedding of tears are due to two reasons. The first reason is that they have a hankering for impersonal liberation and by remembering Kṛṣṇa, who alone can award such *mukti*, they feel great pleasure. This pleasure is the cause of their shedding tears and trembling; it is not due to spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa. The second reason for their shedding tears and trembling is the happiness derived from thinking that simply by the performance of such *bhakti-ābhāsa* their inner desires for material enjoyment will be easily fulfilled.

*vārāṇasī-nivāsī kaścid ayam
 vyāharan hareś caritam
 yati-goṣṭhyām utpulakaḥ
 siñcati gaṇḍa-dvayī-masraiḥ*

Once, in the city of Vārāṇasī, a renunciant was chanting the names of Hari in an assembly of *sannyāsīs* and eventually he began trembling and tears started flowing from his eyes. While chanting the holy name he was thinking, “Aha! By such a simple process I will attain impersonal liberation.” Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes the cause of such a condition (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.3.47–8):

*daivāt sad-bhakta-saṅgena
 kīrtanādy-anusāriṇām
 prāyaḥ prasanna-manasām
 bhogo mokṣādi-rāgiṇām
 keṣāñcid dhṛḍi bhāvendoh
 pratibimba udañcati
 tad-bhakta-hṛṇ-nabhaḥ-sthasya
 tat-saṁsarga-prabhāvataḥ*

Exhibiting such trembling and shedding of tears is not easy for an impersonalist because knowledge and renunciation make the heart hard and push away all the symptoms of *bhakti*, which is very tender by nature. Even though in the process of hearing (*śravaṇa*) and chanting (*kīrtana*) conducted by the impersonalists the disease of the desires for sense gratification and liberation exists, they still feel a little pleasure in their hearts from their performance of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*. If at such a time by some

good fortune they obtain the association of a pure devotee of Bhagavān, then by the effect of that association the *bhāva* that has arisen like the moon in the sky of the hearts of pure devotees is reflected even in their hearts, which are contaminated by the impersonal conception. Such an occurrence can sometimes cause a little ecstasy and shedding of tears. But when again they lack the association of such a devotee, they deride the tears and trembling of their own disciples as fraud or cheating. Hence, *bhakti* can never appear in the heart covered by impersonal knowledge, but sometimes there is the appearance of *bhakti-ābhāsa*.

(2) In *bahirmukha-karmāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa* a blockage comprised of an external covering of fruitive activity (*karma*) is produced by the secondary tendency (*gauṇa-vṛtti*) of *bhakti*. It is as if a curtain of fruitive activity is present between the relisher, the living entity, and that which is to be relished, *bhakti*. This curtain covers the intrinsic nature of *bhakti*. Pursuing the path of mystic *yoga* and strictly adhering to the occupational duties corresponding to one's caste and stage of life (*varṇāśrama-dharma*) are both classified as *karma*. *Karma* is of two types: *nitya* (activities performed regularly) and *naimittika* (activities performed occasionally). All actions that result in piety are considered *karma*, fruitive activity. A detailed explanation of *karma* here would greatly enlarge this presentation. Those who specifically want to understand the concept of *karma* may read the initial pages of my book *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*.

The process of *karma* delineated in the books of the *smārta-brāhmaṇas* is all superficial activity. Activities such as *sandhya-*

vandana, prayers to be recited daily at dusk, that are suitable for the proper execution of one's *varṇāśrama* duties and that are mentioned in the books of the *smārtas* are called *nitya-karma*, daily routine activities. The *smārtas* consider the performance of these daily activities to be *bhakti*. Yet an in-depth review of these activities will reveal that they are superficial. The symptoms of *bhakti* that are visible in them are due merely to *pratibimbabhakti-ābhāsa* and not real *bhakti*. This is because the desired fruit of these activities is either the attainment of impersonal liberation or the pleasures of this world or the heavenly worlds. Some people consider the limbs of *bhakti* such as hearing and chanting to be *karma* and the hearing and chanting of the *karma-yoga* process to be *bhakti*. These misconceptions are caused by their ignorance of the proper philosophical conception. Although externally there appear to be many similarities between the processes of *karma-yoga* and *sādhana-bhakti*, there exists a fundamental difference between the two. Whatever action is performed to attain mundane happiness in this world or in the heavenly worlds is called *karma*. This happiness is classified as either sense gratification or relief from suffering in the form of impersonal liberation.

On the other hand, *bhakti* is the action performed with absorption in those sentiments which only help to increase our natural inborn inclination for love of Kṛṣṇa and where the performer has no other desire whatsoever. Despite accruing some other fruits by the performance of such activity, the performer considers those fruits to be very insignificant. Those acts which nourish unalloyed devotion are also considered *bhakti* because

bhakti alone is the mother of *bhakti*; the processes of *jñāna* and *karma* can never be capable of producing *bhakti*. My dear intimate devotees, you cannot satisfy the people engaged in gross activities by presenting before them this subtle difference between *karma-yoga* and *bhakti*. Only when their faith in the processes of *karma* and *jñāna* dwindles by the accumulation of heaps of pious activities and by the effect of association with pure devotees of Bhagavān will the seedling of undeveloped *bhakti* appear in their hearts in the form of faith. Unless in possession of such faith, no one can understand the subtle difference between *karma-yoga* and *bhakti*.

We should understand that if someone thinks that *bhakti* is simply another form of *karma*, then he won't be able to relish the transcendental sentiments of unalloyed devotion in his heart. The difference between bitter and sweet can be distinguished only by tasting them, not by reasoning. After actually tasting them, it becomes much easier to consider and then determine which of them is superior. Those inclined towards *karma-yoga* sometimes dance, tremble and shed tears while chanting the holy name, but all of this is a mere reflection of *bhakti*, not *śuddha-bhakti*. It is the result of their previous good fortune of having associated with devotees, as described in the verses quoted previously [on p. 34] such as *daivāt sad-bhakta-saṅgena...*. Their trembling and shedding of tears are just symptoms produced by sensual pleasure and are considered mere reflections (*pratibimba*) only. At such times they are either immersed in thoughts of heavenly pleasure or absorbed in an imaginary ocean of the pleasure derived from liberation. This is *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa*.

(3) In present times we can easily point out *viparīta-vastu-bhakti-buddhi-janita-bhakti-ābhāsa*, which is produced by the visualisation of *bhakti* in activities that are actually opposed to *bhakti* and which is prevalent in the *pañcopāsanā* and in the *īśvara-praṇidhāna*, concentration upon the Supersoul within the *yoga* process. Those known as *pañcopāsanā* consider that there are five *sampradāyas*: Śaiva (worshippers of Śiva), Śākta (worshippers of Durgā), Gāṇapatya (worshippers of Gaṇeśa), Saura (worshippers of Sūrya) and Vaiṣṇava (worshippers of Viṣṇu). All five are followers of impersonalism. The Vaiṣṇava line mentioned here is not the Vaiṣṇava line that follows the genuine principle of *bhakti*. The four genuine Vaiṣṇava *sampradāyas* are not included within the Vaiṣṇava *pañcopāsanā-sampradāya* mentioned here. Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī and Śrī Nimbāditya are the four *ācāryas* of the four bona fide *sampradāyas* of unalloyed devotion that are described in the verse *śrī-brahma-rudra-sanakās catvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ*. To indicate these four *sampradāyas*, it is said in the scriptures *sampradāya-vihinā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ*, which means *mantras* not accepted from the four bona fide *sampradāyas* yield no results.

Vaiṣṇavas who belong to the *pañcopāsanā* section are basically impersonalists, not pure devotees. All the *pañcopāsakas* believe that the *mūrtis* of their five worshipful deities are ultimately imaginary. In other words, they believe that Brahman has no form and that these forms are conceived only as a convenience for worship while still in the bodily conception of life. According to their concept, when one's worship becomes perfect he merges into impersonal Brahman and the devotion he offered to those

“imaginary” *mūrtis* whom he considers to be the Supreme is not eternal. This activity is simply *jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa*, devotion that is covered by impersonal knowledge. One cannot attain unalloyed devotion as long as he believes such semblance of devotion to be real *bhakti*. If symptoms of *bhakti* such as trembling and the profuse shedding of tears are detected in the performers of this type of *bhakti-ābhāsa*, they should be taken only as symptoms produced by sensual pleasure and a mere reflection (*pratibimba*) of the genuine symptoms.

Just as the *pañcopāsakas* display a semblance of devotion towards their “imaginary” deities of demigods, similarly *yogīs* also display trembling and shedding of tears towards their “imaginary” deity of the Supersoul. These are all examples of *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa*. The concept that *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* will gradually develop and ultimately transform into unalloyed devotion is totally false because by rejecting impersonal meditation and the benefits sought from fruitive activities the existence of this semblance of devotion totally vanishes. There remains no possibility of those practising *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* actually being benefited unless they completely purify their consciousness from its very root. Impersonalists such as the four Kumāras and the topmost *jñānī* Śukadeva Gosvāmī could only begin new and more exalted lives when they completely renounced their previous faiths and accepted the path of *bhakti*. By the strength of their new, exalted lives they achieved the status of our *ācāryas*. Regarding *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.3.42–3):

vimuktākhila tarṣair yā
muktair api vimrgyate
yā kṛṣṇenātigopyāśu
bhajadbhṛyo 'pi na dīyate
sā bhukti-mukti-kāmatvāc
chuddhām bhaktim akurvatām
hṛdaye sambhavaty eṣām
katham bhāgavatī ratiḥ

How is it possible for the rare *bhagavad-rati*, ecstatic emotion for Bhagavān that appears in the stage of *bhāva*, to appear in the hearts of those desiring material sense gratification and impersonal liberation when such *rati* is being eagerly sought after by liberated souls who have completely renounced all varieties of material desires and is not easily granted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to those engaged in His exclusive *bhajana*?

It is imperative to mention here that those who consider the pleasure derived from illicit association with women and taking intoxication to be love of God are themselves polluted and may pollute others also.

CHĀYĀ-BHAKTI-ĀBHĀSA

It is very important for a *sādhaka* to understand *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*. Unlike *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa*, *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* is not crooked and shrewd; it has simplicity and virtue. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written as follows regarding *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.3.49–53):

kṣudra kautūhalamayī
cañcalā duḥkha-bāriṇī
rateś chāyā bhavet kiñcit
tat-sādrśyāvalambinī
hari-priya-kriyā-kāla-
deśa-pātrādi-saṅgamāt
apy ānuṣaṅgikādeṣā
kvacid ajñeṣv apīkṣyate
kintu bhāgyaṁ vinā nāsau
bhāvāc chāyāpy udañcati
yad abhyudayaataḥ kṣemaṁ
tatra syād uttarottaram
hari-priya-janasyaiva
prasāda-bhara-lābhataḥ
bhāvābhāso 'pi sahasā
bhāvatvam upagacchati
tasminn evāparādhena
bhāvābhāso 'py anuttamaḥ
krameṇa kṣayam āpnoti
khastha-pūrṇa-śaśī yathā

There are a few similarities between *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* and *śuddha-bhakti*, but by nature the practitioner of *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* feels some slight curiosity concerning what fruit will be attained by following this process, his mind is restless and some of his material distress is eradicated. *Chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* is sometimes visible even within a person bereft of spiritual

knowledge, just by the influence of their having come into contact with the times, places and devotees that are related to Bhagavān. Whether one be a follower of *pañcopāsana* or of a bona fide disciplic succession, one cannot attain the stage of *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* without some special good fortune having arisen within him, because upon the shadow of *bhāva* arising just once – in whatever minute degree it may be – it will certainly grow and result in progressive benefit for the *sādhaka*. Upon obtaining the mercy of a pure Vaiṣṇava, *bhāva-ābhāsa* can suddenly progress up to the stage of *bhāva*. But on the other hand, if one commits offences at the feet of pure Vaiṣṇavas, even the topmost semblance of *bhāva* gradually deteriorates, just like the gradual waning of the moon in *kṛṣṇa-pakṣa*, the dark fortnight of the lunar month.

Chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa is of two types: (1) *svarūpa-jñānābhāva-janita-bhakti-ābhāsa*, the semblance of devotion that appears in the absence of knowledge of one's inherent identity, and (2) *bhakti-uddīpaka-vastu-śakti-janita-bhakti-ābhāsa*, the semblance of devotion in which the stimulation for *bhakti* is caused by the influence of having come into contact with objects such as time, place and circumstance that are related to Bhagavān.

(1) The intrinsic knowledge (*svarūpa-jñāna*) concerning the *sādhaka* (the practitioner), *sādhana* (the practice) and *sādhya* (the object of achievement) is non-different from the inherent nature of *śuddha-bhakti*. When such *svarūpa-jñāna* has not yet arisen within a *sādhaka* but the desire to cross over the ocean of material existence has come within him, then whatever symptoms of *bhakti* visible in him in that condition are merely *bhakti-ābhāsa*.

This semblance of devotion transforms into *śuddha-bhakti* when one obtains this intrinsic knowledge. Even for Vaiṣṇavas who are duly initiated into the genuine *sāṃpradāya*, the illumination of one's eternal identity arising from the *dīkṣā-mantra* that they received from their *dīkṣā-guru* will not appear until they are fortunate enough to receive instruction on this intrinsic knowledge. Due to ignorance of this intrinsic knowledge of the *bhakti-yoga* process, *svarūpa-siddha-bhakti* remains covered and hence only the semblance of devotion is visible.

The devotion of *pañcopāsakas* who remain aloof from the teachings of impersonalism and perform the worship of their favourite deity by considering him or her to be a direct expansion of Bhagavān and the supreme goal is also *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*. Still, there is a great deal of difference between *pañcopāsaka* Vaiṣṇavas and *sāṃpradāyika* Vaiṣṇavas. The resolute faith of *sāṃpradāyika* Vaiṣṇavas in the personal aspect of Bhagavān is much stronger than that of *pañcopāsaka* Vaiṣṇavas. By receiving proper instruction on philosophical principles, a *sāṃpradāyika* Vaiṣṇava remains hopeful of reaching a very exalted stage of pure Vaiṣṇavism, but a *pañcopāsaka* cannot be as hopeful of achieving such an exalted stage of Vaiṣṇavism by receiving instruction on philosophical principles according to their own custom.

The accessibility of association of pure devotees for *sāṃpradāyika* Vaiṣṇavas is much better than it is for *pañcopāsakas*. If by some fortune the *pañcopāsakas* obtain the association of devotees and simultaneously keep themselves aloof from the association of impersonalists, they can then be refined by the *sāṃpradāyika* system and can begin pursuing the path

of unalloyed devotion. Two scriptural evidences mentioned in *Bhakti-sandarbhā* are being quoted here. In the *Skanda Purāṇa* it is confirmed that *sāmpradāyika* Vaiṣṇavas achieve their desired result even by the practice of *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*. Śrī Mahādeva says (*Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 11.200):

*dīkṣā-mātreṇa kṛṣṇasya
narā mokṣaṁ labhanti vai
kiṁ punar ye sadā bhaktyā
pūjayanty acyutaṁ narāḥ*

Just by receiving initiation into the *kṛṣṇa-mantra* one can obtain liberation, so what can be said about what one can achieve by performing devotion unto the Supreme Lord?

Regarding *pañcopāsakas* who, remaining free from *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa*, have developed *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*, the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* (211.85) says:

*janmāntara-sahasreṣu
samārādhyā vṛṣadhvajam
vaiṣṇavatvaṁ labhet kaścit
sarva-pāpa-kṣaye sati*

If one worships Gaṇeśa for thousands of births and becomes free from all sins, then it is possible to come to the platform of Vaiṣṇavism.

The scriptural conclusion is that Śāktas, worshippers of the goddess Durgā, are gradually elevated to *bhakti* by first becoming worshippers of the sun-god, then worshippers of Gaṇeśa, then

worshippers of Śiva, then *pañcopāsaka* Vaiṣṇavas, and finally *sāṃpradāyika* Vaiṣṇavas. By the careful analysis of the words of the scriptures, it is understood that by the influence of association with pure devotees, *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* transforms into pure devotion.

(2) In the scriptures there are many examples of *bbhakti-uddīpaka-vastu-śakti-janita-bbhakti-ābhāsa*. The *tulasī* plant, *mahā-prasāda*, *vaiṣṇava-prasāda*, the days of devotional observance such as Ekādaśī, the deity of Bhagavān, the holy *dhāmas*, the Gaṅgā, the footdust of Vaiṣṇavas and so on are various objects that act as *bbhakti-uddīpaka*, stimuli to devotion. The living entity receives immense benefit even by coming in contact with these objects unknowingly. Sometimes benefit is accrued even when the innocent *jīva* unknowingly commits an offence to them. Coming into contact with these objects in this way is also *bbhakti-ābhāsa*. Devotees will not be astonished upon witnessing such remarkable results of *bbhakti-ābhāsa*; all such results are due solely to the immense power of *śuddha-bhakti*. If the processes of *jñāna* and *yoga* are not executed purely and if they are not supported by *bbhakti-ābhāsa*, then they are incapable of granting any result. On the other hand, Bhakti-devī is completely independent; regardless of the motives of those who take shelter of her, she fulfils their innermost desires. Although all these results are visible in the semblance of devotion, it is not the prescribed conduct. The execution of unalloyed devotion is our only duty. Those who desire absolute success should not under any circumstance give a place to *pratibimba-bbhakti-ābhāsa* within their hearts. By the strength of *bhajana* performed under the guidance of pure Vaiṣṇavas, they should cross beyond *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* and take

exclusive shelter at the lotus feet of Bhakti-devī. Therefore all of you kindly accept the following principle presented by Viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsa:

*pratibimbas tathā chāyā
bhedāt tattva-vicārataḥ
bhaktyābhāso dvidhā so 'pi
varjanīyaḥ rasārthibhiḥ*

Those who desire to relish the liquid mellows of devotion (*bhakti-rasa*) should always remain aloof from both types of *bhakti-ābhāsa*. By reviewing this subject matter, it is concluded that the semblance of devotion is of two types, *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* and *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*. *Pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* has a tendency to make the living entity commit offences, while *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* is incomplete in itself. The execution of unalloyed devotion is the only recommended activity for the living entity.

OFFENCES TOWARDS BHAKTI

This is a very dangerous item. We execute so many limbs of *bhakti*, such as accepting the *dīkṣā-mantra* from a bona fide spiritual master, every day applying *tilaka* to twelve different parts of the body, performing *arcana* unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa, observing the vow of Ekādaśī, chanting the holy name and remembering Kṛṣṇa according to one's ability, visiting the holy places like Vṛndāvana and so forth. But unfortunately we don't try hard enough to avoid committing offences at the feet of Bhakti-devī. Giving the example of the activities of Mukunda, Śrīman Mahāprabhu highlighted

to His devotees the various symptoms of offence towards *bhakti* (*Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata*, *Madhya-khaṇḍa* 10.185, 188–190, 192):

kṣaṇe dante tṛṇa laya, kṣaṇe jāṭhī māre
o khaḍa-jāṭhiyā – beṭā nā dekhibe more
prabhu bole – o beṭā jakhana yathā jāya
seī mata kathā kahi tathāya miśāya
vāśiṣṭha paḍaye jabe advaitera saṅge
bhakti-yoge nāce gāya tṛṇa kari dante
anya sampradāye giyā jakhana sāmabhāya
nāhi māne bhakti jāṭhi mārāye sadāya
bhakti-sthāne uhāra haila aparādha
eteke uhāra haila daraśana-bādha

[Śrīman Mahāprabhu said:] I can never bestow mercy upon Mukunda because sometimes he displays his humility by taking straw between his teeth and at other times he attacks Me; in other words, he keeps one of his hands at My feet (displaying humility) and the other at My neck (attacking Me). According to his own convenience, sometimes he behaves as My follower and at other times he criticizes Me. Hence, I cannot reward him. Wherever he goes, seeking his own benefit he represents himself accordingly and mixes with people. Sometimes he supports the doctrine of Māyāvāda by reciting from the book *Yoga-vāśiṣṭhā*, which is endowed with *advaita* philosophy, and at other times he shows his faith by abandoning the impersonal concept and cultivating *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* by becoming meek and humble, and by dancing and performing *kīrtana*. When he enters the sect of the

impersonalists, he rejects the eternality of *bhakti* and condemns the devotees with the weapon of argument and logic. In this way he has committed an offence at the feet of Bhakti-devī. Therefore I cannot give him My *darśana*.

Mukunda Datta is an eternal associate of the Lord, so whatever Mahāprabhu said to him in this regard is only a pastime. But Mahāprabhu's objectives are very grave, so there must be an extremely confidential reason for His statements here. His confidential instruction is that we cannot please Kṛṣṇa just by accepting initiation and executing the various limbs of *bhakti*. Only those who have unwavering faith in exclusive devotion can satisfy Him. Those who have developed such faith accept the path of unalloyed devotion with great determination. They do not visit places where doctrines that are unrelated to *śuddha-bhakti* are discussed. They go to places where the topic of pure devotion is being discussed and they listen with great interest. Simplicity, determination and exclusive desire for *bhakti* are the natural characteristics of such unalloyed devotees. They never approve of statements or activities that are opposed to the principles of *bhakti* merely to gain popularity; pure devotees always remain indifferent to such things.

These days most people don't try to avoid the above-mentioned offences. Just from seeing the devotees or hearing narrations of the Lord's activities, they display symptoms of apparent spiritual ecstasy such as trembling and the shedding of tears and they support spiritual philosophy in assemblies, but afterwards they are again seen becoming mad after sense gratification. Therefore,

dear readers, what can be said about the so-called firm adherence (*niṣṭhā*) of those who display these bogus sentiments? We understand that just to earn fame they display these symptoms before the devotees. Out of greed to acquire fame or other material benefits, they display varieties of this sort of conduct. It is a matter of great sorrow that these people not only commit an offence at the feet of Bhakti-devī by propagating deceitful philosophies in the name of *bhakti*, but also completely ruin the spiritual lives of the living entities of this world.

Dear readers, we should remain very careful not to ever commit any offence at the feet of Bhakti-devī. First of all, we must vow to perform *bhakti* while remaining indifferent to all else. We must never do anything or speak anything that is contrary to *bhakti* just to gain popularity or collect followers. We must remain simple and straightforward in our actions. There shouldn't be any difference between our words and our actions. We must never try to gain the favour of those who are indifferent to *bhakti* by displaying to them artificial symptoms of advanced devotion. We will always remain chaste to the principles of unalloyed devotion and will never support any other doctrine. Our external conduct and the feelings within our hearts should be one and the same.

CHAPTER THREE

AN ANALYSIS OF THE NATURAL ATTRIBUTES OF BHAKTI



*śuddha-bhakti-svabhāvasya
prabhāvān yat-padāśrayāt
sadaiva labhate jīvas
taṁ caitanyam ahaṁ bhaje*

I worship Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. By taking shelter of His feet, the living entity forever obtains the potency issuing from the very nature of unalloyed devotion.

Śuddha-bhakti manifests along with six symptoms: (1) *kleśaghnī* – it brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress; (2) *śubhadā* – it brings all auspiciousness; (3) *mokṣa-laghutākṛt* – liberation becomes insignificant before it; (4) *sudurlabhā* – it is rarely achieved; (5) *sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā* – it grants intense transcendental pleasure; and (6) *kṛṣṇākārṣaṇī* – it is the only

means to attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the stage of *sādhana-bhakti* only the first two symptoms appear, in the stage of *bhāva* the first four symptoms appear and in the stage of *prema* all six symptoms appear. These six symptoms will now be systematically discussed.

(1) *Kleśaghñī* – Bhakti-devī completely removes all the distress (*kleśa*) of those who take shelter of unalloyed devotion. *Kleśa* is of three types: sin (*pāpa*), sins in their seed form (*pāpa-bīja*) and ignorance (*avidyā*). Due to the sins committed by the *jīva* in innumerable lifetimes or the sins that he may commit in his present or future lives, he has to suffer various types of distress. The prominent sins have been analysed in the fifth wave of the second shower of my book *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*. These sins can be further divided into two categories: *prārabdha* and *aprārabdha*.

Prārabdha sins are those for which the living entity must suffer the reactions in his present life span. The sins whose reactions will be suffered in one's next life are called *aprārabdha*. The sins committed by the living entity in innumerable lifetimes combine together as *aprārabdha* sins and in his next birth fructify as *prārabdha* sins. Hence, within the jurisdiction of eternal law, the *jīva* is bound to suffer the reactions of the sins he has committed in his innumerable lifetimes. Birth in a *brāhmaṇa* family, a Muslim family, a wealthy family or a poor family, or having beautiful personal features or being ugly are all the results of *prārabdha-karma*. Birth in an untouchable (*yavana*) family is due to *prārabdha* sins. Unalloyed devotion destroys both types of sin, *prārabdha* and *aprārabdha*. If the path of *jñāna* is followed properly, it destroys *aprārabdha-karma*. But according

to the scriptures of the *jñānīs*, one must suffer the reactions of his *prārabdha-karma*. But *bhakti* also destroys *prārabdha-karma*:

*yan-nāmadheyā-śravaṇānukīrtanād
yat-prahvaṇād yat smaraṇād api kvacit
śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate
kutaḥ punas te bhagavan nu darśanāt*
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.33.6)

[Devahūti said:] O my dear Lord, by hearing and chanting Your holy names, by offering obeisances unto You and by remembering You, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately obtains the right to perform Vedic sacrifices; in other words, he acquires the status of a *brāhmaṇa*. What to speak then of the benefit one can achieve by receiving Your direct *darśana*?

This verse highlights how *bhakti* easily destroys the *prārabdha* sins that result in taking birth in a low-class family. Now see how *bhakti* also destroys *aprārabdha* sins:

*aprārabdha-phalaṁ pāpaṁ
kūṭaṁ bijaṁ phalonmukham
krameṇaiva praliyeta
viṣṇu-bhakti-ratātmanām*

*Padma Purāṇa;
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.23)*

For those who have undeviating and exclusive attachment for devotion unto Lord Viṣṇu, their (1) *aprārabdha*, the accumulated stock of sins that are lying in a dormant condition, (2) *kūṭa*,

sins that are tending towards producing seeds, which means that they are beginning to take shape as sinful desires, (3) *bija*, seeds that are already established as sinful desires, and (4) *prārabdha*, fructified sins, are all destroyed in sequence.

The purport is that for the destruction of their sins, the devotees need not perform any separate acts of either *karma* or *jñāna* as atonement.

The desires to commit sinful activities that are situated within the heart of the living entity are called *pāpa-bija*, the seeds of sins. *Pāpa-bija* can only be destroyed by *bhakti*:

*tais tāny aghāni pūyante
tapo-dāna-vratādibhiḥ
nādharmajam tad-dhṛdayam
tad apīśāṅghri-sevayā*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (6.2.17);
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.24)

The systematic methods for the atonement of sins that are prescribed in the scriptures, such as the performance of difficult vows like *cāndrāyaṇa*³ and other activities on the path of ordinary *karma*, as well as the performance of austerities and the giving of charity, destroy only those sins for which they are specifically prescribed. Those atonements do not destroy the seeds of sin, or in other words the sinful desires that have arisen due to

3 *Cāndrāyaṇa* is a vow where one takes only fifteen mouthfuls of food on the full moon day, decreasing by one mouthful each succeeding day until one fasts completely on the new moon day. Then one gradually increases his intake by one mouthful per day up until the next full moon.

ignorance. Sinful desires can be removed only by engaging in the service of Kṛṣṇa, meaning that besides *bhakti* there is no other means that can expunge sinful desires from the heart. As soon as Bhakti-devī appears in the heart, all sinful desires – as well as any desires for piety – are destroyed at the root. The following verses from the *Padma Purāṇa* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describe how *bhakti* eradicates *avidyā*, ignorance:

*kṛtānuyātrā vidyābbir
hari-bhaktir anuttamā
avidyāṁ nirdahaty āśu
dāva-jvāleva pannagīm*

*Padma Purāṇa;
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.26)*

When *hari-bhakti* appears in the heart, she is followed by the knowledge potency (*vidyā-śakti*), which immediately dispels the ignorance situated within the heart of the living entity, just as a serpent is burnt by a blazing forest fire.

*yat-pāda-paṅkaja-palāśa-vilāsa-bhaktyā
karmāśayaṁ grathitam udgrathayanti santaḥ
tadvan na rikta-matayo yatayo 'pi ruddhasroto-
gaṇās tam arañam bhaja vāsudevam*

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (4.22.39);
Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.25)*

Ascetics who have detached their minds from the objects of the senses by keeping their senses away from those objects cannot easily untie the knot of false ego from their hearts, whereas

devotees who are exclusively engaged in transcendental loving service unto the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa can untie this knot in no time. Hence, one should engage in bhajana of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme shelter.

Though the cultivation of knowledge can dispel ignorance to some extent, without taking shelter of *bhakti*, a *sādhaka* will certainly fall down:

ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas
tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam tataḥ
patanty adho 'nādrta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.2.32)

[The demigods prayed:] O lotus-eyed Lord, although by the cultivation of *neti-neti*, the negativity principle, non-devotees endeavour to attain something different from dull matter and consider themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. With great difficulty they cross the ocean of nescience to attain the stage of Brahman, but because they have not taken permanent shelter of Your lotus feet, they fall down from such a stage.

O intimate devotees, having surely heard the word *avidyā* before, you must be eager to know its intrinsic nature. Therefore I will explain a few points in this regard. Śrī Kṛṣṇa possesses unlimited varieties of potencies (*śaktis*). Amongst them, *cit-śakti*, *jīva-śakti* and *māyā-śakti* are prominent. *Cit-śakti* displays Bhagavān's abode (*dhāma*) and all the paraphernalia necessary for His pastimes (*līlā*). Another name for *cit-śakti* is *svarūpa-*

śakti. *Jīva-śakti* produces innumerable living entities. By nature *jīvas* are purely spiritual (*cit-tattva*), but due to their incomplete constitution they can be trapped by *māyā*, the illusory energy. By harbouring selfish desires they become opposed to Kṛṣṇa and are trapped by the illusory energy, and by desiring to be disposed towards Kṛṣṇa they are freed from *māyā* and engage in His service. This is the difference between conditioned and liberated *jīvas*.

The illusory energy acts in two ways upon the intrinsic nature of the conditioned living entity: through the *avidyā* potency and through the *vidyā* potency. Through its *avidyā* aspect, *māyā* covers the constitutional pure ego of the living entity, thus creating a false or distorted ego by which the *jīva* identifies himself with gross matter. This shackle of ignorance is the cause of the *jīva*'s conditioned state. Becoming free from *avidyā* and devoid of false designations, the living entity attains the stage of liberation. Thus *avidyā* is nothing more than a special potency of *māyā* that makes the living entity forget his constitutional position. Ignorance causes the desire for fruitive activity in the *jīva*. These desires initiate the process of sin and piety. This ignorance is the root cause of all the difficulty experienced by the *jīva*. Besides *bhakti*, no other process is capable of eliminating this ignorance. *Karma* can only destroy sins, and *jñāna* can destroy at the root the desires that cause both sin and piety. But *bhakti* totally eradicates at the root the sins themselves, the desires to perform both sin and piety, and the prime cause of these desires, ignorance.

(2) Bhakti is auspicious by nature, *śubhadā*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.27):

*śubhāni prīṇanam sarva-
jagatām anuraktatā
sad-guṇāḥ sukham ity ādīny
ākhyātāni manīṣibhiḥ*

Scholars define true auspiciousness (*śubha*) as possessing love for all living entities and becoming the object of affection of all living entities as well as possessing all good qualities, happiness and other similar auspicious achievements.

The *Padma Purāṇa* explains what is meant by possessing love for all living entities and being the object of affection of all living entities (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.28):

*yenārcito haris tena
tarpitāni jaganty api
rajyanti jantavas tatra
jaṅgamāḥ sthāvarā api*

Those who have worshipped Śrī Hari have satisfied the entire universe. Therefore all living entities, both animate and inanimate, love them.

The purport is that those who are devoted exclusively to *hari-bhajana* love everyone without any envy; therefore others also love them.

In devotees all varieties of good qualities develop naturally. This is easily verified by examining the lives of devotees. In this regard it says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.18.12), as well as in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.29):

*yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā
 sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ
 harāv abbhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā
 manorathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ*

Those who possess undeviated and exclusive *bhakti* for Bhagavān become the residence of all the demigods and all good qualities. How can such great qualities exist in non-devotees, whose illicit desires compel them to run after sense gratification? The qualities of compassion, truthfulness, humility, detachment, spiritual awareness and so forth appear only in those hearts in which *bhakti* has arisen. Even by great endeavour these qualities do not appear in those hearts which are occupied with desires for sense gratification. Though happiness is included within auspiciousness, it is being reviewed separately. By nature *bhakti* bestows all auspiciousness.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written that the happiness of the conditioned soul can be divided into three categories: *vaiṣayika-sukha*, *brāhma-sukha* and *aiśvara-sukha*. *Vaiṣayika-sukha* is all the varieties of mundane pleasure that are found within this material world. The eighteen types of mystic perfection and heavenly enjoyment are also considered *vaiṣayika-sukha*. Upon realising that mundane pleasure is ultimately distressful and temporary, the endeavour to eradicate it through the process of *neti-neti* is called *vyatireka*, the principle of negation. The impersonal pleasure derived from these *vyatireka* efforts, through eliminating all mundane feelings and imagining oneself to be one with the unchangeable Brahman, is called *brāhma-sukha*. The happiness

derived from taking permanent shelter of Bhagavān, who possesses all opulences in full, is called *aiśvara-sukha*. By nature *hari-bhakti* bestows all varieties of happiness. According to one's specific qualification and desires, it bestows either *vaiṣayika-sukha*, *brāhma-sukha* or *aiśvara-sukha*.

*siddhayaḥ paramāścaryā
bhuktir muktiś ca śāśvatī
nityaṁ ca paramānandaṁ
bhaved govinda bhaktitaḥ*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.31)

The eight types of mystic *yoga* perfection, all varieties of material enjoyment, the happiness of impersonal liberation and the supreme bliss (*paramānanda*) can all be achieved by devotion unto Śrī Govinda.

It is written in *Śrī Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* (and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.32):

*bhūyo 'pi yāce deveśa
tvayi bhaktir dṛḍhāstu me
yā mokṣānta-caturvarga-
phaladā sukhadā latā*

O Lord of the demigods, I repeatedly beg for the boon of attaining exclusive devotion unto You by which, according to their specific qualification, some devotees obtain the fruits of wealth, religiosity, sense gratification and liberation while others obtain the fruit of the happiness of possessing love for You.

The purport is that *bhakti* is capable of bestowing all types of happiness but the unalloyed devotees, considering the pleasure derived from sense gratification and impersonal liberation to be insignificant, search exclusively for *prema-sukha*, the happiness of possessing love for the Supreme Lord. Without the help of *bhakti*, the paths of *jñāna* and *karma* are incapable of yielding any result. Hence, in any condition, happiness cannot be obtained without *bhakti*.

(3) *Mokṣa-laghutākṛt* – By nature *bhakti* renders the conception of liberation (*mukti*) insignificant. It is said in the *Nārada-pañcarātra* (and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.34):

hari-bhakti-mahādevyāḥ
sarvā muktyādi-siddhayaḥ
bhuktayaś cādbhutās tasyāś
ceṭikāvad anuvratāḥ

The various kinds of perfection headed by *mukti* and the entirety of mundane pleasures follow behind the goddess of *hari-bhakti*, *Bhakti-devī*, as her maidservants.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has also said this very beautifully (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.33):

manāg eva prarūḍhāyām
hṛdaye bhagavad-ratau
puruṣārthās tu catvāras
trṇāyante samantataḥ

Only when one understands the fourfold achievements of economic development, religiosity, sense gratification and liberation to be very insignificant can it be accepted that unalloyed devotion is appearing within him.

(4) Attainment of *hari-bhakti* is extremely rare, *sudurlabbhā*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes about the extreme rarity of *bhakti* (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.35):

*sādhanaughair anāsaṅgair
alabhyā sucirād api
hariṇā cāśv adeyeti
dvidhā sā syāt sudurlabbhā*

There are two reasons for *hari-bhakti* being so rare. First, it cannot be achieved in spite of engaging in many varieties of *sādhana* for a long period of time as long as one is bereft of firm faith and unwavering persistence. Secondly, Śrī Hari does not easily grant *bhakti* unto Him even though one may be engaged in *āsaṅga-yukta-sādhana*, spiritual practice endowed with unflinching attachment. The word *āsaṅga* implies expertise in *bhajana*. Without expertise in *bhajana*, no spiritual practice can grant *hari-bhakti*. By executing *sādhana* with expertise in *bhajana* for a long period of time, and after offences to both the holy name and Vaiṣṇavas have been dispelled, by the mercy of the Lord unalloyed devotion, which establishes one in knowledge of his constitutional identity, arises in the heart.

*jñānataḥ sulabbhā muktir
bhuktir yajñādi puṇyataḥ*

seyaṁ sādhana-sāhasair

hari-bhaktiḥ sudurlabhā

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.1.36)

By the cultivation of impersonal knowledge one can easily obtain liberation (*mukti*), and by the performance of sacrifices and other pious activities one can easily obtain sense gratification (*bhukti*), but despite performing innumerable *sādhana*s one cannot achieve *hari-bhakti* so easily.

Bhagavān does not easily grant *bhakti* unto Him, as confirmed in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.6.18) and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.37):

rājan patir gurur alaṁ bhavatāṁ yadūnāṁ

daivam priyaḥ kula-patiḥ kva ca kiṅkaro vaḥ

astv evam aṅga bhajatāṁ bhagavān mukundo

muktim dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam

[Śukadeva Gosvāmī said:] My dear King Parīkṣit, Lord Mukunda Himself was the protector, spiritual master, worshipful deity, well-wisher and head of the Pāṇḍavas and the Yadu dynasty. Sometimes He even became their obedient servant. It is a matter of great fortune because Bhagavān easily grants liberation to those engaged in *bhajana* unto Him, but He doesn't easily award *prema* for Him, which is far superior to liberation.

In his commentary to this verse, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments: “*tasmād āsaṅgenāpi kṛte sādhana-bhūte sāksād bhakti-yoge sati yāvat phala-bhūte bhakti-yoge gāḍhāsaktir na jāyate tāvan na dadāti* *arthāḥ* – those who engage in *bhajana* unto the Supreme Lord by

executing the ninefold limbs of *bhakti* are not granted unalloyed devotion by Bhagavān until they develop strong attachment for activity executed on the platform of ecstatic emotion (*bhāva*), which is the fruit of perception of one's eternal identity. Until that time comes, one's devotion is simply *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*."

(5) *Sāndrānanda-viśeṣātma* – By nature *bhakti* is very intense transcendental pleasure (*ānanda*). It has already been mentioned that Bhagavān is *saccidānanda-svarūpa*, the complete embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss, and that the *jīva* is *anucidānanda*, an infinitesimal particle of spiritual bliss who is likened to a single particle of light situated within a ray of the unlimited spiritual sun. Hence, spiritual knowledge (*cit*) and spiritual bliss (*ānanda*) are also present within the living entity in minute quantity. The word *ānanda* is generally understood to mean mundane pleasure, but whatever pleasure can be derived from all material pleasures combined is extremely negligible when placed before spiritual pleasure. Material pleasure is extremely weak and momentary, whereas *cidānanda*, transcendental pleasure, is extremely intense. *Bhakti* is very intense transcendental pleasure and the intrinsic pleasure of the living entity. The happiness derived from impersonal liberation (*brahmānanda*) is negligible before *bhakti*. *Brahmānanda* is not the eternal bliss of the living entity; it is the so-called pleasure obtained from the negation of matter and material activities. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has said (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.38):

*brahmānando bhaved eṣa
cet parārdha-guṇī-kṛtaḥ*

*naiti bhakti-sukhāmbhodheḥ
paramāṇu-tulām api*

Even if the happiness of liberation experienced by impersonalists is multiplied by ten million times, the resulting pleasure will not be equal to even a drop of the ocean of pleasure derived from *bhakti*.

The purport is that by simple imagination we may extend the happiness derived from impersonal liberation to whatever extent, but in reality it cannot even come near the intrinsic pleasure of the living entity, what to speak of equalling it. The constitutional pleasure of the *jīva* is inborn and hence natural. The happiness derived from impersonal liberation is unnatural due to arising from the living entity's distorted endeavours and hence it is temporary. It is said in *Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya* (and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.39):

*tvat-sākṣāt-karaṇāhlāda-
viśuddhābhdhi-sthitasya me
sukhāni goṣṭhādayante
brāhmāṇy api jagad-guro*

O Bhagavān, by attaining *darśana* of You, I am now established in the ocean of pure bliss. What to speak of material pleasure, even the pleasure of impersonal liberation now seems as insignificant as the water in a calf's hoof-print.

There are many similar statements found in the scriptures.

(6) *Kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī* – *Bhakti* is the only means to attract Kṛṣṇa. As Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.41):

*kṛtvā harim prema-bhājan
priya-varga-samanvitam
bhaktir vaśi karotīti
śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī matā*

Unalloyed devotion overpowers Śrī Kṛṣṇa and all His dearmost associates with love; this very ability to attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa is actually the inherent nature of *Bhakti-devī*.

The purport of this is that in the stage of *sādhana-bhakti*, as long as unalloyed devotion has not arisen within the heart, a *sādhaka* is performing a semblance of devotion (*bhakti-ābhāsa*). At this stage the attainment of *śuddha-bhakti* is very rare. But when unalloyed devotion does appear in the heart – even in the stage of *sādhana* – a little of the splendour of the limbs of *bhajana* begins to blossom. At that time realisation of the *jīva*'s eternal identity and realisation of the true intrinsic nature of the Lord is kindled by the medium of that splendour. Subsequently, a powerful agitation in the form of deep attachment for *bhakti* develops within the heart of the devotee. Thus, the appearance of this stage of *bhajana* causes the pure practice of *bhakti* to quickly unfold into the stage of *bhāva* and to ultimately fully blossom into *prema*. In the stage of *bhāva*, *bhakti* attracts Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with His dearmost companions, but in the stage of *prema*, *bhakti* makes the *sādhaka* an instrument of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and thus induces him to relish the topmost *rasa*. This topic will be

explained more clearly ahead. Viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsa summarizes this topic in the following five verses:

*kleśaghnī śubhadā bhaktir
yadā sā sādhanātmikā
hṛdaye baddha-jīvanām
tatastha-lakṣaṇānvitā (1)*

*kleśaghnī śubhadā mokṣa-
laghutākṛt sudurlabhā
sā bhaktir bhāva-rūpeṇa
yāvat tiṣṭhati cetasi (2)*

*prema-rūpā yadā bhaktis
tadā tat-tad-guṇānvitā
sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā
śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣaṇī ca sā (3)*

*muktānām eva sā śaśvat
svarūpānanda-rūpiṇī
sambandha-svarūpā nityam
rājate jīva-kṛṣṇayoḥ (4)*

*bhaktyābhāsena yā labhyā
muktir māyā nikṛntanī
sā katham bhagavad-bhakteḥ
sāmyam kāṅkṣati ceṭikā (5)*

There are three stages of *bhakti*: *sādhana*, *bhāva* and *prema*. *Bhakti* in the stage of *sādhana* has two aspects: *kleśaghnatva*, meaning it removes all types of material distress, and *śubhadatva*,

meaning it offers the supreme auspiciousness. In the stage of *bhāva*, four aspects of *bhakti* are visible: *kleśaghñatva*, *śubhadatva*, *mokṣa-lagbutākāritva*, meaning it reveals to the practitioner the insignificance of liberation, and *sudurlabhatva*, meaning it is extremely rare. In the stage of *prema*, over and above these four attributes, two more aspects are visible: *sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā*, meaning it grants extremely intense transcendental pleasure, and *śrī-kṛṣṇākārṣaṇī*, meaning it is the only means to attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the conditioned stage of the living entity, the three intrinsic attributes of *bhakti*, that is *sāndrānanda-svarūpatva*, *śrī-kṛṣṇākārṣatva* and *sudurlabhatva*, remain mixed with its three marginal characteristics, that is *kleśaghñatva*, *śubhadatva* and *mokṣa-lagbutākāritva*. In the liberated stage, the *bhakti* of the living entity acts between the *jīva* and Kṛṣṇa as eternal loving service in a particular relationship and as the living entity's intrinsic transcendental pleasure. The liberation that dispels the covering of the illusory energy can be attained simply by the performance of a semblance of devotion. Since such liberation is just one of the ordinary maidservants among the many maidservants of Bhakti-devī, how can she aspire to be equated with Bhakti-devī?

CHAPTER Four

AN ANALYSIS OF THE QUALIFICATION FOR BHAKTI



*karma-jñāna virāgādi-
ceṣṭām hitvā samantataḥ
śraddhāvān bhajate yam
śrī-caitanyam ahaṁ bhaje*

I worship Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is always served by faithful devotees who have completely given up the pursuits of fruitive activity, impersonal knowledge and dry renunciation.

In the first chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature of unalloyed devotion, in the second chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature of *bhakti-ābhāsa*, or that which appears to be devotion but in fact is not, and in the third chapter we discussed the natural attributes of unalloyed devotion. In this chapter we will discuss the qualification (*adhikāra*) for *śuddha-bhakti*. No one acquires anything without

possessing the eligibility for it. This eligibility or qualification is the very foundation of success. When a devotee fully understands this, he will no longer remain doubtful concerning his eventual achievement of the ultimate goal. Many devotees think, “For a long time now I have been fully surrendered to my *guru*, I have accepted the *dikṣā-mantra* from him, I am also engaged in hearing and chanting, but still I am not experiencing the desired result – what is the reason for this?” Gradually they become uninterested in their *bhajana* and in the end they become totally faithless. Sound knowledge of the proper qualification for *bhakti* can easily protect one from such doubts.

It should be carefully noted that the performance of devotional activities such as hearing and chanting and the resultant appearance of symptoms like the shedding of tears and trembling should not be accepted as true *bhakti* for anyone and everyone. Hence, in order to take shelter of unalloyed devotion, it is compulsory to analyse the proper qualification for it. The *hari-bhajana* performed by those who are eligible to perform *karma* and cultivate *jñāna* usually becomes a part of mere *karma* and *jñāna*. Therefore such people don’t obtain the auspicious fruit that is expected from the performance of *bhajana*. A devotee’s *hari-bhajana* becomes pure only when he obtains the proper qualification for unalloyed devotion, and when this happens, his *bhajana* will very quickly bear fruit in the form of *bhāva*. For this reason I have undertaken an analysis of this very important topic. Scholars quote the following verse from *Bhagavad-gītā* (7.16):

*catur-vidhā bhajante mām
janāḥ sukṛtino ’rjuna*

*ārto jijñāsur arthārthī
jñānī ca bharatarṣabha*

[Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:] My dear Arjuna, as a result of their accumulation of pious activities in innumerable lifetimes, four types of people engage in *bhajana* unto Me: those who are distressed, those who are inquisitive, those who desire wealth and those who possess spiritual knowledge. These four kinds of virtuous persons are qualified to perform *bhajana* unto Me.

Those who are very anxious to eradicate their distress are called *ārta*. Those who are inquisitive to understand the Absolute Truth are called *jijñāsu*. Those who desire to attain material happiness are called *arthārthī*, and those who are realising spiritual truth at every moment are called *jñānī*. Though one may be *ārta*, *jijñāsu*, *arthārthī* or *jñānī*, unless one has some accumulated pious merit (*sukṛti*), he will not be inclined towards *bhajana*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has defined *sukṛti* as “those activities in connection with transcendental personalities that give rise to an intense desire to perform *bhakti*.” There may be doubts concerning the existence of *sukṛti* in the *ārtas*, *jijñāsus* and *arthārthīs*, but in relation to the *jñānīs* there are no such doubts. It is a fact that those who possess spiritual knowledge certainly engage in *bhajana* after their abundant accumulation of *sukṛti*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.20–1):

*tatra gītādiṣūktānām
caturṇām adbhikāriṇām
madhye yasmin bhagavataḥ
krpā syāt tat-priyasya vā*

*sa kṣīṇa-tat-tad-bhāvaḥ syāc
 chuddha-bhakti-adhikāravān
 yatthebhaḥ śaunakādīś ca
 dhruvaḥ sa ca catuḥ-sanaḥ*

When the four types of persons who are eligible to engage in *bhakti*, as mentioned in *Bhagavad-gītā* and other scriptures, receive the mercy of Bhagavān or His devotees, they become free from their particular motivations that are, respectively, the desire for relief from distress, the desire to have their inquisitiveness satisfied, the desire to obtain wealth and the attachment to impersonal knowledge. They then become rightful candidates for unalloyed devotion. This is clearly visible from the examples of Gajendra, the sages headed by Śaunaka, Dhruva Mahārāja and the four Kumāras.

When Gajendra was seized by the crocodile and was unable to free himself despite innumerable strenuous efforts, he fervently prayed to Bhagavān. Then Bhagavān, the saviour of the distressed, appeared and delivered Gajendra by killing the crocodile. By the mercy of Bhagavān, Gajendra's distress was removed and he became qualified for unalloyed devotion. Śaunaka and the other sages became very fearful upon the arrival of Kali-yuga. Understanding the inability of fruitive activity to yield any benefit, they approached the great devotee Sūta Gosvāmī and enquired how the people of this age could attain the ultimate benefit. In his reply, Sūta Gosvāmī instructed them on pure devotion, and as a result of receiving his mercy in this way, they attained *śuddha-bhakti*. Dhruva Mahārāja worshipped Bhagavān

motivated by the desire to attain an opulent kingdom. But when Bhagavān appeared before him, by Bhagavān's mercy his desire for a kingdom vanished and he became qualified for pure *bhakti*. Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana and Sanat are the four Kumāras. Previously they were impersonalists, but later on, by the mercy of Bhagavān and His devotees, they completely rejected the conception of impersonalism and attained the qualification for *suddha-bhakti*.

The purport is that as long as all of them harboured desires within their hearts either for relief from their distress, to satisfy their inquisitiveness or to obtain wealth, or were attached to an impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth, they were ineligible for unalloyed devotion. Therefore, in relation to the qualification for pure *bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.14):

*yaḥ kenāpy ati-bhāgyena
jāta-śraddho 'sya sevane
nātisakto na vairāgya-
bhāg asyām adbhikāry asau*

When one is not too attached to or detached from this material world and by some good fortune develops faith in the service of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, he is considered to possess the eligibility for unalloyed devotion.

The purport is that when worldly people realize the futility of material existence after being afflicted by various types of distress and by suffering in the absence of their desired objects, they begin

to lead their lives in a mood of detachment from the material world. If by some good fortune at such a time they acquire the association of Bhagavān's devotees, they enquire from them and come to understand that there is no higher destination than the attainment of Bhagavān. Gradually they develop firm faith in this and engage in *bhajana*. At that time it can be said that they have developed faith in *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. This very faith is the root cause of the eligibility for pure devotion, as confirmed by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī's explanation (found in *Bhakti-sandarbha*, *Anuccheda* 172) of these verses from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.27–8:

*jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu
 nirvinṇaḥ sarva-karmasu
 veda duḥkhātmakān kāmān
 parityāge 'py anīśvaraḥ
 tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ
 śraddhālur dṛḍha-niścayaḥ
 juṣamāṇaś ca tām kāmān
 duḥkhodarkāmś ca garhayan*

[Śrī Kṛṣṇa said:] My devotees, who have developed faith in hearing the narrations of My pastimes, remain detached from fruitive activities and try to accept the objects of the senses just enough to maintain their lives, knowing well that sense enjoyment leads to a miserable result. Still enduring the reactions to their previous activities and endeavouring to become free from the cycle of the pleasant and unpleasant results that arise from such activities, they sincerely regret those fruitive activities and silently condemn them. They simply tolerate the reactions

to those activities while simultaneously remaining engaged in *bhajana* unto Me with firm faith and resolve.

While explaining the above verses, which describe how a faithful devotee performs *bhajana*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has commented in *Bhakti-sandarbha*, “*tad evam ananya-bhakti-adhikāre hetuṁ śraddhā-mātram uktvā sa yathā bhajeta tathā śikṣayati*,” which means that faith is the sole cause of the qualification to perform exclusive devotion. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī also mentions, “*śraddhā hi śāstrārtha-viśvāsaḥ. śāstram ca tad aśaraṇasya bhayaṁ tac charaṇāsyābbhayaṁ vadati. ato jātāyāḥ śraddhāyās tat śaraṇāpattir eva liṅgam iti*,” which means that faith in the words of the scriptures is called *śraddhā*. The scriptures mention that those who have taken shelter of the lotus feet of Bhagavān have nothing to fear, but those who have not done so remain fearful. Thus, it can be understood from the symptoms of *śaraṇāpatti* (surrender) whether or not faith has developed within someone. What is *śaraṇāpatti*? Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes “*jātāyām śraddhāyām sadā tad anuvṛtti-ceṣṭaiva syāt*” and “*karma-parityāgo vidhīyate*,” which mean that upon the appearance of faith, the constant endeavour to serve Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇānuvṛtti-ceṣṭā*) is always visible in a person’s behaviour and the tendency to perform fruitive activities is altogether removed. This is *śaraṇāpatti*. In *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66), after giving separate explanations of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, through a most confidential statement Bhagavān has given instruction on full surrender:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja*

*aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

We should understand the words *sarva-dharma* in this verse to mean paths that are obstacles to complete surrender, such as the pursuance of one's occupational duties within the *varṇāśrama* system and the worship of demigods. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is saying, "Rejecting all of these, one should surrender unto Me, meaning one should develop exclusive faith towards engaging in *bhajana* unto Me. Don't be fearful of the reactions that come to those who commit the sin of rejecting their occupational duties. I assure you that I will free you from the reactions to all such sins."

The doubt may arise that the word faith actually refers here to respect. The paths of *karma*, *jñāna* and so forth also require faith. Thus faith is not only the cause of *bhakti*, but of *karma* and *jñāna* also. The philosophical principle is that the word *śraddhā* actually means feelings of faith in the injunctions of the scriptures, and included within this feeling another sentiment certainly exists, which is called *ruci*, taste. Despite possessing faith, one may not desire to participate in a particular activity unless he has developed taste for it. Faith in the paths of *karma* and *jñāna* is always mixed with a particle of *bhakti* in the form of *ruci*. Only through the influence of this fraction of *bhakti* are the paths of *karma* and *jñāna* able to yield any result. Similarly, the faith that develops for *bhakti* is endowed with *ruci*, and this faith is none other than the seed of the creeper of devotion (*bhakti-latā*), which is sown in the heart of the living entity. Faith in the paths of *karma* and *jñāna* is mixed with taste for the activities of *karma*

and *jñāna* respectively, but the nature of this faith is different. Only faith that is endowed with taste for *bhakti* culminates in the symptoms of *bhakti*. This is called *śaraṇāpatti*, full surrender.

Only when one's taste for *bhakti* advances through the progressive stages of *sadhu-saṅga*, performance of *bhajana*, absence of *anarthas* and finally assumes the form of *niṣṭhā* does it become pure *ruci*. Thus faith is a separate entity from *bhakti*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in *Bhakti-sandarbha*, “*tasmāc chraddhā na bhakty-aṅgaṁ kintu karmaṇy asamartha vidvat tāvad ananyatākhyāyām bhaktādvadbhikāri-viśeṣaṇam eva*.” Hence, faith is not a limb of *bhakti*, but an attribute of the qualification for *bhakti* resulting from one's having become indifferent to the ritualistic fruitive activities known as *karma-kāṇḍa*. It says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.9):

*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta
na nirvidyeta yāvatā
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā
śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

[Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:] One should continue performing his occupational duties as long as he has not become indifferent to them and has not developed faith in hearing the narrations of My pastimes.

The purport is that one is qualified to renounce his occupational duties only when he develops faith in hearing the narrations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. This is the conclusion of the scriptures. To clarify a possible doubt here, we must note that if faith, which

is the very cause of the qualification for unalloyed devotion, is itself not a limb of *bhakti*, then how can spiritual knowledge and renunciation, which in some instances manifest before the appearance of faith, be limbs of *bhakti*? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.248):

*jñāna-vairāgyayor bhakti-
praveśāyopayogitā
īṣat prathamam eveti
nāṅgatvam ucitaṁ tayoh*

In some particular instances spiritual knowledge (*jñāna*) and renunciation (*vairāgya*) may be useful while a devotee is in the initial stages of entering into *bhakti*, but they can never be said to be limbs of *bhakti*.

Hence, it is an established fact that only that faith which is endowed with the symptoms of complete surrender is the cause of the qualification for pure devotion. Sometimes people are heard saying that faith in hearing the narrations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is developed by some through the strict performance of their occupational duties, by some through the cultivation of spiritual knowledge and by others through renunciation of the objects of the senses. But such statements are erroneous. It is possible that these processes may have been cultivated just prior to the appearance of faith, but through a more detailed analysis it becomes apparent that somehow or another there must have been some association with devotees just between the two instances; that is, between the cultivation of the above-mentioned

processes and the appearance of faith. In this context the following verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.51.53) is worthy of consideration:

*bhavāpavargo bhramato yadā bhavej
janasya tarhy acyuta sat-samāgamah
sat-saṅgamo yarhi tadaiva sad-gatau
parāvareṣe tvayi jāyate matiḥ*

[Śrī Mucukunda said:] O my dear infallible Lord, becoming opposed to You, the living entity sometimes attains worldly sense pleasure by pursuing the path of *karma* and sometimes attains liberation through the cultivation of *jñāna*. Thus he is entangled in the repeated cycle of birth and death. If while wandering in this way the living entity somehow becomes fortunate and receives the association of Your devotees, with great determination he fixes his intelligence at Your lotus feet, understanding You to be the only shelter of saintly persons, the origin of all creation, both material and spiritual, and the ultimate goal.

Thus fruitive activity, the cultivation of spiritual knowledge, renunciation and so on can never be the cause of the appearance of faith; only the association of devotees can cause the appearance of *śraddhā*. In this regard Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has composed lines such as *yaḥ kenāpy ati-bhāgyena jāta-śraddho 'sya sevane* [on p. 73]. Thus only persons endowed with *śraddhā* are the rightful candidates for unalloyed devotion.

There is another consideration here. *Sādhana-bhakti* is of two types, *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* and *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti*,

as confirmed in this verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.5): *vaidhī rāgānugā ceti sā dvidhā sādhanaābhidhā*. It is essential to understand the difference between *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* and *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti* because without this understanding there may remain many suspicions that can harm the development of one's *bhakti*. Concerning *vaidhī-bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written:

*yatra rāgānavāptatvāt
pravṛttir upajāyate
śāśanenaiva śāstrasya
sā vaidhī bhaktir ucyate*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.6)

Bhakti is the living entity's natural inclination and the inseparable occupation of his intrinsic nature. In the conditioned stage the *jīva* is opposed to Bhagavān and becomes attached to the worldly enjoyment presented by the illusory energy. As the living entity becomes immersed in worldly pleasure, his natural inclination to render loving devotional service unto Kṛṣṇa becomes dormant. The *jīva* is fully satisfied only when by some good fortune his intrinsic *rāga*, or strong loving attachment for Kṛṣṇa, reawakens, however it may happen. When *prema* appears, *rāga* naturally appears alongside it. But the *rāga*, or attachment for material sense objects, that is visible in the conditioned soul is distorted *rāga*, not pure *rāga*. In that stage the inborn *rāga* of the living entity remains covered or dormant. To awaken this inherent *rāga*, the acceptance of spiritual instruction is essential. The Vedas and their subordinate literatures are storehouses of such

instructions. The *bhakti* that is performed within the framework of the instructions of the scriptures is called *vaidhī-bhakti*.

Now I will give a brief review of *rāgānuga-bhakti*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in *Bhakti-sandarbha*, “*tatra viṣa-yiṇaḥ svābhāvikī viṣaya-saṁsargecchātīśaya-mayaḥ premā rāgaḥ. yathā cakṣur ādīnām saundaryādaḥ, tādrśa evātra bhaktasya śrī-bhagavatya api rāga ity ucyate.*” The powerful loving affection that naturally develops within a materialistic person by his affiliation with the objects of sense pleasure is called *rāga*. Just as eyes become excited upon seeing any beautiful form, the similar inclination of a devotee towards Kṛṣṇa is also called *rāga*. The taste that develops from following in the footsteps of a personality who possesses natural affinity for such *rāga* is called *rāgānuga-bhakti*. Regarding the qualification for *rāgānuga-bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes:

*rāgātmikaika-niṣṭhā ye
vraja-vāsi-janādayaḥ
teṣāṁ bhāvāptaye lubdho
bhaved atrādhikāravān
tat-tad-bhāvādi-mādhurye
śrute dhīryad apekṣate
nātra śāstraṁ na yuktiṁ ca
tal lobhotpatti-lakṣaṇam*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.291–2)

The Vrajavāsīs’ sentiments for Kṛṣṇa are the most exalted and exceptional example of *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. Such sentiments cannot be seen anywhere other than Vraja. The fortunate soul who develops the greed to attain sentiments for Kṛṣṇa such as

those displayed by the Vrajavāsīs is the rightful candidate for *rāgānuga-bhakti*. Despite having heard about the sweetness of such sentiments, one cannot enter into them until he becomes “greedy” for them. The sole cause of the qualification for the practice of *rāgānuga-bhakti* is this spiritual greed, not the careful study of scriptures or the skilful use of logic.

Thus we understand that just as faith is the only cause of the qualification for *vaidhī-bhakti*, similarly, greed is the only cause of the qualification for *rāgānuga-bhakti*. Here a doubt may arise concerning whether the faith that has been previously established as the cause for the eligibility for unalloyed devotion is incomplete. If that faith is the cause of the eligibility only for one type of *bhakti*, then why has it been said to be the cause of the eligibility for all types of *bhakti*? To dispel such a doubt, it is again stressed that faith is the only cause of the qualification for pure devotion. In the absence of faith, no variety of *śuddha-bhakti* can ever appear. The conclusion is that *śāstra-viśvāsamayī-śraddhā*, or *śraddhā* derived from faith in the injunctions of the scriptures, is the only cause of the qualification for *vaidhī-bhakti*, and *bhāva-mādhurya-lobbhamayī-śraddhā*, or faith derived from intense greed to experience the sweet sentiments of the Vrajavāsīs, is the only cause of the qualification for *rāgānuga-bhakti*.

Only faith – whether it be *viśvāsamayī* or *lobhamayī* – is the cause of the eligibility for both types of pure *bhakti*.

There are three types of rightful candidates for *vaidhī-bhakti*: *uttama* (topmost), *madhyama* (intermediate) and *kaniṣṭha* (novice), as confirmed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.16), “*uttamo madhyamāś ca syāt kaniṣṭhaś ceti sa tridhā*.”

The symptoms of an *uttama-adhikārī* in *vaidhī-bhakti* are:

*śāstre yuktau ca nipuṇaḥ
sarvathā dṛḍha-niścayaḥ
prauḍha-śraddho 'dhikārī yaḥ
sa bhaktāu uttamo mataḥ*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.17)

One who is conversant with the scriptures, expert in all types of logic and possesses unwavering determination is an *uttama-adhikārī*, one endowed with firm faith.

The symptoms of the *madhyama-adhikārī* in *vaidhī-bhakti* are:

*yaḥ śāstrādiṣv anipuṇaḥ
śraddhāvān sa tu madhyamaḥ*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.19)

One who is not so expert in understanding the scriptures and yet is faithful is a *madhyama-adhikārī*; in other words, although when presented with difficult arguments he is unable to answer them, within his mind he remains firmly faithful to his own principle.

The symptoms of the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* are:

*yo bhavet komala-śraddhaḥ
sa kaniṣṭho nigadyate*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.19)

Novice devotees have very little expertise in understanding the scriptures and their faith is very delicate and immature. Their faith can be changed by others' logic and arguments.

It is to be noted here that the *śraddhā* visible in these three types of faithful persons is characterized by faith in the injunctions of the scriptures and by being mixed with logical evidences that are dependent on the scriptures. According to the degree of greed possessed by the rightful candidates for *rāgānuga-bhakti*, they can also be divided into the three categories of *uttama*, *madhyama* and *kaniṣṭha*.

The conclusion is that every human being has the right to perform *bhakti*. *Brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras* and *antyajas* (untouchables), *gr̥hasthas*, *brahmacārīs*, *vānaprasthas* and *sannyāsīs* – all of them can be qualified for *bhakti* if they have faith in the injunctions of the scriptures and the instructions of *sādhv* and *guru*. Either an educated person through the study of the scriptures or an uneducated person through hearing the principles of the scriptures in the association of devotees is said to have developed faith when he realizes the supremacy of *bhakti* as described in the scriptures. Alternatively, if one develops *lobhamayī-śraddhā* by continually hearing the narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes in the association of devotees while desiring to follow in the footsteps of the *rāgātmikā* devotees of Vraja, then it can be said that he has acquired the qualification to perform *śuddha-bhakti*. The qualification for pure devotion cannot be achieved by the processes of impersonal knowledge, renunciation, philosophical analysis, religious discussion, self-control or meditation. Despite receiving initiation into a bona fide disciplic succession, one cannot enter into the previously discussed *uttama-bhakti* until he becomes an *uttama-adbhikārī*. Until that time, one's *bhakti* can be said to be a semblance of devotion.

There is great necessity to strive for the stage of *uttama-adhikārī*. This is possible only when one engages in hearing and chanting in the association of devotees. We should never think that one becomes an *uttama-adhikārī* simply by diligently practising hearing and chanting and then displaying the symptoms of shedding tears, trembling and dancing, because these symptoms can also manifest in *bhakti-ābhāsa*. Whatever little softening of the heart and determination to realize one's inherent identity that are visible in the beginning stages of pure *bhakti* are far superior to a display of symptoms such as falling unconscious and so on that arise as a result of pursuing the path of *bhakti-ābhāsa*. Therefore we should strive to attain unalloyed devotion with the utmost care. We should make a special effort to pursue the proper method to attain the qualification for *bhakti*; otherwise there is no possibility of attaining the eternal association of Bhagavān. Viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsa puts forward the following verses:

*śraddhā lobhātmakā yā sā
viśvāsa-rūpiṇī yadā
jāyate 'tra tadā bhaktau
nṛ-mātrasyādhikāritā (1)*

*nā sāṅkhyam na ca vairāgyam
na dharmo na bahujñatā
kevalam sādhu-saṅgo 'yam
hetuḥ śraddhodaye dhruvam (2)*

*śravaṇādi-vidhānena
sādhu-saṅga-balena ca*

anarthāpagame śigbraṁ
śraddhā niṣṭhātmikā bhavet (3)

niṣṭhāpi rucitām prāptā
śuddha-bhakty-adhikāritām
dadāti sādhake nityam
eṣā prathā sanātano (4)

asat-saṅgo 'thavā bhaktāv
aparādhe kṛte sati
śraddhāpi vilāsaṁ yāti katham
syāc chuddha-bhaktatā (5)

ataḥ śraddhāvatā kāryaṁ
sāvadhānaṁ phalāptaye
anyathā na bhaved bhaktiḥ
śraddhā prema-phalātmikā (6)

When *śraddhā* that is based either on faith in the injunctions of the scriptures or on greed to follow in the footsteps of a *rāgātmikā-bhakta* appears in the heart, a person attains the qualification for pure devotion. The appearance of faith is not caused by renunciation, pursuing the process of enumeration, strictly adhering to the occupational duties corresponding to one's caste and stage of life, or becoming a scholar. The sole cause of the appearance of faith is the association of a *sādhū* who has deep love for the narrations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. When faith appears, one becomes a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*. When one executes the limbs of *sādhana-bhakti* such as hearing, and when by the influence of *sādhū-saṅga* one becomes free from *anarthas* and his faith becomes dense and transforms into

niṣṭhā, one develops the intermediate qualification (*madhyama-adhikāra*) for unalloyed devotion. By the further pursuance of the activities of *sādhana-bhakti* such as hearing and by the influence of associating with devotees who are more advanced than oneself, one's *niṣṭhā* intensifies and assumes the form of *ruci*. The *sādhaka* within whom such *ruci* has developed is called an *uttama-adhikārī*. Only such an *uttama-adhikārī* attains unalloyed devotion. This is the eternal process for the attainment of *śuddha-bhakti*. But if during the execution of this gradual process of *sādhana* one keeps the bad association of those who are attached to sense pleasure or those attached to an impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth, or if one disrespects a pure devotee or commits any other offence to him, faith at the novice level as well as that at the intermediate level will dry up from its very root and the *sādhaka* will be unable to achieve pure *bhakti*. In such a condition the *sādhaka* is either entangled in *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* or, in the case of committing numerous offences, even glides down into *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa*. Therefore, until one attains the stage of *uttama-adhikāra*, the faithful and sincere *sādhaka* should remain extremely careful. Otherwise it will be very difficult to achieve pure devotion, which ultimately bears the fruit of divine love.

Śrī-kṛṣṇārpaṇam astu – may this treatise
be an offering unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

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