

Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅgau Jayataḥ

Bhakti-tattva-viveka

Deliberation on the True Nature of Devotion

Composed by

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Translated from the Hindi edition of

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja



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Preface

The unlimited glories of *bhagavad-bhakti* are visible in the Purāṇas, *śrutis*, *smṛtis*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as in the literatures of famous Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*. By understanding the *svarūpa* or constitutional nature of *śuddha-bhakti* or unalloyed devotion and genuinely engaging in its practice, one can easily cross the ocean of nescience and achieve life's ultimate goal of *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 *artha* (economic development), *dharma* (religiosity), *kāma* (sense gratification) and *mokṣa* (liberation). Therefore, people in general become attracted towards the cultivation of *bhakti*. But due to being ignorant of the true nature of *śuddha-bhakti*, they usually come in contact with pretentious devotees who desire only wealth, women and fame, and under their influence either practice false devotion or adopt devotional sentiments which 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 practice a shadow or reflection of real *bhakti* and deceive themselves. Thus they do not achieve the real fruit of *bhakti*.

Hence, the most merciful *bhakti-rasācārya* Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has explained in his book *Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* the true nature of *śuddha-bhakti* 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-siddhā-bhakti* (endeavours which are indirectly attributed with the quality of devotion), *saṅga-siddhā-bhakti* (endeavours associated with or favourable to the cultivation of devotion) and so on. In the realm of devotion the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* is unanimously accepted as the most authoritative literature, but it was composed in the Sanskrit language. So for the benefit of people in general, 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, Śacīnandana Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. After the associates of Śrī Gaurahari such as the Six Gosvāmīs, Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja, Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura and Śrīla 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 *prema-dharma* taught by Śrīman Mahāprabhu many false sects like Āul, Bāul, Kartā-bhajā, Neḍā-nedī, Sāī, Sahajiyā, Sakhī-bhekhī, Smārta and Jāti-gosāī appeared and, while engaged in abundant misbehaviour, started 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 disappearing.

At this time, in the year 1838, Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura auspiciously appeared in a well-educated and cultured family in the village of Vira-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 various 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*, or 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 serialised in issues from the fourth and fifth years (1958-59) of *Śrī Bhāgavat 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 was presented in book form in 1990.

This present English edition is a direct translation of the Hindi edition. Śrīman Prema-vilāsa dāsa Adhikārī provided the English rendering as well as the layout and design. He also oversaw all aspects of the book's publication. Śrīman Navadvīpa dāsa Adhikārī served as Sanskrit editor and offered many valuable suggestions which enhanced the clarity of the presentation. Finally, the book was proofread by Śrīmatī Yaśodā-gopī dāsī. I pray that the mercy of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Śrī Rādhā Vinoda-bihārī be upon all these devotees for their sincere efforts.

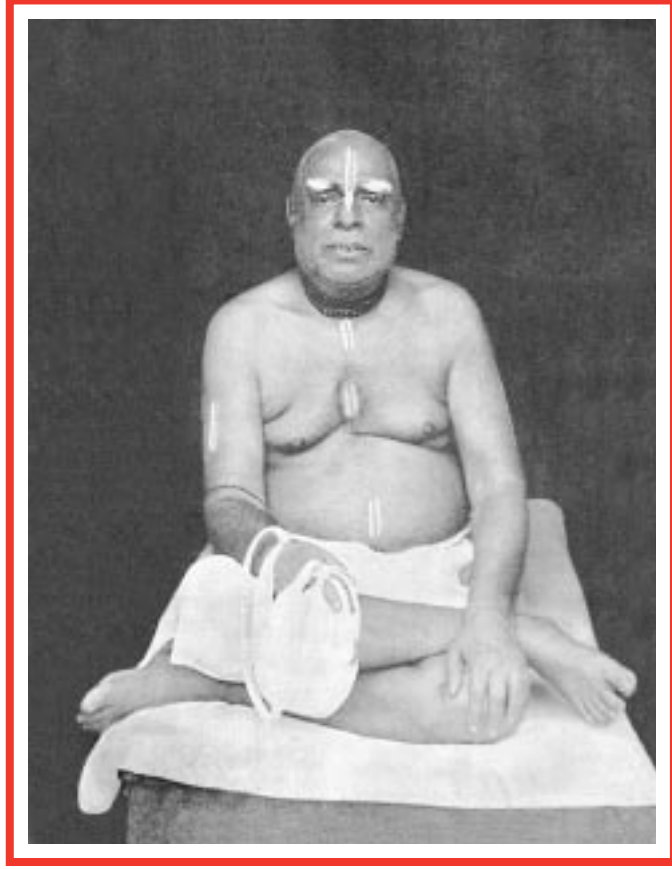
By the causeless mercy of the founder of the Śrī Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti and its subordinate Gauḍīya Maṭha branches throughout India, the most worshipable *ācārya-keśarī jagad-guru om viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, Gauḍīya devotional literatures are being published by the Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti. On the most auspicious occasion of 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 *śuddha-bhakti*, 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

Śrī Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Mathurā
February 24, 1997



Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

श्रील-भक्तिविनोद-वन्दना

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda-vandanā

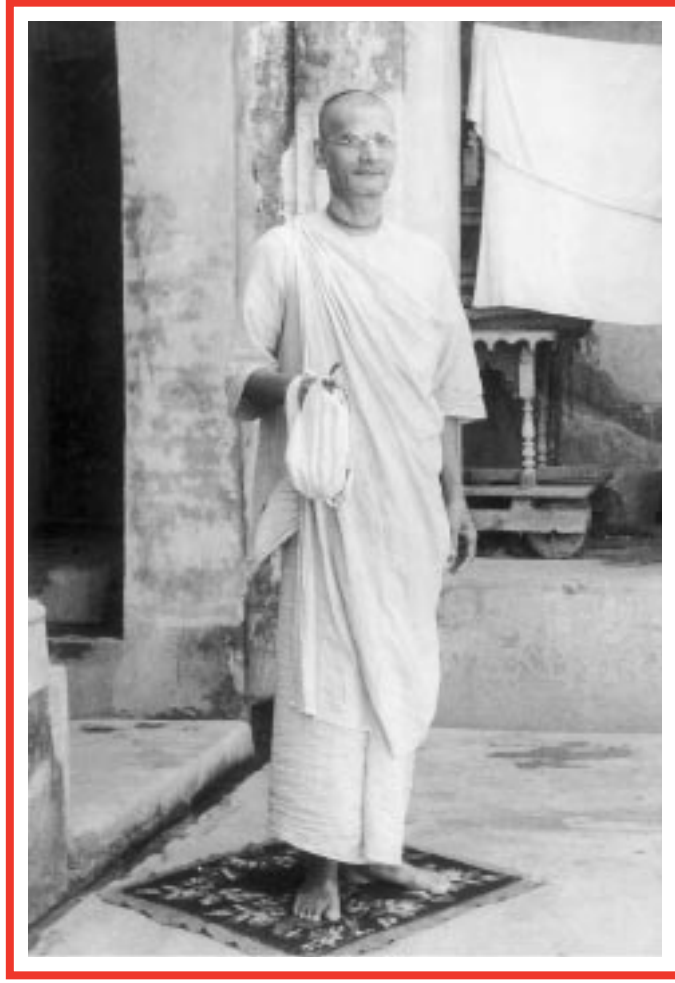
नमो भक्तिविनोदाय सच्चिदानन्द-नामिने ।

गौर-शक्ति-स्वरूपाय रूपानुग-वराय ते ॥

namo bhaktivinodāya saccidānanda-nāmine

gaura-śakti-svarūpāya rūpānuga-varāya te

I offer *praṇāma* unto Saccidānanda Śrī Bhaktivinoda who is the foremost of *rūpānuga* devotees and the embodiment of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *śakti*.



Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja

श्रीपरम-गुरुदेव-प्रणामः

Śrī Parama-gurudeva-praṇāma

नमः ॐ विष्णुपादाय आचार्य-सिंह-रूपिणे ।

श्रीश्रीमद्भक्ति प्रज्ञान केशव इति नामिने ॥१॥

अतिमर्त्य-चरित्राय स्वाश्रितानाञ्च-पालिने ।

जीव-दुःखे सदात्तीय श्रीनाम-प्रेम-दायिने ॥२॥

namaḥ oṃ viṣṇupādāya ācārya-simha-rūpiṇe

śrī-śrīmad-bhakti prajñāna keśava iti nāmine (1)

atimartya-caritrāya svā-śrītānāñca-pāline

jīva-duḥkhe sadārttīya śrī-nāma-prema-dāyine (2)

I offer *praṇāma* to the lion-like *ācārya*, *jagad-guru oṃ viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī*, who is a thoroughly transcendental personality, who nurtures with great affection those who have taken shelter of him, who is always sad to see the sufferings of souls who are inimical to Kṛṣṇa, and who bestows love for the holy name.



Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

श्रीगुरु-प्रणामः

Śrī Guru-praṇāma

त्रिदण्डीनां भक्तशिरोमणिम् च

श्रीकृष्ण-पदाब्ज धृतैकहृदि

चैतन्यलीलामृतसार सारं

नारायणं त्वम् सततं प्रपद्ये

tridaṇḍīnām bhakta-śiromaṇim ca

śrī-kṛṣṇa-padābja dhṛtaika-hṛdi

caitanya-lilāmṛta-sāra sārām

nārāyaṇam tvam satatam prapadye

I offer repeated *praṇāma* unto Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja who is the crown-jewel of devotees among *tridaṇḍī-sannyāsīs*, and who always keeps in his heart the lotus feet of Śrī (Śrīmatī Rādhikā) and Kṛṣṇa. He especially keeps in his heart the very essence of the nectarine truths for which Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu enacted His pastimes.

Chapter One

The Intrinsic Nature of Devotion

*yugapad rājate yasmin bhedābheda vicitratā
vande taṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanyaṁ pañca-tattvānvitaṁ svataḥ (1)*

*praṇāmya gauracandrasya sevakān, śuddha-vaiṣṇavān
'bhakti-tattva vivekā' khyāṁ śāstrāṁ vaksyāmi yatnataḥ (2)*

*viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsasya kṣudrasyākiñcanasya me
etasminn udyame hy ekaṁ balaṁ bhāgavatī kṣamā (3)*

“I offer *praṇāma* unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya who is naturally manifest with the *pañca-tattva* and in whom the contrasting qualities of unity (*abheda*) and distinction (*bheda*) simultaneously exist. After offering *praṇāma* 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 *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 *śuddha-bhakti* will dispel our ignorance concerning the topic of *bhakti* and thus make our human life successful by allowing us to relish the nectar derived from engaging in *śuddha-bhakti* in its pure form. Secondly, it will enable us to protect ourselves from the polluted and mixed conceptions which currently exist in the name of *śuddha-bhakti*.

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 *śuddha-bhakti*. These polluted and mixed concepts 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 which cannot benefit us in any way. These types of people, though opposed to *bhakti*, cannot do much harm to us because we can easily recognise them and avoid them. But those who propagate that *bhagavad-bhakti* is the highest *dharma* 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 *bhakti* and ultimately lead us onto a path which is totally opposed to *bhagavad-bhakti*. Therefore, with great endeavour our previous *ācāryas* have defined the *svarūpa* or intrinsic nature 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 *śuddha-bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written there (verse 1.1.11):

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam jñāna-karmādy anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanām bhaktir uttamā*

“The cultivation of activities which 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 *uttamā-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 ‘*uttamā-bhakti*’? Does the phrase *uttamā-bhakti* or topmost devotion also imply the existence of *adhama* or inferior *bhakti*? Or can it mean something else? *Uttamā-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 phrase *uttamā-bhakti* refers to *bhakti* which is devoid of any contamination, adulteration or attachment to material possessions and which is performed in an exclusive manner. The usage of these qualifying adjectives here teaches us that we should not accept any sentiments which are opposed to *bhakti*. The negation of sentiments which 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 *bhakti-rasācārya* Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī specifically employed the qualifying adjective *uttamā* (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 *uttamā-bhakti*, our previous *ācāryas* considered it necessary to indicate that people mostly practice *miśrā-bhakti* or mixed devotion. In reality, *rasācārya* Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī is aiming to describe the attributes of *kevalā-bhakti* or exclusive devotion. *Chala-bhakti*, *pratibimba-bhakti*, *chāyā-bhakti* (a shadow of devotion), *karma-miśrā-bhakti*, *jñāna-miśrā-bhakti* and so on are not *śuddha-bhakti*. They will all be examined in sequence later on.

What are the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* or intrinsic attributes of *bhakti*? To answer this question it is said that *bhakti* is *anukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlana*, the cultivation of activities which are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In his *Durgama-saṅgamaṇī* 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. Second, it means cultivation towards the object of our *prīti* or affection through *manasi-bhāva*, the sentiments of the heart and mind. Although *anuśīlana* is of two types, the cultivation through *manasi-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* which are concluded to be the sole characteristics 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*. Kāmsa and Śiśupāla were always endeavouring towards Kṛṣṇa with their whole body, mind and words but their endeavours will not be accepted as *bhakti* because such endeavours were unfavourable to *kṛṣṇa-prīti* or 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 ityeṣa vai dhātuḥ 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, *kṛṣṇa-sevā* or loving devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is called *bhakti*. Such service is the intrinsic attribute of *bhakti*.

In the main verse 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 *kevalā-bhakti* (exclusive devotion). The word *bhakti* is also used for Nārāyaṇa and various other expansions of Kṛṣṇa, but the complete sentiments of *bhakti* which 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 *bhagavat-tattva* is the only object of *bhakti*. Although the supreme absolute truth (*para-tattva*) is one, it is manifested in three forms, that is *brahma-tattva*, *paramātmā-tattva* and *bhagavat-tattva*. Those who try to perceive the absolute truth through the cultivation of *jñāna* cannot realise anything beyond *brahma-tattva*. Through such spiritual endeavour they try to cross material existence by negation of the qualities of the material world (*neti-neti*); thus they imagine *brahma* 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, the *brahma* which exists beyond the contamination of matter cannot possess eternal names, forms, qualities, pastimes and so on. They argue on the basis of evidence from the *śrutis*, which emphasise 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, bodily parts, limbs and so on. These arguments have some place, but they can be settled by

analysing the statement of Advaita Ācārya found in the *Śrī Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭakam* (6.67) written by Kavi Karṇapūra:

*yā yā śrutir jalpati nirviśeṣam
sā sāvidhatte saviśeṣam eva
vicārayoge sati hanta tāsām
prāyo balīyaḥ saviśeṣam eva*

In whatever statements from the *śrutis* where the impersonal *tattva* is indicated, in the very same statements personal *tattva* is also mentioned. By carefully analysing all the statements from the *śrutis* as a whole, we can see that the personal *tattva* is emphasised 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 hears everything. The pure understanding of this statement is that He doesn't have material hands, legs, limbs 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 *brahma* is the supreme *tattva*. Here the subtlety is that *jñāna* itself is material, meaning in the material world whatever knowledge we acquire or whatever 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 which is the opposite of gross matter, but by this method one cannot achieve the factual supreme *tattva*. In his *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has outlined the *tattva* which is attained by those who pursue the path of impersonal *jñāna* as follows:

prathamataḥ śrotṛṇām hi vivekastāvān eva, yāvatā jaḍātiriktaṁ cinmātraṁ vastūpasthitam bhavati. tasmīnś cinmātre 'pi vastuni ye viśeṣāḥ svarūpa-bhūta-śakti-siddhāḥ bhagavattādi-rūpā varttante tāms te vivektum na kṣamante. yathā rajanī-khaṇḍini jyotiṣi jyotir mātṛatve 'pi ye maṇḍalāntar bahiś ca divva-vimānādi-paraspara-pṛthag-bhūta-raśmi-paramāṇu-rūpā viśeṣās tāmś carma-cakṣuṣ na kṣamanta ity anvayaḥ tad vat. pūrvavac ca yadi mahat-kṛpā-viśeṣeṇa divya dṛṣṭitā bhavati tadā viśeṣopalabdhiś ca bhavet na ca nirviśeṣa cinmātra-brahmānubhave na tal līna eva bhavati. (214)

idam eva (Gītā 8.3) "svabhāvo 'dhyātman ucyate" ity anena śrī-gītās ūktam. svasya śud-dhasyātmano bhāvo bhāvanā ātmany adhiḥkṛtya 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*) which 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 exam-

ple, the sun is a luminary which dispels the darkness of night. Although its luminous quality is easily understood, the inner and outer workings of the sun planet, the difference which 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 *jñāna* 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 recognise the Lord's personal attributes. Otherwise, by realisation of the impersonal existential *brahma*, one will attain only the state of merging into that *brahma*." (Anuccheda 214)

"This knowledge is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.3): *svabhāvo 'dhyātman ucyate*—'The inherent nature of the living entity is known as the self.' The meanings of the words *svabhāva* and *adhyātma* are as follows. *Sva* refers to the *śuddha-ātmā* or pure self, and the word *bhāva* refers to ascertainment. Consequently the ascertainment of the pure living entity as a unique individual, eternally related to the Supreme, is known as *sva-bhāva*. When the *ātmā* or self is made the principal subject of focus and thus given the power to act in its proper function, it is known as *adhyātma*." (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 *māyā*, is realised only partially. The variegated aspect of transcendence which lies much deeper within is not realised. If one who follows this process meets a personalist, self-realised Vaiṣṇava *guru*, then only can he be protected from the *anartha* of impersonalism.

Those who pursue the path of *yoga* in the end arrive only at realisation of the all-pervading *paramātmā-tattva*. They cannot attain realisation of *śuddha-bhagavat-tattva*. *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 *śuddha-bhakti*. Generally religious principles in this world which pass for *bhagavat-dharma* are all merely *yoga* processes which strive for realisation of the *paramātmā* feature. We cannot expect that in the end all of them will ultimately lead us to *bhagavat-dharma*, because in the process of meditation there are numerous obstacles before one finally realises the absolute truth. Besides, when after practicing either *yoga* or meditation for some time one imagines that "I am *brahma*" (*ahaṅgrahopāsanā*), 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 which is imagined at the time of *upāsanā* or meditational worship—whether it be the *virāṭ* (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 *paramātmā-darśana* or 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-yoga* or *adhyātma-yoga* follows this process to a certain extent, in most cases it is merely included within the process of *jñāna*. The *siddhānta* or philosophical conclusion is that *paramātmā-darśana* cannot be called *śuddha-bhakti*. In this regard it is said in *Bhakti-san-*

darbha, “*antaryāmitvamaya-māyā-śakti-pracura-cic chaktyāśa viśiṣṭam 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 or the all-pervading Paramātmā. His function is related more to displaying the external potency rather than the internal potency. Therefore, this *tattva* is naturally inferior to the supreme and eternal *bhagavat-tattva*.

Absolute truth realised exclusively through the process of *bhakti* is called Bhagavān. In *Bhakti-sandarbha* the characteristics of *bhagavat-tattva* are described as “*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 the Paramātmā: as Garbhodakaśāyī, He is situated as the Supersoul of the complete universe (*virāt-antaryāmī*) 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 *brahma-svarūpa-tattva*. Hence, Bhagavān is the original *tattva* and is the supreme absolute truth. His *svarūpa-vigraha* or intrinsic form is transcendental. The 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 *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 *taṭastha-śakti* or marginal potency of Bhagavān become successful only by following the *dharma* of engaging exclusively in His loving transcendental service. Then by the practice of *nāma-bhajana* one can realise through one’s transcendental eyes the unparalleled beauty of Bhagavān. The processes of *jñāna* and *yoga* are incapable of approaching Bhagavān. By combining *bhagavat-tattva* with *jñāna*, the *tattva* appears as the formless and effulgent impersonal *brahma*, 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 which 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 Vaikuṅṭhanātha Nārāyaṇa, and where the internal potency displays its supreme sweetness (*mādhurya*), there Bhagavān appears as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In spite of 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
rasenotkṛṣyate kṛṣṇa-rūpam eṣā rasa-sthitiḥ*

Although from the viewpoint of *siddhānta* Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa are non-different, Kṛṣṇa is superior due to possessing more *rasa*. Such is the glory of *rasa-tattva*. All of this *tattva* 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 main verse.

To remain both devoid of desires separate from the desire to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*anyābhilāṣitā*) and free from the coverings of *jñāna* and *karma* (*jñāna-karmādy anāvṛtam*) is the *taṣṭha-lakṣaṇa* or marginal characteristic of *bhakti*. “Viṣṇu-*bhakti pravakṣyāmi yayā 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 *jīva* can attain everything. The desire to attain something is called *abhilāṣitā*. From the word *abhilāṣitā* 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 stage of *bhāva*”—it is highly commendable for a devotee to maintain such a desire, but apart from this desire all other types of desires are fit to be rejected. There are two types of separate desires: 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 piśāci hṛdi varttate
tāvat bhakti-sukhāyātra katham abhyudayo bhavet*

As long as the two witches of the desires for *bhukti* and *mukti* remain in a devotee's heart, not even a fraction of the pure happiness derived from *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti** will arise. Both bodily and mental enjoyment are considered *bhukti*. To make an extraneous effort to remain free from disease, to desire palatable foodstuffs, strength and power, wealth, followers, wife, sons and daughters, 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

*All favourable endeavours (*ceṣṭā*) such as *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, *smaraṇa* 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-siddhā-bhakti*. In other words all endeavours of the body, words and mind which are related to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and which are performed exclusively and directly for His pleasure without any intervention are known as *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti*.

bhukti. Practice of the eightfold *yoga* system and to desire the eight or eighteen varieties of mystic perfections are also categorised as *bhukti*. The greed for *bhukti* forces the *jīva* to become subordinate to the six enemies headed by lust and anger. Envy easily takes over the heart of the *jīva* and rules it. Hence, to attain *śuddha-bhakti* 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 *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* 1.2.254-256):

*rucim udvahatas tatra janasya bhajane hareḥ
viṣayeṣu gariṣṭho 'pi rāgaḥ prāyo viliyate*

*anāsaktasya viṣayān yathārtham upayūñjataḥ
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate*

*prāpañcikatayā buddhyā hari sambandhi vastunaḥ
mumuḥsubhiḥ parityāgo vairāgyaṁ phalgu kathiyate*

When the *jīva* 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* or useless. It is not possible for an embodied *jīva* 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. *Rūpa* (form), *rasa* (taste), *gandha* (smell), *sparśa* (touch) and *śabda* (sound) 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 *jīvas* 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 *hari-kathā* or narrations describing the activities of 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 *śuddha-bhakti* to manifest there.

As it is imperative to abandon the desire for *bhukti*, it is equally important to abandon the desire for *mukti*. 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 gr̥hṇanti 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*, *sārūpya*, *sāmīpya* and *ekatva*, my pure devotees don’t 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* or impersonal knowledge leads one to *brahma-sāyujya*. Also by following the method prescribed in the spiritual scriptures one attains *brahma-sāyujya*. By properly observing the Pātañjali *yoga* system, one attains the liberation known as *īśvara-sāyujya* or 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 *bhakti* is temporary and fraudulent. They don’t accept *bhakti* as an eternal occupation and merely consider it to be a means to attain *brahma*. Their conception is that after attaining *brahma*, *bhakti* does not exist. Therefore, the *bhakti* of a sincere devotee deteriorates in the association of such spiritualists. *Śuddha-bhakti* never resides in the hearts of those who consider *sāyujya-mukti* to be the ultimate perfection. Regarding the other *muktis*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī explains (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.55-57):

*atra tyājyatayaivoktā muktiḥ pañca-vidhāpi cet
sālokyādis tathāpy atra bhaktyā nāti virudhyate*

*sukhaiśvaryottarā seyaṁ prema-sevottarety api
sālokyādir-dvidhā tatra nādyā sevājuṣāṁ matā*

*kintu premaika-mādhurya-juṣa ekāntino harau
naivāṅgī kurvate jātu muktiṁ pañca-vidhām api*

Although the aforementioned five types of *mukti* 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 *mukti* assume two forms: *sva-sukha-aiśvarya pradānakārī* (that which bestows transcendental happiness and opulence) and *prema-sevā-pradānakārī* (that which bestows loving transcendental service unto Bhagavān). Those who reach the Vaikuṅṭha planets through these four types of liberation obtain the fruit of transcendental happiness and opulence. Servitors or devotees of the Lord never accept such liberation under any circumstances, and the *premi-bhaktas* or loving devotees 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 desire for *mukti* is *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnya*, being devoid of any desire other than that to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is one of the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* or marginal characteristics of *bhakti*.

To remain free from and uncovered by tendencies such as those for *jñāna* and *karma* is another marginal characteristic of *bhakti*. In the phrase ‘*jñāna-karmādi*,’ the word ‘*ādi*,’ meaning ‘and so forth,’ refers to the practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, *vairāgya sāṅkhyā-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 the *bhakti-vṛtti* or tendency of unalloyed devotion through which the living entity establishes an eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa is also transcendental. When the *jīva* is situated in his pure state, only then does the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* or intrinsic attribute of *bhakti* act. At that time there is no opportunity for the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* of *bhakti* to act. When the *jīva* is conditioned and situated in the material world, along with his *svarūpa* or constitutional identity 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 *śuddha-bhakti* we have to acquaint him with the concept of *anyābhilāṣitā-sūnya*, being devoid of any desires 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 *jīva* 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 and other violent creatures 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 *jīva* becomes exhausted and falls silent.

Seeing the *jīva* in this condition, the most compassionate Śrī Kṛṣṇa then mercifully implants the *bhakti-latā-bīja* or seed of the creeper of devotion within his heart. This seed is known as *śraddhā* or faith and it contains within it the undeveloped manifestation of *bhāva* or 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 *jīva*, the *bhakti-latā* bears the fruit of *prema*.

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 *śraddhā* is sown in the heart, immediately *Bhakti-devī* appears there. *Bhakti* at the stage of *śraddhā* is very delicate like a newborn 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 *jñāna*, *karma*, *yoga*, attachment to material objects, dry renunciation and so forth will not allow her to gradually blossom into *uttamā-bhakti* and will instead make her grow into a different form. In other words, the *śraddhā* will not eventually develop into *bhakti* but will merely assume the form of *anarthas*. The danger of disease remains up until the tender *Śraddhā-devī* becomes free from the influence of *anarthas* and transforms into *niṣṭhā* 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 the processes of *jñāna*, renunciation, impersonal conceptions, *sāṅkhya* and so forth. In the conditioned stage, *jñāna*, *vairāgya* and so on are unavoidable for the *jīva*, but if *jñāna* is of a particular variety which is unfavourable to *bhakti*, it can ruin *bhakti*. Hence, according to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī the word '*jñāna*' here refers to the pursuit of impersonal *brahma*. *Jñāna* is of two types: spiritual knowledge which is directed towards obtaining *mukti*, and *bhagavat-tattva-jñāna* which arises simultaneously along with *bhakti* within the heart of the *jīva*. 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, the *tattva-jñāna* concerning the mutual relationship (*sambandha*) between the *īśvara*, the *jīva* and *māyā* which arises within the heart of the *jīva* through the faithful cultivation of devotional activities is helpful for his *bhakti*. This knowledge is called *ahaituka-jñāna* or knowledge which is devoid of ulterior motive. Sūta Gosvāmī says in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.7):

*vāsudeve bhagavati bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ
janayatyāśu vairāgyaṁ jñānaṁ ca yad ahaitukam*

“*Bhakti-yoga* which is performed for the satisfaction of Bhagavān Vāsudeva brings about detachment from all things unrelated to Him and gives rise to pure knowledge which is free from any motive for liberation and which is directed exclusively toward 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 engage in the favourable cultivation of activities meant to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa which are devoid of any other desire is called *uttamā-bhakti*. *Bhakti* is the only means by which the *jīva* can obtain transcendental bliss. Besides *bhakti* all other methods are external. With the assistance of *bhakti*, sometimes *karma* is identified as *āropa-siddhā-bhakti* or endeavours which are indirectly attributed with the quality of devotion and sometimes *jñāna* is identified as *saṅga-siddhā-bhakti* or endeavours associated with or favourable to the cultivation of devotion. But they can never be accepted as *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti* or *bhakti* in its constitutionally perfected stage. *Svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti* is *kaitava-śūnya* or free from any deceit and full of unalloyed bliss by nature, meaning that it is devoid of any desires for heavenly enjoyment and the attainment of liberation. But in *āropa-siddhā-bhakti* the desires for *bhukti* and *mukti* remain in a hidden position. Therefore, it is also called *sakaitava-bhakti* or deceitful *bhakti*. Oh my dear intimate Vaiṣṇavas! By your constitutional nature you are attracted to *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti* and have no taste for *āropa-siddhā-bhakti* or *saṅga-siddhā-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* or the semblance of real *bhakti*. If by some good fortune through the practice of *bhakti-ābhāsa* one develops *śraddhā* for the true nature of *bhakti*, then only can such practice transform into *śuddha-bhakti*. But this doesn't happen easily, because by the practice of *bhakti-ābhāsa* there exists every possibility of remaining bereft of *śuddha-bhakti*. Therefore, in all the scriptures the instruction is to follow *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti*.

In this short article, the intrinsic nature of *śuddha-bhakti* 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 cidātmake kṛṣṇe jīvasyāṇu cidātmanaḥ
upādhi-rahitā ceṣṭā bhaktiḥ svabhāvikī 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 *jīva*'s persistence towards *anyābhilāṣa* (acting to fulfil desires other than the desire to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa), *jñāna* and *karma* 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 Bhakti-ābhāsa or the Semblance of Bhakti

*yad bhaktyābhāsa-leśo 'pi dadāti phalam uttamam
tamānanda-nidhiṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanyaṁ samupāsmāhe*

“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* or the semblance of *bhakti*. 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 *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* of *bhakti*. But since it is not really suitable for *bhakti-ābhāsa* to be thoroughly analysed in a section where both the *svarūpa* and *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* 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 *jīva* 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 *svabhāva* or nature 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 the *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 *nitya-dharma* or eternal occupational duty. When the same *jīva* becomes opposed to Bhagavān, then he is gripped by fear and his intelligence is lost. *Māyā* is the *aparā-śakti* or external potency of Bhagavān. Considering the existence of this material world which has manifested from the external potency to be an independent element from Bhagavān, the unfortunate *jīva* falls into material existence. Intelligent people, accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of a *sad-guru*, engage themselves in the exclusive *bhajana* of the *para-ma-deva* or supreme god, Śrī Hari.

From the above verse we can conclude that the *jīva*'s *māyābhiniveśa* or absorption in the material energy imposes a false designation upon him. In such an adulterated stage, the *bhakti* of the *jīva* easily deteriorates and appears as *bhakti-ābhāsa*. Those who desire nothing other than entrance into *śuddha-bhakti* should completely cross over *bhakti-ābhāsa* and take shelter of *kevalā-bhakti*, exclusive and uninterrupted devotion. For this reason we are reviewing the topic of *bhakti-ābhāsa* in great detail. This in-depth analysis of *bhakti-ābhāsa* 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* or the semblance of *rati* in his review of *rati-tattva*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has nicely explained *bhakti-ābhāsa*. I am presenting this deliberation on *bhakti-ābhāsa* upon the basis of the conception of *rasācārya* Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. *Bhakti-ābhāsa* exists prior to the stage of *śuddha-bhakti*. From *bhakti-ābhāsa* the stages of *śuddha-bhakti* and *rati* in *śuddha-bhakti* 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 which 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 identity. The form which appears because of the tree's blockage of the path of light and which 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 nirupādhitvam eva rater mukhya-svarūpatvām sopādhitvam ābhāṣātvām tattva gauṇyā vṛtṭyā pravarttamānatvam iti,*” which means that when *bhakti* is unadulterated, it is *svarūpa-bhakti* or devotion in its intrinsic state, but when *bhakti* is adulterated, then it is called *bhakti-ābhāsa*. *Bhakti-ābhāsa* is manifested by the *gauṇī-vṛtṭi* or secondary inclination of the *jīva*. The *jīva*'s intrinsic inclination is called the

mukhya-vṛtti and the inclination which is obstructed or covered is called the *gauṇī-vṛtti*. *Pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* and *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* are both categorised as *gauṇī-vṛtti* or secondary tendencies. When *bhakti* reaches its pure form, it is completely free from the tendencies of *pratibimba* and *chāyā*. At that time only the original object itself, pure spontaneous devotion, is manifest.

Pratibimba bhakti-ābhāsa

Pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa can be divided into three categories: (1) *nirviśeṣa-jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa*, (2) *bahirmukha-karmāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa*, and (3) *vīparīta vastu me bhakti-buddhijanīta bhakti-ābhāsa*.

(1) In *nirviśeṣa-jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa*, *bhakti* remains hidden by a covering of impersonal knowledge. At that time a curtain of impersonal knowledge exists between the *sādhaka* and *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti*, making direct realisation of *svarūpa-bhakti* impossible.

The conception of impersonal *jñāna* is that within *cit-tattva* or transcendence, names, forms, qualities, pastimes and other attributes don't exist. According to this philosophy, these attributes exist only in material objects and when the *jīva* becomes liberated from material existence, he merges into undifferentiated *brahma*. Wherever such *nirviśeṣa-jñānā* exists, *śuddha-bhakti* cannot manifest there. *Kṛṣṇānuśīlana* is called *śuddha-bhakti*. But the activities of *bhakti* are not possible in the *nirviśeṣa* stage because neither Kṛṣṇa, the *kṛṣṇa-dāsa-jīva*, 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 *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* 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, Vṛkāsura pleased Śīva with his worship and after obtaining a boon from Śīva that he could kill anyone by merely placing his hand on their head, he tried to kill Śīva himself. The devotion of such a person is deceitful and temporary due to his ignorance of the intrinsic nature of *nitya-siddhā-bhakti*. In *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.3.44, 46), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described the attributes of such deceitful *bhakti*:

*kintu bāla-camatkāra-kārī tac-cihna vīkṣayā
abhijñena subodho 'yam ratyābhāsaḥ prakīrtitaḥ*

*aśramābhiṣṭa-nirvāhī rati-lakṣaṇa lakṣitaḥ
bhogāpavarga-saukhyāṁśa-vyañjakaḥ pratibimbakaḥ*

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* or excessive attachment for Kṛṣṇa. But only foolish people, who are easily influenced by a show of external symptoms, will consider such so-called *rati* as genuine. Those who are knowledgeable know it as

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 kaścīd ayaṁ vyāharan hareścaritam
yati-goṣṭhyāmutpulakaḥ siñcati gaṇḍadvayīmasraiḥ*

Once, in the city of Vārāṇasī, a *sannyāsī* 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 *harināma* 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* 1.3.47-48):

*daivāt sad-bhakta-saṅgena kīrtanādyanusāriṇām
prāyaḥ prasanna-manasām bhogo mokṣādi-rāgiṇām*

*keśāñciddhṛdi bhāvendoḥ pratibimba udañcati
tad-bhakta hṛnnabhaḥsthasya tat saṁsarga-prabhāvataḥ*

Exhibiting such trembling and shedding of tears is not easy for an impersonalist because *jñāna* and *vairāgya* make the heart hard and push away all the symptoms of *bhakti*, which is very tender by nature. Even though in the process of *śravaṇa* and *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* which 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 *jñāna*, but sometimes there is the appearance of *bhakti-ābhāsa*.

(2) In *bahirmukha-karmāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa* a blockage comprised of an external covering of *karma* or fruitive activities is produced by the *gauṇa-vṛtti* or secondary tendency of *bhakti*. It is as if a curtain of fruitive activity is present between the relisher, the *jīva* and that which is to be relished, *bhakti*. This curtain covers the *svarūpa* or intrinsic nature of *bhakti*. *Varṇa-dharma*, *āśrama-dharma* and *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* are all classified as *karma*. *Karma* is of two types: *nitya* and *naimittika*. All actions which result in piety are considered *karma*. A detailed explanation of

karma here would greatly enlarge this presentation. Those who specifically want to understand *karma-tattva* 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 external *karma*. The *sandhya-vandana* or prayers to be recited daily at dusk and so on which are suitable for the proper execution of one's *varṇāśrama* duties and which are mentioned in the books of the *smārtas* are called *nitya-karma* or daily routine activities. The *smārtas* consider these *nitya-karma* activities to be *bhakti*. Yet an in-depth review of these activities will reveal that they are also external. The symptoms of *bhakti* which are visible in them are due merely to *pratibimba-bhakti-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-tattva* such as *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* to be *karma* and the *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* of *karma-tattva* to be *bhakti*. These misconceptions are caused by their ignorance of proper *tattva*. Although externally there appear to be many similarities between *karma* 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 towards achieving *kṛṣṇa-rati* and where the performer has no other desire whatsoever. Despite accruing some other fruits by the performance of such activity, the performer considers that fruit to be very insignificant. Those acts which nourish *śuddha-bhakti* are also considered *bhakti* because *bhakti* alone is the mother of *bhakti*; *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* and *bhakti*. Only when their faith in *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 *śraddhā*. Unless in possession of such *śraddhā*, no one can understand the subtle difference between *karma* 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 *śuddha-bhakti* 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* sometimes dance, tremble, and shed tears while chanting *harināma*, but all of this is *pratibimba-bhakti*, not *śuddha-bhakti*, and is the result of their previous good fortune of having associated with devotees as described in the verses which were quoted previously such as “*sat-bhakta-saṅgena*”. Their trembling and shedding of tears are just *bhoga-saukhyāṁśa-vyañjaka* or symptoms produced by sensual pleasure and are considered mere *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 me bhakti-buddhi-janita bhakti-ābhāsa* which is produced by the visualisation of *bhakti* in activities which are actually opposed to *bhakti* and which is prevalent in the *pañcopāsanā* and in the *īśvara-praṇidhāna* or concentration upon the *īśvara* 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 which 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 *śuddha-bhakti* which are described in the verse *śrī-brahma-rudra-sanakāścatvāraḥ sampradāyinaḥ*. To indicate these four *sampradāyas*, it is said in the scriptures, “*sampradāya-vihīnā 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 worshipable deities are ultimately imaginary. In other words they believe that *brahma* 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 they merge into impersonal *brahma* and the devotion they offered to those ‘imaginary’ *mūrtis* whom they consider to be the *īśvara* is not eternal. This activity is simply *jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa*. One cannot attain *śuddha-bhakti* as long as he believes such *jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa* 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 mere *pratibimba* or a reflection of the genuine symptoms. Just as the *pañcopāsakas* display *bhakti-ābhāsa* towards their ‘imaginary’ *mūrtis* of demigods, similarly *yogīs* also display trembling and shedding of tears towards their ‘imaginary’ *mūrti* of the Supersoul. These are all examples of *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa*. The concept that *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* will gradually develop and will ultimately transform into *śuddha-bhakti* is totally false because by rejecting impersonal meditation and the benefits sought from fruitive activities the existence of this *tattva* (*bhakti-ābhāsa*) totally vanishes. There remains no possibility of those practicing *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* actually being benefited unless they completely purify their consciousness from its very root. Impersonalists such as the four Kumāras and the top-most *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* 1.3.42-43):

*vimuktākhila tarṣair yā muktair api vimṛgyate
yā kṛṣṇenātigopyāśu bhajadbhyo ’pi na dīyate*

*sā bhukti-mukti-kāmatvāc chuddhām bhaktim akurvātām
hṛdaye sambhavaty eṣām kathām bhāgavatī ratih*

“How is it possible for the rare *bhagavat-rati* or intense attachment for Bhagavān 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 *bhagavat-rati* 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 kautūhālamayī cañcala duḥkha-hāriṇī
rateś chāyā bhavet kiñcit tat-sādṛśyāvalambinī*

*hari-priya-kriyā-kāla-deśa-pātrādi-saṅgamāt
apy ānuṣaṅgikādeṣā kvacid ajñeṣvapikṣyate*

*kintu bhāgyam vinā nāsau bhāvac chāyāpy udañcati
yad abhyudayataḥ kṣemaṁ tatra syād uttarottaram*

*hari-priya-janasyaiva prasādabhara-lābhataḥ
bhāvābhāso 'pi sahasā bhāvatvam upagacchati*

*tasminn evāparādhena bhāvābhāso 'py anuttamaḥ
krameṇa kṣayam āpnoti khastha pūrṇa-śāsī 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 *pañcopāsaka* or a *sampradāyika* (coming in a bona fide *paramparā*), one cannot attain the stage of *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* with-

out 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, *bhāvābhāsa* 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 *bhāvābhāsa* gradually deteriorates just like the gradual waning of the moon in *kṛṣṇapakṣa*, the dark fortnight of the lunar month. *Chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* is of two types: (1) *sva-rūpa-jñānābhāva-janita-bhakti-ābhāsa* or *bhakti-ābhāsa* which appears in the absence of knowledge of one's inherent identity, and (2) *bhakti-uddīpaka-vastu-śakti-janita-bhakti-ābhāsa* or *bhakti-ābhāsa* in which the stimulation for *bhakti* is caused by the influence of having come into contact with objects such as time, place and circumstance which are related to Bhagavān.

(1) The *svarūpa-jñāna* or intrinsic knowledge concerning the *sādhaka* (the practitioner), *sādhana* (the practice) and *sādhya* (the object of achievement) is nondifferent from the *svarūpa* 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* which are visible in him in that condition are merely *bhakti-ābhāsa*. This *bhakti-ābhāsa* transforms into *śuddha-bhakti* when one obtains *svarūpa-jñāna*. Even for Vaiṣṇavas who are duly initiated into the genuine *sampradāya* the *vastu-prabhā*, or illumination of one's eternal identity arising from their *dikṣā-mantra* which they received from their *dikṣā-guru*, won't appear until they receive this *svarūpa-jñāna* by the mercy of a *śikṣā-guru*. Due to ignorance of *svarūpa-jñāna*, *svarūpa-siddhā-bhakti* remains covered and hence only *bhakti-ābhāsa* 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 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 *sāmpradāyika* Vaiṣṇavas. The *niṣṭhā* or firm faith of *sāmpradāyika* Vaiṣṇavas in the personal aspect of Bhagavān is much stronger than that of *pañcopāsaka* Vaiṣṇavas. By receiving proper instruction on *tattva*, a *sāmpradāyika* Vaiṣṇava remains hopeful of reaching a very exalted stage of *śuddha* Vaiṣṇavism, but a *pañcopāsaka* cannot be as hopeful of achieving such an exalted stage of Vaiṣṇavism by receiving instruction on the *tattva* according to their own custom. The accessibility of association of pure devotees for *sāmpradāyika* 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 *sāmpradāyika* system and can begin pursuing the path of *śuddha-bhakti*. 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):

*dikṣā-mātreṇa kṛṣṇasya narā mokṣam labhanti vai
kiṁ punar ye sadā bhaktyā pūjayanty acyutaṁ narāḥ*

“Just by receiving initiation into the *kṛṣṇa-mantra* one can obtain *mukti*, so what can be said about what one can achieve by performing *bhagavad-bhakti*?”

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-pāpakṣaye 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 *śaktas* or worshippers of the goddess Durgā are gradually elevated to *bhakti*, either personal or impersonal, by first becoming worshippers of the sun-god, then worshippers of Gaṇeśa, then worshippers of Śiva, then *pañcopāsaka* Vaiṣṇavas, and finally *sāmpradāyika* 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 *śuddha-bhakti*.

(2) In the scriptures there are many examples of *bhakti-uddīpaka vastu-śakti janita bhakti-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 which act as *bhakti-uddīpaka* or stimuli to *bhakti*. The *jīva* 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 *bhakti-ābhāsa*. Devotees won't be astonished upon witnessing such remarkable results of *bhakti-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 *bhakti-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 *bhakti-ābhāsa*, it is not the prescribed conduct. The execution of *śuddha-bhakti* is our only duty. Those who desire absolute success should not in any circumstances give a place to *pratibimba-bhakti-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 bhedāttatva-vicārataḥ
bhaktyābhāso dvidhā so 'pi varjanīyaḥ rasārthibhiḥ*

Those who desire to relish *bhakti-rasa* should always remain aloof from both types of *bhakti-ābhāsa*. By reviewing the *tattva*, it is concluded that *bhakti-ābhāsa* is of two types, *pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* and *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*. *Pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa* has a tendency to

make the *jīva* commit offences while *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa* is incomplete in itself. The execution of *śuddha-bhakti* is the only recommended activity for the *jīva*.

Offences towards Bhakti

This is a very dangerous item. We execute so many limbs of *bhakti*, such as accepting the *dikṣā-mantra* from a bona fide *guru*, everyday applying *tilaka* to twelve different parts of the body, performing *arcana* unto Śrī Kṛṣṇa, observing the vow of Ekādaśī, chanting *harināma* 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-Bhāgavat, *Madhya-līlā*, 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 sāmbhāya
nāhi māne bhakti jāṭhi mārāye sadāya*

*bhakti-sthāne uhāra haila aparādha
eteke uhāra haila darasana-bādha”*

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 criticises 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 dancing and performing *kīrtana*. When he enters the sect of the impersonalists, he rejects the eternity 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 *līlā* or 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 *dikṣā* 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 *śuddha-bhakti* with great determination. They don't visit places where doctrines which are unrelated to *śuddha-bhakti* are discussed. They go to places where the topic of *śuddha-bhakti* 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 which 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 *bhagavat-kathā* 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 *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 *jīvas* 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 which 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 *śuddha-bhakti* 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 jīvastam caitanyam aham bhaje*

“I worship Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. By taking shelter of His feet, the *jīva* forever obtains the potency issuing from the very nature of *śuddha-bhakti*.”

Śuddha-bhakti manifests along with six symptoms: (1) *kleśaghñī*—it brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress, (2) *śubhadā*—it brings all auspiciousness, (3) *mokṣa-laghutākṛta*—liberation becomes insignificant before it, (4) *sudurlabhā*—it is rarely achieved, (5) *sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā*—it grants intense transcendental pleasure and (6) *kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī*—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 *kleśa* or distress of those who take shelter of *śuddha-bhakti*. *Kleśa* are of three types: *pāpa* or sin, *pāpa-bīja* or sins in their seed form and *avidyā* or ignorance. Due to the sins committed by the *jīva* in innumerable lifetimes or the sins which 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 Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta. These sins can be further divided into two categories: *prārabdha* and *aprārabdha*.

Prārabdha sins are those for which the *jīva* 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 *jīva* in innumerable lifetimes are added to the series of previous *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 a *yavana* or untouchable family is due to *prārabdha* sins. *Śuddha-bhakti* destroys both types of sins, *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-nāmadheya-śravaṇānukīrttanād
yat-prahvaṇād yat smaraṇād api kvacit
śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate
kutaḥ punas te bhagavan nu darśanāt

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.6

“O my dear Lord! By hearing and chanting Your holy names, by offering *praṇāma* 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 which 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 and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.23

“For those who have undeviating and exclusive attachment for *viṣṇu-bhakti*, their (i) *aprārabdha* or the accumulated stock of sins which are lying in a dormant condition, (ii) *kūṭa* or sins which are tending toward producing seeds, which means that they are beginning to take shape as sinful desires, (iii) *bija* or seeds which are already established as sinful desires and (iv) *prārabdha* or 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 which are situated within the heart of the *jīva* are called *pāpa-bija* or the seeds of sins. *Pāpa-bija* can only be destroyed by *bhakti*:

*tais tāny aghāni pūyante tapo-dāna-vratādibhiḥ
nādharmajaṁ tad-dhṛdayaṁ tad apīśāṅghri-sevayā*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.17 and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.24

The systematic methods for the atonement of sins which are prescribed in the scriptures, such as the performance of difficult vows like *candrāyaṇa* 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 which have arisen due to ignorance. Sinful desires can be removed only by engaging in the service of Kṛṣṇa, meaning that besides *bhakti* there is no other means which can expunge sinful desires from the heart. As soon as *Bhakti*-

devī appears in the heart, all the sinful desires as well as any desires for piety are destroyed at the root. In the *Padma Purāṇa* and in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, it is described how *bhakti* eradicates *avidyā*:

*kṛtānuyātrā vidyābhir hari-bhaktir anuttamā
avidyāṁ nirdahaty āśu dāvajvāleva pannagīm*

Padma Purāṇa and *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.26

“When *hari-bhakti* appears in the heart, she is followed by *vidyā-śakti* which immediately dispels the ignorance situated within the heart of the *jīva*, just as a serpent is burnt by a blazing forest fire.”

*yat-pāda-paṅkaja-palāśa-vilāsa-bhakyā
karmāśayaṁ grathitam udgrathayanti santaḥ
tadvan na rikta-matayo yatayo 'pi ruddha-
sroto-gaṇās tam araṇaṁ bhaja vāsudevam*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.22.23 and *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 the 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 the *bhajana* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme shelter.”

Though the cultivation of *jñāna* can dispel *avidyā* 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 padaṁ tataḥ
patanty adho 'nāḍṛta-yusmad-aṅghrayaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.32

“O lotus-eyed Lord! Although by the cultivation of *neti-neti* or 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 *brahma*, 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 *śaktis* or potencies. Among them, *cit-śakti*, *jīva-śakti* and *māyā-śakti* are prominent. *Cit-śakti* displays Bhagavān’s *dhāma* or abode and all the paraphernalia necessary for His *līlā*. Another name for *cit-śakti* is *svarūpa-śakti*. *Jīva-śakti* produces innumerable *jīvas*. By nature *jīvas* are purely *cit-tattva* or spiritual, but due to their incomplete constitution they can be trapped by *māyā*. By harbouring selfish desires they become opposed to Kṛṣṇa and are trapped by *māyā*, 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*. *Māyā* acts in two ways upon the intrinsic nature of the conditioned *jīva*: through the *avidyā* potency and through the *vidyā* potency. Through its *avidyā* aspect, *māyā* covers the constitutional pure ego of the *jīva*, thus creating a false or distorted ego by which the *jīva* identifies himself with gross matter. This shackle of *avidyā* is the cause of the *jīva*’s conditioned stage. Becoming free from *avidyā* and devoid of false designations, the *jīva* attains the stage of liberation. Thus *avidyā* is nothing more than a special potency of *māyā* which makes the *jīva* forget his constitutional position. *Avidyā* causes *karma-vāsanā* or the desire for fruitive activity in the *jīva*. These desires initiate the process of sin and piety. This *avidyā* is the root cause of all the difficulty experienced by the *jīva*. Besides *bhakti* no other process is capable of eliminating this *avidyā*. *Karma* can only destroy sins, and *jñāna* can destroy at the root the desires which 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, *avidyā*.

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

*śubhāni prīṇanam sarva-jagatām anuraktatā
sad-guṇāḥ sukham ityādīnyākhyātāni manīṣibhiḥ*

“Scholars define *śubha* or true auspiciousness 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 Purāṇā* 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 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 *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.29):

*yasyāsti bhaktir-bhagavaty-akiñcanā
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ
harāvabhaktasya 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 upon numerous endeavours these qualities don't 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*, *brahma-sukha* and *aiśvara-sukha*. *Vaiṣayika-sukha* is all the varieties of mundane pleasure which 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 endeavours to eradicate it through the process of *neti-neti* is called *vyatireka* or 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 *brahma* is called *brahma-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*, *brahma-sukha* or *aiśvara-sukha*.

*siddhayaḥ paramāścaryā bhukti-muktiś ca śāśvatī
nityaṁ ca paramānandaṁ bhaved govinda bhaktiḥ*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.31

“*Aṇimā, mahimā, laghimā, prāpti, iṣitā, vaśitva, prākāmya* and *kāmavasāyitā*—these eight types of perfections, all varieties of material enjoyment, *brahma-sukha* and *paramānanda* or the supreme bliss can all be achieved by performing *bhakti* for Śrī Govinda.”

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

*bhūyo 'pi yāce deveśa tvayi bhakti-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 *prema* 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 *brahma-sukha* to be insignificant, search exclusively for *prema-sukha*. 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-laghutākṛta*: By nature *bhakti* renders the conception of *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 cetikāvad anuvratāḥ*

“The various kinds of perfections 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 tṛṇāyante 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 *śuddha-bhakti* is appearing within him.”

(4) Attainment of *hari-bhakti* is extremely rare, *sudurlabhā*. 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 sudurlabhā*

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. Second, Śrī Hari does not easily grant His *bhakti* even though one may be engaged in *āsaṅga-yukta-sādhana* or *sādhana* endowed with unflinching attachment. The word ‘*āsaṅga*’ implies expertise in *bhajana*. Without expertise in *bhajana*, no *sādhana* can grant *hari-bhakti*. By executing *sādhana* with expertise in *bhajana* for a long period of time and after *nāmāparādha* and *vaiṣṇava-apārādha* have been dispelled, by the mercy of Bhagavān *śuddha-bhakti* which establishes one in knowledge of his constitutional identity arises in the heart.

*jñānataḥ sulabhā muktir bhuktir yajñādi puṇyataḥ
seyaṁ sādhana-sāhasair hari-bhaktiḥ sudurlabhā*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.36

“By the cultivation of *jñāna* one can easily obtain *mukti* and by the performance of sacrifices and other pious activities one can also easily obtain *bhukti*, but despite performing innumerable *sādhana*s one cannot achieve *hari-bhakti* so easily.”

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

*rājan patir gurur alaṁ bhavatāṁ yadūnām
daivam priyaḥ kula-patiḥ kva ca kiṅkaro vaḥ
astv evam aṅga bhajatāṁ bhagavān mukundo
muktiṁ dadāti karhicit sma na bhakti-yogam*

“My dear King Parīkṣit! Lord Mukunda Himself was the protector, *guru*, *iṣṭadeva* (worshipable Deity), well-wisher and *kula-pati* (head of the dynasty) 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 *mukti* to those engaged in His *bhajana*, but He doesn’t easily award His *prema*, which is far superior to *mukti*.”

In his commentary to this verse, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments, “*tasmād āsaṅgenāpi kṛte sādhanabhūte sākṣād bhakti-yoge sati yāvat phala-bhūte bhakti-yoge gāḍhāsaktir na jāyate tāvan na dadātīy arthaḥ*”: those who engage in *bhagavad-bhajana* by executing the ninefold limbs of *bhakti* are not granted *śuddha-bhakti* by Bhagavān until they develop strong attachment for *rati-tattva* which is the fruit of the perception of one’s eternal identity. Until that time comes, one’s *bhakti* remains in the form of *chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa*.

(5) *Sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā*: By nature *bhakti* is very intense *ānanda* or transcendental pleasure. It has already been mentioned that Bhagavān is the complete *saccidānanda-svarūpa* and the *jīva* is *anucidānanda* or 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, *cit* and *ānanda* are also present within the *jīva* in minute quantity. People generally understand the word *ānanda* to mean mundane pleasure, but whatever pleasure can be derived from all material pleasures combined is extremely negligible when placed before *ānanda-tattva*. 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 *jīvas*. *Brahmānanda* is negligible before *bhakti*. *Brahmānanda* is not the eternal bliss of the *jīva*; 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 *brahmānanda* experienced by impersonalists is multiplied by ten million times, the resulting *ānanda* won’t be equal to even a drop of the ocean of pleasure derived from *bhakti*.” The purport is that by simple imagination we may extend *brahmānanda* to whatever extent, but in reality it cannot even come near the intrinsic pleasure of the *jīva*, what to speak of equalling it. The constitutional pleasure of the *jīva* is inborn and hence natural. *Brahmānanda* is unnatural due to arising from the *jīva*’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-viśuddhābdhi-sthitasya me
sukhāni gopadāyante brāhmāṇy api jagad-guro*

“O Bhagavān! By attaining Your *darśana*, I am now established in the ocean of pure bliss. What to speak of material pleasure, even *brahma-sukha* 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 hariṁ prema-bhājanṁ priya-varga-samanvitam
bhaktir vaśī-karotīti śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī matā*

“*Śuddha-bhakti* overpowers Śrī Kṛṣṇa and all His dearest associates with *prema*; 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 *śuddha-bhakti* hasn’t arisen within the heart, a *sādhaka* is performing *bhakti-ābhāsa*. At this stage the attainment of *śuddha-bhakti* is very rare. But when *śuddha-bhakti* 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 *bhagavat-tattva* 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 *śuddha-bhakti-sādhana* to quickly unfold into the stage of *rati* or *bhāva* and to ultimately fully blossom into *prema*. In the stage of *bhāva*, *bhakti* attracts Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with His dearest companions, but in the stage of *prema*, *bhakti* makes the *sādhaka* an instrument of *śrī-kṛṣṇa-līlā* and thus induces him to relish the topmost *rasa*. This topic will be explained more clearly ahead. Viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsa comments on this subject in the following five verses:

*kleśaghñī śubhadā-bhaktir yadā sā sādhanātmikā
hṛdaye baddha-jīvanām taṭastha-lakṣaṇānvitā (1)*

*kleśaghñī śubhadā mokṣā-laghutākṛt sudurlabhā
sā bhaktir bhāva-rūpeṇa yāvat tiṣṭhati cetasi (2)*

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

*muktānām eva sā śāśvat svarūpānandā-rūpiṇī
sambandha-svarūpā nityam rājate jīva-kṛṣṇayoḥ (4)*

*bhakti-ābhāsa yā labhyā muktir māyā nikṛntani
sā katham bhagavad-bhakteḥ sāmyam kāṅkṣati cetikā (5)*

“There are three stages of *bhakti*: *sādhana*, *bhāva* and *prema*. *Bhakti* in the stage of *sādhana* has two aspects: *kleśaghñatva*, 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-laghutākāritva*, 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-kṛṣṇākaraṇī*, meaning it is the only means to attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In the conditioned stage of the *jīva*, the three intrinsic attributes of *bhakti*, that is *sāndrānanda-svarūpatva*, *śrī-kṛṣṇākaraṇatva* and *sudurlabhatva*, remain mixed with its three marginal characteristics, that is *kleśaghñatva*, *śubhadatva* and *mokṣa-laghutākāritva*. In the liberated stage, the *bhakti* of the *jīva* acts between the *jīva* and Kṛṣṇa as eternal loving service in a particular relationship and as the *jīva*'s intrinsic transcendental pleasure. The *mukti* which dispels the covering of *māyā* can be attained simply by the performance of *bhakti-ābhāsa*. Since such *mukti* 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-ceṣṭāṁ hitvā samantataḥ
śraddhāvān bhajate yaṁ śrī-caitanyaṁ ahaṁ bhaje*

“I worship Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, who is always served by faithful devotees who have completely given up the pursuit of *karma*, *jñāna* and dry renunciation.”

In the first chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature of *śuddha-bhakti*, in the second chapter we discussed the intrinsic nature of *bhakti-ābhāsa* or that which appears to be *bhakti* but in fact is not, and in the third chapter we discussed the natural attributes of *śuddha-bhakti*. In this chapter we will discuss the *adhikāra* or qualification 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 *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*, but still I am not experiencing the desired result—what is the reason for this?” Gradually they become disinterested in their *bhajana* and in the end they become totally faithless. Sound knowledge of the conception 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 *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* 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 *śuddha-bhakti* it is compulsory to analyse the proper qualification for it. The *hari-bhajana* performed by *karmādhikāris* and *jñānādhikāris*, or 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 which is expected from the performance of *bhajana*. A devotee's *hari-bhajana* becomes pure only when he obtains the proper *adhikāra* or qualification for *śuddha-bhakti*, 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 *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (7.16):

*catur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharataṣabha*

“My dear Arjuna! As a result of their accumulation of pious activities in innumerable lifetimes, four types of people engage in My *bhajana*: *ārta* or those who are distressed, *jijñāsu* or those

who are inquisitive, *arthārthī* or those who desire wealth and *jñānī* or those who possess spiritual knowledge. These four kinds of virtuous persons are qualified to perform My *bhajana*.”

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 *sukṛti* or accumulated pious merit he will not be inclined towards *bhajana*. Śrīla Jiva Gosvāmī has defined *sukṛti* as “those activities in connection with transcendental personalities which 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 *jñānīs* certainly engage in *bhajana* after their abundant accumulation of *sukṛti*. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.20-21):

*tatra gītādiṣūktānām caturṇām adhikāriṇām
madhye yasmin bhagavataḥ kṛpā syāt tat priyasya vā*

*sa kṣīṇa-tat-tad-bhāvaḥ syāc chuddha-bhakti adhikāravān
yathebhaḥ śaunakādiś ca dhruvaḥ sa ca catuḥ-sanaḥ*

“When the four types of persons who are eligible to engage in *bhakti* as mentioned in the *Gītā* and other scriptures receive the mercy of Bhagavān or His devotees, they become free from their particular motivations which are respectively desire for relief from distress, the desire to have their inquisitiveness satisfied, the desire to obtain wealth and the attachment to *jñāna*. They then become *adhikāris* or rightful candidates for *śuddha-bhakti*. This is clearly visible from the examples of Gajendra, the *ṛṣis* 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 *śuddha-bhakti*. Śaunaka and the other *ṛṣis* became very fearful upon the arrival of Kali-yuga. Understanding the inability of *karma* or fruitive activity to yield any benefit, they approached the great devotee Sūta Gosvāmī and inquired how the people of this age could attain the ultimate benefit. In his reply Sūta Gosvāmī instructed them on *śuddha-bhakti*, 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 *śuddha-bhakti*. Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana, and Sanat-kumāra are the four Kumāras. Previously they were *nirviśeṣa-jñānīs* or impersonalists, but later on, by the mercy of Bhagavān and His devotees, they completely rejected the conception of impersonalism and attained the *adhikāra* for *śuddha-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 *śuddha-bhakti*. Therefore, in relation to the *adhikāra* for *śuddha-bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.14):

*yaḥ kenāpy ati-bhāgyena jāta-śraddho 'sya sevane
nātisakto na vairāgyabhāg asyām adhikāry 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 *adhikāra* for *śuddha-bhakti*.”

The purport is that when worldly people realise 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 *śraddhā* in *kṛṣṇa-bhakti*. This very *śraddhā* is the root cause of the eligibility for *śuddha-bhakti*, as confirmed by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī’s explanation (found in *Bhakti-sandarbha*, Anuccheda 172) of these verses from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.27-28):

*jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu nirviṇṇaḥ sarva-karmasu
veda duḥkhātmakān kāmān parityāge 'py anīśvaraḥ
tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ śraddhālur dṛḍha-nīścayaḥ
juṣamāṇaś ca tān kāmān duḥkhodarkāṁś ca garhayan*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “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 *karma* and endeavouring to become free from the cycle of the pleasant and unpleasant results which 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 My *bhajana* with firm faith and resolve.”

While explaining the above verses which describe how a faithful devotee performs *bhajana*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has commented in the *Bhakti-sandarbha*, “*tad-evam-ananya-bhakty-adhikāre hetuṁ śraddhā-mātram uktvā sa yathā bhajeta tathā śikṣayati*,” which means that *śraddhā* is the sole cause of the *adhikāra* to perform *śuddha-bhakti*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī also mentions, “*śraddhā hi śāstārtha-viśvāsaḥ. śāstram ca tad aśaraṇasya bhayaṁ tac charaṇāsyābhayaṁ vadati. ato jātāyāḥ śraddhāyās tat śaraṇāpattir eva liṅgam iti*,” which means 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* whether or not *śraddhā* has developed within someone. What is *śaraṇāpatti*? Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes “*jātāyām śraddhāyām sadā tad anuvṛtti-ceṣṭaiva syāt*” and “*karma-parityāgo vidhīyate,*” which means upon the appearance of *śraddhā*, *kṛṣṇānuvṛtti-ceṣṭā* or the constant endeavour to serve Kṛṣṇa is always visible in a person’s behaviour and the tendency to perform *karma* or fruitive activities is altogether removed. This is *śaraṇāpatti*. In *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (18.66), after giving separate explanations of *karma*, *jñāna* and *bhakti*, through a most confidential statement Bhagavān has given instruction on *śaraṇāpatti*:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja
aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā śucaḥ*

We should understand the words “*sarva-dharma*” in this verse to mean *dharmas* which are obstacles to *śaraṇāpatti* 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 perform *śaraṇāpatti* unto Me, meaning one should develop exclusive *śraddhā* towards engaging in My *bhajana*. Don’t be fearful of the reactions which come to those who commit the sin of rejecting their occupational duties. I assure you that I will free you from the reactions of all such sins.”

The doubt may arise that the word *śraddhā*, meaning faith, actually refers here to respect. The paths of *karma*, *jñāna* and so forth also require *śraddhā*. Thus *śraddhā* is not only the cause of *bhakti*, but of *karma* and *jñāna* also. The philosophical principal 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* or taste. Despite possessing faith, one may not desire to participate in a particular activity unless he has developed *ruci* for it. *Śraddhā* 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 *śraddhā* which develops for *bhakti* is endowed with *ruci*, and this *śraddhā* is none other than the seed of the *bhakti-latā* or creeper of devotion which is sown in the heart of the *jīva*. *Śraddhā* in the paths of *karma* and *jñāna* is mixed with *ruci* for the activities of *karma* and *jñāna* respectively, but the nature of this *śraddhā* is different. Only the *śraddhā* which is endowed with *ruci* for *bhakti* culminates in the symptoms of *bhakti*. This is called *śaraṇāpatti*. Only when one’s *ruci* for *bhakti* advances through the progressive stages of *sadhu-saṅga*, the performance of *bhajana*, *anartha-nivṛtti* and finally assumes the form of *niṣṭhā* does it become *śuddha-ruci*. Thus *śraddhā* is a separate *tattva* or entity from *bhakti*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in *Bhakti-sandarbha*, “*tasmāc chraddhā na bhakty aṅgam kintu karmaṇy asamartha vidvat tāvad ananyatākhyāyām bhaktāv adhikāri-viśeṣaṇam eva.*” Hence, *śraddhā* is not a limb of *bhakti*, but an attribute for the *adhikāra* for *śuddha-bhakti* resulting from one’s

having become indifferent to the activities of *karma-kāṇḍa*. It says in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.20.9):

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

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “One should continue performing his occupational duties as long as he hasn’t become indifferent to them and hasn’t developed *śraddhā* towards hearing the narrations of My pastimes.”

The purport is that one is qualified to renounce his occupational duties only when he develops *śraddhā* 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 *śraddhā*, which is the very cause of the qualification for *śuddha-bhakti*, is itself not a limb of *bhakti*, then how can *jñāna* and *vairāgya*, which in some instances manifest before the appearance of *śraddhā*, be limbs of *bhakti*? Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.248):

*jñāna-vairāgyor bhakti-praveśyopayogitā
īṣat prathamam eveti nāṅgatvam ucitaṁ tayoh*

“In some particular instances *jñāna* and *vairāgya* may be useful while a devotee is in the initial stages of entering into *bhakti-tattva*, but they can never be said to be limbs of *bhakti*.”

Hence, it is an established fact that only that *śraddhā* which is endowed with the symptoms of *śaraṇāpatti* is the cause of the qualification for *śuddha-bhakti*. 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 *jñāna* 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 *śraddhā*, but through a more detailed analysis it becomes apparent that somehow or another there must have been some *sat-saṅga* or association with devotees just between the two instances; that is, between the cultivation of the above-mentioned processes and the appearance of *śraddhā*. In this context the following verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.51.53) is worthy of consideration:

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

“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 *jīva* 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 *karma*, *jñāna*, *vairāgya* and so on can never be the cause of the appearance of *śraddhā*; only *sat-saṅga* 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.*” Thus only persons endowed with *śraddhā* are the *adhikārīs* or rightful candidates for *śuddha-bhakti*. There is another consideration here. *Sādhana-bhakti* is of two types, *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti*, as confirmed in this verse from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.5): *vaidhī rāgānugā ceti sā dvidhā sādhanābhidhā*. It is essential to understand the difference between *vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti* because without this understanding there may remain many suspicions which can harm the development of one’s *bhakti*. Concerning *vaidhī-bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written:

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

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.6

Bhakti is the *jīva*’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 *jīva* 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 which is visible in the conditioned soul is distorted *rāga*, not *śuddha-rāga*. In that stage the inborn *rāga* of the *jīva* 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* which is performed within the framework of the instructions of the scriptures is called *vaidhī-bhakti*.

Now I will give a brief review of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī writes in *Bhakti-sandarbhā*, “*tatra viṣa-yiṇaḥ svābhāvīkī viṣaya-saṁsargecchātīśaya-mayaḥ premā rāgaḥ. yathā cakṣur ādīnām saundaryādau, tadṛśa evātra bhaktasya śrī-bhagavatya api rāga ity ucyate.*” The powerful loving affection which 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 which develops from following in the footsteps of a personality who possesses natural

ruci or taste for such *rāga* is called *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Regarding the qualification for *rāgānugā-bhakti*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes:

*rāgātmikaika-niṣṭhā ye vraja-vāsi-janādayaḥ
teṣāṁ bhāvāptaye lubdho bhaved atrādhikāravān*

*tat-tat-bhāvādi-mādhurye śrute dhīryad apekṣate
nātra śāstraṁ na yuktiṁ ca tal lobhotpatti-lakṣaṇam*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.291-292

“The *vraja-vāsīs*’ 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 *vraja-vāsīs* is the *adhikārī* or rightful candidate for *rāgānugā-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 *rāgānugā-bhakti* is this spiritual greed, not careful study of the scriptures and the skilful use of logic.”

Thus we understand that just as *śraddhā* is the only cause of the *adhikāra* for *vaidhī-bhakti*, similarly greed is the only cause of the *adhikāra* for *rāgānugā-bhakti*. Here a doubt may arise concerning whether the *śraddhā* which has been previously established as the cause for the eligibility for *śuddha-bhakti* is incomplete. If that *śraddhā* 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 *śraddhā* is the only cause of the *adhikāra* for *śuddha-bhakti*. In the absence of *śraddhā*, 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 *adhikāra* for *vaidhī-bhakti* and *bhāva-mādhurya-lobhamayī-śraddhā* or *śraddhā* derived from intense greed to experience the sweet sentiments of the *vraja-vāsīs* is the only cause of the *adhikāra* for *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Only *śraddhā*—whether it be *viśvāsamayī* or *lobhamayī*—is the cause of the eligibility for both types of *śuddha-bhakti*.

There are three types of *adhikārīs* or rightful candidates for *vaidhī-bhakti*: *uttama*, *madhyama* and *kaniṣṭha*, as confirmed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.16), “*uttamo madhyamaś ca syāt kaniṣṭha-śceti sa tridhā*.”

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

*śāstre yuktau ca nipuṇaḥ sarvathā dṛḍha-niścayaḥ
prauḍha śraddho ’dhikārī yaḥ sa bhaktāv 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 the *uttama-adhikārī* or one endowed with firm *śraddhā*.”

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

Kaniṣṭha devotees have very little expertise in understanding the scriptures and their *śraddhā* is very delicate and immature. Their *śraddhā* can be changed by others’ logic and arguments.

It is to be noted here that the *śraddhā* which is visible in these three types of faithful persons is characterised by faith in the injunctions of the scriptures and by being mixed with logical evidences which are dependent on the scriptures. According to the degree of greed possessed by the rightful candidates for *rāgānugā-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), *gṛhastas*, *brahmacārīs*, *vānaprasthas* and *sannyāsīs*—all of them can be qualified for *bhakti* if they have *śraddhā* in the injunctions of the scriptures and the instructions of the *sādhu* 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 *śraddhā* when he realises 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 *ragātmikā* devotees of Vraja, then it can be said that he has acquired the *adhikāra* to perform *śuddha-bhakti*. The *adhikāra* for *śuddha-bhakti* cannot be achieved by the processes of *jñāna*, *vairāgya*, philosophical analysis, religious discussion, self-control or meditation. Despite receiving *sampradāyika-dikṣā* or initiation into a bona fide disciplic succession one cannot enter into the previously discussed *uttamā-bhakti* until he becomes an *uttama-adhikārī*. Until that time one’s *bhakti* can be said to be *bhakti-ābhāsa*.

There is great necessity to strive for the stage of *uttama-adhikārī*. This is possible only when one engages in *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* in the association of devotees. We should never think that one becomes an *uttama-adhikārī* simply by diligently practicing *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* 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 realise one's inherent identity which are visible in the beginning stages of *śuddha-bhakti* are far superior to the display of symptoms such as falling unconscious and so on which arise as a result of pursuing the path of *bhakti-ābhāsa*. Therefore, we should strive to attain *śuddha-bhakti* 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 ṇmātrasyādhikāritā (1)*

*nā sāṅkhyāṁ na ca vairāgyāṁ na dharmo na bahujñatā
kevalaṁ sādhu-saṅgo 'yaṁ hetuḥ śraddhodaye dhruvam (2)*

*śravaṇādi-vidhānena sādhu-saṅga-balena ca
anarthāpagame śighraṁ śraddhā niṣṭhātmikā bhavet (3)*

*niṣṭhāpi rucitāṁ prāptā śuddha-bhaktiyadhikāritāṁ
dadāti sādhu nityam eṣā prathā sanātano (4)*

*asat-saṅgo 'thavā bhaktāv aparādhe kṛte sati
śraddhāpi vilayaṁ yāti kathaṁ syāc chuddha-bhaktatā (5)*

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

When *śraddhā* which 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 *adhikāra* for *śuddha-bhakti*. *Sāṅkhya*, *vairāgya*, *varṇāśrama-dharma* or becoming a scholar do not cause the appearance of *śraddhā*. The sole cause of the appearance of *śraddhā* is the association of a *sādhu* who has deep love for the narrations of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. When *śraddhā* appears, one becomes a *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*. When one executes the limbs of *sādhana-bhakti* such as *śravaṇa*, and when by the influence of *sādhu-saṅga* one becomes free from *anarthas* and his *śraddhā* becomes dense and transforms into *niṣṭhā*, one develops the *madhyama-adhikāra* or intermediate qualification for *śuddha-bhakti*. By the further pursuance of the activities of *sādhana-bhakti* such as *śravaṇa* 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 *sād-*

haka within whom such *ruci* has developed is called an *uttama-adhikārī*. Only such an *uttama-adhikārī* attains *śuddha-bhakti*. 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, *śraddhā* at the *kaniṣṭha* level as well as that at the *madhyama* level will dry up from its very root and the *sādhaka* will be unable to achieve *śuddha-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 *śuddha-bhakti* which ultimately bears the fruit of *prema*.

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