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Bhakti-tattva-viveka

Deliberation on the True Nature of Devotion

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, Sāi, Sahajiyā, Sakhī-bhekhī, Smārta and Jāti-gosāi 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 Vīranagara 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-vivekaiś 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

Chapter One The Intrinsic Nature of Devotion

*yugapad rājate yasmin bhedābheda vicitratā
vande taṁ kṛṣṇa-caitanyam pañca-tattvānvitam svataḥ (1)*

*praṇamya gauracandrasya sevakān, śuddha-vaiṣṇavān
'bhakti-tattva vivekā' khyam śāstrām vakṣyāmi yatnataḥ (2)*

*viśva-vaiṣṇava dāsasya kṣudrasyākiñcanasya me
etasminn udyame hy ekam balam 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-saṅgamanī commentary on Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has explained that the word anuśīlanam has two meanings. First, it means cultivation through the endeavours to engage and disengage one’s body, mind and words. 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. Kaṁsa and Śīsupāla 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-bhūyasi*

“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, paramātmata-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 śrotiṅgām hi vivekastāvān eva, yāvatā jaḍātiriktaṁ cinmātram
vastūpasthitam bhavati. tasmiṅś cinmātre 'pi vastuni ye viśeṣāḥ svarūpa-bhūta-śakti-
siddhāḥ bhagavattādi-rūpā varttante tāms te vivektum na kṣamante. yathā rajanī-*

*khaṇḍini jyotiṣi jyotir mātratve 'pi ye maṇḍalāntar bahiś ca divva-vimānādi-
paraspara-prthag-bhūta-raśmi-paramāṇu-rūpā viśeṣās tāmś carma-cakṣuṣ na
kṣamanta ity anvayaḥ tad vat. pūrvavac ca yadi mahat-kṛpā-viśeṣeṇa divya drṣṭitā
bhavati tadā viśeṣopalabdhīś 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 adhikṛtya
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 example, 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, Ṛśvara, 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 upāsana or meditative worship—whether it be the virāt (the gigantic form of the Lord conceived in the shape of the universe) or the four-armed form situated within the heart—is not eternal. This process is called paramātma-darśana 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 paramātma-darśana cannot be called śuddha-bhakti. In this regard it is said in Bhakti-sandarbha, “ antaryāmitvamaya-māyā-śakti-pracura-cic chaktyaśa 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 tatastha-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 Vaikuṇṭhanātha Nārāyaṇa, and where the internal potency displays its supreme sweetness (mādhubhya), there Bhagavān appears as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. In spite of being predominant almost everywhere, aiśvarya loses its charm in the presence of mādhubhya. 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 mādhubhya, but in the spiritual world it is completely the opposite. There mādhubhya 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 mādhubhya 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 mādhubhya 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 śrīṣa-kṛṣṇa svarūpayoh
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 tātaṣṭha-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 sādhanā-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 hr̥di 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-bhaktii 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 Brahmaloḳa or to obtain any other type of happiness in one's next life is also considered bhukti. Practice of the eightfold yoga system and to desire the eight or eighteen varieties of mystic perfections are also 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 vilīyate*

*anāsaktasya viṣayān yathārham upayuñjataḥ
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate*

*prāpañcikatayā buddhyā hari sambandhi vastunaḥ
mumukṣubhiḥ parityāgo vairāgyaṁ phalgu kathyate*

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
dīyamānam na gṛhṇanti vinā mat-sevanam 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 seyam prema-sevottarety api
sālokyādir-dvidhā tatra nādyā sevājuṣām matā*

*kintu premaika-mādhurya-juṣa ekāntino harau
naivāngī kurvate jātu muktim 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 premī- bhaktas or loving devotees never accept any one of the five varieties of mukti. Therefore, with- in pure unalloyed devotees the desire for liberation does not exist. Thus to remain free from the desire for mukti is anyābhilāṣitā-śūnya, 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,’ mean- ing ‘and so forth,’ refers to the practice of aṣṭāṅga-yoga, vairāgya sāṅkhya-yoga and the occu- pational 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 tran- scendental, 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 transcen- dental. When the jīvais situated in his pure state, only then does the svarūpa-lakṣaṇa or intrin- sic 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 bod- ies. 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 śud- dha-bhakti we have to acquaint him with the concept of anyābhilāṣitā-śūnya, 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 dis- ease 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 condi- tion but I don’t see any hope for my survival. What should I do? Do I not have any well-wish- er? 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 cidātmanah
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-leṣo 'pi dadāti phalam uttamam

“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):

*bhayam 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-śunyam 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 ābhāśātvām 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 14 mukhya-vṛtṭi and the inclination which is obstructed or covered is called the gauṇī-vṛtṭi. Pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa and chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa are both categorised as gauṇī-vṛtṭi 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-ābhāsacan be divided into three categories: (1) nirviśeṣa-

jñānāvṛta-bhakti- ābhāsa, (2) bahirmukha-karmāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa, and (3) viparīta vastu me bhakti-buddhi- janita 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 sādḥaka 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 Śiva with his worship and after obtaining a boon from Śiva that he could kill anyone by merely placing his hand on their head, he tried to kill Śiva himself. The devotion of such a person is deceitful and temporary due to his ignorance of the intrinsic nature of 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
abhijñēna subodho 'yaṁ ratyābhāsaḥ prakīrtitaḥ*

*aśramābhīṣṭa-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 kaścid ayam 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 keśānciddhṛdi bhāvendoḥ pratibimba udañcati tad-bhakta hr̥nnabhaḥsthasya 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* 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-vyañjakaor 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), Gānapatya (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 R̥śvara is not eternal. This activity is simply jñānāvṛta-bhakti-ābhāsa. One cannot attain śud-dha-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 pañ-copāsakas 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 katham bhāgavatī ratiḥ*

“How is it possible for the rare bhagavat-rati or intense attachment for Bhagavān in the stage of bhāvato 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 sādḥaka to understand chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa. Unlike pratibimba-bhakti-ābhāsa, chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa is not crooked and shrewd; it has simplicity and virtue. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written as follows regarding chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.3.49-53):

*kṣudra kautūhalamayī cañcala duḥkha-hāriṇī
rateś chāyā bhavet kiñcit tat-sādṛśyāvalambinī*

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

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

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

*tasminn evāparādhenā bhāvābhāso 'py anuttamaḥ
krameṇa kṣayam āpnoti khaṣṭha pūrṇa-śaśī yathā*

There are a few similarities between chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa and śuddha-bhakti, but by nature the practitioner of chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa feels some slight curiosity concerning what fruit will be attained by following this process, his mind is restless and some of his material distress is eradicated. Chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa is sometimes visible even within a person bereft of spiritual knowledge just by the influence of their having come into contact with the times, places and devotees that are related to Bhagavān. Whether one be a pañcopāsaka or a sampradāyika (coming in a bona fide paramparā), one cannot attain the stage of chāyā-bhakti-ābhāsa without some special good fortune having arisen within him because upon the shadow of bhāva arising just once—in whatever minute degree it may be—it will certainly grow and result in progressive benefit for the sādḥaka. 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 sādḥaka (the practitioner), sādḥana (the practice) and sādḥya (the object of achievement) is nondifferent from the svarūpa of śuddha-bhakti. When such svarūpa-jñāna has not yet arisen within a sādḥaka 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 1.200):

*dīkṣā-mātreṇa kṛṣṇasya narā mokṣam labhanti vai
kim 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, prati- bimba-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—betā nā dekhibe more*

*prabhu bole—“o betā jakhana yathā jāya
seī mata kathā kahi tathāya miśāya
vāsiṣṭha paḍaye jabe advaitera saṅge
bhakti-yoge nāce gāya tṛṇa kari dante*

anya sampradāye giyā jakhana sāmabhāya

nāhi māne bhakti jāṭhi mārāye sadāya

*bhakti-sthāne uhāra haila aparādha
eteke uhāra haila 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-vāsiṣṭhā 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 jīvastaṁ caitanyam ahaṁ 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) kṛṣṇākarsīṇī—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 aprāabdha-karma. But according to the scriptures of the jñānīs, one must suffer the reactions of his prāabdha-karma. But bhakti also destroys prāabdha-karma:

*yan-nāmadheya-śravaṇānukīrtanād
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 prāabdha sins which result in taking birth in a low-class family. Now see how bhakti also destroys aprāabdha sins:

*aprāabdha-phalam pāpam kūṭam bījam 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) aprāabdha 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) bīja or seeds which are already established as sinful desires and (iv) prāabdha 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-bīja or the seeds of sins. Pāpa-bīja can only be destroyed by bhakti:

*tais tāny aghāni pūyante tapo-dāna-vratādibhiḥ
nādharmajam tad-dhṛdayam 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- 25 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
avidyām 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-bhaktyā
karmāśayam grathitam udgrathayanti santah
tadvan na rikta-matayo yatayo 'pi ruddha-
sroto-gaṇās tam araṇam 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 sādḥaka will certainly fall down:

*ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas
tvayy asta-bhāvād avisuddha-buddhayaḥ
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam 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 Purāṇa explains what is meant by possessing love for all living entities and being the object of affection of all living entities (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.28):

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

“Those who have worshipped Śrī Hari have satisfied the entire universe. Therefore, all living entities, both animate and inanimate, love them.” The purport is 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 bhaktitaḥ*

Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.31

“Aṇimā, mahimā, laghimā, prāpti, īṣitā, 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 cādbhūtās 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 prarūdhāyām 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 sādhanas 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 sādhanas endowed with unflinching attachment. The word ‘āsaṅga’ implies expertise in bhajana. Without expertise in bhajana, no sādhanas can grant hari-bhakti. By executing sādhanas with expertise in bhajana for a long period of time and after nāmāparādha and vaiṣṇava-apārādhahave 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-sāhasrair 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 sādhanas 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 alam bhavatām yadūnām
daivam priyaḥ kula-patiḥ kva ca kiṅkaro vaḥ
astv evam aṅga bhajatām bhagavān mukundo
muktim 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 sād- hana-bhūte sāksād bhakti-yoge sati yāvat phala-bhūte bhakti-yoge gādhāsaktir 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 harim prema-bhājam 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 sādha 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 sādha 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 moksā-laghutākṛt sudurlabhā
sā bhaktir bhāva-rūpeṇa yāvat tiṣṭhati cetasi(2)*

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

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

*bhaktiābhāsenā yā labhyā muktir māyā nikṛntanī
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 śubha- datva, 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: sān- drānanda-viśeṣātmā, meaning it grants extremely intense transcendental pleasure, and śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī, 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-kṛṣṇākarṣatva 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-ceṣṭām hitvā samantataḥ
śraddhāvān bhajate yaṁ śrī-caitanyam aham 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 karmādhikārīs and jñānādhikārīs, 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 bharatarṣabha*

“My dear Arjuna! As a result of their accumulation of pious activities in innumerable lifetimes, four types of people engage in My bhajana: āрта 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 āрта. 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 āрта, jijñāsu, arthārthī or jñānī, unless one has some sukṛti or accumulated pious merit he will not be inclined towards bhajana. Śrīla Jīva 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 adbhikāriṇām
madhye yasmin bhagavataḥ kṛpā syāt tat priyasya vā*

*sa kṣīṇa-tat-tad-bhāvaḥ syāc chuddha-bhakti adbhikāravān
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 adbhikāris 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-jñānis or impersonalists, but later on, by the mercy of Bhagavān and His devotees, they completely rejected the conception of impersonalism and attained the adbhikāra 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 adbhikāra 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 adbhikāry asau*

“When one is not too attached to or detached from this material world and by some good fortune develops faith in the service of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, he is considered to possess the adbhikāra 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-sandarbhā, 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 śraddhānur dṛḍha-niścayaḥ
juṣamāṇas ca tān kāmān duḥkhodarkāmś ca garhayan*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, “My devotees who have developed faith in hearing the narrations of My pas- times 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-sandarbhā, “ tad-evam-ananya-bhakti- 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 charaṇāsyāb-hayaṁ 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
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayisyāmi mā sucaḥ*

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-sandarbhā, "tasmāc chraddhā na bhakty aṅgaṁ kintu karmaṇy asamartha vidvat tāvad anyatākhyāyām 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 yāvatā
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, "One should continue performing his occupational duties as long as he has- n'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-

sindhu1.2.248):

*jñāna-vairāgyor bhakti-praveśāyopayogitā
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-samāgamah
sat-saṅgamo yarhi tadaiva sad-gatau
parāvareṣe 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
śāsanenaiva 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-sandarbha, “ tatra viṣa-yiṇaḥ svābhāvīkī viṣaya-samsargecchātiśaya-mayaḥ premā rāgaḥ. yathā cakṣur ādinām saundaryādaḥ, tadṛśa evātra bhaktasya śrī-bhagavaty 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-vāsī-janādayaḥ
teṣāṁ bhāvāptaye lubdho bhaved atrādhikāravān*

*tat-tat-bhāvādi-mādhurye śrute dhīryad apekṣate
nātra śāstram 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 sāstra-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 vrajāvāsī 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:

*sāstre yuktau ca nipuṇaḥ sarvathā dr̥ḍha-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 sāstrādiṣv 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), gr̥hastas, 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-dīkṣā 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 sāṅkhyam na ca vairāgyam na dharmo na bahujñatā

kevalam sādhu-saṅgo 'yaṁ hetuḥ śraddhodaye dhruvam (2)

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

*niṣṭhāpi rucitām prāptā śuddha-bhaktyadhikāritām
dadāti sādhake nityam eṣā prathā sanātano (4)*

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

*ataḥ śraddhāvatā kāryaṁ sāvadhānam 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. Sāṅkhyā, 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 sādhaka 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.