

I] THE VIRTUE OF DEVOTEE ASSOCIATION [TEXTS 179-180]

ŚRĪLA JĪVA GOSVAMI'S ŚRĪ BHAKTI-SANDARBHA IN THREE VOLUMES

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BHAKTI AS THE COMPLETE METHODOLOGY TO ATTAIN THE ABSOLUTE

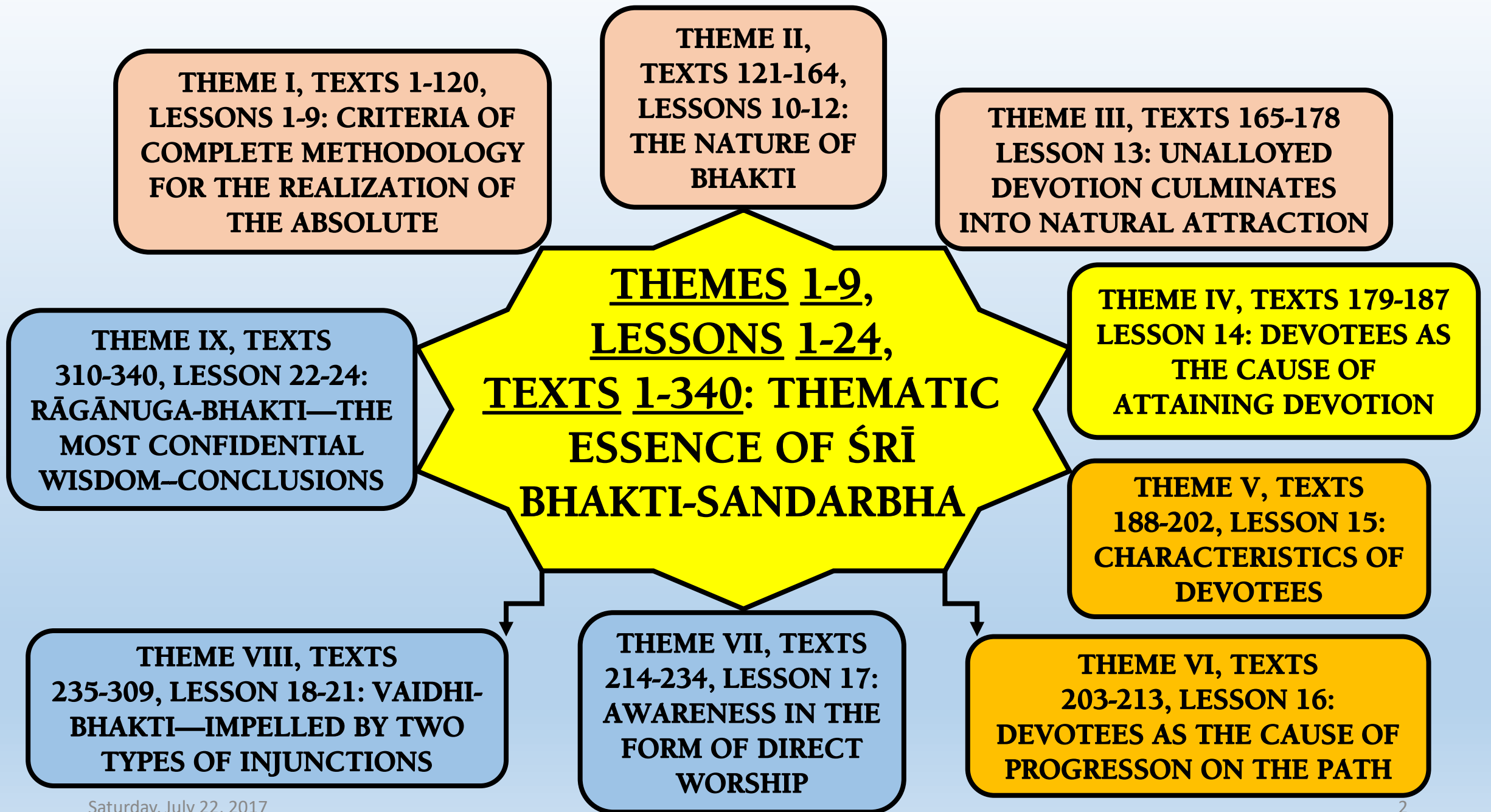
Criteria for a complete methodology

The nature of bhakti

Unalloyed devotion culminates in
natural attraction

THE PREEMINENCE OF THE LORD'S DEVOTEES

DIRECTLY CENTERING OF AWARENESS THRU UNALLOYED BHAKTI



VOLUME 2, TEXTS 179-213, LESSONS 14-16: THE PREEMINENCE OF THE LORD'S DEVOTEES

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I) TEXTS 179-180: THE VIRTUE OF DEVOTEE ASSOCIATION

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**LESSON 14, TEXTS 179-187: DEVOTEES AS
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- I. **THE VIRTUE OF DEVOTEE ASSOCIATION [TEXTS 179-180]:**
Sādhū-saṅga is the cause and sustenance of bhakti. However, offenses block this benefit. , the grace of the such a devotee has the power to nullify the ill-effects of this offense.
- II. **THE GRACE OF GOD IS SECONDARY [TEXTS 181-185]:** The Lord's grace descends thru His pure devotees, who distribute mercy by their own will.
- III. **SĀDHU-SANGA DETERMINES THE SPECIFIC QUALITY OF AWARENESS TOWARDS THE ABSOLUTE [TEXTS 186-187]:** The type of sdhu-saṅga one receives determines the specific nature of awareness one will develop in relation to the Absolute— there're 3 types of self-realized souls.

I] THE VIRTUE OF DEVOTEE ASSOCIATION

[TEXTS 179-180]

■ **TEXT 179: DEVOTIONAL INCLINATION DEVELOP THRU CONTACT WITH DEVOTEES**

- Focusing one's awareness on the Supreme, in the form of unalloyed direct devotion, is supremely rare by its very nature. So the question arises: How one can attain this bhakti?
- King Mucukunda: "When the material life of a wandering soul has ceased, O Acyuta, he may attain the association of Your devotees. And when he associates with them, there awakens in him devotion unto You, who are the goal of the devotees and the Lord of all causes and their effects." [10.51.53]

- **How is it that when a person gets to associate and serve the Lord's devotees, his material existence comes to an end?**
 - The Jīva in material existence \Rightarrow The Lord's illusory potency, Māyā thru her 3 modes of material nature replaces his true identity and knowledge with ignorance and bodily conception of life \Rightarrow becomes devoid of the Lord's awareness \Rightarrow turns away from the Lord $= \Rightarrow$ transmigrates into 8.4 million species of life forms (repeated birth and death)
 - When he gets to associate and serve the Lord's devotees (sādhū-saṅga) \Rightarrow bhajana-kriyā, or devotional service \Rightarrow Māyā's influence is nullified \Rightarrow his ignorance is dispelled \Rightarrow the wisdom that enables him to turn his attention towards the Lord is regained \Rightarrow freedom from material existence
 - "O my lord, great philanthropic souls travel on the earth on behalf of the Supreme Personality of Godhead to show compassion to the fallen souls who are averse to the sense of subordination to the Lord." [3.5.3]

■ **Offences block the benefit of sādhu-sanga**

- Why is it that some people don't become devotees, despite sādhu-sanga?
- So sādhu-sanga has the power to center people's awareness on the Lord, the assistance of the mercy of devotees (besides their mere association) is required to remove the defect of those who demonstrate these two attitudes. The mercy of the devotees is certainly bestowed on those who are indulging in senseless material pursuits but who are not offensive.

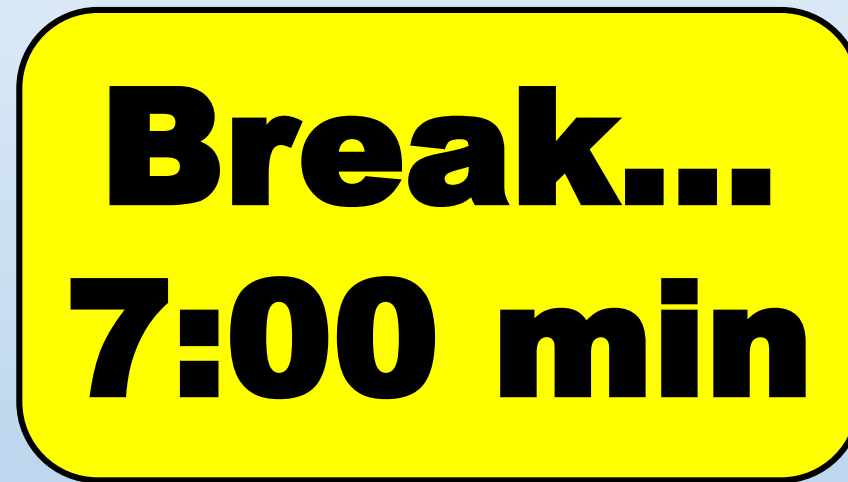
■ **A devotee's grace removes offense**

- If the devotees willingly bless somebody who is offensive, then only will his mind turn towards the Lord. This will not occur for offensive people who are not specifically blessed by devotees.

- These two types of experience are evident in the case of Nalakūvara. Despite being offensive, he was blessed by Nārada, and thus attained devotion for the Lord. The ordinary demigods were not blessed and so a devotional inclination towards the Lord was not awakened in them.
- Another example is of King Rahūgaṇa. Despite being offensive, he was blessed by the mercy of Jaḍa Bharata.
- **Grace is received individually**
 - Doubt: Prahlāda bestowed his mercy upon all those entangled in material existence ⇒ “I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving behind all these unfortunate souls. For those wandering on the path of transmigration, I do not see any shelter other than You.”
[7.9.44]

- Lord Nṛsimhadeva: “Anyone who sings the prayers recited by you and who remembers you & Me, will become free from the bondage of karma in due course of time.” [7.10.14]
- “When the time for person’s release from the cycle of birth and death approaches, he attains the association of those established in truth.” [10.51.53]
- **TEXT 180: BEGINNINGLESS FORGETFULNESS OF THE LORD IS REMOVED ONLY BY SĀDHU-SANGA**
 - “The minds of materialistic householders cannot be attracted towards Lord Kṛṣṇa, either by their own effort by learning from others, or by mutual association.” [7.5.30]
 - “Unless one bathes in the dust from the feet of great unalloyed devotees, one’s mind will not be attracted to the lotus feet of the Lord who performs wonderful deeds...” [7.5.32]

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II] THE GRACE OF GOD IS SECONDARY [TEXTS 181-185]

The Lord does not offer grace directly—His mercy is secondary

- Mercy is a movement of the heart which occurs only when the suffering of another person touches one's own heart.
- But this is not possible for the Lord, who ever relishes supreme bliss, is devoid of sin, and is distinct from the Jīvas ∴ suffering arising out of ignorance cannot penetrate His heart, just as darkness can never contact the sun. Consequently, there is no possibility of compassion being aroused in the Lord's heart at the plight of such suffering. Rather, the Lord's mercy manifests only in relation to bhakti characterized by humility (Ex: Gajendra).

The Lord's grace, however, manifests thru His devotees

- Although devotees, despite in this world are untouched by temporal miseries, they may sometimes recall their own previous suffering in the same way as a person recalls a nightmare upon begin awakened (Ex: Nārada's mercy upon Nalakūvara & Maṇigrīva)
- By coming in contact with the attitude of humility, the special potency of bhakti surges and becomes all the more enhanced in a devotee capable of bestowing mercy.
- “O Lord, who resemble the shining sun, You are always ready to fulfill the desire of Your devotee, and therefore You are known as a desire tree. When ācāryas completely take shelter under Your lotus feet in order to cross the fierce ocean of nescience, they leave behind on earth the method by which they cross, and because You are very merciful to Your other devotees, You accept this method to help them.” [10.2.31]

- **The sages distribute their mercy in accordance with their own will**
 - “Once by the will of providence they [the Nine-Yogendras] went to the sacrificial arena of King Nimi.” [11.2.24]
 - Brahmā: “The Lord acts according to the will of His devotees.” [10.14.2]
 - The Lord Himself: “I am under the control of My devotees.” [9.4.63]
 - “Once, while roaming throughout these planets, the honorable sage Aṅgirā arrived at the palace of King Citraketu by his own sweet will.” [6.14.14]
 - Devotees become compassionate merely by seeing the miserable plight of living beings; their mercy is not contingent on any worship.

- Because sādhu-sanga itself most purifying, a person need not undertake any other purificatory process to obtain it.
- Kṛṣṇa: “Mere bodies of water are not the real sacred places of pilgrimage, nor are mere images of earth and stone the true worshipable deities. These purify one only after a long time, but saintly sages purify one immediately upon being seen.” [10.84.11]
- **Ultimate truth is attained only by sādhu-sanga**
 - “What, then, is the ultimate truth? The answer is that nondual knowledge is the ultimate truth. It is devoid of the contamination of material qualities. It gives us liberation. It is the one without a second, all-pervading and beyond imagination. The first realization of that knowledge is Brahman. Then Paramātmā, the Supersoul, is realized by the yogīs who try to see Him without grievance. This is the second stage of realization. Finally, full realization of the same supreme knowledge is realized in the Supreme Person. All learned scholars describe the Supreme Person as Vāsudeva, the cause of Brahman, Paramātmā and others.” [5.12.11]

- “My dear King Rahūgaṇa, unless one has the opportunity to smear his entire body with the dust of the lotus feet of great devotees, one cannot realize the Absolute Truth. One cannot realize the Absolute Truth simply by observing celibacy [brahmacarya], strictly following the rules and regulations of householder life, leaving home as a vānaprastha, accepting sannyāsa, or undergoing severe penances in winter by keeping oneself submerged in water or surrounding oneself in summer by fire and the scorching heat of the sun. There are many other processes to understand the Absolute Truth, but the Absolute Truth is only revealed to one who has attained the mercy of a great devotee.” [5.12.12]

III] SĀDHU-SANGA DETERMINES THE SPECIFIC QUALITY OF AWARENESS TOWARDS THE ABSOLUTE [TEXTS 186-187]

■ **TEXT 186: TWO TYPES OF SAGES**

- Lord Rṣabhadeva: “Those whose minds are situated in nondual awareness, who are fully at peace, devoid of anger, affectionately disposed towards all living beings, and whose behavior is established in truth are great personalities. Alternatively, they may be those who are established in loving friendship with Me, the Lord, as their one and only aim. Such great personalities have no attachments for those who are engrossed in sense pleasure, nor for house, wife, children, and wealth. They do not endeavor for more than what is necessary to maintain the body.” [5.5.2-3]

■ **TEXT 187: THREE TYPES OF REALIZED DEVOTEES**

- i. Those who have attained eternal forms as associates of the Lord [Ex: Nārada]
- ii. Those whose material desires are completely washed away [Śuka]
- iii. Those whose material desires are inactive [Nārada in his previous life]
 - Narada: “When I was awarded a pure transcendental body as an associate of the Lord, my material body made of the 5 elements fell down because of karma which had set it in motion came to an end.” [1.6.29]
 - Sūta: “Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, the son of Vyāsadeva, Śukadeva Gosvāmī. It is he who defeats all inauspicious things within this universe. Although in the beginning he was absorbed in the happiness of Brahman realization and was living in a secluded place, giving up all other types of consciousness, he became attracted by the pleasing, most melodious pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He therefore mercifully spoke this supreme Purāṇa, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, which is the bright light of the Absolute Truth and which describes the activities of the Lord.” [12.12.69]

- Nārada describes his previous life's experience of divine love, when his heart was still tinged with impurity or dormant desire, to Vyāsa: “O Nārada [the Lord spoke], I regret that during this lifetime you will not be able to see Me anymore. Those who are incomplete in service and who are not completely free from all material taints can hardly see Me.” [1.6.21]
- These 3 types of realized devotees have the same love for the Lord, the 1st type is nonetheless considered superior to the 2nd, which is superior to the 3rd. While residing in a material body, a devotee is sometimes found to have greater love, either quantitatively or qualitatively. Qualitative ⇒ assessed by the relative greatness of the worshiper's beloved deity. Quantitative ⇒ ascertained according to the degree of development of love thru its various stages.
- Among great devotees, one whose love is preeminent, who has had direct vision of the Lord, and is free from material desires is topmost. And one lacking or deficient in one or more of these attributes is correspondingly less developed.