

THE NATURE OF SECTARIANISM

Excerpts from the Introduction of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā*

Sectarianism is a natural byproduct of the Absolute Truth. When *ācāryas* first ascertain and instruct the Truth, it is not polluted with sectarianism. But the rules and regulations received through disciplic succession regarding the goal and the method of achieving it are changed in due course of time according to the mentality and locale of the people. A rule that is followed by one society is not necessarily accepted in another society. That is why one community is different from another. As a community gradually develops more respect for its own standards, it develops hatred towards other communities and considers their standards inferior. These sectarian symptoms are seen in all countries since time immemorial. This is prominent amongst neophytes and found to some extent amongst *madhyama-adhikārīs*. Amongst *uttama-adhikārīs*, however, there is no trace of sectarianism.

When an asslike mentality becomes prominent within the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*, then they certainly indulge in these things. But if they develop a swanlike mentality, then they do not take part in quarrels, rather, they endeavor to attain a higher level. *Madhyama-adhikārīs* do not quarrel so much about external standards, but they are always attacked by philosophical disagreements. Sometimes they condemn the standards of neophytes and establish their own standards as superior. In such cases, they are also considered asslike people. Otherwise, if they had a swanlike mentality and a desire to attain a higher level, they would respect others' practices and inquire about higher topics. Contradictions actually arise only due to asslike mentality. Swanlike persons consider the necessity for different practices according to one's qualification, so they naturally become detached from sectarian quarrels. In this regard, it should be known that both asslike and swanlike people are found amongst the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs* and *madhyama-adhikārīs*.

Although swanlike personalities may accept a particular practice from birth or childhood according to instructions they have received, they nevertheless remain indifferent and nonsectarian.

Harmony is possible only when one has obtained a firm footing in the *dharma*, the function, of the soul.

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