

What Kind of Devotee Am I?

Excerpts from Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura's *Vaiṣṇava Ke?* which challenge the Śāṅkhacūḍa in us.

My dear mind, you are attached to wealth and due to *māyā's* influence you want to use your money simply for the gratification of your material senses, but by this you will get no eternal satisfaction. You should use the wealth at your disposal in the service of the lotus feet of Lord Mādhava (Kṛṣṇa), and then only can you experience transcendental bliss from wealth.

Your lusty desires to enjoy beautiful women are not an abode where you can find real shelter! The Supreme Lover is Yādava (Kṛṣṇa). He is the Supreme Enjoyer and actual owner of everyone's love. Offer all your love and devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa and you will be completely satisfied.



My dear mind, beware of your desire to attain material reputation. It is misleading you with its attractive vision like an oasis of green trees, but it is simply a mirage in the desert of this world of repeated birth and death. It will cause your utter spiritual destruction. Remember how Rāvana, the powerful demon, was bewildered due to false pride and in spite of all his efforts to achieve temporary material prominence he was destroyed by Rāghava (Lord Rāmacandra). The only position you should desire is to become a true Vaiṣṇava, a pure devotee of the Lord. Give all your care and attention for obtaining this! If instead you neglect to purely worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, due to your offenses, for all your hard endeavors your life will simply be hellish.



My dear mind, your desire for cheap reputation can be compared to the stool of a hog. You are proud of being a Vaiṣṇava, but your actual behavior is less than an ordinary civilized human being! Controlled by envy towards true Vaiṣṇavas, you have secretly been relishing trying to squeeze out some temporary material happiness by gratifying your material desires. How do you remain so proud in spite of your hypocrisy, after having abandoned the eternal nectar of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *sankīrtana* movement?



The desire for enjoying cheap fame and material distinction acts like a ferocious tigress who devours one's Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Similarly dangerous are the desires for enjoyment of wealth and women. Someone who has transcended both of these materialistic desires through devotional service is indeed a real Vaiṣṇava.

Someone with such Kṛṣṇa conscious characteristics is truly unattached to material life. He is actually a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa! The material bondage to the repetition of birth and death is easily defeated by a pure devotee of the Lord like him!



The devotee who engages his material possessions in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa while regulating his material activities of sense gratification according to the injunctions of the revealed *sāstras* is actually a *yukta-vairāgi* or a devotee situated in full and appropriate renunciation. He is certainly most fortunate. Even while living in the midst of the material world, whatever opulences he possesses and whatever actions he performs are all aspects of the spiritual opulence and potency of Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

However, if someone is outwardly chanting the holy names of the Lord, or even if he is externally engaged in *kīrtana*, or preaching the glories of the holy name, but actually is motivated by *pratisthā* desires, i.e. is under the control of desires to enhance his own material reputation or temporary position, then whatever apparent opulences or influence he may have achieved by his efforts are simply the products of cheating, and therefore simply temporary products of *māyā*, the illusory energy.



My dear mind, so now, with determination, let us remain eternally in the service of the servant of the servant of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī, the spiritual embodiment of the purest love for Kṛṣṇa! Give up every last trace of attachment for the vicious snake of material desire for sense gratification, subtle or gross. Give up all desires for achieving cheap fame or some position of temporary material importance through chanting the Holy Names of Kṛṣṇa. If one has such material desires one cannot realize the transcendental glories of congregational chanting of the Holy Names of Lord Kṛṣṇa in *sankīrtana*.