

The *Bhāva* and *Bābājī* Dynamic

There is a sect of *bābājīs* who call themselves *viraktas* (detached). They dress like *bābājīs* and think themselves renounced, but it is a mistake to think that simply accepting a name will produce *virakti* (detachment). One should not accept the dress of a *bābājī* if *virakti* has not appeared within oneself as a corollary of *bhāva*. *Bābājī* means to have developed *virakti* through *bhāva*, whereby all aspects of material life become distasteful. Those who find this world and family life unfavorable for cultivating devotion should restrict their needs, wear simple cloth, and partake only of *prasāda* obtained by begging. This lifestyle will gradually become natural for them. When it is determined by the guru that their character has actually transformed in accordance with scriptural standards, and they are deemed qualified, that is real attainment of *bābājī* status. The present custom of awarding *bābājī* status to unqualified people is extremely dangerous.

What to speak of developing *bhāva*, without being steady in *vaidhī bhakti* many people flightily or out of temporary renunciation adopt *bābājī-veśa* for the purpose of making a living. “Temporary renunciation” refers to distaste for the world that arises from disagreement between man and wife, other forms of suffering in family life, inability to get married, satiation with prostitutes, the influence of intoxicants, and so on. With this immature sense of renunciation people boldly approach a *bābājī* or *gosvāmī* and offer some donation in exchange for a *kaupīna* and cloth. But soon the “renunciation” wears off and the men or women, controlled by the senses, fall into illegitimate family life, or secretly satisfy their senses illicitly. They attain no spiritual advantage from this. The Vaiṣṇava community will not derive benefit until this type of *bābājī* life is completely eradicated. False renunciation is a great offense to devotional life.

Among persons who identify themselves as Vaiṣṇava renunciants, those who have actually attained detachment through *bhakti* are very rare. They should be given full respect. Unauthorized renunciants are divided into four classes: monkey renunciants, cheating renunciants, unsteady renunciants, and imitative renunciants. Monkey renunciants don the cloth of a renunciant, but not being renounced, they gallivant around with uncontrolled senses committing sinful acts. Cheating renunciants adopt *bābājī* dress to facilitate eating with Vaiṣṇavas during festivals or for receiving donations from householders to enjoy food, tobacco, or *gāñjā*, or to get their funeral rites performed by Vaiṣṇavas when they pass away. Unsteady renunciants accept *bābājī-veśa* due to momentary feelings of renunciation arising from suffering, poverty, sickness, failure of marriage, or quarrel. Their renunciation does not endure; very quickly they become false renunciants. Imitative renunciants are those who, due to addiction to intoxicants, fail in married life and make a show of devotion while intoxicated, or learn how to act as a devotee by showing false symptoms, or try to imitate the stage of *bhāva* by material emotions. All these categories of so-called renunciants are low, sinful, and unbeneficial for the world.

Renunciation arising from *bhakti* is the beauty of devotional life. To first renounce and then search out *bhakti* is unnatural and in most cases disastrous. Renunciation or detachment is the special ornament of the person who has attained *bhāva*. It is not an *aṅga* of *bhakti*, but a symptom of *bhakti*.

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