

Six Faults that Destroy Bhakti

1. *Atyāhāra* -

Overeating or too much
collecting

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- In his Śrī Upadeśāmṛta, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written the following verse:

**atyāhāraḥ prayāsaś ca
prajalpo niyamāgrahaḥ
jana-saṅgaś ca laulyam ca
ṣaḍbhir bhaktir vinaśyati**

"One's devotional service is spoiled when he becomes too entangled in the following six activities: (1) atyāhāra, eating more than necessary or collecting more funds than required; (2) prayāsa, overendeavoring for mundane things that are very difficult to obtain; (3) prajalpa, talking unnecessarily about mundane subject matters; (4) niyamāgraha, practicing the scriptural rules and regulations only for the sake of following them and not for the sake of spiritual advancement, or rejecting the rules and regulations of the scriptures and working independently or whimsically; (5) jana-saṅga, associating with worldly-minded persons who are not interested in Kṛṣṇa consciousness; and (6) laulyam, being greedy for mundane achievements."

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- It is most important to consider the deep meaning of this verse.
- For anyone who wants to engage in pure devotional service, it is especially necessary to follow the instructions of this verse.
- For one who neglects to follow these instructions, attaining devotion to Lord Hari is extremely rare.
- We are hereby elaborating the meaning of this verse for the benefit of those who have a strong desire to attain pure devotional service.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- In this verse six impediments to devotional service are mentioned-atyāhāra, prayāsa, prajalpa, niyamāgraha, jana-saṅga, and laulya.
- We will separately discuss each of these six items.
- In this small chapter only the meaning of the word atyāhāra is being discussed.
- Many people may think that the word atyāhāra refers only to overeating, but this is not so.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- It is explained in the first verse of Upadeśāmṛta:

vāco vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam
jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam
etān vegān yo viśaheta dhīraḥ
sarvām apīmām pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt

"A sober person who can tolerate the urge to speak, the mind's demands, the actions of anger, and the urges of the tongue, belly, and genitals is qualified to make disciples all over the world."

- In this regard, the urge of the tongue is the desire to taste foodstuffs. The urge of the stomach is the desire to overeat.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- If we understand the word atyāhāra in the second verse as overeating, the fault of repetition occurs in this condensed collection of essential instructions.
- Therefore it is the duty of the learned readers to find other meanings for the word atyāhāra as used by the most grave Rūpa Gosvāmī.
- Although bhojana, or eating, is the principle meaning of the word āhāra, the word bhojana also means to enjoy the objects of the five senses.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Form by the eyes, sound by the ears, smell by the nose, taste by the tongue, feeling of heat and cold, soft and hard by the touch-in this way, the five senses enjoy.
- This type of material enjoyment is compulsory for an embodied soul.
- Without enjoying the sense objects, a living entity cannot survive.
- As soon as the living entity gives up sense enjoyment, he leaves his body. Therefore, giving up sense enjoyment is only a figment of the imagination, it can never be applied in practice.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructed Arjuna in the Bhagavad-gītā (3.5-6):

na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api
jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma
sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ

No one (**na hi kaścit**) can remain without doing activity (**jātu tiṣṭhaty akarma-kṛt**) even for a moment (**kṣaṇam api**). All are forced to engage in action (**sarvaḥ avaśaḥ karma kāryate**) by the guṇas arising from prakṛti (**prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ**).

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa instructed Arjuna in the Bhagavad-gītā (3.5-6):

karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya
ya āste manasā smaran
indriyārthān vimūḍhātmā
mithyācāraḥ sa ucyate

He who, controlling the action of senses (**karmendriyāṇi saṁyamya**), remains remembering those objects of the senses (**yaḥ āste indriyārthān smaran**) in his mind (**manasā**), is bewildered (**vimūḍhātmā**), and is called a pretender (**sah mithyācāraḥ ucyate**).

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Since maintaining one's life is not possible without action, one must work to maintain his life.
- If such activities are done in the mood of enjoyment, then one's qualification as a human is lost and he becomes like an animal.
- Therefore if one can transform all his bodily activities into activities favorable to the devotional service of the Lord, then that is bhakti-yoga.
- Again, the Lord says in the Gītā (6.16-17, 5.8-9):

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

nāty-aśnatas 'tu yogo 'sti
na caikāntam anaśnataḥ
na cāti-svapna-śīlasya
jāgrato naiva cārjuna

Yoga is not possible for one who eats too much (**na aty-aśnatas 'tu yogo 'sti**), or who does not eat (**na ca ekāntam anaśnataḥ**), for one who sleeps too much (**na ca atī-svapna-śīlasya**), or does not sleep, O Arjuna (**jāgrato na eva ca arjuna**).

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

yuktāhāra-vihārasya
yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu
yukta-svapnāvabodhasya
yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā

If one has regulated eating, regulated walking/recreation (**yukta āhāra-vihārasya**), regulated use of organs in both material and spiritual activities (**yukta-ceṣṭasya karmasu**), regulated sleep and regulated waking (**yukta-svapna avabodhasya**), his yoga destroys all suffering (**yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā**).

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

naiva kiñcit karomīti yukto manyeta tattva-vit
paśyañ śṛṇvan sprśañ jighrann aśnan gacchan svapan śvasan

pralapan visṛjan gr̥hṇann unmiṣan nimiṣann api
indriyāṇīndriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan

The person engaged in karma-yoga (**yuktah**), having knowledge (**tattva-vit**), understanding that the senses alone are interacting with the sense objects (**indriyāṇi indriyārtheṣu vartanta iti dhārayan**) while he is seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating (**paśyañ śṛṇvan sprśañ jighrann aśnan**) [Note: These are the actions of the jñāna indriya.], going, sleeping, breathing (**gacchan svapan śvasan**), speaking, excreting (through genital or anus), receiving (**pralapan visṛjan gr̥hṇann**) [Note: These are the actions of the karma indriya, except for sleep and breathing, which are activities governed by the prāṇas. Opening and closing eyes are representative of the five secondary prāṇas.], opening and closing the eyes (**unmiṣan nimiṣann api**), thinks, “I am doing nothing at all. (**naiva kiñcit karomīti manyeta**)”

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Although these instructions are effective for jñānīs, still, their purport is favorable for devotional service.
- The concluding verse of Bhagavad-gītā explains about śaraṇāgati, or full surrender.
- Keeping this in mind, one should renounce fruitive activities and philosophical speculation and accept sense objects as the Lord's mercy.
- This is known as pure devotional service.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Therefore Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has said in the Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (2.255-256):

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

The vairāgya of that person who employs objects suitable for devotional development (**yathā arham upayuñjataḥ**), while remaining detached from them (**anāsaktasya viṣayān**), is said to be suitable for bhakti (**yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate**). The objects should be persistently related to Kṛṣṇa (**nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe**). (BRS)

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

prāpañcikatayā buddhyā
hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ |
mumukṣubhiḥ parityāgo
vairāgyam phalgu kathyate ||

Rejection (**parityāgaḥ**) of things related to the Lord (**hari-sambandhi-vastunaḥ**) by persons desiring liberation (**mumukṣubhiḥ**), who think that these things are simply material objects (**prāpañcikatayā buddhyā**), is called useless vairāgya (**phalgu vairāgyam kathyate**). (**BRS**)

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- The purport of these two verses is repeated in Śrī Upadeśāmṛta by the instruction to reject atyāhāra.
- The purport is that if one accepts sense objects in the spirit of enjoyment, that is atyāhāra.
- But if sense objects are accepted as the Lord's mercy and only as far as required and favorable for devotional service, then it is not atyāhāra.
- If sense objects are honestly accepted as the Lord's mercy, then yukta-vairāgya is easily attained.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Śrīman Mahāprabhu's order is to accept sense objects without attachment and chant Kṛṣṇa's name.
- Don't endeavor for palatable foodstuffs and fine clothes.
- Accept the sanctified bhāgavata-prasāda that is easily obtainable.
- This is the devotee's lifestyle.
- Whatever is required, take only that.
- Taking more or less will not yield auspicious results.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- If the practitioner takes or accumulates more than necessary, his spiritual life will be lost due to his being controlled by material mellows.
- If he does not properly accumulate, then the body, which is his means of worship, will not be protected.
- The purport of the instruction to tolerate the urges of the tongue and belly mentioned in the first verse is this: The materialist easily becomes greedy to enjoy the finest tastes, and being afflicted by hunger, he becomes extremely agitated and enthusiastic to eat the available foodstuffs.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- This is a material urge. Whenever this type of urge will arise, it should be controlled by the cultivation of devotional service.
- The injunction to reject atyāhāra mentioned in the second verse is a constitutional rule for the practitioner.
- The injunction of the first verse is conditional, and the injunction of the second is constitutional.
- There is one more thing to be said. All these instructions have two different types of applications-for the householders and for the renunciates.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- Householders can collect in order to maintain their family members.
- They should earn their livelihood and save according to religious principles.
- With this savings they should serve the Lord, the devotees, guests, family members, and themselves.
- If a householder collects more than his requirement, then this is an impediment in his devotional service and in his achieving the Lord's mercy.

Atyāhāra - Overeating or too much collecting

- So saving too much and earning too much are both atyāhāra-there is no doubt.
- A renunciate will not collect at all. If he is not satisfied by the alms he obtains everyday, then he is guilty of atyāhāra.
- After getting nice foodstuffs, if he eats more than he needs, then he is guilty of atyāhāra.
- Therefore the householders and renunciates should consider these facts carefully, and after giving up atyāhāra, when they engage in devotional service they will attain Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

What Srila Prabhupada
says about *Atyāhāra* -
Overeating or too much
collecting

Srila Prabhupada Uvaca

- Human life is meant for plain living and high thinking. Since all conditioned living beings are under the control of the Lord's third energy, this material world is designed so that one is obliged to work.
- The Supreme Personality of Godhead has three primary energies, or potencies.
- The first is called the antaraṅga-śakti, or the internal potency.
- The second is called the taṭasthā-śakti, or the marginal potency. The third is called bahiraṅga-śakti, or the external potency.

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- The living entities constitute the marginal potency, and they are situated between the internal and external Potencies.
- Being subordinate as eternal servants of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the jīvātmās, or atomic living entities, must remain under the control of either the internal or external potency.
- When they are under the control of the internal potency, they display their natural, constitutional activity—namely, constant engagement in the devotional service of the Lord.

Srila Prabhupada Uvaca

- This is stated in the Bhagavad-gītā (9.13):
**mahātmānas tu mām pārtha
daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ
bhajanty ananya-manaso
jñātvā bhūtādim avyayam**

The fortunate souls (**mahātmānah**), attaining deva nature (**daivīm prakṛtim āśritāḥ**), worship My human form with no distractions (**bhajanty ananya-manaso**), knowing that My human-like body is the cause of all things (**jñātvā bhūtādim**) and is indestructible, being fully spiritual (**avyayam**).

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- The word mahātmā refers to those who are broad-minded, not cripple-minded.
- Cripple-minded persons, always engaged in satisfying their senses, sometimes expand their activities in order to do good for others through some "ism" like nationalism, humanitarianism or altruism.
- They may reject personal sense gratification for the sense gratification of others, like the members of their family, community or society—either national or international.

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- Actually, all these activities are extended sense gratification, from personal to communal to social.
- These activities may all be very good from the material point of view, but they have no spiritual value.
- The basis of such activities is sense gratification, either personal or extended.
- Only when a person gratifies the senses of the Supreme Lord can he be called a mahātmā, or a broad-minded person.

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- In the above-quoted verse from Bhagavad-gītā, the words daivīm prakṛtim refer to the control of the internal potency, or pleasure potency, of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- This pleasure potency is manifested as Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, or Her expansion Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune.
- When the individual jīva souls are under the control of the internal energy, their only engagement is the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, or Viṣṇu.

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- This is the position of a mahātmā.
- If one is not a mahātmā, he is a durātmā, or a cripple-minded person.
- Such mentally crippled durātmās are put under the control of the Lord's external potency, mahāmāyā.
- Indeed, all living entities within this material world are under the control of mahāmāyā, whose business is to subject them to the influence of threefold miseries: ādhidaivika-kleśa (sufferings caused by the demigods, such as droughts, earthquakes and storms), ādhibhautika-kleśa (sufferings caused by other living entities, like insects or enemies), and ādhyātmika-kleśa (sufferings caused by one's own body and mind, such as physical and mental infirmities).

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- Daiva-bhūtātma-hetavaḥ: the conditioned souls, subjected to these three miseries by the control of the external energy, suffer various difficulties.
- The main problem confronting the conditioned souls is the repetition of birth, old age, disease and death.
- In the material world one has to work for the maintenance of the body and soul, but how can one perform such work in a way that is favorable for the execution of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?

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- Everyone requires possessions such as food grains, clothing, money and other things necessary for the maintenance of the body, but one should not collect more than necessary for his actual basic needs.
- If this natural principle is followed, there will be no difficulty in maintaining the body.
- According to nature's arrangement, living entities lower on the evolutionary scale do not eat or collect more than necessary.
- Consequently in the animal kingdom there is generally no economic problem or scarcity of necessities.

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- If a bag of rice is placed in a public place, birds will come to eat a few grains and go away.
- A human being, however, will take away the whole bag. He will eat all his stomach can hold and then try to keep the rest in storage.
- According to the scriptures, this collecting of more than necessary (atyāhāra) is prohibited.
- Now the entire world is suffering because of it.