

Six Faults that Destroy Bhakti

5. *Jana-saṅga* -
Association with worldly-
minded persons

Jana-saṅga - Association with worldly-minded persons

- The word jana means both male and female human beings.
- Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has written in the Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu: sadho saṅgaḥ svato vare, "a devotee should associate with devotees who are more advanced."
- Generally the practicing devotees are superior to karmis and jñānīs in all respects.

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- In the Bhagavad-gītā (7.28) it is said:

yeṣāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpaṁ
janānāṁ puṇya-karmaṇām
te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā
bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ

But those whose sins have been destroyed (**yeṣāṁ janānāṁ tv anta-gataṁ pāpaṁ**) by acts pleasing to the great souls (**puṇya-karmaṇām**), who are free of the ignorance arising from duality (**te dvandva-moha-nirmuktā**), worship Me with determination (**bhajante mām dṛḍha-vratāḥ**).

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- Therefore devotees are naturally pure. There is no possibility for them to commit sin.
- They are not less intelligent like the karmis and jñānīs, because they have taken shelter at the lotus feet of the omniscient Supreme Lord.
- Faith in the devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa is achieved as a result of many lifetimes of pious activities.
- So there is no doubt that the devotees' activities are pure.

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- From faith, the desire to associate with devotees naturally arises. By associating with devotees, everything is achieved.
- The glories of sādhu-saṅga is mentioned in the Ādi Purāṇa as follows:

**ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha
na me bhaktāś ca te janāḥ
mad-bhaktānām ca ye bhaktās
te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ**

Lord Kṛṣṇa told Arjuna, "Those who are My direct devotees (**ye me bhakta-janāḥ pārtha**) are actually not My devotees (**na me bhaktāś ca te janāḥ**), but those who are the devotees of My servant (**mad-bhaktānām ca ye bhaktāḥ**) are factually My devotees (**te me bhakta-tamā matāḥ**)."

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- Regarding the need to associate with devotees, it is said:

**darśana sparśanālāpa
sahavāsādibhiḥ kṣaṇāt
bhaktāḥ punanti kṛṣṇasya
sākṣād api ca pukkaśam**

"Even an outcaste (**pukkaśam api**) becomes completely pure (**punanti**) by seeing, touching, conversing with (**darśana sparśana ālāpa**), or living with (**sahavāsādibhiḥ**) Kṛṣṇa's devotee (**kṛṣṇasya bhaktāḥ sākṣād**) for even a moment (**kṣaṇāt**)."

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- The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.5.32) states:

**naiṣām matis tāvad urukramāṅghrim
spr̥śaty anarthāpagamo yad-arthah
mahīyasām pāda-rajo-'bhiṣekam
niṣkiñcanānām na vṛṇīta yāvat**

As long as their intelligence (**yāvat matic**) does not accept (**na vṛṇīta**) the dust from the feet (**pāda-rajo-abhiṣekam**) of devotees (**mahīyasām**) having no material desires (**niṣkiñcanānām**), the intelligence of these people (**eṣām matic**) will not realize the lotus feet of the Lord (**spr̥śaty tāvad urukrama aṅghrim**), whose secondary goal (**yad-arthah**) is destruction of saṁsāra (**anartha apagamah**).

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- The scriptures often state that without the association of the Lord's devotees, Bhaktidevi does not manifest in the heart.
- It is most necessary for sādhakas to associate with devotees.
- Therefore, in this context, the word jana-saṅga is understood to mean persons who are devoid of devotion.
- That is why Śrīla Rūpa Prabhu has included the instruction to give up worldly association as one of the limbs of devotional service.

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- In the Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.43) it is said:
saṅga tyāgo vidureṇa bhagavad vimukhair janaiḥ

"One who desires to attain devotion to Kṛṣṇa should carefully give up the association of worldly people."

- That means the devotees should not engage in the activities mentioned in the fourth verse of the Upadeśāmṛta with worldly people.
- Activities like talking with worldly people in the course of one's work is not considered association.
- When the same activities are done with affection for someone, then that is considered association with that person.

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- Every practicing devotee should know the various kinds of worldly people.
- Therefore we are hereby most unwillingly enumerating these people.
- These worldly people are of seven kinds: (1) Māyāvādīs and atheists, (2) sense enjoyers, (3) those who fond of the sense enjoyers, (4) women, (5) womanizers, (6) the hypocritically devout, and (7) the ill-behaved foolish outcastes.

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- The Māyāvādīs do not accept the eternal name, form, qualities, and pastimes of the Supreme Lord.
- They consider the living entity as a product of māyā; therefore in their opinion the living entity has no eternal existence.
- They do not consider devotional service eternal; rather, they consider it a temporary method to cultivate knowledge.
- All the Māyāvādī conclusions are opposed to the principles of devotional service.

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- Therefore by associating with Māyāvādīs, one's devotion gradually disappears.
- Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara gave the following instruction in Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya 2.94-95):

**buddhi bhraṣṭa haila tomāra gopālera saṅge
māyāvāda śunibāre upajila raṅge
vaiṣṇava hañā yebā śārīraka-bhāṣya śune
sevyā-sevaka-bhāva chāḍi' āpanāre 'īśvara' mane**

"You have lost your intelligence in the association of Gopāla, and therefore you are eager to hear the Māyāvāda philosophy. When a Vaiṣṇava listens to the Śārīraka-bhāṣya, the Māyāvāda commentary upon the Vedānta-sūtras, he gives up the Kṛṣṇa conscious attitude that the Lord is the master and the living entity is His servant. Instead, he considers himself the Supreme Lord."

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- Those who do not accept the Supreme Lord, who is glorified by the Vedas, are called nāstikas, or atheists.
- Their minds have been polluted by false arguments; therefore one's devotion is lost in their association.
- Association with sense enjoyers is harmful.
- Those who are always busy associating with sense enjoyment are filled with blasphemy, envy, and violence.
- Quarrel, argument, and hankering for sense enjoyment is their life.

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- The more they enjoy, the more their thirst for sense enjoyment increases. The sense enjoyers do not get time to speak or hear topics of Kṛṣṇa.
- Whether they engage in pious activities or sinful activities, the sense enjoyers always remain far from knowledge of the self.
- Therefore in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya 6.278) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said:

**viṣayāra anna khāile malina haya mana
malina mana haile nahe kṛṣṇera smaraṇa**

"When one eats food offered by a materialistic man, one's mind becomes contaminated, and when the mind is contaminated, one is unable to think of Kṛṣṇa properly."

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- Those persons who externally engage in sensual activities and accept sense objects just to maintain body and soul together but internally engage in their constitutional position as servants of Kṛṣṇa are not counted amongst the sense enjoyers, who are attached the fruits of their activities.
- The sense enjoyers and persons fond of sense enjoyers are both worldly-minded.
- Persons who are fond of sense enjoyers are themselves also sense enjoyers, because they always think of sense enjoyment within their hearts.

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- There are some people who are not themselves sense enjoyers, but they take pleasure in associating with sense enjoyers.
- Their association should also be renounced, because they will soon become sense enjoyers and bad association themselves.
- There are two types of sense enjoyers—those who are extremely attached to sense enjoyment and devotees who are attached to sense enjoyment.
- Associating with those who are extremely attached should be totally rejected.

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- The devotees who are attached to sense enjoyment are also of two types—those who have included the Lord as a part of their sense enjoyment and those who have kept the Lord in the center of their sense enjoyment.
- Association with the latter type is preferable to association with the former.
- Although those who engage in sense enjoyment according to religious codes are better than the sinful sense enjoyers, still the practicing devotee should not associate with them until they become devotees.

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- Simply by wearing the dress of a renunciate one does not become a devotee free from sense gratification, because renunciates often collect and save objects of sense enjoyment.
- On the other hand, many persons resemble sense enjoyers but utilize everything in the worship of Lord Hari in the mood of detachment.
- Considering all this, the practicing devotee should give up the association of sense enjoyers and those fond of them and engage in devotional service in a secluded place or, if he is fortunate, in the association of genuine devotees.

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- Do not associate with women.
- On the other hand, when a woman is engaged in sādhana-bhakti, she should not associate with men.
- Associating with the opposite sex is very inauspicious for the advancing devotee.
- There are two types of men and women.
- When a man and woman are married according to religious principles, there is no sin in their touching and talking with each other; rather, this touching and talking is beneficial because of the scriptural sanction.

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- There is, however, no provision for illusory activities other than the execution of reciprocal duties.
- If they are illusioned by each other and they engage in activities other than prescribed duties, then that is called strī-saṅga and puruṣa-saṅga, or association with the opposite sex.
- For those who are engaged in worshiping Kṛṣṇa, such association yields inauspicious results.
- If either one is guilty of such association, then they become an obstacle for the other party.

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- If the wife is helpful in the discharge of devotional service, then the fault of strī-saṅga does not arise.
- But if the wife is an impediment in the discharge of devotional service, then one should carefully give up her association.
- We should consider the behavior of the great Vaiṣṇava ācārya, Śrīmad Rāmānujācārya.
- Śrīmad Rāmānujācārya sent his wife to her parent's home after she offended his guru's wife.
- He then took sannyāsa, in this connection.

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- When there is no marital relationship and one converses with a woman with evil intentions, then this is strī-saṅga.
- That is sinful and detrimental to devotional service.
- Considering these points, the practicing devotee should very carefully give up the association of women and persons fond of women.

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- As stated in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.31.35):

**na tathāsyā bhaven mohō
bandhaś cānya-prasaṅgataḥ
yoṣit-saṅgād yathā puṁso
yathā tat-saṅgi-saṅgataḥ**

Man's bondage and bewilderment (**asya mohah ca bandha**) is not due to (**na tathā bhavet**) attachment to objects (**anya-prasaṅgataḥ**) as much as (**yathā**) it is due to his association with woman (**yoṣit-saṅgād**) and to his association with men who associate with women (**yathā tat-saṅgi-saṅgataḥ puṁsah**).

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- For a householder devotee, touching and speaking to his wife in the above mentioned manner is not detrimental to devotional service; but for a renunciate there cannot be any type of talking or touching a woman, otherwise his practice of devotional service will be completely spoiled.
- Association with such a deviated person should be totally rejected.

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- One should give up the association of dharma-dhvajīs, the hypocritically devout, with special care.
- Those who accept the external signs of dharma but do not actually follow dharma are called dharma-dhvajīs.
- There are two types of dharma-dhvajīs—the hypocrites and the fools, or the cheaters and the cheated.
- Such hypocrisy in jñāna-kaṇḍa and karma-kaṇḍa is also condemned.

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- In devotional service this hypocrisy ruins everything.
- Better associate with sense enjoyers, for in this whole world there is no worse association than the dharmadhvajī.
- The deceitful dharmadhvajīs accept the signs of dharma with a desire to cheat the world, and to fulfill their crooked desires they cheat the foolish by helping them in their rascaldom.
- Some of them become gurus and others become disciples, and by trickery they accumulate wealth, women, false-prestige, and material assets.

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- If one gives up the association of crooked hypocrites, then he can honestly engage in devotional service.
- Honest worship is the only way to attain Kṛṣṇa's mercy.
- As stated in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (1.3.38):

**sa veda dhātuḥ padavīm parasya
duranta-vīryasya rathāṅga-pāṇeh
yo 'māyayā santatayānuvṛtṭyā
bhajeta tat-pāda-saroja-gandham**

"Only those who render unreserved, uninterrupted, favorable service unto the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who carries the wheel of the chariot in His hand, can know the creator of the universe in His full glory, power and transcendence."

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- Again in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (2.7.42) Lord Brahmā tells Nārada:

**yeṣāṃ sa eṣa bhagavān dayayed anantaḥ
sarvātmanāśrita-pado yadi nirvyalīkam
te dustarām atitaranti ca deva-māyām
naiṣāṃ mamāham iti dhīḥ śva-śṛgāla-bhakṣye**

Those to whom (**sah yeṣāṃ**) the infinite Lord shows mercy (**dayayed bhagavān anantaḥ**) -- when they attain devotees who are surrendered completely to the lotus feet of the Lord (**yadi sarvātmanā āśrita-pado**) and who have no material desires (**nirvyalīkam**) – cross (**atitaranti**) the insurmountable ocean of māyā (**dustarām deva-māyām**) and understand the Lord (**ca**). They (**eṣāṃ**) are devoid of the intelligence (**na dhīḥ**) which thinks in terms of “my body” and the “bodies of my family members” (**mama aham iti**) which are worthy food for dogs and jackals (**śva-śṛgāla-bhakṣye**).

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- Externally exhibiting the symptoms of a Vaiṣṇava while internally remaining a Māyāvādī is actually pseudo-Vaiṣṇavism, or hypocrisy.
- In Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya 13.93, 109-110) there is a description of Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa, who was externally a great Vaiṣṇava, devoted to Lord Rāmacandra:

**aṣṭa-prahara rāma-nāma japena rātri-dine
sarva tyaji' calilā jagannātha-daraśane**

Rāmadāsa had renounced everything and was going to see Lord Jagannātha. While traveling, he chanted the holy name of Lord Rāma twenty-four hours a day.

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rāmadāsa yadi prathama prabhure mililā
mahāprabhu adhika tānre kṛpā nā karilā

When Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa met Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Lord did not show him any special mercy, although this was their first meeting.

antare mumukṣu teṅho, vidyā-garvavān
sarva-citta-jñātā prabhu—sarvajña bhagavān

Within his heart, Rāmadāsa Viśvāsa was an impersonalist who desired to merge into the existence of the Lord, and he was very proud of his learning. Since Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the omniscient Supreme Personality of Godhead, He can understand the heart of everyone, and thus He knew all these things.

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- Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, in his great humility, has stated:

kāma, krodha chaya jane
lañā phire nānā sthāne
viṣaya bhuñjāya nānā mate.
haiyā māyāra dāsa
kari nānā abhilāṣa
tomāra smaraṇa gela dūre
artha-lābha-ei āśe
kapaṭa-vaiṣṇava-veṣe
bhramiyā bulaye ghare ghare.

"The six enemies, beginning with lust and anger, are taking me here and there to enjoy various forms of sense gratification. Being a servant of Māyā, I have unlimited desires and have therefore forgotten You. Hoping to gain wealth, I wander from house to house in the dress of a pseudo-Vaiṣṇava."

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- Unless one gives up the association of this type of dharma-dvājī, one cannot purely engage in devotional service.
- Most of the people in the world are of this type.
- Therefore until one gets the opportunity to associate with a pure devotee, he should pass his life engaged in devotional service in a solitary place.
- The worship of Kṛṣṇa is not enhanced by associating with ill-behaved, foolish outcasts.

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- They are naturally attached to eating meat and drinking wine, and they are not situated in varṇāśrama-dharma. Their character is always unregulated.
- By associating with ill-behaved persons, the mind becomes polluted.
- But if those persons become faithful in devotional service by associating with a Vaiṣṇava and they gradually get a taste for worshiping Kṛṣṇa with a pure heart, then their association is auspicious.
- Even if they commit abominable actions for some time due to their former nature, still they are sadhus.

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- In Bhagavad-gītā (9.30-31) it is said:

**api cet su-durācāro
bhajate mām ananya-bhāḅ
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḅ
samyag vyavasito hi saḅ**

Even if (**api cet**) the most sinful person (**su-durācāro**) worships Me (**bhajate mām**) with no other desire than to please Me (**ananya-bhāḅ**), I consider that person to be My devotee (**sādhur eva sa mantavyaḅ**), as he has fixed himself completely in Me (**samyag vyavasito hi saḅ**).

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kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā
śaśvac-chāntim nigacchati
kaunteya pratijānīhi
na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati

Very quickly he becomes a righteous person (**kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā**), and becomes completely devoid of contamination (**śaśvat-śāntim nigacchati**). O son of Kuntī (**kaunteya**), you declare (**pratijānīhi**) that My devotee never perishes (**na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati**).

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- The purport is this: If the outcastes attain faith in unalloyed devotional service by some good fortune, then it can be said that they have attained the genuine path.
- There is no doubt that in a short time they too will become pure and peaceful by following the footsteps of Haridāsa Thākura.
- Ill-behavior, due to one's nature, necessarily remains for some time.
- Even then, such association cannot be called bad.

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- In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.20.27-29) the symptoms of such persons are described as follows:

jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu
nirviṇṇaḥ sarva-karmasu
veda duḥkhātmakān kāmān
parityāge 'py anīśvaraḥ

tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ
śraddhālur dṛḍha-niścayaḥ
juṣamāṇaś ca tān kāmān
duḥkhodarkāmś ca garhayan

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Having awakened faith in the narrations of My glories (**jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu**), being disgusted with all prescribed activities (varṇāśrama) (**nirviṇṇaḥ sarva-karmasu**), knowing that all sense gratification leads to misery (**veda duḥkhātmakaṁ kāmān**), but still being unable to renounce all sense enjoyment (**parityāge apy anīśvaraḥ**), My devotee should remain happy (**tato prītaḥ**) and worship Me (**mām bhajeta**) with great faith and conviction (**śraddhānur dr̥ṭha-niścayaḥ**). Even though he is sometimes engaged in sense enjoyment (**juṣamāṇaś ca tān kāmān**), My devotee knows that all sense gratification leads to a miserable result (**duḥkha udarkāmś**), and he sincerely repents such activities (**ca garhayan**).
(SB 11.20.27-28)

Classic Symptoms of Vaidhi Sadhaka

- **jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu** – Has awakened faith in the process of bhakti
- **nirviṇṇaḥ sarva-karmasu** – Disgusted with all prescribed duties
- **veda duḥkhātmakam kāmān** – Understands that sense gratification leads to misery
- **parityāge 'py anīśvaraḥ** – Still unable to give up sense gratification
- **juṣamāṇaś ca tān kāmān duḥkhodarkāmś ca garhayan** – Unable to give up sense gratification, he sincerely repents for engaging in such acts

Kṛṣṇa's instructions to such Sadhakas

- **tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ śraddhālur dr̥ṭha-niścayaḥ** - Remain happy and worship Me with great faith and conviction

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proktena bhakti-yogena
bhajato māsaḥ muneh
kāma hṛdayyā naśyanti
sarve mayi hṛdi sthite

When an intelligent person (**muneh**) engages constantly in worshiping Me (**bhajato mām asakṛt**) through loving devotional service as described by Me (**proktena bhakti-yogena**), his heart becomes firmly situated in Me (**mayi hṛdi sthite**). Thus all material desires within the heart are destroyed (**sarve kāma hṛdayyā naśyanti**)."

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- The conclusion is that the association of pious and sinful persons who are bereft of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is undesirable.
- On the other hand, the association of persons who are sinful, yet devoted to the Lord, is desirable.

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- The Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.51) quotes the following verse spoken by Mahārṣi Kātyāyana in the Kātyāyana-saṁhitā:

**varam huta-vaha-jvālā-
pañjarāntar-vyavasthitih
na śauri-cintā-vimukha-
jana-saṁvāsa-vaiśasam**

It is preferable (**varam**) to remain within a cage (**pañjarāntar vyavasthitih**) of blazing fire (**huta vaha jvālā**) than to have the misfortune (**vaiśasam**) of living in association with persons (**jana saṁvāsa**) who are opposed to thinking of the Lord (**śauri cintā vimukha**).

- While practicing devotional service one should carefully understand this subject and act accordingly.