

Six Qualities that Enhance Bhakti

11. Sangha Tyaga - Giving up the association of nondevotees



Everyone in the world is under the control of these two kinds of prejudices.

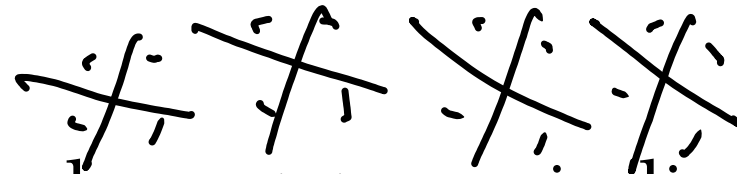
When a living entity is not bound by māyā, then by nature he is a servant of Kṛṣṇa.

Being bound by māyā, a living entity cannot give up ancient and modern wicked prejudices.

At that time ancient wicked prejudices become his second nature.

Only sādhu-saṅga can reform the attachment to prejudices.

Sādhu-saṅga is the only remedy for this disease.



Unless one reforms his attachment to prejudices, one cannot attain perfection in devotional service by any means.

Due to association with materialistic people, the living entity is bound in the cycle of birth and death.

Even if one unknowingly associates with a materialist, the result must come.

And if one unknowingly associates with a real sadhu, he attains freedom from material association.

Again in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.12.1-2) it says:

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

na rodhayati mām yogo na sāṅkhyam dharma eva ca
na svādhyāyas tapas tyāgo neṣṭā-pūrtam na dakṣiṇā

vratāni yajñas chandāmsi tīrthāni niyamā yamāḥ
yathāvarundhe sat-saṅgaḥ sarva-saṅgāpaho hi mām

The Supreme Lord said: O Uddhava! Only by associating with my pure devotees (sat-saṅgaḥ) one can destroy material attachment (sarva-saṅgāpaho) and attain me (yathā mām avarundhe). One cannot attain me (na mām rodhayati) by aṣṭāṅga-yoga (yogo), distinction of ātmā from body (na sāṅkhyam), practice of nonviolence (dharma eva ca), study of the Vedas (na svādhyāyah), austerity, sannyasa (tapas tyāgo), sacrifices, charitable projects, donations (neṣṭā-pūrtam na dakṣiṇā), vows, worship of devatās, secret mantras (vratāni yajñas chandāmsi), holy places, or observing prohibitions and rules (tīrthāni niyamā yamāḥ).

Association with prejudices is very dangerous.

By affectionately associating with pure devotees of the Lord, one's association with prejudices, in the form of karma and jñāna, is destroyed.

Due to this association with prejudices a living entity's propensity for ignorance and passion becomes stronger.

Whatever propensities for goodness, passion, and ignorance are seen in people's eating, sleeping, and sensual activities are all due to association with prejudices. → ancient (or) modern.

Karmīs and jñānīs disrespect Vaiṣṇavas only due to this attachment for prejudices.

Until the attachment to prejudices is destroyed, the ten offenses in chanting will not be uprooted.

Offenses at the feet of sadhus is due to being proud of one's karma and jñāna.

The offense in chanting in the form of blaspheming devotees enters the heart of the nondevotee and takes up residence there.

Worldly attachment is contrary to acceptance of Kṛṣṇa's undisputed supremacy, and it therefore does not allow the unfortunate living entity to fully surrender to the Lord.

Thus disobeying the spiritual master, blaspheming the Vedic literatures, interpreting the holy name, considering the chanting of the holy names as equal to the pious activities offered in the Vedas, committing sinful activities while pretending to chant the holy name, aversion due to conceptions of I and mine, selling the holy names to unfit persons-all these offenses against the holy names continue.

In such a condition, how can one be benefitted?

Therefore it is said:

asadbhiḥ saha saṅgas tu
na kartavyaḥ kadācana
yasmāt sarvārtha hāniḥ syād
adhaḥ pātaś ca jāyate

"One should never associate (na saha saṅgas tu kartavyaḥ kadācana) with materialistic persons (asadbhiḥ), for by doing so (yasmāt) all one's assets are lost (sarvārtha hāniḥ syād) and he falls from his position (adhaḥ pātaś ca jāyate)."

~~It has been seen that many fortunate souls have given up attachment for prejudices by the association of pure Vaiṣṇavaś.~~

From the scriptures it is well known that by the association of Śrī Nārada Muni the hunter (Mṛgāri) and Ratnākara (Vālmīki) attained auspiciousness.

The foremost instruction of Śrī Rāmānujācārya is this: "If you cannot purify yourself by any endeavor whatsoever, then just go sit with the Vaiṣṇavas and you will achieve all auspiciousness."

By observing the pure characteristics of a devotee, in a very short time a person's mind is changed, his attachment for sense enjoyment decreases, and the seedling of bhakti sprouts in the heart.

One even gradually develops a taste for the Vaiṣṇavas' food and behavior.

We have seen how by associating with Vaiṣṇavas, people have given up many anarthas-taste for associating with women, thirst for wealth, desire for sense enjoyment and liberation, inclination for karma and jñāna, eating meat and fish, drinking wine, smoking tobacco, and the desire to chew pan.

By observing a Vaiṣṇava's quality of not uselessly wasting time, many people have easily given up anarthas such as laziness, oversleeping, useless talk, urge of speech, etc.

We have also seen that by associating with Vaiṣṇavas for some time someone's cheating propensity and desire for fame have been destroyed.

We have seen with our own eyes that by associating with Vaiṣṇavas with a little affection all other association, such as attachment for prejudices, has been vanquished.

Those who are attached to winning fights, those who are expert at attaining dominion, those who are eager to accumulate great wealth-
all such types of people have attained devotional service by being purified in the association of Vaiṣṇavas.

Even the hearts of persons who think, "I will defeat the world by my arguments and attain supremacy," have been pacified.

Without the association of Vaiṣṇavas there is no alternative for rectifying the attachment for prejudices.

One should carefully give up attachment for material assets.

People in general have spontaneous attachment for house, household paraphernalia, clothes, ornaments, wealth, wife and children's health, their own health, eatables, trees, and animals.

Some people are so addicted to smoking, chewing pan, eating fish and meat, and drinking alcohol that their practice of spiritual life is obstructed.

Many people do not respect the Lord's remnants out of great attachment to eating things like fish.

ਚੇਰਿੰਗ ਕੁਲਾਸਾ?? ਕੋਸ਼ਯੋ

Because of the desire to constantly smoke, many people's study of devotional scriptures, relish for hearing and chanting, and remaining long in temples is obstructed.

Attachment for these things is averse to the constant practice of devotional service.

If one does not carefully give up these things then he cannot get happiness from his devotional service.

Attachment for these things is easily destroyed by the association of devotees.

Still, one should try to destroy these petty attachments by fully engaging in devotional service.

By observing vows approved in devotional service, those attachments are vanquished.

By properly observing hari-vāsara, Ekādaśī, and appearance days of the Lord, those attachments are vanquished.

The rules of such vows are the provisions for diminishing one's attachments.

There are prescriptions for practicing devotional service while giving up all types of enjoyment on those days.

There are two types of eatables-those which sustain one's life and those which gratify the senses.

Eating grains and drinking are life sustaining.

Fish, meat, pan, intoxicants, and smoking are all for gratifying the senses.

On days of vows, unless one totally gives up sense gratifying items, it is not a vow.

As far as possible, life sustaining items should also be given up.

According to the prescribed needs of one's bodily condition one must try as far as possible to reduce the acceptance of life sustaining eatables.

There is no prescription for acceptance of sense gratifying items, the only prescription is to reject them.

One of the limbs of a vrata is to diminish the devotee's propensity for enjoyment.

If one thinks, "Today somehow or other I will renounce, but tomorrow I will enjoy profusely," then the purpose of the vow will not be successful.

The reason is that vows have been prescribed to give up the association of such items by gradual practice.

Vows are usually for three days.

First by practicing vows for three days, then by practicing for one month, then by practicing for four months (Cāturmāsya)-in this way gradually one should completely uproot the attachment for sense gratifying items and leave them forever.

For those who cannot remember the statements of Bhagavad-gītā:
ksipram bhavati dharmātmā "He quickly becomes righteous," in
regard to the observance of vows, their renunciation is temporary like
the bathing of an elephant.

For those who desire to attain pure devotional service, the association
of nondevotees and women is meant to be given up.

It is extremely necessary for them to associate with sadhus in order to
give up the attachment for prejudices.

They must follow all vows meant for Vaiṣṇavas in order to give up the attachment for material objects. One should not be negligent in these practices.

Endeavor

① Give up

② Give up

association of non-devotees
association with opposite sex

One should follow these instructions with great care and respect.

③ Give up prejudices & the association of vaiṣṇavās

④ Give up attachment to material objects & gratification by following devotional practices.

If one does not follow carefully, then cheating in the form of duplicity renders the whole endeavor useless.

For those who do not have respect in this regard, attaining devotion to Śrī Hari becomes very rare, even after hearing for many births.

What is association and giving up association?

Many people have doubts about this.

Doubts may be there, because if just by coming close to a materialist or material object is consider associating with them, then there is no way to give up this association.

As long as the material body is there, how can one give up the proximity of these things?

How can a gr̥hastha Vaiṣṇava give up his family members?

One cannot give up the association of deceitful persons, even if they
are renunciates.

One will have to come across materialists in one's life, whether one is
a gr̥hastha or a renunciate.

Therefore the limit for giving up the association of materialists is
prescribed in Śrī Upadeśāmṛta as follows:

dadāti pratigrhṇāti
guhyam ākhyāti pṛcchati
bhunkte bhojayate caiva
ṣaḍ-vidham prīti-lakṣaṇam

"Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts (dadāti pratigrhṇāti), revealing one's mind in confidence (guhyam ākhyāti), inquiring confidentially (pṛcchati), accepting prasādam and offering prasādam (bhunkte bhojayate caiva) are ~~the six symptoms of love~~ shared by one devotee and another (ṣaḍ-vidham prīti-lakṣaṇam)."

O sādhakas! One must accept proximity with both bad and good
people as one passes his life.

This equally applies to householders and renunciates.

Proximity must be there, nevertheless one should not engage in bad
association.

Giving in charity, accepting charity, revealing one's mind, hearing
one's mind, accepting foods, and giving foods-if done with love,
these are called saṅga, or association.

Giving some foodstuffs to a hungry person and accepting some charity from a pious man is done out of duty, not out of love.

Even if they are materialists, this type of engagement is not considered association.

But if they are pure devotees, then such activities are performed out of love.

When acts are performed out of love, then it is association.

Therefore giving charity to pure Vaiṣṇavas and accepting items or wealth from them becomes sat-saṅga.

Giving charity to a materialist or accepting charity from one, if done out of love, becomes asat-saṅga.

When a materialist approaches you, whatever is required to be done should be done only out of duty.

One should not speak confidentially with a materialist.

Generally there is some love involved in confidential speaking,
therefore it is association.

While meeting a materialistic friend, one should speak only what is
extremely necessary.

At that time it is better not to exhibit heartfelt love.

But if that friend is a proper Vaisṇava, then one should accept his
association by speaking to him with love.

This type of behavior with relatives and friends creates no hostility.

There is no association in ordinary talk.

One should behave with ordinary people as one externally behaves with a stranger while buying something in the market.

The same dealings with a pure devotee of the Lord should be done out of love.

If one is obliged to feed hungry people, needy people, and teachers,
he should do so as a host dutifully cares for his guest, there is no
need to exhibit love.

Care for them, but not out of love.

↳ Karunya

One should feed pure Vaisnavas with love, and when required accept
the remnants given by them with love.

If one can behave in this way while giving in charity, accepting charity, speaking confidentially, hearing confidentially, feeding, and accepting food with one's wife, children, servants, maidservants, strangers, and whoever else one meets, there will be no unholy association, only good association.

There is no hope of achieving devotion to Kṛṣṇa until one gives up unholy association in this way.

A renunciate Vaisnava should accept whatever alms he receives by mādhukarī, or begging, at the house of a honest householder with the above mentioned consideration.

He should always remember the difference between gross begging and mādhuḱarī.

A gr̥hastha Vaiṣṇava should accept prasāda-grains and drinks-in the house of another gr̥hastha who has pure character.

One should always be cautious about taking prasāda in the house of a nondevotee and one with bad character.

There is no need to speak further about this.

Due to their pious activities) those who have developed faith in devotional service have a little intelligence by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa.

Due to that intelligence they can easily understand the essence of the ācāryas' instructions.

Therefore only a few words are needed to instruct them.

Those who have no pious credits have no faith.

Even if they are given volumes of instruction, they will not understand a thing.

Therefore Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has given only a few words of instruction in Śrī Upadeśāmṛta.