

Bhaktyaloka

By

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Six Qualities that Enhance Bhakti

12. Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in
the footsteps of the previous
ācāryas

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

In the last half of the verse quoted by Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, it says:

viṣṇur ārādhyate panthā nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam

"One should know that without following the process of varṇāśrama-dharma, a materialist has no alternative to pass his life favorably for the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu."

This is the only way to achieve the life of a devotee.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

Human beings are divided according to their nature into the following divisions: brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, saṅkara, and antyaja.

(4 varṇās) (varṇa-saṅkaraś) (antyajās)

~~Even though the system of varṇāśrama is not clearly present in some countries, still it exists in a seedling form.~~

~~According to one's nature, he develops his occupation and, accordingly, his means of livelihood.~~

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

By accepting the livelihood and occupation of others, one meets with misfortune.

What to speak of misfortune, it especially obstructs one's devotional service.

Birth is not the only criteria; the only criteria is one's nature.

In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.11.35) it is stated:

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

yasya yal lakṣaṇam proktaṁ
pūṁso varṇābhivyañjakam
yad anyatrāpi dr̥śyeta
tat tenaiva vinirdiśet

If anyone shows the symptoms (yasya yal lakṣaṇam pūṁsah) of being a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra (yat varṇa-abhivyañjakam), as described above (proktaṁ), even if he is born in a different class (yad anyatrāpi dr̥śyeta), he should be designated according to those symptoms (tat tenaiva vinirdiśet).

In his commentary, Śrīdhara Swami has written:

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

śamādibhir eva brāhmaṇādi vyavahāro
mukhyaḥ na jāti mātrād ity āha-yasyeti
yad yadi anyatra varṇāntare 'pi dṛśyeta
tad varṇāntaram tenaiva lakṣaṇa nimittenaiva
varṇena vinirdiśet na tu jāti nimittenety arthaḥ

"The brāhmaṇas' main characteristics are qualities such as
peacefulness, not birth. If these main characteristics are seen in
persons other than those born as brāhmaṇas, then such persons
should be considered brāhmaṇas. They should not be considered
according to their caste by birth."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

This kind of eternal varṇāśrama-dharma is always to be followed.

It is often useful for devotional service.

Members of the four varṇas and the lower castes should be eager to progress their sāttvic nature.

If an outcaste becomes fortunate due to his pious deeds, then he should progress his cultivation of goodness while following the conduct of a sūdra.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

Everyone should give prominence to devotional service and progress the cultivation of goodness to the platform of nirguna, transcendence, by the mercy of the devotees.

These are the stages of sanātana-dharma.

With devotion, the member of any varṇa is considered the best of the brāhmaṇas; without devotion, the life of a brāhmaṇa fixed in goodness is useless.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

For example, let us consider the statement: Some mahatma has said
(Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura from Prema-bhakti-candrikā):

mahājanera yei patha, tā 'te ha 'ba anurata, pūrvāpara kariyā vicāra

"I will be attached to the path chalked out by the previous and later
mahājanas."

The ṛṣis and mahatmas who have taught conduct before the
appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are counted among the
previous mahājanas.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

The conduct seen in the mahājanas after the appearance of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the conduct of later mahājanas.

The conduct of the later mahājanas is superior and should be adopted.

The conduct of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His followers is meant to teach people, so that conduct should be followed in all respects.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

What is proper occupation?

①

Learn from the followers of CM.

To know this, one should see the behavior of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's followers.

As far as possible I will try to briefly compile them in this essay.

First I will write about the behavior and occupation of the grhastha, as found in the character of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His devotees.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

As a support for his devotional service, a householder should find a suitable wife.

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② Find a suitable wife

In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi 15.26-27) the Lord says:

gṛhastha ha-ilāma, ebe cāhi gṛha-dharma
gṛhiṇī vinā gṛha-dharma nā haya śobhana

"Since I am remaining at home it is My duty to act as a gṛhastha.
Without a wife, there is no meaning to householder life."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

While maintaining religious family life with one's wife, sons and daughters are born in the form of Kṛṣṇa's servants and maidservants; to nourish them is called maintaining the family.

↓
③ Learn to see family members as servants of ②

In these activities there is a need for piously accumulating wealth.

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④ Accumulate wealth through pious means.

In this regard Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said in the Caitanya-bhāgavata (CB Antya-khaṇḍa 5.41) and Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 15.96):

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

prabhu bale,-parivāra aneka tomāra
nirvāha kemate tabe haibe sabāra?
'gṛhastha' hayena inho, cāhiye sañcaya
sañcaya nā kaile kuṭumba-bharaṇa nāhi haya

The Lord said: "There are so many members in your family. How will you maintain everyone? Being a householder, one needs to save some money. Because he is not doing so, it is very difficult for him to maintain his family."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

One must be educated at a proper age.

⑤ Education @ an appropriate age is important
→ but don't study atheistic literatures.

But he should not study atheistic literatures.

In the Caitanya-bhāgavata (CB Ādi-khaṇḍa 12.49 and Madhya 9.241-242) the Lord says:

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

paḍe kene loka-kṛṣṇa bhakti jānibāre
se yadi nahila, tabe vidyāya ki kare?
viṣaya-madāndha saba kichui nā jāne
vidyā-made, dhana-made vaiṣṇava nā cine
bhāgavata paḍiyāo kā 'ro buddhi nāśa

"Why do people study? Education is only for understanding
devotional service of Lord Kṛṣṇa. If you miss this point, then what is
the use of your education? Everyone is blinded by pride and sense
gratification. Being proud of their education and wealth, they fail to
recognize a Vaiṣṇava. If one studies Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam improperly
his intelligence is polluted."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

Serving guests is the principle duty of a gṛhastha-this is the Lord's instruction.

In the Caitanya-bhāgavata (CB Ādi-khaṇḍa 14.21, 26) it is stated:

gṛhasthere mahāprabhu śikhāyena dharmā
atithira sevā-gṛhasthera mūla-karma
akaitave citta-sukhe yā 'ra yena śakti
tāhā karilei bali atithite bhakti

⑥ Atithi seva is
very critical for
householders.

"In this way the Lord satisfied all His guests and taught the world how to behave as a perfect householder. The foremost duty of a householder is to serve his guests. If a householder happily serves his guests without duplicity and according to his ability he is considered hospitable."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

A gr̥hastha should act with simplicity in his dealings with people; he should not allow any kind of cheating or duplicity in his heart.

⑦ Avoid duplicity in occupational & ordinary dealings.

In the Caitanya-bhāgavata (CB Ādi-khaṇḍa 14.142) the Lord says:

ataeva gr̥he tumi kṛṣṇa bhaja giyā
kuṭināṭī parihari' ekānta haiyā

"Therefore go back to your home and worship Lord Kṛṣṇa with full attention, giving up all duplicity."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

It is the principle duty of a gṛhastha to serve senior persons.

⑧ senior members

In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi 15.21) the Lord says:

gṛhastha ha-iyā kariba pitā-mātāra sevana
ihāte-i tuṣṭa habena lakṣmī-nārāyaṇa

"Later I shall become a householder and thus serve My parents, for
this action will very much satisfy Lord Nārāyaṇa and His wife, the
goddess of fortune."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

⑨ Cultivate internal renunciation.

A householder should take the principles of renunciation to heart; but he should not simply dress as a renunciate.

As stated by the Lord in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 16.237-239):

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

sthira hañā ghare yāo, nā hao vātula
krame krame pāya loka bhava-sindhu-kūla
markaṭa-vairāgya nā kara loka dekhāñā
yathā-yogyā viṣaya bhuñja' anāsakta hañā
antare niṣṭhā kara, bāhye loka-vyavahāra
acirāt kṛṣṇa tomāya karibe uddhāra

"Be patient and return home. Don't be a crazy fellow. By and by you will be able to cross the ocean of material existence. You should not make yourself a showbottle devotee and become a false renunciant. For the time being, enjoy the material world in a befitting way and do not become attached to it. Within your heart you should keep yourself very faithful, but externally you may behave like an ordinary man. Thus Kṛṣṇa will soon be very pleased and deliver you from the clutches of māyā."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

⑩ Be duty bound to work for everyone's benefit

A householder is duty-bound to work for the benefit of everyone.

In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi 9.41, 7.92) the Lord said:

bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma yāra
janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra
nāca, gāo, bhakta-saṅge kara saṅkīrtana
kṛṣṇa-nāma upadeśi' tāra' sarva-jana

"One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India [Bhārata-varṣa] should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people. 'My dear child, continue dancing, chanting and performing saṅkīrtana in association with devotees. Furthermore, go out and preach the value of chanting kṛṣṇa-nāma, for by this process You will be able to deliver all fallen souls.'"

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

⑪ Avoiding duplicitous association.

In this practice of devotional service, duplicitous association has been prohibited.

Even in street saṅkīrtana one should chant and dance in the association of pure devotees.

One should not chant in the association of non-devotees.

⑫ Dependence on the will of the Lord

A householder should fully depend on the will of the Lord in all his activities.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

The Lord says in the Caitanya-bhāgavata (CB Madhya-khaṇḍa 28.55):

śuna mātā, īśvarera adhīna saṁsāra
svatantra haite śakti nāhika kāhāra

"Listen, dear mother, the whole world is under the control of the Lord. No one has the power to become independent."

(13) Avoid association of non-devotees, women & uxorious people

A householder should cautiously give up the association of non-devotees, women, and uxorious people.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 22.87) the Lord said:

asat-saṅga-tyāga,—ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra
'strī-saṅgī'—eka asādhu, 'kṛṣṇābhakta' āra

"A Vaiṣṇava should always avoid the association of ordinary people. Common people are very much materially attached, especially to women. Vaiṣṇavas should also avoid the company of those who are not devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

(14) Accumulate wealth by prescribed occupations & not sinful activities

By following his prescribed duties a gr̥hastha Vaiṣṇava should accumulate wealth for his maintenance.

He should not accumulate wealth by sinful means.

Lord Nityānanda Prabhu has stated in the Caitanya-bhāgavata (CB Antya-khaṇḍa 5.685-688):

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

śuna dvija, yateka pātaka kaili tui
āra yadi nā karis, saba nimu muñi
parahimsā, ḍākā, curi-saba anācāra
chāḍa giyā, ihā tumi nā kariha āra
dharma pathe giyā tumi laha hari-nāma
tabe tumi anyere karibā paritrāna
yata saba dasyu, cora dākiyā āniyā
dharma-pathe sabāre laoyāo tumi giyā

"Now listen carefully, O brāhmana. I will take responsibility for all your previous
misdeeds if you do not repeat them. No more aggression, violence, looting, or murder;
give them up forever. Lead a religious life and chant the holy names of the Supreme
Lord. Then later you can also save others. Go and meet other dacoits and murderers
and bring them to the path of pure religious life."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

⑮ Do not hanker for another's wife (or) prostitute

A householder should not hanker for another's wife or prostitutes.

This is exhibited in the Lord's dealings with Kṛṣṇadāsa in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 9.226-227):

gosāñira sañge rahe kṛṣṇadāsa brāhmaṇa
bhaṭṭathāri-saha tāhān haila daraśana
strī-dhana dekhāñā tānra lobha janmāila
ārya sarala viprera buddhi-nāśa kaila

"Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was accompanied by His servant, Kṛṣṇadāsa. He was a brāhmaṇa, but he met with the Bhaṭṭathāris there. With women the Bhaṭṭathāris allured the brāhmaṇa Kṛṣṇadāsa, who was simple and gentle. By virtue of their bad association, they polluted his intelligence."

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

The Lord protected that brāhmaṇa from the women's clutches by pulling him by the hair.

The words sarala vipra mean a weak-hearted young brāhmaṇa.

(16) Importance of Chanting a fixed number of names

He is a real householder who chants one hundred thousand names every day.

Pure devotees should accept prasāda in the houses of such gr̥hasthas.

Sādhu-vṛtti - Following in the footsteps of the previous ācāryas

In the Caitanya-bhāgavata (CB Antya-khaṇḍa 9.121-2) the Lord said:

prabhu bale,-jāna, 'lakṣeśvara' bali kāre?
prati-dina lakṣa-nāma ye grahaṇa kare
se janera nāma āmi bali 'lakṣeśvara'
tathā bhikṣā āmāra, nā yāi anya ghara

64 rands

"The Lord replied: Do you know who is a lakṣeśvara? He is someone who chants one lakṣa, or one hundred thousand, holy names everyday. I call such a person a lakṣeśvara. I only take meals in that person's house, no one else."