

Bhaktyaloka

Essay 7

Utsāha- Enthusiasm

**Don't lose enthusiasm during the
6 stages of unsteady devotional
service**

**Unsteady devotional service -
bhajana kriya**

Anartha nivrtti

**steady devotional service -
nistha**

**The Six Types (Stages) of
Anisthitha Bhajan**

**Unsteady performance of devotional activities is of six types
(in sequential order):**

- a) False confidence (utsaha mayi)
- b) Sporadic endeavor (ghana-tarala)
- c) Indecision (vyudha vikalpa)
- d) Struggle with the senses (vishaya sangara)
- e) Inability to uphold vows (niyamakshama)
- f) Enjoying the facilities offered by bhakti (taranga rangini)

1. Utsaha-mayi (False enthusiasm)

It happens in the beginning of one's devotional life.

Few examples:

- 1) One starts chanting 32/ 64 rounds.
- 2) One comes for mangala aarti at 4 am itself.
- 3) He comes home and preaches his parents to stop watching T.V etc..

2. Ghana tarala (Thick and thin)

Reality strikes.

Janmashtami, one chants 64 rounds and he feels - why to just chant 64 rounds, let me chant constantly!

But after few days, he feels so down that he does not even want to pick up the bead bag.

And he feels - 'I am just a beginner. Srila Prabhupada told to just chant 16 rounds. And I have already chanted 64 rounds for few days. So even if I don't chant today, it's ok.

Bubble gets burst. We realise that - 'That enthusiasm was false. It was just an excitement of newfound faith!'

The devotee understands his actual position.

This is actually progress because the person has come to terms with reality.

3. Vyudha vikalpa (stage of excessive speculation)

I can not continue this thick and thin practice. I need to practice steadily.

He starts thinking - 'Why is my devotional service unsteady?'

May be it is because of my job! Should I change my job?

Or may be my office is very far from the house. My 3 hours get wasted in travelling. Should I rent a house near my office?

Or may be I should change my ashrama only. My all times goes with my family members!

May be I should become a celibate?

This stage is good. Because he is seriously thinking of how to practice bhakti nicely.

Problem: He is seeking solution only in the externals.

4. Vishaya sangara (Struggle with the senses)

After the devotee adjusts the externals, he experiences some improvement in his bhakti but he realises that his practice of bhakti has still not become steady.

He realises- 'My unsteadiness is due to my uncontrolled mind and senses.'

He had 4 extra hours but he wasted it surfing the internet.

He understands - Extra time does not necessarily ensure steady devotional service. The problem is my mind and senses are uncontrolled. So I should figure out a way to control them.

And then the protracted struggle to control the mind and senses begin which is this vishaya sangara stage.

Not that before this stage, there was no struggle with the mind and senses but just that he was not so mature to figure out that the problem is in uncontrolled mind and senses.

This on-going battle with his previously acquired desires for sense pleasure, in which he sometimes meets with victory and sometimes with defeat is called vishaya sangara or struggle with sense pleasure.

5. Niyamakshama (Inability to uphold vows)

This does not talk of the vow of following the four regulative principles - that will come in the previous stage.

Here vows mean - Positive vows to enhance one's quality or quantity of Devotional service

Examples:

- 1) getting up early in the morning to chant quality rounds.
- 2) Chanting more number of rounds.
- 3) Start cooking for Lord more frequently.
- 4) Start cooking for Lord in a devotional mood.
- 5) I will stay away from prajalpa.

Though he makes such resolutions every day, he is not always able to execute them. This is called niyamakshama or inability to follow rules.

Vishaya sangara is the inability to give up material enjoyment, whereas, niyamakshama is the inability to improve his devotional service.

6. Taranga rangini (Enjoying the facilities offered by bhakti)

Finally, to some extent we have become successful in increasing the quality and quantity of our devotional service, our mind and senses no longer trouble us as before...

Example:

We have become:

1. Very good in chanting.
2. very good in giving Bhagavatam classes.
3. Have really got very good understanding of scriptures.



Devotees start noticing.



Fame, glorification, facilities, honour



It can get to our head.

Fame, glorification, facilities, honour, etc.

These have been considered as waves.

Instead of going deep into the ocean of bhakti rasa, one is just surfing on the waves.

The very nature of bhakti is to be attractive, so all types of people become attracted to the devotee, the abode of bhakti.

Thus Bhakti produces much opportunity for material gain, worship and position (labha, puja, pratishtha).

These are weeds around the creeper of bhakti.

Performing activities, or seeking one's pleasure (ranga) amidst these weed-like facilities, which are but small waves (taranga) in the ocean of bhakti, is called taranga rangini, delighting in material facilities.

This stage should ideally come at the later stage. But in this social media age, people can become famous overnight for no significant reasons.

When we are only virtually connected to people, people may appreciate us much more than what we deserve.

For overcoming taranga rangini - take the opinions of those devotees you are living with seriously rather than the comments you receive on the social media.

Remain enthusiastic while navigating through these stages of unsteady devotional service



One must understand that due to the influence of modes of passion and ignorance, in the initial stages everyone will have to pass through this anisthitha bhajana stage.



Anisthitha bhajana kriya is natural and as one gradually navigates through these 6 stages of unsteady devotional service, he reaches the stage of steady devotional service (nistha).



This anisthitha bhajana kriya stage takes very long time to pass and when anartha nivrtti gets accomplished then one comes to the stage of nistha or steady bhajana.



One must remain enthusiastic understanding that steadiness does not come overnight and it is actually earned by sincere efforts.

Inattentiveness is a sign of lack of enthusiasm

In order to progress, there should be no inattentiveness.

One should consciously try to overcome inattentiveness to enthusiastically practice devotional service.

The key to enthusiastic practice is to overcome inattention.