

Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

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Introduction

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- To fulfil Lord Caitanya’s desire that Kṛṣṇa consciousness spread to every town and village of the world, Śrīla Prabhupāda founded a spiritual organization and named it the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).
- He derived the inspiration for this name from the following verse by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī: [See Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, volume 2, pages 129–30]

kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ
krīyatām yadi kuto ’pi labhyate
tatra laulyam api mūlyam ekalaṁ
janma-koṭi-sukṛtair na labhyate

- “Pure devotional service in Kṛṣṇa consciousness cannot be had even by pious activity in hundreds and thousands of lives. It can be attained only by paying one price—the intense greed to obtain it. If it is available somewhere, one must purchase it without delay.” (Padyāvali 14) [Quoted in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 8.70]

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- “Kṛṣṇa consciousness” is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s succinct but substantially concentrated translation of the Sanskrit phrase kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ, “to be absorbed in the mellow taste of executing devotional service to Kṛṣṇa.” [See Lecture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.12, Los Angeles, 15 August, 1972]
- In his purport to this śloka Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “This verse refers to devotional service rendered out of intense greed...spontaneous loving service of the Lord without extraneous endeavour.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 8.70, purport.].
- Śrīla Prabhupāda often said that the way to awaken this greed for spontaneous loving service is to associate with pure devotees.
- The successful outcome of keeping such company is to acquire love for Kṛṣṇa, the only means by which one can attain Him. [See Lecture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.12, Los Angeles, 15 August, 1972]

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- And where can one find such sublime association? Prabhupāda wanted it to be available in ISKCON.
- He states: “It is only this institution, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, that is teaching people how to see Kṛṣṇa.” [The Journey of Self-Discovery, II. Superconsciousness, Everyone Can See God, pages 41–42]
- Thus he makes it clear that the intended mission of the Society he so painstakingly nurtured from its inception is that it become a spiritual institution in which its members, by following his teachings, would awaken the spontaneous devotion with which to purchase Kṛṣṇa and then provide the kind of association that would help others do the same.

Introduction- The Meaning of “KC”

- In 1966 a friend suggested a name for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s new Society that would be more familiar to Westerners: the International Society for God Consciousness.
- But Śrīla Prabhupāda rejected the title as vague and unscientific.
- He insisted that the name of his Society include the words “Kṛṣṇa consciousness” because people could then identify his society with a concrete conception of God. [See Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, volume 2, page 129]
- The name accommodates both devotion to the countless expansions of Kṛṣṇa and the confidential essence of the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya.

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- Avatāras of Kṛṣṇa descend in every age, but the appearances of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya are extremely rare, occurring only once in every twenty-four hours of Brahmā, or once in every 8,640,000,000 years on earth. [See Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.10, with purport.]
- Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya come to give more than just the religious system (yuga-dharma) for a particular age.
- They come for a confidential reason as well: to distribute spontaneous loving devotion to Kṛṣṇa.
- When Kṛṣṇa appears, He brings His eternal companions to earth to display the highest limit of loving exchange, known as vraja-prema. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 4.15–16, purport]

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- As Lord Caitanya, Kṛṣṇa appears with the same associates. Dressed as sādhus instead of cowherd people, the Lord and His devotees teach the world how to awaken that same vraja-prema.
- Thus Lord Caitanya inaugurated the means to perfection—chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa—and inundated the world with the ecstasies of perfection, the taste of the four mellows of the Vraja-vāsīs’ love for Kṛṣṇa.
- In Kṛṣṇa’s original home, Goloka, the four mellows of love are the pure moods of servitorship, friendship, parenthood, and conjugal love.
- To guide persons to vraja-prema Caitanya Mahāprabhu first inspired them to give up deceitful religion and engage in devotional service according to scriptural injunctions.

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- When purified, neophytes could, by chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, develop attachment for Kṛṣṇa’s form, qualities, and pastimes and then spontaneously serve the Lord.
- To serve with spontaneous devotion means to cultivate a mood of love similar to the love of one of the Vraja-vāsīs.
- In this regard Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura: “In the dāsya-rasa one follows in the footsteps of servants like Citraka, Patraka or Raktaka. In the friendly sakhyarasa one can become a friend like Baladeva, Śrīdāmā or Sudāmā.
- In the vātsalya-rasa, characterized by parental affection, one can become like Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā, and in the mādhyarasa, characterized by conjugal love, one can become like Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī or Her lady friends such as Lalitā and Her serving maids (mañjarīs) like Rūpa and Rati.

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- This is the essence of all instruction in the matter of devotional service.” [The Nectar of Instruction 8, purport]
- We should note that we are meant to follow in the footsteps of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal associates, not attempt to replace or become them.
- The aspiration to become, for example, Nanda Mahārāja or Viśākhā-devī is antithetical to the very mood of pure devotion.
- To be Kṛṣṇa conscious, then, means to qualify oneself for spontaneous devotion in one of the four mellows of vraja-bhakti as exemplified by Kṛṣṇa’s eternal companions.
- Because this understanding is confidential, Śrīla Prabhupāda rarely spoke of it in public and wrote about it only sparingly in his books.

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- Yet because it is the essence of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, His Divine Grace did talk about it, did write about it, and did expect thoughtful devotees to understand and carefully pursue it.
- For instance, in 1974 when Śrīla Prabhupāda greeted his disciples in Vṛndāvana at the first major international ISKCON festival, he encouraged them to reflect on and aspire for this perfection.
- He also warned that such a confidential quest, the goal of which is suitable for paramahamsas, must be approached with great caution and reverence.
- He explained that the first steps in the quest included understanding Kṛṣṇa and His devotional service by studying the first nine cantos of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

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- That initial study complete, their hearts purified, devotees could then hear Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in the Tenth Canto and develop attraction for the service of His associates.
- Following in the footsteps of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, devotees could finally hear Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes with the gopīs without mistaking such līlās for mundane romantic affairs.
- This was the path to perfection.
- “So this is my request,” Prabhupāda concluded, “...you have come to Vṛndāvana; try to understand what is Vṛndāvana-dhāma, what is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, but very cautiously, very...carefully...Go through the [Pañca-tattva]...gradually, you’ll be able to understand...that is the highest perfection...this is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s philosophy, that ārādhya-vastu, the worshipable Lord, is Kṛṣṇa.

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- And as He is worshipable, His dhāma is also worshipable...follow the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Then we’ll be favoured by the grace of Kṛṣṇa to understand Him and His pastimes with Rādhārāṇī.” [Lecture, Vṛndāvana, 14 March, 1974]
- Implied in the above quotation is an important aspect of Kṛṣṇa consciousness: Although every mellow of pure devotion is perfect and complete, the mellow of conjugal love is transcendently superior to all the others. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.231–34]
- This topic is elaborately explained in Lord Caitanya’s talks with Rāmānanda Rāya and in His teachings to Rūpa Gosvāmī.

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- The conclusion is that only recipients of the gopīs’ mercy can understand Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa’s loving affairs, and only those who follow in the gopīs’ wake can serve in these most confidential expressions of the Lord’s pleasure potency.
- No one else is qualified. Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī praises Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu for revealing this secret and distributing the conjugal mellow through the saṅkīrtana movement:

anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ purāṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥśacī-nandanah

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- “May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son of ŚrīmatīŚacīdevī be transcendently situated in the innermost core of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has descended in the Age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation has ever offered before: the most elevated mellow of devotional service, the mellow of conjugal love.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 3.4)
- To clarify even further the meaning of “the mellow of conjugal love” (unnatojjvala-rasa), Śrīla Prabhupāda describes it as the perfection of becoming a confidential maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.
- In his purport to the eleventh verse of Śrī Upadeśāmṛta, he writes that such perfection is indeed the most exalted method of devotional service for devotees eager to return to Goloka Vṛndāvana.

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- The process of achieving this goal is to reside either physically or mentally in Vṛndāvana, preferably at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, to take shelter of Śrī Rādhās confidential maidservants, and under their direction to engage constantly in Her loving service.
- In time, devotees thus absorbed give up their bodies and return to the spiritual world.
- There they serve Śrī Rādhā just as they had done in their meditation on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa during their lifetime.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda goes on to say, “The conclusion is that to live on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and to bathe there daily constitute the highest perfection of devotional service.
- It is a difficult position to attain, even for great sages and devotees like Nārada.

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- Thus there is no limit to the glory of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
- By serving Rādhā-kuṇḍa, one can get an opportunity to become an assistant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī under the eternal guidance of the gopīs.” [The Nectar of Instruction 11, purport]
- These are but a few aspects of the wonderful legacy Śrīla Prabhupāda’s followers have inherited and which are implicit in the words “Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”
- Gaura Kiśora Dāsa Bābājī once said that offenseless meditation on the syllables of the holy name would reveal one’s svarūpa. [Prabhupāda Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, page 55]
- Similarly, studying the meaning of the words “Kṛṣṇa consciousness” through Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings will guide us to our eternal identity and to Kṛṣṇa.

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- His Divine Grace’s teachings have been painstakingly enshrined in his books, and they dispel all doubts about how to become Kṛṣṇa conscious.
- Thus devotees serious about following Śrīla Prabhupāda can always turn to his books for guidance.
- Still, devotees sometimes reminisce about how much easier it was to practise Kṛṣṇa consciousness when Śrīla Prabhupāda was with us.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda easily resolved all controversies and answered all questions clearly.
- There is no arguing about the value of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical presence (vapu).

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- However, His Divine Grace taught his followers not to be overly dependent on the temporary body—even the temporary body of the spiritual master. [Letter to Tuṣṭa Kṛṣṇa, Ahmedabad, 14 December, 1972]
- He considered his eternal instructions (vāṇī) more important than whatever his disciples could glean from his physical presence.
- To neglect or ignore those instructions would demean his mission—a transgression we should avoid at all costs.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda said often and explicitly that serious study of his books would fix devotees in a life of voluntary austerity and give them a broad perspective of Kṛṣṇa consciousness according to the Gauḍīya understanding.

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- With such a perspective devotees would be able to understand the importance of applying Kṛṣṇa consciousness in their own lives as well as preaching it to others.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books held all the answers—how to practise devotional service and how to fulfil all spiritual aspirations.
- By continually discussing his books among themselves, his followers would become perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- To neglect such discussions would be to put themselves in harm’s way.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “All the devotees connected with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement must read all the books that have been translated (the Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the Bhagavad-gītā and others); otherwise, after some time, they will simply eat, sleep, and fall down from their positions.

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- Thus they will miss the opportunity to attain an eternal, blissful life of transcendental pleasure.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 25.278, purport]
- In summary, by faithfully assimilating and following Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, devotees will naturally develop spontaneous attachment to Kṛṣṇa.
- In time, the devotees’ mature spontaneous attachment will inspire Kṛṣṇa to reveal their spiritual identity (siddha-deha), their relationship with Him (rasa), and the loving devotion by which to purchase Him (prema).
- Thus under Śrīla Prabhupāda’s guidance, members of ISKCON who follow Prabhupāda’s vāṇī strictly, will unquestionably return back home, back to Godhead.

Introduction- Reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books

- We have mentioned the importance of reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, but the subject requires further consideration.
- This section briefly explores the realm of how to study Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.
- Śuddha-bhakti-cintāmaṇi is, after all, mostly about hearing and reading.
- Of all the Vaiṣṇava authors I study and have learned to know and love, Śrīla Prabhupāda is the one who continues to amaze me the most.
- Devotees know the extraordinary potency of his writings, which have made Kṛṣṇa known throughout the world.

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- Yet how many devotees fully appreciate how much knowledge Śrīla Prabhupāda condenses in what appears to be a simple and effortless presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness?
- In plain English, with everyday examples, Śrīla Prabhupāda makes elevated devo-tional moods, complex philosophical concepts, and intricate linguistic nuances understandable even to laypersons.
- Indeed, the spiritual truths in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purports are like hidden veins of gold that when mined reveal pure nuggets of transcen-dental wisdom.
- Devotees who scrutinize Śrīla Prabhupāda's books tend to observe that he often embeds in a few phrases instructions for readers at many levels of advancement.

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- Thus his teachings are simultaneously relevant to neophytes, intermediates, and the advanced.
- But devotees who neglect to read Prabhupāda's books, or who read them superficially, cannot perceive His Divine Grace's many-levelled guidance.
- They then lose their taste for hearing and for following his directions, and eventually they fall away from the path of pure devotional service.
- What constitutes superficial reading? When readers fail to see the deeper meanings an author intends, their reading is said to be superficial—they see only a shallow, unsubstantial gloss of words.

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- Shallow too is their attempt to separate the author's intended meaning from the greater context of his overall teachings, the scriptural texts they illuminate, and the writings of previous ācāryas.
- One example of a shallow approach to Śrīla Prabhupāda's books is the misreading of his description of spontaneous devotional service in the second chapter of The Nectar of Devotion. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,
- “Now this sādhana-bhakti, or practice of devotional service, may also be divided into two parts.
- The first part is called service according to regulative principles: one has to follow these different regulative principles by the order of the spiritual master or on the strength of authoritative scriptures, and there can be no question of refusal.

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- That is called vaidhī, or regulated. One has to do it without argument.
- Another part of sādhana-bhakti is called rāgānugā.
- Rāgānugā refers to the point at which, by following the regulative principles, one becomes a little more attached to Kṛṣṇa and executes devotional service out of natural love.
- For example, a person engaged in devotional service may be ordered to rise early in the morning and offer āraṭi, which is a form of deity worship.
- In the beginning, by the order of his spiritual master, one rises early in the morning and offers āraṭi, but then he develops real attachment.

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- When he gets this attachment, he automatically tries to decorate the deity and prepare different kinds of dresses and thinks of different plans to execute his devotional service nicely.
- Although it is within the category of practice, this offering of loving service is spontaneous.
- So the practice of devotional service, sādhana-bhakti, can be divided into two parts—namely, regulative and spontaneous.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 2]
- A superficial reading of this text may lead devotees to misconstrue it as the complete definition of rāgānuga-bhakti.
- With such a misconception they may accept the definition of spontaneous devotional service as no more than rising automatically for maṅgalārati, dressing the deity nicely, and making plans for service.

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- But this definition is incomplete because it fails to consider what Śrīla Prabhupāda says elsewhere in his books on the subject, or what ācāryas such as Rūpa Gosvāmī say.
- In the quotation under discussion, Śrīla Prabhupāda is giving examples of how devotees behave when they develop “natural love” and “real attachment.”
- But for a complete understanding of spontaneous service, one must look carefully at what Śrīla Prabhupāda says about it directly, for instance, in chapter sixteen of The Nectar of Devotion.

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- There he says, “Persons desiring to follow in the footsteps of such eternal devotees of the Lord as the Vṛṣṇis and Vṛndāvana denizens are called rāgānugā devotees, which means that they are trying to attain to the perfection of those devotees...There is a gradual development of the ambition to become like a particular devotee, and this activity is called rāgānugā.
- We must always remember, however, that such eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the denizens of Vraja (Vṛndāvana) is not possible unless one is freed from material contamination.....
- When one is actually spontaneously attracted to the loving principles of the gopīs, there will be found no trace of any mundane contamination in his character.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]

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- Here Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly defines spontaneous devotion as the pure ambition to serve Kṛṣṇa like the Vraja-vāsīs, a definition consistent with the one Rūpa Gosvāmī gives in Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.292]
- To this Śrīla Prabhupāda adds a second component: freedom from unwanted habits.
- In Śrīla Prabhupāda's definition, therefore, practising spontaneous devotion cultivates the ambition to serve Kṛṣṇa like the Vraja-vāsīs and begins after the stage of anartha-nivṛtti.
- Thus we should understand the first of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements above in relation to the second.
- The second says that the chief symptom of spontaneous devotional service is the genuine greed to serve Kṛṣṇa in the mood of the Vraja-vāsīs.

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- It also says that the earliest such greed manifests itself when devotees are free of material contamination.
- The first statement says that devotees in whom such spontaneous devotion has appeared will rise early, dress the deity, and practise other acts of devotion out of real attachment rather than out of duty.
- The proper understanding of the first statement, therefore, is that all spontaneous devotees have a natural attachment for devotional practices.
- It does not say what a superficial reading may infer—that devotees who rise early and dress the deities are necessarily on the path of rāgānugā-bhakti.

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- In this way, devotees should be attentive while reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's books.
- They should not take Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements out of the context of his entire teachings, teachings that are a window to the teachings of the previous ācāryas.
- Instead, they should make an effort to understand his writings in a holistic way.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda worked hard to write his books. Shouldn't we, his followers, show our appreciation for his labours by working just as hard to understand them?

Introduction- Concluding Words

- uddha-bhakti-cintāmaṇi uses Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings as a template—along with references to the books of our previous ācāryas—to systematically present the devotional practices and perfection of vraja-bhakti, “Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”
- I am an insignificant disciple of a great master, yet by the encouragement of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the embodiment of all masters and professors of conclusive truth, I have taken up this work.
- I pray that it pleases him and all the Vaiṣṇavas.
- As I write I become more confident that my words will be of value to the ISKCON I love so much, but because even the best of efforts is covered by some fault, I humbly request my learned readers to correct any mistakes they may find and to forgive my shortcomings.