

Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

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Chapter 1- Seed of Devotion

SBC 1– The Seed of Devotion

- The subject of devotional service is a vast ocean. To summarize even a drop of it seems impossible. May the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, which makes even impossible things possible, descend to bless this humble effort.
- This first chapter describes the nature of devotion in general, how it awakens, how it begins to develop, and how a person becomes eligible for devotional service.
- Also mentioned is how the impure motives of conditioned souls cover devotion to produce varieties of mixed devotional service.
- The thrust of this book is pure devotional service, but mixed devotion is discussed first so that the reader may better understand the workings of devotional service in general and later the rareness of pure devotion (uttama-bhakti).

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- Furthermore, this knowledge will allow the reader to analyse the nature of his or her devotion to determine whether it is pure or mixed. Hopefully the information provided here will inspire the reader to advance in devotional service.

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Knowledge of Relationship

- Genuine devotion rests on knowledge of the soul's relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Sentiment devoid of such knowledge, no matter how well-intentioned, can mislead even the most sincere seeker.
- This section explains why knowledge of the Supreme Lord's relationship with His energies (sambandha-jñāna) is essential for those wishing to avoid being misled.
- The Vedas, Purāṇas, Vedānta-sūtra, and ultimately Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam speak of devotional service either directly or indirectly.
- The teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu consistently analyse scripture in terms of three categories.

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Knowledge of Relationship

- In fact, all standard commen-tators, including Lord Caitanya Himself, say that every śloka of Vedānta-sūtra can be placed into one of these three categories.

sambandha, abhidheya, prayojana nāma
ei tina artha sarva-sūtre paryavasāna

- “One’s relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, activities in terms of that relationship, and the ultimate goal of life [to develop love of God]—these three subjects are explained in every aphorism of the Vedānta-sūtra, for they form the culmination of the entire Vedānta philosophy.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.146]

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Knowledge of Relationship

- Sambandha-jñāna comprises knowledge of four subjects: the Supreme Lord, the living entities, the material world, and their interrelationships.
- Abhidheya is the means the living entities use to practically apply that knowledge, and prayojana, the perfection of devotional activities, refers to pure love of God and how it is shared between the living entities and the Lord. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.146, purport]
- To acquire knowledge of relationship is the primary duty of every Vaiṣṇava, and in fulfilling this duty it is best not to forget or underestimate the importance of studying Śrīla Prabhupāda’s books.
- Transcendental knowledge is like the weapon a well-trained soldier takes to the battlefield.

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- In the absence of such a weapon, a soldier faces certain defeat at the enemy's hands.
- Similarly, unless devotees are sufficiently educated in sambandha-jñāna, their efforts on the battlefield of devotional activities will surely meet with setbacks or downfall.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda certainly emphasized that knowledge of relationship is a prerequisite for advancing in devotional service as well as for preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but he did not say that one has to become a scholar to be his disciple.
- The simple-hearted devotee can receive transcendental knowledge by hearing from realized souls and by purely chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.

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- For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “...even you do not read the books, simply if you take part in these three things, chanting, dancing, and taking part in eating the prasādam, your life will gradually progress in spiritual advancement of life...then some day will come...that you will understand what is Kṛṣṇa. And as soon as you understand Kṛṣṇa, then after leaving this body you go back to home, back to Godhead...” [Ratha-yātrā lecture, London, 13 July, 1972] In short, even if devotees do not read books to acquire sambandha-jñāna, they can gain it by chanting purely, and in that way proceed.
- Still, all aspirants, whether through study, hearing, chanting, or any combination of the three, must acquire sambandha-jñāna.
- The absence of such knowledge obstructs progressive devotional service.

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Knowledge of Relationship

- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “...Self-realization is the position of the liberated state.
- One understands his constitutional position by knowledge and vairāgya, renunciation.
- Without knowledge, one cannot have realization. The realization that one is the infinitesimal part and parcel of the Supreme Spirit [sambandha-jñāna] makes him unattached to material, conditional life. That is the beginning of devotional service.
- Unless one is liberated from material contamination, one cannot engage himself in the devotional service of the Lord.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.25.18, purport]

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- Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura also writes, “Without knowledge of transcendental truth, no one’s heart can be spiritually attuned to Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- If one lacks knowledge of his relationship with Kṛṣṇa, then the proper execution of devotional service in relationship to Him is impossible.” [Prākṛta-rasa-śata-dūṣaṇī 26]
- And Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda stresses the need for knowledge of relationship in the following statement: “As long as the jīva is not firmly established in the knowledge of sambandha-tattva...[he will be unable to] disperse the mist and clouds [of anarthas] from his heart...In this state the jīva cannot chant the pure name of Kṛṣṇa, his chanting [being] polluted by unwanted things.” [Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi, chapter 3]

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- Kṛṣṇa spoke Bhagavad-gītā, predominantly sambandha-jñāna, to resolve Arjuna’s dilemma and empower him to surrender. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.4.32, purport]
- Caitanya Mahāprabhu imparted extensive sambandha-jñāna to Sanātana Gosvāmī and Rūpa Gosvāmī.
- And Śrīla Vyāsadeva preserved the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya to give light in this Age of Kali. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 20.82) refers to Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura and all others who describe Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s pastimes “Vyāsadeva”.]
- Subsequently, all spiritual masters in the line of Vyāsadeva train their followers in the sambandha-jñāna spoken by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

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- It is the duty of every aspiring devotee to cultivate the knowledge left by Vyāsa and received so reverentially by great souls such as Arjuna, Sanātana Gosvāmī, and Rūpa Gosvāmī.
- Readers not versed in the topics of sambandha-jñāna are advised to seriously study the references cited above. Space does not permit a thorough study of the subject here.
- This book is mainly about the process of cultivating our relationship with Kṛṣṇa and the breathtaking results of awakening love for Him.
- It presumes that the reader has at least a grasp of the foundational knowledge of the Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy.

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Knowledge of Relationship

- Readers who have heard attentively and who have assimilated this knowledge are in a position to taste the ripe fruit of this book's teachings.

The Definition of Devotional Service

- This section defines devotional service and briefly discusses its primary (svarūpa) and marginal (taṭastha) characteristics (lakṣaṇa).
- [See Waves of Devotion, Eastern Ocean, First Wave, Introduction] The nyāyakośa dictionary of logic defines svarūpa-lakṣaṇa as a thing's fundamental nature and taṭastha-lakṣaṇa as the secondary nature that further defines it.

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The Definition of Devotional Service

- The following initial definition of devotional service rests on the Purāṇic reference cited by Jīva Gosvāmī in Bhakti-sandarbhā.
- There he quotes from the Garuḍa Purāṇa as follows: “Now I shall describe devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu.
- By engaging in such service, one attains everything. Only devotional service and nothing else pleases Lord Hari.” [Bhakti-sandarbhā, anuccheda 216]
- Śrī Jīva then gives the etymological sense of the word bhakti by quoting another text from the same smṛti:

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bhaj ity eṣa vai dhātuḥ
sevāyām parikīrtitaḥ
tasmāt sevā budhaiḥ proktā
bhaktiḥ sādhana-bhūyasī

- “The noun bhakti derives from the verbal root bhaj (to serve). Therefore the wise say that bhakti, which refers to the best of all spiritual paths, means devotional service.” (Garuḍa Purāṇa, Pūrva-khaṇḍa 231.3)
- Some readers may question why this section does not begin with the better-known definition of pure devotional service (anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam...) given by Rūpa Gosvāmī at the beginning of Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11]

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- The reason is that this book follows the example of our siddhānta-ācārya, Jīva Gosvāmī.
- Although defining pure devotion in the same way that Rūpa Gosvāmī defines it, Śrī Jīva first paves the way to that definition by anchoring Lord Caitanya’s teachings to the Vedic tradition.
- The Sandarbhas begin by basing Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy on conventional Vedic sources—śruti and smṛti, especially Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.
- After chapter one in this book, we will centre our discussion on Rūpa Gosvāmī’s seamless definition of pure devotional service.

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- Continuing with Jīva Gosvāmī's initial definition, in the first of the two Purāṇic verses mentioned above, the phrase “by engaging in such service, one attains everything” indicates the marginal characteristic of bhakti; and in the second verse, the word “service” (sevā) indicates its primary characteristic. [Bhakti-sandarbhā, anuccheda 216]
- Here a doubt may arise whether the word bhakti may also apply to the dedication shown by demigod worshippers, or to the self-worship of some impersonalists.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda rejects this proposal. He writes, “The English word ‘worship’ cannot be used in the same sense as bhaj.
- Worship means to adore, or to show respect and honour to the worthy one.

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- But service with love and faith is especially meant for the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- One can avoid worshiping a respectable man or a demigod and may be called discourteous, but one cannot avoid serving the Supreme Lord without being thoroughly condemned.” [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 6.47, purport]
- Devotional service is easy to perform and is accessible to all.
- It is the singular means to know the Lord and the spiritual process recommended by the Lord Himself.
- Kṛṣṇa concludes the Bhagavad-gītā, for example, by asking all human beings to reject without fear all forms of religiosity in favour of exclusive devotional service to Him. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.66]

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- And sage Kavi tells Mahārāja Nimi that the Lord personally prescribes only devotional service as the actual solution to repeated birth and death.

ye vai bhagavatā proktā
upāyā hy ātma-labdhaye
añjaḥ puṁsām aviduṣāṁ
viddhi bhāgavatān hi tān

- “Even ignorant living entities can very easily come to know the Supreme Lord if they adopt those means prescribed by the Supreme Lord Himself.
- The process recommended by the Lord is to be known as bhāgavata-dharma or devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.34)

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The Definition of Devotional Service

- The above śāstric quotes, among many others, confirm the definition of bhakti cited earlier from the Garuḍa Purāṇa: Bhakti is service rendered exclusively to the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, its principal characteristic is service to Him, and its marginal characteristics are the perfections achieved by its practitioners.

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- The Bhagavat-sandarbhā lists bhakti among the Lord’s various spiritual or internal energies. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.66]
- Śrīla Prabhupāda often points out that devotional service, as a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa’s internal potency (svarūpa-śakti), is intrinsically nondifferent from Him.
- It logically follows, then, that since Kṛṣṇa is fully independent, so is bhakti.

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- Accepting the conclusion that bhakti is fully independent, it is therefore more accurate to say that it manifests itself than to say it is acquired.
- That said, certain questions remain unanswered: How and why does bhakti manifest itself? And why does it manifest itself to some jīvas and not to others?
- In answer to the first question, śāstra states that devotion primarily manifests itself to the jīvas through the medium of a pure devotee.
- Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu explains, “Unless one is favoured by a pure devotee, one cannot attain the platform of devotional service.
- To say nothing of kṛṣṇa-bhakti, one cannot even be relieved from the bondage of material existence.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.51.

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- Lord Caitanya substantiates His argument by quoting Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.12.12]
- But there are exceptions to this rule. Kṛṣṇa’s direct mercy and the Vedic literature may also award devotional service.
- For instance, Nārada-bhakti-sūtra states: mukhyatas tu mahat-kṛpayaiiva bhagavat-kṛpā-leśād vā, “Though primarily one attains devotional service by the mercy of the great devotees, one may also attain it from a small particle of the mercy of the Supreme Lord Himself.” [Nārada-bhakti-sūtra 38]
- Similarly, contrary to the opinions of some philosophers, the seed of devotion can also be received from śāstra. Śrīla Prabhupāda states, for example, that it is available from the Bhagavad-gītā. [Renunciation Through Wisdom 1.9]

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- In whichever way beginners receive the seed—the standard way from saints, or an exceptional way from Kṛṣṇa or śāstra—the company of pure devotees is necessary to properly cultivate it.
- And if under valid and exceptional circumstances such company is unavailable, Kṛṣṇa may act as the pure association from within.
- The Lord says: “To those who are constantly devoted to serving Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me. To show them special mercy, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance.” [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 10.10–11]
- In his purports to these verses, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives the conditions under which even less intelligent devotees in exceptional circumstances receive the Lord’s direct guidance: they must display a sincere effort to become Kṛṣṇa conscious, engaging constantly in the Lord’s loving service.

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- The answer to the second question, “Why does bhakti manifest itself?” lies in the compassionate nature of devotion itself.
- Again, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, in the first shower of his Mādhurya-kādambinī, discusses this point directly.
- His conclusion is that the bhakti in the hearts of certain devotees impels them to give bhakti to others.
- Thus devotion is self-manifesting. Bhaktidevī impels pure devotees to share devotion by invoking their compassion for the conditioned souls.
- This empathy is illustrated most wonderfully in the following prayer by Prahlāda Mahārāja:

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prāyeṇa deva munayaḥ sva-vimukti-kāmā
maunaṁ caranti vijane na parārtha-niṣṭhāḥ
naitān vihāya kṛpaṇān vimumukṣa eko
nānyaṁ tvad asya śaraṇaṁ bhramato 'nupaśye

- “My dear Lord Nṛsimhadeva, I see that there are many saintly persons indeed, but they are interested only in their own deliverance. Not caring for the big cities and towns, they go to the Himālayas or the forest to meditate with vows of silence [mauna-vrata]. They are not interested in delivering others. As for me, however, I do not wish to be liberated alone, leaving aside all these poor fools and rascals. I know that without Kṛṣṇa consciousness, without taking shelter of Your lotus feet, one cannot be happy. Therefore I wish to bring them back to shelter at Your lotus feet.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.9.44)

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- That bhakti inspires compassion in a devotee is consistent with the idea that devotion is self-manifesting.
- But since devotees are the central figures in bestowing devotional service, the third question needs recasting.
- Rather than saying, “Why does devotion manifest itself to some jīvas and not to others?” the better question is, “Why do devotees give devotion to some jīvas and not to others?”
- The answer to this recast question has two aspects: the first relates to the discrimination of preachers who distribute devotion, the second to the receptivity of the jīvas who accept it.
- The apparent partiality of devotees who distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness has to do with the level of advancement they have achieved.

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- There are three classes of devotees: the neophyte, the intermediate, and the advanced (prākṛta, madhyama, and uttama, respectively).
- Neophyte devotees are rarely inspired to give devotion to others. Rather, they are self-centred, concerned only with their own advancement.
- In contrast, the vision of the uttama-bhaktas is so elevated that they see everyone, even the nondevotees, as fully engaged in bhakti; therefore they see no need to preach.
- They may influence the atmosphere of the world by their elevated devotional activities, but generally they do not consciously preach.
- In this way, the lowest and highest devotees generally do not give devotion to others.

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- That leaves the intermediate devotees as the natural medium for distributing bhakti.
- For this reason Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly exalts the intermediate devotee preachers.
- He writes, “Such an advanced devotee is called a madhyama-bhāgavata, which indicates that he has attained the intermediate stage between the neophyte and the perfect devotee.
- Generally a devotee in the intermediate stage becomes a preacher. A neophyte devotee or an ordinary person should worship the madhyama-bhāgavata, who is a via medium.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.46, cited in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 16.72, purport]

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- Śrī Havir describes the way in which the intermediate devotees discriminate:
īśvare tad-adhīneṣu
bālīṣeṣu dviṣatsu ca
prema-maitrī-kṛpopekṣā
yaḥ karoti sa madhyamaḥ
- “An intermediate, second-class devotee shows love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is friendly to all devotees, and is very merciful to neophytes and ignorant people. The intermediate devotee neglects those who are envious of devotional service.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.46)
- From this definition it is clear that although the intermediate devotees are friends to all, in order to give devotion they discriminate among different classes of persons.
- They see those who already have bhakti, the devotees.

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- They see those who are eligible and receptive, the neophytes and the ignorant.
- And they see those unwilling to accept devotional service, the envious.
- The intermediate devotees choose to give devotion to the neophytes and the ignorant.
- For this reason, some persons receive bhakti and others do not.
- Although preachers are generally intermediate devotees, sometimes neophytes and very advanced devotees also distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- When fully realized first-class devotees like Śrīla Prabhupāda or his guru mahārāja preach, they adopt the discriminatory vision of the second-class Vaiṣṇavas.

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- In other words, they “come down” to the intermediate platform.
- But because they remain elevated transcendentalists, the potency of their speech is much greater than that of the regular intermediate devotees.
- They display this preaching potency by touching a greater number of souls and by the relative quickness with which they elevate these souls.
- The reason for this superior spiritual influence is that great souls always carry the Supreme Personality of Godhead in their hearts. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam explains:
- “My dear Lord, You are glorified by the selected verses uttered by great personalities.
- Such glorification of Your lotus feet is just like saffron particles.

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- When the transcendental vibration from the mouths of great devotees carries the aroma of the saffron dust of Your lotus feet, the forgetful living entity gradually remembers his eternal relationship with You.
- Devotees thus gradually come to the right conclusion about the value of life.
- My dear Lord, I therefore do not need any other benediction but the opportunity to hear from the mouth of Your pure devotee.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.20.25]
- In glorifying ecstatic devotion, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda briefly describes the amount of spiritual potency devotees at different stages of advancement can instil in other Vaiṣṇavas and in nondevotees.
- He says that devotees at the stage of love can give such love to anyone; devotees at the stage of ecstasy can raise devotees to ecstatic devotion and nondevotees to taste;

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- and serious practitioners, who are not yet liberated, can give nondevotees faith. [Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta, chapter 5]
- A lack of true discrimination handicaps neophyte devotees.
- Sometimes they see devotion where there is none and sometimes they condemn advanced devotees.
- In fact, everyone’s spiritual status, including their own, bewilders them.
- That they awaken devotion in others has more to do with the piety of the recipients than their own meagre influence.
- Nonetheless, by the Lord’s mercy, sometimes even third-class Vaiṣṇavas instil devotion in the hearts of others.

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- This completes the answer to the first aspect of the third question concerning how preachers discriminate while distributing devotion.
- Now let us turn to the second aspect: the receptivity of the persons to whom the devotees preach.
- As already established, for devotion to awaken in a person, that person must hear from devotees.
- The ability to hear depends on both opportunity and receptivity, and both of these depend on the piety of the potential hearer.
- Since devotion is self-manifesting, the type of piety meant here cannot be material. It must be spiritual, and more specifically, spiritual piety coming from devotional service.

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- How do nondevotees, who by definition are not interested in devotion, come into contact with devotional service?
- They do so unknowingly. The devotional piety brought about by such unwitting acts of devotion is called ajñāta-sukṛti.
- What kind of acts constitute ajñāta-sukṛti?
- A nondevotee may, for example, show a simple act of kindness toward a Vaiṣṇava without knowing what a Vaiṣṇava is—perhaps by giving a donation.
- The same kindness shown to an ordinary person would be counted as material piety, but shown to a Vaiṣṇava the piety accrued is devotional.
- The same kindness shown to an ordinary person would be counted as material piety, but shown to a Vaisnava the piety accrued is devotional.

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- This piety by which one becomes receptive to Kṛṣṇa consciousness is also called bhakty-unmukhī sukṛti.
- In the absolute sense, this type of piety is the only good fortune a living entity acquires.
- Pious activities that bestow material opulence (bhogonmukhī sukṛti) or by which one merges into the Supreme Lord’s existence (mokṣonmukhī sukṛti) are not truly fortunate because they distract from the real goal of life. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.45, purport]
- The Caitanya-caritāmṛta provides an example of ajñāta-sukṛti. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.62–65] Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, the leader of the Māyāvādī sannyāsīs in Benares, was criticizing Caitanya Mahāprabhu, thinking Him an ordinary man.

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- When the Lord visited him, Prakāśānanda personally greeted Him and seated Him in the assembly of sannyāsīs.
- This respectful behaviour offered unknowingly to the Supreme Lord was the ajñāta-sukṛti by which Prakāśānanda became qualified to hear from Caitanya Mahāprabhu and later to become a Vaiṣṇava.
- Now we have a complete answer to the third question.
- Persons who receive devotional service do so because of their own receptivity combined with the discriminating initiative of Vaiṣṇava preachers.
- There are unlimited ways in which these general principles are applied in practical life.

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- Sometimes persons with little ajñāta-sukṛti will hear from a great devotee like Śrīla Prabhupāda and only after many years display symptoms of devotion.
- Sometimes a very receptive person will hear from a neophyte devotee and quickly take to devotion, surpassing even his or her vartma-pradarśaka-guru, [Śrīla Prabhupāda comments in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.128), “One who first gives information about spiritual life is called the vartma-pradarśaka-guru or spiritual master.”] as did Dhruva Mahārāja with his mother. And sometimes a person with little piety will quickly advance to pure devotion, as did Mṛgāri after meeting Nārada.
- Modern-day Vaiṣṇavas tell stories of how they were introduced and initially trained in Kṛṣṇa consciousness by devotees who had left devotional service to indulge in sinful acts.

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- Later, these same Vaiṣṇavas found serious practitioners of ideal conduct to follow.
- These are some of the many ways in which people receive and accept pure devotion.
- But the foremost and overriding consideration, one that saints and scripture constantly emphasize, is the mercy of pure devotees, whose hearts overflow with compassion for conditioned souls.

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- On the subject of how devotion awakens, another question arises.
- What is it that living entities receive when devotion becomes manifest in them?
- This subject is extremely important, because a clear grasp of it paves the way for a thorough understanding of devotional service in both its pure and mixed forms.
- It is the seed of devotion, the bhakti-bīja; more precisely, the seed of the creeper of devotion, the bhakti-latā-bīja. As Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu says to Rūpa Gosvāmī,
brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja
- “According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe.

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- Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems.
- Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.
- By the mercy of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.151)
- Since the phrase “seed of the creeper of devotion” is figurative, what is it more precisely?
- It is the transcendental knowledge received from pure devotees that awakens our latent love for Kṛṣṇa. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.107]

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- Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates: “The methods, rules, and regulations by which one is perfectly trained in devotional service constitute the bhakti-latā-bīja, or seed of devotional service.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.152, purport]
- After submissively receiving the seed of the creeper of devotion, the jīvas must embrace that transcendental knowledge in order to sow it in the garden of their heart.
- The devotee-gardeners must then regularly water that seed with the nectar of devotion in practice (sādhana-bhakti), especially the divine elixirs of hearing about Kṛṣṇa and chanting His names.
- The essence of what this book will teach is how to hear and chant in a way that allows the seed of devotion to fructify.

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- Śrīla Prabhupāda adds to this watering process an additional duty: giving the message of Godhead to others.
- This should be carefully noted.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda includes preaching in his description of the watering process.
- He writes, “The seed of devotion cannot sprout unless watered by the process of hearing and chanting.
- One should submissively receive the transcendental messages from spiritually advanced sources and chant the very same messages for one’s own benefit and for the benefit of one’s audience.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 2.117]

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- In other words, sādhana-bhakti includes preaching, and preaching nourishes one's devotional creeper as well as the devotional creepers of others.
- Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya are especially inclined to preachers. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.68–69]
- Who, then, can estimate the extra benefit preachers receive from the rain shower of Their special mercy?
- The general principle illustrated by the example of the bhakti-latā-bīja is that every action begins with an inaugural seed.
- More-over, spiritual or mundane, pious or sinful, any action begins with the seed of knowledge.
- In this regard Śrīla Prabhupāda gives an illuminating commentary:

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- “Everything has an original cause, or seed.
- For any idea, programme, plan, or device, there is first the contemplation of the plan, and that is called the bīja, or seed.
- The methods, rules, and regulations by which one is perfectly trained in devotional service constitute the bhakti-latā-bīja, or seed of devotional service.
- This bhakti-latā-bīja is received from the spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.
- Other seeds, called anyābhilāṣa-bīja, include karma-bīja and jñāna-bīja.
- If one is not fortunate enough to receive the bhakti-latā-bīja from the spiritual master, he instead cultivates such seeds as karma-bīja, jñāna-bīja, or political, social, or philanthropic bījas.

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- However, the bhakti-latā-bīja is different from these other bījas.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.152, purport]
- Here Śrīla Prabhupāda broadens the concept of bīja.
- The type of knowledge persons receive corresponds to the type of seed they sow in their hearts.
- Further knowledge of a subject, as well as actions inspired by that knowledge, cultivates the seed into a creeper that matures and bears its own distinctive flowers and fruit.
- Devotees dedicated to achieving spiritual perfection would do well to seriously meditate on this line of reasoning.

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- They should carefully contemplate the effect submissive hearing of mundane topics unrelated to Kṛṣṇa has on the heart.
- That kind of hearing sows nondevotional seeds.
- Seeds caused and nurtured by mundane movies, music, books, education, magazines, even idle thoughts, compete with and suppress the growth of the delicate creeper of devotion.
- Only three decades after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance, it is common to hear of initiated devotees frequenting mundane movies and listening to rock music, things virtually unheard of while Śrīla Prabhupāda was with us.
- Such devotees appear callous to or at least uninformed about the catastrophic effects such habits have on the garden of their hearts.

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- In our information-crazed age, the world is a jungle-maze of mundane creepers that strangle the hearts of conditioned souls with their tendrils and poison them with their fruit.
- The only path out of such bewilderment is the focused cultivation of the bhakti-latā-bīja as it grows luxuriant under the sun of pure devotion.
- It is impossible to discuss completely the countless creepers that grow from various types of worldly knowledge and that perpetuate material existence.
- As Śrīla Prabhupāda says, there are social, political, and philanthropic seeds, to name a few.
- But some seeds, although not seeds of pure devotion, do contain knowledge of concepts that are partially devotional.

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- These seeds contain a semblance (ābhāsa) of the creeper of pure devotion and are therefore called ābhāsa-bhakti-latā-bījas.
- Two kinds of seeds produce a semblance of the creeper of devotion: transcendental knowledge polluted with the desire for material enjoyment (karma-bīja) and transcendental knowledge polluted with the desire for liberation (jñāna-bīja).
- How does a person acquire the seed of the semblance of devotion?
- Many religionists and philosophers from both Vedic and non-Vedic schools of thought consider devotional service a means to attain either sense gratification or liberation.
- Accordingly, they incorporate either the spirit of enjoyment or the spirit of indifference into the concept of devotion.

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- They propagate the seeds of the creeper of bhakty-ābhāsa.
- These creepers have as their flowers and fruit elevation to heavenly planets and liberation, not love of God.
- Persons who receive such seeds are less fortunate because had they received the pure bhakti-latā-bīja they would have cultivated pure devotion and quickly tasted the fruits of direct service to the Lord.
- Instead, they continue to rotate in the cycle of birth and death.
- Many well-known proponents of such semblance of devotion live under the cultural umbrella of Hinduism.

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- Impersonal philosophy (Māyāvāda) and Western materialism have polluted the eternal theology (sanātana-dharma) of the Vedas [Sanātana-dharma is a well-known name for devotional service in practice.
- See the introduction to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is] and have given rise to countless impure ideologies, many of which use the name bhakti.
- Although persons of Indian origin often say, “I know all about Kṛṣṇa,” what they often know is a distorted picture of the Absolute Truth, a philosophy that artificially tries to make everything one without distinction.
- To such so-called knowers of the truth there is no difference between themselves and God, and that distorted picture impels them to a kind of worship of the Lord in which they perform rituals, chant mantras, and offer prayers in the hopes of achieving material opulence or becoming God.

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- What such practitioners don't know is that their brand of spirituality is but a semblance of devotion, a cause for rebirth—often in lower species of life.
- Persons who have received the seed of the semblance of devotion can have a change of fortune by coming into contact with pure devotees, but they must hear submissively and openly admit their previous misconceptions.
- In this way they become eligible for devotional service and its perfections.
- In summary, the type of knowledge persons receive determines the type of seed they sow in their hearts.

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- Living entities fortunate enough to receive transcendental knowledge from pure devotees get the opportunity to practise pure devotional service, but those who receive impure or distorted knowledge continue to rotate in the cycle of birth and death.
- Only when they meet pure devotees does the door to pure devotional service open. It is for this reason that Kṛṣṇa extols transcendental knowledge:

na hi jñānena sadṛśam
pavitram iha vidyate
tat svayaṁ yoga-sāmsiddhaḥ
kālenātmani vindati

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- “In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge.
- Such knowledge is the mature fruit of all mysticism.
- And one who has become accomplished in the practice of devotional service enjoys this knowledge within himself in due course of time.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.38)
- This concludes the discussion of the seed of the creeper of devotion and the first chapter of Śuddha-bhakti-cintāmaṇi.
- The next chapter discusses the first sprouts from the creepers of pure and mixed devotion—pure and impure faith, respectively.

vivsa kahe sudha nicaya‘śraddhā-śabde—viśvāsa kahe sudṛḍha niścaya
kṛṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya

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- Śraddhā is confident, firm faith that by rendering transcendental loving service to Kṛṣṇa one automatically performs all subsidiary activities.
- Such faith is favourable to the discharge of devotional service. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.62