

# Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

by H.H Śivarāma Swami

# CHAPTER 4

## The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1

- Chapter two examined the seeds of the semblance of faith, and chapter three the creepers of mixed devotion produced from those seeds.
- This chapter begins with a study of the shadowy division (chāyā) of the semblance of faith, and goes on to show how properly cultivated shadowy faith leads to a semblance of devotion and on to pure devotional service.
- The chapter only touches on the reflected division (pratibimba), which is flawed by Māyāvāda philosophy and which is of no use to devotees serious about perfection.
- The main strengths given by the shadow of pure faith are that it facilitates regular and submissive contact with pure Vaiṣṇavas and that it invokes the potency of devotional service and the Lord's mercy.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1

- These three things, especially the company of pure Vaiṣṇavas, gradually qualify aspirants for pure devotional service, the careful practice of which bestows the ultimate goal of life.
- Each person's path from the semblance of faith to the semblance of devotion and on to pure devotional service is unique.
- In fact, all living entities are influenced by their karmic past consisting of unwanted attachments and a unique blend of the material modes.
- Nonetheless, revealed scripture and Vaiṣṇava authorities describe general categories of souls who turn to Kṛṣṇa.
- The varieties and stages of practice such souls pass through in the transition from a semblance of devotion (bhakti-ābhāsa) to pure devotion (śuddha-bhakti) is the subject of this chapter.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- Śrīla Prabhupāda often said that fools remain undiscovered as long as they do not speak. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.54, purport]
- Similarly, mixed devotees pass for true Vaiṣṇavas only until they expose their ulterior motives.
- Great souls learned in the science of devotion easily distinguish crowlike neophytes from swanlike Vaiṣṇavas.
- Kṛṣṇa Himself classifies the four pious but materially motivated persons who approach Him with a semblance of faith:

*catur-vidhā bhajante mām  
janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna  
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī  
jñānī ca bharatarṣabha*

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- “O best among the Bhāratas, four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service unto Me—the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute.”

*teṣāṃ jñānī nitya-yukta  
eka-bhaktir viśiṣyate  
priyo hi jñānino 'tyartham  
aham sa ca mama priyaḥ*

- “Of these, the one who is in full knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best.
- For I am very dear to him, and he is dear to Me.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 7.16–17)

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- The following description of these four general classifications of shadowy faith is based on Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s comments on these two verses from the Bhagavad-gītā. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.20–21]
- The distressed (ārta) are selfish workers whose prime goal in life is to enjoy the fruits of their work.
- In their endeavours to fulfil these desires they become frustrated—by poverty or illness, for example. Sobered by sorrow, they turn to Kṛṣṇa for relief.
- The inquisitive (jijñāsu) are pious but ignorant of the Absolute Truth.
- When their piety matures, the workings of the material world awaken in them the need to understand the reality of things.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1

### (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- Dissatisfied by the teachings of secular scriptures and led by curiosity, they turn to Kṛṣṇa for a clear understanding of God.
- Those who desire material gain (arthārthī) want to enjoy this world's pleasures—wealth, fame, sex, and heaven.
- To achieve, enhance, and preserve a heavenly standard of living, they under-take the ritualistic worship of Kṛṣṇa as He who fulfils all desires.
- The seekers of truth (jñānī) renounce worldly pleasures to realize the impersonal Brahman.
- These are not Māyāvādīs but the Brahmavādīs mentioned in chapter three.
- By strictly practising celibacy and other forms of asceticism, they begin to acquire knowledge of the Supreme, and when inspired by wisdom they turn to Kṛṣṇa and serve Him to acquire pure transcendental knowledge.



## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- It is important to note that of the above four classes Kṛṣṇa particularly extols the jñānīs because they serve in knowledge of Him.
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam gives examples of these four kinds of pious men.
- Gajendra represents the distressed, the Naimiṣāranya sages the inquisitive, Dhruva Mahārāja he who desires wealth, and the four Kumāras the seekers of truth. [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 3]
- By addressing these four kinds of worshipers as pious (sukṛti), Kṛṣṇa acknowledges that piety results in activities that lead to Him.
- In contrast, verse 7.15 describes activities that do not lead to Kṛṣṇa as impious and the perpetrators of such acts as miscreants (duṣkṛtina).

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī defines piety as the asset attained by engaging in activities that lead to pure devotion.
- He says, “Activities that are connected to transcendental personalities and that give rise to an intense desire to perform devotional service are called sukṛti.” [Bhakti-tattva-viveka, chapter 4]
- This spiritual piety, which awakens pure devotion, is bhakty-unmukhī sukṛti.
- It is distinct from material piety, which bestows either material opulence or the ability to merge into the impersonal Brahman. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.45, purport]
- Material piety may be a catalyst for the performance of spiritual piety, as explained in the previous chapter, but it is never a cause of devotion.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- Therefore, when the Bhagavad-gītā mentions four kinds of pious persons who turn to Kṛṣṇa, we should assume that each of them has gathered enough spiritual piety to do so.
- In Vedic society, “pious” is defined as the tendency to follow scriptural injunctions and to situate oneself properly in the varṇāśrama social order, of which Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate beneficiary.
- Such conduct, whether for personal gain or liberation, inevitably brings one into contact with the Lord and teaches one to be submissive to higher authorities—sannyāsīs, brāhmaṇas, and demigods.
- This is the purpose of the Vedic system.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- Materially motivated persons engaged in pious deeds—digging wells, giving in charity, chanting mantras, observing vows, and reading scriptures—also knowingly or unknowingly perform devotional acts that become the source of their spiritual piety.
- Here “devotional acts” means acts such as giving charity to Vaiṣṇavas, observing the vow of Ekādaśī, participating in fire sacrifices dedicated to Viṣṇu, chanting the Lord’s names, or listening to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. [See Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.47.24 with Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary]
- These spiritually pious acts are especially performed when pious people are not discriminating in their practices.
- For example, they give charity indiscriminately to anyone who begs from them, including the Vaiṣṇavas..

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1

### (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- These devotional acts constitute real piety, the effects of which eventually accumulate and mature into pure faith and pure devotion.
- Conditioned souls may conclude that pious deeds themselves give rise to devotion, but scripture and liberated souls disagree.
- Material piety and a mode-of-goodness atmosphere may bring people into contact with spiritual life, but because such things are material they cannot cause full spiritual devotion.
- Only acts of devotion can cause devotion to arise in the heart (bhaktyā sañjātayā bhaktyā). [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.31]
- For example, a gracious host, famous for his piety, may in time become a Vaiṣṇava. Seeing such a transformation, materialistic neighbors may conclude that material piety transformed the fellow into a bhakta. But Vaiṣṇavas will not agree.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- They will point out that the man's piety enabled him to invite Vaiṣṇavas, among his other guests, into his home.
- The unwitting devotional service of taking care of these Vaiṣṇavas gave the host spiritual piety (bhakty-unmukhī sukṛti).
- As his spiritual piety accumulated, it enabled the gentle host to properly hear from the Vaiṣṇavas.
- When mature, his spiritual piety then inspired him to sow the seed of devotion by embracing the Vaiṣṇavas' instructions.
- Thus a host once famous for his hospitality became famous for his devotion. This is the relationship between the two types of piety, material and spiritual.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- The materially pious come to pure devotion by one of two ways: by unknowingly performing devotional acts such as chanting the Lord’s holy name during a ceremonial observance, or by offering service with a purpose other than to please Kṛṣṇa, such as for acquiring a good wife.
- These are examples of the semblance of devotion (bhakty-ābhāsa).
- From the point of purity, the first way, ajñāta-sukṛti, is free of ulterior motives; thus even though devoid of faith, it is superior to the second way, which involves mixed devotion.
- For example, scripture tells of a sinful hunter gored to death by a boar.
- When the hunter cried out haram! “How horrible!” he was at once liberated from sinful reaction because he indirectly uttered the name of Lord Rāma. [Room Conversation, London, 15 August, 1971]

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- From the point of consistency, however, the second way, regular service with ulterior motives, is more valuable than a single act of unwitting but unmotivated devotion.
- For instance, those who utter the name only once, like the hunter, surely increase their devotional credits and thus chant again in the future, but because their chanting lacks faith they do not immediately achieve the steadiness required to advance further in devotional life.
- In the balance, then, regular motivated chanting, because it bestows advancement by its steadiness, is superior to occasional unmotivated chanting.
- Regular chanters continually increase their stock of spiritual piety, assuredly coming nearer and nearer to pure devotion.



## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- An example of this steady, motivated chanting is found in the history of Dhruva Mahārāja.
- At the tender age of five, Dhruva, the grandson of Svāyam-bhuva Manu, retired alone to Madhuvana forest and performed unprecedented austerities.
- His purpose, however, was motivated: he wanted to attain a kingdom greater than his father's.
- On the Lord's request, Nārada Muni arrived to guide the boy's sādhana and to initiate him into the chanting of a Viṣṇu mantra (om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya). Enthused, Dhruva chanted with such determination that his bhakty-unmukhī sukṛti matured in only six months.
- As a result, Lord Nārāyaṇa personally appeared to fulfil Dhruva's desire.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- However, the semblance of devotion had so purified the boy's heart that he felt deeply ashamed of his selfishness.
- Finally, after Dhruva rejected the desire for wealth, Viṣṇu blessed him with pure devotion and a spiritual planet on which to reside eternally.
- Dhruva Mahārāja's mature prayer of repentance expresses the depth of sincerity that finally awakens in motivated devotees and which enables them to cast off the semblance of devotion and beg for the treasure of śuddha-bhakti.

*sthānābhilāṣī tapasi sthito 'ham  
tvām prāptavān deva-munīndra-guhyam  
kācam vicinvann api divya-ratnam  
svāmin kṛtārtho 'smi varam na yāce*

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- “O my Lord, because I was seeking an opulent material position, I was performing severe types of penance and austerity.
- Now I have gotten You, who are very difficult for the great demigods, saintly persons, and kings to attain.
- I was searching after a piece of glass, but instead I have found a most valuable jewel.
- Therefore I am so satisfied that I do not wish to ask any benediction from You.”  
(Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya 7.28)
- Śukadeva Gosvāmī details how Dhruva became free of material desire.
- First, the touch of the Lord’s conch shell made the boy perfectly aware of the Vedic conclusion, and he then understood the Absolute Truth and His relationship with all living entities (daivīm parijñāta-parātma-nirṇayaḥ). [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.9.5]

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- Thus situated in self-realization, Dhruva recognized the folly of fruitive quests and the supremacy of pure devotion.
- Finally, freed from all material desire and blessed with transcendental knowledge, Dhruva became wise.
- In this way, steady mixed devotion quickly led Dhruva to the ultimate means of perfection.
- As already mentioned, in the Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa gives special recognition to the wise.
- Dhruva's history explains why. Until he became wise, his semblance of devotion could not be purified.
- The following paragraphs describe how this type of spiritual reformation takes place.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- Thus situated in self-realization, Dhruva recognized the folly of fruitive quests and the supremacy of pure devotion.
- Finally, freed from all material desire and blessed with transcendental knowledge, Dhruva became wise.
- In this way, steady mixed devotion quickly led Dhruva to the ultimate means of perfection.
- As already mentioned, in the Bhagavad-gītā Kṛṣṇa gives special recognition to the wise.
- Dhruva's history explains why.
- Until he became wise, his semblance of devotion could not be purified. The following paragraphs describe how this type of spiritual reformation takes place.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- The wise jñānīs of whom Kṛṣṇa speaks have fully realized the nature of the self.
- They know that Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Self worthy of veneration.
- To know Kṛṣṇa better, they surrender to Him. Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes two outstanding characteristics the wise possess: full knowledge of spirit and a relative purity of purpose. [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 3]
- Kṛṣṇa summarizes the effect these two traits have on the wise with the words, “I am very dear to the jñānīs” (priyo hi jñānino ‘tyartham).
- To seek the truth, although still an impure motivation—that is, it is aimed at something other than Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure—is the next best thing to a pure motive because it is on the platform of passive adoration.
- This neutral affection for Kṛṣṇa manifests itself in the wise due to their purity of heart.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- To the degree that the heart is pure, to that degree it will develop faith.
- To the degree that the heart develops faith, to that degree it can realize the Absolute.
- And to the degree that one possesses transcendental knowledge, to that degree one can love Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa confirms this in the Gītā: “Being fully absorbed in Me and taking refuge in Me, many, many persons in the past became purified by knowledge of Me—and thus they all attained transcendental love for Me.” [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.10]
- Therefore Kṛṣṇa extols the wise for their knowledgeable devotion, which is still only a semblance of devotion, but is a semblance of a higher order.
- By singling out seekers of the truth, Kṛṣṇa indirectly instructs the other three classes of pious men to cultivate knowledge.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Without being elevated to the position of a jñānī or wise man, a devotee cannot stick to the principle of worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 3]
- In other words, if devotees do not become selfless through wisdom, material desires will inevitably distract them from serving the Lord.
- In most commentators’ opinion, the distressed, inquisitive, and seekers of wealth all become wise by cultivating spiritual knowledge. [Bhagavad-gītā (7.16.) commentaries of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura]
- Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, however, says that those looking to gain wealth or to mitigate distress must first become inquisitive.



## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Four Impure Motives for Devotion)

- This inquisitiveness leads them to knowledge.
- Knowledge then leads them to wisdom, and wisdom to pure bhakti.
- Either stance, however, recognizes that in order to cast off the shackles of shadowy devotion realized knowledge is essential.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- The subject matter of the semblance of devotional service is confidential because few persons are pleased to hear it.
- Those whose goal of life is pure devotion will consider this study helpful, but others may find it disturbing.
- The disturbed may even reject what they read because they mistakenly think that their impure practices are already taking them to Kṛṣṇa.
- Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam proclaims as a kind of cheating (kaiṭava) the motivation that impels the four kinds of pious persons to turn to Kṛṣṇa. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.2]
- Śrī Jīva further elaborates on what constitutes cheating religion:

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- “If a person has even one ulterior motive in devotional service to benefit himself or someone else [other than Kṛṣṇa and the Vaiṣṇavas], then that is called cheating” (tan-mātrāpekṣatvaṁ ced ekataratvaṁ svīyānyadiya-phalāpekṣatvaṁ cet sa-kaitavatvam). [Bhakti-sandarbha, anuccheda 217]
- Based on this definition, the semblance of devotional service falls into the category of cheating (sa-kaitava), whereas the pure devotional service defined in chapter one is guileless (akaitava).
- Therefore devotional practices performed with pride or envy, with a motive to enjoy matter or with a desire to free oneself from conditioned life, are all cheating processes, albeit in decreasing degrees of severity.
- But the foremost cheating propensity is the desire to become one with the Supreme. Śrīdhara Svāmī makes this clear in his explanation of the prefix pra- in the word projjhita at the beginning of his commentary on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.2.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- The cheating mentality is born of contact with the modes of material nature. Ignorance, passion, and goodness exert their influence on devotees in different ways and result in various types of devotional service.
- Kapiladeva describes this phenomenon to His mother Devahūti:
- “Devotional service executed by a person who is envious, proud, violent, and angry, and who is a separatist, is considered to be in the mode of darkness.
- The worship of temple deities by a separatist, with a motive for material enjoyment, fame, or opulence, is devotion in the mode of passion.
- When a devotee worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead and offers the results of his activities in order to free himself from the inebrieties of fruitive activities, his devotion is in the mode of goodness.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.29.8–10)

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- Nonetheless, although the cheating of devotees with a semblance of devotion seems to contradict the initial declaration of the Bhāgavatam, later in Canto Two Śukadeva Gosvāmī supports it.
- Why? Because a semblance of devotion brings impure practitioners into contact with the highest good and points them in the right direction.
- Thus Śukadeva gives words of encouragement to all varieties of devotees:

*akāmaḥ sarva-kāmo vā  
mokṣa-kāma udāra-dhīḥ  
tīvrena bhakti-yogena  
yajeta puruṣam param*

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- “A person who has broader intelligence, whether he be full of all material desire, without any material desire, or desiring liberation, must by all means worship the supreme whole, the Personality of Godhead.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 2.3.10)
- Here the word *udāra-dhīḥ* (“intelligent” or “considerate”) is used in the same sense as the word *udārāḥ* in Bhagavad-gītā 7.18, where Kṛṣṇa praises as “magnanimous souls” the four types of pious men.
- Even though they take up devotional service for their own sense gratification, the Lord encourages them with kind words.
- Inspired by this kindness, devotees remain confident that their desires will be fulfilled. Thus they remain exacting in their motivated *sādhana*.
- This is how Kṛṣṇa encourages the indirect path: He induces less intelligent persons seeking to fulfil their own desires to take up devotional service.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- Meanwhile, He lets the potency of devotional practice purify their hearts until they become indifferent to their mixed devotion and begin to practise pure devotion.
- In truth, devotion plays an essential role in any discipline, spiritual or otherwise.
- It is devotion only that bestows the results of a discipline, whether those results are enjoyment, mystic power, or liberation.
- Without at least a trace of devotion, karma, jñāna, and yoga are fruitless.
- Why? Because it is Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa alone who fulfils the desires of all living entities.  
[Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 4.11]
- And since Kṛṣṇa responds only to devotional service, a spiritual discipline must contain at least a trace of devotion before it can induce Kṛṣṇa to award the fruit of a practitioner's labour.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- “Vaiṣṇava ācāryas quote many verses to substantiate this truth. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.72.4 and 11.20.32–33]
- For instance, the Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya states that for persons devoid of devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, birth in a great family or nation, knowledge of revealed scripture, performance of austerities and penance, and chanting of Vedic mantras are like ornaments on a dead body. [Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya 3.11] And Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam says,

*svargāpavargayoḥ puṁsām  
rasāyām bhuvī sampadām  
sarvāsām api siddhīnām  
mūlām tac-caraṇārcanam*



## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- “Devotional service to His lotus feet is the root cause of all the perfections a person can find in heaven, in liberation, in the subterranean regions, and on earth.”  
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.81.19)
- It is clear, then, that while pure devotion is the ultimate engagement for all souls, the Vedic system recommends to some the semblance of devotion and to others the path of pure devotion.
- The Vedas do this to accommodate the various degrees to which the conditioned souls are able to understand and adopt spiritual principles.
- The question remains, though, whether this recommendation of the ancient Vedas applies to the twenty-first century, especially for Lord Caitanya’s followers.
- The teachings of Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda show that in general it does not.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- While travelling in South India, Lord Caitanya met the great scholar Rāmānanda Rāya.
- As the two sat together on the banks of the Godāvarī, the Lord asked Rāmānanda to recite a verse from scripture concerning the ultimate goal of life.
- Rāmānanda cited a verse that stated that worship of Lord Viṣṇu through one’s prescribed duties in the varṇāśrama system is the means to perfection.
- Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied, “This is external. You had better tell Me of some other means” (eho bāhya, āge kaha āra). [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, ML 8.57–5]
- Knowing Lord Caitanya to be a Vaiṣṇava sannyāsī, Rāmānanda Rāya continued to present more elevated yet still impure types of devotional service (bhakty-ābhāsa).

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- Lord Caitanya continued to reject each response until Rāmānanda Rāya finally described loving devotion as life’s ultimate goal and pure devotional service as the means to achieve it.
- Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura comments that Lord Caitanya actually accepted Rāmānanda’s initial descriptions of the process of devotional service, but because these ideas were not part of His transcendental saṅkīrtana movement, which is based on pure devotion, the Lord insisted on hearing more. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, ML 8.68, purport]
- In other words, Rāmānanda was describing the indirect path to pure devotion, and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to hear of the direct path, the path that He had imported from the spiritual world. [Prārthanā 4]
- The indirect path of devotional service, the “yoga ladder” as Śrīla Prabhupāda calls it, is material. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 6.4, purport]

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- It is a process of gradual elevation for persons unable to take to the saṅkīrtana movement and be directly promoted to the spiritual platform. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 6.3, purport]
- Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself describes this indirect process in the Gītā, and as Caitanya Mahāprabhu He repeated it while instructing Sanātana Gosvāmī. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.26–60]
- However, even though such an alternative is authorized by śāstra, neither Śrīla Prabhupāda nor Lord Caitanya recommends it.
- Readers should carefully note and remember this point.
- Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda points out in detail the drawbacks of the indirect path to pure devotional service.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- “In Kali-yuga the indirect devotional paths of speculation and work are extremely narrow and hazardous.
- Originally they were intended to lead one to the shrine of devotional service through the company of saintly persons or through the process of offering to the Lord the results of work performed without desire.
- In Kali-yuga, however, both paths are contaminated.
- One rarely sees saintly persons because pseudo-spiritualists have replaced them.
- And religious duties generally are no longer performed for purifying the consciousness but merely for enjoying material results.
- Therefore these secondary paths are no longer useful.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- Even the process of deity worship, which gave the highest spiritual success in Dvāpara-yuga, has become impure and degraded.” [Śrī Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi, chapter 1]
- The reader may question why Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings emphasize instituting varṇāśrama when Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura declared it ineffective.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda saw that varṇāśrama could be made effective if its external form was adjusted to facilitate its essential purpose.
- The underlying purpose of varṇāśrama is to elevate persons at any level of spiritual advancement and in any division of human society to pure devotional service.
- The external form is merely the social structure that facilitates this purpose.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- Although Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda notes that the traditional form of varṇāśrama has decayed, Śrīla Prabhupāda saw that its underlying purpose must be fulfilled.
- In order to accomplish this mission, Śrīla Prabhupāda preserved the essential purpose of varṇāśrama in a form adapted to modern times.
- ISKCON is the form Śrīla Prabhupāda chose for organizing Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana movement into a society.
- To fulfil varṇāśrama's essential purpose in ISKCON, he chose to institute four regulative principles and the chanting of a minimum number of Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantras.
- In the traditional varṇāśrama system, the general public was first trained in pious deeds or a semblance of devotion.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- This meant treading the indirect path by practising cleanliness, truthfulness, austerity, and mercy; afterwards, they were engaged in the pure devotional practices of hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa.
- In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s contemporary varṇāśrama structure, however, devotees are at once engaged in chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa and taught that devotion means pleasing the Lord.
- They cultivate this knowledge by selflessly serving the saṅkīrtana mission.
- In this way ISKCON’s members are firmly situated on the direct path.
- By the holy name’s incomparable potency, pure faith at once awakens in devotees and makes them eligible for the activities of pure devotion.



## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- Thus Śrīla Prabhupāda’s followers do not need to wade through the quagmire of rules and regulations governing pious acts and the semblance of devotion.
- They need only chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Jīva Gosvāmī confirms this unparalleled potency of nāma-saṅkīrtana to instil pure faith: “[B]y performance of kīrtana one attains faith in the Lord far greater than that attained by meditation or any other spiritual method.
- Kīrtana brings to an end the cycle of repeated birth and death.
- By performing meditation in the Satya-yuga one does not attain as deep a faith in the Supreme Lord.” [Bhakti-sandarbha, anuccheda 272]
- Many aspects of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s contemporary varṇāśrama structure are not mentioned here, such as the importance of self-sufficient farm communities.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (The Indirect Path to Kṛṣṇa)

- This book stresses the heart of the varṇāśrama system—chanting and distributing the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra—which elevates and fixes devotees in pure devotional service.
- With the help of this knowledge, devotees may determine whether they are in fact connected through varṇāśrama to pure devotional service, as Śrīla Prabhupāda desired, or whether they are drifting in the realms of mixed devotional service, of which Lord Caitanya made light.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- One can also divide the four kinds of pious persons described in the Gītā into two categories, fruitive workers (karma-yogīs) and empiricists (jñāna-yogīs).
- In this division, the distressed, the seeker of wealth, and the inquisitive are categorized as fruitive workers, and the wise as empiricists. [See Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary on Bhagavad-gītā 7.16]
- Śrīla Prabhupāda adds a third category to these two broad ones and assigns to them generally accepted names.
- The three categories are: devotional service mixed with fruitive work (karma-miśra-bhakti), devotional service mixed with empiric knowledge (jñāna-miśra-bhakti), and devotional service mixed with mystic yoga (yoga-miśra-bhakti). [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.10.20–22, purport]

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Kṛṣṇa describes devotional service mixed with fruitive work in the Gītā:

*yat karoṣi yad aśnāsi  
yaj juhoṣi dadāsi yat  
yat tapasyasi kaunteya  
tat kuruṣva mad-arpaṇam*

- “Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and whatever austerities you perform—do that, O son of Kuntī, as an offering to Me.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 9.27)
- By such sacrifice, even when imperfectly performed, materially attached persons purify themselves by staying in touch with the Lord.
- This process of doing everything as an offering to Kṛṣṇa (arpaṇam) is ideal behaviour for devotees engaged in devotional service mixed with fruitive work.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Śrī Kavi says, “In accordance with the particular nature one has acquired in conditioned life, whatever one does with body, words, mind, senses, intelligence, or purified consciousness one should offer to the Supreme, thinking, ‘This is for the pleasure of Lord Nārāyaṇa.’” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.36]
- In other words, devotees should offer every thought and deed to Kṛṣṇa.
- Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī, in his commentary on the above verse, says that not only should devotees offer to the Lord those things prescribed according to religious paths, ceremonies, and regulations, but they should dedicate to the Lord all activities performed according to their personal natures.
- This implies that, barring sinful or wicked acts, even whimsical activities or items to one’s own liking may be offered to Kṛṣṇa.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- This type of devotional service mixed with fruitive work is known as that in which the quality of devotion is attributed to fruitive work (āropa-siddha-bhakti). [Bhakti-tattva-viveka, chapter 1]
- It should be noted that here the word siddha does not mean “perfection” but “accomplishment.”
- In other words, one accomplishes (siddha) to attribute (āropa) devotion (bhakti) to mundane acts.
- Neophyte devotees, especially those contaminated by Māyā-vāda philosophy, have no faith in or knowledge of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal form.
- They cannot see that the Lord’s form is transcendental even when fashioned with material elements..

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Thus when such materialistic devotees see the deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, for example, they consider the deities to be representations of the Absolute Truth, not the Lord directly.
- As they go through the motions of arcanā, offering food and āraṭi to the deities, these devotees think that they are engaged in devotional service, but there can be no devotional service without faith and knowledge; there can be only a semblance of devotion.
- Such devotion is actually called “attributed.” Still, although āropa-siddha-bhakti is not pure, it helps fruitive devotees become regulated in rituals and accustomed to surrendering the results of their work.
- It paves the way to steadiness on the path to pure devotion.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Āropa-siddha-bhakti may be acceptable for materialists, but persons following pure devotional principles should not succumb to it.
- True, devotional service is powerful enough to purify even those who imagine mundane acts to be devotional service, but devotees who fall into the same imaginations purposefully neutralize their devotional credits by offending Bhaktidevī.
- They are actually committing the seventh offence to the holy name and purposefully sinning while thinking devotion will neutralize the reactions to their errant behaviour (nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhiḥ). [Padma Purāṇa, Brahma-khaṇḍa]
- The second category of the semblance of devotional service is devotion mixed with empiric knowledge (jñāna-miśra-bhakti). Kṛṣṇa defines it in this way:



## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā  
na śocati na kāṅkṣati  
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu  
mad-bhaktim labhate parām*

- “One who is thus transcendently situated at once realizes the Supreme Brahman and becomes fully joyful.
- He never laments or desires to have anything.
- He is equally disposed toward every living entity.
- In that state he attains pure devotional service unto Me.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.54)

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Kṛṣṇa also says that speculative philosophers must practise their brand of mixed service for many lives before coming to the stage of full surrender. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 7.19]
- Surrender takes place only in the association of pure devotees, who fan the spark of devotion in the wise until in the liberated state these persons acquire pure devotion (parā bhakti).
- Pure devotion then quickly matures, and in ecstasy devotees cast aside all concepts of liberation.
- Even Śrīpāda Śaṅkarācārya, founder of the Māyāvāda school, admits that those in pursuit of liberation, up to the truly liberated, should engage in devotional service.
- He specifically recommends deity worship: “Even a liberated soul merged in the impersonal Brahman effulgence is attracted to the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- He thus installs a deity and renders service to the Lord” (muktā api līlayā vigrahaṁ kṛtvā bhagavantam bhajante). [This is a quotation from Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary on Nṛsimha-tāpanī Upaniṣad, cited in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 24.112]
- Among devotees with a semblance of devotion, Kṛṣṇa favours the jñāna-miśra-bhaktas over the karma-miśra-bhaktas because their hearts are relatively pure.
- Bereft of the company of pure devotees, however, their affinity for liberation can make them callous to Kṛṣṇa’s names, forms, and pastimes.
- Such indifference can lead to faultfinding, and such offences make them fall from liberation to birth in demonic species.
- Devotees attached to liberation practise such spiritual disciplines as strict silence, tolerance, austerity, celibacy, and equanimity, characteristic of the mode of goodness.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam lists twenty-six such qualities and practices. [SB 11.3.23–26]
- Of them, one is requisite: “Firm faith that one will achieve all success in life by following the scriptures that describe the glories of Bhagavān” (śraddhām bhāgavate śāstre).
- The other twenty-five are helpful, but are not requisite. Rather, these other qualities and practices take on a likeness to devotion by contact with this first practice.
- As already made clear, devotional service is independent of all material causes; it appears of its own accord.
- In fact, the qualities of and practices in the mode of goodness become valuable when they are in touch with devotion; when disconnected they are like decorations on a dead body.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- The empiricists, untrained in the glories of pure devotion, think that cultivating the qualities associated with devotion is equivalent to practising devotion.
- Such semblance of devotion is called saṅga-siddha-bhakti, associating the qualities belonging to jñāna (and karma) with devotional service. [Bhakti-tattva-viveka, ch 1]
- An example of such associative semblance of devotion is found in Lord Caitanya’s pastimes.
- An austere brāhmaṇa once desired to see the Lord’s nocturnal kīrtana.
- The brāhmaṇa, a strict celibate free of sin, subsisted only by drinking milk.
- Every day he would request Śrīvāsa Ṭhākura to let him see Lord Caitanya’s dancing. Finally the Ṭhākura agreed: “I know that no sins stay in your body. You are qualified to see the Lord’s kīrtana.”

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- That night the brāhmaṇa hid in Śrīvāsa’s house and observed the Lord’s ecstasy.
- But Caitanya Mahāprabhu detected the presence of an unqualified person and questioned Śrīvāsa, who replied, “There is only one good brāhmaṇa brahmacārī.
- He lives by drinking milk and is completely free of sin.”
- Lord Caitanya angrily called out, “Quickly, quickly! Take him from this house! What power has he to see My dancing? Has he become My devotee by drinking milk?” The Lord raised His arms and declared, “Merely by drinking milk one can never attain Me.
- If even an outcaste takes shelter of Me, he becomes Mine and I become his. Know that without doubt.
- But if a sannyāsī does not take shelter of Me, then he is not Mine.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- I speak the truth, what austerities did Gajendra or the monkeys or the gopas perform? How did they attain Me? Tell Me.
- Demons also perform austerities, but what happens to them? Therefore, without taking shelter of Me, no one acquires the qualification to attain Me.” [The following three paragraphs are based on Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa 23.17–57]
- In this pastime the brāhmaṇa, although not surrendered to the Lord, thought his many austerities and sinless ways to be devotional service.
- This is an example of saṅga-siddha-bhakti.
- Inspired by the internal potency, the learned Śrīvāsa smuggled the brāhmaṇa into his house so that Lord Caitanya could explain the inadequacy of such a semblance of devotion.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Austerity, control of the senses, and freedom from sin are good qualities, but they do not constitute devotion.
- Without the pure faith that inspires surrender, they are unable to invoke the Lord’s mercy.
- Therefore Lord Caitanya said, “One cannot become My devotee by drinking milk.”
- Kṛṣṇa describes the third general category of the semblance of devotion, service mixed with mystic yoga, in the following verse:

*sarva-bhūta-sthitam yo mām  
bhajaty ekatvam āsthitah  
sarvathā vartamāno ’pi  
sa yogī mayi vartate*



## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- “Such a yogī, who engages in the worshipful service of the Supersoul, knowing that I and the Supersoul are one, remains always in Me in all circumstances.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 6.31)
- Like fruitive work and empiric speculation, the eightfold yoga system (aṣṭāṅga-yoga) depends on devotion for its perfection.
- Beginners in devotional service mixed with mystic yoga, like advanced karma-miśra-bhaktas, dutifully perform detached work until they attain steadiness.
- Then they may renounce their duties and retire from the world.
- Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda comments that devotional service for yogīs—both beginners (ārurukṣu) and perfected (ārūḍha)—includes chanting Kṛṣṇa’s names and hearing His pastimes.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- When yogīs attain steadiness in meditation (dhyāna) and withdraw their senses from the external world, they interact internally with the object of their devotion.
- Perfected yogīs may then meditate on the Supersoul, with or without form, depending on their faith.
- And if even more fortunate they may meditate on the original form of Kṛṣṇa.
- In the Eleventh Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Kṛṣṇa tells Uddhava about the avadhūta-brāhmaṇa who recommends eightfold mystic yoga as an offering to the Lord.
- The Third Canto describes the perfection of Kardama Muni’s mystic practices, in which the object of his meditation, Lord Viṣṇu, appeared before him and later became his son, Kapiladeva.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- The risk of practising devotional service mixed with mystic yoga is that its perfections, such as the ability to get anything one wants (prāpti-siddhi), easily distract the yogī.
- As Kṛṣṇa says, “By various methods, some yogīs free the body from disease and old age and keep it perpetually youthful.
- Thus they engage in yoga for the purpose of achieving material mystic perfections.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.28.41]
- Even mystics advanced in yoga are at risk. Saubhari Muni, for example, while meditating in the water, observed a pair of mating fish and lost all spiritual strength.
- Victimized by the very material energy he thought he had mastered, he used his yogic powers to indulge in sex.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Since either liberation or material enjoyment is the motive for devotional service mixed with mystic yoga, such yoga is sometimes categorized as devotional service mixed with empiric speculation or fruitive work.
- The qualities of ascription (āropa-siddha) and association (saṅga-siddha) may also be identified with devotional service mixed with mystic yoga.
- For instance, when a yogī associates his āsanās with devotion he performs saṅga-siddha-bhakti.
- Devotional service mixed with fruitive work is generally under the influence of the mode of passion.
- When mixed with knowledge and detachment, devotional service is under the influence of the mode of goodness.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- Devotional service mixed with empiric speculation and mystic yoga also falls into this latter category.
- Exceptions to this rule are the empiric speculation of Kamsa, Hiranyakaśipu, and Rāvaṇa.
- Driven by greed and lust, though powerful in their own right they remained helpless victims of the lower modes of nature.
- Devotees should not think the semblance of devotion to be a lazy man's way to perfection.
- The Vedic requirements regarding mixed devotion are not lenient; rather, it is just the opposite—they are quite strict.
- Consider the following statement about karma-miśra-bhakti:

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- “Whatever one finds pleasing or enjoyable he should immediately offer to the Supreme Lord, and even his wife, children, home, and very life air he should offer at the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.28]
- Devotees must be detached and astute to live up to this standard.
- Such statements should eradicate any thought that mixed devotion is an easy way out. In truth, nothing is easier than the line of pure devotion given by Śrīla Prabhupāda, not even its inferior counterpart, the semblance of devotion.
- In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, “This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a great art of life, very easy and sublime.
- This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement gives you everything you want, without any artificial endeavour.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- It is transcendently colourful and full of transcendental pleasure.
- We prosecute these Kṛṣṇa consciousness activities through singing, dancing, eating, and talking philosophy received through authorized disciplic succession, and therefore it gives us everything we want, without any artificial change of our natural instincts.
- The consciousness is there in you, but it is now dirty consciousness, and what you have to do now is to cleanse it from all dirty things and make it clear Kṛṣṇa consciousness in pleasant method by chanting the glorified holy name of God: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.
- These performances we can practise anywhere.
- It does not matter either in a temple, or in a street, or in a park, or at home.

## SBC 4 – The Semblance of Devotion - Part 1 (Three Types of Semblance of Devotion)

- But to assemble together and sit together, we require a place for congregation; therefore a temple of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is required to be established in various centres of the world, irrespective of the particular countries, culture, philosophy, and religion.
- Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so universal and perfect that it can appeal to everyone, irrespective of his position; therefore I fervently appeal to you, all present in this meeting, to extend your cooperation for successful execution of this great movement. [Speech to members of ISKCON London, recorded in Los Angeles, 23/12/1968]  
*kāma lāgi' kṛṣṇe bhaje, pāya kṛṣṇa-rase*  
*kāma chāḍi' 'dāsa' haite haya abhilāṣe*
- When someone engages in Lord Kṛṣṇa's devotional service for the satisfaction of the senses and instead acquires a taste for serving Kṛṣṇa, he gives up his material desires and willingly offers himself as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. CC, Madhya-līlā 22.41