

Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

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Chapter 7- Pure Devotional Service Defined - Part 2

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- The primary characteristics of pure devotional service do not in themselves fully define *uttama-bhakti*, because favourable service to Kṛṣṇa (*ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*) is also one of the symptoms of the semblance of devotion.
- For this reason Rūpa Gosvāmī presents secondary characteristics to complement the primary ones and thus clearly distinguish *uttama-bhakti* from all types of *bhakty-ābhāsa*.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Pure devotional service should be free from the desire for any material benefit or for sense gratification, as these desires are cultivated through fruitive activities and philosophical speculation.” [The Nectar of Devotion, introduction]
- This thought surely sets pure devotion apart from the tainted motives and mixed practices of the mere semblance of devotion.

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- The secondary characteristics of pure devotional service are that it is always free from ulterior desires (anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam) and the coverings of speculative and fruitive pursuits (jñāna-karmādy- anāvṛtam).
- The analysis of these qualities begins with how pure devotion is free from ulterior motives.
- Because desire is inherent in the living entity, no one can be altogether free from desire.
- But devotees can change the quality of their desire.
- To be a pure devotee means to be free from all types of desire except the desire to please Kṛṣṇa, His bona fide representatives, and the Vaiṣṇavas.
- This is the meaning of anyābhilāṣa-śūnyam.

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- Rūpa Gosvāmī, however, added the suffix –tā to the phrase, making it anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam.
- This changes the meaning from simply “desire” to “the tendency to desire.”
- This adjustment accommodates other desires within the scope of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, desires such as the basic urges of life—eating, sleeping, and self-preservation. [Śrī Jīva’s and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary to Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11]
- Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura gives an example of ābhilāṣitā.²¹⁴ In the course of performing devotional service, devotees may at times be placed in dangerous situations.

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- They may have no other recourse than to pray, “O Kṛṣṇa! Please save me!” This prayer does not express a desire to please Kṛṣṇa, but it is a desire integral to life, the survival instinct.
- Because such desires indirectly relate to serving Kṛṣṇa, they do not disqualify a person from pure devotional service.
- In other words, desires for the basic necessities of life—the things devotees use to maintain body and soul—are permissible in pure devotional service.
- This must be the case since the body is an instrument through which devotees perform devotional service for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure.
- The reader should note, however, that desires for excess or luxury do not apply to the definition of pure devotional service.

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- The reader should note, however, that desires for excess or luxury do not apply to the definition of pure devotional service.
- The first verse of Śrī Īsopaniṣad states that devotees should be careful to desire only what Kṛṣṇa has set aside as their quota (tena tyaktena bhujñīthāḥ).
- However, since each conditioned soul is unique, and each devotee has a different service, what constitutes excess for one person may not be excess for another.
- This too should be borne in mind.
- Devotees frequently ask whether they should also give up the desire to advance in devotional service, and ultimately the desire to attain prema.

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- The answer is an emphatic no.
- The desire to practise and perfect pure devotion is inspired in the heart by pure devotion itself.
- Therefore devotees should cultivate, not reject, this desire.
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam supports this understanding:

smarantaḥ smārayantaś ca
mitho 'ghaughā-haraṁ harim
bhaktyā sañjātayā bhaktyā
bibhraty utpulakāṁ tanum

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- “The devotees of the Lord constantly discuss the glories of the Personality of Godhead among themselves.
- Thus they constantly remember the Lord and remind one another of His qualities and pastimes.
- In this way, by their devotion to the principles of bhakti-yoga, the devotees please the Personality of Godhead, who takes away from them everything inauspicious.
- Being purified of all impediments, the devotees awaken to pure love of Godhead, and thus, even within this world, their spiritualized bodies exhibit symptoms of transcendental ecstasy, such as standing of the bodily hairs on end.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.3.31)

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- And in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, “[Lord Caitanya] explains that in pure devotional service there can be no desire other than the desire to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (Teachings of Lord Caitanya)
- Another frequently asked question is “Do the unwanted desires that linger in the heart disqualify devotees from practising pure devotion?”
- Again, the answer is a hearty no.
- In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam Kṛṣṇa reassures Uddhava that sincere devotees who are unable to renounce sense gratification fully, but who are sincerely repentant, may continue to worship the Lord with pure faith. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.20.27–30]
- The power of pure devotion terminates the chain of fruitive actions and quickly removes material desires.

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- Such devotees are then firmly situated in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- In other words, the meaning of “the absence of desires” (anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam), especially with the qualifying suffix -tā, is that those who want nothing other than to please Kṛṣṇa are considered pure.
- In the neophyte stage there will be many unwanted things in the heart (anarthas).
- Still, to gain access to pure devotion, novices must simply insulate their desires to serve Kṛṣṇa from the influence of past deeds.
- They have no other recourse.
- Furthermore, the compound karmādy-anāvṛtam, which indicates that fruitive work or its reactions should not cover activities in devotional service, implies the presence of anarthas during the process of devotional service.

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- This again shows that as long as the influence of anarthas does not cover the devotees' desires to please Kṛṣṇa, the presence of material desires does not disqualify them from performing pure devotional service.
- That said, it is essential that sincere devotees not exploit Kṛṣṇa's kindness.
- By His mercy, He makes the activities of pure devotional service available even to those who are impure.
- Yet devotees should never become complacent.
- To rid themselves of bad habits, they must maintain a correct mentality and make a strenuous effort.
- Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, in his commentary on the above-mentioned verses, illustrates this guileless attitude of pure devotees:

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- “By my previous shameful life my heart is polluted with many illusory attachments.
- Personally I have no power to stop them.
- Only Lord Kṛṣṇa within my heart can remove such inauspicious contamination.
- But whether the Lord removes such attachments immediately or lets me go on being afflicted by them, I will never give up my devotional service to Him.
- Even if the Lord places millions of obstacles in my path, and even if because of my offences I go to hell, I will never for a moment stop serving Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- I am not interested in mental speculation and fruitive activities; even if Lord Brahmā personally comes before me offering such engagements, I will not be even slightly interested.

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- Although I am attached to material things I can see very clearly that they lead to no good because they simply give me trouble and disturb my devotional service to the Lord.
- Therefore, I sincerely repent my foolish attachments to so many material things, and I am patiently awaiting Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.20.27–28, purport]
- By now it should be clear that desires for sense enjoyment (bhukti) and liberation (mukti) are averse to the cultivation of pure devotion.
- Living in sacred places such as Vṛndāvana or solitary places in the Himalayas would therefore seem to be most conducive to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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- Those unable to live in such ideal settings may then wonder how it is possible for them to remain aloof from sense objects and sense enjoyment while living and working, for example, in a sprawling modern metropolis.
- Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's answer to this question provides an incisive understanding of Lord Caitanya's teachings on renunciation in pure devotion.
- He does not praise those who have retired to the forest in order to reject sense objects.
- Rather, Śrī Rūpa calls such persons pseudorenunciants.
- He recommends that devotees stay where they are and cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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- According to the ācārya, an impenetrable armour is created by combining pure devotional service and a proper attitude toward the material world.
- Protected by this armour, even conditioned souls can live amid sense objects and remain detached from them.
- This is the Vaiṣṇava way to give up and stay free from the desire for material enjoyment, a way the Lord Himself prescribes.
- Śrī Kṛṣṇa gives the example of a lotus flower that lives on but does not touch the surface of a pond.
- Above the water, the lotus is always dry. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 5.10]

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- Rūpa Gosvāmī formulates this concept of detachment as follows:

rucim udvahatas tatra
janasya bhajane hareḥ
viṣayeṣu gariṣṭho 'pi
rāgaḥ prāyo vilīyate

- “When a person develops a taste for hari-bhajana, at that time his excessive attachment for the objects of the senses fades.”

anāsaktasya viṣayān
yathārham upayuñjataḥ
nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe
yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate

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- “When one is not attached to anything but at the same time accepts everything in relation to Kṛṣṇa, one is rightly situated above possessiveness.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.254–55)
- In vivid contrast to the above definition of devotional renunciation, rejecting things without knowledge of their relationship to Kṛṣṇa is incomplete.
- Furthermore, such blind renunciation, like speculative knowledge, hardens the heart, an effect incongruous with pure devotion, which softens the heart. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.249]
- This strengthens the idea that such renunciation is false (phalgu-vairāgya).
- False renunciation is weak and cannot long endure.
- The use of the word phalgu here is interesting. Phalgu means “meagre.”

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- It is also the name of a branch of the Ganges that flows through Gayā, the place where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment.
- The Phālgū River is seasonal and often appears dry, a bed of loose sand.
- But beneath the sand, close to the surface, water still flows.
- This misleading appearance of the river is compared to false renunciation, phalgu-vairāgya.
- Just as the bed of the Phālgū River appears to be dried up, false renunciants appear to be devoid of desire.
- However, just as by placing one's hand in the sands of the Phālgū one will find water, by examining the hearts of false renunciants one will find teeming desires for sense objects they had apparently shunned.

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- The reader may wonder how to put superior renunciation into practise.
- First, we must recognize that embodied souls cannot completely renounce sense objects; they can only change their desires in relation to them.
- Instead of thinking of how to enjoy sense objects, devotees think of how to gather sense objects for Kṛṣṇa's pleasure.
- Sense objects are related to the Lord because they are manifestations of His energy.
- Seen in that light, they are His.
- This means that all living entities are His servants and should be engaged in His service, all money is His and should serve as a resource to spread His praises, and all types of foods are His and should be offered back to Him as an act of love.

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- If devotees can see in this way, the world and everything it contains becomes simultaneously an embodiment of the Lord's mercy and an opportunity for loving devotional exchange with Him.
- The nose can be engaged in smelling incense offered to Kṛṣṇa, the eyes in seeing His deity form, the ears in hearing His pastimes, and the tongue in tasting His prasāda.
- In fact, material opulence can be used to propagate the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, which is an especially potent way to purify the heart. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.29.55, purport]
- When devotees develop such vision, they no longer see the objects of the senses as separate from Kṛṣṇa.
- They see everything as connected to Him and engage everything in His service.

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- Sensual desire completely eradicated from their hearts, devotees rise to the perfect stage of pure devotional service.
- This is the original outlook of the living entity in the spiritual world.
- In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, “If one engages all material things in relation with the loving service of the Lord, one is situated in yukta-vairāgya, proper renunciation.
- In this material world, nothing should be accepted for one’s sense gratification: everything should be accepted for the service of the Lord.
- This is the mentality of the spiritual world.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.9.47, purport]

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- A final word on the detrimental effects unrestrained desires have on true renunciation: Devotees should be careful that in the name of yukta-vairāgya they do not contact sense objects that are beyond their ability to engage in Kṛṣṇa's service.
- In other words, they should not overendeavour for things too difficult for them to achieve.
- Otherwise, contact with sense objects, even in the course of service, can increase the tendency for sense gratification and distract one from the devotional path. [The Nectar of Instruction 2]
- A well-intentioned devotee may desire to construct a magnificent temple to house the deity and welcome the public, but if in the course of raising vast sums of money he becomes bewildered by the opulence passing through his hands, what is the gain?

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- Or, if on completion of the temple, as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura noted in 1935, its residents think they have become its proprietors and even fight among themselves for facilities in the spiritual palace, the entire venture will go to ruin. [Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, volume 1]
- Moreover, devotees should not aspire for material benefits or perks in the name of yukta-vairāgya.
- Sometimes sannyāsīs, gurus, and other spiritual leaders, and subsequently their followers, enjoy material opulence in the name of “service to Kṛṣṇa.”
- Unless such things are used without duplicity, devotees are victimized by their lower nature and cheat themselves and others in the name of pure devotion.
- Material desires rekindled, they are often forced into further sense enjoyment that inevitably leads to degradation—usually sex-related scandals.

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- In summary: devotees must be careful about how they utilize and interpret Rūpa Gosvāmī's definition of pure renunciation.
- Whatever facility comes as a result of their advancing the cause of devotional service in the name of yukta-vairāgya, they must use only for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness, not for their own sense gratification.
- On the one hand, if they do not heed this warning given by the ācāryas, they may quickly find themselves immersed in phalgu-vairāgya or worse.
- On the other hand, they may be empowered to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, as Śrīla Prabhupāda was, in a wonderful way, and then rapidly propelled through the stages of pure devotion to perfection.

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- In this regard, a most compelling meditation is that of Rūpa Gosvāmī, who although a proponent of yukta-vairāgya, lived very simply, meeting only his most basic needs.
- “I offer my respectful obeisances unto the Six Gosvāmīs—Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, and Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī who cast off all aristocratic association as insignificant.
- To deliver poor, conditioned souls, they accepted loincloths and became mendicants, but they were always merged in the ecstatic ocean of the gopīs’ love for Kṛṣṇa, and they were always bathing repeatedly in the waves of that ocean.”
(Śrī Paḍ-gosvāmy-aṣṭaka 4)

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- The Gosvāmīs approved of opulence for preaching, but because their preaching did not require it, their lifestyle displayed the inner mood of all pure devotees, one of complete detachment (niṣkiñcana).
- Thus although devotees of our modern times need more facilities to preach and cannot live as our ācāryas did, they should at least emulate their mood.
- Like the desire for sense enjoyment (bhukti), the desire for liberation (mukti) must also go.
- In this regard the standard of pure devotion set by Rūpa Gosvāmī is high—the highest.
- Not only should devotees free themselves from the desire for impersonal liberation, they should also free themselves from desires for spiritual emancipation of any sort.

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Lord Kapila says,
sālokya-sārṣṭi-sāmīpya-
sārūpyaikatvam apy uta
dīyamānaṁ na gr̥hṇanti
vinā mat-sevanaṁ janāḥ

- “ A pure devotee does not accept any kind of liberation—sālokya, sārṣṭi, sāmīpya, sārūpya, or ekatva—even though they are offered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.29.13)
- In other words, pure devotees have only one motive: to please Kṛṣṇa. They do not want to live on the same planet as the Lord (sālokya), to have the same opulence as the Lord (sārṣṭi), to be near the Lord (sāmīpya), or to have bodily features like the Lord’s (sārūpya). And the mere thought of becoming one with the Lord—either by merging into His effulgence (sāyujya) or into His personal form (ekatva)—is reprehensible. (Of course, devotees will accept one of the first four kinds of liberation if it pleases Kṛṣṇa.) [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.55–57]

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- Pure devotional service is so exalted that to please Kṛṣṇa devotees are willing to serve even in the world of birth and death.
- Lord Caitanya speaks of this selfless mood of service in which the devotee's only request is for pure devotional service birth after birth.

na dhanam na janam na sundarīm
kavitām vā jagad-īśa kāmaye
mama janmani janmaniśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi

- “O almighty Lord, I have no desire to accumulate wealth, nor do I desire beautiful women, nor do I want any number of followers. I only want Your causeless devotional service birth after birth.” (Śikṣāṣṭaka 4)

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- Public saṅkīrtana—giving Kṛṣṇa consciousness to others—is a classic example of devotional service free from the desire for reward.
- Devotees who dedicate themselves to such service are, by Kṛṣṇa’s own admission, peerless.
- He says na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priya-kṛttamaḥ, “There is no servant in this world more dear to Me than he.” [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.69]
- ISKCON devotees therefore perform saṅkīrtana for their own benefit and for the benefit of others.
- One blessing that accrues to devotees from such service is the spirit of anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam.

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- Selflessly disposed, a devotee thinks, “Sañkīrtana may be difficult.
- People may ridicule me.
- The weather may be cold or rainy.
- My body and mind may protest.
- But Śrīla Prabhupāda, Lord Caitanya, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa want me to do this, and for their pleasure I shall.”
- The voluntary acceptance of the difficulties that come naturally while pushing forward the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is the hallmark of the goṣṭhy-ānandīs, the confidential associates of Lord Caitanya who profusely distribute Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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- These persons embody the true spirit of jñānānāvṛtam.
- Such preachers manage spiritual organizations, sometimes face open hostility, and live in Kali’s domains, the modern industrialized cities; yet they happily embrace these difficulties and more.
- In fact, their endurance of such struggles is their offering of love to the Divine Couple.
- And Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa prefer these offerings to flowers, words, and sumptuous offerings of food.
- The reluctance of spiritually immature bhajanānandīs—those who concentrate mostly or exclusively on their own spiritual advancement—to shoulder hardships for Lord Caitanya’s mission often hints at an escapist mentality.

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- This trace of spiritual weakness hinders their advancement and must be cleansed in order for them to achieve pure devotional service.
- The great Nārada Muni provides a classic example.
- As a boy, Nārada desired to search for the Lord in the forest, where he became attached to its tranquil atmosphere.
- Although Lord Nārāyaṇa once revealed Himself to the boy there, the Lord considered Nārada's attachment to the forest materially tinged, an obstruction to pure devotion. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.21]
- Thus Nārada would not see the Lord again in that lifetime.
- From this example devotees may ascertain that to become attached to the comforts afforded by spiritual life is a detriment.

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- Devotees accustomed to managing behind desks in comfortable offices, for instance, should keep alive the selfless spirit of pure devotion by regularly visiting the preaching fields.
- This concludes the description of the secondary characteristic of pure devotion called anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam.
- Devotees may still have traces of karma and jñāna in their hearts as they cross the threshold of pure devotion, but they ignore such things.
- They aspire for the pure character of great devotees and engage the things of this world in the spirit of proper renunciation.
- Careful to avoid rejecting service when it is troublesome or accepting it to gain comfort, true Vaiṣṇavas practise pure devotional service to rid themselves of the last vestiges of their inglorious past.

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- The remaining secondary characteristic of pure devotion is its freedom from the coverings of speculative and fruitive pursuits (jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam).
- As mentioned earlier, anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam refers to the pure desire to please Kṛṣṇa, free from the covering influence of speculative knowledge and fruitive work (jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam).
- In addition to being pure in attitude, devotees serious to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness must be free from the influence of karma, jñāna, and other nondevotional practices in their everyday lives.
- Fruitive activities (karma) and the cultivation of knowledge (jñāna) are inevitable consequences of living in a materialistic society.
- Pure devotees are not exceptions to this rule.

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- However, some kinds of work and knowledge are harmful to pure devotion and some are not.
- When devotees indulge in things that are harmful, their mood of pure devotion is effectively covered (āvr̥tam), and covered pure devotion is a semblance of devotion.
- This phenomenon occurs when devotees again take up activities of karma and jñāna either by bad association or by neglecting their spiritual practices.
- Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura likens the appearance of pure devotion to the birth of a baby girl. [Bhakti-tattva-viveka, chapter 1]

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- Just as the parents of a delicate newborn must protect her from sun, cold, and wild animals, so devotees must be careful to protect their newborn devotion from the un-desirable influences of speculative knowledge, fruitive endeavours, and the allurements of mystic perfections.
- If the parents fail to shelter their infant, she will not grow to healthy adulthood. Similarly, if affectionate devotees and careful spiritual practices do not shelter pure devotion, it will degrade into unwanted ideas and habits.
- Nursed to the stage of steadiness (niṣṭhā), pure devotion is relatively safe from affinity for the mundane.
- Are all types of knowledge detrimental to devotional service?
- The living entities must avoid at all cost knowledge that leads them to an impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth.

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- Some philosophers argue that knowledge of liberation is a precursor to devotional service, but Vaiṣṇava ācāryas and scriptures reject this idea.
- As mentioned earlier, devotees need to cultivate knowledge of their constitutional position as living entities in relation to Kṛṣṇa and His energies.
- This cultivation is one of the limbs of pure devotional service.
- One finds this knowledge taught in scripture and awakening by one's practice of pure devotional service.
- Understanding one's relationship with Kṛṣṇa is helpful to one's spiritual development.

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- One should not worry that gathering such knowledge is materially motivated; the urge to gather it is born of the desire to know Kṛṣṇa and thus serves as an impetus to practise bhakti.
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam calls such knowledge causeless (ahaituka).

vāsudeve bhagavati
bhakti-yogaḥ prayojitaḥ
janayaty āśu vairāgyaṁ
jñānaṁ ca yad ahaitukam

- “By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world.”
(Śrīmad-Bhagavatam 1.2.7)

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- If misused, however, even transcendental knowledge can become an obstacle to devotion.
- One example of such misuse occurs when devotees neglect service in favour of culturing knowledge.
- Study of devotional scripture (bhakti-śāstra) is pure devotion, but if by such study a devotee neglects the conclusion of knowledge—that one should serve Kṛṣṇa according to Kṛṣṇa's desire—then the cultivation creates another kind of covering.
- To avoid this, devotees must receive guidance from higher authorities.
- Another example of the misuse of transcendental knowledge is when it gives rise to the pride of scholarship.

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- Sometimes devotees think that their advanced knowledge makes them superior to other Vaiṣṇavas.
- Arrogant and callous to others' feelings, they bicker over the fine points of philosophy and put others down.
- Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī denounces such conduct, which is far from the humble attitude and ways of great Vaiṣṇava scholars such as Śrīla Prabhupāda.
- “If one becomes a bookworm, reading many books and scriptures and hearing many commentaries and the instructions of many men, this will produce doubt within his heart. One cannot in this way ascertain the real goal of life.” [Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 16.11]
- Living in the greater society also makes participation in social functions and religious rituals inevitable.

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- Such fruitive activities performed in small measure and in the mood of detached service do not cover one's pure devotion.
- However, devotees who purposefully indulge in such things and place faith in them muddy the pristine waters of *uttama-bhakti*.
- An example of fruitive work not harmful to the cultivation of pure devotion is attending a relative's funeral.
- After His father, Jagannātha Miśra, passed away, Caitanya Mahāprabhu went to Gayā to perform the conventional ritualistic ceremonies call *piṇḍa-dāna*. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 17.8]
- Were devotees to avoid attending such rites, common men might unnecessarily criticize Vaiṣṇavas, commit offences, and obstruct their own spiritual progress.

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- Similarly, sometimes devotees perform ritualistic fire sacrifices (homa) in the discharge of pure devotional service.
- At the opening of the Krishna-Balaram temple in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda invited local brāhmaṇas to perform the deity installation with traditional Vedic rituals.
- He later explained, “[W]e were obliged to have Vedic ceremonies enacted by brāhmaṇas because the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, especially the smārta-brāhmaṇas, would not accept Europeans and Americans as bona fide brāhmaṇas.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.3.25, purport]
- The practice of Vedic astrology (jyotiṣa) provides another example.
- Astrology offers nothing more than a detailed description of the workings of the modes of nature; it is a material divinatory science.

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- Thus Vedic astrology, which follows authoritative books such as the Bhṛgu-saṁhitā, is useful for common men trying to understand how to organize their lives in accordance with the results of their past activities.
- But devotees may also consult an astrologer to get an indication of how their past influences their future.
- They do this to prepare themselves to deal with potential karmic reactions and perhaps to try to minimize them while maximizing their service to Kṛṣṇa.
- In going through the motions of fruitive work such as piṇḍa, homa, jyotiṣa, and even yogāsanas—as implied by the suffix -adi in jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam—a devotee uses the following guideline to determine whether or not an activity is acceptable to pure devotional service:

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dharmah sv-anuṣṭhitaḥ pumsām
viṣvaksena-kathāsu yaḥ
notpādayed yadi ratim
śrama eva hi kevalam

- “The occupational activities a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labour if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Personality of Godhead.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.8)
- In other words, serious devotees should not perform fruitive acts if those acts are not useful in some way for devotional service, especially gaining a taste for hearing and preaching.
- This raises an important question: When does such fruitive work cover pure devotional service?

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- The answer lies in the motive behind the action.
- To the extent that it is done out of excessive attachment rather than detached duty, devotion is proportionately lost.
- Excessive attachment is illustrated by two mindsets: First, “If I don’t do this, I will incur sin”; and second, “If I do this my devotional life will improve.”
- The first betrays a lack of faith in the foundation of devotion—the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will be true to His promise and protect His devotee from any sin incurred by the neglect of worldly duties (sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi).
- The second discloses a misunderstanding of a basic Kṛṣṇa conscious teaching, which states that fruitive work can neither nurture nor give rise to pure devotion.

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- For instance, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam declares,

yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ
harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā
mano-rathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ

- “In one who has unflinching devotional service to Kṛṣṇa, all the good qualities of Kṛṣṇa and the demigods are consistently manifest.
- However, he who has no devotion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead has no good qualifications because he is engaged by mental concoction in material existence, which is the external feature of the Lord.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.12, as quoted in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.11.8–12, purport)

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- The same examples used above can clarify how fruitive work covers devotion if not done with the proper mood of detachment.
- In the case of piṇḍa, devotion becomes covered when devotees feel that they will incur sin if they do not attend a relative's funeral or that their devotion will prosper if they do.
- In the example of homa, devotion is covered when devotees become too absorbed in performing fire sacrifices, thinking that devotional practices or events, like the opening of a temple or a deity installation, are incomplete without the homa.
- And in the example of astrology, devotees are covered when they have more faith in the power of destiny foretold by jyotiṣa than in the power of devotion or Kṛṣṇa's mercy.

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- There are many pitfalls on the path to pure devotional service—pitfalls posed by fruitive activities, speculative knowledge, yogic practice, and artificial renunciation.
- But because devotees are strengthened by constant engagement in devotional service in pure company, they can keep such obstacles far away. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 2.49]
- If neophyte devotees do not carefully chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, regularly hear Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, visit the Lord’s temple, and faithfully worship the deity, they will be distracted by the vestiges of their fruitive conditioning.
- When devotees identify fruitive activities or the cultivation of knowledge with devotion, their pure devotion degrades to āropa-siddha-bhakti or saṅga-siddha-bhakti.

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- These semblances of devotion can neither attract Kṛṣṇa nor give one love for Him.
- A final comment on fruitive activities that cover pure devotional service: Devotees must be careful that even as they work to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, which is itself pure devotional service, they do not neglect to chant and hear, activities that form the heart of pure devotion.
- Even though advanced devotees are not obliged to follow the regulations of devotional service, a conditioned soul is.
- Still, as long as devotees are in the material world, liberated or not, they should follow the rules and regulations governing devotional service in practice.
- Liberated souls should follow in order to teach others by their example, and neophytes must follow lest they deviate from the strict path.

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- An example of such deviation occurs when devotees turn preaching into a fruitive activity by making the temple a commercial enterprise.
- How often did Śrīla Prabhupāda complain about priests in India for whom worshiping famous deities was merely a means to maintain their families and collect dowries for their daughters?
- How would Prabhupāda react to temple devotees being unnecessarily engaged in the sale of mundane “paraphernalia”?
- We cannot overstate the importance of regulated devotional activities.
- Whether devotees live inside or outside the temples, they must have strong sādhana.

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- We generally accept this standard for temple residents, but strong sādhana is often thought optional for initiated devotees who live outside.
- This is a misunderstanding.
- No devotee in the conditioned state can remain aloof from māyā simply by desiring to do so.
- The desire and the ability to be free of material conditioning must be fortified by the strict cultivation of bhakti.
- Otherwise misconceptions will steer even well-meaning devotees off the path of purity and very likely off the path of devotional service altogether.

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- In this regard Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Everyone must rise early, take bath, attend mangala arati, chant at least 16 good rounds, attend class, and follow the four regulative principles strictly.
- If these things are lax, then there is no question of spiritual life. Anyone who does not accept these things staunchly will have to fall down.” [Letter to Abhirāma, Bombay, 16 January, 1975]
- This section concludes the analysis of pure devotional service as Rūpa Gosvāmī has defined it.
- But this subject is ever-expanding and unlimited.
- This chapter and the last give but a hint of the true glories of pure devotional service.

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- The essence of these chapters can be found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's own words, in which he connects the definition of pure devotional service to the practice and preaching of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- As we can understand from the Bhagavad-gītā (9.34 and 18.65), the Supreme Personality of Godhead wants everyone to think of Him always (man-manā bhava mad-bhaktah).
- Everyone should become His devotee, not the devotee of a demigod.
- Everyone should engage in His devotional service, including arcana (deity worship) in the temple.
- Man-manā bhava mad-bhaktō mad-yājī mām namaskuru.

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- Everyone should offer obeisances, from moment to moment, to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- These are the desires of the Supreme Lord, and one who fulfils His desires favourably is actually a pure devotee.
- Kṛṣṇa wants everyone to surrender unto Him, and devotional service means preaching this gospel all over the world.
- The Lord says openly in the Bhagavad-gītā (18.69): na ca tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścin me priya-kṛttamaḥ, ‘One who preaches the gospel of the Bhagavad-gītā for the benefit of all is most dear to Kṛṣṇa.’
- The Bhagavad-gītā is spoken by the Lord so that human society can be perfectly organized from all angles of vision—politically, socially, economically, philosophically, and religiously.

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- From any point of view, human society can be reformed by the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement; therefore one who spreads this philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for the benefit of all conditioned souls in the universe is perfect in pure devotional service.
- The criterion is that a devotee must know what Kṛṣṇa wants him to do.
- This understanding can be achieved through the medium of a spiritual master who is a bona fide representative of Kṛṣṇa.
- Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī advises, ādau gurv-āśrayam.
- One who is serious in wanting to render pure devotional service to the Lord must take shelter of a spiritual master who comes in the disciplic succession from Kṛṣṇa.
- Evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ (Bhagavad-gītā 4.2).

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- Without accepting a bona fide spiritual master coming in the disciplic succession, one cannot find out the real purpose of devotional service.
- Therefore one has to accept the shelter of a bona fide spiritual master and agree to be directed by him.
- The first business of a pure devotee is to satisfy his spiritual master, whose only business is to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- And if one can satisfy the spiritual master, Kṛṣṇa is automatically satisfied—*yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*.
- This is the success of devotional service.
- This is the meaning of the word *ānukūlyena*—that is, favourable devotional service to the Lord.

SBC 7 – Pure Devotional Service Defined - Part 2

- A pure devotee has no plans other than those for the Lord's service.
- He is not interested in attaining success in mundane activities.
- He simply wants success in the progress of devotional service.
- For a devotee, there cannot be worship of others or demigod worship.
- A pure devotee does not engage himself in such pseudodevotional service.
- He is interested only in satisfying Kṛṣṇa.
- If one lives only for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa, it does not matter whether he belongs to this order of life or that order of life.
- One's only business should be to satisfy Kṛṣṇa.

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- This process is completely manifest in the activities of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.
- It has been actually proved that the entire world can accept devotional service without failure.
- One simply has to follow the instructions of the representative of Kṛṣṇa. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.167, purport]

śraddhāvān jana haya bhakti-adhikārī
'uttama', 'madhyama', 'kaniṣṭha'—śraddhā-anusārī

- A faithful devotee is a truly eligible candidate for the loving service of the Lord.
- According to one's faith, one is classified as a topmost devotee, an intermediate devotee or an inferior devotee. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.64