

Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

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Chapter 11- Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 1

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- Chapter ten discussed regulative devotional service (vaidhī bhakti), the first division of pure devotional service in practice (sādhana-bhakti).
- This chapter and the next discuss the second division of sādhana-bhakti, spontaneous devotion in practice (rāgānuga-bhakti).
- In rāgānuga-bhakti, practising devotees spontaneously desire to follow in the wake of the residents of Vraja.
- According to Rūpa Gosvāmī:

virājantīm abhivyaktām
vraja-vāsi-janādiṣu
rāgātmikām anusṛtā
yā sā rāgānugocyate

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- “Devotional service in spontaneous love is vividly expressed and manifested by the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana.
- Devotional service that accords with their devotional service is called rāgānuga-bhakti, or devotional service following in the wake of spontaneous loving service.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.270)
- The qualification to perform vaidhī bhakti is faith in scripture, and the qualification to perform rāgānuga-bhakti is greed to attain spontaneous devotion.
- Unlike faith, which is based on logic and reasoning, greed or covetousness is based on the heart’s natural inclination.
- Hearing the all-attractive dealings of the devotees of Vṛndāvana awakens in qualified devotees an inclination to develop such loving moods toward Kṛṣṇa.

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- This attraction is no longer dependent on the ruling nature of scripture.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “These rāgānugā devotees do not follow the regulative principles of devotional service very strictly, but by spontaneous nature they become attracted to some of the eternal devotees such as Nanda or Yaśodā, and they try to follow in their footsteps spontaneously.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]
- The idea that persons can advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness with-out strictly following the regulative principles generally perplexes devotees.
- At the root of this confusion is a misunderstanding about what Śrīla Prabhupāda means by “not strictly following regulative principles.”

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- Śrīla Prabhupāda does not mean that spontaneous devotees no longer practise the basic items of devotional service such as chanting and hearing, or that they neglect or break the rules prohibiting illicit sex or intoxication.
- What it does mean is that for rāgānuga-bhaktas, the inspiration to serve and surrender no longer comes from scriptural injunction (vidhi) but from natural attachment (rāga).
- In this sense, these devotees strictly follow their hearts and not the “regulative principles.”
- But because they are so spontaneously drawn to Kṛṣṇa, they are naturally drawn to continue their practice of the primary limbs of devotion, doing those things that increase their association with Kṛṣṇa—hearing, chanting, and remembering, among other practices—and avoiding those things that hinder their association with Kṛṣṇa—sinful activity or indulging in materialistic pursuits.

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- Indeed, later we will see how Rūpa Gosvāmī considers the strict following of the principal activities of regulative devotion a prerequisite for practising spontaneous bhakti.
- The neglect of basics like hearing and chanting, basics that nourish one’s attachment for Kṛṣṇa, disqualifies one from any kind of devotional service, regulative or spontaneous.
- This is what Śrīla Prabhupāda means by “not strictly following.”
- The reader may find more on this subject in the following chapter.
- Of the many devotees qualified to take up spontaneous devotional service in practice, generally only a few are inclined to do so.

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- Before continuing with the study of rāgānuga-bhakti this section introduces the mentality of those eligible to take it up.
- Devotees qualified to make the transition between regulative and spontaneous devotional service in practice must be at the stage of steadiness (niṣṭhā) and must have given up attachment to things that divert the mind from service.
- This full surrender to the practice and spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness often leaves devotees open to criticism from mundane moralists and religionists, but devotees on the platform of steadiness have already surpassed this mundane sense of obligation.
- Their critics, blind to the true way of transcendentalists, accuse devotees of ingratitude toward family, country, and the great men and women who have sacrificed their lives for humanity.

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- Such ingratitude, they say, is tantamount to sin, and sin certainly impedes any person's search for truth.
- While politely braving such criticism, devotees at the stage of steadiness remain unperturbed, fixed in the conviction that originally brought them to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet: that souls surrendered to Kṛṣṇa are free from all material obligations and purified of any sin incurred as a consequence of their surrender. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.41]
- In this way such devotees march resolutely forward, serving the Lord as they desire.
- Not only are steady devotees free from mundane transgressions, they are also free from accidental sins performed while engaged in devotional service.

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- These devotees have given up all material engagements in order to take full shelter at Lord Hari's lotus feet and are thus very dear to Him.
- Seated in everyone's heart, Kṛṣṇa at once takes away the reactions to sins committed by such surrendered souls. [This paragraph is based on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.42]
- Knowledge of these truths makes devotees who are seriously committed to Kṛṣṇa consciousness indifferent to worldly opinions and unmoved by the urges of their own attachments.
- Their sights are set on perfection beyond the understanding of worldly people, a perfection rarely achieved even by great souls.

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- Undaunted and confident in the Lord’s affectionate shelter, they pray that the distance between themselves and ecstatic devotion will soon vanish.

prācīnānām bhajanam atulam duṣkaramśṛṅvato me
nairyāśyena jvalati hr̥dayam bhakti-leśālasasya
viṣvadrīcīm agha-hara tavākarmaṇya kārūṇya-vīcīm
āśā-bindūkṣitam idam upaity antare hanta śaityam

- “I am too weak and too lazy to do even the smallest devotional service, so when I hear of the peerless and difficult-to-perform services performed by great devotees in ancient times, my heart burns with despair. O Lord! O killer of Aghāsura! When I hear that the waves of Your mercy splash everyone from the demigod Brahmā down to the most insignificant creature, my heart is sprinkled with a cooling drop of hope.” (Stava-mālā, untitled prayer)

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- Such is the mentality of practising devotees eligible to move on from regulative to spontaneous practice.
- By practising regulative devotional service, devotees gradually purify their hearts of unwanted things and achieve steadiness—a steadiness visible not only in their physical conduct but in their words and mental activities.
- Although not yet free of impurities, these devotees—masters of their mind and senses—are no longer hostage to residual desires or bad habits.
- Steady devotees diligently study Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and respectfully hear of the Lord’s many incarnations, but when they read of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vṛndāvana, they are especially intrigued.
- They think, “Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but in Vṛndāvana His behaviour is charmingly humanlike.”

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- Simply to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda discourse on this phenomenon, these devotees eagerly read his Kṛṣṇa book, where they become struck by Kṛṣṇa’s sweetness and charm and by the innocent love of the Vraja-vāsīs.
- They repeatedly hear Śrīla Prabhupāda extol the unparalleled loving service of the Vraja-vāsīs in passages such as: “Uddhava...was a great friend of Kṛṣṇa’s...the direct student of Bṛhaspati...very intelligent and...highly qualified.
- Kṛṣṇa, being a very loving friend of Uddhava’s, wanted to send him to Vṛndāvana just to study the highly elevated ecstatic devotional service practised there...to learn from the gopīs and the other residents of Vṛndāvana how to love Kṛṣṇa to the highest degree.
- It was Kṛṣṇa’s special favour...” [Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, chapter 46]

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- Sometimes such devotees discuss the concept of vraja-bhakti with their peers and hear about one another's favourite pastimes.
- At other times they study The Nectar of Devotion to increase their devotional insight.
- They read Caitanya-caritāmṛta with a fresh understanding of Lord Caitanya's teachings and pastimes.
- While listening to Śrīla Prabhupāda's lectures, they repeatedly hear him summarize Lord Caitanya's teachings in a way that gives them new perspectives in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayas tad-dhāma vṛndāvanam
ramyā kācid upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa yā kalpitā
śrīmad-bhāgavatam pramāṇam amalam premā pum-artho mahān
śrī-caitanya-mahāprabhor matam idaṁ tatrādarāḥ naḥ paraḥ

- “The Supreme Personality of Godhead, the son of Nanda Mahā-rāja, is to be worshipped along with His transcendental abode, Vṛndāvana. The most pleasing form of worship for the Lord is that which was performed by the gopīs of Vṛndāvana. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is the spotless authority on everything, and pure love of God is the ultimate goal of life for all men. These statements, for which we have the highest regard, are the opinion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.” (Caitanya-mata-mañjuṣā) [Quoted in Gauḍīya-kaṅṭhahāra 4.41]

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- The vast majority of these devotees acknowledge the wonder and uniqueness of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in Vraja but are not yet moved to do more than hear about or discuss them.
- Still, they discuss them happily in the limited scope of reverential regulative devotion.
- Only later do they acquire inspiration to intensify their relationship with vraja-bhakti.
- But a few devotees react differently.
- They do not remain neutral.
- Heartfelt desire moves them when they hear Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes. They think, “I would also like to love and serve Kṛṣṇa like the Vraja-vāsīs.”

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- Although weak at first, this desire gains strength in contact with advanced devotees who explain Kṛṣṇa consciousness in relationship to vraja-bhakti.

kṛṣṇa-tattva, bhakti-tattva, prema-tattva sāra
bhāva-tattva, rasa-tattva, līlā-tattva āra

- “Kṛṣṇa consciousness means understanding the truth of Kṛṣṇa, the truth of devotional service, the truth of love of Godhead, the truth of emotional ecstasy, the truth of transcendental mellows, and the truth of the pastimes of the Lord.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 25.265)
- Finally these steady devotees, drawn to vraja-bhakti, reveal their minds to their spiritual masters.
- These devotees are the same servants as before, and they continue to perform the same duties, but their mood changes.

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- They now feel a genuine desire to achieve the perfection of the Vraja-vāsīs, and descriptions of the Vraja-vāsīs' service to Kṛṣṇa dominate their hearts and minds.
- Their spiritual masters are pleased to hear of their disciples' interest, because gurus know well the good judgment, sincerity, and advancement of their disciples.
- Gurus and disciples are intimate associates in Śrīla Prabhupāda's service; still, the spiritual masters examine their disciples with questions and arguments in order to establish which disciples have real qualification for spontaneous bhakti.
- When the gurus are satisfied that particular disciples have this qualification, they give them suitable instructions.
- In other words, even though vraja-bhakti is spontaneous, no one should enter its practice whimsically; one should always do so under the spiritual master's expert guidance.

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- As already mentioned, the residents of Vraja are exemplars for devotees making the transition from regulative to spontaneous devotional service in practice.
- The eternal associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Vrindavana have a unique and intense type of attachment (rāga) unknown to the devotees of any of Kṛṣṇa's expansions.
- This truth is well known on earth, in heaven, and in Vaikuṅṭha.
- Such attachment is spontaneous and free from knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's divinity, and it evokes an irrepressible absorption in Vraja's cowherd prince.
- So intense is the Vraja-vāsīs' attachment for Kṛṣṇa that it permeates and absorbs their being.
- Service to Kṛṣṇa done under the sway of this special attachment is known as spontaneous devotional service (rāgātmika-bhakti).

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- Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī defines rāgātmika-bhakti: “Ardently loving the Lord, the devotees serve Him by hearing, chanting, and remembering His glories, serving His feet, offering Him obeisances, and completely surrendering to Him.
- This fervent devotional service is called rāgātmika-bhakti.” [Bhakti-sandarbhā, anuccheda 310, quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.149]
- In short, the type of devotion that inspires pure devotees to follow in the Vraja-vāsīs’ footsteps is called rāgānuga-bhakti, and the bhakti practised by the Vraja-vāsīs themselves is called rāgātmika-bhakti.
- There is a gulf of difference between spontaneous devotional service in perfection (rāgātmikā) and spontaneous devotional service in practice (rāgānugā).

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- In perfection, the devotee's attachment to Kṛṣṇa is like a river, the waves of which are the ninefold activities of devotion.
- Such devotional activities are performed naturally out of mature love.
- In spontaneous service in practice, devotees cultivate the limbs of devotion, such as chanting and hearing, as a means to attain pure love, which in reality has not yet become fully spontaneous or developed. [This paragraph is based on the text of Bhakti-sandarbha (310) beginning tasyāś ca sādhyāyām rāga]
- The following study of spontaneous service in perfection is helpful in understanding spontaneous service in practice, because the latter aspires for the former.

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- Rūpa Gosvāmī defines spontaneous devotional service:

iṣṭe svārasikī rāgaḥ
paramāviṣṭatā bhavet
tan-mayī yā bhaved bhaktiḥ
sātra rāgātmikoditā

- “When a person becomes attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his natural inclination to love is fully absorbed in thoughts of the Lord. That is called transcendental attachment, and devotional service according to that attachment is called rāgātmikā, or spontaneous devotional service.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.272)

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- From this verse it is clear that the primary characteristic of spontaneous service is deep attachment for Kṛṣṇa and the marginal characteristic is absorption in thought of Him.
- Devotees of other forms of Kṛṣṇa certainly have love for God, but because that love is weakened by awareness of the Lord's majesty, such devotees' absorption is less intense than that of the Vraja-vāsīs.
- The devotion Hanumānjī feels for Lord Rāma is an example of love weakened by reverence.
- Hanumān is the ideal servant of the Lord.
- But Lord Rāmacandra once embraced him in the mood of friendship, and in the face of such intimacy Hanumān shrank away from the Lord.

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- Knowledge of Rāma's divinity disabled Hanumān from reciprocating the Lord's fraternal mood.
- Only the Vraja-vāsīs, unmindful of Kṛṣṇa's Godhood, can treat the Lord as an equal or even as a subordinate.
- Unfettered by feelings of awe, the Vraja-vāsīs thus enjoy the unlimited ecstasy of unconditional spontaneous love.
- Spontaneous devotional service is of two kinds: amorous attraction (kāma-rūpa) and familial relationship (sambandha-rūpa).
- Amorous attraction is intense attachment in the mood of a lover, and familial relationship is attraction in the mood of a parent, friend, or servant.

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- Examples of devotees with amorous attraction are Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her gopī friends such as Lalitā and Viśākhā.
- Examples of devotees with familial attraction are Nanda Mahārāja and Mother Yaśodā as parents, Subala and Śrīdāmā as friends, and Raktaka and Patraka as servants.
- There is no end to the glories of these devotees and their service.
- To inspire its readers to vraja-bhakti, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam dedicates its very heart—the first forty chapters of the Tenth Canto—to descriptions of the spontaneous devotion of Vraja.
- What exactly is the greed (lobha) that qualifies devotees to practise spontaneous devotion?

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- Greed is the intense, natural desire of devotees for the service mood of the Vraja-vāsīs. Although greed may have varying degrees of intensity, broadly speaking, it is of two types.
- One is the very intense eagerness possessed by devotees at the stage of ecstatic devotion, devotees whose love has already awakened (jāta-rati). [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 24.288]
- This type of greed is also known as “complete” eagerness (samutkaṅṭhā). [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 18]
- The other type is the less intense greed possessed by devotees at the stage of practice, in which love has not yet awakened (ajāta-rati).

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- This second type of greed is at best strong eagerness, something Śrīla Prabhupāda calls “ambition” and which can be gradually developed. [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]
- As the practising devotee advances, so does his or her eagerness; and in time that eagerness becomes insatiable greed.
- Both kinds of greed share a common characteristic: they are permanent.
- Thākura Bhaktivinoda mentions a third, less significant kind of greed—one that is temporary. [Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta, chapter 10]
- This type of eagerness appears briefly in some devotees when they hear of the qualities of Kṛṣṇa’s eternal associates.

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- Because the symptoms of such desire are short-lived, temporary greed is considered of little or no consequence.
- Only with enduring greed, be it immature or mature, can one practise spontaneous devotional service.
- The consequences of attempts to cultivate spontaneous devotional service in the absence of steadiness and real greed have been recorded in history, and a sad history it is.
- By Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's time, the practice of devotional service had fallen into disrepute in the eyes of the intelligent section of Indian society.
- Unscrupulous men and women had been practising debauchery in the name of rāgānuga-bhakti and had taught that devotion could be cultivated through sexual indulgence.

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- They falsely reasoned, “The gopīs worshipped Kṛṣṇa in this way, so why can’t we?”
- Such imitators made no distinction between activities in perfection (sādhyā) and those in practice (sādhana).
- By acting out the pure spiritual activities of liberated souls with their gross material bodies, these fools hoped to invoke spontaneous devotion.
- Instead, because they were committing offences to Kṛṣṇa and His eternal associates, they succeeded only in invoking the wrath of the goddess of devotion and her representatives.
- Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and his divinely inspired son, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, fought against such misconduct.

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- Their vigorous preaching and prolific writings reinstated pure devotion to its rightful place as the topmost of spiritual practices.
- Without hiding or prohibiting the practice of rāgānuga-bhakti, they cautioned sincere devotees about the risks of taking up such practices prematurely.
- Indeed, many of Bhaktivinoda’s works—works Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted translated—describe and praise spontaneous practice. [A former BBT translator told the author that Śrīla Prabhupāda had instructed him, “I want all of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s books translated into English.”]
- Śrīla Prabhupāda was cautious about improper practice in the name of devotion.

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- When his disciples misunderstood spontaneous cultivation and prematurely tried to follow the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, he reprimanded and corrected them. [Described in chapter 24 of this book in the section, “The Gopī-bhāva Club Controversy.”]
- Nonetheless, Śrīla Prabhupāda, like his predecessors, described for those suitably qualified the process of rāgānuga-bhakti as an integral part of devotional service in practice.
- Jīva Gosvāmī states that spontaneous attachment is very rare [Bhakti-sandarbhā, anuccheda 312] and cannot be imitated.
- Persons who disrespect scriptural regulations and who think themselves great devotees simply because they can make artificial displays of attachment are nothing more than proud hypocrites.

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- Professional musicians often shed tears while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, yet when asked why they do not chant japa or read the Gītā they claim to be beyond such neophyte practices.
- But the revealed scripture, which is no less than the Lord’s own words, condemns such devotion as false.

śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-
pañcarātra-vidhiṁ vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir
utpātāyaiva kalpate

- “Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the Upaniṣads, Purāṇas, and Nārada-pañcarātra is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.” (Brahma-yāmala) [Quoted in Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.101]

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- Yet even Kṛṣṇa's eternally liberated associates perform rituals from the dharma-śāstra.
- For example, when demons attacked Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, Mother Yaśodā called the brāhmaṇas to chant prayers and mantras for Kṛṣṇa's protection.
- And the young unmarried gopīs performed rituals to obtain Kṛṣṇa as their husband.
- Sometimes, in the name of following the inhabitants of Vraja, sādhakas mistakenly imitate them.
- For instance, devotees sometimes argue that the gopīs deceived their family members to meet Kṛṣṇa, so they may deceive other devotees, even their gurus, to further their rasika-bhakti.

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- Needless to say, these devotees lack the spontaneous love of the Vraja-vāsīs, a love so pure that it transforms lying into an act of pure devotion.
- Instead, imitators lose sight of the distinction between truth and untruth, and their lies transform them into servants of Kali (kali-celas). [See Morning walk at Marina del Rey, Los Angeles, 13 July, 1974]
- Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura coined this ungracious term to denote those who dress as Vaiṣṇavas and make a show of bhajana while engaging in illicit sex.
- In truth, respect for scripture, moral conduct, and honesty are all symptoms of genuine, greed-inspired devotion.
- They cannot be sacrificed at the altar of someone’s imaginary spontaneous practice.

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- This is the conclusion both of the scriptures and of spontaneous devotees of the highest order.
- How does genuine greed arise?
- As shown in the last section, greed is not easy to come by.
- It may take millions of lifetimes to awaken it; [Padyāvali 14] it cannot be invoked artificially.
- When genuine greed does arise, however, it does so from the effect of hearing transcendental sound praising the sweetness of the Vraja-vāsīs' love, beauty, qualities, and pastimes.
- Such narrations are found first and foremost in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. They are also found in books written by realized devotees. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.292]

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- Vaiṣṇava ācāryas, including Śrīla Prabhupāda, add that seeing and serving Kṛṣṇa's beautiful deity form has a similar effect of awakening greed. [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]
- What is the common symptom of genuine greed in both devotees whose love is still dormant and in those in whom love has awakened?
- It is complete distaste for anything not related to Kṛṣṇa.
- Sincere devotees anxious to hear constantly about Kṛṣṇa quickly become indifferent to the allurements of sense gratification and liberation.
- This is because the bliss of remembering Kṛṣṇa and His associates is so powerful that it subdues all nondevotional attachments.

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- In the words of Śrīla Prabhupāda: “The pure devotee of the Lord enjoys life by constantly remembering the lotus feet of the Lord by hearing kṛṣṇa-kathā.
- For such devotees there is no such thing as material existence, and the much-advertised bliss of brahmānanda is like a fig for the devotees who are in the midst of the transcendental ocean of bliss.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.13, purport]
- Readers who understand the essence of this statement will not be misled by the semblance of greed, whether in themselves or in others.
- So strong is the taste for pure devotion in devotees with real eagerness for rāgātmika-bhakti that it admits no room for attachment to anything else.
- Still, the intensity of the greed of those practising pure devotional is different from the intensity of those who have attained mature love of God.

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- The former have some inclination to the mode of goodness, which weakens their greed, whereas the latter are completely free of material influence, which makes their greed aggressive.
- As the practitioners' hearts become purified, greed for rāgātmikā service increases, and when all remaining desires are driven out, their eagerness becomes fully mature.
- At what stage of devotion does greed appear?
- Technically, greed can appear at any stage in devotional service.
- Bharata Mahārāja, for example, acquired ecstatic devotion by his devotional practices.

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- Although in his next life he was forced by undue attachment to accept the body of a deer, his previously acquired greed immediately reappeared.
- Thus greed acquired from a previous birth, or by very advanced association, can, in exceptional cases, appear even in the formative stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- Generally, however, greed appears in practising devotees at the stage of steadiness or beyond.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “We must always remember, however, that such eagerness to follow in the footsteps of the denizens of Vraja (Vṛndāvana) is not possible unless one is freed from material contamination.
- In the practice of devotional service there is a stage called anartha-nivṛtti, in which all material contamination gradually disappears.

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- Sometimes persons are found to be imitating such devotional love before they have become free of anarthas, or unwanted habits.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]
- As these devotees cultivate spontaneous devotional service they rise to the spiritual platform, at which time their greed becomes mature.
- Their mature greed then leads them to perfection.
- In sādhakas who continue on the path of regulative devotion, who are not drawn to rāgātmika-bhakti, mature greed naturally appears at the stage of ecstasy.
- Like devotees who reach ecstasy by spontaneous practice, such sādhakas then plunge into the oceanic bliss of vraja-sevā and frolic there eternally.

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- A final point concludes this chapter on rāgānuga-bhakti: As established in the beginning chapters of this book, pure faith makes a person eligible for pure devotion.
- However, after hearing the above deliberation on greed, readers may question how spontaneous devotion, which is an aspect of pure devotion in practice, can be attained by greed alone, not simply by faith.
- It is true that pure faith is the only qualification for any kind of devotion, regulative or spontaneous.
- However, as Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda points out, there are two varieties of faith. [This topic is described in Bhakti-tattva-viveka, chapter 4]
- One type of faith is derived from and reposed in scriptural injunctions.

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- This faith is known as śāstra-viśvāsa-mayī-śraddhā, and it is the qualification for regulative devotional service.
- The second kind of faith awakens by hearing about Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana pastimes and is saturated with greed to taste the sweet sentiments of the Vraja-vāsīs.
- This faith is known as bhāva-mādhurya-lobha-mayī-śraddhā, and it is the qualification for spontaneous devotional service.
- Therefore the statement that greed is the qualification for spontaneous devotional service does not compromise the prerequisite of pure faith.
- Such a statement simply implies that a certain type of faith, one imbued with greed, is the qualification for rāgānuga-bhakti.

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- To avoid the abuse of spontaneous devotion, this book regularly cautions its readers on the subject.
- From those warnings readers may wrongly deduce that spontaneous devotion is something from which to protect practising devotees.
- They may think, “Let devotees practise regulative devotional service and find out about spontaneous devotion when they are liberated.”
- This ultra-conservative attitude may appear valid to some devotees, but it is not the attitude of the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas, including Śrīla Prabhupāda.
- True, many people have been led off the path of pure devotion in the name of rāgānuga-bhakti; that phenomenon should not be ignored or allowed to grow.

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- But Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura reasons that the fault is not with spontaneous devotion but with its false teachers. [This paragraph and the next are based on Shree Chaitanya’s Teachings 2.5.5]
- Ignoring rāgānuga-bhakti, he writes, has “not made it unimportant.”
- Indeed, he goes on to say that “preventative and discouraging methods do not offer any positive cure [for such abuse] and have, as a matter of fact, been found to be practically useless.”
- This comment is relevant to ISKCON, particularly in light of recent unsuccessful attempts by our leadership to restrict the study of spontaneous devotion.
- Resolutions have done nothing to stem the tide of growing interest in the subject; if anything, they have done the opposite.

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- Our parama-guru recommends “intensive counter propaganda”; we should present the right conception of spontaneous devotion and thus stem the tide of immature practice.
- As shown in the excerpt below, Śrīla Prabhupāda recommended this kind of honest yet careful presentation as early as 1969. [Discussion with BTG staff, Boston, 24 December, 1969]
- Satsvarūpa: That means that we can make reference to the gopīs.
- Prabhupāda: Oh, it is done. Gopīs are boycotted.
- Satsvarūpa: No, gopīs are not boycotted.

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- **Prabhupāda:** The policy should be that the people may not understand gopīs like ordinary girls or like that. You should be careful to present the gopīs. It does not mean that, “We shall not utter even the name of gopīs. We have taken vow to boycott the gopīs.” No. They are our worshipable devotees. How we can avoid them?
- **Satsvarūpa:** What about writing down “kissing the lips of Kṛṣṇa?”
- **Prabhupāda:** No. That we should avoid. That we should avoid. But that is not abominable. According to time and circumstances...That thing I have described. The fact is fact. Just like when I am describing Kṛṣṇa’s līlā—I [am] writing Kṛṣṇa’s life—so I cannot give up that portion of His life when Kṛṣṇa is actually kissing the gopīs in rāsa dance.
- **Satsvarūpa:** But that’s in the books. Not in the public...

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- **Prabhupāda:** Yes. So in such circumstances, of course, we can give. But as far as possible, very cautiously and very rarely we shall present. Caitanya Mahāprabhu's life we see that in public He never discussed about Kṛṣṇa's līlā with the gopīs. That was very confidential discussion amongst His own circle, Rāya Rāmānanda, Svarūpa Dāmodara, like that. And He inquired...Even a learned scholar, He discussed about the philosophy, that Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya. But when there was a great devotee like Rāmānanda Rāya, He relished gopīs', I mean to say, intimate behaviour with Kṛṣṇa. So we should remember this, that public may misunderstand this. Therefore we have to present these things very cautiously, not very openly. They may misunderstand. But so far this article is concerned, that is nicely written. That is quite in order. So this should be published.
- **Hayagrīva:** There is nothing specifically objectionable?
- **Prabhupāda:** No, no. There is nothing.

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- Śrīla Prabhupāda’s guru mahārāja explains that spontaneous devotion is part and parcel of the soul and cannot be ignored.
- Instead it should be understood through the teachings of Rūpa Gosvāmī by devotees surrendered to the lotus feet of their spiritual masters.
- It is interesting to note that opinions vary, even among Bhakti-siddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura’s followers, about how devotees should hear the topic of vraja-bhakti.
- For example, when a senior godbrother of Śrīla Prabhupāda learned that in ISKCON devotees chant Jaya Rādhā-Mādhava before Bhāgavatam class, he thought it too liberal.
- Neither did he approve of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa’s swing festival as it is held in every ISKCON temple. [Follow the Angels, part two]

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- Another Gauḍīya Maṭha sannyāsī recounts that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura forbade his disciples to read Rāmānanda Rāya’s discussion with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. [This was told directly to the author]
- Of course, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave no such instruction but in fact encouraged devotees to distribute the Caitanya-caritāmṛta in public—even the volume containing that discourse.
- Thus in some persons’ vision, Śrīla Prabhupāda was quite liberal in making known the process of rāgānuga-bhakti.
- Obviously, whatever others may think, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s followers will consider his presentation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, including his presentation of spontaneous devotional service, perfectly balanced in every way.

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bhya, antara, ihra dui ta sdhanabāhya, antara,—ihāra dui ta' sādhana
'bāhye' sādha-ka-dehe kare śravaṇa-kīrtana

mane nija-siddha-deha kariy bhavana 'mane' nija-siddha-deha kariyā bhāvana
rātri-dine kare vraje kṛṣṇera sevana

- There are two processes by which one may execute this rāgānugā bhakti—external and internal. When self-realized, the advanced devotee externally remains like a neophyte and executes all the śāstric injunctions, especially those concerning hearing and chanting. But within his mind, in his original, purified, self-realized position, he serves Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana in his particular way. He serves Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day, all day and night. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.156-57