

# Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

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# Chapter 12- Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- The preceding chapter discussed the principles of spontaneous devotional service. This chapter describes the activities devotees perform when influenced by genuine greed.
- Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes in three verses the activities of spontaneous devotional service in practice. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.294–96]
- We have paraphrased these three verses in the following paragraph:
- There are two aspects of rāgānuga-bhakti—external and internal.
- Externally, qualified devotees practise like neophytes and follow the scriptural injunctions of regulative devotion, especially those concerning chanting and hearing, as did associates of Lord Caitanya such as Rūpa Gosvāmī and others.

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- Such qualified devotees also try to emulate the types of services Lord Caitanya's associates engaged in and offered, such as writing books, building temples, and other forms of giving Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the conditioned souls.
- These devotees always think of Kṛṣṇa and internally follow the activities of an inhabitant of Vṛndāvana to whom they have become specifically attracted.
- While residing in Vṛndāvana, such fortunate devotees constantly converse about their favourite devotees and the relationship these devotees have with Kṛṣṇa.
- If physically unable to live in Vṛndāvana, they reside there mentally.
- Our analysis begins with the second of these three paraphrased verses, which describes the two aspects of spontaneous devotional service in practice.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī writes:

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sevā sādḥaka-rūpeṇa  
siddha-rūpeṇa cātra hi  
tad-bhāva-lipsunā kāryā  
vraja-lokānusārataḥ

- “In the transcendental realm of Vraja [Vraja-dhāma] one should serve the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with a feeling similar to that of His associates, and one should place himself under the direct guidance of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa and should follow in his footsteps. This method is applicable both in the stage of sādhana [spiritual practices executed while in the stage of bondage] and in the stage of sādhya [God realization], when one is a siddha-puruṣa, or a spiritually perfect soul.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.295) [Quoted in The Nectar of Instruction 8, purport]

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- There are two important terms in this verse.
- Each has been defined by Śrīla Prabhupāda in his word-for-word synonyms to Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.158.
- They are: sādḥaka-rūpeṇa, “with the external body as a devotee practising regulative devotional service”; and siddha-rūpeṇa, “with a body suitable for eternal, self-realized service.”
- Kṛṣṇa’s eternally liberated companions simultaneously exist in two forms.
- In Lord Caitanya’s pastimes they appear as Vaiṣṇavas practising regulative devotion (sādḥakas), and in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes as spontaneous associates (siddhas).
- Rāgānuga-bhaktas who have attained the stage of ecstatic devotion also have two identities.

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- Externally they practise as regulative devotees, and internally they cultivate their newly manifested spiritual body (siddha-deha).
- Realization of their spiritual identity matures as they approach prema through the systematic cultivation of transcendental devo-tion.
- In contrast, devotees not on the transcendental platform have no conception of their spiritual form and cannot artificially conceive of one.
- For such devotees, “following the activities of a Vraja-vāsī” means thinking of and praising the service of a particular Vraja-vāsī.
- At most, devotees at this stage can aspire for a certain role in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes; they cannot, however, enter the pastimes through their meditation.

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- The dangers of imagining one's spiritual form (siddha-deha) cannot be overstated; therefore, we will discuss this topic in depth in chapter twenty-eight.
- Spiritual life is a matter of revelation, something that comes gradually through prolonged, unceasing effort.
- Such effort must be made in line with the authorized disciplic succession.
- If bhāva has not awakened in a devotee, neither has awareness of his or her spiritual form.
- Imagining a spiritual form can never invoke love for Kṛṣṇa; rather, because such an artificial attempt is offensive to devotion, it further covers a person's dormant prema.
- Here is a nice example to elucidate this point.



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- Once, a pseudo-devotee took up residence near Gaura Kiśora Dāsa Bābājī, and to impress visiting pilgrims, loudly imitated the sounds of a person in ecstasy.
- Bābājī Mahārāja told the man, “Just as a barren woman cannot give birth by imitating the sounds of labour, you cannot bring forth pure love for Kṛṣṇa by imitating the sounds of ecstasy.” [See article by Swami B. G. Narasingha Mahārāja on Siddha Deha Revealed]
- In other words, no amount of imagination can cause the fruit of perfection to ripen.
- Only Kṛṣṇa’s mercy can do that.
- Devotees must make themselves fit for Kṛṣṇa’s mercy by service and surrender if they wish to receive knowledge of their spiritual identity.

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- Certain pseudo-Vaiṣṇavas interpret the verse under discussion to mean that a sādḥaka should follow the activities of the Vraja-vāsīs externally as well as internally.
- For example, a man will dress as a gopī and feign the voice and mannerisms of a young girl, thinking his activities to be sādḥana. Nothing more need be said of such a sham in the name of devotion.
- Other pseudo-Vaiṣṇavas remain in the dress of practitioners but neglect the sacred activities of sādḥana-bhakti.
- During Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's time, a disciple of Hemalatā Ṭhākurāṇī, Rūpa Kavirāja, propagated this deviation.

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- He reasoned that since the gopīs did not accept spiritual masters, observe Ekādaśī, or worship either śālagrāma-śilā or Tulasīdevī, it was not necessary for sādhakas to do so.
- Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura denounced this divergence from the truth and drove Rūpa Kavirāja out of Vraja.
- Some time later Rūpa Kavirāja left his body, suffering from leprosy.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes about another kind of deviation in which unqualified novices are assigned a spiritual identity at the time of initiation: “The siddha-praṇālī process is followed by a class of men who are not very authorized and who have manufactured their own way of devotional service.
- They imagine that they have become associates of the Lord simply by thinking of themselves like that.

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- This external behaviour is not at all according to the regulative principles.
- In the opinion of Rūpa Gosvāmī, such activities are simply disturbances to the standard way of devotional service.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]
- What is the proper meditation, then, for a sincere devotee who has not yet reached the dawn of perfection but who is at the stage of spontaneous practice?
- The bona fide meditation is to remember the activities of the Vraja-vāsī to whom one has become attracted.
- For example, devotees attracted to the service of the cowherd boy Śrīdāmā may meditate on Śrīdāmās beautiful features, how he jokes and plays with Kṛṣṇa, how he tends cows during the day, and so on.

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- Devotees attracted to the service of Rūpa-mañjarī, the siddha-rūpa of Rūpa Gosvāmī, may meditate on how Rūpa-mañjarī accompanies Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to Her meetings with Kṛṣṇa, how she anoints the Divine Couple with sandalwood paste and how she fans Them with a whisk.
- A question sometimes arises on this subject: How do devotees know which Vraja-vāsī to follow?
- The truth is that devotees qualified to cultivate such a relationship would not ask this question.
- The devotees' original relationship with Kṛṣṇa is dormant within them.
- It is not something that is whimsically adopted.

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- A natural and special appreciation for the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa awakens in qualified devotees as they hear Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa.
- By continuously hearing and chanting, a sincere devotee is naturally drawn to a particular mood of service and to a particular Vraja-vāsī.
- In this regard Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Special natural appreciation of the descriptions of a particular pastime of Godhead indicates the constitutional position of a living entity.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 4.34]

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- Thus they are known as rūpānugas.
- Caitanya-caritāmṛta describes Rūpa Gosvāmī's character, literary achievements, dedication to Lord Caitanya, and excavation of many of Kṛṣṇa's pastime places. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.115–134]
- Devotees should meditate on and emulate the traits and services of Rūpa Gosvāmī by understanding the heart of his mission and then trying to assist him in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness (Śrī-caitanya-mano 'bhīṣṭam sthāpitaṁ yena bhū-tale). [Śrī Prema-bhakti-candrikā, Maṅgalācaraṇa 2]
- Members of ISKCON accept that Śrīla Prabhupāda is also an eternal resident of Vṛndāvana, and his example is even more relevant to us.

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- To be a member of ISKCON means to be absorbed in Prabhupāda's personal qualities, compassion, preaching spirit, unparalleled achievements, and literary masterpieces.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda's disciples have written many books to help devotees absorb their minds in Śrīla Prabhupāda, and Śrīla Prabhupāda himself left an ocean of instructions in his writings, lectures, conversations, and correspondence.
- His followers may hear these instructions to remain fully connected to him and in order to cultivate their desire to follow in his footsteps.
- In this way, ISKCON's members can practise remembering one of Lord Caitanya's confidential associates.
- The term sādḥaka in the verse under discussion needs to be clarified.



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- It generally refers to devotees who are not yet completely mature but who are trying to achieve perfection through devotional service in practice.
- In this verse, however, the meaning of sādḥaka-rūpa should be understood in another sense—in the context of Lord Caitanya’s mission.
- Lord Caitanya and His associates like Rūpa Gosvāmī appear as practising Vaiṣṇavas in order to taste the bliss of service in separation.
- Moreover, the sādḥaka forms of Lord Caitanya’s associates in this world are projections of their eternal identities in the Śvetadvīpa portion of Goloka.
- In other words, both the sādḥaka-rūpas and the siddha-rūpas of Lord Caitanya’s eternal companions are perfected forms that represent two different moods of devotion, one of aspiration for perfection, the other of engagement in perfection.

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- Both are perfect. The term siddha-rūpa, when used, for example, to refer to Rūpa-mañjarī, does not imply that Rūpa Gosvāmī's sādḥaka form is imperfect and temporary.
- The eternal companions of Lord Caitanya are fully mature in devotion, and their forms are perfect and eternal, as are those of their counterparts in Vraja.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī says that the second external aspect of spontaneous service in practice is the performance of regulative devotional activities.

śravaṇotkīrtanādīni  
vaidha-bhakty-uditāni tu  
yāny aṅgāni ca tāny atra  
vijñeyāni manīṣibhiḥ

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- “Learned ācāryas know that the sixty-four items of regulative devotion—beginning with hearing and chanting—are also useful in spontaneous practice.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.296)
- This verse makes clear that the often-mentioned expression, “Spontaneous service does not depend on the rules and regulations of scripture,” is not a rejection of regulative devotional practice.
- Rather, it accepts that greed, not faith in scripture, is the dominant impetus for rāgānuga-bhakti.
- Thus devotees who truly practise spontaneous devotion do not reject the items of regulative practice, especially the important ones such as chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, hearing Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and worshipping the deity.

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- The truth is quite the opposite: these activities are their life and soul.
- Foolish are those who in the name of spontaneous devotion give up these Kṛṣṇa conscious acts.
- In fact, one should avoid the company of such devotees because their advice and influence can divert even sincere practitioners from the true path to Kṛṣṇa. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.87]
- Spontaneous devotees never neglect regulative practices, but they concentrate on those items of devotional service that further induce meditation on the Vraja-vāsīs of their choice.
- For instance, they do not give up hearing, but spend more time hearing the particular topics that nourish their serving mood.

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- Devotees attracted to the loving exchanges between Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys read books describing the gopas.
- Devotees following the goddesses of Vraja read about the gopīs' special love, services, and moods.
- At the same time, devotees rejoice in hearing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with all the Vraja-vāsīs, despite their own aspirations to become followers of a particular associate of the Lord.
- For instance, followers of the gopīs eagerly take shelter of the gopas, as Rūpa Gosvāmī does of Subala:

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subala ballava-varya-kumārayor  
dayita-narma-sakhas tvam asi vraje  
iti tayoh purato vidhuraṁ janam  
kṣaṇam amuṁ kṛpayādya nivedaya

- “O Subala, you are the intimate friend of the son and daughter of the best of the gopas in Vraja.
- Please be merciful and introduce this unhappy person to your two friends.”  
(Utkalikā-vallārī 24)
- Spontaneous devotees approach deity worship in a similar way.
- Although devotees never give up service to their worshipable deities, their mood in worship changes along with their increasing absorption in vraja-bhakti.

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- Instead of thinking of how to dress the deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa according to the rules of arcana, they dress Them while thinking about how the Vraja-vāsīs do it.
- This does not mean that they concoct new modes of dress for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, however.
- Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura adds submission to the spiritual master (viśrambheṇa guroḥ sevā) to the list of indispensable items of devotion.
- In other words, as disciples advance on the path of spontaneous devotion they never minimize or reject their preceptors' instructions.
- In addition to seeing their gurus as servants of Lord Caitanya's mission, they begin to see them as servants of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, as expressed in the fifth and sixth verses of Śrī Gurv-aṣṭakam.

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- Rāgānuga-bhaktas retain the primary items of devotion, but they are selective about the secondary ones.
- They do not cultivate nonessential items of devotion, once part of their regulative life, that no longer serve the cause of spontaneous devotion.
- This discriminate attitude—something that must be employed with care—reflects the devotees' surrender to their chosen mode of service (ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ).
- In this way spontaneous devotees may give up things such as ritualistic hand gestures (mudrās), branding the body with signs of Viṣṇu, or meditating on Kṛṣṇa's Dvārakā pastimes.
- Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura elaborates on how devotees cultivating spontaneous devotional service determine which practices to select.



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- He divides the activities of bhakti into five categories according to how they affect the spontaneous mood (bhāva): [Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu, pages 134–35, the section beginning atrāyaṁ vivekaḥ vraja-līlā...] things composed of bhāva (bhāvamaya); those related to bhāva (bhāva-sambandhī); things favourable to bhāva (bhāva-ānukūla); those not incompatible with bhāva (bhāvāviruddha); and things opposed to bhāva (bhāva-pratikūla).
- “Composed of bhāva” refers to the four primary mellows, servitude, friendship, parenthood, and conjugal love.
- Devotees cultivating spontaneous devotion are drawn to one of these service moods, and every activity they perform is saturated with the flavour of that rasa.
- By “related to bhāva” Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura means the primary limbs of devotion, such as chanting, hearing, remembering Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, and serving the spiritual master.

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- These practices are indispensable because they help form and mature a devotee's spiritual disposition.
- Then there are related practices not indispensable but favourable to bhāva. One should accept these practices because they are complementary.
- For example, one should observe Ekādaśī, celebrate Janmāṣṭamī, accept vows during the month of Kārttika, renounce sense pleasures to give Kṛṣṇa satisfaction, and worship Tulasīdevī and the banyan tree.
- Then there are practices neither incompatible with nor favourable to cultivating bhāva.
- These practices are optional or neutral.

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- Examples in this category are wearing the deity's flower garland or stamping the body with the Lord's names.
- Finally, opposed to the spontaneous devotion of Vṛndāvana are practices such as meditating on the service of Kṛṣṇa's queens in Dvārakā or affixing the mantras worshipping various deities to one's body (nyāsa).
- Devotees cultivating bhāva should avoid such practices.
- Before deciding which regulative practices to continue and which to drop, however, ISKCON devotees must first consider the example such behaviour will set for newcomers.
- Since new devotees are always joining the Society, it is important that senior devotees encourage them by setting a proper example.

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- If leading devotees neglect practices required of novices, double standards in the Society will result in confusion.
- Lord Caitanya's mercy is the most indispensable item for spontaneous practice, and that mercy showers down on those who selflessly serve His mission.
- Aspirants for rāgānuga-bhakti must carefully consider what is favourable for ISKCON and cultivate the spontaneous mood accordingly.
- This concludes the discussion of Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.296.
- Now we will turn to the first of the three verses we paraphrased at the beginning of this discussion.

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- In this verse, Śrī Rūpa describes in more detail how spontaneous practitioners meditate on the services rendered by the Vraja-vāsīs who have captured their hearts.

kṛṣṇaṁ smaraṅ janam cāsyā  
preṣṭham nija-samīhitam  
tat-tat-kathā-rataś cāsau  
kuryād vāsam vraje sadā

- “A devotee should always reside in the transcendental realm of Vraja and always engage in kṛṣṇaṁ smaraṅ janam cāsyā preṣṭham, the remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His beloved associates. By following in the footsteps of such associates and by entering under their eternal guidance, one can acquire an intense desire to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.294) [Quoted in The Nectar of Instruction 8, purport]

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- Devotees unable to live in Vṛndāvana should practise living there mentally.
- Even mental residence fulfils Rūpa Gosvāmī's instruction and makes it possible to practise spontaneous devotional service anywhere in the world.
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- How does a devotee remember Kṛṣṇa and His associates?
- Since one cannot practise remembrance (smaraṇa) artificially, one must have two prerequisites, purity of heart and suitable knowledge.
- Purity of heart makes the mind peaceful enough to enter thoughts of Vṛndāvana; knowledge of the Vraja-vāsīs' pastimes, features, and qualities provides the subject matter in which to immerse the mind.

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- In this regard Śrīla Prabhupāda was fond of quoting the following two verses from Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura:

viṣaya chāṛiyā kabe śuddha ha'be mana  
kabe hāma heraba śrī-vṛndāvana

- “When the mind is completely purified, being freed from material anxieties and desires, then I shall be able to understand Vṛndāvana and the conjugal love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and then my spiritual life will be successful.”

rūpa-raghunātha-pade haibe ākuti  
kabe hāma bujhaba se yugala-pirīti

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- “When shall I be very much eager to study the books left by the Six Gosvāmīs, headed by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī? By their instructions I shall be able to properly understand the loving affairs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.” (Prārthanā 1.3–4)
- Devotees must first achieve freedom from material contamination by practising the step-by-step process of regulative devotion outlined by Rūpa Gosvāmī.
- The mind then purified, they can gain knowledge of Vṛndāvana from the books of the Six Gosvāmīs and their authorized followers in the line of our founder-ācārya, Śrīla Prabhupāda.
- Attraction to a resident of Vṛndāvana develops in stages.
- First, a general attraction for a particular devotional mood arises—perhaps friendship or conjugal love.



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- Next, a specific attraction to devotees who render service in that mood develops.
- The last to awaken, when taste and attachment have matured, is attraction to a specific Vraja-vāsī.
- When devotees evolve to ecstatic love (bhāva-bhakti), they are no longer at the stage of practice.
- Revelation confirms or modifies their spiritual identity and the particulars of who they are following in Vraja.
- Even after cultivating mountains of knowledge, however, devotees cannot remember Kṛṣṇa and His associates without mental purity.
- The mind plays an essential role in remembrance and hence in spontaneous practice.

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- Therefore genuine rāgānuga-bhakti cannot be imitated. Devotees either have control of the mind or they do not.
- Mental control and meditation are pillars of the eightfold yoga system, and as such they play important roles in bhakti-yoga.
- Vaiṣṇava ācāryas delineate five stages of absorption in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa beginning with hearing (śravaṇa) and ending with the attainment of one's spiritual form (āpana), the qualification to enter Kṛṣṇa's līlā forever.
- In spontaneous practice these stages of remembrance are generally cultivated while performing japa or kīrtana of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra.
- This section sheds light on the nature of spontaneous practice and the inner skills required to successfully take it up, skills that separate real spontaneous devotion from an imitative show.

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- As these abilities evolve, five main stages of absorption are distinguishable: hearing (śravaṇa), acceptance (varaṇa), remembrance (smaraṇa), achievement (āpana), and perfection (sampatti).
- In the beginning, devotees hear philosophical truths about Kṛṣṇa, descriptions of His form, pastimes, and associates; and above all, they chant and hear Kṛṣṇa's holy names. This stage is called śravaṇa-daśā.
- Fixed in service, devotees then develop a taste for Kṛṣṇa's names and pastimes, chant without offence, and accept their identity as Kṛṣṇa's eternal servants (nitya-kṛṣṇa-dāsa).
- The desire to follow the rāgātmikāresidents of Vraja then awakens, and such devotees enter the stage of varaṇa-daśā.

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- Genuine attachment to kṛṣṇa-kathā and pure chanting enable spontaneous devotees to remember the Vraja-vāsīs and their service to Kṛṣṇa.
- Such fortunate devotees then enter the stage of smaraṇāvasthā, which has five subdivisions: First is the stage of recollection (smaraṇa), in which the meditation of inexperienced devotees is easily broken by wandering thoughts and external distractions.
- With time the stage of preliminary absorption (dhāraṇā) develops, in which the mind is freed from distraction by the strength of the holy name.
- At this stage, remembrance proceeds uninterrupted.
- When uninterrupted remembrance gains momentum and becomes strong, it is “concentrated” (dhyāna).

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- When such remembrance becomes an effortless flow, it is called “constant” (anusmṛti).
- The final stage of constant remembrance is “trance” (samādhi), in which devotees, freed of all bodily designation, become fully absorbed in the object of their meditation.
- This stage of trance concludes smaraṇāvasthā, and its attainment signals the end of sādhana and all devotional activities performed in bondage.
- From here on, devotees are freed from all touch of matter.
- Achievement (āpana-daśā) takes place at the stage of ecstatic devotion (bhāva-bhakti) and is on the spiritual platform.
- At this stage spiritual practices reach perfection.

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- Devotees realize their spiritual forms (siddha-svarūpa).
- Their spontaneous practices mature and they factually know their eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa.
- The further stages of absorption in ecstasy culminate in loving service, the ultimate goal of life.
- Devotees then attain the perfection of life (sampatti-daśā) and go back to Godhead.
- From the above description it should be clear that spontaneous practice, although impelled by attraction of the heart, is neither a whimsical nor sentimental affair.
- It is not something to be taken lightly or artificially, nor is it something to be forced on others.

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- True followers of this path know that devotees not drawn to rāgānuga-bhakti will also achieve ecstatic devotion when their regulative practices mature, so they encourage these devotees to follow the path of regulative devotion.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda summarizes Rūpa Gosvāmī's verse as follows: “When one is actually liberated from material contamination, he can always remember an eternal devotee in Vṛndāvana in order to love Kṛṣṇa in the same capacity.
- And developing such an aptitude, one will always live in Vṛndāvana, even within his mind.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]
- As described earlier, the spontaneous devotion of the residents of Vraja is of two types: amorous attraction (kāma-rūpa) and familial relationship (sambandha-rūpa).
- Similarly, spontaneous practice is also of two types.

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- When it follows the mood of the gopīs it is called kāmānuga, and when it follows the mood of Kṛṣṇa’s servants, friends, or parents it is called sambandhānuga.
- Cultivation of amorous attraction is also of two types: the first follows in the wake of the gopīs called sakhīs, who directly associate with Kṛṣṇa in conjugal love; [The sakhīs’ devotion is called sambhoga-icchā-māyī] the second follows in the wake of the gopīs called mañjarīs, who do not directly associate with Kṛṣṇa but who assist the gopīs who do.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī calls the devotion of the mañjarīs tat-tad-bhāva-icchātmikā. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.299]
- About the mañjarīs Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “There are other devotees who do not wish direct contact with the Supreme Person, but who relish the conjugal love affairs of the Lord with the gopīs.



## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Such devotees enjoy simply by hearing of the activities of the Lord with the gopīs.”  
[The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]
- Vaiṣṇavas who follow Rūpa Gosvāmī are called rūpānugas.
- In Vraja, Rūpa Gosvāmī's siddha form is Rūpa-mañjarī.
- She is the leader of the gopīs who do not have direct amorous contact with Kṛṣṇa.
- Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura expresses the mood of a follower of Rūpa-mañjarī in his song Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī-pada.
- The special feature of these devotees is the great longing they have to engage in the service of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī as Her maidservant.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Their unshakable conviction is that the best way to serve Kṛṣṇa is by making unlimited arrangements for Rādhā to serve Him.
- Therefore Rūpa Gosvāmī's followers express their longing with his prayer:

hā devi kāku-bhara-gadgadayādya vācā  
yāce nipatya bhuvī daṇḍa-vad udbhaṭārtiḥ  
asya prasādam abudhasya janasya kṛtvā  
gāndharvike nija-gaṇe gaṇanām vidhehi

- “O Queen! Distressed, falling down on the ground like a stick, stammering with words choked with emotion, I beg You: Gāndharvikā, please be kind to this foolish person and count him as one of Your companions.” (Stava-mālā, Śrī Gāndharva-prārthanāṣṭaka 2)

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- As mentioned above, eligibility for spontaneous practice in amorous attraction develops naturally for those attracted to serving Kṛṣṇa in this way.
- It also develops in devotees who strictly follow the limbs of regulative practice, especially the worship of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa deities.
- Bathing, dressing, and praising the deities, hearing from authorized sources about Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs—these activities nourish to maturity the seed of attachment.
- Purely spiritual (aprakṛta) amorous attraction is possible only between the gopīs and Kṛṣṇa.
- Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda explains that in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes males do not participate in conjugal relationships with the Lord.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- This point counters the offensive propaganda made by some so-called devotees that Kṛṣṇa has such loving exchanges with certain cowherd boys.
- It is indeed an insult to everything sacred and divine to transpose mundane homosexuality, be it sensual or just emotional, into the transcendental realm.
- The words of the Ṭhākura speak for themselves: “In Vraja, males participate in the rasas of servitorship, friendship, and the fatherhood portion of parental love.
- In these three mellows males engage in direct service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- Only females, however, serve the Lord in conjugal love and in the motherhood portion of parental love.” [Jaiva Dharma, chapter 21]
- Serious readers may question whether male sādhakas can cultivate the refined feminine devotional sentiments of the gopīs.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Both men and women can develop feminine feelings of love for Kṛṣṇa.
- This is possible because spiritual sentiments are a natural function of the soul and have nothing to do with the material body.
- Therefore, no one should conclude that cultivating amorous attraction is only for women.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī gives the example of the sages in Daṇḍakāraṇya forest who were attracted to Lord Rāmacandra in a conjugal mood.
- The Lord fulfilled these sages' desire by blessing them with births as gopīs in Vṛndāvana.
- A unique feature of the gopīs' conjugal attraction for Kṛṣṇa is that it is expressed out of wedlock (parakīya).

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Devotees who cultivate such conjugal attraction in the wake of the gopīs take birth in Goloka Vṛndāvana to forever relish pastimes with the cowherd prince of Vraja.
- The conjugal attraction of the queens of Dvārakā is conventional or married (svakīya).
- Devotees who cultivate conjugal attraction following the mood of Kṛṣṇa’s wives take birth in Dvārakā as beloveds of the King of the Yadu dynasty.
- Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura adds that devotees attracted to the gopīs’ mood but unable to relinquish attachment for Kṛṣṇa’s majesty and divinity become followers of Rukmiṇī and the other queens of Dvārakā.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda also writes, “If someone simply desires conjugal love, but does not follow in the footsteps of the gopīs, he is promoted to association with the Lord at Dvārakā.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 16]

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Cultivation of spontaneous practice in familial relationship also has two categories.
- In the first devotees aspire for direct relationships as parents, friends, or servants, and in the second they aspire to become the servants of those serving in a direct relationship with Kṛṣṇa.
- Cultivating the mood of one of Kṛṣṇa's parents, however, can be dangerous.
- Because Kṛṣṇa has only one set of parents, a person aspiring to be a father figure in Kṛṣṇa's life runs the risk of developing a desire to become Nanda Mahārāja himself.
- This is a Māyāvāda contamination just as desiring to be one with Kṛṣṇa is Māyāvāda.
- Such an impurity uproots the carefully grown creeper of devotion.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- The Skanda Purāṇa gives an example of spontaneous devotion practised in the mood of familial relationship. [The name for such devotional practice is sambandhānuga-sādhana-bhakti.]
- Once, a carpenter in Hastināpura wanted Kṛṣṇa as his son.
- Nārada instructed him to adopt the mood of Nanda Mahārāja and to worship a deity of Kṛṣṇa.
- The devotee did so and achieved his desired goal.
- Jīva Gosvāmī comments that the old carpenter, knowing that Nanda Mahārāja was Kṛṣṇa's real father, served the deity of Kṛṣṇa in a mood that resembled Nanda's mood and thus avoided contaminating his devotion.
- The fruit of his aspiration was to become an associate of Nandarāja.



## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Such an associate would, like the elders of Vraja, relish loving Kṛṣṇa in the parental mood.
- Devotees may wonder how the transition from regulative devotion to spontaneous devotion takes place.
- It takes place in one of three ways: in sādhana-bhakti, as a natural consequence of practice in previous lives; in sādhana-bhakti practised in the present life; or in bhāva-bhakti after regulative practice has matured.
- Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī gives examples of the transition from regulative to spontaneous practice from one life to the next. [Bhakti-sandarbha 321]
- He says that both the Vṛṣṇis and the sādhana-siddha gopīs practised regulative service in previous lives.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- As a result of their pure devotion they then appeared in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, where they developed affection (sneha) for Him, which matured into attraction (ruci).
- In this way their regulative devotion in one life led to spontaneous devotion in the next.
- The transition from regulative to spontaneous practice is fascinating in that it goes through the same phases whether it takes place in one life or over many.
- The transition within one lifetime takes place as follows:
- Initially, devotees at the stage of practice are under the jurisdiction of scriptural injunction.
- Then, as they hear Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and associate with advanced devotees, an interest in spontaneous practice awakens in them.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- The pure at heart develop eagerness, which makes them fit to perform what Jīva Gosvāmī calls a mixture of spontaneous and regulative service.
- When real taste (ruci) arises, the influence of spontaneous attraction suppresses the regulative spirit and the devotees are fully imbued with the mood of rāgānuga-bhakti.
- Śrī Jīva writes: “Therefore in some situations it is appropriate to practise rāgānugā bhakti mixed with vaidhī bhakti” (atra miśratve ca yathā-yogyam rāgānugayaikīkṛtyaiva vaidhī kartavyā).
- He adds that even very advanced devotees sometimes display such mixed devotion in order to benefit and guide the general populace. [Bhakti-sandarbhā 312]

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- In mixed spontaneous and regulative practice, the devotees' absorption in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is not out of attachment but out of a desire to comply with the order of the spiritual master or the injunction of scripture.
- For instance, devotees may chant the eighteen-syllable mantra, klīm kṛṣṇāya govindāya gopī-jana-vallabhāya svāhā, and meditate on Kṛṣṇa captivating His companions with the sound of His flute.
- Such devotees may think, “My spiritual master instructed me to chant this mantra.
- By following him I will become a resident of Vraja and serve Kṛṣṇa as His companions do.”
- This is an example of the transition from regulative to spontaneous devotion in the course of practice over one life.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- The third way in which the transition from regulative to spontaneous devotion takes place is without cultivation.
- It happens at the stage of ecstatic devotion in the natural course of the development of regulative practice.
- The details of this process, which has already been mentioned, are described in the next chapter.
- No study of spontaneous devotional service is complete without a description of the role Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu plays in such service.
- It was He who brought the spontaneous devotion of the Vraja-vāsīs to this world; and it is His desire that is now making it available to all.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Just as one cannot enjoy an inheritance without the father's blessings, devotees cannot attain spontaneous devotion without Lord Caitanya's mercy.
- Why is Lord Caitanya's mercy essential for attaining spontaneous devotional service?
- The foremost reason is that the path to spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa, the hidden treasure of the Vedas, is difficult to tread, especially in Kali-yuga.
- Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura sings:

preme picḥala patha gamana bhela baṅka  
mṛgamada-candana-kuṅkume bhela paṅka

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- “The path of love for Kṛṣṇa is winding and crooked.
- And it is slippery, being filled with mud mixed with musk, kuṅkuma, and sandalwood paste.” (Prārthanā 53.3)
- Kṛṣṇa also confirms that among ordinary men perfect beings are rare, and among those rarest of beings hardly one knows Him in truth. [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 7.3]
- Still, by remembering Caitanya Mahāprabhu and surrendering to Him, difficult things become easy.
- Therefore it behooves all Vaiṣṇavas on the path of pure devotion to turn to Him.
- Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda writes, “Simply by taking shelter of the lotus feet of Gaurāṅga, a person enters the path of spontaneous devotion.” [Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta, chapter 10]

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s saṅkīrtana movement is in all ways favourable for the cultivation of spontaneous devotion.
- By speaking or singing about Him, by preaching, distributing books, and performing hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana, devotees learn to fix their minds on Kṛṣṇa.
- By attending spiritual services before the deity morning and evening in the temple or at home, devotees practise the ninefold processes of devotion.
- By visiting holy places such as Vṛndāvana and Māyāpur, devotees are in touch with the lands of Kṛṣṇa, Gaurāṅga, and Their companions.
- The reader may ask, “How is it that simply by serving Lord Caitanya one becomes eligible for spontaneous devotional practice?”



## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- First, one should remember that Lord Caitanya is nondifferent from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa (śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya rādhā-kṛṣṇa nahe anyā).
- Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura says, therefore, that devotees who surrender to Lord Caitanya are automatically counted as confidential associates of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.
- It is just a matter of time before their service matures and fully manifests.

gaura-prema-rasārṇave, se taraṅge yebādube,  
se rādhā-mādhava-antaraṅga  
gr̥he vā vanete thāke, 'hā gaurāṅga' bo'le ḍāke,  
narottama māge tāra saṅga

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- “Anyone who takes pleasure in sporting in the waves of the ocean of Lord Caitanya’s distribution of love of God is at once a confidential devotee of Rādhā and Mādhava.
- Whether he is a sannyāsī or a householder, a devotee who calls out to the Lord and serves His saṅkīrtana movement is always liberated.
- Narottama Dāsa aspires for his company.” (Prārthanā 39.4)
- At this point another question may arise: “The activities of the saṅkīrtana movement are performed in the mood of reverential service to Lord Caitanya.
- How can such a mood develop into the spontaneous spirit conducive to vraja-bhakti?”

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- Because Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa in the mood of Rādhā, Lord Caitanya is pleased with those who chant and serve Kṛṣṇa's name with faith and humility.
- Pleased, He then infuses spontaneous devotion in these servants' hearts. [This paragraph and the next two are based on parts of Navadvīpa-dhāma-māhātmya, chapter 18]
- Although devotees serve Kṛṣṇa in one of five mellow, they worship Caitanya Mahāprabhu only in the mood of servitude.
- However, because Gaura is not different from Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, sincere service to Him results in the awakening of one's relationship with the Divine Couple in any of the five moods.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- For example, although Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes do not manifest themselves directly in the pastimes of Lord Caitanya or his saṅkīrtana movement, fully mature service to Him fructifies as the development of mādhyura-rasa.
- By Lord Caitanya's blessing, devotees then become fit to perform spontaneous service to Rādhā and Śyāma in Vṛndāvana.
- That is, they will externally serve Lord Caitanya's mission and internally cultivate spontaneous devotion for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.
- Such devotees become quickly submerged in the ocean of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.
- By the grace of the Divine Couple, who combine to appear as Gaurāṅga, these devotees gain admittance to the spiritual realm to forever become the gopī's companions.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- This chapter concludes with a beautiful poetic rendition of how service to Lord Caitanya reveals the moods of the Vraja-vāsīs.
- Meditating on these words, written by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, the king of devotional poets, reveals the transcendental truths of spontaneous devotional service.
- All devotees should hear about Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s pastimes with faith and love.
- By the grace of the Lord, one can thus attain shelter at His lotus feet.
- By understanding the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one can understand the truth about Kṛṣṇa.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- By understanding Kṛṣṇa, one can understand the limit of all knowledge described in various revealed scriptures.
- The pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa are the essence of all nectar, and that nectar is flowing in hundreds of rivers in all directions.
- The pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are an eternal reservoir, and one is advised to let his mind swim like a swan on this transcendental lake.
- With all humility, I submit myself to the lotus feet of all of you devotees, taking the dust from your feet as my bodily ornaments.
- Now, my dear devotees, please hear one thing more from me.
- Devotional service to Kṛṣṇa is exactly like a pleasing, jubilant forest of lotus flowers wherein there is ample honey.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- I request everyone to taste this honey.
- If all the mental speculators bring the bees of their minds into this forest of lotus flowers and jubilantly enjoy ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa day and night, their mental speculation will be completely transcendently satisfied.
- The devotees who have a relationship with Kṛṣṇa are like the swans and cakravāka birds who play in that forest of lotus flowers.
- The buds of those lotus flowers are the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, and they are edibles for the swanlike devotees.
- Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is always engaged in His transcendental pastimes; therefore the devotees, following in the footsteps of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, can always eat those lotus buds, for they are the pastimes of the Lord.

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- All the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu should go to that lake and, remaining always under the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, become swans and cakravāka birds in those celestial waters.
- They should go on rendering service to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and enjoying life perpetually.
- In this way all miseries will be diminished, the devotees will attain great happiness, and there will be jubilant love of God.
- The devotees who have taken shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu take the responsibility for distributing nectarean devotional service all over the world.
- They are like clouds pouring water on the ground that nourishes the fruit of love of Godhead in this world.



## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

- The devotees eat that fruit to their hearts' content, and whatever remnants they leave are eaten by the general populace.
- Thus they live happily.
- The pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are full of nectar, and the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa are like camphor.
- When one mixes these, they taste very sweet. By the mercy of the pure devotees, whoever tastes them can understand the depths of that sweetness. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 25.269–77]

## SBC 12 – Spontaneous Devotional Service in Practice - Part 2

prty-akure rati, bhvahaya dui nmaprīty-aṅkure ‘rati’, ‘bhāva’—haya dui nāma  
yāhā haite vaśa hana śrī-bhagavān

- In the seed of affection, there is attachment which goes by two names, rati and bhāva.
- The Supreme Personality of God head comes under the control of such attachment.  
Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.165