

# Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

by H.H Śivarāma Swami

# Chapter 19- From Attachment to Love

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- As attraction and taste become more compelling and dominant in the dynamics of one's devotion, Kṛṣṇa conscious activities become increasingly spontaneous.
- Then one comes to the stage of attachment (āśakti), the stage at which taste and attraction ascend to the limits of maturity accessible to embodied souls.
- At this point, intense absorption in Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities, and pastimes pervades one's life.
- As a materialist is drawn to sense objects, so a devotee at the threshold of transcendence is spontaneously drawn to Hari.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Lord Kapila describes the glories of devotion imbued with strong attachment:

cetaḥ khalv asya bandhāya  
muktaye cātmano matam  
guṇeṣu saktam bandhāya  
rataṁ vā puṁsi muktaye

- “The stage in which the consciousness of the living entity is attracted by the three modes of material nature is called conditional life. But when that same consciousness is attached to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one is situated in the consciousness of liberation.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.15]
- Free from all but the last vestiges of material goodness, the minds of devotees at āsakti are drawn constantly and spontaneously to thoughts of Kṛṣṇa.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- At earlier stages, the same devotees struggled to fix the mind on the Lord only to find themselves inexplicably absorbed in mundane thoughts.
- How embarrassing! Now, at the stage of attachment, their minds impulsively go to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, even in the midst of their day-to-day activities.
- How wonderful!
- Devotees inexperienced in controlling this most welcome mental proclivity may sometimes appear scatterbrained.
- For instance, while cooking a devotee may be drawn to thoughts of Kṛṣṇa's afternoon pastimes (aparāhṇa-līlā), remembering how Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī reluctantly returns home from Rādhā-kuṇḍa, and how later, She hears the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute and eagerly climbs to Her roof for a glimpse of His return with the cows.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The other devotees, noticing this devotee’s reverie, clear their throats to attract his or her attention, but the devotee does not hear them.
- Lord Kapila goes on to say that such devotees, completely cleansed of lust and greed, no longer identify with the body or with bodily possessions. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.16–18]
- They identify with this world only out of habit, and even that habit is really only the wisp of a habit.
- Completely saturated by the nectar of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, their sense of “I-ness” and “my-ness” is fixed on their identity as Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant.
- They know that they are transcendental to material existence, so they are indifferent to the material energy.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Fully situated in knowledge, they see everything in connection with the Lord.
- At the stage of attachment, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa becomes compulsive.
- When not chanting aloud, devotees chant in the mind, even sometimes during sleep.
- Their spiritual practices, twice as potent as they were at the stage of taste, bring them greater access to the holy name's treasures.
- Along with Kṛṣṇa's forms and qualities, His many pastimes now appear in their heart.
- Absorbed in deep meditation on the holy name, these devotees are like persons who have fallen into a bottomless well of bliss; they are lost to the world and the world is lost to them.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- As a result they no longer distinguish between their internal and external lives.
- Such is the absorption that results from cultivating devotional activities (ceṣṭā) along with developing attraction (bhāva).
- Yet this absorption remains the function of a purified mind ever so slightly tinged with matter.
- Therefore, at āsakti the process of remembrance is still ascending (āroha) and not fully spiritual.
- This kind of remembrance does not cause the complete spiritualization of the mind as do revelations that descend from Goloka (avaroha).

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- True, on the absolute platform there is no difference between thinking about Kṛṣṇa and seeing Him directly, but devotees at āsakti are not yet on the absolute platform.
- Slightly bound by matter, at times they meet material impediments to their meditation.
- When they do, the difference between meditation by effort and revelation by grace is apparent.
- A devotee trying to meditate is like a person trying to peek through the crack between the doors of a cinema to see the movie, while a devotee relishing revelation is like the person comfortably seated inside the cinema, watching the movie unobstructed.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- At such times, devotees' intelligence reveals the ineffectiveness of their attempt to invoke Kṛṣṇa's transcendental presence, and they realize that the Lord has not yet bestowed His full mercy on them.
- Thinking that the Lord has not truly appeared to them, they become dejected.
- But a wave of hope to attain the direct vision of Vraja's prince quickly suppresses that melancholy and again absorbs them in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, invoking further images of the Lord.
- To increase their hankering for perfection, attachment and taste then give them a hint of their original spiritual forms.
- With this faint allusion to eternal service, the devotees' hearts again flood with happiness.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Thākura Bhaktivinoda explains that attachment (āśakti) directs the devotees' attention to Kṛṣṇa's eternal companions.
- Through a special, natural attraction to one of these companions, devotees are able to infer a sense of their own spiritual identity. [Śrī Bhajana-rahasya 5]
- Śrīla Prabhupāda also describes this: “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, purport]
- Although these devotees do not have direct realization of their spiritual form or eternal services, their hearts are sufficiently transparent to perceive a hint of them.
- Decorated with tears of intense longing, they pray ardently to Kṛṣṇa for entry into the circle of His eternal companions.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Caitanya Mahāprabhu has depicted the mentality of the aspiring transcendentalist in His Śikṣāṣṭaka (5):

ayi nanda-tanūja kiṅkaram  
patitam mām viṣame bhavāmbudhau  
kṛpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-  
sthita-dhūlī-sadṛśam vicintaya

- “O My Lord, O Kṛṣṇa, son of Mahārāja Nanda, I am Your eternal servant, but because of My own fruitive acts I have fallen into this horrible ocean of nescience. Now please be causelessly merciful to me. Consider me a particle of dust at Your lotus feet.”
- At this stage of attachment, devotees drawn to the gopīs’ service, for example, aspire for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇīs mercy.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- They ardently pray to become Her maidservant, cherishing the conviction that there is no better service than this.
- Recalling descriptions of such service from the ācāryas' writings, these devotees eagerly hanker for the spiritual form of a gopī.
- Through their devotion to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, these devotees' attachment to Kṛṣṇa takes on a new dimension.
- They see service to Kṛṣṇa in relation to service to Rādhā.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- They think, “May my tongue be overwhelmed by relishing the nectar of Rādhās name, may my feet wander on the paths of Vṛndāvana marked by Her footprints, may my hands serve Rādhārāṇī by their expertise, and may my mind be engaged in meditating on Her divine form.
- By attaining the festival of ecstatic love for Rādhā, may I attain firm attachment for the lotus feet of Her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” [Rādhā-rasa-sudhā-nidhi 142]
- Similarly, devotees drawn to the service of Kṛṣṇa’s friends, servants, or parents, will have thoughts and aspirations pertaining to the nature of their relationship.
- In the same way that devotees at āsakti see service to Kṛṣṇa in the context of service to Yaśodā, Rādhā, or Śrīdāmā, they also see many scriptural statements in relation to their newfound moods of service.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- For instance, when devotees in the mood of Rādhās maidservants read Uddhava’s words, *dāsās tava māyām jayema hi*, “We, your servants, will be able to conquer the illusory energy,” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.6.46] they think, “We, your maidservants, will be able to conquer the illusory energy.”
- Indeed, devotees with such attachment are one (*tādātma*) with the general mood of Vṛndāvana and of the particular Vraja-vāsīs they are following.
- Like jaundiced persons who see everything tinted yellow, these devotees see everything from the perspective of their treasured mood of service.
- What we are describing is the devotees’ internal mood.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- While teaching or interacting with the outside world, however, devotees hide their devotional mood and instruct others how to see all things as manifestations of Kṛṣṇa's potencies.
- Then when they are alone or with like-minded devotees, they allow their hidden mood, their suppressed vision, to spontaneously emerge.
- To maintain one's external behaviour as a regulative devotee while developing one's Kṛṣṇa conscious inner life is a must for an advancing Vaiṣṇava.
- ISKCON has seen its share of turmoil when devotees, either within or outside the Society, try to impress on others their burgeoning realizations.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda set the perfect example of how to maintain gravity.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Despite his obvious spiritual credentials, His Divine Grace kept confidential his relationship with Kṛṣṇa.
- He taught and related to devotees according to their qualifications; his conduct was always favourable both for their advancement and for the fulfilment of ISKCON's mission.
- In the course of advancing their Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers will undoubtedly have deep spiritual experiences.
- By making a show of advancement, however, their hard-earned attachment will wane.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Instructing Kṛṣṇa on the science of love, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī said, “Prema is so great that even the knowers of the Vedas cannot fathom it, what to speak of those who merely claim they can.
- One who tries to teach it to an inquisitive person cannot know it, nor can one who tries to learn about it.
- If any of them say they can fathom love, know that they are just imitating!... [Love] shines steadily in the abodes of lovers’ hearts, but if brought outside, it will dim or vanish altogether.” [Prema-samputa 51–53]
- Advancing devotees must, therefore, remain obedient to these bylaws of Vraja, the land of attachment to Kṛṣṇa.
- If they do, their Kṛṣṇa consciousness, along with its devotional ecstasies, will flourish.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The spiritual vision by which devotees see Vraja everywhere pleases and disarms Māyā, the bewildering material energy.
- She is then no longer an enemy but an innocuous curtain thinly veiling the spiritual world.
- Kṛṣṇa needs only to pull the drawstring of that curtain and allow devotees to perceive reality.
- Different grades of spiritualists may strive for perfection in self-realization, but they cannot attain it without intense devotion to the Lord.
- Attachment to Kṛṣṇa is the only auspicious path. Jñānīs and yogīs may try to rid themselves of attachment altogether, thinking it the cause of the soul's entanglement, but the wise know that only attachment directed to great Vaiṣṇavas and the Lord opens the door to perfect liberation.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Scripture praises the qualities of devotees at the stage of āsakti because they are indeed perfect ladies and gentlemen, the true sādhus of this world.
- They are tolerant, merciful, and friendly to all living entities; they have no enemies; they are peaceful; they abide by the scriptures.
- All their characteristics are sublime.
- Engaged in unflinching devotion, they can renounce anything—including family, friends, home, and country—for the Lord's sake.
- Family members may reject them, friends may offend them, scholars may ridicule them, religionists may denounce them, but advanced Vaiṣṇavas do not mind.
- Their only asset is the treasure of the holy name.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- They preach Kṛṣṇa’s message by engaging others in chanting, and according to Śrīdhara Svāmī, when they are not preaching, bhajana of the holy name is the “joyful path” (su-gamaṁ mārgam) they tread out of this world. [See Śrīdhara Svāmī’s commentary to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.39]

śṛṇvan su-bhadrāṇi rathāṅga-pāṇer  
janmāni karmāṇi ca yāni loke  
gītāni nāmāni tad-arthakāni  
gāyan vilajjo vicared asaṅgaḥ

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- “An intelligent person who has controlled his mind and conquered fear should give up all attachment to material objects such as wife, family, and nation and should wander freely without embarrassment, hearing and chanting the holy names of the Lord, the bearer of the chariot wheel.
- The holy names of Kṛṣṇa are all-auspicious because they describe His transcendental birth and activities, which He performs within this world for the salvation of the conditioned souls.
- Thus the holy names of the Lord are sung throughout the world.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.39)
- Sheltered by hearing and chanting Kṛṣṇa’s holy names and pastimes, devotees at attachment do not suffer material misery.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Even if misery befalls them, they are indifferent to it because of their full absorption in remembrance of the Lord.
- These Vaiṣṇavas embody the injunction, “Always think of Kṛṣṇa and never forget Him.”
- Lord Kapila directed His divine mother to the shelter of such holy sādhus as the only way to counteract the pernicious effects of material attachment. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.24]
- Saintly persons serve Lord Caitanya with their body, mind, and words and freely give themselves to the meek and humble.
- For such great souls liberation from this world is imminent.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- When service and bhajana eradicate almost all the effects of their past offences, when the river of their tears for eternal service reaches Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, when the Lord can no longer remain indifferent to their incessant cries for mercy, then, and only then does Kṛṣṇa's favour shine on His devotees and bless them with a ray of divine goodness (śuddha-sattva).
- At that time, all contact with this world comes to a glorious end, and these great devotees attain the spiritual platform.
- Chapters thirteen and fourteen glorified the appearance and characteristics of ecstatic devotion (bhāva-bhakti) and loving devotion (prema-bhakti).
- The present chapter describes only the aspects of those perfect stages not mentioned there.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Ecstasy is the beautiful aromatic budding of the vine of devotion, and love is the even more wonderful blossoming of that vine as it embraces the blackish tamāla tree, Kṛṣṇa.
- Both bhāva and prema have a common characteristic.
- They are aspects of Kṛṣṇa’s internal potency, His svarūpa-śakti—the former as a ray of that potency, the latter as its complete manifestation.
- Great souls fortunate enough to gain entrance to such devotion are no longer touched by the influence of matter, for they are fully situated on the spiritual platform.
- Their cultivation of pure devotion is also fully spiritual and passes through many wonderful stages of development.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- When ecstasy appears even in dog-eaters, it indicates that such devotees are topmost (mahā-bhāgavatas), fully qualified in devotion (uttamādhikāra), and worshipable by Lord Brahmā and the demigods.
- And when devotees acquire love and ascend to the pinnacle of its expression, the greatest ecstasy (mahā-bhāva), they are respected by the inhabitants of Vaikuṅṭha and embraced by the residents of Vraja.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda gives Nārada Muni as an example of one who by the association of great devotees achieved ecstatic devotion and then love of God. [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 17]

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Nārada’s entry to the stage of ecstatic devotion is described in the following verse.

tatrānv-aham kṛṣṇa-kathāḥ pragāyatām  
anugraheṇāśṛṇavam manoharāḥ  
tāḥśraddhayā me ’nu-padam viśṛṇvataḥ  
priya-śravasy aṅga mamābhavad ruciḥ

- “O Vyāsadeva, in that association and by the mercy of those great Vedāntists, I could hear them describe the attractive activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa.
- And thus listening attentively, my taste for hearing of the Personality of Godhead increased at every step.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.26)

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Cultivation of the limbs of devotion, such as hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa, is so powerful that it awards the highest perfection.
- All Vedic literature, including the Vedānta-sūtra, confirms this truth: “Devotional service is so potent that simply by engaging in the activities of devotional service one becomes enlightened without a doubt,” (prakāśaś ca karmaṇy abhyāsāt). [Vedānta-sūtra 3.2.26. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s translation of this verse appears in his purport to Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 9.2]
- The process of cultivating devotional activities (anuśīlanam) does not stop at the stage of ecstasy but continues through ecstasy and love, albeit in ways obviously more developed than at the stage of practice.
- As explained earlier, cultivation is done in two ways, by acting with the senses (ceṣṭā) and by invoking spiritual emotions (bhāva).

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Ecstatic emotions stimulate physical symptoms known as anubhāvas, which in turn nourish further ecstatic emotions.
- Thus the cultivation of devotion by physical endeavour has two dimensions, the acts of devotion themselves (sādhana) and the anubhāvas.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda calls these the executive and effective portions of physical endeavour. [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 17]
- Prior to the stage of ecstasy, devotees cultivate devotion from varying degrees of bondage.
- From the platform of steadiness onward, their emotions are mostly free from the influence of unwanted habits and are visible in increasing stages of attachment.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- But because their attachment for Kṛṣṇa is still unripe and slightly tainted by the modes of nature, it is not the prime object of cultivation.
- Rather, the main cultivation is the acts of devotion themselves.
- Still, physical endeavour does cultivate the mood of devotion and increase the devotees' natural attraction to Kṛṣṇa.
- In rare instances, when a devotee displays greed for spontaneous devotion, the additional practice of cultivating the mood of the Vraja-vāsīs accelerates the awakening of spiritual emotions.
- Strictly speaking, however, because pure attachment (rati) has not yet awakened, this emotional development is still not in the category of bhāvarūpa.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- At the stage of ecstasy the cultivation of blossoming spiritual emotions is more prominent than the cultivation of physical endeavour.
- In fact, physical endeavour becomes an effect of the devotees' ecstatic moods. Spontaneous devotion naturally awakens in all devotees at this stage.
- In short, at the stage of devotional practice, only those devotees who have freed themselves of unwanted habits and who have acquired greed cultivate devotional emotions.
- This cultivation takes place as a consequence of meditating on or trying to follow the mood of Kṛṣṇa's associates in Vraja.
- Otherwise, until one is freed from material bondage, devotees cultivate devotion simply by physical endeavour.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- At the stage of ecstasy, devotees cultivate pure attachment through techniques like meditating on Kṛṣṇa's eightfold daily pastimes (aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā).
- Ecstatic symptoms such as laughing and crying further stimulate the development of spontaneous love.
- Therefore activities such as chanting, hearing, and remembering may appear to be the same in practice as they are in ecstasy, but they are not.
- At the stage of ecstasy these activities are done on the spiritual platform, inspired and saturated by bhāva and enhanced by ecstatic symptoms.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu describes how a devotee chants the holy name in ecstasy:

nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā  
vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā  
pulkair nicitam vapuḥ kadā  
tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati

- “My dear Lord, when will My eyes be beautified by filling with tears that constantly glide down as I chant Your holy name?”
- When will My voice falter and all the hairs on My body stand erect in transcendental happiness as I chant Your holy name?” (Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka 6)

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- In addition to the three ecstatic symptoms described in this verse, there are five more: perspiring, trembling of the body, being stunned, fading of bodily colour, and devastation.
- Of course, the presence of these symptoms does not automatically mean that a devotee has achieved ecstatic love.
- Physical exertion also causes perspiration, and material distress tears.
- But if the nine characteristics of ecstatic devotion mentioned in chapter thirteen are clearly and consistently visible in a devotee's behaviour, then the presence of some or all of these symptoms are signs of true ecstasy.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “These eight bodily transformations, which indicate that a devotee is already liberated within himself, are called aṣṭa-sāttvika-vikāra.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.18, purport]

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- There are two types of ecstasy: that arising from devotion to Kṛṣṇa and that arising from devotion to His Vaikuṅṭha expansions.
- The ecstasy arising from devotion to Kṛṣṇa is superior and more intense due to its sweetness, intimacy, and spontaneity.
- The ecstasy arising from Vaikuṅṭha devotion is weaker due to a sense of formality inspired by awe and reverence.
- In either case, acts of devotion in ecstasy are natural effects of love.
- Leading to ecstatic devotion to Kṛṣṇa are two types of practice: the customary regulative practice (vaidhī), and the exceptional spontaneous practice (rāgānugā).
- As already discussed, the vaidhī bhakti mentioned here is different from the vaidhī bhakti that leads to vaikuṅṭha-bhakti.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The vaidhī bhakti of Lord Caitanya’s followers leads to spontaneous devotion and vraja-bhakti.
- The ācāryas have explained that of the two kinds of devotion practised by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, rāgānuga-bhakti is stronger than the vaidhī bhakti leading to rāga.
- Jīva Gosvāmī writes, “Vaidhī bhakti, which is dependent on following rules and regulations, is weak, but rāgānuga-bhakti, which is independent of rules and regulations, is powerful.” [Bhakti-sandarbha, anuccheda 310]
- Evidence that spontaneous practice is more potent than its regulative counterpart is that the natural attraction for Kṛṣṇa arising out of spontaneous devotion displaces mundane attachment; regulative devotion merely keeps mundane attachments under control until they gradually become purified. [This is explained in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.5.13; Jīva Gosvāmī quotes this verse in Bhakti-sandarbha, anuccheda 310]

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Furthermore, spontaneous practice gives rise to a more evolved form of ecstatic devotion than regulative practice.
- Regulative devotees, unlike spontaneous ones, have no conception of their relationship with Kṛṣṇa, and may not have developed an inclination to have such a relationship.
- Thus at the initial stages of ecstasy, the attachment of those who have chosen the regulative path is immature and either general (sāmānya-sthāyi-bhāva) or transparent (svaccha-sthāyi-bhāva). [See chapter thirteen of this work for a discussion of the terms “general” and “transparent.”]
- As already mentioned, until the permanent ecstasy (sthāyi-bhāva) of regulative devotees manifests itself, the intensity of their bhāva is less than that of spontaneous devotees.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- But when their sthāyi-bhāva awakens and when ecstatic spontaneous attachment matures, the distinction between the two types of devotion dissolves and devotees of both types then taste the same quality of ecstasy.
- Contact with pure goodness (śuddha-sattva) completely spiritualizes the devotees' sense of "I-ness" and "my-ness."
- Just as persons waking from sleep barely remember their dreams, devotees waking from conditioned life hardly remember their bodily identity.
- At the stage of ecstatic devotion they realize their spiritual identity and associate with other devotees only with greed to enter the Lord's eternal entourage.
- The many details of the devotees' original spiritual forms (svarūpas) and their corresponding devotional mellows (rasas) are realized when the ingredients of loving exchange combine through deep cultivation of the holy name (bhajana).

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The holy name chanted by advanced devotees at the stage of ecstasy is laden with mellows of devotion and is therefore known as nāma-rasa.
- By the strength of this pure name, devotees cultivate the various ingredients of loving exchange and their prema for Kṛṣṇa grows and matures.
- Cultivating devotion at the stage of ecstasy, unlike at practice, reveals the object of devotion, Kṛṣṇa.
- Because the fragrance of ecstatic love attracts Him, Kṛṣṇa comes near.
- As the devotees call Him by His name, the youthful prince of Vraja instantly appears in their hearts.
- This initial appearance is called sphūr̥ti.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Nārada Muni describes how Kṛṣṇa appears as a consequence of chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name with love:

pragāyataḥ sva-vīryāṇi  
tīrtha-pādaḥ priya-śravāḥ  
āhūta iva me śīghraṁ  
darśanam yāti cetasi

- “The Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose glories and activities are pleasing to hear, at once appears on the seat of my heart, as if called for, as soon as I begin to chant His holy activities.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.33)

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Who can describe the bliss of devotees whose desires are at last fulfilled after so many arduous years of effort?
- Hearts carried away by His sweetness, they feast on Kṛṣṇa's beautiful features with the mind's eye.
- Ecstasy enlivens their senses and empowers them to remain absorbed in Kṛṣṇa's qualities.
- Their nostrils thrill at Kṛṣṇa's bodily aroma, their lips yearn to taste the nectar of His lips, and their ears drink deeply the sound of His flute.
- Wonderful symptoms of ecstasy, the hard-earned reward for their intense effort, ornament their body, and their mind grows delirious with happiness.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- But just as the ecstasy of such fortunate souls peaks, their vision of Kṛṣṇa disappears.
- Plunged into the ecstasy of grief, they lament like abandoned calves.
- Outsiders who hear the sounds of heart-wrenching sorrow approach these ecstatic devotees, inquire about their welfare, and try to pacify them.
- Like unfaithful wives who hide the signs of attachment to their paramours, ecstatic devotees compose themselves and cover their true feelings.
- Neophytes think that these devotees are suffering from overwork; nondevotees think that Kṛṣṇa consciousness has unhinged them.
- But spiritually advanced Vaiṣṇavas recognize the uncommon radiance of their tear-streaked faces.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- They think, “This is the countenance of one who has uncovered a spiritual treasure.”
- When symptoms such as complete renunciation and addiction to the holy name are also intensely and constantly visible in such devotees’ behaviour, the wise consult among themselves and joyfully conclude, “Our beloved friends have crossed into the realm of perfection.
- They have become greatly fortunate.”
- While chanting the holy names in a solitary place, ecstatic devotees continuously bathe in the ocean of nectar.
- As the adage goes, “Whatever falls into the ocean of sweetness is also sweetened” (mādhurya sindhum adhiyasya bhaven nipātas tat kevalam madhuri-mānam urīkaroti).

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Thus unprecedented, irresistible, nectarean sweetness saturates their thoughts, speech, and activities. [Ānanda-vṛndāvana-campū 11.169]
- As wonderful and overwhelming as these encounters with Kṛṣṇa in ecstatic devotion are, they only make devotees more eager to enter deeper into the realm of spiritual taste (rasa).
- While chanting the holy names, devotees in such states watch in their hearts Kṛṣṇa's eightfold daily pastimes.
- But because their love is still immature, and because the effects of offences have not yet been completely eradicated, bhāva-bhaktas do not yet achieve Kṛṣṇa's direct companionship.
- Like misers whose wealth only increases their greed for further riches, ecstatic devotees relentlessly cultivate devotional activities and moods.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Their only desire is to taste the ultimate fruit of devotion, love of Kṛṣṇa (prema).
- The many leaves, buds, and flowers on the creeper of devotion are but tiny portions of the creeper's opulence.
- They decorate devotees with transcendental symptoms that attract Kṛṣṇa's attention, but they fail to draw Him into the devotee's presence.
- When, however, the mature fruit of the creeper of devotion, pure love, finally ripens, the promise of a rasa-laden taste induces greedy Kṛṣṇa to appear.
- Fortunate devotees thus finally behold their beloved Lord.
- By love's grace they taste Kṛṣṇa's indescribably wonderful form and qualities and they serve Him directly with their senses.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- After countless lifetimes of spiritual drought, the monsoon clouds of bliss burst forth.
- But just as the devotee soars to heights of limitless ecstasy, love, to nourish itself, makes Kṛṣṇa disappear from sight.
- The devotees plunge into an ocean of ecstatic despair.
- This is the playfulness of divine love.

premātibhara-nirbhinna-  
pula-kāṅgo 'ti-nirvṛtaḥ  
ānanda-samplave līno  
nāpaśyam ubhayaṁ mune

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- “O Vyāsadeva, at that time, being exceedingly overpowered by feelings of happiness, every part of my body became separately enlivened.
- Being absorbed in an ocean of ecstasy, I could see neither myself nor the Lord.”  
(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.6.17)
- The advent of love for God is the goal of all human endeavours, yet it is not the final word in spiritual evolution.
- Uncountable phases of spiritual development continually refine and heighten the experience.
- The devotees go through some of these phases while still in the physical body (svarūpa-siddhi), while other phases remain latent until the devotees have assumed their spiritual body in Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes (vastu-siddhi).

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that the material body is unable to tolerate the overwhelming intensity caused by the richness of the advanced stages of prema.
- He particularly refers to those stages that induce the searing heat of separation or the numbing coolness of reunion. [Mādhurya-kādambinī, chapter 8]
- Therefore the specific stages of love—affection (sneha), anger (māna), love (praṇaya) and attachment (rāga)—in the mood of friendship, develop in devotees only after they have taken birth in the universe in which Kṛṣṇa is displaying His pastimes, and after such greatly fortunate souls have been trained in devotional service by the Lord’s eternal companions.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- All devotees go through the same stages of love of God, but each devotee's love for Kṛṣṇa has unique flavour and characteristics.
- The power of each devotee's love to attract Kṛṣṇa, then, is due to its singularity as well as its purity.
- As the supreme enjoyer, Kṛṣṇa is always intent on increasing the scope of loving exchanges because they expand His very being and make Him famous as Rasika-śekhara, the foremost taster of love's mellows.
- Conditioned souls struggle to grasp how God, who is unlimited, can expand His being.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- To explain this concept, the Upaniṣads define the Supreme: “When one understands the Personality of Godhead, the reservoir of pleasure, Kṛṣṇa, he actually becomes transcendently blissful,” (raso vai saḥ, rasam hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati). [Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7.1]
- As the reservoir of all kinds of relationships, Kṛṣṇa is the substance of rasa, and in that sense He is nondifferent from rasa.
- In short, He is rasa.
- Therefore by expanding the range of relationships He enjoys with His devotees, His existence (rasa) also expands.
- This chapter concludes with a description of the stages of loving devotion Vaiṣṇavas go through while still in the body.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The rare fortunate souls who have attained the stage of love should be recognized as perfect devotees (siddha-bhaktas).
- All other devotees, including those at the stage of ecstasy (bhāva-bhakti), are called practitioners (sādhaka-bhaktas).
- This last statement may justly raise a question in the reader's mind. In chapter nine, a distinction was made between devotion in practice and devotion in ecstasy.
- In fact, part of the definition of devotional service in practice is that it promotes devotees to the stage of ecstasy.
- Thus ecstatic devotion cannot be in the category of devotional service in practice.
- How, then, can devotees in ecstasy be called sādhakas?

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The answer to this question lies in Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī's description of perfect devotion, which he describes as being free from material impediments. [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 2.1.280]
- No material condition, including ignorance, aversion, indifference, attachment, and sensual attraction, can obstruct the flow of devotion toward Kṛṣṇa. [These five kinds of obstruction and their origin are described in Kalyāṇa-kalpataru 2.1.5.]
- Nonetheless, because the effects of previous offences linger even at the stage of ecstasy, “material impasses,” as Śrīla Prabhupāda calls them, are present, however slightly, and they sometimes interfere with the practices of ecstatic devotees.
- And as already mentioned, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's analysis of the nullification of offences concludes that reactions to offences to advanced devotees linger after the stage of prema, what to speak of at bhāva.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- It is in this sense that bhāva-bhaktas are also in the category of practitioners—they still have something to overcome.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī goes on to say, “A person who has attained the stage of attraction for Kṛṣṇa and who is not freed from the material impasse, but who has qualified himself to enter into the kingdom of God, is called a sādḥaka.” [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 2.1.276 as paraphrased by Śrīla Prabhupāda in The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 25]
- Just as there are two general classes of devotees, siddha-bhaktas and sādhanabhaktas, there are also two classes of perfect devotees, those who attain perfection while in the material world and those who are eternally perfect (nitya-siddha).
- This second category is the class of liberated souls who descend from the spiritual world to engage in specific missions on behalf of the Lord.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The first category, those who attain perfection in this world, is also divided into two classes, those perfected by devotional practice (sādhana-siddhas) and those perfected by special mercy (kṛpā-siddhas).
- All devotees should try to become sādhana-siddhas while praying to Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda for their special mercy.
- Devotees at the stage of love constantly experience ecstasy while chanting Kṛṣṇa's name in prema-saṅkīrtana.
- Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya says, “This sweet transcendental sound is a special creation of the Lord known as prema-saṅkīrtana, congregational chanting in love of Godhead.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 11.97]
- According to Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, Kṛṣṇa's name chanted at this level of saṅkīrtana is imbued with all of Kṛṣṇa's transcendental potencies.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The Ṭhākura also states that only the topmost currency, the gold coin of pure love (prema) can purchase the pure name.
- At this stage, when devotees engage in prema-saṅkīrtana and hear Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam they greatly enhance their spiritual identity in one of five permanent relationships (known also as continuous ecstasy).
- The potency of activities done in such consciousness mixes continuous ecstasy with four other ingredients—described in upcoming paragraphs—and intensifies it in astonishing and ever-fresh ways.
- The taste of this mixture of ecstasies constitutes transcendental mellow (rasa).
- In this way devotees cultivate the particular relationship to which they are attracted and become happy.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that Kṛṣṇa also becomes inclined toward such devotees and agrees to come under their control. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 23.46]
- The four other ingredients of the mellow of devotion are the causes of ecstasy (vibhāva), subsequent ecstasy (anubhāva), existential ecstasy (sāttvika-bhāva), and transitory ecstasy (vyabhicāri-bhāva).
- Chapters twenty through thirty-four of The Nectar of Devotion give detailed descriptions of these ecstasies.
- This section gives but a brief synopsis.
- Devotees who have realized their constitutional relationship with Kṛṣṇa feel their ecstatic love stimulated when they hear and chant about Him.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- This stimulation, called vibhāva, has two divisions: the subjects (ālambana) of devotion, namely Kṛṣṇa and His devotees; and the objects that cause the stimulation (uddīpana), such as the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute or the sight of His footprints in the dust of Vraja. Kṛṣṇa is technically called the viṣaya, the object of love, and His devotees are technically called the āśraya, the shelter of love.
- Such heightened ecstasies impel devotees to do things with their body, such as dance and sing, activities that further enhance their bliss.
- The activities that naturally follow spiritual emotion are called anubhāvas, or subsequent ecstasies.
- There are fifteen kinds of subsequent ecstasy.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- In addition to the anubhāvas through which devotees choose to express their happiness, devotees go through involuntary transcendental emotions called existential ecstasies (sāttvika-bhāvas), which take the form of crying, being stunned, and so on.
- Rūpa Gosvāmī describes eight existential ecstasies, each of which has five degrees of intensity in three qualitative divisions. [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 28 ]
- In addition to these displays of loving ecstasies are thirty-three transitory ecstasies (vyabhicāri-bhāvas) that further heighten such greatly fortunate devotees' love with various symptoms, some of which are apparently disturbing, such as moroseness, madness, or shock.
- Contact with transcendental stimuli triggers a chain reaction in the continuous ecstasy of devotees resulting in subsequent ecstasy, existential ecstasy, and transitory ecstasy—all of which further heighten the devotees' love for Kṛṣṇa.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- The wonderful taste of the mixture of these ingredients is called “the mellow of devotion” (bhakti-rasa), and it is so indescribably sweet that it forcibly attracts Kṛṣṇa and makes Him subordinate to that love.
- This is the ultimate wonder and secret of pure devotion.
- In Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, “God is great, but devotional service is greater than God because it attracts Him.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 1]
- Devotees in full-blown love with the Lord thus gain His direct association, as Lord Kapila describes to His divine mother:

paśyanti te me rucirāṅy amba santaḥ  
prasanna-vaktrāruṇa-locanāni  
rūpāṅi divyāni vara-pradāni  
sākaṁ vācaṁ sprhaṇīyāṁ vadanti

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- “O My mother, My devotees always see the smiling face of My form, with eyes like the rising morning sun. They like to see My various transcendental forms, which are all benevolent, and they also talk favourably with Me.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.35)
- On seeing the charming form of Kṛṣṇa, smiling and attractive, and hearing His pleasing words, ecstatic devotees almost lose all other awareness.
- Their senses are freed from all other engagements and they become absorbed in devotional service. [The previous two sentences are based on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.35]
- Yet the wonderful thing is that even though they acquire the ultimate opulence of Kṛṣṇa’s company, they still maintain their worship in the mood of separation.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Caitanya Mahāprabhu describes this internal symptom of loving devotion:

yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa  
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitaṁ  
śūnyāyitaṁ jagat sarvaṁ  
govinda-virahaṇa me

- “O Govinda! Feeling Your separation, I am considering a moment to be like twelve years or more. Tears are flowing from my eyes like torrents of rain, and I am feeling all vacant in the world in Your absence.” (Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka 7)
- Such feelings of separation swell the high tide of loving emotions.
- Just as gold melts under extreme heat, the heart melts from abundant love and devotees cry, shout, or laugh loudly.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Sometimes they sing and dance like madmen.
- Having lost themselves to their beloved, they know no one but Kṛṣṇa and thus remain indifferent to the opinions of worldly-minded persons.
- A drunken man does not notice whether he is wearing a coat or shirt; similarly, perfect devotees do not notice whether their temporary body is sitting or standing.
- Indeed, if by God's will the body is finished, the perfect devotees do not even notice that they have passed to the spiritual world. [This paragraph is based on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.2.40 and 11.13.36]
- At the stage of love, devotees are free from all false identities, for they have not even a slight attraction to this world or its opulence.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Their only sense of “my-ness,” is their strong feeling of possessiveness toward Kṛṣṇa; their only sense of “I-ness” is their condensed, intensified absorption in service.
- Lord Caitanya has recorded that “I-ness,” wonderfully expressed by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī: “Let Kṛṣṇa tightly embrace this maidservant who has fallen at His lotus feet, or let Him trample Me or break My heart by never being visible to Me.
- He is a debauchee, after all, and can do whatever He likes, but He is still no one other than the worshipable Lord of My heart.” (Śrī Śikṣāṣṭaka 8)
- These are some of the wonders of love of God, the taste of which Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes as a limitless ocean with four sections—the eastern, southern, western, and northern—each with innumerable waves.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- Caitanya Mahāprabhu described this ocean to Rūpa Gosvāmī while instructing him on the bank of the Daśāśvamedha-ghāṭa at Prayāga.
- The jaundiced perspective of conditioned souls reaches the pinnacle of futility when it tries to examine the topmost transcendental subject of loving devotion.
- Such foolish beings can never taste the varieties of loving exchange between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.
- In contrast, sincere devotees who study this subject gain true insight into the science of love and find unending inspiration in their march toward that goal.
- There is no doubt that the pure devotees who have dedicated everything to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet will ultimately taste the nectar of transcendental mellows, because the mission of Lord Caitanya is to bestow loving devotion on all.

## SBC 19 – From Attachment to Love

- For those who are completely cleansed of all material contamination by pure devotional service and who are always satisfied and brightly enlightened at heart; for those who are always attached to understanding the transcendental meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and who are always eager to associate with advanced devotees; for those whose happiness and very life is service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and who always discharge the confidential activities of love; for such advanced devotees who are by nature situated in bliss, the seed of love (rati) expands in the heart by the practice of devotional service.
- Thus the mixture of ecstatic ingredients is perceivable and unbearably tasty to the devotees, who at last reach the highest platform of wonder and bliss. [This paragraph is based on Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 23.95–98]