

Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

by H.H Śivarāma Swami

Chapter 21- Principles of Hearing

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Before embarking on the study of systematic cultivation, devotees should understand the various aspects of the process of hearing.
- The purpose of this chapter is to describe the basic principles of the hearing process, leaving its in-depth study to the discriminating reader.
- Devotees perfect the confidential worship (nāma-bhajana) of the Lord when they apply both the principles underlying it and the details of its practice. [Chapter Twenty, page 454, defines nāma-bhajana as remembering what one has heard (Kṛṣṇa's pastimes) while chanting the Lord's name.]
- When performed without offence, hearing invokes the presence of the Lord in the form of transcendental sound.
- The holy name is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, and as such it is imbued with all sublime potencies, including the power of Kṛṣṇa's causeless mercy (karuṇa-śakti).

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The direct influence of spiritual sound, enhanced by Kṛṣṇa's special mercy, gradually awakens receptive devotees to knowledge of their spiritual identity.
- The Vedānta-sūtra confirms that transcendental sound first liberates the hearers (anāvṛttiḥśabdāt) and then elevates them to the spiritual realm. [Vedānta-sūtra 4.4.22]
- Liberation is characterized by spiritual knowledge and detachment from matter, and transcendence by divine ecstasy and loving service.
- For devotees with even a slight interest in hearing about Kṛṣṇa, His special mercy works in a wonderful way.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ
puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hr̥dy antaḥ-stho hy abhadraṇi
vidhunoti suhṛt satām

- “Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead, who is the Paramātmā [Supersoul] in everyone’s heart and the benefactor of the truthful devotee, cleanses desire for material enjoyment from the heart of the devotee who has developed the urge to hear His messages, which are in themselves virtuous when properly heard and chanted.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.17)
- Thus the process of liberation begun by hearing about Kṛṣṇa is enhanced and accelerated by His special kindness, because He is especially pleased with devotees who like to hear about Him.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- This section analyses the process of hearing about Kṛṣṇa in four divisions: incidental, purposeful, practised, and specific.
- “Incidental hearing” means to read or hear transcendental subject matter in the order in which, and with the emphasis with which, it is presented in scripture or by pure Vaiṣṇavas.
- For example, while reading the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam’s First Canto, devotees encounter a verse spoken by Bhīṣmadeva about Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes: “Let my mind be fixed upon Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose motions and smiles of love attracted the damsels of Vraja-dhāma (the gopīs).
- The damsels imitated the characteristic movements of the Lord (after His disappearance from the rāsa dance).” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.9.40]

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Hearing of the rāsa-līlā in the course of one's reading, without pursuing the subject further, is referred to as incidental hearing.
- This process is perfect, for it follows the natural path of elevation envisaged by Śrīla Vyāsadeva and the self-realized souls who have commented on his writings.
- “Purposeful hearing” refers to inquiring about a particular subject or pastime of special interest.
- For instance, after reading Śrīla Prabhupāda's summary of Madhvācārya's biography, devotees who want to know more may follow Prabhupāda's guidance: “For further information about Madhvācārya, one should read Madhva-vijaya, by Nārāyaṇācārya.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 9.245, purport]
- In such purposeful hearing, devotees must be mindful of their own qualification.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Without this awareness, research into topics of special interest may lead to misunderstanding.
- Such was the case in 1976 when some of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples took up exclusive study and discussion of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes with the gopīs, something which Śrīla Prabhupāda strongly disapproved.
- “Practised hearing” takes place when devotees regularly hear specific topics about Kṛṣṇa with the purpose of recalling them in the course of their service.
- These topics may include descriptions of Kṛṣṇa’s form, qualities, and pastimes, which are best recalled while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the Six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana as examples of persons who practised this type of hearing: “They were always absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa, how Kṛṣṇa is, I mean to say, having His pastimes, His activities, by thinking, by thinking, thinking. ...
- They could forget their material prosperity in exchange of thinking [about] Kṛṣṇa.” [Lecture, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 3.17–20, New York, 27 May, 1966]
- Spontaneous devotees still on the level of practice, but who have an intense desire to attain the mood of the Vraja-vāsīs, take up this type of hearing, which is also described in the purport to verse 8 of Śrī Upadeśāmṛta.
- “Specific hearing” is the most advanced type of hearing. It is concentrated on Kṛṣṇa’s eightfold daily pastimes (aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā).

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- As just mentioned, in practised hearing, devotees listen to and meditate on individual pastimes, but not necessarily in sequence.
- In specific hearing, devotees hear the full scope of Kṛṣṇa’s Vraja pastimes as they unfold throughout the day.
- Two types of advanced devotees practise this kind of hearing: those who have realized their spiritual form and those who have not.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda’s translation to verse 10 of Śrī Upadeśāmṛta elaborates on how a perfected devotee hears and meditates: “Who, then, will not reside at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and, in a spiritual body surcharged with ecstatic devotional feelings [aprākṛta-bhāva], render loving service to the divine couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, who perform Their aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā, Their eternal eightfold daily pastimes.”

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Realized devotees perceive not only Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, but also the roles they themselves play in them.
- Devotees unaware of their svarūpa may remember what they hear but should not artificially project themselves into the Lord's pastimes.
- If they do, they will only become degraded.
- At what point may practising devotees hear Kṛṣṇa's eightfold daily pastimes?
-
- The stage at which devotees are truly fit to systematically hear Kṛṣṇa's pastimes varies with the individual.
- Eagerness cannot be legislated.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- However, when eagerness does arise, even at niṣṭhā devotees' inability to remember the pastimes without distraction fails to offer due respect to these sacred topics.
- At the stages of taste and attraction, however, the devotees' minds are automatically drawn to and are able to remain fixed on Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.
- Therefore, for devotees with spontaneous attachment, ruci is the most appropriate stage at which to begin meditating on Kṛṣṇa's aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā.
- Each of the four types of hearing is different, and each may be taken up when one possesses the appropriate type of faith.
- Although devotees should not concentrate on things beyond their qualification, the truths underlying transcendence, bhakti-tattva, are never hidden from them.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- At all stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness devotees are made aware of the basic philosophy behind Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.
- Still, devotees only put into practice the principles that match their spiritual advancement.
- It is in this sense that the devotees' qualifications should match the topics they hear.
- Bhīṣmadeva's brief remembrance of the gopīs mentions the rāsa dance, but the rāsa dance is incidental to the primary theme under discussion: his departure from this world.
- Bhīṣma gives no instructions about the role Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with the gopīs play in the spiritual lives of the readers.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- In contrast, Rūpa Gosvāmī urges advanced devotees to adopt the gopīs' mood, to absorb themselves in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa's eightfold daily pastimes, and to live on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. [The Nectar of Instruction 10]
- Bhīṣmadeva and Rūpa Gosvāmī address the same subject, but they present it differently according to their qualification.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda presents both descriptions to his readers, although he says that Rūpa Gosvāmī's instructions are meant only for devotees who have realized their svarūpa.
- Therefore when devotees hear these descriptions, they must keep in mind their own qualification and not try to apply Rūpa Gosvāmī's instructions prematurely.
- Otherwise, they disqualify themselves from hearing such topics altogether.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Scripture forbids both speaking above the qualification of one’s audience and hearing beyond one’s own qualification.
- For in-stance, Kṛṣṇa prohibits repeating confidential subjects to unfit persons:

idaṁ te nātapaskāya
nābhaktāya kadācana
na cāsuśrūṣave vācyaṁ
na ca mām yo ’bhyasūyati

- “This confidential knowledge may never be explained to those who are not austere, or devoted, or engaged in devotional service, nor to one who is envious of Me.” (Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.67)

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The Lord’s warning should not be taken lightly.
- The Padma Purāṇa includes indiscriminate speaking and hearing in its list of offences against the holy name: “It is an offence to preach the glories of the holy name to persons who have no intelligence or no faith in the subject matter,” aśraddadhāne vimukhe ’py aśrṇvati yaś copadeśaḥśiva-nāmāparādhaḥ. [This is the ninth offence listed in the Padma Purāṇa, cited in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 8.24, purport]
- By speaking from scripture in a way consistent with the previous ācāryas, devotees avoid committing offences in their speaking.
- Divergence, however, particularly the type done by professional Bhāgavatam reciters, condemns those who participate to suffer the results of offences.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- One such deviation is the popular Bhāgavata-saptāha, a seven-day recitation of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in which large crowds of people pay to attend morning and evening sessions of three to four hours each.
- The readings typically centre on Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvana pastimes, often those with the gopīs, and are interspersed with songs related to the same subjects.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke strongly against such indiscriminate glorification of Kṛṣṇa as well as the greedy “sādhus” who promote it.
- These fellows, often faithless impersonalists, commit offences in a number of ways: they delve into elevated topics, which they are unfit to hear; they speak publicly on confidential subjects; they speak to an audience unqualified to hear these confidential topics; they make entertainment out of the most sacred form of worship; and they use the profits for material purposes.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- These professional reciters along with their audience of usually gross materialists and rank neophytes are punishable for their transgressions.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Professional speakers and a materially absorbed audience cannot derive real benefit from such discourses.
- Professional speakers make a show of Bhāgavata-saptāha for the sake of family maintenance, and the materially disposed audience hears such discourses for some material benefit, namely wealth, liberation, religiosity, or sense gratification.”
[Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.18.15, purport]
- Śrīla Prabhupāda taught by example how to avoid offences while speaking of Kṛṣṇa.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- When in front of common men or people of mixed qualification, he spoke about God being a person, the difference between matter and spirit, and that chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa is our means of salvation.
- His general rule was to speak on subjects fit for the least qualified persons—the lowest common denominator—in the audience.
- Some Vaiṣṇavas disagree with this policy, arguing that the older devotees in an audience are already familiar with many of the subjects relating to the cultivation of relationship with Kṛṣṇa.
- These Vaiṣṇavas say that a speaker should be able to discourse on the ultimate spiritual relationships, those of Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda did not approve of this strategy because it lacks spiritual discrimination and it opposes the example set by Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- With general audiences Lord Caitanya would simply chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, with His associates he would discuss the broad aspects of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, and with Rāmānanda Rāya and Svarūpa Dāmodara, His closest companions, He would open His heart and sing and hear about the intimate dealings between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.
- Authorized Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas faithfully follow the same process, a process Rūpa Gosvāmī clearly explained:

śrīmad-bhāgavatārthānām
āsvādo rasikaiḥ saha
sajātīyāśaye snigdhe
sādhau saṅgaḥ svato vare

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- “One should taste the meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam in the company of pure devotees, and one should associate with the devotees who are more advanced than oneself and who are endowed with a similar type of affection for the Lord.” (Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.2.91)
- Śrīla Prabhupāda defines sajātīyāśaye snigdhe as “pleasing to the same class of people.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 5.107, purport]
- Thus devotees fit to speak should present to mixed audiences topics suitable for everyone present.
- On the one hand, speakers must orient their presentation to the least qualified members of their audience.
- On the other hand, when speaking to a group of peers, they should select topics suited to that class of Vaiṣṇava.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- This type of behaviour is in line with Rūpa Gosvāmī's order.
- Some devotees will continue to argue that repeated hearing and speaking on the basics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness is boring to more advanced devotees.
- But this line of reasoning is defective and exposes as neophyte the holders of this opinion as well as the so-called advanced hearers about whom they speak.
- The truth is that for advanced devotees any topic related to Kṛṣṇa is nectarean (tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam). [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.31.9]
- Mature Vaiṣṇavas see Kṛṣṇa in all things, moving and nonmoving, what to speak of in topics directly related to Him—from the creation to the rāsa dance.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- As Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms, “Those who are advanced, they know that Kṛṣṇa’s dancing with the gopīs, that līlā, and Kṛṣṇa’s playing as the leader of the battlefield of Kurukṣetra is the same.
- It is all transcendental.” [Lecture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.12, Vṛndāvana, 11 September, 1976]
- A mother’s love makes her baby son’s crawling as enjoyable as when later, as an adult, he defends his doctoral thesis.
- Similarly, an advanced devotee’s love for Kṛṣṇa makes anything the Lord says or does equally relishable.
- Advanced devotees should hear and speak about Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvana līlā, but, as mentioned above, only with select groups of equally or more qualified devotees.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- This type of exchange, which Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged his followers to pursue, is essential for serious students of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- In his own words, “We have to understand Kṛṣṇa in truth.
- Simply superficially if we understand Kṛṣṇa, that ‘Kṛṣṇa was born of the father and mother, Devakī and Vasudeva, and He was born in Mathurā, and then played with the gopīs.
- And then...
- He taught something on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra,’ that is not sufficient knowledge. We should try to understand samagram, as far as possible in complete.
- Then our devotion, our love for Kṛṣṇa, will be increased.” [Lecture, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 7.1–3, Ahmedabad, 14 December, 1972]

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- That said, it is equally important to note that advanced devotees do not hide Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.
- Preachers of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should make introductory presentations of such topics to the public, for Lord Caitanya's order is to preach Kṛṣṇa's message to the world.
- Kṛṣṇa and His message are inseparable from His pastimes.
- Therefore it is the duty of a teacher to determine the audience's fitness and to present Kṛṣṇa accordingly.
- Success in teaching means that the audience appreciates Kṛṣṇa's message and understands that nothing about Kṛṣṇa, His associates, or His pastimes is mundane.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- This means that preachers must disclose Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in a different way to neophytes than they would to advanced devotees.
- As Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Even third-class devotees who have no literary knowledge or no time to read Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam or Bhagavad-gītā get the opportunity to hear about the pastimes of the Lord.
- In this way their minds may remain always absorbed in the thought of the Lord—His form, His activities, and His transcendental nature.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.36, purport]
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam was written to encourage the spiritually impoverished people of Kali-yuga to hear about Kṛṣṇa directly.
- One should avoid improper hearing of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes as much as one would avoid offensive chanting.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- But proper hearing, like offenceless chanting, is essential for sincere sādhakas.
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam tells how Vyāsadeva had compiled scriptures consisting of indirect teachings.
- These scriptures would elevate the conditioned souls by gradually restricting their sense gratification and leading them upward on the path toward material detachment.
- However, Vyāsadeva buried Kṛṣṇa's instructions in Vedic aphorisms and relegated the Lord to a secondary figure in the Mahābhārata.
- When his work was completed, instead of feeling fulfilled Vyāsa felt morose. [This and the following two paragraphs are renderings of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.8–16]

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Nārada Muni, Vyāsadeva's spiritual master, understood his disciple's despondency and guided him to a solution.
- The problem was simple: Vyāsa had failed to broadcast the topmost message of Godhead.
- He had certainly spared the followers of the Vedas from the risk of becoming overly familiar with Kṛṣṇa, but in doing so he had insulated them from directly hearing about the Lord, their prime hope for elevation and the very purpose of the Vedas.
- In Kali-yuga the indirect process would be relevant and accessible only to a few qualified souls.
- The bulk of humanity would use the circuitous route as a convenient excuse to justify their indulgence in sense gratification.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Nārada declared that spiritual confusion would result.

tato 'nyathā kiñcana yad vivakṣataḥ
pṛthag dṛśas tat-kṛta-rūpa-nāmabhiḥ
na karhicit kvāpi ca duḥsthitā matir
labheta vātāhata-naur ivāspadam

- “Whatever you desire to describe that is separate in vision from the Lord simply reacts, with different forms, names, and results, to agitate the mind as the wind agitates a boat which has no resting place.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.14)
- In contrast, hearing Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes is extraordinarily sweet and attractive, so much so that it can lead the people, who are neither austere nor philosophically inclined, to transcendental realization.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Nārada advised Vyāsa to compose a literary work that would directly praise Kṛṣṇa's names, forms, qualities, and pastimes.
- That work—Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—would truly benefit the people and inaugurate a worldwide spiritual revolution.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda followed the formula his guru mahārāja gave him, the same one Nārada Muni had given Vyāsa.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda successfully spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because he praised Kṛṣṇa through the distribution of transcendental literature.
- Even today devotees travel to every town and village selling the books Śrīla Prabhupāda carefully composed, books such as Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Kṛṣṇa book, and Bhagavad-gītā As It Is.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- These books describe Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes in a way that intrigues materialists, elevates practitioners, and brings bliss to transcendentalists.
- Thus by the mercy of an empowered ācārya even materialistic persons can take offenceless pleasure in hearing Kṛṣṇa’s dancing with the gopīs and thus develop their faith in the Lord.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “In this world there are three kinds of men: those who are liberated, those trying to be liberated, and those entangled in sense enjoyment.
- Of these three, those who are already liberated chant and hear the holy name of the Lord, knowing perfectly well that to glorify the Lord is the only way to keep oneself in a transcendental position.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Those who are trying to be liberated, the second class, may regard the chanting and hearing of the Lord’s holy name as a process of liberation, and they too will feel the transcendental pleasure of this chanting.
- As for karmīs and persons engaged in sense gratification, they also may take pleasure in hearing the pastimes of the Lord, like His fighting on the Battlefield of Kurukṣetra and His dancing in Vṛndāvana with the gopīs.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.1, additional notes to the chapter]
- In summary, hearing about Kṛṣṇa is for everyone, but both speakers and hearers must know their respective qualification and the suitability of the topics being discussed.
- Speakers must be able to present Kṛṣṇa’s names, qualities, and pastimes in a manner suitable for different audiences, and devotees should hear and read Kṛṣṇa’s glories according to their adhikāra.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- These are the ways in which hearers and speakers avoid offences for the full spiritual benefit of all concerned.
- The hearing process is more than a means of transmitting information about the Supreme Lord.
- Along with conferring sambandha-jñāna, abhidheya-jñāna, and prayojana-jñāna, hearing bestows the most valuable treasure: transcendental taste (rasa).
- Here, “taste” refers to a nectarean relish produced by the sound vibration that praises Kṛṣṇa’s glories, which is nondifferent from the sweet relish tasted when directly encountering Kṛṣṇa’s potencies, qualities, and pastimes.
- The result of offenceless hearing is that every letter of every word related to Kṛṣṇa tastes like nectar.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The more devotees hear these sounds, the more they want to hear them. The incon-ceivable effect of hearing such nectar does not even require comprehension—although hearing with comprehension certainly accelerates the attainment of realization.
- While visiting South India, Caitanya Mahāprabhu met an illiterate brāhmaṇa who would daily turn the Bhagavad-gītās pages, sometimes pronouncing the words properly and sometimes not.
- He could not understand what he was reading; but by faith in the transcendental vibration, this brāhmaṇa tasted the highest spiritual ecstasy.
- Lord Caitanya certified him as the ultimate authority on Kṛṣṇa's instructions.
- Such is the potency of hearing spiritual sound. [This pastime is described in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 9.93–103]

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The taste inherent in hearing about Kṛṣṇa produces two effects: it makes persons increasingly eager to hear, and it completely relieves their fatigue.
- In other words, devotees become so greedy to hear that they forget their bodily demands. They go on hearing without feeling thirsty, hungry, or tired.
- Śaunaka and the sages eulogize this phenomenon:

vayaṁ tu na vitṛpyāma
uttama-śloka-vikrame
yac-chṛṇvatām rasa-jñānām
svādu svādu pade pade

- “We never tire of hearing the transcendental pastimes of the Personality of Godhead, who is glorified by hymns and prayers. Those who have developed a taste for transcendental relationships with Him relish hearing of His pastimes at every moment.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.19)

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Transcendental subject matters don't all taste the same. Spiritual knowledge tastes sweet, knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's potencies sweeter, and knowledge of devotional service sweeter still.
- Similarly, the pastimes of Lord Nārāyaṇa are sweet, those of His incarnations sweeter, and the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa the sweetest of all.
- Among Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, those in Vṛndāvana are sweeter still, and those with the gopīs are nectarean.
- Ultimately, Kṛṣṇa's pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī are nectarean to the extreme.
- As devotees relish ever-increasing ecstasy, their attachment to hearing about Kṛṣṇa also increases.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- In this way their devotional service develops in stages. Attentively hearing the talks of great devotees (kṛṣṇa-kathāḥ pragāyatām) and rendering them service (mahat-sevayā) are the two main ingredients that nurture the taste of hearing. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.16, 1.5.26]
- These two ingredients are embedded in ISKCON's daily programme, in which devotees attend classes on scripture and serve the preaching mission.
- Devotees dedicated to Lord Caitanya's mission render the greatest service to Rūpa Gosvāmī's followers.
- Such devotees simultaneously develop an extraordinary taste for their service and a great affinity for hearing about Kṛṣṇa.
- A question may be raised about the nature of this taste.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Is the taste of mature hearing about a transcendental subject the same as the taste of directly perceiving it?
- For example, is the taste mature devotees perceive while hearing about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes the same as that of directly participating in them?
- The answer is yes.
- The best evidence in support of this conclusion is the way in which Lord Caitanya fulfilled the purpose of His incarnation.
- Kṛṣṇa appeared in a golden form because He wanted to taste the glory, potency, and happiness of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇīs love for Him.
- He completely fulfilled this desire by continually chanting and hearing Kṛṣṇa's name, qualities, and pastimes.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- For instance, once He became overwhelmed when He perceived the taste of Kṛṣṇa's lips in Lord Jagannātha's mahā-prasāda.
- After finishing those remnants, His hankering continued.
- This hankering was satisfied only when He glorified the taste, influence, and appearance of Kṛṣṇa's lips.
- In this way He showed that the taste of hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa's glories is the same as experiencing those glories directly (abhinnatvān nāma-nāmiṇoḥ). [Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, 1.2.233, quoted from Padma Purāṇa]

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Śrīla Prabhupāda also confirms this truth: “You can get the same benefit by chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name as you get personally talking with Kṛṣṇa”; [Lecture, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 7.1, Upsala University, Stockholm, 8 September, 1973] and, “By hearing the narration of the pastimes of the Lord, one contacts directly the Personality of Godhead.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.26, purport]
- Prahlāda Mahārāja, along with his servants and all the denizens of Hari-varṣa, pray:
-

yat-saṅga-labdham nija-vīrya-vaibhavam
tīrtham muhuḥ saṁsprṣatām hi mānasam
haraty ajo ’ntaḥśrutibhir gato ’ṅgajam
ko vai na seveta mukunda-vikramam

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- “By associating with persons for whom the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mukunda, is the all in all, one can hear of His powerful activities and soon come to understand them.
- The activities of Mukunda are so potent that simply by hearing of them one immediately associates with the Lord.
- For a person who constantly and very eagerly hears narrations of the Lord’s powerful activities, the Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead in the form of sound vibration, enters within his heart and cleanses it of all contamination.
- On the other hand, although bathing in the Ganges diminishes bodily contaminations and infections, this process and the process of visiting holy places can cleanse the heart only after a long time.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Therefore who is the sane man who will not associate with devotees to quickly perfect his life?” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 5.18.11)
- Kavi-karṇapūra explains a wonderful phenomenon perceived by honest devotees in the course of hearing Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.
- He says that the vicarious nature of the hearing process also enables devotees to encounter a taste higher than the taste for which they are qualified.
- This wonder, inaccessible to the offenders of the holy name mentioned earlier, is possible by the empowerment of rasa itself. [This paragraph and the next are based on Alaṅkāra-kaustubha 5.14, 18–19]
- The kavi says that the original rasas reside in the associates of Kṛṣṇa, whose pastimes later appear in drama, poetry, and prose.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- When such drama is seen or poetry heard, the Lord’s associates have already physically left this world, and thus their rasas take shelter of the audience and speakers.
- As devotees taste the depiction of a pastime, there is an extraordinary upsurge of rasa characteristic of elevated stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- Kavi-karṇapūra calls this temporary upsurge “poetic taste” (kāvyā-rasa) to distinguish it from direct taste (bhakti-rasa), neither of which should be confused with the taste offenders perceive, which is material or at best a semblance of taste.
- Just as the company of devotees is considered mature when their talks are saturated with topics of Kṛṣṇa, hearing of Kṛṣṇa is considered mature when such discussions are saturated with topics of His pastimes.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- According to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, when hearing does not include kṛṣṇa-līlā, it is unsystematic and incomplete (krama-hīna-śravaṇa-daśā); but when the hearing process includes Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, and the hearers are addicted to discussing them, it is pure and complete (krama-śuddha-śravaṇa-daśā). [Jaiva-dharma, chapter 40]
- How can hearing any topic about Kṛṣṇa be considered incomplete?
- Every topic about Kṛṣṇa is complete in its own right, but just as a staircase is incomplete without one of its steps, even though each step is in itself complete, so the full range of topics about Kṛṣṇa is incomplete without a discussion of His pastimes.
- When hearing lacks completeness in that way, it does not fully awaken relationship with Kṛṣṇa (rasa).

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- To hear of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is to hear of His all-sweet names, wonderful attributes, irresistible forms, charming abodes, and eternal companions.
- Such systematic and regular hearing of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is the full expression of the hearing process, and because it includes all other topics, it is most complete.
- As already explained, hearing of Lord Caitanya's pastimes is inseparable from hearing of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.
- In his prayer, Śrīman-mahāprabhor aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā-smaraṇa-maṅgala-stotram, Viśva-nātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura discloses the process of meditating on Lord Caitanya's eightfold daily pastimes.
- He concludes by declaring that meditating devotees should remember Lord Caitanya's pastimes before they remember the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (bhāvyaṁ bhavya-janena gokula-vidhor līlā-smṛter āditaḥ).

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Without Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s mercy no one can understand Kṛṣṇa.
- Therefore just as devotees must worship the deity of Lord Caitanya alongside the deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and just as they must study Lord Caitanya’s teachings to realize Kṛṣṇa’s instructions, so they must hear Lord Caitanya’s pastimes to qualify themselves to hear Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.
- In short, devotees can contact Kṛṣṇa only through Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- Lord Caitanya’s pastimes are threefold: chanting and dancing in ecstasy, preaching the path of pure devotion, and tasting the confidential mellows of love.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda placed no general restrictions on hearing any of these pastimes, and the author of Caitanya-caritāmṛta states that the Lord’s pastimes are impervious to the distorted vision of materialists. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 4.234–7]

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Of course, upstarts who have no idea of devotional science can always dream up some kind of mischief.
- The Gaura-nāgarī sahajiyās, for example, accept that Lord Caitanya is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, but they foolishly think that because Kṛṣṇa consorted with other men’s wives in Vraja, Lord Caitanya must have done the same in Navadvīpa.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda comments: “This is a mistake that is technically called rasābhāsa.
- While Caitanya Mahāprabhu is trying to enjoy as a devotee, one should not disturb Him by addressing Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.10, purport]
- The fact is that Lord Caitanya’s life was ideal from every point of view.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- He lived first as a faithful gr̥hastha brāhmaṇa and then as a strict Vaiṣṇava sannyāsī.
- His conduct in both His varṇa and āsramas always perfectly conformed with scriptural injunctions and the highest standards expected of His position.
- Thus honest devotees can confidently hear His pastimes without fear of misunderstanding them.
- However, because certain confidential parts of Lord Caitanya's pastimes are interwoven with accounts of Kṛṣṇa's vraja-līlā, dishonest persons sometimes misinterpret them.
- How devotees should hear or speak of these pastimes will now be further clarified.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The Lord relished the loving ecstasies of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the pastimes of Vṛndāvana with only a few of His confidential associates.
- How, then, can beginners or casual readers hear or read of these topics?
- The answer to this question lies in the proper understanding of the process of incidental hearing.
- Hearing about Lord Caitanya's pastimes inevitably leads to hearing of His absorption in kṛṣṇa-līlā, because the two naturally mingle.
- Readers should hear and relish descriptions of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes as they appear in Caitanya Mahāprabhu's meditations.
- This is the principle of incidental hearing, which can be cultivated by adopting the mood of Lord Caitanya's companions.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Lord Caitanya's associates consider themselves instruments in helping Him taste Kṛṣṇa's sweetness.
- They do not intrude into the Lord's moods or directly enter Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.
- Rather, they always remain servants of His transcendental aspirations, leaving to Lord Caitanya the arrangements for their own entrance into kṛṣṇa-līlā.
- Readers who keep this reverential distance from Kṛṣṇa's intimate pastimes may continue to read nectarean books such as Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura composed a song that depicts this reverential mood:

pūjāla rāgapāṭha gaurava baṅge
mattala sādhu jana viṣaya raṅge

- “The path of spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa is worshipable to us and should be held overhead as our highest aspiration.” [The Authorized Sri Caitanya-Saraswat Parampara]
- This type of incidental hearing allows readers to hear Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes up to His loving exchanges with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.
- If, however, devotees want to enter the purposeful study of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes as they are told in biographies of Lord Caitanya, they must have the qualification needed to hear about Kṛṣṇa directly.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- By continuous hearing about Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa devotees advance to higher stages of Kṛṣṇa consciousness—until they are qualified to enter Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.
- For realized devotees the simultaneous cultivation of gaura-bhakti and kṛṣṇa-bhakti—inconceivable as it may sound—results in the simultaneous blossoming of their sthāyi-bhāvas in both Navadvīpa and Vraja.
- This is the special advantage followers of Lord Caitanya have, even over Kṛṣṇa’s eternal associates. [Śrī Caitanya-candrāmṛta 3]
- What instructions did Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His followers give on how devotees should hear directly of Kṛṣṇa?
- And what should they hear?

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The remainder of this chapter summarizes some of those instructions.
- Kṛṣṇa's variegated pastimes are sources of happiness for both practising and perfect devotees.
- These pastimes take place either within or outside Vṛndāvana.
- Kṛṣṇa's expansion, Vāsudeva, enacts the pastimes in Mathurā and Dvārakā, which are mixed with knowledge of Kṛṣṇa's divinity.
- Although these pastimes do not embody pure spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa, hearing them invokes the mood of separation, which helps cultivate spontaneous love.
- There are two kinds of pastimes in Vṛndāvana: eternal pastimes (nitya-līlā) that unfold throughout the eight periods of the day; and occasional pastimes (naimittika-līlā), such as His killing of demons.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The eternal pastimes take place both in Kṛṣṇa's earthly realm and in Goloka Vṛndāvana in the spiritual sky.
- The occasional pastimes are more prominent in the earthly realm.
-
- Hearing these two kinds of pastimes constitutes the afore-mentioned pure, complete hearing process (krama-śuddha-śravaṇa-daśā).
- As should be obvious by now, hearing about these two kinds of pastimes should not be done indiscriminately.
- Hearing Kṛṣṇa's occasional pastimes is a means to purify the heart from the obstacles to ecstatic devotion.
- In his Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṁhitā, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda describes how the demons Kṛṣṇa killed in Vṛndāvana represent eighteen such obstacles.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Devotees can destroy these obstacles to their devotion by hearing these pastimes, by endeavouring in their devotional practices, and by serving in a way that earns Kṛṣṇa's mercy.
- In this way devotees clear the path to steady hearing of Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes.
- Once freed from bad habits, devotees who hear Kṛṣṇa's playful pastimes with the gopas, gopīs, and cows aspire to follow in the footsteps of the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana and their devotion quickly matures.
- As devotees advance, their hearing of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes develops in two stages.
- In the beginning, verses from revealed scriptures stimulate them to hear as well as to meditate on individual pastimes (mantropāsana).

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- However, when they advance to the spiritual platform, their specific relationship with Kṛṣṇa inspires the process of realized hearing and absorption (svārasikī), in which the Lord's eightfold daily pastimes unfold spontaneously.
- Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī likens the process as a whole to the Ganges River of svārasikī realization in which there are many lakes of mantropāsana.
- Novices on the platform of mantropāsana hear the verses that describe Kṛṣṇa's spiritual form or His sports, and like swans gliding on a lake, they taste the wonderful lotuses growing there.
- These verses become the object of meditation for such devotees, who are in effect practitioners observing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Devotees advanced in hearing are like swans effortlessly gliding from one lake to another, caught up in the current of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, in which they are direct participants.
- This advanced stage of hearing is very elevated, difficult to achieve, and the treasure house of confidential topics of the unmanifest realm. [Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā, anuccheda 153]
- Jīva Gosvāmī uses the following two verses, Brahma-saṁhitā 5.29 and 30, to illustrate svārasikī and mantropāsana hearing, respectively. [Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā, anuccheda 153]
- It is interesting to note that Śrīla Prabhupāda selected the second verse to play during the greeting of the deities each morning in ISKCON temples.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The first verse reveals Brahmās mature realization, his vision of Goloka, which is called svārasikī.

cintāmaṇi-prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vṛkṣa-
lakṣāvṛteṣu surabhīr abhipālayantam
lakṣmī-sahasra-śata-sambhrama-sevyamānaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi

- “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, the first progenitor who is tending the cows, yielding all desire, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of lakṣmīs or gopīs.” (Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.29)

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The second verse reflects Lord Brahmās meditation, which is called mantropāsana.

veṇuṁ kvaṇantam aravinda-dalāyatākṣaṁ
barhāvataṁsam asitāmbuda-sundarāṅgam
kandarpa-koṭi-kamanīya-viśeṣa-śobhaṁ
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi

- “I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who is adept at playing on His flute, with blooming eyes like lotus petals, with head decked with peacock’s feather, with the figure of beauty tinged with the hue of blue clouds, and His unique loveliness charming millions of Cupids.” (Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.30)

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- The first verse reflects svārasikī because the images it contains progress from one pastime to another.
- The second verse reflects mantropāsana because it requires devotees to fix the picture of Kṛṣṇa in the mind and to meditate on Him.
- Of course realized devotees who have the ability to practise svārasikī will also be attracted to the mantropāsana meditation on Kṛṣṇa's form, for He is attractive to all liberated souls.
- When hearing inspired by mantras matures, devotees are eligible to perceive Kṛṣṇa's pastimes directly through the process of aural reception.
- At that time, transcendental sound reveals Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes in the heart.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes this perfection: “O my Lord! Your devotees can see You through the ears by the process of bona fide hearing, and thus their hearts become cleansed, and You take Your seat there.
- You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.9.11]
- Devotees should never be discouraged, thinking this advanced stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness unattainable.
- They should take heart from our ācāryas’ words.
- Four and a half centuries ago Jīva Gosvāmī wrote, “Even today devotees have attained this exalted stage of devotional service.” And just thirty years ago Śrīla Prabhupāda said, “So you have to see Kṛṣṇa in this way, as Kṛṣṇa advises.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- Then very soon you will see Kṛṣṇa.
- There is no question of not seeing Him.
- You will see in every moment, premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena santaḥ sadaiva, twenty-four hours.
- Those who are actually Kṛṣṇa devotees, they are seeing Kṛṣṇa.
- They are seeing nothing but Kṛṣṇa.
- There is no question of not seeing Him, but you have to adopt the method how to see Him.
- And that is given there.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

- You adopt it, and you will see Kṛṣṇa.
- Where is the difficulty?” [Lecture, Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 16.8, Tokyo, 28 January, 1975]

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- As Śrīla Prabhupāda instructs, devotees should continue to hear according to their qualification and should have full confidence that such hearing, including an appropriate hearing of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, will guide them to perfection.
- But they should also bear in mind that appropriate hearing implies that the essential truths underlying these pastimes be included in the discussion as well as the constituents of these pastimes.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- By “constituents of these pastimes” we mean the elements Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes contain: Kṛṣṇa, His associates (parikara), their loving exchanges (prema), the places where the exchanges take place (dhāma), the moods of love (bhāva) expressed, and the themes of the exchanges (līlā).
- When Kṛṣṇa’s pastime potency combines these ingredients, His occasional and eternal pastimes become manifest.
- Mature faith qualifies devotees to hear about and taste the Lord’s pastimes, but faith only matures as devotees become increasingly realized in the truths of the ultimate goal of life, prayojana.
- Although Kṛṣṇa’s devotees relish His pastimes just by hearing them, this relish increases the more they know the truths behind the various ingredients of the pastimes.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes

- How can a person truly understand Kṛṣṇa's pastime of bewildering Lord Brahmā without knowing that the in His original form the Supreme Lord is a cowherd boy (kṛṣṇa-tattva)?
- How will devotees understand Śrīdāmās climbing onto Kṛṣṇa's shoulders without knowing that the Lord is subordinate to His devotees' pure love (prema-tattva)?
- Similarly, how can someone truly understand Lord Caitanya's saṅkīrtana pastimes with His associates without understanding the five truths of the Godhead (pañca-tattva)?
- And without knowing these truths, how can anyone fully taste the sweetness of the Pañca-tattva's pastimes?

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- For example, to emphasize the need to understand the Pañca-tattva, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī writes:

pañca-tattva—eka-vastu, nāhi kichu bheda
rasa āsvādite tabu vividha vibheda

- “Spiritually there are no differences between these five tattvas, for on the transcendental platform everything is absolute. Yet there are also varieties in the spiritual world, and in order to taste these spiritual varieties one should distinguish between them.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.5)
- Knowledge of the many truths underlying Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes is a theme woven into all revealed scriptures.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- Caitanya-caritāmṛta goes on to detail these truths as the foundation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

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)
- Indeed, Caitanya Mahāprabhu, whether travelling through India or staying at Purī, preached both the truth of the pastimes and the truth of the mellow described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa's Pastimes

- Essentially, Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam are identical, for Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, like the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, is the Lord's sound incarnation.
- Therefore the truths underlying Kṛṣṇa's pastimes are as much Kṛṣṇa as are the pastimes themselves.
- And again, to fully relish Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and other authorized books about Kṛṣṇa, the truths underlying His pastimes should be heard along with the pastimes themselves.
- This is the complete and authorized process.
- Devotees sometimes object to reading philosophy, even if it relates to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Hearing Kṛṣṇa's pastimes is much sweeter, they argue, than hearing the truths behind them.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- For example, in spite of the fact that the introduction to Kṛṣṇa-saṅgati lays the philosophical foundation of the book, only about twenty percent of the readers bothered to read it.
- Most devotees wanted to dive at once into the “nectar.”
- This kind of shallow reasoning exposes a lack of realization.
- True, the taste of hearing Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes is different from the taste of hearing the truths behind them, but both are wonderful.
- Both describe the workings of Kṛṣṇa’s internal potencies, and both are integral to the full taste of the nectar of topics about Kṛṣṇa (kṛṣṇa-kathāmr̥ta).

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- Just as camphor and cardamom, ingredients that are not sweet, enhance the taste of sweet rice, the philosophical truths concerning rasa, prema, and līlā, which may not be as tasty as Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, surely enhance the taste of those pastimes.
- In his Rāga-vartma-candrikā [Rāga-vartma-candrikā 1.2.6] Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura shows how important it is to understand the philosophical truths underlying Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes.
- The ācārya poses the question, “While displaying His humanlike pastimes, like fleeing in fear of Mother Yaśodā, is Kṛṣṇa aware of His divinity or not?”
- If the answer is “yes, He is aware of His divinity,” says the Ṭhākura, then the taste of the Lord’s pastimes would be com-pro-mised because He would not really be afraid but would merely be pretending.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- In that case Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes would be no more than a performance.
- If the answer is “no, He is not aware,” then the countless statements of scripture that describe Him as all-knowing, all-seeing, omnipresent, and so on, are false.
- Such a conclusion would challenge Kṛṣṇa’s very godhood, and among other calamitous things demote His pastimes from humanlike to human, the taste of the two being quite different.
- To resolve the seeming paradoxes inherent in both cases, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says that while engaged in pastimes Kṛṣṇa is simultaneously forgetful of his divinity (mugdhata) and aware of it (sarva-jña).
- How can these contradictory and mutually exclusive qualities exist simultaneously?

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- The Ṭhākura answers: “It is by dint of His inconceivable potency (acintya-śakti).
- This potency reconciles all contradictions in the Godhead and makes Kṛṣṇa, while lying in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇīs arms, simultaneously aware of every corner of His creation and oblivious of everything except Her beauty and love.”
- Such an explanation, like all explanations of the truths relating to Kṛṣṇa, is truly full of wonder.
- When devotees hear wonderful things about the Lord, their love for Him increases and so does their appreciation of His pastimes.
- When devotees hear Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes with increased love, they are struck with wonder at His most commonplace behaviour, such as His mischievous pinching of younger children.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing

Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

- As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “The activities of a person, even if they are not very extraordinary, create an impression of wonder in the heart and mind of the person’s friends.
- But even very wonderful activities performed by a person who is not one’s friend will not create any impression.
- It is because of love that one’s wonderful activities create an impression in the mind.” [The Nectar of Devotion, chapter 46]
- Wonder and love nourish one another, and devotees of merit never neglect to hear the truths behind the constituents of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes even as they relish the pastimes themselves.

SBC 21 – Principles of Hearing
Knowing the Truths of Kṛṣṇa’s Pastimes

prabhu kahe,—“bhāgavatārtha bujhite nā pāri
bhāgavatārtha śunite āmi nahi adhikārī

- The Lord replied, “I do not understand the meaning of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.
- Indeed, I am not a suitable person to hear its meaning.” Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 7.82