

Śuddha-bhakti Cintāmaṇi

by H.H Śivarāma Swami

Chapter 28- Hearing with Attachment

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- This chapter continues to discuss the process of hearing about and absorbing the mind in Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana pastimes.
- As Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “If the mind is engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service, then the senses are automatically engaged in His service.
- This is the art, and this is also the secret of Bhagavad-gītā: total absorption in the thought of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.” [Bhagavad-gītā As It Is, Introduction]
- But total absorption is not easy to achieve.
- It requires great submission and determination.

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- Unfortunately, in this age of deceit, many devotees try to convince themselves and others that they have achieved such perfection, even though they have not undergone the disciplines recommended by the ācāryas, disciplines Śrīla Prabhupāda called “prescribed methods.”
- He says:
- “We can begin to experience this bliss by following the prescribed methods of devotional service.
- When we see the deity we can gradually realize how Kṛṣṇa is smiling, playing on His flute, and enjoying the company of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.
- Then we also have to hear about Kṛṣṇa.

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- These two processes will increase in such a way that we will automatically become great devotees, *anicchato me gatim aṅvīm prayuṅkte*.
- This is actually a scientific method. It is not imagination.” [Lecture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.25.36, Bombay, 5 December, 1974]
- For devotees with greed for vraja-bhakti, remembrance of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes is constant (*anusmṛti*).
- Wherever they go, whatever they do, such remembrance follows them like calves follow their mothers.
- External activities such as eating and sleeping do not disturb their meditation.
- Only when they preach and associate casually with others does remembrance of Kṛṣṇa retreat to the background of their thoughts.

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- But when such fortunate souls chant japa or sing in kīrtana, they drown in the nectarean ocean of Kṛṣṇa's name, form, and qualities as they taste inconceivable happiness in worshipping the holy name.
- Like greedy men who have acquired their first wealth, devotees with taste cannot get enough of chanting Kṛṣṇa's names.
- With great hankering they sing prayers like those of Rūpa Gosvāmī and beg for the benediction to fully relish the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's names.

tunḍe tāṇḍavinī ratim vitanute tunḍāvalī-labdhaye
karṇa-kroḍa-kaḍambinī ghaṭayate karṇārbudebhyaḥ sprhām
cetaḥ-prāṅgaṇa-saṅginī vijayate sarvendriyāṇām kṛtim
no jāne janitā kiyadbhir amṛtaiḥ kṛṣṇeti varṇa-dvayī

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- “I do not know how much nectar the two syllables ‘Kṛṣṇa’ have produced. When the holy name of Kṛṣṇa is chanted, it appears to dance within the mouth. We then desire many, many mouths. When that name enters the holes of the ears, we desire many millions of ears. And when the holy name dances in the courtyard of the heart, it conquers the activities of the mind, and therefore all the senses become inert.” (Vidagdha-mādhava 1.15, quoted in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 1.99)
- Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describes as rasikāḥ intelligent devotees who relish transcendental humours. [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.3]
- These devotees reside in knowledge of the sublime science as much as they do in Kṛṣṇa’s unlimited pastimes.

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- Such learned devotees at the stage of taste are fully aware of the truths of the relationships between Kṛṣṇa and His energies, and of the truths of devotional service both in practice and perfection.
- They know all the principles and details about devotion (bhakti), pastimes (līlā), and tastes (rasa).
- They know the eleven transcendental sentiments of the gopīs: relationship in the conjugal mood (sambandha), age (vayasa), name (nāma), form (rūpa), group (yūtha), dress (veśa), regular and occasional service (ājñā), residence (vāsāsthāna), faithfulness to Rādhā (sevā), exclusive allegiance to Her (parākāṣṭhā), and the mood of being Her kept maidservant (pālya-dāsī-bhāva).

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- They also study and remember the details of Kṛṣṇa’s eightfold pastimes as they expand during the different periods of the day: the end of night (niśānta), morning (prātaḥ), forenoon (pūrvāhṇa), midday (madhyāhna), afternoon (aparāhna), evening (sāyam), late evening (pradoṣa), and night (rātri).
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- When further enriched with spontaneous remembrance of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes, systematic worship brings devotees to the stage of attachment (āśakti).
- At āśakti, pure chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s names reveals an intuitive, though not realized, understanding of the devotees’ eternal relationship with the Lord.
- This strong identification with the spiritual realm fuels the devotees’ greed for the mood of the Vraja-vāsīs and absorbs their thoughts in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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- Whether engaged in private worship, saṅkīrtana, preaching, or apparently mundane activities, the devotees' resolute absorption in Kṛṣṇa—His name, service, or pastimes—surpasses the trance of the greatest mystic yogīs.
- When engaged in bhajana, such devotees meditate on Kṛṣṇa's vraja-līlā, abandoning all awareness of their material body and the material world.
- Indeed devotees in attachment are so absorbed in thoughts of Kṛṣṇa that they feel as if they are “living” with Him.
- They are unaware that their experience is only a meditation.
- The materially moulded mind, unaided by the spiritual energy, cannot totally absorb itself in Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

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- But at the stage of āsakti, as much as it is possible for the mind to be absorbed in one object to the exclusion of all others, to that extent devotees absorb themselves in kṛṣṇa-līlā.
- In such samādhi, devotees remember Kṛṣṇa’s daily pastimes as they are described by Rūpa Gosvāmī.

kuñjād goṣṭham niśānte praviśati kurute dohanānnāśanādyām
prātaḥ sāyam ca līlām viharati sakhibhiḥ saṅgave cārayan gāḥ
madhyāhne cātha naktam vilasati vipine rādhayāddhāparāhṇe
goṣṭham yāti pradoṣe ramayati suhrdo yaḥ sa kṛṣṇo’vatān naḥ

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- The sequence of Kṛṣṇa's līlā and devotees' ensuing meditation on them is as follows: Hari returns from the kuñjas and is sent out to the meadows at the end of night, milks the cows and eats in the morning and the early evening, plays with Śrī Rādhikā and Her girlfriends at noon and at night, returns to His village in the afternoon, and pleases His well-wishers in the evening. [Smarāṇa-maṅgala-stotra, quoted in Govinda-līlāmṛta 1.4]
- This is the happy state of pure devotional service for devotees at the threshold of transcendence.
- Having reached the final stage of intermediate devotion they are fully qualified to move on to superlative devotion, the stage of ecstasy and beyond.
- They possess relentless greed for the mercy of Kṛṣṇa and His eternal companions.

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- Pure-hearted devotees, whether regulative or spontaneous, all hear and read about Kṛṣṇa's Vṛndāvana pastimes, albeit to various degrees and with various goals.
- Regulative devotees generally do not meditate on kṛṣṇa-līlā systematically or otherwise, but when they do, they do so guardedly.
- They also read the ācāryas' books to familiarize themselves with the Lord's sports, the principles of spontaneous devotion, and the Vraja-vāsīs' moods.
- They acquire this knowledge in order to explain it.
- Spontaneous devotees read and hear about the same subject matter for many of the same reasons, but they also desire to be consumed by the mood of vraja-bhakti and to be absorbed in thoughts of a specific service.

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- In short, the regulative devotees hear to gain knowledge, the spontaneous to taste nectar.
- The hearing and subsequent meditation of spontaneous devotees is unsystematic in the beginning.
- They eagerly hear pastimes to cultivate their mood of service, but they make no connection between one pastime and another.
- Their meditations are not sequential.
- As they become well-versed in the practice of spontaneous service, however, they practise thinking of the full sequence of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes as they unfold during the eight phases of the day.

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- They thus read books such as Govinda-līlāmṛta and Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta-mahā-kāvya.
- When they hear one particular pastime, as related in books such as Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, they remember it as one event in a series of many.
- The Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana series is being written with these madhyama-bhaktas in mind.
- For the regulative devotees, the series is meant to be a source of knowledge and inevitable impetus for vraja-bhakti; for the spontaneous it is meant to be a source of inspiration to relish ever-fresh nectar.
- Before the discussion moves on to the subject of worship on the spiritual platform (siddha-bhajana), another important topic needs to be clarified.

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- Without a clear, nonduplicitous understanding of this subject, sādhakas, distracted from the path of pure devotional service, will easily descend into the realm of cheating religion (kaitava-dharma) condemned by the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam's authorized followers. [See the first line of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.1.2]
- At issue is the attempt of devotees still in bondage to invoke aspects of their spiritual identity, aspects that only reveal themselves during transcendental worship.
- This deviation from pure devotion is characterized by two fallacies: mistaking one's mentally conceived form to be spiritual, and mistaking one's cultivation of vraja-bhakti to be an eternal mellow of devotion.

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- As devotees advance from steadiness to attachment, the material energy's influence almost disappears.
- Still, these devotees are considered conditioned souls and are thus subject in some measure to the four material defects: illusion (pramāda), the tendency to commit mistakes (bhrama), imperfect senses (karaṇāpāṭava), and the tendency to cheat (vipralipsā). [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.13.15, purport]
- If not properly guided or educated, even the most sincere among steady devotees may fall under the sway of the above two fallacies, fallacies propagated by less advanced, less sincere souls.
- Our ācāryas, especially Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda, were ever vigilant to root out the slightest hint of deviation in their followers.

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- They wrote profusely and spoke out strongly against the imaginary cultivation of siddha-deha, condemning the sahajiyā-bābājīs who make a profession of alluring the ignorant into deviant practices.
- To prevent such malpractice from entering ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged his followers to follow the path of regulative devotion until their spiritual body was revealed from the infallible transcendental platform.
- Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda and his guru mahārāja did not hide or ban the practice of spontaneous devotional service.
- Rather, they wrote and spoke about it.
- But when they did, they clearly emphasized that spontaneous practice was only for those who were fit, not for others.

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- The article quoted in the previous chapter from The Gauḍīya magazine is one example of how Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura wanted his followers to know about aṣṭa-kālīya-smaraṇa and to practise it when qualified.
- Similarly, even during the height of the Gopī-bhāva affair Śrīla Prabhupāda stated, “[Systematic hearing about the gopīs] is not forbidden.
- That may be ideal, but not for the neophytes.”
- Another interesting example of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s attitude toward this issue is found in his two translations of a verse elucidating the practice of spontaneous devotion.

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- In the Nectar of Instruction Śrīla Prabhupāda goes out of his way to translate the verse in a way that explicitly reveals the practice of rāgānuga-bhakti at the stage of bondage. [This verse from Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.295) is cited from the purport to The Nectar of Instruction 8]
- This translation is much more revealing and liberal than his more literal rendition of the same verse found in Caitanya-caritāmṛta. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.158]
- Readers may now compare these two translations for themselves.
- From The Nectar of Instruction: “In the transcendental realm of Vraja [Vraja-dhāma] one should serve the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with a feeling similar to that of His associates, and one should place himself under the direct guidance of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa and should follow in his footsteps.

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- This method is applicable both in the stage of sādhana [spiritual practices executed while in the stage of bondage] and in the stage of sādhyā [God realization], when one is a siddha-puruṣa, or a spiritually perfect soul.”
- And from Caitanya-caritāmṛta: “The advanced devotee who is inclined to spontaneous loving service should follow the activities of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa’s in Vṛndāvana.
- He should execute service externally as a regulative devotee as well as internally from his self-realized position.
- Thus he should perform devotional service both externally and internally.”
- A clear picture emerges when we balance our ācāryas’ warnings with their other teachings: Although spontaneous loving devotional service is the goal of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, to practise it in the conditioned state is risky.

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- Still, devotees free of unwanted habits may try, but they should do so carefully and under able guidance.
- Spontaneous devotion in practice is an authorized way to cultivate Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- Yet the ingredients of practice in the conditioned state should not be identified with the similar ingredients in the perfect state.
- For example, spontaneous devotees, by their eagerness for the topics they have heard and read about, absorb themselves in such subjects.
- Through the agency of their purified mind they become both observers and tasters of Kṛṣṇa's pleasure sports.

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- This means that in meditating on Kṛṣṇa’s exchange with the gopīs, for instance, the observer tastes the conjugal mood of a gopī.
- This is substantiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words in the above verse, “One should serve the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with a feeling similar to that of His associates, and one should place himself under the direct guidance of a particular associate of Kṛṣṇa and should follow in his footsteps.” [Again, this verse from Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.295) is translated in the purport to The Nectar of Instruction 8]
- The phrase “with a feeling similar to that of His associates” indicates that spontaneous sādhakas cultivate the moods they covet—friendly, parental, or conjugal.
- The phrase “place himself under the direct guidance of a particular associate” indicates that such practising devotees identify themselves as gopas or gopīs.

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- But such sādhakas should not mistake the forms and tastes they perceive to be those of their eternal form (siddha-deha) and eternal relationship (rasa).
- The two identities—the one remembered in the mind and the fully realized one—are distinct.
- Furthermore, the identity remembered by the mind does not transform into the eternal one.
- To make the issue even clearer, Rūpa Gosvāmī advises devotees with a strong attachment to vraja-bhakti to serve Kṛṣṇa and the Vraja-vāsīs of their choice in the mind.
- Such rāgānuga-sādhakas should mentally conceive of themselves as either gopīs or gopas, depending on their general aspiration.

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- However, to strictly follow Rūpa Gosvāmī's instructions, they must not try to adopt in their meditation any of the eleven spiritual attributes, such as name, service, and features.
- These features will manifest themselves as a natural consequence of the devotees' spiritual advancement.
- Although the conceptualized identity at this stage does not permit the adoption of specific features, it does allow for mental absorption in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes and cultivation of the Vraja-vāsīs' moods.
- In other words, just as the general devotees use the material body to serve Kṛṣṇa and cultivate devotion but are simultaneously aware that they are not the body, so spontaneous devotees use the temporary, mentally conceived body to serve but are simultaneously aware that they are not that mentally conceived identity.

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- This raises a question: If the practice of vraja-bhakti does not cultivate a spiritual form or relationship, what does it cultivate?
- The answer is that spontaneous devotional service directly cultivates attachment to Kṛṣṇa and an eagerness for perfection.
- When hankering for direct service to Kṛṣṇa becomes supremely intense, devotees' torrential tears induce the Lord to bestow His mercy.
- This mercy then reveals the devotees' spiritual form (siddha-deha), which includes their personal relationship (sthāyi-bhāva).
- Then, by engaging in systematic, realized worship in ecstasy and then love, devotees cultivate their constitutional relationship until the mellow of their devotion becomes full-blown.

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- In both Hari-nāma-cintāmaṇi and Jaiva-dharma, Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda indicates that a fully realized soul sometimes reveals to a qualified disciple the aforementioned eleven ingredients of spiritual identity in order to facilitate the disciple's meditation.
- Nonetheless, even when these ingredients conform in detail to the disciple's spiritual identity, the meditation of the conditioned souls are but material facsimiles of the reality.
- In other words, knowing about the spiritual body through the materially moulded mind cannot invoke the spiritual body.
- Until the spiritual identity manifests itself, devotees cannot cultivate rasa.

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- What happens when devotees think that the forms they are mentally conceiving are their actual spiritual body?
- And what happens when they then try to cultivate spiritual mellows in that consciousness?
- Such devotees commit the most fundamental blunder by misidentifying matter with spirit.
- Thus in the same way that the living entities first become entangled in material existence, sādhakas come under the sway of false identification and are bewildered.
- In that bewilderment, without the grace of advanced Vaiṣṇavas, they fall from the path of devotional service, the path they had struggled to ascend for many lifetimes.

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- As sung by the demigods to the Lord, the devotees' imagined state of liberation and cultivation of rasa thus turn into will-o'-the-wisps.

ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas
tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam tataḥ
patanty adho 'nādr̥ta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ

- “O lotus-eyed Lord, although nondevotees who accept severe austerities and penances to achieve the highest position may think themselves liberated, their intelligence is impure. They fall down from their position of imagined superiority because they have no regard for Your lotus feet.” [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.2.32]

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- Attainment of one's spiritual form is a process of revelation (avaroha-panthā); no one can attain it by the empiric process (āroha-panthā) or even by sādhana.
- Therefore those who falsely imagine they are liberated are offenders to Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet.
- Having rejected the exalted path of liberation for cheap mental speculation, they again fall down to the material platform.
- Among many kinds of sahajiyās two are sad examples of the mockery that the so-called attainment of one's siddha-deha has become: the siddha-praṇālī-bābājīs and the sakhībhekī-sahajiyās.
- The former group deviates by imagining that their mentally conceived form is spiritual; they think that by practising sādhana they are directly cultivating rasa with Kṛṣṇa.

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- The latter imagine their gross material body to be spiritual and thus suitable for tasting rasa in direct service to Kṛṣṇa.
- By debauchery, deviant practices, and criticism of Vaiṣṇavas, certain bābājīs of Rādhā-kuṇḍa have brought infamy to the most sacred place in the universe.
- The next section briefly touches on this topic. [One book published dealing solely with this topic is *The Authorized Sri Caitanya-Saraswat Parampara*, by Swami B.G. Narasingha]
- Rādhā-kuṇḍa bābājīs adopt the sacred dress of paramahansa Vaiṣṇavas, rejecting their responsibilities in the varṇāśrama social structure.
- Yet many smoke bidis and, worse still, indulge in sex with multiple members of either gender—all in the name of cultivating the conjugal mood of the gopīs.

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- Thus they reveal themselves to be unfit for any social order, what to speak of being transcendental to them.
- Other bābājīs, whose conduct is not degraded, argue that those engaged in such deplorable acts are in the minority.
- However, they cannot dispute the theology of their debauchee counterparts because it is essentially the same as their own.
- They both practise a type of sādhana called siddha-praṇālīliterally, the “path of perfection” condemned by our previous ācāryas as an imitative attempt at spontaneous devotion.
- The following paragraphs discuss the practices and flaws of this so-called siddha-praṇālī process.

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- The bābājīs claim exclusive right to Rūpa-mañjarīs line of divine service.
- They argue that the process of perfection given by Rūpa Gosvāmī can be passed down only through a rigid initiation procedure (dīkṣā), of which they are the custodians.
- Consequently, they reject the path of perfection passed down through Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura received in a line from the divine teachings (śikṣā) of great transcendentalists.
- These bābājīs think themselves situated on the topmost spiritual path, so they dismiss knowledge of relationship (sambandha-jñāna) as mixed devotional service, and the path of regulative devotional service as irrelevant to vraja-bhakti.

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- Without giving such foundational knowledge, they introduce novices—often neophytes with strong inclinations toward sinful life—to a type of spontaneous devotional practice that strict Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas adopt only at the mature stage of ecstasy.
- The bābājīs consider Vaiṣṇava aparādha the only sin that can disqualify their disciples from the path of rāgānuga-sādhana.
- As already mentioned in relation to the vikrīḍitam śloka, such bābājīs consider the only requirement for rāga-bhakti minimal faith in the transcendental nature of Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes.
- At the time of initiation into the bābājīway of life, every aspirant receives a siddha-mantra along with a spiritual identity as a mañjarī, complete with eleven bhāvas.

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- Furthermore, disciples are taught at the outset to chant sixty-four rounds of the mahā-mantra daily while following a regimen of aṣṭa-kālīya-smaraṇa.
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- The flaws inherent in the above-mentioned system are many.
- The most obvious of them are to assign imaginary spiritual identities to neophytes and to speak openly of the Lord's most esoteric pastimes.
- These wrongdoings flaunt the authority of Rūpa Gosvāmī, who taught that preaching the glories of the name to persons without corresponding faith is an offence.
- Moreover, by introducing imaginary practices and confidential topics to immature followers, bābājī gurus lose whatever spiritual qualifications they may have acquired.

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- They stand exposed as unfit to practise or teach spontaneous devotional service, what to speak of realize their own svarūpa or reveal those of their disciples.
- Thus the spiritual lives of these bābājīs and their followers degrade to an imitation of the lives of realized souls such as Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.
- Their “secret” practices are nothing but a public embarrassment to Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s line.
- And if these deviations in the name of pure devotion—at Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇīs favourite place of pastimes, no less—were not offensive enough, the same bābājīs also openly criticize our ācāryas.
- It is painful to write what follows, but to protect the members of ISKCON it must be done.

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- Rādhā-kuṇḍa bābājīs consider Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda fallen for having been rejected by his initiating guru—Vipina Vihārī Gosvāmī.
- They also consider Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura a deviant for having changed, as they see it, the ācāryas' teachings.
- And they consider Śrīla Prabhupāda and ISKCON part of an apasampradāya for having followed their predecessors. [Again, for further information on these issues the reader is advised to consult The Authorized Sri Caitanya-Saraswat Parampara by Swami B.G. Narasingha]
- It is true that Vipina Vihārī Gosvāmī rejected Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura for insisting that Māyāpur and not Navadvīpa was Lord Caitanya's birthplace.

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- However, both scriptural and cartographical evidence supported Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's assertion, one that was confirmed by the eminent paramahansa, Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī.
- Thus Vipina Vihārīs conduct was a reflection of his own spiritual inadequacy rather than proof of any fault in his illustrious, more advanced disciple.
- It is the bābājīs, then, who reveal their own defective mentality by siding with Vipina Vihārī Gosvāmī and criticizing a faultless ācārya.
- Similarly, the charge that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura substituted his own version of regulative devotion for Lord Caitanya's teachings on spontaneous devotion is false.

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- Chapters ten and twenty-seven of this book categorically show that Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s formulation of vaidhī sādhana-bhakti provides a window to the teachings of Lord Caitanya and His followers and does not obstruct them.
- As such it is the best way for a worldwide preaching organization to facilitate the attainment of the spontaneous love of the Vraja-vāsīs.
- It is the bābājīs who have missed the essence of Lord Caitanya’s teachings: that Vaiṣṇavas should chant Hare Kṛṣṇa while showing mercy to conditioned souls.
- Thus again it is the bābājīs who are at fault for refusing to recognize how the sādhana and preaching of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura perfectly fulfil Lord Caitanya’s mission to give vraja-bhakti to the world.

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- Just as the bābājīs’ criticism of our predecessor ācāryas is false, so is their criticism of the followers of our ācāryas—Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers in ISKCON.
- The jaundiced vision of the bābājīs prevents them from seeing things as they are; instead, it makes them fault the impeccable lineage and philosophy of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.
- For them the spiritual practices of ISKCON (and of the present Gauḍīya Maṭhas) are at best vaikunṭha-bhakti and at worst speculation.
- Although they sometimes praise ISKCON’s worldwide preaching, their praise is defamation in disguise.
- For instance, they see enthusiastic preaching as a merely pious activity that will eventually make persons fit for rāgānuga-sādhana in the way practised by the bābājīs.

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- They think that if the preachers one day become fortunate, they too will retire to Rādhā-kuṇḍa, take initiation from a bābājī there, engage in nirjana-bhajana, and speak only about aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā.
- At such a time, the bābājīs think, the preachers will have become bona fide rasika devotees.
- Considering all of this, it is truly amazing that some of ISKCON's followers and even initiates go to Rādhā-kuṇḍa for instruction, initiation, or, worse, reinitiation.
- Such uninformed, impulsive attempts at gaining shelter do nothing more than beat empty husks of grain, though the results are more spiritually damning.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- As Lord Brahmā says:

śreyaḥ-sṛtiṁ bhaktim udasya te vibho
kliśyanti ye kevala-bodha-labdhave
teṣāṁ asau kleśala eva śiṣyate
nānyad yathā sthūla-tuṣāvaghātinām

- “My dear Lord, devotional service unto You is the best path for self-realization. If someone gives up that path and engages in the cultivation of speculative knowledge, he will simply undergo a troublesome process and will not achieve his desired result. As a person who beats an empty husk of wheat cannot get grain, one who simply speculates cannot achieve self-realization. His only gain is trouble.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.4)

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- The bābājīs' followers are quick to point out the authenticity of their process and ISKCON's many discrepancies.
- Members of ISKCON should be able to respond knowledgeably to each of these arguments.
- Furthermore, devotees should be aware of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's explanation of the common roots of these branches of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.
- Hearing his explanation should pacify any moderate bābājī and ease friction between the two camps.
- According to Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, Caitanya Mahāprabhu instructed Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī to disseminate confidential knowledge of the path of spontaneous worship. [Jaiva-dharma, chapter 39]

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī followed the Lord’s instruction and made notes in his diary on the two aspects of such worship, the internal or esoteric (antaḥ-panthā) and the external or exoteric (bahiḥ-panthā).
- Vakreśvara Paṇḍita received the exoteric path, which was later recorded by Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī in a work called Śrī Gaura-govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati, and Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī received the esoteric path, which he recorded in writings such as Vilāpa-kusumāñjali and Manaḥ-śikṣā.
- The difference between the two is that the exoteric teachings cultivate vraja-bhakti through an explicit process of spontaneous worship involving the body, mind, and senses.
- In other words, it is an external process of rāgānuga-sādhana.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- In contrast, the esoteric teachings cultivate the spontaneous service mood while engaging the body and senses in regulative devotional service (vaidhī bhakti).
- This path is not self-evident like the exoteric path, but it does aim to effect the same internal development—cultivating the mood of vraja-bhakti.
- The present day bābājīs follow the exoteric path, the followers of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura the esoteric path.
- The former centres on reclusive practices of nāma-bhajana at Rādhā-kuṇḍa (bhajanānanda), the latter on drawing conditioned souls into the saṅkīrtana movement (goṣṭhy-ānanda).
- Both are authorized in their original forms.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- The question is, which of the two paths has better tolerated the onslaughts of Kali-yuga, and hence which of the two is most suited for practise today?
- History shows that unfit teachers and less fit practitioners have corrupted the practices of the exoteric path, a path more prone to be imitated and more difficult to perfect.
- Why is it more prone to be imitated?
- The behaviour of those who take up the exoteric path follows that of great souls such as Haridāsa Ṭhākura, who live in seclusion, dress as paramahamsas, and chant japa all day.
- Persons who seek false fame as great devotees tend to be more attracted to this path, for the foolish public readily accept them as advanced merely by their external display of devotion.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- Even sincere aspirants who seek inner development become easily distracted by the kind of attention that comes to them by adopting the practices of great devotees.
- By contrast, the behaviour of those who take to the esoteric path follows that of regulative devotees who live in society, dress as befits their role in varṇāśrama, and work honestly to help others.
- Because this behaviour is unpretentious, it is less attractive to those seeking name and fame—and less likely to corrupt honest sādhakas.
- Why is the exoteric path more difficult to perfect than the esoteric path?
- On the one hand, the exoteric path demands complete renunciation of all material activities and full dedication to austere spiritual practices.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- Thus its practitioners must from the outset be highly qualified and free of most of their bad habits.
- On the other hand, the esoteric path allows devotees to stay where they are and simply add the regulative practices to their daily routines.
- It is thus suited to all classes of devotees who have pure faith, even those who are not yet free of anarthas.
- The exoteric path, therefore, is clearly more difficult to perfect than the esoteric path.
- For these reasons world preachers such as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda prefer and recommend the esoteric practice of vraja-bhakti.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- It cultivates the moods of devotion in an undisclosed way and makes the ultimate gift of Lord Caitanya less subject to corruption, ridicule, and fakery.
- In concluding this discussion, it is only fair to admit that there may be qualified bābājīs in Rādhā-kuṇḍa and elsewhere who properly practise the exoteric path.
- However, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s general comments, along with those of his guru mahārāja, leave little room for such exceptional cases.
- Even if such cases exist, the exoteric line, whether properly performed or not, is not a viable process of perfection for the overwhelming majority of aspiring Vaiṣṇavas.
- This chapter concludes with a discussion of the second group of sahajiyās, the sakhībhekīs, or the persons who dress as gopīs.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- These foolish men think that adopting the dress and behaviour of Vraja-vāsīs not only cultivates vraja-bhāva but also gives them direct access to Kṛṣṇa and His pastimes.
- Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The sakhībhekīs are another example of so-called sādhakas who want to take a shortcut to perfection.
- By mistaking their material body for a siddha-deha they make a mockery out of pure devotion, and by continuing their sinful ways they descend into the lower species of life.
- Unfortunately, bābājīs and sakhībhekīs constitute but a small fraction of the main thirteen deviant Gauḍīya sects described by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura as apasampradāyas. [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.48, purport, and Madhya-līlā 8.83, purport]

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- The full list is as follows: āula, bāula, kartābhajā, neḍā, daraveśa, sāṇi, sahajiyā, sakhī-bhekī, smārta, jāta-gosāṇi, ativādī, cūḍādhārī and gaurāṅga-nāgarī.
- Very brief descriptions of each follow: āula, a mendicant sect that follows a very easy course of worship; bāula,
- a sect of mendicants who wander about singing sweet melodies about the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa while engaging in illicit sex; kartābhajā,
- a sect that in all ways equates the guru with the Lord; neḍā, literally “shaven-headed,” which sarcastically refers to those whose greatest religious principle is their shaven heads; daraveśa,
- Muslim mendicants (this word has also been used by Śrīla Prabhupāda to mean “hippie”); sāṇi,

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- false renunciants who give up standard spiritual practices; sahajiyā,
- those who take the pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa cheaply as already explained; sakhībhekī,
- those who imagine themselves as gopīs and adopt the dress of women; smārta,
- formalistic and materialistic brāhmaṇas; jāta-gosāñi,
- caste gosvāmīs; ativādī,
- proud devotees; cūḍādhārī,
- those whose only religious principle is śikhā and tilaka; and gaurāṅga-nāgarī, those who place Śrī Caitanya in the position of Kṛṣṇa as the enjoyer of women.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- These sahajiyās are condemned by their offensive approach to devotional service. Victimized by the modes of nature they commit one sinful activity after another, rationalizing illicit sex, intoxication, and other impure habits as “pastimes.”
- The clearly defined boundary between spiritual and material blurred, these practitioners lose all sense of reality.
- Even while apparently worshipping Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya, these sahajiyā sects, bereft of all traces of piety, uproot whatever pseudodevotion they may have developed.
- Unless they surrender to pure devotees and accept the true teachings of Rūpa Gosvāmī, they will continue to suffer for their sins and offences.
- These are some of the unsavoury details concerning those who, without qualification, try to forcibly ascend to the spiritual realm by imaginary practices.

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- Lord Caitanya’s sincere followers take a more submissive approach to perfection.
- They follow the advice of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who said, “Don’t try to see Kṛṣṇa; do something so that Kṛṣṇa may see you.” [lecture, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.11, Vṛndāvana, 22 October, 1972]
- In other words, by cultivating pure devotion and by preaching, devotees try to please Kṛṣṇa and induce Him to reveal to them all aspects of transcendence.
- That is, after all, the only way revelation can take place.
- This concludes the explanation of the fifth point in the study of nāma-bhajana mentioned in chapter twenty: “Cultivation relating to a devotee’s spiritual form (svarūpa) can only be practised at the stage of ecstasy (bhāva).”

SBC 28 – Hearing with Attachment

- Devotees who regularly hear Kṛṣṇa’s Vṛndāvana pastimes, who practise regulative or spontaneous service, must be aware of these and other pitfalls to sādhana.
- Especially before they embark on any form of spontaneous cultivation, devotees should clearly understand the role such practice plays in the overall sādhana Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned for members of ISKCON.

*eta kahi tre la nibhte vasileta kahi tāre lañā nibhṛte vasilā
‘ki kathāśunite cāha?’ miśrere puchilā*

- Saying this, Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya took Prad-yumna Miśra to a secluded place and inquired from him, “What kind of kṛṣṇa-kathā do you want to hear from me?” [Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 5.58]