

**I) LESSON 10, TEXTS 121-138: PURIFYING AND NOURISHING  
POWER OF DEVOTION, WHICH IS NIRGUṆA**

**II) LESSON 11,  
TEXTS 139-148:  
BHAKTI IS A  
UNIQUE ASPECT  
OF THE INTERNAL  
POTENCY AND  
BESTOWS  
INCONCEIVABLE  
RESULTS**

**III) LESSON 12,  
TEXTS 149-164:  
PARTICIPATION  
ONCE IN BHAKTI  
LEADS ONTO  
PERFECTION**

**T  
H  
E  
M  
E  
II**

**LESSONS 10-12,  
TEXTS 121-164:  
THE NATURE OF BHAKTI**

# I) **LESSON 10, TEXTS 121-138: PURIFYING AND NOURISHING POWER OF DEVOTION, WHICH IS NIRGUṆA**

- **PURIFYING POWER [TEXTS 121-130]:** Bhakti destroys inauspiciousness and all sinful reactions (even those that are fructified as well as those in their seed forms), and removes all obstacles—even the neophyte devotee is unobstructed.
- **NOURISHING POWER [TEXTS 131-132]:** Bhakti bestows virtue and bliss.
- **BHAKTI IS NIRGUṆA, OR FREE FROM THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIAL QUALITIES [TEXTS 133-138]:** These include the knowledge, residence and action of Bhagavān. Faith that impels devotion to Bhagavān is also nirguṇa, and so is dharma rooted in Bhagavān.

# PURIFYING POWER [TEXTS 121-130]

## Text 121

- **Devotion is the sole requirement for all** Nature of bhakti in a systematic way  $\Rightarrow$  bhakti alone as the methodology in all scriptures
  - Bhakti is the supreme dharma and that it fulfills all desires
  - “Devotional service, beginning with the chanting of the holy name of the Lord, is the ultimate religious principle for the living entity in human society.” [6.3.22]
  - “An intelligent person whether desireless, full of desire, or desiring liberation could worship the Supreme Person with fervent bhakti-yoga.” [2.3.10]

# NOURISHING POWER [TEXTS 131-132]

## ■ **Bhakti destroys inauspiciousness**

- “The path followed by pure devotees, who are well-behaved and fully endowed with the best qualifications, is certainly the most auspicious path in this material world. It is free from fear, and it is authorized by the śāstras.” [6.1.17]
- “I take shelter of Lord Viṣṇu, the unborn and eternal. Simply by remembering Him, one becomes a recipient of all welfare.” [Viṣṇu-Purāṇa]

## ■ **Bhakti removes all obstacles**

- [Someone may say that aside from devotees, who always seek shelter at the Lord’s lotus feet, there are those who are not devotees but who have accepted different processes for attaining salvation. What happens to them? In answer to this question, Lord Brahmā and the other demigods said:] “O lotus-eyed Lord, although non-devotees 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.” [10.2.33]

- “O Mādhava, Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord of the goddess of fortune, if devotees completely in love with You sometimes fall from the path of devotion, they do not fall like non-devotees, for You still protect them. Thus they fearlessly traverse the heads of their opponents and continue to progress in devotional service.” [10.2.33]
- Although Vṛtrāsura, Gajendra and Bharata fell down from their auspicious births, their intention to perform bhakti was carried over into their next births in lower species.

## **Text 122: Even the neophyte devotee is unobstructed**

- Lord Viṣṇu to Kardama Muni : “My dear ṛṣi, O leader of the living entities, for those who serve Me in devotion by worshiping Me, especially persons like you who have given up everything unto Me, there is never any question of frustration.” [3.21.24]

- “Having awakened faith in the narrations of My glories, being disgusted with all material activities, knowing that all sense gratification leads to misery, but still being unable to renounce all sense enjoyment, My devotee should remain happy and worship Me with great faith and conviction. Even though he is sometimes engaged in sense enjoyment, My devotee knows that all sense gratification leads to a miserable result, and he sincerely repents such activities.” [11.20.27-28]

### **Texts 123 & 124: Bhakti removes all fear**

- “Hiranyakaśipu could not kill his son by throwing him beneath the feet of big elephants, throwing him among huge, fearful snakes, employing destructive spells, hurling him from the top of a hill, conjuring up illusory tricks, administering poison, starving him, exposing him to severe cold, winds, fire and water, or throwing heavy stones to crush him. When Hiranyakaśipu found that he could not in any way harm Prahlāda, who was completely sinless, he was in great anxiety about what to do next.” [7.5.43-44]

- “O Vidura, how can those who have taken shelter of Lord Hari be obstructed by miseries coming from the body, the mind, gods, human beings and sub-humans?” [3.22.37]

## **Texts 125 & 126: Bhakti destroys all sins**

- Krsna speaks about the destruction of aprārabdha sins, or the unmanifest reactions which also perpetuate the inclination towards further sinful acts: “Just as blazing fire burns a pile of firewood to ashes, devotion to Me, O Uddhava, destroys all sins.” [11.14.19]
- “If one chants the holy name of Hari and then dies because of an accidental misfortune, such as falling from the top of a house, slipping and suffering broken bones while traveling on the road, being bitten by a serpent, being afflicted with pain and high fever, or being injured by a weapon, one is immediately absolved from having to enter hellish life, even though he is sinful.” [6.2.15]

तस्माद्भारत सर्वात्मा भगवान् हरिरीश्वरः।  
श्रोतव्यः कीर्तितव्यश्च स्मर्तव्यश्चेच्छताभयम्॥

- “Therefore, O descendant of Bhārata, a person desiring freedom from fear should hear about, glorify, and remember the Supreme Lord Hari, who is the Master and the Supreme Soul of everyone.” [2.1.5]
- Śuka: “Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Kṛṣṇa can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by discharging devotional service, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays.” [6.1.15]
- **What is the message here?** Just as it is the sun’s very nature to dissipate fog, the devotees of Kṛṣṇa destroy all their sins simply by bhakti. The implication is that devotees don’t even endeavor to get free from sins; rather, bhakti by its very nature destroys sins.



## Text 127

### ■ Bhakti surpasses jñāna in purification of sin

- Śuka: “My dear King, if a sinful person engages in the service of a bona fide devotee of the Lord and thus learns how to dedicate his life unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, he can be completely purified. One cannot be purified merely by undergoing austerity, penance, brahmacarya and the other methods of atonement I have previously described.” [6.1.16]

### ■ Bhakti is direct purification, not a device of atonement

- A doubt may be raised from the incident of Indra killing Vṛtrāsura [6.13.17]: Even though Vṛtrāsura was cursed to take birth as a demon, he was nonetheless a great devotee in whom love the Lord was manifest. So how could Indra’s offense of killing such a great devotee be counteracted by worship of the Lord?

- Well, the understanding is that an offense to a great devotee can be nullified only by suffering the consequences of one's transgression or by receiving the grace of the devotee.
- **Explanation to this dilemma:** Indra killed the devotee in the guise of a demon only upon being inspired by the Lord Himself. Therefore, in killing the demon, Indra did not commit such an offense, and hence, worship of the Lord was the only atonement prescribed for him. By the same token, the Lord had instructed Indra to kill Vṛtrāsura so that he could be released from the curse which had condemned him to a demoniac disposition. Thus, the scenario was flawless from all angles of vision.

## Text 128: Bhakti destroys even manifest reactions (prārabdhakarma)

- Devahūti: “To say nothing of the spiritual advancement of persons who see the Supreme Person face to face, even a person born in a family of dog-eaters immediately becomes eligible to perform Vedic sacrifices if he once utters the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or chants about Him, hears about His pastimes, offers Him obeisances or even remembers Him. Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting Your holy name! Even if born in the families of dog-eaters, such persons are worshipable. Persons who chant the holy name of Your Lordship must have executed all kinds of austerities and fire sacrifices and achieved all the good manners of the Āryans. To be chanting the holy name of Your Lordship, they must have bathed at holy places of pilgrimage, studied the Vedas and fulfilled everything required.” [3.33.6-7]

- Similarly, the diseases caused by prārabdha sins are also destroyed as the following verse from Skanda-Purāṇa: “Simply by remembering the unlimited Lord and chanting His names, all mental anxieties and bodily ailments immediately disappear. I offer obeisances unto Him.”

### **Text 129: Bhakti purifies the heart of material desires**

- Viṣṇudūtas to Yamadūtas: “Although one may neutralize the reactions of sinful life through austerity, charity, vows and other such methods, these pious activities cannot uproot the material desires in one’s heart. However, if one serves the lotus feet of the Personality of Godhead, he is immediately freed from all such contaminations.”

- “There are 4 stages of sin: aprāabdha, unmanifest reactions; kūta, the accumulations of such unmanifest reactions into sinful proclivity; bīja, the arousal of sinful desire from such proclivity; and phalonmukha, the manifest of prāabdha reactions. For those engaged in Viṣṇu-bhakti, all 4 stages of sin are destroyed in this order.” [Padma-Purāṇa]

### **Text 130: Bhakti dispels ignorance**

- Manu to Dhruva: “Thus regaining your natural position and rendering service unto the Supreme Lord, who is the all-powerful reservoir of all pleasure and who lives in all living entities as the Supersoul, you will very soon forget the illusory understanding of “I” and “my.” [4.11.30]

# NOURISHING POWER [TEXTS 131-132]

## Text 131: Bhakti nourishes all

- “As pouring water on the root of a tree energizes the trunk, branches, twigs and everything else, and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body, simply worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead through devotional service automatically satisfies the demigods, who are parts of that Supreme Personality.” [4.31.14]
- Maitreya to Vidura: “Suruci, the younger mother of Dhruva Mahārāja, seeing that the innocent boy had fallen at her feet, immediately picked him up, embracing him with her hands, and with tears of feeling she blessed him with the words “My dear boy, long may you live! Unto one who has transcendental qualities due to friendly behavior with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, all living entities offer honor, just as water automatically flows down by nature.” [4.9.46-47]

## Text 132

### ■ Bhakti bestows virtue and bliss

- Bhakti brings about all auspicious qualities:

यस्यास्ति भक्तिर्भगवत्यकिञ्चना सर्वैर्गुणैस्तत्र समासते सुराः।  
हरावभक्तस्य कुतो महद्गुणा मनोरथेनासति धावतो बहिः॥

- “All the demigods and their exalted qualities, such as religion, knowledge and renunciation, become manifest in the body of one who has developed unalloyed devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva. On the other hand, a person devoid of devotional service and engaged in material activities has no good qualities. Even if he is adept at the practice of mystic yoga or the honest endeavor of maintaining his family and relatives, he must be driven by his own mental speculations and must engage in the service of the Lord’s external energy. How can there be any good qualities in such a man?”  
[5.18.12]

- Bhakti is also the cause of experiencing all varieties of bliss either thru promotion to heaven, liberation from material existence, or attainment of the Lord's personal abode. This is stated by the Lord Himself: "Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic yoga, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me. If somehow or other My devotee desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions." [11.20.32-33]
- "One who has fixed his consciousness on Me desires neither the position or abode of Lord Brahmā or Lord Indra, nor an empire on the earth, nor sovereignty in the lower planetary systems, nor the eightfold perfection of yoga, nor liberation from birth and death. Such a person desires Me alone." [11.14.14]



# BHAKTI IS NIRGUṆA, OR FREE FROM THE INFLUENCE OF MATERIAL QUALITIES [TEXTS 133-138]

## Text 133

- Even karma offered to the Lord is saḡuṇa, or within the material qualities, as Kṛṣṇa Himself attests to it
  - “Work performed as an offering to Me, without consideration of the fruit, is considered to be in the [material] mode of goodness. Work performed with a desire to enjoy the results is in the mode of passion. And work impelled by violence and envy is in the mode of ignorance.”

## Text 134

### ■ Knowledge of Bhagavān is nirguṇa, or transcendental

- “Absolute knowledge is in the mode of goodness, knowledge based on duality is in the mode of passion, and foolish, materialistic knowledge is in the mode of ignorance. Knowledge based upon Me, however, is understood to be transcendental.” [11.25.24]
- Knowledge of Bhagavān can be available even to those who are NOT situated in sattva-guṇa!
- “King Parīkṣit inquired from Śukadeva Gosvāmī: O learned brāhmaṇa, demons are generally sinful, being obsessed with the modes of passion and ignorance. How, then, could Vṛtrāsura have attained such exalted love for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa?” [6.14.1]
- Vṛtrāsura received bhakti by the association of Nārada Muni in his previous birth ∴ sadhu-saṅga is the only cause of nirguṇa-bhakti

तुलयाम लवेनापि ना स्वर्ग नापुनर्भवम्।  
भगवत्सङ्गिसङ्गस्य मर्त्यानां किमुताशिषः ॥

- “We cannot equate even a moment’s association of a devotee who is deeply attached to the Lord, with the attainment of heaven or liberation, so what to speak of the petty blessings desired by mortal beings.” [1.18.13]
- Although the Lord is merciful to all, His grace is of different types according to an individual’s disposition and desire [why did He kill the demons (even Vṛtrāsura, His exalted devotee) for Indra’s sake, just like a man of vested interests? (7.1.1)]
- “O learned ones, by visiting or dwelling in a holy place, a person gets an opportunity to associate with great devotees and to render service to them. By such service, a person awakens faith and an interest in hearing narrations about the Lord, and thus develops a taste for such narrations.” [1.2.16]

## ■ Knowledge of Brahman is saḡuᅇa

- A doubt may be raised from this statement: “My glory is called Parabrahma. By my mercy you will realize it in your heart when I will explain it, being questioned by you.” [8.24.38] ⇒ If so, how then do we understand that brahma-jñāna is in the material mode of goodness?
- Answer: Brahma-jñāna appears in two types of people: Those who worship the Lord obtain it as a cōncomitant effect of bhakti, whereas the worshiper of Brahman obtain it independently. The devotee by the dint of their bhakti recognizes some distinction between the self and Brahman. They also accept it as an attendant to the transcendent devotion of the Lord. The worshipers of Brahman, however, accept Brahma-jñāna w/out recognizing and such distinction. Thus, kaivalya-jñāna (desiring liberation), or Brahma-jñāna develops thru contact with the material mode of goodness; hence, it is saḡuᅇa.

## Texts 135 & 136

- **The abode of Bhagavān & action for Him are nirguṇa**
  - Bhakti in the form of both knowledge and action, such as hearing and chanting, is nirguṇa [11.25.24]
  - And so is the Lord's residence: "Residence in the forest is in the mode of goodness, residence in a town is in the mode of passion, residence in a gambling house displays the quality of ignorance, and residence in a place where I reside is transcendental."  
[11.25.25]
  - "A worker free of attachment is in the mode of goodness, a worker blinded by personal desire is in the mode of passion, and a worker who has completely forgotten how to tell right from wrong is in the mode of ignorance. But a worker who has taken shelter of Me is understood to be transcendental to the modes of nature." [11.25.26]

## Texts 137 & 138

### ■ Faith that impels devotion and dharma rooted in Bhagavān is nirguṇa

- “Faith directed toward spiritual life is in the mode of goodness, faith rooted in fruitive work is in the mode of passion, faith residing in irreligious activities is in the mode of ignorance, but faith in My devotional service is purely transcendental.” [11.25.27]
- Śuka: “After hearing the discourses between the Yamadūtas and the Viṣṇudūtas, Ajāmila could understand the religious principles that act under the three modes of material nature. These principles are mentioned in the three Vedas. He could also understand the transcendental religious principles, which are above the modes of material nature and which concern the relationship between the living being and the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Furthermore, Ajāmila heard glorification of the name, fame, qualities and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He thus became a perfectly pure devotee. He could then remember his past sinful activities, which he greatly regretted having performed.” [6.2.24-25]