

Śaraṇagati

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THE HIDDEN SECRETS OF BHAKTI PART 3 OF 3

Did it ever occur to you that perhaps 98% of our time we are in illusion? This illusion comes about when we think: “I am so and so.”, “I am this body, that is so and so many years old now and celebrates its birthday.”, when we believe the friends and guests who come to congratulate, “Yes, that’s me!” As long as one believes this, one has to remain in this material world, as Śrīla Prabhupāda expresses it in this text: “The whole material world is working on the basis of ‘I and ‘mine.’ This is the root of attraction to the material world. If one is attracted by this root of illusory conceptions – ‘I and ‘mine’ – he will have to remain within this material world in different exalted or nasty positions.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 4.11.30, purport)

Most of our life is unfortunately spent in the identification with our physical body and our own concepts of who we are and who others are. Most of our life is not spent on knowing, “I am an eternal servant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. And I am serving Kṛṣṇa. I am not this body. I am not this mind. I have nothing to do with the positioning of my soul in this present human existence. I have only so much to do with it in that my body has a brilliant opportunity to become free from illusion. My mind and body are not identical to me. My interests are different. And I refuse to be a servant of the illusory life based on wrong identifications. I do not want to be the servant of the body and mind any longer. I wish to make this statement to my body and mind: ‘You are very welcome in my life, because you can help me render service. But please agree to be engaged by me since my interest is to experience love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.’”

As long as one is not fixed in this understanding one will live amongst shadows only. Let’s come out of the darkness and walk



into the light! That happens when we learn the art of *bhūta-suddhi*. *Bhūta-suddhi* essentially means to become aware of our spiritual nature. If we want to serve Kṛṣṇa – who is spiritual – we also have to become spiritual. At least the concept of our self has to be spiritual. Śrīla Prabhupāda expresses it like this, “Without becoming brahman, one cannot approach the supreme brahman. Just like without being fire, nobody can enter into the fire.” (L.A, January 31, 1969)

Of course, as we go through life we have to be practical. For example, when someone calls us by our name, we might not want to reply, “I am not here, I am practicing spiritual life. I am not the body, I am not the name you know.” Or it may not be beneficial to reply “This is not me.” when we have to sign our passport or get a visa with our legal name. For practical reasons we must keep a foot in this world, but our inner orientation – and this is the important point here – must be that “I am really a servant of Kṛṣṇa. I am a servant of Rādhārāṇī.”

Often we are not very interested in this. But this is of just as much interest as our next breath: If you want to wake up from the material existence of repeated birth and death you need to practice now: “I am not this body.” And positively: “Aham brahmāsmi: I am an eternal spiritual soul.” This is the beginning of *sādhana*.

In the *bhakti* scriptures performing any spiritual practice without this awareness is compared to a ritual sacrifice where butter is offered into ashes instead of fire. Such a sacrifice does not bring any result and similarly, according to the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, *sādhana* without *bhūta-suddhi* does not award any result.



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If you do not practice detachment from illusion and continue to live in concepts like, “I am a German, I am a Croatian, I am a man, I am a woman, I am intelligent or I am less intelligent” your spiritual life is a shadow. A shadow of a meal never nourishes. Similarly, the shadow of *bhakti* will not nourish you properly. Then, you will remain one of these many unfortunate souls who have gotten the greatest opportunity, but who have not used it and are therefore still in illusion.

In essence *bhūta-śuddhi* means to take a few steps in our understanding of life. After all, our understanding of life describes how we live it. If we don’t understand, “I am really a soul and my purpose is to serve Kṛṣṇa” we will spend our life making money, eating, sleeping, trying to enjoy and trying to be secure in this material world. But if we understand, “I am really a soul” we will see that there are opportunities for us to render service.

Here are two *bhūta-śuddhi* prayers:

“I am by nature an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa but because of my own misfortune I have turned away from Kṛṣṇa since time immemorial. I have identified myself with my body and wondered continuously in the cycle of birth and death for so long. I am in the material world suffering the threefold misery. Now as a result of some unimaginable good fortune I have met my spiritual master and out of his mercy he has enabled me to know that I am really Kṛṣṇa’s eternal servant. He has told me that I am completely apart from my gross and subtle body. I am so fortunate that I serve his lotus feet and follow his footsteps so that I serve Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrī-Śrī Rādhā and Śyāmasundara.” (Pañcarātra-Pradīpa)

“Oh Radha and Kṛṣṇa who are in the eternal spiritual world! I surrender to you! Whatever I call mine now is in truth your property only. Everything is for your sake! Everything is for your enjoyment! Nothing really is for my enjoyment. It’s all for you!” (Sanat-kumāra Samhitā)

Detachment from our illusory identity also includes detachment from everything it relates itself to. In this world there are many things that are so deceivingly close to our mind and intelligence because they correspond to our particular conditioned nature, but we must detach ourselves from them because most of them are illusions. We just have to learn to do this little meditation as we go through the process of *bhakti*. It can also be brief: “I am now sitting down to chant, I am a soul, I am calling out to you, please engage me in your service!”

It is very simple, but because it is the absolute truth, you can go unlimitedly deep according to your advancement. You will discover more and more nuances in this meditation. You will enter a forest



of miracles, the divine forest of Vṛndāvana. You will see more and more things unfolding before your eyes and becoming clear to you. And the result is, you will be blissful.

Summary

This concludes “The Hidden Secrets of Bhakti”. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī describes that in order to act in *bhakti* you need to do three things:

- 1) focus on Kṛṣṇa,
- 2) use your body and mind in his service and
- 3) have the intention to give him pleasure.

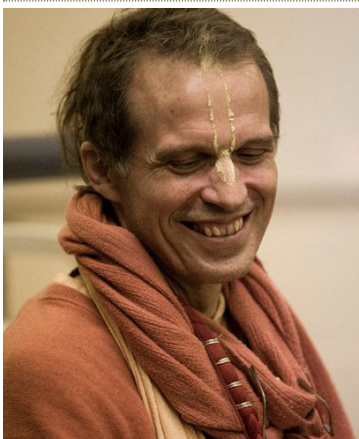
To make this *bhakti* pure you need to understand that

- 4) “All my other desires may be there, but I really desire only *bhakti* as my goal, to be in my relationship with Kṛṣṇa, full of love” and
- 5) “I don’t want to cover it by anything material (jñāna and karma).”

When we consider *bhakti* not as an achievement but as a path, practicing this means practicing pure *bhakti*. This rests upon the foundation of spiritual life: practicing detachment from illusory designations and fixing oneself in one’s spiritual identity.

☪ From a lecture by Śacinandana Swami in Zagreb, Croatia, February 13, 2014.

Photo by Mickey Shah



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upcoming seminars & events:

Jul. 26	Lecture at Ayurveda Hotel Sonnhof, Tirol, Austria
Jul. 28 - Aug. 2	Bhakti Retreat, Switzerland
Aug. 4-7	Kīrtana-Melā, Germany
Aug. 15-18	Janmāṣṭamī Festival, Goloka-dhāma, Germany

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