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WHAT IS SAD-DHARMA?

THE SUPREME LORD IS EQUAL TO EVERYONE

Srila Sukadeva Goswami

**ONE SHOULD NOT GIVE UP
PURE DEVOTIONAL SERVICE**

His Divine Grace

A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

**ARE THE WORDS "DEVOTIONAL SERVICE"
APPLICABLE ONLY TO THE SUPREME LORD?**

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

WHAT IS SAD-DHARMA?

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

**DOES A HIERARCHY OF GREATER
AND LESSER DEVOTEES EXIST?**

Srila Sanatana Goswami

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THE SUPREME LORD IS EQUAL TO EVERYONE

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King Pariksit inquired: My dear *brāhmaṇa*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Visnu, whose natural position is to be the well-wisher of all beings, is equal and extremely dear to everyone. How, then, did He become partial like a common man for the sake of Indra and thus kill Indra's enemies? How can a person equal to everyone be partial to some and inimical toward others? Lord Visnu Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the reservoir of all pleasure. Therefore, what benefit would He derive from siding with the demigods? What interest would He fulfill in this way? Since the Lord is transcendental, why should He fear the asuras, and how could He be envious of them?

O greatly fortunate and learned *brāhmaṇa*, whether Lord Narayana is partial or impartial has become a subject of great doubt in my mind. Kindly dispel my doubt with positive evidence that Narayana is always neutral and equal to everyone.

The great sage Sukadeva Goswami said: My dear King, you have put before me an excellent question. Discourses concerning the activities of the Lord, in which the glories of His devotees are also found, are extremely pleasing to the followers of the Lord. Such wonderful topics as these undoubtedly counteract the miseries of the materialistic way of life. Therefore, great sages like Narada always speak upon *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* because it gives one the facility to hear and chant about the wonderful activities of the Lord and His dear devotees.

Let me offer my respectful obeisance unto Srila Vyasadeva and then begin describing topics concerning the activities of the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Visnu, is always transcendental to material qualities, and therefore He is called *nirguṇa*, or without qualities. Because He is unborn, He does not have a material body which is naturally subject to attachment and hatred. Although the Lord is always above material existence, through His spiritual potency He appeared and acted like an ordinary human being, accepting duties and obligations, apparently like a conditioned soul.

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

My dear King Pariksit, the material qualities - *sattva-guṇa*, *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa* - all belong to the material world and do not even touch the Supreme Personality of Godhead. These three *guṇas* cannot act by all increasing or decreasing simultaneously. Rather they act in competition of each other. When the quality of goodness predominates, the sages and demigods flourish with the help of that quality, with which they are infused and surcharged by the Supreme Lord. Similarly, when the mode of passion predominates the demons flourish, and when ignorance is prominent the Yaksas and Raksasas flourish. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is present in everyone's heart, fostering the reactions of *sattva-guṇa*, *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa* in response to the living entity's desires.

The all-pervading Personality of Godhead exists within the heart of every living being, and an expert thinker can perceive how He is present there to a large or small extent. Just as one can understand the presence of fire in wood, of water in a waterpot, or of sky within an empty pot, one can understand whether a living entity is a demon or a demigod by understanding that living entity's actions in religious matters. A thoughtful man can understand how much a person is favored by the Supreme Lord by seeing his activities. At the time the Supreme Personality of Godhead creates different types of bodies, offering a particular body to each living entity according to his character and fruitive actions, the Lord revives all the qualities of material nature- goodness, passion and ignorance. Then, as the Supersoul, He enters each body and influences the qualities of creation, maintenance and annihilation, using *sattva-guṇa* (goodness) for maintenance, *rajo-guṇa* (passion) for creation and *tamo-guṇa* (ignorance) for annihilation. O great King, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the controller of the material and spiritual energies, who is certainly the creator of the entire cosmos, creates the time factor to allow the material energy and the living entity to act within the limits of time. Thus the Supreme Personality is never under the control of time factor nor is He ever under the material energy.

O King, this time factor enhances the *sattva-guṇa* (goodness). Thus although the Supreme Lord is the controller, He favors the demigods,

who are mostly situated in *sattva-guṇa*. Conversely the demons, who are influenced by *tamo-guṇa*, are naturally annihilated. The Supreme Lord induces the time factor to act in different ways, but He is never partial. Rather, His activities are glorious, and therefore He is called Urusrava (the performer of great deeds).

Formerly, O King, when Maharaja Yudhisthira was performing the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the great sage Narada, responding to his inquiry, recited historical facts showing how the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always impartial, even when killing demons. In this regard he gave a vivid example. O King, at the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, Maharaja Yudhisthira, the son of Maharaja Pandu, personally saw Shishupala merge into the body of the Supreme Lord, Krishna. Wonderstruck, he inquired about the reason for this from the great sage Narada, who was seated there. All the sages present also heard ensuing discussion.

Maharaja Yudhisthira inquired: It is very wonderful that the demon Shishupala merged into the body of the Supreme Personality of Godhead even though extremely envious. This *sāyujya-mukti* (liberation of merging into the body of the Supreme Lord) is practically impossible to attain even for great transcendentalists. How then did the enemy of the Lord attain it? O great sage, we are all eager to know the cause for this mercy of

the Lord. I have heard that formerly a king named Vena blasphemed the Supreme Personality of Godhead and that all the *brāhmaṇas* consequently obliged him to go to hell. Shishupala should also have been sent to hell. How then did he merge into the Lord's existence?

From the very beginning of his childhood, when he could not even speak properly, Shishupala, the most sinful son of Damaghosa, began blaspheming the Lord, and he continued to be envious of Sri Krishna until his death. Similarly, his brother Dantavakra continued the same habit. Although these two men - Shishupala and Dantavakra - repeatedly blasphemed the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Visnu [Krishna], the Supreme Brahman, they were quite healthy. Indeed, their tongues were not attacked by white leprosy, nor did they enter the darkest region of hellish life. We are certainly most surprised by this. How was it possible for Shishupala and Dantavakra, in the presence of many exalted persons, to enter very easily into the body of Krishna, whose nature is difficult to attain?

This matter is undoubtedly very wonderful. Indeed, my intelligence has become disturbed, just as the flame of a candle is disturbed by a breezy wind. O Narada Muni, you know everything. Kindly let me know the cause of this wonderful event.

Sri Sukadeva Goswami said: After hearing the request of Maharaja Yudhisthira, Narada Muni, the most powerful spiritual master, who knew everything, was very pleased. Thus he replied in the presence of everyone taking part in the *yajña*.

The great sage Sri Naradaji said: O King, blasphemy and praise, chastisement and respect, are experienced because of ignorance. The body of the conditioned soul is designed by the Lord for suffering in the material world through the agency of His external energy. My dear King, the conditioned soul, being in the bodily conception of life, considers his body to be his self and considers everything in relationship with the body to be his. Because he has this wrong conception of life, he is subjected to dualities like praise and chastisement. Due to his bodily conception of life, the conditioned soul thinks that when the body is annihilated the living being is annihilated. Lord Visnu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead,





is the supreme controller, the Supersoul of all living entities. Because He has no material body, He has no false conception of “I and mine.” It is therefore incorrect to think that He feels pleasure or pain when blasphemed or praised. This is impossible for Him. Thus He has no enemy and no friend. When He chastises the demons it is for their good, and when He accepts the prayers of the devotees it is for their good. He is affected neither by prayers nor by blasphemy. Therefore by enmity or by devotional service, by fear, by affection or by amorous desire, by all of these or any one of them, if a conditioned soul somehow or other concentrates his mind upon the Lord, the result is the same, for the Lord, because of His ever-blissful position, is never affected by enmity or friendship.

Narada Muni continued: By devotional service one cannot achieve such intense absorption in thought of the Supreme Personality of Godhead as one can through enmity toward Him. That is my opinion. A grassworm confined in a hole of a wall by a wasp always thinks of his captor in fear and enmity and later himself becomes a wasp simply because of such remembrance. Similarly, if the conditioned souls somehow or other think of Krishna, who is *sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ*, (the embodiment of knowledge and bliss) they will become free from their sins. Whether thinking of Him as their worshipable Lord or an enemy, because of constantly thinking of Him they will regain their spiritual bodies. Many, many persons have attained liberation simply by thinking of Krishna with great attention and giving up sinful activities. This great attention may be due to amorous desire, inimical feelings, fear, familial affection or devotional service.

I shall now explain how one receives Krishna's mercy simply by concentrating one's mind upon Him. My dear King Yudhishtira, the gopis by their amorous desires, Kamsa by his fear, Shishupala and other kings by envy, the Yadus by their fraternal relationship with Krishna, you Pandavas by your great affection for Krishna, and we, the general devotees, by our devotional service, have obtained the mercy of Krishna. Somehow or other, one must contemplate the form of Krishna very seriously. Then, by one of the five different processes mentioned above, one can return home, back to Godhead. Atheists

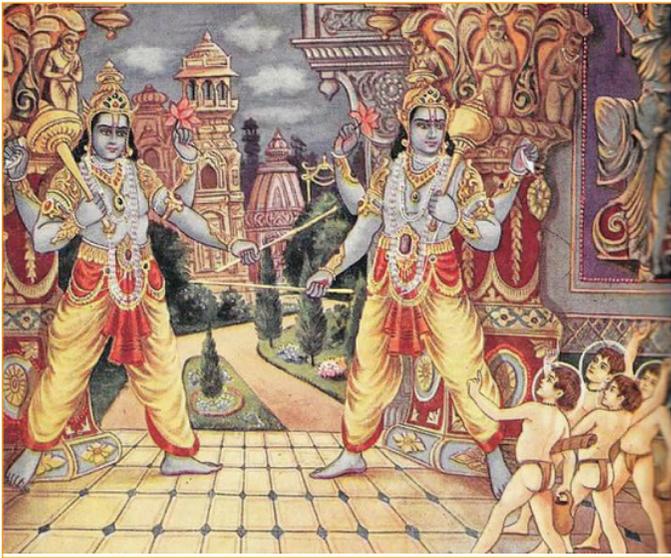
like King Vena, however, being unable to think of Krishna's form in any of these five ways, cannot attain salvation. Therefore, one must somehow think of Krishna, whether in a friendly way or inimically.

Narada Muni continued: O best of the Pandavas, your two cousins Shishupala and Dantavakra, the sons of your maternal aunt, were formerly associates of Lord Visnu, but because they were cursed by *brāhmaṇas*, they fell from Vaikuntha to this material world.

Maharaja Yudhishtira inquired: What kind of great curse could affect even liberated *viṣṇu-bhaktas*, and what sort of person could curse even the Lord's associates? For unflinching devotees of the Lord to fall to this material world is impossible. I cannot believe this. The bodies of the inhabitants of Vaikuntha are completely spiritual, having nothing to do with the material body, senses or life air. Therefore, kindly explain how associates of the Personality of Godhead were cursed to descend in material bodies like ordinary persons.

The great saint Narada said: Once upon a time when the four sons of Lord Brahma named Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanat-kumara were wandering throughout the three worlds, they came by chance to Visnuloka (the abode of the Supreme Lord). Although these four great sages were older than Brahma's other sons like Marici, they appeared like small naked children only five or six years old. When Jaya and Vijaya saw them trying to enter the spiritual realm of Vaikunthaloka, these two gate-keepers, thinking them ordinary children, denied them entry. Thus checked by the doorkeepers Jaya and Vijaya, Sanandana and the other great sages very angrily cursed them. “You two foolish doorkeepers,” they said. “Being agitated by the material qualities of passion and ignorance, you are unfit to live at the shelter of Madhudvisa Krishna's lotus feet, which are free from such modes. It would be better for you to go immediately to the material world and take your birth in a family of most sinful *asuras*.”

While Jaya and Vijaya, thus cursed by the sages, were falling to the material world, they were addressed as follows by the same sages, who were very kind to them. “O doorkeepers, after three births you will be able to return to your positions in Vaikuntha, for then the



duration of the curse will have ended.” These two associates of the Lord Jaya and Vijaya later descended to the material world, taking birth as the two sons of Diti, Hiranyakashipu being the elder and Hiranyaksa the younger. They were very respected by the Daityas and Danavas [demoniac species]. Appearing as Nrsimhadeva, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Hari, killed Hiranyakashipu who repeatedly tried to kill his own son, who was a great devotee of Lord Visnu. When the Lord delivered the planet earth from the bottom of the Garbhodaka Ocean where she had fallen, Hiranyaksa tried to hinder Him, and then the Lord as Varaha, killed him. The Lord, the Supersoul of all living entities, is supremely sober, peaceful and equal to everyone. Since the great devotee Prahlada was protected by the Lord’s potency, Hiranyakashipu was unable to kill him, in spite of endeavoring to do so in various ways. Thereafter the same Jaya and Vijaya, the two doorkeepers of Lord Visnu, took birth as Ravana and Kumbhakarna, begotten by Vishrava in the womb of Keshini. They were extremely troublesome to all the people of the universe. My dear King, in order to relieve Jaya and Vijaya of the *brāhmaṇas’* curse, Lord Ramacandra appeared and killed Ravana and Kumbhakarna. It will be better for you to hear narrations about Lord Ramacandra’s activities from Markandeya. In their third birth, the same Jaya and Vijaya appeared in a royal family of *kṣatriyas* as your cousins, the sons of your aunt. Because Lord Krishna has struck them with His disc, all their sinful reactions have been destroyed, and now they are free from the curse. These two associates of Lord Visnu Jaya and

Vijaya maintained a feeling of enmity for a very long time. Because of always thinking of Krishna in this way, they regained the shelter of the Lord, having returned home, back to Godhead.

—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* » Canto 7; Prescribed Duties for Mankind » Chapter 1: The Supreme Lord Is Equal to Everyone » Verse 1-48.

ONE SHOULD NOT GIVE UP PURE DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

His Divine Grace

A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

*tasmād vairānubandhena
nirvairēṇa bhayena vā
snehāt kāmēna vā yuñjyāt
kathāñcin nekṣate pṛthak*

Therefore by enmity or by devotional service, by fear, by affection or by lusty desire—by all of these or any one of them—if a conditioned soul somehow concentrates his mind upon the Lord, the result is the same, for the Lord, because of His eternally blissful position, is never affected by enmity or friendship.

—*Bhāg* 7.1.26

One should not conclude that because Krishna is unaffected by favorable prayers or unfavorable blasphemy one is therefore free to blaspheme the Supreme Lord. This is not the regulative principle. *Bhakti-yoga* is defined as *ānukūlyena kṣṇānuśīlanam*: one should serve Krishna very favorably. This is the real injunction. Here it is said that although an enemy thinks of Krishna unfavorably, the Lord is adversely unaffected by such sentiments which are antithetic to devotional service. Thus He offers His benedictions even to Shishupala and similarly inimical conditioned souls. This does not mean, however, that one should purposefully be inimical toward the Lord. The injunction is given for the favorable execution of devotional service, not purposeful blasphemy of the Lord. It is said in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.74.40):

*nindām bhagavataḥ śṛṅvaṁs
tat-parasya janasya vā*

Bhāgavata Mahāvidyālaya



*tato nāpaiti yaḥ so 'pi
yāty adhaḥ sukṛtāc cyutaḥ*

One who hears blasphemy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead or His devotees should immediately take action or should leave that place. Otherwise he will be put into hellish life perpetually. There are many such injunctions. Therefore as a regulative principle one should not be unfavorable toward the Lord. Rather one should try to be always favorably inclined toward Him.

Shishupala's achievement of oneness with the Supreme Lord was different because Jaya and Vijaya were ordained to treat the Supreme Lord as an enemy for three lives and then return home, back to Godhead. Jaya and Vijaya inwardly knew that Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but they purposely became His enemies to be delivered from material life. Thus from the very beginning of their lives they thought of Lord Krishna as an enemy, and even though blaspheming Lord Krishna, they chanted the holy name of Krishna constantly along with their inimical thoughts. Thus they were purified because of their chanting the holy name of Krishna. It is to be understood that even a blasphemer can be freed from sinful activities by chanting the holy name of the Lord. Certainly, therefore, freedom is assured for a devotee who is always favorable to the service of the Lord. In the following verse it is clearly explained that by rapt attention upon Krishna, one is purified, and thus one is delivered from material life.

Srila Vishvantha Chakravarti Thakura has very beautifully explained the word *bhayena*, which means "by fear." When the gopis were called to Krishna in the dead of night, they certainly feared chastisement by their relatives—their husbands, brothers and fathers-in-law — but nonetheless, disregarding the scorn of their relatives, they went to Krishna. There was certainly fear in their hearts, but this fear could not check their devotional service to Krishna.

One should not mistakenly think that Lord Krishna must be worshiped by an inimical attitude like that of Shishupala. The injunction is *ānukūlyasya grahaṇam prātikūlyasya varjanam*: one should give up all unfavorable

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

activities and accept only conditions or situations favorable for devotional service. In general, if one blasphemes the Supreme Personality of Godhead he is punished. As the Lord says in *Bhagavad-gītā* (16.19):

*tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krūrān
saṁsāreṣu narādhamān
kṣipāmy ajasram aśubhān
āsurīṣu eva yoniṣu*

There are many such injunctions. One should not try to worship Krishna unfavorably; otherwise he must be punished- at least for one life to be purified. It is said that just as one should not try to be killed by embracing an enemy, a tiger or a snake, one should not blaspheme the Supreme Personality of Godhead and become His enemy in order to be put into hellish life.

The purpose of this verse is to emphasize that even the enemy of the Lord can be delivered, so what to speak of one who becomes His friend?

*karmaṇā manasā vācā
yo dviṣyād viṣṇum avyayam
majjanti pitaras tasya
narake śāśvatīḥ samāḥ*

Srila Madhvācārya also says in many ways that one should not blaspheme Lord Visnu through one's mind, words or actions, for a blasphemer will go to hellish life along with his forefathers.

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (16.19-20) the Lord says:

*tān ahaṁ dviṣataḥ krūrān
saṁsāreṣu narādhamān
kṣipāmy ajasram aśubhān
āsurīṣu eva yoniṣu
āsurīm yonim āpannā
mūḍhā janmani janmani
mām aprāpyaiva kaunteya
tato yānti adhamān gatim*

"Those who are envious and cruel, who are the lowest among men, I cast into the ocean of material existence, making them be born in various demoniac species of life. Attaining repeated birth amongst the various species of demoniac life,



such persons can never approach Me. Gradually they sink down to the most abominable type of existence." One who blasphemes the Lord is put into a family of *asuras*, in which there is every chance of forgetting the service of the Lord. Lord Krishna further states in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.11-12):

*avajānanti mām mūḍhā
mānuṣīṁ tanum āśritam
param bhāvam ajānanto
mama bhūta-maheśvaram*

*moghāśā mogha-karmāṇo
mogha-jñānā vicetasah
rākṣasīm āsurīm caiva
prakṛtiṁ mohinīm śritāḥ*

Mūḍhas, rascals, blaspheme the Supreme Lord because He appears exactly like a human being. They do not know the unlimited opulence of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Anything done by those who have taken the attitude of enmity toward the Lord will be baffled (*moghāśāḥ*). If these inimical persons try to be liberated, or to merge into the existence of Brahman; if they desire to be elevated to the higher planetary systems as *karmīs*; or even if they desire to return home, back to Godhead, they will certainly be baffled.

As for Hiranyakashipu, although he was always extremely inimical toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he nonetheless always thought of his son, who was a great devotee. Therefore by the grace of his son, Prahlada Maharaja, Hiranyakashipu was also delivered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is stated in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (4.21.47):

*hiranyakaśipuś cāpi
bhagavan-nindayā tamaḥ
vivakṣur atyagāt sūnoḥ
prahlādasyānubhāvataḥ*

The conclusion is that one should not give up pure devotional service. For his own sake a person should not imitate Hiranyakashipu or Shishupala. This is not the way to achieve success in any field.

—*Srīmad-Bhāgavatam* » Canto 7; Prescribed Duties for Mankind » Chapter 1: The Supreme Lord Is Equal to Everyone »

Verse 26 », Purport.

ARE THE WORDS "DEVOTIONAL SERVICE" APPLICABLE ONLY TO THE SUPREME LORD?

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakura

Lord Visnu is no one's order supplier. Rather He is the master of all order suppliers. Since Lord Visnu is worshipable for everyone, the words "devotional service" can only be properly applied to Him. The words "devotional service" cannot apply to the service of the various demigods, even though the demigod worshipers falsely attribute those words to their practices. When we worship the demigods, we put priority to our wants for religiosity, economic development, sense gratification, or liberation. However, when we worship Lord Visnu we attend only to what He wants.

The Supreme Lord, His devotional service (*bhakti*), and the devotee are sewn with the same thread. Devotional service is the via media between the Lord and His devotees; the Lord is the object of the devotees worship; and the devotees are the Lord's servants.

The demigods are not God but *jīvas* (living entities in the servant category). The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states: *ekale īśvara kṣṇa, āra saba bhṛtya, yāre yaiche nācāya, se taiche kare nṛtya*: "Lord Krishna alone is the supreme controller, and all others are His servants. They dance as He makes them do so." (Ādi 5.142)

The *Padma Purāṇa* states:

*harir eva sadārādhyah sarva deveśvareśvaraḥ
itare brahma rudrādya nāvajneyāḥ kadācana
yas tu nārāyaṇam devam brahma-rudrādi-daivatāih
samatvenaiva vīkṣeta sa pāṣaṇḍī bhaved dhruvam*

"Lord Hari alone is the supreme worshipable object. He is the controller of all controllers. Demigods like Brahma and Shiva are subordinate to Him. Yet they should never be disrespected. A person who considers demigods like Brahma and Shiva to be on an equal level with Narayana is to be considered an offender."

The scriptures declare that service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Hari alone is true devotional service, but at present the word



bhakti is being misinterpreted and misused. People have come to think that *bhakti* means devotion to the father, king, or schoolteacher. If we do not know what devotional service is and through which medium it is to be performed, we will find ourselves in trouble.

Serving Lord Hari, the master of all the senses, with our senses, is called devotional service. The *Narada-pañcarātra* states, *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktāni tat-paratvena nirmalam/ hṛṣīkeṇa hṛṣīkeṣa sevanam bhaktir ucyate*: "Bhakti, (devotional service) means engaging all our senses in the service of the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the master of all the senses." When the spirit soul renders service unto the Supreme, there are two side effects. One is freedom from all material designations, and the other is that one's senses are purified simply by being employed in the devotional service of the Lord.

Lord Gauranga states in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*: "*anya-vāñchā, anya-pūjā chāḍi' jñāna, 'karma', ānukūlye sarvendriye kṣṇānuśilana/ ei 'śuddha-bhakti'*—*ihā haite 'premā haya pañcarātre, bhāgavate ei lakṣaṇa kaya*." "A pure devotee must not cherish any desire other than to serve Krishna. He should not offer worship to the demigods or to mundane personalities. He should not cultivate artificial knowledge, which is devoid of Krishna consciousness, and he should not engage himself in anything other than Krishna conscious activities. One must engage all one's purified senses in the service of the Lord. This is the favorable execution of Krishna conscious activities. These activities are called *śuddha-bhakti*, pure devotional service. If one renders such pure devotional service, he develops his original love for Krishna in due course of time. These symptoms are described in Vedic literatures like the *Pañcarātras* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*." (*Madhya* 19.168-69)

Similarly, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 3.29.11-12 states:

*mad-guṇa-śruti-mātreṇa mayi sarva-guhāśaye
mano-gatir avicchinnā yathā gaṅgāmbhaso 'mbudhau
lakṣaṇam bhakti-yogasya nirguṇasya hy udāhṛtam
ahaituky avyavahitā yā bhakti puruṣottame*

"The manifestation of unadulterated devotional

service is demonstrated when one's mind is at once attracted to hearing the transcendental name and qualities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is residing in everyone's heart. Just as the water of the Ganges flows naturally towards the ocean, such devotional ecstasy, uninterrupted by any material condition, flows automatically towards the Supreme Lord."

— *Amṛta Vāṇī: Nectar of Instructions of Immortality; His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura Prabhupāda; Compiled by Śrīpāda Bhakti Mayukha Bhāgavat Mahārāja Published by Touchstone Media*

WHAT IS SAD-DHARMA?

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura

As fortunate persons wish to follow the characteristics of the *sādhus'* devotional service, they similarly desire to know their duty. Unfortunate proud persons have the opposite mentality. As they search paths different from those of the *sādhus*, they disrespect the *sādhus'* determined conclusions while elevating their own. They do not care to preach the teachings of Chaitanya Mahāprabhu to the people of this world. Rather they propagate doctrines contradictory to those of Mahāprabhu. They are unaware of how much misfortune they are creating in this way.

Those who are simple-hearted endeavor to properly learn the teachings of Lord Chaitanya from *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. The Lord's teachings are our life and only shelter. *Sad-dharma* lies in this fact alone. The bonafide disciple especially tries to understand *sad-dharma*. If he cannot understand it on his own, then he prays at the feet of his *sikṣa-guru* (instructing spiritual master) and learns from him. Those who have this kind of determination to know *sad-dharma* quickly achieve their desired goal. The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.9) says:

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam
ānukūlyena kṣṇānu-
śilanam bhaktir uttamā*

"One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna favorably and without desire for material profit or gain through

fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service."

As long as this pure devotional symptom, in the form of understanding *sad-dharma*, has not clearly manifest in the heart of an inquisitive person, his mind remains covered with darkness and he cannot understand the true nature of pure devotional service. If one depends on his own speculation, then unalloyed devotional service will not manifest in his heart.

We meet many so-called *paṇḍitas* who think they have understood the constitution of bhakti (devotional service) by their knowledge and intelligence. Some of them have concluded that devotional service mixed with *jñāna* (knowledge) is pure *bhakti*, and some of them have concluded that devotional service mixed with *karma* (fruitive work) is pure bhakti. They are so proud that if they hear the teachings of *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, they say, "Everyone can make their own conclusion. What is the need for accepting the conclusion of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*?" Such people never come in touch with *sad-dharma* because they have no real desire to know it. The only result of performing their personally concocted process of devotional service is they can never relish pure devotion.

—*Śrī Bhaktyāloka - The Six Faults and Qualities of Bhakti* »
 Translated by *Sarvabhāvāna dāsa*.



DOES A HIERARCHY OF GREATER AND LESSER DEVOTEES EXIST?

Srila Sanatana Goswami

Every pure Vaisnava obtains results suitable to his own devotional attitude. What then is the basis for a hierarchy of greater and lesser devotees? In truth, no such hierarchy exists. It is only imagined as a device for comparing different kinds of devotional service. Each devotional relationship, or *rasa*, and its corresponding varieties of pleasure may, for convenience, be measured in terms of relative degrees of perfection. In the nine methods of devotional practice, such as hearing and chanting, and in the various services devotees render to the Lord in Vaikuntha and elsewhere—attending the Lord in person, massaging His feet, dressing His hair, serving Him as a doorkeepers—each devotee relishes the highest possible happiness from his service to his personal worshipable Lord. By presuming a hierarchy of these services one may also devise a hierarchy of happiness and may accordingly rank devotees. But even if, as some persons hold, such a hierarchy is factual, no pure Vaisnava ever thinks himself deprived of anything. Rather all the Lord's devotees feel completely satisfied and happy in all ways.

— 2.4.193, *Śrī Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta of Śrīla Sanatana Gosvāmī* » Volume Two » Translated by *Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa*.

!! Sri Sri Nitai Gaurchandra Jayati !!

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