

SB 5.18.12

*yasyāsti bhaktir bhagavaty akiñcanā
sarvair guṇais tatra samāsate surāḥ
harāv abhaktasya kuto mahad-guṇā
manorathenāsati dhāvato bahiḥ*

“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?”

1. The first two lines speak about unalloyed devotees, who are on one end of the continuum of divine qualities, while the last two lines speak about those devoid of bhakti, who are on the other end of this continuum.

The unalloyed devotees manifest *sarva-guna*, while non-devotees (*abhakta*) remain within the paradigm of *tri-guna*, the three modes of material nature (*kuto mahad-guna*).

2. *Akincana bhakti* is a prerequisite for divine qualities to manifest in a person
 - a. All demigods and their exalted qualities (only) become manifest in the body of someone who executes devotional service without any (material) motive, simply for the pleasure of Sri Krishna.
 - b. The ‘two-pocket devotees’, who have yet to reach the platform of *akincana bhakti*, will manifest divine qualities only to the extent of *akincanatvam* in their hearts. In other words, neophyte devotees, who perform *karma-misra* or *jnana-misra* bhakti, will find these divine qualities manifest in lower intensity, in proportion to the *bhakti* in their *karma* and *jnana* pursuits.
3. The *abhaktas* are at a disadvantage
 - a. Disadvantage 1: They are driven by the “chariot of the mind” (*manorathena*)
 - i. Their motive to speak or do good is primarily from “what’s in it for me.” This is a severe contrast to the *akincanatvam* of pure devotees who want to benefit others, not themselves.
 - ii. Further, their motive is based on their likes or dislikes. They are motivated to speak or do good for those they like. “I am good to those I tend to like.”

iii. They will discontinue their “being good” when the going gets tough. Said differently, conditioned humans have a limit to their goodness. One can only imagine what lies on the other side of their limit.

b. Disadvantage 2: Their consciousness is based in mundane considerations (*asati*)

i. There is no endurance in *asat* – here today, gone tomorrow. Hence, speaking or doing good for others is inconsistent. It is also limited. (ref. BG 2.16)

ii. The so-called good qualities are steeped in falsity. Truthfulness is an alignment among the heart, words, and deeds. The *abhaktas* are not skilled, or even interested, in aligning these three factors. Therefore, while doing good deeds for others, they may speak derogatively about the very persons they are helping, then what to speak of genuine soul-level well-wishing in their hearts for their beneficiaries.

iii. Disadvantage 3: The non-devotees are all about externals only (*bahir*); their qualities are not seen as medium for internal growth.

4. *Misra-bhaktas* and *abhaktas* may seem similar. Sometimes, the *abhaktas* seem “better” than these *bhaktas*. They are helpful, kind, even compassionate to fellow beings, while the devotees seem engrossed in their own salvation. It is quite likely in some, or many, cases. Despite what the externals look to be, it must be clearly understood that while these two sets of persons may seem to fit the same category, internally they are oriented diametrically opposite to each other. The former is genuinely trying to transcend the huge barrier of *anarthas*, while sometimes falling prey to them. The latter is in ignorance of a spiritual alternative in the first place, so their “progress” remains within the mundane sphere.

5. Therefore, non-devotees also manifest “good” qualities, but those qualities are not divine; those are imitations of the genuine qualities. There are diamonds and then there are sparkling stones that pass by as diamonds. Just as the discerning eye of a jeweler can know the difference, the discerning eye of a transcendentalist (*tattva-darsi*, per BG 2.16) can know the difference between a divine quality and its imitation.

Om tat sat!