

Four Types of Devotees Swami Dayananda Saraswati¹

Caturvidhāḥ bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtinaḥ, the people, given to good actions who worship me are four-fold (BG 7-16). Among those *sukṛtinaḥ*, who recognize and worship Īśvara, there are four types. *Caturvidhāḥ. Vidhāḥ* means variety so there are four varieties of devotees. All of them have sufficient recognition of Īśvara to be devotees but among them there is a gradation. The degree of recognition, their attitude, approach, prayers, etc., all determine the four types. And they are, he says, *ārtah, jijñāsuḥ, arthārthi, jñāni*.

Ārtah

Ārti means any sorrow or grief. Sadness, distress, discomfort, trouble are all called *ārti*. *Ārtah* is one who is seized by a distress, caused by a thief, tiger, or disease. Tigers were common in those days when India was full of forests, so Śrī Saṅkara commonly uses the tiger as an example. When a person is seized by some distress, whom he will call as a last resort? If he has some *puṇya karma*, there is Īśvara in his life and he will call upon Him. But only when he is in distress. Till then he does not think of Him. But at least during that spell of distress he does think of Him – because he does not see anyone else who can help him. This kind of devotee is called *ārtah*, a devotee in distress.

Arthārthi

Artha means what is desired. In this context it means wealth and things similar to it – power, progeny and so on. One wants all these and to

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get them, the *arthārthi* invokes the grace of Bhagavan. He thinks he cannot live happily without these things and so he makes use of various means to get them. He uses local influence, money etc. – plus Bhagavan, because he recognizes that there is always a factor over which he has no control. As a devotee, he is mature enough to recognize the chance element. That he recognizes as *daivam*. And there is no way of having any control over it without some grace. So whenever he wants to accomplish something, he invokes the grace of Īśvara to control certain factors that he cannot control or even know. He will perform rituals in order to invoke Īśvara’s grace to help him gain whatever he wants. This is *kāmya-karma*, a *karma* done with a desire to accomplish a given end within *saṃsāra*. The one who does *kāmya-karma* is an *arthārthi*. But he is also an *ārta* devotee. When he is in trouble he will, of course, invoke the Lord. An *ārtaḥ*, however, is not an *arthārthi* because only in distress can he think of God.

Jijñāsu

The third one is *jijñāsu*. The order in the verse *ārta, jijñāsuḥ, arthārthi* is for the sake of meter. But in order of their understanding *ārta* and *arthārthi* are one group, *jijñāsu* and *jñāni*, another. *Jijñāsu* is the one who desires to know. What does he wants to know? That is also important because even the one who does wrong actions, *duṣkṛtinaḥ*, wants to know a lot of things – like how to open locks. But here, the subject matter is Īśvara, the truth of Īśvara, *bhagavat-tattvam*. He is not invoking Īśvara’s grace for simple accomplishments. He wants to know the truth of Īśvara, the ultimate cause of everything. And this *jijñāsu* is a great devotee. He does not use Bhagavan as an accomplice for his small little pursuits; he wants to know who is Īśvara. As a *bhakta* he invokes Īśvara’s grace for this. He also offers

his prayers; he also performs his daily and occasional duties, *nitya-naimittika karma*. But he does all this to gain a clear mind, *antaḥ-karaṇa-suddhi*, and the knowledge of Īśvara.

Knowledge of Īśvara is nothing but knowledge of *ātmā*. Īśvara, the cause of everything happens to be the essence, oneself. If Īśvara were other than *ātmā* he would be *anātmā*, and therefore inert. The only conscious being is *ātmā*, and Īśvara is not separate from it.

This seeming difference between Īśvara and the individual is due to *upādhi*. There is only one reality and that the *jijñāsu* wants to know. He is a devotee because he seeks the help of Īśvara and performs prayerful actions to earn this help. But his actions are not for limited ends within *saṃsāra*, *kāmya-karmas*. The *ārta* and *arthārthi* are *kāmis* because theirs are *kāmya-karmas*. The *jijñāsu*, however, is a *karma-yogi* so his is a different type of devotion. Because of his extra *puṇya*, he has discrimination, *viveka*, and because of that he is a *jijñāsu*.

Jñāni

And then there is a fourth *bhakta*. All four recognize me and to the degree they recognize me they are in union with me. The fourth one's recognition is complete so his identification is total. When you are a *jijñāsu* you necessarily become a *jñāni*, one who knows the truth of Lord Viṣṇu, Parameśvara, as himself. He is a real *bhakta*.