

Jaiiva Dharmma

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Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Chapter Three

Naimittika-dharma:
Impermanent Religious
Duties Are Incomplete,
Pedestrian, Impure and
Evanescent

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- One hour past midnight, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura was deep in meditation, chanting harināma.
- All of a sudden, he walked out from his bhajana-kuṭīra into the silky night, and slowly climbed to the top of the hill at the edge of the Godruma woods.
- He peered towards the north.
- At the zenith, the full moon waved a magic wand and the surrounding landscape and nearby Navadvīpa glowed beautifully in silver glory.
- Māyāpura, nestling cosily in the distance, caught his attention.

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- All at once, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura exhaled and exclaimed in wonder, “Behold! I now see revealed the wondrous and blissful dhāma.
- Large temples and archways, all constructed with precious gems, glitter magnificently, setting aglow the shores and peacefully flowing waters of the Jāhnavī Gaṅgā.
- From many quarters, the congregational chanting of harināma swells resoundingly, heaving upwards and engulfing the satin sky.
- Like Śrī Nārada, thousands of devotees are playing upon vīnās and swirling about in stately dance.

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- On one side, the chief of the devas, demigods, Śrī Mahādeva, white as a lily, plays upon his ḍamarū drum, dancing wildly and singing, 'O my dear Viśvambhara! Be merciful to me!' and then falls to the ground in ecstasy.
- “In one corner, Lord Brahmā, addressing an august assembly of Vedic sages, explains the verse from the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 3.12:

*mahān-prabhur vai puruṣaḥ sattvasy aiśaḥ pravartakaḥ
sunirmalam imam prāptim iśāno jyotir vyayaḥ*

- “Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Controller, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

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- He is the origin of all inspiration and intelligence within man. Immortality and unalloyed peace is attained by His mercy alone. He is of a golden hue and immeasurably effulgent. He is infinite, inexhaustible, and the embodiment of divine love.’
- “In another area, jubilant and dancing devas, headed by Indra, the king of heaven, exult in ecstatic helter-skelter activities.
- They sing a loud chorus, ‘Jaya Prabhu Gauracandra! Jaya Nityānanda!’ Sitting in the trees, the birds coo jubilantly, ‘Gaura-Nitāi!’
- Bumblebees fly erratically throughout the flower gardens, inebriated with the ambrosia of Śrī Gauracandra’s sweet name.

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- Maddened by the delicious nectar of Gauracandra's name, Mother Nature displays the lush profusion of her splendour.
- “Alas! Where does this gorgeous Māyāpura-dhāma hide during the daytime? And exactly what is inspiring me to behold this divine vision now?”
- Throughout the transcendental revelation, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura was remembering his Gurudeva, and he now spoke aloud, “O master! Today, I realize that you have blessed me to perceive the transcendental realm of Māyāpura.
- From today onwards, I will strive to present myself as a devotee of Śrī Caitanya.
- Seeing that everyone in the spiritual land of Navadvīpa is decorated with tulasī neck-beads, tilaka and harināma chaddars, I will also dress like them.”

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- Having made this decision, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura fell into a blissful trance, gradually calming himself and regaining his equilibrium.
- Although, in the meantime, the miraculous vision had vanished from sight, he exclaimed, “Oh, how fortunate am I that I was able to see, if only for a few moments, the spiritual abode of Śrī Navadvīpa.”
- Next morning, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura hastened to the river and sent his māyāvādī sannyāsī staff afloat downstream.
- Putting three strands of tulasī neck-beads around his neck and applying the vertical ūrdhva-puṇḍra Vaiṣṇava tilaka mark upon his forehead, he began to dance and sing, “Hari! Hari!”

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- Later, the Vaiṣṇavas of Godruma-dvīpa, upon seeing the wonderful transformation in his appearance and demeanour, blessed him and fell to the ground to offer him their obeisances.
- Seeing this, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura became bashful and said to the assembly, “How extraordinary! I have accepted the Vaiṣṇava style of dress solely to attract the blessings of the Vaiṣṇavas, but instead I am confronted with a new dilemma.
- I have heard my guru often repeat this instruction from the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 20.21:

*trṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*

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- “One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honour, but is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant harināma.”
- Within himself, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura seriously considered the following: “I regard all these Vaiṣṇavas as my gurus.
- Yet, they are now offering obeisances to me, what future does my spiritual life hold?” Weighed down with such thoughts, his footsteps trod heavily back to his guru.
- He prostrated himself before Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī, who had come to the woody retreat of Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī Maṇḍapa to chant harināma.

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- Seeing the wonderful transformation in Sannyāsī Ṭhākura, both in attire and sentiment, he stood up and embraced his disciple, showering him with cascading tears, and said, “O my dear Vaiṣṇava dāsa, I feel great spiritual exhilaration by the touch of your blessed body.”
- Bābājī’s pronouncement gave Sannyāsī Ṭhākura a new name, Vaiṣṇava dāsa, to replace his old one.
- This day began a new and wonderful life for Sannyāsī Ṭhākura, helping him to shed the stigmas of the māyāvādī false ego, the saffron robes, and the false pride of considering himself in possession of vast knowledge on account of his designation as a sannyāsī.

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- Later in the afternoon, Vaiṣṇavas from Navadvīpa-dhāma and Śrī Godruma assembled in the bowers of Pradyumna-kuñja to receive spiritual instructions and blessings from Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī.
- They were patiently seated all about him, softly chanting harināma upon their tulasī beads.
- Chanting and saintly association exerted a wonderful effect upon the Vaiṣṇavas and spiritual emotions welled up within their hearts.
- Their eyes brimming with tears, they called out, “O my Śrī Gaurāṅga! Prabhu Nityānanda! O my Lord, Sītānātha! All glories to Śacīnandana, son of Śrī Śacīmātā!”

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- They discussed Kṛṣṇa conscious topics with each other. Some were circumambulating Tulasī devī and others were greeting one another with prostrated obeisances as Vaiṣṇava dāsa arrived upon the scene.
- First, he circumambulated Tulasī devī, then fell to the ground, rolling in the dust tread by the hallowed feet of the Vaiṣṇava saints.
- Some of the senior Vaiṣṇavas whispered, “Is he not the Sannyāsī Ṭhākura? Look at him, what a miraculous change!”
- Still rolling on the ground, Vaiṣṇava dāsa began to petition the assembly, “Today, I am extremely grateful to have received the dust from the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.

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- By the mercy of my Gurudeva, I have come to know in full that for the jīva the dust of the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas is the only means to attain perfection.
- The dust of the lotus feet of the pure Vaiṣṇava, the sanctified water of his footbath known as caraṇāmṛta, and the remnants from his prasādam plate known as adharāmṛta are the three transcendental ingredients constituting both the doctor's prescription against bhava-roga, the material disease, as well as the appropriate diet for the patient.
- “Their potency is not merely restricted to curing the material disease of nescience.
- Even one who has already been cured of the material disease is protected against re-infection by the further inoculation of the highest spiritual bliss.

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- My dear Vaiṣṇava saints! Please do not think that I am making an ostentatious exhibition of my erudition, in fact, recently the demon of false pride has been exorcised from my heart.
- “I was born into a brāhmaṇa family, studied all the different scriptures, and finally entered the renounced order of life.
- My false ego knew no bounds.
- Nevertheless, since the time I was first attracted to the Vaiṣṇava philosophy, the seed of humility has been implanted in my heart.
- Now, gradually, by your grace, I have discarded the arrogance born of high lineage, the prestige of material education,

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- and the pride that so often accompanies the exalted position of sannyāsa.
- Now, therefore, I have concluded that I am simply a shelterless infinitesimal soul. My life is meaningless without finding the sanctuary of the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- My birth as a brāhmaṇa, my scholarship, and the renounced religious order were inexorably dragging me into the dark well of illusion.
- I have opened up my mind to you Vaiṣṇavas without reservation, so now you are free to deal with me, your servant, in any way you deem fit.”
- Many of the Vaiṣṇavas, after hearing Vaiṣṇava dāsa’s earnest confessions, addressed him, saying,

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- “O saintly soul! We have always been greedy to receive the dust from the feet of Vaiṣṇavas of your stature.
- Please kindly offer it to us and make our lives worthwhile. You are the receptacle of Bābājī Mahārāja’s divine grace, thus sanctify us by your association. As it is stated in the Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa:

*bhaktis tu bhagavad-bhakta-saṅgena parijāyate
sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ*

- “Devotional sentiments are evoked by the purifying association of advanced devotees.
- The jīva is able to come into close contact with a pure devotee only by accruing sufficient pious results from many previous births.’

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- “We were able to attain your holy association only on account of the piety we have accumulated in our past lives, which has fostered devotion.
- And now, on the strength of your association, we are hopeful of achieving pure devotion to the Supreme Lord.”
- Once these mutual exchanges between the sincere and humble Vaiṣṇavas were concluded, Vaiṣṇava dāsa took his place to one side of the seated assembly, enhancing its dignity.
- The new chanting beads and bead-bag he carried in his hand acquired an auspicious aura, as this august assembly counted another very fortunate soul in its midst that day.
- On that very day, another fortunate soul, a gentleman from Śāntipura, was seated in the gathering of Vaiṣṇavas.

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- From childhood on, this person had studied Arabic and Farsi, leading him to adopt the mannerisms of the ruling Muslim nobility, and bringing him position and prestige in the land.
- As a resident of Navadvīpa, he belonged to a high brāhmaṇa lineage and had inherited vast properties of land.
- He had become an expert in the art of diplomacy and politics and for many years he had been exploiting his position of power for his own advantage and had enjoyed many benefits, but simple happiness still eluded him.
- As a last resort, he had begun to chant harināma.
- Early in life, while still a young boy, experts in the field of Indian classical music had taught him, and he considered that such instruction qualified him to occasionally lead the kīrtana sessions of the Vaisnavas.

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- However, when previously, he had lead some kīrtanas, the Vaiṣṇavas were apparently not fond of his typically palace-court classical touch.
- Nonetheless, he had introduced these classical variations into the kīrtanas, oblivious of the Vaiṣṇavas' feelings.
- Attempting to parade his musical ability, he had stared at the faces of the Vaiṣṇavas, awaiting a response, hoping for some appreciation.
- For quite some days now, this had continued. However, quite suddenly, a few days earlier, he had unexpectedly started to feel increasing pleasure in singing harināma.

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- Thus, he had taken up residence in the house of a Vaiṣṇava of Śrī Godruma to enable himself to participate more conveniently in kīrtana with the Vaiṣṇavas of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma.
- Today, his present landlord had accompanied him to the gathering of Vaiṣṇavas in the woody bowers of Pradyumna-kuñja.
- Whilst sitting there, he had observed keenly how humbly the Vaiṣṇavas treated each other.
- He also attentively listened to the talk Vaiṣṇava dāsa, during which certain doubts had welled up in his mind.
- Already an eloquent speaker, he boldly addressed the assembly, enquiring as follows,

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- “The religious scripture, the Manu-saṁhitā, and other smṛti dharma-śāstras have described the brāhmaṇas as the highest class of men in the social order.
- Further, they have prescribed tri-sandhyā-vandana, the thrice daily chanting of the brahma-gāyatrī-mantra and other prayers, as the nitya-karma—daily, eternal, religious duties of the brāhmaṇas to be performed without exception.
- this be so, then why are the activities of the Vaiṣṇavas opposed to these religious duties?”
- Vaiṣṇavas are not fond of dialectics.
- Had this question been raised by caste brāhmaṇas, who are known to be argumentative, the Vaiṣṇavas would, to avoid confrontation, have declined to answer.

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- However, in this case, since the enquirer was devotionally inclined and a participant in their kīrtanas, everyone conceded that if Śrī Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī were to answer the question, it would very much satisfy the assembly.
- Bābājī Mahārāja respectfully heard the unanimous decision of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- He first offered prostrated obeisances to the assembly and then began to speak.
- “Dear exalted Vaiṣṇavas, if you have no objection, then let the stalwart Vaiṣṇava dāsa tackle this question exhaustively.” Everyone approved of this suggestion.

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa felt very elated upon hearing his guru's suggestion and with sincere humility he began to deliberate aloud, "I am an extremely fallen soul in a dire condition.
- It would be most presumptuous of me to speak anything before this learned and august assembly, yet also I cannot contradict the command of my guru.
- Thus, I have decided that whatever knowledge I have received by way of the nectarean instruction from the lotus lips of my guru I shall sincerely strive to repeat from memory."
- He then walked up to Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī and smeared the dust of his lotus feet all over his own body and head.

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- Standing erect, he started his dissertation, “Let the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, the embodiment of divine bliss and the ultimate source of all partial and plenary expansions of the Absolute Lord, whose effulgence is Brahman, and whose partial manifestation is Paramātmā, the Supersoul within all living entities, inspire us with superior intelligence.
- “The Manu-saṁhitā and other dharma-śāstras written down by other great sages are smṛti-śāstras, corollaries written in pursuance of the original śruti-śāstras known as the Vedas, which are eternal transcendental sound directly manifested from the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and are thus absolutely self-perfected and free of mundane defect.

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- Being corollaries in pursuance of the directions of the Vedas, the dharma-śāstras are held in high esteem, just as the law books defining authorized and unauthorized actions in human society are similarly highly regarded throughout civilised society.
- “In regard to religious practice, human nature is divided into two states: vaidhī, regulated by the rules and regulations of śāstra; and rāgānugā, spontaneous attraction to the Lord’s service.
- As long as the consciousness is under the influence of māyā, material illusion, the guidance of the vaidhī practice remains an important necessity.

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- However, once the consciousness shakes off the shackles of māyā, it leaves the vaidhī state and manifests its innate rāgānugā nature, which is the jīva's original and pure constitution—transcendental and free from all material inebriety.
- “The involvement with matter of the originally pure spirit soul is dissolved only by the desire of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- Therefore, as long as Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not bestow liberation upon the aspiring sādḥaka-jīva, his material entanglement and position is kṣayonmukha—merely in the process of gradual development towards emancipation.
- In this intermediate condition, the jīva, although gradually progressing towards liberation, has factually not fully attained liberation.

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- However, when the jīva is finally actually liberated by the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, his rāgātmikā nature, pure and spontaneous spiritual sentiment, becomes self-manifest as a tangible truth.
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- “The residents of the spiritual realm of Vraja are by nature rāgātmikā, spontaneously fixed in devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- The jīvas, in the intermediate state, who strive progressively towards emancipation, take shelter of the rāgātmikā nature and thus become rāgānugās, followers of the rāgātmikā devotees.
- This is a coveted and excellent position for the jīva because as long as the jīva lacks this position of rāgānugā, his consciousness remains unhappily engrossed in illusory material entanglement.

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- “As a result of close and habitual contact with the material energy, the ignorant conditioned jīva interprets his nisarga, illusory material conditioning, as his innate and original nature.
- At this stage, he cannot develop spontaneous spiritual attraction for the supramundane state.
- In his relationships with matter, his consciousness is deeply engrossed in the false material conceptions of 'me' and 'mine'.
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- “In the state of consciousness which dictates 'I am this body' and 'this body and its extensions are mine' the normal reactions are affection towards persons and objects providing the body with luxuries and comfort, and conversely, hatred towards persons and objects hindering the acquisition of such luxuries.

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- Sucked into this whirlpool of duality, the foolish jīva expresses love or hate on the physical, social, and regulative levels.
- He discriminates between friend and foe, becoming caught up in trifles on the material level.
- Unnecessarily, he cultivates affection for wealth and women, thereby chaining himself to the seesaw routine of happiness and distress.
- This is known as saṁsāra, material life. Attached to this wheel of saṁsāra, the jīva experiences repeatedly the results of his actions, which thereby produce birth and death, success and failure.
- “In this situation, the conditioned jīva finds spiritual involvement a troublesome burden and he cannot realize the truth and necessity of spiritual life.

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- Alas! He forgets that spiritual activities are his inherent occupation and eternal nature.
- Being so mesmerized by mundane attractions, he is forced to witness his own downfall—though in reality, he is an infinitesimal part of the Supreme Absolute.
- “Most people caught in the wheel of saṃsāra do not see this fallen misery as a serious affliction of the enthralled jīva and thus never consider attaining the rāgātmikā nature or even the rāgānuga nature themselves.
- In fact, in their present covered state this is far beyond their reach or even imagination. Seldom does the rāgānuga nature appear spontaneously in the jīva’s heart and then only by dint of the special mercy of a powerful sādhu, holy person.

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- Therefore, the platform of rāgānuga is very rare and almost impossible to attain, and those in saṁsāra are generally deprived of this rare state of existence.
- “However, the Supreme Lord is omniscient and unlimitedly benevolent! Seeing that the living entities—imprisoned by the clutches of māyā—are deprived of a direct perception of the transcendental nature, the Lord therefore considers suitable means for their ultimate benefit:
- 'How may the living entities, mesmerized by māyā, best recollect their lost Kṛṣṇa consciousness?
- Association with sādhus enlightens the living entities about their real identity as the transcendental eternal servants of the Supreme.

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- However, there are no specific injunctions for the conditioned souls to associate with sādhus.
- How then may such beneficial association be directed to take place automatically?
- Therefore, for the greater benefit of the people in general, the introduction of a vidhi-mārga, a regulative spiritual discipline, carefully directing association with sādhus is imperative.’
- Thus, by the Supreme Lord’s benign grace, the brilliant sun of scripture appeared in the sky that is the hearts of the devotees in order to illumine the pertinent religious regulations and instructions amongst all living entities.

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- “First, there were the Vedas, which were ordained to be in three sections: (1) karma, fruitive activities; (2) jñāna, empirical knowledge; (3) bhakti, loving devotion to the Supreme Lord.
- “The living entities, deluded by māyā, find themselves in varying degrees of conditioning.
- Some are in deep ignorance, others slightly knowledgeable, still others fairly well educated on a wide range of subjects, and so on.
- The scriptures offer various instructions to the living entities in accordance with their different mentalities, which are defined as adhikāra, qualification and eligibility.

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- Adhikāra is as varied as the jīvas themselves; however, these various states of eligibility are grouped into three categories, according to their most obvious symptoms: karma-adhikāra, jñāna-adhikāra, and prema-adhikāra.
- These categories are also specified in the Vedas, wherein corresponding vidhi, rules and regulations, are specified.
- These do's and don'ts of scripture define the behaviour of the living entities grouped according to the three types of adhikāra.
- “This vidhi is described as vaidhī-dharma, regulative religious principles. The tendency that impels a jīva to embrace vaidhī-dharma indicates his vaidhī nature, a love of scriptural discipline.

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- One who is bereft of this tendency to follow scriptural rules and regulations is an unruly, uncultured being, generally pledged to illicit, sinful activities.
- People of this type are ostracised from the Vedas and condemned as mlecchas.
- “The duties of the three adhikāra groups described in the Vedas have been elaborated upon by the wise sages and handed down to us as the saṁhitā-śāstras, scriptures that are corollaries to the original Vedic literature.
- Manu and other great Vedic paṇḍitas have delineated the karma-adhikāra in twenty dharma-śāstras, religious treatises.
- Similarly, great munis and philosophers have explained the jñāna-adhikāra in śāstras dealing with logic and empirical analysis.

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- The great ṛṣis, sages, authors of the purāṇas and the sattvika tantric treatises have conclusively propounded the duties and principles of bhakti and their practical application.
- By their chaste adherence to their basis and source, the original śruti, all these smṛti-śāstras are very much a part of the Vedas.
- “The marvellous conclusion of all these smṛti-śāstras is presented in the Bhagavad-gītā.
- Research into the Bhagavad-gītā reveals the following formula: If karma, fruitive work, does not aim at the attainment of jñāna, knowledge, karma is rendered impotent and thus useless.

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- Similarly, if both karma and jñana do not culminate in bhakti-yoga, devotional service, they must also be discarded on the grounds of having become atheistic heretical practices.
- “Thus, the vaiṣṇava-siddhānta, Vedic philosophical conclusion, is that karma-yoga, jñana-yoga, and bhakti-yoga constitute ultimately the same path of yoga, process of spiritual elevation.
- For the conditioned soul, the initial step towards self-realization begins with taking up karma.
- Later, he is promoted to karma-yoga, then to jñāna-yoga, and finally to bhakti-yoga.
- Unless these different levels are properly explained to the deluded living entity, he is unable to reach the highest platform of bhakti-yoga.

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- “What exactly is karma? Any endeavour, physical or mental, carried out to sustain life is karma.
- It is of two kinds: śubha, auspicious; and aśubha, inauspicious. Auspicious karma begets positive results, while inauspicious karma brings negative results to the living entity.
- Further names for inauspicious karma are: papa, sin; and vikarma, perverted unscriptural activities.
- Abstaining from auspicious work is called akarma. Both vikarma and akarma are bad; only auspicious work is good, which is of three kinds: nitya, daily and constant obligatory duties; naimittika, occasional, and ritualistic; and kāmya, desirous, motivated.

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- “Kāmya-karma is shamefully selfish, therefore in the scriptures it is considered ignoble, whereas the virtues of nitya-karma and naimittika-karma are praised.
- After deliberating on the good and bad aspects of karma, the scriptures have concluded that in truth only nitya, naimittika, and kāmya—not akarma or vikarma—make up karma.
- Since kāmya-karma has been rejected as being dispensable because of its selfish nature, therefore only nitya and naimittika karma really fit the descriptions of karma.
- “Nitya-karma is defined as activities beneficial for body, mind, community and afterlife.
- It is everyone’s duty to execute nitya-karma.

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- Daily rites such as sandhyā, chanting the gāyatrī-mantra thrice a day; vandana, chanting of Vedic prayers; using righteous means to protect the health of society and of the physical body; and following the path of truthfulness are all considered as nitya-karma.
- Offering oblations and performing other rites for the satisfaction of the departed souls of the forefathers, executing penances to counteract sinful reactions, and so on are naimittika-karma.
- If an activity begins as a motivated action and yet gradually becomes a regulated responsibility, it is called naimittika-karma.

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- “In order to ensure that nitya and naimittika-karma are properly performed, the compilers of the scriptures have closely studied the characteristics and natural propensities of human beings, and to help them reach this objective, they have formulated a way of life known as varṇāśrama-dharma.
- The essence of this system lies in the fact that human beings are endowed with volition, and, according to their natural tendency towards a particular occupation, may be thus categorized into four groups, which are known as the varṇas: brāhmaṇas, teachers and priests; kṣatriyas, social administrators and the martial class; vaiśyas, businessmen and agriculturists; and śūdras, artisans and labourers.

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- Furthermore, the stages of life are also of four kinds, known as the āśramas: brahmacāri, unmarried student life; gr̥hastha, married family life; vānaprastha, retirement from family responsibilities; and sannyāsī, renounced ascetic life.
- Those who are addicted to akarma and vikarma are outcastes, ostracized from the four varṇas and āśramas of the varṇāśrama system.
- “The four varṇas are determined according to a person’s nature, birth, actions, and personal qualifications.
- If the varṇa is decided on the basis of birth alone, then the original purpose of the varṇāśrama system is destroyed.

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- The āśramas are ascertained by a person's stage on the social progression: brahmacārī unmarried; gṛhastha, married; vānaprastha, gradual rejection and separation from marital arrangements; and sannyāsī, final rejection of all worldly ties with family and social friends.
- “A brahmacārī is unmarried; a gṛhastha is married and living with his wife; a vānaprastha is cultivating disinterest in family affairs and disassociating from his spouse; and a sannyāsī has rejected material life.
- The sannyāsa āśrama is certainly the most elevated of the four āśramas; and the brāhmaṇa varṇa is the best amongst the four varṇas.

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- The crest jewel of all scriptures, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.17.15-21, states in this regard:

*varṇānām āśramāṇām ca
janma-bhūmy-anusāriṇiḥ
āsan prakṛtayo nṛnām
nīcair nīcottamottamāḥ*

- “Corresponding to the specific part of the Universal Form of the Lord from which the varṇas and āśramas appeared, the respective high or low propensities are formed accordingly.
- The feet and legs are of the lower anatomy, from which the śūdra-varṇa and gr̥hastha-āśrama are respectively produced; hence, the śūdra-varṇa and gr̥hastha-āśrama are afflicted with a lowly nature.

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- The mouth and head are of the upper anatomy, from which the brāhmaṇas and sannyāsīs are respectively produced; hence, they are of the highest nature within society.’

*śamo damas tapaḥ śaucam
santoṣaḥ kṣāntir ārjavam
mad-bhaktiś ca dayā satyam
brahma-prakṛtayas tv imāḥ*

- “Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, cleanliness, satisfaction, tolerance, simple straightforwardness, devotion to Me, mercy, and truthfulness are the natural qualities of the brāhmaṇas.’

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*tejo balaṁ dhṛtiḥ śauryaṁ
titikṣaudāryaṁ udyamaḥ
sthairyaṁ brahmanyam aiśvaryaṁ
kṣatra-prakṛtayas tv imāḥ*

- “Dynamic power, bodily strength, determination, heroism, tolerance, generosity, great endeavor, steadiness, devotion to the brāhmaṇas, and leadership are the natural qualities of the kṣatriyas.’

*āstikyaṁ dāna-niṣṭhā ca
adambho brahma-sevanam
atuṣṭir arthopacayair
vaiśya-prakṛtayas tv imāḥ*

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- “Faith in Vedic civilization, dedication to charity, freedom from hypocrisy, service to the brāhmaṇas and perpetually desiring to accumulate more money are the natural qualities of the vaiśyas.’

*śuśrūṣaṇam dvija-gavām
devānām cāpy amāyayā
tatra labdhena santoṣaḥ
śūdra-prakṛtayas tv imāḥ*

- “Service without duplicity to the brāhmaṇas, cows, devas and other worshipable personalities, and complete satisfaction with whatever income is obtained in such service are the natural qualities of the śūdras.’

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*aśaucam anṛtam steyam
nāstikyam śuṣka-vigrahaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhaś ca tarṣaś ca
sa bhāvo 'ntyāvasāyinām*

- “Uncleanliness, dishonesty, thievery, faithlessness, useless quarrel, lust, anger, and hankering constitute the nature of those in the lowest position outside the varṇāśrama system.’

*ahiṃsā satyam asteyam
akāma-krodha-lobhatā
bhūta-priya-hitehā ca
dharmo 'yam sārva-varṇikaḥ*

- “Nonviolence, truthfulness, honesty, desire for the happiness and welfare of all others and freedom from lust, anger, and greed constitute duties for all members of society.’

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- “I refrain from elaborating upon these ślokas, as I am in an august assembly of devotees and all of you are able to comprehend their import.
- I simply want to point out that the system of varṇa and āśrama is the only foundation upon which a civilized society may thrive and the basis for living according to scriptural injunction.
- To the degree the varṇāśrama system is not practiced in a country, irreligiosity will be prominent there.
-
- “Let us now further analyse the usage of the two words, nitya and naimittika.
- A deep probe into the essence of the scriptures reveals that the two words,

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- nitya and naimittika, when they relate to the performance of karma are never meant in the pāramārthika, purely spiritual sense, but are used in the vyāvahārika sense—terms to indicate the vaidhī discipline for everyday, routine, material life.
- “On the other hand, expressions such as: nitya-dharma, eternal religion; nitya-karma, eternal, unmotivated spiritual duties; nitya-tattva, eternal spiritual principle; and nitya-satya, eternal truth, are to be used only to describe the living entity’s pure and transcendental state of consciousness and should actually not be used for another purpose.
- “Previously, the term nitya was used to denote a type of fruitive activity aimed at giving someone in material life a taste and inclination for the absolute transcendence and eternal life upon that plane.

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- However, karma can never be eternal.
- Only when by the process of karma-yoga, karma seeks to achieve jñāna, and jñāna in turn is sublimated into bhakti, can karma and jñāna be described as nitya, but there also solely in an attributive, figurative sense.
- The brāhmaṇa's sandhyā-vandana has therefore been termed nitya-karma only because these physical and psychical activities direct the living entity from a backward state of conditioned consciousness to the pure devotion that is bhakti.
- “Since bhakti is the actual transcendental nitya-karma, a path starting from any backward position that ultimately helps in progress towards bhakti may also be called nitya, eternal, though actually, in itself, such a position is not eternal.

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- In a pedantic sense, it is therefore better to describe it as naimittika, rather than nitya.
- In conclusion, therefore karma, including its two divisions, nitya and naimittika, is merely a means and not an absolute principle.
- “Thus, an analysis on the basis of Vedic siddhānta, ultimate truth and conclusion, establishes that the search for the absolute transcendental reality is the living entity’s only nitya-dharma; and all other religions and performances are naimittika.
- Varṇāśrama-dharma; aṣṭanga-yoga, the path of eight-fold mystic yoga; sāṅkhya, speculative and deductive knowledge; and tapasya, austerity, are all naimittika.

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- If the living entity were not in a conditioned state, encaged in matter, all these religious practices would be redundant.
- The living entity's conditioned state is thus actually the cause that has created all these religious duties and lent credence to them.
- Therefore, in fact, they are all naimittika-dharma.
- “The brāhmaṇa's superior status in society, the vandana prayers, and his final graduation from fruitive work through the acceptance of sannyāsa are all naimittika dharma.
- For the encouragement of those on the spiritual ladder, the status of these religious practices has indeed been very eloquently eulogized in the scriptures,

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- yet in comparison to the genuine nitya-karma, unalloyed bhakti, they maintain a humble position, as this verse from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 7.9.10, illustrates:

*dvi-ṣaḍ-guṇa-yutād aravinda-nābha-
pādāravinda-vimukhāt śvapacaṁ variṣṭham
manye tad-arpita-mano-vacanehitārtha-
prāṇaṁ punāti sa kulaṁ na tu bhūrimānaḥ*

- “The twelve qualifications of a brāhmaṇa are as follows: truthfulness, self-control, austerity, freedom from maliciousness, modesty, tolerance, non-enviousness, expertise in conducting sacrifices, charity, patience, studiousness, and strictness in observing religious vows.

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- A brāhmaṇa of this calibre is indeed worshipable anywhere in the world.
- However, if such a brāhmaṇa is not a devotee and is averse to the lotus feet of the Lord, he is certainly lower than a devotee from the lowest caṇḍāla, dog-eater, caste, who, possessing devotion, has dedicated everything—mind, words, activities, wealth and life—to the Supreme Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- Such a devotee is better than such a brāhmaṇa because the devotee can purify his whole family, whereas the so-called brāhmaṇa in a such position of false prestige cannot purify even himself.’

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- “The purport of this verse is that if a lowborn caṇḍāla first purifies himself by associating with saintly souls and embraces the transcendental path of devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which is the living entity’s actual nitya-karma, then he is far superior to a brāhmaṇa by birth who has rejected the search for the Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa—which is the actual nitya-karma—and has instead busied himself with materialistic naimittika-karma.
- “We find two varieties of human beings in this world: uditaviveka, those with spiritually awakened consciousness; and anuditaviveka, those with slumbering consciousness.
- The latter are the majority in the world, while the first type is very rare.

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- Amongst the second type, the brāhmaṇas are certainly the most advanced and the secondary nitya-karma prescribed for their caste, such as sandhyā-vandana, is the foremost amongst all mundane religious practices.
- “Another name for a person with uditā-viveka is Vaiṣṇava. The Vaiṣṇava demeanour, therefore, is naturally quite different from those who belong to the condition of anuditā-viveka.
- Despite this difference, the Vaiṣṇavas do not deprecate the secondary nitya-karma of other groups, because the Vaiṣṇavas understand that the rules and regulations prescribed for the anuditā-viveka are meant for their beneficial discipline and eventual elevation.

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- The essential direction of all the scriptures is the same: Persons with anudita-viveka should find themselves rigidly obedient to the simple, extraneous, and neophyte instructions of the scriptures; whereas, persons with uditaviveka should seek out and be attached to the deeper scriptural purports.
- “The rituals and the applications may differ, but the purport remains the same.
- To the inexperienced eye of a layman of slumbering consciousness, the activities of a person in awakened consciousness may seem contrary to the social norms, but in essence, they are not.

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- On the other hand, viewed from the position of awakened consciousness, the instructions regarding naimittika-dharma may seem appropriate for people in general, but ultimately they are incomplete, exoteric, diluted, and evanescent.
- “In actual practice, naimittika-dharma is devoid of direct, transcendental activities.
- On the surface, the performer of naimittika-dharma may appear to be acting on the transcendental platform, but actually, these instrumental mundane duties merely provide the means for approaching the final transcendental goal.
- Once the goal is attained, the performances of naimittika-dharma become obsolete, being simply a segment of the path leading to the goal.

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- Furthermore, naimittika-dharma can never be the complete path; for example, the brāhmaṇa's sandhyā and vandana rituals are like his other religious duties: temporary performances subject to stringent scriptural stipulations—they do not spring from his innate natural spiritual activity.
- “At a later stage, having been purified by performing these prescribed duties for a long time, if one is fortunate to come into sādhu-saṅga, saintly association, one develops a spiritual taste for the transcendental activity of chanting harināma.
- At this juncture, the duties of sandhyā-vandana are superseded. However, sandhyā and vandana may contribute to absolute spiritual dharma by elevating people to the point of accepting their prime duty—chanting hari-nāma.

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- That is to say, chanting harināma, in itself, the absolute transcendental activity.
- Although naimittika-dharma is appreciated because it shows the way to spiritual elevation, nevertheless, it is, in itself, ineffective and adulterated, and only the absolute spiritual principle—ultimately—is desirable and useful.
- “Both matter itself and cohabiting with matter are undesirable for the living entities. Naimittika-dharma is supported by a great variety of mundane principles and results, which may keep the practitioners simply enthralled in the mundane nature.

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- For example, a brāhmaṇa's worship of the Supreme Lord may be very beneficial, but if he considers himself superior to all other living entities, this spoils his worship and he then obtains detrimental results.
- “Similarly, the practices of the eightfold yoga system endow the yogi with vibhūti, mystic power, a rather inferior, very inauspicious result for the living entities.
- Bhukti, enjoyment, and mukti, salvation, are both inseparable from naimittika-dharma, and both of which are only fit to be rejected by the jīva.
- Therefore, naimittika-dharma contains a major portion of irrelevant activities and their concomitant dangerous results for the living entities.

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- “Naimittika-dharma is impermanent. It cannot be practiced as an eternal religion under all the different conditions the living entity has to undergo.
- The specific religious duties of a brāhmaṇa, or the duties of statecraft of the kṣatriya, etc., are inevitably discarded with the termination of the immediate cause and reason for one’s earthly duties, namely the body.
- After being born in one life as a brāhmaṇa, a living entity may get a very low birth in his next life as a caṇḍāla, dog-eater.
- Then, the naimittika-dharma as previously prescribed for him in his birth as a brāhmaṇa is not acceptable as the sva-dharma in his birth as a low class caṇḍāla.

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- In this instance, the use of the term sva-dharma is merely figurative, because in every new birth, the conditioned soul assumes a new and temporary sva-dharma in accordance with the body he has attained; whereas, the real sva-dharma is nitya-dharma and thus remains constant from life to life.
- “If I were to be questioned as to what vaiṣṇava-dharma is, my concise reply would be: ‘It is the living entity’s nitya-dharma.’”
- In a liberated state, the Vaiṣṇava devotee engages in the transcendental activity of unalloyed devotional service, kṛṣṇa-prema, in pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- Even while still in a conditioned state and under the influence of material nature, the Vaiṣṇava devotee maintains his uditā-viveka, awakened consciousness, and pursues transcendental devotional service.

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- Acting in the material world, he accepts everything that is conducive to spiritual activity and rejects everything that is detrimental.
- His actions are not hampered by superfluous scriptural stipulations, the do's and don'ts.
- He appreciates and executes any scriptural regulation that enhances his Kṛṣṇa consciousness.
- Nevertheless, if such regulations are detrimental to his spiritual progress, then he discards them.
- Thus, the Vaiṣṇava devotees are the jewels of the earth. They are everyone's well-wishing friends and bring good fortune to this world.

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- I beg humbly to offer these points for consideration to this august assembly of Vaiṣṇavas. Also, kindly forgive me for my mistakes.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa offered his prostrated obeisances to the gathering of devotees and then sat down quietly to one side.
- His dissertation had had an astounding impact upon the gathering of Vaiṣṇavas, who were moved to profuse tears and spontaneous praise of Vaiṣṇava dāsa, the whole village reverberating with the sounds of eulogy to him.
- The inquisitive brāhmaṇa singer tacitly acknowledged the esoteric truths contained in the talk of Vaiṣṇava dāsa.

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- Of course, some of the arguments had met with doubts in his mind, but the seed of faith in vaiṣṇava-dharma was now lodged deeper than before in his heart.
- Standing with folded hands, he spoke out, “Dear respected audience, not claiming to be a Vaiṣṇava, I am nonetheless becoming a Vaiṣṇava by constantly hearing harināma.
- If all of you were to kindly enlighten me with your valuable instructions, then that would dissipate the many doubts still clouding my mind.”
- Śrī Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī, feeling compassion for the brāhmaṇa, replied, “Please try to associate with Vaiṣṇava dāsa as often as possible.

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- He is erudite in all branches of the Vedic scriptures. After embracing the renounced order of sannyāsa, he lived in Vārāṇasī.
- Then our most beloved Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, out of His causeless mercy, attracted him to come to Navadvīpa-dhāma.
- After diligently tutoring himself in the Vaiṣṇava philosophy, he is now fully conversant, and has developed deep attachment and love for chanting harināma.”
- Upon hearing Bābājī Mahārāja’s instructions, the brāhmaṇa inquirer, Śrī Kālidāsa Lāhirī, decided to accept Vaiṣṇava dāsa as his guru, thinking, “A brāhmaṇa by birth, he has taken up the renounced order of life and is therefore certainly eligible to instruct another brāhmaṇa.

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- Furthermore, he has proven himself to be well versed in Vaiṣṇava philosophical conclusions.
- I can learn a lot about Vaiṣṇavism from him.”
- He thus approached Vaiṣṇava dāsa, prostrating himself at his feet, and said, “My dear respected sir, kindly shower your grace upon me.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa reciprocated by offering prostrated obeisances to Lāhirī Mahāśaya and replied, “I would remain always grateful to you, if you were to look upon me with compassion.”
- With the growing purple haze upon the horizon announcing the end of the day, the assembly stood up and dispersed to their individual dwellings.

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- Lāhirī Mahāśaya lived in a hut surrounded by greeneries. It was in a residential locality, but a little hidden from inquisitive eyes, the whole area being fenced-off by strong bamboo strips.
- The small courtyard in front of his hut was taken up by a small bower of mādhavī flower-creepers and a miniature platform for the Tulasī devī plant.
- On either side of the courtyard stood two rooms. A nīma tree sapling, a healthy hedge of mogra flowers, and other fruit and flower trees here and there lent an unassuming splendour to this quiet niche.

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- Mādhava dāsa Bābājī was the owner.
- Initially, this bābājī had been very strict in his devotional practices, but later, as a result of bad association, he had deviated from the path of Vaiṣṇavism.
- Intimate relationship with a woman had contaminated his devotional mood and curtailed his devotional practice.
- Being impoverished, he had found it difficult to make ends meet and now went out begging.
- He had also let one of his rooms and thus Lāhirī Mahāśaya was presently his tenant.

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- Late that night, Lāhirī Mahāśaya awoke abruptly. While lying awake, within his mind he reviewed Vaiṣṇava dāsa's exposition, trying to extract the essence.
- However, suddenly his attention was arrested by a slight stirring outside; he peered into the courtyard and saw Mādhava dāsa Bābājī talking with a woman.
- She apparently noticed Lāhirī's presence and silently slipped away into the dark. Mādhava dāsa Bābājī then came and stood quietly in front of Lāhirī Mahāśaya, hanging his head in shame.
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “What is this, Bābājī?”

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- With tear-streaked cheeks, Mādhava dāsa Bābājī replied, “My disastrous fate! What can I say! Alas! What I was before and just look at me now! Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī used to respect me so much! But now I am too ashamed to meet him.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya gently prodded, “Why don’t you explain everything a little more clearly, so we can understand your problem.”
- Mādhava dāsa replied, “The woman you just saw was my wife before I took to the renounced life.
- After I received initiation and left home, she soon took up residence in a hut on the bank of the Gaṅgā in Śrīpāṭ Śāntipura.

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- A long time passed without incident. However, once I accidentally met her on a trip to Śāntipura and asked her why she had renounced home and family life.
- She tried to explain that she had grown disinterested in family life after being deprived of service to me, her former husband.
- Therefore, she had decided to reside in a holy place, learn about spirituality, and maintain her life by begging.
- “I immediately returned to Godruma without further comment.
- After a while, she also moved to Godruma, taking up residence in the house of a pious milkman.

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- My troubles began when, almost daily, I would run into her somewhere.
- The more I tried to avoid her, the more she intensified her intimacy with me.
- She has now built an āśrama near here.
- Every night, she is waiting until late and then visiting me, meticulously bringing about my downfall.
- I have become infamous everywhere and my spiritual progress has been severely reversed.
- I am the black sheep amongst the followers of Śrī Caitanya.

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- After the incident with Choṭa Haridāsa, I am the next to be condemned as a contemptible culprit.
- Bābājī's sober society has so far not chastised me, but they no longer have any respect for me.”
- After giving him a patient hearing, Lāhirī Mahāśaya cautioned, “Mādhava dāsa Bābājī, you must be very careful!”
- Both then retired to their respective rooms for the rest of the night.
- His mind swarming with thoughts, for Lāhirī Mahāśaya sleep was elusive.

Chapter-3: Naimittika-dharma: Impermanent Religious Duties Are Incomplete, Pedestrian, Impure and Evanescent

- He concluded that Mādhava dāsa Bābājī had become a vāntāśī, one who eats his own vomit by returning to the family life he had renounced, and was now sliding further down to depravity.
- Therefore, it was not advisable to remain here, not so much because of the bad association, which could be avoided, but because his own reputation could be tarnished.
- The saintly Vaiṣṇavas would perhaps lose respect and no longer instruct him.
- In the morning, Lāhirī Mahāśaya went to see Śrī Vaiṣṇava dāsa in Pradyumna-Kuñja.
- After greeting him respectfully, he requested a small living space for himself.

Chapter-3: Naimittika-dharma: Impermanent Religious Duties Are Incomplete, Pedestrian, Impure and Evanescent

- Vaiṣṇava dāsa approached Paramahaṃsa Premadāsa Bābājī with this request and Lāhirī was granted permission to stay in one of the outlying huts, and his daily meals were arranged with a nearby brāhmaṇa family.

Thus ends the Third Chapter of the Jaiva-dharma, entitled:
Naimittika-dharma: Impermanent Religious Duties Are
Incomplete, Pedestrian, Impure and Evanescent