

Jaiiva Dharmma

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Chapter Five

Vaidhī-bhakti Is Nitya-
dharma not Naimittika-
dharma

Chapter 5: Vaidhī-bhakti Is Nitya-dharma not Naimittika-dharma

- Lāhirī Mahāśaya had left behind a large household in Śāntipura. His two sons had completed their education and were well placed in their careers.
- Candranātha, who was thirty-five, was in charge of the household and the maintenance of the landed properties.
- He was a well-qualified doctor, disinterested in spirituality, yet an esteemed member of the brāhmaṇa society.
- His success allowed him a fair crew of servants, maidservants, and guards.
- The second son, Devīdāsa, had been academically inclined from childhood and now studied the scriptures, specializing in two branches: nyāya, logic; and smṛti, Vedic rituals.

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- A proud recipient of the academic degree vidyā-ratna, he had established a small school with about a dozen students.
- Normally humdrum, Śāntipura was this day suddenly astir with the rumour that Kālidāsa Lāhirī had donned the renounced attire of a Vaiṣṇava.
- Such an event became the main topic of discussion at the bathing ghāṭas, market places, and indeed everywhere.
- As is usual, people were not shy to air their views.
- Some cutting remarks were spoken, “He seemed to be doing all right this far in his life, but now, suddenly, he has become senile and disruptive.”

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- “Well! Well! What has possessed him? A happy household, a respected brāhmaṇa, obedient sons and wife—what problems could have prompted him to go to such an extreme?”
- “Such a comedown is natural for one who is always talking of religion and spirituality.”
- However, in contrast, the righteous population supported Lāhirī Mahāśaya, saying he was truly pious because, despite his good material situation, he had developed the desire to take shelter of harināma.
- Finally, someone carried these rumours to Devīdāsa Vidyāratna.
- Taking his misgivings to his elder brother, Vidyāratna said, “Great misfortune has descended upon our father.

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- He lived in Godruma to take advantage of the wholesome surroundings, but has now fallen into bad company.
- I don't dare to hear what is being said in the town!”
- Candranātha responded, “My brother, some of these rumours have reached my own ears.
- Our family is very respected, but now all this talk about father! I cannot show my face anymore.
- Throughout the years, we have vehemently opposed the family of Advaita Gosvāmī and his philosophy and now look what has happened to our own family.
- I think we should consult mother and act as required.”

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- That afternoon, the two brothers sat down for lunch on the long, sun-washed veranda on the first floor of their mansion.
- The young daughter of a widowed brāhmaṇa was serving them while their mother looked on.
- Candranātha said, “Mother, have you heard anything about father?”
- The mother replied, “Why do you ask? He is quite well as far as I know and has absorbed himself in chanting.
- Why don’t you bring him here from Nadia?” Devīdāsa retorted mildly, “His health may be all right, but what is now being batted around in public regarding his behaviour is most disturbing.

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- And I think bringing him back here will definitely cause us to lose face.”
- A little taken aback, the mother enquired, “What is the matter with your father?”
- The other day I met the ladies from the house of Advaita Gosvāmī on the banks of the Gaṅgā and they said that my husband was very fortunate because now the Vaiṣṇava community truly respected him.”
- An exasperated Devīdāsa replied, “Has he been honoured, or has he brought calamity on us—that is the question.

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- At his age, he should be here being served by us instead of eating the remnants of some half-naked persons in kaupīnas, loincloths, and thus smearing the good name of our reputed family.
- Alas! This is the doing of Kali-yuga; after so much intelligent research, he has ended up like this!”
- The mother conceded, “Then the best thing to do will be to bring him here and keep him in hiding.
- Here you can patiently and gradually try to convince him of his mistakes.” Candranātha made the decision, “Yes, there is nothing else we can do.
- Devīdāsa, take a few men secretly to Godruma and convince father to come back.”

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- Devīdāsa spoke hesitatingly, “I’m sure you know that father dislikes me, because he thinks that I’m an atheist.
- It occurs to me that He may not listen to me.”
- Devīdāsa’s maternal cousin, Śambhunātha, was known to be their father’s favourite because he had served Lāhirī Mahāśaya satisfactorily for quite some time.
- Therefore, it was decided that both Śambhunātha and Devīdāsa would proceed to Godruma.
- A servant was immediately sent in advance to Godruma to rent lodgings in a brāhmaṇa’s house.

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- The next day, Devīdāsa and Śambhunātha started for Godruma.
- Upon reaching their temporary residence in Godruma, they alighted from their palanquin and sent off the bearers, but retained a brāhmaṇa cook and two servants.
- Early that evening, Devīdāsa and Śambhunātha walked to Pradyumna-kuñja.
- Upon their arrival, they saw Lāhirī Mahāśaya seated upon a small square woven-leaf sitting mat upon the raised platform known affectionately as the Śrī Surabhī-cabutarā in the middle of the wide, open courtyard.
- Twelve bright tilaka markings decorated his body and he was chanting on beads with his eyes shut.

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- After quietly approaching and climbing onto the platform, Śambhunātha and Devīdāsa prostrated themselves before him in respect.
- Startled, Lāhirī Mahāśaya opened his eyes and recognizing them, said, “Ah! It’s you, Śambhu.
- What brings you here? And, how are you, Devī?” They replied respectfully that thanks to his blessings they were both well.
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya inquired about their lunch, but they had already eaten.
- Just then, they heard loud utterances of harināma coming from the direction of Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī’s cottage in the area of the Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī Maṇḍapa.

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī came out of his cottage and asked Lāhirī Mahāśaya the reason for the loud chanting coming from the quarters of Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī.
- Both of them went to investigate and found that many visiting Vaiṣṇavas were circumambulating Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī, whilst loudly chanting.
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa and Lāhirī also joined the group and, after offering prostrated obeisances to Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī, all the Vaiṣṇavas sat down upon the Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī Maṇḍapa.
- Devīdāsa and Śambhunātha sidled to the back of the assembly and sat down, like cranes amongst swans.

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- One of the visiting Vaiṣṇavas spoke up, “We come from the township of Kaṅṭaka-nagara.
- Our main purpose for coming here is to see the holy sites of Navadvīpa and Māyāpura and take the dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī.”
- Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī felt extremely embarrassed and said softly, “I am but a fallen wretch and you have come to sanctify me.”
- Soon it became known that these Vaiṣṇavas were very talented in singing and glorifying the Lord.
- Mrdaṅgas and karatālas were brought and handed out to them.

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- The clear, melodious voice of an elderly Vaiṣṇava began the following song:

*śrī kṛṣṇa caitanya prabhu nityānanda
gadāi advaita-candra gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*

- “O Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu Nityānanda, Gadādhara, Advaita Ācārya and the devotees of Śrī Gaurāṅga.

*aparā karuṇa-sindhu vaiṣṇava ṭhākura
mo hena pāmara dayā karaha pracura*

- “O great Vaiṣṇava master, you are an ocean of compassion, kindly shower this degraded soul profusely with your benediction.

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*jāti-vidyā-dhana-jana-made matta jane
uddhāra kara he nātha, kṛpā-vitarāṇe*

- “Distribute your kindness, O preceptor, and save those who are inebriated with delusions of high parentage, learning, wealth and followers.

*kanaka-kāmini-lobha, pratiṣṭhā-vāsanā
chādāiyā śodha more, e mora prārthanā*

- “To You I earnestly pray that you reform my greed for wealth and women and my yearning for name and position.

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*name ruci, jīve dayā, vaiṣṇave ullāsa
dayā kari’ deha more, ohe kṛṣṇa-dāsa*

- “Grant me, O sublime servitor of Kṛṣṇa, taste in chanting harināma, compassion for the living entities, and the feeling of jubilation in the association of the Vaiṣṇavas.

*tomāra caraṇa-chāyā eka-mātra āśā
jīvane maraṇe mātra āmāra bharasā*

- “The shade of your lotus feet is my only hope. In life and in death you are my only solace.”
- As the last strains of the song subsided, another song started up, composed by Lāhirī Mahāśaya himself, and full of poetic charm:

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*miche māya-vaśe, saṁsāra-sāgare, paḍiyā chiāma āmi
karuṇa kariyā, diyā pāda-chāyā, āmāre tārila tumi*

- “Shackled by the chains of māyā, I was drowning in the ocean of material existence, and you mercifully appeared and saved me by taking me under the sanctuary of your lotus feet.

*śuna śuna vaiṣṇava ṭhākura
tomāra caraṇe, sampiyāchi māthā, mora duḥkha kara dūra*

- “Kindly hear me, O Vaiṣṇava master! I have surrendered at your feet, so mercifully drive away my distress.

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*jātira gaurava, kevala raurava, vidyā se avidyā-kāla;
śodhiyā āmāya, nitāi-carāṇe, sampāhe,—jāuka jvāla*

- “The pride of high birth is but a messenger from hell, and material education is the art of nescience.
- Pray, redeem my heart and offer it at the lotus feet of Śrī Nityānanda, letting its smouldering pains be forever cooled.

*tomāra kṛpāya, āmāra jihvāya, sphuruka yugala-nāma
kahe kālīdāsa, āmāra hṛdaye, jaguka śrī-rādhā-śyāma*

- “I beg for your mercy, which has the power to make my tongue vibrate with the sublime names of the Divine Couple.

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- I, Kālidāsa, humbly implore that the transcendental names of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Śyāma incessantly resonate and be forever invoked in my heart.”
- The song started off as a solo, but ended in a resounding chorus—the song had intoxicating qualities that had inebriated all persons present.
- The last passage, jaguka śrī rādhā-śyāma, went through endless encores and the devotees flung out their arms in ecstatic dance.
- A few most elevated Vaiṣṇavas fell limp to the ground, entranced by kṛṣṇa-prema.
- It was a truly wonderful sight.

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- Devīdāsa witnessed this silently, deliberating in his mind that his father had fully devoted himself to the highest spiritual quest and that it might be an impossible task to persuade him to return home to Śāntipura.
- The spiritual assembly dispersed at midnight, the Vaiṣṇavas returning to their individual dwellings.
- Devīdāsa and Śambhunātha took leave of their father, Lāhirī Mahāśaya, and returned to their room.
- The next day after lunch, Devīdāsa and Śambhunātha went back to the cottage of Lāhirī Mahāśaya, offered him respectful obeisances and sat down.
- Devīdāsa spoke to his father, “Father, I have a request. Please return to our Śāntipura house.

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- Here you are facing many hardships, whereas at home we can all serve you with pleasure.
- If you permit, we can even add a quiet and separate wing to our house.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya replied, “It sounds good, but here I have nice saintly association, which is difficult to find in Śāntipura.
- In addition, as you also know, the people of Śāntipura are atheistic and love to criticize others.
- Therefore, it is not exactly a peaceful place to live.
- Indeed, many brāhmaṇa families reside there, but by mixing closely with the weaver community, their intelligence has become infected with guile and cunning.

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- Three symptoms characterize the Śāntipura population—the wearing of thin, fine clothing, boastfulness, and Vaiṣṇava-baiting.
- There, the descendants of Advaita Ācārya Prabhu are constantly harassed.
- Moreover, sadly enough, as a result of the bad association, even some of their own family members are becoming critical of Śrī Caitanya.
- Everything considered, I think you should try to make my stay here in Godruma proper and peaceful. That is what I want.”
- Devīdāsa spoke warily, “Father! Everything you have said is true.

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- However, why do you have to communicate at all with the Śāntipura residents?
- In the tranquillity of your separate quarters, you can pass your days in prayer and meditation, whilst pursuing your spiritual search.
- The daily rituals and rites of a brāhmaṇa, such as sandhyā and vandana, are nitya-dharma and to become immersed in such performances is expected of a great soul like yourself.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya said patiently, “My son! Those times are of the past.
- Having stayed in the company of saintly devotees for a few months and after having received spiritual instructions from my guru, my attitudes and opinions have irreversibly changed.

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- What you call nitya-dharma I call naimittika-dharma.
- Devotional service to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, is the only nitya-dharma of the soul—sandhyā and vandana, etc., are factually naimittika-dharma.”
- Devīdāsa retorted, “Father! I have not come across any scriptures supporting your views.
- Are sandhyā, vandana, etc., not a part of hari-bhajana? If they are, they are definitely nitya-dharma.
- Is there a distinction between sandhyā, vandana, and the vaidhī-bhakti process of śravaṇam, kīrtanam, and so on?”

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- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Listen to me, my son.
- Sandhyā, vandana, etc., are part of karma-kāṇḍa portion of the Vedas, which deals with rituals meant for fruitive results, and so are very different from vaidhī-bhakti.
- The karma-kāṇḍa recommends the practice of sandhyā, vandana, etc., for the attainment of mukti.
- In contrast, devotion to the Lord through śravaṇam, kīrtanam, and so on, is performed without any ulterior motive.
- The descriptions in the scriptures you have read regarding the results of śravaṇam, kīrtanam, etc., are merely written to arouse spiritual interest in materialistic men.

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- The principle aim of vaidhī-bhakti is to develop rati, attachment, in the heart of the neophyte for hari-bhakti.”
- Devīdāsa, “Father, then you must admit that the process of bhajana gives rise to gaṇa, secondary, results.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya: “The achievement of secondary results depends entirely upon the motivation of the sādḥaka, practitioner.
- A Vaiṣṇava practices sādḥana-bhakti in order to pave the way for and reach the highest stage of perfection in bhakti.
- Someone who is not a Vaiṣṇava utilizes this process of sādḥana-bhakti to achieve two goals, bhukti, sense gratification, and mukti, liberation.

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- In these two instances, one may not detect any apparent difference in the external practice of sādhana-bhakti, but the main distinction is in the motivation.
- Worshiping the Deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the karma-kāṇḍa process will result in cleansing the heart, the attainment of mukti, the mitigation of material distress and disease, and other mundane advantages.
- “However, in śuddha-bhakti, the same worship of Deity of Kṛṣṇa offers an increased taste for the chanting of harināma.
- The observance of Ekādaśī vows for a karmi, fruitive worker, absolves sins, but for a vaiṣṇava-bhakta, Ekādaśī vows are followed to augment his devotion to the Supreme Lord.

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- Do you not see the great difference? Of course, to discern accurately these subtle differences one needs the Lord's blessings.
- The karmis cannot look beyond their myopic gaṇa goals, but the true devotees succeed in obtaining the mukhya, primary and absolute, objectives.
- All the gaṇa results can be brought under two headings: bhukti and mukti.”
- Devīdāsa, “Then why have the scriptures gone to such lengths to praise these gaṇa results?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “There are two types of men in the world: uditā-viveka and anuditā-viveka.

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- The latter refuse any good constructive work unless they see immediate and concrete, mundane results.
- Therefore, the praise heaped upon gaṇa results is for the benefit of these people.
- However, the true import of the scriptures does not indicate that people should remain complacently satisfied with their gaṇa results.
- Rather the scriptures intend that those of slumbering conscience may be attracted by the gaṇa results initially, but then within a short time, by the grace of a pure Vaiṣṇava, they may hear about the mukhya results and gradually develop an attraction for this higher goal.”

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- Devīdāsa, “Would you consider the smārta, Raghunandana, a paṇḍita of the smṛti-śāstras, and others like him to be in the lower category of anudita-viveka?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “No, they personally were striving for the mukhya results, but they made arrangements through their writings to guide the anudita-viveka.”
- Devīdāsa, “In some scriptures one reads only about the gaṇa results without any mention of the mukhya results.
- How may this be explained?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “The scriptures can be grouped into three categories, which correspond to the three levels of human consciousness:

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- sattvika scriptures in sattva-guṇa, the mode of goodness, for people in the sattva-guṇa;
- rājasika scriptures in raja-guṇa, the mode of passion, for people in raja-guṇa; and
- tāmasika scriptures in tama-guṇa, the mode of ignorance, for people in tama-guṇa.”
- Devīdāsa, “Then, given the variety of scriptural instructions, how does one discern which scriptural directives one should trust and believe, and which should be rejected?
- And how may a man elevate himself from the lower ranks of consciousness?”

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- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Human beings can be classified according to the level of their nature, habits, and faith.
- And corresponding to their faith, people seek the appropriate scriptures.
- A sattvika person has a natural faith and inclination towards sattvika scriptures, a rājasika person towards rājasika scriptures, and a tāmasika person towards tāmasika scriptures.
- Trust and belief grow easily upon the foundation of faith.
- When one performs one’s duties prompted by faith and an increasing level of understanding in the potent association of saintly persons, one can advance to higher levels of consciousness.

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- “The sages who wrote the scriptures were perfect personalities.
- The methods employed by them in formulating the scriptures ensure that if anyone diligently and faithfully executes his specific duties as recommended in the scriptures, he progresses higher.
- Thus, we find diversities in the many scriptures.
- Nevertheless, unwavering faith in the scriptures ushers in all good fortune.
- The conclusion of all the scriptures is the Bhagavad-gītā, which delineates this esoteric precept.”

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- Devīdāsa, “I have been studying many different scriptures from my early years, but today by your grace I have understood a unique philosophical point.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.8.10, writes:

*aṇubhyaś ca mahadbhyaś ca
śāstrebhyaḥ kuśalo naraḥ
sarvataḥ sāram ādadyāt
puṣpebhya iva ṣaṭpadaḥ*

- “Just as the honeybee takes nectar from all flowers, big and small, an intelligent human being should take the essence from all religious scriptures.’
- “I remember, my son, I used to call you an atheist, but now I have stopped criticizing people.

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- No one should be faulted for adhering to their individual level of adhikāra, qualification.
- At the appropriate time, they will be promoted to higher levels.
- You are a paṇḍita in tarka-śāstra, the scriptures of logic, and karma-śāstra, the scriptures of fruitive work, therefore there is no offence in your level of realization, which is based upon these scriptures.”
- Devīdāsa, “Earlier, I held the false opinion that there are no paṇḍitas in the vaiṣṇava-sampradāyas.
- I thought they were fanatics respecting only revelation and believing only in particular segments of the revealed scriptures.

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- I am convinced now there are also broadminded seekers of truth amongst the Vaiṣṇavas.
- Are you presently studying the scriptures under a teacher?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “My son, you may call me a fanatic Vaiṣṇava or anything else, as you please.
- My Gurudeva lives in that cottage and does his bhajana there. He has taught me the essence of all the scriptures, which I have repeated to you.
- If you also wish to learn, then approach him humbly and enquire from him with devotion.

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- Come, I will introduce you to him.” Lāhirī Mahāśaya guided Devīdāsa to Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī’s cottage and, after introducing him, left him with his guru and retired to his own room, quietly sitting down to continue his chanting while the following conversation ensued.
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “Have you concluded your education, my son?”
- Devīdāsa, “I have studied up to Mukti-pāda and Siddhānta-kusumāñjali in nyāya-śāstra.
- In smṛti-śāstra I have read all the books.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “I see you have worked hard in your studies of the scriptures.
- What have you learnt? What is the outcome of your efforts?”

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- Devīdāsa, “...atyanta-duḥkha-nivṛttir eva muktiḥ... ‘One must constantly strive for mukti.’”
- I am searching for mukti through the faithful execution my prescribed religious duties.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “Yes, I was like you once. I have also studied those books and sought the release of mukti.”
- Devīdāsa, “Am I to presume that you have given up that endeavour?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “Son, tell me, what is your concept of mukti?”
- Devīdāsa: “The nyāya-śāstra espouses the existence of an eternal difference between the jīva and Brahman.

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- Thus, in nyāya-śāstra it is not clear exactly how mukti, the cessation of all suffering, takes place.
- However, the Vedāntic viewpoint holds that mukti is the quest for the undifferentiated Brahman.
- To me this is definitely more comprehensible.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “Son, I had studied thoroughly the Vedānta literature in the line of Śaṅkarācārya for a good fifteen years before I entered the sannyāsa order; wherein for a further number of years I endeavoured assiduously for mukti.
- I accepted the four mahā-vākyas of Śaṅkarācārya and profoundly meditated upon their purport.
- Nevertheless, finally I discarded that discipline and philosophy, having decided that it was shallow and immature.”

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- Devīdāsa, “What prompted your conviction?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “Certainly it is not easy to describe to others the trials and tests with which one has been confronted. How will others understand?”
- Devīdāsa could understand from his conversation that Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī was a profound paṇḍita, guileless and self-realized.
- He had not yet studied the Vedānta and so considered that if Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī would kindly consent to teach him, then he could master the Vedānta as well.
- Therefore, he said, “Sir, do you think I am an eligible candidate for studying the Vedānta?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “Seeing that you have sufficient knowledge of Sanskrit, you could study Vedānta, if you find a teacher.”

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- Devīdāsa, “If you would kindly teach me! I am more than willing.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “My present situation is that I am simply a poor servant of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī has been very merciful to me, instructing me to always chant harināma.
- Therefore I try to do his bidding and have very little other time left.
- Besides, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has strictly forbidden the Vaiṣṇavas to read or hear Śaṅkarācārya’s exposition upon Vedānta, the Śārīraka-bhāṣya; therefore, I do not read or teach that book.

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- “Śrī Caitanya, however, the original spiritual master of the entire creation, explained the Vedānta-sūtra-bhāṣya to Śrīla Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya.
- This is available amongst a few Vaiṣṇavas in the form of a hand-written manuscript—you may copy this from one of them and then study it. I may help your understanding, if I can.
- In fact, you could approach Śrīmat Kavi Karṇapūra of Kāñcana-pallī village and procure a copy from him.”
- Devīdāsa, “I will pursue this matter with great care.
- Sir, you have vast knowledge of Vedānta, kindly tell me very plainly if I can find the real essence of the Vedānta by studying the Vaiṣṇava commentary?”

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa, “I have studied and taught the Śaṅkara commentary.
- I have also scrutinized other commentaries, including the Śrī-bhāṣya of Śrī Rāmānujācārya.
- The Gaudiya-Vaiṣṇavas study the elaborations of the aphorisms made by Śrī Caitanya and explained by Śrī Gopīnātha Ācārya.
- In my experience, I have not yet come across anything superior and more exhaustive.
- No further theories, annotations, or new doctrines are necessary after the elaboration given by the Supreme Lord.
- The essence of all the Upaniṣads is available in these dissertations.

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- If someone can take the pains to compile these elaborations systematically, then no other commentaries will be so appreciated by the scholars of Vedānta.”
- The words of Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī gave Devīdāsa profound joy and he offered his prostrate obeisances.
- Proceeding from there to his father’s room, he narrated everything to his father, who became jubilant, proclaiming, “Devī, you have read and heard enough, now you must search for the real purpose of life, the ultimate goal!”
- Devīdāsa, “Father, I came to Godruma feeling extremely hopeful that I could bring you back with me.
- If you kindly come just this one time, we would be very happy. Especially, our dear mother is keen to have your darśana, sight.”

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- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “I have accepted the shelter of the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas and have taken a vow not to visit any non-Vaiṣṇava house.
- First, all of you should become Vaiṣṇavas, then you can take me.”
- Devīdāsa, “Father, I do not understand your instructions. We worship the Lord in our house.
- We have never shown disrespect to harināma.
- We serve and care for guests and Vaiṣṇavas. Are we not Vaiṣṇavas?”

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- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “I recognize that apparently there are no differences between your activities and those of the Vaiṣṇavas, yet you are not Vaiṣṇavas in the true sense.”
- Devīdāsa, “Then please tell me what we should do to become true Vaiṣṇavas?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “First you must denounce your materialistic mentality, your naimittika-bhāva, attachment to temporary rituals, and embrace the values of the eternal religion, nitya-dharma.
- Then you are ready to become Vaiṣṇavas.”
- Devīdāsa, “I have this nagging doubt, which you will kindly dissipate.

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- The Vaiṣṇava devotional activities of śravaṇam, kīrtanam, smaraṇam, pādasevanam, arcana, vandana, dāsyam, sākhyam, and ātmā-nivedanam appear to be diluted with material activities.
- Then, could not these be called naimittika-karma, as well? I detect a certain bias in this matter.
- Deity worship, fasting, using material things in worship, all these are part of the mundane nature, so how can they be designated as nitya, eternal?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Son, it took me a long time to grasp this point, so try to understand it properly.
- Human beings are of two kinds: aihika, worldly; and pāramārthika, spiritual.

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- Worldly men seek only temporal and corporal pleasures, including respect and material advancement.
- Spiritual persons are of three categories: īśānugata, those surrendered to the Supreme Lord; jñāna-niṣṭha, those desiring monistic knowledge with a view to emancipation; and siddhi-kāmi, those aspiring for mystic powers.
- “The siddhi-kāmi are absorbed in the attempt to enjoy the fruits of karma-kāṇḍa, ritualistic performances.
- They want to obtain mystic powers and thus display miracles by pressing into service different yāga, rites; yajña, sacrifices; and the system of aṣṭāṅga-yoga, eightfold yogic discipline.
- They take the view that if an Īśvara, Supreme Controller, exists then He is subservient to the laws of karma.

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- Modern scientists belong to this group.
- “The jñāna-niṣṭha cultivate empirical monistic philosophy, endeavouring to realize their identity with Brahman.
- They do not know, or hardly care, whether an Īśvara exists or not.
- Nonetheless, to suit their particular practice of sādhana, they imagine that an Īśvara exists and practice bhakti towards this imaginary form.
- Gradually, their endeavours are rewarded with appropriate results and at this point their imagined Īśvara is no longer useful or imperative.

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- Thus, this bhakti to Īśvara, they believe, is transformed at the time of enlightenment into their particular definition of jñāna, which is monistic identity with the impersonal Brahman.
- This philosophy does not accept Bhagavān or bhakti to Bhagavān as being nitya.
- “The īśānugata category of spiritual men comprises of those who are actually surrendered to Īśvara.
- This group is truly seeking spirituality.
- They believe in an eternal, unlimited, and personal Īśvara, who has created both the jīvas and the material nature by His potencies.

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- They understand that the jīvas are the eternal servants of Īśvara and that an eternal mood bhakti in respect to Bhagavān is the nitya-dharma of the jīva.
- They appreciate that the jīva by his own minute potency alone is incapable of attaining spiritual realization.
- Karma cannot offer the jīva any eternal results, and monistic jñāna simply warps and distorts the vision of the ultimate, eternal truth.
- However, by the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all spiritual perfection for the jīva is ensured when the jīva executes bhakti to Him.
- “The first two categories of spiritualists are thus known as the followers of karma-kāṇḍa and jñāna-kāṇḍa, respectively.

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- Only members of the third category can truly be called devotees.
- The first two categories claim to be true spiritualists, but in reality they are not seeking the highest goal but are worldly-minded and seeking material gain.
- Thus, their religious goals and practices are all ultimately naimittika.
- “Those who worship Durgā-devī, Gaṇeśa, Śiva, and Sūrya are followers of the jñana-kāṇḍa.
- Their participation in the sravaṇam, kīrtanam, etc., of bhakti is done solely with the motive of obtaining mukti, which they define as the achievement of merging into the impersonal, undifferentiated Brahman.

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- Those amongst them, who are not desirous of bhukti or mukti, when performing śravaṇam, kīrtanam, etc., are factually serving the Supreme Lord, Śrī Viṣṇu, through the medium of these different devas.
- Amongst these five deities, the śrī-mūrtī, deity form, of Bhagavān Śrī Viṣṇu is eternal, absolutely spiritual, and omnipotent.
- However, if one worships the śrī-mūrtī of Bhagavān Śrī Viṣṇu not accepting it to be non-different from Bhagavān Himself, then the worship is mundane and temporary.
- “Dear son, the deity worship you conduct at home is not paramārthika, because you do not acknowledge that the śrī-mūrtī of Bhagavān is eternal and transcendental.

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- This is probative that you are not an īśānugata surrendered to Bhagavān.
- I hope you have been enlightened about the difference between nitya-upāsanā, eternal deity worship, and naimittika-upāsanā, temporary ritualistic deity worship.”
- Devīdāsa, “Yes! If one worships the śrī-mūrtī, but does not accept this form as eternal, such worship is material and not spiritual.
- Nevertheless, could this mundane, ritualistic worship not offer the worshiper clues to the other higher, spiritual truths?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “That may be true, but still such worship cannot be designated as nitya-dharma.

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- In vaiṣṇava-dharma, Vaiṣṇavas worship the Lord's śrī-mūrtī as His eternal form; hence their worship is nitya-dharma.”
- Devīdāsa, “The śrī-mūrtī forms are sculptured by man from matter—how may one see them as absolute and eternal?”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “The śrī-mūrtī worship of the Vaiṣṇavas is not the same as that idea.
- The Supreme Personality of Godhead is positively not the nirākāra-brahman, the formless Brahman.
- He is sat, cit, ānanda, vighraha—the embodied form of eternality, absolute knowledge, and transcendental bliss, endowed with all potencies.
- This is the śrī-mūrti of Vaiṣṇava worship.

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- At first, the form of Bhagavān appears in the spiritual consciousness of the devotee and is reflected within his mind.
- The śrī-mūrtī is then constructed according to this vision of the devotee, and through the potency of bhakti, Bhagavān is attracted to manifest His sac-cid-ānanda form from within the śrī-mūrtī.
- When the pure devotee sees the śrī-mūrti of Bhagavān, that śrī-mūrtī unites with the transcendental form of Bhagavān that the devotee sees within his heart.
- “The jñānīs’ conception of śrī-mūrtī worship is not the same as that of the Vaiṣṇavas.

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- The jñānīs believe that the Brahman concept is fused into the material form of the deity by their imagination, and the Brahman remains in that material form as long as is needed for worship.
- Later, the form is to be considered a mere material object. Ponder upon these points deeply and try to understand the differences in these approaches to deity worship.
- When one, by the mercy of a genuine guru, receives initiation into the path of Vaiṣṇavism, then the different results of these contrasting forms of deity worship become understandable.”
- Devīdāsa, “I have gradually become convinced that the Vaiṣṇavas are not fanatics, but are capable of rational analysis and of deeply probing the science of arcanam, deity worship.

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- On one hand, worshiping the śrī-mūrtī of Bhagavān as non-different from the sac-cid-ānanda form of the Lord and, on the other hand, extrapolating the concept of impersonal Brahman onto matter and then worshiping the deity are certainly opposing processes.
- Superficially, the rituals and performances may appear to be the same, however there is a great distinction in the faith and conceptions of the worshippers.
- Father, you have removed a major doubt in my mind, and I will contemplate these subjects seriously.
- I am now convinced that the jñānīs mode of the deity worship is ultimately a form of deception and a denial of the eternal form of Śrī Bhagavān. All is well for now—I will continue our discussion later and pray at your feet for more answers.”

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- Devīdāsa Vidyāratna and Śambhu returned to their lodging and came back to Lāhirī Mahāśaya later in the evening.
- No further discussions were possible at that time because everyone was simply engrossed in the joy of singing and chanting harināma.
- The next day, in the afternoon, Devīdāsa and Śambhu came and joined the other Vaiṣṇavas assembled in the courtyard of Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī.
- Devīdāsa and Śambhu sat close to Lāhirī Mahāśaya. Just then, the Kāzī, a head of the Muslim religion and the magistrate of Brāhmaṇa Puṣkariṇī village, arrived.
- Standing up courteously, the Vaiṣṇavas welcomed the Kāzī heartily.

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- In turn, the Kāzī exchanged warm greetings with the Vaiṣṇavas and joined them.
- Everyone sat together, expectantly waiting to hear Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī speak.
- Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī addressed the Kazi, “You are truly fortunate, being a descendant of Śrī Chānd Kazi, who was personally favoured by our Lord, Śrīman Mahāprabhu. So please be merciful upon us.”
- The Kāzī replied, “By Śrī Caitanya’s mercy we are also the recipients of the Vaiṣṇavas’ mercy. Śrī Gaurāṅga is the Lord of our hearts. We begin everything by first offering our humble obeisances to Him.”

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- Lāhirī Mahāśaya was proficient in both Urdu and Arabic, the languages used by the Muslims.
- He had deeply studied the holy Koran-sharīf, having read all the thirty sephārās, corollaries.
- In addition, he was well acquainted with the Sufi philosophy and had studied many of their literatures.
- Taking the opportunity of the Kāzī's presence, he asked him, "What is the Islamic concept of mukti?"
- The Kāzī replied, "Our equivalent of the Sanskrit term jīva is rūh. Rūh is found in two conditions of existence: rūh-mujarrad, the liberated soul; and rūh-tarkībī, the conditioned soul.

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- Our term for cit, spirit, is mujarrad, and for acit, matter, we use the term jism.
- Mujarrad-rūh, the pure souls, reside in the spiritual realm of alam-misal, which is transcendental to material time and space.
- The tarakībi-rūh, the conditioned souls, reside in jisam, which is bound by time and space.
- The tarakībi-rūh, conditioned souls, are endowed with a material mind, which is full of desire and malaphuṭ, ignorance.
- However, the mujarrad-rūh, pure souls, are pure and aloof from the contaminations of jisam, the impure existence, and reside in the spiritual region known as ālam al-maśhāl.

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- The rūh is purified by the flowering of iśhqh, spiritual love.
- The place to where Payagambara Saheb, the prophet, was taken by Khodā, the Supreme Lord, is not influenced by jisam, but even there the rūh is bandā, servitor, and Khodā is the master.
- Therefore, the relationship between bandā and Khodā is eternal.
- To attain this status by purification is known as mukti.
- The Koran-sharīf and the books of the Sufis have recorded all these points, but not everyone can comprehend the meanings.
- Since Śrī Gaurāṅga instructed Chānd Kāzī on these esoteric subjects, we have been able to pursue the pure devotional path and become pure devotees.”

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- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “What is the essential lesson of the Koran-sharīf?”
- Kāzī, “The Koran has described behesht, the personal abode of Khodā, but has not greatly detailed ebādat, liberated spiritual life.
- However, we understand that life there is ebādata, eternal, and in the presence of Khodā the mujarrad-rūh are engrossed in sublime joy by His sight. All this has been confirmed by the teachings of Śrī Gaurāṅga Deva.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Does Khodā have a form?”
- Kāzī, “The Koran-sharīf denies that Khodā has form. However, Śrī Caitanya elucidated to Chānd Kāzī that this indicates that the Koran forbids a jisamani, material form of Khodā, but does not forbid the pure mujar-radi, transcendental form.

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- The Payagambara Saheb, the prophet, saw the ecstatic form of Khodā to the degree of his particular elevation and eligibility.
- However, the rasas, spiritual mellows, were veiled to him.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “What is the Sufi philosophy?”
- Kazi, “In their philosophy the main concept is anā al-ḥaqq: ‘I am Khodā.’
- Your monistic advaitavāda philosophy and the Sufi aswaph philosophy are very similar.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Are you a Sufi?”
- Kazi, “No, we follow the pure devotional path; we are surrendered to Śrī Gaurāṅga.”

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- The discussion continued for some time, the Kazī finally taking leave of the Vaiṣṇavas, offering them his respects.
- The evening concluded with congregational chanting of harināma.

Thus ends the Fifth Chapter of the Jaiva-dharma, entitled: Vaidhī-bhakti is Nitya-dharma not Naimittika-dharma