

Jaiṁa Dharma

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Chapter Six

Nitya-dharma: Birth and Caste Differences

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- Devīdāsa was a teacher and had firmly believed for a long time that the brāhmaṇas were the noblest of the varṇas, castes, and that it was the sole prerogative of the brāhmaṇas to pursue the path of spirituality.
- Mukti was not available to men of other varṇas, but only to brāhmaṇas by birth.
- He considered that from birth a brāhmaṇa progressively realizes his oneness with Brahman by the performance of his prescribed varṇāsrāma duties.
- Naturally, therefore, Devīdāsa was very vexed by the conversation between the Kāzī and the Vaiṣṇavas he had witnessed a few days before.
- He was unable to grasp the meaning of the Kāzī's talk.

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- He said to himself, “These yavanas, Muslims, are very strange people and their philosophy is equally an enigma.
- It is all right for my father to talk with them, as he is proficient in the Persian and Arabic languages and has also researched all the different religious philosophies.
- Nevertheless, I wonder why he was so friendly to them? A Hindu has to take a bath upon even touching a yavana, why then did Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī and Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī affectionately invite the Kāzī to join their assembly and sit amidst them?”
- That night, Devīdāsa, unable to contain his mental agitation, declared to his cousin, “Śambhu! I will ignite the flames of religious debate and incinerate the pāṣaṇḍa, heretic, philosophy.

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- This Navadvīpa, which was the famous arena for debates upon nyāya śāstra between illustrious scholars such as Sārvabhauma and Śiromaṇi,
- and which has witnessed Raghunandana's great dissertations upon the twenty-eight treatises that he compiled from all the smṛti-śāstra, has now to bear the upstart behaviour of the Vaiṣṇavas being overly friendly to the yavanas!
- I am sure the scholars and pedagogues of Navadvīpa are as of yet unaware of this incident!”
- It took Devīdāsa a few days to prepare for the plunge into his self-assigned mission.
- Finally, the day arrived, heralding a continuous nagging drizzle that spread a dismal sheet of slick everywhere.

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- All morning, the clouds did not allow a glance of the sun upon the earth.
- At midday, sensing the time for their fateful debate had arrived, Devīdāsa and Śambhu ate hot khicuri.
- The afternoon remained overcast with low hanging clouds continuing to shroud the sun.
- Delayed by the bad weather, the Vaiṣṇavas returned later than usual after their daily mādhuakarī food collection rounds.
- Now, at three in the afternoon, having taken prasādam, some Vaiṣṇavas sat chanting upon their beads in a large cottage adjacent to the courtyard of the Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī Maṇḍapa.

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- Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī, Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, a visiting Vaiṣṇava paṇḍita from Nṛsimhapallī named Ananta dāsa, Lāhirī Mahāśaya, and Yādava dāsa of Kuliya village were seated there, quietly relishing the nectar of chanting harināma.
- Suddenly, they were interrupted by the arrival of Devīdāsa Vidyāratna, accompanied by Caturbhuja Pādaratna of Samudragarh, Cintāmaṇi Nyāyaratna from Kāśī, Kālidāsa Vācaspati from Pūrvasthalī, and the famous paṇḍita, Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi.
- The Vaiṣṇavas heartily welcomed this small group of brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas, requesting them to take seats.
- Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī, being the senior-most Vaiṣṇava, said, “Most people complain that a rainy day like today is bothersome.

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- However, for us, because today brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas from the holy dhāma have graciously come to sanctify our humble dwellings with the dust of their feet, it is an auspicious day.”
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- The Vaiṣṇavas are naturally very humble, even more so than a blade of grass.
- Therefore, they offered their respect by uttering: ...vipra caraṇebhyoḥ namaḥ... “I offer obeisances at the feet of the brāhmaṇas.”
- By nature, these particular brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas were very proud. Returning the greetings of the Vaiṣṇavas, the paṇḍitas superciliously waved their hands in a gesture of blessing and took their seats.
- Devīdāsa Vidyāratna had already prepared these young brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas for a debate.

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- Seeing Lāhirī Mahāśaya, the paṇḍitas grudgingly offered him respects since he was their senior.
- In turn, Lāhirī Mahāśaya, being conversant with the scriptural conclusions, immediately reciprocated their offering of respect.
- Amongst the paṇḍitas, Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi was very expert in argument.
- He had a record of defeating many paṇḍitas in Kāśi, Mithilā, and many other places.
- A person of diminutive stature with a shiny dark complexion and a grave demeanour, his eyes were a pair of incandescent spots.
- He initiated the debate in the assembly, beginning, “We have come today to have darśana of Vaiṣṇavas.

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- We do not subscribe to all your etiquette and activities, but we definitely appreciate your sincere devotion.
- The Supreme Lord has said in the Bhagavad-gītā, 9.30:

*api cet su-durācāro
bhajate mām ananya-bhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ
samyag-vyavasīto hi saḥ*

- “Even if one commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated in his determination.’
- “This quotation from the Bhagavad-gītā is our attestation. On the strength of this verse, we have come to meet sādhus.

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- However, there is also a further purpose to our visit.
- We wish to challenge your malpractice of keeping amicable relations and association with yavanas in the name of bhakti.
- I request the best debater amongst you to come forward.”
- The Vaiṣṇavas became a little saddened upon hearing Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi’s reproach, Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī replying, “We are fools.
- What do we know about debating?
- Our norms and etiquette simply emulate the example set by our mahājanas, who are the previous ācāryas and sādhus of devotional authority.

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- We will silently hear your instructions from the scriptures.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi replied, “We must say that such friendly dealings with yavanas are highly irregular!
- As a segment of Hindu society, if your personal conduct and teachings are against the injunctions of śāstra, such behaviour will surely act to destroy civilised mankind.
- How can you justify your whimsical behaviour with the yavanas by claiming to be following the previous mahājanas, ācāryas, and sādhus?
- Furthermore, who should be designated as a mahājana?

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- Designating just anybody as a mahājana and then citing the scriptural injunction: ...mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ...
- ‘One should follow in the footsteps of mahājanas,’ does not solve the raging problems of the world.”
- Upon hearing this provocative statement, the Vaiṣṇavas courteously left the assembly place and gathered in another cottage nearby to consult amongst themselves.
- They decided that since the paṇḍitas had blasphemed their mahājanas, if at all possible the paṇḍitas should certainly be refuted.
- Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī was not keen to represent their group and, though Ananta dāsa Paṇḍita was an expert in the nyāya-śāstra and the philosophy of logic, they chose Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī to debate on their behalf.

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- The Vaiṣṇavas had gathered that Devīdāsa Vidyāratna was the architect of today’s dilemma.
- His father, Lāhirī Mahāśaya, spoke out unhesitatingly, “Devīdāsa is a very arrogant boy.
- He was definitely disturbed by our amiable dealings with the Kāzī the other day, and so he must have incited these brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas to come here today.”
- Bending down to touch Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī’s feet, Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī said, “I carry the orders of the Vaiṣṇavas as a crown upon my head.
- I believe that all my previous education and scriptural research will now turn out to be of value.”
- The drizzle having let up, the scattered clouds allowed little patches of blue to peep through.

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- A large simple carpet was laid out to cover the major portion of the Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī Maṇḍapa courtyard.
- The brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas sat upon one side of the carpet, the Vaiṣṇavas facing them upon the other.
- The learned Vaiṣṇavas from Godruma and nearby surrounding areas were invited to attend the debate and sat in the periphery, surrounding the two groups of contestants.
- Many eager brāhmaṇa students had also gathered, so the congregation soon swelled to a fair size—an estimated one hundred brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas and students on one side and about two hundred Vaiṣṇavas on the opposite side.
- Having taken permission and blessings from the Vaiṣṇavas, Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī sat at their head, a picture of calm composure.

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- Suddenly, everyone witnessed a wonderful omen causing the Vaiṣṇavas to jubilantly chant harināma:
- All at once, a confetti of flower petals had rained down upon Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī from above.
- Amongst themselves the Vaiṣṇavas concluded, “This is the prasāda, mercy, of Śrī Caitanya.”
- Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi, who was sitting across from them, puckered his nose in obvious disdain and said, “You are mistaken, for it is not the flowers, but the resulting fruits that matter.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī began abruptly without further pomp or frills, he said, “It seems that in Navadvīpa I can at last find an assembly similar to those I’ve seen in Vārāṇasī, which fact gives me great pleasure.

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- Actually, I am a Bengali, yet most of my life, I've spent in Vārāṇasī and other places, studying and giving talks.
- Therefore, my proficiency in Bengali has lessened considerably, so I desire that today's discussion be conducted in Sanskrit.”
- Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi had diligently and sincerely laboured to study the scriptures, but, other than learning by rote, he was not fully conversant with Sanskrit, and hence not confident to debate in the language.
- He felt shaky upon hearing Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī's proposal and blurted out, “The fact is that we are holding this assembly in Bengal, so speaking in Bengali is more appropriate.
- Besides, I am not fluent in Sanskrit like the paṇḍitas from the northwest.”

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- Everyone understood from Cūḍāmaṇi's expression that he was becoming apprehensive of debating with Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, so they requested Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī to converse in Bengali, to which he readily agreed.
- Cūḍāmaṇi began the debate with a volley of questions, “Is jāti, birth-group, not a nitya, permanent, distinction for the human being?”
- Are Hindus and Muslims not of different jāti, birth-group? Is not a Hindu degraded by associating with a Muslim?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī replied, “Yes, the nyāya-śāstra states that jāti is nitya.
- However, the term jāti that we find in the nyāya-śāstra refers not only to race and caste, but also to species.

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- The term nitya-jāti-bheda, permanent distinction between birth-groups, that we find mentioned in the nyāya-śāstra, does not intend to indicate distinctions between the various races of human beings born in the different countries of the world.
- Rather, when using the term nitya-jāti-bheda, the intention of the nyāya-śāstra is to point out the invariable distinction in jāti that exists between the various species of living entities.
- For example, there are permanent distinctions between the goat species, the cow species, and the human species.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “I agree with your analysis, but is there not a distinction in jāti—this time meaning caste—between Hindus and Muslims?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Yes, there is some dissimilarity in both these jātis, but they are neither permanent, nor eternal.

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- The human species is one. The differences lie in language, country, attire, complexion, caste, and so on—and based on these men have created imaginary permanent distinctions, which they wrongly designate as jāti distinctions.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Are there no distinctions at all, even on the basis of birth, between a Hindu and a Muslim?”
- Or are the differences simply limited to the areas of attire, language, and so on?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “The jīva is born into high or low caste as a result of his karma, the activities of his previous lives.
- Depending on caste, humans have specific duties.
- There are four castes: brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and śūdras; others are antyajās, low-born outcastes.”

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- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Are the yavanas, Muslims, outcastes?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Yes, according to the scriptural decrees they are antyajās, outcastes; they do not qualify for the Vedic castes.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “If this be true, how then can a yavana ever become a Vaiṣṇava? And should advanced Aryan Vaiṣṇava society socialize with yavanas?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “A human being who has developed unalloyed devotion to the Supreme Lord is a Vaiṣṇava and every human being is eligible to become a Vaiṣṇava.
- On account of their low birth, yavanas have no right to perform the duties prescribed for the four varṇas in the varṇāśrama system, but they have full eligibility to participate in bhakti.

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- “As long as one has not meticulously analysed and understood the subtle distinctions between karma-kāṇḍa, jñāna-kāṇḍa, and bhakti-kāṇḍa—known as the three upāsanā-kāṇḍas—it is impossible to conclude that one has attained proper comprehension of the scriptures.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “So be it. Karma—the prescribed duties of varṇāśrama—cleanses the consciousness.
- When one’s consciousness is purified, one becomes eligible to gather jñāna, knowledge.
- From jñāna, there spring two varieties of knowledgeable persons, known as jñānīs: nirbheda-brahman-vādī, the followers of monism;
- and the saviśeṣa-vādī, those who worship the personal form of Bhagavān—the Vaiṣṇavas.

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- Therefore, without perfecting the stage of varṇāśrama-karma a person cannot become a Vaiṣṇava.
- Muslims are not eligible to execute varṇāśrama-karma, so how can they ascend to bhakti?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Persons outside the varṇāśrama system, the antyajās are also eligible to embrace the path of bhakti.
- All scriptures have supported this point. The Bhagavad-gītā 9.32 states:

*mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya
ye ‘pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās
te ‘pi yānti parām gatim*

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- “O son of Pārtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaiśyas, (merchants) and śūdras (menial labourers) and of sinful families—can attain the supreme destination.’
- “Here bhakti is indicated by the word āśritya, taking shelter. This is confirmed in the Skanda Purāṇa, Kāśī-khaṇḍa 21.63, which is quoted in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 10.106:

*brāhmaṇaḥ kṣatriyo vaiśyaḥ
śūdro vā yadi vetaraḥ
viṣṇu-bhakti-samāyukto
jñeyaḥ sarvottamaś ca saḥ*

- “Whether one is a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra, or an outcaste, if he has taken shelter of viṣṇu-bhakti, he is considered to be superior to all.’

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- “Further, we find in the Nārādīya-purāṇa, which is quoted in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 10.87:

*śvapaco ‘pi mahīpāla
viṣṇu-bhaktō dvijādhikāḥ
viṣṇu bhakti-vihīno yo
yatiś ca śvapacādhikāḥ*

- ““O king, if a caṇḍāla, dogeater, embraces the path of pure devotion to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Viṣṇu, he is superior to a brāhmaṇa.
- On the other hand, if a sannyāsī is not a devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu, then he is more degraded than a caṇḍāla.’
- Cūdāmaṇi, “Granted, there are numerous scriptural proofs—but it is imperative to draw conclusions.

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- What is the method for removing the blemish of a birth in a base caste? Can this birth-slur be abrogated in any way other than with death and thus rebirth?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “The misfortune of a low birth results from prārabdha-karma, sinful reactions, from the activities of previous births.
- Such reactions are eliminated by the chanting of harināma. The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.16.44 declares:

*yan-nāma sakṛc chravaṇāt
pukkaśo ‘pi vimucyate saṁsārāt*

- “Merely by hearing harināma only once, even caṇḍālas, men of the lowest class, are freed from all material contamination.’

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- “Further, in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.2.46:

*nātaḥ param karma-nibandha-kṛntanam
mumukṣatām tīrtha-padānukīrtanāt
na yat punaḥ karmasu sajjate mano
rajas-tamobhyām kalilam tato ‘nyathā*

- “Therefore, one who desires freedom from material bondage should adopt the process of chanting and glorifying the name, fame, form, and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, at whose feet all the holy places stand.
- One cannot derive the proper benefit from other methods, such as pious atonement, speculative knowledge and meditation in mystic yoga,
- because even after following such methods one takes to fruitive activities again,

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- unable to control his mind, which is contaminated by the base qualities of nature, namely passion and ignorance.’
- “Furthermore, in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 3.33.7:

*aho bata śvapaco ‘to garīyān
yaj-jihvāgre vartate nāma tubhyam
tepus tapas te juhuvuḥ sasnur āryā
brahmānūcur nāma gṛṇanti ye te*

- “Oh, how glorious are they whose tongues are chanting harināma!
- Even if born in the families of dogeaters, such persons are worshipable.
- Persons who chant harināma must have executed all kinds of austerities and fire sacrifices and achieved all the good manners of the Aryans.

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- To be chanting harināma they must have bathed at the holy places of pilgrimage, studied the Vedas, and fulfilled everything required.’
- Cūdāmaṇi, “In that case, why cannot a caṇḍāla who is chanting harināma perform yajña, fire sacrifice?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “For a person to be eligible to perform yajña, he must take birth as a brāhmaṇa.
- A brāhmaṇa must first receive the gāyatrī-mantra and brahminical thread, which is sāvitra initiation, before he is allowed to perform the different Vedic rituals.
- Similarly, a caṇḍāla, although purified by chanting harināma must first be born into a brāhmaṇa family before he is eligible to conduct yajña and the other Vedic rituals, which are readily available to him by such a birth.

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- However, the former caṇḍāla—purified by chanting harināma—can perform all the aṅgas, limbs, of bhakti, which are infinitely greater than yajñas.”
- Cudamani, “This is a very strange siddhānta, conclusion.
- One who is denied exercising an elementary right ends up having claim to a much superior position.
- What simple proofs can you put forward?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Human activities can be categorized under two headings: vyāvahārika, mundane and social; and pāramārthika, spiritual.
- There are instances where a person is spiritually advanced, but is not allowed to perform certain mundane, vyāvahārika activities.

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- For example, a person is born as a Muslim, but acquires the qualities the sattva-guṇa like a pure brāhmaṇa;
- in fact, spiritually, he is a brāhmaṇa, yet he is barred from the vyāvahārika act of marrying a brāhmaṇa bride.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Why is he not eligible? What will be his offence if he does?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “If one acts against social human norms, one commits a social impropriety.
- Those who are proud of knowing the social etiquette will never acquiesce to such impropriety.
- Therefore, in spite of pāramārthika eligibility, one should not go against the principles of general society.”

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- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Kindly reiterate the necessary qualifications for performing karma and for performing bhakti.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Vyāvahārika qualifications such as a privileged birth and one’s nature prepare one for performing tat-tat-karma-yogya-svabhāva-janma, activities suitable to one’s social station, mentality, and birth.
- Faith, devotion, and activities according to the ultimate scriptural conclusions—bhakti-tattvika-śraddhā—bestow the eligibility to execute bhakti.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Please do not try to confuse me with the theological jargon of the Vedānta, but explain to me in prosaic terms what is meant by tat-tat-karma-yogya-svabhāva-janma?”

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Śama, peacefulness through control of the senses; dama, control of the mind; tapaḥ, austerity; śauca, purity; santosa, satisfaction; kṣamā, forgiveness; saralatā, simplicity, straight-forwardness; īśa-bhakti, devotion to Bhagavān; dayā, mercy and compassion; and satya, truthfulness, are some qualifications which constitute the brahminical nature.
- “Śaurya, heroism; bala, physical power; tejā, physical prowess; dhṛti, resolute determination; titikṣā, tolerance; udārata, generosity; udyama, perseverance, enthusiasm; dhīratā, gravity, steadfastness in leadership; brahmaṇyatā, devotion to the brāhmaṇas; and aiśvarya, opulence, are hallmarks of the kṣatriya nature.
- “Āstikya, theistic religiosity; dāna, charity; niṣṭha, faithful dedication; adāmbhikatā, humility; artha-tṛṣṇā, eagerness for wealth, are the nature of a vaiśya.

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- “Dvija-go-deva-sevā, serving the brāhmaṇas, the cow, the devas; and yathā-lābha-santoṣa, satisfaction with whatever is obtained, are the qualifications of a śūdra.
- “Āśaucam, unclean habits; mithyā, dishonesty; caurya, stealing; nāstikatā, atheism; vṛtha kalaha, quarrelling; kāma, lust; krodha, anger; and indriya-trṣṇā, hankering to gratifying the senses, are the activities and characteristics of the antyajās, outcastes.
- “The śāstras recommend that a person’s varṇa is ascertained by his guṇa, nature, and karma, activities, not solely by the assessment of his janma, birth, though recently this has become the exclusive practice.
- A person’s guṇa determines his psychology and preferences, and ultimately his expertise in a particular kind of work.

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- Those svabhāva, individual natures, which I have just now enumerated, prompt the corresponding tat-tat-karma-yogya-svabhāva.
- “Sometimes janma is the dominant factor in the development of a particular guṇa, and sometimes association after janma becomes the dominant factor.
- Association, of course, begins at janma from which time one’s guṇa is moulded, thus indicating that janma is certainly a factor.
- However, janma cannot be deemed the only factor when considering the eligibility for a particular karma. Such an idea would be a great mistake for there are surely a variety of other reasons and causes affecting one’s guṇa and resultant eligibility.

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- Therefore, the śāstras point out that eligibility for a particular karma must be ascertained ultimately on the basis of one's guṇa.”
- Cūdāmaṇi, “What is tattvika-śraddhā?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Simple, guileless faith in the Supreme Lord—and consequently sincere bhakti rendered to Him—is known as tāttivika-śraddhā.
- Ātāttvika-śraddhā, unreal false faith, in the Lord is developed in an impious person's heart when he performs only the external aspects and rituals of worship and—out of pride and greed—uses this mask of religiosity to pursue his cherished material goals.
- This kind of faith is misaligned with the directions of scripture and is therefore designated atāttvika-śraddhā.

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- Many mahājanas have proclaimed that tattvika-śraddhā means sincere faith in the śāstras.
- A sincere candidate is given eligibility to perform bhakti by this tattvika-śraddhā.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Some persons have developed faith in the śāstras, but lack a noble nature—are they fit candidates for bhakti?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “One’s type by nature, svabhāva, is certainly a deciding factor in deciding the eligibility to carry out a particular karma, but svabhāva is definitely not applicable to the eligibility to perform bhakti, which is solely dependent upon tattvika-śraddhā. Kindly, deliberate upon the following verses from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.20.27-30, 32,33:

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*jāta-śraddho mat-kathāsu
nirviṇṇaḥ sarva-karmasu
veda duḥkhātmakān kāmān
parityāge 'py anīśvaraḥ*

*tato bhajeta mām prītaḥ
śraddhālur dṛḍha-niścayaḥ
juṣamāṇaś ca tān kāmān
duḥkhodarkāmś ca garhayan*

- “Having awakened faith in the narrations of My glories by good association, and being disgusted with all material activities, knowing that all sense gratification leads to misery, but still being unable to renounce all sense enjoyment, My devotee should remain happy and continue to hear, chant, and worship Me with great faith and conviction.

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- Even though My devotee is sometimes engaged in sense enjoyment, he knows that all sense gratification leads to a miserable result, and he sincerely repents such activities.’

*proktena bhakti-yogena
bhajato māsakṛṇ muneh
kā mā hṛdayyā naśyanti
sarve mayi hṛdi sthite*

- “When an intelligent person engages constantly in worshiping Me through loving devotional service as described by Me, his heart quickly becomes firmly situated in Me.
- Thus, all material desires within the heart are destroyed.’

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*bhidyate hr̥daya-granthiś
chidyante sarva-saṁśayāḥ
kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi
mayi dṛṣṭe 'khilātmani*

- “The knot in the heart is pierced, all misgivings are cut to pieces and the chain of fruitive actions is terminated when I am seen as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.’

*yat karmabhir yat tapasā jñāna-vairāgyataś ca yat
yogena dāna-dharmeṇa śreyobhir itarair api*

*sarvaṁ mad-bhakti-yogena mad-bhaktō labhate 'ñjasā
svargāpavargaṁ mad-dhāma kathañcid yadi vāñchati*

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- “Everything that can be achieved by fruitive activities, penance, knowledge, detachment, mystic yoga, charity, religious duties and all other means of perfecting life is easily achieved by My devotee through loving service unto Me.
- My devotees are free from all ambition, but if, somehow or other, My devotee desires promotion to heaven, liberation, or residence in My abode, he easily achieves such benedictions.’
- “Arising from śraddhā, this is the progressive development of bhakti-yoga.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “What if I do not accept the authority of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “We have simply presented the conclusion of all the śāstras.

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- Śāstra is one. Even if you do not accept the Bhāgavatam, then the other scriptures will harass you with the same conclusion. We do not need to refer to many śāstras, simply consider what the Gītā, a universally honoured text, has to say.
- In fact, even the verse quoted by you at the onset of this discussion contains the same valuable teachings—as we find in Bhagavad-gītā, 9.30-32:

*api cet su-durācāro
bhajate mām ananya-bhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ
samyaḥ vyavasīto hi saḥ*

- “Even if a person commits the most abominable action, if he is engaged in devotional service, he is to be considered saintly because he is properly situated in his determination.’

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*kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā śaśvac-chāntim nigacchati
kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati*

- “He quickly becomes righteous and attains lasting peace. O son of Kunti, declare it boldly that My devotee never perishes.’

*mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye ’pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te ’pi yānti parām gatim*

- “O son of Pṛthā, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth—women, vaiśyas (merchants) and śūdras (workers)—can attain the supreme destination.’
- “The purport of this is that a devotee who engages in bhakti, hearing topics of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, chanting harināma, singing His glories with ananya-bhāk, single-mindedness,

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- even if he is addicted to many abominable, illicit activities, which go against the scriptural injunctions, must be considered a sādhu because he is on the righteous path being situated in devotional service.
- “Three processes are mentioned in the scriptures: karma-kāṇḍa, fruitive activities within the varṇāśrama system; jñāna-kāṇḍa, empirical philosophy and renunciation;
- and bhakti-kāṇḍa, devotional service comprising of hearing narrations about the Supreme Lord in saintly association and chanting harināma with sincere faith.
- Sometimes, these three methods can be channelled into one application known as yoga, union with the Supreme, at which time they generally become termed as either karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, or bhakti-yoga, depending on the stress and slant of the practice.

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- When any one of these forms of yoga is practiced by itself, their acolytes are called karma-yogis, jñāna-yogis, and bhakti-yogis.
- A bhakti-yogi is the best of the three, because bhakti-yoga is able to reward the yogi with unlimited benedictions by itself.
- You can understand this point from the following verse in the Gītā, 6.47, which is cited at the conclusion of the first of the three six-chapter sections of the Gīta:

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ
mad-gatenāntarātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām
sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

- “And of all yogis, the one with great faith, who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me—he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.’

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- “It is imperative to understand the meaning in Bhagavad-gītā 9.31:

...ksipram bhavati dharmatma...

- ““One who is sincerely engaged in devotional service will have the worst of his character flaws quickly rectified.’
- “Dharma meekly follows bhakti everywhere.
- The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the source of dharma, and He allows Himself to be easily conquered by bhakti.
- Māyā, who enslaves the jīva, is immediately dispelled when the Supreme Lord is invited to occupy the throne in the heart of the jīva.
- No other method of sādhana is needed or is as effective. As soon as the spiritual aspirant becomes a bhakta, dharmic fervour suffuses his heart and steadily manifests all virtues.

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- When kāma, lust for sense enjoyment, is uprooted, then peace and tranquillity enter the heart.
- Therefore, the Lord boldly declares:

...na me bhaktaḥ praṇaśyati...

- “My devotee will never be vanquished.”
- “A karmi and a jñānī are vulnerable—it is possible they may fall into bad association while practising their individual disciplines, but the Lord’s devotees are not attracted to associate with non-devotees in the first place.
- This is solely because of the all-powerful direct association with the Supreme Lord; therefore, the devotee can never be destroyed.

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- Whether a devotee is born in a lowly family of sinners, or in the noble brāhmaṇa caste, the supreme destination is within his grasp.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “It appears to me that the rites and rituals prescribed by the scriptures to the jīva on the basis of his birth are more satisfactory. I was born in a brāhmaṇa family.
- By regular performance of my sandhyā, vandana, and so on, I am sure to acquire jñāna and finally attain mukti.
- This is a tangible truth to me, but I cannot comprehend how śraddhā appears.
- I have come across instructions in the Gītā and Bhāgavatam about how bhakti is begotten from śraddhā.

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- Kindly explain to me how the jīva may endeavour to possess that śraddhā.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Śraddhā is an integral part of the eternal, inherent nature of the jīva. The inclination of the jīva towards a particular karma in the varṇāśrama social system is a product of his naimittika-svabhāva, temporary, assumed, material nature. This is substantiated in the scriptures, for example, the Chāndogya Upaniṣad 7.19.1:

yadā vai śraddadhāti atha manute,

nāśraddadhan manute,

śraddadhad eva manute,

śraddhātveva vijijñāsitavyeti śraddhām bhagavo vijijñāsa iti

- “Sanat-kumāra said, “When a person develops śraddhā, respect for that which is to be known, he makes the effort to comprehend that object.

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- Only those with śraddhā can know that object, others without śraddhā cannot.
- Therefore, O Nārada! First, there must be śraddhā, so it is essential to learn what is the true nature of śraddhā.”
- Nārada replied, “My dear Lord, I earnestly desire to inform myself fully about śraddhā.’
- “Some commentators have explained that śraddhā means faith in the words of the Vedas and the śrī-guru.
- This explanation is acceptable, but not clear. In our sampradāya, the word śraddhā carries the following definition, Āmnāya-sūtra, 57:

śraddhā tv anyopāya-varjaṁ bhakty-unmukhī citta-vṛtti-viśeṣaḥ

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- “Śraddhā is that propensity in man which strives for bhakti, rejecting the attainment of bhakti by the vehicles of karma, jñāna, mystic yoga, and so on.’
- “By constantly hearing about the Supreme Lord in saintly association, one’s consciousness reaches a certain elevation.
- When one realizes that karma, jñāna, aṣṭāṅga yoga, etc., cannot offer the jīva the eternal benediction of the Absolute Truth, and that there is no other option for the jīva besides taking shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Hari with single-minded bhakti, only then can it be said that one has developed śraddhā and faith in the words of the śāstra and guru.
- “Śraddhā is further outlined in the following words of Āmnāya-sūtra, 58:

...sā ca śaraṇāpatti-lakṣaṇā...

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- “The different indications of surrender are the external symptoms of śraddhā.’
- “Śaranāgati, surrender, is described as follows in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 11.676:

*ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam
rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso goptṛtve varaṇam tathā
ātma-nikṣepa-kārpaṇye ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ*

- “The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of things favourable to the execution of devotional service; the rejection of unfavourable things; the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will give protection;
- the acceptance of the Lord as one’s guardian and master; full self-surrender; and humility.’

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- “Firstly, the devotee must take a saṅkalpa, solemn vow, to perform works which are ānukūlyasya saṅkalpa, favourable to unalloyed bhakti.
- Secondly, the devotee must take solemn vow in the matter of prātikūlyasya varjanam, rejecting anything that is unfavourable to unalloyed bhakti.
- Thirdly, He must be convinced that the Supreme Lord alone is rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso, his protector and maintainer, and that nothing positive can come from endeavouring for karma, jñāna, and yoga.
- Thus the devotee expresses viśvāsa, trust, in the Lord.
- Fourthly, the bhakta must develop a sense of gopṭṛtve varaṇam, complete dependence on the Lord,

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- thinking that his own efforts alone will never make him capable of succeeding in anything, not even in physically maintaining himself.
- Therefore, since the Lord is taking care of him, the bhakta will serve the Lord appropriately and as well as he can.
- This is known as nirbharatā, dependence.
- Fifthly, the bhakta must ātma-nikṣepa, offer himself wholesale to the Lord, knowing that he is ignorant of his own spiritual identity, that he is the Lord's property, and that his actions are the implementations of the desires of the Lord.
- This surrender of the self is also known as ātmā-nivedana. Sixthly and finally, the bhakta must develop the sense of kārpaṇye, humility, which makes him feel poverty-stricken, meek, and lowly.

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- This mood of humility is understood as kārpaṇya or dainya.
- “Thus the state of consciousness that is evoked when the heart becomes infused with determination, subservience, trust, dependence, self-surrender, and humility is designated as śraddhā.
- Whosoever attains this śraddhā becomes a fit candidate to execute bhakti and for the sādḥaka, devotional aspirant, this śraddhā is the initial step towards the perfection displayed by the eternally liberated pure jīva souls.
- Since śraddhā is the fundamental nuance of the jīva’s nitya-svabhāva, innate eternal nature, it is therefore also his actual nitya-dharma.
- All other variations of the dharma of the jīva are naimittika.”

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- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Thank you, I have grasped your explanation.
- However, still you have omitted the subject of what evokes śraddhā.
- If sat-karma, pious deeds, are the seeds that later sprout out as śraddhā, then my argument remains uncontested; because, if sat-karma and prescribed duties according to one’s varṇa are not properly executed within the varṇāśrama system, then śraddhā cannot manifest itself.
- Thus, since the yavanas, Muslims, do not have the possibility to perform sat-karma, how can they become suitable candidates for practising bhakti?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Yes! Śraddhā is born of sukṛti, righteous activities.

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- This quote, available in the Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa, 4.33, provides the required proof:

*bhaktis tu bhagavad bhakta saṅgena parijāyate
sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate puṁbhiḥ sukṛtaiḥ pūrva sañcitaiḥ*

- “Devotional sentiments are evoked by the purifying association of advanced devotees.
- The jīva is able to come into close contact with a śuddha-bhakta, pure devotee, only by accruing sufficient sukṛti from many previous births.’
- “However, sukṛti is of two kinds: nitya and naimittika.
- Sukṛti which leads to sat-saṅga and bhakti is nitya-sukṛti, and sukṛti which results in material enjoyment and impersonal liberation is naimittika-sukṛti, otherwise known as anitya-sukṛti.

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- Sukṛti is differentiated on the basis of results—if the result is eternal, sukṛti is the eternal nitya-sukṛti; and if the result is evanescent, sukṛti is the temporal naimittika-sukṛti.
- Bhukti, sense gratification, is fleeting; hence, that which produces bhukti is naimittika-sukṛti.
- “The jīva is in himself śuddha, pure; nitya, eternal; and sanātana, primeval and ever dynamic.
- The cause of the enslavement of the jīva is his intimate intercourse with māyā, matter.
- Mukti, defined as the complete nullification of this enslavement, is dependent upon cause and effect, and, being achieved in a moment, is therefore a transitory and not an eternal action.

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- When mukti is attained, all striving for mukti ceases immediately and is then no longer a topic of discussion.
- Nevertheless, because of a lack of knowledge in this subject, many people falsely believe that mukti is eternal.
- In reality, however, mukti is actually only the removal of the material cause of bondage; therefore, it is primarily naimittika.
- Therefore, that process of so-called bhakti which claims to generate mukti and then ceases to exist is at best naimittika karma.
- “On the other hand, that bhakti, which is present before the stage of mukti is attained, while mukti is attained, and which remains forever after mukti has been attained,

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- is quite different from the bhakti described above—it is an absolute eternal principle and is thus the nitya-dharma of the jīva.
- Attachment to the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, is endless and eternal.
- Hence, in a spiritual sense, no aṅga, limb, of this process of surrender can be termed naimittika. What is called mukti is simply a by-product of this bhakti.
- I offer this quotation from the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.2.12:

*parīkṣya lokān karma-citān brāhmaṇo
nirvedam-āyān nāsty akṛtaḥ kṛtena
tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham*

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- “A brāhmaṇa must realize the temporary nature of the results of karma, and that the cherished eternal Absolute Truth, which lies beyond the principle of karma, is unattainable through karma.
- Hence, he must denounce karma.
- In order to obtain the cherished objective, he must attach himself to the science of bhakti.
- In which case, he must humbly approach, with firewood for a sacrifice in hand, a bona fide spiritual master who is well versed in the conclusions of the Vedas and realized in the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and surrender there at his feet with mind, body and words.’
- “Karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, aṣṭanga-yoga, etc., are all in the category of naimittika-sukṛti.

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- Whereas, bhakta-saṅga, associating with saintly persons, and bhakti-kriyā-saṅga, contact with devotional acts, are nitya-sukṛti.
- Only one who has accrued nitya-sukṛti over many lifetimes will attain śraddhā.
- Naimittika-sukṛti offers many other temporary results, but cannot evoke śraddhā, leading to eternal unalloyed bhakti.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Please explain, bhakta-saṅga and bhakti-kriyā-saṅga.
- From what type of sukṛti do these activities stem?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “To discuss and hear Kṛṣṇa conscious topics from pure devotees and to serve them is known as sat-saṅga, also known as bhakta-saṅga.

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- The pure devotees of the Lord perform the activities of bhakti such as the congregational chanting of harināma in towns and villages.
- A person who participates in these spiritual activities or any other similar activities, such as cleansing the Lord's temple, offering a lamp to the tulasī plant, observing the Hari-vāsara, different spiritual festivals such as Ekādaśī and Janmāṣṭamī, connected to the Supreme Lord, and so on, is performing bhakti-kriyā-saṅga.
- “If somehow or other these activities are not executed with pure śraddhā, but accidentally or even inattentively and hastily, still they result in sukṛti that fosters bhakti to the Supreme Lord.

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- When this sukṛti accumulates into a driving force over many lifetimes, it brings one to the stage of acquiring śraddhā for sādhu-saṅga and ananyā-bhakti, pure unalloyed bhakti.
- All the levels of purity within bhakti add to the development of śraddhā; furthermore, only these bhakti-kriyā, devotional activities, have the inherent potency to generate the required sukṛti.
- If they are executed with śraddhā, the results are marvellous, but even when done disinterestedly or indifferently, they still increase piety in the form of nitya-sukṛti, as pointed out in the Mahābhārata, Prabhāsa-kaṇḍha, which is quoted in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 11.451:

*madhura-madhuram-etan maṅgalaṁ maṅgalānām
sakala-nigama-vallī-sat-phalaṁ cit-svarūpaṁ
sakṛd api parigītaṁ śraddhayā helayā vā
bhṛgu-vara nara-mātraṁ tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma*

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- “The chanting of harināma is the most beneficial of all spiritual and pious activities.
- It is more relishable than the sweetest honey.
- It is the transcendental fruit of all the śruti scriptures, the Vedas.
- O best of the Bhārgavas! If any person chants harināma offenselessly even once, be it with śraddhā, or with derisive indifference, harināma immediately offers him liberation.’
- “Thus, all sukṛti which enhances one’s bhakti to the Lord is nitya-sukṛti.
- This form of sukṛti leads to sādhu-saṅga and ananya-bhakti when patiently seasoned.

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- Through performance of naimittika-duṣkṛti, temporary impious deeds, the wrongdoer may be born in a Muslim family, whereas a person performing nitya-sukṛti develops śraddhā leading to ananya-bhakti.
- Why should this come as a surprise?”
- Cūdāmaṇi, “If bhakti-poṣaka-sukṛti, sukṛti that nourishes devotion, really exists it can only be the result of some other type of sukṛti.
- The yavanas do not possess this other type of sukṛti, so bhakti-poṣaka-sukṛti is beyond their reach.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “One should not think in these terms. Nitya-sukṛti and naimittika-sukṛti are independent of each other, not connected.

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- In the Purāṇas, we find the story of the sinful hunter who unknowingly, by force of circumstance, fasted and stayed up the night of śiva-rātrī, thus performing a śiva-vrata.
- He attained bhakti to Śrī Hari as a result of this nitya-sukṛti, because Lord Śiva is a very elevated Vaiṣṇava.
- In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 12.13.16, it is stated:

vaiṣṇavānām yathā śambhuḥ

- “Amongst all Vaiṣṇavas, Lord Śiva is the best.’
- “Thus, even accidentally observing a vow in his honour enables one to attain hari-bhakti.
- This is substantiated by all the scriptures.”

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- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Are you claiming that nitya-sukṛti can happen by chance, under force of circumstance?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Everything may be said to occur by force of circumstance; this is true even on the path of karma.
- When the jīva was first entangled in the cycle of karma, it happened suddenly, by sheer force of circumstances, did it not?
- Although the mimāṃsā philosophers have described karma as being anādi, materially beginningless, factually karma has a cause.
- The jīva’s bhagavad-vimukhatā, indifference, rejection, and turning away from the Lord, is the root cause of his crucifixion upon the wheel of karma.
- Similarly, nitya-sukṛti may appear to have occurred by chance.

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- “In the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 4.7, it is stated:

*samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno
‘nīśayā śocati muhyamānaḥ
juṣṭam yadā paśyaty anyam
īśamasya mahimānam iti vīta-śokaḥ*

- “Although the two birds are in the same tree, the eating bird (the jīva), is filled with anxiety and moroseness, and fully engrossed in enjoying the fruits of the tree.
- Nevertheless, if somehow or other, he turns his face to his friend, who is the Lord (the Supersoul), and knows His glories (by the mercy of the guru) then at once, the suffering bird is freed from all anxiety.’

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- “The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 10.51.53, states:

*bhavāpavargo bhramato yadā bhavej
janasya tarhy acyuta sat-samāgamah
sat-saṅgamo yarhi tadaiva sad-gatau
parāvareṣe tvayi jāyate ratiḥ*

- “O Acyuta! The jīva is eternally enthralled in the continuous cycle of birth and death.
- By the mercy of the Lord, when the time for release from this vicious circle arrives, he first attains the association of saintly persons.
- Right from that moment, he develops attachment to Your lotus feet.
- You are the Lord of both the material and the spiritual worlds and the shelter of the saintly souls.’

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- “Again from the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 3.25.25:

*satām prasāṅgān mama vīrya-samvido
bhavanti hṛt-karṇa-rasāyaṇāḥ-kathāḥ
taj-joṣaṇād āśv apavarga-vartmani
śraddhā ratir bhaktir anukramiṣyati*

- “In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the potent pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart.
- By cultivating such knowledge, one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed.
- Then real devotion and devotional service begin.”

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- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Then, according to your understanding, there is no distinction between one practising Vedic culture, an ārya, and a yavana?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “In general, there are two types of difference between men: pāramārthika, those of a spiritual nature; and vyāvahārika, those of a material nature.
- Between an ārya and a yavana, there are no absolute spiritual differences, only mundane distinctions.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Why must you always come up with lofty Vedic circumlocutions?”
- What may be these mundane vyāvahārika distinctions between the ārya and the yavana?”

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Social intercourse in day-to-day material life is known as vyāvahārika.
- In a materialistic society, the yavana is considered an untouchable.
- This is a mundane distinction and because of his low birth āryas refuse water or food from his hands.”
- Cūdāmaṇi, “If so, then clearly define how there is spiritual parity between an ārya and a yavana?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “The scriptures declare:

bhṛgu-vara nara-mātram tārayet kṛṣṇa-nāma

- “‘O best of the Bhṛgu dynasty, the transcendental name of Kṛṣṇa can liberate any human being.’

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- “This means that all human beings, including the yavanas, are equal in respect to their attaining spiritual goals.
- Those bereft of nitya-sukṛti may be called ‘biped animals,’ because they have no faith in the transcendental name of Kṛṣṇa.
- Thus, although they are born as human beings, they are devoid of humanity, which implies that their inhuman or animalistic nature is predominant. It is written in the Mahābhārata:

*mahāprasāde govinde nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave
svalpa-puṇyavatām rājan viśvāso naiva jāyate*

- “Persons with meagre sukṛti cannot develop faith in mahāprasāda, the spiritual food remnants of the Lord; in the Deity of Śrī Govinda, the Supreme Personality of Godhead; in the transcendental kṛṣṇa-nāma; and in the Vaiṣṇavas.’

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- “Nitya-sukṛti bestows an immense piety that purifies the jīva.
- Naimittika-sukṛti is of meagre piety and cannot evoke śraddhā for spiritual objects.
- Mahā-prasāda, Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His Deity form, harināma, and the pure Vaiṣṇava devotee are the four transcendental manifestations within this material world.”
- At this point, Cūḍāmaṇi said, with a short derisive laugh, “What a speech that was!
- This is pure Vaiṣṇava fanaticism! How can a little rice, dal, vegetables, and so on become cinmaya, transcendental?
- I am convinced that nothing is impossible for you Vaiṣṇavas to believe in.”

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Whatever you may do, please do not attempt to criticize or blaspheme the Vaiṣṇavas.
- This is my humble request. After all, in a debate one must adhere to the topic at hand, not indulge in vaiṣṇava-nindā, blasphemy of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- There is no object in the material world superior to mahā-prasāda because it evokes the spiritual nature of man and dissipates the mundane conditioning.
- Hence, the Śrī Īsopaniṣad, verse 1, declares:

*īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ
yat kiñca jagatyāṁ jagat
tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā
mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam*

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- “Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord (is interwoven into the Lord’s existence and manifests His consciousness).
- One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself (in a mood of yukta-vairāgya) which are set aside as his quota, and one must not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.’
- “Everything in this world is connected with the Supreme Lord through His energies.
- If one develops the vision that everything is related to the spiritual nature, then one does not differentiate between what is spiritual and what is material.
- Moreover, one stops trying to enjoy and exploit the material energy.

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- Those jīvas, whose consciousness is directed inwards, towards spirituality, should accept their daily bodily requirements in this world with the mood that everything is the prasāda of the Lord.
- This is known as mahā-prasāda, great mercy.
- That you cannot relish and appreciate such a wonderful thing as mahā-prasāda is truly a great misfortune.
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Please leave all that aside, let us remain on the subject.
- How are we supposed to behave with the yavanas?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “As long as a person remains a yavana, we are indifferent towards him.

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- However, when the yavana becomes a Vaiṣṇava on the strength of his nitya-sukṛti, then we do not refer to him henceforward as a yavana.
- The scriptures give this advice in the Padma Purāṇa, which is also quoted in Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 10.119:

*śūdraṁ vā bhagavad-bhaktam
niṣādam śvapacam tathā
vikṣate jāti-sāmānyāt
sa yāti narakam dhruvam*

- “A devotee of the Supreme Lord may be born in a śūdra family, the last of the four varṇas, or lower as a niṣāda, an aboriginal hunter, or even in a caṇḍāla, dog-eating family, but anyone who thinks that such a devotee is to be designated according to his birth will certainly be doomed to hell.’

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- “In the Itihāsa-samuccaya, it is stated, as quoted in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 10.127:

*na me priyaś catur-vedi
mad-bhaktah śvapacaḥ priyaḥ
tasmai deyaṁ tato grāhyaṁ
sa ca pūjyo yathā hy aham*

- “If a brāhmaṇa, well-versed in the four Vedas (a caturvedi) is not a devotee, he is not dear to Me, but if a person, though born in a caṇḍāla family, is a devotee then he is very dear to Me.
- Whatever offering that has to be made must be made to him with proper faith.
- His remnants must be accepted by all, knowing him to be worthy of everyone’s worship just as I am.”

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- Cūḍāmaṇi, “I understand. Can a gṛhastha-vaiṣṇava offer the hand of his daughter in marriage to a yavana-vaiṣṇava and can the yavana-vaiṣṇava in turn accept the hand in marriage of the daughter of a gṛhastha-vaiṣṇava?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “For the world of materialistic society a yavana remains a yavana until his death, but in spiritual life when a yavana attains bhakti, he is no longer to be regarded a yavana.
- The ten prescribed duties, saṃskāras, are smarta activities and vivāha, marriage, is one of them.
- Hence, if the gṛhastha-vaiṣṇava is an ārya, belonging to one of the four varṇas, then he should only marry into his own varṇa.

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- Although the varṇāśrama dharma is a part of naimittika-karma, he should follow its principles, in order to lead a proper household life.
- “It is not true that one becomes a Vaiṣṇava simply by discarding the social rules and etiquette of varṇāśrama dharma.
- For a Vaiṣṇava, anything that is favourable towards the path of bhakti becomes his duty.
- Only when a person develops genuine detachment from varṇāśrama dharma by progress in hari-bhajana will he be eligible to disassociate himself from it.
- Then, he must reject the varṇāśrama system and everything associated with it entirely.

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- “If, to a faithful Muslim, his own yavana society proves spiritually detrimental, then he may renounce it without hesitation.
- If two persons are Vaiṣṇavas, one of which has renounced varṇāśrama-dharma and the other has renounced yavana society, ultimately what is the difference?
- Both have rejected the vyavahāra, materialistic norms. In the pursuit of paramārtha, spiritual reality, they are brothers.
- “However, this is not applicable to gṛhastha-vaiṣṇava society. Domestic society may place hindrances in the gṛhastha’s path of bhajana; however, until he gains the full eligibility to reject the norms of varṇāśrama society, he should not do so.

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- Gradually, when he spontaneously develops firm and steady attachment to practices that are beneficial to his spiritual bhajana, then he may forget his dependence on social etiquette. For example, in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.11.32:

*ājñāyaivaṁ guṇān doṣān
mayādiṣṭān api svakān
dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān
mām bhajet sa tu sattamaḥ*

- “The Supreme Lord said, “My devotee perfectly understands that the ordinary religious duties prescribed by Me in various Vedic scriptures possess favorable qualities that purify the performer, and he knows that neglect of such duties constitutes a discrepancy in one’s life.

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- However, having taken complete shelter at My lotus feet, a saintly person ultimately renounces such ordinary religious duties and worships Me alone. He is thus considered the best amongst all living entities.’
- “Further, the Bhagavad-gītā, 18.66, states:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpēbhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

- “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.’
- “Elsewhere, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 4.29.46, states:

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*yadā yasyānugṛhṇāti
bhagavān ātma-bhāvitaḥ
sa jahāti matiṁ loke
vede ca pariniṣṭhitām*

- “When a person is fully engaged in bhakti, he is favoured by the Lord, who bestows His causeless mercy.
- At such a time, the awakened devotee gives up all material activities and ritualistic performances mentioned in the Vedas.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “If a yavana sincerely embraces Vaiṣṇavism, will you sit together with him and eat?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Impartial, detached Vaiṣṇavas can sit with him and honour mahā-prasādam.

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- In the context of ordinary social dealings, gr̥hastha-vaiṣṇavas may not sit together with him, but there is no such objection when it comes to honoring viṣṇu-prasāda.
- In fact, they are duty-bound to sit together.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Then, why are the yavana-vaiṣṇavas prohibited from touching the Deity paraphernalia in a Vaiṣṇava temple Deity room?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “It is offensive to call a Vaiṣṇava ‘yavana,’ only because he is born in a yavana family.
- Every single Vaiṣṇava has the right to serve the Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- If a gr̥hastha-vaiṣṇava, in serving the Deities, acts contrary to the precepts of varṇāśrama dharma, he is found guilty only of transgressing the rules of social etiquette.

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- For the nirapekṣa-vaiṣṇava in the renounced order, Deity worship is not recommended because nirapekṣatā, being free from all external requirements, is recommended.
- The nirapekṣa-vaiṣṇava should serve the Divine Couple, Śrī Rādhā and Her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in mānasi-sevā, internal meditation.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “I see. Now please tell me what you think of the brāhmaṇas?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “There are two types of brāhmaṇas: svabhāva-siddha, by qualification; and jāti-siddha, by birth only.
- The brāhmaṇas by qualification are close to being Vaiṣṇavas and should be respected by all; whereas, a brāhmaṇa by birth is to be given the conventional social respect of mundane society.

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- In this way, the Vaiṣṇavas respect both.
- The scripture, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 7.9.10, comments on this point:

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

- “If a brāhmaṇa has all twelve brahminical qualifications (as they are stated in the books called, Sanat-sujāta) but is not a devotee and is averse to the lotus feet of the Lord, he is certainly lower than a devotee who was born as a dog-eater, but who has now dedicated everything—mind, words, activities, wealth, and life—to the Supreme Lord.

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- Such a devotee is better than such a brāhmaṇa because the devotee can purify his whole family, whereas the so-called brāhmaṇa in his position of false prestige cannot purify even himself.’
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “The lower castes, such as the śūdras, are not allowed to study the Vedas.
- Can a śūdra who has become a Vaiṣṇava scrutinize the Vedas?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “He may come from any varṇa, but if a person is a pure Vaiṣṇava, he automatically becomes a transcendental brāhmaṇa.
- The Vedas are broadly divided into two sections: that section which directs the performance of karma, prescribed duties within varṇāśrama dharma; and that section which exhorts the tattva, the Absolute Truth.

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- Mundane brāhmaṇas have only access to the former section of the Vedas, explaining karma and so on; while, the transcendental brāhmaṇas are fit candidates to study the latter section describing the Absolute Truth.
- Regardless of a pure Vaiṣṇava's background, he is worthy of studying and teaching the essence, the Absolute Truth, from the Vedas.
- This is substantiated in the Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.4.21:
tam eva dhīro vijñāya prajñām kurvīta brāhmaṇaḥ
- “An intelligent, equipoised person who has realized Brahman must endeavour to know the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, and surrender unto Him with loving devotion.’

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- “In the same Upaniṣad, 3.8.10, it is stated:

*yo vā etad akṣaram gārgy aviditvāsmāl lokāt praiti sa kṛpanaḥ
atha ya etad akṣaram gārgi viditvāsmāl lokāt praiti sa brāhmaṇaḥ*

- “O Gārgi! Those who pass away from this mortal world without the knowledge of the infallible Supreme Personality of Godhead are very impious, lowly destitutes, and terrible misers;
- and those who have realized the transcendently situated Supreme Lord, exit from this material world as brāhmaṇas.’
- “Manu offers this comment referring to the mundane brāhmaṇas, in the Manu-smṛti, 2.168:

*yo ‘nadhītya dvijo vedam anyatra kurute śramam
sa jīvann eva śūdratvam āśu gacchati sāvayaḥ*

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- “The twice-born brāhmaṇa, dvija, who after receiving the sacred thread does not immerse himself in the study of the Vedas, but busies himself with less important texts and subject matters will very soon in this lifetime, along with his family, acquire the lowly qualities of a śūdra.’
- “The Vedas have clearly defined the characteristics of a deserving candidate who can delve into the essence of the Vedas. The Śvetāśvataropaniṣad, 6.27, states:

*yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanāḥ*

- “Only unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master are all the imports of Vedic knowledge automatically revealed.’

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- “The word parā-bhakti indicates śuddha-bhakti. I do not wish to delve deeper into this topic, if need be you can research further.
- To put it in a nutshell: Those who have developed śraddhā in the process of ananya-bhakti are suitable candidates to scrutinize the sections of the Vedas propounding the highest tattva, the essence of the Vedas.
- As for the great souls who have attained ananya-bhakti and have thus been crowned with kṛṣṇa-prema, they are qualified as the exemplary propounders of this absolute knowledge, the conclusion of the Vedas.”
- Cūḍāmaṇi, “Have you already concluded that the second section of the Vedas, dealing with the tattva, the Absolute Truth, only supports the teachings of vaiṣṇava-dharma and no other theology?”

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “There is but only one dharma without plurality, designated as nitya-dharma, which is also called vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- The different religious instructions of naimittika-dharma are like the ascending steps of the ladder of vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- The Supreme Lord Himself declares in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.14.3:

*kālena naṣṭā pralaye vāṇīyaṁ veda-samjñitā
mayādau brahmaṇe proktā dharmo yasyām mad-ātmakaḥ*

- “The Supreme Lord said, “O Uddhava! Those instructions that propound the eternal dharma that inspires attachment to Me are compiled in the Vedas.
- By the ravages of time (pralaya) they seem to be lost; I will again instruct Brahmā at the beginning of creation with the same knowledge of the Vedas.’

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- “The Kaṭhopanishad, 1.2.15, states:

*sarve vedā yat padam āmananti
tapāmsi sarvāṇi ca yad vadanti
yad icchanto brahmacaryam caranti
tat te padam saṅgrahaṇa bravāmi
aum ity etat*

- “The Supreme Being, whom the Vedic literature pre-eminently describes as the supreme object of attainment, is Śrī Viṣṇu, about whom, however, I will speak only in brief.
- All austerities have been ordained for performance for the purpose of His pleasure and satisfaction.
- To attain Him the brahmacārīs go to the abode of their guru and, maintaining celibacy, study the Vedas.

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- That Supreme Absolute Truth is manifested by the sound aum.'
- “Furthermore, the Kaṭhopanīṣad, 1.3.9, states:

*vijñāna-sārathir yas tu
manaḥ pragrahavān naraḥ
so'dhvanaḥ param āpnoti
tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam*

- “One who possesses vijñāna, realization of the Lord, as his charioteer, and who thus maintains a steady control of the mind, which is like the reins that control the horses of the bodily senses, crosses this material reality and attains the supreme abode of Śrī Viṣṇu, who is the omnipresent Supersoul known as Vāsudeva.’

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- “There are many further evidences in the Vedas,” concluded Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī.
- At this point in the discussion, the faces of Devīdāsa Vidyāratna and his friends were looking decidedly pinched and dry and the enthusiasm of the brāhmaṇa, Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi, seemed to be flagging.
- It was already five in the afternoon and the unanimous decision of the congregation was to halt the debate.
- The brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas got up from their seats and took leave of the Vaiṣṇavas, unhesitating in their praise of the depth of Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī’s erudition.
- Loudly glorifying harināma, the Vaiṣṇavas dispersed to their individual dwellings.

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Thus ends the sixth chapter of Jaiva-dharma,
entitled: Nitya-dharma: Birth and Caste
Differences