

Jaiiva Dharmma

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Chapter Nine

Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Almost four years have now gone by since Lāhirī Mahāśaya came to Godruma and associating with the Vaiṣṇavas of that sacred place has had a greatly purifying effect upon him.
- Now he is continuously chanting even whilst performing his daily chores. His lean frame is covered by sparse clothes and he has given up using any footwear, even wooden clogs.
- He has overcome the false pride of his high caste to such an extent that whenever he sees a Vaiṣṇava he immediately offers daṇḍavats and with the utmost humility places the dust from the feet of the Vaiṣṇava upon his head.
- If anyone refuses to comply, he remains undeterred, using gentle force to achieve his goal.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- He is always looking for and eating eagerly the prasādam remnants of the pure Vaiṣṇavas.
- From time to time, his sons visit him with the idea of bringing him back home, but in view of his absorbed devotional attitude they quickly realize the futility of their plans and return home empty-handed.
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya looks like a Bābājī who has already received bheka.
- However, after due analysis of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy through his diligent absorption in the daily Vaiṣṇava discussions here in Godruma, he has concluded that internal detachment is more essential than externally donning the garb of an ascetic in an official ceremony of bheka.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- The mood of Sanātana Gosvāmī was to live most frugally and Mahāśaya is trying to emulate that lofty level.
- For instance, to minimize his material needs, instead of possessing four dhotis, he cuts one dhoti into four pieces and wears one piece at a time.
- The sacred thread of a brāhmaṇa, generally rejected by the bābājīs, still hangs around his neck, but when his sons attempt to offer him money he refuses, explaining, “I will not take money from materialistic persons.”
- Once the elder son, Candranātha, brought a large sum of money, offering it as a contribution for the Vaiṣṇava festivals.
- Following in the footsteps of Śrīla Raghunāthadāsa Gosvāmī, Lāhirī Mahāśaya declined.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- One day, Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī spoke to him, “Lāhirī Mahāśaya, we see that you have freed yourself from all the habits of the non-Vaiṣṇavas.
- Actually, we have received bheka initiation, but from you we could still learn a great deal about vairāgya, renunciation.
- Now, the only thing needed to complete your transformation is a Vaiṣṇava name.”
- Lāhirī Mahāśaya replied, “Sir, you are my parama-guru, you are free to decide as you wish.”
- Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī said, “You are from Śāntipura, so I think the name ‘Advaita dāsa’ is appropriate.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Lāhirī Mahāśaya fell to the ground in humility to receive his new name.
- From that day on, everyone addressed him as Advaita dāsa, and even his little cottage got a new name, Advaita-kuṭīra.
- Advaita dāsa had a friend from childhood named Digambara Caṭṭopādhyāya, who had accumulated great wealth by holding important posts in the Muslim government.
- After retiring, he had returned to his village, Ambikā, and enquired about his old friend, Kālidāsa Lāhirī.
- Finally, he found out that his friend had renounced home and family and was presently residing in Godruma under the name of Advaita dāsa, spending his days in chanting kṛṣṇa-nāma.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara Caṭṭopādhyāya was a śakta fanatic, a worshipper of śakti, the female energy.
- He abhorred the word “Vaiṣṇavism,” covering his ears whenever it was uttered in his hearing.
- Upon hearing about the present circumstances of his dear friend, he called his servant, “Hey, Vāmana dāsa, immediately arrange a boat.
- I want to dash off to Navadvīpa without delay and save my friend Kālidāsa from disaster!”
- The servant soon returned to his master with a boat fully prepared for the journey.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara Caṭṭopādhyāya was a shrewd man.
- A pundit in the tantra-śāstras and well versed in Muslim culture, he often forced the Muslim religious scholars to accept defeat in their Persian and Arabic debates with him, and he often left the brāhmaṇa paṇḍitas speechless whenever they tried to debate with him upon Tantra.
- He was famous in important cities like Delhi and Lucknow, and in his leisure time he had also managed to write a book entitled Tantra-saṅgraha, A Compendium of Tantra.
- His impressive erudition was further demonstrated by the commentaries he had written on the various verses of this book.
- Digambara hurriedly stepped into the boat, clutching a copy of Tantra-saṅgraha in his hands.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Landing at the pier of Godruma-dhāma after a two-hour boat ride, he picked out and instructed a capable man to act as his messenger.
- Digambara then dispatched the messenger to Advaita dāsa and waited patiently in the boat for his return.
- Advaita dāsa was sitting in his cottage and quietly chanting when Digambara's messenger arrived and paid his respects.
- Advaita dāsa asked, “Who are you and why have you come here?”
- The messenger replied, “I have been sent by Śrī Digambara Caṭṭopādhyāya, who wants to know whether you, Kālidāsa Lāhirī, remember him or not?”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- His curiosity aroused, Advaita dāsa asked, “Where is Digambara?”
- He is my childhood friend, how could I ever forget him? Has he embraced Vaiṣṇavism?”
- The messenger replied, “He is waiting nearby in a boat, but I do not know whether he is a Vaiṣṇava or not.”
- Advaita dāsa quickly asked, “Why has he not come to me directly?”
- Upon hearing this and without answering, the messenger took his leave to inform Digambara.
- Two hours later Digambara, accompanied by four other gentlemen, arrived at Advaita-kuṭīra.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara had always been very generous and open by nature and upon seeing his old friend, he was clearly extremely pleased.
- He rushed to meet Advaita dāsa and taking him in his arms broke into a song he had composed:

*kālī! tomāra līlā-khelā ke jāne mā, tribhuvane?
kabhu puruṣa, kabhu nārī, kabhu matta hao go raṇe*

- “O dear Kali, Who can fathom you, dear Mother? You enjoy pastimes on the earth sometimes in the male form, sometimes in the female form, and sometimes you are ferociously absorbed on the battlefield.

*brahmā ha'ye sṛṣṭi kare, sṛṣṭi nāśa ha'ye hara,
viṣṇu ha'ye viśva-vyāpī pāla go mā, sarva-jane*

- “As Brahmā you create, as Śiva you destroy, and as Viṣṇu, dear Mother, you maintain the whole universe.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

*kṛṣṇa-rūpe vṛndāvane, vāṁśī bājāo vane vane,
(ābāra) gaura ha'ye navadvīpe, mātāo sabe saṅkīrtana*

- “As Kṛṣṇa you play the flute throughout the forests of Vṛndāvana.
- Again you appear as Gaurāṅga, immersing Navadvīpa with the sound of saṅkīrtana.”
- Advaita dāsa received him warmly, “Welcome dear brother! Come and sit down.”
- Taking a seat, Digambara reciprocated with tear-filled eyes these sentiments of friendship and affection.
- He burst out saying, “Dear brother Kālidāsa, what shall I do? You have embraced the path of renunciation and rejected the devas as well as dharma.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- I have come from my life in the Punjab with great expectations.
- However, back home in Śāntipura, I have found that all our childhood friends have passed away.
- Remember Girish Khendā, Peśā Pāglā, Iśe Pāglā, Dhanuva, Kele the carpenter, and Kānti Bhaṭṭacārya? Well, all of them are gone.
- Just you and I are left.
- I had hoped to find you in Śāntipura, thinking we could pass the rest of our lives in the enjoyment of each other's company.
- One day you would come to my house, the next day I would cross the Gaṅgā to your place; we would immerse ourselves in music, study Tantra, and so on.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- However, alas! Fortune has forsaken me, and just look at you! You are like the ox-dung, which, unlike cow-dung, can be used neither for cleaning the house, nor in any religious ceremonies.
- Could you please explain to me what you have done to yourself?”
- Within himself Advaita dāsa calmly considered the situation, knowing that this was a difficult test and that he had better get away from this unwanted association.
- He said, “Digambara! Do you still remember the little game we used to play with a wooden stick and a small piece of oval-shaped wood called gullī-daṇḍa?”
- Remember one time we suddenly found ourselves under that ancient tamarind tree?”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “Of course I remember! It was near Gaurī dāsa Paṇḍita’s house. Gaura and Nitāi had sat under the same tree.”
- Advaita dāsa, “At that time my friend you told me not to touch the tree, because Śacīmātā’s son Nimāi had sat under it, and by touching it one would become an ascetic.”
- Digambara, “I recall everything vividly. In fact, I remember your weakness for the Vaiṣṇavas even at that time. I warned you then that you might fall into Gaurāṅga’s trap.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Yes! You always knew I was inclined in that direction. Well, I have actually fallen into the trap and now I am caught.”
- Digambara, “Take hold of my hand and lift yourself out. It is never good to remain trapped.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Advaita dāsa, “My friend, this trap is wonderful. I pray to remain in it forever! Why don’t you just try it for yourself?”
- Digambara, “I’ve had enough experience to know that in the beginning it may seem pleasurable, but ultimately it will give you nothing.”
- Advaita dāsa, “What of the net which has trapped you? Will it actually give you happiness in the end? Don’t make that mistake.”
- Digambara, “Try to understand! We tantrics are seekers of absolute knowledge, worshipers of the Goddess Mahāvidyā, Durgā-devī.
- This knowledge is useful now and also later—by it we are happy now and will be so in the hereafter.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- You Vaiṣṇavas consider yourselves happy now, but we tantrics do not consider your renounced way of life as happiness.
- And in the final judgement, there will be no end to your misery.
- I am confounded as to why people become Vaiṣṇavas.
- Just note how we tantrics relish our meals of meat and fish, etc.
- We wear fancy clothes and such. This is enjoyment!
- We are more civilized and expert in material science, while you are denied the pleasures that these things provide, and in the end there will be no mokṣa, liberation, for you.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Why do you say that there will be no mokṣa for us?”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “If one rejects Mā Nistāriṇī, the Mother of Liberation, then one cannot be liberated—that applies to you, or even Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva.
- Mā Nistāriṇī is the ādya-śakti, original potency—she has created Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva and is now maintaining them.
- When Mā Nistāriṇī so desires everyone will re-enter her egg-shaped womb whence all creation has emanated.
- Have you ever worshiped this Mā Nistāriṇī to invoke the shower of her mercy upon yourself?”
- Advaita dāsa, “Is Mā Nistāriṇī a spiritual being or a material object?”
- Digambara, “She is the personification of the conscious, spiritual energy and independently wilful.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Puruṣa, the spiritual Supreme Male, is created by her wish.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Then, what is puruṣa and what is prakṛti?”
- Digambara, “Vaiṣṇavas only spend their time in bhajana; therefore, they are bereft of philosophical knowledge.
- Actually, puruṣa and prakṛti are like the two halves of a chickpea, although they have separate identities, in fact they are one.
- When the outside skin is removed, they are two, but when the skin covers the pea, they are one.
- The puruṣa is a spiritually conscious entity, while prakṛti is inert matter.
- The undivided and undifferentiated condition of puruṣa and prakṛti is Brahman.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Advaita dāsa, “The Mā Nistāriṇī you are talking about is she the female prakṛti or the male puruṣa?”
- Digambara, “Sometimes she is puruṣa, and sometimes she is prakṛti.”
- Advaita dāsa, “You said that both puruṣa and prakṛti are like the two halves under the skin of a chickpea. Now who of the two is the mother and who is the father?”
- Digambara, “You are challenging me with philosophical problems. Well, we know how to tackle them. Factually, Mā Nistāriṇī is prakṛti and the father is puruṣa.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Who are you, the jīva?”
- Digambara, “...Pāśa-baddho bhavej jīvaḥ pāśu-muktaḥ sadāśivaḥ... ‘When the soul is covered by the illusion of māyā, he is jīva.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- When he is liberated from māyā’s influence, he is Sadāśiva.”
- Advaita dāsa, “So are you puruṣa or prakṛti?”
- Digambara, “I am puruṣa, and Mā Nistāriṇī is prakṛti. So long as I am in the illusory, conditioned state, she is my mother. However, when I am liberated, she becomes my wife.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Without doubt I have now grasped your philosophy well: You will change from being the son of your mother to being her husband! Tell me, where did you learn such ideas?”
- Digambara, “My friend, I am not wearing blinders like you, who are only interested in the Vaiṣṇavas alone.
- I have associated with many sannyāsīs, brahmacārīs, mystic tantric yogis, and so on.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- In addition, I have intensively studied the tantra-śāstras before I could acquire this knowledge. If you wish, I can school you and prepare you, too.”
- Advaita dāsa thought to himself, “What a terrifying idea!”
- However, he replied, “Could you kindly explain your concept of civilization, and what is prākṛtika-vijñāna, material science?”
- Digambara, “Civilisation means to converse well in sophisticated society, to dress in a manner that pleases others, to eat food and conduct oneself in a way which is not repellent to others. Actually, you Vaiṣṇavas follow none of these manners.”
- Advaita dāsa, “How is that?”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “You do not mingle in societies outside your own, and in general, your behaviour is unsocial.
- The Vaiṣṇavas have not yet learnt what it means to entertain people with sweet words.
- Whenever they meet someone, they directly exhort the person to chant hari-nāma.
- Why is this so? Are there no other civilized topics to discuss?
- Your dress turns people away and so they refuse to offer you a seat at any kind of social event.
- A tuff of hair tied at the crown of the head, strings of tulasī beads hanging around the neck, dressed scantily in a loincloth—this is the appearance.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- In addition, you only eat spinach and other vegetables. The Vaiṣṇavas are not at all civilized.”
- Advaita dāsa thought to himself, “If I provoke a quarrel, he will get angry and leave. Which would be for the better.”
- Continuing, Advaita dāsa said, “Does social sophistication help one’s position in the next life?”
- Digambara, “I must admit that there is no gain in the next life. However, how can society advance without culture?”
- If society is progressing, then one can pay attention to the next life.”
- Advaita dāsa, “My friend, if you promise not to become angry, I would like to say something.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “You are my childhood companion, I would offer my life for you and yet you think I cannot tolerate a few harsh words from you?”
- We are practiced in courtesy so even if we are irked, our words will remain sweet. After all, the more one learns to mask one’s feelings, the more one advances in culture.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Human life is short and inevitably has numerous disturbances; thus, with our limited time, it is imperative to serve the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, with unmotivated simplicity.
- The culture and sophistication, which you present as synonyms, are merely exercises in self-deception.
- If a human being remains on the path of truthfulness, his life is honest and simple.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Leaving this straight path for that of deception, he becomes sly, engages in unscrupulous dealings, and tries to hide his crookedness behind a facade of sweet words and postured civility.
- Truthfulness and simplicity are laudable human characteristics, whereas the culture and sophistication you speak of generally lack these qualities.
- True culture, in its pristine state, shorn of all immorality, is found amongst the Vaiṣṇavas, and the culture of the non-Vaiṣṇavas is tainted by sinful ways.
- Real culture means sabhyatā, worthiness to participate in a sabhā, serious truthful assembly—in other words, simple decency—

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- but the contemporary definition of culture is simply a method of masking mischievous internal motives, which are gradually further perverted into deceit.
- “The so called ‘culture’ you have described has nothing in common with the nitya-dharma of the jīva.
- If dressing attractively is the standard of cultured activity, then an expensive prostitute is certainly more civilized than you.
- Indeed, the real purpose of wearing clothes is simply to cover the body.
- The clothes must of course be clean and fresh. Similarly, foodstuffs should be pure and healthy.
- However, you insist that primarily foodstuffs should be palatable, regardless of impurities.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Alcohol and meat, for instance, are naturally impure; therefore, to consume them is not at all cultured, but is surely a sinful act.
- Today's definition of culture is actually based on the mores of Kali-yuga.”
- Digambara, “Have you completely forgotten the Badsahi culture of the Muslim emperors?”
- Just remember how the people would sit so gracefully in the court of the Muslim king, dressed stylishly, and engaged in conversation according to the court etiquette?”
- Advaita dāsa, “This is all mundane business. What would we lack without it?”
- My friend, I think that because of your long years of service amongst the Muslims you have become biased in favour of their culture. Actually, sinless life is truly cultured life.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- As I have said just now, the so-called cultural progress of Kali-yuga only brings about an acceleration of sinful activities. It is simply the noisome disease of hypocrisy.”
- Digambara, “Just realize that today’s modern civilised man considers the contemporary culture to be the actual height in the progress of humanity, and that a person without such culture should hardly be considered a human being!
- The present understanding of decency is that men and women should dress in fashionable clothes and ornaments to cover their faults.”
- Advaita dāsa, “It is up to you to ponder over these matters and decide whether this modern philosophy of life is actually good or bad.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Personally, I notice that modern ‘educated men’ are shrewd and sly, opportunistically observing and taking advantage of the changing times.
- They favour this so-called civilization as it provides a means to mask their ill motives and degradation.
- Such shrewd men protect the so-called high pedestal of their culture with futile debates and violent physical threat.
- What can an actually intelligent person gain from their society and culture?”
- Digambara, “Actually some people consider that knowledge and culture are simultaneously expanding by this civilisation, and if the trend continues this earth will become like heaven.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Advaita dāsa, “These are the hallucinations of opium eaters and those who believe in such ideas are glorified fools.
- Yet, one who proselytises this view is an even more amazing specimen.
- Knowledge is of two kinds, pāramārthika, spiritual; and laukika, material.
- I do not perceive anywhere that spiritual knowledge is expanding by the progress of material knowledge.
- Actually, I generally see that spiritual knowledge is being perverted and misinterpreted in concert with the focus upon material knowledge.
- After all, is there actually any eternal relationship between the jīva and material knowledge?

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- With the escalation of material knowledge, man's attention has been drawn towards the multi-fold varieties of external phenomena and distracted from the origin of all knowledge, the transcendental Absolute Truth.
- I must acknowledge that the increase of secular material knowledge is followed by a shallow 'sophisticated' culture.
- However, this is a bad omen for the jīva, leading him along the path to spiritual self-destruction.”
- Digambara, “Why a path of destruction?”
- Advaita dāsa, “I repeat, this human life is short. Therefore, like the wayfarer at the inn, the jīva must diligently prepare for spiritual realization during the travels of his limited life span.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- It is foolish to waste time trying to improve arrangements at the inn during one's short visit, without concern for one's destination.
- If more and more time is wastefully spent in the pursuit of material knowledge, less time will be left for spiritual realization.
- As I see it, we should use material knowledge to help in acquiring the basic necessities for the maintenance of this body, while leading a simple life dedicated to spiritual realization.
- There is absolutely no need of excess material knowledge and its concomitant 'sophisticated' culture.
- Actually, what is the permanence of all this external material gaudiness?"

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “Now I see that I have landed in the clutches of an extraordinary person of the renounced order. Are you saying that the development of human society is of no use?”
- Advaita dāsa, “That depends on the type of society. If it is a Vaiṣṇava society, there is a tremendous benefit for all.
- That which is derived from a non-Vaiṣṇava society—a materialistic society—is not at all beneficial for the jīva.
- However, let us leave this topic for a moment. Tell me, what do you actually mean by prākṛtika-vijñāna?”
- Digambara, “Prākṛtika-vijñāna is natural material science and is found in the tantra-śāstras in many different areas.
- Prākṛtika-vijñāna is constituted of whatever systems, knowledge and beauty are exhibited in the material nature of this world.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- For instance, there are: dhanura-vidyā, the system of military science; ayurveda, the system of medical science; jyotira-vidyā, astrology; the art of music and dance; and the like, which are the different branches of prākṛtika-vijñāna.
- “Coming back to philosophy, we have already discussed that prakṛti is the ādya-śakti, giving birth to and manifesting this material cosmos.
- Through her own potency, she has introduced variegatedness into the creation, and in each of the many aspects of her energy is a different area and stream of knowledge.
- By acquiring this knowledge of material science, one can exonerate oneself from the sins committed against the ādya-śakti, Mā Nistāriṇī.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Unfortunately, for themselves, the Vaiṣṇavas do not care for or make research into vijñāna, science.
- However, we Tantrics shall attain mokṣa through mastering this knowledge.
- Just see how deeply some of the great western thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and the famous Muslim scholar, Hākim, etc., have probed into this science and even written poetic eulogies to it.”
- Advaita dāsa, “You just said that the Vaiṣṇavas do not care about vijñāna. I disagree.
- The pure spiritual knowledge that the Vaiṣṇavas study is actual vijñāna—extremely scientific and experiential.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- In one of the four catur-ślokī of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 2.9.31, we find the following:

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

*jñānaṁ parama-guhyaṁ me yad vijñāna-samanvitam
sarahasyaṁ tad-aṅgaṁ ca gṛhāṇa gaditaṁ mayā*

- “O Brahmā, knowledge of Me is non-dual, and yet has four distinct divisions: jñāna, vijñāna, rahasya, and tad-aṅga.
- Jñāna is my svarūpa; My relationship with My potency is vijñāna; jīva is My rahasya, secret; and pradhāna is my tad-aṅga.
- A jīva cannot understand this knowledge by his own intelligence, but you can understand the same by My mercy in conjunction with devotional service.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- I am explaining this science so that you may take it up carefully.’
- “Even before the material world was created the Supreme Personality of Godhead, being pleased by Brahmā’s devotional service, gave him this instruction.
- In this way, the Lord taught Brahmā the pure and scientific vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- “My friend Digambara, there are two kinds of knowledge. On one hand, there is viṣaya-jñāna, material knowledge, which is acquired by human beings through the bodily sense organs that are impure and thus unsuited to perceive spiritual objects.
- These material sense organs are only of use in the maintenance the conditioned soul’s material condition.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- On the other hand, there is the science of the Supreme Self, which delves into the actual spiritual truth.
- This is known as śuddha-jñāna, pure spiritual knowledge, which is eternal and forms the basis of the devotional service of the Supreme Lord performed by the Vaiṣṇavas.
- In all respects, viṣaya-jñāna is distinct and opposite from śuddha-jñāna and has no connection with it.
- “You propose that viṣaya-jñāna is alone vijñāna and that the material knowledge of ayurveda, etc., has to be separated from śuddha-jñāna to attain the status of scientific vijñāna.
- However, this usage of the term is incorrect because materialistic science is not vijñāna in the true sense of the word.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- The truth is that śuddha-jñāna—whose characteristics are contrary to the material sciences of Ayurveda, etc.—is actually vijñāna since śuddha-jñāna intrinsically indicates the scientific distinction of transcendence from matter.
- Accurate knowledge of the distinctive qualities inherent within an existing object is known as vijñāna.
- Thus, the perfect realization of the spiritual Absolute Object as distinct from mundane matter is actual vijñāna.
- Therefore, the process of exposing and eliminating viṣaya-jñāna and scientifically establishing the pre-eminence of śuddha-jñāna as distinct from viṣaya-jñāna is real vijñāna.
- “Vastu, eternal spiritual existence, is one, and both terms jñāna and vijñāna may be applied to the perception of this transcendental existence.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Jñāna is the direct perception of transcendence, and vijñāna is the establishment of this jñāna as distinct from viṣaya-jñāna.
- Jñāna and vijñāna are actually the same thing; however, according to the particular context the term jñāna or vijñāna is used.
- “You claim that vijñāna indicates viṣaya-jñāna; however, the Vaiṣṇavas say that actual vijñāna gives the true analysis of viṣaya-jñāna as distinct from śuddha-jñāna.
- The Vaiṣṇavas consider dhanura-veda, ayurveda, jyotira-veda, and chemistry, physics, etc., as material knowledge without a permanent relationship to the jīva.
- Therefore, such material knowledge is inconsequential in terms of establishing the jīva in one of the five rasas in relationship to Īśvara, which are the ultimate nitya-dharma of the jīvas.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Further, the Vaiṣṇavas see that those who are ardently striving to advance in viṣaya-jñāna according to their individual material propensities are absorbed in the activities of karma-kāṇḍa.
- “However, Vaiṣṇavas do not criticize those who endeavour for progress in understanding the mundane nature because this activity may ultimately come to assist them in understanding the prime efficacy of spiritual realization.
- You have misnamed the insignificant mundane knowledge of the materialists as vijñāna.
- Well, ultimately, what harm can the erroneous adoption of that name do? It is childish to quarrel insistently over names and designations.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “Supposing material knowledge had not advanced to what it is today, how would you subsist and perform your bhajana?”
- This indicates that you Vaiṣṇavas must also work to improve your material knowledge.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Persons endeavour in their chosen field according to their individual propensities.
- However, Īśvara alone distributes the appropriate results of those actions to their performers.”
- Digambara, “From where do the individual inclinations and propensities arise?”
- Advaita dāsa, “Habits and preferences forged from previous actions will consolidate later into one’s propensities.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- The depth of a person's material knowledge is the barometer that measures the extent of his material engrossment.
- In turn, this material knowledge and engrossment makes him an expert in expressing the mundane art forms, which are also an outcome of material culture.
- Ultimately, however, whatever articles are suitable—as a result of this entire material endeavour by the materially engrossed—will be utilized gratefully by the Vaiṣṇavas as paraphernalia for the devotional service of the Lord.
- However, the Vaiṣṇavas themselves need not invest any energy in the creation of these products.
- “A carpenter makes furniture for a living. However, he can also make an altar to enthrone the Deity in home of a gr̥hastha-vaiṣṇava.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Following their instinct and propensity, the bees busily collect pollen and produce honey, which is then taken away to be offered to the Lord.
- Not everyone in this world will endeavour for their own highest good—spiritual elevation. The different activities are prompted by different propensities.
- “Human propensities are numerous—they are high or low, and so on. Degraded persons perform many base activities resulting from mean propensities.
- However, at the same time, they may perform activities prompted by co-existing noble propensities.
- Thus, the wheel of human life turns, combining in itself innumerable divisions and departments.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- All materialistic men, executing their works inspired by their mundane propensities, reach success by indirectly assisting the Vaiṣṇavas in their spiritual practice.
- The materialists are, however, unaware of this fact. Bewitched by Śrī Viṣṇu's illusory potency, Māyā, they perform multifarious mundane activities, which are later utilized by the Vaiṣṇavas in the devotional service of the Lord.
- In this way the entire world is actually the unwitting servitor of the Vaiṣṇavas.”
- Digambara, “What is this Māyā of Śrī Viṣṇu?”
- Advaita dāsa, “In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Caṇḍī-māhātmya, 81.40, māyā is described with these words:

yogamāyā hareḥ śaktir yayā sammohitam jagat

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- “Yogamāyā is the potency of Śrī Viṣṇu by which the whole world is bewildered.’
- Digambara, “Who is that personality known as Mā Nistāriṇī?”
- Advaita dāsa, “She is this Māyā of Śrī Viṣṇu, also known as Viṣṇu-māyā.”
- At this point, Digambara opened his hand-written manuscript on Tantra and said, “Here, read! My Mā Nistāriṇī is addressed as Caitanya-rūpiṇī, embodying spiritual consciousness; Icchāmāyī, fully independent; Trigūṇatita, transcendental to the material modes; and Trigūṇa-dhāriṇī, the controller of the material modes.
- The one you call Viṣṇu-māyā, is not beyond the scope of the three material modes of nature.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Then how can you equate her with my Mā Nistāriṇī who is so transcendently described?
- I can see plainly that you Vaiṣṇavas are fanatical in terms of this topic and I strongly detest it.”
- Advaita dāsa, “My dear brother, Digambara! Please do not get upset.
- As you have come to see me and we are meeting after a long separation, I would like you to be content and happy.
- Why do you surmise that the name ‘Viṣṇu-māyā’ is demeaning in some way?
- Śrī Viṣṇu is the embodiment of the absolute spiritual consciousness; He is the Supreme Lord of all Lords and everything is His energy—His Māyā.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Energy is not an independently existing entity; it is the inherent characteristic of an object.
- Therefore, it is a philosophical error to describe energy as the source and fountainhead of everything, for energy cannot exist without a source.
- Therefore, first, an absolute spiritual subject has to be established.
- “In the Vedānta commentaries, we find: ...śakti-śaktimatayor abhedaḥ... ‘The potency and the potent are one.’ Energy is not an independent entity, rather the Śaktimān-puruṣa, the Supreme Being, is the possessor and source of all energy.
- Māyā is His intrinsic nature and subservient to His desires as the Śaktimān-puruṣa.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Therefore, it is not fallacious to describe Māyā as Caitanya-rūpīṇi, Icchāmāyī, or Trigūṇatita, because Māyā manifests and acts under the orders of the transcendental Śāktimān-puruṣa.
- In this way, she is non-different from the Śāktimān-puruṣa.
- “Icchā, desire, and caitanya, consciousness, are attributes of the Śāktimān-puruṣa. Śākti, or Māyā, does not possess independent icchā, she works under the direction and will of the Śāktimān-puruṣa.
- For example, a person is endowed with the śakti, energy, to walk and move about.
- However, this śakti is only set in motion if the person desires to do so.
- Thus, it is only a figure of speech to say, ‘Śākti walks.’

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- What is actually meant is that the possessor of śakti—the puruṣa—is walking.
- Similarly, Bhagavān is the controller and possessor of His singular energy, Śakti.
- However, that singular energy manifests in unlimited variety.
- In transcendental spiritual activities, she is known as the cit-śakti and in material affairs as the acit-śakti, or Māyā. In the Vedas, Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 6.8, we find:

parāśya śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate

- “The absolute energies of the Supreme Brahman are multifarious in nature.’

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- “Triguṇa-dhāriṇī Śakti, whom you have just referred to, is actually mundane energy.
- Material creation and annihilation are part of her activities.
- The purāṇas and tantras define this energy as Viṣṇu-māyā, Mahā-māyā, Māyā, etc.
- Allegorically, she is said to be the mother of the trinity—Brahma, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara. Also, she slays the fearsome demons, Śumbha and Niśumbha, and performs many other similarly wonderful activities as recorded in the scriptures.
- “The jīvas are forced to remain her captives as long as they are engrossed in matter.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Nevertheless, when they are enlightened with the transcendental knowledge of their true spiritual identities, they sever the shackles of Maya and win freedom.
- If one submits to the Lord's transcendental cit-śakti, one will eternally experience supramundane ecstasy.”
- Digambara, “Are you, or are you not, under a particular energy?”
- Advaita dāsa, “Yes, we are jīva-śakti. We have escaped from the influence of the illusory material māyā-śakti and taken shelter under the control of the transcendental absolute cit-śakti.”
- Digambara, “That makes you śaktas, the worshippers of śakti, too.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Advaita dāsa, “Yes, of course, Vaiṣṇavas are the real śaktas.
- We are under the patronage of Śrī Rādhikā, the embodiment of the cit-śakti.
- We worship Kṛṣṇa, but under Śrī Rādhikā’s loving guardianship.
- Hence, who can claim to be more authentic śaktas than us? We do not see any differences between a true śakta and a Vaiṣṇava.
- However, those who worship only the māyā-śakti without taking complete shelter within the spiritual cit-śakti are admittedly to some extent śaktas, but cannot be considered Vaiṣṇavas.
- Ultimately, they are gross materialists.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Durgādevī has made the following statement as recorded in the Nārada-Pañcarātra:

tava vakṣasi rādhā'ham rae vṛndāvane

- “In my original form as cit-svarūpa, the embodiment of the spiritual potency, I, as Śrī Rādhikā—the antaraṅga-śakti, the internal energy—reside in the forests of Vṛndāvana-dhāma, embellishing Your [Kṛṣṇa's] divine bosom.’
- “Unequivocally, the words of Durgā-devī proclaim that śakti is a singular energy and potency, not a plurality.
- There is an ultimate unity between Her original form as the cit-svarūpa, Śrī Rādhikā, and Her mundane form, the śakti-māyā jaḍa-svarūpa, the embodiment of the material energy.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Thus, in Her pure state, bereft of the three material modes, Viṣṇu-māyā is the cit-śakti and in Her mundane condition, when She is in touch with the three material modes, She is the jaḍa-śakti, material energy.”
- Digambara, “You mentioned earlier that we are jīva-śakti, please explain.”
- Advaita dāsa, “The Supreme Lord says in the Bhagavad-gītā 7.4-5:
*bhūmir āpo ’nalo vāyuh khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca
ahaṅkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā*
*apareyam itas tv anyāṁ prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām
jīva-bhūtāṁ mahā-bāho yayedam dhāryate jagat*
- “Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego—all together these eight comprise My separated material energies.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Yet, besides this inferior nature, O mighty-armed Arjuna, there is a superior energy of Mine, which comprises all living entities who are struggling with the material nature and are sustaining the universe.'
- “Digambara, do you know the glorious position of the Bhagavad-gītā?
- It is the essence of all scriptures and offers the conclusion to every debate.
- Thus, we can conclude from this statement that besides this jaḍa-śakti there is the existence of the jīva, which is different in constitution.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- The jīva-śakti is another of the Supreme Lord’s energies—superior to the material energy and yet inferior to the cit-śakti—known by the sages as the taṭasthā-śakti, the marginal potency.
- Hence, the living entity is a unique form of the śakti of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”
- Digambara, “Kālidāsa, have you ever read the Bhagavad-gītā?”
- Advaita dāsa, “Yes, in fact, I read it long ago.”
- Digambara, “What is the standard of its philosophical truth?”
- Advaita dāsa, “My dear brother, a person endlessly praises the sweet taste of molasses only so long as he has not tasted pure crystal sugar.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “Look, I think this is bias on your part.
- Devī Bhāgavata and Devī-gītā are appreciated throughout the world.
- However, you and your Vaiṣṇava associates do not even like to hear the mention of these two books.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Have you read the Devī-gītā?”
- Digambara, “There is no reason for me to lie—I have not read it. For some time I have tried to obtain a copy of both books, but have as of yet failed to procure them.”
- Advaita dāsa, “How can you comment upon a book that you have not yet read? Tell me, who is biased, you or me?”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Digambara, “I must admit that even since childhood I was always a bit afraid of you.
- You were, even in those early days, a voluble person and now after becoming a Vaiṣṇava you seem to have honed your wit to even greater sharpness. You strongly refute whatever I say.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Honestly speaking, I am a wretched fool, but after proper research, I have concluded that there are no pure religious ethics outside the vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- However, you have opposed vaiṣṇava-dharma during your whole life and have thus brought ill fortune upon yourself.”
- Digambara, now getting slightly angry, retorted, “O yes! You can say that! I am deeply involved in religious worship and discipline and you claim that I have been wasting my time? Here, look! This book Tantra-saṅgraha is a result of my hard labour.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- You blindly denounce culture and science and try to boast about your Vaiṣṇava philosophy and practice, but what am I supposed to do about that?
- Come, let us continue this debate before an assembly of the learned and cultured, and then see who is said to have the superior conclusion, you or me?”
- Advaita dāsa was now thinking that it was rather a better idea to rid himself of this bad company and said, “After all, tell me, what will your culture and material science do for you when you die?”
- Digambara, “Kālidāsa, shame on you! Is there anything after death? As long as one lives, one should try to be acknowledged by the cultured society and enjoy one’s senses as much as possible.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- In the end, when death approaches, Mā Nistāriṇī will place you in an appropriate situation.
- Should we tolerate the present distress only because death is imminent?
- Where will you be when the body made up of five elements dissolves into the five great elements of material nature?
- This material existence is Māyā, both Mahā-māyā and Yogamāyā.
- Only she can offer you pleasures in the present and certain liberation after death.
- “Śakti is the ultimate, there is nothing beyond her. You are born through Śakti and you will return to Śakti. One must begin by serving Śakti.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Behold the power of Śakti in material science! Diligently improve your yogic strength because by that you will see there is nothing but the unmanifest Śakti.
- Whence did you manufacture the phantasmagoria about this conscious Supreme Controller known as Īśvara?
- By believing in these stories, you are forced to experience hardships in the present.
- And who can guarantee that you will gain more than us after death? What business do you have with a divine male factor, a Puruṣa? Simply surrender to Śakti, you can merge into her, and thus eternally exist in her.”
- Advaita dāsa, “Dear friend, I see that you are captivated by the material energy.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Moreover, suppose the Caitanya-puruṣa actually exists, then what will your future be after a lifetime of ignoring Him?
- In addition, kindly consider what is the actual happiness of this present life?
- I would say that satisfaction and peace of mind are real happiness.
- Yes, I have rejected all material pleasures, but now I experience a real inner happiness.
- And if there is eternality beyond this life, then by His grace I shall have that also.
- On the other hand, you are not at all peaceful and contented even presently.

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- The more you seek carnal pleasures, the more your thirst for them increases.
- You have never really understood what real happiness actually is.
- Chasing after the pleasures of the flesh, one day you will certainly plunge deeply into an ocean of grief.”
- Digambara, “We shall see what happens to me, but first tell me why you have left the sophisticated cultured milieu?”
- Advaita dāsa, “I have not discarded the cultured society, in fact that is what I have actually gained, and now I am busy avoiding the uncultured lot.”
- Digambara, “What do you understand by uncultured?”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Advaita dāsa, “Please do not get angry, listen to what Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 4.30.33, states, which is quoted in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 10.292:

*yāvat te māyayā spr̥ṣṭā bhramāma iha karmabhiḥ
tāvad bhavat-prasaṅgānām saṅgaḥ syān no bhava bhava*

- “Dear Lord, as long as we have to remain within this material world as a result of our material contamination and wander from one type of body to another and from one planet to another, we pray that we may associate with those who are engaged in discussing Your pastimes.
- We pray for this benediction life after life, in different bodily forms and on different planets.’
- “In the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 10.294, it is said:

*asadbhiḥ saha saṅgas tu na kartavyaḥ kadācana
yasmāt sarvārtha-hāniḥ syād adhaḥ-pātaś ca jāyate*

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- “One should never associate with people who are absorbed in non-reality, for by such company one is deprived of all worthwhile objects of attainment and falls down to a degraded position.’
- “The sage Kātyāyana recorded in his Kātyāyana-saṁhitā, which is quoted in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 10.295:

*varam hutavaha-jvālā pañjarāntar-vyavasthitiḥ
na śauri-cintā-vimukha jana-samvāsa-vaiśasam*

- “Better I burn in a blazing fire or remain forever caged, rather than experience the pain of having association with a person who is inimical to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.’
- “Further, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.31.33-34, declares, as quoted in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 10.297-298:

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

*satyaṁ śaucaṁ dayā maunaṁ buddhiḥ śrīr hrīr yaśaḥ kṣamā
śamo damo bhagaś ceti yat-saṅgād yāti saṅkṣayam*

- “One becomes devoid of truthfulness, cleanliness, mercy, gravity, spiritual intelligence, shyness, austerity, fame, forgiveness, control of the mind, control of the senses, fortune, and all such opportunities.’

*teṣv aśānteṣu mūḍheṣu khaṇḍitātmasv asādhuṣu
saṅgam na kuryāc chocyeṣu yoṣit-krīḍā-mṛgeṣu ca*

- “Therefore, one should not associate with a coarse fool who is bereft of the knowledge of self-realization and who is no more than a dancing dog in the hands of a woman.’
- “In the Garuda Purāṇa, purva 231.13, we find:

*pāraṁ gato 'pi vedānām sarva-śāstrārtha-vedy api
yo na sarveśvare bhaktas taṁ vidyāt puruṣādhamam*

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- “Even though one may have gone to the other side of all the Vedas, and even though one is well versed in all the revealed scriptures, if one is not a devotee of the Supreme Lord, one must be considered amongst the lowest of mankind.’
- “In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 6.1.18:

*prāyaścittāni cīrṇāni nārāyaṇa-parāṇmukham
na niṣpunanti rājendra surā-kumbham ivāpagāḥ*

- “My dear King, as a pot containing liquor cannot be purified even if washed in the waters of many rivers, non-devotees cannot be purified by processes of atonement even if they perform them very well, again and again.’
- “Further, in the Skanda Purāṇa, as quoted in Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 10.312, we see:

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

*hanti nindati vai dveṣṭi vaiṣṇavān nābhinandati
krudhyate yāti no harṣam darśane patanāni ṣaṭ*

- “The six causes of degradation and fall-down are to strike a Vaiṣṇava, to criticize him, to hate him, to not welcome or greet him upon sight, to show anger to him, and not to be happy upon seeing him.’
- “You see, Digambara, it is most inauspicious for the jīva to associate with such spiritually destitute persons. What can be the benefit of living in the society of such despicable company?”
- Digambara, “Imagine, we came to meet you as a decent gentleman! However, according to you we have become a coarse and uncouth cripple! Just as well! Kindly stay here and associate with your ‘pure’ Vaiṣṇavas, I am returning to my home.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Advaita dāsa could see that the exchange was concluding and thought it best to finish with some kind parting words.
- He said, “You must go home, but you are my childhood friend, seen again after such a long time. I do not feel like letting you go.
- You have so kindly come to see me; will you not stay a little longer and take prasādam with us?”
- Digambara, “Brother Kālidāsa, you know that I cannot digest any outside food, besides I eat only haviṣya, sacrificial food, and I have already taken before I came here.
- Indeed, I was very glad to see you and will come again when I have some leisure time.
- I cannot spend the night here because I must perform certain disciplines, handed down to me by my guru. So I will take my leave now.”

Chapter 9: Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

- Advaita dāsa, “Come, I will accompany you to your boat.”
- Digambara, “No, no, it’s all right. Continue with your work. I have a few persons along with me.”
- With these parting words, Digambara walked quickly away, humming to himself a song about Kālī-mā.
- Advaita dāsa quietly went back to his kuṭīra.
- He sat down peacefully and began to chant kṛṣṇa-nāma.

*Thus ends the ninth chapter of Jaiva-dharma,
entitled: Nitya-dharma and Material Science
and Civilization*