

Jaiiva Dharmma

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Chapter Ten

The Age and History of Nitya-dharma

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- Śrī Harihara Bhaṭṭācārya of Agradvīpa, by profession a teacher, some time back had been suddenly assailed by a nagging doubt, which had persisted even after he had approached and discussed with many persons, so the frustration he felt in his heart had grown considerably.
- Finally, he came to the village of Arkaṭīlā and questioned the learned scholar of logic, Śrī Caturbhuja Nyāyaratna.
- “Dear Bhaṭṭācārya Mahāśaya, please could you kindly tell me the age of vaiṣṇava-dharma?”
- Śrī Harihara Bhaṭṭācārya had been initiated into the Vaiṣṇava order and daily had worshiped Kṛṣṇa in his home.
- Whereas Śrī Caturbhuja had been assiduously studying the nyāya-śāstra of logic and philosophy for twenty years.

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- At the end of all this study, he had developed an attitude of aloofness towards dharma.
- Apathetic to religious wranglings and debates, only during his śakti worship did he sometimes show signs of bhakti.
- Therefore, his first reaction to Harihara's question was the thought, "Harihara is already partial to vaiṣṇava-dharma, now he wants to drag me into a philosophical labyrinth. It is better to avoid this argument."
- Therefore he said, "Dear Harihara, your question surprises me.
- You have already studied up to the level of the muktipāda section of the nyāya-śāstra, so you should be well aware that in the rhetoric of the nyāya scriptures the vaiṣṇava-dharma is never mentioned.

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- So, I ask you: Why do you harass me with your question?”
- Harihara said, “Sir, I have received vaiṣṇava-mantra dīkṣā in accordance with the age-old traditions of our family.
- Never, have I had any doubts about vaiṣṇava-dharma, but recently I heard that the famous debater from Vikramapura, Śrī Tarka-cūḍāmaṇi, has apparently set out on a mission to uproot vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- He travels extensively and preaches strongly against the Vaiṣṇava ethics, filling his coffers along the way.
- In one such gathering, predominantly visited by a śakta audience, he remarked that vaiṣṇava-dharma was very new and also lacking in philosophical depth, and that only people from the lower castes become Vaiṣṇavas, the high-class gentry turning up their noses and looking down on vaiṣṇava-dharma.

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- “Initially upset to hear a scholar of his stature uttering such banalities, I pondered nevertheless over what he had said and came to certain realizations.
- Before the advent of Śrī Caitanya, vaiṣṇava-dharma had never been practiced in Bengal to any great extent.
- The majority of the people were followers of the śakti cult.
- Although a few persons like me also took initiation into vaiṣṇava-mantra, still, of this few most aspired after Brahman realization and were engaged in attaining mokṣa.
- The śakti worshippers, also known as pañcopāsaka, the worshipers of the five Deities, mostly adopted this standard of vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- “The vaiṣṇava-dharma has definitely undergone changes and taken a new form since the appearance of Śrī Caitanya.

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- The Vaiṣṇavas now close their mind and ears to words and thoughts like Brahman and mukti.
- Now, I cannot even fathom the structure of the philosophy of bhakti.
- These modern Vaiṣṇavas prove the proverb that the blind have to find another support for they rarely stay on the right path.
- Thus, I have come to you with my question: Has the vaiṣṇava-dharma that we find today existed since the dawn of civilization, or did it arise after the advent of Śrī Caitanya?”
- Upon realizing that Harihara’s standpoint was not that of a fanatic Vaiṣṇava, the face of Śrī Caturbhuja immediately lit up.
- He said, “Harihara, I support your views.

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- The present rise of this fledgling vaiṣṇava-dharma is intimidating and one cannot even speak out against it openly.
- Remember, this is Kali-yuga, one must be very cautious.
- Many rich gentlemen have been highly influenced by the philosophy of Caitanya and have joined His ranks.
- They disrespect us greatly and even consider us as their enemies. I dare say they will soon eliminate us.
- Traders and members of other business communities have started to hold dissertations and discussions upon the scriptures, certainly a cause of consternation for the brāhmaṇa caste.

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- “Mind you, for a long time we brāhmaṇas had expertly arranged society so that we were exclusively favoured in the study and teaching of the śāstras and every other caste was barred from such practice.
- Even the caste just below us, the kāyasthas, was afraid to chant the Vedic mantras—even beginning with the primal sound, aum.
- Everyone was simply accepting our authority and following our instructions.
- However, now many people are converting to vaiṣṇava-dharma, and furthermore, even as such neophytes they are debating and analysing philosophy.
- Indeed, ever since Nimāi Paṇḍita entered the scene, our image and position have been tarnished and the brahminical religion has gradually become obsolete.

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- My dear Harihara, the paṇḍita you have just mentioned, Tarka-cūḍāmaṇi, has definitely said the right thing, whether out of greed for money or for whatever other reason.
- “These rascal Vaiṣṇavas! Their words really irk me.
- They are now propagating this garbage that Śaṅkarācārya—on the Supreme Lord’s direct orders—compiled the māyāvāda literature, which according to them is a totally false concept.
- They, on the other hand, say that the vaiṣṇava-dharma is eternal and has existed since time immemorial.
- Not even a century has gone by since this dharma took birth and now, suddenly, it is said to be without a beginning!
- What is that old saying? ...‘The shoe is now on the wrong foot.’

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- “Well, let them scream as much as they want. Regrettably, however, Navadvīpa is now not such a nice place as it was. It has certainly deteriorated, especially in the area of Gādigāchā.
- Some Vaiṣṇavas are living there and they act as if the world belonged to them.
- A few of them are very learned scholars and their preaching is causing chaos amongst the common folk.
- They are destroying our land and discouraging people from believing in the eternal māyāvādī philosophy and the worship of devas and devīs, demigoddesses.
- Soon this religious culture and practice will disappear. Have you not seen the definite decline in the elaborate performance of śrāddha, oblations to departed souls, and other brahminical observances?

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- How will the officiating priests maintain their families without the income from these observances?”
- Harihara replied, “Well, mahātmājī! Is there no solution or reprisal for this situation?”
- There are still a few famous learned paṇḍitas in Māyāpura.
- In addition, across the Gaṅgā in Kuliya village there are several scholars of smṛti and nyāya.
- What about if we were to band together and collectively lay siege upon the Vaiṣṇavas of Gādigāchā?”
- Reflecting upon this, Nyāyaratna thought out loud, “Yes that is possible, yet only if there is unity amongst us. In general, we are divided and distrust one another considerably.

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- Recently, I heard that a small group of brāhmaṇas took Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi to Gādigāchā and challenged the Vaiṣṇavas to a philosophical debate.
- They were vanquished and returned to their individual tolās, private Sanskrit schools, inventing stories to tell the people in order to save their reputations.”
- Harihara said, “Respected Bhaṭṭācārya Mahāśaya, you are our teacher and an instructor of numerous other teachers.
- Many people have learned the art of rhetoric and argumentation from reading your commentaries on nyāya.
- You must go and once and for all defeat those Vaiṣṇava paṇḍitas.
- Prove to them that their vaiṣṇava-dharma is just a new fashion and lacks Vedic authorization.

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- Only then will our flag of pañcopāsanā, which has received widespread patronage for such a long time, keep on waving proudly.”
- Externally, Śrī Caturbhuja Nyāyaratna did not display the nagging fear in his mind, namely that perhaps a place where Kṛṣṇa Cūḍāmaṇi and others had been humbled might also become his own place of devastation.
- He said, “Harihara, I will go disguised and you will take the position of being a leading teacher.
- You will start the debate and set the assembly ablaze with blistering arguments, then I shall take over.”
- Harihara, bristling with confidence, exulted, “I am fully prepared to follow your instructions.

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- Next Monday, we will cross the Gaṅgā in the name of Mahādeva and lay siege there in Gādigāchā.”
- The days passed by until that fateful Monday arrived. Harihara, Kamalākānta, and Sadāśiva—a trio of brāhmaṇa teachers—collected Śrī Caturbhuja from his home in Arkaṭīlā and crossed the Gaṅgā.
- It was three-thirty when they stomped into Pradyumna-kuñja grove, much like the famed Durvāsā Muni and his followers, and seating themselves on the Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī Maṇḍapa platform, announced their arrival by loudly uttering, “Haribol! Haribol!”
- Advaita dāsa Bābājī quietly appeared, welcomed them graciously, and seated them upon comfortable straw mats. He enquired, “Kindly, How may we help you?”

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- Haridāsa spoke up, saying, “We have come to discuss certain subjects with the Vaiṣṇavas.”
- Advaita dāsa Bābājī quickly said, “The Vaiṣṇavas here shy away from arguments, but if you have sincere queries that would be nice.
- The other day a few scholars came pretending to be genuine seekers, but only bombarded us with a barrage of verbiage.
- In the end, they had to retreat, crest-fallen and nursing their battered pride.
- Therefore, let me ask the permission of Śrī Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī.” He disappeared into the cottage of Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī Mahārāja.

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- Shortly afterwards, Advaita dāsa Bābājī returned and went around spreading more sitting mats.
- Soon, Śrī Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī arrived, offered his prostrated obeisances first to the tulasī plant, then to the visitors, and finally took a seat.
- Hands folded, he asked his guests, “Kindly say, how may we serve you?”
- Paṇḍita Caturbhuja said, “We have a couple of questions we would like to have answered.”
- Immediately, Śrī Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī called for Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī. The latter came and taking stock of the situation sat down quietly.

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- When everyone was properly settled, Caturbhuja asked, “Is the vaiṣṇava-dharma modern, or is it primordial?”
- Śrī Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī’s imperceptible, urging nod gave Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī the signal, so he said, “The all-auspicious vaiṣṇava-dharma is sanātana, ever-existent, and nitya, eternal.”
- Caturbhuja Nyāyaratna, “I see that the vaiṣṇava-dharma is of two kinds.
- One kind professes that Brahman, the Supreme Truth, is nirākāra, formless.
- However, as the nirākāra cannot be worshiped therefore an imaginary form is constructed, and by worship of this imaginary form the consciousness is purified.

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- The mythical image of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, of Rāma, or Nṛsimha, is worshipped and thereby one gradually becomes enlightened with the knowledge of nirākāra-brahman, the formless Supreme.
- When one's consciousness is thus purified, then the impersonal nature of Brahman is realized.
- Amongst the pañcopāsanās, those who worship the mūrti of Viṣṇu and meditate on a specific viṣṇu-mantra with this understanding introduce themselves as Vaiṣṇavas.
- “The other kind of vaiṣṇava-dharma asserts that Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, and so on, possess eternal personal forms.
- According to this understanding, worship and meditation upon the individual mantras and śrī-mūrtis of their Lordships leads to absolute, eternal knowledge and the acquisition of divine mercy by the sādḥaka, practitioner.

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- In this view, the philosophy of impersonalism is called māyāvāda and is considered an illusory misconception distributed by the propounder of impersonalism, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya.
- Which of these two is the sanātana and nitya vaiṣṇava-dharma?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “The latter is the real vaiṣṇava-dharma, and it is certainly sanātana.
- The former kind you spoke of is vaiṣṇava-dharma in name only; in actual reality, it is the opposite of the true vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- It is a non-permanent philosophy, borrowing greatly from the monistic concepts of the māyāvāda school.”

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- Caturbhuja, “Everything is now quite clear to me. You say that the real vaiṣṇava-dharma is the philosophy of Śrī Caitanya deva,
- and that the real and true vaiṣṇava-dharma does not simply consist of worshiping Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa, or Śrī Rāma, or Śrī Nṛsimha, and so on,
- but insist that this vaiṣṇava-dharma has to be performed as prescribed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- All right, but how can you claim that this brand of vaiṣṇava-dharma is sanātana, given that Śrī Caitanya appeared only recently?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Actually vaiṣṇava-dharma has existed since the creation of the jīva.

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- The jīvas are designated as anādi, beginningless, having not come into being within the purview of mundane history and creation—their manifestation is from the Supreme Lord and thus above the linear strictures of material time.
- Thus, it is fair to conclude that the intrinsic constitutional function of the jīva known as jaiva-dharma—or vaiṣṇava-dharma—is also beginningless, primordial, and eternal.
- “Within the material universe, Lord Brahmā is the first manifested jīva.
- As soon as Lord Brahmā appears, the first Vedic hymns of knowledge, the basis of vaiṣṇava-dharma, also become manifest.
- This momentous occurrence is recorded in the famous four essential verses of the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam known as the catuḥślokī.

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- “In addition, this is corroborated in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.1.1:

*brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva
viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā
sa brahma-vidyām sarva-vidyā-pratiṣṭhām
atharvāya jyeṣṭha-putrāya prāha*

- “Lord Brahmā, the creator and protector of this universe, appeared prior to any other creature, from the lotus sprouting from the navel of Supreme Lord. He initiated his eldest son, Atharvā, into the science of the Absolute Truth known as parama-vidyā, which is the repository of all branches of knowledge.’
- “The Ṛg Veda Samhitā, 1.22.20, states:
*tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam
sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ
divīva cakśur ātatam*

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- “The supreme destination, the spiritual abode of Śrī Viṣṇu, is resplendently self-manifest as brightly as the sun. It is seen and worshiped since time immemorial by the devas and Vaiṣṇava saints.’
- “In addition, the Kaṭhopanīṣad, 1.3.9, declares:
*tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam
viṣṇor yat paramam padam*
- “The lotus feet of Śrī Viṣṇu are the ultimate and greatest shelter.’
- “Further, in the Svetāśvatara Upanīṣad, 5.4, the following is found:

*sarvā-diśa ūrddhvam adhaś ca tiryak
prakāśayan bhrājate yad vanadvān
evam sa devo bhagavān vareṇyo
yoni-svabhāvān adhiṣṭhaty ekaḥ*

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- “There is but one Supreme Lord, the Absolute Godhead, who is the primal cause of all causes.
- Like the sun that disperses brilliant rays to drive away the darkness, but ever remains so resplendent, the Supreme Godhead also maintains His supreme divinity in all circumstances.’
- “The Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.1.2, states:

*satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma
yo veda nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ parame vyoman
so ‘śnute sarvān kāmān saha brahmaṇā vipaścitā*

- “The Supreme Absolute Brahman is the embodiment of truth, knowledge and eternity.
- He is transcendental to the purview of material time, place and senses.

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- One who has realized that the Supreme Brahman is simultaneously situated both in the spiritual sky and in the hearts of the jīvas becomes sublimely connected with this omniscient Śrī Hari in a loving relationship, which completely fulfils all the spiritual desires of the jīva.’
- “This devotional mood of eternal surrender is totally absent in the pseudo-Vaiṣṇavism, which is the result of the influence of the māyāvāda philosophy.
- In terms of attaining knowledge, by this pseudo-Vaiṣṇava philosophy one cannot become enlightened about one’s true spiritual identity as an eternal servant of the Supreme Lord,
- because this philosophy proposes that when one attains knowledge of Brahman one becomes Brahman. If one considers oneself Brahman, why should one serve Brahman?

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- “In contrast, the Kaṭhopanīṣad, 1.2.23, instructs:

*nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo
na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas
tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanuṁ svām*

- “The knowledge of the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Supersoul, cannot be acquired through endless debates, sharp intellect, or erudition.
- However, when the jīva soul turns to the Supreme Lord Śrī Hari in a serving mood and begs for His mercy, the Lord within the heart reciprocates and reveals Himself to the jīva.’
- “Factually, the process of devotional surrender is the only true dharma.

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- When the Supreme Brahman, Bhagavān, is satisfied and showers His mercy upon the devotee, the eternal transcendental form of the Supreme Lord can be directly seen.
- Knowledge of just the impersonal aspect, Brahman, cannot bestow perception of this divine transcendental form.
- These unequivocal declarations from the Vedas establish the pure vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- Thus, the brand of vaiṣṇava-dharma propagated by Śrī Caitanya is fully supported by the entire Vedic literature. There can be no doubt regarding this.”
- Caturbhuja, “Are there any references in the Vedic scriptures to show that the essence and ultimate goal of dharma is śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and not the attainment of Brahman?”

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “The Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.7.1, states:

raso vai saḥ

- “That Supreme Absolute Truth is the embodiment of all spiritual relationships.’
- “Additionally, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.13.1, we find the statement:

*śyāmāc chabalam prapadye
śabalāc chyāmaṁ prapadye*

- “The multifarious energies of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa are known as śabala.

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- Through the process of surrendering to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we find the shelter of the hlādinī-śakti, the pleasure potency of the Lord, which is the quintessence of all His energies.
- In the divine sanctuary of this hlādinī-śakti, we attain śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śyāmasundara.’
- “Thus, there are numerous Vedic statements proving that śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate aim of dharma.”
- Caturbhuja, “Is the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentioned anywhere in the Vedas?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Does not the above word, śyāma, directly imply Kṛṣṇa? Also, the Ṛg Veda, 1.22.164.31, relates:

apaśyaṁ gopāṁ anipadyamānamā

- “I saw a cowherd-boy Gopāla, Kṛṣṇa, who is infallible.’

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- “These descriptions in the Vedas refer to the young boy, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa.”
- Caturbhuja, “All these descriptions are allusions and one has to stretch the meanings to arrive at such a conclusion.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “If you scrutinize the Vedic scripture you will discover that Vedic statements on all matters are written in this cryptic strain.
- Therefore, we should accept the purports on the Vedas given to us by the sages.”
- Caturbhuja, “Now please tell me the history of the vaiṣṇava-dharma.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “I have already mentioned that vaiṣṇava-dharma is concomitant with the manifestation of the jīva. Lord Brahmā is the first Vaisnava.

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- All the devas and early progenitors are Vaiṣṇavas.
- The mental progeny of Lord Brahmā, Nārada Ṛṣi, is also a Vaiṣṇava. Have you understood now that the vaiṣṇava-dharma has existed since the creation?
- All jīvas are not beyond the influence of the māyā-śakti in her form as the three modes of material nature; yet to the degree they are freed from the māyā-śakti they are also advanced in vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- “The Mahābhārata, Ramayana, and the Purāṇas are scriptures detailing the history of the Āryans.
- The superiority of the vaiṣṇava-dharma is described in all these scriptures, which are historical texts and records centred on famous personalities.

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- In these descriptions of the devas, humans, and demons, we are introduced to such personalities as Prahlāda, Dhruva, and so on.
- Besides them, there were also so many other Vaiṣṇavas, contemporaries of Dhruva and Prahlāda, whose names are not recorded since only the prominent people have been mentioned.
- Dhruva, the son of Manu, and Prahlāda are grandsons of Kaśyapa Muni, a prājapati, progenitor.
- They are our earliest ancestors. Thus, the pure vaiṣṇava-dharma has existed since the dawn of history.
- As history advanced, innumerable wise sages and devotees plus the royal races of the Solar and Lunar dynasties lit up the firmament by their activities and the subsequent chronicles thereof. They were all devotees of Śrī Viṣṇu.

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- “The historical records of the three previous ages of Satya-yuga, Tretā-yuga, and Dvāpara-yuga show that these times were blessed with an abundance of saintly Vaiṣṇavas.
- In the present age of Kali-yuga, Southern India has born illustrious spiritual sons, Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya and Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī, and in western India, Śrī Nimbāditya Śvamī has appeared.
- All these great preachers were Vaiṣṇavas who inspired many millions to embrace the pure path of vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- By their mercy alone, perhaps more than half the population of India was able to transcend this ocean of material nescience and attain the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

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- Moreover, in Bengal and Orissa the Lord of our heart, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, has delivered so many fallen and wretched souls.
- Tell me, have you still not realized the superior position of the vaiṣṇava-dharma, even after reading and hearing all these facts?”
- Caturbhuja, “Of course I do, but how can you designate Prahlāda as a Vaiṣṇava?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “A proper analysis of the śāstra is required. Śrī Prahlāda rejected māyāvādī influenced impersonal brahma-jñāna realization of his tutors, Śaṅḍa and Amarka, and opted to chant harināma, understanding this as the pure essence of all spiritual activities.
- Hence, there is no doubt that Prahlāda was a pure Vaiṣṇava devotee.

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- The real point is that only an unbiased assessment of the scriptures will lead to a correct comprehension of the siddhānta, scriptural conclusion.”
- Caturbhuja, “If we assume that the vaiṣṇava-dharma is sanātana, then what can be the unique contribution of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, giving Him such special honour and status?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Vaiṣṇava-dharma is like a lotus flower gradually blossoming with the passage of time.
- First, comes the bud, slowly the bud begins to grow, and then the petals open in a breath-taking bloom, spreading their fragrance all around.
- “At the beginning of creation the four branches of knowledge were expressed to Lord Brahmā.

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- They are bhāgavata-jñāna, knowledge of the Absolute Truth as the Supreme Personality of Godhead; māyā-vijñāna, scientific knowledge of external energy of the Lord; sādhana-bhakti, devotional service in practice; and prema, the final goal of pure love of Godhead.
- At this tender budding stage of Vaiṣṇavism, these four branches were encapsulated as seeds in the four original verses of the Bhāgavatam known as the Catuḥ-ślokī.
- When Prahlāda arrived, the buds appeared from these seeds.
- Then gradually, with the advent of Bādarāyaṇa Vedavyāsa, the buds opened and the petals of the lotus flower of vaiṣṇava-dharma were revealed by the different Vaiṣṇava ācāryas.

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- With the descent of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the flower has finally burst into full bloom, diffusing its heady scent for the eager nostrils of the entire universe.
- “Śrī Caitanya revealed and disseminated the process of chanting harināma as the only means to achieve prema.
- This awakening of kṛṣṇa-prema is the most esoteric aspect of the vaiṣṇava-dharma and Śrī Caitanya mercifully distributed this science for the highest benefit of all human society.
- Previously, had anyone ever revealed and propagated this process of hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana?
- The practice of hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana has always been proposed in the Vedas as the scriptural treasure par excellence.

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- Yet, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana was never preached in a manner that made it easily available and fully comprehensible to the general mass of human society.
- Certainly, the general populace were not widely inspired to introduce the chanting into their lives and translate it into a central and constant spiritual practice.
- However, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana is so wonderful! Tell me, was this repository of divine nectar ever distributed with such joyous abandon before the advent of Śrī Caitanya?”
- Caturbhuja, “Well, if singing and chanting is so effective, then why is it not popular in the paṇḍita circles?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “In the age of Kali the meaning of the word paṇḍita has been perverted.

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- The scriptures define the word paṇḍa as a bright and acute intellect, and one who possesses paṇḍa is a paṇḍita.
- However, presently a paṇḍita is someone who can aimlessly juggle words under the pretence of logic and rhetoric, or one who presumes to explain the smṛti-śāstras solely with the view of entertaining his audience.
- How can one expect such so-called paṇḍitas to realize the profound importance of the religious science, what to speak of making others understand it?
- “A sincere and objective scrutiny of all scriptures will certainly lead to the conviction that logic and rhetoric, etc., are not the essence or goal.
- Those who are expert in self-deception and deluding the public are indeed the paṇḍitas of Kali-yuga.

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- Presently, all the so-called paṇḍita circles are simply engrossed in sophism and word jugglery.
- Subjects such as the ultimate human destination; the purpose of life; the eternal interrelationships between jīva, Īśvara, and the śaktis of Īśvara; the prime necessity of humanity and the means to acquire it; and so on, are never discussed.
- Yet, only when these topics of eternal truth and absolute reality are brought into focus can we expect the knowledge of prema and hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana to become familiar amongst the people.”
- Caturbhuja, “I admit there are hardly any good paṇḍitas. Nevertheless, tell me why the upper class brāhmaṇas have not taken up vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- The brahminical caste is a sāttvikā group established in the mode of goodness.

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- They are generally inclined towards the path of truth and noble deeds, yet why are they mostly antagonistic to vaiṣṇava-dharma?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “You have questioned me and so I am compelled to tell you the truth.
- We Vaiṣṇavas are not here to find faults in others. Sir, if you will not be hurt or enraged and are sincere about learning the truth, then I am prepared to answer your last question.”
- Caturbhuja, “Actually, studying the scriptures has made us very much in favour of upholding the good qualities like moderation, self-control, tolerance, etc., therefore it is not at all difficult for us to listen to you.
- Please offer us a lucid explanation and we will certainly take your good spiritual instructions to heart.”

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- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Please note that Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī, and Śrī Nimbāditya were all brāhmaṇas by birth.
- Each of them had thousands of disciples who were brāhmaṇas. Our Śrī Caitanya of Bengal was a Vedic brāhmaṇa; Śrī Nityānanda was a high caste rādhīya-brāhmaṇa; and Śrī Advaita Prabhu was a vārendra-brāhmaṇa.
- Even the gosvāmīs and mahātmās, the intimate associates of Śrī Caitanya, were mostly from the brāhmaṇa class.
- In addition, an impressive number of brāhmaṇa stalwarts have joined the ranks of the Vaiṣṇava preachers to disseminate this pure vaiṣṇava-dharma worldwide.
- Therefore, why do you claim that higher caste brāhmaṇas do not admire vaiṣṇava-dharma?

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- “We know that mostly all the high-born brāhmaṇas hold vaiṣṇava-dharma in esteem.
- However, some, as a result of bad hereditary traits, depraved company, and wrong upbringing are hostile towards the vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- Of course, this attitude certainly does not give a good account of their brāhmaṇa background. It simply reflects their misfortune and degradation.
- “The śāstras hold the view that particularly in Kali-yuga properly qualified brāhmaṇas are scarce.
- These few select and qualified brāhmaṇas are Vaiṣṇavas.
- From the moment of initiation into the gāyatrī-mantra—

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- the mantra that personifies the Vedas and who is a devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu—a brāhmaṇa is factually embracing vaiṣṇava-dharma by having been thus initiated into a purely vaiṣṇava-mantra.
- Yet, on account of the ill influence of the deteriorating times, the deluded brāhmaṇa unfortunately accepts reinitiation by bogus non-Vedic methods and rejects his original vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- However, this small number of mislead vaiṣṇava-brāhmaṇas must not lead you to draw a wrong conclusion.”
- Caturbhuja, “Why do the majority of the Vaiṣṇavas apparently come from the lower castes?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “There is no doubt about it. Most persons from the lower castes readily accept their meek and stricken position, thus evoking the compassion of the Vaiṣṇava sādhus.

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- No one can become a Vaiṣṇava without first receiving the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- A person cannot become humble, if he is intoxicated with high caste, position, lineage, wealth, etc.
- Such persons devoid of humility are not likely to attract the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.”
- Caturbhuja, “I think I have heard enough about this topic. I see you are gradually leading the conversation to the subject of the disparaging scriptural quotes about the brāhmaṇas of Kali-yuga.
- I feel extremely disheartened when I hear those scriptural quotes, such as the one in the Varāha Purāṇa:

*rākṣasāḥ kalim āśritya
jāyante brahma-yoniṣu*

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- “‘Demons, taking advantage of Kali-yuga, take birth in brāhmaṇa families.’
- “‘Therefore, I want to go on to other topics. Why do the Vaiṣṇavas disregard Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, a fathomless ocean of knowledge?’”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “I am surprised to hear this. We regard Śaṅkarācārya as an incarnation of Lord Śiva.
- Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has instructed us to honour him as an ācārya.
- We reject only the philosophy of māyāvāda preached by him.
- This māyāvāda philosophy is not rooted in the Vedas; it is merely a disguised form of Buddhism.

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- In order to keep the demons and atheists deluded and in ignorance, the Bhagavān instructed Śrī Śaṅkarācārya to pervert the philosophy of the Vedas and the Gītā by propagating monism.
- How can we fault the ācārya on this account and thus censure him?
- “Lord Buddha was also an incarnation of the Supreme Lord, widely broadcasting a philosophy which went against the Vedic tenets.
- However, does any civilized person castigate him for it? One may argue that such actions of Bhagavān and Lord Śiva are not well planned because they are discriminatory.
- My answer is that Bhagavān is the well-wishing universal father and Lord Śiva His chief executive.

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- They are both omniscient, all auspicious and can never make the mistake of being prejudiced.
- Those amongst the human beings who are ignorant and small-minded cannot appreciate the profundity of Their works and so they end up foolishly berating the Lord and His pure devotee.
- “A knowledgeable person must not make loose comments such as: ‘This act of Īśvara was not appropriate; He should have done this or that.’
- Human beings cannot hazard opinions on topics beyond the jurisdiction of their limited intellect.
- Īśvara alone knows the urgency of keeping the atheistic demons imprisoned in the māyāvāda thought.

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- We, the human beings, can neither fully fathom the reason for our existence, nor understand the expediency of our extinction at the time of mahā-pralaya, total annihilation.
- Yet, all this is a part of the pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān. The devotees of Śrī Hari simply relish hearing about His pastimes, never quarrelling or disagreeing with them.”
- Caturbhuja, “Yet, why do you say that the māyāvāda philosophy is contrary to the ethics of the Vedas, Vedānta, and Gītā?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “After properly scrutinizing the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta-sūtra can you pinpoint verses or aphorisms in support of the māyāvāda theory?
- I will shed appropriate light on their meanings.

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- Initially, some hint of māyāvāda thought can be detected in certain Vedic verses, but again, if these verses are seen in their entirety and in their full context, even these hints quickly evaporate.”
- Caturbhuja, “Frankly speaking, I have studied neither the Upaniṣads, nor the Vedānta-sūtra; yet I am well prepared for any discussion upon nyāya, for I am conversant in sophism and dialectics.
- I have browsed through the Gītā, but do not possess a fair grasp of its importance, therefore I admit defeat.
- “Oh yes! There is another matter I would like to hear about from you, as I am sure a paṇḍita of your stature will be able to make me understand.

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- Why do the Vaiṣṇavas honour only viṣṇu-prasāda and disregard the prasāda of the devas and devīs?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “First of all, I am not a paṇḍita, I am a very ignorant man.
- You must understand that whatever I speak is on the strength of the mercy of my guru, Śrīla Paramahaṁsa Premadāsa Bābājī.
- The śāstras are a vast, unlimited ocean—no single person could possibly study them all entirely.
- Śrīla Gurudeva has churned this ocean and given me the essence, which I have received fully confident that this siddhānta is concordant with the entirety of śāstra.
- “Now, the answer to your question: ‘Do the Vaiṣṇavas disregard the prasāda remnants of the devas and devīs?’

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- Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only and uncontested Supreme Personality of Godhead.
- All devas and devīs are His devotees, solely owned by Him. Certainly, Vaiṣṇavas always honour and never deride the prasāda remnants of devotees.
- “Devotion to the Supreme Lord is enhanced by accepting the prasāda remnants of the Lord’s devotees, known as mahā-prasāda.
- There are, indeed, other excellent devotional objects besides the prasāda remnants; for example, the devotee’s foot-dust and his footbath water, also known as caraṇāmṛta, nectar from the feet.

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- The main point is that if a māyāvādī worships or offers foodstuff to any deva, because his consciousness is polluted by monism, the devas will reject his worship and offering.
- I can give myriad quotes from numerous śāstras in support of this point, if you require such.
- “Truly, the māyāvādīs worship only the devas. Moreover, if one accepts foodstuff offered to devas by māyāvādīs, one’s devotion will be impaired and one will offend Bhaktidevī.
- However, when a pure Vaiṣṇava offers Śrī Kṛṣṇa prasādam to the devas and devīs, they receive it jubilantly and dance with joy.
- Then, in turn, when a Vaiṣṇava accepts these remnants, he immediately experiences exultation.

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- “Now see the all-powerful strength of the scriptural injunctions.
- In the yoga-śāstra, it is mentioned that a yoga practitioner must not take the remnants of a deva.
- However, surely this does not imply that yogis disrespect deva prasāda.
- Yet, solitary meditation is improved if such a yogi abstains from eating such prasāda.
- Similarly, on the path of bhakti, a devotee must accept prasāda offered only to Bhagavān, not to any deva or devī. Otherwise progress in one-pointed śuddha-bhakti is hindered.
- Similarly, this does not indicate disregard to deva prasāda.

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- The abstinence from deva prasāda as recommended in the scriptures actually helps the sādhakas to advance towards their respective spiritual goals.”
- Caturbhuja, “Much obliged! I have understood this point. Now please tell me why you are opposed to animal sacrifice, which is endorsed by the scriptures.”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “According to the purport of the scriptures, animal sacrifice is not prescribed.
- The following excerpt from a verse in the Vedas denounces the killing of animals:

mā hiṁsyāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni

- “‘One should not commit violence to any living entity.’

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- “As long as the nature of a person is controlled by the guṇas of tama and raja, he remains engrossed in sex life, meat-eating, and the taking of intoxicants.
- The Vedas clearly do not agree with these undesirable acts.
- The real opinion of the Vedas is that as long as human beings have not elevated themselves to the level of sattva-guṇa and are thereby able to renounce sex, non-vegetarian food, and
- the addiction of intoxication, then they may legally marry to help themselves curb the basic instinct of sex, they may eat only sacrificial animals as non-vegetarian food, and in specific religious rituals they may drink wine.
- Gradually, these checks used as deterrents will fully free them from these undesirable activities.

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- This is the actual Vedic understanding; the Vedas never advise the killing of animals. For example, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.5.11, states:

*loke vyavāyāmiṣa-madya-sevā
nityā hi jantor na hi tatra codanā
vyavasthitis teṣu vivāha-yajña
surā-grahair āsu nivṛttir iṣṭā*

- “In this material world the conditioned soul is always inclined to sex, meat-eating and intoxication.
- Therefore, the religious scriptures never actually encourage such activities.
- Although the scriptural injunctions provide for sex through sacred marriage, for meat-eating through sacrificial offerings,

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- and for intoxication through the acceptance of ritual cups of wine, such ceremonies are meant for the ultimate purpose of renunciation.’
- “The Vaiṣṇavas are of the opinion that if a tamasic or rājasic person desires to act in such irresponsible manner, let him do so.
- Nevertheless, a sattvika person must refrain from these acts. Hear another quote from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 1.13.47, where Nārada Muni gives the instruction:

ahastāni sahas-tānām apadāni ca-tuṣ-padām
phalgūni tatra mahatām jīvo jīvasya jīvanam

- “Those who are devoid of hands are prey for those who have hands.

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- Those devoid of legs are prey for the four-legged.
- The weak are the subsistence of the strong.
- And the general rule holds that one living being is food for another.'
- “Once again, in the Manu Smṛti, 5.56, we find:

*na māṁsa-bhakṣaṇe doṣe na madye na ca maithune
pravṛttir eṣā bhūtānām nivṛttis tu mahā-phalā*

- “The natural propensity of human beings is toward sensual enjoyment, meat eating, and intoxication; yet, by discarding these propensities a person gains a wonderful fortune.”

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- Caturbhuja, “Very well! However, what is your attitude towards the śrāddha ceremony, the offering of oblations to the forefathers, which helps to repay the debt of a man to his father.
- Why are the Vaiṣṇavas not in favour of such ceremonies?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Actually, the Vaiṣṇavas are not against karmis performing the śrāddha ceremony.
- In this context, the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.5.41, states:

*devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām
na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan
sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam
gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam*

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- “O King, one who has given up all material duties and has taken full shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, who offers shelter to all, is not indebted to the devas, great sages, ordinary living beings, relatives, friends, mankind, or even to one’s forefathers who have passed away.
- Since all such classes of living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, one who has surrendered to the Lord’s service has no need to serve such persons separately.’
- “Therefore, a devotee who has surrendered his life to the Supreme Lord is not required to perform the śrāddha ceremony of the karma-kāṇḍa process in order to repay the debts to the forefathers.
- He is advised to simply worship the Supreme Lord and offer Him bhoga, foodstuff.

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- By offering it to the Lord, the bhoga is converted into prasāda and is then offered to and partaken of by the deceased family members.”
- Caturbhuja, “When does a person become eligible to perform śrāddha in this manner?”
- Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “From the day a person develops faith and respect for the chanting kṛṣṇa-nāma, and for hearing topics related to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he becomes a Vaiṣṇava and acquires this eligibility.
- The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.20.9, comments:

*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvatā
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

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- “One should continue to perform the Vedic ritualistic activities until one actually becomes detached from material sense gratification and develops faith in hearing and chanting about Me.”
- Caturbhuja, “I am truly happy for this chance to speak with you.
- I have heard a very subtle and wise analysis of these topics from you, convincing me that you are a fine scholar and awakening, indeed, my faith in vaiṣṇava-dharma.
- This has given me immense pleasure. Well, my dear Harihara, what need is there for further debate.
- These Vaiṣṇavas possess vast knowledge—they are the champions of scriptural debate.

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- Whatever we may have to say in order to protect our hereditary brahminical business, it is certainly an irrefutable fact that such a brilliant super-excellent scholar and Vaiṣṇava as Śrī Nimāi Paṇḍita was never,
- nor will ever again be born in Bengal, perhaps not throughout the entire length and breath of India.
- Now let us depart to our homes across the Gaṅgā. The day is coming to an end.”
- Caturbhuja Nyāyaratna stood up with his associates, sang out, “Haribol! Haribol!” and began to walk away.
- The Vaiṣṇavas began to chant jubilantly, “Jay Śacīnandana! Jay Śacīnandana! All glory to the son of Śacīmātā, Nimāi!” and broke out into a stately dance.

Thus ends the tenth chapter of Jaiva-dharma, entitled: The Age and History of Nitya-dharma