

Jaiṅva Dharma

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Chapter Seventeen

Nitya-dharma: Sambandha,
Abhidheya and Prayojana

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Part Five: The Liberation of the Jīva from the Prison House of Māyā

- Vrajanātha listened impassively while his grandmother talked to him that night about completing the final arrangements for his marriage ceremony.
- After supper, he reclined upon his bed until late in the night, still pondering over the status of the pure jīva.
- At the same time in another room, quite different thoughts were keeping his aged grandmother awake, “How can I arouse his interest in his matrimonial affairs—he seems so unconcerned.”
- However, the thoughts of Vrajanātha’s grandmother were interrupted by the sudden arrival of the maternal cousin of Vrajanātha, Vānimādhava.

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- Vānimādhava had been assigned by Vijaya Vidyāratna, the father of the prospective bride, to finalize the marriage alliance between Vrajanātha and his daughter, who was also the paternal cousin-sister of Vānimādhava.
- **Vānimādhava**, “Granny, why delay? Please organize this marriage properly—it is up to you.”
- **Grandmother then expressed her own concern about the situation**, “Dear boy, you are such an expert in these matters, why don’t you speak to Vrajanātha and make him understand that he must marry. Every time I bring the subject up, he remains silent.”
- Vānimādhava was short, with a stumpy neck, dark complexion and sly, dimly lit eyes.

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- He had the habit of ‘putting his finger in every pie,’ but managed somehow or other to stay aloof or at least he pretended to do so.
- **He quickly retorted**, “Granny, everything will come out fine.
- I am only waiting for your permission and then I can start.
- You know already what I can accomplish—I can make money by counting the waves upon the sea! Just let me get into this topic with Vrajanātha.
- Ahh, yes! Granny, remember, you promised to stuff me full with all those goodies of yours...?”
- Hearing from the grandmother that Vrajanātha was fast asleep, Vānimādhava decided to leave and return the next day.
- Early the next morning he showed up carrying a loṭā, a small kettle-shaped water vessel, for his ablutions.

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- From the house, Vrajanātha entered the courtyard where Vānimādhava was waiting and sat down upon the Chandimaṇḍapa platform in front of the family Devī temple.
- **Seeing Vānimādhava, he spoke with mild surprise,** “My dear brother, what brings you here so early?”
- **Vānimādhava got straight to the point,** “Dear elder brother, you have spent a long time studying and teaching the nyāya scriptures.
- Your father, Haranātha Cūḍāmaṇi, was a renowned scholar and now you are famous as a paṇḍita.
- Yet, have you considered that you are also the sole male in your household? Who will inherit these large holdings if you have no male descendent? Big brother, it is the earnest desire of everyone that you marry.”

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- **Vrajanātha**, “Dear brother, why do you trouble me without cause?”
- Since I am nowadays associating with the followers of Śrī Gaurāṅga, I have no intention of entering household life.
- Family life does not attract me.
- Having learned to experience immense exultation in the company of the Vaiṣṇava sādhus in Māyāpura, I will either take sannyāsa, embracing the robe of the renunciate, or at least take full shelter of the feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- I reveal these facts to you because I consider you a close friend and would ask you to keep them to yourself.”
- Judging Vrajanātha’s mood, Vānimādhava thought that a straightforward, simple approach would not favour his mission and thus he decided to take a more devious course.

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- **Masking his inner feelings, he said slyly**, “I am here to assist you in anything you want.
- When you were a student I carried your books to school and back, now that you are about to take the sannyāsa āśrama, I will carry your staff and water-pot.”
- Hiding their real feelings, men of cunning possess double tongues.
- They say one thing to one person and twist it around for another, thus causing considerable chaos and contention.
- Their words are sugar-coated, but their hearts are black with poison.

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- Hearing the sweet sympathy of Vānimādhava and feeling encouraged to trust him, Vrajanātha said, “Dear brother, I always knew you as a well-wishing and hearty friend.
- You see, my grandmother is an old-fashioned matriarch; she has no knowledge about the serious facts of life, renunciation and so on.
- Since discovering someone she thinks would be a good bride for me, she has been scheming tirelessly to drag me into the inferno of family life.
- If you can persuade her to desist from this plan, I shall remain forever indebted to you.”
- **Vānimādhava responded**, “As long as Śarmarāma, the great arbitrator, is present, no one can force you to act against your will.

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- Elder brother, please open your heart to me and tell me honestly why you have developed such a strong aversion for household-life, so that I will be able to defend you vigorously.
- Who has advised you to embrace renunciation?”
- Vrajanātha entrusted Vānimādhava candidly with the whole story of the respected elder, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, the mentor to whom he fled every evening, who was extremely merciful and expert in soothing and cooling the burning pangs of material existence.
- Being a crooked man with sinister designs, Vānimādhava conspired within himself, “Now I have it, now I know his weakness.
- I will have to make some devious manoeuvres to get him back upon the right track.”

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- **Yet, aloud he said**, “Elder brother, I will gradually convince grandmother to give up her plans for your marriage, but first I must return to my house.”
- Vānimādhava started out in the direction of his home, but soon turned around towards Śrīvāsāṅgana, Māyāpura.
- Arriving there, he sat down under the fragrant bakula tree, saying to himself in a critical mood, “These good-for-nothing Vaiṣṇavas are the real enjoyers in this world.
- They live in nice surroundings with blossoming flowers, green shady bowers and wide, clean courtyards.
- Each has his own bhajana-kuṭīra to chant japa away from the public eye.

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- And that is all they have to do.
- They live like kings, and God-fearing people, especially the pious ladies, upon their return from purificatory baths in the Gaṅgā always bring them fruits, milk and so on—such an easy life!
- Earlier the caste brāhmaṇas were able to direct this flow of bounty into their own larders by institutionalising karma-kāṇḍa performances, but the bābājīs have now outwitted them and become the latest rage.
- “O Kali-yuga, I salute you! You protect your followers and allow them to live off the fat of the land.
- Coming here has opened up my eyes.

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- Alas! My birth in an elevated aristocratic Kulīna brāhmaṇa family is to no avail, because today no one offers us even a glass of water, what to speak of fruits.
- These charlatan Vaiṣṇavas accuse the scholarly logicians of using word jugglery simply for the discussion of material objects, calling them fools.
- However, even after having studied this science of logic thoroughly, my elder brother Vrajanātha has begun to accept the words of these Vaiṣṇavas.
- That would appear to be it: He is an unfortunate victim who has fallen into their mischievous clutches.
- I am Vānimādhava; I will set Vrajanātha aright and teach these crooks in loincloths a lesson.”

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- Vānimādhava stopped spewing out mental venom, strolled over to one of the huts and entered.
- By coincidence, it was the hut of the elderly Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, who was sitting on a simple hand-made mat chanting japa.
- The face being a mirror of the mind, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī saw that Kali-yuga in the form of this young brāhmaṇa boy had entered the hut.
- Very humble by nature, Vaiṣṇavas consider themselves at all times to be lower than a piece of straw.
- They tolerate the taunts of inimical persons, wishing them only the best.

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- Though uninterested in seeking respect for themselves, they are always respectful to others.
- Therefore, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī endearingly asked Vānimādhava to be seated.
- Vānimādhava was a deadly hater of the Vaiṣṇavas.
- Ignorant of the status of a Vaiṣṇava, he pompously concluded that the elderly Bābājī was a śūdra and made a gesture of blessing him by showing him the palm of his hand.
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī enquired, “Son, what is your name? And what brings you here?”
- In doing so, he addressed Vānimādhava with the more familiar and casual tumi, not with the more respectful āpni.

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- Enraged at this, Vānimādhava replied with an undignified sneer, “Hey you Bābājī, do you think that by just wearing a kaupīna, you are now on equal terms with a brāhmaṇa.
- Apart from that, I would like to know whether or not you are acquainted with Vrajanātha Nyāya-pañcānana?”
- All the while Vānimādhava used the familiar tumi.
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Kindly forgive my offences and overlook the defects in the language of an old man.
- Yes, Vrajanātha blesses us sometimes with his presence.”
- Vānimādhava, “That man is not as simple as you think he is.
- He will visit you regularly for some time to win your confidence and then after observing your practices carry out his own plans.

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- The Belapukuriyā brāhmaṇa community is antagonistic towards you Vaiṣṇavas and have selected Vrajanātha to come here and find out more about your way of life.
- You are an elderly man; you should be careful with him.
- I will visit you from time to time and tell you all about their devious plans against you and your friends.
- A note of caution, for your own good, Vrajanātha must not know I was here. I will take my leave now.”
- Vānimādhava sidled off in the direction of his home.
- After lunch, Vānimādhava visited Vrajanātha and in the course of their conversation said casually,

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- “Elder brother, I went to Māyāpura on some work this morning and unexpectedly met a very aged Vaiṣṇava, I think he was called Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī.
- We exchanged a few courteous words and came to speak about you.
- He mentioned something so despicable about you that I was shocked—never before have I heard anyone speak such castigating words about a brāhmaṇa.
- Finally he said that he would feed you with the contaminated remnants of all the lower castes and thereby demote you from your brahminical position.
- What a shame! If a paṇḍita like yourself is insulted and you continue to visit him, this will blacken the good name of the entire brāhmaṇa community.”

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- Vrajanātha was shocked to hear Vānimādhava speak in this manner. Vrajanātha had developed firm faith and trust in the Vaiṣṇavas and a growing devotion to Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī.
- Suddenly and for no recognizable reason, all these feelings became much stronger.
- Vrajanātha turned to Vānimādhava, saying, “Brother, today I am busy.
- Tomorrow, we can discuss all this at leisure; you had better go home now.”
- Vānimādhava left quietly. Vrajanātha was well aware of Vānimādhava’s double-faced character and although he had studied extensively the polemical methods of logic and rhetoric he disliked dishonest ways.

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- He had revealed his intimate thoughts about accepting renunciation because of Vānimādhava's alleged willingness to assist him in entering the sannyāsa āśrama.
- Nonetheless, now he understood Vānimādhava's deeper malicious motives.
- Furthermore, it occurred to him that Vānimādhava's scheming intrigues may have been prompted ultimately by some expected personal gain in the matter of his marriage.
- In addition the visit to Māyāpura might have been made with the intention of sowing seeds of dissension.
- Vrajanātha clasped his hands and earnestly prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, let my faith in the guru and the Vaiṣṇavas become fixed and unshakable and not be reduced by the wiles of materialists and cheaters."

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- After being absorbed in philosophical deliberations until late afternoon, at sunset Vrajanātha set out eagerly for Śrīvāsāṅgana.
- After Vānimādhava had left the hut of Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, the elderly Bābājī thought that his visitor was a brahma-rākṣasa, a very powerful demon: ...rākṣasāḥ kalim-āśritya jāyante brahma-yoniṣu... “The demoniac persons will take shelter of Kali-yuga to multiply and be born as brāhmaṇas.”
- This description properly fits my visitor.
- He is arrogant, proud of his brāhmaṇa caste, insolent in behaviour, inimical to the Vaiṣṇavas, and a hypocrite making a show of religiosity.
- This is written all over his face. His narrow shoulders, dim and sly eyes, and cunning circumlocution reflect his black heart.

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- What a striking distinction between the two! Vrajanātha has a lovely nature, and this man takes after the Devil himself.
- O my Śrī Kṛṣṇa! O Śrī Gaurāṅga, please protect me from evil, so I may never have to associate with such men.
- I must warn Vrajanātha against the devious ways of this vicious man.”
- When Vrajanātha came that evening, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī’s affection, which had now greatly increased, encompassed and welcomed him during their greeting embrace.
- Considerably moved, Vrajanātha fell at his feet, his eyes brimming with tears.

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- He remained silent out of shame while Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī began, “I was visited this morning by a dark-complexioned brāhmaṇa youth who made certain provocative remarks, do you know this person?”
- Vrajanātha, “Dear master, if I may repeat your own words, there are many sorts of human beings, some of whom are so perverted that they enjoy causing anxiety to others.
- Vānimādhava—I hesitate to add the prefix ‘brother’—is a prime example of this kind. I would prefer not to mention him anymore.
- His main business is to criticize you in my presence and to blame me in your company, hoping to wedge with falsities and lies a rift in our friendship.
- I hope you were not offended by this upstart.”

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- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “O Kṛṣṇa! O Gaurāṅga! I am fortunate to have been in the service of Vaiṣṇavas for a long time and by their mercy, I am able to judge between a Vaiṣṇava and a non-devotee.
- As I have properly assessed everything that happened today, you may drop the topic.”
- Vrajanātha, “All right dear master, let us forget that fellow. Kindly tell me how the conditioned soul may attain liberation.”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “We find the answer to this question in the seventh śloka of the Daśa-mūla-śikṣā:

*yadā bhrāmaṁ bhrāmaṁ hari-rasa-galad-vaiṣṇava-janaṁ
kadācit sampaśyan tad-anugamane syād ruci-yutaḥ
tadā kṛṣṇāvṛtyā tyajati śanakair māyika-daśāṁ
svarūpaṁ bibhrāṇo vimala-rasa-bhogaṁ sa kurute*

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- “The conditioned jīva travels high and low throughout the material universe from one species of life to another.
- When he associates with a Vaiṣṇava saint, who is saturated in the flowing rasa of devotion to Śrī Hari, he gradually develops ruci for serving the Lord and following the Vaiṣṇava way of life.
- By chanting kṛṣṇa-nāma the jīva becomes purified of his material contamination; thus his svarūpa begins to manifest more and more, and he gradually attains eligibility to relish the nectarous rasa of śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”
- Vrajanātha, “Master, please cite a few verses from the Vedas to substantiate this śloka.”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Both the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.1.2, and Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 4.7, repeat the same śloka:

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*samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagno nīśāya śocati muhyamānaḥ
juṣṭam yadā paśyati anyam īśam asya mahimānam iti vīta-śokaḥ*

- “Although the two birds are in the same tree, the eating bird, the jīva, is fully engrossed with anxiety and moroseness as the enjoyer of the fruits of the tree.
- However, if in some way or other he turns to his friend the Lord and knows His glories, the suffering bird becomes immediately free from all anxieties.”
- Vrajanātha, “Do the words, ‘If he turns to his friend the Lord and knows His glories, the suffering bird becomes immediately free from all anxieties,’ describe the liberation of the jīva?”

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- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “The termination of the jīva’s captivity within māyā is called mukti, which the person who associates with pure devotees is sure to attain.
- However, most importantly, one should consider the details of the status, which the jīva attains after mukti.
- The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 2.10.6, declares:

*muktir hitvānyathā rūpaṁ
sva-rūpeṇa vyavasthitih*

- “Mukti is the permanent situation of the living entity in his svarūpa, constitutional transcendental form, after giving up the changeable gross and subtle material bodies.’

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- “According to this verse, the jīva must give up the coverings that are his material bodily forms and become permanently situated in his svarūpa.
- As soon as the chains of captivity are cut, the process of mukti for the jīva ceases.
- Then the eternal and endless engagement of the jīva in his svarūpa, which is the prayojana of the jīva, begins.
- The state of complete elimination of material suffering may also be called mukti, but the sublime, spiritual bliss that the liberated jīva experiences by devotional activity upon the spiritual platform far transcends the relief felt by the cessation of material entanglement.

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- “The Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.12.3, describes:

*evam evaiṣa samprasādo'smāc charīrāt samutthāya
param jyoti-rūpa-sampadya svena rūpenābhiniṣpadyate
sa uttamah puruṣah sa tatra paryeti jakṣan krīḍan ramamāṇah*

- “The liberated jīva transcends the confines of his gross and subtle material bodies and acquires a spiritual form luminescent with transcendental lustre.
- This is his intrinsic, supramundane identity.
- He is a perfect being and resides in the spiritual world relishing sublime activities and divine bliss at every moment.”
- Vrajanātha, “What are the symptoms of a jīvan-mukta, liberated soul?”

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- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “The Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.7.1, mentions eight symptoms:

*ya ātmāpahatā-pāpmā vijaro vimṛtyur viśoko ‘vijighatso
‘pipāsaḥ satya-kāmaḥ satya-saṅkalpaḥ so ‘nveṣṭavyaḥ*

- “A person should search out a jīvan-mukta, who is seen to possess these eight symptoms:
- apahata-pāpa, free from all sinful activity and the nescience of māyā;
- vijara, free from the miseries of old age and decay;
- vimṛtyu, has conquered death and rebirth;
- viśoka, is beyond material happiness and distress;

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- vijighatsa, no longer desires material enjoyment;
- apipātā, has no desire other than the service of the Lord;
- satya-kāma, whose desires are always faultless and directed to the Supreme Truth, Kṛṣṇa; and
- satya-saṅkalpa, whose wishes are always fulfilled by the grace of Kṛṣṇa.”
- Vrajanātha, “The seventh śloka of the Daśa-mūla mentions that after wandering through many species of life the fortunate soul meets a pure Vaiṣṇava devotee filled with kṛṣṇa-prema and this event brings about the highest benediction of the jīva.

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- My first question is: Is it not true that the practice and cultivation of brahma-jñāna, aṣṭanga-yoga, and other pious auspicious activities ultimately lead one to the attainment of devotion to Śrī Hari?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Here are the Supreme Lord’s own words from the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.12.1-2:

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

*na rodhayati mām yogo na sāṅkhyam dharma eva ca
na svādhyāyas tapas tyāgo neṣṭā-pūrtam na dakṣiṇā
vratāni yajñaś chandāmsi tīrthāni niyamā yamāḥ
yathāvarundhe sat-saṅgaḥ sarva-saṅgāpaho hi mām*

- “The Supreme Personality of Godhead said, “My dear Uddhava, by associating with My pure devotees one can destroy one’s attachment for all objects of material sense gratification.

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- The devotion developed in such purifying association brings Me under the control of My devotee.
- One may perform the aṣṭanga-yoga system, engage in philosophical analysis of the elements of material nature, practice non-violence and other ordinary principles of piety, chant the Vedas, perform penances, take to the renounced order of life, execute sacrificial performances and dig wells, plant trees and perform other public welfare activities, give in charity, carry out severe vows, worship the devas, chant confidential mantras, visit holy places or accept major and minor disciplinary injunctions, but even by performing all such activities one does not bring Me under his control.’

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- “The purport is that none of these practices is as potent spiritually in attracting the mercy of the Supreme Lord as is sādhu-saṅga.
- The aṣṭanga-yoga path and other such practices just mentioned please the Lord only superficially, unlike sādhu-saṅga, which pleases Him fully.
- In another text, the Hari-bhakti-sudhodaya, 8.51, this statement is found:

*yasya yat-saṅgatiḥ puṁso maṇivat syāt sa tad-guṇaḥ
sākula-dvaitato dhimān sva-yūthyān eva saṁśrayet*

- “A person gradually acquires the characteristics of the company he keeps, much like a gem stone which lends some of its own colour and sparkle to other substances in touch with it.

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- Therefore a person can become a pure devotee in the saintly association of pure devotees.’
- “Sadhu-saṅga brings blessings to all the living entities.
- The scriptures advise niḥsaṅga, to live without companions.
- This means one should give up contact with worldly-minded people and only seek the saintly company of Vaiṣṇavas.
- Even accidental association with pure devotees without knowledge of the benefit brings good fortune, as declared in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 3.23.56:

*saṅgo yaḥ saṁsṛter hetur asatsu vihito ’dhiyā
sa eva sādhuṣu kṛto niḥsaṅgatvāya kalpate*

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- “Desiring companionship for sense gratification is certainly the path to bondage.
- Yet, the same act of association with saintly persons leads to the path of liberation, even if performed without knowledge.’
- “Further, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 7.5.32:

*naisam matis tavad urukramanghrim
sprsaty anarthapagamo yad-arthah
mahiyasam pada-rajo “bhisekam
niskincananam na vrnita yavat*

- “Unless they smear upon their bodies the dust of the lotus feet of a Vaiṣṇava completely free from material contamination, persons very much inclined towards materialistic life cannot be attached to the lotus feet of the Lord, who is glorified for His uncommon activities.

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- Only by becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious and taking shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord one can be freed from material contamination.’
- “Further, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 10.48.31:
*na hy am-mayāni tīrthāni na devā mṛc-chilā-mayāḥ
te punanty uru-kālena darśanād eva sādhaḥ*
- ““Only after a long period of worshiping Gaṅgā devī, the holy places of pilgrimage, and the earthen and marble deity forms of the devas, is the soul of such a worshiper sanctified, whereas an unalloyed devotee of the Lord purifies any person simply by giving a moment’s association through his mere presence.’
- “Further, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 10.51.53:

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

- “O, Acyuta! O, Supreme Being! O, One who is eternally fixed in His original identity! O, infallible One! The jīva is eternally caught in the continuous cycle of birth and death.
- When the time for his release from this vicious cycle comes, he first attains the association of saintly persons.
- Right from that moment, he develops attachment to Your lotus feet.
- You are the Lord of both the material and the spiritual worlds and the shelter for the saintly souls.’

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- “Vrajanātha my boy, the eternally conditioned soul has been crucified on the karma-cakra, the cycle of fruitive action, since time immemorial.
- He wanders in the material universe from one species of life to another, sometimes as a deva and sometimes as a beast.
- However, if—on the strength of previous sukṛti, accumulated over many life-times—he meets a pure elevated devotee of the Lord, he develops attraction to serve the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”
- Vrajanātha, “Master, you say that sukṛti brings a person into contact with a saintly soul. What is sukṛti? Is it a part of karma or jñāna?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “According to the scriptures, pious auspicious activities are called sukṛti.

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- They are of two varieties: bhakti-pravartaka, that which invokes devotional service to the Supreme Lord; and avāntara-phala-pravartaka, that which gives extraneous material results.
- The fruitive activities and pursuit of empirical knowledge in the sāṅkhya philosophy are examples of sukṛti producing extraneous results.
- Yet, saintly association; dhāma-yatra, spiritually enlivening pilgrimages; observing devotional vows; and so on, are bhakti-pravartaka and generate eternal devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- On the other hand, avantara-phala-pravartika sukṛti gives temporary material results and then exhausts its effect.
- “All materially meritorious deeds—giving charity, performing austerity, etc.—reward us with sense gratification.

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- In addition, by realization of Brahman through monistic empirical knowledge, one achieves the sukṛti that bestows impersonal mukti.
- However, none of these sukṛtis can generate attachment for devotional service.
- On the other hand, seeking the company of pure devotees; observing vows conducive to devotional service such as Ekādaśī, Janmāṣṭamī (the appearance day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and Gaurapūrṇimā (the appearance day of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya); offering service to Tulasī devī; honouring mahā-prasāda, the sanctified food remnants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; circumambulation of the temple of Śrī Viṣṇu; and worshiping the holy dhāma are all bhakti-pravartaka sukṛti.”

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- Vrajanātha, “If a person who is afflicted by the pangs of material existence and is thus desirous to end his suffering—which is caused by nescience—directly and earnestly approaches the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Hari in order to surrender himself, will he not be awarded with bhakti?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “By his power of discrimination a person may become conscious of the distress inflicted upon him by Māyādevī and comprehend that material life is unreal and contaminating.
- However, only upon realizing that the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord and His unalloyed intimate devotees are his sole sanctuaries, and then single-mindedly endeavouring to surrender to the Lord through the medium of His pure devotees will the sincere soul properly realize the protective association of sādhus engrossed in kṛṣṇa-prema.

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- This sublime sādhu-saṅga then bestows the prime devotional sukṛti, giving the aspirant the greatest blessing—attainment of the lotus feet of Śrī Hari.
- “The jīva’s initial mood of renunciation and state of awakening consciousness play an indirect, secondary role as stepping stones towards his ultimate devotional goal.
- However, sādhu-saṅga is an indispensable need and is thus the principal means to attain śuddha-bhakti at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”
- Vrajanātha, “If we place karma, pious works; jñāna, empirical knowledge; vairāgya, renunciation; and viveka, discrimination, as the secondary causes for bhakti, why do we not call them bhakti-pravartaka sukṛti?”

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- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “We have strong reservations against accepting this opinion.
- The results of these secondary causes are extraneous to the real goal, most often becoming redundant and ineffective after being awarded.
- Karma pushes the jīva into the pool of material enjoyment, dries it up, and then leaves.
- Vairāgya and viveka may elevate the jīva only up to the non-dual Brahman realization, but are generally inadequate to elevate him further.
- The monistic, non-dual Brahman realization, by its impersonal nature usually deprives the jīva from receiving shelter at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord.

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- Therefore, these performances cannot be assertively termed bhakti-pravartaka sukṛti.
- Rarely they may elevate someone to the doors of bhakti—but that is the exception, not the rule.
- Sadhu-saṅga, on the other hand, has no irrelevant side effects; it heaves the devotee to the highest realization, prema, as confirmed in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 3.25.25:

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

- “In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Lord is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart.

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- By cultivating such knowledge one gradually advances along the path of liberation, thereafter one is freed, and one's attraction becomes fixed.
- Then real devotion and devotional service begin.”
- Vrajanātha, “Thus sādhu-saṅga is established as the only bhakti-pravartaka-sukṛti.
- How about the procedure? Is the hearing of hari-kathā from the sādhus then followed by the attainment of bhakti?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Very well, I will explain the development step by step—listen carefully.

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- While wandering through the different species of life, a jīva upon attaining birth as a human being must perform providentially or otherwise bhakti-pravartaka-sukṛti in the form of any one of the limbs of pure devotional service, such as fasting on Ekādaśī, or on other spiritually important occasions; visiting and respecting the holy places of the pastimes of the Supreme Lord; or hearing kīrtana from the lips of a renounced and humble Vaiṣṇava sādhu.
- However, those persons who purposely desire bhukti and mukti will not get the benefits of bhakti-pravartaka-sukṛti, even by performing any of these activities.
- In contrast, if an innocent person, even one devoid of philosophical understanding, performs these activities by accident, by chance, or by social custom without desiring bhukti and mukti, he obtains the results of bhakti-pravartaka-sukṛti.

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- “When such sukṛti has been accumulated over many lifetimes, it generates a force that creates śraddhā, which is defined as faith in the practice of śuddha-bhakti.
- This śraddhā then gives birth to the desire to associate with pure devotees, which is sādhu-saṅga.
- Thereafter, this sādhu-saṅga inspires a gradual increase in bhajana, which initially is the cultivation of sādhana-bhakti, such as meditation and chanting.
- “Bhajana destroys the unwanted material desires in the heart, known as anarthas. When the anarthas are uprooted, śraddhā is transformed into niṣṭhā, unflinching faith.
- Through gradual purification, niṣṭhā increasingly generates ruci, taste for bhakti.

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- Ruci then reveals the sublime beauty of bhakti and is converted into āsakti, strong attachment for bhakti.
- When āsakti fully blossoms, bhāva (also known as rati), loving spiritual emotion, floods the heart.
- All the different bhāvas in concert create rasa, spiritual mellow, finally leading to kṛṣṇa-prema.
- “The point is that the jīva with sufficient bhakti-sukṛti upon seeing a sādhu develops the inclination to associate with such śuddha-bhaktas and follow their example.
- The essential conclusion is that the first stage of contact with a sādhu creates śraddhā in the heart.
- This śraddhā then inspires the jīva to see and approach the sādhus in a new light; the aspiring jīva now sees the sādhus as his gurus.

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- This is the second stage of sādhu-saṅga.
- Another term for this increased level of śraddhā is śaraṇāpatti, surrender.
- The first stage of sādhu-saṅga is defined as coming into circumstantial contact with Śrī Hari's sacred places, festival days, paraphernalia, and śuddha-bhaktas; and thereby becoming a recipient of mercy.
- The Bhagavad-gītā, 18.66, describes śaraṇāpatti, the result of the first stage of sādhu-saṅga, in the following verse:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja
aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

- “Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto me.

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- I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.’
- “These ‘all varieties of religion’ include smarta, aṣṭanga-yoga, sāṅkhya, jñāna, vairāgya, etc., which are all naimittika-dharma.
- Abandoning them has to be accompanied by the proper realization that such performances will never bestow prayojana, the prime necessity of human existence.
- The Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Hero of Vraja, the embodiment of eternity, absolute knowledge and bliss is the sole goal of human existence.
- Knowing this, the jīva must relinquish the desire for the bhukti and mukti of naimittika-dharma and practice śaraṇāpatti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

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- This is real śraddhā. When the heart of the jīva is controlled by such śraddhā, he sheds tears of remorse and applies himself to following a pure Vaiṣṇava sādhu.
- Thus at this second stage, sādhu-saṅga brings the jīva to the point of finding the shelter of a guru.”
- Vrajanātha, “What are the different anarthas of the jīva?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “There are four types of anarthas: sva-svarūpa aprāpti, ignorance about one’s own true identity; asat-tṛṣṇā, hankering after illusory phenomena; aparādha, offences; and hṛdaya-daurbalyam, weakness and hesitancy of the heart.
- “When the jīva forgets that he is a minute, pure, transcendental part and parcel of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the eternal servitor of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he becomes materially entrapped and oblivious of his true spiritual identity.

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- This is the first anartha of the jīva, known as sva-svarūpa aprāpti.
- Next, the jīva, identifying himself with the material body, becomes attached to material objects and projecting his ego onto them he desires to enjoy and exploit them to gain illusory, fleeting pleasures.
- Thus, the jīva wallows in the second anartha known as asat-trṣṇā, hankering after illusory phenomena, which is divided into the three categories of such material desire: putra-īśānā, for sons; vitta-īśānā, for wealth; and svarga-īśānā, for paradise.
- The aparādhas are ten in number—they will be discussed in detail later.
- Finally, the results of hṛdaya-daurbalyam are grief and distress, plus a host of other problems.

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- “These four types of anarthas are the concomitant results of the nescience that covers the jīva.
- By following the process of devotional service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the association of pure devotees, these anarthas are gradually annulled.
- The path of yoga—consisting of the four parts: pratyāhāra, withdrawal from sense-objects; yama, self-control; niyama, restraint; and vairāgya, renunciation—is not a means to free oneself from material anxiety, for it cannot award ultimate perfection and is filled with problems and the danger of falldown and failure.
- To become ultimately purified by this path is only a most distant possibility.

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- “On the other hand, the method of śuddha-bhakti in sādhu-saṅga is easy to follow and totally immune to the ravages of anxiety.
- The material involvement of the jīva is reduced to the same extent as his anarthas are decreased, and his material attachments and coverings recede as his svarūpa is re-established.”
- Vrajanātha, “May the jīvas who are free from anarthas be called liberated?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Consider these verses from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 6.14.3-5:

*rajobhiḥ sama-saṅkhyātāḥ pārthivair iha jantavaḥ
teṣāṃ ye kecanehante śreyo vai manujādayaḥ*

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- “In this material world there are as many living entities as there are atoms.
- Among these living entities, a very few are human beings, and among them, few are interested in following religious principles.’

*rāyo mumukṣavas teṣāṁ kecanaiva dvijottama
mumukṣūṅāṁ sahasreṣu kaścin mucyeta sidhyati*

- “O best of the brāhmaṇas, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, out of many persons who follow religious principles, only a few desire liberation from the material world.
- Among many thousands who desire liberation, one may actually achieve liberation, giving up material attachment to society, friendship, love, country, home, wife and children.

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- And among many thousands of such liberated persons, one who can understand the true meaning of liberation is very rare.’

*muktānām api siddhānām nārāyaṇa-parāyaṇaḥ
sudurlabhaḥ praśāntātmā koṭiṣv api mahā-mune*

- “O great sage, among many millions who are liberated and perfect in knowledge of liberation, one may be a devotee of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, or Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- Such devotees who are fully peaceful are extremely rare.’
- “One who is free from anarthas is a śuddha-bhakta, a very rare personality indeed.
- Even amongst many millions of liberated persons, a śuddha-bhakta of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is rarely found.

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- Therefore, there is not a more extraordinary saṅga in this world than that with a śuddha-bhakta of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”
- Vrajanātha, “Is the term Vaiṣṇava only applied to the gṛha-tyāgī, renounced order of Vaiṣṇavas?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “A śuddha-bhakta of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is a Vaiṣṇava.
- It matters not whether he is a householder or a renunciate, a brāhmaṇa or a caṇḍāla, a wealthy person or a poor man.
- The measure of his śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the degree of his elevation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and his position as a Vaiṣṇava.”
- Vrajanātha, “You said earlier that the conditioned jīvas within the material world display five levels of consciousness.

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- And that bhaktas either on the stage of sādhana-bhakti or bhāva-bhakti are counted amongst those who are under the subjugation of māyā.
- At what stage of devotional development is a bhakta considered māyā-mukta, liberated from māyā?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “As soon as the jīva is initiated into śuddha-bhakti, he receives the designation māyā-mukta jīva, a liberated soul.
- However, he is only truly emancipated from the subjugation of māyā when he has fully matured in sādhana-bhakti.
- Prior to this maturity, the jīva is only liberated to the extent he has attained svarūpa-gata-māyā-mukti, awareness of his constitutional spiritual nature and liberation from false ego.

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- Vastu-gata-māyā-mukti, complete liberation, takes place when the jīva is completely freed from his gross and subtle material bodies and established in his svarūpa and transcendental service.
- Sincere adherence to the process of sādhana-bhakti ignites at some stage the spark of bhāva-bhakti.
- If the flame of bhāva-bhakti is kept burning and the jīva has thus become firmly fixed in this elevated state of spiritual consciousness, then at the time of leaving the gross body, his subtle body will also dissolve and he will obtain his pure transcendental svarūpa and transcendental service.
- “The material conditioning of the jīva remains therefore throughout the period of sādhana-bhakti, even spilling over into the beginning stage of bhāva-bhakti, though only residual amounts persist.

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- Therefore, the authorities in our line have included sādhanabhakti and bhāva-bhakti within the five levels of consciousness considered māyā-kavalita, under the influence of māyā.
- The gross materialist seeking bhukti and the jñānī seeking mukti most certainly also belong to these five levels.
- “Amongst those souls who are liberated, complete emancipation from subservience to māyā is only eventually accomplished by those jīvas blessed with śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Hari.
- The imprisonment of the jīva began when the jīva forgot his position as the eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- This forgetfulness is the original offence of the jīva and is the root of all the jīva’s subsequent offences.

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- Only the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa can forgive all these offences and nothing else.
- Therefore, the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is alone the indispensable instrument that can fully release the jīva from the captivity of māyā.
- “The monistic philosophers cultivating empirical knowledge are under the false impression that just by acquiring knowledge one can attain mukti.
- However, it is impossible to attain complete mukti without the benediction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 10.2.32-33, this point is explained:

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*ye 'nye 'ravindākṣa vimukta-māninas
tvayy asta-bhāvād aviśuddha-buddhayaḥ
āruhya kṛcchreṇa param padam tataḥ
patanty adho 'nādr̥ta-yuṣmad-aṅghrayaḥ*

- “O lotus-eyed one, those who think they are liberated in this life, but do not render devotional service to You, must be of impure intelligence.
- Although they accept severe austerities and penances, and rise to the spiritual position, to the impersonal Brahman realization, they fall down again because they neglect to worship Your lotus feet.’

*tathā na te mādharma tāvakāḥ kvacid
bhraśyanti mārgāt tvayi baddha-sauhr̥dāḥ
tvayābhiguptā vicaranti nirbhayā
vināyakānīkapa-mūrdhasu prabhu*

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- “O Supreme Personality of Godhead, Mādhava! Your intimate and surrendered devotees are held captive by the bonds of love they have for Your lotus feet.
- Hence, they are not afraid of falling down from the path of bhakti, unlike those who proudly consider themselves as vimukta-māninas, liberated.
- O Lord, Your devotees are so well protected by You that they dauntlessly dance on the heads of those who try to hinder them.”
- Vrajanātha, “How many types of māyā-mukta jīvas are there?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Initially, there are two types of māyā-mukta jīvas: the nitya-mukta jīvas, eternally liberated souls; and the baddha-mukta jīvas, those who have attained liberation from their previous conditioned, material existence.

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- The nitya-mukta jīvas were never captured by māyā.
- They are categorized into two groups: nitya-mukta jīvas who are aiśvarya-gata, engrossed in the opulence of the Lord in a reverential mood; and those who are saturated in mādhurya-gata, the nectarean moods of the divine conjugal love of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa.
- “The aiśvarya-gata-nitya-mukta jīvas are the nitya-pārṣadās of Śrī Nārāyaṇa, the presiding Lord of Vaikuṅṭha.
- They are the particles of the spiritual effulgence emanating from Śrī Mūla-Saṅkarṣaṇa, who resides in Vaikuṅṭha.
- “The mādhurya-gata-nitya-mukta jīvas are the nitya-pārṣadās of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of Vraja-vṛndāvana.

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- They are the particles of the spiritual effulgence emanating from the body of Śrī Balarāma, who is situated in Goloka Vṛndāvana.
- “The baddha-mukta jīvas after the attainment of mukti are of three types: aiśvarya-gata, those steeped in the opulences of the Lord; mādhyurya-gata, those absorbed by the sweetness of the Lord; and brahma-jyotir-gata, those who meditate upon the impersonal brahma-jyotir effulgence of the Lord.
- “The jīvas who in their period of sādhana were inclined to the reverential moods of bhakti in aiśvarya were elevated to the planets of Śrī Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṅṭha as the associates of His nitya-pārsadās.
- Those jīvas who in their period of sādhana were attracted to the intimate moods of bhakti in mādhyurya became the eternal residents of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s Goloka Vṛndāvana and now relish nectarine rasa as the associates of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His nitya-pārsadās.

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- However, those jīvas who sought to merge into the non-dual Absolute Brahman and as a result have attained sāyujya-mukti after death are in the debilitated situation of brahma-sāyujya, amalgamation into the impersonal brahma-jyotir.”
- Vrajanātha, “What is the final destination of those who worship Śrī Gaurāṅga?”
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Gaurāṅga are non-different in terms of tattva; they are the same Absolute Truth and both are the fountainheads of madhura-rasa, nectarean, honey-like mellows.
- However, there are two ways in which madhura-rasa manifests: mādhyura, transcendental conjugal sweetness; and audārya, transcendental magnanimity.

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- When mādhyurya is pre-eminent, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is manifest, and when audārya is prominent, Śrī Gaurāṅga is manifest.
- In the original Vṛndāvana, Goloka, there are two symmetrical halves: kṛṣṇa-pīṭha, the abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; and gaura-pīṭha, the abode of Śrī Gaurāṅga.
- In kṛṣṇa-pīṭha reside those jīvas whose devotional mood is primarily mādhyurya, appended with audārya—they are the devotees of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.
- In gaura-pīṭha reside those jīvas whose devotional mood is most pronouncedly audārya, supported by mādhyurya—they are the eternal servitors of Śrī Gaurāṅga.
- In certain cases, some eternally liberated souls are present simultaneously in both the pīṭhas through their svarūpa-vyūha, personal expansions.

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- In other instances, particular pārṣadās participate in one pīṭha in their spiritual form, being absent in the other.
- “Devotees who worship Śrī Gaurāṅga exclusively in their period of sādhana attain gaura-pīṭha when they are liberated and perfect; whereas, those who worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa exclusively in their period of sādhana serve in kṛṣṇa-pīṭha after liberation.
- Then there are those devotees who in their period of sādhana worship both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Gaurāṅga.
- After obtaining liberation, they acquire two transcendental forms and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa in kṛṣṇa-pīṭha and Śrī Gaurāṅga in gaura-pīṭha simultaneously.
- This is the divine and confidential mystery of the inconceivable, simultaneous oneness and difference of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Gaurāṅga.”

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- The unequivocal instructions of Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī about the liberated souls caused Vrajanātha to be overwhelmed with strong spiritual emotions and he fell at the feet of his elder Vaiṣṇava guru.
- Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, moved to tears, took Vrajanātha in his arms and, exuding paternal affection, firmly embraced him.
- Time had flown by and it was late in the night when Vrajanātha took leave of Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī and slowly returned home, totally engrossed in Bābājī's instructions in the matter of the jīva's final destination.
- While taking his supper, he spoke sternly with his grandmother, “Grandmother, if you desire to see me at all, you must cancel those things you call matrimonial arrangements.

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- Vānimādhava should be told not to visit this house. You must not involve him in any of our family matters—he is my enemy.
- I will not speak to him any more and you should not have anything to do with him.”
- A very intelligent lady, the elderly grandmother calmly considered her conversation earlier that morning with Vānimādhava and the one now with her grandson Vrajanātha and quickly decided to postpone the entire matter of Vrajanātha’s matrimony to a future, more congenial time.
- “Further pressure and coaxing will aggravate the displeasure of Vrajanātha, perhaps provoking him to leave home for Vārāṇasī, Kāśī, or Vṛndāvana.
- Therefore, I shall leave it up to Śrī Parameśvara to do as He pleases,” she concluded within her mind.

Chapter 17: Nitya-dharma: Sambandha, Abhidheya and Prayojana

*Thus ends the seventeenth chapter of Jaiva-dharma,
entitled: Nitya-dharma: Sambandha, Abhidheya and
Prayojana.*

*Part Five: The Liberation of the Jīva from the Prison
House of Māyā*