

Jaiiva-dharma

by Śrīla Saccidānanda
Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

However, by the time Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took birth on September 2, 1838, the sublime transcendental tenets of Srī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had largely been forgotten.

Born in the ancient village of Birnagar (Ulāgrām) in the Nadia district of West Bengal, Srīla Bhaktivinoda was the third son of Ānanda-candra Datta and Jagat-mohīni, both of whom belonged to wealthy and eminent families.

His father named him Kederanātha, a name of Lord Śiva. Talented and thoughtful, from an early age Kederanātha Datta began to search for the essence of life.

After marriage and his studies in Calcutta, during which his great literary abilities became evident, this search led him to acquire copies of Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.

After reading these two books, Kederanātha became an ardent devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, whom he termed “the Eastern Saviour.”

He took as his life’s mission the revival of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in their original pristine purity.

Simultaneously, he pursued a career in the British administration that then ruled India, eventually rising to the most respectable position of Deputy Magistrate.

In the late nineteenth century, Vaiṣṇavism was under siege in India.

Economic development and sensual pursuits were the programme for the 'modern age'.

Vaisnavism was thought to be outmoded, and the truths of the sacred Vedas were obscured by rampant misinterpretation, speculation, and condemnation.

In this atmosphere, only a very few Vaisnava devotees understood and properly practiced the sublime tenets of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

For the most part, the spotless transcendental pastimes Śrī Kṛṣṇa enjoys in the spiritual world with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the other gopīs, as revealed in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, were equated with the condemned licentious affairs of this world.

As a result, the pure Vaiṣṇavism taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had largely been covered and had fallen into disrepute throughout large sections of society.

↳ Bipin Bihari Goswami

Inspired by his spiritual master, (Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī), Śrīla Bhaktivinoda set out to revive the true teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Helped by his fourth son, Bimala Prasāda, who would become the celebrated Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Thākura Prabhupāda, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda started a vigorous campaign of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The undaunted efforts of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda knew no bounds, and great success followed his heroic struggles and campaigns. Books, essays, magazines, poems, songs, and commentaries flowed like the unstoppable Ganges from his pen.

He founded many preaching centres for the distribution of kṛṣṇa-nāma and most notably he revealed the lost site of Śrī Caitanya's birth.

In 1896, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda reached out to the Western world with the publication of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: His Life and Precepts.

He sent this concise English work to various universities and intellectuals, particularly in the West.

In that same year, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda made a remarkable prediction. Long before the invention of the aeroplane, he wrote, "A personality will soon appear in order to preach the teachings of Śrī Caitanya and move unrestrictedly over the whole world with His message."

This year, 1896, was the birth year of Śrīla A.C. Bhaktivedanta Svāmī Prabhupāda, who would fulfil the Thākura's prophecy in his later years with the founding of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

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Earlier, in 1885, in his monthly Bengali publication Sajjana-toṣaṇi, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda had called for the day when the fortunate English, French, Russian, German, and American people would take up hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana in their streets and join with their Bengali brothers in diving into the ocean of Śrī Caitanya's love.

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Furthermore, in the same publication, the Thākura called for the day when all sects and religions of the world would flow like rivers into the ocean of Vaiṣṇavism.

This trio of predictions, which the world is presently seeing fulfilled, displays the spiritual empowerment of the great personality known as Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura.

In recognition of his eminence, the learned Vaiṣṇava community of the time designated the Thākura the 'Seventh Gosvāmī', according him a status equivalent to that of the Six Gosvāmīs, the direct disciples of Śrī Caitanya. Any student of his life and works can only agree.

In 1908, the Thākura left household life, embracing the sannyāsa āśrama with the acceptance of bābājī-veṣa from Śrīla Gaura Kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja and would soon accept a number of disciples.

However, in 1910, in Bhakti Bhavan, near the samādhi of Srīla Haridāsa Thākura on the seashore of Jagannātha Purī, the Thākura entered deep spiritual trance in uninterrupted meditation upon the transcendental līlā of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa, largely oblivious to the external world.

On the 23rd of June 1914, precisely at noon, at this holy place, the Thākura departed this world to enter the eternal pastimes of the Lord.

This was the same day that Gadādhara Pandita, the incarnation of Śrīmatī Rādhārānī in the Pañca-tattva, had returned to the Lord's unmanifest līlā some four hundred and fifty years before.

His legacy, freely bestowed upon all souls of this world, is an exemplary spiritual life and an ocean of transcendental literature.

This ocean comprises innumerable magazine articles and over one hundred publications of songs, poetry, and philosophy.

A major wave in this ocean is the Jaiva-dharma, published in Bengali in that momentous year of 1896.

The book is set in Navadvīpa-dhāma, Śrī Caitanya's birthplace, approximately one hundred years after His birth. The work is in the form of a highly entertaining novel, the central core of which is a series of dialogues between spiritual teachers and their disciples.

There are also a number of debates on various topics between these teachers and antagonistic parties. Within this format, Srīla Bhaktivinoda brilliantly elucidates the philosophy, practice, and ultimate goal of transcendental life as taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

The book has four distinct parts that progressively illuminate the various levels of spiritual practice the fallen conditioned jīva must pursue to be re-established in his eternal jaiva-dharma, transcendental love of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Srī Kṛṣṇa.

Part-1 → Jaiva dharma is distinct from all types of material activity

Chapters One to Twelve form the first part, which establishes the transcendental authenticity of jaiva-dharma as distinct from all material activity.

Chapter One clarifies the difference between pure jaiva-dharma and mundane, materially motivated religiosity.

Chapter Two establishes jaiva-dharma as the pure and eternal function of the soul, as opposed to the ever-changing flux of activities the fallen soul performs in the illusion of material conditioning.

Chapter Three expounds the prime necessity of renouncing all illusory material designations in the search for the Absolute.

In particular, the relationship between varṇāśrama-dharma and jaiva-dharma is debated.

Chapter Four establishes jaiva-dharma, vaiṣṇava-dharma, and nitya-dharma, the eternal function of the soul, as synonymous when understood in their purest essence.

Chapter Five explains that vaidhī-bhakti, comprising the preliminary devotional practices that lead to the attainment of one's innate jaiva-dharma, is a purely transcendental activity.

In this regard, there are friendly discussions between the descendants of the Chānd Kazi, a Muslim-born devotee of Śrī Caitanya, and the renounced Vaiṣṇavas.

In Chapter Six, a brāhmaṇa paṇḍita offended by the friendly dealings between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Kāzī's descendants debates the validity of this behaviour.

Jaiva-dharma is established as open to all souls, without consideration of race and caste.

Chapter Seven fully elucidates the terrible cycle of birth and death in the material world and how jaiva-dharma frees one from such suffering.

In Chapter Eight, Vaiṣṇava behaviour is explained to a young devotee. This chapter describes the various levels of Vaiṣṇavas, and how one should relate toward the members of each level.

Chapter Nine contains an interesting debate between a Vaiṣṇava and a Śakta worshiper that contrasts the goals of spiritual culture with those of material advancement.

Chapter Ten relates another debate, this time concerning the historical status of the Vaiṣṇavism taught by Śrī Caitanya.

The conclusion is that the philosophy and practices taught by Śrī Caitanya are eternal.

In Chapter Eleven, a Muslim scholar challenges the Vaiṣṇavas over their practice of Deity worship.

A fascinating debate ensues. In Chapter Twelve, Vrajanātha, a sincere aspirant to jaiva-dharma, enters the book.

He is given preliminary guidance in the principles of sādhana, regulated spiritual practice, and sādhya, the ultimate goal of such practice.

Part-2 → Daśa mīk fattva

We now enter the second part of the book, Chapters Thirteen through Twenty-two.

Jaiva-dharma in connection with material topics has been illustrated, so Śrīla Bhaktivinoda moves us, the enthralled readers, on to an elaborate exposition of the Daśā-mula-tattva, the ten fundamental principles of the philosophy taught by Śrī Caitanya.

Chapter Thirteen enumerates these ten principles, which are divided into two categories: pramāṇa, proof, and prameya, that which is to be proved.

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This chapter also expounds on the first two of the ten principles.

The first is pramāṇa; the sacred Vedas are established as the ultimate authority in the description of Absolute Truth and thus as the ultimate pramāṇa, proof.

The second principle establishes Śrī Hari—Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead—as the highest manifestation of the Absolute Truth.

Chapter Fourteen presents the third and fourth principles. The third principle portrays the inconceivable potencies of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the fourth illustrates Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the shelter of all rasa, transcendental mellow.

Chapter Fifteen begins a trio of chapters discussing jīva-tattva, the truth concerning the jīvas, the innumerable individual spirit souls.

Chapter Fifteen begins the discussion with an elaborate exposition of the intrinsic nature of the jīva. Chapter Sixteen describes the enslavement of the errant jīva by the māyā-sakti, the external, illusory material energy.

Chapter Seventeen gives us hope by describing the liberation of the jīva from the māyā-sakti and his establishment under the shelter of the cit-sakti, the internal, spiritual energy.

Chapter Eighteen gives the ultimate description of reality: acintya-bhedābheda-tattva, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's inconceivable and simultaneous difference from and oneness with every aspect of His creation.

10 mūla

1 pramāṇya → proof
9 prameya → that which is to be proved.

Chapter Nineteen moves us on from sambandha-tattva, the philosophical tenets of bhakti, to a trio of chapters dealing with abhidheya-tattva, the means for attaining the highest goal.

9 prameya
7 sambandhe → 3 ②
1 abhidheya → 3 Jīva
 → 1 acintya śleṣa-āśeṣa
 → 1 sēdhane bhakti
1 prayojane → pr-10-11

Chapter Nineteen begins the trio by presenting unmotivated bhakti, uncontaminated by karma (fruitive desire) or jñāna (empirical mental speculation) as the abhidheya, means of attainment.

Chapter Twenty elaborately elucidates the beginning stage of abhidheya: vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti, regulated devotional practices impelled by chaste adherence to scriptural injunctions "scriptural stipulations" sounds horrible.

Chapter Twenty-one takes us to the next stage of abhidheya with a wonderfully informative presentation of rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti, devotional practice following in the footsteps of the residents of the transcendental realm and impelled by an awakening spiritual greed.

Chapter Twenty-two presents the final and tenth principle of the daśā-mūla-tattva, known as prayojana-tattva, the highest goal of attainment, which is kṛṣṇa-prema, transcendental love of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Now begins the third section of Jaiva-dharma, comprising three chapters, which presents śrī-nāma-tattva, the principle of harināma, the transcendental names of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Part-3 nāma-tattva

23-25

Chapter Twenty-three begins with a panoramic presentation of the philosophical truths concerning harināma.

Chapter Twenty-four discusses nāmāparādha, offensive chanting, and Chapter Twenty-five discusses nāmābhāsa, the stage of clearing offences to harināma.

As the spiritual aspirant progressively frees his chanting of harināma from offences, the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa enables him to progressively experience rasa, transcendental mellow.

Thus, we are led to the fourth and final section of Jaiva-dharma, which deals with rasa-tattva, the principles of transcendental mellow.

Part -4 → 26-40 → Rasa tattva

Chapter Twenty-six begins with a general introduction to rasa-tattva.

Chapter Twenty-seven deals with sāmagrī-bhāva, the ingredients of rasa, and the intermixing of these ingredients.

Chapter Twenty-eight explains the central cause of experiencing rasa, known as mukhya-rati, the attachment of the devotee to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

This attachment takes the form of various moods towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Chapter Twenty-nine presents the moods of śānta-rati, attachment in neutrality, dāsya-rati, attachment in servitude, and sakhya-rati, attachment in fraternity.

Chapter Thirty discusses vātsalya-rati, attachment in parenthood, and mādhyurya-rati, attachment in conjugal love.

Chapters Thirty-one to Thirty-seven expound the topic of mādhyurya-rati with detailed descriptions of the constituent personalities, moods, and activities.

The perfection of mādhyā-rati is known as śṛṅgāra-rasa, which has two divisions: vipralambha, love in separation, and sambhoga, love in union.

Chapter Thirty-eight introduces śṛṅgāra-rasa, the perfected mellow of conjugality, and describes vipralambha in detail.

Chapter Thirty-nine elucidates sambhoga with particular reference to the asta-kāliya-līlā, the eightfold daily pastimes that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His dear devotees enjoy in the spiritual world.

In Chapter Thirty-nine, the topic is how the sincere aspirant can actually enter the transcendental līlā of Śrī Kṛṣṇa by undertaking the esoteric practice of ekādaśa-bhava, the assumption of the eleven items of spiritual identity.

Also, the end of this chapter details the particular missions Śrī Caitanya gave His most prominent disciples.

The final chapter, Chapter Forty, scientifically explains the progressive stages on the path of attaining the final goal of life, kṛṣṇa-prema, and the concomitant practices of each level.

The book then ends with a final prayer and the phala-śruti, a description of the fruit one attains by studying this wonderful book, Jaiva-dharma.

At this point, the learned reader will appreciate how comprehensively Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura has presented the philosophy, practice, and goal of Vaiṣṇavism as taught by his Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Though the book displays the profound genius of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda, prema, transcendental love, is the wonderfully predominant mood.

The sincere reader cannot help but imbibe such sublime nectar from the pages of Jaiva-dharma.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura completed the book in 1896 on the appearance day of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; undoubtedly, it is a further avatāra of Śrī Caitanya, the literary incarnation of His teachings.

May our lives be an attempt to repay the infinite debt we owe the great Vaiṣṇava, Śrīla Sac-cid-ānanda Bhaktivinoda Thākura, for his sublime elucidation of jaiva-dharma.

Falling at the lotus feet of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda and all the Vaiṣṇavas, I pray to become their eternal servant, Keśīdamana dāsa

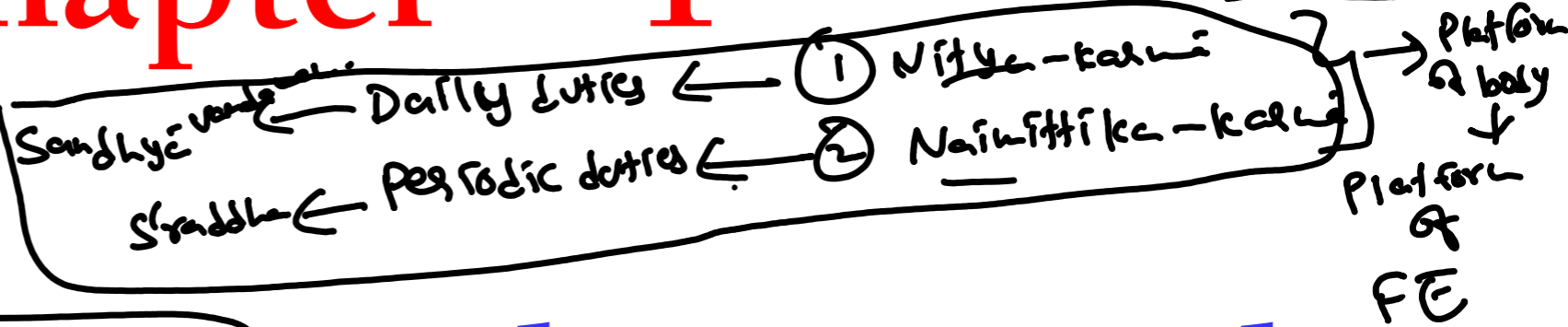
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Chapter - 1

Palace of the Jeeva
Senses

Dharma of the soul
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Jaike dhama.



Nitya-dharma, The Eternal Nature of the Living Entity, and Naimittika-dharma, His Impermanent Religious Duties

Jambūdvīpa, the earth planet, is the most precious planet in the solar system,
and Bhārata-varṣa, India, is the most auspicious land upon earth.

Jambudvīpe → Bhāta khēḍe
↳ Bhārata varṣe

Gaura-maṇḍala, Bengal, is spiritually the pre-eminent province of India, and
Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma is the crown jewel of Bengal.

Shining eternally in spiritual splendour, the region of Godruma prospers in
one corner of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma, upon the banks of the Bhāgīrathī Gaṅgā.

In days past, the woody bowers of Godruma provided places of spiritual
retreat to many elevated and saintly souls.

Pradyumna-kuñja, a simple meditation cottage, was located in the very same
arbour where Śrī Surabhidevī had long ago meditated, worshiping Śrī
Gaurāṅga-sundara within her heart.

The present occupant of this cottage, Śrī Premadāsa Paramahaṁsa Bābājī, was
receiving spiritual instructions from Śrī Pradyumna Brahmaçārī, a bhāgavata-
pāriṣada, an eternal associate of the Supreme Lord, and was thus known as
his śikṣā-śiṣya, a disciple who receives instruction, but not mantra initiation.

Śrī Premadāsa Paramahaṁsa Bābājī was an erudite scholar, having mastered
all the branches of philosophy and the various scriptures.

He passed his days in continuously chanting harināma, the holy names, in
ecstasy.

Bābājī Mahārāja had chosen Godruma as his place of meditation with the knowledge that it is, according to spiritual criteria, an exact replica of Nandagrāma in Vraja.

28 rounds

His daily routine comprised chanting a minimum of two hundred thousand names of Kṛṣṇa and humbly offering innumerable prostrate obeisances to all Vaiṣṇavas.

He sustained himself by mādhlukarī, thus begging a little foodstuff at the homes of various cowherds until he had enough for the day, just as a bee takes a small amount of pollen from many flowers.

→ प्रवृत्ति

After these daily chores, Śrī Premadāsa Paramahansa Bābājī never wasted the remaining time in village prattle; daily, he would read aloud the Prema-vivarta, by Śrīla Jagadānanda Pandita, an eternal associate of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, his eyes brimming with tears of exultation.

On these occasions, the saintly devotees from the neighbouring cottages eagerly gathered around Śrī Premadāsa Paramahansa Bābājī to listen.

Hardly surprising, for the text of Prema-vivarta is saturated with rasa, spiritual mellow, and the sweet flow of Bābājī Mahārāja's voice was so inspiring that it would douse any flames of material misery within the hearts of the entranced devotees.

One afternoon, after completing his prescribed number of rounds of chanting harināma, Bābājī Mahārāja was seated in a small clearing in the wooded bower named Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī

Upon reciting the Prema-vivarta, he soon felt spiritual emotions stir within his heart.

At that moment, a person of the renounced order, a sannyāsī, approached him and fell flat before him in utter humility, remaining prostrate for a considerable length of time.

Already deep in meditation, Bābājī Mahārāja was at first unaware of the sannyāsī's presence.

However, soon coming out of his meditation and seeing the sannyāsī offering obeisances, Bābājī Mahārāja felt overcome with modesty, for he considered himself lower than the straw in the street.

So Bābājī Mahārāja also fell down upon his hands and knees in front of the sannyāsī, crying out, “O my Śrī Caitanya! O Nityānanda! Kindly be merciful to this fallen wretch!” Then, turning to the sannyāsī, he addressed him, “Sir, I am very low and without means—why do you embarrass me so?”

After touching the feet of Bābājī Mahārāja in awed respect, the sannyāsī stood up.

Bābājī Mahārāja was quick to offer his guest a straw mat, upon which he sat in the assembly of Vaisnavas.

Bābājī Mahārāja began to speak with a faltering voice, choked with
devotional sentiments, “Dear sir, how may this fallen soul be of any service
to you?””

The sannyāsī put down his kamaṇḍalu, water pot, and addressed Bābājī
Mahārāja with folded hands, “Respected master, I am a very unfortunate
soul! Whilst residing in holy places of pilgrimage like Vārāṇasī, I have
thoroughly studied the six branches of philosophy—Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika,
Sāṅkhya, Patañjali, Uttara-mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta—all of which are related
to the Vedas, Brahma-sūtra, and Upaniṣads.”

I have thus spent a good number of years in serious debate and
contemplation upon the different conclusions of the scriptures.

I twelve years ago, I accepted initiation into the sannyāsa order from Srīla Saccidānanda Sarasvatī.

After my initiation, I travelled widely to all places of pilgrimage, always associating with other sannyāsīs in the line of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya.

I passed through the first three levels of the renounced order, namely kūṭīcaka, bahūḍaka, and haṁsa, and some time ago, I attained the final stage of sannyāsa, the paramahaṁsa level.

In Vārāṇasī, I accepted the vow of silence and contemplated deeply the teachings of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, who had compressed the essence of his philosophy into a number of statements from the Vedas such as aham brahmāsmi,

‘I am Brahman’; prajñānam brahmā, ‘Brahman is consciousness’; and tat tvam asi, ‘You are that,’ calling them the mahā-vākyas, great sayings of the Vedas.

‘One day, when I was meditating, a Vaiṣṇava saint passed by, loudly singing the glorious pastimes of Śrī Hari.

I opened my eyes and saw the hairs on his body standing on end and tears cascading down his cheeks, soaking him.

Rapturously he sang, ‘Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, Prabhu Nityānanda!’ He danced with faltering steps, sometimes tripping and falling to the ground.