

Jaiṡa Dharma

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Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Chapter Three

Naimittika-dharma: Impermanent
Religious Duties Are Incomplete,
Pedestrian, Impure and Evanescent

Valueless
mundane.

temporary.

One hour past midnight, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura was deep in meditation, chanting harināma.

All of a sudden, he walked out from his bhajana-kuṭīra into the silky night, and slowly climbed to the top of the hill at the edge of the Godruma woods.

He peered towards the north.

At the zenith, the full moon waved a magic wand and the surrounding landscape and nearby Navadvīpa glowed beautifully in silver glory.

Māyāpura, nestling cosily in the distance, caught his attention.

All at once, Sannyāsī Thākura exhaled and exclaimed in wonder, “Behold! I now see revealed the wondrous and blissful dhāma.

Large temples and archways, all constructed with precious gems, glitter magnificently, setting aglow the shores and peacefully flowing waters of the Jāhnavī Gaṅgā.

From many quarters, the congregational chanting of harināma swells resoundingly, heaving upwards and engulfing the satin sky.

Like Śrī Nārada, thousands of devotees are playing upon vīnās and swirling about in stately dance.

On one side, the chief of the devas, demigods, Śrī Mahādeva, white as a lily,
plays upon his ḍamarū drum, dancing wildly and singing, 'O my dear
Viśvambhara! Be merciful to me!' and then falls to the ground in ecstasy.

“In one corner, Lord Brahmā, addressing an august assembly of Vedic sages,
explains the verse from the Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad, 3.12:

mahān-prabhur vai puruṣaḥ sattvasy aiśaḥ pravartakaḥ
sunirmalam imam prāptim iśāno jyotir vyayaḥ

“Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the Supreme Controller, the Supreme
Personality of Godhead. He is the origin of all inspiration and intelligence
within man. Immortality and unalloyed peace is attained by His mercy alone.
He is of a golden hue and immeasurably effulgent. He is infinite,
inexhaustible, and the embodiment of divine love.’

“In another area, jubilant and dancing devas, headed by Indra, the king of heaven, exult in ecstatic helter-skelter activities.

They sing a loud chorus, 'Jaya Prabhu Gauracandra! Jaya Nityānanda!' Sitting in the trees, the birds coo jubilantly, 'Gaura-Nitāi!'

Bumblebees fly erratically throughout the flower gardens, inebriated with the ambrosia of Śrī Gauracandra's sweet name.

Maddened by the delicious nectar of Gauracandra's name, Mother Nature displays the lush profusion of her splendour.

“Alas! Where does this gorgeous Māyāpura-dhāma hide during the daytime?
And exactly what is inspiring me to behold this divine vision now?”

Throughout the transcendental revelation, Sannyāsī Ṭhākura was remembering his Gurudeva, and he now spoke aloud, “O master! Today, I realize that you have blessed me to perceive the transcendental realm of Māyāpura.

From today onwards, I will strive to present myself as a devotee of Śrī Caitanya.

Seeing that everyone in the spiritual land of Navadvīpa is decorated with tulasi neck-beads, tilaka and harināma chaddars, I will also dress like them.”

Having made this decision, Sannyāsī Thākura fell into a blissful trance, gradually calming himself and regaining his equilibrium.

Although, in the meantime, the miraculous vision had vanished from sight, he exclaimed, “Oh, how fortunate am I that I was able to see, if only for a few moments, the spiritual abode of Śrī Navadvīpa.”

Next morning, Sannyāsī Thākura hastened to the river and sent his māyāvādī sannyāsī staff afloat downstream.

Putting three strands of tulasī neck-beads around his neck and applying the vertical ūrdhva-pundra Vaiṣṇava tilaka mark upon his forehead, he began to dance and sing, “Hari! Hari!”

Later, the Vaiṣṇavas of Godruma-dvīpa, upon seeing the wonderful transformation in his appearance and demeanour, blessed him and fell to the ground to offer him their obeisances.

Seeing this, Sannyāsī Thākura became bashful and said to the assembly, “How extraordinary! I have accepted the Vaiṣṇava style of dress solely to attract the blessings of the Vaiṣṇavas, but instead I am confronted with a new dilemma.

I have heard my guru often repeat this instruction from the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 20.21:

trṇād api sunīcena taror api sahiṣṇunā
amāninā mānadena kīrtaniyaḥ sadā hariḥ

“One who thinks himself lower than the grass, who is more tolerant than a tree, and who does not expect personal honour, but is always prepared to give all respect to others, can very easily always chant harināma.”

Within himself, Sannyāsī Thākura seriously considered the following: “I regard all these Vaiṣṇavas as my gurus.

Yet, they are now offering obeisances to me, what future does my spiritual life hold?” Weighed down with such thoughts, his footsteps trod heavily back to his guru.

He prostrated himself before Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī, who had come to the woody retreat of Śrī Mādhavī-mālatī Maṇḍapa to chant harināma.

Seeing the wonderful transformation in Sannyāsī Thākura, both in attire and sentiment) he stood up and embraced his disciple, showering him with cascading tears, and said, “O my dear Vaiṣṇava dāsa, I feel great spiritual exhilaration by the touch of your blessed body.”

Bābājī’s pronouncement gave Sannyāsī Thākura a new name, Vaiṣṇava dāsa, to replace his old one.

This day began a new and wonderful life for Sannyāsī Thākura, helping him to shed the stigmas of the māyāvādī false ego, the saffron robes, and the false pride of considering himself in possession of vast knowledge on account of his designation as a sannyāsī.

Later in the afternoon, Vaisnavas from Navadvīpa-dhāma and Śrī Godruma assembled in the bowers of Pradyumna-kuñja to receive spiritual instructions and blessings from Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī.

They were patiently seated all about him, softly chanting harināma upon their tulasī beads.

Chanting and saintly association exerted a wonderful effect upon the Vaiṣṇavas and spiritual emotions welled up within their hearts.

Their eyes brimming with tears, they called out, “O my Śrī Gaurāṅga! Prabhu Nityānanda! O my Lord, Sītānātha! All glories to Śacīnandana, son of Śrī Śacīmātā!”

They discussed Kṛṣṇa conscious topics with each other. Some were circumambulating Tulasī devī and others were greeting one another with prostrated obeisances as Vaiṣṇava dāsa arrived upon the scene.

First, he circumambulated Tulasī devī, then fell to the ground, rolling in the dust tread by the hallowed feet of the Vaiṣṇava saints.

Some of the senior Vaiṣṇavas whispered, “Is he not the Sannyāsī Ṭhākura? Look at him, what a miraculous change!”

Still rolling on the ground, Vaiṣṇava dāsa began to petition the assembly, “Today, I am extremely grateful to have received the dust from the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.

By the mercy of my Gurudeva, I have come to know in full that for the jīva the dust of the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas is the only means to attain perfection.

The dust of the lotus feet of the pure Vaiṣṇava, the sanctified water of his footbath known as caraṇāmṛta, and the remnants from his prasādam plate known as adharāmṛta are the three transcendental ingredients constituting both the doctor's prescription against bhava-roga, the material disease, as well as the appropriate diet for the patient.

“Their potency is not merely restricted to curing the material disease of nescience.

Even one who has already been cured of the material disease is protected against re-infection by the further inoculation of the highest spiritual bliss.

My dear Vaiṣṇava saints! Please do not think that I am making an ostentatious exhibition of my erudition, in fact, recently the demon of false pride has been exorcised from my heart.

“I was born into a brāhmaṇa family, studied all the different scriptures, and finally entered the renounced order of life.

My false ego knew no bounds.

Nevertheless, since the time I was first attracted to the Vaisnava philosophy, the seed of humility has been implanted in my heart.

Now, gradually, by your grace, I have discarded the arrogance born of high lineage, the prestige of material education, and the pride that so often accompanies the exalted position of sannyāsa.

Now, therefore, I have concluded that I am simply a shelterless infinitesimal soul. My life is meaningless without finding the sanctuary of the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.

My birth as a brāhmaṇa, my scholarship, and the renounced religious order were inexorably dragging me into the dark well of illusion.

I have opened up my mind to you Vaiṣṇavas without reservation, so now you are free to deal with me, your servant, in any way you deem fit.”

Many of the Vaiṣṇavas, after hearing Vaiṣṇava dāsa's earnest confessions,
addressed him, saying, "O saintly soul! We have always been greedy to
receive the dust from the feet of Vaiṣṇavas of your stature. Please kindly offer
it to us and make our lives worthwhile. You are the receptacle of Bābājī
Mahārāja's divine grace, thus sanctify us by your association.

As it is stated in the Bṛhan-nāradiya Purāṇa:

**bhaktis tu bhagavad-bhakta-saṅgena parijāyate
sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ**

“Devotional sentiments are evoked by the purifying association of advanced devotees. The jīva is able to come into close contact with a pure devotee only by accruing sufficient pious results from many previous births.’