

Jaiṅva Dharma

Person to act in a particular way.

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Chapter Four

The Nitya-dharma Is
Vaiṣṇavism

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “To be a Vaiṣṇava, neither formal education, nor fluency in a particular language is necessary, but it is essential for the jīva to eradicate the nescience of material illusion.

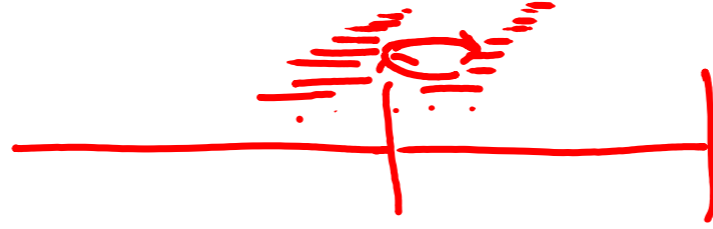


This can only be accomplished when he takes complete shelter of the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master who is a pure Vaiṣṇava saint and who infuses the heart of the disciple with the knowledge of sambandha-tattva through his teachings and exemplary actions.

This is the correct explanation of dīkṣā, initiation, and śikṣā, spiritual instruction.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “What follows dīkṣā and śikṣā?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “One must cultivate an ideal moral character and practice Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”



This stage of development is known as abhidheya-tattva, the process by which one achieves the ultimate desired goal, kṛṣṇa-prema.

The Vedas and all corollary scriptures, have repeatedly stressed the importance of this endeavour for self-realization; and hence Śrī Caitanya has termed this endeavour the abhidheya-tattva, that which needs to be done.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, his eyes brimming with tears, continued, “O master! I will take shelter of your lotus feet.”

Your wonderful instructions have made me grasp the knowledge of sambandha-tattva.

Concurrent with this process of learning and by your mercy, my previous misconceptions have gradually disappeared.

Definite symptom of mercy

↓
Humility

Now kindly teach me the abhidheya-tattva.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Now at last, you can stop worrying! Your humble attitude is a sure indication that Śrī Caitanya has blessed you.

For the captive jīva in the material world, sādhu-saṅga, saintly association, is the only recourse.

The guru and saintly Vaiṣṇavas instruct people about the science of self-realization out of their inherently compassionate nature.

By carrying out this science of devotional service, the sādḥaka, aspirant, gradually approaches the sādḥya, ultimate realization of the essential truth.

Devotional service to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, is the only abhidheya, means, to achieve that ultimate goal.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “What must one do to serve the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, thus engaging in hari-bhajana?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Hari-bhajana means to engage in bhakti. Bhakti is divided into three stages: sādhana, the stage of practice; bhāva, the first awakening of divine emotion; and prema, the mature state of transcendental love.

One must practice sādhana-bhakti in the beginning, which then leads one to the stage of bhāva-bhakti.

When bhāva-bhakti matures to kṛṣṇa-prema, it is known as prema-bhakti.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Please elaborate upon the form and application sādhana-
bhakti.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has extensively researched this
subject in his book, Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, which I will now try to
summarize as succinctly as possible.”

Sādhana-bhakti has nine limbs, as enumerated in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,
7.5.23:

śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ
smaraṇam pada-sevanam
arcanaṁ vandanam dāsyam
sakhyam ātmā-nivedanam

“Prahāda Mahārāja said, “Hearing, chanting, and remembering about the transcendental names, forms, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Śrī Viṣṇu; serving the lotus feet of the Lord; worshipping the Lord; offering prayers and obeisances to the Lord; becoming His servant; considering the Lord one’s best friend; and surrendering everything to Him—in other words serving Him completely with body, mind, and words—constitutes pure devotional service.’

“Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has further divided these nine limbs into branches and sub-branches, arriving at a total of sixty-four practices.

An important fact about sādhana-bhakti is that it has two divisions: vaidhī-bhakti, directed by the rules and regulations of scripture; and rāgānuga-bhakti, impelled by spontaneous attraction.

Vaidhī-bhakti has the nine limbs aforementioned.

In rāgānuga-bhakti, one must surrender to the guidance of a vrajavāsī, an eternal associate of Kṛṣṇa in transcendental Vraja, and thus serve Kṛṣṇa internally, imbued with the devotional mood of that vrajavāsī.

The level of devotion of an aspirant will decide his adhikāra, eligibility, to practice one form or the other of sādhana-bhakti.”

→ Vaidhi adhikāra → Feet
→ Rāgānuga adhikāra.

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Gurudeva, what are the criteria for determining the adhikāra to perform sādhana-bhakti?””

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “The guru judges the ability of a sincere neophyte to adhere to scriptural rules and regulations.”

Accordingly, he initiates him into the process of vaidhī-sādhana-bhakti.”

If and when the neophyte is inclined towards rāgānuga-bhakti, then the guru guides him on the esoteric path of bhajana in rāgānuga-bhakti.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “How does one discern the levels of adhikāra, Gurudeva?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “A neophyte who neither possesses a purified intellect, nor the ability to grasp the philosophical precepts of rāgānuga-bhakti, but is nevertheless attracted to Deity worship and following the scriptural injunctions is eligible for vaidhī-bhakti. → Eligibility for Vaidhi

Whereas, someone who desires to worship and serve the Supreme Lord without having to overtly depend on scriptural stipulations and whose heart is naturally drawn to hari-bhajana is a fit candidate for rāgānuga-bhakti.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “Revered master! Kindly ascertain my level of adhikāra, so that I may understand this principle.”

I am as of yet unable to comprehend precisely the two concepts of vaidhī-bhakti and rāgānuga-bhakti.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “You have but to test your own heart to know your level.”

Do you firmly believe that—without strictly following scriptural edicts—worshiping and serving the Supreme Lord is possible?”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, “I feel that, when conducted according to scriptural instructions, great benefit from sādhana and bhajana can be gained.”

However, another view is strongly emerging in my mind, namely that sincere hari-bhajana opens up an ocean of transcendental rasa.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “You see? Scriptural injunctions are your supreme command; hence, you should embrace the path of vaidhī-bhakti.”

Gradually, however, the precepts of rāgānuga-bhakti will begin to crystallize further within our consciousness.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya could not restrain the tears slowly swelling in his eyes.

Getting up and touching the feet of Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, he said,
“O master! Initiate me into your divine wisdom, according to my eligibility.”

I do not want to dabble in philosophy outside my limitations.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī also stood up, embraced Lāhirī quietly, and indicated for him to sit down.

Lāhirī Mahāśaya then said, “Kindly instruct me in the precise method of bhajana I should take up.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Begin by seriously chanting harināma. Amongst the different limbs of bhajana, chanting is the most efficacious.”

Harināma and the proprietor of harināma are the one and same person.

Chanting without committing offences will quickly lead one to complete perfection.

Take up chanting with full faith.

The other branches of devotional practices, all included within chanting, are hearing, remembering the Lord's pastimes, serving His lotus feet in meditation, worshiping His Deity form, offering prayers, becoming His servant, becoming His friend, and totally surrendering to Him."

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, "O master! I am eager to begin. Please shower me with your mercy."

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, "Dear Sir, please always repeat the following mantra and avoid the nāmāparādhas, offences against harināma: Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare."

As Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī uttered this, the mahā-mantra, he gently pressed a set of chanting beads made of tulasī wood into the hand of Lāhirī Mahāśaya.

When the latter began to chant the mahā-mantra on his new beads, he felt tears of jubilation streak down his face.

He exulted, “Dear master! I am unable to express the joy that I feel!” and collapsed at Bābājī’s feet.

Carefully Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī lifted him up and held him steady.

After a period of stunned silence, Lāhirī Mahāśaya said, “I am indeed blessed! I have never before experienced such exhilaration.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Revered Sir! Truly, you are blessed! You have sincerely taken shelter of harināma. Thus, you have showered great fortune upon me, also.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya returned to his cottage.

Having received initiation, he started chanting harināma upon his new beads, pushing aside all fears and doubts.

Days went by in chanting and Lāhirī Mahāśaya began to decorate his body with the vaiṣṇava-tilaka markings in the customary twelve places.

He refused to eat anything other than prasādam, food offered to the Lord,
and steadily increased his daily chanting up to two lakhs, two hundred
thousand names of the Lord.

↓
128 rounds

He offered prostrated obeisances to pure Vaiṣṇavas as soon as he saw them.

He would begin his daily routine by first offering worship to Paramahansa
Premadāsa Bābājī and then he would serve his spiritual master, Srī Vaiṣṇava
dāsa Bābājī, constantly and diligently.

He lost all interest in trivial talks, as well as classical music.

Thus, a metamorphosis took place in Lāhirī Mahāśaya.

He was now a Vaiṣṇava.

One day, Lāhirī Mahāśaya approached Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, prostrated himself humbly, and enquired, “O master! What is the prayojana-tattva, the principle of the ultimate spiritual goal and necessity?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Kṛṣṇa-prema is the prayojana-tattva for the jīva.

Constant sādhana in devotional service leads to bhāva.

When bhāva matures, it is called prema.

Kṛṣṇa-prema is the eternal occupation of the jīva, his eternal opulence, his source of supreme joy, and his absolute necessity.

The absence of prema results in the sufferings of the jīva, material entanglement, and attachment to matter.

Nothing is superior to prema, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of transcendental Absolute Truth, is subdued by prema alone.

Ānanda, spiritual bliss, when intensified and condensed, turns into prema, the essence.”

Lāhirī Mahāśaya, choking with tears, asked, “Will I ever be eligible to experience prema?”

Vaisnava dāsa Bābājī, firmly embracing him, responded, “Behold! In a matter of days, you have elevated yourself from sādhana-bhakti to bhāva-bhakti.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa will soon benedict you further.”

These utterances from his guru had a magical effect upon Lāhirī Mahāśaya.

He began to roll in the dust in joy and exclaimed, “Ah! Nothing can surpass the guru in importance.”

Alas, how foolishly I have wasted so much of my life.

My guru has lifted me out of the dark well of materialism by his unlimited mercy.”

**Thus ends the Fourth Chapter of Jaiva-dharma, entitled: The Nitya-dharma
Is Vaiṣṇavism**