

Jaiṣa Dharma

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Chapter Seven

Nitya-dharma and
Samsāra, Material
Existence

Yādava dāsa, “Is it essential for a gr̥ha-tyāgī bhakta to change his dress, adopting the garb of a renunciant?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “Actually, when all attachments to household life are completely annihilated, the nirapekṣa-akiñcana-bhakta, detached devotee, can stay anywhere, in the forest or in the house.”

Such an elevated saint purifies the whole world. Sometimes, however, they are seen as bhiksus, saints who live by begging, and so they go around dressed in kaupīna, loincloth, and carrying a kanthā, a coverlet sown from used and worn-out clothing.

When they take the vows of ‘kaupīna and kanthā,’ they do so in the presence of other gr̥ha-tyāgī bhaktas, in order to fortify their resolve.

This is known as veṣa, the method of receiving the garb of a mendicant,
which admits them to the life of bhikṣā, begging.

How can there be any objection to accepting veṣa in this way?"

Yādava dāsa, "Is there a purpose to being recognized as a bhikṣu on the basis
of one's kaupīna and kanthā?"

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, "Once a devotee by wearing kaupīna and kanthā is seen
by the world as a bhikṣu, then his relatives and family members will disown
him very easily and thus he, in turn, will reject any thought of going back
home.

A natural attraction for detachment as well as repulsion for the company of materialistic people will consume him.

The experienced gr̥ha-tyāgī devotee with a seasoned sense of detachment may not require a change of dress.

However for some receiving veṣa does help.

Elevated devotees who display the following characteristics do not need to accept veṣa, as stated in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 4.29.46:

yadā yasyānugṛhṇāti
bhagavān atma-bhāvitaḥ
sa jahāti matim loke
vede ca pariniṣṭhitām

When the Lord (yadā bhagavān) shows mercy to the devotee (ātma-bhāvitaḥ yasya anugṛhṇāti), the devotee gives up (sah jahāti) thinking (pariniṣṭhitām matim) of karma-kāṇḍa and material affairs (loke vede ca).

“There is no injunction for these awakened devotees to outwardly accept the garb of detachment.”

However as a matter of public consideration such acceptance may sometimes be taken as necessary.”

Yādava dāsa, “Who can give veṣa?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “One should receive veṣa from a gr̥ha-tyāgī bhakta.

A gr̥hastha-bhakta has not experienced the life of a renunciant; hence, he must not give veṣa to anybody.

The Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa states:

aparīkṣyopadiṣṭam yat loka-nāśāya tad bhavet

“Without first practising spiritual life, one should not advise others, as this will create chaos in society.”

Yādava dāsa, “What are the points a guru must consider when he initiates a devotee with veṣa?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “The first point a guru must consider is whether the disciple is competent.”

Has he, as a gr̥hastha-bhakta, been able to attain the brahminical qualities such as equanimity, sense control, and so on by practising devotional service to Kṛṣṇa?

Has he shaken off the desire to associate with women? Has he uprooted the material cravings for wealth, opulent food and clothing, and luxurious living?

The guru will have the disciple stay with him for some time to test him properly.

Only when he is convinced of his disciple's eligibility, and not before, will he initiate him into veṣa.

The guru will surely fall down if he initiates an undeserving disciple.”

Yādava dāsa, “Now I understand that receiving bheka or veṣa is not an easy affair, but is actually an extremely serious observance.”

Indeed, the unqualified so-called gurus have made this bheka or veṣa a mere meaningless ritual, a farce.

Unfortunately this is only the beginning, I wonder where all this will end?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “It was in order to protect the sanctity of this process that Śrī Caitanya chastised Choṭa Haridāsa for a minor deviation.”

Those who claim to be followers of my Lord, Śrī Mahaprabhu, must always remember this punishment of Chota Haridāsa.”

Yādava dāsa, “Is it an authorized process to receive bheka, construct a temple, and begin Deity worship?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “No, after receiving veṣa, a competent devotee enters into mendicant life, which means every day he must go out and maintain himself by begging.”

He will not entangle himself in temple construction and other large-scale enterprises.

He will live in a solitary hut, or in the temple of a grhastha. He must not utilize money for his needs or anything else.

He will simply use all his time and energy to chant harināma without offence.”

Yādava dāsa, “Then what may one call those who after leaving home build their own temple and live in it as if it were a household?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “They are called vāntāśī, those who eat their own vomit. They are eating what they have regurgitated.”

Yādava dāsa, “Is such a person no longer a Vaiṣṇava?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “When his actions are contrary to scriptural injunctions and opposed to the principles of vaiṣṇava-dharma, why should we seek his association?”

He has deviated from the path of śuddha-bhakti and adopted deceit and caprice.

What Vaiṣṇava qualities are still left in him?"

Yādava dāsa, "How can we say that he has forsaken vaisnava-dharma if he continues to chant harināma?"

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, "Chanting harināma and nāmāparādha, offences against harināma, are two different subjects."

Wherever you see sinful activities being committed on the strength of chanting, that is nāmāparādha. You must run far away from nāmāparādha.”

Yādava dāsa, “Can we call his condition of saṁsāra, Kṛṣṇa conscious or not?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “Certainly not! A Kṛṣṇa conscious life is not tainted by deceit; it is filled with simplicity and honesty and offences are absent.”

Yādava dāsa, “Then, he must be inferior to a gr̥hastha-bhakta?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “If he is not even a bhakta, then there cannot be a comparison with any kind of bhakta.”

Yādava dāsa, “How can he be saved?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “He must first give up his offensive activities.”

Then he must chant incessantly, until tears of remorse bring him back to the Vaiṣṇava fold.”

Yādava dāsa, “Respected Bābājī, the gr̥hastha-bhaktas follow the varṇāśrama system, therefore is it possible for a gr̥hastha to become a Vaiṣṇava if he is excluded from the varṇasrama system?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “If only you knew how liberal and magnanimous the vaiṣṇava-dharma is!

It is also known as jaiva-dharma, the religion for all living entities.

Every human being from any position has the right to follow the vaiṣṇava-dharma.

Those born in the lowest status of humanity, known as antyajās can embrace vaiṣṇava-dharma and live as grhastha-bhaktas although they are outside the varṇāśrama society.

Another example is a sannyāsī, the highest religious order in the varṇāśrama system, who breaks his sannyāsa vows and falls down.

Nevertheless, later, by association with saintly persons he may be reinstated in śuddha-bhakti and live as a gr̥hastha-bhakta although he is now an outcaste from the varṇāśrama society.

Those persons and their descendants who are excluded from the varṇāśrama society because of unlawful actions may take up the process of śuddha-bhakti by associating with sādhus—they can become gr̥hastha-bhaktas, although they have no status in the varṇāśrama society.

Therefore, there are two types of gr̥hastha-bhaktas: varṇāśrama-dharma-yukta, those within the varṇāśrama system; and varṇāśrama-dharma-rahita, those outside the varṇāśrama system.”

Yādava dāsa, “Which of the two is better?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “He who has developed the higher intensity bhakti is naturally the better.”

As for those who are in either of these two conditions but are actually bereft of bhakti, the vyāvahārika point of view of materialistic society will adjudge those who are within the varṇāśrama society as being the better of the two.

At least they have a locus standi in varṇāśrama society, while the others are antyajās. However, seen from the paramārthika point of view both are the same—they are both degraded because they are without bhakti.”

Yādava dāsa, “Can a gr̥hastha wear the dress of a gr̥ha-tyāgī while still a householder?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “No. If he were to do so, he would be indicted on two offences, (deceiving himself) and (deceiving the world).”

If a gr̥hastha wears a kaupīna and carries a kanthā, etc., he ridicules and insults the gr̥ha-tyāgī bhakta who is formally initiated into bhikṣā.”

Yādava dāsa, “Respected Bābājī, is there an authorized scriptural procedure for receiving bheka or veṣa?”

Ananta dāsa Bābājī, “It has not been clearly outlined. A human being from any varṇa can embrace the vaiṣṇava-dharma.”

However, according to the scripture, only a brāhmaṇa can accept the sannyāsa order, no other.

In the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 7.11.35, Nārada Muni first describes the characteristics of the different varṇas and then goes on to say:

yasya yal lakṣaṇam proktaṁ
pumso varṇābhivyañjakam
yad anyatrāpi drśyeta
tat tenaiva vinirdiśet

If anyone shows the symptoms (yasya yal lakṣaṇam pumsah) of being a brāhmana, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra (yat varṇa-abhivyañjakam), as described above (proktaṁ), even if he is born in a different class (yad anyatrāpi drśyeta), he should be designated according to those symptoms (tat tenaiva vinirdiśet).

“On the strength of this scriptural statement the practice of giving sannyāsa
to persons having brahminical qualities, although born in lower varṇas was
started.”

If all these conditions are met with, such a practice is certainly to be accepted as authorized by the scriptures.

Of course, this is only applicable in spiritual paramārthika consideration and is not applicable according to mundane vyāvahārika convention.”

At this point, Yādava dāsa turned to his companion, “Dear Caṇḍīdāsa, has your question been answered?”

Caṇḍīdāsa replied, “I was able to assimilate the following from the wonderful spiritual teachings by the most respectable Ananta dāsa Bābājī:

Jīva, having forgotten that he is an eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, accepts the material body and under the influence of the guṇas, three material modes, he begins to try to exploit this world.

In return for this, he is rewarded with pain and enjoyment. In his attempt to enjoy the results of his actions, he is forced to accept birth, disease, old age, and finally death.

He goes through many lives, sometimes with a high birth, sometimes with a low birth, but each time his soul is covered by a new false ego.

He is driven to protect his fragile mortal body from the ravages of hunger and thirst.

He has to suffer in many ways because of an imbalanced distribution and unavailability of essential commodities.

His body is under constant siege from the various and inevitable distresses.

Insufferable quarrels and disputes with wife and children sometimes drive him to commit suicide.

“He is forced by greed for money to commit many sinful activities, ending up by being punished by the law, becoming a pariah of society, and thus bringing upon himself untold misery.

There is no relief from anxiety and lamentation brought about by death in the family, loss of wealth, attacks by rogues, etc.

Even in old age, sorrows accompany him when his family members neglect his needs.

Rheumatic and phlegmatic conditions trouble him as the body begins to age and gradually disintegrate.

After death, the sojourn in the next mother's womb is at every moment a harrowing and excruciating experience.

Combined with all this suffering, lust, anger, greed, illusion, madness, and envy smother the conscience and sense of discrimination into obscurity.

This is saṁsāra, material existence.

“Now, I have properly grasped the purport of the word saṁsāra.

I repeatedly fall at the feet of all the assembled bābājīs.

The Vaiṣṇavas are the real gurus of this world and today by their mercy I have gained the actual understanding of saṁsāra.”

The entire assembly of Vaiṣṇavas burst out loudly, uttering harināma and praising Ananta dāsa Bābājī for his perceptive spiritual analysis.

More Vaiṣṇavas joined their group and Lāhirī Mahāśaya began to sing a composition of his own:

e ghora saṁsāre, paḍiyā mānava, na pāya duḥkhera śeṣa
sādhu-saṅga kori’, hari bhaje yadi, tabe anta haya kleśa

“There is no end to the jīva’s suffering after falling into the dark well of saṁsāra. However, if he associates with saintly souls and turns in surrender to the Supreme Lord Śrī Hari, then he puts a stop to his distress.

viṣaya-anale, jvaliche hr̥daya, anale bāḍe anala
aparādha chaḍi' laya kṛṣṇa-nāma, anale paḍaye jala

“This material life means being consumed by a fire, where all material
endeavours are fuel for the fire. When the incinerated jīva takes up chanting
the transcendental name of Kṛṣṇa without offence, this merciful rain puts
out the flames.”

nitai-caitanya-carāṇa-kamale, āśraya laila yei
kālidāsa bole, jīvane maraṃe, āmāra āśrayā sei

“I, Kālidāsa, consider those who have taken shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Śrī
Nityānanda Caitanya as my only safe sanctuary in this life.”

Caṇḍīdāsa was extremely moved by the words of the song and began to dance along.

At the end he fell like a stick at the feet of the bābājīs.

He sanctified himself by applying the dust from their feet upon his head, beginning to roll upon the ground, and crying in ineffable joy.

The assembled Vaiṣṇavas who witnessed Caṇḍīdāsa's ecstatic emotion agreed that he was very fortunate.

After a while Yādava dāsa said softly to Caṇḍīdāsa, "Come, let us return, we must cross over the Gaṅgā."

Caṇḍīdāsa replied humorously, “If you will take me across the material ocean, I will certainly accompany you.”

Together they offered their dandavats in Pradyumna-kuñja and came out of the entranceway where they saw Damayantī offering repeated obeisances to all the Vaiṣṇavas.

She said, “Alas! Why was I born as a woman! If I were a man, I could unhesitatingly go inside the kuñja, behold the lotus feet of the Vaiṣṇava sādhus and offer my dandavats, thus fulfilling the purpose of this human life.

My wish is that birth after birth I may serve the Vaiṣṇavas in Navadvīpa.”

Yādava dāsa said, “O mother! This Godruma-dhāma is extremely sacred.”

As soon as one enters, one is rewarded with pure bhakti. In Godruma played our beloved Śrī Śacīnandana Nimāi.

This was the village of the cowherd men, gopa-palli.

Knowing the glories of this place, Śrīla Prabodānanda Sarasvatī Gosvāmī has prayed in his Śrī Navadvīpa-śataka, verse 36:

na loka-vedoddhṛta-mārga-bhedair
āviśya saṅkliśyata re vimudhāḥ
hathena sarvaṁ parihṛtya gaude
śrī-godrume parṇa-kuṭīm kurudhvam

“O foolish jīva! By taking shelter of society and the Vedas, you have tried out so many religious paths, but they have only brought you distress. Now renounce these uncertain methods and immediately go to Godruma, build yourself a thatched hut, and live there.”

The three of them returned to Kuliyā-grāma after crossing the Gaṅgā.

A wonderful transformation took place in Caṇḍīdāsa and his wife Damayantī
devī from that day on.

They began exhibiting the Vaiṣṇava mood and qualities and it appeared that material life could no longer touch them.

All their time was taken up in serving the Vaiṣṇavas, chanting harināma, and doing acts of mercy to all living beings.

How wonderful was this newly changed Vaiṣṇava couple! What immense potency there is in the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava!

All glories to kṛṣṇa-nāma! All glories to the sacred land of Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma!

Thus ends the seventh chapter of Jaiva-
dharmā, entitled: Nitya-dharma and
Samsāra, Material Existence