

Jaiṡa Dharma

by Śrīla Saccidānanda
Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

Chapter Nine

Nitya-dharma and Material Science and Civilization

Digambara, “Just realize that today’s modern civilised man considers the contemporary culture to be the actual height in the progress of humanity, and that a person without such culture should hardly be considered a human being!”

The present understanding of decency is that men and women should dress in fashionable clothes and ornaments to cover their faults.”

Advaita dāsa, “It is up to you to ponder over these matters and decide whether this modern philosophy of life is actually good or bad.”

Personally, I notice that modern ‘educated men’ are shrewd and sly, opportunistically observing and taking advantage of the changing times.

They favour this so-called civilization as it provides a means to mask their ill motives and degradation.

Such shrewd men protect the so-called high pedestal of their culture with futile debates and violent physical threat.

What can an actually intelligent person gain from their society and culture?"

Digambara, "Actually some people consider that knowledge and culture are simultaneously expanding by this civilisation, and if the trend continues this earth will become like heaven."

Advaita dāsa, “These are the hallucinations of opium eaters and those who believe in such ideas are glorified fools.

Yet, one who proselytises this view is an even more amazing specimen.

Knowledge is of two kinds, pāramārthika, spiritual; and laukika, material.

I do not perceive anywhere that spiritual knowledge is expanding by the progress of material knowledge.

Actually, I generally see that spiritual knowledge is being perverted and misinterpreted in concert with the focus upon material knowledge.

After all, is there actually any eternal relationship between the jīva and material knowledge?

With the escalation of material knowledge, man's attention has been drawn towards the multi-fold varieties of external phenomena and distracted from the origin of all knowledge, the transcendental Absolute Truth.

I must acknowledge that the increase of secular material knowledge is followed by a shallow 'sophisticated' culture.

However, this is a bad omen for the jīva, leading him along the path to spiritual self-destruction."

Digambara, “Why a path of destruction?”

Advaita dāsa, “I repeat, this human life is short. Therefore, like the wayfarer at the inn, the jīva must diligently prepare for spiritual realization during the travels of his limited life span.”

It is foolish to waste time trying to improve arrangements at the inn during one’s short visit, without concern for one’s destination.

If more and more time is wastefully spent in the pursuit of material knowledge, less time will be left for spiritual realization.

As I see it, we should use material knowledge to help in acquiring the basic necessities for the maintenance of this body, while leading a simple life dedicated to spiritual realization.

There is absolutely no need of excess material knowledge and its concomitant 'sophisticated' culture.

Actually, what is the permanence of all this external material gaudiness?"

Digambara, "Now I see that I have landed in the clutches of an extraordinary person of the renounced order. Are you saying that the development of human society is of no use?"

Advaita dāsa, “That depends on the type of society. If it is a Vaiṣṇava society,
there is a tremendous benefit for all.”

That which is derived from a non-Vaiṣṇava society—a materialistic society—
is not at all beneficial for the jīva.

However, let us leave this topic for a moment. Tell me, what do you actually
mean by prākṛtika-vijñāna?”

Digambara, “Prākṛtika-vijñāna is natural material science and is found in the
tantra-śāstras in many different areas.”

Prākṛtika-vijñāna is constituted of whatever systems, knowledge and beauty are exhibited in the material nature of this world.

For instance, there are: dhanura-vidyā, the system of military science; ayurveda, the system of medical science; jyotira-vidyā, astrology; the art of music and dance; and the like, which are the different branches of prākṛtika-vijñāna.

“Coming back to philosophy, we have already discussed that prakṛti is the ādya-śakti, giving birth to and manifesting this material cosmos.

Through her own potency, she has introduced variegatedness into the creation, and in each of the many aspects of her energy is a different area and stream of knowledge.

By acquiring this knowledge of material science, one can exonerate oneself from the sins committed against the ādya-śakti, Mā Nistāriṇī.

Unfortunately, for themselves, the Vaiṣṇavas do not care for or make research into vijñāna, science.

However, we Tantrics shall attain mokṣa through mastering this knowledge.

Just see how deeply some of the great western thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Socrates and the famous Muslim scholar, Hākim, etc., have probed into this science and even written poetic eulogies to it.”

Advaita dāsa, “You just said that the Vaiṣṇavas do not care about vijñāna. I disagree.”

The pure spiritual knowledge that the Vaiṣṇavas study is actual vijñāna—
extremely scientific and experiential.

In one of the four catur-ślokī of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 2.9.31, we find the following:

śrī-bhagavān uvāca

(jñānam parama-guhyam me yad vijñāna samanvitam
sarahasyam tad-aṅgam ca grhāṇa gaditam mayā

“O Brahmā, knowledge of Me is non-dual, and yet has four distinct divisions: jñāna, vijñāna, rahasya, and tad-aṅga.

prāṇīṅka bhava-abhava tattva

Jñāna is my svarūpa; My relationship with My potency is vijñāna; jīva is My rahasya, secret; and pradhāna is my tad-aṅga.

prakṛti

A jīva cannot understand this knowledge by his own intelligence, but you can understand the same by My mercy in conjunction with devotional service. I am explaining this science so that you may take it up carefully.’

“Even before the material world was created the Supreme Personality of Godhead, being pleased by Brahmā’s devotional service, gave him this instruction.

In this way, the Lord taught Brahmā the pure and scientific vaisnava-dharma.

“My friend Digambara, there are two kinds of knowledge. On one hand, there is viṣaya-jñāna, material knowledge, which is acquired by human beings through the bodily sense organs that are impure and thus unsuited to perceive spiritual objects.

These material sense organs are only of use in the maintenance the conditioned soul’s material condition.

On the other hand, there is the science of the Supreme Self, which delves into the actual spiritual truth.

This is known as śuddha-jñāna, pure spiritual knowledge, which is eternal and forms the basis of the devotional service of the Supreme Lord performed by the Vaiṣṇavas.

In all respects, viṣaya-jñāna is distinct and opposite from śuddha-jñāna and has no connection with it.

“You propose that viṣaya-jñāna is alone vijñāna and that the material knowledge of ayurveda, etc., has to be separated from śuddha-jñāna to attain the status of scientific vijñāna.

However, this usage of the term is incorrect because materialistic science is not vijñāna in the true sense of the word.

The truth is that śuddha-jñāna—whose characteristics are contrary to the material sciences of Ayurveda, etc.—is actually vijñāna since śuddha-jñāna intrinsically indicates the scientific distinction of transcendence from matter.

Definition of vijñāna

(Accurate knowledge) of the (distinctive qualities) (inherent) (within) an (existing object) is known as vijñāna.

- ① *śuddha-jñāna*
- ② *pīṇḍa-jñāna*
- ③ *śūdrā-jñāna*
kr̥tī
- ④ *tāra-śūdrā-jñāna*
- ⑤ *śūdrā-jñāna*

Thus, the perfect realization of the spiritual Absolute Object as distinct from mundane matter is actual vijñāna.

Actual definition of vijñāna

Therefore, the process of exposing and eliminating viṣaya-jñāna and scientifically establishing the pre-eminence of śuddha-jñāna as distinct from viṣaya-jñāna is real vijñāna.

“Vastu, eternal spiritual existence, is one, and both terms jñāna and vijñāna may be applied to the perception of this transcendental existence.

Jñāna is the direct perception of transcendence, and vijñāna is the establishment of this jñāna as distinct from viṣaya-jñāna.

Jñāna and vijñāna are actually the same thing; however, according to the particular context the term jñāna or vijñāna is used.

“You claim that vijñāna indicates viṣaya-jñāna; however, the Vaiṣṇavas say that actual vijñāna gives the true analysis of viṣaya-jñāna as distinct from śuddha-jñāna.

↓
Sāṅkhya

The Vaiṣṇavas consider dhanura-veda, ayurveda, jyotira-veda, and chemistry, physics, etc., as material knowledge without a permanent relationship to the jīva.

Therefore, such material knowledge is inconsequential in terms of establishing the jīva in one of the five rasas in relationship to Īśvara, which are the ultimate nitya-dharma of the jīvas.

↓
Śuddha Jñāna

Further, the Vaiṣṇavas see that those who are ardently striving to advance in viṣaya-jñāna according to their individual material propensities are absorbed in the activities of karma-kaṇḍa.

“However, Vaiṣṇavas do not criticize those who endeavour for progress in understanding the mundane nature because this activity may ultimately come to assist them in understanding the prime efficacy of spiritual realization.

You have misnamed the insignificant mundane knowledge of the materialists as vijñāna.

Well, ultimately, what harm can the erroneous adoption of that name do? It is childish to quarrel insistently over names and designations.”

Digambara, “Supposing material knowledge had not advanced to what it is today, how would you subsist and perform your bhajana?”

This indicates that you Vaiṣṇavas must also work to improve your material knowledge.

Advaita dāsa, “Persons endeavour in their chosen field according to their individual propensities.

However, Īśvara alone distributes the appropriate results of those actions to their performers.”

Digambara, “From where do the individual inclinations and propensities arise?”

Advaita dāsa, "Habits and preferences forged from previous actions will consolidate later into one's propensities."



The depth of a person's material knowledge is the barometer that measures the extent of his material engrossment.



engrossment
Material knowledge \propto material knowledge.

In turn, this material knowledge and engrossment makes him an expert in expressing the mundane art forms, which are also an outcome of material culture.



Ultimately, however, whatever articles are suitable—as a result of this entire material endeavour by the materially engrossed—will be utilized gratefully by the Vaiṣṇavas as paraphernalia for the devotional service of the Lord.

However, the Vaiṣṇavas themselves need not invest any energy in the creation of these products.



Yukta - Vairāgya

“A carpenter makes furniture for a living. However, he can also make an altar to enthrone the Deity in home of a gr̥hastha-vaiṣṇava.

Following their instinct and propensity, the bees busily collect pollen and produce honey, which is then taken away to be offered to the Lord.

Not everyone in this world will endeavour for their own highest good—spiritual elevation. The different activities are prompted by different propensities.

“Human propensities are numerous—they are high or low, and so on. Degraded persons perform many base activities resulting from mean propensities.

However, at the same time, they may perform activities prompted by co-existing noble propensities.

Thus, the wheel of human life turns, combining in itself innumerable divisions and departments.

All materialistic men, executing their works inspired by their mundane propensities, reach success by indirectly assisting the Vaiṣṇavas in their spiritual practice.

The materialists are, however, ~~unaware of this fact.~~

→ अज्ञानेन.
सुपेक्षिते

Bewitched by Śrī Viṣṇu's illusory potency, Māyā, they perform multifarious
mundane activities, which are later utilized by the Vaiṣṇavas in the
devotional service of the Lord.

In this way the entire world is actually the unwitting servitor of the
Vaiṣṇavas."

Digambara, "What is this Māyā of Śrī Viṣṇu?"