

Jaiṡa Dharma

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Chapter Ten

The Age and History of Nitya-dharma

Caturbhuja, “Are there any references in the Vedic scriptures to show that the essence and ultimate goal of dharma is śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa and not the attainment of Brahman?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “The Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 2.7.1, states:

raso vai saḥ

“That Supreme Absolute Truth is the embodiment of all spiritual relationships.”

“Additionally, in the Chandogya Upaniṣad, 8.13.1, we find the statement:

śyāmāc chabalaṁ prapadye
śabalac chyāmaṁ prapadye

“The multifarious energies of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa are known as śabala.

Through the process of surrendering to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we find the shelter of the hlādinī-śakti, the pleasure potency of the Lord, which is the quintessence of all His energies.

In the divine sanctuary of this hlādinī-śakti, we attain śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śyāmasundara.’

“Thus, there are numerous Vedic statements proving that śuddha-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate aim of dharma.”

Caturbhuja, “Is the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa mentioned anywhere in the Vedas?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Does not the above word, śyāma, directly imply Kṛṣṇa? Also, the R̥g Veda, 1.22.164.31, relates:

apaśyam **gopām** anipadyamānamā

“I saw a cowherd-boy Gopāla, **Kṛṣṇa** who is infallible.’

“These descriptions in the Vedas refer to the young boy, Gopāla Kṛṣṇa.”

Caturbhuja, “All these descriptions are allusions and one has to stretch the meanings to arrive at such a conclusion.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “If you scrutinize the Vedic scripture you will discover that Vedic statements on all matters are written in this cryptic strain.”

Therefore, we should accept the purports on the Vedas given to us by the sages.”

Caturbhuja, “Now please tell me the history of the vaiṣṇava-dharma.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “I have already mentioned that vaiṣṇava-dharma is concomitant with the manifestation of the jīva. Lord Brahmā is the first Vaiṣṇava.”

All the devas and early progenitors are Vaiṣṇavas.

The mental progeny of Lord Brahmā, Nārada Ṛṣi, is also a Vaiṣṇava.

Have you understood now that the vaiṣṇava-dharma has existed since the creation?

All jīvas are not beyond the influence of the māyā-śakti in her form as the three modes of material nature; yet to the degree they are freed from the māyā-śakti they are also advanced in vaiṣṇava-dharma.

“The Mahābhārata, Ramayana, and the Purāṇas are scriptures detailing the history of the Āryans.

The superiority of the vaiṣṇava-dharma is described in all these scriptures, which are historical texts and records centred on famous personalities.

In these descriptions of the devas, humans, and demons, we are introduced to such personalities as Prahlāda, Dhruva, and so on.

Besides them, there were also so many other Vaiṣṇavas, contemporaries of Dhruva and Prahlāda, whose names are not recorded since only the prominent people have been mentioned.

Dhruva, the son of Manu, and Prahlāda are grandsons of Kaśyapa Muni, a prājapati, progenitor.

They are our earliest ancestors. Thus, the pure vaiṣṇava-dharma has existed since the dawn of history.

As history advanced, innumerable wise sages and devotees plus the royal races of the Solar and Lunar dynasties lit up the firmament by their activities and the subsequent chronicles thereof. They were all devotees of Śrī Viṣṇu.

“The historical records of the three previous ages of Satya-yuga, Tretā-yuga, and Dvāpara-yuga show that these times were blessed with an abundance of saintly Vaiṣṇavas.

In the present age of Kali-yuga, Southern India has borne illustrious spiritual sons, Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya and Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī, and in western India, Śrī Nimbāditya Śvāmī has appeared.

All these great preachers were Vaiṣṇavas who inspired many millions to embrace the pure path of vaiṣṇava-dharma.

By their mercy alone, perhaps more than half the population of India was able to transcend this ocean of material nescience and attain the lotus feet of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Moreover, in Bengal and Orissa the Lord of our heart, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, has delivered so many fallen and wretched souls.

Tell me, have you still not realized the superior position of the vaiṣṇava-dharma, even after reading and hearing all these facts?”

Caturbhuja, “Of course I do, but how can you designate Prahlāda as a Vaiṣṇava?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “A proper analysis of the śāstra is required. Śrī Prahlāda rejected māyāvādī influenced impersonal brahma-jñāna realization of his tutors, Śaṅḍa and Amarka, and opted to chant harināma, understanding this as the pure essence of all spiritual activities.”

Hence, there is no doubt that Prahlāda was a pure Vaiṣṇava devotee.

The real point is that only an unbiased assessment of the scriptures will lead to a correct comprehension of the siddhānta, scriptural conclusion.”

Caturbhuja, “If we assume that the vaiṣṇava-dharma is sanātana, then what can be the unique contribution of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahaprabhū, giving Him such special honour and status?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Vaiṣṇava-dharma is like a lotus flower gradually blossoming with the passage of time.

First, comes the bud, slowly the bud begins to grow, and then the petals open in a breath-taking bloom, spreading their fragrance all around.

“At the beginning of creation the four branches of knowledge were expressed to Lord Brahmā.

- ① bhāgavata jñāna
- ② māyā-vijñāna
- ③ sādhanā bhakti
- ④ preme

They are bhāgavata-jñāna, knowledge of the Absolute Truth as the Supreme Personality of Godhead; māyā-vijñāna, scientific knowledge of external energy of the Lord; sādhanā-bhakti, devotional service in practice; and prema, the final goal of pure love of Godhead.

At this tender budding stage of Vaiṣṇavism, these four branches were encapsulated as seeds in the four original verses of the Bhāgavatam known as the Catuh-ślokī.

When Prahlāda arrived, the buds appeared from these seeds.

Bṛhmi → seed
Prahāde → bud
vyāsa → buds opened.
Vaiṣṇava ācāryas → petals
were revealed.

Then gradually, with the advent of Bādarāyaṇa Vedavyāsa, the buds opened and the petals of the lotus flower of vaiṣṇava-dharma were revealed by the different Vaiṣṇava ācāryas.

C.M → Full bloom.

With the descent of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the flower has finally burst into full bloom, diffusing its heady scent for the eager nostrils of the entire universe.

“Śrī Caitanya revealed and disseminated the process of chanting harināma as the only means to achieve prema.

This awakening of kṛṣṇa-prema is the most esoteric aspect of the vaisnava-dharma and Srī Caitanya mercifully distributed this science for the highest benefit of all human society.

Previously, had anyone ever revealed and propagated this process of hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana?

The practice of hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana has always been proposed in the Vedas as the scriptural treasure par excellence.

Yet, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana was never preached in a manner that made it easily available and fully comprehensible to the general mass of human society.

Certainly, the general populace were not widely inspired to introduce the chanting into their lives and translate it into a central and constant spiritual practice.

However, hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana is so wonderful! Tell me, was this repository of divine nectar ever distributed with such joyous abandon before the advent of Śrī Caitanya?"

Çaturbhuja, "Well, if singing and chanting is so effective, then why is it not popular in the paṇḍita circles?"

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, "In the age of Kali the meaning of the word paṇḍita has been perverted.

The scriptures define the word paṇḍa as a bright and acute intellect, and one who possesses paṇḍa is a paṇḍita.

However, presently a pandita is someone who can aimlessly juggle words under the pretence of logic and rhetoric, or one who presumes to explain the smṛti-śāstras solely with the view of entertaining his audience.

How can one expect such so-called paṇḍitas to realize the profound importance of the religious science, what to speak of making others understand it?

“A sincere and objective scrutiny of all scriptures will certainly lead to the conviction that logic and rhetoric, etc., are not the essence or goal.

Those who are expert in self-deception and deluding the public are indeed the paṇḍitas of Kali-yuga.

Presently, all the so-called paṇḍita circles are simply engrossed in sophism and word jugglery.

Subjects such as the ultimate human ^①destination; the ^②purpose of life; the eternal interrelationships between jīva, Īśvara, and the śaktis of Īśvara; the prime necessity of humanity and the means to acquire it; and so on, are never discussed.

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Yet, only when these topics of eternal truth and absolute reality are brought into focus can we expect the knowledge of prema and hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana to become familiar amongst the people.”

Caturbhuja, “I admit there are hardly any good paṇḍitas.”

Nevertheless, tell me why the upper class brāhmaṇas have not taken up
vaiṣṇava-dharma.

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The brahminical caste is a sāttvikā group established in the mode of
goodness.

They are generally inclined towards the path of truth and noble deeds, yet
why are they mostly antagonistic to vaiṣṇava-dharma?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “You have questioned me and so I am compelled to tell you the truth.”

We Vaiṣnavas are not here to find faults in others. Sir, if you will not be hurt or enraged and are sincere about learning the truth, then I am prepared to answer your last question.”

Caturbhuja, “Actually, studying the scriptures has made us very much in favour of upholding the good qualities like moderation, self-control, tolerance, etc., therefore it is not at all difficult for us to listen to you.”

Please offer us a lucid explanation and we will certainly take your good spiritual instructions to heart.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Please note that Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Madhvācārya, Śrī Viṣṇusvāmī, and Śrī Nimbāditya were all brāhmaṇas by birth.”

Each of them had thousands of disciples who were brāhmaṇas.

Our Śrī Caitanya of Bengal was a Vedic brāhmaṇa; Śrī Nityānanda was a high caste rādhīya-brāhmaṇa; and Śrī Advaita Prabhu was a vārendra-brāhmaṇa.

Even the gosvāmīs and mahātmās, the intimate associates of Śrī Caitanya, were mostly from the brāhmaṇa class.

In addition, an impressive number of brāhmaṇa stalwarts have joined the ranks of the Vaiṣṇava preachers to disseminate this pure vaiṣṇava-dharma worldwide.

Therefore, why do you claim that higher caste brāhmaṇas do not admire vaiṣṇava-dharma?

“We know that mostly all the high-born brāhmaṇas hold vaiṣṇava-dharma in esteem.

However, some, as a result of bad hereditary traits, ^① depraved company, ^② and wrong upbringing are hostile towards the vaiṣṇava-dharma.

Of course, this attitude certainly does not give a good account of their brāhmaṇa background. It simply reflects their misfortune and degradation.

“The śāstras hold the view that particularly in Kali-yuga properly qualified brāhmaṇas are scarce.

These few select and qualified brāhmaṇas are Vaiṣṇavas.

From the moment of initiation into the gāyatrī-mantra—the mantra that personifies the Vedas and who is a devotee of Śrī Viṣṇu—a brāhmaṇa is factually embracing vaiṣṇava-dharma by having been thus initiated into a purely vaiṣṇava-mantra.

Yet, on account of the ill influence of the deteriorating times, the deluded brāhmaṇa unfortunately accepts reinitiation by bogus non-Vedic methods and rejects his original vaiṣṇava-dharma.

However, this small number of mislead vaiṣṇava-brāhmaṇas must not lead you to draw a wrong conclusion.”

Caturbhuja, “Why do the majority of the Vaiṣṇavas apparently come from the lower castes?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “There is no doubt about it. Most persons from the lower castes readily accept their meek and stricken position, thus evoking the compassion of the Vaiṣṇava sādhus.