

Jaiṡa Dharma

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Chapter Ten

The Age and History of Nitya-dharma

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.

No one can become a Vaiṣṇava without first receiving the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.

A person cannot become humble, if he is intoxicated with high caste, position, lineage, wealth, etc.

Such persons devoid of humility are not likely to attract the mercy of the Vaiṣṇavas.”

Caturbhuja, “I think I have heard enough about this topic. I see you are gradually leading the conversation to the subject of the disparaging scriptural quotes about the brāhmaṇas of Kali yuga.

I feel extremely disheartened when I hear those scriptural quotes, such as the one in the Varaha Purāṇa:

rākṣasāḥ kalim āśritya
jāyante brahma-yoniṣu

“Demons, taking advantage of Kali-yuga, take birth in brāhmaṇa families.”

“Therefore, I want to go on to other topics. Why do the Vaiṣṇavas disregard Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, a fathomless ocean of knowledge?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “I am surprised to hear this. We regard Saṅkarācārya as an incarnation of Lord Śiva.”

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has instructed us to honour him as an ācārya.

We reject only the philosophy of māyāvāda preached by him.

This māyāvāda philosophy is not rooted in the Vedas; it is merely a disguised form of Buddhism.

In order to keep the demons and atheists deluded and in ignorance, the Bhagavān instructed Śrī Saṅkarācārya to pervert the philosophy of the Vedas and the Gītā by propagating monism.

How can we fault the ācārya on this account and thus censure him?

“Lord Buddha was also an incarnation of the Supreme Lord, widely broadcasting a philosophy which went against the Vedic tenets.

However, does any civilized person castigate him for it?

One may argue that such actions of Bhagavān and Lord Śiva are not well planned because they are discriminatory.

My answer is that Bhagavān is the well-wishing universal father and Lord Śiva His chief executive.

They are both omniscient, all auspicious and can never make the mistake of being prejudiced.

Those amongst the human beings who are ignorant and small-minded cannot appreciate the profundity of Their works and so they end up foolishly berating the Lord and His pure devotee.

“A knowledgeable person must not make loose comments such as: ‘This act of Īśvara was not appropriate; He should have done this or that.’

Human beings cannot hazard opinions on topics beyond the jurisdiction of their limited intellect.

Īśvara alone knows the urgency of keeping the atheistic demons imprisoned in the māyāvāda thought.

We, the human beings, can neither fully fathom the reason for our existence, nor understand the expediency of our extinction at the time of mahā-pralaya, total annihilation.

Yet, all this is a part of the pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān. The devotees of Śrī Hari simply relish hearing about His pastimes, never quarrelling or disagreeing with them.”

Caturbhuja, “Yet, why do you say that the māyāvāda philosophy is contrary to the ethics of the Vedas, Vedānta, and Gītā?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “After properly scrutinizing the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta-sūtra can you pinpoint verses or aphorisms in support of the māyāvāda theory?”

I will shed appropriate light on their meanings.

Initially, some hint of māyāvāda thought can be detected in certain Vedic verses, but again, if these verses are seen in their entirety and in their full context, even these hints quickly evaporate.”

Caturbhuja, “Frankly speaking, I have studied neither the Upaniṣads, nor the Vedānta-sūtra; yet I am well prepared for any discussion upon nyāya, for I am conversant in sophism and dialectics.”

I have browsed through the Gītā, but do not possess a fair grasp of its importance, therefore I admit defeat.

“Oh yes! There is another matter I would like to hear about from you, as I am sure a paṇḍita of your stature will be able to make me understand.

Why do the Vaiṣṇavas honour only viṣṇu-prasāda and disregard the prasāda of the devas and devīs?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “First of all, I am not a paṇḍita, I am a very ignorant man.

You must understand that whatever I speak is on the strength of the mercy of my guru, Śrīla Paramahansa Premadāsa Bābājī.

The śāstras are a vast, unlimited ocean—no single person could possibly study them all entirely.

Śrīla Gurudeva has churned this ocean and given me the essence, which I have received fully confident that this siddhānta is concordant with the entirety of śāstra.

“Now, the answer to your question: ‘Do the Vaiṣṇavas disregard the prasāda remnants of the devas and devīs?’

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only and uncontested Supreme Personality of Godhead.

All devas and devīs are His devotees, solely owned by Him. Certainly, Vaiṣṇavas always honour and never deride the prasāda remnants of devotees.

“Devotion to the Supreme Lord is enhanced by accepting the prasāda remnants of the Lord’s devotees, known as mahā-prasāda.

There are, indeed, other excellent devotional objects besides the prasāda remnants; for example, the devotee’s foot-dust and his footbath water, also known as caraṇāmṛta, nectar from the feet.

The main point is that if a māyāvādī worships or offers foodstuff to any deva, because his consciousness is polluted by monism, the devas will reject his worship and offering.

I can give myriad quotes from numerous śāstras in support of this point, if you require such.

“Truly, the māyāvādīs worship only the devas. Moreover, if one accepts foodstuff offered to devas by māyāvādīs, one’s devotion will be impaired and one will offend Bhaktidevī.

However, when a pure Vaiṣṇava offers Śrī Kṛṣṇa prasādam to the devas and devīs, they receive it jubilantly and dance with joy.

Then, in turn, when a Vaiṣṇava accepts these remnants, he immediately experiences exultation.

“Now see the all-powerful strength of the scriptural injunctions.

In the yoga-śāstra, it is mentioned that a yoga practitioner must not take the remnants of a deva.

However, surely this does not imply that yogis disrespect deva prasāda.

Yet, solitary meditation is improved if such a yogi abstains from eating such prasāda.

Similarly, on the path of bhakti, a devotee must accept prasāda offered only to Bhagavān, not to any deva or devī. Otherwise progress in one-pointed śuddha-bhakti is hindered.

Similarly, this does not indicate disregard to deva prasāda.

The abstinence from deva prasāda as recommended in the scriptures actually helps the sādhakas to advance towards their respective spiritual goals.”

Caturbhuja, “Much obliged! I have understood this point. Now please tell me why you are opposed to animal sacrifice, which is endorsed by the scriptures.”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “According to the purport of the scriptures, animal sacrifice is not prescribed.”

The following excerpt from a verse in the Vedas denounces the killing of animals:

mā hiṁsyāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni

“One should not commit violence to any living entity.”

“As long as the nature of a person is controlled by the guṇas of tama and raja, he remains engrossed in sex life, meat-eating, and the taking of intoxicants.”

The Vedas clearly do not agree with these undesirable acts.

The real opinion of the Vedas is that as long as human beings have not elevated themselves to the level of sattva-guna and are thereby able to renounce sex, non-vegetarian food, and the addiction of intoxication, then they may legally marry to help themselves curb the basic instinct of sex, they may eat only sacrificial animals as non-vegetarian food, and in specific religious rituals they may drink wine.

Gradually, these checks used as deterrents will fully free them from these undesirable activities.

This is the actual Vedic understanding; the Vedas never advise the killing of animals. For example, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.5.11, states:

**loke vyavāyāmiṣa-madya-sevā
nityā hi jantor na hi tatra codanā
vyavasthitis teṣu vivāha-yajña
surā-grahair āsu nivṛttir iṣṭā**

“In this material world the conditioned soul is always inclined to sex, meat-eating and intoxication. Therefore, the religious scriptures never actually encourage such activities.

Although the scriptural injunctions provide for sex through sacred marriage, for meat-eating through sacrificial offerings, and for intoxication through the acceptance of ritual cups of wine, such ceremonies are meant for the ultimate purpose of renunciation.’

“The Vaiṣṇavas are of the opinion that if a tamasic or rājasic person desires to act in such irresponsible manner, let him do so.”

Nevertheless, a sattvika person must refrain from these acts. Hear another quote from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 1.13.47, where Nārada Muni gives the instruction:

ahastāni sahaṣṭānām apadāni caṭuṣ-padām
phalgūni tatra mahatām jīvo jīvasya jīvanam

“Those who are devoid of hands are prey for those who have hands. Those devoid of legs are prey for the four-legged. The weak are the subsistence of the strong. And the general rule holds that one living being is food for another.”

“Once again, in the Manu Smṛti, 5.56, we find:

na māmsa-bhakṣaṇe doṣe na madye na ca maithune
pravṛttir eṣā bhūtānām nivṛttis tu mahā-phalā

“The natural propensity of human beings is toward sensual enjoyment,
meat eating, and intoxication; yet, by discarding these propensities a person
gains a wonderful fortune.””

Caturbhuja, “Very well! However, what is your attitude towards the śrāddha
ceremony, the offering of oblations to the forefathers, which helps to repay
the debt of a man to his father. Why are the Vaiṣṇavas not in favour of such
ceremonies?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “Actually, the Vaiṣṇavas are not against karmis performing the śrāddha ceremony. In this context, the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, 11.5.41, states:

devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām
na kiṅkaro nāyam rñī ca rājan
śarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam
gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam

“O King, one who has given up all material duties and has taken full shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, who offers shelter to all, is not indebted to the devas, great sages, ordinary living beings, relatives, friends, mankind, or even to one’s forefathers who have passed away. Since all such classes of living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, one who has surrendered to the Lord’s service has no need to serve such persons separately.”

“Therefore, a devotee who has surrendered his life to the Supreme Lord is not required to perform the śrāddha ceremony of the karma-kāṇḍa process in order to repay the debts to the forefathers.”

He is advised to simply worship the Supreme Lord and offer Him bhoga, foodstuff.

By offering it to the Lord, the bhoga is converted into prasāda and is then offered to and partaken of by the deceased family members.”

Caturbhuja, “When does a person become eligible to perform śrāddha in this manner?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa Bābājī, “From the day a person develops faith and respect for the chanting kṛṣṇa-nāma, and for hearing topics related to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he becomes a Vaiṣṇava and acquires this eligibility.”

The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 11.20.9, comments:

Bhakti ← (tāvāt karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvataḥ
(mat-kathā-śravaṇādau (va śraddhā) yavan) na jāyate

“One should continue to perform the Vedic ritualistic activities until one actually becomes detached from material sense gratification and develops faith in hearing and chanting about Me.”

Qualification for Jñāna.

Platform of faith.

Caturbhuja, “I am truly happy for this chance to speak with you.

I have heard a very subtle and wise analysis of these topics from you,
convincing me that you are a fine scholar and awakening, indeed, my faith in
vaiṣṇava-dharma.

This has given me immense pleasure. Well, my dear Harihara, what need is
there for further debate.

These Vaiṣṇavas possess vast knowledge—they are the champions of
scriptural debate.

Whatever we may have to say in order to protect our hereditary brahminical business, it is certainly an irrefutable fact that such a brilliant super-excellent scholar and Vaiṣṇava as Srī Nimāi Paṇḍita was never, nor will ever again be born in Bengal, perhaps not throughout the entire length and breath of India.

Now let us depart to our homes across the Gaṅgā. The day is coming to an end.”

Caturbhuja Nyāyaratna stood up with his associates, sang out, “Haribol! Haribol!” and began to walk away.

The Vaiṣṇavas began to chant jubilantly, “Jay Śacīnandana! Jay Śacīnandana! All glory to the son of Śacīmātā, Nimāi!” and broke out into a stately dance.