

Jaiṅva Dharma

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Chapter Eleven

Nitya-dharma and Deity Worship

Therefore, through this process of pure devotional service the transcendental form of the Lord is revealed—an impossible task for the methods of karma or jñāna.

Mullah Sāhib, “Matter is distinct from God.

Our tradition proclaims that Satan has introduced the worship of Deities formed of material elements just to enslave the jīva in material existence.

In our opinion, it is better to avoid such idol worship.”

Gorācānda Bābājī, “Īśvara is one and unsurpassable; He has no rival.

Everything in the entire cosmic creation is created by Him and is subordinate to His will.

Therefore, He can be satisfied by any object when it is properly employed in His worship.

In fact, none of the objects or persons that are other than Īśvara that a jīva may worship in forgetfulness of Īśvara can make Īśvara jealous or envious in any way for He is Bhagavān, the fully renounced, all-auspicious Supreme Benefactor and Well-wisher of everyone.

Even if there were a Satan, then certainly he could not possess even the slightest power to act against the supreme will of Bhagavan.

Ultimately, he could only be another jīva and subservient to the Supreme Lord.

However, according to our Vaiṣṇava understanding such a gargantuan monster as the 'Devil' or 'Satan' does not exist.

Nothing can occur in this world contrary to the Lord's plan, nor is it possible for anyone to be independent of the Lord's control.

"At this point one may pose the question, 'If nothing is independent of the Īśvara, then how was sin created?' This is our answer: Jīva is the servant of the Supreme Lord.

Acknowledgement of this truth is called jñāna, or vidyā, but forgetfulness is known as avidyā, nescience.

For whatever reasons, certain jīvas act in avidyā and thus sow the seed of sin in their hearts.

However, the eternal associates of the Supreme Lord, the nitya-pārsada jīvas, do not sow the seed of sin in their hearts.

Instead of inventing the extraordinary myth of Satan and further imagining a certain object as him, it would be more fruitful to recognize and understand the avidyā within our own hearts as the cause of our sinful activity.

“Therefore, to worship the śrī-mūrtī of Īśvara in the material elements is not an offence.

Actually, such worship is most essential for those of low devotional qualification and particularly auspicious for those of high spiritual eligibility.

To consider Deity worship as unbeneficial is futile rhetoric and mere dogma—
scriptural evidence and logic cannot be found to support such a view.”

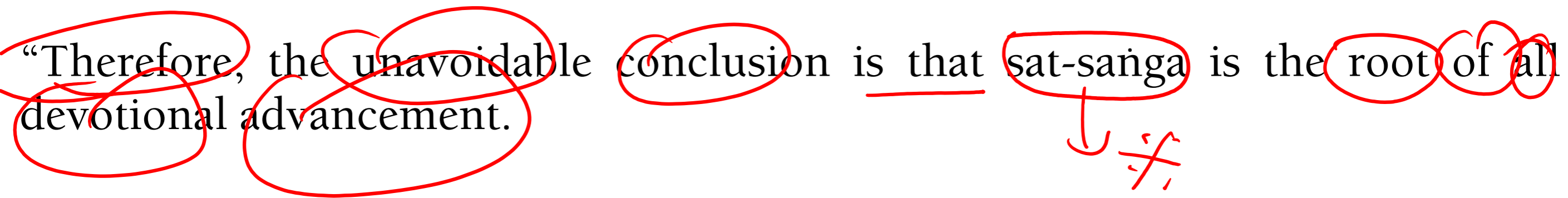
Mullah Sāhib, “The worship of the Deity formed from matter cannot increase the spiritual perception because the mind of the worshiper remains confined thus to the properties of matter.”

Gorācānda Bābājī, “If we study the ancient historical accounts of those who became great devotees of the transcendental Lord we can understand your proposal to be mistaken.

It is a matter of record that many neophyte devotees began their devotional practice by worship of the Deity form.

As they continued their Deity worship in the association of pure devotees their devotional mood gradually deepened. they increasingly realized the transcendental and conscious nature of the Deity form, and eventually they plunged deeply into the ocean of transcendental devotional love.

“Therefore, the unavoidable conclusion is that sat-saṅga is the root of all devotional advancement.



The association of pure devotees intoxicated with kṛṣṇa-prema naturally awakens one's innate affection for Srī Hari.

As this affection gradually increases, one progressively discards the material conception of the Deity.

This unfolding of spiritual consciousness brings the greatest good fortune.

In contrast, the followers of non-Āryan religions generally oppose the worship of the Deity form.

However, how many of them have actually realized cinmaya-bhāva, the transcendental all-conscious nature of Bhagavān and His spiritual creation.

Instead they are spending their time in sophistry and malicious argumentation—when can they expect to experience true devotion to the Lord?”

Mullah Sāhib, “To perform Deity worship in divine devotional consciousness may be considered living without aberration.

However, how can the worship of dogs, cats, snakes, and even of promiscuous men be permissible and considered as a devotional process?

Our divine prophet has especially castigated such byūt-parasta.”

Gorācānda Bābājī, “Generally, human beings are by nature grateful to the Supreme Lord.

They may wallow in sinful life, yet on occasion they consider a Supreme Being as the actual ultimate controller of everything and bow down in awe to the mighty and inexplicable wonders that occur in the world.

Thus, the ignorant and foolish—prodded by their innate gratitude to the Supreme Being—generally revere rivers, mountains, the sun, giant and powerful beasts, etc.

They confide their inner thoughts and feelings to these objects and display surrender to them.

Actually, cinmaya-bhakti, the divine process of devotion to the transcendent Lord, on the one hand, and this type of worship of objects and spirits, on the other, are irreconcilably different.

Yet, the ignorant person's acknowledgement of and grateful obeisance to the Supreme Godhead through these material objects certainly give him much pious benefit, which gradually bestows a positive spiritual effect.

A little deliberation upon this topic will verify that these less intelligent seekers cannot be condemned.

“Worshiping, meditating upon, and offering prayers—as the Muslims do in namāz—to the all-pervasive, formless, impersonal feature of Godhead is also bereft of pure divine love of the transcendental Supreme Person.

Where then, ultimately, lies the distinction between such worship and the worship of, say, a cat or a mountain?

Our Vaiṣṇava view is that enhancing one's attachment and affection for the Supreme Lord—by whatever method—is crucial to one's eventual realization of the transcendental Absolute Truth.

If, on the other hand, such less-enlightened seekers are simply ridiculed and repudiated this may close their portal to gradual elevation.

~~Those who become sectarian by obstinately locking themselves into dogmatic cults are soon diverted from lofty idealism, munificence, and liberality.~~

~~They deride and rail at anyone who does not follow their particular methodology in religious practice. This is a serious aberration on their part.~~

Mullah Sāhib, “Are you suggesting then that everything is God and that all types of worship to any object are tantamount to worshiping God?”

Is worshiping something sinful also worshiping God? Moreover, is revering immoral proclivities equivalent to devotion to God? Is God pleased with all these things?”

Gorācānda Bābājī, “We do not designate everything as God. Certainly, the Supreme Personality is distinct from all things—all that exists is created by God and is under His divine sovereignty.”

However, as everything is related with the Supreme Godhead, it is the natural prerogative of everyone to enquire about the presence of God in all things.

Repeated and sincere enquiry about the presence of the Supreme in all things will gradually bestow increasing perception of the Supreme Transcendental Person, thus leading to ultimate success according to the Vedic aphorism:

...jijñāsāsvādanāvadhī... ‘Inquiry leads to experience.’

Therefore, even indirect enquiry about the Supreme Lord will one day result in the realization of transcendence.

“You are all very learned theologians. If you kindly consider these points with a noble and open mind, then you will understand.”

We are poor and simple Vaisnavas and are not keen on participating in lengthy debates.

With your permission, may we return to hear the musical narration, Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala-gītā, songs glorifying the all-auspicious pastimes of Śrī Caitanya?”

Mullah Sāhib’s reaction regarding the discussion was not discernible from his demeanour.

He sat placidly for a short time, then said, “I am pleased to hear your analysis and explanations. I will return another time and ask more questions. It is late now and I desire to go back to my home.”

Mullah Sāhib walked at the head of his small group of followers to their patiently waiting horses, mounted, and rode off to Sātsāika Paraganā.

The Vaiṣṇavas chanted kṛṣṇa-nāma in jubilant chorus and rejoined the others, who were still engrossed in the kīrtana of Śrī Caitanya-maṅgala-gītā.

Thus ends the eleventh chapter of Jaiva-dharma, entitled: Nitya-dharma and Deity Worship