

Jaiṅva Dharma

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Chapter Twelve

Nitya-dharma: Sādhana, the
Means of Attainment, and
Sādhyā, the Ultimate Goal

Śrī Navadvīpa-maṇḍala, consisting of nine transcendental islands, is the foremost place of pilgrimage in the entire universe.

Like Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma, it is spread over an area of thirty-two square miles.

The maṇḍala is compared to an eight-petal lotus flower with each of the eight petals representing one of the transcendental islands.

The ninth island is represented by the central seed-vessel, which is the island of Antardvīpa, in the centre of which is Śrī Māyāpura.

North of Śrī Māyāpura lies the island of Sīmantadvīpa with an impressively tall temple dedicated to Śrī Sīmantiṇī devī.

The Bilva-puskarinī Lake spreads itself over an area on the northern side of this temple, while the Brāhmaṇa-puṣkarinī Lake is found on the southern side.

Lying there on the northern periphery of Navadvīpa-maṇḍala, these lakes with their adjoining areas are popularly known as Simuliyā.

At the time of Śrī Caitanya, the hamlet of Simuliyā was the seat of many erudite scholars.

One most learned resident of Simuliyā was Śrī Nīlāmbara Cakravartī, the father of Śrī Śacīmātā, and close to his old house now lived a Vedic brāhmaṇa named Śrī Vrajanātha Bhaṭṭācārya.

Vrajanātha had attended the village Sanskrit tola on the banks of Bilva-puṣkarīṇī Lake, mastering in a short time nyāya, the philosophy of logic and rhetoric.

Even very famous and respected paṇḍitas from all around and as far away as Māyāpura, Godruma, Madhyadvīpa, Amraghātā, Samudragadh, Kuliya, and Pūrvasthalī were intimidated by the novel arguments and rhetoric of Śrī Vrajanātha Bhaṭṭācārya.

In public debates and large gatherings of paṇḍitas, the innovative and piercing arguments of Śrī Vrajanātha Nyāya-pañcānana were like incendiary arrows burning to ashes every proposal of his opponents.

Of these paṇḍitas, an especially malicious one, Naiyāyika Cūḍāmaṇi, was particularly envious of Vrajanātha's brilliance and had decided to murder him.

Deciding to do this by certain black rites from the tantra-śāstra, he went to the śmaśana, crematorium, in Rudradvīpa.

There amongst the ashes, he began to utter sinister mantras, throughout long days and nights, calling forth the black powers of Death.

At midnight, the dark moon of amāvāsyā having spread a cover over the śmaśāna, the brāhmaṇa invoked his worshipable and chosen goddess, Kālī, with powerful mantras, entreating her as follows, “Dear Mā! In Kali-yuga, you are the only deity worthy of worship.

People say you are easily satisfied with just a few incantations of mantra and thus readily offer to your supplicant his desired boons.

O noble and most formidable Goddess! Your humble servant has undertaken gruelling pains for many days and nights in chanting your mantras. Kindly show me your mercy just this one time.

Oh Devī, I know I am riddled with wrongs, but you are my mother, please overlook and excuse them. And now, kindly manifest yourself to me!”

Crying out repeatedly in this manner, the incantations were chanted and a life hung in the balance as Naiyāyika Cūḍāmaṇi offered oblations into the sacrificial fire for the death of Vrajanātha Nyāya-pañcānana.

Soon the powers of the mantras began to manifest themselves: The sky became overcast, the winds howled, and ear-shattering thunder crashed down.

Momentary lightning flashes pierced the eerie pall, revealing the ghastly forms of ghosts and demons.

At first, the paṇḍita was mortally afraid, but soon, bravely exerting his powers of reasoning with the help of the sacrificial wine, he pulled himself together, steeled his nerves, and pleaded, “O dear Mā! Kindly, do not delay any further!”

Just then, an ethereal voice from the sky echoed the words, “Give up your worries.”

Vrajanātha will soon discontinue his rhetorical debates, renounce that path, and become silent.

You will no longer have to face him as an opponent. Calm yourself and return home.”

The divine prophecy thrilled Cūḍāmaṇi and he repeatedly bowed down before the image of Lord Śiva, the Lord of tantric rites, returning home with a sprightly gait.

At twenty-one, Vrajanātha Nyāya-pañcānana had been crowned the unconquerable regent of debate and scholasticism—the dig-vijayī paṇḍita, one who has conquered all four directions.

Voraciously, he had read the complete works of Śrī Gaṅgeśopādhyāya, who had initiated a new system of logic known as navya-nyāya.

In addition, he had picked out many logical fallacies in Raghunātha (Kāṇābhaṭṭa) Śiromaṇi's Dīdhiti, which was a famous commentary on Gaṅgeśopādhyāya's dissertation on nyāya, the Tattva-cintāmaṇi.

Thereafter, he had started writing his own independent purports.

Material life had no attraction for him and he spent no time in its contemplation; instead, the subjects of nyāya: semantics, rhetoric, sophism, devising new counter-arguments, and so on, filled his world.

Using the logical tools of ghata, a clay pot; paṭa, a piece of cloth; avaccheda, the distinguishing property of an object; and vyavaccheda, the separation of one object from another, he constantly considered the nature of objects, the nature of time, and the peculiarities of liquids and solids, even while eating, sleeping and walking.

Still, he had never even heard of paramārtha, the ultimate spiritual destination—pure devotion to the Supreme Lord.

One evening, while sitting on the bank of the Gaṅgā, Vrajanātha was deeply contemplating the enumeration of the sixteen elements of nyāya by the sage Gautama.

All at once, a young student of nyāya-śāstra came up to him and enquired as follows, “Dear Nyāya-pañcānana Mahāśaya, are you familiar with the aphorisms of Nimāi Paṇḍita that repudiate the theory of paramāṇu, the theory of creation based upon the material atom?”

Vrajanātha’s immediate response boomed out like the roar of a lion, “Who is this Nimāi Paṇḍita? Are you referring to the son of Śrī Jagannātha Miśra? Tell me about His subtle arguments.”

The student replied, “Not so long ago, here in Navadvīpa, an extraordinary personality named Nimāi Paṇḍita composed a myriad of aphorisms on nyāya and with them He succeeded in unsettling even the famous Raghunātha Śiromaṇi.

Since then Nimāi Paṇḍita has ruled the roost as the undisputed Master amongst all stalwart scholars of nyāya-śāstra.

Yet, despite His great command of nyāya, eventually He came to view it with contempt, in fact becoming derisive of material existence as a whole.

He embraced the renounced order as a sannyaśī mendicant and roamed far and wide, propagating the congregational chanting of harinama.

Present-day Vaisnavas worship Him as the Supreme Brahman, the Absolute Personality of Godhead, and thus dedicatedly chant His Śrī Gaurahari mantra.

Śrī Nyāya-pañcānana Mahāśaya, kindly go through his aphorisms and see what you think.”

Impressed and enticed by this unreserved eulogy of Nimāi Pandita's aphorisms, Vrajanātha began to search for them and within a short time discovered a number of Nimāi Paṇḍita's aphorisms from different scholarly sources.

Out of human nature, one automatically venerates the pre-eminent teachers of the subjects in which one is interested.

Moreover, for various reasons people generally tend to have more esteem for great personalities after their death and, in contrast, be even neglectful of such personalities whilst they live.

Thus, it was only natural for Vrajanātha after delving into Nimāi Paṇḍita's aphorisms to develop great deference for Him.

Acutely feeling the absence of Nimāi Paṇḍita, Vrajanātha would express his feelings in prayer, "O Nimāi Paṇḍita! If only I had been there when you were present, perhaps I could have gained great knowledge from you."

Dear Nimāi Paṇḍita! Kindly enthrone yourself in my heart.

Truly, you must be the Absolute Supreme Brahman, otherwise how could your intellect construct such extraordinary rhetorical aphorisms?

You are indeed the Golden Avatāra, Śrī Gaurahari! Your philosophy and profound insight has given vision to persons blinded by nescience.

Ignorance is black and dark, which Your brilliant golden hue as Śrī Gaura Gaurāṅga has dissipated.

You are the Supreme Lord, Śrī Hari, because you are able to steal the heart of everyone.

In truth, I have lost my heart to Your wonderful aphorisms.”

In this manner, devotional feelings were gathering momentum within Vrajanātha's heart.

Afflicted at times to frenzy with deeply felt emotion, he would cry out aloud, "Hey Nimāi Paṇḍita! O Gaurahari! Please be merciful to me.

When will I be capable of composing aphorisms such as Yours?

With a little grace from You, I would be sure to make huge strides in my study of nyāya and become a great scholar!"

One day, Vrajanātha mused, “In all probability those devotees who worship Śrī Gaurahari, they, like me, must have been attracted to Nimāi Pandita because of His unsurpassable erudition in the logic and rhetoric of the nyāya philosophy.

Let me find out what books written by Nimāi Paṇḍita they study.”

With this mood, Vrajanātha desired to seek the association of the devotees of Śrī Gaurahari.

Repeated utterance of “Nimāi Paṇḍita” “Gaurahari” and other transcendental names of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the yearning to associate with Śrī Gaurāṅga’s followers, these two activities turned out to be extremely spiritually fortuitous, accruing for Vrajanatha immense sukṛti.

One afternoon, while sitting down to eat lunch at his grandmother's place,
Vrajanātha asked her, "Grandma, did you ever see Śrī Gaurahari?"

His grandmother immediately joyfully reminisced over her early childhood
days and said, "Aha! Will I evermore behold that nectarean golden
personality, the embodiment of the most exquisite beauty?"

How can anybody remain immersed in householder family life after seeing
that charming form?

When He performed harināma-saṅkīrtana immersed in ecstasy, even Navadvīpa's animal population, including the birds, trees and creepers were paralysed, overwhelmed with prema.

Even now, remembering those days and feelings, my eyes fill with tears and soak my breast."

Vrajanātha asked, "Grandma, do you have any stories about Him?"

Grandmother replied, "Yes, when He accompanied His mother Śrī Śacīdevī to her father's house, just nearby here, the older ladies of our families would cook many different preparations of spinach, rice, and so on, to feed Him.

He especially relished every morsel of spinach, heaping praise upon the cooks.”

Just at that moment, Vrajanātha was served spinach upon his plate and thought to himself, “Aha! The favourite spinach preparation of logician par excellence, Śrī Nimāi Paṇḍita,” and relished the spinach with great affection.

It is hard to describe how greatly attached Vrajanātha was now becoming to Nimāi Paṇḍita on matters concerning the logic and rhetoric of the nyāya philosophy even though Vrajanātha was, as of yet, still oblivious to pure spiritualism.

Nevertheless, Vrajanātha had become enraptured in thought of Śrī Nimāi Paṇḍita.

He felt pleased when anyone uttered the name Nimāi and if anyone came for alms at Vrajanātha's door and chanted, "Jai Śacīnandana!" he would be given special care.

Sometimes, Vrajanātha would visit learned Bābājī devotees in Māyāpura to hear Śrī Gaurāṅga's name being chanted and humbly enquire from the Bābājīs about the pastimes of the Lord as the most erudite scholar.

Several months passed in this manner and gradually a certain and sure change was coming over Vrajanātha.

Vrajanātha had always been attracted to Nimāi Paṇḍita as an extraordinary
logician, but nowadays everything about Nimāi was of keen interest.

Vrajanātha now felt a growing ennui towards logic and rhetoric, and very soon
Nimāi the pure devotee dethroned Nimāi the logician par excellence from
Vrajanātha's heart.

At the rhythmic sounds of the kohl and karatālas, Vrajanātha's heart now leapt
and danced in joy.

Each time he saw a devotee, he would offer obeisances very respectfully to the
devotee within his mind, and he felt increasing devotion to Śrī Navadvīpa-
dhāma as the birthplace of Śrī Gaurāṅga.

Steadily Vrajanātha was maturing into a spiritual and saintly person.

His competitor scholars of nyāya noticed the change and saw that Vrajanātha had grown quiet and pensive, so they heaved a sigh of relief knowing they would be spared harassment by his sharp arrows of logic and rhetoric.

Naiyāyika Cūdāmaṇi thought that his worshipful Deity had successfully disabled Vrajanātha and that now he had finally rid himself of the last impediment to his own ascension.

One day Vrajanātha sat upon the bank of the Gaṅgā and soliloquised, “If a great nyāya philosopher of the stature of Śrī Nimāi Paṇḍita could turn His back on nyāya and take up bhakti, then why should I not do the same?”

My entire life I have been caught up in the vortex of nyāya and have never cared for bhakti; therefore, I have been a stranger to spiritual life and Śrī Gaurāṅga's sacred name.

Nyāya took complete control of my life, so much so that my eating, sleeping, and thinking were completely stolen.

Nevertheless, now things have reversed, I have forgotten nyāya and think only of Śrī Gaurāṅga.

“When I see the Vaiṣṇavas dancing, my mind is enchanted.

Yet, how can I forget that I am the torchbearer of a prominent aristocratic and well-respected Vedic brāhmaṇa family?

I admire the demeanour of the Vaiṣṇavas, but I think I should not adopt their conduct outwardly—to worship Śrī Gaurāṅga in the calmness of my heart would be better.

The countenances of the Vaiṣṇavas living in Khola-bhāṅga-ḍāṅgā where the Kāzī broke the mṛdaṅga drum and in Vairāgī-ḍāṅgā of Māyāpura exhilarate me.

Especially the magnetic effect of Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī makes me wish to stay beside him permanently and become his pupil in the study of the bhakti-śāstras.

“In the Vedas, the Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.5.6, declares:

ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ

“O Maitreya! Always hear about, think about, meditate upon, and see all objects as they are related to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Supersoul, Śrī Hari.”

“In this verse when the word mantavya is analysed on the basis of nyāya philosophy, the pursuit and enquiry into Brahman realization is advised.

Yet, the word srotavyah implies striving after a goal that goes beyond Brahman realization by hearing from a realized teacher, a clear signal of the limitations of Brahman realization.

I have spent too much time in contentious empirical speculations.

Now being tired of them, I simply want to take shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gaurahari.

Without delay I must go and take darśana of Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī.”

The setting sun ignited the western sky immersing the scene in orange hues and a southerly breeze stirred up the dry foliage.

Flocks of birds homeward bound flew by in formation and the stars were gradually becoming visible in the evening sky.

At this moment the Vaiṣṇavas of the Śrīvāsāṅgana temple in Māyāpura started their sandhyā-āratī, evening worship, and kīrtana, congregational chanting.

Vrajanātha, arriving at the temple, went directly to the Khola-bhāṅga-dāṅgā area within the temple complex and sat down on the circular raised platform around the bakula tree, where he allowed the evening kīrtana to Śrī Gaurahari soothe his heart.

After kīrtana and āratī, the Vaiṣṇavas assembled under the bakula tree, coming in twos and threes.

Soon the elderly Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī walked slowly over to the bakula tree uttering aloud, “Jaya Śacīnandana, Jaya Nityānanda, Jaya Rūpa-Sanātana, Jaya Dāsa Gosvāmī!”

As he approached the platform and sat down, all the Vaiṣṇavas offered him obeisances.

Spontaneously Vrajanātha felt compelled to prostrate himself in reverence before the aged Vaiṣṇava.

The elderly Bābājī looked down at Vrajanātha's expressive and sincere face, embraced him, and made him sit next to him.

He asked Vrajanātha, "Who are you, my son?"

Vrajanātha replied, "I am a seeker of truth, I desire to learn from you."