

Jaiṁa Dharma

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Chapter Seventeen

Nitya-dharma: Sambandha,
Abhidheya and Prayojana

Part Five: The Liberation of the Jīva from the Prison House of Māyā

Vrajanātha listened impassively while his grandmother talked to him that night about completing the final arrangements for his marriage ceremony.

After supper, he reclined upon his bed until late in the night, still pondering over the status of the pure jīva.

At the same time in another room, quite different thoughts were keeping his aged grandmother awake, “How can I arouse his interest in his matrimonial affairs—he seems so unconcerned.”

However, the thoughts of Vrajanātha's grandmother were interrupted by the sudden arrival of the maternal cousin of Vrajanātha, Vānimādhava.

Vānimādhava had been assigned by Vijaya Vidyāratna, the father of the prospective bride, to finalize the marriage alliance between Vrajanātha and his daughter, who was also the paternal cousin-sister of Vānimādhava.

Vānimādhava, “Granny, why delay? Please organize this marriage properly—it is up to you.”

Grandmother then expressed her own concern about the situation, “Dear boy, you are such an expert in these matters, why don’t you speak to Vrajanātha and make him understand that he must marry. Every time I bring the subject up, he remains silent.”

Vānimādhava was short, with a stumpy neck, dark complexion and sly, dimly lit eyes.

He had the habit of ‘putting his finger in every pie,’ but managed somehow or other to stay aloof or at least he pretended to do so.

He quickly retorted, “Granny, everything will come out fine.

I am only waiting for your permission and then I can start.

You know already what I can accomplish—I can make money by counting the waves upon the sea! Just let me get into this topic with Vrajanātha.

Ahh, yes! Granny, remember, you promised to stuff me full with all those goodies of yours...?”

Hearing from the grandmother that Vrajanātha was fast asleep, Vānimādhava
decided to leave and return the next day.

Early the next morning he showed up carrying a lotā, a small kettle-shaped
water vessel, for his ablutions.

From the house, Vrajanātha entered the courtyard where Vānimādhava was
waiting and sat down upon the Chandi-maṇḍapa platform in front of the
family Devī temple.

Seeing Vānimādhava, he spoke with mild surprise, “My dear brother, what
brings you here so early?”

Vānimādhava got straight to the point, “Dear elder brother, you have spent a long time studying and teaching the nyāya scriptures.”

Your father, Haranātha Cūḍāmaṇi, was a renowned scholar and now you are famous as a paṇḍita.

Yet, have you considered that you are also the sole male in your household? Who will inherit these large holdings if you have no male descendent? Big brother, it is the earnest desire of everyone that you marry.”

Vrajanātha, “Dear brother, why do you trouble me without cause?”

Since I am nowadays associating with the followers of Śrī Gaurāṅga, I have no intention of entering household life.

Family life does not attract me.

Having learned to experience immense exultation in the company of Vaiṣṇava sādhus in Māyāpura, I will either take sannyasa, embracing the robe of the renunciate, or at least take full shelter of the feet of the Vaiṣṇavas.

I reveal these facts to you because I consider you a close friend and would ask you to keep them to yourself.”

Judging Vrajanātha's mood, Vānimādhava thought that a straightforward, simple approach would not favour his mission and thus he decided to take a more devious course.

Masking his inner feelings, he said slyly, "I am here to assist you in anything you want.

When you were a student I carried your books to school and back, now that you are about to take the sannyāsa āśrama, I will carry your staff and water-pot."

Hiding their real feelings, men of cunning possess double tongues.

They say one thing to one person and twist it around for another, thus causing considerable chaos and contention.

Their words are sugar-coated, but their hearts are black with poison.

Hearing the sweet sympathy of Vānimādhava and feeling encouraged to trust him, Vrajanātha said, “Dear brother, I always knew you as a well-wishing and hearty friend.

You see, my grandmother is an old-fashioned matriarch; she has no knowledge about the serious facts of life, renunciation and so on.

Since discovering someone she thinks would be a good bride for me, she has been scheming tirelessly to drag me into the inferno of family life.

If you can persuade her to desist from this plan, I shall remain forever indebted to you.”

Vānimādhava responded, “As long as Śarmarāma, the great arbitrator, is present, no one can force you to act against your will.

Elder brother, please open your heart to me and tell me honestly why you have developed such a strong aversion for household-life, so that I will be able to defend you vigorously.

Who has advised you to embrace renunciation?"

Vrajanātha entrusted Vānimādhava candidly with the whole story of the respected elder, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, the mentor to whom he fled every evening, who was extremely merciful and expert in soothing and cooling the burning pangs of material existence.

Being a crooked man with sinister designs, Vānimādhava conspired within himself, "Now I have it, now I know his weakness.

I will have to make some devious manoeuvres to get him back upon the right track."

Yet, aloud he said, “Elder brother, I will gradually convince grandmother to give up her plans for your marriage, but first I must return to my house.”

Vānimādhava started out in the direction of his home, but soon turned around towards Śrīvāsāṅgana, Māyāpura.

Arriving there, he sat down under the fragrant bakula tree, saying to himself in a critical mood, “These good-for-nothing Vaiṣṇavas are the real enjoyers in this world.

They live in nice surroundings with blossoming flowers, green shady bowers and wide, clean courtyards.

Each has his own bhajana-kuṭīra to chant japa away from the public eye.

And that is all they have to do.

They live like kings, and God-fearing people, especially the pious ladies, upon their return from purificatory baths in the Gaṅgā always bring them fruits, milk and so on—such an easy life!

Earlier the cast brāhmaṇas were able to direct this flow of bounty into their own larders by institutionalising karma-kāṇḍa performances, but the bābājīs have now outwitted them and become the latest rage.

“O Kali-yuga, I salute you! You protect your followers and allow them to live off the fat of the land.

Coming here has opened up my eyes.

Alas! My birth in an elevated aristocratic Kulīna brāhmaṇa family is to no avail, because today no one offers us even a glass of water, what to speak of fruits.

These charlatan Vaiṣṇavas accuse the scholarly logicians of using word jugglery simply for the discussion of material objects, calling them fools.

However, even after having studied this science of logic thoroughly, my elder brother Vrajanātha has begun to accept the words of these Vaiṣṇavas.

That would appear to be it: He is an unfortunate victim who has fallen into their mischievous clutches.

I am Vānimādhava; I will set Vrajanātha aright and teach these crooks in loincloths a lesson.”

Vānimādhava stopped spewing out mental venom, strolled over to one of the huts and entered.

By coincidence, it was the hut of the elderly Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, who was sitting on a simple hand-made mat chanting japa.

The face being a mirror of the mind, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī saw that Kali-yuga in the form of this young brāhmaṇa boy had entered the hut.

Very humble by nature, Vaiṣṇavas consider themselves at all times to be lower than a piece of straw.

They tolerate the taunts of inimical persons, wishing them only the best.

Though uninterested in seeking respect for themselves, they are always respectful to others.

Therefore, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī endearingly asked Vānimādhava to be seated.

Vānimādhava was a deadly hater of the Vaiṣṇavas.

Ignorant of the status of a Vaiṣṇava, he pompously concluded that the elderly Bābājī was a śūdra and made a gesture of blessing him by showing him the palm of his hand.

Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī enquired, “Son, what is your name? And what brings you here?”

In doing so, he addressed Vānimādhava with the more familiar and casual tumi, not with the more respectful apni.

Enraged at this, Vānimādhava replied with an undignified sneer, “Hey you Bābājī, do you think that by just wearing a kaupīna, you are now on equal terms with a brāhmaṇa.

Apart from that, I would like to know whether or not you are acquainted with Vrajanātha Nyāya-pañcānana?”

All the while Vānimādhava used the familiar tumi.

Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “Kindly forgive my offences and overlook the defects in the language of an old man.

Yes, Vrajanātha blesses us sometimes with his presence.”

Vānimādhava, “That man is not as simple as you think he is.

He will visit you regularly for some time to win your confidence and then
after observing your practices carry out his own plans.

The Belapukuriyā brāhmaṇa community is antagonistic towards you
Vaiṣṇavas and have selected Vrajanātha to come here and find out more about
your way of life.

You are an elderly man; you should be careful with him.

I will visit you from time to time and tell you all about their devious plans against you and your friends.

A note of caution, for your own good, Vrajanātha must not know I was here. I will take my leave now.”

Vānimādhava sidled off in the direction of his home.

After lunch, Vānimādhava visited Vrajanātha and in the course of their conversation said casually,

“Elder brother, I went to Māyāpura on some work this morning and unexpectedly met a very aged Vaiṣṇava, I think he was called Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī.

We exchanged a few courteous words and came to speak about you.

He mentioned something so despicable about you that I was shocked—never before have I heard anyone speak such castigating words about a brāhmaṇa.

Finally he said that he would feed you with the contaminated remnants of all the lower castes and thereby demote you from your brahminical position.

What a shame! If a paṇḍita like yourself is insulted and you continue to visit him, this will blacken the good name of the entire brāhmaṇa community.”

Vrajanātha was shocked to hear Vānimādhava speak in this manner. Vrajanātha had developed firm faith and trust in the Vaiṣṇavas and a growing devotion to Raghunātha dāsa Bābāji.

Suddenly and for no recognizable reason, all these feelings became much stronger.

Vrajanātha turned to Vānimādhava, saying, “Brother, today I am busy.

Tomorrow, we can discuss all this at leisure; you had better go home now.”

Vānimādhava left quietly. Vrajanātha was well aware of Vānimādhava’s
double-faced character and although he had studied extensively the polemical
methods of logic and rhetoric ~~he disliked dishonest ways.~~

He had revealed his intimate thoughts about accepting renunciation because of
Vānimādhava’s alleged willingness to assist him in entering the sannyāsa
āśrama.

Nonetheless, now he understood Vānimādhava's deeper malicious motives.

Furthermore, it occurred to him that Vānimādhava's scheming intrigues may have been prompted ultimately by some expected personal gain in the matter of his marriage.

In addition the visit to Māyāpura might have been made with the intention of sowing seeds of dissension.

Vrajanātha clasped his hands and earnestly prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, let my faith in the guru and the Vaiṣṇavas become fixed and unshakable and not be reduced by the wiles of materialists and cheaters."

After being absorbed in philosophical deliberations until late afternoon, at sunset Vrajanātha set out eagerly for Srīvāsāṅgana.

After Vānimādhava had left the hut of Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, the elderly Bābājī thought that his visitor was a brahma-rākṣasa, a very powerful demon: ...rākṣasāḥ kalim-āśritya jāyante brahma-yoniṣu... “The demoniac persons will take shelter of Kali-yuga to multiply and be born as brāhmaṇas.”

This description properly fits my visitor.

He is arrogant, proud of his brāhmaṇa caste, insolent in behaviour, inimical to the Vaiṣṇavas, and a hypocrite making a show of religiosity.

This is written all over his face. His narrow shoulders, dim and sly eyes, and cunning circumlocution reflect his black heart.

What a striking distinction between the two! Vrajanātha has a lovely nature, and this man takes after the Devil himself.

O my Śrī Kṛṣṇa! O Śrī Gaurāṅga, please protect me from evil, so I may never have to associate with such men.

I must warn Vrajanātha against the devious ways of this vicious man.”

When Vrajanātha came that evening, Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī’s affection, which had now greatly increased, encompassed and welcomed him during their greeting embrace.

Considerably moved, Vrajanātha fell at his feet, his eyes brimming with tears.

He remained silent out of shame while Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī began, “I was visited this morning by a dark-complexioned brāhmaṇa youth who made certain provocative remarks, do you know this person?”

Vrajanātha, “Dear master, if I may repeat your own words, there are many sorts of human beings, some of whom are so perverted that they enjoy causing anxiety to others.”

Vānimādhava—I hesitate to add the prefix ‘brother’—is a prime example of this kind. I would prefer not to mention him anymore.

His main business is to criticize you in my presence and to blame me in your company, hoping to wedge with falsities and lies a rift in our friendship.

I hope you were not offended by this upstart.”

Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “O Kṛṣṇa! O Gaurāṅga! I am fortunate to have been in the service of Vaiṣṇavas for a long time and by their mercy, I am able to judge between a Vaiṣṇava and a non-devotee.”

As I have properly assessed everything that happened today, you may drop the topic.”

Vrajanātha, “All right dear master, let us forget that fellow. Kindly tell me how the conditioned soul may attain liberation.”

Raghunātha dāsa Bābājī, “We find the answer to this question in the seventh śloka of the Daśa-mūla-śikṣā: