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[Respected Maharajas, Prabhus, and Didis,
Dandavat pranamas. Jaya Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga.

For the past almost ten years that I have had the fortune to associate with Srila Bhaktivedanta Narayana Gosvami Maharaja, both in India and around the world, he has given series of classes on several scriptures, such as Caitanya-caritamrta, Srimad Bhagavatam, Manah-siksa, Upadesamrta, and so on. However, although in so many of his classes on the various topics he quoted Jaiva Dharma, which he said he had personally read 108 times, he had never given entire classes, and what to speak of a series of classes, on that divine literature. Now in Germany, however, perhaps inspired by the newly published English translation, he has begun that series.

The devotees had never experienced such a condensed, surcharged atmosphere. It felt to some like a semblance of Sri Godruma, the residential abode of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura in Sri Navadvipa Mandala and the scene of Jaiva Dharma, as was manifest last nite, Dec 13th, in Germany. Each devotee experienced that atmosphere according to his individual ability.

The following is a continuation of the English publication of Jaiva Dharma (Chapter Three), and by the grace of Sri Guru and Gauranga, soon you may receive a transcription of the first of Srila Maharaja's present lectures on the subject.

Your aspiring servant, Syamarani dasi]

JAIVA DHARMA - CHAPTER THREE

NAIMITTIKA-DHARMA IS TO BE RELINQUISHED

One night, just after ten o'clock, Sannyasi Thakura sat chanting hari-nama on a raised mound in a secluded part of his grove within Sri Godruma. Gazing northward, he saw the full moon had already risen, diffusing an uncommon luster throughout Sri Navadvipa-mandala. Suddenly, a divine manifestation of nearby Sri Mayapura became visible before his eyes.

Sannyasi Thakura exclaimed, "Oh! What an extraordinary vision! I am seeing a most astonishing and blissful holy place! Towering jeweled palaces, temples and ornamented archways are illuminating the bank of the Jahnavi River by their glittering splendor. The tumultuous sound of hari-nama-sankirtana is rising from many places, as if to pierce the sky. Hundreds of Vaisnavas, like Narada playing upon his vina, are chanting sri-nama and dancing.

"On one side is fair-complexioned Mahadeva, with his damaru drum in his hand. He cries out, 'O Visvambhara, please bestow Your mercy upon me!' Saying this, he dances tandava-nritya wildly, then falls to the ground, unconscious. On another side, the four-

headed Brahma sits in an assembly of rsis who are well-versed in Vedic lore. He recites the following Vedic mantra and lucidly explains its meaning:

mahan prabhur vai purusah sattvasyaisah pravartakah
sunirmalam imam praptim isano jyotir avyayah
Svetasvatara Upanisad (3.12)

"That Personality is undoubtedly mahan, supreme, and He is prabhu, master. He bestows the tendency for intelligence, and by His mercy a person can attain supremely pure and transcendental peace. That person known as Mahaprabhu Sri Caitanya is purusa, the Supreme Person. He is isana, the Supreme Ruler. He is jyoti-svarupa, self-manifest and possessing a lustrous effulgence due to the golden splendour of His limbs. He is avyaya, the imperishable Lord.'

"Elsewhere, Indra and other devas are leaping in ecstasy, crying, 'Jaya Prabhu Gauracandra! Jaya Nityananda!' The birds sitting on the branches of the trees are calling out, 'Gaura! Nitai!' Large black bees are humming everywhere in the flower gardens, intoxicated by drinking gaura-nama-rasa (the liquid essence of the holy name of Gaura). Prakriti-devi (the goddess of nature) is maddened with gaura-rasa and diffusing her magnificent radiance everywhere. This is wonderful! I have seen Sri Mayapura in broad daylight many times, but I have never beheld anything like this before. What am I seeing?"

Remembering his Gurudeva, Sannyasi Thakura said, "O Prabhu, now I can understand that you have bestowed your mercy upon me today by granting me a vision of the transcendental (aprakrita) aspect of Mayapura. From today onwards, I shall call myself a follower of Sri Gauracandra. I see that everyone in this divine land of Navadvipa wears a necklace of tulasi beads, tilaka on his forehead, and the letters of sri-nama stamped on his body. I shall also do the same."

Saying this, Sannyasi Thakura fell into a state of unconsciousness. He regained external consciousness after a short while, and began to cry, "Indeed, I am extremely fortunate, for by the mercy of my guru, I have obtained a momentary vision of the sacred land of Sri Navadvipa."

The next morning, he threw his ekadanda staff into the river. Then, decorating his neck with a three-stranded necklace of tulasi beads and his forehead with the urddhva-pundra-tilaka mark, he chanted "Hari! Hari," and began to dance.

When the Vaisnavas of Godruma saw Sannyasi Thakura's extraordinary mood and new appearance, they offered him prostrated obeisance, saying, "You are blessed! You are blessed!" He became somewhat embarrassed at this, and said, "Oh, I have accepted this Vaisnava dress to become an object of the Vaisnavas' mercy, but now I have met with another obstacle. I have heard the following statement many times from Gurudeva's mouth:

trinad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena kirtaniyah sada harih
Sri Siksastaka 3

"Considering oneself to be more insignificant than a blade of grass, being more tolerant than a tree, and free from all desire for personal prestige, and offering all respect to others, one should constantly be absorbed in hari-kirtana.'

"The very same Vaisnavas whom I consider to be my gurus are now offering obeisances to me. What will become of me?" Pondering thus, he approached Paramahansa Babaji, offered him prostrated obeisance, and stood up with his head bowed.

Babaji Mahasaya was seated in the madhavi arbor chanting hari-nama. When he saw Sannyasi Thakura's complete change of dress and his awakening of bhava for sri-nama, he embraced him and bathed him with tears of love, saying, "O Vaisnava dasa, today I have become successful by touching your auspicious body."

With that statement, Sannyasi Thakura's previous name was forsaken. He received a new life from that day and was now known as Vaisnava dasa. Thus, he abandoned his Mayavada sannyasa dress, his prestigious sannyasa name, and the exalted conception he had of himself.

That afternoon, many Vaisnavas came to Sri Pradyumna-kunja from Sri Godruma and Sri Madhyadvipa to see Paramahansa Babaji. They all sat surrounding him, chanting hari-nama with tulasi-mala in their hands. They called out "Ha Gauranga! Nityananda! Ha Sitanatha! Jaya Sacinandana!" and their eyes welled with tears. The Vaisnavas discussed among themselves topics related to the confidential service of their ista-deva (worshipable Deity), and then, after circumambulating Tulasi-devi, they offered obeisances. At that time, Vaisnava dasa also circumambulated Sri Vrnda-devi, and rolled in the dust of the lotus feet of the Vaisnavas.

Some of the Vaisnavas whispered to one another, "Isn't that Sannyasi Thakura? What an extraordinary appearance he has today!"

Rolling on the ground before the Vaisnavas, Vaisnava dasa said, "Today, my life has become successful, for I have obtained the dust of the Vaisnavas' lotus feet. By Gurudeva's mercy, I have clearly understood that the jiva has no destination unless he has the dust of the Vaisnavas' feet. The dust of the feet of the Vaisnavas, the water that washes their feet, and the nectar emanating from their lips — these three items are the medicine and the way of life for the patient who is afflicted with the disease of material existence. They are the cure for the entire material disease, and they are also the source of transcendental enjoyment for the healthy soul who has become free from this affliction.

"O Vaisnavas, please do not think that I am trying to show off my scholarship. My heart has now become free from all such egotism. I took birth in a high brahmana family, studied all the sastras, and entered the sannyasa asrama, which is the fourth stage of the

social order. As a result, my pride knew no bounds. But when I became attracted to the Vaisnava principles, a seed of humility was sown in my heart. Gradually, through the mercy of all you Vaisnavas, I have been able to cast off the vanity of my noble birth, the pride in my learning, and the arrogance of my social status.

"Now I know that I am a destitute and insignificant jiva. I was being ruined by my false ego of being a brahmana, by my learning, and by my status as a sannyasi. I submit all this before your lotus feet with full simplicity. You may deal with this servant of yours however you deem fit."

When the Vaisnavas heard Vaisnava dasa's humble words, many of them said, "O best of sadhus! We are eager to obtain the dust of the feet of Vaisnavas like you. Please bless us with the dust of your lotus feet. You are the object of Paramahansa Babaji's mercy. Please purify us by making us your associates. The sastra says that bhakti is obtained through associating with bhaktas like yourself:

"bhaktis tu bhagavad-bhakta-sangena parijayate
sat-sangah prapyate pumbhah sukritaih purva-sancitaih
Brihan-Naradiya-Purana (4.33)

"Bhakti is awakened when one associates with bhaktas of Sri Bhagavan. Association with suddha-bhaktas is attained only by the accumulation of transcendental pious activities performed over many lifetimes.'

"We had accumulated a sufficient stock of sukriti (pious activities that foster bhakti), and that is how we have obtained your association. Now, by the strength of that association, we aspire for hari-bhakti."

When the Vaisnavas had concluded their exchanges of mutual respect and humility, Vaisnava dasa sat down on one side of the assembly, thereby enhancing its dignity. The hari-nama-mala looked brilliant in his hands.

That day, a fortunate gentleman was sitting with the Vaisnavas. He had taken birth in an aristocratic brahmana family and was also a zamindar (wealthy landlord). He had studied Arabic and Farsi from childhood and had developed a significant reputation in the country, for he had courted many of the Islamic royalty and was also expert in group dynamics and political strategy. Although he had enjoyed his position and opulence for many years, it had brought him no happiness. At last, he had taken up the practice of hari-nama sankirtana.

In his childhood, the gentleman had been trained in Indian classical music by some of the most prestigious music masters of Delhi. Because of that training, he had become strong enough to put himself forward as the lead singer during performances of hari-nama sankirtana. The Vaisnavas did not like his polished, classical style of singing; he would show off some of his musical artistry during sankirtana and then look expectantly at

others' faces for recognition. He continued to lead kirtanas for many days, and gradually he began to experience some pleasure in sankirtana.

After some time, he came to Sri Godruma in order to join the kirtana programs of the Navadvipa Vaisnavas, and he took up residence in the asrama of a Vaisnava there. On this particular day, accompanied by that Vaisnava, he had come to Pradyumna-kunja and was sitting in the Malati-Madhavi Mandapa. When he saw the Vaisnavas' humble behavior towards each other, and heard Vaisnava dasa's words, many doubts arose in his mind. Being a skilled orator, he audaciously raised the following inquiry before the assembly of Vaisnavas: "The Manu-smṛiti and other dharma-sastras state that the brahmana caste is the highest caste. According to these sastras, religious rites such as chanting brahma-gayatri and other Vedic mantras at dawn, noon and sunset (sandhya-vandana) are considered to be nitya-karma (eternal duties) for the brahmanas. If these activities are obligatory, why is Vaisnava behavior opposed to them?"

Vaisnavas have no taste for argument and debate. If the question had been put by an argumentative brahmana, they would not have replied, for fear of becoming embroiled in a battle of words. However, since they saw that the present questioner regularly sang hari-nama, they all said, "We will be most happy if Paramahansa Babaji Mahasaya answers your question."

On hearing the order of the Vaisnavas, Paramahansa Babaji Mahasaya offered obeisances and said, "O great souls, if you so desire, the respected bhakta, Sri Vaisnava dasa, will answer this question in full." All the Vaisnavas consented to this proposal.

When Vaisnava dasa heard the words of his Gurudeva, he considered himself most fortunate, and humbly said, "I am wretched and insignificant. It is completely inappropriate for me to say anything in such a learned assembly. Nonetheless, I must always bear the order of my Gurudeva upon my head. I have drunk the nectar of spiritual instructions flowing from my guru's lotus mouth. I shall remember that and speak as far as my ability allows." Having smeared his entire body with the dust of the lotus feet of Paramahansa Babaji, he then stood up and began to speak.

"Sri Kṛṣṇa Caitanya is the source of all different types of expansions and avatars. He is directly Bhagavan Himself, full of transcendental bliss. The all-pervading, featureless nirvisesa-brahma is the effulgence of His limbs, and Paramatma, who resides in the hearts of all jivas, is His partial expansion. May He be pleased to appear in my mind and enable me to answer this question.

"Manu-saṁhita and other dharma-sastras are respected throughout the world because they establish the codes and prohibitions that follow the line of thought of the Vedic śruti-sastras. Human nature has two tendencies in regard to religious pursuit; the first is called vaidhi (to follow the rules and regulations of sastra), and the second is raganuga (to follow the soul's spontaneous attraction towards Sri Kṛṣṇa). As long as the intelligence is under the control of maya, human nature must be regulated by rules and prohibitions.

"Thus, in this condition the vaidhi nature will certainly be in effect. When the intelligence is liberated from the bondage of maya, however, human nature no longer needs to be governed by rules and prohibitions; rather, it is prompted by spontaneous love. In this condition, the vaidhi tendency no longer remains, and the raganuga tendency becomes manifest. This raganuga tendency is the unadulterated nature of the jiva. It is the perfected state of the self (svabhava-siddha), transcendental (cinmaya), and free from bondage to dull matter (jada-mukta).

"The pure spiritual jiva's relationship with the material world is completely terminated when Sri Krsna wills. Until this time, the sadhaka-jiva's relationship with the material world can only tend toward its eventual cessation (ksayonmukha). During that time, the jiva's intelligence attains freedom from matter to the extent of svarupatah jada-mukti, but not to the extent of vastutah jada-mukti.

"At the stage of vastutah jada-mukti, the ragatmika-vritti (the mood of the ragatmikas) is awakened in the pure jiva, both in terms of his internal identity (svarupa) and constitutional state (vastu). This ragatmika-prakriti is the nature of the eternal residents of Vraja. The sadhaka-jiva in the ksayonmukha stage becomes a raganuga by following the service of the Vrajavasis. He then receives many different spiritual graces, and progresses very quickly. This condition of raganuga should be ardently sought after by the jivas.

"Until the jiva comes to this point, his intelligence is always attached to this material world. Because the conditioned jiva is in contact with maya, his inherent nature changes. In his bewildered condition, he has no pure, natural attachment for spiritual objects, and due to his falsely acquired nature (nisarga), he mistakenly thinks that his attachment for mundane objects is his natural spiritual attachment.

"The conceptions of 'I' and 'mine' are two types of egoism whose influence is very prominent in the mundane sphere, and which lead one to think, 'I am this body', and 'All things relating to this body are mine'. Due to these conceptions, one naturally feels attracted to people and things that bring pleasure to the material body, and one feels averse to people and things that impede material pleasure. When the bewildered jiva falls under the sway of such attachment and aversion, he considers others to be friends or enemies, and displays love or hatred for them in three ways: in relation to the material body and its acquisitions; in relation to society and social ideas; and in relation to morality and ethics. Thus, he engages in the struggle for material existence.

"The false attachment for kanaka (gold and the things that money can buy) and kamini (anyone who satisfies our lusty desires) brings one under the control of temporary happiness and distress. This is known as samsara, a state in which one wanders throughout the material universe gaining only birth, death, the fruits of karma, and various conditions of life—some high and some low.

"The jiva who is bound in this way cannot easily comprehend spiritual attachment (cid-anuraga), nor can he realize or experience such a thing. In reality, this spiritual attachment is the jiva's true function (sva-dharma) and his eternal nature. However, he

forgets this and becomes engrossed in attachment to matter, although he is actually a particle of consciousness. Thus, he suffers degradation. This is a miserable condition, although hardly any of the jivas who are thus entangled in samsara think so.

"The jivas bound by maya are wholly unacquainted with the raganuga nature, to say nothing of the ragatmika nature. The raganuga nature may be awakened in the hearts of the jivas, but only occasionally by the mercy of sadhus. Consequently, this raganuga nature is rare and difficult to obtain, and those who are entangled in samsara are cheated of it by maya.

"Bhagavan, however, is all-knowing and merciful. He saw that the jivas who are bound by maya have been cheated of their spiritual inclination. Now, how will they attain good fortune? By what means can remembrance of Krsna be aroused in the hearts of the jivas who are enthralled by maya? They will only be able to understand that they are servants of Krsna if they associate with sadhus, but there is no specific rule that one must associate with sadhus, so where is the hope that everyone may easily attain sadhu-sanga (the association of saintly devotees)? Consequently, there can be no auspiciousness for people in general without the path of rules and regulations (vidhi-marga).

"The sastras were manifested from this merciful consideration of Sri Bhagavan. Issuing forth by His mercy, the sun of the sastra arose in the sky of the hearts of the ancient Aryan risis, and illuminated all the injunctions and rules to be followed by the populace.

"In the beginning was the Veda-sastra. In some places, it teaches pious activities directed toward the attainment of material fruits (karma), in other places it teaches knowledge directed toward liberation (jnana), and elsewhere it teaches devotion with love and affection for Bhagavan (priti-rupa-bhakti). The jivas who are infatuated with maya are found in many different conditions. Some are completely stupefied, some have a little knowledge, and some are knowledgeable in many subjects. The sastra provides different types of instructions that are consistent with the different mentalities of the jivas. This differentiation is known as adhikara (eligibility).

"There are countless individual jivas, and they have innumerable varieties of adhikara, which have been divided into three broad categories according to their primary characteristics: karma-adhikara (eligibility for pious action leading to material gain), jnana-adhikara (eligibility for knowledge leading to liberation), and prema-adhikara (eligibility for unalloyed loving service to Bhagavan). The Veda-sastra specifies these three types of eligibility and establishes proper codes of behavior for those in each of the three groups. The dharma that the Vedas have thus prescribed is known as vaidha-dharma.

"The tendency by which a person is compelled to adopt this vaidha-dharma is known as vaidhi-pravritti (the proclivity to follow the religious codes of sastra). Those who are altogether lacking in the tendency to follow the rules of sastra are thoroughly avidha (opposed to the injunctions of sastra). They are engaged in sinful activities, and their lives are given over to actions that defy the regulations of sastra (avidha-karma). Such people

are excluded from the jurisdiction of the Vedas and are known as mlecchas (people belonging to an uncivilized, non-Aryan race).

"The duties of those in the three eligibility groups outlined in the Vedas have been described still more elaborately in the samhita-sastras of the risis, who composed numerous sastras that follow the tenets of the Vedas. The duties of those eligible for karma are described in twenty dharma-sastras compiled by Manu and other panditas; the duties of those who are eligible for jnana are described in the sastras dealing with logic and philosophy, compiled by those who knew the different philosophical systems; and finally, the instructions and activities for people eligible for bhakti have been determined by those who are learned in the Puranas and pure tantras. All these literatures are known as Vedic because they are in keeping with the Veda.

"Modern-day pseudo-philosophers of these sastras, without a view to the underlying purport of all the sastras, have tried to establish the superiority of only one of its limbs. This has cast innumerable people into a pit of argument and doubt. Bhagavad-gita, which is the matchless deliberation on all these sastras, clearly establishes that karma not aiming at jnana is atheistic, and should be rejected. Karma-yoga and jnana-yoga that are not directed towards bhakti are also cheating processes; in reality, karma-yoga, jnana-yoga and bhakti-yoga form a single yoga system. This is the Vedic Vaisnava siddhanta (conclusion).

"The jiva who is bewildered by maya is first compelled to adopt the path of karma; then he must adopt karma-yoga, followed by jnana-yoga, and finally bhakti-yoga. However, if he is not shown that all these are but different steps on the one staircase, the conditioned jiva cannot ascend to the temple of bhakti.

"What does it mean to adopt the path of karma? Karma consists of the activities that one performs with the body or mind in the course of maintaining one's life. There are two types of karma: auspicious (subha) and inauspicious (asubha). The results that the jiva obtains by performing subha-karma are auspicious, whereas those that he obtains from asubha-karma are inauspicious. Asubha-karma is also known as sin (papa), or prohibited acts (vikarma). The non-performance of subha-karma is known as akarma. Both vikarma and akarma are bad, whereas subha-karma is good.

"There are three types of subha-karma: obligatory daily rites (nitya-karma), circumstantial duties (naimittika-karma), and ceremonies performed out of a desire for personal benefit (kamyakarma). Kamyakarma is completely self-interested and should be rejected. The sastras direct us to adopt nitya-karma and naimittika-karma. The sastras have considered what is fit to be taken up and what is fit to be abandoned, and they have classified nitya-karma, naimittika-karma, and kamyakarma as karma, whereas akarma and kukarma (impious activity) have not been included in this category. Although kamyakarma is counted as karma, it is undesirable, and should be given up; so only nitya-karma and naimittika-karma are truly accepted as karma.

"Nitya-karma is karma that produces auspiciousness for the body, mind, and society, and which results in promotion to other planets after death. Everyone is obligated to perform nitya-karma, such as chanting the brahma-gayatri-mantra at the three junctures of the day (sandhya-vandana), offering prayers, using honest means to maintain one's body and society, behaving truthfully, and caring for one's family members and dependants. Naimittika-karma is karma that one must carry out under certain circumstances, or on certain occasions, for example, performing rites for the departed souls of one's mother and father, atoning for sins and so on.

"The authors of the sastras first examined the natures of human beings and their natural eligibility traits, and then established varnasrama-dharma (the duties for the social castes and spiritual orders). Their intention was to prescribe a system in which nitya-karma and naimittika-karma could be carried out in an excellent way in this world. The gist of this arrangement is that there are four natural types of human beings, classified according to the work that they are eligible to perform: brahmanas (teachers and priests), ksatriyas (administrators and warriors), vaisyas (agriculturists and businessmen), and sudras (artisans and laborers). People are also situated in four orders or stages of life, which are known as asramas: brahmacari (unmarried student life), grihastha (family life), vanaprastha (retirement from family responsibilities), and sannyasa (the renounced ascetic life). Those who are fond of akarma and vikarma are known as antyaja (outcaste) and are not situated in any asrama.

"The different varnas are determined by nature, birth, activities, and characteristics. When varna is determined only on the basis of birth, the original purpose of varnasrama is lost. Asrama is determined by the various stages of life, depending on whether one is married or unmarried, or has renounced the association of the opposite sex. Married life is known as the grihastha asrama and unmarried life is known as the brahmacari asrama. Disassociation from spouse and family is characteristic of the vanaprastha and sannyasa asramas. Sannyasa is the highest of all the asramas, and the brahmanas are the highest of all the varnas.

"This conclusion is established in the crest-jewel of all the sastras, Srimad-Bhagavatam (11.17.15-21):

varnanam asramanan ca janma-bhumi-anusarinih
asan prakritayo nrinam nicair nicottamottamah

The varnas and asramas of humanity have higher and lower natures in accordance with the higher and lower places on Sri Bhagavan's universal body from which they appeared.

samo damas tapah saucam santosah ksantir arjavam
mad-bhaktis ca daya satyam brahma-prakritayas tv imah

The natural qualities of the brahmanas are control of the mind, control of the senses, austerity, cleanliness, satisfaction, forbearance, simplicity, devotion unto Sri Bhagavan, compassion for the suffering of others, and truthfulness.

tejo balam dhritih sauryam titiksaudaryam udyamah
sthairyam brahmanyam aisvaryam ksatra-prakritayas tv imah

The natural qualities of the ksatriyas are prowess, bodily strength, fortitude, heroism, tolerance, generosity, great perseverance, steadiness, devotion to the brahmanas, and sovereignty.

astikyam dana-nistha ca adambho brahma-sevanam
atustir arthopacayair vaisya-prakritayas tv imah

The natural qualities of the vaisyas are theism, dedication to charity, freedom from pride, service to the brahmanas, and an insatiable desire to accumulate wealth.

susrusanam dvija-gavam devanan capy amayaya
tatra labdhena santosah sudra-prakritayas tv imah

The natural qualities of the sudras are sincere service to the devas, brahmanas and cows, and being satisfied with whatever wealth is obtained by such service.

asaucam anritam steyam nastikyam suska-vigrahah
kamah krodhas ca tarsas ca sa bhavo 'ntyavasayinam

The natural characteristics of those who are in the lowest class, and who are estranged from the varnasrama system are: uncleanness, dishonesty, thievery, lack of faith in Vedic dharma and the existence of a next life, futile quarrel, lust, anger, and greed for material objects.

ahimsa satyam asteyam akama-krodha-lobhata
bhuta-priya-hiteha ca dharmo 'yam sarva-varnikah

The duties for the members of all the varnas are: non-violence, truthfulness, abstention from theft, freedom from lust, anger, and greed, and endeavoring for the pleasure and welfare of all living beings.

"Everyone in this learned assembly knows the meaning of the Sanskrit slokas, so I am not translating them all. I just want to say that the system of varna and asrama is the basis of vaidha-jivana (life that is carried out in accordance with religious rules and regulations.) The prominence of impiety in a country is measured by the extent to which the varnasrama system is absent there.

"Now let us consider in what sense the words nitya (eternal) and naimittika (circumstantial) have been used in relation to the word karma. If we consider the profound purport of the sastras, we can see that these two words have not been used to refer to karma in a paramarthika sense, which relates to supreme spiritual truth. Rather, they have been used in a routine (vyavaharika), or figurative (aupacarika) sense.

"Properly speaking, words like nitya-dharma, nitya-karma, and nitya-tattva can only be used to describe the pure spiritual condition of the jiva. Therefore, in the general use of the word nitya-karma, the word nitya is applied to the word karma only in a figurative or attributive sense, because karma in this world is a means to an end, and only remotely indicates eternal truth. Actually, karma is never eternal. Karma and jnana may only be thought of as nitya in an indirect sense when karma is directed towards jnana by means of karma-yoga, and when jnana is directed toward bhakti. The brahmanas' chanting of the brahma-gayatri-mantra (sandhya-vandana) is sometimes described as nitya-karma. This is valid in the sense that practices that are remotely directed toward bhakti through physical activities may be termed nitya, but only because they aim at nitya-dharma. In reality they are not nitya. This usage is known as a figurative expression (upacara).

"Actually, the only true nitya-karma for the jivas is krsna-prema. In ontological terms, this true nitya-karma is referred to as unalloyed spiritual cultivation (visuddha-cid-anusilana), or activities directed towards reinstating one's pure, transcendental consciousness. The physical activities that one will naturally have to adopt to attain this cid-anusilana are assistants to nitya-karma, so there is no fault in referring to them as nitya-karma. From the absolute perspective, though, it would be better to refer to such activities as naimittika, rather than nitya. The divisions of karma into nitya and naimittika are only from a relative viewpoint, and not from the absolute spiritual perspective.

"From the point of view of the essential nature of things, the nitya-dharma of the jivas is unalloyed spiritual practice, and all other types of dharma are naimittika. This applies to varnasrama-dharma (duties prescribed for the castes and orders of human civilization), astanga-yoga (the eightfold yoga system), sankhya-jnana (the path of knowledge involving analytical research into the nature of spirit and matter), and tapasya (asceticism).

"These are all naimittika-dharma because the jiva would not need these dharmas if he were not bound. The conditioned state of being bewildered by maya is itself a circumstantial cause, and the function or duty that is prompted by a circumstantial cause (nimitta) is known as naimittika-dharma. Therefore, from the absolute spiritual perspective they are all naimittika-dharma.

"Naimittika-dharma includes the superiority of the brahmanas, their sandhya-vandana, and their acceptance of sannyasa after renunciation of all karma. All these activities are highly recommended in the dharma-sastras and they are beneficial in consideration of appropriate eligibility, but they still have no standing in relation to nitya-karma.

"viprad dvi-sad-guna-yutad aravinda-nabha-
padaravinda-vimukhat svapacam varistham
manye tad-arpita-mano-vacanehitatha-
pranam punati sa kulam na tu bhurimanah
Srimad-Bhagavatam (7.9.10)

"In my estimation, a bhakta who has taken birth in a family of dog-eaters, but who has dedicated his mind, words, activities and wealth to the lotus feet of Sri Krsna, is superior to a brahmana endowed with all twelve brahminical qualities, but who is diverted from the lotus feet of Sri Padmanabha. Such a bhakta, although of lowly birth, can purify himself and his entire family, whereas the brahmana who is filled with pride cannot even purify himself.'

"The twelve qualities of brahmanas are: truthfulness, control of the senses, austerity, freedom from malice, modesty, tolerance, freedom from envy, sacrifice, charity, fortitude, studying the Vedas, and accepting vows. Brahmanas endowed with these twelve qualities are certainly worthy of honor in this world. However, if a candala is a bhakta, he is superior to brahmanas who possess these qualities but do not have krsna-bhakti. The purport is that a person who was born a candala, but who has been purified by the samskara (impressions) achieved through sadhu-sanga, and who is now engaged in the jiva's nitya-dharma of pure spiritual cultivation, is superior to a brahmana who is established in naimittika-dharma, but who abstains from the nitya-dharma of unalloyed spiritual practice.

"There are two kinds of human beings in this world: those who are spiritually awake (udita-viveka) and those who are spiritually unconscious (anudita-viveka). Most people in this world are spiritually unconscious; those who are spiritually awake are rare. Of all those who are spiritually unconscious, the brahmanas are the best, and the brahmanas' nitya-karma, such as sandhya-vandana, is the best of all the duties that are prescribed for the different varnas.

"Another name for those who are spiritually awake is 'Vaisnava'; their behavior will necessarily be different from the behavior of those who are spiritually unconscious. Even so, the behavior of the Vaisnavas is not opposed to the aim of the smriti rules, which are established in order to regulate people who are spiritually unconscious. The ultimate aim of all the sastras is always one.

"Those who are spiritually unconscious are bound to a particular portion of the stark and rudimentary injunctions of sastra, whereas those who are spiritually awake receive the underlying essence of sastra as an intimate friend. These two groups of people perform different activities, but their aim is the same. Ineligible people may think that the behavior of those who are spiritually awake is opposed to the behavior of people in general, but in reality, the fundamental aim of these different patterns of behavior is the same.

"From the point of view of those who are spiritually awake, people in general are eligible for instructions regarding naimittika-dharma. However, naimittika-dharma is in essence incomplete, adulterated, impermanent and ultimately fit to be rejected.

"Naimittika-dharma is not direct spiritual practice; rather, it consists of temporary, material activities that are taken up to attain pure spiritual practices. Hence, it is merely the means to an end. The means is never complete because its function ceases when it has

produced the end. Therefore, it is simply a phase in the achievement of the final goal. Consequently, naimittika-dharma is never complete.

"For example, a brahmana's chanting of sandhya-vandana, like his various other duties, is temporary and subject to specific rules. These activities do not stem from his natural, spiritual proclivity. If after performing these prescribed duties for a long time, one obtains the association of suddha-bhaktas (sadhu-sanga), one develops ruci (taste) for hari-nama. At that time, sandhya-vandana is no longer a circumstantial, prescribed karma. Hari-nama is complete spiritual practice, whereas sandhya-vandana and other such practices are only the means to obtain this principal goal and can never be the complete reality.

"Naimittika-dharma is commendable because it aims at the truth, but it is eventually meant to be abandoned, and it is mixed with undesirable results; only spiritual reality is truly beneficial. Although the jiva should relinquish matter and its association, materialism is prominent in naimittika-dharma. Moreover, naimittika-dharma produces such an abundance of irrelevant results that the jiva cannot help but get entangled in them.

"For instance, a brahmana's worship of Isvara is beneficial, but he is apt to think, 'I am a brahmana and others are inferior to me.' The result of such false egoism is that his worship yields detrimental results. Another example is that an insignificant result of practicing the eightfold yoga system is the attainment of mystic powers, which are most inauspicious for the jivas. The two unavoidable companions of naimittika-dharma are mukti (liberation) and bhukti (material enjoyment), but the jiva must save himself from the clutches of mukti and bhukti if he is to obtain his real objective, which is the culture of pure spiritual reality (cid-anusilana). Consequently, naimittika-dharma entails much that is contemptible for the jivas.

"Naimittika-dharma is impermanent, for it does not apply at all times or in all conditions. For instance, a brahmana's priestly duties, a ksatriya's administrative or military duties, and other such circumstantial occupations are brought about by a particular cause, and they cease when the cause ceases. If a brahmana takes birth as a candala in his next life, the brahminical occupational duties are no longer his sva-dharma. I am using the word sva-dharma (own duty) in a figurative sense here. The naimittika-sva-dharma of the jiva changes in every birth, but his nitya-dharma never changes. The jiva's true sva-dharma is nitya-dharma, whereas naimittika-dharma is impermanent.

"One may ask, What is vaisnava-dharma? The answer is that vaisnava-dharma is the jiva's nitya-dharma. When the Vaisnava—the jiva—is liberated from matter, he nurtures krsna-prema in his pure spiritual form. Before that stage, when the Vaisnava is still materially bound, although spiritually awakened, he only accepts objects and association that are favorable for his spiritual practice, and he rejects all that is unfavorable. Thus, he never adheres blindly to the rules and prohibitions of the sastras. He accepts the instructions and prohibitions of the sastras graciously, but only when they are favorable to his practice of hari-bhajana. When they are unfavorable, he immediately rejects them.

"A Vaisnava is the world's only true friend and he renders auspiciousness for all jivas of the world. Now I have humbly submitted whatever I had to say today in this assembly of Vaisnavas. Kindly excuse my faults and any offenses."

Having spoken thus, Vaisnava dasa offered sastanga-pranama to the assembled Vaisnavas and sat off to one side. By this time, the eyes of the Vaisnavas had filled with tears, and they all exclaimed in unison, "Well done! Well done! Blessings upon you!" The groves of Godruma echoed these words in response.

The brahmana singer who had asked the question could see the profound truth of many of the topics presented in the discussion. Some doubts had arisen on certain points, but the seed of faith in vaisnava-dharma had been significantly nourished in his heart. He folded his hands and said, "O great souls, I am not a Vaisnava, but I am becoming a Vaisnava by continuously hearing hari-nama. If you will kindly instruct me, all my doubts may be dispelled."

Sri Premadasa Paramahansa Babaji Mahasaya said kindly, "From time to time you may associate with Sriman Vaisnava dasa. He is a scholar who is learned in all the sastras. Previously, he lived in Varanasi, where he accepted sannyasa after studying the vedanta-sastras deeply. Sri Krsna Caitanya, who is the dearest Lord of our hearts, displayed unlimited mercy and attracted him here to Sri Navadvipa. Now he is fully conversant with all the truths of Vaisnava philosophy, and he has also developed profound love for hari-nama."

The man who had asked the question was named Sri Kalidasa Lahiri. On hearing Babaji Mahasaya's words, he accepted Vaisnava dasa within his heart as his guru. He thought, "Vaisnava dasa was born in a brahmana family, and he accepted the sannyasa-asrama, so he is fit to instruct a brahmana. Besides, I have witnessed his extraordinary scholarship in the Vaisnava truths. I can learn much about vaisnava-dharma from him." Thinking in this way, Lahiri Mahasaya offered dandavat-pranama at Vaisnava dasa's lotus feet, and said, "O great soul, kindly bestow your mercy upon me."

Vaisnava dasa offered dandavat-pranama to him in return and responded, "If you bestow your mercy upon me, I will be fully successful." As evening drew near, everyone returned to their respective places.

Lahiri Mahasaya's house was in a grove in a secluded area of the village. In the center of the kunja was a natural awning of madhavi creepers and a raised platform for Tulasi-devi. There were two rooms, one on either side of the kunja. The courtyard was enclosed with a trellis of cita plants, and its beauty was enhanced by many trees such as bael, nima, and other trees bearing fruits and flowers. The owner of that grove was Madhava dasa Babaji.

At first Madhava dasa Babaji had been a man of spotless virtue, but immoral association with a woman had blemished his Vaisnava character and was curtailing his practice of bhajana. He was quite impoverished and was meeting his expenses with difficulty by

begging at various places and by renting out his extra room, which Lahiri Mahasaya was occupying.

That night, Lahiri Mahasaya's sleep was broken at midnight. He had begun to contemplate the essential meaning of what Vaisnava dasa Babaji had explained, when he heard a sound outside. As he came out of his room, he saw Madhava dasa Babaji standing in the courtyard, and speaking with a woman. The woman disappeared as soon as she saw Lahiri Mahasaya, while Madhava dasa stood motionless and embarrassed before him.

"Babaji, what is the matter?" asked Lahiri Mahasaya.

"It is my ill fate," replied Madhava dasa with tears in his eyes. "What more can I say? Alas, to think of what I was in the past, and what I have now become! Paramahansa Babaji Mahasaya had so much faith in me. Now I am ashamed to go before him."

"Please tell me clearly so that I can understand," Lahiri Mahasaya requested.

Madhava dasa replied, "The woman you just saw was my wife when I was a householder. Shortly after I accepted the renounced life of a babaji, she went to Sripat Santipura, where she built a hut and began to reside on the bank of the Ganga. After many days had passed, I happened to go to Sripat Santipura, and saw her there. I asked her, 'Why did you leave your household?' and she explained, 'Family life no longer appeals to me, since I am deprived of the service of your feet. I have taken up residence in this tirtha (holy place), and I can sustain myself by begging alms.'

"I returned to Godruma without saying another word to her. After some time, she also came to Godruma, and took up residence in a cowherd's house. I used to see her here and there every day, and the more I tried to avoid her, the closer she drew to me. Now she lives in an asrama that she has built here, and she tries to ruin me by coming here late at night. My bad reputation has spread everywhere and my practice of bhajana has deteriorated sorely through my association with her. I am a disgrace to the family of the servants of Sri Krsna Caitanya. I am the only person since the time of Chota Haridasas's chastisement who deserves punishment. Because of their compassion, the babajis of Sri Godruma have not yet chastised me, but they no longer have any faith in me."

When Lahiri Mahasaya heard these words, he said, "Madhava dasa Babaji, please be careful," and returned to his room. Babaji went and sat down on his seat. Lahiri Mahasaya could not sleep. Again and again he thought, "Madhava dasa Babaji has fallen down by entering householder life again, after he has formally renounced it. It is not appropriate for me to stay here any longer. Even if it does not lead me into bad association, it will certainly spoil my reputation, so that the pure Vaisnavas will no longer instruct me with confidence."

Early the next morning he went to Pradyumna-kunja, greeted Sri Vaisnava dasa with due respect, and asked for a place to stay in the kunja. When Vaisnava dasa informed Paramahansa Babaji Mahasaya of this news, Babaji gave instructions that he should be

given a place to stay in a kutira on one side of the kunja. From then on, Lahiri Mahasaya lived in that kutira and arranged to obtain prasada at the house of a brahmana who lived nearby.