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The *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal* is a biannual publication dedicated to the in-depth study of the ancient *daiva-varṇāśrama* social structure outline by Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, 4.13.

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A few Words

The *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal* presents the various aspects of a culture that is organized into *varṇas* and *āśramas* for the purpose of performing *saṅkīrtana-yajña* or service to Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa.

The basic concept is that such a culture is based on an agrarian economy, which is the foundation of traditional Vaiṣṇava life.

Śrīla Prabhupāda described *daiva-varṇāśrama* as an unfinished 50% of his mission. And that remaining 50% extends the movement to engage the rest of society—that is, the hundreds of millions who are not *brāhmaṇas*.

This journal is open to any constructive view of *daiva-varṇāśrama*. You do not need to agree with the editors to contribute articles or read them.

Our goal here is to assist in establishing, maintaining, and glorifying *daiva-varṇāśrama*.

Your servants, the editors

I. *Daiva-Varṇāśrama* Definition and Goals

Dayānanda dāsa

Definition

The definition of *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* may be best understood by looking at the definition and expanded meaning of each word:

Daiva may mean the Supreme, Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.¹ It may also mean godly or the divine.²

Varṇa means the four classes that Kṛṣṇa creates and Śrī Nārada Muni explains in the *Bhāgavatam*.³

Āśrama means the four orders of life.⁴ Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that they are for “cultural advancement towards the path of spiritual realization.”⁵

Dharma means duty, responsibility, or occupation.⁶ It also means the nature of a thing. In other words, it indicates that *varṇāśrama* is the fixed nature of human social organization from creation.⁷

Prabhupāda sometimes explains that *varṇāśrama-dharma* is the correct term for the foreign word “Hindu.” He further explains that that

¹ Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (SB) 3.1.35

² Bhagavad-gītā (BG) 16.3

³ BG 4.13 and SB 7.11

⁴ SB 1.3.13 and SB 7.12

⁵ SB 1.3.13 purport. See also SB 7.12

⁶ BG 2.31 purport; BG 16.1-3. I have also used the word *responsibility*. *Duty* and *responsibility* are synonymous; however, since 1900, use of the word *duty* has fallen off whereas *responsibility* has increased. (as calculated by Google Books Ngram Viewer)

⁷ BG 2.31 purport

system without being qualified as daivic is asuric.⁸

The term *daiva-varṇāśrama* indicates two things. *Daiva* means that the system is delivered by Kṛṣṇa, as He declares in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (*Gītā*).⁹ Kṛṣṇa states that the four types of occupations (*varṇas*) are based on the qualities (*guṇa*) and *karma* of the individuals. Thus, a system that is based on birth in a particular family is not daivic. It is asuric, which is the opposite of godly.

Another meaning of *daiva* is Viṣṇu or Vaiṣṇava.¹⁰ Thus, *daiva-varṇāśrama* is centered on Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.¹¹ As such, the *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* is organized to serve the Supreme via *yajña*.¹² In the Kali age, that *yajña* is *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.¹³

I have determined six *varṇāśrama* goals. They appear here in random order.¹⁴

1. Self-realization and Detachment
2. Mass Preaching
3. *Hari-toṣaṇam*
4. Agrarian economy
5. Varṇāśrama College
6. Entertainment and Enjoyment

Note that I have not mentioned *yajña* to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa as a separate goal. However, it is a core component of all six and mentioned several times below.

⁸ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (CC) Madhya 3.6

⁹ BG 4.13: *cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ | tasya kartāram api māṁ viddhy akartāram avyayam ||* "According to the three modes of material nature and the work ascribed to them, the four divisions of human society were created by Me. And, although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable."

¹⁰ SB 3.1.35; CC Ādi 3.91

¹¹ SB 1.2.13; Śrīla Prabhupāda's SB 5.5.29 lecture, Nov 16, 1976

¹² BG, chapters 3 and 4

¹³ See Prabhupāda's article taken from Back To Godhead (BTG), May 20, 1956, reproduced in this journal.

¹⁴ They are all essential, and they coordinate together to implement Mahāprabhu's movement.

1. Self-realization and Detachment from Sense Gratification

Self-realization and detachment from the material world are fundamental goals of *varṇāśrama*.¹⁵

Kṛṣṇa urges tolerance of nature to achieve liberation.¹⁶ Although that applies to the four *varṇas* and *āśramas*, such tolerance and austerity is especially meant for *brahmacārīs*, *vānaprasthas*, and *sannyāsīs*, who are the example for the rest of society.

There is a false idea about detachment that is widespread, even among some Vaiṣṇavas. Detachment does not mean that one should avoid a particular kind of work. It means one should give up the fruits of work in *yajña* to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda explains, “There is no question of detachment. That is bogus propaganda. You cannot be detached. Duty does not mean detachment. You must do your duty. There is attachment. Where is the detachment? [...] Real detachment means that everything belongs to Kṛṣṇa. So you have no proprietorship. That is detachment. If you falsely claim, ‘It is mine,’ that is attachment, unnecessary. It is not yours.”¹⁷

Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Gītā* that when the fruits of labor (*karma-phala*) are used for sense gratification, one becomes bound. That is the process that results in *karma-bandha*, which literally means the bondage of *karma*.¹⁸ However, one must read carefully to understand that Kṛṣṇa does not say detachment from the work (*karma*). Rather, we must be

¹⁵ Śrīla Prabhupāda’s talk with Bob Cohen (Brahma Tirtha das), Feb 27, 1972: “Our Indian system is called *varṇa* and *āśrama*, four spiritual orders and four social orders. The spiritual order is *brahmacārya*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*. And social order is *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, and *śūdra*. Under this system the regulative principles are so nice that even if one has got the tendency to enjoy material life, he is so nicely molded that at last he gets liberation and goes back to home, back to Godhead. This is the process. Sex life is not required on principle [it is discouraged], but because we are attached to it, therefore there are some regulative principles.”

¹⁶ Here, “nature” means the heat of summer, the cold of winter, and all the vicissitudes presented both externally and internally. See, for example, BG 2.14-15

¹⁷ Morning Walk with Prabhupāda, June 21, 1976

¹⁸ BG 3.9

detached from the *karma-phala*, the money.

The work only binds (*karma-bandha*) when one is physically attached to the money (*karma-phala*). The work must be done.¹⁹ And detachment is not a mental exercise. One physically gives up the money, transferring it from service to the senses to Kṛṣṇa's service.²⁰

It is true that some verses seem to imply that some work (*karma*) should be renounced.

But that idea is dispelled in the *Gītā's* 18th chapter, beginning with verses 2-3. Kṛṣṇa clarifies the matter in verses 7-11. He explains that when one does one's duty and renounces the fruits (*phala*), the money, doing so is in the mode of goodness.

Thus, it is not the work (*karma*) that must be given up. Rather, the *karma-phala* (money) must be renounced. The *varṇāśrama* system, which centers on *yajña* to Viṣṇu, is designed for that purpose.

2. Mass preaching

Caitanya Mahāprabhu spoke the following three verses. The first one is in Bengali, his words, and the following two he quoted from the *Purāṇas*.²¹

The Bengali verse is "One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India [Bhārata-varṣa] should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people."

Here is an excerpt from Prabhupāda's purport to that verse:

"This is not only the duty of Indians but the duty of everyone, and we are very happy that American and European boys and girls are seriously cooperating with this movement. One should know definitely that the best welfare activity (*para-upakāra*) for all of human society is to awaken man's God consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, everyone should help this great movement."²²

¹⁹ BG 2.47 as well as BG chapters three and four that explain the process of *yajña* to Viṣṇu.

²⁰ Prabhupāda's BG 3.1-5 lecture, Dec 20, 1968

²¹ CC Ādi 9.41-43

²² CC Ādi 9.41, *bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya janma yāra | janma sārthaka kari' kara para-*

The subsequent verse, quoted from the *Bhāgavatam*, is “It is the duty of every living being to perform welfare activities (*śreya-ācaraṇam*) for the benefit of others with his life, wealth, intelligence and words.”²³

The third verse, from *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is “By his work, thoughts and words, an intelligent man must perform actions which will be beneficial for all living entities (*prāṇinām upakāra*) in this life and the next.”²⁴

I’ve quoted these three verses, because Prabhupāda often cites *para-upakāra*, welfare for others, in connection with the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. In the second verse, which is from the *Bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa says one should use his life, wealth, intelligence, and words for the benefit (*śreya*) of others. These four items imply that the *varṇāśrama* system is meant to benefit all of society.²⁵

***Para-upakāra* involves mass *saṅkīrtana* and mass *varṇāśrama*:**

In his *Light of the Bhāgavata*, published in 1961, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “This process of *yajña* is called the *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, or **mass** agitation for invoking man’s lost spiritual consciousness.”²⁶

During the first few years of ISKCON,²⁷ Śrīla Prabhupāda focused on

upakāra

²³ CC Ādi 9.42, quoted from SB 10.22.35, *etāvaj janma-sāphalyam dehinām iha dehiṣu | prāṇair arthair dhiyā vācā śreya-ācaraṇam sadā ||* See also, BG 5.11

²⁴ CC Ādi 9.43, quoted from *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.12.45, *prāṇinām upakārāya yad eveha paratra ca | karmaṇā manasā vācā tad eva mati-mān bhajet ||*

²⁵ In a two-day lecture on BG 3.1-10, Prabhupāda said the following: “You have to employ your life, your money, your words and your intelligence, all for Kṛṣṇa. [...] And how one can..., unless one is spiritually advanced how he can sacrifice his hard-earned money for Kṛṣṇa? [...] If you cannot work in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, then you better perform your prescribed duty according to *varṇāśrama*.”

²⁶ *Light of the Bhāgavata*, text 2. See also, SB Introduction, “The Lord inaugurated this system of **mass saṅkīrtana**, and leaders of all countries can take advantage of this spiritual movement in order to keep the mass of people in a pure state of peace and friendship with one another.” BG 7.1 University of Florida, July 29, 1971, “So Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared there, and He started this *saṅkīrtana* movement, **mass saṅkīrtana** movement, without any discrimination. And He predicted that this *saṅkīrtana* movement would be spread all over the world, and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra would be chanted in every village, town on the surface of the globe.”

²⁷ ISKCON is the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, established by Śrīla

saṅkīrtana and book distribution²⁸ as mass activities. Then in the last three years, he began emphasizing *daiva-varṇāśrama* as a mass solution, conforming with Mahāprabhu's "*para-upakāra*" verse.²⁹

Nevertheless, there are many indications that *daiva-varṇāśrama* remains a niche program for most.³⁰ That is certainly not the fault of those who are busy maintaining ISKCON and their *sādhana* and have no time to develop it.

However, those who do not believe that *saṅkīrtana*, book distribution, and *daiva-varṇāśrama* are mass activities would do well to read Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and conversations.

3. *Hari-toṣaṇam*

ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ | svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam | |

"O best among the twice-born, it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one's own occupation according to caste divisions and orders of life (*varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ*) is to please the Personality of

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

²⁸ BG 4.1 lecture by Prabhupāda, Feb 7, 1974: "So *Bhagavad-gītā* is not a book on *bhakti-yoga* for a person only, individual. No. It is meant for the whole **mass** of people, the whole human society, the leader of the human society or the leader of the family."

²⁹ Room Conversation with Prabhupāda on Feb 14, 1977, "*Para-upakāra* means **mass** benefit, not there is certain section. Then we have to introduce this *varṇāśrama-dharma*." SB 4.29.81 purport: "To rule the **mass** of citizens in a state and keep them in a complete progressive order is not possible simply by passing laws every year in a legislative assembly. The *varṇāśrama-dharma* is essential in a good government." Speech at Fire Yajña with South Indian *Brāhmaṇas*, Aug 16, 1976: "Anyone who has taken birth as a human being on the land of Bhārata-varṣa... He [Mahāprabhu] does not mean the cats and dogs; He means the human beings, *manuṣya*. So in order to fulfill the mission of *manuṣya-janma*, we shall try to reestablish the *varṇāśrama-dharma*, *varṇāśramācāravatā puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān, viṣṇur ārādhyate* [Cc. Madhya 8.58], and spread this movement all over the world."

³⁰ "Towards Varnashrama Dharma: A Constitution for ISKCON," Krishna Dharma das, Nov 11, 2021. "Within ISKCON society at present, *varnashrama* is gradually emerging." "ISKCON and Varṇāśrama-Dharma--A Mission Unfulfilled," Ravindra Svarupa Dasa, Jan 29, 1999. "10 Reasons Why Varnashrama Dharma Cannot be Established in ISKCON (or Issues that Must be Resolved)," Dhanesvara Das, undated.

Godhead.”³¹

The following two paragraphs are summarized from some of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lectures and purport of that verse:

Human society all over the world is divided into four castes and four orders of life according to one’s qualities and work inclination. These natural divisions are for the best interest of society. And their aim is to please the Personality of Godhead.

The goal of life, which is realization of the Absolute Truth, is distracted by too much attachment for sense gratification. However, the *daiva-varṇāśrama* system gradually detaches the common people from that sense gratification and elevates them to service to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda explains that *sanātana-dharma* and *varṇāśrama-dharma* are the same.³² Vedic civilization and *varṇāśrama-dharma* are also the same.³³

Vaiṣṇavas understand that *sanātana-dharma* does not just mean to focus on *Brahman* like the Māyāvādīs think. Vaiṣṇavas know that *varṇāśrama-dharma* must include *daiva*, Kṛṣṇa. And Vedic civilization is not meant for worshipping the demigods. It is meant for complete devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

The above verse, beginning with *ataḥ pumbhir*, is number 13 in the chapter.³⁴ Starting with the sixth verse, Śrīla Vyāsadeva entertains an eight-verse discussion of *varṇa*, *dharma*, and *bhakti*.

In these eight verses (6-13), the concept of *dharma* is so close to *varṇa* that Prabhupāda translates *dharma* as *occupation* in the four times it is

³¹ SB 1.2.13; “All the duties, the summarization of duty is *ataḥ pumbhir divja-śreṣṭhā varṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ*. There are different duties, but the real duty is *saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*, whether you have satisfied Kṛṣṇa. Then you’ll have done all duties. *Ataḥ pumbhiḥ*. Because there are different types of duties. But whatever you do, the success is whether by your duty you have satisfied Kṛṣṇa. Then it is successful.” From a Morning Walk with Śrīla Prabhupāda on June 21, 1976 [Note that Prabhupāda’s use of the word “duty” means one’s occupation in the *varṇāśrama* system.]

³² BG 1.42 purport; SB 7.11.2 text and purport; *Civilization and Transcendence*, “3. Concocted Religion”; SB 6.1.21 conversation with Prabhupāda, Dec 12, 1970

³³ Prabhupāda’s SB 5.5.1 lecture, Nov 28, 1975

³⁴ SB 1.2.13

used in the series. The basic theme of the verses is that one's occupation is his *dharma*. And that *varṇa-dharma* or *varṇāśrama-dharma* must be directed toward *bhakti* to Adhokṣaja, Hari, Vāsudeva, Bhagavān, or Viṣvaksena—all names for Kṛṣṇa used in the verses.

Thus, the eight verses provide a wonderful discussion of the essence of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, which is the path to *bhakti*.

Moreover, they expand on SB 1.1.2, which basically says that an interpretation of *dharma* that is not connected to *bhakti* is cheating.

The eight verses also provide a good purport to BG 18.66, *sarva-dharmān parityajya* or Kṛṣṇa's instruction to give up all *dharma* that is not connected to *bhakti* to Īśvara Bhagavān Vāsudeva.³⁵

4. An Agrarian Economy

The following is adapted from my book, *The Environmental Solution*, section on "Agrarian Economy."

The *varṇāśrama* system in India, based on an agrarian economy, still works successfully in Vaiṣṇava culture, albeit in extremely poor health due to the influence of modern, empirical, materialistic culture.³⁶ Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura discusses this in his *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* (3.2), which appears in this journal as "History of *Varṇāśrama*."

Agrarian economies are usually called "traditional" by modern academics.

Modern "experts" often dismiss such economies as undeveloped or even primitive. The following definition is typical: "Some parts of the world still function with a traditional economic system. It is commonly found in rural settings in second and third world nations, where economic activities are predominantly farming or other traditional

³⁵ Names used in SB 1.1.1-2

³⁶ *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* 3.2, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, "However, the *varṇāśrama* system remained strong, the culture of the society was preserved and not lost." Also, "The people of India may have declined to a decrepit state with age, but as long as the *varṇāśrama* system is practiced, the Aryan identity will also remain." And, "Is the system of *varṇa* in India now in a healthy state? No, the system was established in a perfect way, but it gradually deteriorated, and that is the reason for the troubles and degradation of present India."

income-generating activities.”³⁷

Capitalism, socialism, or a mixture of the two are the globally dominant systems.³⁸ Many believe that these represent an advancement in society, primarily due to the comforts they provide.

The Vaiṣṇava perspective is that the pursuit of comfort has gone far beyond its healthy limit.³⁹ It is not just a question of restricting capitalism and socialism. Agrarianism must be redeveloped.⁴⁰

Due to industrialization and the global economy, no country has an agrarian economy. Some have agricultural economies, meaning that a large part of their GDP (Gross Domestic Product) comes from agriculture. That cannot be called agrarian in the sense of small or localized farms working integrally and sustainably with well-functioning rural communities.

Agriculture and *Yajña*

Yajña was a central feature of the ancient Indo-European culture; it remains so in Vaiṣṇavism. *Yajña* connects to *karma*. The results of *karma*—that is, money, farm produce, power, or whatever human effort produces—must be used in *yajña*.⁴¹

The *Gītā* explains that not participating in the work-*yajña* cycle amounts to stealing from the demigods and Kṛṣṇa.⁴² Ideally, work is

³⁷ “Economic System,” Corporate Finance Institute, corporatefinanceinstitute.com

³⁸ “Capitalist Countries 2022,” worldpopulationreview.com, World Population Review

³⁹ Room Conversation with Prabhupāda, Oct 8, 1977:

Prabhupāda: No luxuries. Live very simple life and you save time for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. That is my desire. Don't waste time for bodily comforts. You have got this body. You have to eat something. You have to cover yourself. So produce your own food and produce your own cloth. Don't waste time for luxury, and chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. This is success of life. In this way organize as far as possible, either in Ceylon or in Czechoslovakia, wherever. Save time. Chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Don't be allured by the machine civilization.

⁴⁰ Mohandas Gandhi, “Relevance of Gandhian Principles in Agriculture | Articles - On and By Gandhi” Prabhupāda: “...we are going to organize the village organization according to Gandhi's program.” Meeting with Mr. Dwivedi, April 24, 1977

⁴¹ BG, chapters 3 & 4

⁴² BG 3.12, 3.16, 4.31

within the context of an agrarian economy. The various elements of a working society cooperate, with agriculture at the functional and economic heart, to practice *yajña*, whose goal is to please the Supreme.⁴³

Cow Protection

The two books that form the basis of the Vaiṣṇava or *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture, the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, contain many references to the importance of cow protection.⁴⁴

Kṛṣṇa Himself loved and protected cows as Gopāla.⁴⁵

Śrīla Prabhupāda consistently taught that the protection of cows is essential in human society. For example, he said, “But cows especially must be protected, for society’s good. Must be protected—from gratitude. We are drinking the milk of cow. How can we kill our mother? From all considerations, cow protection must be there. That is the duty of the *vaiśyas*, *kṛṣi-go-rakṣya-vāṇijyam*.”

“Cow protection is especially mentioned. And the cow’s blood—the milk is nothing but blood [in another form]. So you get more vitamin value by drinking milk than eating or drinking the cow’s blood. From all points of view, cow protection must be there. That is human civilization. From all points of view.”⁴⁶

5. Varṇāśrama College

In early March of 1974, Śrīla Prabhupāda began speaking about establishing a *varṇāśrama* college.⁴⁷ In the coming years, he regularly mentioned it. For example, he said: “We are therefore proposing to start a college, *varṇāśrama* college. It is proposed... We are trying so many things, but this is also one of the programs, that the people of the

⁴³ See the previous section on *hari-toṣaṇam*, SB 1.2.13. Also, see the article on *yajña* in this edition of the journal taken from Prabhupāda’s BTG, May 20, 1956.

⁴⁴ BG 18.44 and SB 10.24.21, 9.2.3, 8.19.43, 7.3.13, 7.2.12, 3.3.28, 1.19.3, 7.11.15, 8.24.5, 4.22.62

⁴⁵ SB 10.24.21

⁴⁶ Prabhupāda’s Room Conversation with Mr. Arnold, Aug. 7, 1971

⁴⁷ Morning Walk with Prabhupāda, “Varṇāśrama College,” March 14, 1974; Morning Walk, March 12, 1974; Letter to Tarun Kanti Ghosh Babu, March 11, 1974

world, they should be educated according to the quality and work--*brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, śūdra.*"⁴⁸

Then in 1976, he escalated the conversation. And in 1977, his final year on earth, he spoke often of *varṇāśrama* and the concept of a *varṇāśrama* college as a next step in the development of ISKCON.

Note that his definition of college is the traditional British one, not an American college. "College courses in UK are designed to teach students to reach a certain level of skills and knowledge in a particular field of interest which makes them able to get a job or gain academic preparation to enter university."⁴⁹

During his conversation about the *Varṇāśrama* College on March 14, 1974, Prabhupāda indicated that the *varṇas* should receive traditional training. He expressed his distaste for modern education, professions, and business that focus on technology. He said, "We are not going to open mills and factories."

The following are extracted from Prabhupāda's conversations: "The other day I was suggesting to the governor to open a *varṇāśrama* college."⁵⁰ "We should have an ideal institution, a *varṇāśrama* college."⁵¹

He explained how Mahāprabhu's view of *varṇāśrama* fit with his and his guru's: "Kṛṣṇa has nothing to do [with *varṇāśrama*], but to maintain the human society very peaceful, advancing in spiritual knowledge, this *varṇāśrama* is required. Therefore, sometimes I become very eager to start a *varṇāśrama* college. We have nothing to do with *varṇāśrama*, we Kṛṣṇa..., but we want to see that the whole human society is peaceful."⁵²

He also acknowledged the difficulty. In June 1975, he said, "So Caitanya Mahāprabhu, He knew that this is Kali-yuga; it is very, very difficult to engage people strictly in the *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Actually, it is difficult. Who is going? If you open a *varṇāśrama* college, there will be no student, because they will think, 'What is this nonsense,

⁴⁸ Prabhupāda's SB 6.1.12 lecture, June 25, 1975

⁴⁹ "The Difference Between College and University in UK," <https://www.studying-in-uk.org/difference-between-college-and-university-in-uk/>

⁵⁰ Conversation with Prabhupāda on April 24, 1975

⁵¹ Conversation with Prabhupāda on June 15, 1975.

⁵² Lecture by Prabhupāda on SB 6.1.12 on June 25, 1975

varṇāśrama? Let us learn technology. We shall get a good salary. We shall earn money.”

Then in August 1975, two months later, he again stressed opening such colleges. Those who are experienced followers of Prabhupāda understand that they must face the difficult challenges and find ways to attract students. They must do their best to introduce the traditional methods Prabhupāda loved and not compromise unless necessary. However, when compromise is needed in the beginning, the goal is to work to establish the traditional methods.⁵³

This idea of traditional methods is discussed a little more in an article in this journal called “Strategic Directions—Opinion” in the section on *Varṇāśrama College*.

6. Entertainment and Enjoyment

Without enjoyment, it is not possible to live. The living being is *sac-cid-ānanda* (existence, knowledge, and enjoyment).

And there must be transcendental enjoyment or else the souls, being trapped by *māyā*, will connect with the sense objects in the search for pleasure. However, that type of pleasure leads to suffering and death.

For example, regarding the higher form of enjoyment, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “Even one hundred years ago in India, all dramatic performances were centered around the superhuman activities of the Supreme Lord. The common people would be verily entertained by the performances of dramas, and *yātrā* parties played wonderfully on the superhuman activities of the Lord, and thus even the illiterate agriculturist would be a participant in the knowledge of Vedic literature, despite a considerable lack of academic qualifications. Therefore, expert players in drama, dancers, singers, speakers, etc., are required for the spiritual enlightenment of the common man.”⁵⁴

He also explained in a lecture on *rasa-varjaṁ raso 'py asya*: “So spiritual life, or transcendental life, does not mean that we are free from activity. Simply artificially if we sit down, ‘Oh, no more shall I do

⁵³ See Rupa Vilasa’s article in this journal, entitled “Varṇāśrama College for All.”

⁵⁴ SB 1.11.20 purport

anything material. I shall simply meditate.’

“Oh? What meditation will you do? Your meditation will be broken in a moment, just like Viśvāmītra Muni. He could not continue his meditation. We must always, cent percent, be engaged in spiritual activities. That should be the program of our life. Rather, in spiritual life you will hardly find any time to get out of it, you have got so much engagement.

“*Rasa-varjam*. And that engagement can only be possible when you find some transcendental pleasure in it.”⁵⁵

Thus, pleasure must be a part of any *varṇāśrama* community. The *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and *vaiśyas* arrange for the enjoyment and entertainment of everyone, especially the *śūdras*.⁵⁶

Prabhupāda makes it clear that *varṇāśrama* communities are divorced from modern culture where the fundamental goal is comfort. Speaking about *varṇāśrama* communities, he said:

“No luxuries. Live a very simple life and save time for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. Don't waste time for bodily comforts.

“Granted, you have got this body, so you must eat something and cover yourself. You should produce your own food and cloth. Don't be allured by the machine civilization. It is a soul-killing civilization. Establish this way of life (*varṇāśrama*) anywhere you can.

“And money, spend for Kṛṣṇa—for Kṛṣṇa's palace, for Kṛṣṇa's temple, for Kṛṣṇa's worship, gorgeous, as gorgeously as possible. That is the true human civilization. And to organize this, *varṇāśrama* will

⁵⁵ Prabhupāda's BG 2.58-59 lecture; Also, in 2019, I was discussing the idea of transcendental enjoyment with Bhakti Caru Swami. He related a time when Prabhupāda asked him how he would maintain his vow of *sannyāsa*. When Bhakti Caru Maharaja responded that he would be very strict, Prabhupāda cautioned him, saying that Viśvāmītra was strict, and Menaka tempted him. Therefore, the goal is to acquire a higher taste. One must enjoy Kṛṣṇa consciousness more than sense gratification to become fixed. Of course, *ruci* (pleasure/taste) is described as more advanced than *niṣṭha* (fixed), but the beginnings of *ruci* and *laulyam* (longing) contribute to *niṣṭha*. See Prabhupāda's lecture, Oct 20, 1968; Prabhupāda's SB 1.2.18 lecture, Sep 26, 1974; Prabhupāda's BG 2.58-59 lecture Apr 15, 1966; Prabhupāda's Morning Walk Apr 26, 1976

⁵⁶ See my article in this journal entitled, “Higher Enjoyment—a Pillar of *Daiva-Varṇāśrama*” for further development of this point.

help you to divide the society—*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*—as there is division in the body.”⁵⁷

On the one hand, Prabhupāda instructed his followers to shun the luxuries and enjoyments of the modern machine civilization. On the other hand, he stressed that the only way to do that is to cultivate the enjoyment of Kṛṣṇa’s *lilās* and *nāmas* through festivals, feasts, art, dance, architecture, sculpture, drama, music, education, parades, storytelling, and more.

That enjoyment of *lilās* and *nāmas* is part of *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. Prabhupāda explains, “Unless you have got enjoyment, how can you continue your activities? Therefore, Kṛṣṇa consciousness means the more you become active in Kṛṣṇa conscious, the more you become joyful. *Ānandamayo ’bhyāsāt*.⁵⁸ That means your real life becomes revealed—joyful life. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *ānandāmbudhi-varadhanam*,⁵⁹ meaning there is an ocean of joy that does not remain stagnant. It increases. That is the beauty of this movement.”⁶⁰

Also, when commenting on BG, 10.8-11, Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura paraphrases Kṛṣṇa: “These four verses, which are the essence of the *Gītā* for preventing the degradation of the *jīvās*, I [Kṛṣṇa] have explained to give happiness to all.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Room Conversation with Prabhupāda on Oct 8, 1977

⁵⁸ *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.12

⁵⁹ *Śikṣāṣṭakam* 1 by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

⁶⁰ Prabhupāda’s lecture on SB 7.7.25-28, March 13, 1967

⁶¹ *Bhagavad-gītā* website with principal commentaries: <https://www.bhagavad-gita.us/bhagavad-gita-10-11/>

II. Strategic Directions—Opinion

Dayānanda dāsa

On Strategy and Innovation

From 1967-1969, although we were distributing *Back to Godhead* (BTG) magazines, book distribution seemed impossible.

In 1968, Śrīla Prabhupāda asked a few of us to give money to publish the *Teachings of Lord Caitanya* (TLC). Jayananda gave \$5,000 (\$45,000 today), which pleased Prabhupāda very much. I gave \$500 (\$4,500) and others gave various amounts.¹

Early in 1969 in L.A., we received a shipment of many boxes of TLCs. They languished in storage, occasionally being pilfered by devotees for personal use. We found it impossible to distribute them, although several had become experts in BTG sales.

Then in 1969-70, Gargamuni and Brahmananda set up a table next to the *harināma* party, and they began to sell the TLCs and the newly published *Bhagavad-gītās*.

Then a breakthrough happened. On *Janmāṣṭamī*, 1970, we received big, silver *Kṛṣṇa* books with a foreword by the famous musician George Harrison. With those books, devotees were able to knock down the barriers. They figured it out. They distributed hundreds.

It didn't happen overnight. Some leading devotees became inspired geniuses—organizing, selling, publishing, enchanting the public, and

¹ The history here is based on my personal recollection. It can also be found in *Prabhupāda Lilamṛta* by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Gosvāmī as well as other biographies.

enthusing the devotees.

Thus, in 1971-72, the book distribution began in full force, and increased significantly in each year to come.²

What does this history have to do with *varṇāśrama*?

The answer is that *varṇāśrama*, like book distribution, is also a *para-upakāra* activity aimed at the masses.³ To establish it as a mass program requires devotees to innovate. Like book distribution, devotees cannot rely solely on Prabhupāda's strategies to be successful. We must use our own intelligence.

Here I am not rejecting or minimizing Prabhupāda's strategies. However, his followers must innovate to execute his desires. We cannot stop trying, and we cannot blame others. For example, both Tripurāri Swami (1972) and Mahotsaha Prabhu (2023) are examples of great innovators and leaders in book distribution. We can all do something. Prabhupāda explained: "So with Caitanya Mahāprabhu's blessing and spiritual strength, and with the good wishes of Vaiṣṇavas, just proceed and preach and always think of Kṛṣṇa. He will help. *Buddhi-yogaṁ dadāmi tam* (Bg. 10.10). If you sincerely work... Kṛṣṇa is within yourself. He will give you strength, instruction."⁴

The two *para-upakāra* activities--*saṅkīrtana* and *varṇāśrama*—should be coordinated. By *saṅkīrtana*, I mean books, preaching, festivals, *harināma*, *prasādam*, etc. And every person who comes within our sphere or everyone who takes home a book and reads it should be encouraged to attend a *varṇāśrama* college. At least that should be the goal: not just to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa or visit a temple, but to attend a *varṇāśrama* college.⁵

² For the history of book distribution see *Our Family Business* by Vaisesika Dasa and *Distribute Books, Distribute Books, Distribute Books* by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Gosvāmī.

³ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Adī 9.41, *bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya janma yāra | janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra* || "One who has taken his birth as a human being in the land of India [Bhārata-varṣa] should make his life successful and work for the benefit of all other people." Also, "*Para-upakāra* means mass benefit." From Feb 14, 1977, conversation on *varṇāśrama*.

⁴ Initiation Ceremony by Prabhupāda, Nov 18, 1975 in Bombay

⁵ From Feb 14, 1977, conversation: Hari-śauri: But in Caitanya Mahāprabhu's practical preaching He only induced them to chant. Prabhupāda: That is not possible for ordinary man. Hari-śauri: What, to simply induce people to chant? Prabhupāda: But who will

Other goals may be important, but they are secondary to the College. Then everyone who attends the college should be guided toward a role in a *varṇāśrama* community. And those who desire to remain in the city may be engaged accordingly, with a focus on book distribution and the financing of festivals and *varṇāśrama* communities.

I see no practical alternative.

For book distribution and *varṇāśrama*, recruitment of new devotees is essential.

Like the early strategies Prabhupāda's disciples developed, we need new strategies for mass recruitment to increase *varṇāśrama* and *saṅkīrtana*.

Preaching to the Masses

In the first few years of his preaching, Śrīla Prabhupāda was not keen on emphasizing *varṇāśrama-dharma*. He wanted to assemble a society of Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇas* to print and distribute his books, preach, and set an example for society.

Here is what he said about *varṇāśrama* in 1968.

“Prabhupāda: No, no, no. You have come to execute Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Before coming to this Kṛṣṇa consciousness, were you in *varṇāśrama-dharma*? No. So at the present moment, there is no possibility of persons following the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, either here or anywhere. Everyone is *varṇa-saṅkara*. *Kalau śūdra-sambhavaḥ*. In this age, everyone is a *śūdra*. Nobody is *brāhmaṇa*, nobody is *kṣatriya*, nobody is *vaiśya*. *Śūdra*. So in this age, you won't find anybody following the *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

“Therefore this is the panacea, to engage everyone in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa. He comes above the highest principle of *brāhmaṇism*. This is the greatest gift to humanity, that even

chant? Who'll chant? [My comment: Here Prabhupāda establishes that *varṇāśrama* is needed to influence people to chant. Either the chanting will go alongside *varṇāśrama* or it will follow *varṇāśrama*. Devotees on farms have the experience with WWOOFers (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms), those who volunteer to work on farms. They often become induced to chant while they are working on the farm. They are first attracted to the farm work and then the chanting.]

[when] he is in the, I mean to say, fallen condition, the most degraded position, he can be raised to the highest position simply by chanting. This is the only remedy.”⁶

By 1972, Prabhupāda began speaking more favorably about *varṇāśrama*. Yet he was not keen on fully implementing it. “*Varṇāśrama* is very good institution. But still, *varṇāśrama*, perfect *varṇāśrama*, cannot be possible in this age.”⁷

And then in 1974, Prabhupāda began to change his preaching strategy. He saw the need to train his followers, not just as *brāhmaṇas* and *sannyāsīs*, but as members of a complete society.

“Regarding the farm, farm opening is not very essential, but if you can do it conveniently, then do it. The *varṇāśrama* system is for convenience sake in the material world. It has nothing to do with spiritual life. Acceptance of *varṇāśrama* means a little easy progress to spiritual life, otherwise it has no importance to us.”⁸

By 1975, with the increasing success of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), Prabhupāda started to push in a new direction: “So make, organize. I can give you the idea, but I’ll not live very long. If you can carry it out, you can change the whole... Especially if you can change America, then the whole world will change. Then the whole world...”⁹

In 1976, Prabhupāda started to push for even more direct implementation of *varṇāśrama* in his society. At least he spoke favorably of the concept. “That is called *varṇāśrama*—four *varṇas*, four *āśramas*. That is very scientific. *Brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra* and *brahmacārī*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha*, *sannyāsa*. So Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement includes this system of division of society. It is a perfect society. Therefore, we are trying to introduce the *varṇāśrama* system, although it is very difficult nowadays. But if one becomes a devotee, which is above *varṇāśrama-dharma*, then the purpose is served. In this age, although *varṇāśrama-dharma* is very scientific, and Kṛṣṇa

⁶ BG 3.18-30 Dec 30, 1968 lecture

⁷ BG 1.20 lecture, July 17, 1973

⁸ Letter to Hansadutta, Oct 19, 1974; Also, see the conversation on Varṇāśrama College in March 14, 1974.

⁹ Room Conversation discussing *varṇāśrama* community, Aug 1, 1975

consciousness movement includes this, but we are mostly trying to get to the topmost part of *varṇāśrama*--- *sannyāsa*, or above that. That means Vaiṣṇava."¹⁰

Note that Prabhupāda's concept of how to introduce *varṇāśrama* was not fixed. We cannot blindly follow his strategies. We must understand the goals, the philosophy, the essence, and use our own abilities and intelligence to strategize and implement *varṇāśrama* among the masses around the world.¹¹

Regarding the idea of mass preaching, Prabhupāda said in 1977: "This is a small scale. [He is referring to the current direction of ISKCON in recruiting *brāhmaṇas*.] What percentage of people in the world are we controlling? Very insignificant. But if you want to make the whole human society perfect, then this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be introduced according to the Kṛṣṇa's instruction, [meaning *cātur-varṇyam*] if you want to do it in a large scale for the benefit of the whole human society. Now we are picking up some of them, best. That is another thing. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu said *para-upakāra*. Why a certain section should be picked up? The whole mass of people will get the benefit of it. Then it is required, systematic. *Sve sve karmaṇy abhīrataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ*. *Para-upakāra* means mass benefit, not there is certain section. Then we have to introduce this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It must be done perfectly, and it is possible, and people will be happy."¹²

In a room conversation in Māyāpur, February 14, 1977, wherein Prabhupāda enthusiastically discussed *varṇāśrama*, he used the word "masses" five times. Also, in connection with *varṇāśrama*, he speaks about mass of people in SB 4.29.81 purport, SB 2.7.9 purport, SB 5.5.1 lecture, and SB 1.5.24 purport.

Perhaps the most telling of Prabhupāda's *varṇāśrama* goals is this statement: "There is a program—Manipur. I want to start in that small

¹⁰ Interview with *Trans-India Magazine*, July 17, 1976 in N.Y.

¹¹ See the previous section, "On Strategy and Innovation."

¹² Part of room conversation with Prabhupāda on February 14, 1977, in Māyāpur

state *varṇāśrama* idea. That is my dream. Small state it can be done, *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya....*"¹³

That indicates *varṇāśrama* on the state level with Manipur as a model. Already, about half of Manipur's three million people are followers of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. And, without delving too deeply into the complex politics of the region, Christian preachers have been quite successful in converting those in the non-Vaiṣṇava community. That is not the fault of devotees; however, it means a missed opportunity.¹⁴

Thus, we should not think of *varṇāśrama* as niche preaching in ISKCON. As ISKCON is currently organized and executed, it is just a part of *varṇāśrama*. With its focus on temples, education, and the recruitment and training of *brāhmaṇas*, ISKCON is only a small part of *varṇāśrama*.¹⁵ *Varṇāśrama* is the macrocosm. ISKCON does quite well in recruitment of *brāhmaṇas*, which comprise one part of *daiva-varṇāśrama*. However, the other part—*kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra*—encompasses all of society, the entire world.

Environmental Preaching

Coupled with *saṅkīrtana* and festivals, preaching about environmental degradation is the best way to expand the *varṇāśrama* movement significantly.

To develop *varṇāśrama*, there must be a close alliance with the preaching expansion of ISKCON. In many places, having a farm for cow protection is considered an important part of the development of a temple. However, that will, in general, not result in a *varṇāśrama* community.

Sometimes professionals are encouraged to work on the farms in

¹³ Conversation on Feb 14, 1977

¹⁴ The following comment is perhaps not my business, but I will put it here anyway: In India, there are thousands of young devotees who chant 16 rounds and behave like pure *brāhmaṇas* or Vaiṣṇavas. I believe they should be engaged in organizing and converting the masses to Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. I have seen such potential, and I am confident it will happen at some point. Those thousands of today will become millions tomorrow or the next day.

¹⁵ I am not criticizing ISKCON. I am urging it to expand its scope and not consider *varṇāśrama* as a niche.

their spare time. However, for expansion, there must be recruits from the *śūdra* community.¹⁶

In conjunction with book distribution, festivals, and *harināma*, devotees can use environmental preaching to recruit.¹⁷ And the Varṇāśrama College is the key instrument for training those recruits.

A fundamental aspect of environmental preaching is that preachers must see *varṇāśrama* as the perfect alternative to modern society. Some in ISKCON want to infiltrate society and seek rapport with other organizations. Some encourage people to chant in their homes and not change anything else in their lives.¹⁸ However, environmental and *varṇāśrama* preaching does not tolerate asuric society. It seeks to establish communities independent of the materialistic, machine culture.

Unfortunately, some are embarrassed that ISKCON devotees do not comply with the leftist agenda for clean, sustainable, environmentally friendly living. They should not be embarrassed.

There is no comparison between the asuric American or European cities and the far superior *varṇāśrama* communities. We cannot think that we must prepare something materially perfect to accept recruits.

It is a war.

Modern society kills billions of animals. Its citizens are part of the top one to five percent of the wealthiest, spoiled people in the world. They have gathered their wealth by overexploiting nature for hundreds of years. They currently put forward socialist, egalitarian, and humanist ideals, which are false solutions to their problems. Those solutions are based on greed and the bodily concept of life. They are not centered on

¹⁶ On a walk, April 20, 1974, Prabhupāda explained: "A devotee is neither *brāhmaṇa* nor *śūdra*. He may act like a *śūdra*, but he is not *śūdra*. He may act like a *brāhmaṇa*; he is not *brāhmaṇa*. He is Vaiṣṇava." When we establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*, there will be many Vaiṣṇavas acting as *śūdras* and many *śūdras* who will be influenced by the *varṇāśrama* culture gradually to become elevated as Vaiṣṇavas. With both types of *śūdras*, including every gradation, we can build an army to conquer the world.

¹⁷ I have described environmental preaching in detail in my book, *The Environmental Solution* by Michael Wright.

¹⁸ I do not wish to disparage these efforts. They are often done by pure, advanced followers of Prabhupāda; however, I am speaking of strategies for mass recruiting here. It is a question of practical strategy, not who is correctly following Prabhupāda.

any higher power, which is required for a proper solution.¹⁹

Thus, it is a battle between two cultures—daivic and asuric. It is clear in the name, *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*. To be effective, we must collect an ever-increasing army. We must engage the army in preaching, distributing books, and developing *varṇāśrama* communities.

Resistance of Leftists and Humanists

In modern society, there is a strong influence of humanists and leftists, or those whose ideas originate from Karl Marx and other so-called reformist Europeans of the 1800s.²⁰

Although the humanist movement is very old, its resurgence in the 1800s was primarily a reaction to Christianity. Humanists say they do not need a God to have human morals.

And in simple terms, socialists reacted to social injustice and imbalance. They also rejected God. They want all people to receive the same justice and to be able to pursue the same opportunities. They especially want to minimize wealth inequality.

And they decry any system that promotes class structure.²¹

In the ensuing century and a half, religious people have been influenced by humanist and egalitarian morals. On the surface, those human morals seem worthy.

However, the flaw is that those morals tend to place too much emphasis on the bodily concept of life, especially on the human being.²² That is most obvious when one views modern society's relationship

¹⁹ Some want to make the earth divine or an object of worship. They say we must treat the earth with respect; however, they have no clear philosophy to curb greed on a broad scale.

²⁰ Friedrich Engels, Oscar Wilde, George Eliot, Charles Darwin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and David Strauss are just a few of the "other reformist Europeans" I refer to.

²¹ "Classless Society," in Wikipedia: "In Marxist theory, tribal hunter-gatherer society, primitive communism, was classless." Also, see the article, "Yajña or Sacrifice to the Supreme" by Śrīla Prabhupāda in this journal. He addresses the classless society that leftists clamor about. And he quotes *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (SB) 11.5.2-3 in support of his argument.

²² Note that Kṛṣṇa encourages us to see all souls equally, including non-humans. *Bhagavad-gītā* (BG) 5.18.

with nature.

Granted, leftists and humanists have recently become eager to correct humanity's relationship with nature. But, in general, it is too little too late. And it is often theoretical or just rhetoric. When there is a choice between the rights and privileges of workers contrasted with protecting the environment, the leftists support the workers.²³

As with many religions, ISKCON is also influenced by leftism and humanism. Of course, ISKCON devotees continue to put Kṛṣṇa and śāstra in the center; however, the subtle influence of the leftist, humanist morality causes some devotees to be embarrassed with the way other devotees behave.²⁴

For example, when some in ISKCON strongly reject asuric society and its ways of functioning, those with a liberal influence may object.²⁵

It is often difficult for such "liberal" devotees to accept traditional *varṇāśrama* society.²⁶

Nevertheless, those who wish to establish *varṇāśrama* as a mass movement must be allowed to do so. If they are not given permission, they must take it.²⁷

²³ See *The Environmental Solution* by Michael Wright for a more complete discussion of leftists and humanists.

²⁴ Devotees sometimes transgress the social mores of the time, which is certainly a controversial topic. See Conversation with Prabhupāda, May 5, 1976. Also, on a walk, March 14, 1974: "Just like some of the devotees, great devotees, they took the profession of becoming thief."

²⁵ I would not say their objections are against Kṛṣṇa consciousness; however, I am describing here two strategic approaches to spreading Mahāprabhu's movement. One is infiltrating asuric culture to preach and the other is opposing it to preach. One problem arises (there may be many) when those who infiltrate become too influenced by it.

²⁶ Some devotees in India may be reluctant to embrace *varṇāśrama* due to the heavy resistance from both society and the government. It may not be accurate to call them "liberal."

²⁷ There are many advantages to coordination within an organization. An individual soldier can do very little outside his unit. However, Rear Admiral Grace Hopper (1906-1992) famously said: "It is better to ask forgiveness than permission." She was referring to occasionally using one's intelligence in the face of organizational bureaucracy.

The “Impossibility” of Large-scale Agrarian Economy

It is essential to know one’s enemy.²⁸

First, a little history:

Europeans began their Commercial Revolution nearly a thousand years ago. As time progressed, their mercantile activity sought to compete with the Arabs and others. About 600 years ago, their ships and navies had improved such that they began an “Age of Discovery,” in which they expanded trade through world colonization.²⁹

A natural part of any expanded trade is the exploitation of natural resources. Agrarianism, or locally produced food and goods, is transformed into large-scale agriculture for transport elsewhere. Such trade has existed for thousands of years.

However, with European shipping and colonization of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, the exploitation of natural resources significantly increased worldwide.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the European Scientific Revolution began, which later fed into the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century.

It was the Industrial Revolution that drove nails into the coffin of the agrarian economy.

At first, the colonial powers were reluctant to allow their colonies full access to industries. However, after World War II, the Asian and African countries achieved independence and pursued agricultural and industrial economies in earnest.

The result is that it is impossible to resurrect the agrarian or traditional economy without strong action. That means widespread preaching. It means strong resistance to European ideas and materialism that have been hundreds of years in the making.

The former colonies that were kept away from industry for so long

²⁸ Many people are fond of quoting Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* (500 BCE). He says, “Know yourself, know your enemy.” Of course, that idea is not unique to ancient China. It has been common sense among generals and leaders of state for thousands of years.

²⁹ See Commercial Revolution, Age of Discovery, Scientific Revolution, Industrial Revolution, and Traditional Economy (another name for agrarian economy) in Wikipedia.

now want to share in the results of materialism. They have adopted European ideas like socialism, capitalism, humanism, empirical science, and democracy. They are embarrassed about their own traditions. They have been brainwashed into thinking their religions and old economies are backward. Many try to resist such brainwashing, but they cannot resist the sense gratification offered by materialism that is so easily obtained through industry and mass agriculture.

The *varṇāśrama* movement is a revolution against that materialism. It seeks to reestablish the nearly dead agrarian economy. To do so, it must be bold, innovative, and aggressive. It requires brilliant strategists, forceful *kṣatriyas*, and strong armies.

Varṇāśrama College

First, one must understand the definition of *college*. The American and British systems are different. The Varṇāśrama College is closer to the British system.

Note the following definition: “Whereas in the US, colleges are exclusively postsecondary institutions, colleges in the UK also deliver academic or vocational courses to students aged 16–18, in order to prepare them for university or employment.”³⁰

In fact, Prabhupāda said that students go to the Varṇāśrama College as early as age 10-12.³¹

However, the Varṇāśrama College system has not yet been fixed.

I have extracted the following from a walk with Prabhupāda on March 14, 1974, and interjected some of my comments.

He said that Varṇāśrama College is like a technological college for the

³⁰ “Difference Between Colleges and Universities in the USA and UK,” Sarah Hastings-Woodhouse

³¹ Morning Walk, Mar 14, 1974: Prabhupāda: “Varṇāśrama College means for grown-up students. College means for grown-up students.” Hṛdayānanda: “Is there a minimum age for beginning such a college?” Prabhupāda: “Yes. Ten to twelve years.” Hṛdayānanda: “They can start at ten to twelve?” Prabhupāda: “Yes. From five to ten years, *gurukula*. And after ten years, they should go to the Varṇāśrama College.”

public. It is for young people,³² and he suggested that the teaching may be done by *sannyāsīs*, like in a missionary school. He explained that it would be a boarding school where the students follow the regulative principles.

Of course, children follow them naturally.

Hṛdayānanda Mahārāja asked about specific subjects. However, Prabhupāda seemed to be more anxious to discuss the principles rather than the implementation.

It is my own experience in education that the external society has a strong influence on the educational institution. Thus, the *varṇāśrama* community should operate together with the college.³³ Neither one can begin as a perfect entity; however, they work together and develop each other.

For example, ISKCON has struggled for 50 years to train *brāhmaṇas* and managers to administrate ISKCON, which it is doing quite well but with room for ongoing improvement. In the same way, a perfect school cannot be manufactured immediately. Over time, it will slowly adjust to the needs of the community.

As the March 14, 1974, discussion continued, Prabhupāda continually emphasized the problems with modern materialistic society. Although the dialogue was about *varṇāśrama* college, the point was to establish *varṇāśrama* communities and colleges as alternatives to modern, materialistic society.

The proof of the effectiveness of the college is that it supplies graduates who can function effectively in the *varṇāśrama* community. Education is not a theoretical exercise based blindly on *śāstra*. For

³² *Kaumāra ācaret prājño dharmān bhāgavatān iha* [SB 7.6.1]

³³ There is an African saying that it takes a village to raise a child. That is true. When the family and community influences are strong and healthy, the child generally matures well. However, there is another saying: “The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.” We have experienced that in ISKCON. Some children did not feel the warmth of the ISKCON families, communities, and schools in which they were raised. As adults, they have tried to burn down the institution. Unlike some, I do not overly fault individuals or ISKCON for that situation. Establishing worldwide ISKCON in ten years was like waging a war in which there were many casualties, including the soldiers who had to neglect their families, in this case, for the benefit of humanity.

example, some current *gurukulas* teach impossibly theoretical so-called brahminical *mantras* and subjects.³⁴ That is not practical or useful for ISKCON.

The establishment of a *varṇāśrama* college may be difficult, like book distribution or any skill that is well done. It is a combination of education and practical application.

However, in another sense, it is not difficult. Prabhupāda said, “What is the difficulty? If I teach you how to cook, is it very difficult? But I must know everything because I am a teacher.”³⁵

That means when the system is implemented, it may continue without difficulty because everyone is trained to maintain the system.

What is needed are devotees who can conceive how to implement the system. It may be done in the same way that some genius devotees created widespread book distribution without too much difficulty. We should keep in mind that not everyone can do such a thing.

Thus, managers should be on the lookout for such innovators. They are expert strategists and brilliant leaders. Plus, they must deal with the politics of those who oppose them.

One of Prabhupāda’s disciples, Viṣṇujana Swami, declared, “When we had our boat, the boatmen every morning were worshipping.” And Prabhupāda replied, “Because, due to past culture, even the lowest class of men is a greater philosopher than these rascals in Western countries.”

That quote is from the same conversation on March 14, 1974. Viṣṇujana Swami correctly observed that the *varṇāśrama* culture is still strong in India. Those who are devoted to Kṛṣṇa and renounced from material life influence the rest of society. Due to that effect, the common people, like the boatmen, are doing their daily worship.

³⁴ This is my opinion based on how well *gurukula* graduates can integrate into ISKCON and *varṇāśrama* communities and how well they function as *brāhmaṇas* who know how to preach and strategize. In the *varṇāśrama* system, Prabhupāda indicated that the *brāhmaṇas* will teach the *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas*, like Dronacharya. And as preachers, they must be prepared to do more than give classes and quote verses. Prabhupāda told us that when he visited the *gurukula* in 1975.

³⁵ From the same conversation on March 14, 1974

That is the way *daiva-varṇāśrama* is meant to function.

Prabhupāda’s response was that due to the force of the past and present *varṇāśrama* culture—the traditional culture—even the boatmen are better than university professors in the West. They know they are not the body. They know there is a purpose to life higher than sense gratification. Even Nobel laureates do not have that knowledge.

Also, Prabhupāda’s statement shows his love for traditional society and his perception that it still impacts the people.³⁶

The roadmap is clear. Know the *śāstra*. Draw from practical, real-world examples in traditional Indian society. And use *śāstra* to guide our own implementation of the Varṇāśrama College. There is a common wisdom that says, “don’t reinvent the wheel.”³⁷

Non-Essential Preaching

Economic Collapse

Some preachers predict economic collapse or some other impending disaster. However, human crises like economic decline, war, social turmoil, injustice, and scarcity come and go.

According to history, we see that some people are affected, and others are not. Even when large numbers are affected by a disaster, it is generally temporary.

In New Vrindavan, West Virginia, in the 1970s, many were convinced that American society was doomed. When the downfall did not happen quickly, they became disillusioned. Many religious sects predict an apocalypse. Such fears are not good motivation for long-term maintenance of natural, spiritual life.

It is better to preach about degradation of the environment.³⁸ That is

³⁶ The interaction shows how Viṣṇujana Swami understood and imbibed Prabhupāda’s love for the traditional culture (*varṇāśrama*).

³⁷ When *Gītā-nagarī* was founded in the 1970s, devotees looked to the Amish for examples of how to live without machines. Similarly, in countries outside of India, there are often people who still practice traditional farming and living without technology. There is no need to reinvent practical ways of living. We are not trying to implement *śāstra* in a vacuum or in a theoretical manner.

³⁸ Current environmental degradation will likely continue for generations. It is not like

an example of modern, materialistic greed that causes destruction. It shows the effect of asuric society, which is a culture that fights with nature, the demigods, and the Supreme to get sense gratification.

Such preaching is not done to instill fear of impending doom. Instead, it should be more intelligently used to show the inferiority of modern materialistic society and the superiority of *varṇāśrama* culture.

When we work in *varṇāśrama* communities, we are not trying to solve the environmental problems. We are participating harmoniously as demigods (*devas* or *bhaktas*)³⁹ in compliance with the orders of the Supreme.⁴⁰

Thus, taking part in such communities does not solve the problems. But it puts us on the side of the *devas*—those who try to serve the Lord. That is the purpose of the soul—*jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nitya-dāsa*—not sense gratification and greed that burn up nature and aggravate the *devas*.

Sustainability

On one ISKCON website, *sustainability* is defined as “the practice of living within one’s limits.” That statement conforms to the *īśāvāsya* principle.⁴¹

However, in common language, the definition is “avoidance of the depletion of natural resources to maintain an ecological balance.”

Unless devotee preachers educate others, they will not know that the Vaiṣṇava definition is different. Thus, it is better to avoid the term.

There is indeed a difference. Vaiṣṇavas know that one should accept

wars and economic declines that come and go. It is also more characteristic of the asuric battle with God and His nature, which He controls and owns.

³⁹ SB 7.9.11-13 lecture, March 24, 1969: “Anyone who is Vaiṣṇava, devotee of the Supreme Lord, he is demigod. That is the statement of Vedic literature. *Viṣṇu-bhaktobhaved daivaḥ*. [CC Adi 3.91, from *Padma Purāṇa*]”

⁴⁰ His orders in the *Gītā* and *Īsopaniṣad*.

⁴¹ *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* 1: *īśāvāsyam idam sarvaṁ yat kiñca jagatyām jagat | tena tyaktena bhunñjīthā mā grāhaḥ kasya svid dhanam ||* “Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.”

only one's quota, not more. However, sustainability in the modern vernacular means that one may take the maximum possible that nature can sustainably supply.

Some people—those who do not practice sustainability—are so greedy that they have no problem depleting nature's resources excessively, beyond its apparent ability to supply.⁴² People devoted to sustainability want to manage their greed so that it conforms to nature's limits. Or they may desire to use technology to entice as much as possible from nature but in a benign way.

Devotees also want to manage their greed, but they do it by first understanding that *īśvara* owns everything. They must take only their quota, and even that they should minimize. Devotees understand they are not these bodies and that the goal of life is not sense gratification.

They manage greed through knowledge, enjoyment, and love: They know about the soul. They enjoy service to Kṛṣṇa. And they love Him, so they want to do as He asks.

The environmentalists who seek sustainability do so through studying how much ecosystems will produce. They depend on biologists and other scientists. They are limited by empirical knowledge to motivate them.

In contrast, devotees have enjoyment and love as part of their motivation. There is no comparison.

Climate Change

This is a highly politicized topic. The goal of most environmentalists in controlling climate change is modifying energy use.

At the crux of the discussion on climate change is the use of fossil fuel energy. For environmentalists that means managing, not reducing, the

⁴² There are various methods of obtaining natural resources. Modern chemicals and machines are a way of forcing nature to yield produce and energy. Also fond of using force, Hiranya-kaśipu used fear to require earth and the seas to produce abundantly. In contrast, Mahārāja Pṛthu milked the earth by reestablishing sacrifice, *yajña*. *Yajña* is a key difference between asuric and daivic culture. It is not the use of chemicals or machines; however, eliminating them does indeed play an important part in natural *varṇāśrama* living.

use of energy. It is rare for politicians or businesspeople to discuss a serious reduction of energy.

They may say that fossil fuel use should be cut back, but they mean energy sources should be found elsewhere.

Vaiṣṇavas worship *śaktimān* (the Lord of energy), not *śakti* (energy). They use energy sparingly. They offer the energy in *yajña* to the Supreme. In other words, in the *varṇāśrama* culture, the people are urged to use energy in service to Kṛṣṇa. Doing so weans them away from using it excessively for sense gratification.

The point is that environmentalists have solutions that do not reduce attachment to energy. Devotees have different solutions. Since the discussion on climate change is so passionate and people think they understand the solutions, which are generally leftist, it is difficult to interject a different perspective.⁴³

There are plenty of heinous abuses of nature in asuric society. They produce fewer assumptions in the audience. Better avoid climate change. As soon as devotees use that term, people think devotees are leftists. That is not the case. We are neither left nor right. We are transcendental to those.

⁴³ The leftist perspective on environmental solutions generally amounts to a materialistically motivated self-delusion. They take the supposed moral high ground, but their ideas are unproven and utopian. This is discussed in detail in "The Environmental Solution," by Michael Wright.

III. Simple Living—High Thinking

Vyāpaka dāsa

Janmādy asya yataḥ...

The Absolute Truth is that from which everything emanates...

"The supreme one who is celebrated as the Supreme Being or the Supreme Soul is the supreme source of the cosmic manifestation as well as its reservoir and winding up. Thus, he is the Supreme Fountainhead, the Absolute Truth." (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* [SB] 2.10.7)

Since the cosmic manifestation is a display of Lord Kṛṣṇa's energy, logically all aspects of creation must reflect the nature of the original cause, i.e., the Supreme Being, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, we should be able to empirically verify that any action (*vikarma*) which violates the basic tenets of Kṛṣṇa consciousness will also be socially and environmentally unsustainable in the long term.

Otherwise, it will be argued that the Vedic definition of the Absolute Truth is invalid or that the simple living model is an inaccurate reflection of the Absolute Truth. Certainly, neither is true. So, this provides the devotees an opportunity to show how the devotional lifestyle can act as a panacea for all of today's moral and social problems.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami (Śrīla Prabhupāda) explains in the preface of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*: "The ideals of spiritual communism, according to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Vedic scripture), are based more or less on the oneness of the entire human society, nay, of the entire energy of living beings. The need is felt by great thinkers to make this a successful ideology. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

will fill this need in human society. It begins, therefore, with the aphorism of Vedānta philosophy (*janmādy asya yataḥ*) to establish the ideal of a common cause.

“Human society, at the present moment, is not in the darkness of oblivion. It has made rapid progress in the field of material comforts, education and economic development throughout the entire world. But there is a pinprick somewhere in the social body at large, and therefore there are large-scale quarrels, even over less important issues. There is need of a clue as to how humanity can become one in peace, friendship and prosperity with a common cause.” (SB Canto 1 – Creation, Preface)

Kali-yuga (modern) society runs in the opposite direction of the simple living, high thinking lifestyle encouraged by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Vedas. His instructions in this regard are relevant both materially and spiritually and these teachings cannot be minimized in developing a comprehensive social plan and will play an essential role in providing the vision and practicum of a sustainable society.

Simple living requires the philosophical basis and inspiration provided by spiritual life. Without this higher taste, the lower self (mind and senses) erodes the desire and morality needed to develop one’s relationship with Kṛṣṇa. It is this pleasure of the eternal relationship with God that is being sought after even through consumerism. In the end, it is the only true pleasure. So, without this higher taste, the mind eventually returns to material pleasures with the attractiveness and relevance of simple living being lost.

Recent history provides many instances where simple living is maintained solely by the level of available technology. However, though fulfilling many of our ideals of simple living, it lacks the higher spiritual connection. So simple living without higher thinking is also not recommended. Connection to the Supreme is key.

Presently, there is no shortage of technology. Its presence is everywhere from the computer I am composing this article on to telecommunication, transport, power generation and so on. Unfortunately, the current situation is often lacking in both simple living and high thinking and is more likely to be characterized as high living and simple thinking.

From hydrogen cells to condoms, contemporary remedies focus on symptoms while ignoring the underlying cause of spiritual bankruptcy. The urge to enjoy separately from Kṛṣṇa (God) is the primary force behind the narcissistic and debilitating tendencies of modern society. As such, this social arrangement which is based upon action springing from the modes of passion and ignorance cannot persist.

This is confirmed in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* (2.16):

"Those who are seers of the truth have concluded that of the nonexistent there is no endurance, and of the existent there is no cessation. This seers have concluded by studying the nature of both."

Energy Consumption

Society has made countless technological changes throughout history. As an example, the field of transport follows a continuum starting with oxen before moving to horses, to steam, and now to oil, with each stage providing increased mobility and speed. However, each change in technology demands an increase in energy use. Inarguably, one can travel further and faster in the 21st century, but it is dependent upon a large increase in the amount of energy consumed.

To illustrate, overall energy consumption in the 1980s was 80 times greater than that consumed 100 years ago.¹ So, at the heart of the current lifestyle is enormous energy use. As such, the question must be asked if these levels of consumption can be maintained, and the quick answer is no. The crucial point is that these demands stem from an inflated standard of living fueled by uncontrolled desire.

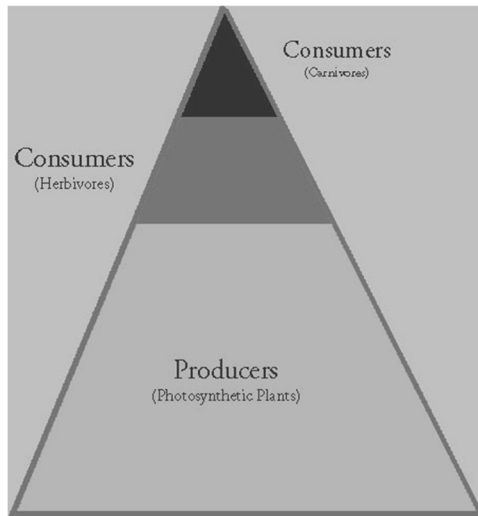
So, when some speak about an evolving society, the fact behind the matter is that the alleged evolvment is merely a reflection of harnessing energy through new technology to meet the demand of ever-increasing wants.

The unfortunate situation is that the primary energy source, oil, is non-renewable and is a prominent cause of adverse environmental effects. Could not the latest panacea in the form of hydrogen cells be as

¹ See <https://ourworldindata.org/fossil-fuels>.

easily remedied by a civilization focused on an environmentally harmonious, God-conscious culture of simple living and high thinking? Certainly, but not until the sensual buzz from material gratification is replaced by knowledge or is beaten down by the laws of *karma*, using the strong arm of environmental degradation. Even as devotees, we are constantly challenged by this dilemma; and if we are to pass the test, we will need to summon a strict adherence to our devotional practice and principles. These are the only hope and remedy available to us and the world.

Lasting change cannot be achieved until the true proprietorship of all things is understood. Nothing less will work, and the basis of this change will come because of the sincere chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* (providing the chanting is done offenselessly), which will replace the urge for consumption with a proper understanding of one's place in nature. Indeed, a sustainable society can only be achieved if built upon an infrastructure of spiritual practice because the gross always manifests from the subtle.



Trophic Triangle—relative biomass at each level

Trophic Triangle

Nowhere does the effect of moving away from a simple living, high

thinking ideal seem so vivid as in diet and its concomitant impact on the environment.

The workings of an ecosystem illustrated by the Trophic Triangle reveal how nutrition (energy) passes through an ecosystem. There are three feeding levels in every system. The top level is populated by carnivores, which subsist by hunting prey (generally herbivores) or scavenging for carrion. The next level is the herbivores, which find their nourishment by ingesting plants. The third level is the producers which are the engine of the ecosystem since it is their role to capture the sun's energy and transform it into food energy (carbohydrate), on which all consumers (carnivores and herbivores) are dependent. They are the sole energy-producing component of the ecosystem, and all levels are dependent for nourishment upon these plants fulfilling their responsibility of photosynthesis. Photosynthetic plants are the foundation of the food chain. (See Britannica [Britannica.com], trophic pyramid)

Meat

So, as one moves up through the various stages of an ecosystem, the biomass of each level is reduced to 1/10th of the previous. Therefore, as measured in biomass, there is one carnivore to 10 herbivores and 100 producers. This is one of the ecological reasons behind a vegetarian diet being able to support higher population densities.

Some of the environmental effects of a meat-based diet are:

- Raising livestock and poultry is a food-consuming, not food-producing, operation. Many more humans can be supported on the same agricultural base if livestock and poultry are eliminated from the food chain and humans feed on the second trophic level rather than the third.

- A shifting agricultural system takes 0.05 calories of energy for one calorie of food output. Similarly, a hunting and gathering society consumes 0.2 calories for each calorie produced; a modern milk grass-fed cow farm produces one calorie for every calorie produced in comparison to a grass-fed beef which uses over two calories and a beef feedlot consumes 10 calories to produce one calorie of food energy.

- Pure vegetarian food choices make less than five percent of the demand on the soil as meat-oriented choices. Livestock production accounts for 85% of all lost topsoil. The U.S. has already lost 75% of its topsoil. The livestock in this country produce 20 times as much excrement as the human population. Over half of this is not recycled.

- Factory farming is resource-intensive and wasteful, which is partly why the Union of Concerned Scientists in its publication *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices* considers reducing our meat consumption as one of the most important things we can do to help the environment. Anywhere from seven to 16 lbs. of grain are needed to create one pound of edible cow flesh.²

- John Robbins, author of the book *Diet for a New America*, reveals some interesting statistics on America's production of animal flesh and fluid: Raising animals for food requires more than one-third of all raw materials and fossil fuels in the U.S. If we all adopted a vegetable-based diet, only two percent of raw materials would be used.

In researching this article, I happened across the PBS website, which discusses the modern production of meat. In the article, the CEO of the American Meat Institute defends the efficiency of the 100,000-head feedlots as reducing the cost of meat for the masses and how the cost of meat and food has been reduced in North America to less than nine percent of household income. This was attributed to centralization, refrigerated transport, and new ways of packaging meat.

However, it was interesting to read data from the Economic Research Service site of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which confirmed that per capita expenditure for food decreased in affluent countries — but simultaneously the cost to produce a calorie of food was greater in wealthier states. The reason given was that affluent diets were heavier in meat, which is a very expensive source of protein.

Though it may be less expensive currently to eat meat compared to twenty years ago, it is also less efficient from an environmental and

² See, for example, "Energy flow and primary productivity," Khan Academy (khanacademy.org); "If the world adopted a plant-based diet we would reduce global agricultural land use from 4 to 1 billion hectares," *Our World in Data* (ourworldindata.org); "Sustainability of meat-based and plant-based diets and the environment," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (78, 3, Sep 2003)

energy perspective due to centralization and increased transportation costs. In addition, the external costs of water pollution, health care, long-distance transport of feed to the herds, manure disposal, and transportation of meat to urban centers are not accounted for.

As described above, when it takes an investment of ten calories to produce one calorie of food energy, it is only a question of time until the illusion of profitability evaporates. Economics cannot dominate nature for any extended period. In addition to shallow economics, the karmic reaction to wholesale animal slaughter provides a debilitating effect on society in both the short and long term.

As such, the example of meat-eating is an important one, and one on which all devotees can agree. But it is just one of many possible illustrations to show that deviation from Vedic ideals works neither materially nor spiritually. This is a lesson we must not forget.

Oil

Oil is transformed organic matter which was originally produced through photosynthesis and stored away in various carbon sinks throughout many millenniums. The downside is that by quickly releasing this energy into the environment to enhance the standard of living, there have been severe pollution problems created. Due to inputting so much energy and byproducts into the environment in such a short period, natural cycles cannot deal with it in the medium and short term.

IV. *Yajña* or Sacrifice to the Supreme

Adapted by Dayānanda dāsa from the Original

By Śrīla Prabhupāda from *Back to Godhead*, Vol 3, Pt 6, May 20, 1956

Discussion of a Classless Society:

In society, there are four classes: management, intelligentsia, mercantile, and labor, which orchestrate for the benefit of all.

People fall into those four divisions naturally, based primarily on their qualities at birth as well as inclination and education. When narrowly viewed, one may observe differences in those professions. But they operate together for the entire social body to function.

In that homogeneous sense, they are classless.

Around the world, many decry the biases of racism, caste, class, and ethnicity. And rightfully so. Humans tend toward greed and self-interest, which generate imbalance and injustice. Many struggle to eradicate such divisions. They think that the divisions themselves cause greed. That is not the case. Instead, misidentification with the body and the body's goals generates greed.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa describes a natural system that has existed since humans were created. Within that system are four classes, divided according to quality and work.¹ In other words, it is a natural merit system, not one of entitlement based on race, birth, religion, etc.

People are divided by four broad types of work, and united by cooperating for the benefit of the entire society.

¹ *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* (BG) 4.13

And that central point of cooperation is *yajña* or sacrifice for the supreme. *Yajña* is another name for the all-pervading Viṣṇu. Thus, the *Bhagavad-gītā* instructs everyone to work for Viṣṇu's satisfaction.² That is proper work or *karma*. Such work leads to *karma-yoga* or preliminary *bhakti*.

When one is on the level of pure *bhakti*, there are no classes.³ On that level, one has developed spiritual vision, meaning that a *bhakta* (pure practitioner) sees all souls equally.⁴ Until one is on that spiritual level, one inevitably has material vision in which one sees differences in the bodies.

In this age (Kali-yuga), it is impossible for an entire society to have such a spiritual vision, which cannot be achieved through education or force. It can only be attained through love or *bhakti*.⁵

Thus, the divisions are nature's requirement just as the law of gravity is needed for the universe to operate properly.

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains:

"[At the time of creation] The four social orders (*āśramas*) along with the four classes (*varṇas*) headed by the *brāhmaṇas* were generated from the mouth, arms, thighs, and legs of the Universal Person (Virāṭ Puruṣa). Members of such natural divisions who do not serve that Universal Person, who is the Supreme Controller and the source of their own social position, propel themselves toward increased suffering."⁶

² BG 3.9

³ BG 5.18 & 18.54, *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya* 19.170, etc.

⁴ BG 18.54

⁵ *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.38

⁶ Note that this is my translation of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (SB) 11.5.2-3. Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation can be found in his article below. Gopiparanadhana Prabhu's and Hridayananda Maharaja's may be found in the BBT publication of SB, eleventh canto. **Verse:** *mukha-bāhūru-pādebhyaḥ puruṣasyāśramaiḥ saha / catvāro jajñire varṇā guṇair viprādayaḥ pṛthak // ya eṣāṁ puruṣaṁ sāksād ātma-prabhavam īśvaram / na bhajanty avajānanti sthānād bhraṣṭāḥ patanty adhaḥ //* **Synonyms:** *mukha* — mouth; *bāhu* — arms; *ūru* — thighs; *pādebhyaḥ* — from the legs; *puruṣasya* — of the Supreme Lord; *āśramaiḥ* — the orders of life; *saha* — along with; *catvāraḥ* — the four; *jajñire* — were produced of; *varṇāḥ* — the classes; *guṇaiḥ* — by dint of qualities; *vipra-ādayaḥ* — the *vipras* (*brāhmaṇas*) and others; *pṛthak* — divided. *yaḥ* — those; *eṣāṁ* — among them; *puruṣaṁ* — the Supreme Person;

The Universal Person (Virāt Puruṣa) is a conception of the supreme within the universe. He is all-pervasive and the source of creation. As mentioned in the verse above, He is the Supreme Controller and the origin of everything in nature and the universe.

Such a conception is required for someone who has an empirical perspective of the universe. The materialist cannot conceive of any cause beyond the physical. Modern empiricists believe the universe was created randomly and living beings evolved randomly without an ultimate cause.

However, that concept of a random universe or random evolution contradicts mathematics (probability) and the laws of physics. It is an inference or assumption not even based on empirical science.

The Universal Person is a genuine perspective, showing that the universe is not caused or administrated randomly. There is an all-pervasive intelligence that controls.

The point is that regardless of whether one's view of the supreme is pantheistic, polytheistic, or monotheistic, it is essential to go beyond the empirical view. That means one must envision an invisible cause of creation and an invisible present, pervasive, cognizant control.

In addition to being universal (*virāt*), he is described as a person (*puruṣa*). That is an essential point developed throughout the *Vedas* and *Purāṇas*. The highest understanding of *puruṣa* is called *param-puruṣa*. Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is *param-puruṣa*.

The verse above discusses how the classes were generated at creation. That description may be understood both figuratively and literally. Some require a figurative view because they must fit any perspective into their own limited sense of reality, which includes a materialistic worldview and concept of poetics.

Others recognize they cannot understand the universe with their senses or with the aid of mechanical extensions like telescopes and computers. Such people accept the view of the *Vedas*. Thus, it becomes

sākṣāt — directly; *ātma-prabhavam* — the source of their own social position; *īśvaram* — the supreme controller; *na* — do not; *bhajanti* — render service; *avajānanti* — disrespect; *sthānāt* — from their position; *bhraṣṭāḥ* — deviated; *patanti* — fall; *adhaḥ* — down (into greater suffering).

easy to see the universe through the eye of the *Vedas*.

On the one hand, those with an empirical view are prone toward greed and destruction of the planet.⁷ On the other hand, those who rely on the *Vedas* follow its teachings on sense control. They are far less likely to destroy nature.⁸ That is proof that the literal view is superior to the figurative one. It does not matter how fantastical the Vedic and Puranic stories might seem to skeptics.

The Virāt Puruṣa generates the *brāhmaṇa* class from his mouth. *Brāhmaṇas* are learned in the *Vedas* and possess intelligence (*buddhi*) in the sense that they can discriminate what elevates humans and what degrades them. They are born with certain qualities and inclinations to function in society, which must be developed in life through training. Although they have such natural qualities at birth, that does not mean someone who is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family is automatically a *brāhmaṇa*. He must demonstrate those qualities, which may or may not be present.

Since the *brāhmaṇas* are the mouth, the other classes must give them nourishment to maintain the health of the entire body. They never keep it for themselves but pass it on for the sake of the body.

Another definition of *mukha*, the word for mouth used in the verse, is head or chief. Thus, the *brāhmaṇas* are the head of the social body. They guide it because they know what is needed for the elevation of society.⁹

As the mouth of society, they guide consumption. The heat energy of

⁷ For evidence of this, see, for example, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, by Elizabeth Kolbert, which predicts disaster due to modern society's unnaturally exploitative relation with nature.

⁸ Granted, Vedic, Vaiṣṇava, or *daiva-varṇāśrama* society is not the only one that acts more harmoniously with nature than modern materialistic society. *The Environmental Solution*, by Michael Wright, argues convincingly that almost all societies that revere a higher order—Virāt Puruṣa, the generator and controller of nature—have a more harmonious relationship with her. They may be pantheistic, polytheistic, monotheistic, or in the case of Buddhism, atheistic (non-empirical atheism). The point is that, as stated here, they attempt to control human greed. Nevertheless, out of those societies, *daiva-varṇāśrama* is the best and most powerful antidote for the current asuric culture. That is one of the themes of *The Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal*.

⁹ Note that this point reflects a major theme from Śrīla Prabhupāda's article, which appears after this one.

digestion is called Vaiśvānara, who represents Kṛṣṇa.¹⁰ *Brāhmaṇas*, who are vegetarians, know how to nourish the individual body and the social body. Currently, the social body is being fueled by various energies, which are causing significant destruction to the planet.

In contrast to modern culture, for thousands of years the *brāhmaṇas* have observed *yajña*, through which the social body is nourished. Without *yajña*, the social body becomes polluted, and it suffers scarcity along with all the ills caused by destruction of nature due to excessive pursuit of energy.

Empiricists who cannot understand the pervasive control of Virāṭ Puruṣa think they can force nature to produce anything. They nourish society in any way they like according to their whimsical perception of the world. Truly their perception is whimsical because that is their view of nature; its origin is random, a whim. Those with a vision of Virāṭ Puruṣa know that nature cannot be forced. There must be *yajña*, and the *brāhmaṇas* orchestrate its performance.

Yajña is a complex concept practiced under the tutelage of wise experts.¹¹ Although one may study *yajña* by reading the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the *Gītā* explains that to learn correctly, one must approach those with keen discernment who see the truth. One reason for such personal instruction is that *yajña* is a practice, not a theoretical doctrine. *Yajña* is not a bodily and mental control system like the individual *yoga* practices. It involves one's work or profession and how that work integrates with society and nature.

The *brāhmaṇas* guide society in the performance of *yajña*. In that way, they influence the social body toward elevation to goodness (*sattva*). As mouth, they speak from the *Vedas*, and they recite *mantras*. Such sounds elevate society. And they counter the infinite stories that come from the media, educators, and scientists, all produced through their observation of *māyā*, the illusion of a world without Virāṭ Puruṣa. Those stories are not only based on illusion, but they also support the lie that humans may consume anything without suffering the reaction.

And those limitless stories will never produce a classless or

¹⁰ BG 15.14

¹¹ BG 4.34

egalitarian society. There must be those who teach society to view all beings as soul. Socialists, humanists, and others oppose classism by educating the public that they are human beings and not part of a particular class. Such education never works because administrators of nations want people to think they are Americans, Russians, and Indians. And others want humans to exploit nature and disregard the lives of billions of entities in favor of human lives.

The superior vision is to see all beings as soul (*ātmā*), not the body.

Thus, the *brāhmaṇa* class is needed to educate the people that they are all souls and not bodies.

To fulfill the need to introduce a classless society or a society that minimizes greed and injustice, ISKCON¹² has been established to create a *brāhmaṇa* class, not just in name but in quality. Those *brāhmaṇas* eat *sattvic* food offered to *param-puruṣa* Viṣṇu in *yajña*. And they propagate the *Vedas* by chanting *mantras*, establishing educational institutions, and producing books and videos.

Such are the functions of the mouth.

Currently, the empiricists, those who deny the Virāṭ Puruṣa, have contributed much to the destruction of society and nature.¹³ They are proud of technologies that exacerbate political tensions. Their so-called wonderful inventions contribute to human comforts while ravaging the earth.

Most of that destruction is caused by disregarding the fact that the Virāṭ Puruṣa controls and owns all the energy the materialists covet so much. They are stealing from the Virāṭ Puruṣa.

The solution to that greed is not to attempt a classless society. It is to reestablish a society with proper guidance from qualified *brāhmaṇas*.

The heart of *brāhmaṇa* culture is *yajña*, which, among other things, prevents stealing from Virāṭ Puruṣa. Just as one's body is born by the

¹² The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

¹³ My statement here means that those who deny any form of God, including an empirically conceived one like the Virāṭ Puruṣa, tend towards greed and destruction of nature. Thus, I use the term, Virāṭ Puruṣa, which allows for some vagueness in the definition of the Supreme. However, I make it clear in other places that Virāṭ Puruṣa is *param-puruṣa* Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

influence of *karma*, or work,¹⁴ *yajña* is also born alongside *karma*.¹⁵ Despite modern misunderstandings about the word, *karma* means everyday work. *Karma* is the work that obtains money or harvest, and *yajña* recommends how one should use that money or yield. Thus, *yajña* encompasses enjoyment, food, worship, charity, and discipline.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* explains that all work should be done for *yajña* so that the results are uplifting and not destructive.¹⁶ That is how *yajña* links with *karma*.

In ancient times, the concept of *yajña* was not only a central part of *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture but also most of the world's cultures.¹⁷ In the *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, *yajña* implies that the higher powers are the true enjoyers, and the ultimate enjoyer is Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.¹⁸

When humans understand their debts to the higher powers and act on that knowledge through *yajña*, their societies achieve harmony with nature.

Individuals and society require necessities to live and to become elevated. Those are received from the Virāṭ Puruṣa or the Supreme who owns and controls everything. They come through the higher powers who have been appointed as administrators of nature.

Currently, the empiricists have found ways to force nature to comply, to produce. Materialists want energy or power. And they want control over that energy. Everywhere there are discussions about how to obtain energy. The desire for energy in modern society is unlimited. That is greed. The *Vedas* have a recipe for controlling that greed. It is *yajña*.

Yajña begins with the recognition that Virāṭ Puruṣa or *param-puruṣa* owns everything. *Yajña* is the means to reciprocate with the higher powers, who supply human necessities. *Yajña* is a reminder that humans should not succumb to greed and that they are indebted to

¹⁴ Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (SB) 1.13.46.

¹⁵ SB 1.4.19; Vyasa, *The Mahābhārata*, Adi Parva, Sambhava Parva 120.

¹⁶ BG 3.9

¹⁷ Animist cultures, including African, European, American, Middle Eastern, and Asian cultures, practiced various forms of sacrifice. Moslems still practice *qurban*, Jews *korban*, and Christians communion, all forms of sacrifice.

¹⁸ BG 5.29 (*bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ-Kṛṣṇa* is the enjoyer of all sacrifice).

param-puruṣa.

In most ancient societies around the world, including Vedic culture, *yajñas* were performed to reciprocate with the higher powers.¹⁹ According to some scholars, *yajña* was generally an integral part of the Bronze and Iron Age cultures of Europe, South Asia, Western Russia, and Central Asia.²⁰

The gods oversee the rains, winds, seasons, sun, and all aspects of humanity, nature, and the universe. The empirical view is that everything may be reduced to chemicals, sub-atomic particles, and energies. That is one perspective; however, it is myopic.

Those who have only that view and cannot see the soul and its connection with the *param-puruṣa* propel themselves toward suffering. Allowing humanity to become disconnected from the universe results in suffering. The *Vedas* do not just teach human morality. They educate humanity in what responsibilities are required to live harmoniously within the Virāt.

Such responsibilities are called *dharma*, which is part of an essential science taught by the *brāhmaṇas*. *Dharma* describes the natural functioning of society in relation to the Virāt, the universe. Without understanding its responsibilities, society operates like a group of animals with no higher vision. The concept of social elevation and liberation from suffering is absent. In its absence, modern, materialistic society constantly passes laws, invents ideologies, manipulates economies, and fights with nature without ever examining the root cause of suffering, which is identification with the body and rejection of *dharma*.

One of the essential items of *dharma* is that the *param-puruṣa* owns and controls everything; therefore, one must accept only one's quota.²¹ Moreover, society must perform *yajña*, which connects humans with nature and the universe.

¹⁹ *Yajña* is a basic theme of the Vedas, and *yasna* (cognate of *yajña*) is also a basic theme of ancient Persian Zoroastrianism. (<http://www.avesta.org/yasna/yasna.htm>)

²⁰ Stefan Zimmer, "Sacrifice in Proto-Indo-European," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 37, 2009, https://www.academia.edu/2945244/2009_Sacrifice_in_Proto_Indo-European.

²¹ *Īśopaniṣad* 1

Although there are various administrators or higher powers in nature, the *param-puruṣa* is Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. He is the ultimate enjoyer of *yajña*.²²

Energies are not meant to be enjoyed separate from Viṣṇu. Humans must recognize the Supreme as the enjoyer, controller, and friend. Simply because He enjoys and controls does not make Him cruel or unjust. He is a friend and well-wisher. We do not suffer under the Supreme as servants of a cruel master. However, when we try to enjoy separately from Him, we suffer due to being disconnected from the source of enjoyment.

Enjoyment through *yajña* is multifaceted. It is the process that elevates an individual or society either in this world or the next. An impetus for performing *yajña* is the desire to have the enjoyment that sustains and uplifts individuals, families, communities, and the environment.

Even if one is uninterested in spiritual advancement or has no faith in a higher power, one should still offer the results of one's work in the spirit of *yajña* to benefit communities, nations, and the environment.²³

Seeking pleasure through *yajña* controls the desire to exploit beyond the necessities of life—beyond one's quota. People work for money that they use for their needs. They also use surplus money for increased comforts, either their own or those of family and community. The obsession with consumption is born and grows from attachment to those comforts.²⁴

Thus, when families and communities operate on the principle of detachment and spend money on the enjoyment that *yajña* offers instead of material comforts, they begin to control their consumption.

According to Vaiṣṇava-Vedānta, in the modern age beginning 5,000 years ago, the celebration of Viṣṇu's *līlās* and chanting of His names (*mantras*) is the greatest *yajña*.²⁵ Such celebration is called *saṅkīrtana-yajña*, which was propagated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (1486-1534).

²² BG 5.29 & 3.9

²³ BG 12.11

²⁴ BG 2.62

²⁵ BG 10.25; SB 1.1.15-19

Saṅkīrtana-yajña may be done through festivals, feasts, parades, art, architecture, education, etc. And it involves sacrificing our possessions for such activities. Money (from 1% to 50% of individual income and GDP)²⁶ should be offered for such *yajña*.

It is through cooperating to perform *yajña* that the classes unite and become one class. The four *varṇas* and *āśramas* become one in the service of *saṅkīrtana-yajña*. That is the purpose of ISKCON, to create a class of *brāhmaṇas* that orchestrate the natural classes of society to produce the symphony of *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.

By uniting society toward that one purpose, greed is minimized.

Without *yajña*, suffering in humanity can only increase. The materialists who try to make political, educational, and social changes will inevitably be unsuccessful. *Yajña* is the only way to achieve classlessness and relief from suffering.

For the proper operation of society, *yajña* cannot be avoided. Viṣṇu or Virāṭ Puruṣa is the root of creation. Society must nourish that source to thrive, like watering the root of a tree causes the leaves and branches to flourish.

Materialists want the kingdom of God without God. Some, who claim to believe in God or a higher power, pray to have their desires satisfied. However, if individuals and societies place their desires ahead of service to the *param-puruṣa*, they miss the goal of life.

And that service to the Supreme Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is most easily achieved by the *varṇas* and *āśramas* working in cooperation for *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.

Original Article by Goswami Abhay Charan Bhaktivedanta

'Yajna' or Sacrifice for the Supreme

(Classless Society)

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Throughout the whole universe, there are four classes of men who

²⁶ Gross National Product (GDP)

are working very hard for a total benefit. The different classes of men are differently designated because the works done by each class of men have different varieties of colour in respect of quality and importance. This quality and importance are judged from a neutral angle of vision, but when they are taken up for the total benefit, the quality and modes of works become one homogeneous resultant and all the different classes of men become members of *one classless society*.

There is a good demand for classless society nowadays everywhere and especially in India where the classes or castes have misused the division of scientific caste system. The scientific caste system specified in the authoritative scriptures like the Bhagwat Geeta etc. is different from the demoniac caste system in India now observed without any purpose. The division of classes or castes is natural, and as every natural thing is considered to have been introduced or created by the Supreme Lord, so the scientific caste system is also designed by the Lord although He does not belong to any such mundane arrangement. The Lord sometimes appears in the species of the fish, the tortoise, the swine, the horse etc. and sometimes in the family of a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya* or *Vaishya* etc. but He has nothing to do with such different classes or species of life. As the Absolute independent Person, He can do whatever He likes without being affected by such qualities and yet He has no responsibility whatsoever for all such actions. The principle of "*King can do no wrong*" is unreservedly applicable for actions of the Supreme Lord.

The classless society so often demanded by the people in general is made possible by the process of '*yajna*' or sacrifice for the Supreme. '*Yajna*' is the name of the Supreme Lord who is all-pervading '*Vishnu*.' In the Bhagwat Geeta it is recommended that everyone should be engaged to work for the satisfaction of *Vishnu*. That is the right type of '*Karma*' or work which leads gradually to the stage of '*Karmayoga*' or the preliminary stage of devotional activities which are performed in the realm of spiritual existence. Spiritual existence of devotional activities and classless society are two identical terms.

The one without the other has no meaning. There is a natural division of qualitative work and the class is created with reference to this context of natural division. How then it is possible to make the natural

division of classes into one classless society!

The answer is very clearly mentioned in the Sreemad Bhagwat 11 canto. It is said there as follows:

Wordings

Mukha, Bahu, Uru, Padevyā, Purushasya, Ashramai, Saha, Chattara, Jajneray, Varna, Gunai, Bipradaya, Prithak, Ja, Esham, Purusham, Sakshat, Atma, Prakhābam, Iswaram, Na, Bhajante, Abajananti, Sthanat, Bhrasta, Patanti, Adha.

Synonyms

Mukha-Mouth, *Bahu*-Arms, *Uru*-Thighs, *Padevyā*-From the legs, *Purushasya*-Of the Supreme Lord, *Ashramai*-The orders of life, *Saha*-Along with, *Chattara*-The four, *Jajneray*-Were produced of, *Varna*-Castes, *Gunai*-By dint of qualities, *Bipradaya*-The Bipras and others, *Prithak*-Divided.

Ja-Those, *Esham*-Amongst them, *Purusham*-The Supreme Person, *Sakshat*-Directly, *Atma*-Ownself, *Prakhābam*-The originator, *Iswaram*-The Lord, *Na*-Do not, *Bhajanti*-Render service, *Abajananti*-Do neglect, *Sthanat*-From the position, *Bhrasta*-Deviated from, *Patanti*-Fall down, *Adha*-Downwards.

Translation

The four social orders of life (Brahmachari, Grihastha, Vanaprasth, Sannyasi) along with the four castes such as the Bipras and others (the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Sudras) were produced from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the legs respectively of the Supreme Lord (Virata Purusha).

Those, amongst them, who do not render service directly to the Supreme Person who is the Lord and originator of such divisions of social life of one's ownself,-do fall down from their specified position.

Purport

The *Virata Purusha* is the gigantic material conception of the Supreme Lord who pervades all over the universe. The Brahmins, who are learned and intelligent class of the highest order by qualities and work but not by birth right, are considered to be produced from the mouth of the *Virata*. The function of the mouth is twofold. The one important function of the mouth is that it is the inlet opening of the whole body for taking in all foodstuff to be dispatched to the region of the stomach. There are many holes in the body but the mouth is the only one hole which is able to swallow down all kinds of foodstuff on behalf of the stomach. Stomach is the central place where all the foodstuff is given for proper assimilation and distribution of strength throughout the body. The whole energy of body is generated from the action of the stomach and therefore the complete energy of the body is meant for feeding the stomach. The power of assimilation which is the prerogative of the stomach only is an emblem of divine energy. The divine energy in the stomach has been designated as '*Vaiswanara*' or an energy of intense heat representing the inconceivable power of Godhead. Incubation of heat generated in the stomach cannot be produced artificially in the physical laboratory of the material scientist. This '*Vaiswanara*' is the vital power in the body. The vitamin therapy of foodstuff is dependant on the '*Vaiswanara*' heat. The vitamins are produced by the heat and it is not that there is vitamin in the foodstuff offered to the stomach. This *Vaiswanara* heat produces different qualities of vitamin at different places. The *Vaiswanara* heat in the stomach of a cow produces different vitaminous energy from the one which is produced in the stomach of a human being. For example, fragments of straw itself has no vitamin value by chemical analysis but when it is put into the stomach of a cow, straw produces enormous volumes of vitamin 'D' and 'A' while the same straw put into the stomach of a human being will cause starvation to death. That is the inconceivable power of the Supreme Lord.

Pure Ghee (Clarified butter) offered on the fire of '*Yajna*' produces more and more Ghee but non-acceptance of such sacrificial rites, under the plea of non-productive economy, drives away completely the production of ample pure ghee, yielding place to the harmful hydrogenated vegetable oils. In the '*Ayurvedic*' scriptures oil is particularly mentioned to be harmful for the stomach but in the

absence of sacrificial energy of the human being he is forced to accept harmful vegetable oil for the stomach in the name of and absence of pure unadulterated clarified butter. That is the importance of the process of 'Yajna' and that is the Law of Nature.

Foolish people think vitamin value of foodstuff in their own way and push into the stomach all sorts of rubbish thing thinking that 'Vaiswanara' heat, representative of the Supreme Lord, will accept any such rubbish thing for assimilation. The case is different. The 'Vaiswanara' representative power of Godhead in the stomach of the human being can accept only leaves, flower, fruits of the vegetable group and pure water and milk for vitaminising the human energy. The mouth being the entrance door to the region of the stomach, it must guard the tongue of every human being to acquire the quality of a Brahmin, who can accept only foodstuff of 'Satwik' quality. Description of Satwik quality foodstuff is mentioned in Bhagwat Geeta and that also of the Brahmin in fact.

The other function of the 'Brahmin' mouth is to articulate Vedic sound conducive to the welfare of the people in general. The world is now fully surcharged with the air of non-spiritual sound in the shape of different varieties of indecent literatures and common country news.

Such newspapers vibrating with mundane sound will never be able to bring in existence of a real classless society. In order to bring in classless society the following things, essential for all practical purposes, must be first of all introduced.

- (1) To set up a batch of real qualitative Brahmin.
- (2) Controlling the tongue and stomach by satwik food or the remnants of foodstuff offered to the Supreme Lord.
- (3) Vibration of sound transcendental overwhelmingly to set right the news and indecent literature.

In the multi-class society of human being everybody has fallen down due to a civil disobedience attitude of the members in the body of the *Virata Purusha* as described above. There is complete noncooperation with the Virata or Total stomach by the members of the body of Virata.

Even in the highest society of mundane culture the representative leaders are inimical without any cooperative spirit. For example Mrs.

Bentwich president of the London County Council while receiving the Soviet leaders expressed this sentiment. She said, "*There are many and significant differences which divide our two peoples and any action which will help to breach the differences is precious to us both and to the whole world.*"

The Soviet leader Mr. N. A. Bulganin replied to this and said, "Not everything is smooth and clear between the Soviet people and Englishmen today. There still are many issues on which we lack due understanding. The relations between our Countries should be expanded in every direction, for the broader they are, the greater will be the understanding between us."

Why this happened? Because everyone of us has missed the central point of cooperation. The central point of cooperation is to do everything in lieu of performing *yajna*. That is the central point of understanding for broadening the classless society in a universal measure. In the absence of such 'yajnic' or sacrificial spirit, there must exist multi-class society of contending interest.

In the midst of the din and bustle of our very busy life, perhaps we have forgotten the word 'Yajna' so essential for our existence. Occasionally we are reminded of this word 'Yajna' sometimes by somebody in the red garment, who may approach us and ask to contribute something for the 'Yajna'! On that occasion, if we are in a good mood, we may be pleased to contribute something and mostly we may deny it because of our past bad experience in respect of such 'Yajna' without any knowledge of it.

But 'Yajna' is a word meant for our practical action of sacrifice born along with our material tabernacle from the womb of our mother. As soon as we take our birth in this material world, we are indeed in need of so many material things for the satisfaction of our body and mind. And these material things are supplied to us by the appointed agents of the Supreme Lord, so that we may live, know ourselves, the Supreme Lord and then go back to home, back to Godhead. Such supplying agents are known as Indra, Chandra, Varuna, Surya, etc. These agents of the Supreme Lord are satisfied when 'Yajna' is duly performed by us in lieu of the goods supplied by the agents of the Lord. If we do not perform 'Yajna' these supplying gods are not only

dissatisfied but also they neglect further supplies proportionately of the needs of our daily life namely, heat, air, light, water etc. and also we are designated as thieves in terms of the language mentioned in the Bhagwat Geeta.

The most important item of our material existence is dependant on the grow more food campaign or in other words on agricultural activities which in turn are dependant on the showers of rain.

Proportionate fall of seasonal rains (not in the control of the political leaders or the material scientists) produce food grains sufficiently. Ample production of food grains nourish the living being both men and animals. Rain is supplied by the agents of Godhead (admitted by the politicians) when they are satisfied by the performance of 'Yajnas' and 'Yajna' is performed by *dint of human labour or energy*. Our whole energy is meant cent percent for the performance of Yajnas or engagement of our full energy for the gratification of the Supreme Lord Vishnu. Vishnu is the ultimate beneficiary of all 'Yajna' as the stomach is the ultimate beneficiary of the total energy of the material body, because He is the Supreme proprietor of the universe and everything within it. He is the Sole protector and friend of all living beings. Peace is obtained when He is propitiated as happiness is felt when the stomach is fulfilled, and therefore it is our sole duty to satisfy Him by the performance of 'Yajna.'

There are different kinds of 'Yajna' recommended in different ages. The one which is recommended in this age of Kali (iron age of quarrel and fight) is the performance of yajna called the 'Samkeertan Yajna' which is a process of chanting and hearing the transcendental Name etc. of Godhead.

For the purpose of this particular type of 'Yajna' we can sacrifice everything which we may have in our possession. Formerly the people were mostly agriculturists and therefore they used to sacrifice, in most cases, food grains and clarified butter. At the present moment, we are not only agriculturists but also industrialists. And for the performance of Samkeertan Yajna, which is solely recommended in this age of Kali, all of us the agriculturists, the industrialists or the labourers all can contribute our mites in the sacrificial altars of the Samkeertan Yajna systematically undertaken by responsible men under authentic

guidance.

The need of the present moment is to organise a body of spiritual association for the benefit of all concerned and see for ourselves that our contribution is rightly and properly being utilised for the benefit of all concerned.

'*Samkeertan*' Yajna is performed in the following manner.

(1) To organise the parties for melodious musical chanting of the powerful mantras of the Vedas. *By such songs sung by the spiritually organised parties*, the transcendental sound of the Vedas penetrate within the cores of heart of the strongest atheist and help him opening the doors of his spiritual consciousness. This is performed in the manner of surgical operation without any material pain. The patient undergoing such operational performances feels within himself a transcendental relief after such operational performances, spiritualised foodstuff is offered to him for recuperation of the spiritual health.

(2) This operation is also performed for the mass enlightenment by the process of press and platform propaganda. For such press and platform propaganda we require everything including the machine, the paper, the ink, the broadcasting equipments, the propagandists, the conveyances and all other contingencies that are meant for their maintenance.

Money is the medium of exchange for all the above articles. So people must contribute at least one to fifty percent of their income for the mass sacrifice either in cash or in kinds and we are able to make proper utilisation of each and every item of the same, by the grace of Shree Krishna the singer of Bhagwat Geeta.

Do not try to avoid participating in the performance of this 'Yajna' and *thereby bring in unhappiness in the individual as well as in the total existence* of the human civilization. There is already crisis in the civilization and we have to counteract it properly.

Every human being has his duty to perform for the total mass happiness of the living being. The performance of 'Yajna' is the only means to attain such end of life. It is something like pouring water in the root of the tree, whereby all the branches, leaves, and twigs of the tree are properly nourished. Or it is something like supplying

foodstuffs in stomach whereby supply of energy is transmitted to all the nerves and senses namely the hands, the legs, the eyes, the ears, the tongue etc. of the body and no separate attempt is required to make for each of the above items.

Yajna (Sacrifice) Dana (Charity) and Tapa (Penances) are not to be given up at any stage of life. Even the most perfect order of human being does not give up these essential duties of humanity. The Enjoyer of the results of all the Yajnas, being the Personality of Godhead Sree Krishna Who is now in this age appeared as Sree Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, He must be satisfied by such sacrifices. He shall be donated all charities, and all sorts of penances must be undertaken for His satisfaction only.

These are Summumbonum teachings of the Bhagwat Geeta. By these practical demonstration, one can exhibit his awakening of Divine consciousness or realisation of the teachings of Bhagwat Geeta. In the absence of such practical manifestation, one is considered to be robbed of his all transcendental knowledge under the influence of the Illusory Energy (Maya) due to the demoniac attitude towards the authority of the Supreme Lord. Such men of demoniac principles are sure to undergo the threefold miseries inflicted by the physical nature.

By such one stroke of physical tricks, all the plans of the Asuras are rendered useless and we have seen this bafflement on many occasions. Let us not commit the mistake over and again repeatedly.

V. A History of *Varṇāśrama*

The following selection is from the *Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta* second *vr̥ṣṭi*, third *dhāra* by Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda, translated by Brian Soul.

The *varṇāśrama* system was established at the beginning of the Tretā-yuga, at a time when a great, scientific culture prevailed. At that time, it was the rule that a man would adopt a particular *varṇa* according to his inherent nature, and he would perform the duties of that *varṇa* when he was competent to do so. With this division of labor, and the determination of mens' natures, the functions of the world were carried out beautifully. One whose father had no *varṇa* was given a *varṇa* solely by reason of his nature. The Vedic histories of Jābāli, Gautama, Janaśrutī, and Citraratha are examples thereof.

One's *varṇa* was determined according to the *varṇa* of one's father and one's inherent nature; both criteria were employed.

In those days genuine reformatory measures were employed, and for that reason Bhārata-varṣa was possessed of the greatest glory and was peopled by men as resplendent as the sun. At that time the whole world respected the inhabitants of Bhārata-varṣa as the most ideal persons in all respects. Egypt, China, and other countries looked to the residents of Bhārata-varṣa for proper guidance.

Varṇāśrama-dharma was thus observed with great purity, but gradually, from the time of Jamadagni and his son Paraśurāma, who had the nature of *kṣatriyas*, but counted themselves as *brāhmaṇas*, malice and discord were generated between *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*. We find therefore, that much was made of one's birth in a particular family in determining one's *varṇa*, and it so happened that this

conception, which is not based upon one's *svabhāva*, was introduced into Manu's lawbook and elsewhere.

The *kṣatriyas*, being unable to elevate themselves to the higher *varṇa*, manufactured the Buddhist dharma with a view to destroying the *brāhmaṇas*. The *brāhmaṇas*, for their part, reacted by laying great stress on their lineage. On one hand, the *brāhmaṇas* fell from their high pedestal, and on the other, the *kṣatriyas* lost their patriotism, and the noble residents of Bhārata thereby brought about their own destruction.

The *brāhmaṇas*, bereft of their brahminical qualities, composed *dharma-sāstras* devoted to their own interests, and thereby neglected the other *varṇas*. The *kṣatriyas*, bereft of *kṣatriya* courage, endurance and so forth, were defeated in battle and lost their kingdoms, and began to propagate the insignificant Buddhist creed. The *vaiśyas*, bereft of *vaiśya svabhāva*, propounded the Jain *dharma*, and thus Bhārata's extensive trade diminished. The *sūdras*, who were previously good servants, took to dacoity (robber gangs) and other types of criminality, and gradually people forgot the lessons of Vedic culture.

When such was the condition, the *mleccha* kings (those who did not follow Vedic principles) invaded and brought India under their dominion. Little by little the vices of Kali-yuga began to prevail. Alas! The people of Bhārata-varṣa, who were once examples and preceptors to the whole human race, were reduced to the most contemptible state. This was not due to the divisions of caste, but to the establishment of casteism contrary to Vedic principles.

Their only hope now is that the Supreme Lord, Who is the sole propounder of scriptural injunctions and the guide of all living beings, and Who alone looks for the well-being of everyone, if He so desires, may send some empowered personality to re-establish the pristine glory of the *varṇāśrama* system.

VI. Varṇāśrama College for All

Rūpa-Vilāsa dāsa

*sādhana-kāle ye paryanta hṛdaya kāma āche
se paryanta varṇāśramādi dharmera apekṣā thāke*

TRANSLATION

At the time of practicing *sādhana-bhakti*, so long as there is material desire within the heart, one should remain within the confines of the *varṇāśrama* system.

(Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta first *vṛṣṭi*, sixth *dhāra* by Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda)

With this verse Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura warns against accepting the position of a Vaiṣṇava, or a fully liberated person without the requisite qualifications. As Śrīla Prabhupāda will later indicate, becoming a Vaiṣṇava is not so easy. We casually claim to be Vaiṣṇavas, but Śrīla Prabhupāda (later in this article) calls such claims “impudent.” A real Vaiṣṇava is *niṣkiñcana*, free from material desire, as pointed out by the above verse that “so long as there is material desire within the heart” we cannot become impudent enough to think that we are like Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *niṣkiñcana*.¹ In fact, beyond its being impudent, the real mission is preaching, following the order of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Therefore, what should a devotee who is not fully *niṣkiñcana* do? This is explained by Rāmānānda Rāya, citing Lord Brahmā’s advice (SB 10.14.3) in his conversation with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (CC

¹ One who has nothing to do with this material world.

Madhya-līlā 8.7):

*jñāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva jīvanti san-mukharitām
bhavadīya-vārtām*

*sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir ye prāyaśo 'jita jito 'py
asi tais tri-lokyām*

SYNONYMS

jñāne—in gaining knowledge; *prayāsam*—unnecessary endeavor; *udapāsyā*—setting far aside; *namantaḥ*—completely surrendering; *eva*—certainly; *jīvanti*—live; *sat-mukharitām*—declared by great realized devotees; *bhavadīya-vārtām*—discussions about You, the Supreme Personality of Godhead; ***sthāne sthitāḥ***—**situated in their own positions**; *śruti-gatām*—received aurally; *tanu-vāk-manobhiḥ*—by the body, words and mind; *ye*—those who; *prāyaśaḥ*—almost always; *ajita*—O my unconquerable Lord (beyond perception and unlimitedly independent); *jitaḥ*—conquered; *api*—indeed; *asi*—You are; *taiḥ*—by such pure devotees; *tri-lokyām*—within the three worlds.

TRANSLATION

Rāmānanda Rāya continued, “Lord Brahmā said, ‘My dear Lord, those devotees who have thrown away the impersonal conception of the Absolute Truth and have therefore abandoned discussing empiric philosophical truths should hear from self-realized devotees about Your holy name, form, pastimes and qualities. They should completely follow the principles of devotional service and remain free from illicit sex, gambling, intoxication and animal slaughter. Surrendering themselves fully with body, words and mind, they can live in any *āśrama* or social status. Indeed, You are conquered by such persons, although You are always unconquerable.’”

The Sanskrit phrase *sthāne sthitāḥ*—situated in their own positions—from the word for word transliteration above has been highlighted to indicate the theme of Lord Brahmā and Śrīla Prabhupāda: that devotees are meant to assume their natural positions in *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Thus, all of the *sādhakas* who are not on the *niṣkiñcana* platform

like Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and the great devotees who followed Him should take the position in life that they are qualified to perform and do the work of *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣātrīyas*, *vaiśyas*, or *sūdras*, according to their inclinations and qualifications in one of those four categories. This does not mean to say that some more elevated rare souls might not be *niṣkiñcanas* for whom *varṇāśrama-dharma* might appear to be superfluous or external to their interest. However, as preachers setting an example for others, they would remain within the confines of *varṇāśrama-dharma* to show their respect to other great *niṣkiñcanas* as shown by the example of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. They would, as Śrīla Prabhupāda describes above by including some extra purporting in the translation to make things crystal clear to his disciples: “throw away the impersonal conception,” “hear from self-realized devotees,” remain “free from illicit sex, gambling, intoxication, and animal slaughter,” “surrender themselves fully with body, words and mind,” and “live in any *aśrama* or social status,” and thus “conquer” Kṛṣṇa thereby. In summary: follow the path of *bhakti-mārga*.

In the *varṇāśrama-dharma* conversations with Śrīla Prabhupāda, these significant statements were made:

Satsvarūpa: Lord Caitanya, when Rāmānanda Rāya brought this up². He said it was not possible in this age to introduce this.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Not... He did not say possible³. *Ihā bāhya*.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu was interested only on the spiritual platform. He had no idea of material side. He rejected material side.

Satsvarūpa: But don't we do that also?

Prabhupāda: No. Our position is different. We are trying to implement Kṛṣṇa consciousness in everything. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally took *sannyāsa*. He rejected completely material. *Niṣkiñcana*. **But we are not going to be *niṣkiñcana***⁴. We are trying to cement the troubled position of the [society]. That

² *Varṇāśrama-dharma*

³ Not possible

⁴ One who has nothing to do with this material world.

is also in the prescription of *Bhagavad-gītā*. We are not rejecting the whole society. Caitanya Mahāprabhu rejected everything, *ihā bāhya*. **Rejected meaning**, “I do not take much interest in this.” *Bāhya*. “It is external.” He was simply interested in the internal, the spiritual. But our duty is that we shall arrange the external affairs also so nicely that one day they will come to the spiritual platform very easily: paving the way. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu, personality like that, they have nothing to do with this material world. But we are preaching. We are preaching. Therefore, we must pave the situation in such a way that gradually they will be promoted to the spiritual plane, which is not required⁵.

Satsvarūpa: *Varṇāśrama* is not required⁶?

Prabhupāda: Not required. Caitanya Mahāprabhu denied, “I am not *brāhmaṇa*, I am not *kṣatriya*, I am not this, I am not this.” He rejected. But in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the *cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam*. [Bg. 4.13]: “According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me...”] So we are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It must be done.⁷

In commenting about such *niṣkiñcana* Vaiṣṇavas and claims of perfection, Śrīla Prabhupāda said:

“Actually, a Vaiṣṇava is above this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. But we don’t claim that we have become perfect Vaiṣṇava. We are not so impudent. (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.8.41 Lecture.)

The word “we” above can be taken several ways. It can be understood as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s humility that he doesn’t claim to be a perfect Vaiṣṇava, or it may be a warning to us that it would be impudent to claim to be Vaiṣṇavas, or both.

When Satsvarūpa Mahārāja asks in the discussions above whether

⁵ Where it is not required.

⁶ *Varṇāśrama* is not required for the *niṣkiñcana* devotee, but for others *varṇāśrama-dharma* is the method by which the way can be paved to gradually become a Vaiṣṇava or *niṣkiñcana*.

⁷ *Varṇāśrama-dharma* training must be established.

practitioners don't also reject the "material side" like Lord Caitanya, Śrīla Prabhupāda responds by saying, "No, our position is different...we are not going to be *niṣkiñcana*." He explains that "...we must pave the situation in such a way that gradually they will be promoted to the spiritual plane" by establishing *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

Hari-śauri: But in Caitanya Mahāprabhu's practical preaching He only induced them to chant.

Prabhupāda: That is not possible for ordinary man.

Hari-śauri: What, to simply induce people to chant?

Prabhupāda: Hm.

Satsvarūpa: But if they won't chant, then neither will they train up in the *varṇāśrama*. That's the easiest.

Prabhupāda: The chanting will be there, but you cannot expect that people will chant like Caitanya Mahāprabhu. They cannot even chant 16 rounds. (And) these rascals are going to be Caitanya Mahāprabhu?

Hari-śauri: Well, at least my own understanding was that the chanting was introduced in the age of Kali because *varṇāśrama* is not possible.

Prabhupāda: Because it will cleanse the mind. Chanting will not stop.

Hari-śauri: So therefore the chanting was introduced to replace all of the systems of *varṇāśrama* and like that.

Prabhupāda: Yes, it⁸ can replace, but who is going to replace it?⁹ The... People are not so advanced. If you imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura to chant, it is not possible.

Satsvarūpa: We tell them go on with your job but chant also.

Prabhupāda: Yes. *Thākaha āpanāra kāje*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. *Āpanāra kāja ki*. Caitanya Mahāprabhu recommended, *sthāne sthitaḥ*. And if they do not remain in the *sthāna*, then the *sahajiyā's* chanting will come. Just like the *sahajiyās* also have got the beads

⁸ Chanting

⁹ The first hint that most people, many devotees even, cannot chant like Lord Caitanya or other great *niṣkiñcana* devotees.

and... but they have got three dozen women. This kind of chanting will go on. Just like our (name withheld). He was not fit for *sannyāsa* but he was given *sannyāsa*. And five women he was attached, and he disclosed. Therefore *varṇāśrama-dharma* is required. Simply show-bottle will not do. So the *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be introduced all over the world and...

Hari-śauri: But in our community, if the..., being as we're training up as Vaiṣṇavas...

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Hari-śauri: ...then how will we be able to make divisions in our society?

Prabhupāda: Vaiṣṇava is not so easy. The *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be established to **become** a Vaiṣṇava. It is not so easy to become Vaiṣṇava.

Hari-śauri: No, it's not a cheap thing.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Therefore this should be made. Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava, is not so easy. **If Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava is so easy, why so many fall down, fall down? It is not easy. The *sannyāsa* is for the highest qualified *brāhmaṇa*. And simply by dressing like a Vaiṣṇava, that is... fall down.**

Śrīla Prabhupada is brutally honest here about how qualified a *sannyāsī* should be, and that without such qualification and training, it would lead to fall down. He also makes it clear that *varṇāśrama-dharma* needs to be established to enable *sādhakas* to become Vaiṣṇavas, and that becoming a Vaiṣṇava is not easy.

Satsvarūpa: In our ISKCON, one becomes a *brāhmaṇa* after a year. It's not very hard. Everyone becomes a *brāhmaṇa*.

Prabhupāda: That is due to chanting. That lifts very easily.

Hari-śauri: Where will we introduce the *varṇāśrama* system, then?

Prabhupāda: In our society, amongst our members.

Hari-śauri: But then if everybody's being raised to the brahminical platform...

Prabhupāda: Not everybody. Why you are misunderstanding? *Varṇāśrama*, not everybody *brāhmaṇa*.

Hari-śauri: No, but in our society practically everyone is being raised to that platform. So then one might ask what is...

Prabhupāda: That is... Everybody is being raised, but they're falling down...

Prabhupāda: ... **Whatever we have, that is all right. But we see by experience that they're falling down.** There must be systematic. **Why falling down? Because he was not fit for the position, therefore he has fallen.** Better remain in his position and become perfect. Why artificially bring them? There is no need.

Again, Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks realistically about his devotees' qualifications when it comes to chanting, indicating the necessity that everyone needs to be situated in *varṇāśrama-dharma* training according to their qualities and activities and thus perfect their lives. Otherwise fall down will repeatedly occur due to a lack of fitness manifesting due to artificial acceptance of exalted positions. Serious training is required.

Prabhupāda: Kṛṣṇa says. Bring that *Bhagavad-gītā*. *Sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ?*

Hari-śauri: *sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ samsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ | svakarma-nirataḥ siddhiṁ yathā vindati tac chrṇu ||* "By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect. Now please hear from Me how this can be done." (BG 18.45)

Prabhupāda: Yes. He is śūdra, clerk. He can... As a śūdra, he can get the perfection. Why he should artificially become a brāhmaṇa and sannyaśī and fall down? This has to be checked...Everywhere, wherever, Māyāpura or anywhere. Question is that here it is clearly said, *sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ*. Brāhmaṇa has his duty, kṣatriya has his duty, vaiśya has his duty, śūdra has his duty. And if he performs his duty nicely, then he also becomes perfect. So why artificially he should be called a brāhmaṇa? Let them do, according to śāstra, the work of śūdra, or vaiśya. He'll get the perfect¹⁰. Perfection is not checked. But why artificially he should be made a brāhmaṇa or he should be made a sannyaśī and fall

¹⁰ Achieve perfection.

down and become a ludicrous? That is the point. Better let him live in his position and become perfect. That's good. That looks very nice. And that is possible. That is possible. *Varṇāśramācāravatā puruṣeṇa paraḥ pumān viṣṇur ārādhyate* [Cc. Madhya 8.58]. Viṣṇu, Lord Viṣṇu, can be worshiped if you perfectly follow the rules and regulation of four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*. Here it is also said, *sve sve karmaṇi*. You work as a perfect *brāhmaṇa* or a perfect *kṣatriya*, perfect *sūdra*; you get perfection. The perfection is available in your natural life. **Why should artificially you become unnatural and fall down and become ludicrous? Perfection is not checked.**

To promote someone to *brāhmaṇa* and especially a *sannyāsī* without the required qualifications and training is a mistake. Prabhupāda talks about the artificiality of it and states that it will mean “fall[ing] down and becom[ing] ludicrous” twice here. He repeatedly, on the strength of the *sthāne sthitāḥ* verse cited by Rāmānānda Rāya, states that is better to take a natural position as a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *sūdra* according to a person's quality and activity and achieve perfection in that way. Perfection in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not checked by this process. The logical conclusion is that we must form *varṇāśrama* institutes where everyone is trained according to their natural tendencies, thus avoiding the artifice of imitating *niṣkiñcana* souls, and steadily progressing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We must adopt this training and practice in our communities ourselves and train others as well. This was clearly Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire. Training in the legitimate *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* is required for everyone, both the *sādhakas* and the newcomers, if pleasing Śrīla Prabhupāda is the goal.

VII. Higher Enjoyment—a Pillar of *Daiva-varṇāśrama*

Dayānanda dāsa

Currently, there are hundreds of millions of people in *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture.¹

The use of such large numbers is practical when comparing entire cultures, as I do in this article. See Śrīla Prabhupāda’s discussion with Professor Kotovsky referred to in the footnote.

Prabhupāda did not like the word Hindu. Instead, he used *varṇāśrama-dharma*.² The *ācāryas* added the word *daiva* to become *daiva-varṇāśrama*.³

Daiva indicates Vaiṣṇava society, centered on Viṣṇu, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *deva-deva*. In contrast, simple *varṇāśrama* is influenced by the Māyāvāda interpretation of Vedānta and it is asuric (against Viṣṇu).⁴ *Daiva* also indicates those who are on the side of the

¹ In his conversation with Professor Kotovsky Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Vaiṣṇava. This is called Vaiṣṇava cult. The Vaiṣṇavas, as far as you know—you have been in India—there are many millions of Vaiṣṇavas.” Thus, when presenting how well *daiva-varṇāśrama* interacts with nature, it is perfectly acceptable to point out that for thousands of years, Vaiṣṇava society has not destroyed the environment. Even today, *daiva-varṇāśrama*’s impact on nature is very low despite the negative influence of modern materialism.

² “This is Vedic system, *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Now it is foolishly going as Hindu dharma. What is the Hindu dharma? ‘Hindu’ is not found even in the scriptures.” Lecture on *Bhāgavad-gītā* (BG) 9.4, Apr 23, 1976.

³ Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gave the seed ideas for Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta to establish the system of *daiva-varṇāśrama*. Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (CC) Adi 12.73. Also, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (SB) 5.1.24 purport: “Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, however, wanted to reestablish *daiva-varṇāśrama*.”

⁴ CC 12.73 and CC 3.6 purports

devas (demigods), described in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, chapter 16, alongside the description of the *asuras* (non-godly).

Thus, it is relevant to have an idea of the size of the Vaiṣṇava (*daiva-varṇāśrama*) community. The highest estimate is about 800 million.⁵ It is safe to say that there are hundreds of millions in *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture today.

Now, one may argue that many of those Vaiṣṇavas are not pure, so they should not be counted.⁶

There are a few responses to that point. First, Prabhupāda wanted to create a society of *brāhmaṇas* for the purpose of guiding the rest of society, understanding well that society is becoming increasingly impure as time progresses.⁷

When speaking about *daiva-varṇāśrama*, Prabhupāda explained: “But why artificially he should be made a *brāhmaṇa* or he should be made a *sannyāsī* and fall down and become a ludicrous? That is the point. Better let him live in his position and become perfect.”⁸

That means there are many *śūdra* Vaishnavas who are not purely on the level of *brāhmaṇas* and *sannyasis*. As Sivarama Swami says, “*Varṇāśrama* for devotees is about helping them come to the mode of goodness.”⁹ The entire society in this age (Kali-yuga) will never be in the mode of goodness. However, the purpose of *daiva-varṇāśrama* is for the *brāhmaṇas* to have a *sattvic* influence on the rest of society.

Here is another argument in favor of using hundreds of millions when giving the size of *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture:

Academics and the educated public commonly estimate the size of

⁵ Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, *The World's Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography*, 1st edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 400. There are several scholarly estimates ranging from the size of America's population (330 million) to 800 million.

⁶ Such Vaiṣṇavas have some faith (*śraddhā*) in Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, or Rāma. Thus, they should be embraced into the Vaiṣṇava community at large. It is the duty of pure devotees to guide them not demonize them for being impure.

⁷ See Prabhupāda's article on *Yajna and Varṇāśrama* from the May 20, 1956, edition of *Back to Godhead* reproduced in this journal.

⁸ Room conversation in Mayapur, Feb 14, 1977.

⁹ From “How This Book Came To Be,” *Varṇāśrama Compendium*, Sivarama Swami

religious communities: 2.2 billion Christians, 1.6 billion Muslims, 800 million Vaishnavas, 500 million Buddhists, etc.¹⁰

If those outside the community are using such numbers, we should be able to do so as well.

There should be no dispute about hundreds of millions currently in *daiva-varṇāśrama*. Instead, the dispute is with caste *brāhmaṇas* (*dvija-bandhus*) who try to enforce *asura-varṇāśrama*. The common people worship Kṛṣṇa and Rāma as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.¹¹

Thus, for the purpose of this article and others I have written, those in *daiva-varṇāśrama* or Vaiṣṇava culture are people who have some devotion to Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, or Nārāyaṇa. They have home worship, visit temples, listen to discourses, appreciate *kirtana/bhajana*, participate in feasts and festivals, attend dances or dramas, etc. They may do those things minimally, or, in many cases, as the complete focus of their lives.

They are people who live within the culture and who are influenced by it, meaning influenced by *sattva*, regardless of how small that influence might be. Thus, I count those who are guided in some measure, large or small, by the greater Vaiṣṇava culture and who do not oppose it.

When comparing those hundreds of millions following *daiva-varṇāśrama* with those in modern global culture, one prominent difference may be emphasized. That is the treatment of nature.¹²

Until recent decades, those in *daiva-varṇāśrama* have been fortunate to reject the strong materialistic influences of the West. Now, due to globalization, India, home to most Vaiṣṇavas, has adopted materialistic goals of overconsumption and destruction of nature.

Nevertheless, the average American consumes and wastes 7 to 15 times more than the average Indian.¹³ About 65% of Indians still live in

¹⁰ "The Global Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center website, Dec 18, 2012.

¹¹ Śrīla Prabhupāda—Talk About *Varṇāśrama*, SB 2.1.1-5, June 28, 1977.

¹² See *The Environmental Solution* by Michael Wright for a thorough analysis of cultures and the way they treat nature.

¹³ Global Footprint Network website (footprintnetwork.org) includes maps and data collected to calculate biocapacity and ecological footprint of individuals and countries.

rural areas.¹⁴ And until the early 2000s, satellite TV and cell phones were not available to rural Indians.¹⁵

Thus, the landscape is changing for Vaiṣṇavas, and it is difficult for them to resist the external culture.

Some may argue that Indians have simply not had the advantage of modern materialism. Now that they do, they realize it is better. Indeed, many Indians are concerned with the fact that Western materialism has become prominent in most of their cities. However, most Indians, especially those in rural areas, are still devoted to traditional culture. They try to maintain *daiva-varṇāśrama* as best they can.¹⁶

Why then does India have a bad reputation for its treatment of the environment? That is because over the last several decades, individually, the level of consumption and waste has increased slightly, but collectively, due to the 1.4 billion population, that increase magnifies significantly.¹⁷

When comparing the U.S. with India, each person in the U.S. has 9.25 times greater ability to consume and waste than a person in India. That is due to the difference in population and the ability of the country to produce and absorb waste.¹⁸

Stated differently, compared to India, the U.S. has more than twice the ability (2.2) to supply its population and absorb its waste. And India has more than four times (4.2) the U.S. population.¹⁹

¹⁴ “India Rural Population 1960-2023,” recorded by [macrotrends.org](https://www.macrotrends.org) website.

¹⁵ Wikipedia: “Telecommunications in India” and “Direct-to-home television in India.”

¹⁶ There are many articles and media discussions, like “Influence of Westernization of Indian Culture” by Mrinmoy Biswas, May 28, 2023, *Times of India*. I lived in India more than five years spanning four decades, and I see most people try to resist materialism as much as they can, but it presents a temptation. Some have determined that many highly educated Indians spend tremendous energy trying to emigrate to the materialistic West, but they often become homesick, so they renew their love for the original culture. That is one reason they establish temples and revive religious practice. They realize Western materialism was not what they wanted after all.

¹⁷ Global Footprint Network website

¹⁸ Global Footprint Network website

¹⁹ Global Footprint Network website. Again, compared to the U.S., India has 4.2 times the population that must be satisfied with .45 of the resources and ability to absorb waste. Therefore, the average American is automatically, by birth, 9.25 times richer and more capable of waste than the average Indian. Plus, the U.S. has other wealth advantages over

Also, since Indian entry into the global market in the early 1990s, their manufacturing efforts, which are needed to compete have caused immense pollution.²⁰

It is difficult to compare two cultures when the external factor of American wealth is such a prominent feature. However, one must look beyond that wealth to analyze greed and satisfaction. That is what we are trying to do in this article.

Thus, I argue that it is not effective enough to put forward an idealized “Vedic” culture that some in ISKCON²¹ currently offer. Instead, devotees should present a living, struggling *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture—hundreds of millions—that offers a good example of a society operating in harmony with nature. Having said that, an ordinary person may not understand the significance of today’s *daiva-varṇāśrama* on its surface. Thus, as stated in the *Gītā* (4.34), one must approach the *tattva-darśīs*, those who have the vision. Many in ISKCON have that vision. They can explain the vast culture and its current significance. And they can demonstrate it.

To sum up what I have presented thus far, current *daiva-varṇāśrama* society is a far better example of harmony with nature than the American society that the world tries to emulate.

And why *daiva-varṇāśrama* society treats nature better than modern culture depends on one thing more than anything else. The people—

India, one of which is that the world economy is indexed on the dollar. All of those wealth advantages help Americans disguise the level of their overconsumption, which is related to their greed and lack of satisfaction.

²⁰ “Environmental issues in India,” Wikipedia. There are many contributing factors to Indian pollution. The British railway system began serious deforestation. After independence in 1948, the Congress government pursued Soviet-style industrialization. However, India’s isolationist policies prevented excessive consumption. When the Congress government passed laws in 1989-1991 enabling India to enter the global market, the current overconsumption and pollution began. Although most Indians remain attached to their traditional culture, the influences of TV, movies, automobiles, cell phones, etc. have taken their toll. Having said all that, *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture still hangs on. It still offers an example of less consumption, less waste, less materialism, and greater faith in the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, and Rāma. When compared with American culture, India’s *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture, even in its weakened state, is a far better example of *daiva* versus *asura* behavior.

²¹ ISKCON = the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Vaiṣṇavas—know how to enjoy life without unduly impacting the environment.

In 1970 in Los Angeles, Śrīla Prabhupāda called me into his room to gently chide me for not better overseeing the devotee laborers. They had left some half-eaten plates of *prasādam* on the windowsill of their work area. He began by explaining how Vaiṣṇavas respect *prasādam* and how such respect fits into the most natural culture on earth. He then proceeded to describe that culture.

In the nearly one-hour conversation, he told me story after story that etched two things in my brain. First, Vaiṣṇava culture is harmonious with nature. It is the natural way for humans to live. Second, Prabhupāda loves the *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture and wants to establish it around the world.

He did not explicitly say the word *varṇāśrama*. Instead, he used terms like *brāhmaṇas*, villagers, *sadhus*, and disciples. However, *varṇāśrama* society was implicit in most of the stories.

He mentioned one thing that struck me at the time and has remained with me, always within easy reach of my mind. He said the villagers go to the *brāhmaṇa's* house for entertainment.²²

For example, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes, “Even one hundred years ago in India, all dramatic performances were centered around the superhuman activities of the Supreme Lord. The common people would be verily entertained by the performances of dramas, and *yātrā* parties played wonderfully on the superhuman activities of the Lord, and thus even the illiterate agriculturist would be a participant in the knowledge of Vedic literature, despite a considerable lack of academic qualifications. Therefore, expert players in drama, dancers, singers, speakers, etc., are required for the spiritual enlightenment of the common man.”²³

Devotees of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa often think it is important to teach others via lectures, discourses, and classes. However, the common people tend to retain knowledge when it is embedded within an

²² I realize now that Śrīla Prabhupāda was teaching me about *daiva-varṇāśrama* through entertaining me with stories.

²³ SB 1.11.20

entertainment medium.

Thus, most people should be taught with that in mind. One might argue that through modern education most people are literate. However, despite such education, they are generally not interested in topics that will elevate them to *sattva*, nor are they keen to learn about transcendental knowledge.

And their philosophical musings under the influence of intoxication do not translate into *dharmic* principles.

Prabhupāda explained in a lecture on *rasa-varjām raso 'py asya*: “So spiritual life, or transcendental life, does not mean that we are free from activity. Simply artificially if we sit down, ‘Oh, no more I shall do anything material. I shall simply meditate.’

“Oh? What meditation you will do? Your meditation will be in a moment broken, just like even Viśvāmītra Muni, he could not continue his meditation. We have to always, cent percent, be engaged in spiritual activities. That should be the program of our life. Rather, in spiritual life you will hardly find any time to get out of it, you have got so much engagement. *Rasa-varjām*. And that engagement can only be possible when you find some transcendental pleasure in it.”²⁴

The following article is adapted from a pamphlet I wrote on enjoyment. It is to be used to convince non-Vaiṣṇavas of the necessity of *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture.

Three types of enjoyment

The *Bhagavad-gītā* (the *Gītā*) describes three levels of worldly

²⁴ BG 2.58-59 lecture; Also, in 2019, I was discussing the idea of transcendental enjoyment with Bhakti Caru Swami. He related a time when Prabhupāda asked him how he would maintain his vow of *sannyāsa*. When Bhakti Caru Maharaja responded that he would be very strict, Prabhupāda cautioned him, saying that Viśvāmītra was strict, and Menaka tempted him. Therefore, the goal is to acquire a higher taste. One must enjoy Kṛṣṇa consciousness more than sense gratification to become fixed. Of course, *ruci* (pleasure/taste) is described as more advanced than *niṣṭha* (fixed), but the beginnings of *ruci* and *laulyam* (longing) contribute to *niṣṭha*. Ref: Lecture & Initiation, Oct 20, 1968, Seattle; SB 1.2.18 lecture, Sep 26, 1974; BG 2.58-59 lecture Apr 15, 1966; Morning Walk Apr 26, 1976

enjoyment—degrading (*tamasic*), selfish (*rajasic*),²⁵ and elevating (*sattvic*).²⁶ There are effectively infinite combinations of these three.

Enjoyment of drugs is an example of degrading, *tamasic* enjoyment.

Selfish, *rajasic* enjoyment is achieved by exploiting others and nature. It is characterized by attachment to immediate gratification, which results in long-term suffering.

The third, or highest level of worldly enjoyment, *sattvic*, elevates oneself and others. It is selfless and requires discipline in the beginning, but it brings about long-term satisfaction.

The *Gītā* also describes a form of enjoyment that is more refined and even less exploitative than these three.²⁷ That is pleasure or joy that transcends or goes beyond this world. It is called enjoyment in pure goodness or *śuddha-sattvic* enjoyment.

Modern culture has an abundance of the first two, which results in self-destruction and degradation of society and the environment. The highest forms are not absent, but their influence is almost non-existent.

Daiva-varṇāśrama seeks to elevate society to *sattva* and *śuddha-sattva*.

***Daiva-varṇāśrama* Society**

For thousands of years, enjoyment that does not harm others or the environment has sustained *daiva-varṇāśrama* or Vaiṣṇava society.

Such pleasure elevates society.

The terms *daiva* and *Vaiṣṇava* mean centered on Viṣṇu, who is the Supreme. And the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the best place to find the basic values of that culture.

Those values include identifying oneself and all other beings as soul, not the body, seeking unification with the Supreme, and being detached from a world of suffering.

²⁵ In this article, I use degrees of selfishness as the best one-word description of *tamasic*, *rajasic*, and *sattvic* behavior. See, for example, SB 1.2.8, SB 12.3.29, and SB 10.14.51

²⁶ BG 18.37-39

²⁷ BG 2.59, 5.21, 6.21, 6.27, 9.2

Vaiṣṇava Worldly Enjoyment

Much of the *Gītā* describes analyses of nature, work, time, the individual, and the supreme.²⁸ It also presents perspectives on how humans can maintain a balanced life in their environment.

One important concept introduced early in the text is that enjoyment is based on economies.²⁹ In other words, people earn money and, aside from purchasing necessities, use it to enjoy life. Thus, societies evolve economies that facilitate the two: necessities and enjoyment.³⁰

As mentioned above, there are three types of enjoyment. When economies are focused on just the selfish and degrading forms, society suffers.

Those in the *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture, however, enjoy redirecting their money and harvest away from selfish consumption to higher purposes, like charity, good deeds, and supporting renunciants, who are examples of detachment from consumption.³¹

Vaiṣṇavas derive satisfaction working for success, not by acquiring more money and status, but through individual and social elevation.

They enjoy focusing inward towards the soul rather than outward towards the world of greed and dissipation.

In the traditional culture, young Vaiṣṇavas are taught that detachment from possessions is a positive and pleasurable state. And throughout their lives, they maintain the idea that such detachment is indeed enjoyable.³²

Transcendental Enjoyment

For a culture to be properly sustained and uplifted, transcendental

²⁸ *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*, Introduction

²⁹ BG 3.10-16

³⁰ Note that much of the discussion here communicates the concept of *dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* in modern language. See, SB 7.5

³¹ This concept is found in BG, chapters 3 and 4 as well as 12.

³² SB 7.12.1. This paragraph refers to the *āśrama* part of *varṇāśrama*. In *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, the people are far more tolerant of nature than in modern materialistic society, which seeks to overcome and exploit nature. See BG 2.14-15

enjoyment must predominate.³³

Transcendental enjoyment is based on the life force—the soul, the essence—not the external world that fosters greed, division, prejudice, and hatred. Such enjoyment seeks to leave behind any tinge of selfishness.

The highest forms of entertainment and enjoyment in *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture are associated with *līlās* and divine names (*nāmas*), which find their expression in art, architecture, home and temple worship, festivals, music, drama, dance, and more.

Līlā

In Sanskrit, *līlā* means play, sport, pastime, or drama.³⁴ Traditionally, it refers to the dramas that are enacted by an incarnation of the Supreme.

Vaiṣṇavas embrace the concept that the creator appears within His creation to assist in its maintenance. When the demigods or humans have serious trouble, the Supreme may appear at His will.³⁵

However, His appearance and activities are not just meant to aid humanity during difficulty but are also a chance for Him to enjoy Himself through enacting a role within His own drama.

Thus, His *līlās* are characterized by victory and joy. For example, Kṛṣṇa was victorious over many opponents. But beyond His supreme displays of heroism, He demonstrated transcendental joy through friendly, filial, and conjugal love.

Vaiṣṇavas enjoy grand celebrations honoring His *līlās* and those of Viṣṇu. Such festivities are joyful reminders that life is not meant for selfish pursuits.

Instead of focusing on consumption of material goods, Vaiṣṇavas

³³ Not everyone in society will be on the level of *ruci* or *bhāva*; however, the social influence of those who are in the mode of goodness, the *brāhmaṇas*, must be strong. They, in turn, must be strongly influenced by those on the higher levels of *bhakti*. (See CC *Madhya* 23.14-15; SB 3.26.20; Dec 29, 1974 lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda, etc.)

³⁴ *Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary*

³⁵ SB 1.1.18, 1.2.34, 1.16.8, 2.2.36, and 11.5.32; BG 4.7

enjoy public and private festivals,³⁶ parades, home worship, temple worship, renunciation, devotion, cultivation of transcendental knowledge, food distribution, and so on—all with the aim of pleasing Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa.

The idea is that giving pleasure is the best way of receiving it. And by watering the root of creation, who is Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, the branches and leaves—that is, all beings—become satisfied.

Throughout history, people in *daiva-varṇāśrama* communities enjoyed dance,³⁷ drama,³⁸ music, art, sculpture, architecture, science, and literature that have focused on *līlās*.

Divine Names

Divine names, or names of Viṣṇu, also permeate the *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture. They are present within nearly all conversations as salutations, music, chanting, meditation, festivals, daily life, worship, and more. They are integrally connected to the *līlās*. Indeed, most divine names invoke remembrance of a specific *līlā*.³⁹

There are thousands of such names. Since the Supreme is absolute, His names and *līlās* are identical with Him. Like Him, they are on the absolute level. And by uttering His names, one invokes the company or association of the Supreme. He dances on the tongue.⁴⁰

His name appears in common greetings like Jai Rām, Hare Kṛṣṇa,

³⁶ An important celebration of one of Kṛṣṇa's *līlās* is Rathayātrā. Also, Prabhupāda wrote: "There is not one incident like Rathayātrā, but there are many hundreds of thousands of incidents in different appearances of the incarnations of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In different cities and different centers, we can introduce such multi-pastimes ceremonies of Lord Kṛṣṇa." (Letter to Aniruddha, July 7, 1968)

³⁷ Indian regional dances are displays of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu *līlās*.

³⁸ Throughout South and Southeast Asia, dramas, puppet shows, paintings and sculptures demonstrate *līlās* from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Purāṇas*.

³⁹ Some names, out of thousands that are associated with *līlās*, are Nṛsiṃha (half-man half-lion), Vāmana (dwarf), Madhusūdana (killer of Madhu), Brajendra-nandana (beloved son of the King of Braj), and Śyāma (blackish).

⁴⁰ Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura, *Śrī Bhajana-Rahasya* (Gauḍiya Vedānta Publications, 2015); *Stava-Mālā* of Śrī Rupa Gosvāmi in *Prathamā-caitanyaṣṭaka: hare kṛṣṇety uccaiḥ sphurita-rasanaḥ* "The *mahā-mantra* ecstatically dances of its own accord on the theatrical stage of His tongue."

Hari bol, and Nārāyaṇa.

Many recite a thousand names of Viṣṇu daily. Others chant Kṛṣṇa, Rām, or Nārāyaṇa thousands of times a day.⁴¹

Transcendental Enjoyment Conclusion

In *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, transcendental enjoyment is expressed through celebration of Viṣṇu’s or Kṛṣṇa’s names and *līlās*.⁴²

Certainly not all Vaiṣṇavas enjoy on the same high level, and they do not represent a utopian society. However, where transcendental enjoyment prevails, it serves to uplift society and enable it to flourish in relative harmony with nature.

Indeed, their hundreds of millions are doing a far better job at respecting and preserving nature than hundreds of millions of Americans whose worldwide influence of exploitation and greed has already caused serious harm to the planet.⁴³

In that way, the *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture has the practical solution to environmental disaster—enjoyment that elevates. It is a proven solution. Modern liberal political, economic, and social solutions will not work. They are unproven.⁴⁴ *Daiva-varṇāśrama* is the solution.

The *Gītā* and *Daiva-varṇāśrama* Culture

Kṛṣṇa’s teachings in the *Bhagavad-gītā* contain solutions to environmental disturbances caused by humans.

For 5,000 years, the *Gītā* has given the essence of *daiva-varṇāśrama*

⁴¹ Of all *mantras*, the greatest is Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

⁴² *Śrī Śrī Siksastakam*, 1-8; SB 6.2.46, 6.3.31, 2.1.11, 11.5.32; BG 4.7

⁴³ *The Environmental Solution*, Michael Wright, Center for Vishnu Culture

⁴⁴ In the “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) journal,” September 18, 2023, a study concludes there will be a mass extinction, especially of those high on the food chain like humans. The study says, “Immediate political, economic, and social efforts of an unprecedented scale are essential if we are to prevent these extinctions and their societal impacts.” Such a suggestion is typical but not proven to work. It is grasping at straws. Nobody wants to suggest that the human addiction to energy must be addressed. However, that is the revolutionary position of *daiva-varṇāśrama* preachers.

values. Moreover, it is impossible to divorce it from the entire Indian experience.

The *Gītā* molds the values and mentality of the people. Whether or not they regularly study it, they have been raised and shaped by its ideals. Thus, those in the *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture, and even those outside but influenced by it, are naturally more inclined to respect nature and the environment than those in modern, post-industrial cultures.

For example, most Vaiṣṇavas are vegetarian. Their thinking is that all living beings have souls. A human has no right to take the life of another creature.⁴⁵ Meat-eating consumes immense amounts of water, land, and energy resources; thus, Vaiṣṇavas conserve those resources. Moreover, Vaiṣṇavas do not endanger animal species by hunting them to extinction.

Even today, about 50 percent of Vaiṣṇavas live in agrarian settings. In general, they believe that a simple, non-materialistic life will be good for their progress in this life and the next.

Those are just some of the practical influences of the *Gītā*. Everyone should read the *Gītā* to understand those influences.

The *Gītā*'s Solution to Greed and Overconsumption

The *Gītā*'s perspective on overconsumption, or greed, is particularly relevant to the environment. Kṛṣṇa teaches that the body is designed around five knowledge-acquiring senses—seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling—along with five working senses—tongue, arms, legs, genitals, and anus. And the mind is supposed to control those senses.⁴⁶

The problem is that the senses are uncontrollably attracted to the objects of the world. And that attraction fosters worldly enjoyment.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Manu-saṃhitā*: 5.27-44, 5.51, 5.55, and 5.38: "As many hairs as the slain beast has, that many births and deaths will its killer suffer." And verse 5.45: "He who injures innocent beings from a wish to give himself pleasure never finds happiness, neither living nor dead."

⁴⁶ BG 3.42

⁴⁷ BG 2.62-63

Although such enjoyment may seem desirable, it is temporary, illusory, and often degrading. Thus, it is false enjoyment, resulting in overconsumption of natural resources. True enjoyment—transcendental enjoyment—may be experienced by one who rises above the magnetism of the sense objects and contacts the soul. Such enjoyment is required to control overconsumption, which is the root cause of environmental destruction.⁴⁸

***Gītā* Perspectives and Practices**

The *Gītā* prescribes methods for connecting with the soul.

Again, the mind is supposed to be in control of the senses, but in fact, the worldly predicament is that the senses have subjugated the mind.

For the mind to regain control over the senses, transcendental enjoyment must replace sense enjoyment. And to obtain such enjoyment, there must be practical means to do so.

The *Gītā* details such means. The *Gītā* is not a work of history or religious sentiment. It is analytical and meant to provoke action.

It systematically unfolds a science in the true sense of the word—knowledge. It analyzes work or occupation, money derived from occupations, social order, universal order, psychology, knowledge, devotion, character, godliness, and more.

And the *Gītā* indicates that all this analysis can be reduced to one essence—enjoyment of the *līlās* and names of the Supreme.⁴⁹

Adopting the sciences presented in the *Gītā* will bring about a tremendous change in humanity’s relationship with nature. And that is not a theoretical idea, nor has it proven itself on a small scale. Hundreds of millions demonstrate the effectiveness of the *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ BG 2.59

⁴⁹ BG 10.8-11; Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura confirms: “These four verses, which are the essence of the *Gītā* for preventing the degradation of the *jīvās* (living beings), I have explained to give happiness to all.” Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa states that these four *Gītā* verses describe the *bhakti* characterized by the highest *ekānta* (single-purposed) devotees.

⁵⁰ Note that aside from quoting Śrīla Prabhupāda, I have not used the word “spiritual.” In modern society, spiritual is most often identified with impersonalism, rejection of

organized religion, new age beliefs, and sometimes simply deep feelings or thoughts. (See *Cambridge Dictionary*, "It was a spiritual communion that he found with her.") Thus, I prefer to use specific terms like *bhakti*, *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture, Vaiṣṇava culture, etc.

VIII. Śivarāma Swami's *Varṇāśrama Compendium*, Volume 1

Review by Dayānanda dāsa

Edited and modified by Kṛṣṇa Kathā dāsa

I present here my review of Śivarāma Swami's *Varṇāśrama Compendium*. Although I suggest a few additions and clarifications, I do not correct anything because his offering is perfect as it is.

It is important for experts on *varṇāśrama*, such as Śivarāma Swami, Bhakti Vikāsa Swami, Bhakti Raghava Swami, and others to exchange good ideas and work together where practical.

In the Catholic Church, there are prominent lineages, like the Benedictines, Franciscans, and Jesuits, and historically they have been successful Catholic practitioners and preachers. In a similar way, already in ISKCON,¹ some lineages are emerging.

These lineages do not deviate from the *paramparā*; instead, they apply various strategies to implement the teachings and to spread Mahāprabhu's movement. Nevertheless, I would argue that it is too early to encourage sharp demarcations between the various efforts to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*. It is a difficult task to do so, and the existing *varṇāśrama* structures have not yet put down deep, extensive roots and withstood the test of time.

Thus, my goal is to offer some considered comments as a seasoned disciple of the *paramparā*. I do that with my head at the feet of Śivarāma Swami and the Magyarországi Krisna-tudatú Hívők Közössége (the Hungarian yātrā) as well as the other gurus and followers of *daiva-*

¹ International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

varṇāśrama.

In the **Introduction: How This Book Came to Be**, Mahārāja states that “Varṇāśrama for devotees is about helping them come to the mode of goodness.” This concept is a major theme of the book.²

Part One: About This Book

In **The Compendium and This Volume**, Śivarāma Swami writes: “Codes of conduct are generally accompanied by consequences for their breach. That is not the case with this compendium, as we had neither the time for such an undertaking at present, nor a way to comprehensively implement sanctions. The subject of sanctions and their enforcement, like other subjects, may be added to revised editions of this handbook at later dates.”

And: “Yet we find that there is no systematic body of information that tells devotees, for example, what principles they should work by in business, how much profit should they make, or how they should deal with employees. Nor are devotee business owners or managers clear what conduct and work codes are expected of them as Vaiṣṇavas.”

The development of laws, sanctions, and consequences is an essential part of society. For example, in the Jewish tradition, Halakha law has evolved over at least two thousand years. Thus, establishing laws and sanctions is not an exercise that can be completed even in a generation. The more *daiva-varṇāśrama* assumes control and becomes independent from modern society the more there is a need for laws and sanctions. When Vaiṣṇava culture takes control of countries, even more laws will become necessary. Nevertheless, Śivarāma Swami’s book will not become outdated, because he has established the basic qualities and values of the culture. Laws, in general, are based on such cultural values.

After referring to 20 books of *dharma-śāstra*, Mahārāja states: “Both sections of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam describing varṇāśrama-dharma deal almost exclusively with ācāra, (general conduct) and so this volume is more or less a synthesis of Nārada Muni’s and Kṛṣṇa’s teachings on the subject. What this book brings to the fore is the context of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam’s

² See, for example, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lecture of May 9, 1970, on Śrī Īṣopaniṣad, Mantra 7 in LA.

teachings.”

Using the *Bhāgavatam* to establish standards and qualities is the perfect approach. Of course, in the real world, people, including devotees, do not always rise to the highest standard. Nonetheless, it must be taught. Some will rise to that level and the rest of us must have that ideal for which we strive to achieve.

In **Implementing Guidelines**, he again mentions the limited ability of *kṣatriyas* to enforce guidelines (rules or laws). That limited ability to enforce also exists in other religious communities. Devotee administrators and intellectuals would do well to study how those communities enforce their rules under the watch of the local secular authorities.

Varṇāśrama: Neither Outdated nor Dangerous nicely explains how *varṇāśrama* is relevant today, why it does not contradict Mahāprabhu's discussion with Ramananda Roy, how it is manifested at creation, how it exists in Vaikuntha, and why ISKCON must implement *varṇāśrama*.

Part Two: The Twenty-One Qualities of Humans

In the following chapters there are discussions of qualities primarily based on SB and BG, but also NOD, *Śikṣāṣṭakam*, CC, NOI, and other *Purānas*.³ The preponderance of quotes are from SB.

5-13: The Four Pillars of Religion: Truthfulness, Mercy, Austerity, Cleanliness; Tolerance and Discrimination; Control of the Mind and Senses; Non-Violence; Celibacy; Charity; Reading Scripture; Simplicity and Satisfaction; Rendering Service to Saintly Persons

In **Gradually Taking Leave of Unnecessary Engagements**, Mahārāja states: “*They include family obligation and attachment, making a living, social and political obligation, and sports and entertainment, to name just a few.*”

Śivarāma Swami writes in **Spiritual Knowledge**: “...a social system that uses *varṇāśrama*'s divisions and structure but is based on bodily identification is called *asura-varṇāśrama*, the *varṇāśrama* of demons. And the *varṇāśrama* that is based on spiritual self-identification is called *daiva-*

³SB = *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*; BG = *Bhagavad Gītā*; NOD = *Nectar of Devotion*; CC = *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*; NOI = *Nectar of Instruction*, all with purports by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

varṇāśrama, *spiritual varṇāśrama*.”

Exactly so: self-identification or identification with the soul (*ātmanā*) is one of the pillars of *daiva-varṇāśrama*. And, as implied in the name *daiva-varṇāśrama*, society is centered around *daiva* (Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa).⁴

Other chapters in Part Two are **Remaining Silent and Grave, Food Distribution and Divine Vision**, and **The Nine Limbs of Pure Devotion**.

As with the chapters on *ācāra* (conduct), Mahārāja quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda and SB to establish the ideals that must be taught and implemented as far as possible.

Part Three: Duties and Characteristics of the *Varṇas*

The Acharyas’ Desire for *Daiva-Varṇāśrama*: Here, Mahārāja quotes Śrīla Prabhupāda: “*In order to serve the mass of people, to bring them to the ideal position, we should try to introduce this varṇāśrama, not that we are going to be candidates of varṇāśrama. It is not our business. But to teach them how the world will be in peaceful position we have to introduce.*”

Śivārāma Swami also discusses Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda’s and Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s desire to counter the asuric implementation of *varṇāśrama*.

Thus, part of devotees’ preaching to the masses in asuric societies⁵ is to bring them to the human platform. *Varṇāśrama* is the mass movement aspect of preaching.

In **Principles Underlying Devotees’ Nature and Work**, Mahārāja discusses devotees’ nature (*bhāva* or *svabhāva*) and work (*karma*). He explains that the goal is elevation to goodness, achieved through scriptures and *mantras*.

In a discussion of *karma*, the concepts of *karma-phala* and *yajña* also play important roles. As Mahārāja indicates, nobody in the material world is free from *karma* (meaning work, corresponding to *svabhāva*). *Karma-phala* (the fruit of work) binds one to the material body and sense gratification.⁶ Thus a fundamental goal of *daiva-varṇāśrama*-

⁴ See also, CC Madhya 3.6, purport.

⁵ Asuric versus daivic is discussed in the BG, chapter 16.

⁶ “Abandoning all attachment to the results of his activities (*karma-phala*), ever satisfied and independent, he performs no fruitive action, although engaged in all kinds of

*dharma*⁷ is to become detached from *karma-phala* (the fruits of work). That detachment is the key to being released from *karma-bandha* (the bondage of *karma*).⁸

Yajña is the specific technique through which one becomes detached. Thus, when discussing *svabhāva* and *karma*, which are born along with the body, it is important to mention *yajña*, which is also born with the body.⁹ It is by the practice of *yajña* that one becomes elevated within the *varṇāśrama* system. *Yajña* is the vehicle that enables one to become detached from *karma-phala*, which is used to fund sense gratification.¹⁰ And in the *daiva-varṇāśrama* system, *yajña* is *saṅkīrtana*.

When discussing Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the conversation inevitably turns to *bhakti* and *yoga*. However, *daiva-varṇāśrama* is a social system based on the *Vedas*. *Yajña* is at the heart of that system.¹¹ Be assured that all the limbs of *bhakti* are *yajñas*, but that is another topic.¹²

undertakings." BG 4.20; "But all of them (*yajñas*) are recommended for ultimately bringing about liberation from the body." BG 4.32 purport

⁷*Daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* contains *para-dharma-bhakti* (SB 1.2.6). Thus, it is not mundane *dharma* that Kṛṣṇa mentions in BG 18.66 or Śrīla Vyāsadeva refers to in SB 1.1.2.

⁸ BG 3.9. (*karma-bandhana*) Note that it is not so much the *karma* that binds (*bandha*), but the attachment to *karma-phala*. In this case, *bandha* means bound to *karma*. More specifically, it means bound to the body and to the sense gratification that one achieves through *karma* (work) for *karma-phala* (the results).

⁹ "But 'Yajña' is a word meant for our practical action of sacrifice born along with our material tabernacle from the womb of our mother." Back to Godhead, May 20, 1956

¹⁰ Thus, *kāma* or sense gratification and *karma-phala* are nearly synonymous.

¹¹ "By your occupational duties, you are performing *yajña*. Because *yajña* means to satisfy the Supreme Lord. *Varṇāśrama*... This *varṇāśrama* program is there to satisfy the Supreme according to one's quality and karma. That is called *varṇāśrama*." BG 4.18 lecture Apr 7, 1974. My comment: There is a misunderstanding that simply by performing one's *varṇāśrama* occupation, that satisfies Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda appears to say that here. Instead, part of one's occupation is *yajña*, which means to sacrifice the *karma-phala* to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. That is what he is speaking about here. Reference, *Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā* (Bs) 5.54 plus purport.

¹² "When the mind is fully absorbed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is said to be in *samādhi*, or trance. Anything done in such transcendental consciousness is called *yajña* or sacrifice for the Absolute." BG 4.24 purport. "So in this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, because everything is being done for Kṛṣṇa, it is simply *yajña*. Nothing else. It is not *karma*. When it is *karma*, you are bound up by the results of *karma*. But if you perform *yajña*, you are not bound up. *Karmāṇi nirdahati kintu ca bhakti-bhājam* (Bs. 5.54). *Bhakti-bhājam*, those who are engaged in devotional service, they have no more any *karma*." SB 1.1.4 lecture, Aug 27, 1973

The materialistic cycle might be shown like this: *svabhāva/karma* → *karma-phala* → used for *kāma* (sense gratification) → *karma-bandha* → (and again) *svabhāva/karma* → *karma-phala*... endlessly. Without any type of *yajña*, it is a useless life.¹³

Daiva-varṇāśrama breaks the cycle thus: *svabhāva/karma* → *karma-phala* → used for *yajña* for Viṣṇu → *mokṣa* from *karma-bandha* (freedom from bondage, breaking the cycle) → *vaikuṅṭha* and one's *svabhāva* is awakened as eternal servant of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. (*jiver svarūp hoy krsner nitya-dās*)¹⁴

In **Work as the Basis of Varṇa**, Mahārāja discusses *niṣkāma-karma* (work without desire for *karma-phala*) to make the same or similar point I mentioned in my comments above on the previous chapter.

Eligibility for the Varṇas discusses devotees in the three modes, and this is a welcome addition. It indicates an openness and eagerness to work with and elevate anyone, provided he or she is willing to embark on the *daiva-varṇāśrama* path.

Mahārāja states that *daiva-varṇāśrama* will elevate one to goodness, which is certainly a fact. One might also say that such elevation is accomplished due to *bhakti*, which is the *daiva* part of *daiva-varṇāśrama*, and the association of devotees (*sadhu-saṅga* and *bhajana-kriya*).

In **The Qualities of Śūdras and Vaiśyas** Mahārāja writes, "...we describe the śūdras first, because they are the bedrock of the varṇāśrama society ISKCON is constructing."

This is another welcome statement. Historically, ISKCON has attempted to transform recruits into *brāhmaṇas*. Here, he recognizes that the greater population (*śūdras* are the greatest percentage) must be engaged in service to *daiva—deva-deva* or Śrī Kṛṣṇa—using their *śūdra* proclivities.

The Qualities of Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas: Mahārāja opens with "The leadership of society has two aspects: the visionary and the executive."

He identifies the visionary with *brāhmaṇas*; however, *kṣatriyas* are responsible for intermediate and long-term strategies to defend against aggression and achieve economic goals among other things. That also requires vision. Thus, one might argue that such vision is under the

¹³ BG 3.16

¹⁴ *Svarūp* means *svabhāva*, the word Śivarāma Swami uses in the book.

purview of the *kṣatriya*, who is responsible for the outcome (by Kṛṣṇa's grace). But the *kṣatriya* may consult with *brāhmaṇas* as he sees fit. An example of such consultation might be Candragupta and Cāṇakya.

As in Chapter One, Mahārāja speaks about the enforcement of laws. Currently, criminal laws must be enacted by the host state, in this case, Hungary. However, in many countries, including Hungary, the Jewish *beit din* courts are recognized. They are meant for personal, family, and business mediation. In America, there are *sharia* courts for Muslims that are also used for some civil matters. The topic of adjudication and law enforcement is indeed an important area that devotee lawmakers must develop over the coming centuries.

Regarding *brāhmaṇas*, in 1970, Prabhupāda told me that villagers would go to the *brāhmaṇa*'s house for entertainment. Thus, I would argue that it is the *brāhmaṇa*'s duty to ensure that there is enough enjoyment in a *varṇāśrama* community to counter the sense enjoyment of the outside world. It is a tall order, but unless *varṇāśrama* communities establish truly fulfilling spiritual and cultural entertainment, future generations will not stay in devotee communities. Our sons and daughters will become enticed by *māyā*.

Fidelity to Duty is the Basis of Social Order: This is a wonderful chapter. Fidelity to duty, based on *dharma* that leads to *mokṣa* and *bhakti*, is absent in modern society. Instead, the only fidelity is based on sense gratification.

In **Duties of Śūdras and Vaiśyas**, Mahārāja gives a nice explanation of *śūdra* intelligence. In addition to his discussion, the word discrimination may also be used for intelligence (*buddhi*),¹⁵ This is not to be confused with IQ. Einstein served humanity in ways that increased sense gratification. Thus, his lack of discrimination qualified him as a *śūdra*. A *śūdra* may be highly intelligent in terms of IQ but without brahminical qualities. It is a mistake to think that philosophers, theologians, and university professors are *brāhmaṇas*.

Mahārāja has certainly given a good start to the treatment of *śūdras*. They are 90-95% of society; it might even be argued as much as 99-100%. Thus, the role of *śūdras* in *varṇāśrama* communities is an ongoing

¹⁵ "Understanding which discriminates by intelligence is situated in the mode of goodness." BG 18.30 purport

topic. *Brāhmaṇas* must forever be sensitive to their treatment and development: society runs on their backs. Unlike the caste *brāhmaṇas*, devotee *brāhmaṇas* must ensure that *śūdras* receive the proper spiritual encouragement, including enjoyment, inspiration (enthusiasm), knowledge, and love. At the same time, they must be restricted from expanding their sense gratification and independence.

Thus, *daiva-varṇāśrama brāhmaṇas* have an immense task in countering the socialist, communist, and materialistic forces of society, which are extremely effective in enchanting modern day *śūdras*.

Regarding the duties of *vaiśyas*, I would argue that their most important duty is to ensure that *saṅkīrtana*, in all its forms, is financed. *Yajña* is at the heart of *daiva-varṇāśrama*, and the *yajña* of Kali-yuga is *saṅkīrtana*.¹⁶ Humanity must act according to *varṇāśrama-dharma* to perform *yajña* to please Viṣṇu.¹⁷ The *vaiśyas* must therefore organize a huge level of funding to properly facilitate *saṅkīrtana-yajna*.¹⁸

Saṅkīrtana-yajña means every type of glorification of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa *līlās* and names.¹⁹ That means that *pādayātrās*, festivals, dramas, dances, storytelling, and every form of *līlā* and *nāma* entertainment should be financed for the benefit of *daiva-varṇāśrama* communities and to entice and recruit outsiders.

Everything Mahārāja has written in **Two Pillars of Society** is perfect. Nevertheless, as a reminder, it is essential that the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas* find ways to involve and encourage the *vaiśyas*, who are also twice born. They receive similar education, and they are responsible, not just for farming, but for collecting money which can be used to fight the materialistic economy.²⁰

¹⁶ From *Back to Godhead* magazine, 3.6, May 20, 1966, "Yajna or Sacrifice for the Supreme," by Śrīla Prabhupāda: "There is a natural division of qualitative work and the class is created with reference to this context of natural division. [...] The central point of cooperation is to do everything in lieu of performing yajna. [...] There are different kinds of 'Yajna' recommended in different ages. The one which is recommended in this age of Kali (iron age of quarrel and fight) is the performance of yajna called the 'Samkeertan Yajna' which is a process of chanting and hearing the transcendental Name etc. of Godhead."

¹⁷ BG, chapters three, four, and 18.3-7

¹⁸ SB 1.17.42

¹⁹ *Sankirtana As It Is*, Dayananda, C&V Media

²⁰ "This proverb is there, *dhula mati bhatte kare mato*. He is thinking that 'I am taking

Prabhupāda said that some people's *karma* is such that they can simply reach out and collect money from the air, meaning that it is very easy for some.²¹ Presumably, those people are mostly in the *vaiśya* community.

I liked Mahārāja's discussion in **Duties of Kṣatriyas**. One of his most important statements was "*However, excess monies accrued above administrative costs should not be squandered for personal enjoyment but should be used to host religious events like saṅkīrtana festivals and public food distribution in addition to abundant charity — a mainstay for certain parts of society.*"

Further, the king or president must be accepted by all as an empowered representative of the *paramparā*; if not, his rule will be weak and ineffective. The ISKCON *gurus*, *brāhmaṇas*, and *sannyasis* are all special representatives of the *paramparā*. They represent the power of knowledge and renunciation.

The *kṣatriya* king executes the desires of the *paramparā*; in that way, he carries its power into the realm of physical organization of the community.²²

Mahārāja states, "*Thus the duty of a kṣatriya extends beyond being expert in martial arts and the use of weapons.*"

Martial arts and weapons are indeed a low-level activity of *kṣatriyas*; they should also become expert strategists, familiar with the arts of ruling as taught by Vidura, Cāṇakya, and others. Although kings and generals know the arts of fighting, more important are the arts of statecraft, diplomacy, and phalanx organization. In modern language, that is usually called strategy.

In **The Duties of Brāhmaṇas** Mahārāja cites, "*All twice-born men —*

some dust, but when it is in hand, it is coin.' That is good time. And when it is bad time, if you catch coin and when it is in your hand, it is dust. We should think that time may also come. Yes. Because after all, it is Kṛṣṇa's desire, turn dust into coin, to turn coin into dust. So, we should be always careful. If we remain Kṛṣṇa conscious, then the coin will never turn into dust. Otherwise, it can be turned. So you American, you are now full of coins. Before turning into dust, catch Kṛṣṇa with the coin. It will never turn into dust; it will remain coin." Śrīla Prabhupāda, conversation, June 20, 1975, in L.A.

²¹ From a conversation with Aśoka in Dallas, 1975, that I witnessed.

²² These two paragraphs are, admittedly, my opinion based on personal experience as a temple president and observation of temple administrations throughout the history of ISKCON.

brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas and vaiśyas — must perform sacrifice, study the Vedic literature and give charity.” He then states, “Still, for Vaiṣṇavas, Lord Caitanya’s order of yāre dekha, tāre kaha ‘kṛṣṇa’-upadeśa makes preaching compulsory, even if one has some other means of livelihood.”

Furthermore, Mahārāja writes, “The very essence of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is preaching, and brāhmaṇas are meant to both disseminate knowledge of Kṛṣṇa to people in general, and systematically teach our philosophy to devotees.”

Determining One’s Varṇa: Mahārāja has done an admirable job of constructing a difficult set of guidelines. As the varṇāśrama communities progress, this topic will undoubtedly develop. Determining one’s varṇa is an art and cannot fully be expressed by a structured set of guidelines. However, such guidelines must exist to establish a framework and starting point.

Part Four: Concluding Words

Mahārāja writes in *Āśrama, Economy, and Family Tradition*: “The purpose of the components of varṇāśrama — economy included — is to facilitate Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Prabhupāda writes that *bhakti* and *saṅkīrtana* go hand in hand.²³ Thus *saṅkīrtana* is included in Mahārāja’s reference to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Our Mission is Loving Devotion: One of the most important aspects of love is service, devotional service. *Daiva-varṇāśrama* directs society away from sense gratification and greed, replacing it with service to *deva-deva*. Thus, service to *daiva* is the best way to cultivate love as a society.

I thank Mahārāja for publishing **Room Conversation, October 8, 1977**, in the **Epilogue**.

It is the essence of Prabhupāda’s social and cultural revolution. The entire modern civilization is focused on increasing comforts, or as Prabhupāda says, luxuries. Here, he cautions: “No luxuries.” That is a fundamental social difference between modern culture and *daiva-varṇāśrama*.

In **Appendix One: The Principles of Varṇāśrama**, Mahārāja has cited

²³ BG 3.10, purport

several verses including SB 11.5.3, which essentially says that one who does not serve the Supreme, who is the source of the *varṇas* and *āśramas*, falls down. That is like SB 1.2.13, which says that the highest perfection of *varṇāśrama* is to please Hari.

Moreover, in his purport to SB 1.2.6, Prabhupāda writes: “We have purposely denoted *dharma* as occupation because the root meaning of the word *dharma* is ‘that which sustains one’s existence.’” In that way, Prabhupāda refers to the *varṇas*, specifically *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*.

The **Room Conversation: *Varṇāśrama* System Must Be Introduced in Appendix Three** is a perfect discussion. In the dialogue, there are important subtleties that appear as contradictions or tensions. Those subtleties may be argued, interpreted, and applied in various ways. The important thing is to apply them and to act.

My comments are meant to contribute not to argument but to application, however it might be done. Above all else, *daiva-varṇāśrama* can mean only one thing: organizing society to serve Kṛṣṇa. That we can all agree upon.

IX. Report on Kurmagrama

Dayānanda dāsa

We rise at 3:30 a.m., go to the toilet in the traditional way,¹ and bathe using a bucket or non-heated shower for a pampered guest. The weather is warm, so the water is not cold. On rising, some chant *jayati jana-nivāso devakī-janma-vādo*.

“May He be glorious and happy—He who is the resort of all, who is the son of Devakī, who is the guide of the Yadu dynasty, whose mighty arms chastise the adharmic people, who clears away the ill fortune of all, and whose enchanting, smiling face increases the lust of the *gopīs*.

An hour later the community has assembled in the temple, which is illuminated only by ghee lights, with men on one side, women on the other. Everyone is in traditional dress. I am in Kurmagrama, a traditional village in Andhra Pradesh.²

The ceremony is thousands of years old, rooted in the ancient Vedas. It is patterned after the greeting of a king or an honored guest because we are in the court of the king and queen of the community—Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

The priest makes the traditional offerings to the sacred pictures and images on the altar. He offers incense, lights, water to wash the feet, a

¹ In the West, commercial toilet paper has been in use for less than two hundred years. Before that scrap paper, and before that anything. In Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, water is more commonly used.

² Kurmagrama is located near Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh. It is five hours from the famous Jagannath Temple in Puri, one-and-a-half hours from Sri Kurmanatha Swamy Temple, and three hours from Sri Varaha Narasimha Swamy temple.

cloth to dry, flowers, a fan to cool, and yak tail to drive away the insects.

We dance and sing the greeting song.

After the *arati* ceremony, we give a similar greeting to Tulasi, the sacred plant. Tulasi is worshiped all over India by millions. Plants like Tulasi and *kuśa* grass as well as trees like the banyan and Ashvatta are revered in the culture. Certain animals, like cows, monkeys, rats, and others, are considered especially connected with the demigods and the Supreme God of gods.

Unfortunately, Western traditions have long rejected the soul in nature, but here it is preserved. The *Gītā* says that a wise person sees a cow, dog, dog eater, a gentle *brāhmaṇa*, and an elephant as equal souls.³ Of course, those are given as examples. All souls are equal.⁴

After the singing, we sit and chant softly on beads in the temple, where the darkness is tamed by the burning lights placed throughout. The collective sound, the incense, the flames, the altar, and the companionship create an atmosphere that is meditative, sublime, and subtly joyful.

In time, there is a lecture, in Telugu, the local language, Hindi, the national language, or English, the global language. Normally, the speaker discusses the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, the most important of the principal eighteen *Purāṇas*. This incredible work, filled with stories interwoven with philosophy, has 18,000 verses along with commentaries by exalted devotees, some recent and some from hundreds of years ago. There is plenty to talk about.

The stories are the basis of art, architecture, dance, drama, music, and discourse, forming much of the rich culture that is followed by hundreds of millions over thousands of years.

And then the moment we have all been awaiting. *Prasādam*. We are going to have breakfast. We are not so otherworldly that we have renounced all thought of eating. After spending more than four hours in the morning program, everyone is eager for the meal. (Or perhaps there are one or two among us who are eager to overcome the demands

³ *Bhagavad-gītā* (BG) 5.18

⁴ BG 18.54

of tongue and belly to spend more time chanting.)

But the ancients anticipated our sense desires. The teachings of the *Gītā*, and indeed, any higher form of *yoga*, say that we should transfer our focus on the sense objects to the soul and the Supreme Soul. That is why we have *prasādam*. It is food offered to Kṛṣṇa, for his pleasure before ours. And then we may partake. As the roots are watered to nourish the tree, so do we offer our food to Kṛṣṇa, the root of existence, so that we may be nourished.

That is a wonderful way to connect with the Supreme. And it is characteristic of the entire process, which seeks to engage the senses to reunite with the Supreme. Some who seek transcendence try to quiet the demands of the senses, as in meditation.

However, the *bhakti-yoga* system is designed to work with the senses, mind, and body in a practical way. That system uses the temporal vehicle to focus attention on the soul.

Why then, one might ask, can we not use all vehicles to connect with the soul, vehicles like airplanes, automobiles, telescopes, etc.⁵ The answer is that the sages recommend not extending the reach of the senses too far. The senses are already enamored by and magnetically attracted to their objects—tongue to good food, eyes to beautiful scenes, nose to fragrances, and so on. We are already bound. There is no need to seek extensions to further bind us to this world.

That is one of the themes of Kurmagrama—freedom from bondage of the world to achieve self or soul realization.

In that sweet village, the residents work in a natural setting to minimize the demands of the senses. Of course, the basic demands must be met. That is why we have *prasādam*.

But let us satisfy our necessities in a way that does not distract us from the soul.

After breakfast, we go about our daily duties.

⁵ It is possible. “Whatever is favorable for the rendering of service to the Lord should be accepted and should not be rejected as a material thing” *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.255-256. There are various discussions on this point; however, there are limits of what might be used in service. For example, we do not use meat. Also, it would not be practical to use the asuric (ungodly) culture in service to Kṛṣṇa.

The *brahmacārīs* take me on a tour of the community. I see their quarters, where they sleep on thin mats on the ground. The floor looks like packed dirt, but it is also mixed with cow dung, which has a purifying effect.

Outside, there is an area for washing clothes with a well to bring up the groundwater.

Some are weaving cloth for the community, and some are in the fields plowing with oxen, planting, pruning, and doing all the magic needed to produce *prasādam*.

In modern society, we fight with nature. We kill. Every one of us. We are guilty of being part of the wrong kind of civilization.

If we are to awaken, we must seek a place like Kurmagrama to find our way.

Here, instead of the insidious stream of new technologies, the residents are satisfied with traditional methods of living. Even if we cannot live the way they do, still, we have much to learn from them about satisfaction and enjoyment.

For example, they are not so restless and dissatisfied that they require a stream of new movies, regular sports, and enchanting music. They are more than satisfied with dramas from the ancient histories, like the *Mahābhārata*, with singing and dancing throughout. And I have witnessed them crying during a particularly poignant scene, even though they have seen it a hundred times before.

What, therefore, is the need for those costly, destructive modern forms of entertainment?

After visiting the quarters of the single, celibate young men, we go to the family section. It is an area with several apartments or villas. I meet a man, his wife, and daughter, who used to live in Houston. He tells me that he was tired of working long hours to maintain the American way of life and keep the wheels turning in the IT company so that managers and shareholders could accumulate wealth.

What is it used for? The Vedas say that harvest, produce, and money should be used for self-realization.⁶ But in America, almost everyone is

⁶ BG chapters 2-4

enslaved to lives that cause undue suffering. Their illusory enjoyment causes misfortune to others and to posterity. Moreover, *karma* says they will also suffer.⁷

After visiting the simple, yet charming, villas, we look at the vegetable fields: squash, millet, bananas, and mangoes. We go for a drive around the property. It is fortunate for me that they have a couple of cars, although, as a young man, I once took an oxcart 30 miles from one village to another. It was a delightful, real-world experience. And it struck me then that more than half of the earth's population live simple, satisfying rural lives.

Of course, the world has changed since the 1970s, but not so much that it is not possible to consider two realities—urban and rural.

We drive past their cashew trees that they inherited from the previous owners. When guests visit, as many do, they are asked to collect the valuable cashew crop. It's a perfect occupation. Immersion in the culture is the best way to learn about it.

If you wish to visit, you can send a text to +91 77320 75607 or look up Kurmagrama on the internet. I highly recommend the experience.

⁷ BG 4.18, 2.51, 3.9

Contributors

Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda (1838 – 1914), hailed by contemporary scholars as the most influential Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava leader of his time, is credited, along with his son Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, with pioneering the propagation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in the West and its eventual global spread. He edited and published over 100 books on Vaishnavism. In his later years, Bhaktivinoda founded and conducted *nāma-haṭṭa* – a traveling preaching program that spread the theology and practice of Caitanya Mahāprabhu throughout rural and urban Bengal.

A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda (1896 –1977) is the founder/*ācārya* (spiritual guide) of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). In 1944, he started the Back to Godhead magazine, for which he was writer, designer, editor, publisher, and distributor. In 1966, he founded ISKCON in New York City. From 1967 until 1977, he traveled eleven times around the globe, cultivating ISKCON’s disciples, temples, schools, book publishing, and farm communities. He translated and commented on over sixty volumes of classic literature, including the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, which have now been translated into as many as 80 languages, with total sales of over half a billion.

Rūpa-Vilāsa dāsa (Robert MacNaughton) was born in 1945. He received spiritual initiation from Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1972. He is a

well-known lecturer in ISKCON and has written a number of biographical works about the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas like *A Ray of Vishnu*, *The Seventh Goswami*, *Nāmācārya*, and *Without Fear (Glimpses of Śrīla Prabhupāda)*. He recently submitted an updated and expanded biography of Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda to the BBT press to be released later this year or early the next. He has also published an expanded biography of Gaura Kiśora dāsa Bābājī and Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārājas called *Bābājī Mahārāja (Two Beyond Duality)*. He presently lives in the U.K. with his wife Śarad-bihārī devī.

Dayānanda dāsa (Michael Wright) met Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1967 after which he and his wife started the ISKCON temple in Los Angeles. They later helped establish the temple in Tehran, Iran. Over the years, he has studied Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Farsi, and Spanish as well as the history and philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism and its relation to culture and the environment. For the last 20 years, he has been writing and lecturing on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and how Vaiṣṇava culture can contribute essential solutions to the earth's environmental crises. He has published several books, pamphlets, and articles.

Kṛṣṇa Kathā dāsa (Chris Scott) is a retired homeopath and bookseller and has contributed many articles to various magazines. He has managed temples in Dublin, Co. Fermanagh and Belfast and has lived in several rural devotional communities in Ireland and France. He received spiritual initiation from Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami in 1982 and now lives in London with his wife Yamuna Lila.

Vyāpaka dāsa was initiated by Śrīla Prabhupāda in 1975 in Winnipeg, Canada. For several years, he studied and practiced organic farming both inside and outside of ISKCON. He subsequently spent 15 years as an inspector in the organic foods industry while operating his own farm. As a researcher and writer, he contributed to the *Organic Field Crop Handbook* compiled by Canadian Organic Growers (COG). He has written many articles and currently lives in Jaipur, India where he assists the farm there.