

Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal

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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 outlined by Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, 4.13. This issue is the final one in the series.

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DAIVA-VARṆĀŚRAMA JOURNAL

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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*.

He explained: “For large scale, *varṇāśrama* is required. Currently, ISKCON is small scale. Very insignificant. But if you want to make the whole human society perfect, then this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be introduced according to Kṛṣṇa’s instruction (*cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭam*—BG 4.13). Now we are recruiting a small part of society, the best, the *brāhmaṇas*. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu said *para-upakāra*. Why should only a certain section be recruited? *Para-upakāra* means for the benefit of the masses.

“Thus, we must introduce *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It must be done perfectly. It is possible and the people will be happy.” Feb 14, 1977, conversation, edited for clarity.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, this is the last issue of the journal.

Your servants, the editors

I. Vaiṣṇava Environmental Activism

Dayānanda dāsa

Vaiṣṇava environmental activism is not just an aspect of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. It casts a wide net and is essential for recruiting large numbers to Mahāprabhu's movement.

People who join an activist group are eager to do something. It is active, on the street. For example, people block traffic by sitting in front of the cars, and they glue themselves to fixtures so they can't be moved. They are often willing to be arrested, all indicating a high level of commitment.

When devotees hear the word environment in connection to *varṇāśrama*, they often categorize it with social problems like crime, human trafficking, corrupt government, failed economy, food shortages, and other issues. They say that discussion of the environment is only one aspect of *varṇāśrama* no more important than any other.

However, that is not true. Those are all socio-political concerns. Environmental solutions are cultural, which may be directly solved by *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture.

To see how effective a preaching vehicle might be, one should (1) evaluate the level of passion and commitment around each one, and (2) see how well *daiva-varṇāśrama* addresses it.

The first four social problems listed above (crime, etc.) do not generate a very strong or long-term level of passion, and our implementation of *varṇāśrama* does not address them very well. Number five, food shortage, is under the category of the environment.

And all five are temporary. In general, they will come and go depending on the socio-political climate. Environmental degradation is here to stay, and it will cause many other problems.

The U.S. and other wealthy countries have a history of correcting serious social and governmental problems like crime, economy, etc. But the major weakness of all countries, wealthy and poor, is environmental exploitation. That is built into the fabric of America and the other wealthy countries. Thus, it cannot be solved without cultural change. Moreover, it is a problem that will last for generations.

Here are a few inspiring numbers. They show how many people are friendly, supportive, and in many cases, willing to sacrifice for an activist cause:

Fridays for Future or School Strike for Climate: In 2019, one million strikers in 2,200 strikes were organized in 125 countries.

Just Stop Oil: 2,300 arrests with 138 people spending jail time.

Extinction Rebellion: Since 2018, they have recruited 250,000 people in 1,000 groups in 75 nations. (They are the people who sit in front of cars, of course not all 250K.)

Earth Day: Established in 1970 for environmental protection, huge numbers take part in functions in 192 countries.

Green Parties: Starting around 1972, these are left-leaning political parties now in 90 countries.

Greenpeace: Founded in 1971, they claim 3.5 million members in 55 countries.

Quite a lot of popular sentiment supports the groups listed here, but they have weak ideologies. There is not one significant group in the world that has proven solutions. They all depend on the promises of left-wing political ideology and unproven technologies.

Varṇāśrama, meaning natural village life, is a proven solution. Just 50-80 years ago, the villages of South Asia, which were roughly based on *varṇāśrama*, were models of harmony with nature—proof that *varṇāśrama* culture solves environmental issues.

It is sad news that Extinction Rebellion got 250,000 people in five years, or School Strike for Climate has one million followers. *Daiva-*

varṇāśrama should have those people. And indeed, with a little effort, *daiva-varṇāśrama* can have that many.

It begins with faith in this type of preaching. The next step is to implement it widely.

II. Vaiṣṇava Cultural Ecology

Dayānanda dāsa

Overview

This article criticizes empirical science¹ as incomplete and thus ineffective in offering substantial solutions to environmental issues. I argue for the need for a non-empirical science, Vaiṣṇava cultural ecology, not to be confused with ideas of cultural ecology developed by anthropologists and businesses since the 1950s.²

The science of Vaiṣṇava cultural ecology defines culture as the interaction of three elements: human behavior, knowledge systems, and the environment.³

Here, the word environment is nearly synonymous with nature.

¹ Empirical means observational, meaning a science that limits its understanding of the world by observing it is empirical. Such sciences either reserve judgement on anything that cannot be observed, or they discount it.

² *Theory of Culture Change* by Julian Steward, 1955; Frake, Charles O. (1962), "Cultural Ecology and Ethnography," *American Anthropologist*; Marietta L. Baba, (1995), "The Cultural Ecology of the Corporation," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*.

³ Here, human behavior means the basic functions shared with animals like eating, sheltering, mating, etc., yet unrefined by any system of knowledge. A knowledge system defines reality, an ideal, or methods of function effectively in the world. The environment means material nature. The objective of this paper is not to introduce God or spirituality. Instead, the intent is to attack modern science and culture based on direct observation of society's relation to nature. The purpose for doing so is to establish the superiority of Viṣṇu-centered culture—Vaiṣṇava culture.

Included in the term *knowledge systems* are science, religion,⁴ ideology, superstition, and philosophy. That is because they all combine to contribute to the reality of a culture. Modern science is empirical, and the other knowledge systems are generally non-empirical.⁵

Living in balance with nature is the true material reality and imperative of a culture. Imbalance creates a false reality.

According to Vaiṣṇava cultural ecology, for a knowledge system to operate responsibly in society, it must contribute to the human-ecosystem balance, and it must have mechanisms to prevent imbalance. Thus, all knowledge systems must be analyzed equally to determine how responsible they are, or how much they contribute to a culture's balance or imbalance with nature.⁶

True Culture

When a culture is out of balance with nature, it is said to be unnatural. From the perspective of nature, it is a false culture since natural is true and unnatural is false.

A culture must be true or natural for its population to survive and flourish.⁷

⁴ "Some scholars argue that it is not appropriate to apply the term religion to non-Western cultures." See Dubuisson, Daniel (2007). *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology*. Thus, I argue that religion does not necessarily mean faith in God. At minimum, it means the set of codes given to humans to live in the world properly. It is more appropriate to categorize it with the other systems of knowledge that influence societies. That will be made more apparent as this article progresses.

⁵ Religions, ideologies, superstitions, and philosophies generally place importance on non-empirical evidence to form their truths. In some cases, evidence may be observational or empirical. However, since their epistemologies are not fully empirical, they are called non-empirical.

⁶ No culture in the Kali-yuga has been proven to operate perfectly; however, a culture must have reasonable balance with nature to be considered viable.

⁷ According to the analysis of Ernst Mayr, noted biologist, "Every species is fertile enough so that if all offspring survived to reproduce, the population would grow." [Author's note: Species overexploit nature if left unchecked. In the case of humans, an unchallenged top predator, it is the duty of their knowledge systems to guide and restrict them.]

The concept of a true or false culture is part of the epistemology of Vaiṣṇava cultural ecology.

Here, epistemology refers to a culture's truth or material reality and how it is defined or proven as true. *Sat*⁸ or true culture must be in balance with nature. Otherwise, it is *asat*.⁹ *Sat* means true, good, or spiritual. *Asat* means the opposite.¹⁰

In Vedānta philosophy, *sat* means real because it is in relation to the Supreme.¹¹ *Asat* is neither real nor in relation to the Supreme. Vaiṣṇava culture is *sat*. It is in relation to the Supreme.

However, the objective here is to present an argument that conforms to empiricism. Empirical scientists or those influenced by them will not accept that Vaiṣṇava culture's connection with the Supreme is proof that it is true culture.

However, they must accept that it is true culture because it is in balance with nature. It is an observable, proven fact that traditional Vaiṣṇava culture flourishes in far greater balance with nature than modern culture.¹²

⁸ In Sanskrit, *sat* means true.

⁹ The dictionary definition of *sat* is true or real. *Asat* is untrue or false. (Monier Williams) Also, SB 5.5.30, synonyms and BG 17.28 synonyms.

¹⁰ Following is a simple translation of BG 17.26-28: "The word *sat* is used in relation to the Supreme and the knowers of Brahman (*sādhus*). Thus, *sat* is used in performing all auspicious activities. What is permanent in sacrifice, austerity, and charity, is called *sat*. Any work dedicated to the Lord (*sat*) is called *sat*. However, faithless sacrifice, charity, or austerity is *asat*—false or useless." Prabhupāda's translation of BG 17.26-28: "The Absolute Truth is the objective of devotional sacrifice, and it is indicated by the word *sat*. The performer of such sacrifice is also called *sat*, as are all works of sacrifice, penance, and charity which, true to the absolute nature, are performed to please the Supreme Person, O son of Prṥhā. Anything done as sacrifice, charity, or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Prṥhā, is impermanent. It is called *asat* and is useless both in this life and the next."

¹¹ *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.4.14, commentary by Baladeva: "Sat indicates Brahman." Also, SB 10.88.10: *tad brahma paramaṁ sūkṣmaṁ cin-mātraṁ sad anantakam*, "That param-brahma (Supreme Absolute) is subtle, eternal, and pure *sat*."

¹² For references to support this statement, see *The Environmental Solution* by Michael Wright (available on cvc.guru)

A culture that lives in balance with nature is *sattva*. Again, *sat* means good, real, or spiritual. The word *sat-tva*¹³ means goodness, reality, or spirituality, and *asattva* means badness, quality of impermanence, or falseness.¹⁴ Hence, a *sattva* culture is goodness or reality, and an *asattva* culture is falseness.¹⁵

Also, *asat* is *tamah* or the mode of darkness, ignorance.¹⁶

And *tamah* produces *ugra-karma*, the work that destroys the planet.¹⁷

A culture that is true (*sattva*) is in balance with both its higher and lower nature (*sva-bhāva*). A culture's nature (*sva-bhāva*) is to follow its *dharma* (*sva-dharma*).¹⁸

Considering the three components of culture—human nature, knowledge systems, and the environment—the culture's knowledge systems must be dharmic and they must guide humans toward *dharma*. It is *dharma* that elevates the culture to *sattva* or reality. And it is *dharma* that prevents the destruction of nature.¹⁹

If a knowledge system like democracy, empirical science, etc., does not have such a *dharma*, the people resort to *adharmā* or animal life. That *adharmic* life is the life of greed that destroys nature.

¹³ The Sanskrit suffix *tva* means the quality of. As a suffix it is generally translated as -ness or -ity.

¹⁴ SB 6.1.41 lecture, July 22, 1975: "Asat means which is not good or which is not eternal, or temporary. *Asato mā sad gama* [Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (BU) (1.3.28)]. The Vedic injunction is = don't keep yourself in *asat*; come to the *sat*. *Tamasi mā jyotir gama*: don't keep yourself in the darkness; come to the light."

¹⁵ Definitions from Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 1899.

¹⁶ BU 1.3.28: *asato mā sadgamaya* | *tamaso mā jyotirgamaya* | *mṛtyormā mṛtaṃ gamaya*, "From *asat*, lead me to *sat*; from ignorance, lead me to the light; from the path to death, lead me on the path to liberation."

¹⁷ SB 7.9.8 lecture, Feb 15, 1976: "So this *ugra-karma*, formerly this *ugra-karma* was entrusted to the demons. Those who were in the *sattva-guṇa*, they do not like this *ugra-karma*. *Sattva-guṇa*, *rajo-guṇa*, *tamo-guṇa*. *Rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ* [SB 1.2.19]." Also, BG 16.9: "Following such conclusions, the demoniac, who are lost to themselves and who have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible [*ugra-karma*] works meant to destroy the world."

¹⁸ See the "Dharma" article in this issue of the journal and the treatment of *sva-bhāva* (one's nature) with *sva-dharma* (one's *dharma*).

¹⁹ SB 10.13.53 purport: "*Varṇāśrama-dharma*, therefore, is essential, for it can bring people to *sattva-guṇa*. (SB 1.2.9-19)

If a knowledge system does not have a set of principles (*dharma*) to prevent the destruction of nature, it is not innocent. It is not aloof from blame as scientists claim to be. It is irresponsible and complicit in the destruction. A knowledge system must guide humanity with a *dharma* that prevents overexploitation of nature or else it is useless.²⁰

A culture's knowledge systems combine to create either a true or false culture.

When a cultural element contributes to imbalance, that is evidence of a false contribution.

The Theory of Evolution

After Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species* (1859), scientists became increasingly interested in the impact of the environment on species. Hence, many, especially biologists and anthropologists, are concerned with human adaptation to nature.

In simple terms, Darwin's theory is based on natural selection, caused by life's requirement to survive, and thus adapt to environmental change.²¹

Adaptation to ensure survival has the appearance of a good motivation for a species, but equating life with survival is limiting. The Vedāntic model of three basic life qualities—survival (*sat*),²² knowledge (*cit*), and enjoyment (*ānanda*)—is more realistic.²³

²⁰ BG 17.28: "Anything done as sacrifice, charity, or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Prthā, is impermanent. It is called *asat* and is useless both in this life and the next."

²¹ It is outside the scope of this paper to explain natural selection in detail. One may search for "natural selection" in Wikipedia.

²² Here, I am equating survival with *sat* although the normal definition of *sat* is eternal existence. That is because the interaction of the three modes of nature causes the living entity to fight for survival. The motivation for that fight is that the living entity is *sat*, eternal existence. The living entity falsely identifies with the three modes, thus causing him to express his eternality (*sat*) as survival. See CC Adi 1.16 lecture, Apr 9, 1975.

²³ *Sac-cid-ānanda* is *sat* (eternal existence), *cit* (knowledge), and *ānanda* (enjoyment), the three elements of life. See Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (CC), Adi 4.61, Madhya 21.5; Vedānta-sūtra 1.1.12; BG 15.7.

Certainly, evolutionists and biologists have given much evidence that an essential part of life is survival, but they have not proven that the pursuit of knowledge and enjoyment is subordinate to survival.²⁴

The interactions of those three expressions or motivations may be infinite for all practical purposes. Those infinite combinations can show how the evolution of species becomes more complex, not just adaptive to environmental conditions.²⁵

Considering that, it is not useful for scientists to view societies only through the lens of survival. Doing so often prejudices historians, anthropologists, and others when they examine the technology of a culture to see how advanced it has become in survival.

Instead, cultures should be examined based on the three fundamental qualities, not just the one.²⁶ Moreover, that examination must be within the context of nature. When a culture's unique combination of survival, knowledge, and enjoyment acts well within nature, the culture may be understood to be well-developed.

²⁴ By subordinate, I mean they are not the result of chemicals that the living being produces. If they were chemicals, they would be subordinate to life itself. Instead, they are fundamental elements of life.

²⁵ Scientists have not decisively ascertained the reason for evolution from simple to complex forms. Most say that species compete with their predators resulting in an "evolutionary arms race" in which species try to become more complex than their rivals. (e.g., "Arms races between and within species," Dawkins & Krebs, 1979). According to the model of three—survival, knowledge, and enjoyment—species are always striving to live and seek knowledge and enjoyment, causing a species to move to more complex forms. When biologists define life only in terms of survival, they have trouble arguing evolution to more complex forms. The one-element survival model has an extremely low probability, meaning it is infinitely improbable that one element can cause millions of increasingly more complex species. In contrast, the model of three elements (*sac-cid-ānanda*) is deterministic (not probabilistic) due to the nearly infinite combinations of three. [Note that the influence of *karma*, the *tri-guṇas* (three modes), and *paramātmā*, which are also factors in the evolution of a living entity, are omitted here for simplicity. One reason for that omission is to emphasize life's essential element of enjoyment (*ānanda*). It is imperative for a culture's knowledge systems to manage enjoyment. Modern enjoyment is based on greed, which in turn destroys nature.]

²⁶ Knowledge and enjoyment are fundamental elements in the relationship between humans and their ecosystem. If either their knowledge or enjoyment systems impel humans to destroy nature, those systems must be repaired. Some cultures have healthy systems, and some do not.

When the three fundamentals of life combine within a culture to destroy and overexploit nature, such a culture causes imbalance to its ecosystem and dies or diminishes due to the superior force of nature.

Therefore, cultural “evolution” or development must not be measured on survival alone. It must be considered properly developed when it can achieve balance within its ecosystem. In other words, a culture’s expression of the three life qualities—survival, knowledge, and enjoyment—must be in balance with nature.

Even if one considers survival to be the core motivation of evolution, human development should still be indexed to human-ecosystem balance, not to any less natural feature, like economy, political power, human rights, poverty, etc.

Cultural Ecology

In 1955, Julian Steward, in his *Theory of Culture Change*, introduced the term *cultural ecology*. His theory described culture in terms of “subsistence activities and economic arrangements.”

As explained above, problems arise when anthropologists view culture only in terms of survival.

Therefore, the Vaiṣṇava definition of cultural ecology is different from Steward’s.

Modern scientists are limited to empirical evaluations. Culture is comprised of myriad non-empirical elements like human behavior and knowledge systems. Thus, empiricists are limited in their conclusions. And, when they wish to apply the results of their observations to another culture, they are trying to integrate foreign non-empirical values into a non-empirical entity. That is outside the scope of their disciplines.

The key word here is *values*. They do not easily assimilate into humanism or any other popular ideology contrary to the attempts of some.

At minimum, values arise from a combination of the three qualities of life guided by knowledge systems²⁷ and molded by the infinite influences imposed by nature.²⁸ When attempting to move values from one culture to another to guide it toward greater balance, an empiricist will have serious problems. The empiricist does not truly understand the non-empirical origin of the values, or their destination, being another non-empirical culture.

When a culture, like modern culture, is out of balance with its ecosystem,²⁹ empiricists are of little use when attempting to correct the imbalance.

Therefore, Vaiṣṇava cultural ecology must be accepted on an equal footing with empirical sciences even though it is not entirely based on empirical methods. It determines the proper relationships between modern cultures and nature. So, it must have the power to make cultural adjustments accordingly.³⁰ And its acceptance by the scientific community is essential, since without it, modern culture is in danger of losing much, including its sciences.

²⁷ In the case of Vaiṣṇava culture the knowledge system is Vaiṣṇava-vedānta. Its *śāstras* guide people in *varṇāśrama* society to live in greater balance with nature than in modern society.

²⁸ This statement is a nod toward the influences of the three modes and *karma*.

²⁹ The assertion here is that modern global culture, basically European derived culture, has become seriously out of balance with its environment. Its overexploitation results in destruction, pollution, and depletion of nature and its resources. For example, see footprintnetwork.org and "The destruction of nature threatens the world economy. It's time to outlaw it as a serious financial crime," Midori Paxton, United Nations Development Programme.

³⁰ If governments are funding their militaries to defend against the aggression of foreign powers, they must spend even more to ensure cultural balance with nature. That is because the threat imposed by nature to a society that is out of balance is greater than that of foreign armies. If modern society continues to destroy its environment, that will result in a strong, possibly overwhelming reaction from nature even causing an extinction of humanity according to some. Thus, for example, in the United States, the science of cultural ecology should be funded with at least one trillion dollars yearly (based on the military budget according to usaspending.gov). That money will not only be used to correct the superficial aspects of imbalance by reducing the carbon footprint, healing lands, and cleaning bodies of water, but also for the more difficult and costly task of changing cultural values by redirecting the knowledge and enjoyment systems of the culture.

Reality

A culture's truth or material reality is explained by the combination of its internal components acting within nature. Those components are human behavior and knowledge systems, which have their own epistemologies not necessarily congruent with empiricism.

For example, although technologies arise from modern science, which is empirical, the use of technologies is typically based on human sentiment or attachment to feelings and desires. The reality that is created by such use is often destructive to the environment. As a result, in general, scientists ally with business and political interests to correct the imbalance. In doing so, an empirical system, science, partners with two non-empirical systems—business and politics, which are in part based on unreasonable human desires to overexploit natural resources.

Thus, modern science, as a knowledge system, proves its ineffectiveness in guiding humanity. Such proof is supported by the lack of evidence of a complete solution for environmental destruction.

In contrast, traditional Vaiṣṇava *varṇāśrama* society can be investigated due to its greater balance with nature, proving itself to be a true or natural culture.

If humanity continues to significantly destroy its environment, scientists will not be able to avoid responsibility and claim immunity from blame.

The public is led to believe that science is based on evidence—truth is proven by evidence. However, the evidence shows that sciences have partnered with governments and businesses that are creating serious imbalances between humans and their ecosystems.

That proves the irresponsibility of empirical science or at least of scientists.

Therefore, establishing the science of Vaiṣṇava cultural ecology is the responsible direction.

III. Traditional Indian Life

Bhakti Vikāsa Swami

Sometime in 1993 in Dubai, my good friend Ranganathan was driving me back after an evening lecture program when he started telling me about his childhood in a traditional Śrī Vaiṣṇava village in South India. Encouraged by my interest, he went on talking even after we reached my apartment, and it was well after midnight before I finally got out of the car. I lay down to rest thinking of what a pleasing life these people had led, and how even now people could live like this, if they would simply agree to.

My memory wandered over the years I had spent in India and Bangladesh. In the course of preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I had travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent and experienced the varieties of Hindu culture prominent in each area.

Having stayed in the homes of many pious and cultured Hindus, I had gradually come to learn something about what real culture means. I thought of the many cultured people I knew throughout the Indian subcontinent, living representatives of a dying way of life. I resolved to make a book based on interviews with such people, to try to convey a feeling of what life in the old India was like, and what it could and should be like even now. I started thinking deeply on where man had gone wrong in his quest for technological development, what traditional societies had that we now lack, and what the actual criteria of civilization should be.

A principal goal of enlightened civilization is to elevate its members to their ultimate capacity. A truly advanced society does not strive simply for the ephemeral requirements of eating, sleeping, mating, and defending, for even the animals do that. Real human civilization begins with philosophical inquiry into the nature of God, the universe, and the ontological position of the living beings.

Therefore, spiritually oriented civilizations throughout the world practiced a realistic approach to life that catered to all aspects of the individual—physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual—while stressing the responsibility of each person to the rest of society. And as man has to live with, and by, the mercy of nature, traditional land-based cultures stressed respect to all life and co-operation with nature. They sought to take from nature only as needed, and to give back proportionately as they took out.

In traditional societies, man fulfilled his needs in a simple and eco-friendly way. Material requirements were fulfilled without undue struggle. There were no industrial complexes producing endless varieties of unnecessary accessories to an artificial way of life. Nor were there huge shopping plazas for touting such unwanted goods. Nor was there an advertising industry goading the public into buying things they did not need. The economic system was based on need, not greed. Trade was limited, and mostly by barter: “I give you something you need; you give me something I need.” There were no stocks or shares, market crashes, currency speculation, budget balancing, inflation, mass unemployment or strikes.

Life's basic necessities – food, clothing, housing materials and fuel – were available from the land. Cotton was spun at home. Every village would have a potter to make vessels for cooking. Larger villages would have a blacksmith, who would make simple farming and cooking utensils, razors (one razor would last a man for life), and other such items using either non-locally produced or recycled metal. Rope and string were produced locally from fibers of plants such as coconut, jute, and flax. Water was available from rivers, wells, and ponds. There was no need for waterworks, sewage systems, water closets or taps. Nor was there a need for electricity, for people were accustomed to living

without complex machines. Lamps burning home-produced vegetable oil supplied light. The heat of summer would be tolerated, with bamboo hand fans giving a little relief. Winter would be met with extra blankets and wood fires. Medicines, cosmetics, and dyes were made at home from plants. There was no need for furniture, for people would sit, eat, cook, study and sleep on the floor.

Those leading such pristine lives tended to be innocent and unpretentious. They didn't have strong negative emotions. Bitterness, depression, and the like were practically unknown. People tended to be satisfied with what they had and considered advancement not in terms of surrounding oneself with material possessions but in becoming detached from such objects. Life based on these values was simple, natural, and pleasing and tended to foster good qualities such as honesty, respect for others, kindness, and so on.

Of course, simply living in the country does not automatically bring peace of mind and spiritual wisdom. Some villagers are little more spiritually enlightened than the dogs and buffaloes they live among. And city dwellers who try to "get away from it all" by moving to the country simply bring their passion and problems with them. After all, the very nature of the material world is that it is miserable. Either in the town or the village, human life without God consciousness is little better than that of the animals.

But the simple agrarian life certainly lends itself to God realization more naturally than the complex urban society of today. Everything in nature speaks of God for those with the eyes to see it. Therefore, sages traditionally preferred to live far from the hubbub of urban life. Breathing fresh air and drinking pure water, they could peacefully meditate upon God as the cause and upholder of nature.

But industrialized man has strayed far from such innocent existence. Modern city life is highly artificial, being far removed from its source of sustenance. City dwellers, even if of theistic bent, tend to have very little idea about the relationship between man, God, and nature. They think food comes from a shop, light from a switch, and health from a pill. Multinational corporations rape mother earth, exploit her resources, stick people in factories and sell all kinds of junk

to them. Industrialization and consumerism influence people to become selfish, ignorant, and grossly materialistic. Secular education teaches man to consider himself master of his own destiny, and nature an adjunct to “progress”—a beast to be hacked and tortured into submission.

For all their advancement and economic development, modern city dwellers cannot even get decent drinking water, what to speak of peace and contentment. In modern cities, drinking water is often bought, because the tap water is repeatedly recycled sewage mixed with chemicals. Even then, bottled mineral water has no taste or vigor like fresh river water or well water.

People in big cities drive out to the country on weekends just to breathe some fresh air, whereas in the village, air means fresh air. What a nasty civilization, that crowds people into unhealthy, crime-ridden cities, has them work in horrible, dangerous factories, and provides them with poisonous air and food.

City dwellers do not have to walk a lot, carry water, or work in the fields, and tend to look down upon villagers as backward and primitive. But for all their modern conveniences, city folk have to exercise artificially, or otherwise end up with diseases like diabetes and piles.

Such artificial living makes for artificial people, who may smile on the outside but are hollow within. The modern city dweller is constantly overstimulated with a bombardment of information, advertisements and so-called entertainment. But his heart remains spiritually and emotionally empty. Although modern man can hardly envisage life without TVs, cars and innumerable diversions, this plethora of gadgets is a meager substitute for peace of mind.

Most villagers in the Third World still rise early, go to work in the fields, and hardly ever go far from home. Despite their apparent poverty, they are often more content than others who have more money than they need. They tend to be better mentally balanced than those who live life in the fast lane, divorced from the simple pleasures of stable family life and mutual sharing.

But village life throughout the world is under threat. The demands of consumer society are fast standardizing the planet into one vast urbanized megacomplex. Traditional cultures and values are being destroyed and people reduced to screws in a massive economic machine. The charm has even been removed from agriculture; now it is agribusiness. Sanity is being civilized out of existence.

Modern life is a ridiculously over-hyped grovel for sense gratification. Mindlessly, people dedicate themselves to the pursuit of wealth, luxury, power, and sexual gratification, although these have never brought anyone satisfaction. Lust, greed and anger are promoted as desirable and indeed indispensable to the modern man and woman. There is constant pressure to live up to the foolish ideals imposed by the entertainment and advertising industries. Consciously or unconsciously, people try to cut profiles shaped in a movie studio. They do not know their own identity because they are too busy trying to be someone else. They are anxious to “get ahead” by any means. Unfortunately, they do not know where they are getting ahead to.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa describes lust, greed, and anger as the three gateways to hell. Modern men do not like to believe in hell, but they are busy creating it on earth. Their habits are unregulated, imbalanced, unhealthy, and sinful. Their bellies are filled with junk food and animal corpses. People cannot trust even their spouses, children, or parents. Their values are perverted. They are proud of their big buildings and fast cars, but their minds are so agitated that they need a pill to go to sleep. The “advancement” they are so proud of is simply a ploy to make them work like beasts for the sake of sense enjoyment. Gorging on flesh and becoming intoxicated are considered normal by modern “civilized” man. People live in a fantasy world of sex, violence, and nonsensical sports. Psychosis, neurosis, child abuse, homosexuality, divorce, and the threat of nuclear holocaust are all part of everyday life.

Genuine spiritual culture, or the quest for God, is almost completely absent in modern society. The materialistic world view is so deeply embedded that the cultivation of transcendental knowledge is not only not encouraged, but is hardly even thought about, even by leading

intellectuals. The slaughter of millions of animals is considered so normal and acceptable that it continues year after year without protest. Governments not only sanction, but support divorce, contraception, abortion, and homosexuality. The godless society is so fallen in every aspect that many books could be written describing its moral decrepitude. Succinctly, one word describes it all: insanity.

As noted by Sir Arnold Toynbee, the late English historian: "The cause (of the world's malady) is spiritual. We are suffering from having sold our souls to the pursuit of an objective which is both spiritually wrong and practically unattainable. We have to reconsider our objective and change it, and until we do this, we shall not have peace either amongst ourselves or within each of us".

Many books have been written about the harm man has inflicted on himself and other living beings in the name of progress. The more enlightened victims cum participants in this catastrophe are looking for solutions to the mess man has landed himself in as well as the planet. Traditional societies and values, once rejected as primitive and useless, are again being reexamined, at least by some.

People talk of going back to nature without knowing that most of the world never left it. For instance, in America, if someone drives a bullock cart into town, he is likely to be photographed for the local newspaper. He would probably need police permission to bring bulls into an urban area. Yet in most areas of India bull power is still as common as that nasty, noisy, only seemingly better replacement called the tractor.

The original culture of India is Vedic (i.e., based on the Vedic literature). The Vedas present a vast body of knowledge, covering all manner of subjects from astronomy and mathematics to architecture, economics, and even the proper uses of warfare and sex. The essence of Vedic culture is the quest for freedom from birth and death, based on profound metaphysical philosophy and culminating in highly developed love of God. In India, religion was never compartmentalized as one aspect of life. It was life. Everything in life was ultimately directed towards a transcendental goal. Although a

religious ethos is also present elsewhere in the world, the degree to which it has been developed in India is outstanding.

Unfortunately, the past few centuries have seen the Vedic legacy become infiltrated by so many non-Vedic ideas. The original Vedic culture has been gradually modified, diluted, and contaminated in various ways, until it has become what is now known as Hinduism. Still, whatever real culture remains in India is valuable and worth learning from.

For even today, bits and pieces of traditional India still survive. See the Saurashtrian cowherd man leaning on his ornamental wooden stick, his feet adorned with curled-up ornately designed shoes, his face with a similarly curled-up mustache and his head covered with fifty meters of ribboned white cloth, intricately wrapped as a huge turban. And see his son, calling each cow of his herd by name, and playing his flute to gather them. Meet a small band of pilgrims walking from one holy place to another, on perhaps a thousand-kilometer journey to visit places of God, singing *bhajan*s as they walk, taking provisions from pious people along the way and stopping on the path at midday to cook *chapatis* in the open air on a fire made from twigs and leaves. Then there are groups of village women walking several kilometers to the nearest well or river, their brass water pots stacked one on top of another on their heads, with colorful clothing reflecting the early morning sun, their thick silver anklets just visible under their saris, their bracelets jostling up and down as they march along, singing to Kṛṣṇa with guileless simplicity.

However, the essence of Indian culture goes far deeper than its external manifestations. It is based on a subtle spiritual philosophy that is impenetrable to those not prepared to enter its intricacies. The difficulty in comprehension is compounded by the negative propaganda that Western scholars have inflicted upon Indian culture and religion for over two hundred years.

The Europeans have attempted to justify their forceful domination of India, which they called “civilizing the natives,” by labeling her great heritage as superstition. An example is found in *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* by Abbe Dubois, a French missionary who

lived in South India in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Dubois minutely observed and recorded the intricacies of life in India, and his 770-page volume is so interesting that it is still in print. Dubois, however, was a bigot who saw only with the eye, not the heart. He mixed intimately with the people, yet inwardly held them in utter disdain. He considered the sole hope for their improvement to lie not merely in conversion to Christianity, but in wholesale Westernization and rejection of their tradition.

Sturdy Christian that he was, Dubois could have hardly foreseen Western man's becoming more heathen than the pagans he sought to civilize. Yet Western man is no less enthusiastic to benevolently impose his latest fetish on the uncivilized peoples in the form of science and technology.

Until recently, it was widely believed that scientific progress would usher in paradise. A book published in 1965 by the United States Information Service declared: "In the short space since she won independence, India has taken huge strides toward assuring the blessings of modern life for her citizens. In health, education, industry and development, India is forging ahead. The changes are coming and will come to India's villages, too—not to destroy the peace and dignity of rural life, but to enhance it with more security, more of the good things of the world. Change is beginning to come. In the villages, hope shines through."

Nowadays, however, at least some in the West are realizing the mistake of foisting their economy and values on the so-called undeveloped world. As man gropes for alternatives to the soul-killing civilization, the significance of Indian culture is emerging from under the mud the West sought to bury it in. Westerners themselves are taking leading roles in promoting this oldest of human civilizations.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, the Founder-*Ācārya* of ISKCON and the greatest exponent of Vedic culture in the modern age, was keenly aware of the discrepancies in human society and strived to establish Vedic culture as a blueprint for reviving spiritual values throughout the world:

“Vedic culture is perfect for human society, perfect culture. You have to adopt it. Then you become happy. The whole human society becomes happy, never mind where it is. It is a science, how to live just like human beings, not like cats and dogs. That is Vedic culture. Everyone is happy. Still, those who are following Vedic principles are happier than others.

“Because it is the society of *śūdras* everywhere, there is confusion. No brain. Simply 'want, want, want, want, want.' And in brahminical culture, you will find even a very poor *brāhmaṇa* – no source of income, no fixation of foodstuff even – he is happy. He is happy by his knowledge. He'll satisfy himself. If he does not get his food, then he will think that 'This day Kṛṣṇa desired that I should not have my food. Oh, it is Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. It is Kṛṣṇa's mercy.'

“We are just trying to introduce the real civilization. Actually, there is no civilization at the present moment. They are simply cats and dogs fighting one another. This is not civilization. Atheists and demons are predominating. And because they have got big, big skyscraper buildings and many motorcars, India has become victimized: 'Oh, without this motorcar and without this skyscraper building, we are condemned.' So, they are trying to imitate. They have forgotten their own culture, the best culture, Vedic culture. So, this is the first time that we are trying to conquer the demonic culture with this Vedic culture. This is the first time. So, it is very pleasing that you have joined this movement. If you want to make the human society happy, give them this culture of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

During my travels in India, I was often amazed at how high class some of the families I stayed with were. Having been brought up as an uncouth *mleccha*, I sometimes felt embarrassed to be among such elevated people, especially as they respected and served us as *sādhus*. They were naturally well-behaved and cultured, yet humble, without artificial sophistication or snobbishness. Their family life was ordered and content, to a degree I had never seen in the West.

For example, the Indian children obeyed their parents without question. I have more than once stayed as the guest of prosperous

businessmen who, although they had grandchildren, were unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly obedient to their fathers.

I occasionally visited a Sanskrit professor who had mentored thousands of students during his long career. Although widely known and highly respected throughout Orissa, he would insist on bowing down before me as a monk (*sannyāsī*), despite my attempts to stop him. And he would try to stop me from returning his obeisances, although he was clearly pleased that I had imbibed the impulse to do so. My family background and previous activities were low class and abominable, particularly compared to his. I could speak but a few words of Sanskrit and was young enough to be his son, yet he saw the positive: “Whatever his past may be, he is a *sannyāsī* and therefore worshipable. He has renounced all prospects of material enjoyment to serve Śrī Hari. For all my learning, I am a householder, bound up in the material world. I must bow down.”

Moving among such people gave me an inside perspective on Indian civilization and brought it to life for me. Indian culture was for me no longer a theory in a book, quaint and antiquated customs for the wistful and for anthropologists. I came to develop an appreciation of the value of true human culture, and to understand that even the high philosophical ideals I was professing and practicing were incomplete without culture.

In taking a look at life the way it was not so long ago in India before modernization, we find a more or less contented people with no serious social or psychological problems. Life was going on in basically the same way it had for thousands of years. Most importantly, we find a society with knowledge of the soul and God at the base of its moral codes, family ideals and educational values.

Śrīla Prabhupāda often stressed that all necessities of life could be had by living on the land. He wanted ideal farming communities to be established all over the planet. Such communities would have Kṛṣṇa consciousness as their basis, dependence on the land, the cows and Kṛṣṇa as the means of sustenance, simple living and high thinking as their motto, and Vedic culture as their way of life.

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Traditional Indian Life.*

IV. Social Chaos

Dayānanda dāsa

Overview

Devotees should not wait for or expect social chaos to enhance the *varṇāśrama* movement.

A dear friend wrote me the following:

I think that the chanting and *saṅkīrtana* will continue, and *varṇāśrama* life may attract many as Kali-yuga gets worse and worse. Agrarian life is best, but until things get worse it may not attract so many even amongst the devotees. Gradually, I think farm life will attract people having (as Śrīla Prabhupāda said) solved the greatest problem: food. If food becomes less and less available (due to economic pressures), farm life may sound like a very good idea. I think the evolution of *varṇāśrama* life will take time and increasing chaos in the greater social body to become fully established.

Unfortunately, these arguments do not communicate the enthusiasm for *varṇāśrama* that Prabhupāda had.

My friend's two major arguments are food production and chaos. The rest of this article is my analysis of them as they relate to *varṇāśrama*.

At the center of *daiva-varṇāśrama* is worship of Kṛṣṇa. Along with that is the elevation of the citizens to liberation.

Prabhupāda emphasized natural food production, because our animal needs—eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—should not

be made more complex as in modern society. Thus, implementing an agrarian economy is an important element in the pursuit of detachment from its complexities and liberation from sense gratification.

Regarding chaos, Prabhupāda explained that current society is already in chaos since it is based on animal life—eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. To become free from chaos on a social level, *varṇāśrama* must be established.

Goal of Varṇāśrama

First, we must look at the fundamental reasons for establishing *daiva-varṇāśrama* and understand what the secondary reasons are, keeping those in perspective.

The most important reason is that Kṛṣṇa has established it.¹ And Prabhupāda has recommended we implement it to expand preaching among the masses. It is good for the masses because they will be engaged in glorifying Kṛṣṇa, either directly or indirectly, due to participation in *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, which has the potential to act as an umbrella culture for millions.²

The *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture conforms with daivic culture.³ If we do not participate in that culture, we are enmeshed in its opposite, asuric culture, which is predominant in the world. Devotees are demigods.⁴ As such, they want to cooperate with Viṣṇu and the *devas*, not the *asuras*.

Chaos

Prabhupāda often asserted that *varṇāśrama* will promote organization and prevent chaos. By that, he meant organization for advancement in

¹ *Bhagavad-gītā* (BG) 4.13

² Conversation with Prabhupāda, Feb 14, 1977. Also, see my article in *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal* 1.1, “II. Strategic Directions—Opinion.”

³ BG 16.10: “But those who are *devas*, godly, their lusty desire is controlled, restricted. Therefore this *varṇāśrama*, four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*, this is education how to control this lusty desire. That is required.”

⁴ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (CC) Adi 3.91

spiritual life. Kṛṣṇa's *varṇāśrama* system is not meant to organize society for sense gratification. Instead, it is designed to elevate society to detachment from sense gratification.

Prabhupāda's use of the word *chaos* is different from those who envision a society nicely organized for eating, sleeping, mating, and defending.⁵ When Prabhupāda says a society is in *chaos*, he means current society, which is organized for animal pursuits. Simply eating, sleeping, mating, and defending without the higher pursuits introduced by *varṇāśrama* society is chaos. Thus, current society is already in such chaos and already in urgent need of *varṇāśrama*.⁶

Devotees sometimes say it is an antidote to economic issues, and they say that it is environmentally friendly, meaning it is a way for society to live in harmony with nature.⁷ These reasons are secondary. The primary purpose is to elevate the members of society to *mokṣa*. That means liberation from the bondage of *karma*, which is caused by attachment to sense gratification. And beyond *mokṣa*, it is meant to cultivate loving service to Kṛṣṇa.

They are the primary reasons.

When we introduce the secondary reasons, we should be careful not to falsely advertise or we will be caught in a lie. For example, if we say *varṇāśrama* solves economic issues, some may object. Devotees in our rural communities live austerely. But austerity is not considered an economic solution. It is the opposite in modern circles.⁸ Thus, we must be educated and prepared when teaching others.

⁵ BG 13.3 lecture, Dec 30, 1972: "If you want to, if you want to maintain, keep the perfect human civilization, then you must maintain this *varṇāśrama*. Otherwise, there will be chaos. Because we have created chaos in the world, without following the Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is trouble. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is all-around solution, overall solution of all problems."

⁶ Conversation, July 30, 1973: "*Nānyat tat-toṣa-kāraṇam* [Cc. Madhya 8.58]. So in order to satisfy Him [Viṣṇu], there is no other way than to act according to the tenets of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. This is the beginning of civilization. Without accepting this division of *varṇas*, that is animal society; everything is chaos."

⁷ Of the two, I prefer speaking about Vaiṣṇava (*varṇāśrama*) culture's relations with nature, and I have written extensively on that subject.

⁸ Britannica.com under austerity (economics): "Austerity measures can in principle be used at any time when there is concern about government expenditures exceeding

And we should not fool ourselves. *Varṇāśrama* life is meant to become detached from material comforts and attached to Kṛṣṇa. If we have some other expectation, we may become disappointed and disillusioned. *Varṇāśrama* is a material social construct given by Kṛṣṇa. Just because he has offered it to humans does not mean they will execute it perfectly.

It is the best system in the world. Such a perfect system requires advanced, honest devotees to implement it. Otherwise, the road can be rough.

In conclusion, devotees introduce *varṇāśrama* because it is a way to engage the masses in the culture that glorifies Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. It is the way of the *devas*. When executed properly, it is the best way to guide an entire society away from material life and toward attachment to Kṛṣṇa.

Food Production

An agrarian economy that uses natural means of production is at the heart of *varṇāśrama*. The fundamental reason is not to provide society with a better means of food production. It is to reduce the complexity of our animal needs. By doing so, detachment or liberation from material life is easier. Thus, the goal of simple, natural food production is secondary; the primary goal is liberation.

Individually and in small groups, liberation may be achieved in other ways. However, *varṇāśrama*, which offers a simple means of acquiring basic needs like eating, is essential for the liberation of society. Modern society has little choice but to adopt *varṇāśrama* to achieve freedom from suffering for its citizens. Advanced technology cannot provide such freedom.

Often *varṇāśrama* is seen only in terms of farm, food production, and cow protection. Those are certainly essential parts of *varṇāśrama*; however, they do not form the basic purpose of the culture.

government revenues. Often, however, governments delay resorting to such measures because they are usually politically unpopular."

In the previous topics, I have explained the fundamental purpose, which is to organize society for spiritual advancement.

Food production, cow protection, brahminical influence, and performance of *yajña* are four essential items in *varṇāśrama* as well as austerity and charity. All those can be done according to the various modes of nature.⁹ Thus, it is up to the devotees to introduce the daivic methods in each case.

They are all meant to be coordinated for worshipping Viṣṇu.

Now, I am going to discuss some misunderstandings of Prabhupāda's statements and explain the context in which they should be taken.

First, when one analyzes Prabhupāda's statements, one must discriminate between conversations and his lectures or purports on *śāstra*. Conversational statements should be understood within their context. In nearly every case, there is a *śāstric* basis of the context, because Prabhupāda almost invariably spoke in terms of *śāstra*.

Thus, in a conversation, it is necessary to understand the context to find that *śāstric* reference. And it may be a little more difficult when the *śāstric* reference is paraphrased in English.

In relation to *varṇāśrama*, there are a few statements that are often quoted out of context. In each case, it appears Prabhupāda is emphasizing the importance of food production. As I mentioned above, food production is indeed an essential item of *varṇāśrama*; however, it is subordinate to the greater goal of liberation.

The following are three conversations.

In one case, Prabhupāda was speaking with Sir Alistair Hardy, professor at Oxford University.¹⁰ Prabhupāda said that the basic problems of material life are eating, sleeping, mating, and defending. He explained that humans invent more complex problems, but those are not the real ones. Turning away from God is the real one.

Thus, Prabhupāda's point was that humans should be careful not to introduce complexity when solving their basic problems like food.

⁹ BG, chapters 16-18

¹⁰ Conversation with Prabhupāda, July 27, 1973, London

That is because all problems may be solved by understanding and acting on the idea that God owns and controls everything.

Then, showing that he had not properly understood the point, Sir Hardy spoke of overpopulation. Prabhupāda said no. His response was to focus the conversation on food production. He explained that the problem is not overpopulation. The problems are caused when humans think they own the land. Instead, God owns everything, all lands. When humans act on that principle, they will understand that God provides food to all beings including humans. It is human greed and the sense of proprietorship over the land that cause the problems, not overpopulation.

His point was that humans should not expand their material problems. Bring them back to the one issue—God, who owns everything. Thus, Prabhupāda did not say that the ultimate solution is natural food production.¹¹ His point was that the solution is to simplify society's animal needs.

Another conversation is with Mr. Dixon, State Minister for Social Services in Australia.

Initially, Mr. Dixon wanted to know how to educate young people. Prabhupāda said the *sankīrtana* movement is purifying them. Then he transitioned to understanding how God owns everything. He asserted that the Europeans came to Australia and assumed ownership. His implication was that it was due to greed.

Prabhupāda explained that God supplies what is needed for all beings. He said to Mr. Dixon that if you are satisfied with food, then all your economic, social, political, philosophical, and religious needs will be met.¹²

¹¹ Prabhupāda said, "We have to eat something, we have to live somewhere, we must have our sex life and we must defend. These are four problems of living entity." [Sir Hardy interjected that overpopulation creates an economic problem. Prabhupāda did not agree. He explained,] "There is no other problem. These economic problems, other problems, that is our creation." [This means we create too much complexity in life. Then he explained why.] "We do not believe in God. That is the problem." [From July 27, 1973]

¹² Some devotees quote this statement and take it out of context by saying that natural food production solves all problems. Instead, the statement was part of a general

The important point is not food production. It is accepting that the land is controlled and owned by God. Here Prabhupāda implied that Europeans were not satisfied with solving the basic problems of life, so they occupied lands around the world. And the reason for their dissatisfaction was their imperfect understanding of God.

Toward the beginning of Prabhupāda's discussion with Mr. Dixon, he referred to the *Bhagavad-gītā* 5.29.¹³ That is the *śāstric* reference that one must understand to make a proper analysis of this conversation. Although Prabhupāda did not quote it, another verse that is relevant here is *Śrī Īṣopaniṣad* One.¹⁴

The third statement that is taken slightly, not completely, out of context is Prabhupāda's declaration, "I want to introduce *varṇāśrama*. At our Pennsylvania farm, the biggest problem of life is solved: food."¹⁵

Just prior to Prabhupāda's final departure, he spoke of going to London and then America. This statement is from that circumstance. In his biography of Śrīla Prabhupāda, Satsvarūpa Mahārāja summarizes the discussion. He indicates that Prabhupāda wanted to establish *varṇāśrama* in America as a gift to the mass of people, to the country. That was due to his feelings of affection and gratitude for their support in starting his movement.

argument asserting that God owns everything. In fact, it was used to argue against European culture and its greed to expand and seize lands.

¹³ BG 5.29: *bhoktāraṁ yajña-tapasāṁ sarva-loka-maheśvaram | suhrdaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ jñātvā māṁ śāntim ṛcchati ||* "A person in full consciousness of Me, knowing Me to be the ultimate beneficiary of all sacrifices and austerities, the Supreme Lord of all planets and demigods, and the benefactor and well-wisher of all living entities, attains peace from the pangs of material miseries."

¹⁴ *Īṣopaniṣad* 1: *iśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiñca jagatyāṁ jagat | tena tyaktena bhujñitā mā grdhaḥ 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."

¹⁵ *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, chapter 53, Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami. Note that my friend's note that I cited in the beginning of this article refers to Prabhupāda's statement: "biggest problem: food."

We know from Prabhupāda's other discussions on *varṇāśrama* that it is meant to benefit the masses.¹⁶ Pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*śuddha-bhakti*) is for the *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas and *varṇāśrama* is for everyone else.

And Prabhupāda liked the idea of going to Gītā-nagarī because they had solved the food problem, meaning they were producing food naturally without machines, without complicating the simple problem. Food is one of the basic problems of material life as we have learned from Prabhupāda's discussions with Sir Hardy and Mr. Dixon above.

Prabhupāda wanted his disciples to demonstrate that those basic problems may be solved simply, naturally, without undue complexity through machines, chemicals, and advanced technology. The purpose of such natural living is to focus society (*varṇāśrama*) on service to Viṣṇu.¹⁷

Moreover, we may understand that natural food production could be a significant problem for devotees living in America, because Americans do not know how to solve problems without advanced technology. Thus, his disciples solved their biggest problem, producing food naturally.

Food Shortage

When we believe that American society is on the brink of failure and will shortly run out of food, we make a serious mistake.¹⁸ Compared to most countries of the world, the U.S. has a large fertile land mass and a relatively small population. Although fossil fuels are central to food

¹⁶ In connection with *varṇāśrama*, Prabhupāda cites *para-upakāra*, for the benefit of humanity.

¹⁷ Conversation, Oct 8, 1977, "No luxuries. Live very simple life and you save time for chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa." [...] "So produce your own food and produce your own cloth." [...] "And money, spend for Kṛṣṇa—for Kṛṣṇa's palace, for Kṛṣṇa's temple, for Kṛṣṇa's worship, gorgeous, as gorgeously as [possible]. Not for false [artificial life]. This is the human civilization [dharmic]. And to organize this, *varṇāśrama* will help you to divide the society---*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*---as there is division in the body."

¹⁸ "4 Countries That Produce the Most Food," from Investopedia.com: "The U.S. is the world's top food exporter thanks to high crop yields and extensive agricultural infrastructure."

production, studies indicate that the U.S. economy can survive when fossil fuels are finished. Other energy sources can be used.¹⁹

The point is that unless people are taught that God owns everything, they will not be satisfied with simple living. Americans will continue to work hard to satisfy their greed even as other people in the world are suffering due to depleted resources. That is the nature of asuric society.

Thus, America and Europe are unlikely to experience serious, long-term food shortage any time soon. If their resources are somehow threatened, they may resort to military might to exploit others.

However they manage to maintain their greed, there will be options that do not involve God.²⁰

The focus on food in *varṇāśrama* is only secondarily meant to show people how food may be produced naturally. It is primarily to show that all material problems should be solved simply so that society can focus on spiritual advancement.

It is true Prabhupāda would sometimes indicate that disaster is coming. He also explained that disasters come and go. That happens all over the world. Nature creates floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions, plagues, and earthquakes. Humans create wars and various forms of oppression. Those are all natural.

¹⁹ For example, see "USA Without Fossil Fuel," large.standord.edu.

²⁰ Conversation, July 26, 1975: *Nara-nārāyaṇa*: There is so much mismanagement in different parts of the world that there are so many revolutions now in all parts of the world, including India, Africa and even the United States. There are so many problems based on the fact that their food grains and milk supply are not being supplied nicely or distributed nicely. Now, supposing that there is a demand that there should be good management for it. How these things should be distributed properly, by what system, so that people can get these things in a way that they can become God conscious and at the same time have their...? *Prabhupāda*: God consciousness does not depend on distribution of food. It requires cultural education. It does not mean that one who has got enough food, he is God conscious. The food distribution is not one of the conditions for becoming God conscious. That is wrong project. "If people are given sufficient food, they will become God conscious" That is not the fact. But people advance this theory, that "We are now economically distressed. We cannot turn our attention to God consciousness." That is a wrong plea. God consciousness does not depend on any material condition.

However, we cannot assume that people will turn to God when they are faced with such calamities. Even at death, most do not turn to God.²¹ The point is that disturbances only occasionally impel someone to approach God, and in that case, the faith of the person is generally weak.²²

Occasionally, not often, Prabhupāda or his disciples would speak on the inevitability of nuclear war, and someone would pose the question, “What should we do as devotees?”

Prabhupāda would respond, “Preach.”²³

Preaching

In conclusion, devotees should be eager for *varṇāśrama*. They should not wait for the end of the Kali-yuga or the dissolution of American, European, Indian, Russian, or Chinese society.

When that dissolution happens, devotees must already be physically prepared. If not, materialism will win. Hiranyakaśipu’s culture will

²¹ Morning walk, July 18, 1975: *Kṛṣṇadāsa*: Under the threat of nuclear warfare wouldn't Kṛṣṇa consciousness be easier to spread? *Prabhupāda*: No, threat is already there. But they are so fool that they are not afraid of the threat. Threat is already there. Everyone will die. That is the problem. So who is caring for this? They are avoiding this. They cannot take any anti-measures.

²² BG 7.6. Prabhupāda explains that one whose material problems are alleviated by taking shelter of God may not appreciate God’s grace. He may then again take shelter of *māyā*.

²³ Letter from Prabhupāda to Mākhānlāl, June 22, 1973: “You have asked about whether nuclear devastation on this planet would affect the *saṅkīrtana* movement. No, there is nothing that can stop the *saṅkīrtana* movement because it is the will of God Himself, Lord Caitanya, that His Holy Name be heard in every town and village. Neither can the demons devastate this planet independent of the will of Kṛṣṇa. Nothing happens without His sanction. If Kṛṣṇa wants to kill someone no one can save Him, and if Kṛṣṇa wants to save someone no one can kill him. For our parts we should just be determined to carry out our mission against all opposition, demons, nuclear war, whatever. The whole universe is finally subject to certain annihilation by the will of Kṛṣṇa, but devotional service is eternal and is the only certain way one can save himself from devastation. We can preach all over the world that the only way to be saved from collective and individual devastation is to take to the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa. In short, this material world is a very precarious place therefore we should always chant Hare Kṛṣṇa and seek Kṛṣṇa’s protection.”

triumph. There is always a fight between the *devas* and *asuras*. The *devas* do not remain complacent. They prepare and they fight.

In Mahāprabhu's movement, the fight means preaching, converting, spreading *saṅkīrtana*, and establishing *varṇāśrama* communities. It is a fight between the intelligent, clever devotees and the power-hungry, materially attached, ignorant *asuras*. We are lucky that presently we do not need to have Arjuna's, Rama's, or Hanuman's strength.

We seek to convert everyone to the service of Viṣṇu. And in most areas of the world, we are allowed to do that. Even though the societies are asuric, we can glorify Viṣṇu. We must take advantage now before we are no longer allowed to move so freely.

Yes, we should be afraid to linger. We need to work quickly to awaken our love and spread it widely.

V. Vedic Vaiṣṇava Villages

Bhakti Rāghava Swami (Dr. Réal L.J. Gagnon)

Summarized by Dayānanda dāsa

Editor's Note

This article is a summary of Bhakti Rāghava Swami's booklet of the same name. The complete booklet, which includes references and a bibliography, is online here.¹

Abstract

Vedic Vaiṣṇava Villages – Beginner's Guide to Simple Living and High Thinking explains 1) the importance of villages, 2) the principles of self-sufficiency, 3) the rural basis of Vedic culture, and 4) the steps to establish self-sufficient communities.

Invocation

*namo brahmaṇya-devāya go-brāhmaṇa-hitāya ca / jagad-dhitāya kṛṣṇāya
govindāya namo namaḥ*

My Lord, obeisances to You, O Kṛṣṇa, Govinda. You are the well-wisher of the cows, the *brāhmaṇas*, humanity, and the world.²

*om surabhyai nama iti mantro'yaṁ tu sad-akṣaraḥ / siddho lakṣa japennaiva
bhaktānām kalpa-pādayaḥ*

¹ <https://cvc.guru/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/BR-Swami-Vedic-Village.pdf>

² *Vishnu Purāṇa*, 1.19.65

Chanting *om surabhyai namaḥ* (obeisances to Surabhi) one lakh (100,000) times bestows all achievements and fulfills all the desires of the devotees of the Supreme Lord.³

*trātavyāḥ prathamam gāvah trātāḥ trāyanti tā dvijān | go-brāhmaṇa
paritrāṇe paritrātam jagat bhavet*

Above all, cows should be protected. Thus protected, they will in turn protect the *brāhmaṇas*. When the cows and *brāhmaṇas* are protected, the whole world is protected.⁴

Introduction

Vedic sociology promotes local, agrarian culture in contrast to modern city societies that are supplied by resources from around the world. The economic and social ethos is based on local production and cow protection.

Globally, the percentage of people in rural areas has dropped precipitously in the last hundred years. In some countries like India, the migration from village to city began after independence from colonialization and coincided with industrialization. In so-called developed countries, significant migration began in the mid-eighteenth century, again, along with industrialization.

Hundreds of years ago, European political, scientific, economic, and industrial revolutions prompted the move away from traditional living, effectively suppressing the *brahmanas* and weakening the *kṣatriyas*.

Modern technology and industry have driven us on the dangerous path of ever-increasing consumerism and exploitation of natural resources.⁵ In the last 30 years, over 30% of the natural resources on our planet have been depleted, all for ephemeral advancement and comfortable living. Global natural resources are depleting by 45% every year.⁶

³ *Brahma Vaivarta Purāna*, 2.47.16

⁴ *Harivamśa Purāna*, 55.31

⁵ "We are consuming the future," *The World Counts*, <https://www.theworldcounts.com/>

⁶ "Cost of growth: Global natural resources depleting by 45% a year," *Down to Earth*, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/>

Due to excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, our topsoil has lost up to 70% of its fertility and the global problem of desertification is threatening the ability for governments to feed the ever-increasing population with diminishing land to grow food. The food that we consume daily has lost up to 45% of its natural food value. The average vegetable found in today's supermarket is anywhere from 5% to 40% lower in minerals than those harvested just 50 years ago.⁷

Followers of the Vedic culture find the ever-increasing urbanization alarming and destructive. They know that village life best facilitates individuals and society to progress both in keeping with the eternal principles of material *sva-dharma* and spiritual *sva-dharma*.

This article, summarized from the booklet, is divided into the following topics: 1) Śrīla Prabhupāda, 2) Three Gifts of Nature, 3) Ethics of Cānakya, 4) Village *Svarāj* – M.K. Gandhi, 5) Other Sources, 6) Guiding Principles, 7) Four Options, 8) Land Selection, 9) Before Moving, 10) Thirty Qualities, 11) Vedic Economy, 12) Vedic Education, 13) Seven Essential Elements, 14) Conclusion.

1. Śrīla Prabhupāda

For those interested in relocating to villages, it is important to study the ideal village. One can do this by reading about ideal Vedic life.

And one may visit villages where the residents follow Vedic practices. For example, in Bali, Indonesia, every village has two types of leaders directing the community. One is the village head, called *Kepala Dusun*, and the other is called *Adat*, the head of cultural activities. In the Hindu villages of Indonesia, no one can be part of a village unless one agrees to regularly participate in cultural and religious functions, of which there are many. In this way, there are civic rules, as well as religious and cultural norms to respect.

Devotees, of course, can get good insights about villages and their importance by hearing directly from our Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas* like Śrīla Prabhupāda.

⁷ "Fruits and Vegetables Yielding Fewer Nutrients Than in the Past," *Earth Easy*, <https://learn.eartheasy.com/>

The Vedabase (<https://vedabase.io/en/>) is an excellent source of information. For example, it contains 1,391 references for the word *villages*, 5,051 references for the word *village*, and 64 references for *village organization*.

When discussing *varṇāśrama-dharma*, Śrīla Prabhupāda would inevitably speak about villages and the ideal *Vrindavan* village where Lord Kṛṣṇa performed His childhood pastimes.

Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly explained that Vedic culture is agrarian based, wherein cows, agriculture, and the cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness are bases for simple living and high thinking.

Note that in 1996 for Śrīla Prabhupāda's Centennial Anniversary, the GBC body commissioned some devotees to research community development. They saw a clear connection between city temples and *varṇāśrama* communities. They reported:

Prabhupāda explains the role of city temples as staging grounds for organizing *varṇāśrama* communities. In the first phase, devotees should go into the cities and attract the people by establishing temples and distributing Kṛṣṇa conscious literature.

Second, as people become devotees, they can be brought to farm communities where they can live the Kṛṣṇa conscious lifestyle described in the books and remain fixed up in devotional practice without the temptations and material allurements of the cities.

According to Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision, the modern industrial cities provide an environment which crushes spiritual development: "This town life, industrial life, factory life, is asuric life. It is killing human ambition. It is killing human civilization."

The city temples can provide a way out of that environment by training devotees and directing them to Kṛṣṇa conscious communities, where they can find wholesome occupations, favorable to spiritual development.⁸

⁸ *Speaking About Varnasrama* -- Introduction

Also notable is that Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke about establishing *varṇāśrama* as early as 1949 in a letter written to Dr. Patel, the then Deputy Minister of India.

And in 1956, he wrote “Gītā Nagari—Essay,” in his *Back to Godhead* magazine.⁹ There he revealed a four-wave approach to introduce Kṛṣṇa consciousness all over the world: 1) *sankīrtana wave*, chanting of the holy names and distributing literature; 2) *temple worship wave*, establishing temples; 3) *spiritual initiation wave*, formal initiation denoting commitment to the mission; and 4) *classless society wave*, living in self-sufficient village communities.

The fourth wave is the establishment of *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*.

In a walk, on May 27, 1974, in Rome, Śrīla Prabhupāda explained the need to become localized and self-sufficient.

[Editor’s note: Following is a summary of Prabhupāda’s conversation. The full version is in Mahārāja’s booklet online.]¹⁰

The problem of modern society’s dependence on oil will be solved as soon as we are localized. Petrol is required for transport, but if you are localized, there is no question of transport. You don’t require petrol. Oxen will solve the problem of transport. This is not just an ideal solution; it is practical. Start the community project as we have already started in New Vrindavan. Make this perfect.¹¹

There are many similar statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda that clearly emphasise the need and the importance of reverting to this lifestyle. What follows is a series of such quotes from various sources—Prabhupāda’s purports, conversations, and letters.

[Editor’s note: Maharaja’s booklet has the quotes. Here are the references he cites: SB 4.29.54 purport; lecture, Gītā Nagari Farm, July 15, 1976; *Light of the Bhagavat* 27; SB 3.2.29 purport; letter to Hayagrīva, November 8, 1970; letter to Hayagrīva and Kīrtanānanda Svāmī, August 22, 1968; letter to Rāyarāma Dāsa, October 17, 1968; conversation, July 25, 1973; conversation, May 25, 1974; conversation,

⁹ “Conception of Gita Nagari,” *Back to Godhead*, III.4, May 20, 1956

¹⁰ <https://cvc.guru/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/BR-Swami-Vedic-Village.pdf>

¹¹ Morning Walk, on May 27, 1974, in Rome

April 20, 1975; conversation, January 6, 1976; room conversation, August 3, 1976.]

2. Three Gifts of Nature

Grandfather Bhīṣma, one of the twelve *mahājanas*, describes three gifts of nature that should not be sold, abused, misused, or exploited. They are cows, land, and knowledge.¹²

These gifts serve as three mothers. As a mother provides care, attention, love, and affection to her child, these three mothers, Surabhi, Bhūmi, and Sarasvatī, give welfare, health, and growth to humanity.

Modernity, through industrialization, mechanization, urbanization, and globalization, robs humanity of these three natural gifts.¹³

3. Ethics of Cāṇakya

T. Y. Ramesh's *Ethics of Cāṇakya* summarizes some of Cāṇakya Paṇḍita's maxims regarding statesmanship as it applies to village self-governance, sustainability, and autonomy: Royal officials controlled the towns and villages, but they did not micro-manage them. The villagers were free to manage their affairs. Thus, the heads of towns and villages would adjudicate civil and criminal matters.

In that way, they existed as self-sufficient little republics. And for millennia, they were able to survive periodic political and natural upheaval.¹⁴

4. Village *Swarāj* – M.K. Gandhi

Śrīla Prabhupāda appreciated Gandhi's pro-village, anti-industrialization position.

Gandhi said that in the future there will be only villages and the world. Nations will be designated as a matter of convenience, but the

¹² "Dana Dharma Parva," *Mahābhārata*, *Anuśāsana Parva*, Chapter 69

¹³ *Modernity is Killing Civilization* by Bhakti Raghava Swami

¹⁴ Ramesh, T. Y. *Ethics of Chanakya*, T. Y. Ramesh, Sahni Publications, 2000, p. 178

true authority for life will lie in the hands of the villages. Districts and states will be agents of villages.

He also wrote that life is more genial, varied, and fruitful when organized into small, simple collective units.

In the past, even soldiers were not permitted to enter a village except by royal decree.

Villages last when nothing else lasts. Their independence and self-sufficiency are also conducive to their happiness.

Gandhi wanted to resuscitate the villages of India from their dependence on and exploitation by cities. He was convinced that truth and freedom could be achieved through village life, not just in India but worldwide.¹⁵

5. Other Sources

The founding fathers of America were pious and very close to nature.

Historically, agriculture has been accepted as the noblest of all professions. Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States thought that there are three ways for a nation to acquire wealth. First is by war or robbery, second by commerce or cheating, and third by agriculture, the only honest means. He stated that such wealth comes from a continuous miracle provided by God.

Thomas Jefferson believed that governments would remain virtuous as long as they are primarily agricultural.¹⁶

Other advocates of simple agrarian life are Vandana Shiva, physicist and environmentalist,¹⁷ Michael Cremo, devotee, writer, and archeologist, Daniel Webster, lawyer and politician, and James Gustave Speth, lawyer and environmentalist.

[Editor's note: Mahārāja provides quotes from each of these famous people in his booklet online.]¹⁸

¹⁵ *Village Swaraj*, Mahatma Gandhi, available from Amazon

¹⁶ "A Nation Founded By Farmers," Modern Farmer, <https://modernfarmer.com/>

¹⁷ <http://www.navdanya.org/site/>

¹⁸ <https://cvc.guru/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/BR-Swami-Vedic-Village.pdf>

6. Guiding Principles

Village organization falls under the jurisdiction of the local *kṣatriyas*. The *brāhmaṇas* give guidance to the *kṣatriyas*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to establish communities based on the long-standing *varṇāśrama* system. Such communities will be independent, self-sufficient, self-sustainable and self-governed.

ISKCON society needs to recognize that villages will be independent from ISKCON's direct governance.

Prabhupāda's first three movements (*sankīrtana*, deity worship, and initiations) mentioned above are in the domain of *brāhmaṇas* while the fourth movement, *varṇāśrama*, is under the purview of the other three *varṇas*.

The *kṣatriyas* organize, *vaiśyas* produce food, and *śūdras* serve the others.

Here are three essential principles in the operation of a village:

1. Governance is the responsibility of its residents.
2. More specifically, governance is the responsibility of local *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya grhasthas*. *Brāhmaṇas* are advisors.
3. The village temple is one of many departments or services.

Village communities cannot be managed in the same way ISKCON manages temples. Although the focus in a village is serving the Lord, the temple president does not oversee the affairs of the village.

Such a structure may not happen immediately; however, we must progress in that direction.

7. Four Options

As householders understand the importance of rural communities, there may be four options open to them: They are

1. joining an existing community of devotees,
2. starting a community with likeminded devotees,
3. converting an existing village by gradually preaching and recruiting the residents,
4. renovating a partially abandoned village.

The goal is for devotees to take charge of the local leadership. In some countries, this is the case. In India, Indonesia, Hungary, and Czech Republic the heads of some villages are devotees.

8. Land Selection

Selection of land is vital. Once investing in land and developing a village, it is practically impossible to change for another land. Here are some considerations:

Location

Śrīla Prabhupāda indicated that within a 50-kilometer radius of a city temple we should have a rural community that will be closely connected with that temple. That is one consideration for establishing a community.

However, most rural communities will not be directly linked with a city temple.

Land Condition

This is an important consideration. Some factors are the quality of the soil, slope of the land, water access, trees, rocks, etc. The *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra* lists twenty-one factors, one of them being, "Devoid of mud, stones, salty ground, uneven land, thorns, bands, wild animals, deer, and forest tribes."¹⁹

Forests and Trees

Vedic culture gives special importance to forests.

Trees must be valued and protected. For example, the life of a tree was sometimes considered even more important than a human life. In the *Vṛkṣāyurveda*, Surapāla wrote, "Ten wells equal a pond, ten ponds a lake, ten lakes a son, and ten sons a tree."²⁰

¹⁹ "Excellences of the Constituent Elements," *Arthaśāstra*, Book Six, Chapter One, Section 96/8

²⁰ "Vrikshayurveda: The Hindu Science of Plant Life," <https://indosphere.medium.com/>

Manpower

For a project to be successful, there must be a core group of families involved, a minimum of four to six. Two families from a group of four to ten who are interested may relocate to the land. The other families may give financial help until the project becomes established, perhaps for one or two years. When the farm is financially self-sufficient, the other families can move to the farm.

Ownership

From the beginning, it should be clearly decided whether the land will be owned conjointly or privately.

Skills

Many skills are needed for farming, cow protection, management, etc. As much as possible, some of those should be developed before moving to the land.

Master Plan

Although plans change, the group should design the project layout based on how many acres will be allotted for residential purposes, cow grazing, agriculture, etc.

Market

The main purpose for producing food is to provide for the residents in the community. However, excess produce may be sold or exchanged. A Vedic maxim for self-sufficiency is to produce what you need and use what you produce.

Deeds

When purchasing land, it is best to have legal counsel.

Road Access

All property should have clearly defined road access.

History of Land

The group should know how the land was previously used and if the land was contaminated or tampered with. This can be done by speaking with neighbors or previous owners. Also, one may live on the land and wait for a period before developing it. This will give sufficient time to learn about the land's features.

9. Before Moving

For one or two years, families who wish to relocate to the land should meet regularly to discuss how they will proceed. Establishing successful Vaiṣṇava village communities is based on five principles.

1. Land: Considerations for land selection were discussed above.
2. Manpower: As above, there should be four to six families with two who are willing to pave the way. Depending on group consensus, some may have less interest in spiritual life, but the dominant faction should be spiritually inclined.
3. Organization: Someone should be designated the leader. If possible, a direction toward *varṇa* and *āśrama* should be established. When the community develops, the residents may decide to establish a *panchayat*, a five-member governing committee.
4. Capital: As in any enterprise, capital is necessary to begin and maintain. Self-sufficient community projects take time to develop and thus need sufficient capital in the beginning.
5. Orientation: The project must be based on spiritual principles. A community should work to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*.²¹

10. Thirty Qualities

The purpose of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is human organization. Without *dharma*, one is an animal. Modern society has basically organized people based on the animal propensities to eat, sleep, mate, and defend.

²¹ BG 18.14

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Nārada Muni outlines the 30 qualities one needs to develop as a human.

The first four are

1. *satyam*, truthfulness, implying among other things, no gambling.
2. *dayā*, compassion, implying respect for all life, expressed minimally as no meat eating.
3. *tapah*, austerity, especially regarding sex. Out of four *āśramas*, three are celibate. Those three set the example for the fourth, the *gṛhastha āśrama*.
4. *śaucam*, cleanliness, which implies, at minimum, no intoxication.

These four qualities will form the basis of strong communities. The more individuals adhere to these qualities, the easier it becomes to establish the system of *varna* and *asrama*.

Following is the list of all 30. The first 21 should be developed by all humans. The remaining nine are for those cultivating *bhakti*, beginning with *śravaṇam* and ending with *ātma-nivedanam*:

1) truthfulness, 2) mercy, 3) austerity (observing fasts on certain days of the month), 4) cleanliness, bathing twice a day, 5) tolerance, 6) discrimination between right and wrong, 7) control of the mind, 8) control of the senses, 9) nonviolence, 10) celibacy, 11) charity, 12) reading of scripture, 13) simplicity, 14) satisfaction, 15) service to saintly persons, 16) gradually taking leave of unnecessary engagements, 17) observing the futility of the unnecessary activities of human society, 18) remaining silent and grave and avoiding unnecessary talk, 19) considering whether one is the body or the soul, 20) distributing food equally to all living entities (both men and animals), 21) seeing every soul (especially in the human form) as a part of the Supreme Lord, 22) hearing about the activities and instructions given by the Supreme Personality of Godhead (who is the shelter of the saintly persons), 23) chanting about these activities and instructions, 24) always remembering these activities and instructions, 25) trying to render service, 26) performing worship, 27) offering obeisances, 28)

becoming a servant, 29) becoming a friend, and 30) surrendering one's whole self.²²

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* will more easily be introduced when people develop these qualities.²³

11. Vedic Economy

The Vedic economy is defined in the *Bhagavad-gītā*: *kṛṣi-go-rakṣya-vāñijyam vaiśya-karma svabhāva-jam*, “Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work of the *vaiśyas*.”²⁴

Each of these three activities is an art and a science. Great ṛṣis have written books of knowledge on them.

Agriculture is related to the land, which is referred to as Goddess Bhūmi, who is worshipped. We care for the land as a goddess. And from land comes the necessities of life.

kāmaṁ vavarṣa parjanyaḥ sarva-kāma-dughā mahī / siṣicuḥ sma vrajān gāvah payasodhasvatīr mudā

“During the reign of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the clouds showered all the water that people needed, and the earth produced all the necessities of man in profusion. Due to their fatty milk bags and cheerful attitude, the cows moistened the grazing ground with milk.”²⁵

From the land, one can get the four necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, and medicines.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that “if one has a cow and four acres of land, he has no economic problem.”²⁶

The science of agriculture is given in *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, *Vṛkṣāyurveda*, *Kṛṣi-Parāśara*, *Kāśyapīya Kṛṣisūkti*, and others.

In Vedic culture, food is not considered a commodity to sell. Rather crops are first and foremost grown for family consumption.

²² SB 7.11.8-12

²³ SB 7.11.13

²⁴ BG 18.44

²⁵ SB 1.10.4

²⁶ Room Conversation with Allen Ginsberg, May 11, 1969, Columbia

Householders also grow food to distribute to the needy.

Four of the five daily duties (*yajñas*) for householders are food related: offering food to the Lord, saintly persons, other living entities, and oneself.²⁷

The Vedas enjoin that one worship the land before plowing it. Land is never meant to be exploited, for example, by chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Keeping the topsoil healthy and productive is a science and an art that has largely been forgotten. The soil cannot be properly maintained unless animals pasture the lands. Hence the need for and importance of cows, who are allowed to perform their natural function of grazing and pasturing.

12. Vedic Education

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that the standard and complete education for 7-to-8-year-old village boys is to manage the calves. The *gurukula* is for *dvijas*—*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and *vaiśyas*—who are a small percentage of society. Most boys receive education through work or apprenticeships.

Prabhupāda wrote: “As soon as Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were a little grown up, They were meant for taking care of the calves. Although born of a very well-to-do family, They still had to take care of the calves. This was the system of education.”²⁸

Reading about Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd friends gives an understanding of the inner meaning of Vedic education. In addition to cow care, there are tasks related to agriculture and cottage industries like weaving and building.

Prabhupāda wrote: “The *brāhmaṇas* were trained in literary, academic education, *kṣatriyas* were trained to take care of the state, and *vaiśyas* learned how to cultivate the land and take care of the cows and calves. There was no need to waste time going to school to be falsely educated and later increase the number of unemployed. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma

²⁷ BG 3.12 purport

²⁸ SB 10.11.37

taught us by Their personal behavior. Kṛṣṇa took care of the cows and played His flute, and Balarāma took care of agricultural activities with a plow in His hand.”²⁹

Kṛṣṇa and His friends would play and tend the cows based on 64 items.

They are called *Catuṣṣaṣṭi-kalās* or *Chausath Kalās* (64 forms of art). Some of these are still found today in remote Indian villages.

(1) *gītam*, singing; (2) *vādyam*, playing on musical instruments; (3) *nṛtyam*, dancing; (4) *nāṭyam*, drama; (5) *ālekhyam*, painting; (6) *viśeṣakacchedyam*, painting the face and body with colored unguents and cosmetics; (7) *tanḍula-kusuma-bali-vikārāḥ*, preparing auspicious designs on the floor with rice and flowers; (8) *puṣpāstaranam*, making a bed of flowers; (9) *daśana-vasanāṅga-rāgāḥ*, coloring one’s teeth, clothes and limbs; (10) *maṇi-bhūmikā-karma*, inlaying a floor with jewels; (11) *śayyā-racanam*, covering a bed; (12) *udaka-vādyam*, ringing waterpots; (13) *udaka-ghātaḥ*, splashing with water; (14) *citra-yogāḥ*, mixing colors; (15) *mālya-grathana-vikalpāḥ*, preparing wreaths; (16) *śekharāpīḍa-yojanam*, setting a helmet on the head; (17) *nepathya-yogāḥ*, putting on apparel in a dressing room; (18) *karṇa-patra-bhaṅgāḥ*, decorating the earlobe; (19) *sugandha-yuktiḥ*, applying aromatics; (20) *bhūṣaṇa-yojanam*, decorating with jewelry; (21) *aindrajaḷam*, jugglery; (22) *kaucumāra-yogaḥ*, the art of disguise; (23) *hasta-lāghavam*, sleight of hand; (24) *citra-śākāpūpa-bhakṣya-vikāra-kriyaḥ*, preparing varieties of salad, bread, cake and other delicious food; (25) *pānaka-rasa-rāgāsava-yojanam*, preparing palatable drinks and tinging draughts with red color; (26) *sūcī-vāyaka-karma*, needlework and weaving; (27) *sūtra-krīḍā*, making puppets dance by manipulating thin threads; (28) *vīṇā-damarukavādyāni*, playing on a lute and a small x-shaped drum; (29) *prahelikā*, making and solving riddles; (29a) *pratimālā*, capping verses, or reciting poems verse for verse as a trial of memory or skill; (30) *durovacaka-yogāḥ*, uttering statements difficult for others to answer; (31) *pustaka-vācanam*, reciting books; and (32) *nāṭikākhyāyikā-darśanam*, enacting short plays and writing anecdotes. (33) *kāvya-samasyā-pūraṇam*, solving enigmatic verses; (34) *paṭṭikā-vetra-bāṇa-vikalpāḥ*, making a bow from a strip of

²⁹ SB 10.11.37

cloth and a stick; (35) *tarku-karma*, spinning with a spindle; (36) *takṣaṇam*, carpentry; (37) *vāstu-vidyā*, architecture; (38) *raupya-ratna-parikṣā*, testing silver and jewels; (39) *dhātu-vādaḥ*, metallurgy; (40) *maṇi-rāga-jñānam*, tinging jewels with various colors; (41) *ākara-jñānam*, mineralogy; (42) *vrkṣāyur-veda-yogāḥ*, herbal medicine; (43) *meṣa-kukkuṭa-lāvaka-yuddha-vidhiḥ*, the art of training and engaging rams, cocks and quails in fighting; (44) *śuka-śārikā-pralāpanam*, knowledge of how to train male and female parrots to speak and to answer the questions of human beings; (45) *utsādanam*, healing a person with ointments; (46) *keśa-mārjana-kauśalam*, hairdressing; (47) *akṣara-muṣṭikā-kathanam*, telling what is written in a book without seeing it, and telling what is hidden in another's fist; (48) *mlecchita-kutarka-vikalpāḥ*, fabricating barbarous or foreign sophistry; (49) *deśa-bhāṣā-jñānam*, knowledge of provincial dialects; (50) *puṣpa-śakaṭikā-nirmiti-jñānam*, knowledge of how to build toy carts with flowers; (51) *yantra-mātrkā*, composing magic squares, arrangements of numbers adding up to the same total in all directions; (52) *dhāraṇa-mātrkā*, the use of amulets; (53) *saṁvācyam*, conversation; (54) *mānasī-kāvya-kriyā*, composing verses mentally; (55) *kriyā-vikalpāḥ*, designing a literary work or a medical remedy; (56) *chalitaka-yogāḥ*, building shrines; (57) *abhidhāna-koṣa-cchando-jñānam*, lexicography and the knowledge of poetic meters; (58) *vastra-gopanam*, disguising one kind of cloth to look like another; (59) *dyūta-viśeṣam*, knowledge of various forms of gambling; (60) *ākarma-kriḍa*, playing dice; (61) *bālaka-kriḍanakam*, playing with children's toys; (62) *vaināyikī vidyā*, enforcing discipline by mystic power; (63) *vaijayikī vidyā*, gaining victory; and (64) *vaitālikī vidyā*, awakening one's master with music at dawn.³⁰

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained: "Make Vaikuṅṭha. That is my request. Teach from the very beginning of life. Just like *bālaka-kriḍa*, *bāla-kriḍanakaiḥ kriḍan*. By playing, he's becoming Kṛṣṇa conscious. Just produce a new generation, just like Parikṣit Mahārāja. *bāla-kriḍanakaiḥ*, from very childhood. Kṛṣṇa-yoga, *bhakti-yoga*, can be practiced even by a child without interfering with his natural propensities, without any education, without any knowledge. There is no need of high-grade knowledge or education to understand. It is already there in everyone's

³⁰ Śrī brahma-saṁhitā 5.37 purport

heart. It is not that one has to learn it artificially by some gymnastic. No, natural. Just like the children here, they are also dancing with their parents. They are offering flower, trying to imitate how to chant. And they are very much pleased. So similarly, these things (should be) introduced. Kṛṣṇa. So, some way or other, they should be engaged in Kṛṣṇa. It doesn't matter whether (the child) understands it or not."³¹

Regarding education for girls, the Vedic culture does not advocate co-education. Education for girls is called *strī-dharma*, primarily to prepare them for being ideal wives and mothers.

Actual Vedic education is to prepare an individual for spiritual advancement. If education does not foster that objective, it is asuric.

13. Seven Essential Elements

*Kauṭilya Arthasāstra*³² lists seven essential elements for a successful kingdom or community. Princes would receive training in those seven.

The seven are 1) the leader, 2) his ministers, 3) his kingdom, 4) his fort, 5) his treasury, 6) his army, and 7) his allies.

Each of these elements contains qualities that Kauṭilya (Cāṇakya) explains.

For example, the qualities of a king are put into four areas. The four areas for a king are listed as easily approachable (having 14 qualities), intellect (8 qualities), energy (4 qualities), and excellences (22 qualities).

The qualities of minister, kingdom, fort, treasury, army, and allies are similarly expanded.

[Editor's note: Mahārāja gives book and website references in his topics 14 and 15. They may be obtained from his booklet online.]³³

³¹ SB 2.3.14-15 lecture, May 31, 1972

³² "Excellences of Essential Elements," *Arthasastra*, Book Six, Chapter One, Section 96.1,

³³ <https://cvc.guru/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/BR-Swami-Vedic-Village.pdf>

14. Conclusion

Daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma and its practical application will remain largely concealed if individuals do not leave their present comfort zones in the cities.

Devotees must learn about the reality of a self-sufficient village based on Vedic guidelines and values. Only by spending quality time in the villages will that be revealed.

Self-sufficiency and sustainability will only become a reality when you learn to live in a localized way rekindling your natural relationship with nature, the self (*ātmā*), and the super-self (*paramātmā*).

That is what Śrīla Prabhupāda meant when he stated that one must learn to live on the lap of material nature.

As nicely explained in his essay, *Gita Nagari*, "When Gita-nagari will attempt to harmonize such sweet relation between man and God, man and the world, and the world and God, at such an auspicious time only, the United Nation's effort to establish peace in the world will be successful, or the dream of a casteless society all over the world will be realized in practice. There is no other practical solution of the scientific basis of universal brotherhood or of universal religion without understanding this simple truth of the fatherhood of Godhead, motherhood of Nature, and childhood of all living entities."³⁴

Kṛṣṇa's and Prabhupāda's guidelines for *varṇāśrama* will require courage, determination, initiative, and innovation. The *varṇāśrama* mission, or *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, means re-introducing village lifestyle as the norm within general society, the most ideal norm which can best facilitate the advancement of our Vaiṣṇava practices in devotional service.

For that to take place, traditional education and training at the village level must be re-introduced. Thus, *gurukula* and *varṇāśrama colleges* are of paramount importance. The *Varnāśrama Śikṣālaya* programs introduced in India are meant to serve as forerunners to these educational reforms.

³⁴ "Conception of Gita Nagari," *Back to Godhead*, III.4, May 20, 1956

Let us know, let us realize, and let us demonstrate the importance of village life. Let us become convinced that village life, based on the eternal principles of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, is indeed an essential part of our eternal philosophy, our eternal education, our eternal lifestyle, indeed, our eternal *dharma*, *sanātana dharma*.

VI. Women's Roles

Dayānanda dāsa

The questions and answers below pertain mostly to women's roles in *daiva-varṇāśrama* society.¹ They have become a primary issue in the implementation of *varṇāśrama* by some followers of Prabhupāda.

I am going to argue that they are important but secondary.

Women's roles are certainly a part of the traditional culture, but they are not the main part. When devotees make them into a fail or succeed issue, they not only misunderstand our *paramparā's daiva-varṇāśrama*, but they also do a disservice to its implementation.

Of primary importance is to push on with *varṇāśrama* regardless of how imperfectly. At the same time, both women and men must become mature and wise while making their best efforts to resist the influence of asuric society.

First, the main goal of *daiva-varṇāśrama* is to establish an intimate link between *daiva-varṇāśrama* and *saṅkīrtana-yajña*,² because *yajña* has

¹ The questions in this article were posed by a devotee woman, a reader of the *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal*.

² Note that *saṅkīrtana* means to glorify or celebrate Kṛṣṇa's names, forms, and *līlās*. *Saṅkīrtana* means everything that expands Mahāprabhu's movement and helps Him distribute the fruits of *prema*. As Prabhupāda has demonstrated, it is establishing and maintaining temples, schools, *varṇāśrama* communities, deity worship, book distribution, *harināma*, festivals, *prasādam* distribution, drama, art, and more. And, to properly expand Mahāprabhu's movement, all of those should act in concert. There are priorities and devotees should work together to accomplish everything.

always been the heart of *varṇāśrama* society since it was originally created from the body of Virāṭ Puruṣa.³

The second goal is liberation from sense gratification, which may also be called material life or material enjoyment. That is done by the cooperation of all *varṇas* and *āśramas* for *yajña* or *saṅkīrtana-yajña*⁴ as well as implementing regulative principles (*yama, niyama*).⁵

Third is establishing a farm-based economy and cow protection.⁶

Fourth is implementing education for both spiritual life and the roles of the four *varṇas* and *āśramas*.⁷ It could also be argued that education goes hand in hand with the first three.

Fifth is to implement traditional Vaiṣṇava or Vedic culture. There are three items that are part of any successful community: responsibility, good relationships, and cooperation.

Everything is based on responsibility or duty (*dharma*). For the individual, family, and community, *dharma* is acting dutifully or responsibly.

In any community, there may be some who are highly responsible and saintly and some who are irresponsible. Everyone else is in between. The goal is to collect a few saintly people and mostly responsible people. Too many irresponsible people will spoil the community.

Next are good relationships. Relationships must be based on affection and as much as possible on honesty and trust. There may be

³ SB 11.5.2-3

⁴ BG chapter 3 and “Yajña—Sacrifice to the Supreme,” BTG, May 20, 1956, by Prabhupāda.

⁵ Nectar of Instruction, 3 purport: “Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī therefore recommends, *tat-tat-karma-pravartanāt*: “One must strictly follow the regulative principles of *vaidhī bhakti*.” In addition to these four prohibitions (*yama*), there are positive regulative principles (*niyama*), such as the daily chanting of sixteen rounds on *japa-mālā* beads.”

⁶ It is not required to support this self-evident statement; however, one example is CC Adi 17.111 verse and purport.

⁷ *Varṇāśrama* college: Morning Walk, March 14, 1974, *gurukula*: SB 7.12.1, and *bhakti-sāstrī*: Conversation Feb 27, 1977. Also, letter to GBC by TKG approved by Prabhupāda, Jan 6, 1977.

strictness and enforcement of rules, but it must be through example and affection.⁸

In general, people should not receive too much money. Instead, as much as possible, it should be used for *yajña* or worship of Viṣṇu.⁹ And relationships form a part of the payment.¹⁰ The ideal is that *brāhmaṇas* receive money mostly through charity,¹¹ *vaiśyas* as landlords and business owners, *kṣatriyas* by taxation and gifts. Only *sūdras* receive a salary for some sense gratification, but not too much.¹²

Cooperation is based on the above two, responsibility and relationships. The *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *sūdras* work together to organize a community that cooperates for the primary goal, *saṅkīrtana-yajña*,¹³ and the other spiritual, economic, and social objectives.

Now let me address the questions here:

People are conditioned by modern global culture; how can they adjust?

We adjust to *daiva-varṇāśrama* in the same way we have done since the inception of ISKCON. We do our best to shrug off the asuric influences of the culture we live in. Some individuals, families, and communities do better than others. And some worse. But we all

⁸ Conversation, Sept 5, 1971: "It is out of love, out of affection, reciprocation. [...] Just like the child is afraid of the father. There is affection. 'My father is displeased if I do.' Father has said, 'Don't touch this,' so I don't touch. So that fear and affection, both are there. It is not simply that he is afraid of his father, but the affection is [also] there."

⁹ SB 10.84.38; BG, chapter 3; SB 4.12.10.

¹⁰ CC Antya 20.37

¹¹ SB 2.3.24: "He was not accepting any salary, because he was *brāhmaṇa*. *Brāhmaṇa* cannot accept any salary." Also, *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* 2.51.

¹² SB 2.3.24 lecture, June 22, 1972: "The *sūdra* accepts salary: 'I serve you; you pay me.'" Also, quoting BG 6.1 in *The Perfection of Yoga*, 7: "A remuneration or salary is always demanded by the worker. But here Kṛṣṇa indicates that one can work out of a sense of duty alone, not expecting the results of his activities."

¹³ "Yajña or Sacrifice to the Supreme," *Back To Godhead*, May 20, 1956, by Śrīla Prabhupāda: "The central point of cooperation is to do everything in lieu of performing *yajña*. That is the central point of understanding for broadening the classless society in a universal measure."

struggle to give up asuric life and achieve daivic life, hence the name *daiva-varṇāśrama*.

Sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam.¹⁴ Also, we try to become free from material designations like black, white, man, woman, etc. Although we may be categorized in one of four *varṇas* or one of two genders, we must understand that we are souls or else we will not be satisfied with our lot in life.¹⁵

Some can do better than others. Some are heavily influenced by sense gratification, but they have love for Kṛṣṇa and *guru*. Kubjā was a prostitute, but she loved Kṛṣṇa, and He graced her. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was rejected by *varṇāśrama* society, but Mahāprabhu accepted him.

Kṛṣṇa created the four *varṇas*, but we do not necessarily fall neatly into those ideals. We cannot fall neatly into anything in this material world, especially as modern global society becomes more and more asuric.¹⁶

Therefore, regardless of designation, we must depend on our relationships, first with Prabhupāda and *guru*, then community authorities, community members, and family members.¹⁷

¹⁴ CC Madhya 19.170: “*Bhakti*, or devotional service, means engaging all our senses in the service of the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of all the senses. When the spirit soul renders service unto the Supreme, there are two side effects. One is freed from all material designations (*sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam*), and one’s senses are purified simply by being employed in the service of the Lord.”

¹⁵ Conversation, April 14, 1976: “You go even to a village [Indian village], illiterate, he believes in transmigration of the soul. Ordinary illiterate villagers, he believes.”

¹⁶ Regarding ideal roles for women, men, families, and communities, we first look to Prabhupāda. He sometimes quoted from Cāṇakya or Kautilya and Manu; however, we do not use everything they said. Many things in *Manu-smṛti* and other literature contradict the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, either in spirit or letter. Moreover, for various reasons, we do not necessarily follow everything in the *Bhāgavatam* or the *śāstras* of the Gosvāmīs. (For example, Conversation, July 18, 1973) There are so many rules and regulations that we must understand priorities. Rather than study many *śāstras* and learn many details, as some devotees do, a learned person must know how to apply the knowledge, and that includes prioritization.

¹⁷ CC Madhya 22.54: *sādhu-saṅga*, ““The verdict of all revealed scriptures is that by even a moment’s association with a pure devotee, one can attain all success.” Also, *Nectar of Instruction*, 4-6.

Again, the answer is that we move forward and do the best we can. Prabhupāda demanded quality service from us, so we strive to give it to him.

How can women be encouraged to have a subordinate role to men when they are maintaining themselves independently, some even becoming CEOs and heads of state?

This question addresses a complex situation. When building *daiva-varṇāśrama* communities that are self-sufficient and have an agrarian-based economy, it is probably a good idea to request women to adopt traditional roles.¹⁸ The theme of those villages is to live simply according to traditional values.

But taking a step back, let us first consider that the goals of modern society are different from Vaiṣṇava culture. The society that surrounds us is hell-bent on material comforts and the freedom to flaunt traditional roles.

Nevertheless, we can turn to Rūpa Gosvāmī to address this issue. Regardless of the differences of the two cultures, he urges us to be practical. He explains that things that can be used in Kṛṣṇa's service should be accepted as long as one can do so without being attached to the sense objects. In modern language, that means that we must teach others to use their money, power, beauty, or knowledge for Kṛṣṇa and not for comforts beyond necessities.¹⁹

¹⁸ SB 7.11.25-29: A virtuous woman (*sādhvī*) serves her husband. She should dress well and be of pleasant disposition. She should clean and organize the house. And she should know the *dharma*. Thus, she should serve her husband with affection provided he is not fallen.

The woman who serves her husband, following in the footsteps of the goddess of fortune, surely returns home, back to Godhead, with her devotee husband, and lives happily in the Vaikuṅṭha planets. [summarized and edited]

Śrīla Madhvācārya says: "A woman should think of her husband as the Supreme Lord. In that same way, a disciple should think of the guru and a śūdra think of the brāhmaṇa. Thus, they all will become devotees of the Lord."

¹⁹ *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.255: *anāsaktasya viṣayān yathārham upayujjataḥ nirbandhaḥ kṛṣṇa-sambandhe yuktaṁ vairāgyam ucyate*, "Things should be accepted for the Lord's service and not for one's personal sense gratification. If one accepts something without

If we use airplanes and cars to preach, then surely we can engage important people in Kṛṣṇa's service. They are worth far more than those inanimate objects.

Thus, if a woman is a CEO or head of state, we may simply keep in mind that Rūpa Gosvāmī's principle is renunciation of the fruits of labor, the money, etc. for Kṛṣṇa's service. Such a person may not fit in a simple *varṇāśrama* village; however, in the Vedic era there were also cities like Mathurā. And cities are always more complex than villages.

Thus, while establishing villages, we are not neglecting the cities. We should keep in mind that the issue of women's roles should not be considered more important than preaching. In other words, we should skillfully seek to maintain a balance.

From about 390 to 410, after her husband died, Maharani Prabhavati Gupta, a Vaiṣṇava, ruled the Vakataka realm, which was a little less than one-fourth the size of today's India. Of course, she was an exception, but there are other such exceptional examples.

Sumati Morarjee, a Vaiṣṇava, was the CEO of Scindia Steamship Lines. The company owned 43 ships. Most ISKCON devotees know that she gave passage on one of her ships to Śrīla Prabhupāda to come to the West to found ISKCON.

Prabhupāda and Kṛṣṇa engaged Sumati Morarjee to become instrumental in founding the ISKCON movement.

We must take Prabhupāda's example of engaging everyone, including women CEOs and heads of state.

One of Prabhupāda's female disciples asked him how she should manage being aggressive when going out to distribute books and then transforming to being humble in the temple. He responded that she should be a "lamb at home, and a lion in the chase."²⁰

attachment and accepts it because it is related to Kṛṣṇa, one's renunciation is called *yukta-vairāgya*."

²⁰ Conversation, July 13, 1975: *Jayātīrtha*: One girl was asking that "When we are doing *saṅkīrtana*, I must be very aggressive, but when I come to the temple, then I'm supposed to be very humble." *Prabhupāda*: A lamb at home, a lion in the chase. [laughter] When you are chasing, you must be a lion. [laughter] But when you come home, you do not try to chase the devotees. [laughter]

However, the responsibility of being a lamb and a lion does not just rest on the shoulders of such women. The communities and authorities must become expert enough to embrace those women, giving them the respect due to any advanced devotee.

On the one hand, devotees must find ways to establish simple, self-sufficient villages wherein the women fit into traditional roles. On the other hand, devotees must cultivate and encourage independent women like CEOs and state leaders.

When doing so, those powerful women should not be treated as lesser devotees because they do not follow so-called Vedic roles. If they surrender the results of their work to Kṛṣṇa, they are also exalted devotees. Prabhupāda explained, “And how can one, unless one is spiritually advanced, how can he sacrifice his hard-earned money for Kṛṣṇa?”²¹

Also, Mahāprabhu was clear that devotees are transcendental to *varṇāśrama*.²² Thus, some women who accept a humble position are nevertheless more spiritually advanced than their husbands. Gāndhārī, the wife of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Mandodarī, the wife of Rāvaṇa, are such examples.²³

One who has a subordinate position in the *varṇāśrama* society may be an *uttama* (pure) devotee. And one who has a high position may be a third-rate devotee (*kaniṣṭha*).

Mahāprabhu stated that a moment’s association with a pure devotee is perfection.²⁴ He said that the highest devotee should be treated like a *guru*.²⁵ One should bow to initiated devotees and genuinely respect anyone who chants Hare Kṛṣṇa.²⁶

And a woman can be any of those devotees as much as a man.²⁷

²¹ BG 3.1-5 lecture, Dec 20, 1968

²² CC Madhya, Chapter 22.

²³ SB 9.10.27 and SB 1.13.30.

²⁴ CC Madhya, 22.54.

²⁵ CC Madhya, 22.65-66, 71-72, and *Nectar of Instruction* (NOI) 5 describe the *uttama* devotee. CC Madhya 8.128 states that one who knows about Kṛṣṇa, regardless of social position, is a *guru*.

²⁶ NOI 5.

²⁷ BG 9.32 and SB 2.4.18.

An ignorant person poorly treats an exalted devotee like Jaḍa Bharata. However, a wise person like King Rahūgaṇa can see his advanced position.²⁸

For example, only a fool would try to control Sumati Murarjee or any other advanced female devotee. Such women will naturally serve according to their understanding of *dharma*.²⁹ They should be treated with care, respect, and love.

It is indeed a difficult job for devotees to attract women and at the same time encourage them to accept traditional roles. Those who do so successfully are certainly praiseworthy. The strong influence of feminism is difficult to overcome. However, the real enemy is not feminism but identification with the body. Even the demigods struggle, what to speak of mere mortal men and women.³⁰

In conclusion, devotees must be mature and wise. They must develop the art of relating to male and female leaders in the greater society. There are 25 million millionaires in the U.S., both men and women. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to attract those people to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.³¹

Doing so is not a task that can be learned in a book. It is an art or a skill.

²⁸ SB 5, Chapters Nine and Ten. I may seem to be belaboring this point, but it is because there have been many cases in ISKCON where women have been abused. The goal of Prabhupāda's movement is to attract and keep people along with their children and children's children. Doing so requires wisdom and forbearance at a minimum.

²⁹ In 1983, as temple president of ISKCON Potomac (Washington D.C.), I was trying to cultivate a mature Indian woman who was CEO and owner of a successful software consultancy business. And she was a lifelong Vaiṣṇava. One Sunday, during the feast, I found her sitting at a table speaking to two young, inexperienced *brahmacārīs* who were sitting on the other side in an air of confrontation. They were grilling her on which of the four regulations she followed. I immediately intervened on her behalf. Considering the dangers of such treatment, it is all-important to emphasize respect.

³⁰ SB 1.1.1; SB 3.26.26; BG 8.16.

³¹ The Los Angeles temple moved to 1975 La Cienega and subsequently to 3764 Watseka. They both bordered on residential areas, so Prabhupāda told me, as temple president, to convert the people in those areas. Unfortunately, we were too immature to do so. I would venture to say that we still have not learned the art despite becoming mature enough to do so.

In the same way, establishing and maintaining a simple village wherein modern women assume support roles also cannot be learned from a book. The women must be cared for, not abused or exploited, and they must be satisfied.

People can sometimes remain in an emotionally difficult situation for years, decades, or even a lifetime. Thus, that period is not proof of success.

Proof of success is when the *daiva-varṇāśrama* communities continue for generations.

How do we, who are influenced by global feminism and women's equality, expect men and women to adopt traditional roles?

This is a similar question to the previous one. First, a theoretical answer, and then the practical.

Prahāda Mahārāja tells his father that the solution to obsessive attachment to his family is to go to the forest and worship Viṣṇu.³²

The point is that men and women combine and a family results. That is perfectly natural. Attachment to the family is also natural. However, spiritual life calls for detachment from the family, which can be difficult.

The traditional method of becoming detached is to worship Viṣṇu through *yajña*.

In addition to that *yajña*, the *brahmacārīs*, *vānaprasthas*, and *sannyāsīs* naturally set an example of detachment from family life and material enjoyment.

Now, a few practical items:

The *śāstra* instructs householders to distribute *prasādam* and contribute money to the *yajña*. They are in the best position to do both. The more that householders part with their money, harvest, or time,

³² SB 7.5.5

the more advanced they are in their service to the *yajña*.³³ That does not mean quantity of money. It means the percentage.³⁴

At minimum, offering money to Viṣṇu decreases the amount one spends on material expansion. That is the beginning of one's detachment.

But to do that, the entire family must cooperate to accomplish such a goal.

Men and women in global society have become contaminated by its influence. For most devotees, it is not possible to immediately give up the norms of modern society. However, a few set an example for others.

Regarding treatment of women, we may look at the way Prabhupāda related to his female disciples. He guided them with love and affection. And he depended on his temple authorities and husbands to manage the details regarding families and duties of men, women, and children.

Effective guidance in devotional life cannot be established by force. Any guidance must be done through love and affection.

Nevertheless, it is natural that there will be differences, sometimes vast differences.³⁵ And standards will change over time as was experienced in the short ten years that Prabhupāda oversaw ISKCON.

³³ One may object that devotional service is qualitative not quantitative. It is both. In quantity we have 16 rounds to chant, four principles to follow, nine limbs of bhakti, 64 qualities, etc. In quality, we have *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam*, no other desire but to serve.

³⁴ SB 1.17.38 purport: "The citizens of the state must give in charity up to fifty percent of their income."

³⁵ Today in ISKCON, there are what some people call liberals and conservatives. The liberals generally want to be more accommodating to modern feminism. The conservatives insist on maintaining traditional roles for women. When a society like ISKCON can maintain varieties and differences within its scope, that is often a sign of good management. However, there may come a time when the authorities must restrain those who allow too much syncretism or mixing with the outside culture. That is a matter to be determined by leaders who know and enforce the *śāstra*. Note that Islam and Christianity, which are the leading religions today, have typically tried to prevent too much syncretism throughout their histories. In contrast, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions may have allowed too much syncretism. For example, Prabhupāda referred to Hinduism as a hodgepodge. (*Civilization and Transcendence* 3)

If we say that women's roles must be determined before we implement *varṇāśrama*, then we will fail. They are a natural part of its implementation, but the first goal is to find ways to intimately link *saṅkīrtana* and *varṇāśrama*. That should be the supreme objective.

We cannot expect either men or women who are raised in an adharmic society to become dharmic immediately. Both men and women may gradually transition from crows to swans, before, during, and after *daiva-varṇāśrama* is established. In fact, the act of establishing it is purifying.³⁶

We must look to saintly men and women in *śāstra* as well as among ourselves, and we must struggle to follow their examples. And we must struggle to surrender to structure and discipline that is administrated through good relationships.

Where are the men in the mode of goodness?

First, one must have the natural propensity (*guṇa/karma*) to be elevated to the mode of goodness. Second, one must be properly educated and trained to achieve goodness. Not everyone has the propensity and training.

It is not enough to be issued a thread by a guru.³⁷

However, every community should have one or more *brāhmaṇas* who know how to apply *śāstra*,³⁸ are good examples of detachment, and are capable of guiding *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras* by the example they set. When necessary, they may be strict, but it must be communicated through a loving relationship like father to son.

³⁶ CC Madhya 19.170: "*Bhakti*, or devotional service, means engaging all our senses in the service of the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of all the senses. When the spirit soul renders service unto the Supreme, there are two side effects. One is freed from all material designations, and one's senses are purified simply by being employed in the service of the Lord."

³⁷ Conversation, Feb 14, 1977: "Everybody is being raised, but they're falling down."

³⁸ *Manu-smṛiti*, 12.106, author's translation: "Those who read the *śāstras* are better than those ignorant of them; those who memorize them are even better; those who know how to apply them are better still, and those who resolutely follow them are best."

Not every man can do those things. Such *brāhmaṇas* are a small percentage of society.

And a woman who is not qualified to support such men should not look to join with them. One of the aspects of the *varṇāśrama* society is that the people know their place.

Everyone must be satisfied in his or her role.³⁹

When looking for a spouse, one should try to find someone responsible and cooperative. At minimum, a husband should be responsible (dharmic) for family and community, otherwise he should not be a husband.⁴⁰ And a wife should be similarly responsible.

A man and woman sacrifice for the family, which in turn sacrifices for the community, which sacrifices for *saṅkīrtana*.

Can we ever cooperate to create and sustain something viable?

Yes, we can. Definitely. ISKCON has progressed from one small storefront temple with immature devotees whose general qualification was little more than attachment to Prabhupāda. Today, there is an international movement with a great amount of diversity in work, thought, education, expertise, and spirituality. It can be done.⁴¹

ISKCON has tremendous wealth in land, manpower, money, and organizational ability.⁴² It can be done.

³⁹ See the article entitled "Satisfaction" in this journal issue.

⁴⁰ SB 5.5.18: "One who cannot deliver his dependents from the path of repeated birth and death should never become a spiritual master, a father, a husband, a mother or a worshipable demigod."

⁴¹ Conversation, Feb 14, 1977: "We have to introduce this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It must be done perfectly, and it is possible, and people will be happy."

⁴² *Varṇāśrama* society is normally organized by the *kṣatriyas* assisted by the *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. ISKCON was established to recruit and train *brāhmaṇas*, but when Prabhupāda's followers recruit and train dharmic *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras*, cooperation will ensue. Worldwide, the citizens of large countries cooperate for social, economic, and national goals. Especially their militaries are examples of precise cooperation of up to three million personnel. If the *asuras* can cooperate for material enjoyment, so can the *devas*, the devotees, cooperate for the enjoyment of Kṛṣṇa.

VII. Hindu Revival

Dayānanda dāsa

The best of all cultures is *varṇāśrama*, yet it has become contaminated by asuric influences, especially from the modern materialistic, global culture.¹ It is the natural tradition, coming from Kṛṣṇa, not an addition or modification. It is not a concoction. It is based on *śāstra* and *paramparā*.

It could be argued that the second half of Śrīla Prabhupāda's movement is a Hindu revival. Thus, it becomes a Hindu movement, but in Śrīla Prabhupāda's terms. The reason I present this perspective is to better understand how to implement *varṇāśrama* on a mass scale.

I am not trying to introduce something controversial. My idea is to offer another way of viewing *daiva-varṇāśrama* as a basis for newer, more dynamic methods of establishing it.

Some believe the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement has nothing to do with Hinduism. And, in a sense, they are correct. Prabhupāda said, "It is a mistake to understand that we are trying to push on Hindu culture."²

¹ *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta*, Chapter Eight, by Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami: "Praising Mahatma Gandhi for his Vaiṣṇava qualities, Abhay suggested that Gandhi had also esteemed the Gita-nagari concept. It was the only way of relief from the sufferings caused by "demoniac-principled leaders" who were misguiding the present demoralized civilization."

² Morning Walk with Śrīla Prabhupāda, April 9, 1976.

He often supported that idea by using a verse from the *Nārada-pañcarātra*, which is a definition of *bhakti*.³ “This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is, *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam*. When one becomes freed from all designations, he can take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. As long as one is Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, there is no question of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”⁴

So, in what way is Prabhupāda’s movement Hindu revival? First, we must understand that Hindu means *varṇāśrama*. Śrīla Prabhupāda explained, “Hindu religion is a modern term given by foreigners. The religion of the Indians, the *bhāratīya*, is *varṇāśrama-dharma*, religion of four social classes and four spiritual orders.”⁵

However, Prabhupāda was not trying to make converts to *varṇāśrama-dharma* or Hinduism. He wanted to establish *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*. There are two differences introduced in the word *daiva*. First, it is Kṛṣṇa’s system, which is based on one’s work and qualification, not birth.⁶ Second is that *daiva* indicates Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, meaning that the system is focused on Kṛṣṇa. It is a social system meant to elevate the people to *bhakti* that Prabhupāda describes as *sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam*, free from bodily designations.

The existing system in ISKCON is to train *brāhmaṇas*. Prabhupāda described that as small scale. The large scale, or *daiva-varṇāśrama*, is to train everyone else—*kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras*.⁷

³ Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (CC) Madhya 19.70, quoted from the *Nārada-pañcarātra: sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam tat-paratvena nirmalam hr̥ṣikeṇa hr̥ṣikeśa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*, “Bhakti, or devotional service, means engaging all our senses in the service of the Lord, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the master of all the senses. When the spirit soul renders service unto the Supreme, there are two side effects. One is freed from all material designations, and one’s senses are purified simply by being employed in the service of the Lord.”

⁴ Prabhupāda’s Vrindavan Lecture Nov 29, 1971

⁵ CC Madhya 22.21-28 lecture, Jan 11, 1967.

⁶ *Bhagavad-gītā* (BG) 4.13

⁷ Room conversation, Feb 14, 1977: *Prabhupāda*: Brāhmaṇas are available. Why you are bothering about this? Brāhmaṇas are also available, śūdras are also available. Why śūdra should be artificially become a brāhmaṇa? *Satsvarūpa*: What will the śūdras do in the big city temple, in all the temples? *Prabhupāda*: Why you are bringing our temples? I am talking of the principle. *Satsvarūpa*: Oh. *Hari-śauri*: The principle we follow. We’re just thinking how it can be implemented. You were saying that it should be started in our

Śrīla Prabhupāda made several statements about large-scale *daiva-varṇāśrama*. For example, he said, “We want a stronghold of this culture, and I think it will be possible in Manipur. Establish *daiva-varṇāśrama*. There must be first-class *brāhmaṇas*, first-class *kṣatriyas*, first-class *vaiśyas* and first-class *śūdras* also. These are my ideas. The whole world will see that here is real culture, Vedic culture.”⁸

He also said, “There is a program, Manipur. I want to start in that small state *varṇāśrama* idea. That is my dream. [It is a] small state [so] it can be done.”⁹

Converting people on a large scale may seem like a huge task, and it will indeed be difficult. However, consider that starting with one man and \$20 in 1965, there are now tens of thousands of *brāhmaṇas*, hundreds of temples, schools, research institutes, restaurants, farms, a billion books distributed in many languages, millions of friends, art, architecture, sculpture, dance, drama, music, and more—all from one man and us, his followers. We can extend the culture to a huge scale. We have only started with a small section of society.

Although the external process is to organize people according to work, the underlying principle is to raise them to the mode of goodness

society. *Prabhupāda*: Yes, that is a very broad idea. Now we are speaking of some of them, training them. [*brāhmaṇas*] That is another thing. That is small scale. *Hari-śauri*: The principle we're following. [Editor's note: Hari-śauri's statement shows his misunderstanding of Prabhupāda's desire to ensure his disciples understand the principles of *varṇāśrama* before foolishly rushing into implementation.] *Prabhupāda*: For the big scale, this [*varṇāśrama*] is the required. In big scale you cannot make all of them as *brāhmaṇas* or *sannyāsīs*. No. That is not possible. This [current ISKCON] is a small scale. How many percentage of people of the world we are 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 [BG 4.13], if you want to do it in a larger 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 abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ* [BG 18.45]. *Para-upakāra* means mass benefit, not there is certain section. Then [to do that] we have to introduce this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It must be done perfectly, **and it is possible**, and people will be happy.

⁸ Room conversation, Feb 2, 1977

⁹ Room conversation, Feb 14, 1977

and pure goodness. That is done by arranging for them to offer the fruits of their work to Kṛṣṇa.¹⁰

People are happy doing so when they experience transcendental enjoyment by celebrating Kṛṣṇa's names, *līlās*, and forms. When the members of society spend lavishly on temples, deity forms, *līlā* festivals, *prasādam* distribution, and entertainment, many will find it easy to enjoy.¹¹

That is the basic principle of *varṇāśrama* society. *Varṇāśrama-dharma* is meant to elevate the members of society to liberation from suffering, which is equal to detachment from sense gratification.¹²

However, as we learn from the *Gītā*, such detachment cannot be truly successful without adding *daiva*.¹³ That is one reason for calling it *daiva-varṇāśrama*. The *Bhāgavatam* explains that one's work must be dharmic. Such dharmic work must elevate that person to renunciation. And renunciation must lead the person to *bhakti*. That is *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*.¹⁴

The process is simple. It is the offering of fruits of labor (*karma-phala*) that instills renunciation. And it is offering to Kṛṣṇa that raises one to *bhakti*.

¹⁰ *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (SB) 3.29.10: "When a devotee worships the Supreme Personality of Godhead and offers the results of his activities in order to free himself from the inebrieties of fruitive activities, his devotion is in the mode of goodness."

¹¹ Room conversation, Oct 8, 1977: "And money, spend for Kṛṣṇa---for Kṛṣṇa's palace, for Kṛṣṇa's temple, for Kṛṣṇa's worship, gorgeous, as gorgeously as [possible]. And to organize this, *varṇāśrama* will help you to divide the society---*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*---as there is division in the body. That will help. Don't waste the human form of body for sense gratification. I wanted to introduce this. Now I have given you ideas. You can do it. You are all intelligent. For Caitanya Mahāprabhu's *para-upakāra*. So you do good to others, not exploit others. Any human being who has been bestowed by this body [given a body] has the capacity to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. Give them chance and make situation favorable. Is that clear?"

¹² BG 2.14-15

¹³ BG 17.28: "Anything done as sacrifice, charity, or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Pṛthā, is impermanent. It is called *asat* and is useless both in this life and the next."

¹⁴ SB 3.23.56: "Anyone whose work is not meant to elevate him to religious life, anyone whose religious ritualistic performances do not raise him to renunciation, and anyone situated in renunciation that does not lead him to devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, must be considered dead, although he is breathing."

Most agree that in modern culture, it is difficult to dedicate lavish amounts for the worship and glorification of Kṛṣṇa. Life's problems become complex with the need for a nice house, car, and many other amenities. It may seem counterintuitive that living a simple farm life would offer greater facility to worship Kṛṣṇa.

However, the simple uncomplicated life at least gives the chance to be elevated to renunciation as stated above. And Kṛṣṇa supplies the fruits of work, the money or harvest offered to Him.¹⁵ As we work in the modern world, we begin to think that we create the results or that living in a wealthy society influences wealth. That may be true on a superficial level; however, living a simple life does not mean Kṛṣṇa will refuse to give abundance to his servants so that they can worship Him lavishly.

The point is to establish a culture that works to satisfy the simple needs like eating without complicating those needs.

Thus, the ideal society satisfies its animal needs—eating, sleeping, mating, and defending—simply. When a culture adds unwanted complexity to the basic material problems, that becomes a distraction from the Supreme. It means that the Supreme is no longer the center of society.

For example, a thousand years ago, the people of the European countries satisfied their need for food in a simple way. Then about five hundred years ago, they became greedier. Their desires grew more complex, and they set out to conquer lands all around the world. Their simple food requirement increased due to greed. Prabhupāda discusses this idea in his conversation with Mr. Dixon, the state minister for social services in Australia.¹⁶

¹⁵ BG 3.1-5 lecture, Dec 20, 1968: "If you have got enough money, spend it for Kṛṣṇa. Don't stock it. The more you spend, more you become balanceless for spending Kṛṣṇa, then more you are benefited. This is the process. That will be taught in the *karma-yoga* section [of the *Gītā*]. And how one can, unless one is spiritually advanced how he can sacrifice his hard-earned money for Kṛṣṇa?"

¹⁶ Conversation, April 23, 1976: *Prabhupāda*: Actually, it is not your land. You come from Europe. But you are now claiming it is your land. The Africans, they are [also] claiming. So much land, you can produce ten times food grains for as many populations as there are. [...] You take the total land as God's property, and all the population, they are sons of God. Then whole problem solved. Everything solved."

But the Europeans are just an example. All over the world people claim the land as their own when Kṛṣṇa is the true owner.¹⁷ The point is not to try to create a world culture in which everyone communally shares the land and its produce. That is not possible despite the wishful thinking of Marx and his socialist followers.

Instead, society is best managed when it is organized as *daiva-varṇāśrama* culture. Humans are not perfect. The socialist idea of a utopian society is unproven and unrealistic. Imperfect humans cannot have a perfect society.

Nevertheless, *varṇāśrama* has all the necessary systems for managing imperfect humans. One of its prominent features is the control of greed and sense gratification and the elevation to freedom from suffering.

In the Satya-yuga, society was nearly perfect due to the elevated citizens. In Tretā-yuga, *varṇāśrama* manifested.¹⁸ Two and a half million years have passed since then, and humans have deteriorated significantly. Thus, the idea of working for a perfect society is foolish. Instead, perfection may be found through gradual elevation to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *Bhāgavatam* explains that one can achieve perfection (*saṁsiddhi*) when one's occupation according to *varṇa* and *āśrama* is to please the Supreme (*hari-toṣaṇa*).¹⁹

Now that ISKCON is not constrained by recruiting only *brāhmaṇas*, its preachers can compete with all the other prominent doctrines of the world.

Due to its greed, modern culture is ruining nature with no respite in sight, but *varṇāśrama* culture is harmonious with nature.²⁰

¹⁷ Śrī Īsopaniṣad 1

¹⁸ SB 11.17.16

¹⁹ SB 1.2.13: *ataḥ pumbhir dvoija-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 is to please the Personality of Godhead."

²⁰ SB 8.19.21 purport: "To teach this highest culture, *varṇāśrama-dharma* is recommended. The aim of the *varṇāśrama* divisions—*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, *brahmācārya*, *grhasṭha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*—is to train one to control the senses and be content with the bare necessities. Here Lord Vāmanadeva, as an ideal *brahmacārī*, refuses Bali Mahārāja's offer to give Him anything He might want. He says that without

Socialists think they have the solutions to inequality, injustice, and the abuse of nature. However, their solutions are impractical and unproven. *Daiva-varṇāśrama* is proven. It has worked for thousands of years.

Under the influence of Western Christian culture, the environment has degraded. They are concerned with individual and social sins, but their societies are based on the greed of exploitation of nature, which belongs to God. That is the greater sin. *Daiva-varṇāśrama* is the solution.

Islam puts Allah in the center of society, which is very good. Many in the Islamic world have a natural way of living; however, their sole focus is on going to heaven. They enjoy praying, but in *daiva-varṇāśrama*, the citizens are encouraged to enjoy at every step.²¹ In other words, the emphasis on transcendental enjoyment is far greater in the *daiva-varṇāśrama* religion than in Islam.

Thus, compared to any culture in the world, Vaiṣṇava culture, on the whole, is more effective in curbing greed while satisfying its citizens with art, entertainment, literature, and chanting.

The external features of *daiva-varṇāśrama* briefly stated above may be expanded considerably and used to convert entire nations.²²

contentment one could not be happy even if he possessed the property of the entire world or the entire universe. In human society, therefore, the brahminical culture, *kṣatriya* culture and *vaiśya* culture must be maintained, and people must be taught how to be satisfied with only what they need. In modern civilization, there is no such education; everyone tries to possess more and more, and everyone is dissatisfied and unhappy. The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is therefore establishing various farms, especially in America, to show how to be happy and content with minimum necessities of life and to save time for self-realization, which one can very easily achieve by chanting the *mahā-mantra*—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.”

²¹ *Śikṣāṣṭaka* 1, CC Antya 20.12: *prati-padaṁ pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam*, “it enables one to taste full nectar at every step.”

²² Conversation Feb 14, 1977: “Manipur. I want to start *varṇāśrama* in that small state. That is my dream. Small state it can be done. [It can be more easily accomplished in a small state.]”

Prabhupāda said, “It is possible.”²³ He also said, “Impossible is a word found in a fool’s dictionary.”²⁴

Thus, excuses for not acting now are unacceptable, as I have established in this issue’s article, “Social Chaos.” We cannot wait for a concocted definition of chaos. Prabhupāda explained that without *daiva-varṇāśrama*, society is already in chaos.²⁵

Practical Implementation

Some devotees desire to implement *daiva-varṇāśrama* communities solely by referring to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s comments. However, at least some of his discussions may have been brainstorming sessions.

Before moving into the implementation stage, one must know what the two basic principles in a *varṇāśrama* community are. The first is renunciation (*virāga* or *vairāgya*). The second is service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*tīrtha-pada-sevā*).²⁶

Growing food naturally, caring for cows, and organizing society into *varṇas* and *āśramas* are some of the means to achieve those goals. They are not goals in themselves.

Mahāprabhu rejected *varṇāśrama* as *eho bāhya* (This is external.) However, Prabhupāda said, “But we are not going to be *niṣkiñcana* (without desire or having nothing).” He explained that although Mahāprabhu rejected everything external, our duty is to arrange society’s external affairs so that people will gradually, easily come to the spiritual platform.²⁷

²³ Room conversation, Feb 14, 1977

²⁴ Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta, chapter forty-five. [“Impossible is a word to be found only in the dictionary of fools.” The statement is from Napoleon that Prabhupāda borrowed.]

²⁵ BG 13.3 lecture, Dec 30, 1972: “If you want to, if you want to maintain, keep the perfect human civilization, then you must maintain this *varṇāśrama*. Otherwise, there will be chaos. Because we have created chaos in the world, without following the Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is trouble. So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is all-around solution, overall solution of all problems.”

²⁶ SB 3.23.56, see footnote above for translation.

²⁷ Conversation, Feb 14, 1977, in Mayapur. The full statement is “Our position is different. We are trying to implement Kṛṣṇa consciousness in everything. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally took sannyāsa. He rejected completely material. *Niṣkiñcana*.

Thus, they will be elevated to the internal spiritual level so they will not require the external *varṇāśrama* structure. In other words, *varṇāśrama* is a means to an end, which is *bhakti* or *śuddha-bhakti*.

The reason I make that point is that we may try to implement *varṇāśrama* as best we can. It depends on the individuals who are doing so and the environment they are in.

If we look at Vaiṣṇava history, we may find many differences in practice and social organization depending on the time and region.

Nevertheless, broadly at the root of any *varṇāśrama* organization should be the worship of Viṣṇu and progression toward freedom from material life.

Here is a case study on *varṇa* in Manipur based on a paper by Mangoljao Maibam and Vethihu Kezo, both college professors: Prior to the introduction of Vaiṣṇavism, there were no *varṇas* in Manipur. Some Rāmānandī Vaiṣṇava preachers came to Manipur in 1717, converted the king, and encouraged him to establish casteism and other practices by force.

The preachers divided society into *brāhmaṇas*, those who had come from India and some converts, and *kṣatriyas*, who are the majority of Manipuri Vaiṣṇavas. There are no *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. There is a third class, called Loi. They are outside the Vaiṣṇava communities and live in separate villages.

In the late 1700s, King Bhagyachandra converted to Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and stopped using force. He was charismatic, and he

But we are not going to be *niṣkiñcana*. We are trying to cement the troubled position of the... That 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 required."

established temples in every village along with the *rāsa-līlā* dance.²⁸ However, he did not change the caste scheme.²⁹

In Indonesia, predominantly Bali, the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva preachers established four *wangsas*: *brahmana*, *satriya*, *waisya*, and *sudra*.³⁰

My point in citing these studies is that it is not practical to implement a *varṇāśrama* system in a vacuum. There are influences and controls from the government and external society. It is a good idea for a few intellectual devotees to study various systems around the world, especially in India and Bangladesh.

The purpose of studying *varṇāśrama* in India would be to observe how purely it might be done. Studying the castes of Manipur or Bali might give hints on how to implement the system on top of the local culture on a widespread basis.³¹

I am not suggesting that such studies should be exhaustively conducted prior to starting a farm community of 25 devotees, or even 250. But Prabhupāda's vision of *varṇāśrama* was to organize thousands and even millions of people.³² For that, we should consider how to proceed.

²⁸ For successful expansion, there should be strong, charismatic leadership of good devotees. Also, the people must have transcendental enjoyment to sustain their devotion over hundreds and thousands of years.

²⁹ Mangoljao Maibam and Vethihu Kezo, "Origin of Caste System in Manipur: A Brief Analysis," *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, www.ijfmr.com.

³⁰ Howe, L. E. A., "Hierarchy and Equality: Variations in Balinese Social Organization." *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*

³¹ Bhakti Rāghava and Bhakti Vikāsa Swamis already do this. Some ISKCON leaders who oppose *daiva-varṇāśrama* may not know about such practical models. The various experts like these two swamis, Śivarāma Swami, and others must be consulted, and indeed, revered for the expertise they have gained.

³² Conversation, Feb 14, 1977: "There is a program—Manipur. I want to start in that small state *varṇāśrama* idea. That is my dream. Small state it can be done."

VIII. Varṇāśrama—a Śūdra Movement

Dayānanda dāsa

ISKCON is for *brāhmaṇas* and *varṇāśrama* is for *śūdras*.

That statement needs clarification. Śrīla Prabhupāda established ISKCON to recruit *brāhmaṇas* to head society and *sannyāsīs* to spread Mahāprabhu’s movement around the world. Thus, although not everyone in ISKCON is a *brāhmaṇa*, it has a *brāhmaṇa* focus. Most devotees in ISKCON have the characteristics of *dvija*, twice born, which means they are *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and *vaiśyas*. There are certainly exceptions, but ISKCON’s general theme is to push its devotee population to hear and study philosophy, preach, worship the deities, and behave like *brāhmaṇas*.

In contrast, *varṇāśrama* is for everybody—*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras*, *brahmacārīs*, *grhasthas*, *vānaprasthas*, and *sannyāsīs*. However, most people are *śūdras*. Going even further, in the Kali-yuga, effectively everyone is a *śūdra*.¹

¹ *Srimad Bhagavatam* 7.11.18-20 purport: “As stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.13), *cātur-varṇyaṁ mayā sṛṣṭaṁ guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ*: the four divisions of human society were created by the Supreme Lord according to the three modes of material nature and the work ascribed to them. Formerly, the principle of dividing human society into four sections — *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra* — was strictly followed, but because of gradual neglect of the *varṇāśrama* principles, *varṇa-saṅkara* population developed, and the entire institution has now been lost. In this Age of Kali, practically everyone is a *śūdra* (*kalau śūdra-sambhavāḥ* [*Skanda Purāṇa*]), and finding anyone who is a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya* is very difficult. Although the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is a movement of *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas, it is trying to reestablish the divine *varṇāśrama* institution, for without this division of society there cannot be peace and prosperity anywhere.”

Members of each *varṇa* and *āśrama* are attracted by a specific environment. This article presents ways to create an environment that will attract *śūdras*. And not only should they be attracted, but they must also remain active participants of the *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, along with their children and grandchildren.

It should be clear that *śūdras* are eligible for the highest knowledge. Kṛṣṇa explains: “This knowledge [supreme knowledge of relationship with Kṛṣṇa] should be taught to one who is free from these bad qualities, who is dedicated to the welfare of the *brāhmaṇas*, and who is kindly disposed, saintly and pure. And if common workers [*śūdras*] and women are found to have devotion for the Supreme Lord, they are also to be accepted as qualified hearers.”²

Introduction

With great difficulty, Prabhupāda set up the Kṛṣṇa consciousness society to recruit *brāhmaṇas*. After nearly 60 years, it has been effective in assembling a body of top-class devotees. However, it has not developed the necessary skills or systems to recruit many *śūdras*.

Prabhupāda explained that *varṇāśrama* is for mass preaching or mass expansion.

He said in 1977: “This [ISKCON] is small scale. [He was 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 Kṛṣṇa’s instruction [meaning *cātur-varṇyam*]—if you want to do it in a large scale for the benefit of the whole human society.

² CC Madhya, 9.95-107. On his *guru*’s order, an illiterate South Indian *brāhmaṇa* was trying to read the *Gītā* imperfectly, and he was in ecstasy. Mahāprabhu saw that and appreciated his advanced sentiment. The *brāhmaṇa* knew the real meaning of the *Gītā*. He said, “I simply see the Lord’s beautiful features. It is for this reason that I am reading the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and my mind cannot be distracted from this.” Thus, in ISKCON, some may study Sanskrit, and many should receive *bhakti-śāstrī* education. However, the authorities in the *daiva-varṇāśrama* movement should recognize that most people may not be suitable for training in *bhakti-śāstrī*.

“Now we are picking up some of the best. That is another thing. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu said *para-upakāra*. Why a certain section should be picked up? [With *varṇāśrama*,] the whole mass of people will get the benefit of it. Then it is required, systematic.³ *Sve sve karmany abhirataḥ saṁsiddhiṁ labhate naraḥ*.⁴ *Para-upakāra* means mass benefit, not there is certain section. Then [to do that] we have to introduce this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It must be done perfectly, and it is possible, and people will be happy.”⁵

In a room conversation in Māyāpur, on 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 in Manipur. I want to start *varṇāśrama* in that small state. That is my dream. It can be done in a small state—*brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya*....”⁶ [Edited for clarity.]

His declaration 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.⁷ Those conversions are a missed opportunity for devotees.

In Muslim and Christian efforts to preach worldwide, they have been highly successful, especially with the common people. Either we can learn from them or develop our own methods.

Regardless, we must have successful ways to convert the masses or else we are not fulfilling the design of the *daiva-varṇāśrama* part of Prabhupāda’s movement. Some temples and devotees think that by purchasing land or protecting cows, they are doing what is necessary.

³ Meaning, it is required that the approach be systematic.

⁴ BG 18.45: “By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect.”

⁵ Part of room conversation with Prabhupāda on February 14, 1977, in Māyāpur

⁶ Conversation on Feb 14, 1977

⁷ Wikipedia, “Kuki people:” The majority of Kukis are now Christians, with most belonging to Protestant denominations, especially Baptist.

However, those two are only a small part of the task.

Entertainment and Enjoyment

Śūdras especially are interested in sense gratification.⁸ The purpose of *varṇāśrama* is to help the *grhasthas* and *śūdras* advance in spiritual life and achieve detachment from sense gratification.⁹ One of the most important ways the upper classes guide the working classes is by arranging for entertainment and enjoyment.

The following selection, until the end of this topic, is from *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal* 1.1, “*Daiva-varṇāśrama* Definition and Goals.”

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

⁸ Conversation, Nov 25, 1971: “In Western countries, they are all *śūdras*. They are getting money and misusing it for wine and women. They cannot use money for [spiritual life], simply for sense gratification. That is the *śūdra*. And *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, especially *kṣatriya*, as soon as they get money, they would make a big sacrifice to satisfy *viṣṇu-yajña*.”

⁹ SB 5.5.1 lecture, Nov 28, 1975: “So our civilization, Vedic civilization, means *varṇāśrama-dharma*, following the four principles of *varṇas* and four principles of *āśrama*. The ultimate goal is God realization. That is the human civilization. If there is no God realization, simply working hard day and night for sense gratification, it is accepted as hog civilization, dog civilization.”

players in drama, dancers, singers, speakers, etc., are required for the spiritual enlightenment of the common man.”¹⁰

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 anything material. I shall simply meditate.’

“Oh? What meditation will you do? Your meditation will be broken in a moment, just like Viśvāmitra 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-varjaṁ*. And that engagement can only be possible when you find some transcendental pleasure in it.”¹¹

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*.¹²

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

¹⁰ SB 1.11.20 purport

¹¹ BG 2.58-59 lecture; Also, in 2019, I was discussing the idea of transcendental enjoyment with Bhakti Charu Swami. He related a time when Prabhupāda asked him how he would maintain his vow of *sannyāsa*. When Bhakti Charu Mahārāja responded that he would be very strict, Prabhupāda cautioned him, saying that Viśvāmitra 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*. Lecture, Oct 20, 1968; SB 1.2.18 lecture, Sep 26, 1974; BG 2.58-59 lecture, Apr 15, 1966; Morning Walk Apr 26, 1976.

¹² See my article in *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal* 1.1, “Higher Enjoyment—a Pillar of *Daiva-Varṇāśrama*” for further development of this point.

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 help you to divide the society—*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*—as there is division in the body.”¹³

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 *rūpas*, *līlās*, and *nāmas* through lavish deity worship, festivals, feasts, art, dance, architecture, sculpture, drama, music, education, parades, storytelling, and more.

That enjoyment of *līlās* 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*.”¹⁴ That means your real life becomes revealed—joyful life. Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *ānandāmbudhi-varḍhanam*,¹⁵ meaning there is an ocean of joy that does not remain stagnant. It increases. That is the beauty of this movement.”¹⁶

Also, when commenting on BG, 10.8-11, Viśvanātha Cakravartī 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.”¹⁷

This is the end of the selection from *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal* 1.1, “*Daiva-varṇāśrama* Definition and Goals.”

¹³ Room Conversation with Prabhupāda on Oct 8, 1977

¹⁴ *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.1.12

¹⁵ *Sikṣāṣṭakam* 1 by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

¹⁶ Prabhupāda's lecture on SB 7.7.25-28, March 13, 1967

¹⁷ *Bhagavad-gītā* website with principal commentaries: <https://www.bhagavad-gita.us/bhagavad-gita-10-11/>

Engagement

Everyone must be engaged, all classes and especially the *śūdras*. Without work, they become lazy. Prabhupāda explained, “Nobody should remain unemployed. The *śūdras* are inclined. If he has got something to eat, he will not work.”¹⁸

Sometimes it sounds like Prabhupāda was speaking harshly or insensitively about *śūdras*, but he makes it clear that they must be engaged with affection.

In one place, he said they must be “obedient. Because people are not obedient. What are these hippies? They are not obedient. So, obedience also requires training. [...] That is *śūdra*. He must agree to abide by the orders of *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśya*. That's all. So that nobody will be unemployed.”¹⁹

But when questioned further, he explained: “It is out of love, out of affection, reciprocation. [...] Just like the child is afraid of the father. There is affection. ‘My father is displeased if I do.’ Father has said, ‘Don't touch this,’ so I don't touch. So that fear and affection, both are there. It is not simply that he is afraid of his father, but the affection is [also] there.”²⁰

Such management is an art that must be cultivated. In July 1975, Prabhupāda visited the *gurukula* in Dallas and explained how to discipline children. He said that the teachers must set an example of anything asked of the students. In other words, the students should not be asked to follow a discipline a teacher is not following.

And more importantly, he said, everything should be based on love. As he explained above, there may be a tinge of fear, meaning fear of displeasure. However, the underlying motivation is love and affection.

That is truly an art that must be cultivated. Without that relationship, it is extremely difficult to organize discipline and proper occupations in a community.

¹⁸ Conversation, May 27, 1974 and Conversation, Aug 1, 1975.

¹⁹ Conversation, March 14, 1974

²⁰ Conversation, Sept 5, 1971

Charismatic Leadership

Through charismatic leadership much can be accomplished.²¹ At the same time, it can result in much disturbance. Mahāprabhu's and Prabhupāda's movement relies on such leadership; thus, it cannot be abandoned.²² Leaders who learn the art of attracting and influencing others may be called charismatic. It may be learned, or it may be a natural talent.²³

Charisma is from a Greek word meaning *favor* or *divine gift*.²⁴ However, in modern times, it has come to mean personal charm. It may indeed be a gift from God. It seems that some are destined to become famous. Their beauty, wealth, or talent may be naturally attractive to many.

However, many work very hard to develop their talents.

Some have charisma limited to a small group or community whereas others are attractive to thousands and even millions.

Those who are attractive to others must also be controlled by affection as mentioned above. Currently, in materialistic society, there are many *śūdras*—sportspeople, actors, and singers—who have an immense following. Their influence is based on sense gratification.²⁵

²¹ Letter to Sukadeva, Dec 13, 1972, "I am calling upon you the big leaders to push this idea forward, namely, to *attract* some educated men to join us." And, "So you know this art, how to *attract* and engage men, so aim yourself at the top-class of men and give them every opportunity and facility to become convinced of our philosophy and engage themselves to their satisfaction." [Here, I equate *attract* to *charisma*. The dictionary definition is "compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others."]

²² Letter to Govinda dasa, April 7, 1973, "We especially have to try to *attract* the educated young men and women in your country so that in future there will be many strong leaders to keep our Kṛṣṇa Consciousness Movement strong."

²³ Letter to Damodara, Jan 9, 1973: "Main thing is to somehow or other create first quality preachers on Kṛṣṇa's behalf. So many boys and girls are simply wasting their time in so many frivolous ways, but if we are sincere and serious to *attract* them to Kṛṣṇa's fold, very easily we shall be able to persuade them to join us."

²⁴ Prabhupāda rarely used the word *charisma*. Instead, he spoke in terms of *attraction*.

²⁵ CC Madhya 17.185, Text: "A devotee's behavior establishes the true purpose of religious principles." From the purport: "One may serve his country, people and society, the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system, the sick, the poor, the rich, women, demigods

In *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, *śūdras* are not prevented from being influential or charismatic; however, they are controlled by affection for the *gurus*, the *brāhmaṇas*, and the *paramparā*.

Śūdras can be powerful in the Vaiṣṇava community.

Rāmānanda Rāya describes himself as a *śūdra*.²⁶ Indeed, many in his *karaṇa* sub-class were from the lower classes. However, his name Roy or Rai means king.

And Kṛṣṇa's foster father, Nanda, was a king among *vaiśyas*. Prabhupāda explains, "Nanda means that leader of the cowherd men, or he was king, Nanda Mahārāja. 'King' does not mean always one has to become a king of very big kingdom."²⁷

In modern society, great actors and singers are the new kings, queens, moguls, and sages. Yet they are controlled by their agents, producers, and popular devotion. Everyone must be controlled.

In the *daiva-varṇāśrama* system that control comes ultimately from Kṛṣṇa, who prescribes the methods to become free from sense gratification. The *varṇāśrama* structure—those who are leaders within that structure—control the various charismatic persons through love and affection so that all of society may become relieved from the bondage of karma and free from suffering.²⁸

and so on. All this service comes under the heading of sense gratification, or enjoyment in the material world. It is most unfortunate that people are more or less attracted by such material activity and that the leaders of these activities are accepted as *mahājanas*, great ideal leaders. Actually, they are only misleaders, but an ordinary man cannot understand how he is being misled."

²⁶ CC Madhya 8.21 and CC Madhya 7.63 purport: "Śrī Rāmānanda Rāya belonged to the *karaṇa* class, which is the equivalent of the *kāyastha* class in Bengal. This class is regarded all over India as *śūdra*." [...] "He was also the governor of South India under the regime of Mahārāja Pratāparudra of Orissa."

²⁷ SB 1.8.21 lecture, Oct 1, 1974

²⁸ SB 1.2.8 lecture, April 22, 1974, "There are many hundreds and thousands of followers, but there must be one leader. You follow any cult, [cult, meaning veneration directed toward an object] you must accept one leader." And, "There are leaders or gods. God means controller. There is controller always. You have to follow a leader or a controller. But the supreme leader is Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is such a leader that He is not controlled by any other leader." [edited for clarity and conciseness]

Currently, many devotee leaders and preachers are indeed capable of communicating such affection.²⁹ In the history of ISKCON, some devotees have demonstrated themselves as charismatic, and, in some cases, their influence has been so strong that they impact many other charismatic devotees.

It is through the charismatic leaders in Kṛṣṇa consciousness and friends in the external society that the *varṇāśrama* movement will be successful.

Identification with a Cause

There are always causes that stoke passion in the masses of people. They may be religious, ideological, or connected to sense gratification.

Movements like Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, and many others have inspired people and induced them to great self-sacrifice. Marxism and left-wing ideologies have been especially successful since the mid-1800s.

Even today, when many are apathetic, great numbers are still willing to give their lives for religions, ideologies, and countries.

Eric Hoffer was a well-known sociologist, famous among scholars from the 1950s. He was rooted in the working class, so his perspectives about mass movements and the people who join them seem to have been written partly from experience and partly from his research.

Although his statements are not from *śāstra*, his writings on movements and their followers bear consideration.³⁰

For example, he wrote, “It is a truism that many who join a rising revolutionary movement are attracted by the prospect of sudden and

²⁹ Again, affection does not mean to spoil or be lax. It means to establish a relationship like father-son wherein the son is afraid to displease the father. It is an art.

³⁰ Whenever I read of a movement that has success in provoking passion in millions of followers, whether religious or political, I immediately feel competitive. I look at the movement, make an objective analysis, truly without much prejudice, and determine that *daiva-varṇāśrama* has more to offer. I then lament that we devotees have not yet been able to inspire such fervor in millions.

spectacular change in their conditions of life. A revolutionary movement is a conspicuous instrument of change.”³¹

About the ardent follower, he commented: “His sense of security is derived from his passionate attachment and not from the excellence of his cause. The ardent follower is not really a stickler to principle. He embraces a cause not primarily because of its justness and holiness but because of his desperate need for something to hold on to. Often, indeed, it is his need for passionate attachment which turns every cause he embraces into a holy cause.”

Hoffer observed that people in certain socio-psychological situations, which he describes in his book, are more likely to join movements than others. He asserts that there are many who simply desire to be passionately attached to some cause, which can be almost any cause.

Based on my analysis of Hoffer, for devotees to be successful, they must publicly declare *daiva-varṇāśrama* to be a mass movement that will solve modern society’s ills. Many people are pre-disposed to join such a movement. We must simply seek out and capture those people. We have everything needed to do so—money, organizational ability, expert preachers, charismatic devotees, *prasādam*, music, sales ability, and, most importantly, the perfect society, *daiva-varṇāśrama*.

Many are waiting to change their lives. They want a cause to follow. We must give them the revolution they desire.³² According to Hoffer, they will indeed join our cause. I believe him.

And I believe Śrīla Prabhupāda, who said, “It is possible.”³³

³¹ *The True Believer*, Eric Hoffer, 1951

³² SB 1.5.11: “On the other hand, that literature which is full of descriptions of the transcendental glories of the name, fame, forms, pastimes, etc., of the unlimited Supreme Lord is a different creation, full of transcendental words **directed toward bringing about a revolution** in the impious lives of this world’s misdirected civilization. Such transcendental literatures, even though imperfectly composed, are heard, sung and accepted by purified men who are thoroughly honest.”

³³ Room conversation on *varṇāśrama*, February 14, 1977, in Māyāpur. A friend told me that “possible” is not a very strong word. However, Prabhupāda has asked his followers to do the task of establishing *daiva-varṇāśrama*. Some in ISKCON object that it is not possible. Prabhupāda said that it is.

IX. Satisfaction

Dayānanda dāsa

Dissatisfaction in Modern Society

In today's world, self-satisfaction is difficult to understand, what to speak of achieve.¹

There are many social constructs in modern society, like democracy, socialism, capitalism, humanitarianism, and materialistic science, that increase complexity, spiritual chaos, and anxiety.

For example, in a democracy, people are expected to understand and have opinions on local, national, and international affairs. We are taught that the people are the government, at least in large part. That breeds anxiety and dissatisfaction.²

To illustrate, prior to about 250 years ago in European society³ or 100 years ago in the colonized countries, the burden lay on the crown. Thus, the expression "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."⁴ Today, that unease is transferred upon the head of every citizen.

Families are also more complex and burdensome. Previously, in families around the world, cultural traditions dictated that the parents or grandparents were the ultimate authorities. Children contributed to

¹ The Google dictionary defines satisfaction as the pleasure from fulfilling one's desires or needs. In the *śāstra*, one should not seek to be satisfied (*santoṣa*) by fulfilling one's desires; instead, by accepting what one's receives. (SB 3.28.2) Also, SB 7.15.20: "Desires, hunger, thirst, and anger have an end, but greed is never satisfied." [In modern society, desires and needs have morphed into greed.]

² "Anxieties of Democracy," Social Science Research Council, ssrc.org.

³ Including America, Australia, etc.

⁴ *Henry IV*, part 2, Shakespeare.

the family as soon as they were able; they followed the orders of their parents. But today's pampered children are a costly burden.

Also burdensome is the continual struggle to increase individual and family comforts. In pursuit of comfort, the nuclear family has become a selfish, complex, independent unit. Women abandon traditional roles to share the burdens. Many lazy, irresponsible men abandon the family, thus escaping their obligation.⁵ All these family conditions cause disturbance, anxiety, and dissatisfaction.

Offspring are not expected to contribute much to the family throughout their lives. They are basically trained to be selfish and seek enjoyment. In uneducated families, that enjoyment is immediate. In more cultured families, the children are taught how to discipline themselves for long-term enjoyment.⁶ But in nearly all cases, the theme is selfishness.⁷

It is not possible for a materially selfish person to be truly satisfied. Whatever happiness one achieves through comforts is ephemeral. One can rise to a high level of enjoyment like Hiranyaśipu, but it will eventually end.⁸

The predominant theme of modern society is complexity for material aims, not simplicity for the sake of higher enjoyment.

Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us to satisfy life's basic needs, like eating, sheltering, etc., using simple methods, taking care not to add complexity. That results in genuine satisfaction and time to offer greater, more focused service to the Supreme.⁹

Another symptom of dissatisfaction is constant fighting over perceived injustice and inequality.

For example, modern society, especially in America, has become extremely litigious. Among people, businesses, communities,

⁵ These are the adharmic, irresponsible progeny described in BG 1.40.

⁶ *Bhāgavad-gītā* 18.36-38, three kinds of happiness.

⁷ For example, *The Selfish Society: How We All Forgot to Love One Another and Made Money Instead*, Sue Gerhardt.

⁸ BG 9.21 *kṣiṇe puṇye martya-lokaṁ viśanti*. "When one's merits are exhausted, one returns to the world of suffering."

⁹ For example, conversation with Minister Dixon, April 23, 1976.

churches, and governments, there is a constant stream of lawsuits. In previous ages, there were indeed lawsuits. We find provisions for lawsuits in many ancient texts.

However, Nārada states that when people truly followed *dharma*, there were no lawsuits.¹⁰ That implies that as people become more selfish and entrapped in material pursuits, they no longer follow true *dharma*. They may manufacture a *dharma* that conforms to their insatiable desires; however, it is not truly *dharma*.¹¹ And the result is dissatisfaction, more disagreements, and more lawsuits.

In contrast to disagreements and lawsuits, people were traditionally more accepting of their lot in life. When people suffered at the hands of other people, nature, or the government, they accepted it as their lot, their fate, or life's test.¹²

"Whatever condition Kṛṣṇa has given me, that is all right."¹³

Traditional Society

In traditional societies, people accepted the authorities of family, community, kingdom, and religion. They understood indebtedness to the higher authorities and self-sacrifice for a higher goal, especially a spiritual one.

¹⁰ "Asahāya, Commentary on *Nārada-smṛti*," *Principles of Hindu Law, The Commentaries*, Jogendra Chunder Ghose, Vol II, 1917.

¹¹ SB 6.1.34-39 lecture, Dec 19, 1970: *Dharmām tu sāksād bhagavat-praṇītam* [SB 6.3.19]. *Dharma* is enacted by the Supreme. Man-made *dharma* is not *dharma*. It is called *dharma-viparyaya*, the opposite of *dharma*, or *kaitava-dharma*, cheating *dharma*. [summarized]

¹² I am not suggesting here that devotees or people in general should tolerate every injustice. If someone commits murder, he should be punished severely. I am pointing out a general theme that applies especially to civil disputes.

¹³ SB 1.5.36 lecture, Aug 17, 1974: "Whatever condition Kṛṣṇa has given me, that is all right." *Tat te anukampām*: 'It is by His grace I have got this position.' Morning Walk, Apr 14, 1976: Although you may not like it, misery comes. Similarly, happy conditions come according to your destiny. Why waste time with this? You cannot change it. Formerly any man was satisfied in any position. [summarized] Moreover, in the Bible, St. Paul and others discouraged lawsuits. For example, Corinthians 6.7: "To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?"

The *Mahābhārata* states that a man should be sacrificed for a family, a family for a village, a village for a kingdom, and the earth for the soul.¹⁴ Although this statement indicates a dire situation wherein one might have to sacrifice a life or the lives of many, the theme is nevertheless sacrifice for a higher cause, even a material one. But due to selfishness, modern people try to avoid such sacrifice.

It is true that the government has a responsibility to take care of its communities that in turn must take care of families; however, over the course of time, people have become less interested in serving the greater good and more interested in receiving service from their authorities.

Especially in the wealthy countries, people are spoiled, entitled, and dissatisfied.

The *varṇāśrama* system is the opposite. The citizens are taught to be satisfied with their *varṇa*, their role in society. And the *varṇas* cooperate to serve the whole society, which in turn serves the Supreme. The analogy is that feeding the stomach nourishes the body. And food goes into the mouth, represented by the *brāhmaṇas*.¹⁵

Śrīla Prabhupāda explained: “Because it is a society of *sūdras* everywhere [modern society], there is confusion. No brain. Simply *śocati*: ‘want, want, want, want, want.’¹⁶ And in brahminical culture, you will find that even if one is a very poor *brāhmaṇa* with no source of income, even without eating regularly, he is happy. He is happy due to his knowledge. He will satisfy himself. If he does not get his food, he will think that ‘This day Kṛṣṇa desired that I should not have my food. Oh, it is Kṛṣṇa's pleasure. It is Kṛṣṇa's mercy.’”¹⁷

The point here is that the *varṇa* system is the natural way to achieve social satisfaction.

In 1907, British historian Sidney Low observed: “There is no doubt that it [*varṇa*] is the main cause of the fundamental stability and

¹⁴ *Mahābhārata* Sabha Parva, Chapter 55: Vidura to Dhṛtarāṣṭra: *tyajet kulārthe puruṣaṁ grāmasyārthe kulaṁ tyajet | grāmaṁ janapadasyārthe ātmārthe pṛthivīm tyajet*

¹⁵ SB 11.5.2 and “Yajña, Sacrifice to the Supreme,” *Back to Godhead*, May 20, 1956.

¹⁶ *Śocati* can be translated as grieving, lamenting, or in this case, covetous whining.

¹⁷ Conversation, Sept 21, 1973.

contentment by which Indian society has been braced up for centuries against the shocks of politics and the cataclysms of Nature. It provides every man with his place, his career, his occupation, his circle of friends.

“It makes him at the outset a member of a corporate body, it protects him through life from the canker of social jealousy and unfulfilled aspirations; it ensures him companionship and a sense of community with others in like ease with himself. The caste organization is to the Hindu his club, his trade union, his benefit society, his philanthropic society. There are no workhouses¹⁸ in India and none are as yet needed.”¹⁹

Satisfaction in Daiva-varṇāśrama

Currently, it is up to the individual to seek satisfaction in meditation, chanting, prayer, or another means, which many people do. However, it is extremely difficult or nearly impossible to achieve family and social satisfaction in modern global culture.

Social satisfaction in the *daiva-varṇāśrama* system is achieved through living simply and accepting one’s place in society. Even if one meditates or chants for a couple of hours in the day, without satisfaction on a societal level, life often becomes turbulent, spiritually chaotic, and insufferable.

¹⁸ Workhouses were operated by the British government as places for people who are destitute. They received board and lodging in return for work.

¹⁹ *Vision of India*, Sidney Low, 1907, pp. 862-263 quoted in *History of Dharma-śāstra* by Kane, vol II, part 1. [One may argue that this quote does not represent Ṭhākura Bhaktivinoda’s criticism of modern *varṇāśrama*. However, the Ṭhākura’s issue with asuric-*varṇāśrama* is that the *brāhmaṇas*, who should be devotees of Brahman, take advantage of the system for their material ends. They are not proper teachers and representatives of Brahman or Para-brahman. The Ṭhākura did not disapprove of a *varṇa* system that “provides every man with his place,” meaning that a man is provided with a social structure that offers him satisfaction with his place in society. Sidney Low was not making a spiritual critique. His material analysis was that the *varṇa* system offered equal or better provisions for the common people than the British system. That was an extraordinary endorsement considering the European attitude of superiority at the time.]

Some declare that everyone must chant or meditate on a societal level, and peace will be achieved. That may be true; however, there is no historical evidence that such a utopian society has ever existed aside from in the Satya-yuga. Thus, it is an unproven theory, meaning there is no proof that enough people can be induced to chant to establish the promised peace and satisfaction.²⁰

But *daiva-varṇāśrama* society has existed, and it still exists in many places, although in fractured forms. The *varṇāśrama* society does not depend on everyone to be a *brāhmaṇa*. It is an elevated culture without the need for everyone to vibrate together in unison. Instead, it is a culture in which the people work for a higher cause. Certainly, no society in this age can achieve perfect satisfaction. However, when comparing modern society with traditional *daiva-varṇāśrama*, and not just theoretical *daiva-varṇāśrama*, one finds a markedly higher level of satisfaction.

Unlike a theoretical society in which the people all chant or meditate, the practical or observable superiority of *varṇāśrama* culture is proof of a society that offers greater social satisfaction.

Researchers conduct surveys to determine which countries are happiest. Their criteria are based on wealth, health, education, etc.²¹ But in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the happiness and satisfaction indices are different. To achieve a higher level of satisfaction and avoid suffering, one must become detached from material happiness and distress that come and go. Such detachment is extremely difficult to understand for those with material goals.

However, Kṛṣṇa details the methodology for such detachment in His *Gītā*.

²⁰ The exception to this statement is that in the Satya-yuga, there was one social class called *hamsa* and the people followed *dharma* perfectly. (SB 11.17.10) Also, it is said that in the 17th century, King Virhamvir ordered the citizens to chant and adhere to other Vaiṣṇava practices. But they did not maintain those disciplines for long. In other words, there are not enough *hamsa*-like people for a perfect *dharma* society, and it cannot be achieved by force.

²¹ "World Happiness Report: What makes some countries happier than others?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, Husna Haq, csmonitor.com.

Kṛṣṇa's Method to Achieve Satisfaction

In the third chapter of His *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa does not specifically mention *varṇa*; however, the chapter is mostly about work (*karma*) or occupation,²² and *varṇa* also means one's occupation. So, when Kṛṣṇa uses the word *karma*, one can think *karma/varṇa*.

Near the middle of the chapter, just when Kṛṣṇa is discussing *karma* and *yajñā*, he mentions self-satisfaction. Thus, we get the idea that satisfaction is related to *karma/varṇa* and *yajñā*.

Taking a step back to give an overview, the theme of the chapter is work, detachment from the fruits of work, and *yajñā*, which directs those fruits toward Viṣṇu and away from the deadly enemy lust.²³ In that way, offering the fruits—the money—establishes our link with Viṣṇu instead of nourishing our lust.

Here is a more detailed explanation:

Kṛṣṇa starts by explaining work. It is unavoidable and constant. He then states that working in a way that controls the mind and senses is the best.

This is important to note, because, after discussing the methodology of work, detachment, and *yajñā*, He ends the chapter with control of the mind and senses, thus wrapping up His discussion by referencing the original premise.

Essentially, the control of mind and senses is accomplished through *yajñā* to Viṣṇu in the *varṇāśrama* society.²⁴

²² The definition of *karma* is work. It means working in one's job, occupation, or profession. In this chapter, Kṛṣṇa uses it in that simple way. Here, it does not mean a good or bad reaction to that work.

²³ Restated with some Sanskrit: "Work (*karma*), detachment from the fruits of work (*karma-phala*), and *yajñā*, which redirects *karma-phala* away from *kāma* and thus purifying the mind and senses." Note that the final verses of the third chapter refer back to the opening verses, 1-7, bringing in a conclusion or resolution to the beginning of the chapter. Arjuna's opening question was the relationship between intelligence (*buddhi*) and work (*karma*). The chapter leads to an understanding of how those two are linked. The last few verses conclude and refer back to the beginning.

²⁴ BG 3.9, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 3.8.8. Mind and sense control is also achieved through *bhakti*, whose limbs are *yajñās*. (BG 3.13 purport).

Kṛṣṇa reviews the traditional Vedic system of *yajña*, which is at the heart of *varṇāśrama* culture.²⁵ He describes a cycle of *yajña*, rain, and food. He emphasizes that one who breaks the cycle and enjoys the food and other necessities without offering them in *yajña* is a thief.²⁶

Going beyond food, Kṛṣṇa then explains the transcendental nature of *yajña*: Work comes from the Vedas, which come from the Supreme, who pervades *yajña*. Thus, through *yajña* to Viṣṇu one links to Viṣṇu.

It bears repeating that the heart of *varṇāśrama* society is *yajña* and it has been that way since *varṇāśrama* was created. That means the heart of *daiva-varṇāśrama* in this age is *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.

Kṛṣṇa warns us that one who does not follow the natural cycle lives in vain. In simple terms, that cycle is working, getting results like money or harvest, and offering the excess above necessities to Viṣṇu.²⁷ In Vedic times, the offerings were placed in the fire. In this age, they are offered in the fire of *saṅkīrtana-yajña*.

In other words, work in a *varṇa* produces money or harvest, which is placed in the fire of *saṅkīrtana*. The money is used to glorify and celebrate Kṛṣṇa, and the harvest is used for *prasādam*.

Returning to *yajña*. A fundamental purpose of *yajña* in *varṇāśrama* society is to facilitate detachment from material life. It functions like this: After working, we get some excess above what we need for our bare necessities. That excess we can spend on either comforts or *yajña*.

²⁵ The Puruṣasukta section of the *Rg Veda* (10.90) begins with a primordial *yajña* during which the four *varṇas* proceed from the body of the *virāt-puruṣa*. See also, SB 11.5.2-3.

²⁶ BG 3.12.

²⁷ Either one follows *karma* (work)—*karma-phala* (fruits of work)—*yajña*, or one follows *karma—karma-phala—kāma* (comforts). The latter is a life of sin, lived in vain. This is a simplified form of the cycle described by Kṛṣṇa and the great commentators. According to Śrī Madhvācārya, “The Supreme Lord is eternally established in the cycle of *yajña*. The cycle was established by Lord Brahmā at creation. Whoever does not perpetuate the cycle, which is beneficial to all beings in the universe, is sinful. His actions run counter to the sustenance of all life, and he will be cast into hell. (SB 5.26.18).” Another point is that there are at least two definitions of *karma-phala*. One is the money or harvest one receives from working. That is the definition I am referring to here. The other meaning is the material body or situation one receives as the result of one’s actions. That is *karma-phala* or *karma-bandha* (the bondage of *karma*). The way to avoid *karma-bandha* is to use *karma-phala* in *yajña* to Viṣṇu. (BG 3.9) Doing so is called *karma-phala-tyāga* (renunciation of the fruits of *karma*).

If we spend it on *yajña*, we have less to spend on comforts. Simple.

In modern complex society, that is difficult to do. But in simple *varṇāśrama* society, it is much easier. And lest someone object that it is too difficult, Mahāprabhu offered us the living example of Kholāvecā Śrīdhara, who was extremely poor, yet he sacrificed 50% of his income.²⁸

And Mahāprabhu embraced him. Imagine Śrīdhara's satisfaction when that happened. Of course, most are not on the level of Śrīdhara Prabhu, but just as we follow the example of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the ācāryas, we may try to follow Śrīdhara's lead.

As Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned, the *varṇāśrama* system is designed to satisfy Viṣṇu through *yajña* and thus achieve detachment through offering the results of work to Him.²⁹

It is a practical process. Again, when we offer our money to Kṛṣṇa, we have less to spend on extras or comforts.³⁰ Those comforts are *kāma*, which does not just mean sex. It means all the things we work for that are beyond our necessities.³¹ Kṛṣṇa supplies our necessities and more. That extra amount should be used to achieve liberation through *yajña*.³²

²⁸ SB 1.2.6 lecture, Feb 23, 1972, and SB 1.2.12-14 lecture, March 26, 1967.

²⁹ BG 3.9 purport.

³⁰ Much of what I've written in this article is for *grhasthas*. For example, *yajña* for *brahmacārīs* does not involve money. For them, it is generally study of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. *Brahmacārīs* know that; however, many *grhasthas* seem to be in a fog regarding the sacrifice of money.

³¹ Technically, *kāma* means attachment of the senses to the sense objects. BG 2.62 *dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsah*. Thus, the ultimate objective is *niṣkāma-karma* or work without desire. That means one can no longer work for oneself or one's family, but for Kṛṣṇa alone, *anya-abhilāṣitā-sūnyam*, devoid of desire. That is *uttama-bhakti*, which we are not discussing here.

³² BG 3.10. *Yajña* to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa is synonymous with *karma-yoga* or *karma-miśra-bhakti*. The ultimate goal is *niṣkāma-karma* or work without desire (*kāma*). And the *varṇāśrama* system is the process to achieve that high goal of *niṣkāma-karma*. But it is not easy to achieve *niṣkāma-karma* or *niṣkiñcana*. In a conversation, Feb 14, 1977, Prabhupāda explained: "He [Caitanya Mahāprabhu] rejected everything material. *Niṣkiñcana*. But we are not going to be *niṣkiñcana*. We are not rejecting the whole society. Our duty is that we shall arrange the external affairs all so nicely [by implementing *daiva-varṇāśrama*] that one day they will come to the spiritual platform [*niṣkiñcana* or *niṣkāma-karma*] very easily; we are paving the way." [summarized]

Toward the end of the chapter, Kṛṣṇa explains that *kāma* rests on the mind and intelligence (*buddhi*).³³ That *kāma* is the source of our dissatisfaction.³⁴ Through the process of *yajña* and sense control,³⁵ one destroys the *kāma* that lives on our *buddhi* like a parasite.³⁶

In that way, a society organized into *varṇas* and *āśramas* to perform *yajña* for Viṣṇu (*saṅkīrtana-yajña*) results in social satisfaction.³⁷

It is therefore incumbent on devotees to advertise *daiva-varṇāśrama* as the only way to achieve social satisfaction, meaning the cessation of the incessant harassment from a society hell-bent on comfort, entertainment, and a materialistic quality of life.

In the modern materialistic world, people decry faith in religion. However, *daiva-varṇāśrama* does not yield to such attacks. To paraphrase Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one can directly observe how *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* awards great happiness and satisfaction.³⁸

The *daiva-varṇāśrama* system is practical and observable. It uses the methodology or technique explained above to achieve satisfaction.

And Kṛṣṇa says that one does not have to begin the technique with devotion to Him.

He says, “If you are unable to sacrifice to Me, then at least give up all the results of your work and try to be self-situated or self-controlled.”³⁹ That means one should sacrifice one’s money for a higher purpose and

³³ BG 3.40.

³⁴ SB 8.19.25. *hetur asantoṣo ’rtha-kāmayoḥ*. “The cause of dissatisfaction is *kāma*, lust, for *artha*, money.”

³⁵ BG 3.30-31, 3.41.

³⁶ Here *buddhi* means the intelligence to discriminate between material and spiritual or between attraction to the sense objects and Kṛṣṇa. It is intelligence in the sense of the power of discrimination. It is the intelligence to use the fruits for *yajña* instead of lust.

³⁷ SB 3.6.33 purport: “[The organization of society into *varṇas* and *āśramas*] will make the entire society perfect in regard to the order of its social construction. A disordered [non-*varṇāśrama*] society cannot satisfy either the members of the society or the Lord.”

³⁸ BG 9.2. With some Sanskrit, “One can directly observe (*pratyakṣa*) how this *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* (*dharmya*) awards great happiness and satisfaction (*su-sukham*).”

³⁹ BG 12.11. With some Sanskrit, “If you cannot work for Me (*mat-karma*), then give up all the results of your work (*sarva-karma-phala-tyāga*) and try to be self-situated or self-controlled (*yata-ātma-vān*).”

simultaneously control the senses. Such detachment and sense control will eventually lead to *bhakti*.

He explains that by *karma-phala-tyāgaḥ*, giving up the results of work, one achieves peace or satisfaction.⁴⁰

Therefore, the *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, depending on how expansive and well-organized, may accommodate a great variety of people who are working toward liberation and social satisfaction in a way that anyone can see and any innocent person can join.

⁴⁰ BG 12.12. *karma-phala-tyāgas tyāgāc chāntir*. "By giving up the fruits of work one attains peace (satisfaction)."

X. Opposition to Daiva-Varṇāśrama

Dayānanda dāsa

A few years ago, ISKCON officials in North America presented their objections to *daiva-varṇāśrama*.

They do not represent every current criticism of *daiva-varṇāśrama*, but they do cover the majority, at least in spirit.

There are seven and I will briefly address each one.

First is that ISKCON should not take up *varṇāśrama* now because no one understands it sufficiently.

It is true that, aside from establishing farm communities and cow protection, an ISKCON-wide consensus on how to further develop *daiva-varṇāśrama* does not exist. However, among those who have studied Prabhupāda’s instructions on *daiva-varṇāśrama* and gained decades of expertise, a few schools of thought and practice have emerged. Plus, there is general agreement about the basics.¹

Among intelligent people, there will always be positive, productive disagreements. When scientists disagree, we do not say to reject science. When parents argue, the children have no right to say the parents should divorce. And to assume that “no one understands” is like an atheist who says that no one can know God.

¹ See “Daiva-Varṇāśrama Definition and Goals,” *Daiva Varṇāśrama Journal*, Issue One, <https://cvc.guru/1-goals>.

Second is that *varṇāśrama* is for less intelligent people and thus we in ISKCON are not meant for *varṇāśrama*.

It is true that *daiva-varṇāśrama* invites *śūdras* to take part.² However, such an invitation broadens Mahāprabhu's movement to include the masses³ as Gauḍīya preachers did in Jaipur, Rajasthan, West Bengal, East Bengal (Bangladesh) and Manipur.⁴ Some may wish to restrict ISKCON to *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and *vaiśyas*; however, *śūdras* (the working classes) are an important part of modern society. They form the backbone of a democratic society, a culture that has egalitarian and liberal ideals, and an age in which everyone is basically a *śūdra* (*kalau śūdra sambhava*).⁵

Third, introducing *varṇas* is dangerous as it would promote the caste system and establish material designations.

True, historically, *asura-varṇāśrama* has led to discrimination. But even when people are not officially placed in classes, they still discriminate based on wealth, education, beauty, fame, power, etc.

Those who are tainted by leftist ideology seek to establish a utopia in which such discrimination does not exist, but seeking a utopia in this world is contrary to Vedānta philosophy.⁶

Instead, the four classes are established to organize a daivic society that leads to non-discrimination (*sarvopādhi vinirmuktam* and *brahma-bhuta prasannātmā*).⁷

² *Bhagavad-gītā* (BG) 9.32, *striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim*: "Although women, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* are considered less intelligent, they also can become devotees and return home, back to Godhead."

³ Prabhupāda Conversation, Feb 14, 1977: "In order to serve the mass of people, to bring them to the ideal position, we should try to introduce this *varṇāśrama*..."

⁴ There are roughly three million Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in Bangladesh and one million in Manipur.

⁵ *Skanda Purāṇa*

⁶ BG 8.15

⁷ *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (CC) Madhya 19.170 and BG 18.54

Both modern society and Indian *varṇāśrama* are asuric and prone to harmful discrimination.⁸

And here lies the dispute. Devotees who do not view modern society or Hindu social structure as asuric will undoubtedly disagree.⁹ Such a belief is based not on evidence but sentiment. Thus, it will not be effective to present evidence in the face of sentimental attachment to either modern global culture or current Hindu society.

The evidence in Prabhupāda's writings is abundant. There are many statements like "bringing about a revolution in the impious lives of this world's misdirected civilization."¹⁰

Those who desire to conform to the status quo are mistaken, even for a strategy like preaching by infiltrating society. Such a strategy invites *māyā's* influence. For a few, it may be possible, but not as a rule.¹¹

Fourth, Śrīla Prabhupāda at times adjusted things and even changed his mind.

I agree with that statement. However, there is a difference between adjusting a strategy and ignoring a core principle. For example, a few leaders have expressed embarrassment with book distribution. They

⁸ *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (SB) 5.5.29, Nov 16, 1976, lecture: "The human society begins when there is *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Otherwise, it is animal society. There is no human society." And BG 16.7-9, Jan 23, 1975 lecture: "They have established their civilization, as it is stated in the *Bhāgavad-gītā*, animal or asuric civilization."

⁹ Prabhupāda's letter, Aug 26, 1958: "The cult of Hinduism or the system of *varṇāśrama* are not being utilized in the spirit of the *Bhāgavad-gīta* and as such the abovementioned cult is waning day by day." *Civilization and Transcendence*, "Concocted Religion:" "Nowadays India, like the rest of the world, has also given up the real religious system – *sanātana-dharma*, or *varṇāśrama-dharma*. In India they have accepted a hodgepodge thing called 'Hinduism.'" BG 1.20 lecture, July 17, 1973: "This is called *asuric varṇāśrama*."

¹⁰ SB 1.5.11

¹¹ We see clearly that the influence of modern education and materialistic society erodes Vaiṣṇava values, if not in one generation, then two.

say that the books have errors in them, and the distributors often do not give the impression of a sophisticated organization.¹²

Despite such a view, Prabhupāda did indeed establish book distribution as a core strategy, a principle that his followers must follow.¹³ *Daiva-varṇāśrama* is like that. It is one of the principal strategies that, admittedly, Prabhupāda was not able to develop fully.¹⁴

When we decry *daiva-varṇāśrama*, we criticize the many devotees serving in farm communities throughout the world. When we disparage the institution of book distribution, we diminish the services of book distributors. That is Vaiṣṇava-*ninda*, an offense against Vaiṣṇavas.¹⁵

Fifth, ISKCON is meant to promote a totally different brand or approach from that of *varṇāśrama*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda discouraged the organization of ISKCON as a centralized corporation.¹⁶ The idea of establishing a corporate brand is highly suspect. It is acceptable for some devotees to advocate their own approach to preaching, but many competing approaches are valid in spreading Mahāprabhu's movement.

It is contrary to Prabhupāda's guidelines for one powerful group to impose their view on all others to thus establish a totalitarian or corporate ISKCON "brand."

¹² Several years ago, this view was privately held by a few of ISKCON's leaders and one of them expressed it to me.

¹³ *Our Family Business*, Vaisesika Dasa

¹⁴ Prabhupāda increasingly spoke of *varṇāśrama* toward his final years. It was not during one or two brainstorming sessions as an optional direction. See "Daiva-Varṇāśrama Definition and Goals," *Daiva-Varṇāśrama Journal*, Issue One: "During the first few years of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda focused on *saṅkīrtana* and book distribution 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."

¹⁵ CC Madhya 15.261, purport

¹⁶ Prabhupāda letter to Karandhara, a GBC and BBT trustee, Dec 22, 1972: "Do not centralise anything. Each temple must remain independent and self-sufficient."

Sixth, ISKCON devotees are very wealthy and will become wealthier than non-devotees within 20 years.

This is a spurious argument. ISKCON was founded as a brahminical movement, not a *vaiśya* movement.¹⁷ It is true that modern society highly values money; however, *brāhmaṇas* value knowledge of Brahman above all else.

The third objection above was that *varṇāśrama*, a classed society, leads to discrimination. So does wealth accumulation.

That is happening today in ISKCON. Those who have wealth are targeted by the ISKCON authorities as valuable contributors and others are often neglected. Moreover, among devotees, those who are wealthy sometimes think of themselves as above the other devotees. During festivals, especially in India, the wealthy donors are given preferential seating. Wealth is a dangerous commodity unless used fully in devotional service, and that tends to be the exception not the rule. Therefore, in a *daiva-varṇāśrama* society, the duty of the *brāhmaṇas* and *sannyāsīs* is to guide the others in using their wealth for Kṛṣṇa.¹⁸

Seventh, ISKCON should not go against the present trends of egalitarianism as found especially in America.

This point is at the heart of most objections to *daiva-varṇāśrama* and possibly even book distribution. It implies, at least in part, that we should be careful not to make waves in modern society.

Modern society or American society is asuric. Again, as mentioned above, due to sentimental attachment to modern society, reason and evidence may not be effective enough to prove that position.¹⁹

Instead, I assert that those who are not willing to stand against American society are afraid. Prabhupāda said that a preacher must be fearless.²⁰ He was Abhay or fearless. There have been many fearless devotees in ISKCON's short history.

¹⁷ "Yajña or Sacrifice to the Supreme," *Back to Godhead*, May 20, 1956.

¹⁸ SB 1.17.39-42

¹⁹ The same as the above footnote: BG 16.7-9, Jan 23, 1975, lecture: "They have established their civilization, as it is stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, animal or asuric civilization."

²⁰ BG 16.1-3, purport: "For a *sannyāsī*, the first qualification should be fearlessness."

And to back down from challenging modern society admits weakness.

Of course, any challenge must be done cleverly. Cāṇakya Paṇḍita said when an opponent is stronger, one must be cunning to overcome him.²¹ But to back down in the face of asuric society shows fear, weakness, and a lack of ingenuity.

In WWII, Neville Chamberlain wanted to appease Hitler, but Winston Churchill and the allies waged war and defeated him. Thus, Churchill is celebrated as the important figure, not the one who desired appeasement.

²¹ Kautilya *Arthaśāstra*, Book 10, 3.2-24

Contributors

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Bhakti Vikāsa Swami was born in 1957 in England. Śrīla Prabhupāda initiated him in 1975. From 1977 to 1979, Mahārāja was based in India, mostly traveling in West Bengal where he preached and distributed books. He then spent ten years establishing ISKCON's presence in Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, and Malaysia. In 1989, he took sannyāsa and was given the name Bhakti Vikāsa Swami. He continued to travel throughout India, lecturing in English, Hindi, and Bengali. He now travels extensively around the world. He has written many books, which have been translated into more than fifteen languages. He is an ISKCON guru.

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