

The Eight Petals



In Support of Varnasrama to Attain the Lord's Lotus Feet

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Focus on Varnasrama



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There is no alternative to pacify the Lord, but by executing the principles of varṇāśrama dharma

Varnasramacaravata/ purushena parah puman
vishnur aradhyate pantha/ nanyat tat-tosha-karanam [Vishnu Puran 3.8.9]

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Viṣṇu, is worshiped by the proper execution of prescribed duties in the system of varṇa and āśrama. There is no other way to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One must be situated in the institution of the four varṇas and āśramas."

Purport by Srila Prabhupada: Viṣṇu worship is the ultimate aim of human life. Those who take the license of married life for sense enjoyment must also take the responsibility to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Viṣṇu, and the first stepping-stone is the varṇāśrama-dharma system. Varṇāśrama-dharma is the systematic institution for advancing in worship of Viṣṇu.

If we do not take to the principles of varṇāśrama-dharma by accepting the four social orders (brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya and sudra) and the four orders of spiritual life (brahmacārī, grhasṭha, vānaprastha and sannyāsa), there can be no question of success in life. — SB 5.19.10 Purport

Srila Prabhupada Speaks on Varnasrama

Varnasrama dharma Assures Success in Life

Our Vedic philosophy is that everyone must work. But there must be division of work. Just like in your body there are different parts. The head department, the arms department, the belly department, and the legs department. These are different parts. So all these departments must work for the total benefit of the body. That is our philosophy. Nobody should sit idle. But he must work according to his capacity. Brain must work for giving direction. Hand must work for giving protection. Belly must work for supplying food, energy. And leg must work for carrying the body. So similarly the society must be divided: the brain of the society, the arms of the society, the belly of the society and the legs of the society. That will make perfection. The brain will give direction That is the brāhmaṇas. The arms will give protection. That is the ksatriya. And the belly will give energy, food, that is vaiśya. And the legs will carry the body. That is sudra. This is... Whole society should be divided into four divisions, the brāhmaṇa, the ksatriyas, the vaiśya and the sudras. And they should work cooperatively for the total benefit of the body. This is perfect life. (Room Conversation with Banker; September 21, 1973, Bombay)



Ṛṥu Mahārāja's sole aim in ruling his kingdom was to raise the citizens to the standard of God consciousness... In the Visnu Purana it is said that the entire Varnasrama institution is meant to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The rules and regulations set up for the execution of the duties of brāhmaṇas, ksatriyas, Vaiśyas and sudras or brahmācāris, grhasthas, vānaprasthas and sannyāsīs are all meant to satisfy the Supreme Lord. At the present moment, although the so-called brāhmaṇas, ksatriyas, Vaiśyas and sudras have lost their original culture, they claim to be brāhmaṇas, ksatriyas, vaiśyas and sudrās by birthright. Yet they have rejected the proposition that such social and spiritual orders are especially meant for worship of Lord Visnu... In Bhagavad-gīta (18.46) it is said:

yataḥ pravṛttir bhūtānām / yena sarvam idaṁ tatam

sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya / siddhim vindati mānavaḥ

“By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, man can, in the performance of his own duty, attain perfection.”... The Absolute Truth is therefore the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and every living being is meant to satisfy the Supreme Godhead by performing his respective duty (sva-karmaṇā tam abhyarcya). Mahārāja Ṛṥu wanted to introduce this formula amongst his citizens.

The most important point in human civilization is that while one engages in different occupational duties, he must try to satisfy the Supreme Lord by the execution of such duties. That is the highest perfection of life. Svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam: [SB 1.2.13] by discharging one's prescribed duty, one can become very successful in life if he simply satisfies the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The vivid example is Arjuna. He was a ksatriya, his duty was to fight, and by executing his prescribed duty he satisfied the Supreme Lord and therefore became perfect. Everyone should follow this principle.

— SB 4.21.27 Purport

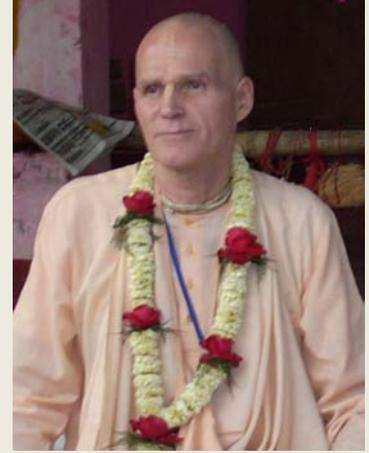
The Vedic process of sense gratification is therefore planned in such a way that one can economically develop and enjoy sense gratification and yet ultimately attain liberation. Vedic civilization offers us all knowledge in the śāstras, and if we live a regulated life under the direction of śāstras and guru, all our material desires will be fulfilled; at the same time we will be able to go forward to liberation.

— SB 4.22.34 Purport

HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Speaks on Varnasrama

Āsuric Varnāśrama and Daiva Varnāśrama

One becomes a civilized human being by accepting the system of *varṇāśrama*, either the *āsuric varṇāśrama* or the *daiva varṇāśrama*. It is a question of becoming a less advanced or a more advanced human being. Śrīla Prabhupāda speaks of *āsuric varṇāśrama* to describe the same system of *varṇa* and *āśrama* when devoid of pure devotional service. There are many blends of *āsuric varṇāśrama*. For example, although one may follow all the injunctions in the *śāstras*, one of them being to adopt and accept the *varṇāśrama* system, unless the *brāhmaṇas* overseeing such a system are *Vaiṣṇavas brāhmaṇas*, if they are impersonalists for example, then the system becomes contaminated. Without the devotional touch, without the element of *bhakti*, where all activities are centered on serving and pleasing Lord Kṛṣṇa, that *varṇāśrama* system becomes polluted.



In Kali-yuga especially, the *varṇāśrama* system has been heavily polluted since the time of Lord Buddha and of course even before that. The whole downfall of the *varṇāśrama* system started when the young *brāhmaṇa Śrīngi* misused his *brahminical* power by cursing Parikṣit Mahārāja. One of the last qualified kings was Parikṣit Mahārāja who ruled as a *Vaiṣṇava kṣatriya*. But soon after his disappearance, we practically don't find in Kali-yuga any more *Vaiṣṇava* kings. When we no longer have qualified *brāhmaṇas*, naturally we will also not have qualified *kṣatriyas* and therefore the whole *varṇāśrama* system will become polluted.

Lord Buddha rejected the Vedas on the basis of misuse of the *varṇāśrama* system. In the name of *śāstras*, the *brāhmaṇas* were unnecessarily killing so many animals and to stop such animal killing, Lord Kṛṣṇa advented Himself as Lord Buddha. He preached the philosophy of *ahimsa*, non-violence. So, as we can see, in times of emergency, even the very system of *varṇāśrama* can temporarily be abandoned to prevent people from engaging in unrestricted sinful activities.

The *varṇāśrama* system, being established by the Supreme Lord Himself, Lord Kṛṣṇa, is meant to be connected with *bhakti* because Lord Kṛṣṇa's main teaching in the *Bhagavad-gītā* is *bhakti*, devotional service. Because the *varṇāśrama* system has been polluted now for so many centuries, the very word '*varṇāśrama*' has become practically rejected. Part of our task as devotees is to make this word *varṇāśrama* once again popular, accepted and properly understood. During the time of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thakura, the very word *Vaiṣṇava* was also not well accepted. By his tireless efforts and forceful preaching, *Vaiṣṇavism* became once again regarded as being the most elevated.

People speak of the unjust caste system based *varṇa* and *āśrama*. Unfortunately, in Kali-yuga people in general have had a very bad experience with both unqualified *brāhmaṇas* and unqualified monarchs. Therefore, today it is very difficult to promote monarchy. The opposite is taking place. Monarchy has been systematically demolished and replaced by democracy and other forms of governance. But whether it is democracy, communism, socialism or any other form of governance, when it is devoid of God consciousness, we should know it will fail because none of these systems are created by Kṛṣṇa and none of them are scientific in nature. We should be convinced that the system of *varṇāśrama*, when connected with *bhakti*, that system will come out successful. Normally, in Kali-yuga, to make such an attempt would be practically impossible. Our previous *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda, and our *śāstras* as well, inform us that for a certain period of time, 10,000 years to be precise, it is possible to introduce pure *dharma* within this otherwise polluted Kali-yuga, and that will only be possible by introducing the element of *bhakti* as taught by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Normally, *varṇāśrama* means *daiva varṇāśrama*, divine *varṇāśrama* or that *varṇāśrama* system with Kṛṣṇa at the center, with all the members of the society, beginning from the *brāhmaṇas* down to the *śūdras* as *Vaiṣṇavas*. By quality (*guṇa*), people who don't practice devotional service are tightly under the influence of the modes of nature and their occupations (*karma*), reflect that. But for someone who takes to devotional service or practices *daiva varṇāśrama*, his quality (*guṇa*) will be that of a *Vaiṣṇava* and his occupation (*karma*) may fall in any of the *varṇas*.



For those who are fruitive workers (*karmis*), those who are mental speculators (*jnanis*) and those who are yogis, unless they are connected with *bhakti*, they all fall under *āsuric varṇāśrama* when they accept to live within the system of *varṇa* and *āśrama*. So, our mission as devotees is to re-introduce the system of *varṇāśrama* in its pure, original form, centered on devotional service to Kṛṣṇa. That is *daiva varṇāśrama* and any system not connected with devotion to God has different blends of *āsuric* or impure mentality.

[An excerpt from HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's *The Science of Daiva Varṇāśrama*]

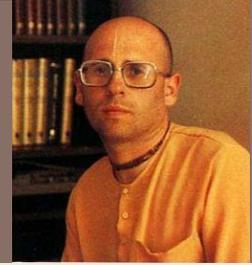


"The complete span of life of a human being is meant for preparing himself for going back to Godhead or to get rid of the material existence made of the repetition of birth and death. As such in the system of *Varṇāśrama Dharma* every man and woman is trained up for this purpose of eternal life, in other words the system of *Varṇāśrama Dharma* is known also as *Sanātana Dharma* or eternal occupation. The system of *Varṇāśrama Dharma* prepares a man for going back to Godhead..." [SB.1:19:4 purport.]

The two features of *Sanātana dharma* are *bhagavat dharma* (activities of all the liberated souls in the spiritual world and a few in the material world) and *varṇāśrama dharma* (activities of most conditioned souls in the material world). In the material world, *varṇāśrama dharma* is meant to support the activities of *bhagavat dharma*; together both provide a complete science.

Implementing Varnashrama: Is It Practical?

- HH Hridayananda Das Goswami



For many years, devotees have pondered how to institute the *varṇāśrama* social system that Lord Krishna created (Bg 4.13) and Srila Prabhupada advocated as vital to organize and truly civilize humanity. Considering the two branches of this system — *varṇa* and *āśrama* — it seems that it is the system of four *varṇās* that has proven more difficult to institute, both in ISKCON and in the world. ISKCON generally (at times roughly) practices the system of four *āśramās*, but reviving the four- *varṇa* system has proven more elusive, even among the devotees, not to speak of in the world.

Ironically, the philosopher who best explains this problem may be Karl Marx, who famously concluded from his study of history that the means of production determine social and political relationships. In other words, the way that a society secures its basic material needs will shape the social and political institutions of that society.

For example, at a very simple level, we find that societies who live by hunting and gathering, being necessarily nomadic or semi-nomadic, tend to form simple tribal systems of social and political life. Among agrarian societies where food can be stored in large quantities, much larger scale societies are possible, resulting in more specialized divisions of labor, and much more complex political institutions. This leads to political and social hierarchy.

We should note here that the Vedic *varṇa* system presupposes an agrarian economy, ie an economy based on land and the production of food. As agrarian life gives way to industrial, urban life and the simple efficient hierarchy of *varṇās* collapses. We see this clearly in the history of Europe where a pre-industrial caste or *varṇa* system collapsed with the onset of the industrial revolution. We also witness this process in contemporary India, where rapid industrialization and consequent urbanization is weakening the traditional caste system, even in its hereditary form.

Srila Prabhupada clearly understood these historical dynamics, for we find that exactly at the time he began the “*varṇāśrama* talks” during his morning walks in Vrindaban, 1974, Prabhupada began to urge the devotees to acquire land and produce their own food. Prabhupada understood that the *varṇa* social system presupposes, and seems to require, an agrarian economy.

Prabhupada also predicted widespread social and economic upheavals that would render our self-sufficient farms essential for our own survival and that of others. Thus for various reasons, including our own survival, ISKCON truly needs another “back to the land” movement. In the context of an agrarian economy, we can revive the system of four *varṇas*, created by Lord Krishna, and now needed more than ever to civilize a lost, suffering humanity.

[Source: <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=40>]





Varnashrama - How It Works and Why It Works...

- HG Niscala devi dasi

We recently read that our GBC is interested in finding the best way for making our temples successful, by surveying all the temples and finding out what works. If it is an impersonal survey, for the purpose of gathering statistics, leading to the passing of numerous resolutions for people they have never met, never spoken to, much less having gotten to know, then it will do more for the cause of depersonalization than for temple development and reform, and devotees will feel more than ever, reduced to numbers. When we are driving dangerously, we are warned “you may become just another statistic!”, an idea that makes the skin crawl with horror, yet it is where we are at, if the only importance our leadership can assign us is numerical- how many books we have given out, how much money collected, etc...

Yet there is another way to do a survey... asking the devotees personally, their needs, problems, and observations. Or if that is not possible to do in person, then much can be learnt from the various devotee forums, maybe even coming down to their level, and taking part in the discussions, to find out what they find lacking in the temples.

Many devotees are crying out for an atmosphere of personalism and family, of honesty and integrity, summed up in a theme, much written about by them on the various forums- “love and trust”, the lack of which creates many an embittered soul, not “enviousness”, as we may be led to believe...

“Love and trust” was a dynamic model developed by Srila Prabhupada, creating all those smiles exploding with joy, which are now preserved only in fading photographs or nostalgic memories. Love and trust is also the dynamic model reflected in his instruction to introduce varnashrama into ISKCON. It is something which we haven't done so far, and thus it is no wonder we have leaders more worried about results and money, than the personal well-being and happiness of temple members. Further, the absence of happiness is usually attributed to them “being in maya” or “mental, prabhu”...



That varnashrama is about love and trust is clear from the descriptions in *Mahabharata* and so on. The citizens loved their leaders and had absolute trust in them. Consequently they were happy to serve under them. There is nothing in our literature or in the instructions of Prabhupada to suggest that varnashrama is only for rural communities, as vaisyas may do business. That we think it so, means that we are overlooking the central benefit of varnashrama- not the qualification of the vaisya, but that of the leadership. The difference it would make to our society can hardly be calculated, because it necessarily means every leader is qualified, as guna determines one's service, or karma. It means that every leader must be a ksatriya-- or a brahmana if he is not involved in management. This ensures the dynamic of love and trust, as the brahmana is trustworthy and the ksatriya, love-worthy, by nature.

Love and Trust equal ksatriya and brahmana

Love

The ksatriya's character is amply described in our literature. From descriptions of Pariksit, Arjuna etc, it is clear that their forte was to offer protection, not specifically to those who can give them the most service or money, but to everyone and especially to the most vulnerable, the helpless. This is love in practice. When Arjuna could not relieve the distress of one of his citizens, he was prepared to enter fire. Superimposed onto the temple scene, the presence of a ksatriya leader means that elderly and sick devotees are offered assured shelter and facility, without the need for exchange of labour or money. For others, it means that everyone is listened to, their viewpoints, their problems, their issues, taken very seriously by the management...no one feels neglected or undervalued or unimportant.



No one is told "stop being mental prabhu", or "just chant hare krsna" when they are in distress, as goes on in many of our temples, which being focused on what the individual can give us, rather than what we can give the individual, have a dynamic of exploitation in the name of Krsna. A ksatriya leadership, on the other hand, ensures a dynamic of sub-zero exploitation, in other words, nothing less than love, concern for the welfare of the individual, and an attitude of selfless service. Such a personal dynamic in this day and age is very rare, both inside and outside of ISKCON, yet it is essential for a good community atmosphere. Who would ever leave it for the impersonal exploitative dynamic pervading kali yuga? It is the basis of the loving family atmosphere that everyone hankers for. How can we be a movement for personalism without it?

We are not a movement for book distribution and festivals, nor for big feasts, sugar overdoses and sore feet, nor even are we a movement for making devotees- we are a movement for Krsna consciousness, following in the footsteps of the great devotees. When we enrich our atmosphere with such consciousness of loving service, devoid of any vestige of exploitative mentality, people are attracted. They become devotees without any pressure, fulfilling the purpose of mass book distribution and festivals. But if, after a festival or receiving a book, they join and find our leaders not caring about their welfare, more interested in what they can do or collect for them, rather than finding out who they are,... or leaders who are aloof, absorbed in their personal affairs or in making money... they leave after a few years of service, often using the excuse of their guru's falldown, or marriage, so they don't feel guilty about it.

Trust

Besides a general lack of love and concern, the other problem much expressed by devotees is lack of trust in the financial affairs of leadership. That is why a thoroughly detached brahmana must be present in every temple, and to ensure detachment, he should be not in the pay of the temple, but be an unpaid advisor and if necessary a whistleblower. He or she ensures that the temple is run ethically and morally, that making money does not supercede the importance of the welfare and happiness of the least significant member. The brahmana ensures that the ksatriya lives up to his name and function... that he acts as the arms of the Supreme Lord, Who is always available whenever we turn to Him.

Since he is by nature opposed to any sort of hypocrisy, the brahmana ensures the trust of the devotees in the integrity of their leaders. With that love and trust comes faith and commitment. Without it, we may keep devotees for a few years, by the same tactic president Bush used to justify his war in Iraq- utilization of paranoia.. We fear to be judged, and we know that devotees who leave ISKCON are judged as “bloopers”, “in maya” “envious” “ungrateful”, “disloyal” and so on. So that keeps us in the movement for a few depressing years, after which many of us leave, either by using the excuse of marriage, family or career, or the excuse of our guru’s falldown, or by using no excuse at all and just practicing Krsna Consciousness separately or in another group.

Love and Challenge

The challenge of ksatriya leadership is not to make sure everything gets done and bills are paid, but whether everyone is joyfully situated in a service suitable for their nature. Under the guidance of long-sighted brahmanas, the ksatriya knows that he need not worry about money and labour, as the joyful cooperative atmosphere that ensues from his loving concern for each member’s well-being, ensures the payment of bills and execution of services, by voluntary enthusiasm of devotees to rise up to the task.

The brahmana counsels him, don’t worry about making big money, just make sure it is ethically done, for the goal is not to impress others, but the Lord within. The brahmana also makes sure that devotees are evolving in their understanding of the philosophy. He gets them to question their understanding, and lay naked their blind assumptions. Thus, the ksatriya provides the emotional support the devotees need, and the brahmana, their spiritual and philosophical challenges. In this way, devotees feel both challenged and loved.

Love is necessary for security and a sense of belonging. Challenge is needed for growth, evolution, aspiration. They are opposite forces, rarely present in any one individual. That is why varnashrama is so necessary, to make use of each person’s natural talents. It may be that we don’t have anyone in ISKCON of the caliber of Pariksit or Arjuna, or Maitreya Rishi, but we do have individuals who are more caring and concerned about others welfare (ksatriyas), some who are more detached and philosophical (brahmanas), some who are good at getting things done (sudras) and some who are good at making money (vaisyas). The work of the vaisya and sudra is extremely valuable to the community, except when they take up leadership positions, then they cause problems...

Then the soft-hearted ksatriyas are ridiculed as “sentimental” or “mushy” and the brahmanas are ridiculed as “armchair philosophers”. And our society becomes less than the positive alternative it is purported to be...

The Interdependency of Book Distribution, four stages of Bhakti, and Varnashrama

Our current situation is that ISKCON is mainly a society for Indian ex-patriots wanting to preserve their culture for their kid’s heritages. They provide nearly all of the labour and money for running our programs, which is wonderful, kind of like a mother putting cool cream on her child’s boil. It eases the pain of self-reflection, because things are getting done- the concern of the sudra. No doubt the GBC will find many temples thriving under such cold cream. But as our temples fill up with Indians who are enthusiastic- and



rightly so- about their heritage, it becomes less and less relevant for the western mindset, and more and more a movement for Hinduism in the west. That is fine, except that we should change our name to the International Society for Preserving Indian Culture- ISPIC- for Krsna consciousness is not about cultural heritage but the sanatana dharma of every soul on the planet, regardless of their so-called heritage.

It is the heritage and birthright of every soul. Our business as ISKCON, not ISPIC, is to bring the knowledge of that birthright to the world. The first step is knowledge, book distribution- which brings about sraddha- the enkindling of faith. Then after that, sadhu sanga, to provide an association of saintly persons dedicated to truth and the welfare of all. Then the third step is anartha nivritti, which is interesting... How can we help others with their unwanted baggage if we are burdened with our own, and not even being aware of that burden, how can we render the ultimate welfare service-“ to distinguish reality from illusion for the benefit of all”? If the thoroughly truthful are suppressed in our movement, as Kundali and others have been, then we neither have sadhu sanga, nor anartha nivritti, and it is doubtful that sraddha will ever become unshakeable, with few extant evidences for bhakti's efficacy on the planet...

Then the fourth step, bhajana kriya, but how can we provide the peace of mind for constant bhajana, which includes the active meditation of karma yoga, when we have no facility for it, no varnashrama...instead we have each temple acting more or less as a church for attendance once or twice a week for an hour or so. We are not meant to be an occasional relief from the rat race, but channel the full energy and latent talent- karma and guna- of each individual who comes to us, in the service of the Lord, the only qualification being that they are willing.

Bhakti must be “uninterrupted and unmotivated to fully satisfy the living entity”. The brahmana in varnashrama helps to rid each devotee of ulterior motivation, by helping him or her separate reality from illusion and overcome all the anarthas that strangle the devotional creeper, anarthas “that often appear like the creeper itself”.... The ksatriya in varnashrama provides the shelter for uninterrupted service according to one's nature, making surrender joyful and natural.

No longer need the living entity struggle alone against his inner and outer obstacles to the attainment of bhakti- if only we can show him ISKCON and leave ISPIC for another group to be concerned about.



- ***HG Niscaladevi dasi***

Cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ [Bg. 4.13]. Viprādayo guṇaḥ pṛthak cātur-varṇyam. Ya eṣaṁ puruṣaṁ sāksād ātma-prabhāvam īśvaram, na bhajanti vā ajānanti... Puruṣasya āśramaiḥ saha. Tyakta jagṛhe varṇa vipro aday guṇaḥ pṛthak(?). These are the statements of śāstra, that the human society, just to make it real human society, not cats' and dogs' society, there must be varṇāśrama. That is dharma. In the material stage, when we have to take care of this body, there must be this varṇāśrama. That is systematic human society. If there is no varṇāśrama-dharma, then it is cats' and dogs' society. In the cats' and dogs' society there is no varṇāśrama-dharma.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.9, Hyderabad, April 23, 1974]

The Gap Between Pink Slip and Red Lips

Vrndavanlila dd



We had just got down from Faluknama Express and ran frenziedly to enquire about the next train taking us to Mayapur. It was a passenger train which took us to Nabadwip Station. By the time we reached there it was pretty late at night and no boats were available to ferry us across to Sridham Mayapur. We decided to spend the night at Station Retiring room. As formalities were being worked out by my husband at the station, my little daughter Radhika was standing perplexed beside me. The stench, vulgarity of the general passengers and crushing crowd of a general bogie was still fresh in her mind. She innocently asked me, “Mamma where are we going?” Trying to read her, I said, “You know it beta, we are going to Mayapur to take darshan of your favorite lord Narsingha dev and of course beautiful Sri Sri Radha-Madhavaji.” She was still not satisfied and further asked, “Has Mayapur changed its location?” “Why, what makes you feel that? How can a place change its location?” She still had that puzzled look on her face and continued, “But earlier when we used to come, it never took us sooo loooong to reach Mayapur. I never saw people who would never get up to give me seat and would rather push me and shove me from all sides. Nobody yelled and shouted, but this time the journey is not coming to an end at all. After this long also, we have still not reached Mayapur.” I could quickly understand her mind and told her soothingly, “You know this is something new for you to learn. Mayapur is at the same place, but earlier, we used to go by flight and then a direct taxi to Mayapur, so it never took us so long. This time you have come by train that is why it took us little long.” “But earlier in the train they used to give us blanket, bedsheets, and towels, but how come this time they did not give us anything. It was all so dirty and people were spitting wherever they felt like....” I tried to explain, “Earlier we were travelling in AC coaches, so you were getting all those things, now we are travelling in Sleeper Class that is why there is a change. But everywhere you have people isn't it? And they all have expansion of the Lord within them. Why to feel so bad about it?” “Hmm Yeah, they have the Supersoul situated in their heart but then why were they not aware that I also have the same Lord in my heart. They did not love me or care for me at all. I did not like it.” That was her innocent way of seeking explanation to the vulgar behavior that so pervades the general class and way of securing her little Krsna-centric world of love, which was so different from what she was experiencing. “It happens dear, not all the time people will be the same. When you do not like something, you should immediately try to learn that you do not repeat those things in your life and hurt others.”

“Hmmm. But next time I do not want to travel like this. Why cannot we travel the way we did earlier? Mamma please I like only that.”

I had always found her contented with everything that she had, she hardly ever asked for anything. I had never seen her act stubbornly, shouting or demanding things greedily generally the way other kids do. Now seeing her so perturbed, was little disturbing for me. For more than the material discomfort and my inability to fulfil her little desire, it was the emotional quotient that lay in her plea which mortified me.

Holding her tight, I just said, “Yes dear I understand that. May be now we cannot because.....” Before I could complete the sentence, she added “I think we have become poor after you stopped going to office. That is why we cannot travel the way we used to earlier, isn't it?” With great effort I

could just mumble, “Yes, perhaps you are right.” She continued without paying much attention, “Does not lord love me, I think He should not make me suffer like this when He knows that I do not like it that way. And that too I am going to take His darshan only.”

I tried to infuse some cheer in her heart, “This is where you are mistaken dear, you know how much he loved his brahmana friend Sudama but even he had to lead a very difficult life. So it happens. It only proves that He loves us all. We are the children of such a richie rich father, Lord Krsna. He is the supreme, the most opulent one, why should we worry? Is it difficult for Him to give us a few pennies or to fulfil your desire to travel in an AC coach or by flight, but He is choosing to do it otherwise. There is a reason behind everything, but we sometimes tend to understand it later and sometimes that later also never comes. But we should have firm faith in Him and in His love. He is taking interest in you that is why He is not so easily just fulfilling what you desire but seeing that everything helps take you towards Him. Don't you agree?”

“Yes, if you say that, it has to be right...” Then exclaiming suddenly she almost shouted, “True. He does not forsake me. You know even though we have become poor, He still comes in my dream. Yes, He loves me mamma, you are correct. He really loves me.”

The next day we took a boat and reached Mayapur dham. Bamsi bhavan was full, only a few rooms were available on high payment. So, with the help of devotee friends we arranged for our stay in humble Namhatta building. Radhika was looking forward to her incubated baby bed as she used to get in Bamsi bhavan, big well ventilated room and a beautiful garden with Krsna dancing on Kaliya's hoods. Here we had dark room, next to some dark godown on the ground floor with narrow beds where we had to literally squeeze ourselves to make us fit on the same bed.

To my surprise, she was just fine and said, “You know Mamma I am very happy that this time Gangaji was so close to us for so long as we were crossing in the boat. Isn't He merciful? Then just when I was thinking where my baby bed is, I realized I will be sleeping so close to you.” He had made things so easy for me to face. Her words almost brought tears of gratitude towards the Lord and my guru maharaj in my eyes. I wrestled to control them.

We had time just enough to dump our luggage there and leave towards the Shankha building for the GBC-SPT meeting. There again children were not allowed inside and also we were late for taking the prasadam. We ran towards Govinda's, made her eat some prasadam. I was worried for her. She had to be left at a devotee's house till evening till the meeting got over. This was a shock development even for us, for which even we were not prepared. But it had to be addressed immediately. My husband immediately thought of his old devotee friend whose house was next to the goshala, a place my daughter loved. With a beating heart, I slowly shared with her how we'd planned for her. In a soft tone, I said, “You know guddi (Radhika's pet name) beta, today is the day of test and austerity for you. Children are not allowed in the meeting, so you will be at that beautiful mataji's house whose house is just next to goshala, where you have hundreds of friends....so many many calves and cows to play around. What do you think of this?” I asked with a faked air of jubilation.

“So you and papa will not be with me till evening? Why? You know that I am a very good girl; I will sit there peacefully without disturbing. You can tell the GBCs.”



“I know it dear that you are very good and that is why Krsna wants you to play with your calf friends and also do little sacrifice in staying away from us. You will see every evening when your austerity is over, you will get a reward.”

“Yes, Mamma He is so merciful. Today I saw Him in the same blue dress what I had got in my dream. I am so happy. He really loves me.” All the way even amidst little shades of distress of prospective temporary separation from us, she tried to chuckle all the way. She picked up the leaves that had dropped down from the trees for feeding them to the calves and the cows at goshala.

Our days used to be hectic. Getting up early in the morning, rushing from Namhatta to Lotus building for darshan and prasadam, then dropping her at friend's place and then returning to Shankha building for meeting, from there proceeding to Chaitanya Bhavan for break away sessions and then to disperse for lunch for an hour to meet again. So we were together for a brief time during the lunch, when I used to rush from Chaitanya Bhavan (venue for meeting of our break away session committee) to Goshala (the place where our friends used to stay) in the scorching heat. Sometimes I used to go alone to pick her up as my husband engaged himself in carrying or arranging for a few things for our guru maharaj (His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami), or when available then with my husband. She was not used to staying away from either of us, especially me. Then in the evening we used to take our light dinner prasadam at Shankha building. The devotees at the counter were very warm and compassionate. She used to look forward to meeting them. Later one night as we prepared to sleep, she said, “Mamma now I understand how much the Lord loves us. You know every day when I miss you He sends one calf to make me happy. And then we are together for lunch. Again when you go away, the calves in the goshala make me feel little happy. You know even their mothers stay separately in a different room, so we understand each other. I play with them till evening...and when my austerity and sacrifice is over I get a reward. I get hugs from Radhanath Maharaj, darshan of my guru maharaj and blessings from soooooo many sannyasis. I am so happy. You know Balbhadra prabhu blessed me so nicely. He has beautiful blue eyes and so many cows. He told me and I remember having seen him on the website. I am very happy mamma.” All my fears had melted in her sweet words. The next day we were leaving for my husband's village, again in the same passenger train. But this time though she was physically with us, she was oblivious of her surroundings. She was happily ecstatic, cheerfully looking forward to reaching the village. Excitedly she was speaking, “You know we will get to see our cows and baya (my father in law) was telling me that there are two calves with whom I can play, I can run in the fields, I can go and play in Swarnarekha river ... Oh I am so happy.”



He is so simple in His ways of love, we make it so complicated. Pleasure and pain, comfort and discomfort everything is so relative but wise are those who can rise above. Even in her small gesture I could see that the self same experience which had once proved to be the cause of so much disturbance earlier, now no way mattered to her, she was happy as ever.

*mātrā-sparśās tu kaunteya / śītoṣṇa-sukha-duḥkha-dāḥ
āgamāpāyino 'nityās / tāmś titikṣasva bhārata [BG 2.14]*

[O son of Kuntī, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.]

But is this state so easy to acquire? Prahlad maharaj was subjected to great sufferings and tortures, but he was totally unaffected by them. But we do not even hold a candle to him. I was reminded of my constant pangs of pain when I was down with dengue not so long ago. I remember how with every shooting pang of pain, I used to remind myself “I am not this body, I am a spirit soul”, but I was still very much aware of the pain. I could not transcend the body. I was somehow managing to chant my rounds, but I know how those sixteen rounds itself had become so challenging for me during my sickness (body-consciousness days). No wonder we need varnasrama dharma, which recognizes our material body and tries to engage us according to our basic nature. In the close company of mother cow and mother earth, it gets so much easier to develop the qualities of servitude towards Him. Everything is so subtle but is very scientific. Westerners call our traditional agriculture as a gamble of monsoons, and ridiculed it suggesting technology to replace bulls and other methods of irrigation. But what will they understand of devotion and surrender? Traditional way of agriculture is godly as it keeps one constantly thinking of the Lord, as he sows, irrigates or does whatever he is reminded of his dependency on the Lord and thus constantly thinks of Him as His only servitor. Naturally every action in agriculture is anointed in His love. His cows and bulls remind him of Him. As the bulls till the land, their urine and dung make the soil more fertile pest-resistant, the fertility of soil remains intact as only the top layer is tilled, mother earth is not gnawed to yield forcibly. No wonder every Indian festival is deeply connected to the Lord. We do not have Valentine's day or Mother's day etc, we rather have Diwali where we celebrate the return of Sri Ram to Ayodhya or festivals like Khichdi, lohri, pongal etc where first crop is offered to the Lord. Our entire ecosystem is Krsna-centric, but slowly the modern so called science is demoniacally trying to replace the lord with scientists – GM seeds, living beings and what not. The thought itself is so demoniac.

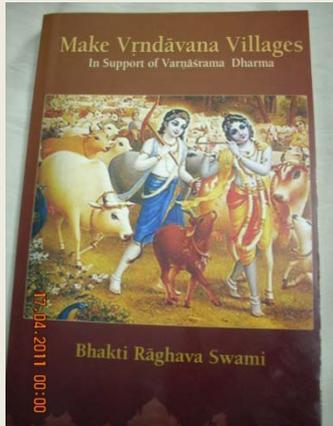
While at one end I see this demoniac nature, I also see how adversity makes a person realize his spiritual identity and know his true friends. The pink slip has proven to be a boon in disguise in getting closer to Him. Many of my 'friends' have forsaken me for we are not so comfortably placed and it is below their status to acknowledge our presence, a few have tried to take advantage of our difficulties while a few have defined the beautiful family that Srila Prabhupada left for us in heritage. It is with the latter's help and inspiration that I am what I am, still somehow or the other able to serve devotees and my guru. I could publish two books (The Fourth Wave and Gosamvardhan), come out with a free monthly e-newsletter, The Eight Petals. Had it not been for them, this period could have been so dark and trying. With the mercy of pink slip now I know who my true friends are, my kitchen fire is never off, our deities wear wonderful dresses hand-stitched by me and we have covered a newer realm of spiritual realization. Besides it has been a humbling experience.

Earlier when Srila Prabhupada said in his prophetic voice about cities crumbling down and people turning jobless, its seriousness never got registered in my mind- “I am a doctorate with good knowledge and industrial experience, what can happen to me?” Now that myth is broken. Sometimes when I think of my little Radhika, wondering about her future as I have taken a little enterprising decision of homeschooling her. Her disarming uncontaminated innocence and deep loving nature and deeply rooted spirituality sometimes does rake up a few disturbing thoughts in me, but deep down I know the Lord is there to take care of all of us. We are the children of the most opulent and most loving father. It is just that we have to keep the umbilical cord of parampara and mahamantra connected to Him. The gap between pink slip and red bimba lips of the Lord can be radical. The moments of difficulty are so delicate and if our determination is fragile the gap can be immeasurable. However on the other hand if our faith is firm and we have the good fortune of guru's mercy and prayers of vaishnavas the gap between the pink slip and red bimba lips of the Lord becomes so narrow, that it turns next to negligible.

Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare



• Varnashrama Literature

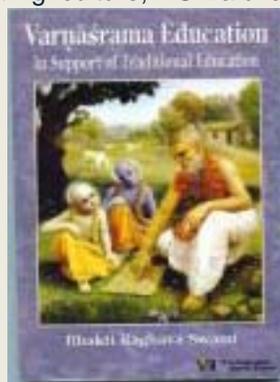
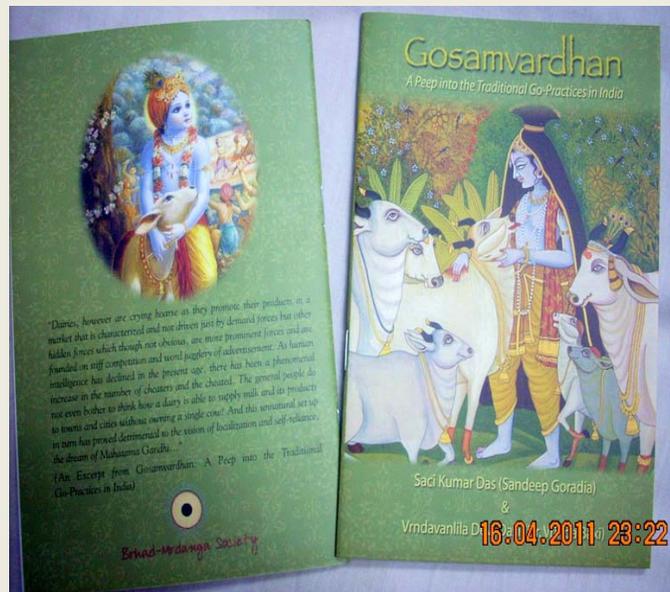


Make Vrndavan Villages

H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami, who heads the Varnashrama Ministry, India has authored several books on Varnashrama, including this. This book is meant to serve as a general introduction to some of the basic concepts of varnashrama-dharma. In essence, the subject matter deals with both the topic of education as well as social and spiritual upliftment through a well established and scientifically planned educational system and social structure which encompass all spheres and all dimensions of life. Its revised edition includes more information on the subject and exciting additions on cow.

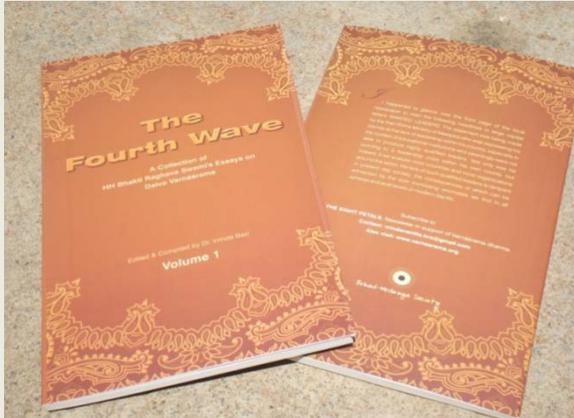
Gosamvardhan: A Peep Into the Traditional Go-Practices in India

Released just last month, on the occasion of Fourth International Seminar on Daiva Varnashrama, Sridham Mayapur, is authored by HG Sacikumar prabhu (with hands-on experience in farming and cow raising) and Vrndavanilila dd (Editor, *The Eight Petals*, a monthly e-newsletter in support of Daiva Varnashrama dharma). It makes an intensive reading as it pours information about the traditional practices related to cow rearing in traditional India and fragility of present situation. It should be of great help for those who are just not interested in keeping the cows in goshala, but also in reviving an ecosystem that supports mother cow in her old glory and not as a liability. Its 'Introduction' has been written by Indian Minister for Daiva Varnashrama, HH Bhakti Raghava Swami and 'Foreword' by none other than the Global Minister for Cow Protection & Agriculture, HG Balbhadra prabhu.



Varnashrama Education

The topic of education, a highly debated and controversial subject among many many educationalists and students alike, has always been of extreme importance and relevance to any society, especially in the most traditional oriental cultures. This books deals with the aspect of Education in the context of Varnashrama.

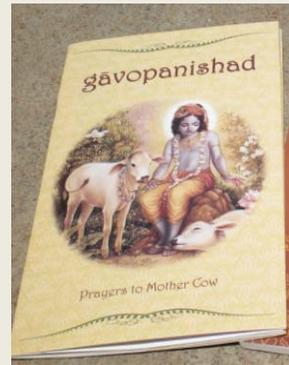


The Fourth Wave

It is a wonderful collection of HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's essays on Daiva Varnasrama addressing a wide range of concerns of daily life beginning from the very definition of the term 'dharma', administration, family system, education, food, to technology. The 'Preface' for *The Fourth Wave* has been written by HG Patita Pavan Adhikary, a senior disciple of Srila Prabhupada, a strong daiva varnasrama supporter, a prolific writer, and an astrologer who has the distinction of having served as ISKCON Temple President and Director (Book Reviews) for BBT.

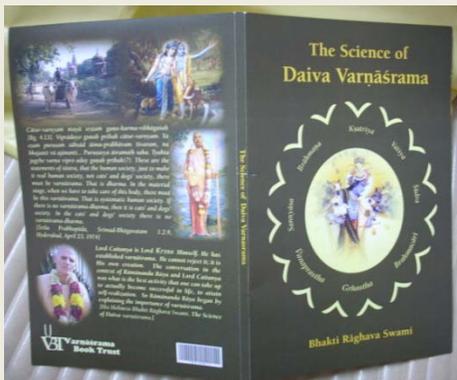
Gavopanishad: Prayers to Mother Cow

Cows, dear to the Lord Himself, have been integral to the concept of varnasrama and have functioned as the defining features of Vedic social, economic, and spiritual system. This small attractive book contains lovely prayers in the glorification of Mother Cow, complemented by short but interesting information on the significance of cow and panchgavya products. The 'Foreword' to *Gavopanishad* has been written by H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami himself.



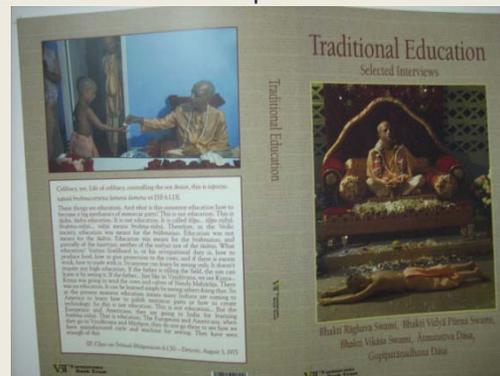
The Science of Daiva Varṇāśrama

The book by His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami is an effective attempt to address the general queries and doubts related varṇāśrama dharma. In order to make it convenient for the reader it has been divided into three sections, beginning with the very definition and understanding of the concept of varṇāśrama dharma as envisioned by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, to move to second section of the need or relevance of varṇāśrama followed by the third section dealing with the questions related to complications arising in the process of implementation of principles of daiva varṇāśrama dharma in the present situation.



Traditional Education

Traditional Education which is usually viewed with denigration if not scorn has been very interestingly dealt. It very effectively brings out the science behind the method, structure, curriculum, efficacy and even *patrata* of traditional education. It finds itself on insightful answers given to 20 questions related to different aspects of education. It includes interviews by HH Bhakti Raghava Swami, HH Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami, HG Gopiparanadhan Das and HG Atmatattva Das. It also includes an interesting lecture given by HH Bhakti Vikas Swami on the same subject.



In addition to the above there are many more books in the pipeline and several documentary movies. In order to get more information one can contact: vindavanlila.brs@gmail.com

Devotees Celebrate Vyasa Puja of HH Bhakti Raghava Swami

May 22, 2011. Bellary. The 65th Vyasa Puja of His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami, Head, Indian Varnasrama Ministry was celebrated by devotees with great devotion and fanfare. His Holiness is famous for his devout determination to manifest Srila Prabhupada's dream to bring forth the 'Fourth Wave' or Varnasrama mission in the society. The celebration was spread across three days beginning from May 20, 2011 to culminate on May 22. Hundreds of devotees coming from different locations reached the venue to participate. The auspicious occasion was also marked by release of two books on Varnasrama (*The Science of Daiva Varṇāśrama* and *Traditional Education*) by His Holiness.

Bhatta Parsaul agitation: Mayawati to hold panchayat with farmers tomorrow

[Source: <http://www.dnaindia.com>]

June 1, 2011. Lucknow. In an apparent bid to woo farmers in the backdrop of their agitations in Bhatta Parsaul and Katesar, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati will hold a 'kisan panchayat' tomorrow for a dialogue with them. "The chief minister will hold a panchayat tomorrow to discuss the problems of the farmers by meeting them," a senior official said. Mayawati is under attack from opposition parties for allegedly ignoring the interest of farmers after the Bhatta-Parsaul incident (Greater NOIDA).

After Rahul Gandhi's visit to Greater NOIDA village, Congress leaders and its president Sonia Gandhi had launched a direct attack on the BSP government terming it of adopting 'anti-farmers' attitude.

After the panchayat, Mayawati is likely to make some announcements redressing grievances of the farmers. Farmers in Bhatta Parsaul were agitating for more compensation of their land from the Uttar Pradesh government.

OBC quota may be split among different castes [Source: *The Times of India*]

May 27, 2011. New Delhi. The Centre is considering splitting the 27% OBC quota among different backward caste groups in a move that will challenge the overpowering influence of dominant communities like Yadavs and Kurmis and may trigger a resistance.

In what will change the face of backward caste reservation as brought in by Mandal Commission two decades ago, the government plans to divide backward castes into sub-groups based on their socio-economic status. Each bloc would be assigned a part of the 27% reservation quota in central jobs and education, thus saving the weaker backwards from competing with stronger communities which have cornered the quota benefits.

Ramdev reaches Delhi, UPA bends to placate him [Source: *IBNLive*]

Jun 01, 2011. New Delhi. In a desperate attempt to placate Baba Ramdev to call off his proposed protest fast against black money, senior Cabinet ministers Kapil Sibal, PK Bansal and Subodh Kant Sahay met him at the airport when he arrived in Delhi on Wednesday afternoon.

The government does not want a repeat of the Anna Hazare movement that got huge public support.

Earlier, rejecting Manmohan Singh's appeal to call off his fast, Yoga guru Baba Ramdev on Wednesday asked people to join him in the campaign against black money.

Uttarakhand boosts skills to check migration [Source: *Business Standard*]

June 1, 2011. Dehradun. The rural industries programme (RIP) in the Pauri district of Uttarakhand is attempting to create new entrepreneurial skills in areas ranging from beauty parlours to printing presses among unemployed youth in the state's mountainous areas. With migration plaguing the hill state, the RIP began in September 2008 with the aim of setting up 200 small units in three years.

38 more 'ideal' villages to come up in Maharashtra by June (Source: *The Hindu*)

May 12, 2011. Hiware Bazaar (Ahmednagar district). Jhamrun Mahali in Washim district is set to become a model village in Maharashtra's drought-prone, poverty-stricken Vidarbha region. By June, this village, along with 37 others modelled along the lines of the 'ideal village' Hiware Bazaar, will be completely self-sustainable and thus ready to be called 'Adarsh gaon' under the State government's Adarsh Gaon Yojana (AGY).

"How long are we going to be talk about Ralegan Siddhi and Hiware Bazaar? Why should we be satisfied with just two 'ideal villages'? The success of our villages will be when a better village is created," Mr. Popatrao Pawar, Sarpanch of Hiware Bazaar since 1989 told. Mr. Pawar is now the executive director of the AGY, and selected other villages under this scheme. Social crusader Anna Hazare, whose efforts for his village Ralegan Siddhi were an inspiration for Hiware Bazaar, is the adviser for this programme.

A sum of Rs.8 crore has been given to these villages, 13 of which are from the Vidarbha region, known for its high number of farmer suicides. Kohlitola, a village from the Naxal-hit Gondia district has also made it to the list. The funding continues for three years for development works in the village.

Complete revival

A drought-prone village with only about 400mm of rainfall every year, Hiware Bazaar has seen a complete revival in the last two decades. Watershed development was adopted to fight the acute water crisis that the village was reeling under. The increased water levels resulted in a better yield, and more grass for animals to graze. This helped the village to make its way out of poverty by adopting cash crops and marketing its dairy products. This accomplishment has come from utilising the government schemes to suit the village requirements. The village came under the State's AGY in 1994, and since then, has been scripting its own success story. The story of

Hiware Bazaar that began in 1989 will repeat itself in these 38 villages in the years to come.

But being named an 'Adarsh Gaon' is far from easy. Villages had to give a proposal after which a committee headed by Mr. Pawar inspected the villages. "The villages had to show dedication in the struggle to fight mediocrity. They had to follow all the conditions of becoming an 'Adarsh gaon'. We chose villages with a revolutionary spark," Mr. Pawar says.

Villages need to follow strict rules. The process begins with effective water management through the watershed technique and water auditing, taking responsibility of the village's natural resources- planting trees and stopping grazing, contributing labour for the village work, and then expanding to bring about behavioural changes in the people for harbouring social change. Hiware Bazaar is free of any kind of addiction and there are no liquor or tobacco shops in the village. Vasectomy has been made compulsory, as is the pre-marital HIV test.

The 'Adarsh Gaon' model prides itself of being based on the joint decisions made by the Gram Sabha, where all the villagers are present. Even while selecting the new villages under the scheme, Mr. Pawar made sure that the decision to become an ideal village was taken by the entire village together.

The greatest victory for Hiware Bazaar so far has been the reverse migration that the village has witnessed since 1989. As many as 93 families have come back to the village, "from the slums in Mumbai and Pune" Mr. Pawar says. The village of 216 families was completely below poverty line (BPL) in 1989; now it has only three BPL families.

Mr. Pawar says: "Vidarbha was our priority as the people are reeling under the pressure of land for agriculture. Farmers' suicides have become a norm, and people are becoming complacent because of all the 'Vidarbha packages' which are obviously not helping. It is time for the villages to wake up and do something themselves." One of the conditions of the AGY is also that a village cannot accept any government funding without adding some of their own funds to it.



• **Mails to the Editor**

Thank you for sending me your newsletter. You are doing valuable service for Srila Prabhupada.
With best wishes,

- *HH Hridayananda Das Goswami*

It is wonderful to promote Varnasrama Dharma. Thank you for starting this publication Mataji.

It is a bridge from being conditioned to being liberated. It is a merciful system. It is pleasing to Srila Prabhupada.

I see that we need to push on two fronts, by finding ways to show how it is relevant for the devotees and also people outside. Finding our proper position of asrama and varna can save our spiritual life.

Your servant,

- *Akrura Das (London)*

Hare Krishna mataji,

Please accept my humble obeisances

All Glories to Srila Prabhupada,

I received this one issue (probably 16th) on BASIC NEEDS (Simple living).

It is really very interesting and informative. Do we have hard copies also?

And is it possible to get copies of the earlier issues and the subject matters please...

Your servant,

- *Advaita Krishna Das (London)*

Hare Krishna,

Please accept my humble obeisances.

This is a wonderful newsletter with some very informative articles by Srila Prabhupada, HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Maharaj and few other devotees on Varnasrama.

Your servant,

- *Bhaktin Jyoti*

(In response to HH Bhakti Raghav Swami's article, "Unnecessary Necessities")

To understand the basic needs in a materialistic culture, you must think like a materialist. Coming of age in America, the child is constantly bombarded with images of fast cars and beautiful personal houses and he is taught that the wisest man has the most things and he yearns for the day he can have his own home and vehicle. As a product of the American education system, I have discovered that these institutions care little about imparting any kind of wisdom or truth, but merely are means to achieve the materialistic goal. I feel let down by my country and its leaders. Men at their age should not be arguing over small issues as such in the political arena these days. Are we still arguing over whether or not two people

of the same gender cannot love each other and provide for each other just as much as a man and a woman can? My good friend A. Einstein wondered why we can smash atoms, yet mans prejudices and superstitions even of each other pulse through the undercurrents of our actions. these always speak louder even if we are screaming. How is truth and peace expected to be obtained with so many cool things in the marketplace to buy? Why should one care about encompassing the whole universe with the mind when i can turn on a television and let others form my opinion for me? Sadly, in the nation of my birth these distractions are being used by our friends in power to keep us from obtaining these free truths by making us slaves to money and the materials that we "need" to live. My good friend Socrates said, look at all the things i do not wish to have!

When man realizes that money is merely a tool to give him temporary peace and happiness, he will be cured of the curious fever of acquiring things.

- *Bhakta Joseph Wilkins*

Thank you very much Maharaja for enlightening us further, in a spirit of renunciation to so many superfluous amenities of the modern world which, not only pollute our planet and threaten the survival of mankind, but also entangle most people further in the cycle of birth and death, generating unnecessary anxieties and diverting their attention from the uttama gati, the supreme goal of life, i.e. Krishna prema, develop pure love of God and go back home, back to Godhead...

Hare Krishna

All glories to your service!

Your servant,

- *HG Puskarakasa das*

I am thankful to the devotees whose inspiring response to the newsletter in the form of mail or even otherwise and their interest in varnasrama dharma is truly infectious and encouraging. In addition to the above mails, several other encouraging responses were received. It includes those by Niscala mataji, Eddy Gaasbeek prabhu, Manjari devi dasi, Preeti Murkar mataji, Hariharan prabhu, and Ashish Mittal prabhu besides many more which because of space constraint we are not able to include here.

The mails/ articles can be posted to eightpetalsnewsletter@gmail.com or vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com

Focus for the next issue -

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Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Women