

**VARNA SHRAMA
DHARMA—PERFECT
ORGANIZATION OF
SOCIETY**

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Dedicated

To my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

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Saintly Kings Make Material Prosperity and Eternal Salvation Possible

In very ancient times, there was a saintly king by the name of Rsabhadeva who was an incarnation of Lord Krishna. Although He was a perfect personality - the Supreme Lord and controller of all - He nonetheless acted as if He was an ordinary conditioned soul. Therefore, He strictly followed the principles of varnasrama-dharma (the ideal organization of society for material and spiritual fulfillment). Over the course of time, the principles of varnasrama-dharma had become neglected; hence, through his personal characteristics and behavior, Rsabhadeva taught the ignorant public how to perform duties within the varnasrama-dharma. In this way, He regulated the general populace in the householder life, enabling them to develop both religious and economic well-being, and to attain fame (as pious men), sons and daughters, material pleasure and finally eternal life. By His instructions, He showed how people could remain in family life and, at the same time, become perfect by following the principles of varnasrama-dharma.

The varnasrama-dharma is a system of social and spiritual organization of society meant to help imperfect, conditioned souls. By the example and help of a saintly king or leader, and many saintly mentors, the people of a kingdom or country are trained to become spiritually advanced in preparation to return to the spiritual world. A society that does not know the ultimate goal of life is no better than a flock of animals living together. The human form of life is especially meant for cultivation of spiritual knowledge so that one can be liberated from the clutches of birth, death, old age, and disease. The varnasrama-dharma organization of society enables people to become qualified to rise above ignorance and illusion. By following the regulative principles for spiritual advancement, one can become successful in both economic and spiritual endeavors.

Lord Krishna reveals to us the most essential component to establish and maintain the varnasrama-dharma. He says, “Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.” (Bg 3.21) People require a saintly leader and qualified brahmanas (priests) who can teach the Vedic knowledge by practical behavior. Those members of society who are below the brahminical qualification – administrators, merchants, and workers – should take instructions from the qualified people who are experts in following the regulative principles of progressive spiritual life. Then everyone is given an opportunity to receive training in order to become free from material attachment, which keeps one in constant anxiety and misery.

The leaders of society must be ideal examples of liberated souls so that they can help common men rise above mundane material existence. Although Rsabhadeva was an incarnation of Krishna and perfect in every way, He still followed the prescribed duties according to the varnasrama-dharma. Krishna says, “For if I ever fail to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Arjuna, certainly all men would follow my path.” (Bg 3.23) As an ideal king (ksatriya), Rsabhadeva followed the instructions of the Brahmana priests as related to mind control, sense control, tolerance, patience, compassion, and so forth. He ruled the people according to the varnasrama-dharma, which required that the brahmanas instruct the rulers and the rulers administer the kingdom through the merchants and workers. Brahmanas are required to teach according to the standard Vedic scriptures without any alteration or speculation. A person who wants to improve himself must follow the standard rules as practiced by the great teachers. The king or the executive head of a state, the parents, and the school teachers are all considered to be natural leaders of the innocent people. All such natural leaders have a great responsibility to their dependents. They must be conversant with the standard books of moral and spiritual codes.

Without following the prescribed duties attributed to the different social and spiritual orders of the Vedic society, the world deteriorates into chaos. This disruption of society is caused by irresponsible people who engender unwanted children. These children are not given the love, protection, and educational training necessary for them to integrate into society as responsible and morally upright citizens of the state. The Vedic regulations that define the duties of the different divisions of the social and spiritual classes of people are designed to teach people to be peaceful, happy, prosperous, and organized for spiritual progress toward the goal of ultimate emancipation. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada comments on this point in the Bhagavad-Gita (3.24):

“The Lord is the father of all living entities, and if the living entities are misguided,

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indirectly the responsibility goes to the Lord. Therefore, whenever there is general disregard of regulative principles (varnasrama dharma), the Lord Himself descends and corrects the society. We should, however, note carefully that although we have to follow in the footsteps of the Lord, we still have to remember that we cannot imitate Him. Following and imitating are not on the same level. We cannot imitate the Lord by lifting Govardhan Hill, as the Lord did in His childhood. It is impossible for any human being. We have to follow His instructions, but we may not imitate Him at any time. The Srimad-Bhagavatam (10.33.30–31) affirms:

‘One should simply follow the instructions of the Lord and His empowered servants. Their instructions are all good for us, and any intelligent person will perform them as instructed. However, one should guard against trying to imitate their actions. One should not try to drink the ocean of poison in imitation of Lord Siva.’

We should always consider the position of the isvaras, or those who can actually control the movements of the sun and moon, as superior. Without such power, one cannot imitate the isvaras, who are super powerful. Lord Siva drank poison to the extent of swallowing an ocean, but if any common man tries to drink even a fragment of such poison, he will be killed. There are many pseudo devotees of Lord Siva who want to indulge in smoking ganja (marijuana) and similar intoxicating drugs, forgetting that by so imitating the acts of Lord Siva they are calling death very near. Similarly, there are some pseudo devotees of Lord Krishna who prefer to imitate the Lord in His rasa-lila, or dance of love, forgetting their inability to lift Govardhan Hill. It is best, therefore, that one not try to imitate the powerful, but simply follow their instructions; nor should one try to occupy their posts without qualification. There are so many “incarnations” of God without the power of the Supreme Godhead.”

The following discussion of varnasrama-dharma begins with the story how Krishna lifted the mountain Govardhan, defeated the pride of the demigod Indra, and explained how to organize a wonderful festival that satisfies the hearts of all living entities.”

Govardhan – The Mountain That Fulfills All Desires

Govardhan is a village at the foot of Govardhan Mountain, which is located near the town of Vrindaban in the Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh, India. It is approximately 90 miles south of Delhi. Vrindaban is the holy land where Lord Krishna frolicked with His devotees five thousand years ago.

“Go” means a cow or the senses. “Vardhana” means to increase. One meaning of the word Govardhan is the following: people who use their senses in the service of Lord Krishna become purified of the influence of lust, anger and greed. Their attraction to the Lord increases as their ability to perceive the Lord is enhanced by the purification of negative qualities.

We will learn below that Govardhan mountain is an expansion of Lord Krishna and thus is considered non-different than the Lord. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims flock to Govardhan on pilgrimage to experience the blessing by which their devotion (bhakti) to Lord Krishna increases. The senses of the pilgrims become more spiritually perceptive and one’s quality of devotion is enhanced by circumambulating the mountain with reverence while chanting the holy names of the Lord, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare/ Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

The Purpose of Material Creation

Five thousand years ago Lord Krishna explained the purpose of Vedic spirituality. He said, “In the beginning of creation, the Lord of all creatures sent forth generations of men and demigods, along with sacrifices for Vishnu (Lord Krishna’s expansion), and blessed them by saying, ‘Be thou happy by this yajna (sacrifice) because its performance will bestow upon you everything desirable for living happily and achieving liberation.’”

The material world is a creation of Lord Krishna that enables the conditioned souls who revolted against Him in the spiritual world to learn how to perform sacrifices for the satisfaction of Lord Vishnu. It is compared to a prison house in which the souls who revolted against the authority of the Lord are given a chance to rectify themselves in the human form of life. Lord Krishna expands Himself as Lord Vishnu for the

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creation, maintenance and destruction of the material worlds. In the Vishnu form He receives the sacrificial offerings of the people who desire to free themselves from the cycle of birth and death.

Lord Krishna is the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. His transcendental form holding the flute is the origin of the material and spiritual worlds and all living entities expand from Him. He declares this fact: “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in My devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts.” (Bg 10.8)

During the period of material creation, Lord Krishna blessed the conditioned living entities with a system of sacrifices to help them constantly remember Him and thus live comfortably without unnecessary anxiety and at the end of life return to the spiritual world. The Lord declared that whoever, at the end of life, remembers Him exclusively will at once return to His transcendental, eternal abode to live with Him. He confirmed this more emphatically by saying, “He who meditates on Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, his mind constantly engaged in remembering Me, undeviated from the path, he, O Partha (Arjuna), is sure to reach Me.” (Bg 8.8)

Lord Krishna’s original form holding a flute with two arms is uniquely for loving affairs with His eternally liberated devotees in the spiritual world. He comes in His original form into the material creation once in a day of Brahma. During His appearance He manifests and enacts the same loving relationships He enjoys in the spiritual world with His devotees. This transcendental display of love and affection is meant to attract the attention of conditional souls in the material world. He says, “One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.” (Bg 4.9)

Deterioration of Pure Vedic Spirituality

During the course of time, however, confusion arose in the minds of people. Lord Vishnu is the plenary expansion of Lord Krishna who is the yajna pati, which means the chief beneficiary of all sacrifices in the material worlds. However, people began to offer sacrifices to the demigods thinking them to be on an equal footing as Lord Vishnu. The Vedic spirituality is strictly monotheistic. Yet, this understanding deteriorated into a polytheistic system of worship placing the demigods, who are the servants of Lord Vishnu, on the same level as the Lord. Lord Krishna comments on this misunderstanding: “Those who are devotees of other gods (the demigods) and who worship them with faith actually worship only Me, O son of Kunti, but they do so in a wrong way.” (Bg 9.23)

The demigods are like different departmental directors in the government of the Supreme Lord. Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead and the demigods are His mandated agents whose duty is to collect the offerings made by the conditioned souls and deliver them to Lord Vishnu, just as the tax collector delivers the tax money to the government. Lord Krishna further elaborates, “I am the only enjoyer and master of all sacrifices. Therefore, those who do not recognize My true transcendental nature fall down.” (Bg 9.24) His Divine Grace Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada commentary on this verse follows:

“Here it is clearly stated that there are many types of yajna performances (sacrifices) recommended in the Vedic literatures, but actually all of them are meant for satisfying the Supreme Lord. Yajna means Vishnu. In the Third Chapter of Bhagavad-Gita it is said that one should only work for satisfying yajna, or Vishnu. “Work done as a sacrifice for Vishnu has to be performed; otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.” (Bg 3.9)

“The perfect form of human civilization, known as varnasrama -dharma, is specifically meant for satisfying Vishnu. Krishna says in this verse, “I am the only enjoyer and master of all sacrifices.” Less intelligent persons, however, without knowing this fact, worship demigods for temporary benefit. Therefore they fall down to material existence and do not achieve the desired goal of life. If, however, anyone has any material desire to be fulfilled, he had better pray for it to the Supreme Lord (although that is not pure devotion), and he will thus achieve the desired result.” (Bg purport, 9.24)

Thus, Lord Krishna instructs that the demigods should be respected as His servants, but He does not

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approve the unnecessary worship of the demigods. Thinking that they are equal to the Lord is inappropriate and offensive.

The Story of Govardhan

One day Lord Krishna, who at the time appeared to be only seven years old, noticed that the cowherd men of Vrindaban, under the leadership of Nanda Maharaja, Krishna's father, were preparing sacrificial offerings to Indra, the demigod of rain. Their purpose was to please Indra who in return would supply ample rain to grow the grains and grasses to feed their cows. Vrindaban was a rural, agrarian community that adhered to the traditional Vedic religious practices.

Krishna wanted to unequivocally establish the standard of pure devotion and love of God. Since He is God, only He can teach others the difference between pure love and self-interested religious activity. Krishna taught by His own example what exclusive devotion for God is during His pastimes in Vrindaban.

Krishna asked his father to explain why he was preparing to perform an elaborate sacrifice for Indra. Maharaja Nanda answered that the sacrifice was a traditional Vedic ceremony especially for farmers who depend on the rain that is supplied by the demigod Indra. By such performance one shows gratitude to Indra who sends clouds to pour down a sufficient quantity of rain for successful agricultural production. All living entities subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of sacrifice, and sacrifice is born of prescribed duties. Rain is necessary for the success of people in their endeavors to live and prosper, engage in religious activity, and ultimately to attain liberation from birth and death.

Hearing his father's explanation, Krishna tried to convince him to stop the sacrifice to Indra. The only way to attain complete freedom from birth and death is to exclusively surrender one's attention and service to Lord Krishna. This is emphatically stated in the Bhagavad-Gita:

“One can understand Me as I am, as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of Me by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God.”

“Always think of Me, become My devotee, worship Me and offer your homage unto Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend.”

The demigods are the servants of Lord Krishna. They cannot give anything to the performers of sacrifice unless Krishna gives His permission. The results of self-interested sacrifice are temporary because the sacrifice is meant for the satisfaction of material desires of the performer rather than offerings of love and devotion to Krishna. This is explained in the Bhagavad-Gita:

“Those whose intelligence has been stolen by material desires surrender unto demigods and follow the particular rules and regulations of worship according to their own natures.”

“I am in everyone's heart as the Supersoul. As soon as one desires to worship some demigod, I make his faith steady so that he can devote himself to that particular deity.”

“Endowed with such a faith, he endeavors to worship a particular demigod and obtains his desires. But in actuality these benefits are bestowed by Me alone.”

“Men of small intelligence worship the demigods, and their fruits are limited and temporary. Those who worship the demigods go to the planets of the demigods, but My devotees ultimately reach My supreme planet.” (Bg 7. 20-21-22-23)

Sometimes the demigods become overly proud of their tremendous power and opulence. This was the case for Indra. Krishna wanted to teach him a lesson of humility. Therefore he purposely angered Indra by stopping the sacrifice meant for him. At the same time, he wanted to instruct the residents of Vrindaban that demigod worship was not necessary if one is a pure devotee of the Supreme Lord who is the source of all benedictions.

Temporary material benedictions prolong one's bondage in life

Asking for temporary material benedictions will only prolong one's staying in the cycle of birth and death because he must take birth again in a material body to receive the material benefits of mundane

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sacrifices. Sacrifice meant to please God has eternal benefit because the highest perfection of spiritual life is to please the Lord. This is stated in the Srimad Bhagavatam, “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.” Krishna further expands this point:

“Acts of sacrifice, charity and penance are not to be given up; they must be performed. Indeed, sacrifice, charity and penance purify even the great souls.”

“All these activities should be performed without attachment or any expectation of result. They should be performed as a matter of duty, O son of Pritha. That is My final opinion.” (Bg 18. 5-6)

The commentary on this verse by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada follows: “Although all sacrifices are purifying, one should not expect any result by such performances. In other words, all sacrifices which are meant for material advancement in life should be given up, but sacrifices that purify one's existence and elevate one to the spiritual plane should not be stopped. Everything that leads to Krishna consciousness must be encouraged. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam also it is said that any activity which leads to devotional service to the Lord should be accepted. That is the highest criterion of religion. A devotee of the Lord should accept any kind of work, sacrifice or charity which will help him in the discharge of devotional service to the Lord.” (Purport to Bg 18.6)

Two Kinds of Illusion

Maharaja Nanda did not know that his son Krishna was God Himself appearing in His original form as a cowherd boy. This was necessary in order to have a close relationship between the pure devotee and Krishna. There are eternal relationships one can attain by pure devotion. Nanda and his wife Yasoda attained their desire to act as the father and mother of God because they developed the flavor of parental love for the Lord.

The five most intimate relationships one can have with Krishna are the following: neutrality, servant, friend, parent, and conjugal lover. These relationships are eternally being experienced in the spiritual world. To engage in such relationships with God one must not be aware that Krishna is the Supreme God so that all formality of awe and reverence is eliminated. This enables one to freely express intimate love without any inhibition. Thus the residents of the spiritual world are under a type of illusion called Yogamaya that brings them closer to God. The inhabitants of the material world suffer from another kind of illusion called Mahamaya, which enables them to go far away from God by sinful acts.

We Need God's Help to Exercise Free Will

If a person is fully aware of God's presence, he will not feel free to commit sins. God does not interfere with one's ability to choose the path of sinful activity. He enables it if one is determined to do so by giving forgetfulness of Himself so that one can have free choice. By forgetting God one feels free to engage in sinful activity, but due to the laws of karma, one receives negative reactions to sinful activities which frustrate, and can cause deep anxiety. In a state of despair, one may begin to reflect about why there is suffering and misery. In such a devastated state, one seeks answers from spiritual authorities. If he is fortunate enough to meet a genuine devotee of Lord Krishna, he will be introduced to the Bhagavad-Gita and its correct understanding, by which all his questions will be answered. Thus he begins his path back to God from the morass of material conditioned life of birth and death.

However, if one desires to serve Krishna, the Lord gives all help and protection so that His devotee can come back to Him. He confirms this in the Bhagavad-Gita: “But those who always worship Me with exclusive devotion, meditating on My transcendental form – to them I carry what they lack (yoga), and I preserve what they have (kshema).” (Bg 9.22) Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada explains this verse: “One who is unable to live for a moment without Krishna consciousness cannot but think of Krishna twenty-four hours a day, being engaged in devotional service by hearing, chanting, remembering, offering prayers, worshipping, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, rendering other services, cultivating friendship and surrendering

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fully to the Lord. Such activities are all auspicious and full of spiritual potencies, which make the devotee perfect in self-realization, so that his only desire is to achieve the association of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Such a devotee undoubtedly approaches the Lord without difficulty. This is called yoga. By the mercy of the Lord, such a devotee never comes back to this material condition of life. Kshema refers to the merciful protection of the Lord. The Lord helps the devotee to achieve Krishna consciousness by yoga, and when he becomes fully Krishna conscious the Lord protects him from falling down to a miserable conditioned life (kshema).”

Thus, people need God’s help to either serve Him faithfully or reject Him. The laws of karma are to help people understand that the material world is actually a prison house of reward and punishment. Therefore, an intelligent person will seek to end his stay in this world of illusory happiness and bewildering suffering.

Krishna Convinces his Father to Stop Indra’s Worship

Krishna used very clever arguments based on different atheistic philosophies to convince his father to stop Indra’s worship. He began by explaining the godless philosophy called Karma-mimamsa. This false doctrine is very popular today. It says that one does not have to believe or pray to superior beings in the universe like demigods. They simply have to perform righteous acts or good karma and they will get good results. They believe the laws of karma are regulating all activity in this world. People should attend to their duties by respecting diligently the laws of karma. Thus they will be awarded good results.

Due to karma, living entities take their birth in a certain body, experience varieties of happiness and suffering in that body, and then give it up as their term of past karma ends. Bad karma is the cause of suffering and good karma leads to happiness. Krishna’s point is that Indra can do nothing to alter the happiness and suffering of anyone, for everyone is tightly bound by his karmic reactions.

As a side note we must say that no law of nature such as the law of karma or the law of gravity has ever been established by a random act of nature. A law is made by a law maker who has superior intelligence to create and maintain the law consistently. The fallacy of the Karma-mimamsa philosophy is the assumption that even if there is a god, he may create, but he is then subordinate to his own laws. This is naïve. It is a false conception that aims to reduce the understanding of God to an ordinary limited being like ourselves. If we look honestly at the dimension and grandeur of material creation, we can understand that the creator and maintainer of such a complex and magnificent organization has unlimited potencies that are beyond human comprehension. He is the supreme controller and can apply His laws and retract them or alter them by His will.

Maharaja Nanda answered Krishna saying that without satisfying the demigods one cannot derive any good result simply by material activities. Therefore material causes such as the law of karma are not sufficient for attaining results. There must be a sanction of the superior authorities in the universe that control and maintain its functioning. Nanda Maharaja insisted that it is necessary to obtain regulated and sufficient rain for agricultural work. For this reason they must satisfy Indra, the superintendent of supplying rain.

Krishna defeated this argument by saying the demigods give results only to those persons who have executed their prescribed duties. They cannot give good results to persons who have not executed their prescribed duties. Demigods are limited to being dependent on the execution of duties and not independent in awarding good results to anyone. Therefore one should not waste time and resources worshipping demigods.

Everyone has a natural tendency to work. According to that natural tendency, all living entities, including the demigods, achieve their respective results such as repeated birth, death, old age, disease, friends, enemies, happiness and distress. Krishna reemphasized again that all persons should diligently discharge duties according to their natural tendencies. The demigods are satisfied by the proper execution of duties. Thus one should not divert attention to worshipping them.

Why does Krishna Give so Much Importance to Execution of Duties?

Krishna declares in the Bhagavad-Gita that He created four divisions of human society: brahmanas

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(priests and intellectual-philosopher holy men), ksatriyas (warriors/politicians/administrators), vaisyas (farmers, businessmen, and bankers), and sudras (workers). “According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable.” (Bg 4.13) These four divisions exist in all societies.

The old Soviet Union tried to eliminate the four divisions and establish only a worker class. This attempt failed. By the 1990s there were four distinct social classes in the Soviet Union similar to everywhere else in the world: the nomenklatura – consisted of Communist party officials and personnel in the government along with military generals (ksatriyas) and government directors of heavy industries (vaisyas). There was a vast bureaucracy of lesser officials that managed factories, government agencies, farms, and different institutions of the state including schools and universities. The urban workers and farmers, and artists of various sorts (sudras) were the most numerous class, and lastly, the intellectuals (pseudo-priestly class). The Marxist-Leninist notions of a classless society never really materialized.

Krishna emphasizes the execution of prescribed duties because they enable human society to become perfectly fit for getting out of the clutches of the illusory energy (maya). Most people lead a householder lifestyle either by sacred marriage or mutual consent. The varnasrama system of societal organization regulates the people interested in a progressive spiritual evolution. A regulated populace can develop economic well-being, material pleasure, maintain a peaceful and healthy life, and finally be promoted to eternal life. Human society is distinguished from the animals by virtue of their capacity and intent to follow regulative principles for spiritual evolverment.

The prescribed duties pertain to the specific social divisions of society. They are not determined by birth. These duties are the natural tendencies of work that people acquire in association with the three modes of nature: goodness (sattva), passion (rajas), and ignorance (tamas). According to the influence of these modes on the psychophysical make-up of a person, one develops tendencies for work, desires, conceptions and beliefs about the purpose of life and how to achieve them. The modes can also fluctuate according to the relationships and social circle with which one associates. The influence of the modes binds a person to stay in the throes of material life.

Specific guidelines are defined for these divisions (varnas) of society in the Bhagavad-Gita

Brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas and sudras are distinguished by the qualities born of their own natures in accordance with the material modes:

“Peacefulness, self-control, austerity, purity, tolerance, honesty, knowledge, wisdom and religiousness – these are the natural qualities by which the brahmanas work.

Heroism, power, determination, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and leadership are the natural qualities of work for the ksatriyas.

Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work for the vaisyas, and for the sudras there are labor and service to others.” (Bg 18. 41-42-43-44)

Equal Opportunity for all Divisions of Society

Those who participate in the social divisions are also able to take part in the four spiritual divisions (ashramas) of society: brahmacari (celibate student), grhastha (married couples), vanaprastha (husband and wife begin a life of renunciation together), sannyasa (husband leaves wife in a secure situation and becomes an itinerant, renounced monk). All the social and spiritual divisions of the ideal varnasrama society work cooperatively for peace, prosperity, and spiritual advancement of everyone.

The Vedic society is planned to help all members of society rise above the influence of the modes of passion and ignorance and come to the mode of goodness, which is the platform from which they can begin to make tangible spiritual progress by understanding higher order philosophical concepts. Eventually by proper guidance and practice one can rise up to the level of transcendental goodness which is the position of liberation from all material influences that bind one to the cycle of birth and death. One becomes liberated even in this world from the binding negative qualities of lust, anger, greed, illusion,

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madness, and envy, lamentation, false pride, unlimited hankerings, etc. The genesis of these negative qualities is the mind which is not controlled. The uncontrolled mind causes a person to become completely entangled in selfish and self-indulgent activities that chain one to stay in the cycle of birth and death. This is affirmed in the Vedic scriptures: “For man, mind is the cause of bondage and mind is the cause of liberation. Mind absorbed in sense objects is the cause of bondage, and mind detached from the sense objects is the cause of liberation.” (Amṛta-bindu Upaniṣad 2) Working honestly according to the codes of work outlined in the Vedas and living a God-centered life sustains a person on the fast track for a peaceful life and spiritual emancipation.

Why did Krishna Use Atheistic Philosophy to Convince his Father to Stop Indra’s Worship?

Krishna is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Everything originally comes from Him. The intelligence of the atheists also emanates from Krishna. He says, “...know that I am the original seed of all existences, the intelligence of the intelligent.” (Bg 7.10); “I am seated in everyone’s heart, and from Me come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. (Bg 15.15) The intelligence and knowledge of the atheists is coming from Krishna. As God is all powerful, He can also use atheistic philosophy to accomplish His goals.

But when God does something many purposes are served simultaneously. He not only convinces His father to stop the demigod Indra’s worship, but He also clearly delineates the difference between His transcendental position and the material conditioned state of the demigods and ordinary human beings. Due to this conditioning it is impossible for a person to understand God. Krishna affirms this, “Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulence, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and sages.” (Bg 10.2) One must rise above the influence of the modes of nature by proper training to begin to understand who God is.

Another purpose why Krishna explained atheistic philosophy was to defeat it by lifting the Govardhan Mountain, thus demonstrating His supernatural powers. By this incredible feat for an apparent 7 year old, He proved that He was above the controlling power of nature, time, and karma.

The Lord possesses inconceivable powers that reverse the laws of nature He has created. He does this at the discretion of His own sweet will. Krishna’s inconceivable potencies and their ability to contradict the laws of material nature are described by Sukadeva Goswami, the renowned Vedic authority of ancient times. “Krishna is bewildering my intelligence because, although He is unborn, He has appeared as the son of Nanda Maharaja. He is all-pervading, but still He is held on the lap of Yasoda. In spite of His being all-pervasive, He has become limited by the love of Yasoda. Although He has innumerable forms, He is moving as one Krishna before His father and mother, Nanda and Yasoda.” (Nectar of Devotion, chapter 22) Brahma, the secondary creator of the material world under Krishna’s authority, declares that Krishna controls the law of karma and can reverse it for His devotees, “Beginning from the great King of heaven (Indra) down to the ant, everyone is undergoing the reactions of past deeds. But a devotee of Krishna is relieved from such reactions by the grace of Krishna.” (Brahma Samhita, 5.54) Krishna declares time is manifested by Him, “Time I am, the great destroyer of worlds...” (Bg 11.32)

The ancient atheists’ arguments against the existence of God used mechanistic models which assume that a complex system can be understood by examining the workings of its individual parts and the manner in which they are coupled. They irrationally attributed exclusive causality to the apparent mechanical functions of nature. They exclude the possibility of a supremely intelligent creator and His cadre of administrators who manage the universal workings of nature. But nature functions in subtle ways. In most cases, the most important system components are not solid and not physically observed.

Krishna presents six theoretical points based on atheistic philosophy to convince his father to stop the worship of Indra.

- Karma alone is sufficient to determine one’s destiny
- The conditioned nature of a person is the supreme controller in the universe
- The modes of nature are the supreme controller
- The demigods are also a dependent aspect of karma
- The demigods are under the control of karma

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One's occupation is the actual worshipable deity

Krishna presented these atheistic arguments not because He believed them but rather because He wanted to stop the impending sacrifice for Indra and all demigods, and establish unequivocally His transcendent status as the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Krishna attributes supreme causality to the law of karma, the three modes of material nature, and their conditioning effect on living entities that forces them to work. By working under the cloud of material conditioning one succumbs to the three types of material miseries: those that are caused by the material body, by other living entities, and by natural cataclysmic events. He adds that one's occupation is the actual deity worthy of worship for all people. This is a typical atheistic argument that completely avoids attributing causality to a transcendent, supremely intelligent God.

Every organized system created by man is masterminded by a lead intelligent person who employs managers and workers who execute his plans for production, delivery, and a finished product. Man has never created anything without intelligent planning and careful execution of the plan. Nothing of tangible utility and value has been created by random permutation and combination without the supervision of intelligent managers. The atheists' claims that nature organizes itself into complex systems is irrational and without any foundation of fact. Krishna will dramatically prove this by His superhuman feats.

The Demigods Are Not Equal to Lord Krishna

The demigods are subject to the laws of karma and conditioned by the modes of nature. They are persons who have the same foibles as human beings. However, they are on a much higher level of human perfection than ordinary human beings. They have been given tremendous material facilities and responsibilities in the universal management by Krishna. The material facilities may be used for sense gratification and self-indulgence, or they may be engaged in the glorification of Lord Krishna. These two possibilities are always present in the material world due to the exercise of limited free will that God bestows upon humans and demigods.

One can compare the position of the demigods to top executives on the earth who, by virtue of their power and wealth, have tremendous facilities for doing good or misusing them for selfish endeavors. The difference between the demigods and ordinary humans is the following: The demigods have much more spiritual and material assets due to many lifetimes of service to God.

What is interesting to note is that the demigods are subordinate to the six points mentioned above. They are not free of material conditioning. Lord Krishna, however, is the creator of the law of karma, the three modes, and time. He is not influenced by them. He controls them, and for His devotees, who sincerely serve Him with love and devotion, He also frees them from being entangled. Krishna says in the Bhagavad-Gita, "One who engages in full devotional service, unflinching in all circumstances, at once transcends the modes of material nature and thus comes to the level of Brahman." (Bg 14.26)

The Limits of Free Will

Krishna provides the living entities with all facilities for life. If we use these assets to serve God, we attain eternal life. If we become envious of God and deny His existence and choose to use our assets such as intelligence, etc., for selfish endeavors, we become entangled in the material world.

God gives us a body and senses, intelligence, mind, the process of perception, etc. We have limited free will by which we can choose how we want to use them. Depending on our choices and activities, we may act piously or impiously. Following the instructions of God given in Holy Scriptures and with the guidance of bona fide teachers, one can attain eternal life in the spiritual world. But, by violating God's instructions, one remains bound by the laws of material nature that keep the living entity in the unending cycle of birth and death transmigrating up and down through the 8.4 million species of life, which includes the demigods. Each species has a particular body conditioned by material nature that cannot escape its destiny.

In the absence of full knowledge of who exactly is the Supreme Godhead, one may decide to worship demigods, who are lesser personalities in the universal governance of God. The demigods are pious

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individuals who have practiced devotion to Krishna. Their devotion is mixed, however, with the desire to dominate the forces of nature. Therefore, they are given the opportunity to administer certain universal affairs on behalf of the Lord to satisfy their desires and continue to make spiritual advancement toward complete purification and unadulterated love for God. They are prone to the same temptations and weaknesses as all conditioned souls, and they can succumb to the illusory pursuit of sense gratification in the course of their spiritual duties.

Because of the extent of the demigod's great powers over universal affairs, people sometimes think they are worthy of worship. The purpose of such worship is most often garnering favors of material facilities for sense gratification such as health, wealth, longevity, relative liberation on higher material planets where the duration of life is much longer than on the earth. However, the demigods can never confer eternal liberation by promotion to the spiritual world because they are also subject to the four miseries: birth, old age, disease and death. The demigods can also be bewildered by their extensive opulence and power and become blinded like Indra to challenge the authority of Krishna.

Demigod Worship Often Results in Self-indulgence and Atheism

People who worship demigods are loyal to them as long as their material desires are satisfied. The demigods can only bless persons with benefits up to the limit of their good karma from their previous life. They cannot give more. But everyone has mixed good and bad karma from previous lives. When a person begins to experience bad karma, he may shop around from one demigod worship to another to offset his bad karma. If the bad karma continues or if there is a severe karmic reaction due to past sinful acts, a person may lose faith in the demigods and turn to atheism and belief in modern science as the panacea to all problems of life. Whoever or whatever panders to a person's desire for sense gratification becomes their favorite god or agent for supplying the objects of desire.

The laws of karma, the three modes of material nature, and time are created by Lord Krishna. These three overpowering forces act on the material body of living entities to keep them under the complete control of material nature. The worship of demigods cannot help one escape the bondage of these forces. The impossibility of overcoming the forces of nature by self-interested performance of sacrifices (yajna), charity, and austerities (tapa) is confirmed by Krishna:

“Anything done as sacrifice, charity or penance without faith in the Supreme, O son of Pritha (Arjuna), is impermanent. It is called *asat* and is useless both in this life and the next.” (Bg 17.28) Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada comments on this verse, “Anything done without the transcendental objective – whether it be sacrifice, charity or penance – is useless. Therefore in this verse it is declared that such activities are abominable. Everything should be done for the Supreme in Krishna consciousness. Without such faith, and without the proper guidance, there can never be any fruit. In all the Vedic scriptures, faith in the Supreme is advised. In the pursuit of all Vedic instructions, the ultimate goal is the understanding of Krishna. No one can obtain success without following this principle. Therefore, the best course is to work from the very beginning in Krishna consciousness under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. That is the way to make everything successful. In the conditional state, people are attracted to worshipping demigods, ghosts, or Yakṣas like Kuvera.”

“The mode of goodness is better than the modes of passion and ignorance, but one who takes directly to Krishna consciousness is transcendental to all three modes of material nature. Although there is a process of gradual elevation, if one, by the association of pure devotees, takes directly to Krishna consciousness, that is the best way. And that is recommended in this chapter. To achieve success in this way, one must first find the proper spiritual master and receives training under his direction. Then one can achieve faith in the Supreme. When that faith matures, in course of time, it is called love of God. This love is the ultimate goal of the living entities. One should therefore take to Krishna consciousness directly.” (Bg, purport to verse 17.27)

Rather than putting our faith in demigods or mundane people and their misleading philosophies, we have a better chance of living a productive life by trusting the words of Krishna. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada makes a sincere statement that follows:

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“If one develops firm faith in the understanding that if he simply engages in Krishna consciousness and Krishna’s transcendental loving service, then he is freed from all other obligations. A pure devotee of Lord Krishna doesn’t have to perform any of the ritualistic functions enjoined in the Vedas; nor is he required to worship any demigods. Being a devotee of Lord Krishna, one is understood to have performed all kinds of Vedic rituals and all kinds of worship to the demigods. One does not develop devotional service for Krishna by performing the Vedic ritualistic ceremonies or worshipping the demigods, but it should be understood that one who is engaged fully in the service of the Lord has already fulfilled all Vedic injunctions. In order to stop all such activities by His devotees, Krishna wanted to firmly establish exclusive devotional service during His presence in Vrindavana.” (Krishna Book, Chapter 24, first paragraph)

Krishna used the philosophies of Karma-mimansa and atheistic Sankhya to convince his father to give up demigod worship. At the same time, He demonstrated the fallacies of these philosophies by showing how the demigods like Indra who seem all powerful in this world are completely subordinate to Him.

Indra became upset when Nanda Maharaja and the inhabitants of Vrindaban stopped his worship. He sent frightening rain clouds and caused a deluge that flooded Vrindaban, endangering the lives of everyone. Krishna defeated Indra’s aggression on Vrindaban by lifting Govardhan Mountain and using it as an umbrella to counter the deluge of rain that Indra sent to drown all the inhabitants and cows. Krishna demonstrated supernatural power that proved He controls the demigods and all the laws of material nature that He can alter at His own sweet will.

Hope for Everyone Struggling in this World of Birth and Death

Krishna gives hope and a pathway for all people to escape the oppressive forces of material nature. He says, “This divine energy of Mine, consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” (Bg 7.14) This statement by Lord Krishna is the solution to the whole problem of the unending cycle of birth and death. It is impossible to overcome the forces of nature by material science or materialistic motivated worship of the demigods. Surrendering to the will of God through service and devotion guided by bona fide teachers who are pure devotees themselves is the guaranteed way for ultimate success.

All living entities depend on the necessities of life supplied by Lord Krishna through His supply agents, the demigods. We should make proper use of these necessities to live a healthy, peaceful life. Then we can concentrate on self-realization that will prepare us to achieve the ultimate goal of life, which is liberation from the exhausting struggle for existence. This purpose is attained by performance of sacrifices recommended in the Vedas. If we ignore the purpose of human life and selfishly misuse the supplies delivered by the demigods for sense gratification, then we become hopelessly entangled in material existence. Entanglement is not the purpose of life in the material world. By such selfish acts we become thieves and are punished by the laws of material nature. A society of thieves can never be happy because their aim in life will lead to eternal bondage rather than eternal liberation. Their puny goals of life center around temporary sense gratification which only affords illusory relief from nature’s unrelenting rush to old age, disease and death.

Krishna says, “...without sacrifice one can never live happily on this planet or in this life: what then of the next?” (Bg 4.31) Existence in the material world is due to the multiple reactions of sinful acts committed in previous lives and this life. Ignorance is the cause of sinful life, and sinful life is the cause of one’s dragging on in material existence. The human form of life is the only loophole by which we may get out of this entanglement. The Vedas give us a chance to escape by the description of varnasrama: the organization of society for the progressive spiritual elevation of all the classes of people without discrimination.

The Importance of Sacrifice Conducted with Spiritual Knowledge

Sacrifices performed with authorized spiritual knowledge are better than the mere sacrifice of material possessions. All sacrifices should ultimately lead to the transcendental knowledge by which one gains release from material miseries. The final goal of pure knowledge is to engage in the loving service of the Supreme Lord. This dedication to unalloyed, pure service is called Krishna consciousness.

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All sacrifices are not equal because they take different forms according to the particular faith of the performer. Lord Krishna elaborates on this point:

“Of sacrifices, the sacrifice performed according to the directions of scripture, as a matter of duty, by those who desire no reward, is of the nature of goodness.”

“But, the sacrifice performed for some material benefit, or for the sake of pride, O chief of the Bharatas, you should know to be in the mode of passion.”

“Any sacrifice performed without regard for the directions of scripture, without distribution of prasadam [spiritual food], without chanting of Vedic hymns and remunerations to the priests, and without faith is considered to be in the mode of ignorance.” (Bg 17. 11-12-13)

Without transcendental knowledge, all sacrifices remain on the material platform and result in no spiritual benefit. If one fails to achieve real knowledge, which culminates in the transcendental knowledge of Krishna consciousness, then sacrifices are merely material activities. This is confirmed in the Srimad Bhagavatam, “The occupational activities a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Personality of Godhead (SB 1.2.8). Sacrifices should be performed as a matter of duty without any material desire in mind to be satisfied. They should be performed for the pleasure of God and not for our facilitation in the pursuit of sense gratification.

Sacrifice in the mode of goodness is not for material benefit. It is meant only to offer respect and love for God. In this way one can gain strength and determination to follow God’s instructions. Sacrifice performed for material benefit, or for the sake of pride, is in the mode of passion. When sacrifices are performed for making money and gaining material benefits, and the money is spent for sense gratification ignoring the scriptural injunctions, the so-called devotees develop a demoniac mentality. Rather than an act of faith, it becomes an act of faithlessness due to the influence of ignorance. Such ceremonial shows of spiritual fervor are not accepted as genuine and have no benefit for human society.

Krishna reveals that there are four kinds of pious persons who begin to render devotional service to Him – the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and the one who is searching for the knowledge of the Absolute. He certifies that the person who achieves transcendental knowledge and who is always engaged in pure devotional service is the best because Krishna is dear to him and he is dear to Krishna. Krishna guarantees that the devotee who always engages in His sincere service is sure to attain the highest and most perfect goal of returning to live eternally with Him and the legions of liberated souls in the spiritual world.

Krishna Describes the Perfect Organization of Society to his Father for Achieving Complete Liberation Eternally

Krishna eventually convinced his father to give up worship of Indra and begin the worship of Govardhan Mountain. Since there is no specific mention in the original four Vedas for worship of Govardhan mountain, Nanda Maharaja inquired how to do it. Krishna gave the following instructions.

“Prepare very nice foods of all descriptions from the grain and ghee collected for the yajna. Prepare rice, dal, then halava, pakora, puri and all kinds of milk preparations, such as sweet rice, rabri, sweetballs, sandesa, rasagulla and laddu, and invite the learned brahmanas who can chant the Vedic hymns and offer oblations to the fire. The brahmanas should be given all kinds of grain in charity. Then decorate all the cows and feed them well. After performing this, give money in charity to the brahmanas. As far as the lower animals are concerned, such as the dogs, and the lower grades of people, such as the candalas, or the fifth class of men, who are considered untouchable, they also may be given sumptuous prasadam. After nice grasses have been given to the cows, the sacrifice known as Govardhan worship may immediately begin. This sacrifice will very much satisfy Me.”

“In this statement, Lord Krishna practically described the whole economy of the vaisya community. In all communities in human society—including the brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, sudras, candalas, etc.—and in the animal kingdom—including the cows, dogs, goats, etc.—everyone has his part to play. Each is to work in cooperation for the total benefit of all society, which includes not only animate objects but also inanimate objects like hills and land. The vaisya community is specifically responsible for the

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economic improvement of the society by producing grain, by giving protection to the cows, by transporting food when needed, and by banking and finance.”

“From this statement we learn also that although the cats and dogs, which have now become so important, are not to be neglected, cow protection is actually more important than protection of cats and dogs. Another hint we get from this statement is that the candalas, or the untouchables, are also not to be neglected by the higher classes and should be given necessary protection. Everyone is important, but some are directly responsible for the advancement of human society and some are only indirectly responsible. However, when Krishna consciousness is there, then everyone’s total benefit is taken care of.” (Krishna Book, Chapter 24)

The sacrificial offerings to Govardhan Mountain are still being performed since Lord Krishna started it over 5000 years ago. It is conducted in a grand manner with the participation of approximately 500,000 pilgrims who delight in the feast called Annakuta, which literally means a mountain of food. In all the temples in Vrindavana-Govardhan area, huge quantities of food are prepared in this ceremony and are very sumptuously distributed to the general population. Many decorated cows are fed grasses and grains and honored for their invaluable service of producing pure milk and cream for Krishna’s pleasure. From Krishna’s description above of the many preparations necessary to worship Govardhan, we can appreciate how important pure milk and cream are for the worship of the Lord and the pleasure of all people.

At present and in the past, people dress nicely and assemble near Govardhan to offer worship and circumambulate the hill chanting the holy names of the Lord accompanied by cymbals and instruments.

Govardhan Mountain originally descended from the spiritual world to assist Krishna in His pastimes in this world. A powerful sage and Vedic yogi named Pulastya Muni wanted to transfer Govardhan to another region of India. Because he was not able to do this, he cursed the mountain to reduce in size gradually. By the time Krishna appeared over 5000 years ago the mountain reduced to 2 miles high in some places. Today it is only 80 feet high. Therefore, it is referred to now as Govardhan Hill.

Krishna continued his description of how to conduct the Govardhan hill ceremony. He advised the cowherd men to stop the sacrifice to Indra and begin the Govardhan worship in order to chastise the falsely proud demigod Indra, who was illusioned into thinking he was the supreme controller of the heavenly planets. Because Krishna appeared as a cowherd boy in Vrindaban, Indra was somewhat bewildered and he wanted to test the Lord’s prowess.

Nanda Maharaja and the cowherd men of Vrindaban accepted Krishna’s instructions and began to do everything He advised. Nanda Maharaja engaged learned brahmana priests in the worship of Govardhan Hill by chanting Vedic hymns and offering prasadam (sanctified vegetarian food). The inhabitants of Vrindavana assembled together, decorated their cows and fed them. Keeping the cows in front, they began to circumambulate Govardhan Hill. The gopīs (cowherd women) dressed themselves very luxuriantly and sat in bullock carts, chanting the glories of Krishna’s pastimes. The Brahmana-priests, assembled to offer their blessings to the cowherd men and their wives.

When everything was complete, Krishna assumed a great transcendental form as big as the mountain and declared to the inhabitants of Vrindavana that He Himself was Govardhan Hill in order to convince the devotees that Govardhan Hill and Krishna Himself are identical. Then Krishna began to eat all the food offered there. This astonishing appearance of a gigantic live form of Krishna as big as the mountain erased any doubts in the minds of the inhabitants that worship of Govardhan is an authentic Vedic ceremony to honor the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

The gigantic form of Krishna who began to eat the offerings was separately constituted. Krishna appearing in His childhood form, along with the other inhabitants of Vrindaban, offered obeisances to the Deity of Krishna and Govardhan Hill. This is an example of the bewildering inconceivable power of Lord Krishna who is simultaneously one and inconceivably different. He was present at the same time as a small child and a gigantic living Deity!

The appearance of Krishna established Govardhan as a special, unique, and serendipitous incarnation of God. Further, anything in direct relationship to Krishna such as the land of Vrindaban, the Yamuna river and Govardhan hill are also worthy of worship by the devotees. They are not an ordinary land, river, or hill.

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They have all descended from the spiritual world to assist the Lord in His intimate pastimes. This esoteric knowledge can only be understood by unalloyed devotees of the Lord. It is said, “Persons who have acted piously in previous lives and in this life and whose sinful actions are completely eradicated are freed from the dualities of delusion, and they engage themselves in My service with determination.” (Bg 7.28) Bhaktivedanta Swami elaborates:

“Those eligible for elevation to the transcendental position are mentioned in this verse. For those who are sinful, atheistic, foolish and deceitful, it is very difficult to transcend the duality of desire and hate. Only those who have passed their lives in practicing the regulative principles of religion, who have acted piously, and who have conquered sinful reactions can accept devotional service and gradually rise to the pure knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Then, gradually, they can meditate in trance on the Supreme Personality of Godhead. That is the process of being situated on the spiritual platform. This elevation is possible in Krishna consciousness in the association of pure devotees, for in the association of great devotees one can be delivered from delusion.” (Purport to Bg 7.28)

The Ancient Varnasrama Society and its Modern Equivalent Daiva Varnasrama

The perfect cooperation of all the social and spiritual divisions of society (Varnasrama dharma society) that Krishna described 5000 years ago has its modern counterpart. Five thousand years ago there was no industrialization and dependence on machines and sophisticated material technology. Life in rural Vrindaban was based on cow protection and land stewardship. Everything for living happily and peacefully was supplied by performance of Vedic sacrifices performed by qualified brahmanas that pleased Lord Krishna who in turn provided all the basic necessities through the demigods, His supply agents.

Life in this world today has changed dramatically. The rural agrarian life style dominated by the mode of goodness that promotes simple living and high thinking was the model during the Vedic times. Today, there is overwhelming complexity and confusion under the influence of the modes of passion and ignorance. There is widespread misery and confusion. Sense gratification is glorified and self-control is deemed old fashion. There is no clear concept of what the spiritual goal of life is or how to attain it. In the present condition there is no possibility of practicing the original Varnasrama system of societal organization. However, the same goals and objectives can be achieved by the Daiva Varnasrama system of social and spiritual organization.

Daiva means divine or spiritual in Sanskrit, the ancient language of the Vedic literature. The divine organization of social and spiritual divisions of society can be instituted for the prosperity, social harmony and spiritual success of modern society. The key to the success is given by Lord Krishna in the following verse from Bhagavad-Gita. “By worship of the Lord, who is the source of all beings and who is all-pervading, a man can attain perfection through performing his own work.” (Bg 18.46) Daiva Varnasrama means God-centered activities for all the divisions of society.

The Vedic Cultural Center and Sri Sri Radha Nila-Madhava Temple is an example of a Daiva Varnasrama model. People of different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, professions and trades visit the temple. They are all welcome. Everyone is encouraged to learn about how to rise above the influence of the modes of material nature. The process is relatively simple. There are four yamas (things to do) and four niyamas (things not to do). Following these four rules and regulations will quickly raise one to the level of Krishna consciousness where the influence of the modes is greatly diminished or eliminated. The four things not to do are: no consumption of meat, fish, eggs, chicken or any flesh, no intoxication including coffee and tea, no gambling and philosophical speculation, no illicit sex outside of marriage.

These four prohibitions are necessary to respect the four universal principles of religion. They are austerity, cleanliness, mercy, and truthfulness. When a person becomes unduly proud of material acquisitions and power and engages in meat eating by which a poor animal is slaughtered and cut up to satisfy his palate, his ability to engage in austerities for spiritual advancement is compromised. Engaging in illicit extra-marital sex is strictly prohibited because it destroys one’s mental and physical cleanliness, enflames the mind with sexual fantasies, and promotes reckless behavior. Intoxication can quickly put one in an illusory state by

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which he can become very cruel and violent, speak all sorts of nonsense, and assault others viciously. Gambling can easily become compulsive to the point that one may squander all his accumulated wealth and begin to lie and cheat others to continue to gamble; and philosophical speculation tends to undermine one's dedication to always speak the truth backed up by scriptural evidence. By respecting these four prohibitions, one eliminates over 90% of the miseries caused by material life.

The remaining 10% is achieved by strictly following the four recommended spiritual activities. They are:

(1) Regularly chanting a prescribed number of rounds on prayer beads of the Mahamantra (chanting the “great mantra” for deliverance of the mind from all material ignorance – Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.)

By repeating this mantra on prayer beads a prescribed number of times a day, one continually asks Lord Krishna and His eternal consort Srimati Radharani, His personification of love and devotion, to always protect the devotee to remain steady in unalloyed devotional service to the Lord. Chanting this prayer of supplication sincerely and without any material desire attached will result in purification of the mind of material desire and then gradual development of determination to follow the spiritual path throughout life. Repeating the names of God with feeling and devotion helps one to keep the mind always focused on pleasing the Lord. The Mahamantra is the great chant for salvation from the cycle of birth and death. It is the medicine that cures a sick mind cluttered with material desires.

The 16th century incarnation of Krishna, Lord Chaitanya, inaugurated the congregational chanting of the Mahamantra Hare Krishna as the recommended and practical means for ordinary persons in this age to attain eternal salvation. It is said, “In the Age of Kali (hypocrisy and quarrel), people who are endowed with sufficient intelligence will worship the Lord, who is accompanied by His associates, by performance of Sankirtan yajna (sacrificial performance). Other sacrifices are not easy to perform in this Age of Kali, but the Sankirtan yajna is easy and sublime for all purposes.” Krishna affirms this in the Bhagavad-Gita, “Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion.” (Bg 9.14)

(2) Offering tasty eatables to Lord Krishna that are prepared with love and devotion according to the Lord's personal taste.

(3) Regularly hearing, chanting, and discussing the Holy Scriptures - especially Bhagavad-Gita and Srimad Bhagavatam.

(4) Engaging in regulated and time sensitive devotional service in the association of the devotees in the temple. This service is specifically meant for the pleasure of Lord Krishna and is performed with utmost cleanliness and in a timely manner.

Anyone who follows strictly the dos and don'ts mentioned above will be able to make tangible spiritual advancement in the association of good devotees. Such association of rightfully situated devotees is crucial for sustained progress in spiritual life. In their association, one will develop the ardent desire to get initiated and formally continue a life of devotion being duty bound to follow and progress without any whimsical deviations due to petty material desires. Lord Krishna says, “But a person free from all attachment and aversion and able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom can obtain the complete mercy of the Lord.” (Bg 2.64) Bhaktivedanta Swami explains this verse: “It is already explained that one may externally control the senses by some artificial process, but unless the senses are engaged in the transcendental service of the Lord, there is every chance of a fall. Although the person in full Krishna consciousness may apparently be on the sensual plane, because of his being Krishna conscious he has no attachment to sensual activities. The Krishna conscious person is concerned only with the satisfaction of Krishna, and nothing else. Therefore he is transcendental to all attachment and detachment. If Krishna wants, the devotee can do anything which is ordinarily undesirable; and if Krishna does not want, he shall not do that which he would have ordinarily done for his own satisfaction. Therefore to act or not to act is within his control because he acts only under the direction of Krishna. This consciousness is the causeless mercy of the Lord, which the devotee can achieve in spite of his being attached to the sensual platform.” (Purport Bg 2.64)

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The net result of a life spent in Krishna consciousness is described by Krishna: “For one thus satisfied (in Krishna consciousness), the threefold miseries of material life exist no longer; in such satisfied consciousness, one’s intelligence is soon well established.” (Bg 2.65) Having the ability to tolerate the miseries encountered in life, and keep the intelligence clear and steady to always maximize one’s ability to make the right decision even in the most distressful conditions, is a tremendous virtue.

But for persons who are not Krishna conscious the prognosis is bleak. Krishna says, “One who is not connected with the Supreme (in Krishna consciousness) can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be any happiness without peace?” Peace of mind and steady intelligence are valuable virtues. Without an active and real connection to Lord Krishna (God) one will always remain bereft of the most precious assets in life: transcendental intelligence, a steady mind, peace, happiness, and eventually real love for God. With these assets always at one’s disposal, one can remember and cherish the thoughts of God uninterruptedly throughout life and at the most critical moment, death. Krishna says, “And whoever, at the end of his life, quits his body remembering Me alone at once attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt.” (Bg 8.5)

Freedom from the cycle of birth and death, going back to the spiritual world to associate eternally with Krishna and His glorious devotees in one’s own spiritual body, experiencing unabated loving relationships in the company of liberated souls, and assisting in the Lord’s nectar-like pastimes is the destiny of the sincere devotee.

Daiva Varnasrama is Open for Everyone

Everyone in modern society can participate in the Daiva Varnasrama society. One must find a profession or trade by which he can work honestly without violating the regulative principles mentioned above. If one is engaged in a job where the principles are violated, then by patiently chanting Hare Krishna and regularly associating with devotees, Krishna will help the devotee find a more suitable job. The sustained connection to Lord Krishna begins a reciprocal relationship where all the “spiritual desires” of a devotee to advance in holy life and offer service to the Lord are satisfied by the mercy of the Lord. There are stark differences between spiritual and material desires. The spiritual desires of an individual are always discussed with spiritual mentors or gurus who are experts in channeling one’s natural tendencies for service and work to please Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna says: “One who is in knowledge of the Absolute Truth, O mighty-armed, does not engage himself in the senses and sense gratification, knowing well the differences between work in devotion and work for fruitive results.” (Bg 3.28) Once a devotee has a specific varna or social position and work that corresponds to his natural tendencies, then he situates himself in the right ashram. Thus success is sure for the rigid practitioner. The 16th century Vaishnava saint Rupa Goswami has said, “One can execute the process of bhakti-yoga successfully with full-hearted enthusiasm, perseverance, and determination, by following the prescribed duties in the association of devotees and by engaging completely in activities of goodness.” (Upadeśāmṛta 3)

The Vedic Path and Other Religions

The Vedic Civilization had preceded all others on this earth. Similarly, the Vedic varnasrama system for social organization of society has existed since the most remote time. On examination we will find remarkable similarities between the Vedic varnasrama system and that practiced by other religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhist, Islam, Hinduism, etc. The varnas and ashramas exist in every religion and country. However, the implementation in the above five major religions is incomplete or flawed. Hinduism is no exception. In fact, it may be that Hinduism is the most flawed of the five major religions even though it is derived from the Vedic tradition. Hinduism has diverged most flagrantly by virtue of five major flaws or deviations from the original varnasrama system. They follow:

1- The caste system practiced in modern Hinduism is based on a purposeful mistranslation and false interpretation of the original Vedic instruction. Lord Krishna says: “According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me. And

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although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the nondoer, being unchangeable.” The Vedic brahmanas (priests) who had the exclusivity of Sanskrit learning deliberately changed one crucial word in this verse to preserve their privileges for their families. They substituted the word birth for the three modes of material nature (guna in Sanskrit which means qualities determined by the influence of the modes on a person). They made the caste system hereditary which is completely contrary to the original intent of Krishna. According to the original intent, even the son of a common worker could theoretically become a Brahmana if he was trained properly and if he had the natural tendency for brahminical activities. The modern false interpretation of Hinduism precludes this upward movement. This has caused havoc in the Hindu religion. It is due to the selfish interest of a vested class of brahmanas.

2- The upsurge of the Kevala Advaita philosophical interpretation of the Vedas. This interpretation purports that the Supreme Truth is impersonal. Such an interpretation makes this philosophy akin to atheism because it denies that God is a person. It purports the supreme state that one can attain is a constantly emanating energy that is spiritual and eternal. Krishna clearly says in the Bhagavad-Gita, “And I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman, which is immortal, imperishable and eternal and is the constitutional position of ultimate happiness.” The Brahman effulgence is the spiritual light that emanates from the body of Krishna and His plenary expansions such as Narayana. The origin of everything is the Supreme Person Krishna. Persons do not come from impersonal energy. If this was true (which it is not) then the expansion would have qualities that the (Pg 39) source lacks. This would contradict the complete understanding of God as declared in the invocation Mantra of the Sri Isopanisad:

“The Personality of Godhead is perfect and complete, and because He is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the Complete Whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the Complete Whole, even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance.” (Iso, invocation) If the Supreme God is impersonal, then His expansions being persons would have something He doesn’t, namely personality, desires, emotions, etc. But God is the origin of everything and He is perfect and complete, therefore He cannot be less than His emanations.

3- We have already discussed the problem with worshipping demigods as being on an equal level as Lord Krishna.

4- Performing Vedic rituals for material benefits.

5- Individuals declaring themselves as the incarnations of god. There have been too many so-called man-gods have turned out to be imposters and this has tarnished the image of Hinduism. The above five points have undermined the dynamic progress of Hinduism and hamstrung it by multiple vested interests.

When followed, the universal principles of spirituality (austerity, truthfulness, mercy and cleanliness) promote the welfare of society. People live peaceful, prosperous and spiritually oriented lives by refraining from the four activities that undermine the universal principles of spirituality (meat eating, gambling, intoxication, and illicit sex outside of marriage). By practicing the four activities for spiritual progress (regularly hearing and reciting holy scriptures, chanting the holy names of God such as the Hare Krishna Mahamantra, eating only sanctified vegetarian food offered first to God, and engaging in unselfish acts of devotion meant only to please God with devotion and love) all persons remain on an upward progressive path of material and spiritual well-being. This organization of society results in a population of happy people who are on a path to eternal salvation.

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