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STICKING TO THE DUST OF VRINDAVAN

*His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupada*

What is the meaning of living in Vrindavan?



bhakta-sane vāsa — To be in the society of devotees. One should come here for developing a devotional attitude, and not for making business or money. If anyone comes for that reason, he makes offense.

It is called *dhāma-aparādha*, offense to the holy *dhāma*. There are many kinds of *aparādhas*, offenses: *dhāma-aparādhas*, *nāma-aparādhas* and *sevā-aparādhas*. That is described in the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. Here in Vrindavan *dhāma*, no one should do business. No one should try to satisfy his senses in Vrindavan *dhāma*. Then his living in Vrindavan will actually be profitable. Of course, anyone living in Vrindavan *dhāma* is fortunate because the *dhāma* has its own power. But *ānukūlyena kṣṇānu-śīlanam* [Cc. *madhya* 19.167] — if we live in the *dhāma* in an *ānukūla* way, a favorable way, then our achievement of ultimate success is very easy. If we commit offenses then it will be delayed. But still, anyone who is some way or other living in Vrindavan, sticking to the dust of Vrindavan, is certainly benefited. ❀

— Lecture on Nectar of Devotion. Vrindavan. 13 November 1972.

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BHAKTI AND VARNASRAMA DHARMA

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode
Śrī Chaitanya-śīkṣāmṛta 3.4
(with footnotes as in original)

What is the relationship of *varṇāśrama*, which was previously discussed, with *vaidhi-bhakti*? Should a person take shelter of *vaidhi-bhakti* and give up the rules of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, or should he practice *vaidhi-bhakti* for developing devotion while still following the *varṇāśrama* rules and duties? It was previously stated that the purport of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is to maintain the body, develop the mind, perform good works for society, and learn spiritual topics, all with the goal of developing pure *bhakti*.¹

¹ *etat saṁsūcitam brahmaṁs tāpa-traya-cikitsitam
yad īśvare bhagavatī karma brahmaṇi bhāvitaṁ*

O *Brāhmaṇa* Vyasadev, it is decided by the learned that the best remedial measure for removing all troubles and miseries is to dedicate one's activities to the service of the Supreme Lord Personality of Godhead [Sri Krishna].

*āmāyo yaś ca bhūtānām jāyate yena suvrata
tad eva hy āmayam dravyam na punāti cikitsitam*

O good soul, does not a thing applied therapeutically cure a disease caused by that very same thing?

*evam nṛṇām kriyā-yogāḥ sarve saṁsṛti-hetavaḥ
ta evātma-vināśāya kalpante kalpitāḥ pare*

Thus, when all a man's activities are dedicated to the service of the Lord, those very activities that



Since man is bound by a material body, he must follow the *varṇāśrama* rules. That cannot be denied, for without the development of body, mind, society and spirit, man's life becomes degraded. The rules of *varṇāśrama* are suitable for this purpose, and therefore they should be followed. However, *varṇāśrama* is not the final goal. With the assistance of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, a person should cultivate bhakti. It is also necessary to follow the rules of *varṇāśrama* in the cultivation of bhakti.

But by following the rules of *varṇāśrama*, which are time consuming, a person may not have any time left to cultivate bhakti.² Furthermore, where there is some conflict of principles, what should be done? First, it should be said that without taking proper care of body, mind, society and spirit, a person cannot perform the more elevated activities of bhakti. How can the seed of devotion, faith, awaken in the heart if a person dies prematurely, develops mental problems, or never learns anything about spirit? And if a person gives up the rules of *varṇāśrama* and acts as he pleases, his physical and mental actions will be like those of a madman. He will be engaged in the worst sins. No sign of bhakti will be visible.

Thus, though *varṇāśrama-dharma* is somewhat engaging, it must be followed as an assistant to bhakti, and with the cultivation of bhakti its consumption of time will decrease.³ Its various

caused his perpetual bondage become the destroyer of the tree of work.

*yad atra kriyate karma bhagavat-paritoṣanam
jñānam yat tad adhīnam hi bhakti-yoga-samanvitam*

Whatever work is done here in this life for the satisfaction of the mission of the Lord is called bhakti-yoga, or transcendental loving service to the Lord, and what is called knowledge becomes a concomitant factor.

*kurvānā yatra karmāṇi bhagavac-chikṣayāsakṛt
gṛṇanti guṇa-nāmāni kṣṇasyānusmaranti ca*

While performing duties according to the order of Sri Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one constantly remembers Him, His names, and His qualities. (Bhāg. 1.5.32-36)

² *na hy anto 'nanta-pārasya karma-kāṇḍasya coddhava
saṅkṣiptam varṇayīṣyāmi yathāvad anupūroṣaḥ*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: My dear Uddhava, there is no end to the innumerable Vedic prescriptions for executing deity worship; so I shall explain this topic to you briefly, one step at a time. (Bhāg. 11.27.6)

³ *śreyān sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt
svabhāva-niyatam karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam*

It is better to engage in one's own occupation, although one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept

activities will transform into devotional actions. First a person should practice the five types of devotional activities to the utmost, as directed by Lord Chaitanya [associating with devotees, chanting the holy name, hearing Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, residing in Mathura, and worshiping the deity, as listed in Cc. madhya 22.128 — Ed.], while simultaneously being meticulous in observance of *varṇāśrama* duties, which may take too much time. He should gradually reject those *varṇāśrama* duties that are against devotional principles. Finally, being purified by bhakti, *varṇāśrama* duties will become the servant of *sādhana-bhakti*. Acting it this way, there will be no conflict between the duties of *varṇāśrama* and bhakti. By the cultivation of bhakti, the life of a *brāhmaṇa* and the life of a *śūdra*, both purified by bhakti, become equalized. The *śūdra*, being illumined by his state of servitude to the Lord and to the devotees, becomes equal to the selfless *brāhmaṇa*. The purity of *vaiṣṇava* unity will enlighten the lives of the four *varṇas* so much that the world will seem to be Vaikuntha. By removal of the obstacles arising from bodily identification, real equality of the souls is possible.⁴

Just as atheistic moral dharma merges with theistic moral life, *varṇāśrama-dharma*, so theistic moral life transforms itself and becomes devoid of its previous faults in the life of a devotee. In *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the worship of the Lord is only one among many rules. When this dharma is incorporated in the life of a devotee, all the rules becomes subordinate to the worship of the Lord. Although this change may seem very general, when faith becomes strong the whole life of the person becomes transformed. The lives of a *varṇāśrama* follower and a devotee are completely different.

According to the scriptures, every human being has a qualification for performing bhakti.⁵

another's occupation and perform it perfectly. Duties prescribed according to one's nature are never affected by sinful reactions. (Bg.18.47)

⁴ *brāhmaṇe pukkase stene brahmaṇye 'rke sphuliṅgake
akrūre krūrake caiva sama-dṛk paṇḍito mataḥ*

Such a man sees equally the *brāhmaṇa* and the outcaste, the thief and the charitable promoter of brahminical culture, the sun and the tiny sparks of fire, the gentle and the cruel. (Bhāg. 11.29.14)

⁵ *na hy acyutam prīṇayato bahv-āyāso 'surātmajāḥ
ātmatvāt sarva-bhūtānām siddhatvād iha sarvataḥ*

My dear sons of demons, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Narayan, is the original Supersoul, the

As devotion is the natural propensity of the soul, all attention should be paid to this matter. Thus, all persons in the four *varṇas* and *āśramas* are qualified for *bhakti*. Of course, as people outside the *varṇas* are also counted as human beings, they have a right to devotion as well, but the opportunities are less. Because their birth, association, actions, and nature are all without proper regulation, they are extremely attached to the material modes, and live like animals. Just to fill their stomach, they become selfish, violent towards others, and devoid of compassion. Because their hearts are hard, *bhakti* becomes difficult for them to appreciate.⁶ Examples like Haridas Thakur, the hunter saved by Narada, and the story of Jesus and Paul, show that such people do have qualification for devotion. By examining their lives however, it will be found that they endured many hardships in taking up the path of devotion, so much so that their life spans were considerably shortened.

Though all humans have a right to practice *bhakti*, those who follow the regulations of *varṇāśrama* have a much easier time. But even though the qualification and

father of all living entities. Consequently, there are no impediments to pleasing Him or worshiping Him under any conditions, whether one be a child or an old man. The relationship between the living entities and the Supreme Personality of Godhead is always a fact, and therefore there is no difficulty in pleasing the Lord. (*Bhag.* 7.6.19)

⁶ *sukham aindriyakam daityā deha-yogena dehinām sarvatra labhyate daivād yathā duḥkham ayatnataḥ*

Prahlad Maharaja continued: My dear friends born of demoniac families, the happiness perceived with reference to the sense objects by contact with the body can be obtained in any form of life, according to one's past fruitive activities. Such happiness is automatically obtained without endeavor, just as we obtain distress.

tat-prayāso na kartavyo yata āyur-vyayaḥ param na tathā vindate kṣemam mukunda-caraṇāmbujam

Endeavors merely for sense gratification or material happiness through economic development are not to be performed, for they result only in a loss of time and energy, with no actual profit. If one's endeavors are directed toward Krishna consciousness, one can surely attain the spiritual platform of self-realization. There is no such benefit from engaging oneself in economic development. (*Bhāg.* 7.6.3-4)

opportunity is there, many *varṇāśrama* followers do not take to *bhakti*.⁷

The reason is that man's life takes the form of ascending steps. Those outside the *varṇāśrama* are on the lowest step. Atheistic moralists are on the second step. Theistic moralists are on the third step. *Vaidha-bhaktas* are on the fourth step, and *rāgānuga-bhaktas* are on the fifth step. It is the nature of the soul to ascend to the next higher step, but he should not ascend prematurely or too quickly. Only after being firmly established on one step is it possible to ascend to the next step. That is why being qualified with steadiness on each level has been emphasized. When a person is qualified to ascend to the next step, he must also give up attachment to the old step. The tendency to cling to the old stage is called *niyamāgraha*, clinging to outmoded rules. Because of this, the outcastes have no respect for the atheistic moralists; the atheistic moralists have no respect for the pseudo-theistic moralists; the pseudo-theists have no respect for the theistic moralists; the theistic moralists have no respect for the *vaidha-bhaktas*; and the *vaidha-bhaktas* have no respect for *rāgātmikā-bhakti*. Because of such habit, the followers of *varṇāśrama* often do not respect the *vaidha-bhaktas*.⁸ This does not affect *bhakti* itself, but it is a misfortune for those who do

⁷ *yan-nāmadheyam mriyamāṇa āturaḥ patan skhalan vā vivaśo gr̥ṇan pumān vimukta-karmārgala uttamām gatim prāpnoti yakṣyanti na tam kalau janāḥ*

Terrified, about to die, a man collapses on his bed. Although his voice is faltering and he is hardly conscious of what he is saying, if he utters the holy name of the Supreme Lord he can be freed from the reaction of his fruitive work and achieve the supreme destination. But still people in the age of Kali will not worship the Supreme Lord. (*Bhāg.* 12.3.44)

⁸ *viprād dvi-ṣaḍ-guṇa-yutād aravinda-nābhā-pādāravinda-vimukhāt śvapacāṁ varīṣṭham manye tad-arpita-mano-vacanehitārtha-prāṇam punāti sa kulam na tu bhūrīmānaḥ*

If a *brāhmaṇa* has all twelve of the *brahminical* qualifications [as they are stated in the book called [*Sanat-sujāta*]] but is not a devotee and is averse to the lotus feet of the Lord, he is certainly lower than a devotee who is a dog-eater but who has dedicated everything — mind, words, activities, wealth and life — to the Supreme Lord. Such a devotee is better than such a *brāhmaṇa* because the devotee can purify his whole family, whereas the so-called *brāhmaṇa* in a position of false prestige cannot purify even himself. (*Bhāg.* 7.9.10)

not take up interest in their own advancement. Those at a higher stage naturally have compassion for those at a lower stage, but until the lower-situated people are fortunate, they cannot give up their stage and develop a taste for the higher stage.

When the consciousness of those situated in *varṇāśrama* matures into devotional sentiment, they take up the life of a devotee. But as long as they do not, they must still be said to be practicing karma. Karma is not an integral part (*aṅga*) of *bhakti*. When karma matures fully, it takes the form of devotional action, and this is called *bhakti*, not karma. The moment that real faith in the Lord arises, a person transcends karma. The *sandhyā* rites are obligatory activities arising out of the rules of moral dharma. They are not activities of *bhakti* arising from faith. When faith in the Lord arises, all the activities, being centered on the Lord, are given respect according to their contribution to the goal, *bhakti*. Thus, if a devotee is listening to a devotional lecture in the evening, he does not like to interrupt that to perform his *sandhyā* rites. The devotee understands that there is no necessity for giving up an activity that is already fulfilling the goal of *sandhyā* rites. ❀



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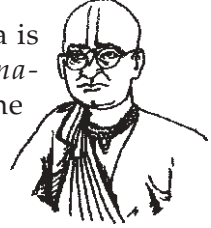
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SEEING NON-DEVOTEES AS DEVOTEES

*Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati
Thakur Prabhupada*

Question: Is it proper to think of a non-devotee as a devotee?

Answer: No. Sri Gurudeva is *nāmācārya*; he is *śrī-nāma-kīrtana-kari*, the chanter of the holy name. One who is an offender to the holy name should not be considered guru. A bona fide guru does not make provision for anyone's sense gratification, nor does he say anything with the purpose of pleasing anyone. One who is on the path of pleasure does not like the words of those who are on the path of the highest goal. Such people are in search of some gratification; that is why they are deprived of what is beneficial.



To think of a non-devotee as a devotee and to think of false devotion as devotion is only self-deception. When one does not have the good fortune of serving or honoring a devotee, then he has this desire to accept a non-devotee as a devotee. But can a crow become a peacock by attaching some peacock feathers to its body? Can a disguised jackal become a lion, the king of beasts? How long can this deceitful trick be covered up? The truth will always be manifest. Those who serve Krishna are not weak. They alone are strong and determined. Only by one's good fortune can one understand that the highest thing is devotional service to Krishna, that only a servitor of Krishna is truly great. Due to attachment to the external, one can admire someone's petty pride in money, or insignificant pride in education, or meaningless pride in beauty, and then one will be in great danger due to one's indifference to the service and servitor of Krishna. ❀

— Mandala Publishing Group. *Prabhupada Saraswati Thakur*, page 98-99. Eugene, Oregon. 1997.