

DAIVA VARNASRAMA DHARMA – DIVINE CULTURE

POSITION PAPER

IN SUPPORT OF VARNASRAMA

CONTENT

INVOCATION

BACKGROUND

1. Introduction
2. Discovering Four Movements
3. The Four Waves
4. Sastra on Varnasrama
5. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura on Varnasrama
6. Srila Prabhupada on Varnasrama
7. Understanding Basic Concepts
8. ISKCON GBC Resolutions related to Varnasrama
9. IIAC Resolution related to Varnasrama
10. Cities as our Preaching Basis
11. Villages as our Living Basis
12. Gurukulas, Varnasrama Colleges and Vedic Villages
13. OM Sri Surabhi Campaign
14. Varnasrama Teacher Training

Appendix 1 – Varnasrama not for Kali Yuga by HH Bhakti Purusottama Swami

Appendix 2 – Position Paper on Varnasrama in India

Appendix 3 – IDVM-India Mandate

Appendix 4 – GBC Resolution (2009)

Appendix 5 – GBC Resolution (2015)

Appendix 6 – IIAC Resolution (2015)

Appendix 7 – IIAC Resolution (2020)

Appendix 8 – Varnasrama Teacher Training

INVOCATIONS

*namo brahmanya-devaya go-brahmana-hitaya ca.
jagat-hitaya krsnaya govindaya namo namah*

*My Lord, you are the well-wisher of the cows and the brahmanas, and
You are the well-wisher of the entire human society and world. ¹*

*tratavyah prathamam gavah tratah trayanti ta dvijan
gobrahmana paritrane paritratam jagat bhavet*

***First of all, cows** should be protected. Cows thus protected, will in turn
protect the brahmanas. Thus, when protection of cows and brahmanas
is achieved, then the whole world is protected. ²*

*The killing of cows by human society is one of the grossest suicidal
policies and those who are anxious to cultivate the human spirit must
turn their attention **FIRST** toward the question of cow protection. ³*

*There should be a thorough overhauling of the social system, and society
should revert to the Vedic principles, that is, the four varnas and the four
asramas.” ⁴*

*sruti-smrti-puranadi-pancaratra-vidhim vina
aikantika harer bhaktir utpatayaiva kalpate*

*Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic
literatures like the Upaniñads, Purāëas and Nārada Païcarātra is
simply an unnecessary disturbance in society. ⁵*

*Siddhanta baliya citte na kara alasa
Iha ha-ite krsne lage sudrdha manasa*

*A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions,
considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind.
Thus, one’s mind becomes attached to Sri Krishna. ⁶*

¹ (Vishnu Purana 1.19.65)

² Mahabharata, Harivamsa Parva, 55.31

³ Light of the Bhagavat, 27

⁴ Srimad-Bhagavatam.4.29.54

⁵ **Bhakti =rasamtita-sindhu, 1.2.101**

⁶ CC, Adi 2.117

BACKGROUND

This document was initially prepared on the occasion of ISKCON's Golden Jubilee in the year 2016. Somehow it never got to be published. Since then, various developments have taken place, one being especially the inauguration of the *Varnasrama College ONLINE (VCO)* in May of 2020. ⁷

The activities of the VCO have prompted me to once again focus on the neglected topic of *varnasrama dharma* since that is one of the main objectives of VCO, helping devotees establish onsite local *Varnasrama Colleges* in as many countries as possible.

My hope in publishing this paper is to inspire as many devotees as possible to take up the yet unfulfilled mission of *daiva varnasrama dharma* as clearly articulated by our ISKCON Founder Acarya Srila Prabhupada. Failing to do so falls in the category of *guru-avajna* (disobeying the orders of the spiritual master) and is clearly one of the ten offenses against the holy name.

We have recently launched a Telegram Group entitled *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign Global*, ⁸ inviting stakeholders from at least 108 countries to become active in this initiative that was actually launched by the *ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry of India (IDVM-India)* ⁹ on January 1, 2015, the very year that Srila Prabhupada left India to introduce Krishna consciousness in the Western countries as ordered by his spiritual master, His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura Prabhupada.

⁷ www.varnasramacollege.com

⁸ www.srisurabhi.org

⁹ www.iskconvarnasrama.com

Since the *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign* has yet to be introduced globally, it will work in collaboration with the global *Varnasrama College Network*,¹⁰ of which VCO is a subsidiary, promoting the three following prime objectives that can be summarized as follows: 1) establishing local *Varnasrama Colleges* in 108 countries, 2) establishing local *Traditional Gurukulas* in 108 countries and 3) establishing *Vedic Villages* in 108 countries.

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/varnasramacollegenetwork/>

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of our ISKCON temples up to now (November 2020) have been less involved in helping establish the *varnasrama* mission as desired by our Founder Acarya Srila Prabhupada. Although we celebrated ISKCON's Golden Jubilee (1966-2016) just four years ago, during these last 50 years of spreading the Krishna consciousness movement all over the world, city temples and rural farm projects have remained separate entities, generally with little or no interaction.

One of the important instructions given by Srila Prabhupada during his physical presence with us was that "immediately" we should establish *Varnasrama Colleges* in every city temple and rural project. To this day, however, this particular order has not been followed and ISKCON devotees in general remain aloof or at best distant from the *varnasrama* mission. In addition, and directly related to this lacuna, as a society, ISKCON has simply not fulfilled the mission given to us by our Founder Acarya Srila Prabhupada as clearly explained by a former GBC member himself, HG Ravindra Svarupa das in his critical article entitled '*ISKCON and Varnasrama: A Mission Unfulfilled*'.¹¹

Unfortunately, even as I write this article, there are some leaders within our ISKCON society, up to the level of GBC members, who believe and openly opine that *varnasrama* is simply not for *Kali Yuga*.¹²

It is important to understand why this mentality has come about and how to remedy the situation especially after reaching our first milestone, ISKCON's Golden Jubilee in the year 2016. We simply cannot allow another 50 years to pass by avoiding this most important dimension of Srila Prabhupada's mission which

¹¹ ISKCON Communications Journal, Vol. 7, No. 1, June 1999

¹² Appendix – 1- Varnasrama not for Kali Yuga by HH Bhakti Purusottama Swami

is fundamental in realizing the following sober statement given by His Divine Grace: *“There should be a thorough overhauling of the social system, and society should revert to the Vedic principles, that is, the four varnas and the four asramas.”*

13

In all respects, the social, economic, political, and ecological disasters of the day that are plaguing each and every nation around the world with no solution in sight are due largely to our not having understood the dual dimension of *sanatana dharma*. Therefore, we have a grave responsibility as aspiring *Vaisnavas* to introduce and demonstrate the proper understanding of both the spiritual and material dimension of *sva-dharma* (original nature) of all individuals, something that remains totally alien to all political and social leaders around the world and unfortunately, to a large extent, remains less understood to many of our own devotees serving at different levels. This will be dealt with in the section entitled *“Understanding Basic Concepts”*.

This document, *“Daiva Varnasrama Dharma – Divine Culture”* is a humble attempt to assist ISKCON temples accept the fact that each and every city temple devotee, each and every city temple congregational member and each and every city temple President must actively promote this dimension of Srila Prabhupada’s overall mission for spreading Krishna consciousness all over the world. In many ways, it is a follow-up to a *Position Paper*¹⁴ on varnasrama that we had helped put together in the year 2008 when a small committee had been assigned to put on paper thoughts about systematically introducing *varnasrama dharma* in India.

¹³ SB 4.29.54 Purport

¹⁴ Appendix 2, Position Paper on Varnasrama in India

That document was a precursor the establishing a *varnasrama* ministry in India the following year with its own Mandate.¹⁵

Since the establishment of the *ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry* in India (IDVM-India) in the year 2009, although various outreach programs have been introduced, the Ministry has not sufficiently directly interacted with city temples to help demonstrate how they can also play an integral role in the development of the *varnasrama* mission.

Although the responses from those who have attended the IDVM-India sponsored *Varnasrama Development Seminars*¹⁶ given at the *ISKCON LEADS (ISKCON Leadership Education and Development System)*¹⁷ have proven most positive and encouraging, regrettably, due largely to little follow up and a large gap in between these courses (one every two years for 3 or 4 days), the desired impact on our city temples has been very meager.

Fortunately, in the month of October 2020, the ISKCON Leadership of India, through its *ISKCON India Advisory Committee* (IIAC), passed a resolution establishing a *Varnasrama Steering Committee* to help further expand the mission statement of the *ISKCON India Daiva Varnasrama Ministry*.

It is our hope that this presentation will help bridge the existing gap between the *varnasrama* mission as envisioned by Srila Prabhupada and the rank-and-file devotees as well as many leaders within ISKCON.

¹⁵ Appendix 3, IDVM-India Mandate

¹⁶

<https://www.srisurabhi.org/latestnews/varnashrama-seminars-at-iskcon-leads/>

¹⁷

<https://iskconnews.org/iskcon-leads-on-with-all-india-training-program,1819/>

2. DISCOVERING FOUR MOVEMENTS

Prior to my appointment as Minister for IDVM-India in 2009, I must openly confess that it took me some 25 years to begin understanding why *varnasrama* is such an important component both individually to help devotees become *Vaisnavas* and collectively to help solidify and expand our movement.

Although I was very much involved in village outreach programs during my early days with the Mayapur *Nama Hatta* Department in West Bengal and Orissa (1979 to 1986), during my whole career as the *Nama Hatta* Regional Director, as well as one of the *Nama Hatta* travelling preachers, I could not make the connection between the *varnasrama* mission and the *Nama Hatta* village outreach program. To this day, that connection evades most *Nama Hatta* preachers. That connection also evades the Ministry for Congregational Development under which *Nama Hatta* takes its guidance. The *varnasrama* dimension only became a reality to me after I left India in the year 1992 and began travelling to Indonesia.

It was during this later period of my devotional career (nineteen nineties) that I discovered Srila Prabhupada's essay called "*Gita Nagari*"¹⁸ (published in his *Back to Godhead Magazine* in 1956) wherein Srila Prabhupada explains that the preaching movement is to be carried out in four distinct and interconnected phases. This was somewhat of a revelation to me at the time. Shortly after making this discovery, my conviction was further reinforced upon reading an

¹⁸ VedaBase, Books, Essays and Articles, Conceptions of Gita Nagari

earlier letter dated 1949 to Dr. Sardar Patel ¹⁹, the then Deputy Prime Minister of India, wherein Srila Prabhupada expressed the very same concepts.

Srila Prabhupada speaks of four distinct interrelated “*movements*” (his choice of word) for spreading Lord Caitanya’s *Sankirtan* mission. Upon looking closely at what Srila Prabhupada did when introducing Krishna consciousness in the West (and likewise when looking back at how Lord Caitanya Himself introduced the *Sankirtan* Movement 500+ years ago in India), we can clearly observe these four phases from the very beginning of his preaching efforts, a pattern he followed and stressed till his very last breath practically speaking.

If we look at these “*Four Movements*” or waves closely, as we should, we will soon understand the importance of each and every phase. The first three have been introduced in the city temples, and during Srila Prabhupada’s physical presence these three movements brought us to the height and climax of our preaching. To this day, these three continue to be the mainstream of our city preaching. Interestingly enough, they correspond to the first of three axioms known to devotees: 1) *Books are the Basis*, which corresponds to the *Sankirtan* Movement 2) *Purity is the Force*, which corresponds to the *Deity Worship* Movement, and 3) *Preaching is the Essence*, which corresponds to the *Spiritual Initiation* Movement. However, Srila Prabhupada’s complete vision did not stop at these three phases. The fourth axiom, *Utility is the Principle*, continues to evade us even today as it corresponds to the fourth phase, the *Classless Society* Movement or *Varnasrama*. We fail to understand the obvious need to return to a more simplified lifestyle that has always been recommended in the *sastras*, that

¹⁹ VedaBase, Correspondence 1949

of living off the land, growing our own food, protecting cows, traditional agriculture which is said to be the noblest profession.

3. THE FOUR WAVES

The general outreach program in any new area centers on two primary activities: *harinama* (chanting the Holy Names), and book distribution (*brihat-mridanga*). Whenever devotees would visit some particular town or city, the chanting of the Holy Names and the books distributed would naturally attract onlookers. That's precisely what Srila Prabhupada did at Tompkins Square Park in New York City in 1966. The process of chanting *harinama* in the streets and the distribution of transcendental literatures constitute, in Srila Prabhupada own words, the "*Sankirtan Movement*", the first of four phases.

If there is any local interest expressed, as generally there is, there are good chances of going to the second phase, that of opening a preaching center that may one day become an established and full fledged ISKCON temple. Srila Prabhupada called this second phase the "*Temple Worship Movement*".

When *Harinama*, books and a temple become established, naturally more people tend to come and wish to join. Since not everyone can join as full-time devotees in a temple, especially those who are householders, there is need of systematic cultivation of congregational members. This third phase Srila Prabhupada coined as the "*Spiritual Initiation Movement*" wherein individuals are trained and educated in the science of devotional service so that one day they may qualify to formally become part of Krishna's spiritual family by accepting *diksa* or formal initiation from a bona fide spiritual master.

Thus, these three phases establish a strong basis for introducing Krishna consciousness and for systematically orchestrating the needed training and education for pushing forward the overall *Sankirtan Mission*. However, without understanding and adopting the fourth phase, which goes beyond the city temples, and even beyond devotee homes in the cities, the complete mission will not be realized.

That fourth wave initially eludes us. The very title Srila Prabhupada has chosen often confuses devotees as he coined this fourth phase the “*Classless Society Movement*”. Most devotees are less familiar with this fourth dimension and upon hearing the expression “*classless society*” they will often conclude that we can practice or introduce this idea of “*classless society*” in our movement, classless meaning since everyone is a practicing Vaisnava, hence there is no need to introduce the four *varnas* and the four *asramas* that are fundamental to *daiva varnasrama dharma*. However, as clearly explained in his Essay *Gita Nagari*, Srila Prabhupada clarifies that “classless” means transcendently situated by accepting the same activity of devotional service to Lord Krishna, but “within” the four *varnas* and *asramas*.

This relegation of *varnasrama* is reminiscent of the debate between M. K. Gandhi and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar wherein Dr. Ambedkar in his essay entitled *Annihilation of Caste* ²⁰ written in 1936 wrongly concluded this to be the best remedy, the abolition or annihilation of caste or class altogether. To solidify his belief and demonstrate his conviction, Dr. Ambedkar ended up rejecting the Vedic teachings in toto and accepted Buddhism shortly before leaving this world.

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annihilation_of_Caste

The correct understanding and meaning of “*classless society*” come to light when we begin to understand that our Vedic culture is first and foremost an agrarian-based culture where the vast majority of people live in villages depending on the ideal scientific sustainable economy prescribed by the Lord Himself, centered on cows and land. Within this ideal holistic Vedic lifestyle, the four natural social divisions (*varnas*) for *brahmanas* (*intellectual class*), *ksatriyas* (*administrative class*), *vaisyas* (*productive class*) and *sudras* (*working class*), as well as the four spiritual divisions (*asramas*) *brahmacari* (*student life*), *grihastha* (*householder life*), *vanaprastha* (*retired life*) and *sannyasa* (*renounced life*), all become immediately manifested. Thus, within such an agrarian culture, the science of economics, the fourth of the *Catur Vidya* (four Vedic sciences) mentioned in the *Kautilya Arthashastra* ²¹ which is further corroborated in the *Bhagavad-gita*, “*Krishi, go raksha, vanijyam*”, ²² agriculture and cow protection, becomes the norm. Only by such knowledge of Vedic economics (*Varta*), as well as the other three basic Vedic sciences known as 1) *Anviksiki* (Philosophy), 2) *Trayi* (Education) and 3) *Danda Niti* (Politics), can one understand how modern-day policies propounding “economic development” are, but a misleading propaganda promulgated by those who are totally ignorant of these fundamental Vedic sciences.

Unfortunately, we have become so conditioned and enamored by the modern-day mechanized and industrialized way of life that we frown at the thought of village life not understanding that the Vedic norm and standard for living a peaceful, wholesome, and sustainable life lies in the simple and natural

²¹<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00litlinks/kautilya/index.htm>

²² Bg 18.45

way taught by the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself Lord Krishna when He lived in the small village of Vrindavan. There are far reaching effects of this that we will briefly try to cover in the pages to come.

4. SASTRAS ON VARNASRAMA

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, described as the mature fruit of all the Vedic literatures, abounds in references to *varnasrama*, explaining how no society can function properly without this scientific system created by Lord Krishna Himself:

*atah pumbhir dvija-srestha varnasrama-vibhagasah
svanusthitasya dharmasya samsiddhir hari-tosanam*

“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.”—²³

In the purport to this verse Srila Prabhupada explains:

“In the Kali-yuga, or in the age of quarrel, this artificial predominance is already current, but the saner section of the people knows it well that the divisions of castes and orders of life are meant for smooth social intercourse and high-thinking self-realization and not for any other purpose.”

Herein the statement of the Bhagavatam is that the highest aim of life, or the highest perfection of the institution of the varnasrama-dharma, is to cooperate jointly for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. This is confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita.”²⁴

Although Pariksit Maharaja was to die within seven days, he still inquired from Sukadeva Goswami about *varnasrama*:

*pramanam anda-kosasya bahyabhyantara-bhedatah
mahatma canucaritam varnasrama-viniscayah*

²³ SB 1.2.13

²⁴ Ibid

*Also, please describe the inner and outer space of the universe by specific divisions, as well as the character and activities of the great souls, and also the characteristics of the different classifications of the castes and orders of social life.*²⁵

In a revealing purport to Pariksit Maharaja's inquiry to Sukadeva Goswami on the topic of *varnasrama*, Srila Prabhupada makes the following telling observations:

Those who are of the opinion that the devotees of the Lord are satisfied with mere sentiments can find in the inquiries of Maharaja Pariksit good lessons as to how inquisitive a pure devotee is to know things in their true perfection...

*The value of such scientific divisions of human society can be ascertained only in terms of the proportionate development of devotional service to the Lord.*²⁶

Pariksit Maharaja further inquired from Sukadeva Goswami specifically on the system of *varnasrama*:

varnasrama-vibhagams ca rupa-sila-syabhavatah
rsinam janma-karmani vedasya ca vikarsanam

*O great sage, kindly describe the divisions and orders of human society in terms of symptoms, behavior and the characteristics of mental equilibrium and sense control. Also, please describe the births of the great sages and the categorical divisions of the Vedas.*²⁷

In his purport to this verse, Srila Prabhupada further explains:

*The four statuses and orders of human society—brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas and sudras, as well as brahmacaris, grihasthas, vanaprasthas and sannyasis—are all divided according to quality, education, culture, and spiritual advancement attained by practicing control of the mind and the senses.*²⁸

²⁵ SB 2.8.16

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ SB 3.7.29

²⁸ Ibid, Purport

In an important statement on *varnasrama*, Srila Sukadeva Goswami further explains about the four divisions of retired life and the four levels of *sannyasa* life. In addition, he makes the clear statement to the effect that *varnasrama* exists since the creation of Lord Brahma himself.

*vaikhanasa valakhilyau- dumbarah phenapa vane
nyase kutecakah purvam bahvodo hamsa-niskriyau*

The four divisions of retired life are the vaikhanasas, valakhilyas, audumbaras and phenapas. The four divisions of the renounced order of life are the katicakas, bahvodas, hamsas and niskriyas. All these were manifested from Brahma. ²⁹

In the purport to the following verse Srila Prabhupada clearly establishes that the scientific system of *varnasrama* is not some recent and new invention but has existed since the creation of this material world.

The varnasrama-dharma, or the institution of the four divisions and orders of social and spiritual life, is not a new invention of the modern age, as proposed by the less intelligent. It is an institution established by Brahma from the beginning of the creation. This is also confirmed in the Bhagavad-gita (4.13): catur-varnyam maya srstam. ³⁰

The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* deals extensively with the subject matter of *varnasrama*, especially in the seventh canto wherein Srila Narada Muni, one of the twelve *Mahajanas* (*great Teachers*), and an expert in both the science of *bhakti* and the science of *varnasrama dharma*, answers the questions from Yudhisthira Maharaja very elaborately in what can be considered as his

²⁹ *SB 3.12.43*

³⁰ *Ibid, Purport*

dissertation on the subject matter of *varnasrama dharma*, a must read especially for all householders.

sri-yudhisthira uvaca
bhagavan srotum icchami nram dharmam sanatanam
varnasramacara-yutam yat puman vindate param

Maharaja Yudhisthira said: My dear lord, I wish to hear from you about the principles of religion by which one can attain the ultimate goal of life—devotional service. I wish to hear about the general occupational duties of human society and the system of social and spiritual advancement known as varnasrama-dharma. SB 7.11.2

In the purport to this verse Srila Prabhupada refers to Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's primary teaching that we are all eternal servants of the Lord, yet He also states that this eternal occupation of the living entity can be executed through *varnasrama*.

"Indeed, it has been explained by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Jivera 'svarupa' haya-krsnera 'nitya-dasa': [Cc. Madhya 20.108] the real occupational duty of the living entity is to serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead.... This eternal occupational duty can be organized through the institution of varnasrama, in which there are four varnas (brahmana, ksatriya, vaisya and sudra) and four asramas (brahmacarya, grihastha, vanaprastha and sannyasa). Thus, Yudhisthira Maharaja inquired from Narada Muni about the principles of sanātana-dharma for the benefit of human society. "³¹

³¹ Ibid, Purport

5. SRILA BHAKTIVINODA THAKURA ON VARNASRAMA

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's unique contribution was to revive the misappropriated mission of Lord Caitanya and pioneer a movement to be widely and firmly established globally. Due to having neglected some basic principles of *varnasrama dharma*, the Sankirtan Movement had given way to *sahajiasim* (various malpractices not authorized in the scriptures) for some 300 years. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura wanted to redress Lord Caitanya's mission by gradually reintroducing some *varnasrama* principles.

"The solution to this problem is to establish the order of daivi-varnasrama dharma - something you have started doing; you should know that to be the real service to the Vaisnavas. Because pure devotional conclusions are not being preached, all kinds of superstitions and bad concepts are being called devotion by such pseudo-sampradayas as sahajiya and atibari." ³²

In his well-known *Sajjana Toshani*, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes:

"Those who have sufficiently studied sociology certainly conclude that the system of varnasrama is the topmost social system.

If one is situated in the principle of varnasrama, then his nature cannot be lost. Rather one can receive huge opportunity and advantage to cultivate Krishna consciousness.

Varnasrama dharma is the society of the Vaisnavas in their conditional stage." ³³

³² Letter entitled SARASVATI to his son Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati

³³ *Sajjana Toshani* 2/7

In his *Bhaktyaloka*, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura emphatically declares devotees are meant to take up the activities of devotional service and that these activities no longer create *karma*.

“But a devotee who desires to properly pass his life still accepts his duties according to varnasrama, as those duties are favorable to devotional service and counted as part of devotional service.

All these activities are no longer called karma.”³⁴

Finally, in his *Sri Chaitanya Siksamrita*, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura clearly asserts that following varnasrama is necessary for *Vaisnavas* and that one will more easily be able to advance in devotional service by following the God given system of the four *varnas* and four *asramas*.

*“With the assistance of varnasrama dharma, a person should cultivate bhakti. It is also necessary to follow the rules of varnasrama in the cultivation of bhakti.”*³⁵

*“Though all humans have a right to practice bhakti, those who follow the regulations of varnasrama have a much easier time.”*³⁶

³⁴ Sri Bhaktyaloka, Six Faults that destroy bhakti.

³⁵ Sri Chaitanya Siksamrta, Chapter 3

³⁶ Sri Chaitanya Siksamrta, Chapter 3

6. SRILA PRABHUPADA ON VARNASRAMA

It has been clearly documented that Srila Prabhupada emphatically stated on several occasions, that 50% of his preaching mission was yet to be introduced, that of establishing *varnasrama*. Srila Prabhupada also wrote in various purports of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* how the ideal lifestyle for society was based on the principles of simple living and high thinking. Indeed, our Vedic culture is primarily a culture aimed at developing first and foremost our spiritual consciousness for which the easiest and simplest living condition centers around land, cows, and devotional service to Lord Krishna.

To this effect Srila Prabhupada often underlined the importance of village life, indeed he himself wanted to travel in the villages of India to help revive the Vedic agrarian culture.³⁷

There are numerable references supporting the above assertions and the purpose of this document is not to elaborate on this point, however important it remains. We present but a few of the salient references by Srila Prabhupada that give clear support to his vision and mission of *varnasrama dharma*.

“This Krishna consciousness movement is for the protection of brahminical culture and cows. Then automatically the peace of the world will come, if (these) two things are done. This is Vedic literature. They pick up the essence of the things, and all other

³⁷ A Transcendental Diary, Volume 1, December 27, 1975

*things follow.”*³⁸

*“This town life, industrial life, factory life, is asuric [demoniac] life. It is killing human ambition. It is killing civilization.”*³⁹

*“And to save this human civilization, these two classes are required very urgently. So, you American boys and girls, you are intelligent, you have got all facilities. At least in your country, create these two classes, brahmana and ksatriya. The world will be saved, and you will be saved, and Krsna will be pleased.”*⁴⁰

*“The varnasrama college has to be established immediately. Everywhere, wherever we have got our center, a varnasrama college should be established to train four divisions: one class, brahmana; one class, ksatriya; one class, vaisya; and one class, sudra.”*⁴¹

“Unless in the human society the varnasrama system is introduced, no scheme or social order, health order or any order, political order, will be successful”.

*“Live village life, simple life, and be satisfied with the bare necessities. There is no need of luxury. And save time and chant Hare Krishna. This is ideal life. So, I am pleased that you are doing that, and do it more nicely so that others may be attracted.”*⁴²

*“...according to Vedic economics, one is considered to be a rich man by the strength of his store of grains and cows. With only these two things, cows and grain, humanity can solve its eating problem. Human society needs only sufficient grain and sufficient cows to solve its economic problems. All other things but these two are artificial necessities created by man to kill his valuable life at the human level and waste his time in things which are not needed.”*⁴³

“If we have sufficient grains, fruits, vegetables, and herbs, then what is the necessity of running a slaughterhouse and killing poor animals? A man need not kill an animal if he has sufficient grains and vegetables

³⁸ Lecture, December 4, 1968, Los Angeles

³⁹ Evening Lecture, Gita Nagari, July 15, 1976.

⁴⁰ Conversation, LA, August 17, 1972

⁴¹ *March 12, 1974, Vrindavana, Morning Walk*

⁴² Evening Lecture, Gita Nagari Farm, July 15, 1976.

⁴³ SB 3.2.29

*to eat. The flow of river waters fertilizes the field, and there is more than what we need. Minerals are produced in the hills, and jewels in the ocean. If human civilization has sufficient grains, minerals, jewels, water, milk, etc., then why should it hanker after terrible industrial enterprises at the cost of the labor of some unfortunate men?"*⁴⁴

*"Advancement of human civilization depends not on industrial enterprises but on possession of natural wealth and natural food, which is all supplied by the Supreme Personality of Godhead so that we may save time for self-realization and success in the human form of body."*⁴⁵

*"This Krishna conscious movement is for the protection of...
Brahminical Culture & Cows."*⁴⁶

*"Those who are anxious to cultivate the human spirit must turn their attention first toward the question of cow protection."*⁴⁷

*"The protection of cows is not merely a religious sentiment but a means to secure the highest benefit for human society."*⁴⁸

⁴⁴ SB 1.8.40

⁴⁵ SB 4.9.62

⁴⁶ Lecture Los Angeles, December 4, 1968

⁴⁷ Light of the Bhagavat 27

⁴⁸ Lecture, New York, 7 Apr. '73

7. UNDERSTANDING BASIC CONCEPTS

Our Vedic culture is based on eternal, hence unchanging, principles and concepts because everything is connected with the eternal sciences of the Vedic knowledge. These are known as *Catur Vidya*, the four essential sciences that help shape a community, a village, or a nation. These are totally unknown in modern day society by present leaders of nations. Unfortunately, many of these are also not known or not understood by our own devotees.

For any devotee to understand about *varnasrama*, one needs to know the basics of these four sciences that are the subject matter of learning by the *dvijas* (twice born) in society, the natural leaders of society, that means the *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas* and *vaisyas*. Before one can properly understand the science of the *brahmanas*, *Trayi* (education), before one can properly understand the science of the *ksatriyas*, *Danda Niti* (politics) and before one can properly understand the science of the *vaisyas*, *Varta* (economics), all these three members of the twice-born need to all receive a fundamental knowledge of Vedic philosophy called *Anviksiki*. Indeed, the Science of Philosophy is the first science that one learns in the traditional system of education, *Gurukula*, as well as *Varnasrama College*, and this then gives shape to all the other three sciences.

This beginning of sciences, called in Sanskrit *Anviksiki*, deals with the subject matter of *dharma*, understanding *dharma* in its two main features, the

spiritual *sva-dharma*, called *Bhagavat Dharma*, and the material *sva-dharma*, called *Varnasrama Dharma*. Therefore, once the twice born receive this basic knowledge, they can simultaneously take up various spiritual and material subject matters as they carry out their formal education, either as a *brahmana*, *ksatriyas* or *vaisya*. The Science of Philosophy is divided into 1) *Sankhya*, 2) *Yoga* and 3) *Tarka*.

Having assimilated the basic knowledge (*brahmanas* will go deeper in these subject matters, *ksatriyas* less and *vaisyas* even less), they can then take up specific studies in their respective areas of knowledge, education for *brahmanas*, politics for *ksatriyas* and economics for *vaisyas*. This type of education is to train natural leaders of society and that education is known as formal education, very different than the education of the remaining members of society, the *sudras* and the women.

While formal education is ordained for the twice born, the rest of the population also receives an education which is referred to as non-formal education. This type of education is known as “non-formal” in that most of the learning is done through apprenticeship or skill learning. For the *sudras* it is manual work, some trade or skill that is learned on the job.

As for the women, they receive a separate type of education called *stri-dharma*. That education is also largely through learning skills from one’s mother at home such as cooking, house cleaning, and developing the necessary qualities needed to become a good wife and a good mother. Education for women also covers the unthinkable wonders of the 64 aesthetic fine Arts and Crafts.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Brahma Samhita, 5.37, Purport

Therefore, Srila Prabhupada would often refer to these unchanging principles using the expression “*First is Character*”. The expression “*First is Character*” refers to the importance of first and foremost developing good character. That remains the main feature of the traditional *Gurukula*, learning to be a humble servant serving in the *asrama* of the preceptor, the *guru*, then afterwards academics would enter into the picture.

Another often quoted statement by Srila Prabhupada is “*First is Food*”. That doesn’t mean that our first preoccupation should be eating over and above everything else. It simply means that the first business for human beings as well as other forms of life is meeting the basic food need but meeting that basic need in the simplest way possible without detracting from the primary goal of life, self-realization.

Srila Prabhupada would also stress the important of growing our own food: grow only what you need and use only what you produce, a very profound statement not at all easy to practice.

8. ISKCON GBC RESOLUTIONS RELATED TO VARNASRAMA

Although the subject of *varnasrama* has not been in the limelight of GBC discussions, it did surface at different times over the years. During Srila Prabhupada centennial anniversary in 1996, the GBC established a committee to study the topic of communities. The findings of the committee were that communities could not be studied unless one took into consideration the whole spectrum of *varnasrama dharma*. As a result of their research, the committee compiled a book entitled *Speaking About Varnasrama*. It is interesting to note the following statement made in the introduction of this book:

“In Vrndavana and Allahabad, we’ll see Prabhupada explain the role of city temples as staging grounds for organizing varnasrama communities. In the first phase, devotees should go into the cities and attract the people by establishing temples and distributing Krsna conscious literature. Second, as people become devotees, they can be brought to farm communities where they can live the Krsna conscious lifestyle described in the books and remain fixed up in devotional practice without the temptations and material allurements of the cities.”⁵⁰

A few years later, in 2009, the GBC passed two relevant resolutions pertaining specifically to *varnasrama*. One requests City Temples to purchase organic food and *ahimsa* (cruelty free) milk from existing ISKCON farm communities and the other encourages all those who give *Srimad-Bhagavatam*

⁵⁰ Speaking About Varnasrama, Introduction

classes to keep 10 minutes of the class mentioning something in relation to *varnasrama*.⁵¹

In the year 2015, the GBC passed a resolution acknowledging that 50% of Srila Prabhupada's mission remained unfulfilled and therefore established a research committee to look into the matter.⁵²

⁵¹ Appendix 4 – GBC Resolution - 2009

⁵² Appendix 5 – GBC Resolution - 2015

9. IIAC RESOLUTIONS RELATED TO VARNASRAMA

In April 2015, the members of the ISKCON India Advisory Committee [IIAC] held their meeting in Kanpur. In an effort to bring the *varnasrama* mission closer to our ISKCON City temple leaders, devotees and congregational members, IDVM-India formulated a proposal requesting all city temples to open a temple department focused on bringing awareness for self-sufficiency and sustainability as well as awareness about the importance of village preaching and cow protection. Ideally all temples should develop a rural project as instructed by Srila Prabhupada many years ago.

All temples should also encourage families who are not involved in front line preaching in the cities to relocate to rural projects understanding the ill effects of city life for our present and future generation of children. To this effect the IIAC passed a resolution encouraging the temples to establish a “department promoting the concepts of sustainable Vaisnava communities and increased cow-awareness in rural and urban areas.”⁵³

More recently in October 2020, the IIAC passed a resolution establishing a *Varnasrama Committee* to lend support to the *varnasrama* mission in India.⁵⁴

⁵³ Appendix 6 – IIAC Resolution - 2015

⁵⁴ Appendix 7 – IIAC Resolution - 2020

10. CITIES AS OUR PREACHING BASIS

With an ever-increasing number of people migrating to the cities in the twentieth century, it was quite natural for Lord Caitanya's preaching mission to become established in urban centers of the West. In doing so, however, Srila Prabhupada was not simply content with opening centers in the cities. He naturally wanted that various programs be organized for those devotees and congregational members, as well as people in general, to enable them all to advance in Krishna consciousness. At the same time, Srila Prabhupada wanted to introduce the social norm of simple living and self-sufficient lifestyle that one finds in the traditional Vedic culture. This is clearly highlighted in the Introduction to the book *Speaking About Varnasrama* as follows:

*In Vrindavan and Allahabad, we'll see Prabhupada explain the role of city temples as staging grounds for organizing varnasrama communities. In the first phase, devotees should go into the cities and attract the people by establishing temples and distributing Krishna conscious literature. Second, as people become devotees, they can be brought to farm communities where they can live the Krishna conscious lifestyle described in the books and remain fixed in devotional practice without the temptations and material allurements of the cities. According to Srila Prabhupada's vision, the modern industrial cities provide an environment which crushes spiritual development: "This town life, industrial life, factory life, is asuric (demoniac) life. It is killing human ambition. It is killing civilization." He tells devotees. The city temple can provide a way tour of that environment by training devotees and directing them to Krishna conscious communities, where they can find wholesome occupations, favorable to spiritual development."*⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *Speaking About Varnasrama*, Compiled by Hare Krishna Dasi, Introduction

For that to happen, Srila Prabhupada wanted that all temples be *Varnasrama Colleges*. In the least, every temple should establish a specific department promoting the varnasrama ideology. What would a *Varnasrama Department* do in a city temple? Unless we have been exposed to the four phases of Srila Prabhupada's overall preaching strategy, we will not so easily understand even the need to have such a department in our city temples.

There are two main areas meant to be the focus for our city temples: 1) on the one hand, the emphasis should be on educating and training devotees to preach in the cities and 2) on the other hand, the emphasis should be on educating and training devotees and congregational members how to make the transition to the villages.

The curriculum for city preaching can continue to be that provided by existing educational institutions such as the *Vaisnava Institute for Higher Education (VIHE)*, the *Mayapur Institute (MI)*, *ISKCON LEADS*, etc. It will also be good to add *Varnasrama Training Course Curriculum* covering the culture for *brahmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas* and *sudras* as it pertains to an agrarian lifestyle within a rural setting as well as an urban lifestyle in keeping with Vedic culture.

In addition to preparing individuals to preach in the cities, a *Varnasrama Department* should educate and teach individuals not only about preaching in the village but also how to relocate or migrate in the villages. Such village-oriented curriculum should include learning skills and crafts to be used in the villages, visiting rural projects close to the city temple, beginning community gardens in the city, having on-going discussions in relation to village life by having weekly readings from the book *Speaking About Varnasrama*, and organizing seminars and workshops to create awareness about village life.

Each city temple should work towards having its own village community or adopting a village from where the natural produce from the land (grains, vegetables, flowers, etc.) would be provided by that rural community. The City Temple *Varnasrama Department* should organize regular village outreach programs, empower local villagers to establish *Nama Hatta Sanghas* and *Krishi Go Raksha Sanghas*. Here is what Srila Prabhupada said while visiting his *Gita Nagari* project in North America:

“Live village life, simple life, and be satisfied with the bare necessities. There is no need of luxury. And save time and chant Hare Krishna. This is ideal life. So, I am pleased that you are doing that, and do it more nicely so that others may be attracted.”

⁵⁶

⁵⁶ *Evening Lecture, Gita Nagari Farm, July 15, 1976.*

11. VILLAGES AS OUR LIVING BASIS

Although cities have been described as our “preaching basis”, we must know that living in villages and taking up to the more traditional occupations of cow care and agriculture is also another form of preaching. Accepting the lifestyle recommended in the *sastras* means applying the philosophy of Krishna consciousness in a practical way or living our philosophy. Far too often, we become well-versed in the philosophy of Vedic knowledge, referred to as *jnanam*, but we often fail to come to the platform of applied knowledge, *vijnanam*. Our very philosophy of *sanatana dharma* speaks about the need to simplify our lives and our Acaryas themselves similarly instruct how to live a lifestyle based on the principles of “*Produce Only What You Need*” and “*Use Only What You Produce.*”

Therefore, for devotees, Srila Prabhupada expected and wanted that we show by personal example. This was exemplified in a morning walk in Rome in the following exchange with devotees:

Prabhupada: Yes. The oxen will solve the problem of transport.... bullock cart... when we are localized, we don't require to go beyond ten miles, five miles, no. Because they have created a rubbish civilization therefore one is required to travel fifty miles for earning bread, hundred miles, hanging ... 3 hours, four hours, they spend for transport.

Devotee: Is this an ideal solution or a practical one?

Prabhupada: This is practical.

Devotee: Because sometimes we say that actually we cannot change the course of the ...

Prabhupada: No, no. Our society will be ideal, by practical application.

Devotee: If we stop all the transportation industry there will be huge unemployment.

Prabhupada: No, no, we are not going to stop employment. We live like this. You see, if you like you live like us.

Devotee: Example.

Prabhupada: Example.

Devotee: Not that we dictate to the ..., not that we're going to force everyone.

Prabhupada: No. We are not going to force anyone. "Our mode of living is like this. If you like you can adopt". Just like we chant Hare Krishna. So, we are not forcing anyone that "You also, you must chant." No. We live like this.

Devotee: We should start using bullock cart.

Prabhupada: Yes. No, first of all you start the community project, as we have already started in New Vrindavana. Make this perfect.

We are witnessing a global trend towards this type of simple living centered on the principles of sustainability and self-sufficiency. Organizations like *Global Eco Network (GEN)* ⁵⁷ have been advocating such ideology for the past five decades. Various individuals such as environmental activist Dr. Vandana Shiva have highlighted such themes in many of her books such as *Soil Not Oil*:

In Soil Not Oil, Vandana Shiva explains that a world beyond dependence on fossil fuels and globalization is both possible and necessary. Condemning industrial agriculture as a recipe for ecological and economic disaster, Shiva champions the small, independent farm: their greater productivity, their greater potential for social justice as they put more resources into the hands of the poor, and the biodiversity that is inherent to the traditional farming practiced in small-scale agriculture. What we need most in a time of changing climates and millions who are hungry, she argues, is sustainable, biologically diverse farms that are more resistant to disease, drought, and flood. "The solution to climate change," she observes, "and the solution to poverty are the same." Soil Not

⁵⁷ <https://ecovillage.org>

*Oil proposes a solution based on self-organization, sustainability, and community rather than corporate power and profits.*⁵⁸

Similarly, in various countries outside of India, there is a growing interest in the protection of our environment and natural resources. One such ecologist is Dr. Allen Savory who has been very active in promoting the concept of Holistic Management. He states:

Holistic Management uses decision-making and planning processes that give people the insights and management tools needed to work with the web of complexity that exists in nature: resulting in better, more informed decisions that balance key social, environmental, and financial considerations.

*In the context of the ecological restoration of grasslands worldwide, managers implement Holistic Planned Grazing to properly manage livestock – mimicking the predator/prey relationships in which these environments evolved.*⁵⁹

⁵⁸

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/535624/soil-not-oil-by-vandan-a-shiva/>

⁵⁹ <https://savory.global>

12. GURUKULAS, VARNASRAMA COLLEGES and VEDIC VILLAGES

Srila Prabhupada spoke of both *Gurukula* and *Varnasrama College* institutions as fundamental and essential educational systems for training members of our ISKCON society as well as for society at large to understand the Vedic way of life based on the principles of *daiva varnasrama dharma*. Srila Prabhupada also clearly advocated the establishment of Vedic Villages when referring to the traditional concepts of “village organization” as propounded by M. K. Gandhi whose thoughts are especially outlined in his book *Village Swaraj*.⁶⁰

12.1 Gurukulas

Traditionally, *Gurukulas* served the purpose of the *Varnasrama College* in that young boys would either adopt formal training and education to take up the numerous and variegated occupations of the twice born (*brahmana, ksatriya or vaisya*) or would adopt non-formal training and education to take up various occupations of the non-*dvijas*, through trade and apprenticeship often also living in the home of a teacher such as a carpenter. Since the natural *varnasrama* culture based on more traditional technologies has practically disappeared, Srila Prabhupada felt the need to introduce the system of *Varnasrama College* for the

⁶⁰ https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/village_swaraj.pdf

older boys or young men, and, taking in consideration our modern-day situation, even for older men.

However, it should be noted, that both *Gurukula* and *Varnasrama College* are meant for the males in society because in both cases, one is trained up in ones *varna*. *Varna* training is exclusively for the men as it prepares one to assume a position of leadership within society. Since women are not meant to take up such public leadership position in society, such training and education is restricted to men.

Training and education for the girls and young women has always been known as *stri-dharma*, natural occupations for women focused primarily on learning the science of becoming a mother, a housewife and assistant to the husband. The *sastras* also outline the 64 Arts and Crafts to be learned by young girls and women in general. This was part of the instructions given by Grand-father Bhisma-deva, one of the twelve *Mahajanas*, authorities on *dharma*, to Yudhisthira Maharaja:

In *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (1.9.27) Bhisma instructs King Yudhisthira in *dana-dharma*, or public acts of charity, *raja-dharma*, or the duties of a king, *moksa-dharma*, or duties for salvation, *stri-dharma*, or duties for women, and ultimately bhagavata-dharma, or pure devotional service to the Lord. ⁶¹

This basic concept of *varna* being exclusively for males is not an expression of male chauvinism as some may want to believe. It is based on scientific fundamental basic physiological and psychological differences between the genders and aims at a more cohesive functioning of society with the ultimate

⁶¹ SB 11.12.1-2, Purport

aim of assisting all members of society towards the primary goal of life, that of self-realization. Although so fundamental in Vedic society, quite understandably, this basic difference inevitably meets with extreme reservations and opposition in modern day society which is based on artificial gender equality. Not only does it exist in the secular world but indeed even within ISKCON this point is being debated.

Srila Prabhupada explained that *Gurukula* education is meant for the young boys between the ages of five and twelve and *Varnasrama College* for those above the age of twelve. As the Vedic culture becomes gradually re-established, the *Varnasrama College* will be less needed as the social structure of society will naturally foster the needed training and education.

According to Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, one of the foremost duties of the senior *brahmanas* in a village is to determine and establish the *varna* of young boys before they reach the age of fifteen. By identifying the young boy's *varna*, his education is thus determined and according to his education, his occupation and *asrama* are also clearly defined. In this way, the system of *varna* and *asrama* is most scientifically followed to help bring about the topmost results in individuals and society.

12.2 *Varnasrama Colleges*

Srila Prabhupada was very emphatic on this point. He absolutely wanted our devotees, the largest percentage of whom had not been exposed to the Vedic culture, to systematically receive training and education through the medium of *Varnasrama Colleges*. Srila Prabhupada gave specific instructions regarding this matter by clearly establishing that *Varnasrama College* education and training would be for older boys and men, not for women. He wanted a different type of

education for women. He actually wanted that each ISKCON city temple be a *Varnasrama College* and often explained that our movement is simply not a religious movement but also an educational and cultural movement.

We should therefore understand that the *Varnasrama College* was meant to introduce us to the standard Vedic culture that happens to be especially present in the villages of India. It is not as some would have us believe that Srila Prabhupada wanted us to become Indians or that we adopt Hinduism. The fact of the matter is that people from India by birth and upbringing are the closest to what is meant to be the norm and standard in society. Our objective is to regain simultaneously our natural spiritual constitution of *Bhagavat Dharma* as well as our natural material constitution called *Daiva Varnasrama Dharma*.

12.3 Vedic Villages

Throughout the various Vedic literatures, we hear of how society was best organized on the principles of simple living and high thinking minimizing the material necessities of life. This is best achieved when one adopts an agrarian lifestyle. Within such a simplified way of living, cows, land, and cultivation of the eternal culture called *sanatana dharma* remain key components.

Up until the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the societal norm around the world revolved around villages, especially those of India. This ancient culture was highly praised and valued by various scholars and philosophers of the West such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Will Durant. In particular, Durant regarded India as the motherland of all other nations recognizing in her the value of simple village

community, and self-governance. ⁶² It is for this reason that Srila Prabhupada wanted the western countries to take up what is a more natural and sustainable lifestyle that is most conducive to both spiritual emancipation as well as economic development.

13. OM SRI SURABHI CAMPAIGN

The *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign* was initially an initiative of the *ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry* of India that was established in the year 2009. ISKCON India became the first country to establish such a Ministry, to the credit of its leaders who had such insight as to recognize the need for an organized effort in promoting this crucial dimension of Srila Prabhupada's mission.

Once we begin to understand how the present trend towards planned increased urbanization is factually based on *adharma* principles in that the effort negates both the spiritual *sva-dharma* and material *sva-dharma* of individuals in society, we can then begin to understand why Srila Prabhupada condemned so strongly the modern-day machine civilization based on industrialized and mechanized lifestyle neglecting the real values and purpose of life. To satisfy his lust and greed, modern man is blindly increasingly allured to activities of sense gratification that entangle him more and more simply blinding him to the real purpose of life. The end result is a misguided and misdirected society as Srila Prabhupada would often explain.

62

<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=fTlIDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA205&lpg=PA205&dq=villages+Durant+observations+india&source=bl&ots=BeHg6w8JSD&sig=ACfU3U1MbDe6UaTeVU3DmgOKO4LNNBRZsA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiQvfDL9uXsAhXQV30KHdIPCHcQ6AEwCXoECAkQAg#v=onepage&q=villages%20Durant%20observations%20india&f=false>

At the crux of this modern-day dilemma is the neglect, nay the atrocities to mother cow. Srila Prabhupada stated how modern cities of Europe and America will one day be destroyed due to having allowed this unforgivable act of cruelty to mother cow having been blinded by so called material advancement:

*“The killing of cows by human society is one of the grossest suicidal policies and those who are anxious to cultivate the human spirit must turn their attention **first** toward the question of cow protection.”*⁶³

To bring all this in proper perspective, to understand how cows are central to a civilized nation, to highlight various aspects of the Vedic culture in the context of our mother cow, the ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry (IDVM-India) has launched the *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign*. It is not simply some sentimental plea to close down slaughterhouses, although that is certainly part of the objectives, but more in trying to bring about the understanding of Vedic culture as being largely a cow-centered culture, the basis upon which all other dimensions can develop properly. It is only with cows that we can build up a brahminical culture and it is only with the help of qualified *brahmanas* that we can give opportunity to people in general to become Krishna conscious. This symbiosis between cows and the land is yet to be understood. The natural inter-dependence between cows, land, *brahmanas* and Krishna consciousness being of paramount importance, only then can society be reestablished in its rightful position and become naturally peaceful and truly prosperous.

The *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign* is not simply coinciding with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of ISKCON 50th year but proposes to extend the Golden Jubilee Era for the 12-year period that Srila Prabhupada introduced and

⁶³ Light of the Bhagavat, 27

preached Krishna consciousness all over the world. Taken in this light we can take advantage of this 12-year period which started the year Srila Prabhupada reached America in 1965 until his physical disappearance in 1977. In the context of Golden Jubilee Era, this coincides with the year 2015 and extends till November 2, 2027, the year ISKCON will commemorate Srila Prabhupada's Golden Jubilee Tirobhava tithi, his physical disappearance for this mortal world.

The objectives of the *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign* reflect the aims and objectives of the ISKCON society especially in the matter of bringing about major changes in the world both at the level of spiritual awareness and at the level of material awareness, or in other words by introducing both the spiritual *sva-dharma* and the material *sva-dharma*.

Although the *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign* was launched in India by the IDVM-India, its scope is beyond India. To carry forward the objectives of the *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign*, the *Varnasrama College Network* will be promoting the campaign outside of India. Opportunities are available to any interested individual to become a stakeholder and help introduce the campaign in 108 countries around the world. Within each country individuals may become *Serve Surabhi Members*, groups may register as *Serve Surabhi Teams* and within each country there will be a *Sri Surabhi Hosting Team*. The *OM Sri Surabhi Campaign Global* is also intimately connected with the *Sri Surabhi App*.

14. VARNASRAMA TEACHER TRAINING

The *Varnasrama Teacher Training* course will be one of the preliminary courses offered by *Varnasrama College ONLINE (VCO)*, an online educational institute established in May 2020, in collaboration with the ISKCON Ministry of Education. This paper gives but a brief outline of what the course will be and appears in the Appendix section.⁶⁴ For more information about the course, one may contact the Director of Admissions for VCO by visiting the website at www.varnasramacollege.com. All VCO Teachers will need to have taken this course to teach in the five faculties of the institute.

⁶⁴ Appendix 8, Varnasrama Teacher Training

APPENDIX 1

VARNASRAMA NOT FOR KALI YUGA

This Vaisnava sampradaya, we respect *Veda*, we respect *Manu-smriti*, we respect *varnasrama*. But we know very well that in this *Kali Yuga Manu-smriti* cannot be followed, and all Vedic principles cannot be followed. That is the reason Mahaprabhu brought this chanting of the holy name, and we became *Vaisnavas*.

Followers of *Vaisnavism*, they do not practice the principles of *karma khanda*, *jnana khanda*, like that. So, this casteism was rejected by Caitanya Mahaprabhu. So, we should tell people how especially, this group of Hinduism, those who are following *Vaisnavism*, they're not so much into this casteism, *varnas*, *asrama*, things like that; once we become *Vaisnava*, he has no binding to a particular *varna* or *asrama*.

So, actually that is the main purpose while Krishna left the earthly planet, That time He took *jnana* and *dharma* with Him. Looks like *varnasrama dharma* is not meant for this Kali Yuga.

That is mentioned, that in *Kali Yuga*, there is no four *varnas*, for *varna* there is only one *varna*, *eka-varna*. We should understand that, somewhere, in the *Brahma Vaivarta Purana* this has been described. His Holiness Jayapataka Maharaja many times, has quoted this, the whole world will be *eka-varna*. So, in this way you really have to look into what Mahaprabhu said.

It is not so important for us to establish *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya*, *sudra*. Our principle is completely different. Our principle is *stane sthitah sruti-gatam tanu-van-manubhir* ... it doesn't matter *varna* and *asrama*. What matters is how much we are engaged in hearing and chanting. So why don't we speak what we are meant for? Let us promote what we are meant for. We should not be distracted to Vedic life, Vedic civilization, *Manu samhita*, *varnasrama*, this, that. *Varnasrama* Mahaprabhu said. Ramananda proposed ... that is very much true, but ... Mahaprabhu said "*eho bahya, age kaha ara*" (it's external, say more).

What *varnasrama* gives? *Varnasrama* will promote us to higher planetary systems, not more than that. Why are we so particular about these things? And even if we say do *varnasrama* for Krishna karmarpana, that also Mahaprabhu said, ... "*eho bahya*", this is external. Because that is only to get free from *karma phala*. Now that people will understand, better that we just try our best, get people in chanting and hearing,

Don't get into all these Vedic things, it's too much. Vedic age is by-gone age. Vedic age, other age, ... age, they're all past. Now it is Hare Krishna age, Hare Krishna *Yuga*. And Hare Krishna *Yuga* is very suitable for everybody and beyond all these concepts. This concept of *varnasrama*, we get, but not for this *Yuga*. Haribol.

Bhakti Purusottama Swami, July 2020.

APPENDIX 2 Position Paper on Varnasrama in India

**PROMOTING VRINDABAN VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA
POSITION PAPER OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNING BODY FOR INDIA**

Dated: 2 September 2008

THE MISSION REVEALED

As early as 1949, Srila Prabhupada described his mission in a letter to the Hon. Sardar, Dr. Vallabhaji Patel, Deputy Prime Minister of India, outlining four movements. The first was the "**sankirtan**" movement of chanting and philosophical discourse that was to be introduced all over the world. Then came the "temple entry" movement, organizing temples as centers of spiritual culture according to scriptures like *Bhagavad-gita*. Thirdly, he described the "spiritual initiation" movement, a movement that would be conducted under strict disciplinary methods to enable "*mayajanas*" to attain the perfection of human life. This would "be organized in such a manner that people all over the world

may take interest in it." Finally, he described the "classless society" movement or the "scientific division of the caste system as envisaged in the *Bhagavad-gita*".

We can see that Srila Prabhupada had a clear idea how his preaching movement would be conducted as early as 1949. As the years went by, he refined the concepts involved. In 1956, he published his "*Essay on Gita Nagari*" in *Back to Godhead Magazine*, which reiterated the same "four movements" or divisions. Then again in 1966 Srila Prabhupada registered his International Society for Krishna Consciousness and began to systematically introduce these four divisions earlier identified in his 1949 letter and 1956 essay. As his mission expanded around the world, he began to purchase farmland to develop rural communities. In October of 1977 this conversation took place:

Prabhupada: What meeting going on?

Tamala Krishna: Oh, very interesting meeting. (We were) discussing our Gita-Nagari community and talking about varnasrama. We were trying to reflect on all of the teachings in your books and what we had read about Krishna's life and Nanda Maharaja's community. How the vaisya community lives, how the different varnas and asramas function together, and what their responsibilities are to each other. We're trying to set up our Gita-Nagari community based upon the teachings which you've given in your books. Dhristadyumna Maharaja has designed the very ideal plan for all of the varnas and asramas to live together.

Prabhupada: Hm. Do it.

DEPARTING INSTRUCTIONS

In the last film footage of Srila Prabhupada, we find him lying in his bed with HH Jayadvaita Swami holding a microphone to his lips. Carefully choosing

the words for what were to become his final purports, he explained exactly why we need varnasrama:

"According to the association of different natures, we get a body. karanam guna sangasya sad asad yoni janmasu. Therefore, we should always seek good association, devotee association. Then our life will be successful. If we live with good association, then we cultivate knowledge. . . A man is known by his company. So, if we have the chance of association with devotees, then our character, nature becomes better. By hearing, by discussing Srimad Bhagavatam, this raja guna, tama guna are subdued. Then sattva guna remains. nasta prayesu abhadresu nityam bhagavata sevaya. Then raja guna, tama guna cannot do us harm. Therefore, varnasrama dharma is so essential that people live in sattva guna. Tama guna, raja guna increases lust and greediness, and that implicates the living entity who exists in the material world in many, many forms. That is very dangerous. Therefore, they should be brought into sattva guna by the establishment of varnasrama dharma." [Note: transcribed directly from the video, emphasis added.]

We can understand from this statement, as well as from numerous similar references made by Srila Prabhupada, that he clearly expected his ISKCON society to establish *varnasrama dharma* within the context of agrarian based self-sufficient communities, the actual norm and standard of Vedic society.

SANATANA DHARMA - TWO FEATURES

"The complete span of life of a human being is meant for preparing himself for going back to Godhead or to get rid of the material existence made of the repetition of birth and death. As such in the system of Varnashram Dharma every

man and woman are trained up for this purpose of eternal life, in other words the system of Varnashram Dharma is known also as Sanatana Dharma or eternal occupation. The system of Varnasrama Dharma prepares a man for going back to Godhead..." [SB 1/19/4 purport.]

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

"VARNASRAMA SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO BECOME A VAISNAVA"

When it was suggested that the chanting of Hare Krishna was meant to replace varnasrama for everyone, Srila Prabhupada replied:

Prabhupada: Yes, it can replace, but who is going to replace it? People are not so advanced. If you imitate Haridasa Thakura to chant, it is not possible . . . the sahajiya's chanting will come. Just like our (name withheld). He was not fit for sannyasa, but he was given sannyasa. And five women he was attached, and he disclosed. Therefore varnasrama-dharma is required. Simply show-bottle will not do. So, the varnasrama-dharma should be introduced all over the world, and...

Satsvarupa: Introduced starting with ISKCON community?

Prabhupada: Yes. Yes. Brahmana, ksatriyas. There must be regular education.

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

Prabhupada: Yes.

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

Prabhupada: Vaisnava is not so easy. The varnasrama-dharma should be established to become a Vaisnava. It is not so easy to become Vaisnava." [Mayapura 14 February 1977]

From the above, we can understand that the *sankirtan* movement as introduced by Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu based on the chanting of the holy names and the performance of devotional service to Lord Krishna, is not meant to replace *varnasrama* as a means of societal organization. Rather the *varnasrama dharma* should be established in society as a supportive measure to help individuals become Vaisnavas.

In Sri Bhaktyaloka, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura also confirms that Lord Caitanya did not reject *varnasrama* for social organization. After quoting *Bhagavatam* 1.2.8 – dharmah svanusthitah pumsam visvaksena-kathasu yah / notpadayed yadi ratim srama eva hi kevalam – the Thakur explains:

"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."

From this one should not conclude that Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has ordered us to discard *varnasrama-dharma*. If that had been the case, then He would not have instructed all living entities through His pastimes of completely following the orders of *grihastha* and *sannyasa*. As long as one has a material body the system of *varnasrama-dharma* must be followed, but it should remain under the full control and domination of *bhakti*. *Varnasrama-dharma* is like the foundation of one's supreme occupational duty. When one's supreme occupational duty is matured and one achieves his goal, then the process is gradually neglected. Again, it is also abandoned at the time of death.

PROMOTING RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Srila Prabhupada expressed his desire to establish Krishna Conscious, self-sufficient communities and villages. He also gave instructions to make existing villages Krishna Conscious.

So far, ISKCON India has become very successful at city preaching and large numbers of the populace have taken up to the chanting of the holy names sincerely, thus adapting their lives to the principles of Krishna consciousness. However, the establishment of a society based on the traditional village lifestyle has been neglected. Although one can still advance in Krishna consciousness living in the cities, the degraded influences of urban life place serious constraints on the progress most devotees can make. ISKCON must recognize the need to re-establish, develop, and maintain the ideals of village-based communities, the natural Krishna-conscious village lifestyle which was shown by Krishna and Balarama Themselves. Initially, perhaps only a few will want to take it up, but without it, Srila Prabhupada's mission in four phases or "movements", and ISKCON's preaching programs, remain incomplete. The following are but a few selected quotes supporting the need to remain in the villages:

"Actually, everyone should be engaged to produce food, but the modern set-up of civilization is that few people are engaged in producing food, and others are eating. They are offering... They are artificially getting money." [Conversation 25/7/73 London]

"Clever means that he must stay in his own land. He should not be cheated by the paper and go to the city." [Conversation 25/7/73 London]

“Gandhi's program was very nice; village organize so that they may not come to the city and help the capitalists. Remain satisfied in the village.” [Conversation 12/9/76 Vrindavan]

“So, this Krishna consciousness movement is trying to revive the original, constitutional position. So, one of them, in Krishna consciousness movement, is village organization, as you are trying here.” [Lecture 15/7/76 Gita Nagari]

“India's civilization was based on village residence. They would live very peacefully in the villages.” [Morning Walk 13/10/75 Gita Nagari]

Therefore, the RGB vision is to develop preaching and development programs which involve the following specific village-oriented programs:

1. Establishing Krishna Conscious rural communities
2. Helping existing villages to become self-sufficient and Krishna Conscious.
3. Developing *Nama Hatta* village preaching programs to expand Krishna Consciousness in rural India.

Each temple should expand and develop their rural preaching programs as an integral aspect of its preaching effort following these three aspects of rural Krishna Consciousness development.

ESTABLISHING A VARNASRAMA SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATION

The *varnasrama* system is a complete educational institution in itself where the needs of individuals are met at all levels: physical, mental, social and spiritual. A *varnasrama* society, which is primarily agrarian based, provides an ideal educational environment. It is grounded on two important concepts and scientific principles of (1) aptitude-based learning, which leads to aptitude-based occupation, *varna* and (2) phased lifelong education, *asrama*, which leads to gradual self-realization. This education is formal and informal. In traditional

village-life the majority of the population are trained at home, imbibing the occupation of the family they are born into. Formal education, which is meant for the *dvijas* (*brahmanas*, *ksatriyas* and *vaisyas*), needs to be introduced by the revival of the original Vedic *gurukula* system as recommended by Srila Prabhupada. According to Vedic tradition, education is awarded based on merit. Srila Prabhupada describes this in his "*Essay on Gita Nagari*":

"By a test of practical psychology and by examination of the birth horoscope of the child, with special reference to his birthright, sect and class arrangement, a student from the very beginning shall be given the education of a brahmana, of a ksatriya, of a vaisya or of a sudra, as may be the case, according to his quality and destined work."

Formal training can only be given to those who have the right disposition and who display the appropriate attitude. Teachers also require the proper temperament and qualification. It is necessary therefore to give the utmost consideration when appointing *gurukula* teachers to ensure that they have proven, exemplary character. Students trained in such *gurukulas* will eventually graduate according to their nature and aptitude to take up key occupations in a developed *varnasrama*-based society. It is therefore essential that we immediately begin the work to develop this greater society. Srila Prabhupada stressed: "*To train the innocent boy to be a sense gratifier at the early age when the child is actually happy in any circumstance is the greatest violence. Therefore, brahmacari gurukule vasan danto guror hitam*" [SB 7.12.1]. The curriculum of such schools needs to be derived primarily from sources as recommended by Srila Prabhupada.

There is not a full body of specific instruction from Srila Prabhupada spelling out all the details of how *gurukula* should be developed in ISKCON. The various efforts to follow whatever instructions he did give have born various fruits. In Mayapur, the *Sri Rupanuga Paramarthika Vidya Pitha* found that the closer they got to focusing on character development rather than academics, the more successful the graduates were in any sphere. The kind of character that is developed from appropriate *gurukula* training in general equips the majority of students to adapt to any future circumstance. In *puranic* descriptions of *gurukula* there are many varieties according to the mood of the particular *guru*.

Apart from the *gurukulas*, Prabhupada ordered:

“The varnasrama college has to be established immediately. Everywhere, wherever we have got our center, a varnasrama college should be established to train four divisions: one class, brahmana; one class, ksatriya; one class, vaisya; and one class, sudra. But everyone will be elevated to the spiritual platform by the spiritual activities which we have prescribed. There is no inconvenience, even for the sudras.” [Walk Vrindavan '74]

These colleges are required not only for practical training, but as a way to impart cultured behavior.

The Vedic system does not condemn anyone. 'You are a potter. Oh, you are lower.' No. You are as good as a priest because you are doing your duty. Just like a brähmaëa is addressed as *pandita maharaja*. A *ksatriya* as *thakura saheb*, a merchant as *sethji* and the laborer as *chouddhari* -- leader. In this way, everyone has got respectable position. [July '68 Conversation.]

So, this Vedic scheme, *varnasrama*, is a very important scheme. If possible, it should be introduced and taken up very seriously. That is one of the items of Krishna consciousness movement, to re-establish the institution of *varna* and *asrama*. Not by birth, but by qualification. [July '76 Conversation]

This system of *varna*-based training, with appropriate *asrama* progression, is a scientific system designed to bring people to the mode of goodness, with the ultimate goal of achieving *suddha sattva*, the attainment of full Krishna Consciousness. So far, in general, we have failed to provide excellence in the *gurukula* system, or to provide much in the way of appropriate livelihoods to *gurukula* graduates. As a result, we find that there is a growing demand for western-style academic education. This type of education overlooks the fact that humans are born of four particular natures. Therefore, statistically, only a few students can gain any benefit from this system. In terms of spiritual life, this system can never impart the kind of character training that is obtained from the proper matching of teacher and student in the spiritual atmosphere of menial service to *guru* that should be provided in a *gurukula*. Krishna and Balarama set the perfect example when they attended the *asrama* of Sandipani Muni. By graduating from the *gurukula* and progressing through the *asramas* of adult life in devotee association, all the while cultivating spiritual knowledge, the students gain realization to enable them to perfect their lives.

COW PROTECTION & BRAHMINICAL CULTURE

Srila Prabhupada taught us that cow protection and brahminical culture are the keys to real prosperity and that they occur as a natural side effect of

following *varnasrama dharma*. So far in India we have had problems with some of our *goshalla* programs, mainly because they have been developed in isolation, not within the framework of a greater *varnasrama* social structure. Cows have been neglected and as a result brahminical culture is not thriving. The *sastras* warn us of this result.

CONGREGATION AND YOUTH PREACHING

Internationally, many of our devotees are suffering due to lack of good association. Most devotees are forced to work and associate with non-devotees in order to survive in the outside world. In India and in certain parts of the world, some devotees are benefiting from such programs as *Nama Hatta*, *Bhakta Vriksa*, and similar congregational programs. Among our congregation of devotees, the youth are the key. It has been seen in some parts of the world that when youths are introduced to the concepts of *varnasrama dharma*, they become enthused because they recognize that this is a system that lets them take their lives into their own hands. Rather than placing faith in the empty promises of the politicians and industrialists, they appreciate the opportunity to use what Krishna has given: the means of production - land and cows. Introducing *varnasrama* concepts to our youth preaching teams is a new concept that can result in the conception of *varnasrama* communities, therefore demonstrating the effectiveness of the Krsna Consciousness philosophy. Srila Prabhupada predicted that by creating 'ideal units' of society, people will want to give up the factory work to come and live in blissful communities wherein Krishna culture is practiced.

CITY TEMPLES AND RURAL COMMUNITIES IN TANDEM

Srila Prabhupada wanted that we should have farms supporting our city temples. In this way persons from the city can be shown how to live a simple Krishna conscious lifestyle. Srila Prabhupada predicted that many people will be attracted to Krishna consciousness in this way:

It is very good that the farm will be providing foodstuffs for both the farm and the temple in Paris. That is wanted. The farm program should be growing your own food, produce your own milk, cloth and everything and chant Hare Krsna.

[Letter to Bhagavan 14/11/75]

Regarding Ahmedabad Centre, we must have a place there... (it is) one of the most opulent and important cities of India. We have to organize in the neighboring village... Now, our next program will be to organize farming land to set an example to the whole world how people can be peaceful, happy, and free from all anxieties simply by chanting Hare Krishna *Maha-mantra* and living an honorable life in Krishna Consciousness. [Letter to Kartikeya Mahadevia 19/10/75]

NETWORKING

The technical aspects of creating villages in which the process of varnasrama organization can begin will be a challenge. Many aspects of simple living are vanishing. There are, however, organizations in India that are already working with simple traditional systems. It may be beneficial for us to network with such organizations to make the progression to a simple rural life easier.

While there is an urgent need to develop the *varnasrama* aspect of the Krishna Consciousness movement in India, the work will have to proceed at a natural pace as interest can be aroused.

APPENDIX 3 MANDATE – IDVM-India

RGB/ISKCON Bureau Mandate (2009)

“Therefore, the India RGB hereby establishes the Varnasrama-based Rural.

Development Ministry with the following mandate:

1. To encourage the establishment in India of models of Krishna-conscious rural communities (villages):
 - a. to demonstrate in a practical way how the principles of varnas (aptitude based occupations) and asramas (phased lifelong spiritual emancipation) are universal and standard principles meant to be implemented.
 - b. To demonstrate the principles of self-sufficiency, sustainability, and localized economy based on proper utilization of land and cow protection.

2. To encourage, wherever possible in India, varnasrama-based rural development centered on the land, cows, and Krishna.
3. In order to accomplish the above, to establish training programs, publish resource materials, organize conferences and seminars, establish libraries and resource centers, etc.

Bhakti Raghava Swami is hereby appointed as minister.

END of Mandate for India varnasrama

APPENDIX 4 GBC Resolutions 2009

1. GBC RESOLUTION (2009)

310. GBC Participation in Farm Projects

Whereas ISKCON farms and farmers often struggle to make their operations viable;

Whereas ISKCON farms, cow protectors, farmers, and those engaged in rural development often feel unsupported by ISKCON management;

Whereas the successful establishment of varnasrama and rural life was a key concern of Srila Prabhupada;

Whereas the Vedic system is supportive of agricultural and rural communities;

Whereas there has been a global decline in the general status of farm projects;

Whereas ISKCON farm projects in which GBC members put energy are often

successful;

RESOLVED

That all GBC members, as far as possible, commit themselves to spend 10% of their time helping to develop farm projects:

- by giving 10% of their classes on the importance of farm development and cow protection
- and/or by spending 10% of their time on a farm or farms to encourage the farm devotees.

311. Purchasing from ISKCON Farms and Farmers

Whereas ISKCON farms and farmers often struggle to make their operations viable;

Whereas the majority of temples and centers do not buy produce from their local farm, farmers, or goshalla;

Whereas in times of global economic crises, by not buying from our local farms there is danger of high prices and food shortage due to dependence on outside sources which are in turn dependent on oil-consuming transport companies;

Whereas other religious groups successfully purchase from their own projects thereby presenting an ecologically-friendly, self-sufficient lifestyle to the world;

Whereas it was Srila Prabhupada's desire that we, ISKCON, present an ecologically-friendly, self-sufficient lifestyle to the world "independent from outside help;"

Whereas the Vedic system was supportive of agricultural and rural communities;

Whereas there has been a decline in the development of ISKCON farms and most remaining farms are struggling;

RESOLVED

That all ISKCON Deity kitchens, temples, restaurants, and relevant projects should purchase, wherever possible, produce, flowers, and milk products from ISKCON farms in their local region up to a ceiling of their current purchases, provided they are of reasonable quality and can be afforded.

Where practical, the ISKCON temples, restaurants, or projects concerned will explore the possibility of purchasing land and making it available to farmers to cultivate. Additionally, temples should make available, at a reasonable cost, space for farm produce to be sold.

APPENDIX 5 GBC RESOLUTION (2015)

309: Daivi-varnasrama Research Committee

Whereas Srila Prabhupada had said that 50% of his mission—establishing Daivi-varnasrama—remained unfulfilled.

RESOLVED:

That the GBC recognizes the need to establish Daivi-varnasrama and to that end it shall establish a research committee to study how to fulfill Srila Prabhupada's desire in that regard.

APPENDIX 6 IIAC RESOLUTION (APRIL 2015)

OM Sri Surabhi Campaign

Whereas ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry -India (IDVM-India) has been established in the year 2009 to help promote the Vedic principle of “simple living and high thinking” based on the universal concepts of self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Whereas IDVM-India has been working closely with and is a participant in the Strategic Planning Network (SPN) global initiative committee called Sustainable Vaisnava Communities (SVC) that is promoting similar ideals as the Ministry.

Whereas IDVM-India has launched a global campaign on January 1, 2015, entitled “OM Sri Surabhi Campaign” to bring awareness about the need to integrate

Mother Surabhi in our daily lives as an essential component in preserving and maintaining Vedic culture,

RESOLVED that the IIAC recommends that each ISKCON center establish a department promoting the concepts of sustainable Vaisnava communities and increased cow-awareness in rural and urban areas.

APPENDIX 7

IIAC Resolution (2020)

Proposal

Whereas the above limitations of the existing *varnasrama* ministry in India has hampered its growth and expansion,

Whereas the *varnasrama* mission is meant to be taken up by the topmost leaders of India to help set a proper example and provide the needed support to the ministry,

Whereas the world situation is such that ISKCON as a society should be much more proactive in establishing training projects such as *Varnasrama Colleges* and *Vedic Villages*,

Whereas our Founder Acharya Srila Prabhupada gave many important and clear instructions on the need for ISKCON to protect, preserve and whenever needed, re-establish the agrarian based Vedic culture, with emphasis on self-sufficiency and sustainability,

Whereas there is an urgent need to bring in a more variegated presence and participation, of both general devotees from different parts of India, as well as different leaders representing ISKCON India,

Whereas, ISKCON India has a special role to play in protecting varnasrama dharma and spearheading the implementation and development in India and around the world,

Therefore, the IIAC establishes the *ISKCON India Varnasrama Steering Committee* with the following Mandate:

- 1) To meet with the members of IDVM-India to discuss how the ministry can be expanded and revitalized.
- 2) To request the Chairman of each Divisional Council to select one dedicated devotee who will officially represent each Division as the *Varnasrama Divisional Director*.
- 3) That the Steering Committee, with the help of members of IDVM-India, establish within the existing Ministry a training program for those who will join the *Varnasrama Ministry*.
- 4) That the *Varnasrama Steering Committee* take guidance from the existing Minister, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and the former Minister, Sripad Bhakti Raghava Swami.

The following devotees are herein nominated to be part of the *Varnasrama*

Steering Committee:

- 1) Bhakti Rasamrita Swami (South India)
- 2) Madhava das, Deputy Minister for IDVM-India
- 3) SankarshanNitai das (Vrindavan/Govardan)
- 4) Shri Jeeva Das (Guwahati)
- 5) Subhekshana Das (Mayapur)
- 6) Bharat Chandra das (South India) **Convenor**
- 7) Visnunam das (Ahmedhabad)
- 8) Savyasachi Das (Bhopal/Nandagram)
- 9) Kamalaochan das (Mumbai/Vapi/Bhilwara)
- 10) Sanak Sanatana Das (Vrindavan)

APPENDIX 8 Varnasrama Teacher Training

OBJECTIVE

The Varnasrama Teacher Training (VTT) course will prepare individuals to become teachers and instructors in the art and science of *daiva varnasrama dharma*. The courses will cover all four *varnas* and all four *asramas*.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The *Varnasrama Teacher Training* will be a three-months, 360 hours, accumulative intensive study course taken either on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays), at weekly intervals (Monday to Friday), at monthly intervals (four full weeks in a month) or continuously for three consecutive months. This document only gives a general overview of the course. Anyone taking the course will gain

sufficient knowledge and experience to help establish a *Gurukula*, a *Varnasrama Collage* or a Vedic Village.

Those taking the course on weekends (2 days) will cover 12 hours each weekend. To cover the full 360 hours, they will need 30 weekends or approximately 8 months.

Those taking the course on a weekly basis once every month will cover 30 hours each month. To cover the full 360 hours, they will need 12 months or approximately one year.

Those taking the intensive course continuously will finish the course in 3 months covering 360 hours.

The course will be a combination of theory and practice, including applied field work. There will be extensive use of Power Point presentations and videos to cover various sections of the course as well as oral presentations and discourses.

PREREQUISITES

Recommendation from two ISKCON authorities or well-established authorities with credentials in their particular field

Full Curriculum Vitai (CV)

Harinama initiated for at least two years.

Practicing devotee for at least five years

Bhakti Shastri holders will be given preference.

Entrance Examination

COURSE DELIVERY

All sessions will cover 1.5 hours.

Students will attend daily 4 sessions, 2 in the morning, 2 in the afternoon.

Students will be given a one-hour assignments daily.

Intermediate Exams will be given at the end of every month.

Final Exam at the end of the course (to include test and essay)

90% attendance for the students will be compulsory.

Sadhana Sheets will be mandatory for all students.

Courses are given 5 days a week, Monday through Friday for 12 weeks.

Daily hours, 6; weekly hours 30; monthly hours 120, total course 360 hours.

FACULTY

All Faculty Members giving the courses will have undergone training and practical application of *varnasrama dharma* concepts and applied practice.

MODULES

The course is divided into 10 Modules, the first and last covering two weeks while all other modules cover one week, for a total of 12 weeks or 3 months cumulating in 360 hours.

Module 1 Introduction (two weeks)

Varnasrama History (Ancient/Within ISKCON)

Varnasrama Terminology

Dharma Shastri course

The Four Movements within ISKCON

Vedic Sociology

Module 2 *Brahmana Varna* (one week or 30 hours)

- Module 3** *Ksatriya Varna* (one week)
Module 4 *Vaisya Varna* (one week)
Module 5 *Sudra Varna* (one week)
Module 6 *Brahmacary Asrama* (one week)
Module 7 *Grihastha Asrama* (one week)
Module 8 *Vanaprastha Asrama* (one week)
Module 9 *Sannyasa Asrama* (one week)
Module 10 *Practicals* (2 weeks)

All students will be requested to take up the following:

Prepare two power points.

Public address (30 minutes presentation)

Field Work Assignment (two weeks placement in the field)

Essay (between 5,000 to 10,000 words)

TOTAL = 12 weeks or three months

Compulsory Reading (selected sections)

Bhagavag-gita As It Is

Srimad-Bhagavatam

Nectar of Devotion

Caitanya Caritamrita

Manu-Samhita

Kautilya's Arthashastra

Canakya Niti

Gita Nagari Essay

Light of the Bhagavata

Speaking About Varnasrama

Pillars of Education

Traditional Education

Modernity is Killing Civilization

My Spiritual Lamentation

Village Life

Make Vrindavan Villages

Elective Audio and Visual

Media Coverage

Power Points

Videos

The Story of Stuff

Rock Story

Inconvenient Truth

Mitti – return to the roots.

Before the Flood

The Devil in the Milk

Cowspiracy

Life is easy, why make it complicated.

Course Outline with Syllabus

Curriculum Design

For each Module, there will be specific books of reference, some mandatory and some elective.

The modules of the entire course will be based on thematic studies.

Module 1 Introduction

(Two weeks divided into 40 sessions)

Varnasrama History (Ancient/Within ISKCON)

Bhaktivinoda Thakura

Varnasrama Terminology

Dharma Shastri course

The Four Movements within ISKCON

Vedic Sociology (Introduction)

Syllabus

Make Vrindavan Villages

Varnarama Education (five pillars of education)

Speaking About Varnasrama (cities as training ground)

Gita Nagari Essay (four movements)

Modernity is Killing Civilization (3 gifts of nature)

Media

Power Points

Videos

The Story of Stuff

Rock Story

Inconvenient Truth

Matti

Before the Flood

The Devil in the Milk

Cowspiracy

Life is easy, why make it complicated.

Module 2 *Brahmana Varna* (one week or 20 sessions)

Catur Vidya (*Anviksiki, Trayi, Danda Niti, Varta*)

Anviksiki (*Sankhya, Yoga and Tarka*)

Trayi (*Caturdasya Vidya*)

Module 3 ***Ksatriya Varna*** (one week)

Leadership in ISKCON

Leadership in society

Danda Niti

Vidura Niti

Kautilya Arthashastra

Bhismadeva in Mahabharata, Santi Parva

Dhanurveda

64 Arts and Sciences

Module 4 ***Vaisya Varna*** (one week)

Vrikayurveda

ISKCON Cow Protection

Vedic Farming

Millets

Module 5 ***Sudra Varna*** (one week)

Traditional technologies

Watershed Management

Traditional cloth making

Module 6 ***Brahmacary Asrama*** (one week)

Vaisnava Etiquette (Bhakti Charu Swami)

Brahmacarya Life (Bhakti Vikas Swami)

Module 7 *Grhastha Asrama (one week)*

Grihastha Vision

SB Canto 7, Ideal Family Life

Module 8 *Vanaprastha Asrama (one week)*

Module 9 *Sannyasa Asrama (one week)*

SB and sannyasa

GBC and sannyasa resolutions

Module 10 *Practicals (2 weeks)*

Preparing two power points

Public address

Field Work Assignment (one week placement in some rural projects)

Essay

By RP Bhakti Raghava Swami, November 8, 2020