

Sri Krishna Kathamrita



Bindu

Issue 552

Varnashram Dharma and Bhakti





Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications

Issue No. 552

Śrī Kāmikā Ekādaśī

13 July 2023

Highlights

• [VARNASHRAM DHARMA AND BHAKTI](#)

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• [VARNASHRAM MEANS LIVING OFF THE LAND](#)

A remembrance of His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• [VAISHNAVAS, VARNASHRAM AND STRI-SANGA](#)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

• [VAISHNAVAS AND VARNASHRAM](#)

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur

• [THE VARNASHRAM OF A PURE VAISHNAVA](#)

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur

• [ABOVE VARNASHRAM](#)

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja



VARNASHRAM DHARMA AND BHAKTI



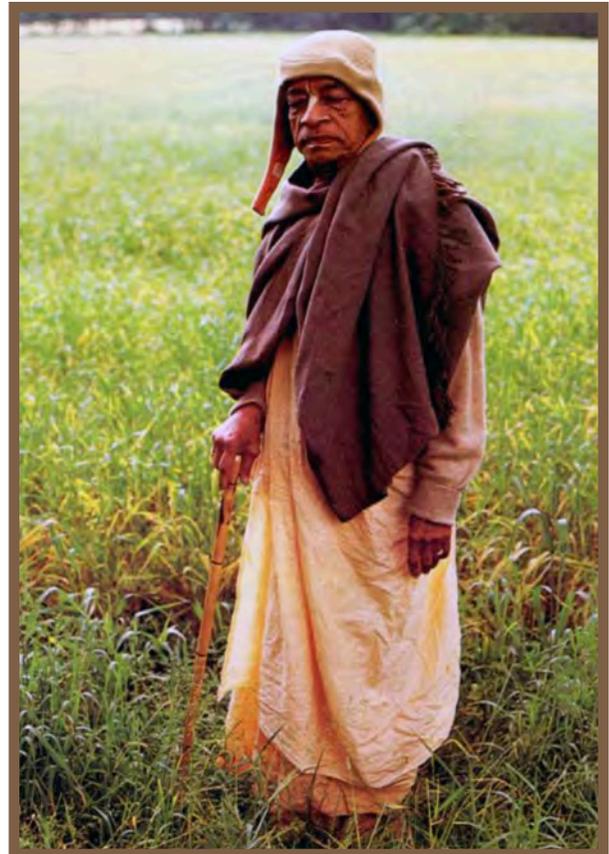
His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Mission of the Krishna Consciousness Movement

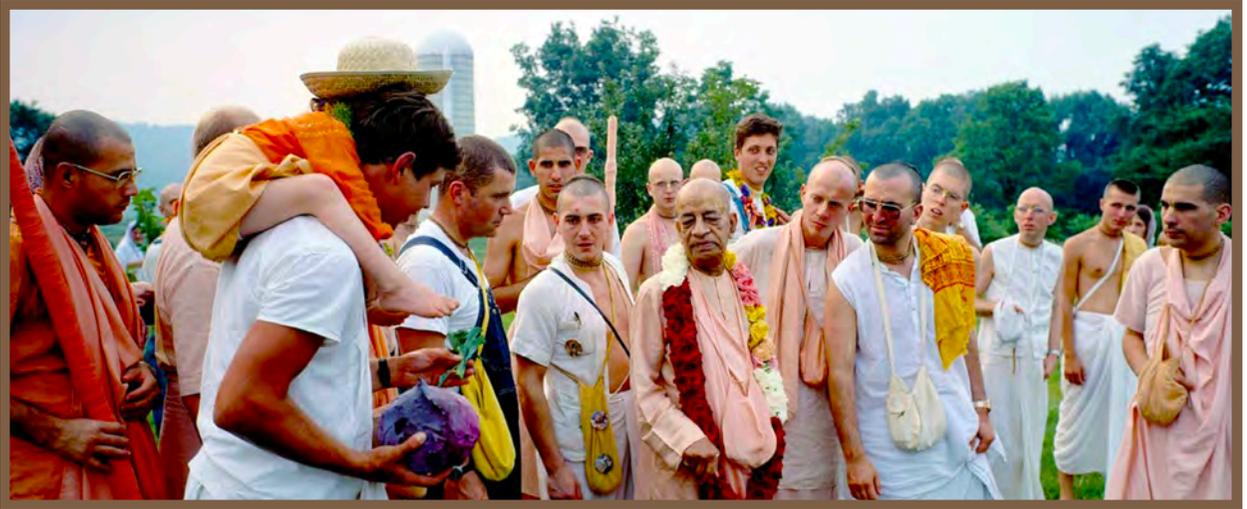
In order to rectify this world situation, all people should be trained in Krishna consciousness and act in accordance with the *varṇāśrama* system. The state should also see that the people are engaged in satisfying the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is the primary duty of the state. The Krishna consciousness movement was started to convince the general populace to adopt the best process by which to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus solve all problems. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 4.14.20.)

If we do not take to the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma* by accepting the four social orders (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*) and the four orders of



Cover: Cows of Vraja, by B. G. Sharma

Unknown photographer



Srila Prabhupada visiting Gita Nagari farm in July of 1976

spiritual life (*brahmacārī*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*), there can be no question of success in life. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 5.19.10)

...If one's position is ascertained by a bona fide spiritual master and one is properly trained to engage in the service of Lord Vishnu according to the four social divisions [*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *sūdra*] and the four spiritual divisions [*brahmacārī*, *grhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*], one's life becomes perfect. (Translation of *Bhāg.* 5.19.19)

In the land of Bharatvarsh, the institution of *varṇāśrama-dharma* may be easily adopted. At the present moment, certain demoniac sections of the population of Bharatvarsh are disregarding the system of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Because there is no institution to teach people how to become *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *sūdras* or *brahmacārīs*, *grhasthas*, *vānaprasthas* and *sannyāsīs*, these demons want a classless society. This is resulting in chaotic conditions. In the name of secular government, unqualified people are taking the supreme governmental posts. No one is being trained to act according to the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, and thus people are becoming increasingly degraded and are heading in the direction of animal life. The real aim of life is liberation, but unfortunately the opportunity for liberation is being denied to people in general, and therefore their human lives are being spoiled. The Krishna consciousness movement, however, is being propagated all over the world to reestablish the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system and thus save human society from gliding down to hellish life. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 5.19.19)

Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

THE QUICK METHOD FOR ALL

The following series of verses are from the eleventh canto of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam. They are spoken by Krishna to Uddhava about *varṇāśrama-dharma* and *bhakti*, with commentaries by Srila Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur.

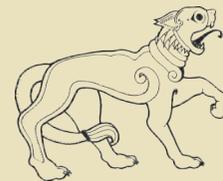
Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.2.34

*ye vai bhagavatā proktā upāyā hy ātma-labdhaye
aṅgaḥ pumsām aviduṣāṁ viddhi bhāgavatān hi tān*

Even ignorant living entities can very easily come to know the Supreme Lord if they adopt those means prescribed by the Supreme Lord himself. The process recommended by the Lord is to be known as *bhāgavata-dharma*, or devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Vishwanath: The characteristics of *bhāgavata-dharma* are described. *Varṇāśrama* was spoken by Manu and others. But because *bhakti* is most secret, the Lord himself speaks it. Know that the method for quickly attaining one's benefit (*ātmā-labdhaye*), even for ignorant persons, is *bhāgavata-dharma*.

— Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur. *Sārārtha-darśīni*. English translation by Sripad Bhanu Swami. Parampara Publishers. Chennai, India. 2004.





Unknown photographer

Srila Prabhupada visiting New Mayapur, France, in August 1976

Although the Krishna consciousness movement is a movement of Brahmins and *vaiṣṇavas*, it is trying to reestablish the divine *varṇāśrama* institution, for without this division of society there cannot be peace and prosperity anywhere. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 7.11.18-20)

One of the objectives of the Krishna consciousness movement is to establish this *daiva-varṇāśrama*, but not to encourage so-called *varṇāśrama* without scientifically organized endeavor by human society. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 7.14.10)

We have repeatedly stressed that human culture does not begin unless one takes to the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 7.15.38-39)

Among the four *yugas* — *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali* — the *Kali-yuga* is the worst, but if the process of *varṇāśrama-dharma* is introduced, even in this age of *Kali*, the situation of *Satya-yuga* can be invoked. The Hare Krishna movement, or Krishna consciousness movement, is meant for this purpose. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 9.10.51)

Before coming to the standard of *varṇāśrama-dharma* there is no question of human civilization. Therefore, the Krishna consciousness movement is trying to establish this right system of human civilization, which is known as Krishna consciousness, or *daiva-varṇāśrama* — divine culture. (Science of Self Realization, chapter 3.o)

So this Vedic scheme, *varṇāśrama*, 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 reestablish the institution of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, not by birth, but by qualification. (Evening *darśana*, Washington DC, 8 July 1976)

The Krishna consciousness movement includes this system of division of society. It is perfect society. Therefore, we are trying to introduce the *varṇāśrama* system, although it is very difficult nowadays. (Interview with Trans-India Magazine, New York, 17 July 1976)

Prabhupada: 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 *mahā-mantra* and living an honorable life in Krishna Consciousness. In India especially people are religiously inclined. They like to live in village and also like to love Lord Rama, Lord Krishna. This idealism is running through their blood and veins. We have to organize their natural tendency and

elevate them again back to home, back to godhead. Please think over these points very seriously and as soon as I return we shall take up the program. My beloved sannyasi disciple Swami Pushta Krishna has promised to give me a car, and as soon as I get it I shall move from village to village along with some selected assistants and organize this farming village development program. (Letter to Kartikeya K. Mahadevia, Johannesburg, 19 October 1975)

Vishnujana: ...When we first go to open a temple in a city, we get an apartment or a storefront. But then,

Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

BEYOND VARNASHRAM

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.2.35

*yān āsthāya naro rājan na pramādyeta karhicit
dhāvan nimilya vā netre na skhalen na pated iha*

O King, one who accepts this process of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead will never blunder on his path in this world. Even while running with eyes closed, he will never trip or fall.

Vishwanath: The person who has begun *bhakti* is no longer qualified for *varṇāśrama*. In performing *bhakti* there is no consideration of whether one has performed those duties of *varṇāśrama* or not. The Lord says:

*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvata
mat-kathā-śravaṇāḍau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

One should continue to perform the Vedic ritualistic activities only until one becomes detached from material sense gratification and develops faith in hearing and chanting about me. (*Bhāg.* 11.20.9)

In the next verse it is said *bhaktyaikayeśam guru-devatātmā*. The word *ekayā* modifying *bhaktiyā* indicates that *karma-miśra* and other types of mixed *bhakti* are also rejected.





Painting by Krishnahari Das, published by the artist, Calcutta, circa 1880

Śrīmatira mūrālī-śikṣā, Radharānī's lessons in the flute



Unknown photographer

Srila Prabhupada walking through the fields in Mayapur in March of 1974

when more and more people come then we should get land and cows and everything and...

Prabhupada: Yes, yes.

Vishnujana: ...and turn it into a society.

Hridayananda: Ah, that's wonderful. (Morning walk in Vrindavan, 14 March 1974)

Vaishnava is Not Cheap

Satsvarupa: When Ramananda Ray brought this up, Lord Chaitanya said it was not possible in this age to introduce this.

Prabhupada: Yes. Not... He did not say possible. *Eho bahya*. [From Cc. madhya 8.59: "The Lord replied, "This is external. You had better tell me of some other means.""] Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was interested only on the spiritual platform. He had no idea of the material side. He rejected the material side.

Satsvarupa: But don't we do that also?

Prabhupada: No. Our position is different. We are trying to implement Krishna consciousness in everything. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu personally took *sannyāsa*. He completely rejected material. He was *niṣkiñcana* ["one who has nothing to do with this material world"]. But we are not going to be *niṣkiñcana*. ... We are not rejecting the whole society.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu rejected everything, *eho bahya*, meaning, "I do not take much interest in this." *Bahya*, "It is external." He was simply interested in the internal, the spiritual.

But our duty is that we shall pave the way, we shall arrange the external affairs also so nicely



Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

NECESSITY OF WORSHIPING THE LORD

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.5.3

*ya eṣāṁ puruṣaṁ sākṣād ātma-prabhavam īśvaram
na bhajanty avajānanti sthānād bhraṣṭāḥ patanty adhaḥ*

If any of the members of the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas* fail to worship, if they thus disrespect the Lord, who is the source of their own creation, they will fall down from their *āśrama*.





Unknown artist, Kanoria painting, 1780

that one day they will come to the spiritual platform very easily. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and personalities like that, have nothing to do with this material world. But we are preaching. Therefore, we must pave the situation in such a way that gradually they will be promoted to the spiritual plane.

Satsvarupa: *Varṇāśrama* is not required.

Prabhupada: Not required. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu denied it. He said, “I am not a *brāhmaṇa*, I am not a *kṣatriya*, I am not this, I am not this.” He rejected. But in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Krishna says *catur-varnyam maya srstam*. [Bg. 4.13]: “According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by me...”] So we are preaching Krishna consciousness. It must be done.

Hari-sauri: But in Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s practical preaching he only induced them to chant.

Prabhupada: That is not possible for ordinary man.

Hari-sauri: What, to simply induce people to chant?

Prabhupada: But who will chant? Who’ll chant?

Satsvarupa: But if they won’t chant, then neither will they train up in *varṇāśrama*. That’s the easiest.

Prabhupada: The chanting will be there, but you cannot expect that people will chant like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. They cannot even chant sixteen rounds. And these rascals are going to be Chaitanya Mahaprabhu?

Satsvarupa: No. But if they at least will chant and take some *prasāda*...

Prabhupada: Chanting will go on. That is not stopped. But at the same time *varṇāśrama-dharma* must be established to make the way easy.

Hari-sauri: Well, at least my own understanding was that the chanting was introduced in the age of *Kali* because *varṇāśrama* is not possible.

Prabhupada: Because it will cleanse the mind. Chanting will not stop.

Hari-sauri: So, therefore, the chanting was introduced to replace all of the systems of *varṇāśrama* and like that.

Prabhupada: Yes, it can replace, but who is going to replace it? The people are not so advanced. If you imitate Haridas Thakur to chant, it is not possible.

Satsvarupa: We tell them go on with your job but chant also.

Prabhupada: Yes. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu recommended, *sthāne sthitāḥ* [“just stay where you are”, *Bhāg.* 10.14.3]. And if they do not remain in

the *sthāna*, [situated in their proper position] then the *sahajiyā*’s chanting will come. The *sahajiyā*s also have beads..., but they have got three dozen women. This kind of chanting will go on. Just like our [name withheld]. He was not fit for *sannyāsa* but he was given *sannyāsa*. And he was attached to five women.

Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

NO OBLIGATION TO PERFORM

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.5.41

*devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām piṭṛṇām
na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan
sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam
gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam*

O King! One who has given up all *varṇāśrama* duties and has taken full shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, who offers shelter to all, is not a debtor to or a servant of the *devatās*, great sages, ordinary living beings, relatives or *Pitṛs*.

Vishwanath: This verse shows that *bhakti* is devoid of the troubles caused by daily and occasional duties such as *śrāddha* rites and *tarpaṇas*. *Āpta* refers to those who give nourishment such as mother and father. *Devatās* refers to the *devatās* of the five sacrifices. One involved in *karmas* is the debtor and servant of the *devatās*, sages, living beings, parents, and *Pitṛs*. He daily performs the five sacrifices for them. [Translators note: The sacrifices are *deva-yajña*, *bhūta-yajña*, *brahma-yajña*, *nṛ-yajña* and *piṭṛ-yajña*.] *Smṛti* says *parikṣīṇam ṛṇārthaṁ karma kārayet*: one should perform *karmas* for destroying debts. That is not so for the devotee who has surrendered completely to Mukunda. It is just like a person who, on being accepted as the servant of the emperor of the earth, cannot be the servant of the ruler of a province. This person has given up all prescribed *varṇāśrama* duties (*kartam*) or has given up all distinctions. When one worships Vishnu all worship of *devatās* and *Pitṛs* is accomplished.



Painting by Radhe Gendron



Krishna loves the calves and cows of Vrindavan

Therefore *varṇāśrama-dharma* is required. Simply show-bottle will not do. So *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be introduced all over the world.

Satsvarupa: Introduced starting with our ISKCON community?

Prabhupada: Yes. Yes. *Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriyas*. There must be regular education.

Hari-sauri: But in our community, if we are being trained up as *vaiṣṇavas*, then how will we be able to make divisions in our society?

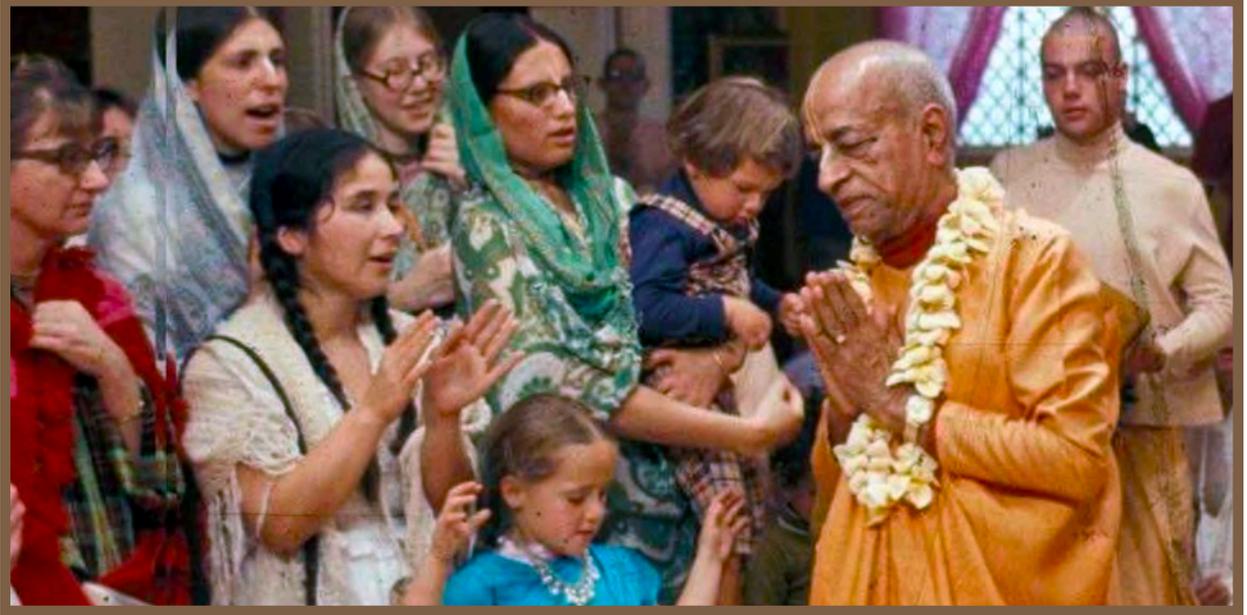
Prabhupada: *Vaiṣṇava* is not so easy. *Varṇāśrama-dharma* should be established to become a *vaiṣṇava*. It is not so easy to become *vaiṣṇava*.

Hari-sauri: No, it's not a cheap thing.

Prabhupada: Yes. Therefore, this should be done. To become a *vaiṣṇava* is not so easy. If becoming a *vaiṣṇava* is easy, why do so many fall down? It is not easy. (Conversation in Mayapur, 14 February 1977)

Varnashram is Not Always Necessary

Vishnu worship is the ultimate aim of human life. Those who take the license of married life for sense enjoyment must also take the responsibility to satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vishnu, and the first stepping-stone is the *varṇāśrama-dharma* system. *Varṇāśrama-dharma* is the systematic institution for advancing in worship of Vishnu. However, if one directly engages in the process of devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, it may not



Unknown photographer.

Srila Prabhupada with some of his spiritual daughters

Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

QUALIFICATION FOR BHAKTI

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.11.23-24



*śraddhātur mat-kathāḥ śṛṇvan su-bhadrā loka-pāvaniḥ
gāyann anusmaran karma janma cābhinayan muhuḥ
mad-arthe dharma-kāmāṛthān ācaran mad-apāśrayaḥ
labhate niścalān bhaktiṁ mayy uddhava sanātane*



A person with natural faith should constantly hear topics about me, should sing and remember my topics which purify the world, and enact my exploits and birth. He should perform *dharma*, *kāma* and *artha* as service to me. Having taken shelter of me, he will attain permanent *bhakti* to me, whose form is permanent.

Vishwanath: Having described *jñāna-yoga* in four and half verses, Krishna now describes *bhakti-yoga* until *Bhāg.* 11.12.15. The ending on *śraddhāluḥ* indicates a natural faith. This excludes a mixture of *jñāna* or *karma*. Placing this word at the beginning indicates that such natural faith is the qualification for *bhakti*. It will be said:

*yadṛcchayā mat-kathāu jāta-śraddhas tu yaḥ pumān
nā nirviṇṇo nāti-sakto bhakti-yogo 'sya siddhi-daḥ*

If by unexpected association with devotees one develops faith in my topics, such a person, being neither very disgusted with nor attached to material life, is qualified for *bhakti* and will achieve perfection.

*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvatā
mat-kathā-śravaṇāu vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

As long as one does not become detached from daily and periodic duties or has not awakened his faith in hearing topics about me, one must perform one's prescribed duties of *varṇāśrama*. (*Bhāg.* 11.20.8-9)

Thus the qualification for *bhakti* is different from the qualification for *jñāna* or *karma*.



Painting by Sophie Charlotte Belnos. 1851

" Religious Vessels from The Sandhya or the Daily Prayers of the Brahmins"

be necessary to undergo the disciplinary system of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. The other sons of Brahma, the Kumaras, directly engaged in devotional service, and thus they had no need to execute the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 3.13.11)

Madhudvisha: Prabhupada, in this age of Kali when there is no social structure or *varṇāśrama-dharma*, how can one discriminate how he is utilizing his energies for his prescribed duties? How can one determine his prescribed duties, as Lord Krishna has described here, for Arjuna to follow his prescribed duties.

Prabhupada: Yes. Before coming to Krishna consciousness were you in *varṇāśrama*? Then how you have come? How you have come to this position?

Madhudvisha: Out of misery.

Prabhupada: No, no, no. You have come to execute Krishna consciousness. Before coming to this Krishna consciousness, were you in *varṇāśrama-dharma*? No. So at the present moment, there is no possibility of persons following the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, either here or anywhere. Everyone is *varṇa-saṅkara*. *Kalau sūdra-sambhavaḥ*. In this age, everyone is a *sūdra*. Nobody is a *brāhmaṇa*, nobody is a *kṣatriya*, nobody is a *vaiśya*. All *sūdra*. So in this age, you won't find anybody following *varṇāśrama-dharma*.

Therefore, the panacea is to engage everyone in Krishna consciousness — chanting Hare Krishna. He [then] comes above the highest principle of *brahmanism*. This is the greatest gift to humanity, that even if he is in a fallen, most degraded position, he can be raised to the highest position simply by chanting. This is the only remedy. Now you cannot again introduce this system of *varṇāśrama*. It is not possible. But if one takes to Krishna consciousness, then automatically he immediately becomes a *brāhmaṇa* and above a *brāhmaṇa*. A *vaiṣṇava* is above the *brāhmaṇa*. Just like when we initiate — give the Hare Krishna *mantra* — he is supposed to be above all the material modes of nature. And when he has practiced, we offer him the sacred thread. This is the prescription for this age. Otherwise, you cannot select who is a *brāhmaṇa*, who is a *sūdra*, who is a *kṣatriya*. It is very difficult. (Lecture in Los Angeles, 30 December 1968)

It is no longer possible to revive the perfect system, *varṇāśrama*. Although we are trying to revive, it is not possible. It is very difficult. People are so fallen. *Mandāḥ sumanda-matayo manda-bhāgyā hy upadrutāḥ*

[*Bhāg.* 1.1.10]. They are so disturbed, *manda-bhāgyāḥ*, unfortunate, and *upadrutāḥ*, always disturbed...There will be no rainfall, and food scarcity and taxation by the government, income tax. Income tax is to



Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

REJECTING VARNASHRAM

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.18.28

*jñāna-niṣṭho virakto vā mad-bhakto vānapekṣakah
sa-liṅgān āśramāns tyaktvā cared avidhi-gocarāḥ*

A person fixed in *jñāna* and detached from external objects, or my devotee who is detached even from the desire for liberation — both should reject the *āśrama* duties based on external rituals or paraphernalia and conduct themselves beyond the range of rules.

Vishwanath: The mature *jñānī* and the *niṣkāma* devotee are beyond the rules of *varṇāśrama*. The mature *jñānī*, devoid of expectations of even good position, should reject the rules. Complete indifference to things (*anapekṣakah*) is not possible for the devotee who has not developed *prema*. Thus the devotee who has developed *prema* gives up the *āśramas* along with the all signs of *āśramas* (such as the stick and water pot). The devotee who has not developed *prema* (who is not *anapekṣakah*) gives up the actions of the *āśramas* but not its external signs. However, for the devotees in general, giving up the actions of his *sva-dharma* takes place to some degree from the beginning of *bhakti*:

*āvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvataḥ
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

As long as one is not satiated by fruitive activity and has not awakened his taste for devotional service, hearing and chanting, one has to act according to the regulative principles of the Vedic injunctions. (*Bhāg.* 11.20.9)

Because the matured *jñānī* and the *prema-bhakta* have no tendency for sin, there is no fear of bad conduct. Thus they do not have to follow rules.





Painting by Sophie Charlotte Belmos. 1851

"Daily Prayer of the Brahmins"

plunder...This is Kali-yuga. So in this position of harassment, how can the peaceful *varṇāśrama* be revived? It is very difficult. It is almost impossible. (Lecture in Bombay, 14 November 1974)

Above Varnashram

Our position is that we are above *varṇāśrama*. But for management or ideal society, we are introducing this. So far we are concerned, as Krishna conscious men, we are above *varṇāśrama*. But to show the people that we are not escaping — we can take part in any order of life. That is our position. Just like if I brush somebody's shoes, that does not mean I am shoemaker. My position is the same. But to show how to do it... Just like a servant is doing. The master says, "Oh, you cannot do. Just watch." Just like I show you sometimes how to mop. I am not a mopper, but I am showing how to mop. Our position is like that. We do not belong to any *varṇa* and *āśrama*.

But we have to show these rascals. Just like Dhruva Maharaja. He was a perfect *vaiṣṇava*, but when he was king, he was fighting like anything. Not that, "Oh, now I have become a *vaiṣṇava*. I cannot kill." What is this? He killed like anything. When the *yakṣas* attacked his kingdom, he was killing like anything, so that finally the *yakṣa-rāja* came and asked him to pardon this. He immediately accepted. He [the king of the *yakṣas*] wanted to give him a benediction, "You are so great that simply on my request, you have stopped killing these rascal, *yakṣas*. So you can take some benediction from me." Dhruva said, "That's all right. Thank you. You give me the benediction that I may be a pure lover of Krishna. That's all." This is the benediction he asked for. Although he was so powerful and the *yakṣa-rāja*, could give him the wealth of the whole universe, but Dhruva said, "Thank you very much. Give me this benediction that I may remain a pure devotee of Krishna." This is *vaiṣṇava*. He is doing everything, but his aim is to please Krishna. Similarly, even if we take to *varṇāśrama*, we do not belong to any... Just like Krishna says, *mayā sṛṣṭam*. "I have inaugurated." But Krishna has nothing to do with *varṇāśrama*. Similarly, if we act as *varṇāśrama*, still, we have nothing to do with *varṇāśrama*. (Morning walk in Vrindaban, 14 March 1974)

The *varṇāśrama* system is for convenience sake in the material world. It has nothing to do with spiritual life. Acceptance of *varṇāśrama* means a

little easy progress to spiritual life, otherwise it has no importance to us. For example, all my European and American disciples have no *varṇāśrama* position, but spiritually because they have followed the rules and regulations and also my instructions, their advancement spiritually is being appreciated by everyone. Always remember that *varṇāśrama* life is a good program for material life, and it helps one in spiritual life; but spiritual life is not dependent upon it. After all, the system of *varṇāśrama* has to be realized before accepting spiritual life; and the renounced order of *sannyāsa* is the last stage of *varṇāśrama*. (Letter to Hansadutta, 19 Oct. 1974)

Not Important for Krishna Consciousness

Prabhupada: All my sisters were married within twelve years. My second sister, she became twelve years, and I heard my mother become so disturbed: "Oh, this girl is not being married. I shall commit suicide." [laughter]

Tamal Krishna: At twelve!

Prabhupada: Twelve years. And she was given to a boy, my brother-in-law, for his second marriage. Means that my brother-in-law lost his first wife,

Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

PRODUCES IMPERSONAL LIBERATION

Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 11.18.47

*varṇāśramavatāin dharma eṣa ācāra-lakṣaṇaḥ
sa eva mad-bhakti-yuto niḥśreyasa-karaḥ paraḥ*

Following rules of *varṇāśrama* with a little mixture of *bhakti* produces impersonal liberation.

Vishwanath: Having spoken of mixed *bhakti* (where *bhakti* is more prominent than *jñāna*), Krishna now describes secondary *bhakti* (where *jñāna* is more prominent than *bhakti*). Activities of *varṇāśrama* with offerings to me produce impersonal liberation (*niḥśreyasa-karaḥ*).





Srila Prabhupada giving class outside of his mud hut in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, in February 1977

and still he was twenty-one years old. My sister was twelve years old, and brother-in-law was twenty-one. They say that if the girl before marriage has menstruation, then the father has to eat that menstrual liquid. Means it is very strict. And if the father is not living, then the elder brother has to eat. [break] ... Getting the girl married rests on the father. In the absence of the father, the eldest brother. The girl must be married. That is called *kanyā-dāya*. *Dāya* means “legally inheritance”. Just like your father’s money you get automatically. So similarly, *kanyā-dāya* means to get the girl married is a *dāya*. You cannot refuse it. It is incumbent; you must do it.

Tamal Krishna: So many of the girls in our society, they have reached that age but they are not getting married.

Prabhupada: No, your society is different. Now it is here also.

Tamal Krishna: I mean in ISKCON, in our Society.

Prabhupada: No, ISKCON is not going to be a social reformer, but as far as possible we can help. Our main business is how to make everyone Krishna conscious. That is our business. We cannot take up, but if possible we can take up all of the *varṇāśrama* system.

Tamal Krishna: If *varṇāśrama* is neglected, then how can there be proper functioning of society?

Prabhupada: No. If the society chants Hare Krishna seriously, then it is all right. Never mind whatever [sins] are done. It doesn’t matter. *Pāpī tāpī jata chilo,*

hari-nāme uddhārilo [by chanting one is delivered from all sins. From Srila Narottam Das Thakur’s *Prārthanā*.]. This is the power of *hari-saṅkīrtana*. If one is absorbed in Krishna consciousness, all benefit is there. So long we are in the bodily concept of life, we require this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. Otherwise there is no necessity.

You have read the eighth chapter of *madhya-līlā* [of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*] — the talks between Ramananda Ray and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu? “How does perfectional life begin?” This question was raised by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and Ramananda replied, “It begins with the *varṇāśrama-dharma*, regulated social life.”

Tamal Krishna: Mahaprabhu rejected that.

Prabhupada: Not rejected. He said, “Yes, it is not very important.” *Eho bāhya* — “This is external.” *Āge kaha āra* — “If you know something more, please speak it.” So *varṇāśrama-dharma* is a good help undoubtedly, but it is not important for Krishna consciousness. Otherwise how could I start this movement in the Western country? There was no *varṇāśrama-dharma*. But that did not hamper my movement. Now people are surprised: “How these people have become such great devotees.” It was not based on *varṇāśrama-dharma*. No. Because the whole movement is spiritual. It starts from the spiritual platform, *ahaṁ brahmāsmi. Jīvera svarūpa haya nitya-kṛṣṇa-dāsa* [Cc. *madhya* 20.108]. *Samāśritāye pada-pallava-plavaṁ mahat-padaṁ puṇya-yaśo murāreḥ, bhavāmbudhir vatsa-padaṁ param* [Bhāg. 10.14.58].

Just like if there is a gap [in the road]. You can cross it by a bridge, or you can jump over, that is also going on. To become Krishna conscious means to jump over to the spiritual platform immediately. This *varṇāśrama-dharma*, *sannyāsa*, *varṇa-tyāga*, *karma-tyāga*, these are different steps only. But if you become Krishna conscious seriously, then you jump over all these steps; you go immediately. Like the lift and the staircase. By staircase you go step by step; but by lift you can go immediately, faster.

Hridayananda: Even some of these women, they are not married but they are serving Krishna.

Prabhupada: Yes. *Striyo sūdrāḥ tathā vaiśyās* [Bg. 9.32]. This *striyā*, generally it is understood to mean, “Even she is prostitute”. *Te ‘pi yānti parām gatim* — “They can also go back to home, back to Godhead.” If one takes Krishna very seriously, then everything is possible. Devotional service is so strong that it cannot be checked by any material impediments. The *smārtas*, they are thinking that, “How can these *mlecchas* and *yavanas* become *brāhmaṇas*?” But they do not know that by Krishna consciousness one can jump over. It is understood to mean. Therefore, there are gradual processes, *varṇāśrama-dharma*, *karma-tyāga*, this, and that, so many things, pious activities, and rituals. But this is the process, step by step, to cross over *māyā*. *mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te* — “Anyone who surrenders to Krishna sincerely, immediately he crosses over” [Bg. 7.14]. As Krishna says in another place, *aham tvām sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi* [Bg. 18.66]: “I’ll do immediately.” *Māyā* means *pāpa*, sin. Unless one is sinful, he cannot be in *māyā*. So if one surrenders, then it means that he immediately crosses over *māyā*. These *smārta brāhmaṇas*, they are thinking, “How can a person born in other families become a *brāhmaṇa*?”

Hridayananda: So they have no faith in devotional service.

Prabhupada: No, they are... [the tape ends here] (Morning walk in Mayapur, 9 February 1976)

Srila Prabhupada’s Final Words on Varnashram

[**Note:** The following purport excerpt is the final written instructions given by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada on the subject of *varṇāśrama*.]

We should gradually come to the *sattva-guṇa* so that we may avoid the two lower *guṇas*. This can be done

if we regularly discuss *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* and hear about Krishna’s activities. ...by hearing and discussing *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa* are subdued, so that only *sattva-guṇa* remains. Then *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa* cannot do us any harm.

Varṇāśrama-dharma, therefore, is essential, for it can bring people to *sattva-guṇa*. *Tadā rajas-tamo-bhāvāḥ kāma-lobhādāyaśca ye* (Bhāg. 1.2.19). *Tamo-guṇa* and *rajo-guṇa* increase lust and greed, which implicate a living entity in such a way that he must exist in this material world in many, many forms. That is very dangerous. One should therefore be brought to *sattva-guṇa* by



Śāstra on Varṇāśrama

BHAKTI DOES NOT ARISE FROM VARNASHRAM

**Srila Vishwanath Chakravarti Thakur’s
Comments on Bhāg. 11.17.1-2**

Dharma of *bhakti* has three types: pure *bhakti*, mixed *bhakti* and secondary *bhakti*. Pure *bhakti* arises in humans with or without *varṇāśrama* by association with pure devotees, by good fortune. It does not arise from *varṇāśrama* or other processes. You have said:

*yam na yogena sāṅkhyena dāna-vrata-tapo-’dhvaraiḥ
vyākhyā-svādhyāya-sannyāsaiḥ prāpnuyād yatnavān api*

I cannot be attained by intense efforts of *yoga*, *sāṅkhya*, charity, vows, austerity, sacrifices, explaining the Vedas, study of the Vedas, or *sannyāsa*. (Bhāg. 11.12.9)

When persons practicing *varṇāśrama* contact pure *bhakti* by devotional association, they give up *varṇāśrama* and perform the *dharma* of *bhakti*.

*ājñāyaivam guṇān doṣān mayādiṣṭān api svakān
dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān mām bhajeta sa tu sattamaḥ*

A person who, understanding good and bad aspects of *dharma* as taught by me, gives up all his duties and simply worships me is the best of all. (Bhāg. 11.11.32.)



the establishment of *varṇāśrama-dharma* and should develop the *brahminical* qualifications of being very neat and clean, rising early in the morning and seeing *maṅgala-ārātrika*, and so on. In this way, one should stay in *sattva-guṇa*, and then one cannot be influenced by *tamo-guṇa* and *rajo-guṇa*. (Purport to *Bhāg.* 10.13.53) 🍌

VARNASHRAM MEANS LIVING OFF THE LAND



A Remembrance of His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
By **Abhiram Das**

Shortly before Srila Prabhupada departed from this world, there were a few conversations he had about Gita-nagari. In one conversation, downstairs in his house in Vrindavan, he was talking about his impending death, and he said, “I have no lamentation.” Naturally, he was free of all hankering and lamenting. But then he paused and said, “No, I have a lamentation.” Three or four people were there at the time, and someone asked, “Do you mean because you have not finished translating the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*?”

Srila Prabhupada said, “No, because I have not established *varṇāśrama*. Fifty percent of my work is incomplete because I have not established *varṇāśrama*.” Then the question arose, “What to do about this uncompleted work?” In another conversation on the roof, Srila Prabhupada said, “I want to establish *varṇāśrama*,” and one of us asked, “How will you do that?” Prabhupada said, “I will sit down in Gita-nagari and teach you to live off the land.” He made it as simple as that. 🍌

— From *Srila Prabhupada - Remembrances*. Volume 2, chapter 28. Compiled by Siddhanta Das. ITV.

VAISHNAVAS, VARNASHRAM, AND STRI-SANGA

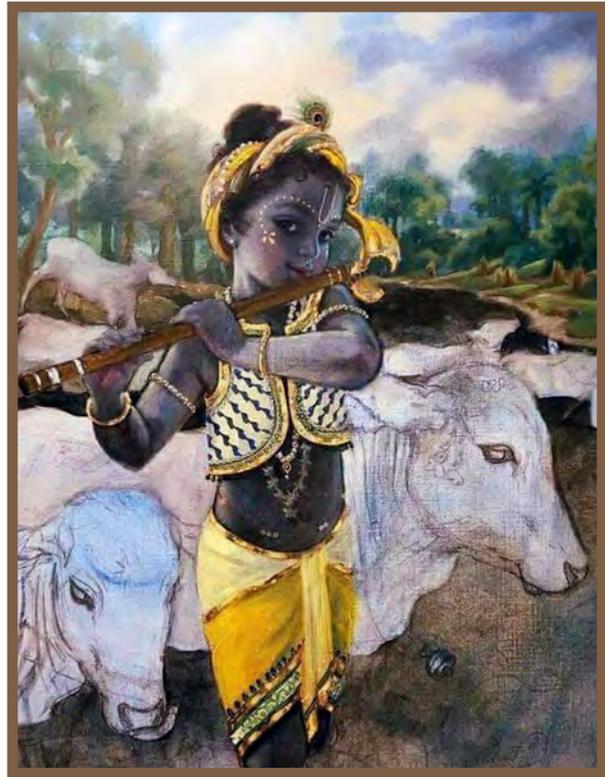


Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

In the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *madhya-līlā*, chapter twenty-two, 87, 93, 142, 143, and 145 it is stated:

asat-saṅga-tyāga, — *ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra*
‘strī-saṅgī’ — eka asādhu, ‘kṛṣṇābhakta’ āra

A *vaiṣṇava* should always avoid the association of ordinary people. Common people are very much materially



Painting by Radhe Gendron

Krishna calls the cows with his flute

attached, especially to women. *Vaiṣṇavas* should also avoid the company of those who are not devotees of Lord Krishna.

eta saba chāḍī’ āra varṇāśrama-dharma
akiñcana hañā laya kṛṣṇaika-śaraṇa

Without hesitation, one should take the exclusive shelter of Lord Krishna with full confidence, giving up bad association and even neglecting the regulative principles of the four *varṇas* and four *āśramas*. That is to say, one should abandon all material attachment.

vidhi-dharma chāḍī’ bhaje kṛṣṇera caraṇa
niṣiddha pāpācāre tāra kabhu nahe mana

Although the pure devotee does not follow all the regulative principles of *varṇāśrama*, he worships the lotus feet of Krishna. Therefore he naturally has no tendency to commit sin.

ajñāne vā haya yadi ‘pāpa’ upasthita
kṛṣṇa tāire śuddha kare, nā karāya prāyaścitta

If, however, a devotee accidentally becomes involved in a sinful activity, Krishna purifies him. He does not have to undergo the regulative form of atonement.

jñāna-vairāgyādi — bhaktira kabhu nahe ‘aṅga’
ahimsā-yama-niyamādi bule kṛṣṇa-bhakta-saṅga

The path of speculative knowledge and renunciation is not very essential for devotional service. Indeed, good qualities such as nonviolence and mind and sense control automatically accompany a devotee of Lord Krishna.

The first obstacle for being able to identify oneself as a *vaiṣṇava* is *strī-saṅga*, association with women. Association with women is of two types, the first of which is regulated association based on *varṇāśrama* principles. In the *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, (ādi 1.94) it is said:

*kṛṣṇa-bhaktira bādhaka—yata śubhāśubha karma
seha eka jīvera ajñāna-tamo-dharma*

All kinds of activities, both auspicious and inauspicious, that are detrimental to the discharge of transcendental loving service to Lord Śrī Krishna are actions of the darkness of ignorance.”

Srila Thakur Narottam has also said (*Prema-bhakti-candrikā* 6.13):

*punya se sukhera dhāma, tāhāra nā laio nāma
pāpa punya dui parihara*

Don't even talk about pious activities, which are the source of all happiness. Give up both pious and sinful activities.

Giving up the association of *hari-janas* and becoming overly attached to the wife under one's protection is the symptom of bad association. But remaining in the *grhastha āśrama* in order to increase Krishna's family cannot be called *strī-saṅga*. The second kind of *strī-saṅga* is unregulated association with women, which is irreligious and which creates disturbances in the *varṇāśrama* society, because those who indulge in such association are engaged in sinful activities, abominable activities, or inactivity, and as a result they go to hell. The sinful people of the material world are completely unqualified to be called *vaiṣṇavas*. And pious people who strictly follow the rules and regulations of *varṇāśrama* but are indifferent to the service of Hari are also completely unqualified to be called *hari-janas*.

If the lowest classes of *prakṛti-janas* are addressed as *hari-janas*, then those who address them as such are ineligible to have the fortune of being called *hari-janas*.

If *varṇāśrama* and other fruitive activities enjoined in the *śāstras* become prominent in one's life, then one cannot become *akiñcana*, fully dependent on the Lord; rather these activities provoke offenses against the chanting of the holy names in the form of conceptions of “I” and “mine”. If a person who is fully surrendered to Krishna becomes proud of following *varṇāśrama* principles, then it must be considered that he has become most unfortunate. 🍊

— *Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava*. English translation by Bhumiapati Das. Pages 112-115. Vrajara Press. Vrindavan. 1999.

VAISHNAVAS AND VARNASHRAM



Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur Jaiva Dharma Chapter 7

Yadavadas: O revered master, householder devotees live under the shelter of the *varṇāśrama* system. If such a *grhastha* gives up *varṇāśrama*, can they be a *vaiṣṇava*?

Anantadas: Ah! *Vaiṣṇava dharma* is very broad and generous. It is also known as *jaiva-dharma*, or the religion for all living entities. Every human being is qualified to follow the *vaiṣṇava dharma*. Even outcastes may embrace *vaiṣṇava dharma* and live as householders. For them there is no *varṇāśrama*. They who break the *varṇāśrama* rules of *sannyāsa* may, by associating with devotees, attain pure *bhakti*. Then they can be householder devotees. For them there are no rules of *varṇāśrama*. They who because of their misdeeds have left the *varṇāśrama* system may still, along with their children, take shelter of pure *bhakti* in the association of the devotees. Then they are householder devotees, but they are not part of the *varṇāśrama* system. Householder devotees are of two kinds: Those who follow the *varṇāśrama* system, and those who do not follow the *varṇāśrama* system.

Yadavadas: Of these two which is the best?

Anantadas: He who has more devotion is the best. If neither has any devotion then according to the material point of view the follower of *varṇāśrama* is better because he is pious and the other is an outcaste. However, from the spiritual point of view, they are both degraded, for neither has any devotion. 🍊

Bibliography

— Bhaktivinode Thakur. *Jaiva Dharma*. Gaudiya Mission. Calcutta. 1984. Bengali.

— Bhaktivinode Thakur. *Jaiva Dharma*. English translation by Sarvabhavana Das. Published by Brhat Mrdanga Press. Vrindavan. 2003.

THE VARNASHRAM OF A PURE VAISHNAVA



Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

Although a pure *vaiṣṇava*'s conduct has some similarity with a person following *varṇa-dharma*, they do not consider it to be their aim to nourish



Pahari painting circa 1700's. Unknown artist.

Krishna decorates Radharani's eyes with kajjala

society, nor to bestow auspiciousness upon it. They do not fill the sky of their hearts with such thoughts that by their actions, society will either be nourished or harmed. A pure *vaiṣṇava* is never busy in establishing himself amongst the fourfold *varṇas* and fourfold *āśramas*. He feels no hesitation towards anybody whose activities cross the boundaries of the regulations of *varṇa* or who does not respect the rules of *āśrama*. This is because all his activities are dedicated to the

sole aim of increasing *bhagavat-bhakti*. A pure *vaiṣṇava* does not feel pride or shame due to his being a Brahmin, or a *mleccha-caṇḍāla* or being a *gr̥hastha* or a *bhikṣu*. If a pure *vaiṣṇava* attains hell or heaven in order to achieve *bhagavat-bhakti*, it is all the same. The *prema* which he has from attaining Bhagavan, or the *prema* from being in separation from Bhagavan is never reduced. A pure *vaiṣṇava* does not hanker for anything. He has no scarcity of anything. Due to the deficiency

of those who desire Brahman, they are enticed by the excellence of unachievable things. When they achieve that, the splendour of the form of Brahman which is always desired by them, becomes inferior. One who desires Brahman is constantly disturbed by the entanglements of *māyā*. A pure *vaiṣṇava* is not agitated by that. Although the appearance and all the activities of a pure devotee seem to be similar to the appearance and activities of those who desire *māyika* results, factually they are very different.

Sometimes, considering pure *vaiṣṇavas* and inferior *vaiṣṇavas* to be the same, many people ask pure *vaiṣṇavas* their *varṇa*, and just like those persons within society, they attempt to categorise them in one of the four *āśramas*. Such attempts are simply befitting a non-*vaiṣṇava* and are merely a social endeavour. If one has *darśana* of the divine appearance pastimes of Sri Gaurāṅga, who is the saviour of the fallen, and the world's only Supreme Guru, then all doubts will be dispelled. 🍊

— From the article, “Śrī Vaiṣṇavera Varṇāśrama” (The Varnashram of a Pure Vaishnava), first published in *Sajjana Toṣaṇī* magazine, Vol. 11. Issue 10 in 1900. Translated into English by Sanatan Das. <https://bhaktivinodainstitute.org/sri-vaisnavera-varnasrama/>

ABOVE VARNASHRAM



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

By offering the fruits of one's activity for the pleasure of Lord Hari, the heart will become purified of material desires. When one becomes free from desires for one's own enjoyment and happiness, and under the guidance of a bona fide guru utilizes the fruit of his activities for Lord Hari's satisfaction, then one is elevated to the stage of pure devotion, *śuddha-bhakti*. He will then inquire and put forward questions about the soul and the supersoul — *tattva-jijñāsā*. A taste for *hari-kathā* will develop. By these symptoms it may be understood that such a person is not in the category of *varṇāśrama* but has gone above it. Therefore it is said that a *vaiṣṇava* does not belong to any caste. One should never say that a *vaiṣṇava* is a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* or *śūdra*. He is a *vaiṣṇava*. A *vaiṣṇava* is not under the modes of material nature. He is beyond them. (Lecture, Bhubaneswar, 5 November 1994.) 🍊

— *The Process of Inquiry*. Chapter 10. Gopal Jiu Publications. Jagannath Puri, India. 2020.

SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

A free bi-monthly service provided by
Gopal Jiu Publications

Subscribe at our website: www.gopaljiu.org

GopalJiuPublications is a section of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Quotations from the books, letters, and lectures of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada ©Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. All other materials, unless specified, © ISKCON Gopal Jiu Publications. All rights reserved. Blanket permission is given to redistribute Bindu in electronic or print form provided no changes are made to the contents.

