

SPEAKING ABOUT VARNASRAMA

Srila Prabhupada on Varnasrama and Farm Community Development

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PREFACE

In December 1992, ISKCON's Governing Body Commission established Correspondence Resolution Number 9, creating a Farm Research Committee to research Prabhupada's instructions on farming and rural community development. The committee realized that to research instructions on community development meant to research Prabhupada's instructions on social development. To research instructions on social development meant, in turn, to research Prabhupada's instructions on *varnasrama dharma*. Thus, the current work was assembled.

The committee's goal in creating this work has been to provide a systematically organized reference and resource for devotees in the Hare Krishna movement, from temple president and rural project leaders, to farmers, rural community members, and *Gurukula* and upper level teachers and their students, and especially to provide guidance for the leaders of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) as they seek to carry out the instructions of ISKCON's founder-acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in his mission of helping create a society dedicated to the loving service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Sri Krishna.

In addition, we want to provide an authoritative source for scholars, who in the near future, are sure to become increasingly interested in Prabhupada's teachings on how to organize a peaceful, productive God-centered society. Such researchers should know that the Krishna consciousness movement is founded on the scriptural principle, propagated in the recent age by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, that the Lord in his full potency is present in his names, such as Allah, Jehovah, Govinda, and many other transcendental names, of which the names Krishna and Rama are prominent. The potency of the name of God is recognized in all religions around the world. According to India's ancient Vedic scriptures such as the *Agni Purana* and *Brhan-naradiya Purana* (38.126), the most potent means of deliverance from illusion and material misery in the current age is to chant the names of God. The Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* is specifically mentioned in many places, such as the *Kali-santarana Upanishad*, for example, which states;

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Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

iti sodasakam namnam
kali-kalmasa-nasanam
matah parataropayah
sarva-vedesu drsyate

“After searching through all the *Vedic* literature, one cannot find a method of religion more sublime for this age than the chanting of Hare Krishna.”

Even though this method of spiritual advancement appears easy to adopt, it was Prabhupada’s realization that most people are so caught up in the illusory activities of the modern world that they are not able to directly avail themselves of the opportunity. Therefore, following in the footsteps of his spiritual predecessors in the Madhva-Gaudiya-*sampradaya* line of disciplic succession, he presented the system of *varnasrama dharma*, also known as *daiva-varnasrama*, to pave the way for spiritual progress by creating an environment in which chanting Hare Krishna and engaging in devotional service to the Lord would become easy and satisfying for everyone, even those coming from the lowest and least spiritually inclined segments of the population.

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The present volume is intended to be first of a series presenting Prabhupada’s instructions on *varnasrama* and rural community development. The series is planned to be organized as follows: volume one, conversations and lectures, volume two, *varnasrama* fundamentals, *brahmanas* and *ksatriyas* (including discussion of occupational training, land distribution, and taxation); volume three, *vaisyas* and *sudras* (including discussion of farming, cow protection, economics); volume four, *brahmacary* and *grihastha* (including discussion of the role of women and children); volume five, *vanaprasthas* and *sannyasis*. (volume five will also include a glossary and comprehensive index.)

The editors of this series encourage devotee who may have had personal exchanges and letters from Prabhupada related to these topics to contact us so that we may include that information in our presentation. We want to stress that this volume has been edited to maintain focus on the subject of the book. Scholars doing research may wish to contact The Bhaktivedanta Archives for original sources. (See: Convention Used in this Volume.)

Many devotees and friends of the devotees have helped bring this presentation of Prabhupada’s *varnasrama* message to fruition. They have provided funding, encouragement, and leads to valuable information in letters, discussions, e-mail message and phone conversation. We want to express our thanks to all who have done so much to help us in our work, with special thanks to the following individuals: Ambarisa das has magnanimously provided principle funding the project. Other benefactors include Bhakti-tirtha Swami, Advaita Candra dasa, Vraja-Vadhu-devi dasi, Hare Krishna dasi’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Traub, Linda Laracuenta, Wallace Dorian, Douglas Bahnuik, and the late Karenlee Campbell. Credit also goes to Naveen Krishna dasa for helping us in funding matters.

We are greatly indebted to all those devotees who have invested so much hard work and love to develop ISKCON's many farm communities over the years. Their dedication is an important inspiration for the present work. The help of several of those devotees deserves special mention. Lagudi dasa, the lead ox-man from Australia's New Govardhan Farm, collaborated on much for the preliminary research of Prabhupada's books. ISKCON's Minister for Cow Protection and Agriculture, Balabhadra dasa and his wife Chaya-devi dasi have been constant and enthusiastic supporters of the project. Vyapaka dasa, the co-editor of Hare Krishna /Rural Life provided encouragement and leads to important quotes. Our neighbors, Bhakta Bob Swett and his wife Bhakti Velma, have inspired us with their efforts to develop Krishna conscious farming in Maine. We also thank the ISKCON Commission for Social Development.

Other devotees and friends have helped give us the perspective that helped us notice important points that Prabhupada makes in his writing and talks. As well as friendship and intellectual critique, Jaya Lalita-devi dasi and Visakha-devi dasi gave us many insights on Prabhupada's economic and social thought. June and David Vail provided constant encouragement for this project, as did Paul Sarvis and Gwyneth Jones. Hare Krishna dasi's professors at Bowdoin College were supportive of her explorative comparisons of Prabhupada's socio-economic perspective with other modern thinkers: special thanks to John Fitzgerald, Daniel Rossides, Robert McIntyre, John Holt and Jonathan Goldstein for their kindness in this regard.

We want to thank the staff at *Back to Godhead* magazine for their support and for acting as a proving ground for much of this research over the past few years. In particular, our thanks go to Jayadvaita Swami, Nagaraja dasa and Yamaraja das for their support and guidance.

Our publishers, *The Bhaktivedanta Archives*, provided endless patience and assistance in all the technical matters of producing the book, as well as good-humored hospitality – and tasty prasadam. In particular, we want to thank Ranajit dasa, Dulal Candra dasa and Ekanatha dasa for their good cheer and valuable support. We have an unrepayable debt to all the devotees who worked to transcribe all Prabhupada's works for the *Bhaktivedanta VedaBase*. We also thank all the devotees at Prabhupada Village in Sandy Ridge, North Carolina, for their kindness and support for the project, with a special thanks to Harakanta-devi dasi and her family for their generous hospitality to Hare Krishna dasi during the book's editing sessions.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Paramananda dasa, ISKCON's first Minister of Agriculture, for the original inspiration to research Prabhupada's instructions on farming and *varnasrama*. We first heard excerpts from many of the conversations in this volume in his *Srimad-Bhagavatam* classes. We want to thank Suresvara dasa's wife, Katyayana-devi dasi and their daughter Radhika Candra-devi dasi for their support and encouragement, and we also thank Hare Krishna dasi's husband Stephen Petroff and their children, Maharani-devi dasi and Astottara-sata das for years of indispensable patience and sacrifice, loving assistance and enthusiasm for our work in presenting Prabhupada's message.

Before concluding this abbreviated list of those we are indebted to, in the spirit of *varnasrama* appreciation we want to take the opportunity to thank all the engineers and assemble workers of Grundig, Uher and Sony companies who worked to create the tape recorders used to record Prabhupada's priceless books and his lectures and conversations, making them all available to us. Without this unknowing devotional service on their part, the world be much, much poorer. Certainly, this is an example of what we meant by *varnasrama* cooperation: Even those who have a very humble occupation can serve the Lord because they provide indispensable help to those who have spiritual knowledge that can benefit the whole human society.

Finally, our greatest debt is to our *founder-acarya* and spiritual master, Prabhupada himself, for this great compassion in working to pave the way to make it easy for all of us to go back home, back to Godhead.

The Editors.