

# The Eight Petals



In Support of Varnashrama to Attain the Lord's Lotus Feet

## Advisor:

HH Bhakti Raghava Swami  
bhakti.raghava.swami@pamho.net

## Editor: Vrindavanlila dd

vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com

## Co-Editor:

HG Rasamandal Das  
Rasamandal.BRS@pamho.net

## Editorial Consultant:

HG Hari Kirtan Das  
hkd75@yahoo.com

## Conception & Design:

Vrindavanlila dd  
vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com








## Govinda Mas

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## Focus on Women



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## Simply by Following the Husband, a Woman Becomes a Devotee...

**Mrs. Wax:** I realize that we're all considered spirit souls. But can a woman be first -class if she...

**Prabhupāda:** Anyone can become first-class. Woman can become first-class if she is chaste and very much attached to husband. And if the husband is first-class, she becomes first-class. Because woman's duty is to follow husband. So if the husband is first-class, the wife is first-class, if she sticks to the husband.

**Mrs. Wax:** But she can never be first-class unless she has a first class husband.

**Prabhupāda:** No, she is first class by following faithfully husband. And if the husband is first-class, then woman is first-class. [Room Conversation, July 5, 1975, Chicago]

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"These women are not ordinary women. They are preachers. They are Vaishnavas. By their association one becomes a Vaishnava." [Morning walk, March 27, 1974]



# Srila Prabhupada Speaks on Women

## Bhartur Vrata-Dharma-Niṣṭhayā

The words *bhartur vrata-dharma-niṣṭhayā* indicate that a woman's duty, or religious principle, is to serve her husband in all conditions. In Vedic civilization a man is taught from the beginning of his life to become a brahmācārī, then an ideal grhastha, then vānaprastha, then sannyāsī, and the wife is taught just to follow the husband strictly in all conditions of life. After the period of brahmācarya, a man accepts a householder's life, and the woman is also taught by her parents to be a chaste wife. Thus when a girl and boy are united, both are trained for a life dedicated to a higher purpose. The boy is trained to execute his duty in accordance with the higher purpose of life, and the girl is trained to follow him. The chaste wife's duty is to keep her husband pleased in householder life in all respects, and when the husband retires from family life, she is to go to the forest and adopt the life of vānaprastha, or vana-vāsī. At that time the wife is to follow her husband and take care of him, just as she took care of him in householder life. But when the husband takes the renounced order of life, namely sannyāsa, the wife is to return home and become a saintly woman, setting an example for her children and daughters-in-law and showing them how to live a life of austerity. [SB 4:23:20, Purport]



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**Devotee:** "After reaching his own camp, Arjuna, along with his dear friend and charioteer (Sri Kṛṣṇa), entrusted the murderer unto his dear wife, who was lamenting for her murdered sons. "Sri Sūta Gosvāmī said: Draupadī then saw Asvatthamā, who was bound with ropes like an animal and silent for having enacted the most inglorious murder. Due to her female nature, and due to her being naturally good and well-behaved, she showed him due respects as a brahmana."

...**Prabhupada:** ...*athopetya sva-sibiram / govinda-priya-sarathih  
nyavedayat tam priyayai / socantya atma-jan hatan  
tatahrtam pasuvat pasa-baddham / avan-mukham karma-jugupsitena  
niriksya kṛṣṇapakṛtam guroh sutam / vama-svabhava kṛpayā nanama ca*

So this is already explained in the purport that woman's nature is very mild, and man's nature very strong. That is the difference. Therefore according to Vedic civilization, the woman must be protected because they are very simple. They can be led to goodness also very easily, and they can be polluted also very easily. By nature, they are very simple. Therefore sastra says that... Just like child. If you mold the character of a child from the very beginning, then he can become a great man. Similarly, if you train woman from the very beginning how to become chaste and faithful to the husband, they can become a very good mother, very good asset in the family.

So there is sufficient information in the Vedic literatures how a man should be trained up, a boy should be trained up, a girl should be trained up, so that in future they may become happy. The ultimate aim of life is how to become connected with Kṛṣṇa. That is the ultimate. *Athato brahma jijñasa*. If I say to anybody that "Your ultimate goal of life is to understand Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu," naturally there will be inquiries: "Who is Kṛṣṇa? What is Kṛṣṇa? What does He do?" So many questions. That question is recommended in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, *athato brahma jijñasa*. That is life. So the boys and girls should be trained up how to inquire about the ultimate goal of life, Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. That they do not know in the modern civilization. That they do not know. Not merely in the modern civilization. In the past also, those who were entrapped by the modes of material nature, *ahankāra-vimudhatma*, the material conception of life, false ego... Ahankāra this is called... Ahankāra there is. But when we are in a false ahankāra, that is our cause of all trouble, miseries. Ahankāra, ahan... If we become entrapped in false ahankāra, then we are *vimudhatma*, entrapped by nature. That is the difficulty. [SB1.7.43, Vrindavana, October 2, 1976]

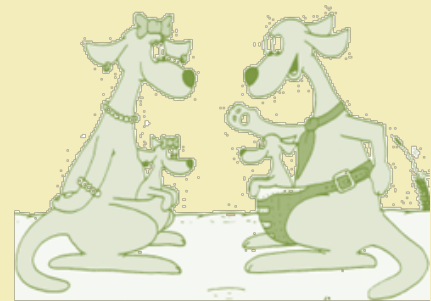


## HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Speaks on Women Varna Occupations for Women Destroy Dharma

**T**he issue of traditional occupations vs. non-traditional occupations for men and women alike has become less of a contention in modern day society. The shift from agrarian to urban lifestyle ("the global urban wave"), which continues to go unabated in present day "developing" countries, has taken deep roots with global urban population expected to reach 70% of the earth's population by year 2050. [1] This had brought about more and more acceptance of the changing roles of men and women as cited in the following article:

**Myth:** A man's place is in the workforce making money and as the breadwinner in the family.

**Fact:** Although more women than men are the main caregiver in their families, more and more fathers are becoming the primary parent for their child(ren). More fathers are staying home and taking care of their children while the wife/mother works, more fathers are participating equally in the housework and childcare in their family, and more fathers have sole or shared custody of their child(ren) in situations of divorce. With most wives/mothers working full-time, fathers need to participate fully in the important job of raising their children. [2]



*Isn't that great? With this new baby-belt, I can babysit while my wife works...*

Such a mentality has become mainstream for an increasing number of people in pursuit of the 'American Dream' (not only in North America but around the world) putting into question the traditional understanding and acceptance of *varnas* and hence the whole system of *varnasrama* which is described in the Vedic literatures as the most scientific and practical social system meant to help one advance in reaching the real goal of life, spiritual emancipation which culminates in Krishna consciousness.

While the above observations are undoubtedly true and verifiable through statistics, the fact remains that such trends are not necessarily beneficial for individuals or society even though seemingly appealing to many. To the contrary, Vedic authorities view this shift from the rural to the metropolis as increasingly not only problematic but highly destructive. Such drastic societal changes uproot the very foundation of what is meant to be a civilized people whose primary goal and objective in life should be 'consciousness building' or 'consciousness development' as opposed to mere 'economic development'. Today's consumer oriented cities increase the unnecessary necessities of life while making us increasingly alienated to the real values of life such as mother earth, the sacredness of all forms of life, especially the cows, humanity in general, what to speak of spirituality itself.

Modern 'liberalized' life standards where men and women are allowed to easily mix together and where women are encouraged to take up the same occupations as men open the doors to all types of anomalies. From a Vedic point of view, these are regarded as dangerous and major deviations. Non-traditional occupations, as taken up today by women as well as by men, are the cause of major upheavals and disturbances for individuals and society at large as they create both physical and emotional health hazards (See article STRESS KILLS), [3] disrupt normal relationships and in particular destroy the family nucleus, the basis for a healthy, balanced and progressive society.





Therefore, in the Vedic culture, marriage and family responsibilities are not only highly recommended for women, they are actually compulsory since the traditional occupation for women is meant to be that of devoted wives and loving mothers, however archaic and outdated this may seem to many. Sex life is also meant to be confined within married life 'only'; another antiquated concept for most 'modernized' people.

"According to Vedic civilization, without marriage, no sex life is allowed. Therefore marriage is compulsory. In every human society, there is marriage. But according to Vedic civilization, marriage is compulsory, *samskara*. So therefore in the *Bhagavad-gita* it is said, *strisu dustasu varsneya jayate varna-sankarah*. If the women are not married, then *varna-sankara* population will increase. It is said. And as soon as there is *varna-sankara* population, the whole world will be in chaotic condition." [4]

Although women will naturally inherit the qualities of a particular *varna* due to their being born within a particular family, or due to marrying someone from a particular *varna*, it should be made very clear that women, as a



class, do not receive formal training to take up any of the four *varna* occupations, namely that of *brahmana*, *ksatriyas*, *vaisya* or *sudra*. In the discussions held between Srila Prabhupada and his senior disciples on the topic of *varnasrama* college, when asked if women would also be admitted to study in the *varnasrama* college, Srila Prabhupada replied to the negative:

**Satsvarupa:** Srila Prabhupada, is this school for women also, or just for men?

**Prabhupada:** For men. Women should automatically learn how to cook, how to cleanse home.

**Satsvarupa:** So they don't attend *varnasrama* college.

**Prabhupada:** No, no. *Varnasrama* college [is] especially meant for the *brahmana*, *ksatriya* and *vaisya*. Those who are not fit for education, they are *sudras*. That's all. Or those who are reluctant to take education—*sudra* means. That's all. They should assist the higher class. [5]

This does not mean that women do not receive any education. Their education, and it can be quite extensive as well as enunciated in the sixty-four activities in fine arts and crafts [6], is meant to help them take up the lifelong and noble duties of responsible mothers and grandmothers. The Vedic culture gives utmost stress to the need and importance of upholding family tradition through the sacred ceremony or *samskara* called marriage. There are ten kinds of purificatory processes, *dasa-vidha samskara*, to be adopted within a civilized society. Marriage is also defined as the union of male and female for the purpose of creating good progeny, which in itself forms the basis of a stable and healthy society. Society otherwise produces *varna sankara*, unwanted population as we see rampant today, where women engage in dangerous, unnatural and sinful activities of abortion and contraceptives, what goes under the attractive name 'family planning'.

"Prabhupada: *Sankaro narakayaiva*. When there are unwanted children, then the family tradition, the family obligation, they are all forgotten. At the present moment, nobody knows that after death there is life, and still such life is connected with the family, the forefathers and the descendants. Nothing of this science is known at the present moment... This subtle regulation of family connection is unknown at the present moment, and still they are very proud of advancement of knowledge... But *kula-striyah*, family women, they have got so many obligations... the wife is so

important. If there is chaste wife, she can help the husband in these four principles of life, *dharma artha kama moksa* [SB 4.8.41, Cc. Adi 1.90], *dhara samprati hetuta*. If we can train up nice wife, or the society trains the girls to become nice wife, she becomes a great source of energy to the husband. *Dharma-artha-kama-moksa dhara sampra....* And if they are polluted, they become source of the *sankara, varna-sankara*. [7]

The role of women within our Vedic system that propounds essentially an agrarian based lifestyle is to assist the husband carry out his particular *varna* or occupation. It is not that a '*brahmani*' performs the same duties of a '*brahmana*' and thus becomes a 'female' *brahmana*. A '*brahmani*' is the wife of a *brahmana* who, due to close association with the duties and responsibilities of that particular *varna*, will naturally learn many things about the *brahmana varna* and in exceptional and rare cases may also take up certain activities of that *varna*. The same can be said for all other three *varnas*. The wife is not meant to take up the social occupation of a *ksatriya*, nor that of a *vaisya* nor that of a *sudra*, as we see artificially done in present day society. Some devotee women may be an exception. "For preaching purposes," they may be allowed to take up some activities of the *brahmana varna* and even *ksatriya varna*. But what is meant to be an exception among devotees should not be advertised or promoted as a rule within our ISKCON society, what to speak of the general society. A small example that we are seeing in present day modern ISKCON society is the use of the word 'prabhu' for women. This is artificial, misleading and a disservice to the varnasrama mission.

Srila Prabhupada gave us all sound advice on how to rectify our present misguided society and we should hear closely those words of wisdom. Although these instructions are directed to his American disciples, we should know that they are equally applicable to any society who is imitating the American way: "If the American people are serious about curbing the degraded criminal life of their nation, they must take to the Krishna consciousness movement and try to create the kind of human society advised in Bhagavad-gita (*catur-varnyam maya sristam guna-karma-vibhagasah* [Bg. 4.13]). They must divide their society into first-class men, second-class men, third-class men and fourth-class men. Since they are now creating only men who are less than fourth class, how can they avoid the dangers of a criminal society? Long, long ago, Lord Indra regretted his disrespect to his spiritual master, Brhaspati. Similarly, it is advised that the American people regret their mistaken advancement in civilization. They should take advice from the spiritual master, the representative of Krishna. If they do so, they will be happy, and theirs will be an ideal nation to lead the entire world." [8]



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## • Varnashrama Musings



## Woman : Aham Brahma Asmi...

- Vrindavanlila dd



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu rejected varnashrama in conversation with Ramananda Raya  
*G*naham vipra na ca narapatir napi vaisyo na sudro  
 naham varni na ca grhapatir no vanastho yatir va  
 kintu prodyan nikhila paramananda-purnamrtabdher  
 gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanu-dasah (Cc, Madhya 13.8, Padyavali 74)

"I am not a brahmana, nor a ksatriya; I am not a vaisya nor a sudra, I am not a brahmacari, nor a householder, not a vanaprastha, not a sannyasi. But since Lord Sri Krsna, the maintainer of the gopis and the overflowing ocean of nectar, is the only source of universal, transcendental bliss, I claim to be a servant to the servant of the servant of His lotus feet."

Our real identity is the transcendental identity, "*gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanu-dasah*" as Gauranga Mahaprabhu would explain. It appears very attractive to us; just not because it states the ultimate truth, but surprisingly, also because it pampers our ego - we are 'vaishnavas', above brahmanas. We may derive pleasure in saying, "I am not this body, I am a spirit soul." "My varna is not a woman, but a spirit soul."

Spiritually there is no distinction between a man and a woman, anybody can scale any height. The gopis of Vrindavan are personification of height of *bhakti bhava*. Vishakha devi, seeing the suffering of Srimati Radharani in the absence of Krsna (who was then with Chandravali) cursed Him to suffer the same emotion of separation and agony (You shall cry, cry, and cry!) as her *prana-sakhi* (Srimati Radharani) had. The Supreme Lord's most merciful form of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, whose lotus eyes were always tearful in separation from the Lord, is the result of the curse (blessing in disguise for the devotees) of Vishakha devi.

*Aham Brahma asmi*. While it is the truth, it has to be understood in the right perspective lest it turns spiritually self-destructive - we are in the relative world after all. If we humbly and sincerely try to explore into our hearts we would realize that the said transcendence is very difficult to achieve. I do not rule out the possibility and even presence of great souls even amongst us who have achieved this perfection but they are very very rare.

**Prabhupada:** Not required. Caitanya Mahaprabhu denied, "I am not brahmana, I am not ksatriya, I am not this, I am not this." He rejected. But in the *Bhagavad-gita*, the *catur-varnyam maya srstam*. So we are Krsna..., preaching Krsna consciousness. It must be done.

**Hari-sauri:** But in Caitanya Mahaprabhu's practical preaching He only induced them to chant.

**Prabhupada:** That is not possible for ordinary man...The chanting will be there, but you cannot expect that people will chant like Caitanya Mahaprabhu. They cannot even chant sixteen rounds. (And) these rascals are going to be Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

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

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

(Room conversation in Mayapur, February 14, 1977)

*bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate*  
*vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ* [BG 7.19]

[After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.]

In general we are all on the path to that perfectional state, with different devotees serving from different planes of realization. Understanding of general conditioning or limitations imposed by our body will only help us fighting it successfully. Chanting or harinam is definitely the yuga-dharma and it should not stop under any circumstance. It is a great cleanser but how many of us are like Haridas Thakur?

**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 varnasrama and like that.*

**Prabhupada:** *Yes, it can replace, but who is going to replace it? The... People are not so advanced. If you imitate Haridasa Thakura to chant, it is not possible.*  
*(Room conversation in Mayapura, February 14, 1977)*

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's chanting could make even ferocious animals like tiger also forget their nature imposed by their material body and enjoy the Nama-sankirtana in the Jharikhanda forest. Haridas Thakur's chanting was so pure that he could effortlessly bring a heart change even in the prostitute (he could achieve what great Vishwamitra could not). But are we on the same platform? Both qualitatively and quantitatively, we are a far cry from Haridas Thakur. His chanting had transformed the prostitute, but if we are simply able to continue with our chanting without offence even in her absence, it is an achievement.

"Being *gopi-bhartuh pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanu-dasah* is the true transcendental identity. But with layers of conditioning on our consciousness, encased in the material body we forget ourselves in different identities – "I am an Indian; I am a Hindu, I am a woman or a man, I have a Ph.d., I am the Senior Manager etc." These are all upadhis, the disguises of the soul and we have to aspire for

*sarvopadhi vinirmuktam tat-paratvena nirmalam*

*hrsikena hrsikesa-sevanam bhaktir ucyate*

"Bhakti is defined as the engagement of the senses in the service of the Proprietor of the senses. This service is to be free from any contamination by identity with the body, and pure through being exclusively fixed on Him." (*Bhakti-rasamrta Sindhu* quoting Narada Pancaratra )

But have we achieved that transcendental plane? The nature of soul is – sad+cit+ananda (eternal, full of knowledge and blissful). The animals around us, even the plants and trees have the same soul, same quality of the soul; but their consciousness is so low that it is very difficult for them to jump out of it. So much is the effect of this *bahya* (external) superfluous material body! Is this conditioning so



easy to conquer? In human form we have an opportunity to chant and come out of it but is it so easy to break the conditioning that has been on us from millions and millions of lifetimes? We are full of bliss then why do we cry in pain when hurt (recall Bhakta Prahlad who was a vaishnava), we feel the pangs of hunger; we feel thirst and need water to quench the thirst, we treat when sick... We behave according to our gender, like a man or a woman, we dress like a man or a woman. Not just that, we even marry which is based on our identification with body.

Even Lord Siva was momentarily bewildered by the illusory potency of the Lord, who are we compared to Him?

*ayi vyapaśyas tvam ajasya māyām'  
parasya pumśaḥ para-devatāyāḥ  
aham' kalānām ṛṣabho 'pi muhye  
yayāvaśo 'nye kim utāsvatantrāḥ [SB 8.12.43]*



[Lord Śiva said: O Goddess, you have now seen the illusory energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the unborn master of everyone. Although I am one of the principal expansions of His Lordship, even I was illusioned by His energy. What then is to be said of others, who are fully dependent on māyā?]

Our desire may be sincere, but our ambience is not so conducive. There are more than enough examples to show the wonderful working of maya, even within our own society. It is thus more effective to take a humbler and safer position in a daiva varnasrama and discharge our duties according to the Vedic injunctions.

Sadly in this age, the general mass is of *varnasankaras*. Further, the four regulatives that Srila Prabhupada gave us to protect the devotees from the attack of Kali and reinstate the four legs of dharma is very difficult to observe despite sincerity.

In this age, every pillar of spiritual growth has crumbled down. Unconsciously we are a part of civilization that thrives on slaughterhouse, total sense aggrandizement, gambling (stock market), and dirt (internally as well as externally). Sitting on the debris of violated vows what kind of liberating chanting will we be able to do? Isn't it simpler to acknowledge the power of Kali and equip ourselves to safety by resorting to the structure of daiva

“The basic principles of irreligiosity, such as pride, prostitution, intoxication and falsehood, counteract the four principles of religion, namely austerity, cleanliness, mercy and truthfulness. The personality of Kali was given permission to live in four places particularly mentioned by the King, namely the place of gambling, the place of prostitution, the place of drinking and the place of animal slaughter.” [SB, Purp, 1.17.38]. In order to protect the devotees from the attack of Kali, Srila Prabhupada gave us the four regulatives (no meat eating as the basic principle of Krishna Consciousness.

- No eating of meat, fish or eggs - [Principle of mercy or *daya*]
- No illicit sex - [Principle of Austerity or *tapas*]
- No gambling - [Principle of Truthfulness or *satyam*]
- No intoxication (including alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and other recreational drugs) - [Principle of Cleanliness or *śaucam*]



varnasrama dharma? Its Krsna-centric living can only facilitate the chanting and one day lead *everybody* to the perfectional stage where we can actually relish His name.

Similarly, how can a woman be above the material conditioning? She also has to perform her dharma – *stri dharma* as given in the scriptures (Refer to HH Bhakti Raghva Swami's article "Vedic View of Women" in the last issue). Simply serve the husband, who in turn serves the Guru, Guru ultimately serves the Lord in the disciplic succession. If there is a break in the service-chain anywhere, the person who fails to render the service is at the suffering end. So if we have to realize our selves, we need to serve according to our dharma.

Many women cite spiritual blindness of their husband as a sufficient reason to not to serve or worse (to divorce). Although at several places Srila Prabhupada said that a chaste woman need not serve a fallen husband (*naradhama*), but if we see practically this was advised only in extreme situations. He instructed even his own sister to serve her husband dedicatedly without any complaints, despite he having all the vices - a meat eater, drunkard, woman-hunter. She did, and it is a history how he turned around completely after a few years. This situation does not give license to men to do anything sinful, it only means that a woman's path of liberation is much easier, it lies in her sincerely following and assisting her husband with reverence and intimacy. Indian history is replete with such examples; Queen Mandodari, wife of king Ravana, personification everything demoniac, is also one of the Satis; Gandhari devi was married to Dhratrashttra, about whom we all heard so much. *Bhagavad-gita* opens with his speech clearly displaying his material attachment, spiritual blindness, selfishness, irresponsibility, and *adharmi* nature. His wife, Gandhari never gave up on him and followed her path of *stri dharma*. She was so chaste that she covered her eyes when she realized that she would be marrying a blind king, so is the case with Vrinda devi, who was married to demon king Jalandhar. This *simple* path of chastity and following the husband in itself endows the women with such spiritual power that even the Supreme Lord honors it. For instance, the Lord gracefully honored the curse of His devotee, Gandhari devi and of Vrinda devi. When they cursed, what did the Lord do? He gladly accepted it, even though it meant complete erasion of His dynasty and then because of Vrinda devi's curse He later appeared as Shaligram shila in Gandaki river. Why should the Lord accept the curses and 'undergo' this 'tribulation'? He is setting an example for us to show how He respects a person, man or a woman who respect His timeless injunctions. It is therefore important for every woman to not just know the *stri-dharma* but also follow it sincerely. Hare Krsna!!



## Women In Krishna Consciousness—Questions & Answers

- HG Vishakha Devi Dasi



*The first step in spiritual understanding is to transcend the bodily concept of life. To think I am a man or I am a woman is to be in illusion. The body is a material dress for the soul, a dress that's changing from moment to moment, as the body develops, and will change entirely at death. But the constant within the body is the soul, which is not subject to any of these changes.*

**Q. Why should women be interested in Krishna consciousness?**

**A.** So they can realize they're not women! If we think of ourselves as "women," we reveal our ignorance of our actual identity. The word woman refers to the temporary material body, not to the eternal, spiritual soul, the person within the body. In maybe forty or sixty years, the body I'm wearing will perish, and I'll no longer be a Woman. But the living force, the soul within the body, won't perish. Krishna consciousness provides an understanding of the relationship between the soul and matter and the Supreme Soul, Krishna. Human intelligence is meant for contemplating these subjects, not for dwelling on materialistic thoughts based on a false identification with the temporary body.

**Q. What do you think of the women's liberation movement?**

**A.** The highest liberation is to go back home, back to Godhead, and never again face the miseries of birth, old age, disease, and death. Although the women's liberation movement may offer some worthwhile proposals, it generally ignores this highest goal. But by becoming Krishna conscious, a woman is liberated in this life and the next; so Krishna consciousness is the real women's liberation movement.

**Q. In the Krishna consciousness movement, what is the position of women devotees?**

**A.** From the spiritual viewpoint, men and women (and all other living entities) are equal. The soul within the body is part and parcel of Krishna and is equal in quality and quantity to all other souls. But from the material, bodily point of view, obviously there are differences.

**Q. What about those differences?**

**A.** As far as serving Krishna and preaching Krishna consciousness, material differences are ignored. Men and women serve the Supreme Lord's Deity form in the temple—worshiping, cleaning, cooking—and they go out daily to preach to interested people and distribute literature about Krishna consciousness. Women with children both care for their children and spread Krishna consciousness alongside their unmarried godsisters. Actually, to raise a child as a devotee of God is in itself a great service to Krishna.

**Q. But I've heard that you think women are inferior to men. Is that true?**

**A.** As I mentioned before, spiritually there's no distinction. In **Bhagavad-gita** Krishna says that both men and women are eligible to attain the highest destination, to return to the kingdom of God, if they take shelter of Him. Spiritually there's no duality, no inferiority or superiority based on the body and mind. But there are material differences: women are generally not as physically strong as men, but only women can bear children and nourish them with their breast milk. So it's natural that women's duties will differ from men's in some ways.

**Q. Today many people reject that idea. It won't make your movement very popular among women.**

**A.** We can't change the Krishna conscious philosophy to make it popular. Nor are we so concerned with popularity. We simply want to present Krishna's teachings as they are, and those who hear receptively will benefit. The first step in spiritual understanding is to transcend the bodily concept of life. To think "I am a man" or "I am a woman" is to be in illusion. The body is a material dress for the soul, a dress that's changing from moment to moment, as the body develops, and will change entirely at death. But the constant within the body is the soul, which is not subject to birth, death, or any other material influence.

**Q. How do men and women relate to each other in Krishna consciousness?**

**A.** Except for his wife, a Krishna conscious man should regard every woman as he would his mother. So in Krishna consciousness the relationship between men and women is based not on lust but on mutual respect, with Krishna in the center. If this mentality is absent, men and women mix too freely, and their relationship may easily degrade into immorality and mutual exploitation.

**Q. What about in more intimate relationships?**

**A.** In more intimate relationships, the man protects the woman. In a woman's youth, her father protects her; after marriage, her husband protects her; and later on in life her grown sons protect her.

**Q. What do you mean, "protect"?**

**A.** Protect from illusion and degradation. That is real protection. When the father, husband, and sons are fully trained in spiritual principles by the spiritual master, they are qualified to guide their family members.



*Bhagavad-gita* points out that when the religious tradition in the family breaks down, the chastity and faithfulness of women are shaken. As men and women mix freely, the result is abortion and unwanted progeny. From such immorality and licentiousness come broken homes and the degradation of the whole society. Conversely, when the husband is a dedicated devotee of God and the wife is loyal, good progeny and a harmonious society result.

**Q. But what if the woman wants to be more than just a housewife?**

**A.** That is welcome and encouraged. Women in the Krishna consciousness movement sing, write, photograph, paint, act, sculpt, teach, and dance. One of my godsisters in our West Virginia farm community is an architect. Now she's helping plan out a huge temple that the devotees there will build over the next few years. So there's no hindrance at all to a woman who wants to use her special talents to serve Krishna.

**Q. Can women become leaders?**

**A.** Real leadership is to teach by example and precept how to go back home, back to Godhead, at the end of this lifetime. A fully Krishna conscious devotee, whether man or woman, is actually more of a leader than all the so-called leaders of modern society. Materialistic leaders simply increase our material problems; a devotee decreases those problems to nil. That is real leadership.







## **Women in the Vedic Tradition**

- *HG Niscala dd*

Srila Prabhupada's views regarding women are often felt to be outdated, more applicable to Srila Prabhupada's time and place of birth in early twentieth century India. Ironically, while he adjusted much of the teaching of the parampara to appeal, apply and be relevant to late twentieth century Westerners, there were bits like these that he left as is, although the position of women is hardly a core issue of Vaishnavism (we are, after all, not these bodies!) and indeed his stance estranged some women such as the liberationists who might otherwise have become more attracted to bhakti, had he not been so uncompromising.

This leads one to wonder why he was so inclined? In an attempt not to justify, but to understand, as well as to portray my own feelings as a woman (bodily speaking), I offer the following thoughts.

The issue is not superfluous to bhakti at all, but is at the very core of Vaishnavism. The living entities' position constitutionally is one of service; he or she is happiest when engaged in serving another being, and this is perfected when dove-tailed towards serving a devotee or the Lord Himself. I already mentioned in another article that a recent survey showed that those who had the greatest satisfaction within their lives were proportionately those involved in serving not their own interests, but those of another. Extending this concept to marriage, it is also meant to be a training ground for bhakti, and where the emphasis is on who can be servant, it is conducive, but if it is on who can be master, it is detrimental.

Modern marriage often degenerated into a struggle for supremacy, and this is the unfortunate effect of women's liberation, which was a natural result of abusive, exploitative and manipulative husbands. However, it became the fashion, and maybe due to media sensationalizing the stories of abuse, many wives of gentle-men thought it "better to be safe than sorry" and leave no opening for exploitation. One can only, after all, exploit a servant – not a master, nor one of equal status. Thus, either the women went out to work and Dad changed the nappies, or they shared equally – very equally – in these chores; and the reaction of these "liberated" people to Srila Prabhupada was shock and horror. How could he be so blatantly patriarchal?

Actually, he was trying to tell these women that they could be happier if they weren't vying for artificial supremacy over, or equality to males. By adopting the constitutional position of service, the living entity is happiest, and if by circumstance the one being served is of low character and exploits the service attitude, this does not condemn the service attitude, or give a reason to do away with it – it should simply be applied elsewhere.

In a normal marriage where there is love, not domination, the husband's reaction to a wife who is eager to serve and please him, will be to serve and please her in all respects. Practically he will be dominated by her loving service and be henpecked. This is the normal happy effect of a service attitude in marriage. The abnormal effect, which is often due to alcohol, drug abuse, infidelity or mental disturbance, is to exploit horribly the innocent service attitude, and it is this disastrous effect which is dramatized and sensationalized over and over in the media. A hardening of relationships in general has resulted, as if in paranoia, women are suspecting their husbands could degenerate into enemies at some point, and like nations in a cold war, are building up their weapons arsenal.

There is another consideration – that the service attitude could degenerate into unhealthy masochism. The telling sign is a lack of respect being accepted and inflicted upon oneself.

Whether between wife and husband, parent and child, or guru and disciple, there must be mutual respect and loving concern, no matter who is serving whom. If that is the case, and the dynamic is thereby actually loving, there is no need to struggle for supremacy or equality, for the servant and the served become bound in reciprocal dealings of gratitude.

Thus, there is real equality by service, and the effect is to experience relief and happiness as layers of paranoia and self-defense become peeled away. As one learns to trust one's ability to serve and not be exploited, eventually one can apply this healthy attitude towards other living entities and towards the Lord. Indeed where the husband is a devotee, it is as good as serving the Lord, and is accepted by Him as better.

Considering this, I think Srila Prabhupada's attitude towards the position of women was only apparently antiquated and is actually based on the eternal nature of the soul.

What about Srila Prabhupada calling women "less intelligent"? A typical quote is "...literatures were written for the less intelligent women, laborers, and friends of the twice-born." Specifically, Srila Prabhupada refers to less intelligent women. Of course, more intelligent women may like to delve into deeper philosophy, but for the less intelligent ones, **Mahabharata** and so on were written.

Why am I so certain? Because there is a conversation where Srila Prabhupada states that his female disciples are as good as their brothers. Obviously he considered that women were of varying intelligence, as were men, being divided into brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, friends of the above, and shudras, the last two categories or lower, comprising the gamut of men in Kali yuga, except for those who are trained in spiritual culture. And similarly, women.

We tend to forget that alongside his mention of less intelligent women, he is placing categories of less intelligent men. When we don't knee-jerk at political incorrectness, such as Srila Prabhupada's placing "less intelligent" before "women" and actually analyze him a bit we may not find him antiquated at all, just more sensible in approach than the modern attempt to equalize everyone, which is an unsuccessful attempt at stopping exploitation of the weak by the strong. The real cause of this is addressed over and over in his purports, the desire in the living entity to lord it over and exploit nature, which robs him of happiness while embodied, and spoils his chances of freedom.



## When the Husband Is Not a Devotee...

- HG Sundari Radhika dd



**W**e were asked a question: what if the wife is a devotee of Lord Krsna and her husband is a non-devotee (karmi)? If one partner is a devotee and the other one is not (yet), it is not a problem if the devotee wife knows what her duty is towards Krsna in this situation. In my answer that follows we assume that the husband is a normal man and not a homicidal maniac or in some other way having serious clinical mental problems.

All women have just one duty or dharma in this world--- to serve her husband. When we say **all** women, then it means all women. It is called stri-dharma (*SB 7.11.25-29*). For the wife, *vivaha* is her second birth (dvi-ja) her initiation into Vedic culture. And moving into husband's house is not just moving into the house, it means she goes to live in the asrama. Who's asrama? The ashrama of

her husband. If husband is qualified, it is grhastha ashrama. If not, it is a grhamedhi life. But it does not matter if husband is qualified or not according to our standard or expectations. He is still the representative of Krsna. Who sent us this husband? Krsna sent him. The wife can still make spiritual progress even if the husband is not a devotee.

So what is it that Krsna wants from me, you, and other jiva's in this female body? As devotees we want to please Krsna. Krsna says that for a brahmachari, guru is His representative; for child, mother is the representative of Krsna, and for wife, her husband is representative of Krsna. As a brahmachari lights the fire for sacrifice in the ashrama of his guru, so does the wife when she lights fire in the kitchen to cook for her husband. That is her sacrifice. And Krsna accepts it equally. (This is explained in Manu Samhita.)



The point is that wife makes spiritual progress if she performs her prescribed duty which is – serving her husband [SB 7.11.25-29]. She performs her duty for Krsna for His pleasure.

“Perform your prescribed duty, for doing so is better than not working. One cannot even maintain one's physical body without work. Work done as a sacrifice for Visnu has to be performed, otherwise work causes bondage in this material world. Therefore, O son of Kunti, perform your prescribed duties for His satisfaction, and in that way you will always remain free from bondage.” [BG 3.8-9]

She may not love to serve husband who is not a devotee, but she serves him as her duty to please Krsna (BG 5.29). Wife should not be rude, critical or fight with husband as this would be even greater sin than any fault he may possess. His faults should be dealt with by his superiors or equals not by his subordinate (wife). Although he may not be spiritually qualified she should be respectful, in the same way as she is respectful to her guru. Guru may criticize, but disciple cannot be rude and disrespectful. So why should the wife be angry and rude with her husband? Hiranyakasipu abused his own son Prahlada, but Prahlada was never disrespectful to him. He always approached his father with folded palms saying: “O greatest of all demons.” Prahlada was never rude. Although his father literally wanted to kill his own son Prahlada was always respectful. Nrsimhadeva corrected his father.

For a wife service to the husband is her sacrifice (BG 3.14-15); it's not that she should sacrifice a goat in the temple. She should sacrifice her false ego, mind, body in the service of her husband, who is direct representative of Sri Krsna. And she makes spiritual advancement. Like we have a murti of Krsna in some material form—He may be carved and made with very delicate and attractive features, or He may be painted or carved not really perfect, but still Krsna is present in those statue forms/*murtis* and we offer our service to Him. Even imperfectly carved murti is still Krsna's manifestation in this world. So is the husband for wife; perfect, imperfect, good, bad, devotee, or non-devotee.

If husband wants her to serve him meat, alcohol, sex, etc, she should serve him. She will not get any reaction for doing that (BG 18.47), because she is doing her dharma (stri dharma); she is following her husband's instructions, which means she is following her duty. So she will not get any reaction, but her husband will get reaction if he demands something that is not according to dharma. Though



wife gets no karma it may affect her consciousness, for example she would get no karma for cooking meat but she may feel disgusted.

The point is that everyone should follow their dharma or prescribed duty. Krsna arranged this world in such a way so that everyone is able to make spiritual advancement by following his or her prescribed duty (*BG 18.46*).

For women it is simple. Just follow what your husband says. So however we turn, if wife is able to adjust and follow her husband she makes advancement. If she disobeys her husband, she degrades herself, slowly and surely. Krsna always sends for us a husband who is best for us to practice for our relationship with Krsna. Remember we can not get into the spiritual world until we develop the service attitude.

Now we have opportunity to practice serving Krsna by serving His representative that He sent to us and whom we got by our own karma. If we are dealing on platform of justice and morality and think “if my husband is not good then I will not serve him,” then we are not going to like Krsna. How will we tolerate that Krsna said He is going to be with me but is with another gopi instead? Is that justice? No it is not.



“I know no one but Krsna as my Lord, and He shall remain so even if He handles me roughly by His embrace or makes me broken hearted by not being present before me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, for He is always my worshipful Lord, unconditionally.”

So there is so much we have to practice. (Of course as I said at the beginning that we assume that we are dealing with normal men not perverts or criminals. Nor should men take advantage of this because by so doing they would reap serious bad karma.)

If husband is not a devotee, we have to do our duties, cooking (what he wants), offer to Krsna, cleaning, taking care of all family members etc. Speaking sweetly and be respectful. Have faith in Krsna that by serving your husband nicely, He will be happy with you and if He wants He will change the heart of your husband. And even if he doesn't want to become devotee, if he is pleased with service of his wife, he will not be able to make obstacles in her devotional life. He will have respect for such a wife.

We have the example of Pisima Mataji, HDG Srila Prabhupada's sister. She was not only Srila Prabhupada's sister, but his God-sister as well. Just try to imagine her situation; she was married to a non-devotee, who turned out to be a rogue, meat eater, he drank alcohol, he was a woman-hunter, spending money on gambling, etc. So if we have in our husband only one of these things we would consider it as a catastrophe. She had all in one person. Not only was he a non-devotee, but he had many

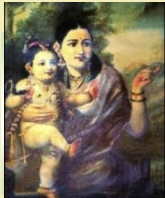


bad habits. So Pisima Mataji came to Srila Prabhupada and asked what should she do in this situation? He advised her to do what she learned from her mother- to serve her husband, and to pray to Sri Krsna for the best interest of her husband. And not to argue with her husband. Actually a woman should never argue with a drunken man, because he can kill her.

And Srila Prabhupada told her: “Remember those Deities that we worshiped when we were children?” He said, “I have them here, I’ll give them to... You worship Them, Radha-Govinda, and you keep praying to Them, and They’ll help you.” He didn’t advise her to divorce her husband, or to complain to various women’s ministries about him, etc. Rather for material problem he gave a spiritual solution.

She did the way Srila Prabhupada advised her; she didn’t criticize her husband, she didn’t argue with him, but she did her prescribed duties, her stri-dharma with the idea to please Sri Krsna through her service to the husband. It is not a material thing to follow stri dharma, because as I said before, a woman who follows stri dharma properly, she makes direct spiritual advancement, as a brahmachari makes by serving his guru. When Krsna gets pleased, only He can change the husband. No wife can change her husband. Krsna was obviously pleased with Pisima mataji’s service, and her husband came to her after sometime, and begged her for forgiveness, admitting that he was so bad, and realizing what a good wife he has, a wife who always works in his best interest. He ended up worshipping her. That “This woman is serving me so faithfully, and serving the Deities so faithfully, and she wants nothing but the best for me, and she’s praying to Krsna for me.” He acknowledged that and changed all his ways.

That is the power of a woman who follows her prescribed duty, stri-dharma, in order to please Sri Krsna, and to make spiritual advancement.



## Women, ISKCON, and Varnashrama

- HG Sita Pati Das

**T**he individual can go home without *varnashram-dharma*. You can go back to Godhead without adopting the gender roles of *varnashram-dharma* in this lifetime. It is possible. At the same time, if we really want everyone to go back to Godhead, then a *varnashram society* is the way to facilitate that. The acaryas have been quite clear in this matter.

I submit that our present problems arise from an incomplete understanding of the real nature of the male-female roles and relationship in *varnashram-dharma*, and dishonesty about our own qualifications. Without a deep understanding of the actual essence of this relationship and the necessary qualifications we have attempted to ape the external appearance and found it unsatisfactory. The *varnashram-dharma* model that Srila Prabhupada advocated should not be abandoned for other unproven model that we may concoct. We should not use our intelligence in a demonic fashion to oppose the Lord’s agents, to find fault in them. We should try to understand how our implementation is faulty. A Vaisnava sees no faults in others, only in oneself.

One of the problems we encounter in presenting Prabhupada’s books are his statements that women are generally less intelligent than men. One thing we should bear in mind is that Prabhupada intended his books to be the standard for human society for the next ten thousand years. Prabhupada

is stating the conditions in an ideal *varnashram* society, which we don't have at the present point in time. To see where this society fails to meet the Vedic standard, it is not to the women that we should look, but to the men.

In Vedic society men control their senses according to a regulated program. This does not happen today. Therefore men have less intelligence than they have the potential to manifest. Although Prabhupada states that women are generally less intelligent, this may not be the case at the moment, hence Prabhupada's qualification of the statement with the modifier generally. Or else he is referring to the "woman class" as less intelligent. Prabhupada is speaking in broad sociological terms about the general material society of conditioned living entities over a long period of time. We shouldn't confuse our limited sense perceptions with the vision of a maha-bhagavat. When we try to put our perceptions into context with the statements of a maha-bhagavat then we are actually using our intelligence and our limited independence correctly.

That women are generally less intelligent does not translate into all women are less intelligent than all men, and I submit that at this point in time the exception can sometimes approach the rule. While recognising the limitations of our present circumstances, we should not lose sight of the proposed goal of *varnashram-dharma* implementation in society. We need to have faith that Prabhupada's vision for the world is coming from Krishna. If we don't, then what is the point in hearing anything from him? Prabhupada made that very clear - you cannot pick and choose. Either accept it all or reject it all. The mind is imperfect and when it attempts to discriminate amongst knowledge in that way it will do so according to its conditioning. Therefore one surrenders totally to a bona-fide system of transcendental knowledge, and is therefore given protection from this tendency of the mind. Either we accept Prabhupada as the captain of the ship or not. Let's not try to have some half-way house - hot or cold, not an attempt to remain in a luke warm mix of Prabhupada's instruction and our own imperfect speculation by claiming that in some respects he is "socially conditioned", while in others he is speaking the absolute truth. We are the ones who are socially conditioned.

This controversy has arisen out of a lack of faith that what Prabhupada has said in this regard is true, when it clashes with our limited sense perceptions. We can accept information that is contrary to our sense perceptions when we have faith in the source. The lack of faith in Prabhupada has arisen through our miscomprehension and misapplication of his instructions. This miscomprehension, applied under the justification that "Prabhupada has said!" has caused a negative association to arise in the hearts of many. Not only in this regard, but in many other issues as well. We should not, however, mistake the baby for the bathwater and throw both out together.

We should never have made the mistake of thinking that women are inferior to men in the *varnashram* system. This is a conception from our social conditioning that we have imposed on Srila Prabhupada's description. As soon as we hear "less intelligent" we automatically think and act: "inferior". Intelligence means the ability to discriminate. If it is the case that women have a less developed ability to discriminate than men how does that make them inferior? It is our tendency to use this as a mechanism to lord it over that gives rise to the association. Even in Vedic civilisation where it is the case that women are generally less intelligent than the men they are never inferior. Women appear as subordinate to men, but at the same time men are reliant on women for everything. Actually, women are worshiped in Vedic society. Every woman is regarded as one's mother, and one's mother is worshipable. What to speak of the current manifestation of maya where the reverse can often be the case, where men can be less intelligent than women. We find that many women are more receptive to Krishna Consciousness because they have more humility and less propensity to be the enjoyer. Intelligence means the ability to discriminate, and real intelligence means discriminating between spirit and matter. Therefore, according to Srila Prabhupada's standard, by their actions they are among the most intelligent.



Women on the other hand are more compassionate. Witness Draupadi's treatment of Asvattama. They generally have less intelligence and they generally have more compassion. A pita constituted body, according to Ayurveda, has less water and more fire. Why is it that we impose no conception of inferior in that case, but automatically do so when we hear that "women have less intelligence"? The answer lies in the same explanation that Prabhupada gave of the interaction between the varnas. It is not that brahmanas are superior to the other social roles. They are all equally necessary, but the brahmanas are especially respected because they provide spiritual guidance to society. At the same time, a real brahmana offers all respects to others and expects no respect in return. This is not always the case, as we see in many historical examples in the Bhagavatam, but nonetheless it remains the ideal standard. Due to the deterioration of the Kali yuga the caste brahmanas began to develop a superiority complex and thus they lost all their good qualities. The brahmanas are reliant on the other social classes. They all exist in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Similarly, have to a large degree lost the good quality of their greater capacity for intelligence, men have retained a superiority complex through social conditioning. Along with this is a concomitant lack of humility that characterises all interactions in Kali Yuga. This is the age of quarrel and misunderstanding. Amongst all this, men have insisted that women live up to the Vedic standard of submission, chastity, and obedience, without insisting that they themselves live up to the terms of their *varnashram* contract: providing protection, well informed level-headed guidance and support. *Varnashram* is a social contract - all parties have to fulfill their obligations under the terms of the agreement.



A woman's traditional role, not just under *varnashram-dharma* but in the majority of societies, is to be submissive. This comes from the fact that women generally have more humility than men. Someone has to be humble. Actually, both husband and wife should be humble. That is the standard of the spiritual platform. However, on the way to the spiritual platform there needs to be an arrangement whereby disturbance can be minimised. Therefore, in society traditionally women have utilized their greater forbearance, humility, and tolerance to provide this peaceful social situation. Without this social chaos would have precipitated long ago. A woman's applying her greater natural humility in submissiveness should never be mistaken for inferiority. Doing that has lead us to the mess we are in now. Actually she is serving a greater goal than her husband, who due to his conditioning has a body that mimics that of the Supreme Enjoyer. By her humility and submissiveness she actually trains him in service. First he is taught by his mother, and then by his wife. But he should be receptive to learning from this. He should be brought up to recognise it for what it is.

Should we expect the women to be on that platform, performing their duties in accordance with *varnashram-dharma* while men are neglectful of theirs? Why should men expect women to be mahabhagavats while they are not? There needs to be compromise, and understanding. We do not live in a perfect *varnashram* society and we are not all pure devotees. At the same time our compromise should be directed toward attaining the ideal *varnashram* society and pure devotion. It should be one of practical necessity in achieving the goal rather than one of expediency in lowering or changing the standards whimsically to suit our present conditioning. In other words, it should be a working strategy that carries us forward, preserving and approaching the ideal while acknowledging and taking into account how our present reality does not meet with that ideal.

In *varnashram* society women are amply rewarded for their service in playing a submissive role, and that is what they are - spiritual beings playing a material role. They are given the facility to raise a

family in a peaceful setting and to play a vital role in the socialization of children. The unique contribution they give in imparting the feminine qualities and values that predominate in their character to the future generation is recognised as the indispensable service to society that it is, and thus they are considered as one of the seven worshipable mothers. In fact, the seven worshipable mothers are named so after them. They have a strong sense of identity and self-worth as their contribution to society is acknowledged as equal to that of men. Without this input, society cannot go on.

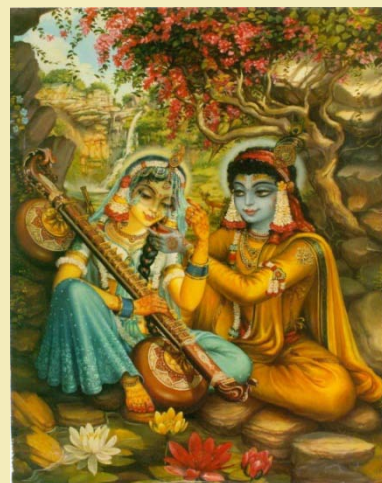
Can society provide this for women today. within ISKCON or without? Obviously not. We have brought our social conditioning into the society from outside and in some instances interpreted Srila Prabhupada's teachings according to it. When women's unique contribution to society is acknowledged and valued and honored and reciprocated, then there can be equality of the sexes. Then there can be some form of material social stability. Women's contribution to society should not be marginalized, undervalued, or denigrated under any pretext. These things do not come from Prabhupada or his teachings, they come from a socially conditioned conception of Prabhupada and his teachings.

The backlash has been against our misunderstanding of Prabhupada's teachings and it has reflected badly on his character. Prabhupada was always a perfect gentleman, and no lady has come forward to complain about her treatment by him personally. The actions of the sons are to the credit or the disgrace of the father. Now the women do not want to help establish *varnashram-dharma* by taking up the roles and trying to apply them. Renunciation means performance of duties without attachment to results. It does not mean neglect of duty.

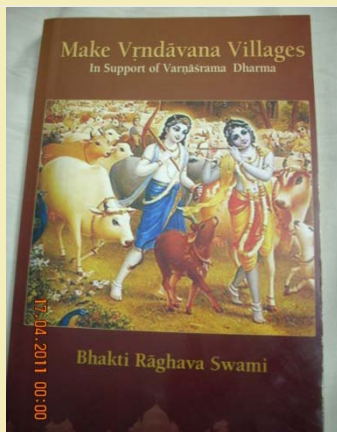
This has all come about due to a simplistic understanding of the nature of renunciation. Prabhupada gave us what we could take at the time and encouraged us to go as far as we could in the short time allotted to us. However we need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the sublime and profound philosophy and culture that is his legacy to us.

Devotees are transcendental to *varnashram-dharma*. They adopt the roles in order to demonstrate to the general mass of people how to live. Everyone wants to be a hero though.

We need to recognise the important role that grhasta life plays in society, for it is here that the women's contribution is in effect. Society means grhasta life. Without children and families and socialisation there is no society. Without renunciation and travelling preachers there is no Krishna Consciousness missionary work. We need both. Because family life and socialisation have been de-emphasized in the endeavour to introduce renunciation into a society that has only a dim historical recollection of it, the vital importance of women and their unique role has also been de-emphasized. Now we need to mature in our understanding of how a proper Krishna conscious balance between both, existing in a harmonious relationship, is needed for proper human society. The children are our future. In order to ensure the well-being of that future, as well as the renounced orders of life, we need to understand the roles we need to adopt in order to facilitate Krishna Conscious family life. These roles, for both men and women, need to be recognised by society at large as a valid and important service for pushing on this movement, without detracting from the importance of perceived prestige of the renounced orders. Women will not be happy as long as their unique contribution to society is marginalized. Without their input and active co-operation this movement has no future. [Source: <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=5366> (An excerpt from the original article)]



## • Varnashrama Literature

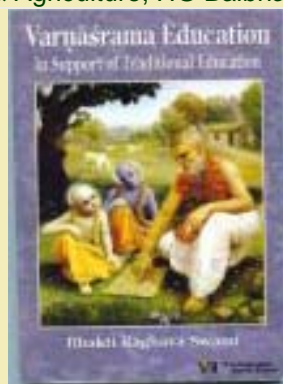
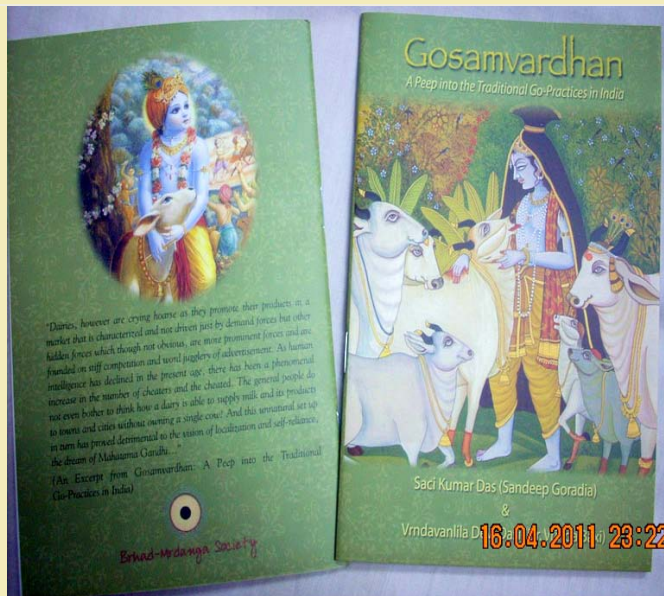


### **Make Vrndavan Villages**

H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami, who heads the Varnasrama Ministry, India has authored several books on Varnasrama, including this. This book is meant to serve as a general introduction to some of the basic concepts of varnasrama-dharma. In essence, the subject matter deals with both the topic of education as well as social and spiritual upliftment through a well established and scientifically planned educational system and social structure which encompass all spheres and all dimensions of life. Its revised edition includes more information on the subject and exciting additions on cow.

### **Gosamvardhan: A Peep Into the Traditional Go-Practices in India**

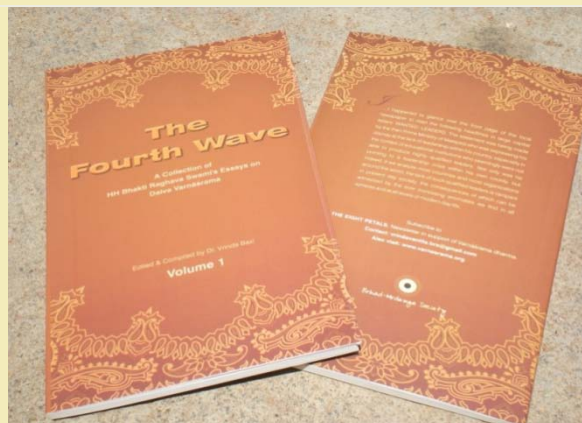
Released just last month, on the occasion of Fourth International Seminar on Daiva Varnasrama, Sridham Mayapur, is authored by HG Sacikumar prabhu (with hands-on experience in farming and cow raising) and Vrndavanilila dd (Editor, *The Eight Petals*, a monthly e-newsletter in support of Daiva Varnasrama dharma). It makes an intensive reading as it pours information about the traditional practices related to cow rearing in traditional India and fragility of present situation. It should be of great help for those who are just not interested in keeping the cows in goshala, but also in reviving an ecosystem that supports mother cow in her old glory and not as a liability. Its 'Introduction' has been written by Indian Minister for Daiva Varnasrama, HH Bhakti Raghava Swami and 'Foreword' by none other than the Global Minister for Cow Protection & Agriculture, HG Balbhadra prabhu.



### **Varnasrama Education**

The topic of education, a highly debated and controversial subject among many many educationalists and students alike, has always been of extreme importance and relevance to any society, especially in the most traditional oriental cultures. This books deals with the aspect of Education in the context of Varnasrama.



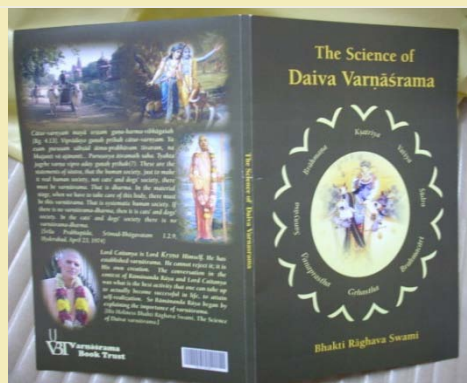
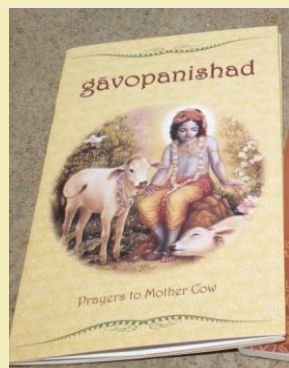


### **The Fourth Wave**

It is a wonderful collection of HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's essays on Daiva Varnasrama addressing a wide range of concerns of daily life beginning from the very definition of the term 'dharma', administration, family system, education, food, to technology. The 'Preface' for *The Fourth Wave* has been written by HG Patita Pavan Adhikary, a senior disciple of Srila Prabhupada, a strong daiva varnasrama supporter, a prolific writer, and an astrologer who has the distinction of having served as ISKCON Temple President and Director (Book Reviews) for BBT.

### **Gavopanishad: Prayers to Mother Cow**

Cows, dear to the Lord Himself, have been integral to the concept of varnasrama and have functioned as the defining features of Vedic social, economic, and spiritual system. This small attractive book contains lovely prayers in the glorification of Mother Cow, complemented by short but interesting information on the significance of cow and panchgavya products. The 'Foreword' to *Gavopanishad* has been written by H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami himself.

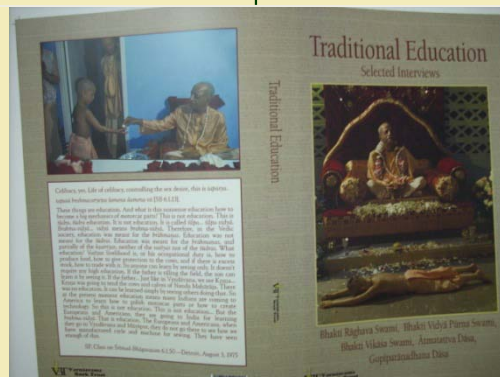


### **The Science of Daiva Varnāśrama**

The book by His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami is an effective attempt to address the general queries and doubts related varnāśrama dharma. In order to make it convenient for the reader it has been divided into three sections, beginning with the very definition and understanding of the concept of varnāśrama dharma as envisioned by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, to move to second section of the need or relevance of varnāśrama followed by the third section dealing with the questions related to complications arising in the process of implementation of principles of daiva varnāśrama dharma in the present situation.

### **Traditional Education**

Traditional Education which is usually viewed with denigration if not scorn has been very interestingly dealt. It very effectively brings out the science behind the method, structure, curriculum, efficacy and even *patrata* of traditional education. It founds itself on insightful answers given to 20 questions related to different aspects of education. It includes interviews by HH Bhakti Raghava Swami, HH Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami, HG Gopiparanadhan Das and HG Atmatattva Das. It also includes an interesting lecture given by HH Bhakti Vikas Swami on the same subject.



In addition to the above there are many more books in the pipeline and several documentary movies. In order to get more information one can contact: [vrvindavanlila.brs@gmail.com](mailto:vrvindavanlila.brs@gmail.com)

## • Varnasrama News



### **No drama over first 'legal' same-sex marriage** [Source: *Times of India*]

Jul 30, 2011. Gurgaon. A Gurgaon court has recognised a same-sex marriage, but the LGBT frat is sceptical as it's still not 'legal'.

Most would have expected it to be 'big news', but the opposite happened when a runaway lesbian couple, Beena and Savita, (from Khekada village in Baghpat) was given recognition of their marriage by a Gurgaon court, along with police protection. Unlike the recent legal nod given to same-sex marriages in New York, which was followed by widespread celebration and fanfare, gay parades with jubilant posters, outrageous costumes and overwhelming euphoria, LGBT activists and lawyers here seem barely optimistic about the development.



### **It's tough being a woman**

[Source: *The Times of India*]

July 31, 2011. New Delhi. India is far from being a safe haven for women. Seema Sinha reports on the hidden dangers of being a woman in this country.

Recently, on her visit to Delhi, actor Gul Panag made a cutting statement, 'It's difficult being a woman in Delhi' This is a stark reality in a land where we have had charismatic women like Indira Gandhi, the astronaut space shuttle mission specialist Kalpana Chawla, and many more. The hurtful fact in this largest democracy is that we have seven million girls missing since the last decade and a whopping 50 million missing over the past century.



### **Indian Women Take SlutWalk to New Delhi's Streets** [Source: *The Times*]

August 1, 2011. New Delhi. On a bright Sunday morning, young women walked the streets of New Delhi without the fear of being ogled or groped. For yesterday's female participants in SlutWalk Delhi, one of a series of marches around the world protesting sexual violence against women, the atmosphere of safety was an exception to daily life in the Indian capital.

The SlutWalk movement, which started in Toronto in April to protest police indifference to victims of rape, spurred similar marches in the U.S., the U.K. and Australia.



### **In 10 years, urban Indian women's average income doubles** [Source: *The Times of India*]

Jul 26, 2011. Mumbai. Reinforcing the growing financial independence of women in India, a survey says the income level of urban Indian women has doubled in the last decade. This increase has also led to the average urban household income doubling, according to a study by market research firm IMRB.

The urban Indian woman who earned Rs 4,492 per month in 2001 was taking home as much as Rs 9,457 as of 2010. The rise in her income is directly reflected in the average monthly household income of urban India going up from Rs 8,242 to Rs 16,509 in 2010, says the IMRB survey.



### **'Cradle baby' scheme to be extended** [Source: *The Hindu*]

July 24, 2011. Chennai. The 'cradle baby' scheme, a brainchild of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, will be extended to Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Villupuram and Tiruvannamalai districts as the 2011 census has revealed a fall in the child sex ratio in these districts. Ms Jayalalitha added that female infanticide and foeticide could be the reason for this trend in these districts. She said that so far 3,200 girls and 582 boys had been rescued. Subsequently, 2,088 girls and 372 boys were given in adoption in the country and another 170 girls and 27 boys were in foreign countries. Non-resident Indians adopted 13 girls and 5 boys. A total of 160 children were handed over to their parents.

She said the scheme and the awareness created had had the desired effect in these districts. The child sex ratio in the State was 1000:942 as per the 2001 census and the figure became 1000:946 in 2011 census.



• **Mails to the Editor**

Thanks for sending me the latest copy. In his article, Bhakti Raghava Swami states, based on Narada's teachings, that "...varnas are for men, not for women..." Actually throughout Vedic literature women are considered to belong to different varnas. Thus we have the feminine terms: brahmani, ksatriya, vaisya, and sudrani. Maharaja is correct that in traditional culture, the women would not enter the workplace, but they definitely belonged to the varnas, regardless of marriage. Thus, Arjuna's concern in the beginning of *Bhagavad-gita* is varna-sankara, literally 'varna-mixing.' Similarly, the Manu-smṛti is extremely concerned to avoid varna mixing.

With best wishes,

- **HH Hridayananda Das Goswami**

Please accept my obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

Thank you for this article. I have personally concluded that a woman's place in varnasrama is not well understood. A philosophy and social organization that are true, that come from the Absolute Truth, must be one that provides each individual with authentic personal expression both material and spiritual. If we understand a social system to mandate that a person's nature is repressed (which Krishna advises against) then such a system must not be fully true. Because I believe varnasrama to be a system of truth, I also believe it must be a system where both men and women can authentically express both their ashrama and varna natures and to do so in such a way as to nourish and allow full expression of their spiritual nature.

I have found that those who say women do not need such expression cannot live what they preach and end up being who they are anyway. Such is what Krishna predicts in the third and eighteenth chapter of the Gita—our choice is not to repress our nature, nor to artificially do another nature. Our choice is to use our nature properly in devotional service, or improperly for maya. We each—yes, women, too—have three aspects to our nature. One is spiritual and eternal. One is varna and for this life. It changes from one life to the next. The other is ashrama that changes as we age in life. All three need authentic expression in Krishna's service, whether one is male or female, black, white, brown or otherwise.

Your servant,

- **HG Urmila devi dasi**

Dear Mother Vrndavanlila dasi,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada and to your gurudeva.

I read the issue of your newsletter issue on women, and I thank you for including one of my articles in it. I also read your article with great interest—especially as your article was the only one of significant length submitted by a woman.

Your servant,

- **HG Krishna Kirti Das**

Dear Swamiji (His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami),

I was immensely pleased to read your indepth article on ideal womanhood as per -*Srimad Bhagavatham*. All the ills of the world whether terrorism of Islam or materialism of the west with toxic influence on children in their formative years will be overcome only if the people of west/gulf countries were to just go through the articles written by really enlightened and

wise people of your order. May Lord Krishna give you strength, longevity and production of further works of the type I was fortunate to come across from your self.

With warm regards,

- **Bhakta Madhavarao**

Hare Krishna Mataji!!

Please accept my humble obeisances \_^\_o All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

I read your article "I do not want to be a woman in varnashrama" and was very inspired to read that. Especially the line "We are here to prepare ourselves to go back home and not waste our human birth in asserting our "right". This birth is meant for higher purpose rather than settling the gender equation 'right'." makes a lot of sense as it takes one out of the bodily conception of life. Thanks for jotting down your thoughts so wonderfully and inspiring all the women who have ever suffered gender inequality. All glories to you...

A struggler on the path of devotional service,

- **Bhaktin Ruchika Srivastava**

PAMHO mataji,

Another fantastic issue! 1) The articles, including the first page is simply wonderful (Loving Krishna Will Help Her To Love Her Son & quote from SB). I always look forward for such things in your spiritual e-zine. 2) The photos of the Lord whilst Kunti offering prayers are worth seeing again and again. 3) HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's quotes from puranas are interesting to read. 4) I liked the quote of Prabhupada "Yes, women are not as intelligent as the men, but when a woman becomes a devotee, then she becomes as intelligent as the man." from HG Hari Sauri Dasa's article. 5) Your article with your personal experiences is amazing. You've covered a wide variety of aspects. All glories to your wonderful service!

Hare Krishna!

- **Bhakta Ravishanker Sangem**

Maharaj has nicely presented the Vedic injunctions and recommendations regarding the position of women in the family and society. We can see other religious groups which have presented a very conservative and chaste example of family life also. Various Christian groups including the Amish have demonstrated practically that it is possible even in the environment of the modern world....Naturally, there are many men who have exploited such vulnerabilities for their power and abuse. Fortunately, the ideals remain, but the practices often fall short of that ideal. ... It does not mean that the ideals are not worthy to study, but the practical application has often fallen short...

- **HG PustaKrishna Das**

*Hare Krsna dear Readers, I am thankful to the devotees whose inspiring and overwhelming response to the newsletter in the form of mail, phone calls or even otherwise and their interest in varnasrama dharma. Their mood was truly infectious and encouraging. I may not be able to mention all the names because of space constraint, but I nevertheless owe each and every one of them my heartfelt thanks. Please keep reading and writing!*

-The Editor

The mails/ articles can be posted to [eightpetalsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:eightpetalsnewsletter@gmail.com) or [vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com](mailto:vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com)

Focus for the next issue -

Postal address:

New Govardhan, #89, 9<sup>th</sup> Cross, Trimurthy Colony, Mahindra Hills, Secunderabad, AP (India)

For further details: Contact: +91-9949698297 (Vrindavanlila devi dasi)

*Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*

*Make Vrindavan Villages*