

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

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Focus on Freewill



Highlights of the issue:

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God's Interference in Our Freewill is His Special Favor

Hridayananda: So Prabhupada, if some people say, "Well, I have no free will," that means that they are actually lazy.

Prabhupada: Yes. You have got free will, but must utilize it properly. That is free will. Free will means to utilize it properly. That is free will.

Svarupa Damodara: So people... Sometimes Krsna interferes in the free will?

Prabhupada: Ah?

Svarupa Damodara: Our free will.

Prabhupada: Yes.

Svarupa Damodara: God interferes.

Prabhupada: Yes. That is Krsna's special favor. Because by your free will you are going to hell. If Krsna interferes, that is Krsna's special favor. Just like a child is going to touch fire by free will, and father, "Eh, don't do it." That is his special favor.

[Ref. VedaBase> Morning Walk — December 4, 1973, Los Angeles]

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada? Why God gave to man free will if He knew the man would fall down in the material world?

Prabhupada: If you have no free will, then you are a stone. The stone has no free will. You want to be stone? Then you must be, must have free will. But don't misuse your free will. But don't try to become stone. That is not life.

[Ref. VedaBase > Bhagavad-gita 15.15 — August 5, 1976, New Mayapur (French farm)]

Srila Prabhupada Speaks on Freewill

Your Freedom is Subordinate to God's Freedom

Swedish man (3): Is there free will?

Prabhupada: Yes, yes. Just like you are sitting here. If you don't like, you can go away. That's your free will. There is free will. Because we are part and parcel of God, God is completely free to do anything.

And because we are part and parcel of God, therefore we have got minute quantity of freedom. Just like a drop of ocean water, it is also salty, but the quantity of salt in that drop is not equal to the salt in the ocean. Similarly, you have got a little quantity of freedom, but not as freedom as God has got. That is not possible. You are subordinate. Your freedom is subordinate to God's freedom. Therefore if you misuse your freedom, then you become punishable. The government gives you freedom, but if you misuse your freedom, if you violate the laws, then you are criminal.



Yes? [Ref. VedaBase > Bhagavad-gita 7.1-3 — Stockholm, September 10, 1973]

Freewill is Freedom to Do Wrong

Prabhupada: Free will means...

Hayagriva: ...infallible judgment?

Prabhupada: Free will means that you can act wrongly. That is free will. Unless there is chance of doing wrong or right, there is no question of free will. Where is free will then? If I act only one sided, that means I have no free will. Because we act sometimes wrongly, that means free will.

Hayagriva: A man may know better but still act wrongly.

Prabhupada: Yes.

...Prabhupada: But that is free will. He misuses his. Just like a thief, he knows that his stealing, it is bad, but still he does it. That is free will. He cannot check his greediness, so in spite of his knowing that he is doing wrong thing — he will be punished, he knows; he has seen another thief, he was punished, he was put into prison — everything he knows, but still he steals. Why? Misuse of free will. Unless there is misuse of free will, there is no question of free will.

[Ref. VedaBase > Rene Descartes]

HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Speaks on Freewill

The Psychology of Freewill

Are we free to act or are we forced to act due to destiny? To what extent are we able to exercise our freedom? What exactly constitutes free will and freedom? If everything is pre-destined according to the laws of nature, what is the meaning or purpose of desire?

These and similar questions naturally arise in the minds of those who have no access to factual knowledge. Due to four defects inherent in all human beings, namely the tendency to cheat, to make mistakes, to be illusioned, and to be governed by imperfect senses, we cannot acquire perfect knowledge by ourselves. However, we can easily clear our doubts by hearing from the perennial teachings that have served as a perfect guide to mankind since time immemorial, the book of knowledge par excellence, the “Song of the Lord” known as the *Bhagavad-gīta*. Indeed, *Bhagavad-gīta* is accepted as the most profound book on psychology for it explains in detail the workings of the body, mind and soul.



Our Three Bodies

In the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-gīta* titled “Knowledge of the Absolute” Lord Krishna gives clear information of these three levels of existence or three bodies, two being perishable (the gross and subtle body or *apara prakṛiti*-inferior nature) and one being eternal (the soul or *para-prakṛiti*-superior nature). This basic understanding is referred to in the ancient Vedic scriptures as “*atma-jñāna*”, generally translated as “knowledge of the soul”. The word “*atma*” however, also refers to the body and the mind. Our understanding of free will is intimately connected with our understanding of the workings of the body, mind and soul. In all the three states however the living entity’s position is that of “*prakṛiti*”, subordinate and dependent, as opposed to that of the Lord, being “*puruṣa*”, master and fully independent.

Most people have some knowledge of the gross body that is made up of five gross material elements, namely earth, water, fire, air and ether (Bg. 7.4). However, most people have much less information of the subtle body that is made up of three subtle elements, namely mind, intelligence and ego (Bg.7.4). Even fewer people have information of the spiritual body (Bg. 7.5) that is described as “*sat, chit, ananda vigraha*”, “*sat*” (eternal), “*chit*” (full of knowledge), “*ananda*” (full of happiness) and “*vigraha*” (form).

The Workings of the Subtle Body

To help us understand about free will, we must know the workings of the mind (*manah*), intelligence (*buddhih*) and ego (*ahankara*). The mind has three functions, namely to think,

to feel and to will. The intelligence has two functions, namely to accept or reject. As long as one remains on the platform of “false ego” (*ahankara*), the intelligence accepting the self to be this gross and subtle body, keeps one’s free will compromised. This “power of discrimination” of the intelligence is the special feature of one who is fortunate to acquire a human form of life. Misuse of such discrimination prolongs one’s existence in the material world through the repeated cycle of birth and death known as the wheel of “*samsara*”. As long as one continues to nurture material thoughts and material desires, these have to be enacted through a material gross body and a material subtle body. When one dies, one only leaves the gross body but continues to live both within the subtle and spiritual body, thus being forced to reincarnate, continuing to compromise his free will.

The Free Will of the Conditioned Soul

By “conditioned soul” (*baddha jiva*) we mean someone who is “governed” by the three modes of material nature called as “*guna*”. “*Gunas*” are described as the binding ropes of “karmic reaction” in keeping with the laws of material action and material reaction (*karma*). The root cause of “*karma*” lies within the “*ahankara*” or false bodily identification of the conditioned soul. In such a state, the conditioned soul is forced to repeatedly accept a material body, both gross and subtle, and is forced to follow the dictates of the law of *karma*. In such a condition, one’s freedom and one’s free will is checked or conditioned.

The Free Will of the Liberated Soul

By “liberated soul” (*mukta jiva*) we mean someone who is freed from the dictates of the modes of material nature. One exists in his natural condition of spirit soul or “*para-prakriti*”. As “*para-prakriti*”, the spirit soul who is freed from the material existence experiences full freedom to act on the platform of spirit soul. By constitutional position, however, one eternally remains with limited independence being the part and parcel of the Supreme Lord (Bg. 15.7). At that stage, one can express and experience pure transcendental desires to serve the Lord and to experience fully his natural qualities of “*sat, chit, and ananda*”, eternality, knowledge and happiness. One’s only desire is to satisfy the will of the Supreme Lord. The highest perfection of life is described “*samsiddhir hari-tosanam*”, pleasing the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Hari. (SB 1.2.13)

*Atah pumbhir dvija-srestha varnasrama-vibhagasah
Svanustitasya dharmasya samsiddhir hari-tosanam*

[O best among the twice-born, it is therefore concluded that the highest perfection one can achieve by discharging the duties prescribed for one's own occupation according to caste divisions and orders of life is to please the Personality of Godhead.]

Real freedom and real free will of the living entity come only when one becomes freed from the shackles of this material body and regains one’s constitutional position as eternal servant of the Lord. “*Jivera svarupa haya Krishna nitya dasa*”: [Cc. Madhya 20.108] “every individual soul is eternally a servitor”. The easiest method to achieve this exalted position is to take shelter of the Lord by chanting his holy names: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.





Freewill of a Molecule

- Vrindavanilla dd



The tussle between “freewill” and “destiny” has been primordial. There is one famous Greek play titled “Oedipus Rex” by Sophocles. The main character Oedipus has the tragic destiny of marrying his own mother revealed to him by the soothsayer. Shaken by the revelation, he decides to escape his fate by leaving his royal parents and his kingdom, but ironically the more he tries to give a slip, nearer he gets to the prediction. Finally the fate takes the better of him. He later learns of the commission of the most heinous sin – marrying his own mother and having even children from her. He relinquishes his kingship, blinds himself and moves from one place to another as he repents for the sin from which he had in fact tried to save himself. He is forsaken and alone but he makes himself adorable by the manner in which he reacts to his destiny. His desire to purge, do *prayashchit* for his inadvertently committed sin brings out the beauty in his character, he rises to such a height that from being one who is scoffed at by everybody, whose presence had once caused epidemics, death, draught in his country; later turns to a harbinger of good times, his death is said to bring good luck to the place where he would leave his body.

It beautifully brings forth the beauty and significant role of “freewill” in our lives. *Bhagavad-gīta* explains the wonderful attributes of the soul besides the minuteness of soul. It is just one ten-thousandth part of the upper portion of the hair point in size.*¹ The minute “freewill” of this super-micro soul has created so much of furore that there are 14 planetary systems and countless universes, and further sub- and sub to sub-systems to place everybody according to their “freewill”! So wonderful is freewill! This differentiating factor from non-living beings can make a heaven of hell or hell of heaven. It is therefore important that we learn to exercise it judiciously. It is because of this we are separated from the Lord. Though we are suffering because of misuse of freewill and are sentenced to serve our prison term in the *bhuloka*. At the same time *bhuloka* is also *karmabhoomi*, where we have the possibility of decision making (thus freewill) and accordingly designing the future body and destiny.

Freewill has been a subject which has attracted the attention of philosophers, spiritualists and scientists (especially neuroscientists, psychologists and physicists) alike. There are a

*¹ The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (5.9) says:
bālāgra-śīṣata-bhāgasya / śatadhā kalpitasya ca
bhāgo jīvaḥ vijṣeyaḥ / sa cānanyāya kalpate

[Translation: When the upper point of a hair is divided into one hundred parts and again each of such parts is further divided into one hundred parts, each such part is the measurement of the dimension of the spirit soul.]

few scientists (for instance Nobel Laureate Gerard who gave a theory suggesting predetermined status of behavior of particles and thus ourselves) who believe in non-existence of freewill and claim that they can predict each and every move of every studied individual with greatest accuracy*². Their perception reduces one to mere robots without any emotions and free will. A few non-atheists also find it confusing to see freewill in the face of the Lord being considered as “*sarva kārṇa kārṇam*” (the cause of all causes - BS 5.1). Let us try to study it.

However before I try to do so, I consider it important to confess that I am neither a philosopher, nor a spiritualist nor even a scientist. I am a mere practicing devotee who had been struggling to understand it till some time ago. Freewill can be compared to free periods that we had in our student days. As a child in the school, every class was given one or two free periods besides other regular periods for teaching Maths, Science, English, Hindi or other such subjects. In the free periods the students were free to do anything, they could play, draw, study, sleep, read in the library or anything that they wanted to do. Though this was a free period and one was free to pursue their interests, yet at the same time it entailed a few implicit understandings:

- The duration of free period and its very presence is because the authorities have gracefully chosen to give us so
- It has to be exercised within the restraints of rules of the school and of general decorum
- Free period can be used according to one's temperament, it can be used or even abused



Free will is no different. It does exist and comes in measures as given by the Lord. If He does not wish to give us free will and freedom to exercise it, there is no possibility of we having it.

Swedish man (3): Is there free will?

Prabhupāda: Yes, yes. Just like you are sitting here. If you don't like, you can go away. That's your free will. There is free will.

Free will exists, but how much? –Only as much as the Lord wants us to have. The conversation between Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śyāmasundara prabhu is worth reading:

Śyāmasundara: Does the hydrogen molecule have an independent desire?

Prabhupāda: No, but within the hydrogen atom, there is Kṛṣṇa; therefore it is combining. Not this hydrogen atom as matter is combining, but because Kṛṣṇa is within that hydrogen atom existing. He knows that by combination this thing will come about, that will come out, that will come out...

Śyāmasundara: But the individual soul has a little independence to choose?

*² *New Scientist*, 4 May 2006, pp. 8.

Prabhupāda: No, no.

Śyāmasundara: Has no independence?

Prabhupāda: No. The individual soul does not. In *Bhagavad-gīta* it says that *anumantā*, individual soul, wants to do something and Kṛṣṇa gives orders. Man proposes and God disposes.

Śyāmasundara: So we have no free will?

Prabhupāda: No. Without sanction of Kṛṣṇa we cannot do anything. Therefore He is the ultimate cause.

Śyāmasundara: But I thought you had been saying that we have a little independence.

Prabhupāda: That independence that Kṛṣṇa wants me to do something but I want to deny it. But unless Kṛṣṇa sanctions, you cannot do that also.

... So far as we get information, our knowledge is from the Vedic information, *aṅdāntara-stha paramāṇu*: Kṛṣṇa is within, the Paramātmā. It does not say the soul is within, the Paramātmā.

So, how much control do we have over our free will? — We have only as much free period (free will) as much as the school authorities (the Supreme Lord) will allow or sanction. Even within the allowable limits, when we exercise it, we need to follow the law of the school (nature). One cannot violate them. Misuse of free period or abuse of freewill is followed by misery of punishment by the respective executive and judiciary authorities.



Devotee (4): Prabhupāda, we're in this material world, in this human body, we're having to work with this intelligence, with mind, material things. So there is a group of philosophers that say that actually because we're a product, our mind, the way we're thinking now is a product of our upbringing and our past, that actually we have no free will, but we're forced to think and act in a certain way.

Prabhupāda: Then that you have to admit that you are conditioned by some authority. When you are put into jail, you cannot act independently. You have to act according to the jail superintendent's order.

... Devotee (4): So he admits he's conditioned, but still, there's no free will. He says, "Yeah, so I'm in the prison. I'm imprisoned. I'm conditioned."

Prabhupāda: No, no, no. Free will... Just like a man commits theft by his free will. But when he is put into jail, then no more free will. He has to act according to the jail superintendent. But his beginning of jail life is free will. Nobody asked him that "You go to jail." But why he has come? He knows also that "When I am put into jail, I will lose all my freedom." He knows that. Still, he comes. Why does he come? He knows that. That is called *ajnana*. *Mudha*. That is called *mudha*. He

knows; still, he does. [Ref. *VedaBase*> Morning Walk - 14 July 14, 1975, Philadelphia]

There is another discussion reinforcing the same thought:

Prabhupāda: Yes, freedom. Our present condition is not freedom. We are completely under the laws, *te 'pi svatantra rudhāṇī vardhya* (?). They are tied up by the ropes of material nature, hands and legs, and still they are thinking, “I am free.” That is illusion. Nobody is free. *Daivī hy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā* [Bg. 7.14]. We are seeking freedom but nobody is free. Nobody is free. *Prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni* [Bg. 3.27], they are pulled by the ear, “Do this.” *Prakṛteḥ*. You have to do this.

Śyāmasundara: He says that the free will, which creates itself or realizes itself is the truest of all realities.

Prabhupāda: Yes. So if by free will if you choose to surrender to Kṛṣṇa then you'll get your real free will, freedom. Otherwise you are under the clutches of *māyā*. *Daivīhy eṣā guṇa-mayī mama māyā duratyayā* [Bg. 7.14]. You cannot surpass the stringent laws of material nature, that is not...

So, working within the stringent laws of nature, one can misuse the gift of free will and bind himself in the vicious circle of death-birth-death. In the *Bhagavad-gīta* (5.13) the Lord says that He is not the cause of anyone's particular work, nor the authority, nor the result of such work—but that all these come out of the various modes of nature. Thus, all acts performed by the living entity—except those with transcendental results—are self-created engagements arising from an abuse of the freewill, and therefore such acts or engagements are never to be considered as if the works and the results were somehow ordained by the almighty Godhead. Such works are all material and are therefore conditioned and directed by the modes of nature. The Personality of Godhead dissociates Himself from such works.

One cannot be without work, how can we work without getting entangled in the karmic reaction of that work? If we surrender all our actions or work to Him, we can but how do we do it? Conditioned with the three modes of nature or *guṇas*, how can one take the right decision? If the freewill is so dangerous, should we repress it altogether? How should the freewill be used that it does not prove self-injurious due to our ignorance?

Though we are suffering in this material body because of our earlier misuse of free will; yet it is His causeless mercy that the Lord has not abandoned us. Keen on bringing us back to Him, even in this situation He has given us the way out, an escape route from this prison house. He has given us free will, but He has also given the instructions to use it properly to return to Him. Prabhupāda explained it beautifully:

“I am now talking to you the most confidential words.” (*Sarva-guhyatamam*) “You stop your so-called freewill. Just surrender to Me.” This is the most confidential. “If you surrender to Me, that is good for you. But if you go on keeping your free will you'll not be happy.” There is also free will. When you come to the platform of Kṛṣṇa consciousness you serve Kṛṣṇa with freewill, not that you become a stone. There is freewill. Just like our

devotees they are dressing Kṛṣṇa nicely, is there no freewill? They are cooking for Kṛṣṇa. Is there no freewill? The freewill is there. The Māyāvādī philosopher says, the Buddha philosopher says, that "Stop this freewill, and then you become happy." But our proposition is not to stop freewill but purify freewill. Purify. Not stop these eyes. Just if it is suffering from cataract, cure that cataract. Keep the eyes. And their proposition, "Get out these eyes and throw it. Then there will be no more seeing what is right and wrong." That is their proposition. *Nirviśeṣa-vādī*. *Nirviśeṣa* means no specialty, no varieties. That is *nirviśeṣa*. And *śūnya*, zero. When it is zero, then there is no question of right and wrong. So our philosophy is not that. There is no zero, and there is no variety. We don't say. There is, but its purified varieties. *Tat-paratvena nirmalam* [Cc. *Madhya* 19.170]. *Nirmalam* means purified. So our process is to purify everything."

Our job is therefore to purify our freewill and thus dovetail our freewill with His Supreme will – Easier said than done.

*sadṛśam ceṣṭate svasyāḥ / prakṛter jñānavān api
prakṛtiṁ yānti bhūtāni / nigrahaḥ kiṁ kariṣyati* [Bg 3.33]

[Even a man of knowledge acts according to his own nature, for everyone follows the nature he has acquired from the three modes. What can repression accomplish?]

Repression fails and dovetailing is difficult, bordering on impossibility? How do we do that while being puppets in the deft hands of mayadevi and her tools of three *guṇas*? She keeps us in the prison house using the trident of three *guṇas*? It is very difficult to transcend the *guṇas*. This concern was expressed by Arjuna himself to the Lord and He even agreed to it, but He gave a solution to that too. Even while working within *guṇas*, using freewill according to one's *guṇas*, one has the option of coming out. One needs to be just what one is. Just perform one's duty according to one's nature or "*svabhāva*" – according to one's *varṇa* and *guṇa* – or simply following the principles of *daiva varṇāśrama* – "*svabhāva-niyatam karma / kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam*" [Bg. 18.47]. It is worth noting that the system of *varṇāśrama*, has been created by Him and is thus perfect. *cātur-varṇyam mayā śṛṣṭam / guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ* [Bg. 4.13] Simply by performing one's *karma* within the *varṇāśrama* set up ensures that our freewill is not abused.

The Lord is so merciful! He has created *varṇāśrama* for us. For the soul who has abused the freewill. For the soul which is just one-thousandth of the hair tip in size. Being His creation to protect the erring; *varṇāśrama* is in complete congruence with the Supreme will and is thus capable of giving one an opportunity to make the best of our human life within the limitation of *svabhāva* and *guṇas*. The set up *varṇāśrama* ensures that one is on the path of gradual spiritual evolution without resorting to "unnatural" methods of achieving transcendence. Hare Kṛṣṇa!



Free Will Vs Predestination *Easily Explained*

- HG Kesava Kṛṣṇa Dasa

Many times devotees try to reconcile this essentially Christian concept with Vedic understanding, but end up writing lengthy explanations that do not always satisfy the curiosity. This is because it is mostly incompatible with the truths of *Bhagavad-gīta*, for it has to be broken down in a simplified manner to give a satisfactory and brief explanation.



Predestination

As we may know, the five truths covered by *Bhagavad-gīta As It Is*, namely Krishna, the *jiva* souls, nature, time and action or *karma* are revealed. Of these, *karma* or action does not fit in to the predestination scheme. Yes, we can argue that our actions determine our 'predestination' or fate, but this is not the predestination of God's doing.

The normal understanding is that God determines our fate, which rules out our own responsibility to earn good or bad fruits of our actions. It is simply a matter of God disposing what we propose. The fact that we ourselves are responsible for whatever happens to us by our proposals, makes predestination a misfit. It should really be called self-destination. Or, we can label it as proposed-destination.

Otherwise, predestination dominates in the four other truths. Ever free Krishna comes and acts according to Vedic timing, although He has no obligation to. We *jiva* souls are destined to be eternal and live conditioned or liberated, by use or misuse of our minute independence. Material nature is an on-going process complete with punctual creations and devastations and the changing of the yugas. And Time ensures that all things must happen in predetermined fashion.

Free Will

There is no such thing as free will for us eternal *jiva* souls. It is more accurate to call it bound will. The only times we can speak of free will are when, somehow we misused our minute independence to end up here in this material world, and, when we take to the process of devotion to Krishna aided by the guidance of free agents like the Supersoul within our hearts, and those pure devotees who are already liberated.

If we are fortunate to be endowed with *buddhi yoga*, this can inspire us to act freely and to also appreciate all freedom givers related to the Lord such as His holy names, His devotees, the sastras, prasada, mercy and so on.

Because the jiva souls are bound, every decision or action they take is also bound. Impelled by bound desires it appears as if the jiva souls have a free choice to act, but the three modes of material nature are acting or enforcing matters.

The notion of free will can properly be explained as in determining our future or destination through our bound desires. For the sake of argument we sometimes need to use the term free will, but we have to correct it to bound or conditioned will. When our desires become free, then we will be acting on free will. Hare Krishna [Source: <http://www.dandavats.com>]

Is Bhakti Predestined?

- HH Romapada Swami



Bhakti is supreme, causeless and fully independent - no material cause can either induce or impede bhakti from appearing in one's heart. Srila Visvanatha Cakravarthi Thakura analyses this as follows: if material pious deeds, suffering, blind fortune or any such material condition could guarantee or give rise to bhakti, then that material cause would be considered more powerful than bhakti - this is contradictory and cannot be true.

It is therefore understood that bhakti is attained only by the mercy of bhaktas, who carry pure devotion for Krishna in their heart. In other words, bhakti (present in the heart of devotees) is the cause of bhakti.

Lord Caitanya taught that a rare and fortunate soul achieves the seed of bhakti through the mercy of a pure devotee.

*brahmanda bhramite kona bhagyavan jiva
guru-krishna-prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija*

“According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.”
(Cc. Madhya 19.151)

Devotional service is thus not predestined. It is by the causeless mercy of devotees that one attains the opportunity for pure devotional service and to revive one's forgotten relationship with the Supreme Lord. Therefore the pure devotees of the Lord move here and there out of great compassion, taking great troubles to create opportunities for people in general to render devotional service.



Even upon receiving the mercy of the devotees, and getting the seed of this devotional creeper (bhakti-lata-bija), it is the choice of the living entity to take up the process of devotion. In other words, it is a matter of individual freewill. At every point, the conditioned living entity has full freedom of choice to turn his misdirected attention back to the Supreme Lord or not - otherwise there would be no meaning to the term freewill at all. (We have previously discussed freewill and predestination at some length - please see Digest 4 and Digest 12 Q 117)

Thus, it is only by the causeless mercy of devotees, when received and accepted by a conditioned living entity by proper use of their freewill, results in their taking up pure devotional service.

It is sometimes seen that certain individuals take to the process of devotional service very quickly and effortlessly, upon coming in contact with devotees - just like dry wood catching fire. In such cases, it can be understood that they are continuing or resuming their spiritual progress from a previous life. One who takes up the path of spiritual realization, or devotional service, but does not achieve complete success in this lifetime is given a further chance in the next life - this is confirmed by Krishna in BG 6.41-44. The Lord arranges in the lives of such persons an environment or an opportunity that is conducive to once again take up the process from where they left. But even in such a case, it is not quite a matter of predestination - the individual still has the full freedom to choose or reject the opportunity given to them, to misuse or to properly utilize it.



Also, Krishna is fully independent, and so is Bhaktidevi - thus, it cannot be expected that bhakti is obliged to appear because of one's previous devotional practices. Srila Prabhupada explains how the transcendental system of devotional service is fully independent — it may or may not develop in a particular person even after he undergoes all the detailed formulas. Similarly, the association of devotees is also free from material causes. One may be fortunate to have it, or one may not have it even after thousands of endeavors. Thus, freedom is the main pivot in all spheres of devotional service. (Cf. SB 1.6.37 p) By sincerely surrendering to the Lord through the transparent medium of the spiritual master, we can hope to attract His causeless mercy.

[NOTE: Maharaj's above answer which appears as an article above was originally in response to the following question: Was it destined when I was born that I would one day become associated with ISKCON and do all these spiritual activities? If yes, then why do we preach? Won't people destined to join ISKCON join it, and those not destined to join ISKCON not join it? If no, then does it mean that joining ISKCON is outside the influence of destiny? Source: www.dandavats.com.]

• Varnashrama Developments



This morning we held a special class in memory of Bhagiratha prabhu. To our good fortune, one of the devotees close to Bhagiratha prabhu since his childhood, Sriman Kisora Krishna prabhu, arrived here at Sahyadri Sri Krishna Balarama Ksetra (SSKKB) the day before yesterday. Time was but too short to begin recollecting all the wonderful memories of this great Vaisnava who left our midst rather suddenly and unexpectedly.

I first noticed Bhagiratha prabhu in the late nineties at the Sri Sri Krishna Balarama temple in Denpasar (Capital City of the Province of Bali) where even as a young student in primary and secondary school he would come and associate with devotees by staying overnight at the temple. He was then known as Bhakta Nyoman Bagia. He was likely less than 10 years old when he started chanting the Holy names on japa mala. One of the earlier Balinese devotees who actually brought him and many other young students to Krishna consciousness was Sriman Dhritatma prabhu, a teacher by profession who was and remains a very active preacher. By the time Bhakta Nyoman Bagia was 16, he was already very serious in his devotional service. Kisora Krishna prabhu recalls how he had vowed to hand carve and string his own tulasi mala that, because of its large size, he finished just a short time before his Hari Nama diksa ceremony in Bali In July of 2002. He had just turned 18 and received the name Bhagiratha das brahmachary.



As part of the plan to send some Indonesian devotees to India for learning and training, I had selected both Kisora Krishna prabhu and Bhagiratha prabhu who were fortunate to obtain a three year Student Visa to study Yoga and Sanskrit under the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan branch in Mangalore, And so it was that in the later part of year 2003 they both went to India together, this being Bhagiratha prabhu's first visit to the holy land. It was during this period that he first visited our Sahyadri Sri Krishna Balarama Ksetra where he and prabhu Kisora helped develop the project in its very early days.

Within six months of his being in India, I got the news of the new proposed educational facility in Govardhan, the Srimad-Bhagavatam Vidyapitham, which was to be headed by Sriman Gopiparanadhana prabhu who was then taking applications. Soon after receiving this information, I contacted Gopiparanadhana prabhu who readily agreed to accept Bhagiratha prabhu from their very first semester in October 2004.

Bhagiratha prabhu took to Govardhan as a fish takes to water. Somehow he was given the service to look after the school's Gaura Nitai Deities although he was still not brahmana initiated. The following year, in October 2005, Gopiparanadhana prabhu asked me if I could award Bhagiratha prabhu his second initiation so he could serve the Deities full time. Since I was still not able to enter India, I recall giving him brahmana diksa long distance over the telephone. Gopiparanadhana prabhu was kind enough to perform the diksa ceremony himself. Bhagiratha prabhu was a good student. He was able to successfully complete his studies along with a group of some 20 foreign devotees from different parts of the world. By that time he had picked up Sanskrit nicely. He was gradually developing a deeper and stronger attachment for the land of Vrindavan, in particular for both Krishna and Balarama along with Giri Govardhanji. Once he wrote to me asking if he could worship personal deities of Sri Sri Krishna Balarama in their form of Govardhan silas as well as Shalagram sila, to which I consented.

Soon after leaving India in the year 2007, he asked me if he could compose a second line of my pranam mantra in Sanskrit, to which I also agreed. His deep attachment and appreciation for Govardhan was evident with his taking up the task of writing his own book describing the various pastimes of Lord Krishna in Govardhan in addition to various holy places in Vrindavan all depicted with beautiful illustrations. I asked him to begin a small Varnasrama College at Gaura Hari for which he recruited a few local students.

Whenever I would visit Indonesia, generally once or twice a year, he would assist me in different ways. He was a staunch advocate of the varnasrama mission and helped organize three yearly varnasrama seminars in Bali, the first being at the Gaura Hari temple in Gianyar in the year 2009, all of which were well attended. In my last visit to Indonesia in the year 2011 he accompanied me on visits to some of the far away islands from Bali such as Kalimantan and Sulawesi.

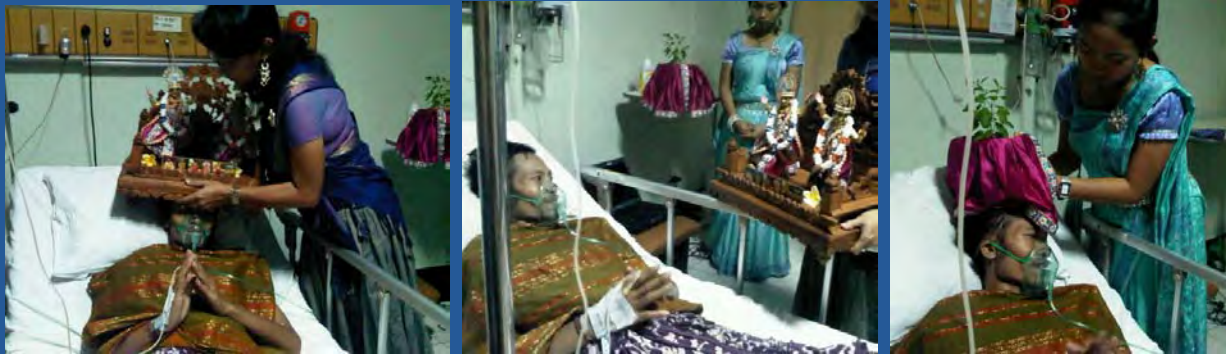
He was always very enthusiastic in serving. One such personal service included interviewing various senior devotees on the subject matter of varnasrama. He took this up very eagerly and completed five interviews within one year approximately. The devotees he interviewed were His Holiness Bhakti Vidya Purna Maharaja, His Holiness Bhakti Vikasa Maharaja, His Grace Gopiparanadhana prabhu, His Grace Atma Tattva prabhu and myself. The book came out under the title ***Traditional Education***, Selected Interviews where Bhagiratha prabhu's photo and short history is also included.

Bhagiratha prabhu liked to travel. He did some preaching in Cambodia as well as Thailand. He actually travelled with his Govardhan teacher, His Grace Gopiparanadhana prabhu, when he visited Bangkok, going out on Harinam and distributing Srila Prabhupada's books. I remember visiting a Buddhist temple in Bangkok where they had on display the corpse of a dead body somehow kept in some liquid. Bhagiratha prabhu was visibly shaken seeing this dead body and

this helped him become even more serious about his Krishna consciousness. His favorite pilgrimage place was of course Vrindavan. The devotees from Indonesia requested him to bring them on pilgrimage to India and so he began to serve as a guide bringing the devotees to both Mayapur and Vrindavan.

Two years ago approximately while I was at the Gaura Hari temple, noticing that I was worshiping a small ivory deity of Gopalji and a cow, he brought me his own Sudarshan Cakra Shalagram Sila and offered him to me for worship. I was extremely pleased and to this day I continue to worship his Shalagram Sila.

Bhagiratha prabhu loved performing kirtans. He was a good singer and was adept at playing both the harmonium and mrdanga. He picked up a small portable harmonium that he carried with him wherever he travelled. He would wrap this harmonium around his neck moving about the temple room enthusing devotees with his lively kirtans. He was also a very good dancer and always very cheerful in disposition. He learned how to perform yajnas and at different times devotees would request him to perform some particular samskara in their homes or at the temple.



When Gopiparanadhana prabhu passed away last year, Bhagiratha prabhu wrote two letters of appreciation on dandabats.com thus showing his deep love and affection for his beloved teacher at Govardhan. He expressed deep separation from his affectionate teacher and guide. He named his pen drive "Dauji" to help him always remember Balaramaji. He loved cows dearly.

Bhagiratha prabhu was in contact with many devotees many of whom he helped to bring to Krishna consciousness. He was a good preacher and his enthusiasm was contagious.

I am sure that all those who had the good fortune to come in contact with him will miss him dearly. He leaves behind his wife Bhaktin Mila and an adopted daughter "Gita Nagari". He also leaves many Deities such as Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai, Sri Sri Krishna Balarama, Govardhanji, Lord Narasinghadeva and Shalagram silas all of whom he worshiped regularly and with great fervor. I remember once he had spent about three hours performing his morning puja feeling particularly enlivened on that day lovingly reciting Sanskrit slokas for the pleasure of his Deities. Devotees close to him plan to continue the worship of all his Deities.

My dear Bhagiratha prabhu, what can I say? I must thank you for having been such an ideal disciple, student and teacher. You served with so much love and affection. I will miss your good

association. May Krishna, Balaramaji and Govardhanji always be by your side along with Their beautiful cows. As I take darshan of your Shalagram Sila and Sri Sri Krishna Balarama I cry in grief and separation of your sudden departure. Although it is most painful, I remain confident that you will always remain well protected by your Lordships Sri Krishna and Dauji.

All glories to you and to your wonderful display of devotional service. I long for the day we can meet again and continue to serve in Srila Prabhupada's sacred mission. I remain your ever well-



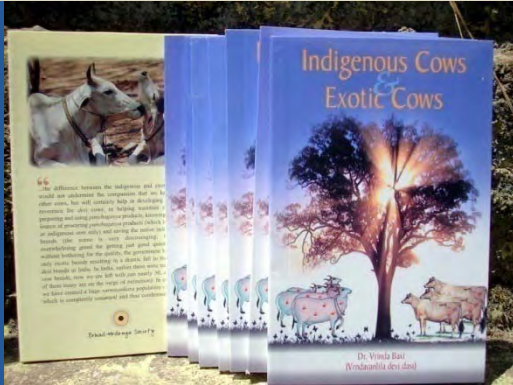
Bhagiratha Das was born on the Island of Bali, Indonesia, in March 1984 by the name of Nyoman Bagia. He joined the Hare Krsna movement in 1993 and got initiation from His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami Maharaja in the year 2002. In the following year of his initiation, soon after completing his senior high school, he was sent by his spiritual master to study Yoga and Sanskrit language to gain exposure to the rich Indian culture.

Bhagiratha Das devoted the first year of his stay in South India to study Yoga Therapy and Sankrit in the Province of Karnataka under various teachers. The rest of his time in India was spent undertaking more advanced study of Sanskrit under the guidance of His Grace Gopi Paranadhana Prabhu, senior discipole of Srila Prabhupada, as well as an erudite Sanskrit scholar and Head Master of Srimad Bhagavatam Vidyapitham at Sri Govardhan, Vrindavana.

During his sojourn in India, Bhagiratha Das made the most of his stay in India, not only studying Yoga and Sanskrit but also participating actively in the Sahyadri Sri Krishna Balarama Ksetra Varnasrama Project in South India with some of his friends and God-brothers. After spending close to five years in India, he returned to his country, Indonesia, to serve his spiritual master and help spread and develop varnasrama project, especially in the areas of education- gurukula. At the time of his departure he headed the Gaura Hari Varnasrama College in Gianyar, Bali.

wisher. All good fortune and all blessings upon you. Jaya Radhe!

● **Varnashrama Literature**

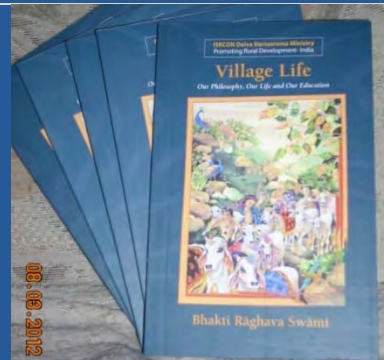
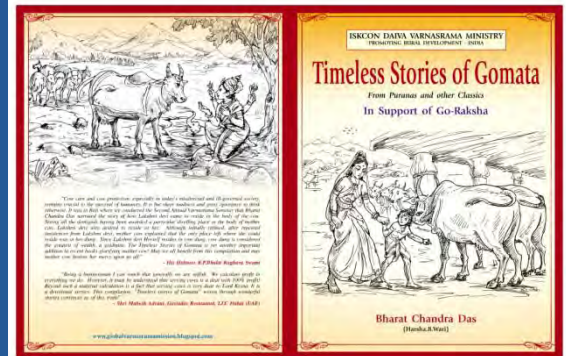


Indigenous Cows & Exotic Cows

It is exciting to know who was the cow who participated in Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, or who did severe penance to please the Lord or who appeared from the churning of the ocean. Are all the cows alike? Holy scriptures discriminate, as does Science – Bos Indicus and Bos Taurus. The book throws light on these aspects while discussing the different existing indigenous cow breeds of India; differences between indigenous cows and exotic cows; and difference between buffalo milk and cow milk. It gives both scientific and Vedic insight into the subject. It is likely to inspire love for mother cow with intelligence without generating negative feelings towards non-indigenous cows as the latter have their own place in the ecological set up. It is likely to help and guide the government to annul policies that have harmed our own indigenous cows and gomata and also help formulate policies which will help her from getting extinct. Its *Preface* has been written by H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami's (Head, Varnashrama Ministry, India) and *Introduction* by HG Balabhadra prabhu (Head, ISCOWP Ministry).

Timeless Stories of Gomata: From Puranas and Other Classics

It is a lovely compilation of different pastimes involving gomata, picked up from different *Puranas* and other Vedic scriptures by HG Bharat Chandra Das. It is certain to inspire necessary awe, reverence and love for the sacred cow, so dear to the Lord. Its presentation in lucid language, big font size, and A4 size of the book are features that are likely to appeal to both children and adults alike. Further, the 35 attractive illustrations by professional artist make it an irresistible buy.



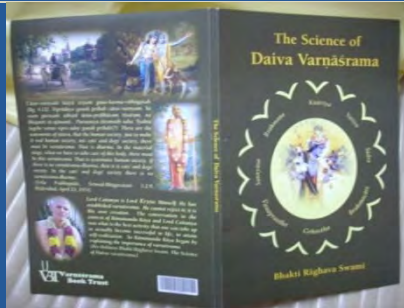
Village Life: Our Philosophy, Our Life and Our Education

It made waves at ISKCON Leadership Sangha and at the Fifth International Varnashrama Seminar at Sridham Mayapur. It is yet another interesting collection of H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami's (Head, Varnashrama Ministry, India) interesting essays in support of Sri Rādhāpāda's vision of simple life – Village Life – as demonstrated by the Lord Himself in His Vrndavan pastimes. Tasterfully compiled and edited by HG Vrndavanlila dd, the book is a call to return to our Vedic roots and addresses several practical aspects in one's daily life including astrology, development, celibacy, and role of women in a village set up, dung economy etc while assisting one to take up the simple life – daiva varṇāśrama dharma.

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

Authored by HG Sacikumar prabhu (with hands-on experience in farming and cow raising) and Vrndavanlila dd (Editor, *The Eight Petals*, a monthly e-newsletter in support of Daiva Varnashrama dharma). It makes an intensive reading as it pours information about the traditional practices related to cow conservation in traditional India and the 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 Varnashrama, HH Bhakti Raghava Swami and 'Foreword' by the Global Minister for Cow Protection & Agriculture, HG Balabhadra prabhu.



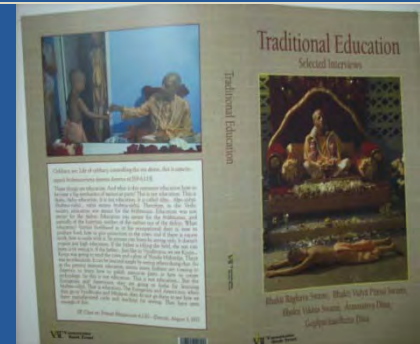


The Science of Daiva Varnāśrama

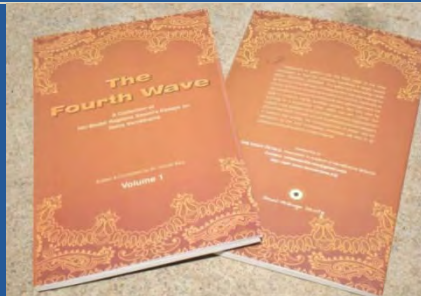
The book by His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami addresses the common doubts and misunderstandings related to varṇāśrama dharma. In order to make it convenient for the reader it has been divided into three sections, beginning with the very definition and understanding of the concept of varṇāśrama dharma as envisioned by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, to move to second section of the need or relevance of varṇāśrama followed by the third section dealing with the questions related to complications arising in the process of implementation of principles of daiva varṇāśrama 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 finds 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.



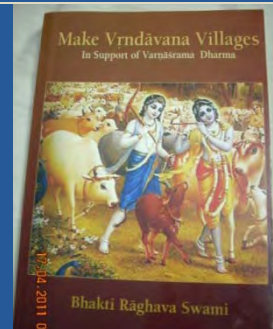
The Fourth Wave



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.

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.



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.

In addition to the above there are many more books in the pipeline and several documentary movies. For more information one can contact: vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com or gourgopal.brs@gmail.com

● Varnashrama News



Big Bucks Drive Professionals to Farming in Gujarat

(Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>)
May 24, 2012. Ahmedabad. Gujaratis are going back to their roots. And, it makes good business sense too. A buoyant agriculture in the state is luring an increasing number of professionals and entrepreneurs to switch to farming. Mahendra Patel, 42, recently closed down his electronics goods showroom. Patel, who owns an acre of land on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, found growing Dutch roses more lucrative than his business. "My income has grown many fold," says Patel, who made a neat Rs 30 lakh this year. Arvind Patel, a practising doctor put down his stethoscope to pick up a plough. He now grows exotic vegetables in Gamdi village in Ahmedabad.

Official data shows 9% growth in the number of farmers in Gujarat over the last five years - there are 46.61 lakh farmers in the state. The growth in numbers is largely driven by consistently good monsoon over the last decade. A portion of it could also be realtors turning to farmers to buy agriculture land.

State agriculture minister says the number of farmers is increasing since a large number of people who switched over to other professions are returning to farmlands. "The number is higher in Saurashtra, where farmers forced their sons to join other professions due to perennial water crisis. Water availability is luring them back," says Sanghani.

IDVM Minister's Vyasa Puja Celebrated

May 10, 2012. Hebri. His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami, Minister for ISKCON Daiva Varnashrama Ministry- India's, was

celebrated grandly at Sahyadri Sri Krsna Balrama Kshetra farm in Hebri, Karnataka for two days (May9th-10th). Non-stop kirtan, cultural folk dance (yakshagana), chanting, yagna, skits, book distribution etc marked the day. Devotees from different parts of the world came to participate in the celebration.

TN to part-fund Pilgrimage to Mansarovar, Muktinath [The Hindu]

May 15, 2012. Chennai.

Fulfilling her poll promise, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on Tuesday announced subsidy to 500 Hindus from the state undertaking pilgrimage to Mansarovar in China and Muktinath in Nepal.

Making a suo motu statement in the Assembly, she said her government would extend financial assistance to 500 Hindu pilgrims, 250 each to the important Hindu pilgrim centres of Mansarovar and Muktinath.

She said the state government would bear Rs. 40,000 of the total Rs one lakh towards the expenses for a person to visit Mansarovar and Rs. 10,000 out of Rs 25,000 for Muktinath.

13 Indian Pilgrims Die in Nepal Air Crash

May 14, 2012. Nepal. Devotees from ISKCON Chowpatty in Nepal on a yatra to Muktinath left their bodies in an air crash. The mishap occurred near Muktinath, as the chartered flight tried to land at the high altitude airport. The accident which claimed the lives of 13 pilgrims from India included 8 ISKCON devotees: HG Kunjabihari prabhu, his wife HG Madhupriya dd, son, Bhakta Shivam; HG Gokulrani dd and her daughter Bhaktin Taruni, HG Muralinohan and his brother; and HG GauraKrishna prabhu.



*H*are Krsna,

Dandavat Vrindavanlila dd,

The issue regarding free-will cascades one from the lower consideration of individual choice and discrimination to the highest consideration of rasa wherein one is enrolled in the loving affairs of Sri Sri Radha Krishna. During the sadhana phase of Krishna consciousness, one must try to think, feel and will for Krishna seva. Choice and discrimination of matter and spirit creates the character of the devotee. Later, in the final reality, when blessed by the ecstatic connection with clear Krishna consciousness, one will surely forget one's self, in favor of the immersion in Krishna consciousness in its infinite permutations. Choice is replaced by the overwhelming love for Krishna. It cannot be stopped or broken. Lord Chaitanya's lila hints at the self-abandonment when love for Krishna reaches its highest expressions. I wish you well in engaging the community of bhaktas in these important philosophical considerations.

Sincerely,

- **HG Pusta Krishna Das**

(In response to HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's artice "Beyond Cessation of Suffering")

*D*espite the fact that the ultimate goal of life is to develop prema bhakti, Daivi Varnashrama is to be viewed as favorable for the performance of devotional service, and therefore to be accepted.

Therefore Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, and other decvotees involved in promoting the implementation of Daivi Varnashrama are to be encouraged in their service, all the more that it will become more and more of a crucial issue, as major catastrophies keep increasing in this material material world, in this Kali yuga, in the form of the three types of material suffering inflicted on the living entities...

When everything is still tolerable, the mode of ignorance caracterized by laziness and sleep prompts us not to do anything, leave things as they are and just let events go by...But, when electricity power will break down, just to take a simple example, we'll see how life in the cities will become very precarious and difficult. Not to speak of when food and water supply start becoming scarce...! Then, even a good job and a nice house will become insignificant, if not of no use!

So, instead of toiling hard like asses, why don't we build a sustainable model in the form of "simple living and high thinking" which will give us ample time to cultivate the higher values of life in the form of developping spiritual knowledge, praising and worshiping the Lord, and serving each others' highest spiritual welfare...?

Yours in service

- **HG Puskaraksha Das**

Hare Krishna Mataji,

There are three types of happiness. Material, spiritual and devotional.
Bhoga, tyaga and bhakti....

HG Bhadra Govinda Das

Hare Krsna,

Mataji,

Thanks very much. We are enjoying all the readings and editions you send...

Bhakta Sanjay Ganti

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE EDITOR

We plan to initiate a discussion on 'Varnasrama'. Those interested to participate in the discussion or those who may have interesting thoughts to share on the subject may send their questions or writings to the editor. We would make an effort to answer the doubts related to the subject. Depending on its scope, its relevancy to the general readers and other such factors it will be included in the coming issue/s of the newsletter.

Please mention "QUESTIONS ON VARNASRAMA" or "THOUGHTS ON VARNASRAMA" as the case may be in the subject line of the mail.

The mails/ articles can be posted to:

eightpetalsnewsletter@gmail.com or *vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com*

Focus for the next issue -

Guru

Postal address:

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

Contact: +91-9949698297 (Vrindavanlila devi dasi / Dr. Vrinda Baxi)

Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare