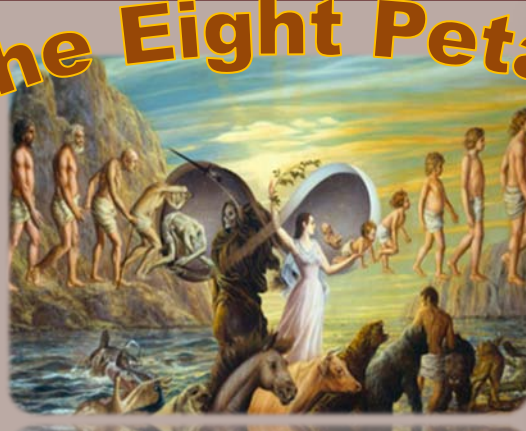


The Eight Petals



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

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Volume: 03
Issue: Aug'11-Sept'11

Focus on Suffering



Highlights of the issue:

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- ✦ Beyond the Cessation of Suffering
- ✦ 'Happiness' in Suffering
- ✦ Dealing With Unexpected Reversals in Life
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There Is No Happiness In This Material World

"Out of so many human beings who are suffering, there are a few who are actually inquiring about their position, as to what they are, why they are put into this awkward position and so on. Unless one is awakened to this position of questioning his suffering, unless he realizes that he doesn't want suffering but rather wants to make a solution to all suffering, then one is not to be considered a perfect human being. Humanity begins when this sort of inquiry is awakened in one's mind." [Bg. Introduction]

Yes, unless one is pessimistic of this material world, he is animal. A man knows what are the sufferings of this material world: adhyatmic, adhibautic, adhidaivic. There are so many sufferings pertaining to the mind, to the mind, sufferings offered by other living beings, and sufferings imposed forcibly by the laws of nature. So the world is full of suffering, but under the spell of maya, illusion, we accept this suffering condition as progress. But ultimately whatever we do, the death is there. ... there is no happiness within this material world. I have fully arranged for my happiness, and any moment, just after arrangement, we are kicked out; we have to accept death. So where is happiness here? The intelligent man is always pessimistic, that "First of all let us become secure," that we are trying to adjust this material position to become happy. ... And then further advancement of knowledge is there, and when he understands the orders of Krsna, sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja, to surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and after surrendering and understanding Him fully, then we go to the world which is full of bliss, knowledge and eternal life, tyaktva deham punar janma naiti mam eti kaunteya. That is perfection of life. [SP, Discussions on the Writings of Philosopher, William James]

Srila Prabhupada Speaks on Suffering

Suffering Is the Result of Our Disobedience

Devotee: Srila Prabhupada, sometimes people argue that if there is no God, it doesn't matter what I do, and if there is a God, then He is controlling everything and it still doesn't matter what I do, because everything is predetermined anyway. In either case, I am free to do anything I like.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but why do you suffer?

Devotee: Well, it's all God's plan. I suffer according to God's plan.

Srila Prabhupada: No. It is not God's plan that you suffer; you suffer because you violate God's laws. He is controlling everything, but He has given you minute independence: you can either follow His laws or violate them. But you are so foolish that you do not understand you are suffering. Your position is like that of the cats and dogs, who also cannot understand that they are suffering.

Our point is that you are suffering because you have violated God's laws, and if you become obedient to God you will not suffer. But you are such a fool, such a rascal, that you do not even know that you are suffering.

Devotee: But the devotees also seem to be suffering.

Srila Prabhupada: Yes, but they are not suffering like the nondevotees. Material life, which is the cause of suffering, is like a disease, and devotees are giving up this diseased condition of life for Krishna consciousness. If you are suffering from some disease, you cannot expect to be cured immediately. But one who is taking the medicine is very intelligent. His sufferings will soon be gone. But these nondevotee rascals will not even take the medicine -- Krishna consciousness -- so they will continue to suffer. And for the most part, devotees enjoy. Why are you always chanting Hare Krishna and dancing unless you are enjoying?

Devotee: Sometimes I get a sick stomach, too.

Srila Prabhupada: That's because you have a material body. But your suffering is just like the movement of a fan that has been switched off. The fan is still moving, but the switch is off; so it will soon stop. Similarly, your suffering will soon stop, because you are acting on the spiritual platform. And after giving up this body, you will have a completely blissful life. As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita* [4.9], *tyaktva deham punar janma naiti*: "After giving up the body, a devotee doesn't take birth again in the material world." You are not going to get another material body, full of suffering. That is your advantage.



But these nondevotee rascals are going to continue getting body after body, all full of suffering. They will have to accept one body and suffer, and then again they'll have to give up that body and take another body and suffer. As long as one accepts a material body he will have to suffer, because having a material body means suffering. So those who are not Krishna conscious will change bodies one after another and continue to suffer the threefold miseries [those caused by the body and mind, those caused by other living beings, and those caused by natural calamities].

But devotees, even if they appear to be undergoing some suffering, will eventually give up the material body and remain in their spiritual body, free from all suffering.



Devotee: [taking the position of a materialist] That is simply your faith.

Srila Prabhupada: And it is your faith that you do not believe it. We are accepting the words of the Bhagavad-gita on faith, so we have a chance of getting promoted to the spiritual world. But you have no faith, so you are sure to continue suffering in the material world. We are at least willing to take the chance, but you are so foolish that you are not willing to take the chance. So your suffering is sure to continue.

Devotee: Indians often say, "Well, I will take the chance when Krishna wishes. His will is supreme, so whenever He wishes He will make me Krishna conscious."

Srila Prabhupada: In the *Bhagavad-gita* [18.66], Krishna says, *sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja*: "Give up all your nonsense and surrender unto Me. Become Krishna conscious." So, Krishna wishes that you surrender to Him. Why don't you obey His wish?

Devotee: Why does Krishna arrange for the pleasures of sense gratification if they only bring us suffering?

Srila Prabhupada: Again, the same answer: Krishna has given us minute independence -- we can use our senses for either sense gratification or for serving Him, which is the real pleasure of the senses. The senses are meant for enjoyment, but if you try to enjoy your senses in a diseased way -- by gratifying them -- that is your misfortune, and you will have to suffer. You have to cure your disease by becoming Krishna conscious. Then you will enjoy unlimitedly.

We are not like the Mayavadis [impersonalists], who want to destroy the senses and become senseless. That is not our program. We want to purify the senses (*sarvopadhi-vinirmuktam tat-paratvena nirmalam*). Suppose a man cannot see because he has glaucoma. The mayavada program is that if your eye is giving you trouble and you cannot see, pluck it out. That is not our program. We want to cure the disease so you can see very nicely. So, our senses should be cured of the material disease by our practicing Krishna consciousness. Then we will be able to enjoy real sense pleasure by using our senses in the service of Hrsikesha [Krishna], the master of the senses.

[*Srila Prabhupada, Morning Walk – Mayapur; April 1975*]

HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Speaks on Suffering Beyond the Cessation of Suffering

When the young prince Siddhartha, who was later to become Gautama Buddha, first ventured out of the palace, having been overly sheltered in his tender years of childhood and adolescence, he experienced for the first time the shocking truth about life, namely the cruel sufferings related to disease, old age and death. So disturbed was he when confronted with such harsh realities of life that he then and there resolved to find a solution to humanity's suffering. After undergoing severe penances and entering into deep meditation, he emerged to uncover the teachings of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *nirvana* (the cessation of all material desires) that, according to him, automatically brings an end to all suffering. The *ahimsa* philosophy of Lord Buddha is based on the Four Noble Truths meant to mitigate suffering and the Eightfold Path of proper views, speech, action, livelihood, effort, resolve, mindfulness and concentration.



Although himself a *ksatriya* (warrior) prince aware of the tenets of *sanatana dharma* (the eternal religious principles taught in the *Vedas*), Gautama Buddha could not tolerate the abuses from the local *brahmanas* (priests) who engaged in the unrestricted killing of innocent animals, all in the name of authorized sacrifices found in the Vedic writings. He therefore rejected the entire Vedic teachings and established his own philosophy of *sunyavad* (voidism). By rejecting *sanatana dharma*, he also rejected the principles of *varnasrama dharma* that were being misused at that time.

However, if we closely analyze the teachings of Gautama Buddha, we will find that these are all to be found in the original teachings of the *Vedas*. Although Gautama Buddha rejected the exploitive *varnasrama* system current in those days, he nevertheless very cleverly re-introduced the same basic Vedic concepts. The fundamental principle of Buddhism is very much connected with the peace formula of simple living and high thinking. Such simple living and high thinking can best be realized through the scientific system of *varnasrama dharma*, when properly understood and correctly applied.

Transcending Suffering through Plain Living and High Thinking

Dharma refers to eternal principles that cannot be changed. *Varnasrama dharma* teaches one to minimize and simplify material activities which are considered the root cause of all attachment and hence suffering in the material world. Most people cannot immediately sever all material desires and therefore are taught to regulate such desires.

Living within society and adopting various rules and regulations as recommended within the sacred teachings of *sanatana dharma*, and in particular *varnasrama dharma*, will help one gradually control the mind and senses. By following such a process, one will come to the stage of transcendence and beyond. When the aim of life remains that of material exploitation, one's suffering simply increases, as in our present day misdirected society. Srila Prabhupada, the modern ambassador of the ancient Vedic teachings, explains as follows:



“The sufferings of human society are due to a polluted aim of life, namely lording it over the material resources. The more human society engages in the exploitation of undeveloped material resources for sense gratification, the more it will be entrapped by the illusory material energy of the Lord, and thus the distress of the world will be intensified instead of diminished.” [SB 2.2.37]

This is very much in keeping with the teachings of “proper action” and “proper livelihood” as outlined in the Eightfold Path of Buddhism. Srila Prabhupada gives further clarity as to how one should meet one's basic necessities of life:

“The human necessities of life are fully supplied by the Lord in the shape of food grains, milk, fruit, wool, stones, sugar, silk, jewels, cotton, salt, water, vegetables, etc., in sufficient quantity to feed and care for the human race of the world as well as the living beings on earth and every planet within the universe. The supply source is complete, and only a little energy by the human beings is required to get his necessities in the proper channel. There is no need of machines and tools or huge steel plants for artificially creating comforts of life. Life is never made comfortable by artificial needs, but by plain living and high thinking.” [SB 2.2.37]

Sinful Activities Increase Our Suffering

When we deviate from proper livelihood, we more easily engage in sinful activities, as in present day society, and thus we simply increase our suffering:



“Unfortunately in modern civilization, men are busy killing the cows that are the source of yogurt, milk and ghee. They are cutting all the trees that supply honey, and they are opening factories to manufacture nuts and bolts, automobiles and wine instead of engaging in agriculture. How can the people be happy? They must suffer from all the misery of materialism.” [SB 5.16.25]

One of the most serious deviations from *dharma* is the killing of innocent cows. This further echoes the ahimsa philosophy of Buddhism”

“The killing of cows by the human society is one of the grossest suicidal policies, and those who are anxious to cultivate the human spirit must turn their attention first toward the question of cow protection.” [Light of the Bhagavat 27]

Due to being highly intoxicated with excessive and destructive material pursuits modern man is not only committing *go-hana* (killing of cow) but also *atma-hana* (killing of the soul):

“Human society needs only sufficient grains and sufficient cows to resolve its economic problems. All other things but these are artificial necessities created by man to kill his valuable life at the human level and waste his time in things which are not needed.” [SB 3.2.29]

Uprooting Suffering through Daiva Varnasrama

Although suffering can be mitigated by following some of the methods prescribed in the Buddhist philosophy or by following the principles of *varnasrama dharma*, the elimination of suffering only occurs when one learns the science of uprooting the suffering altogether. The accumulation of *karmic* reaction, both pious and impious, forces the living entity to again and again take birth in the material world. Suffering will only be stopped when we learn the art and science of ending the cycle of repeated birth and death through *daiva varnasrama dharma*.



Daiva varnasrama is that art and science which teaches the living entity to dovetail all his activities, words, mind and intelligence in the divine service of Lord Krishna. It is not sufficient to neutralize humanity's suffering. One must learn to eliminate it completely by adopting devotional practices which will enable one to no longer incur sinful reactions. *Daiva* (divine) activities or devotional activities to the Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Krishna are the only means to end our suffering. In our present age of Kali Yuga this begins with the chanting of the Holy Names of God, as taught by the Yuga Avatara, Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

This proper understanding and application of the dual nature of *dharma* (material and spiritual) makes all things balanced and helps meet all necessities of life. This was and is meant to be the daily meditation of thoughtful men:

Dharma mulam hi Bhagavan sarva veda mayo harih

Smrtam ca tad vidam rajan yena catma prasidati

“The Supreme Being, the Personality of Godhead, is the essence of all Vedic knowledge, the root of all religious principles, and the memory of great authorities. O King Yudhisthira, this principle of religion is to be understood as evidence. On the basis of this religious principle, everything is satisfied, including one's mind, soul and even one's body.” [SB 7.11.7]


Evidence of our understanding the principles of *dharma* will come when we introduce the lifestyle advocated within the system of *daiva varnasrama dharma*. This application of *daiva varnasrama dharma* will automatically and immediately help relieve and transcend humanity's suffering and bring one beyond by uprooting the cause of our suffering, namely forgetfulness of our eternal loving relationship with Lord Krishna.



'Happiness' in Suffering

- Vrndavanlila dd



 ur cow, Surabhi was lying sick in a helpless state, unable to even stand on her legs. The doctors in the city are good only for treating cats and dogs. Their apathetic treatment had made me rely on the Lord Himself and seek guidance from baba, my father in the law staying in a village in Orissa. As I followed his instructions, everybody in our family sat in front of her taking turns to chant the mahamantra till very late in the night.

Round 2 at night my turn came. As I chanted, she just kept her head in my lap and tried to sleep. As the beads slipped through my fingers, I tried to concentrate on the sounds. Her innocent face and eyes made me suffer silently. I was thinking how selfless a cow's life is... through out her life she just gives, gives and gives. Even when our own biological mother stops giving us milk, she continues; she helps us in serving the Lord. Her very presence reminds one of the Lord Govinda...Gopala. Even till her last day she gives the goldmine of dung and urine and post-death, she gives her hide for being used in the service of the Lord. Surabhi's picture that hung in front of me depicted her standing behind the tribhanga form of the Lord, licking His lotus feet. I almost urged the Lord to bless her with health. It seems my suffering was directly connected to hers, my happiness at this moment seemed to be defined by physical state. As I murmured my prayer, my mind raced back in time. It unconsciously paused at different points of time in my life where in the suffering peaked to its summit.

Long time back, as a child of about 3 years I had been mistakenly left in the school on a holiday. As I cried alone unable to go back home, my heart hankered to see my mother. The end of suffering lay in my mother returning to pick me back; so many such instances flashed...the suffering of not being able to complete the homework, anxiety of reaching the school in time, of exams, of getting first position in the class, of finding relevant literature for writing the thesis, separating from parents and family after marriage and so on but 'suffering' has been there constantly present. How the definition of 'happiness' and 'suffering' keeps changing for us even within this one life itself? Afterall we are denizens of relative world. How true Srila Prabhupada was when he said that though everybody hankers for happiness but they do not know what true happiness is. "Temporary cessation of misery is falsely called happiness". How surprising it is that though fundamentally we are 'sacidananda' – eternal, full of knowledge and blissful but our material existence takes its toll in several ways. Misery in all its three form abound our lives, making us suffer (*pade pade yad vipdam*) every moment but it is a blessing in disguise. Suffering is "a process of purification" [SP, Morning Walk; March 25, 1976, New Delhi] ... distress is the stuff that devotees are made of:

catur-vidhā bhajante mām' / janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna

ārto jijñāsur arthārthī / jñānī ca bharataraṣabha [Bg. 7.16]

[O best among the Bhāratas, four kinds of pious men begin to render devotional service unto Me — the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute.]

This makes us easy to understand the depth of Queen Kunti's prayers wishing calamities befall her again and again so that she "could see You (the Lord) again and again, for seeing You means that we will no longer see repeated births and deaths."

vipadaḥ santu tāḥ śaśvat / tatra tatra jagad-guro

bhavato darśanam' yat syād / apunar bhava-darśanam [SB 1.8.25]

So, is this suffering which can be a crucial stepping stone to devotional service and is the form of Lord's mercy or *anugraha* so easy to 'get' and 'taste'? How wonderful maya is! Despite being in "dukhalayam", all the time pierced by the three dents of adhyatmika, adibhautik and adidaivik sufferings - *Prakrteḥ kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvasah* [Bg. 3.27] - we do not realize that we are suffering. The illusion is so overwhelming that chasing the objects of sense gratification we have forgotten our real *svarupa* and we choose to be in a state of willful suspension of disbelief. Even in the course of Srila Prabhupada's lecture there was an instance of a man, one of the audience who saw no problem in being reborn as a 'dog' in his next life – "Happiness of a fool." *Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!* The illusion is so great that even Indra forgot his position. Instead of feeling captive of the curse, was enjoying the "fall". He refused the pleasures of the might and heaven even at the behest of Narada muni just to remain in a hog's body on earth and 'enjoy' the company of female hogs and eating abominable things.

Prabhupada: If you are asked to stand here for five hours, you'll feel most uncomfortable. But they are standing for five thousand years, no uncomfortable. This is punishment. Punishment is there, but unaware. So everyone is like that. Anyone in the material world, they are being punished in different degree, but unaware. That is maya's grace, that although he is punished, he cannot understand.

Guru-kṛpa: So they answer that "If you're happy, then what's wrong with that?"

Prabhupada: Yes, that class you are here. You go on with that happiness. But we are not satisfied with this. You are rascal, you are happy in that way, but we are not. That is the difference between you and me.

Guru-kṛpa: Happiness of the fool.

[Morning Walk -- April 24, 1976, Melbourne]

Without exception, in this material world everybody is subject to the sufferings of *janma mrtyu-jara-vyadhi*. The big question is why is everybody subject to these three miseries and the four sufferings? What did we do to incur this punishment? Why does it illude us so terribly?

This suffering is "due to ignorance. I do not know. I am committing sinful life, I am committing mistakes; therefore I am suffering." Any intelligent man knows that he is suffering and tries to find a solution to it. A guru rescues his disciple from ignorance (*ajnana-timirandhasya*



jnananjana-salakaya) and sufferings caused because of ignorance and disobedience of His law. The Lord is so merciful that though on one hand He punishes the erring children but at the same time He also provides for us to return to Him. He himself gives the instructions to break the glass ceiling of illusion and suffering. Five thousand years ago, the Lord spoke *Bhagavad-gita* to Arjuna, which is nothing but science of devotion through following varnasrama dharma. Through different logic He proved to Arjuna how it was his dharma to fight. A bonafide guru being the representative of the Lord passes on the same message to his disciples. Vyasadeva also while recording the conversation between the two, at no point wrote "It is my opinion". Instead he wrote "Sri Bhagavan uvaca" – "Whatever writing, it is spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Carrying on the same tradition, our own Founder-Acarya, Srila Prabhupada also conveyed the same message. Even in his last conversation just before he left his material body he stressed on the importance and implementation of daiva-varnasrama dharma in the society beginning with ISKCON itself.

He is a nitya siddha, but being a vaishnava he was "*para dukha dukhi*", so in order to relieve others of their sufferings, of which they are sometimes foolishly not even aware he took the pains of reviving the Lord's message – daiva varnasrama dharma.

One may give so many excuses of not following it, but that is the only way. This was suggested to even Arjuna, whose devotion to the Lord is established beyond doubt. He had the privilege of being dear friend of the Lord, the one for whom He happily accepted to be the charioteer, the chosen one for receiving the divine message directly from Him, yet he was instructed to following the varnasrama



dharma, in his case the kshatriya dharma. Further, since everything is meant for the pleasure of the Lord it becomes devotional activity. Bhakti which has never been easy, particularly in this age of Kali needs more attention; thus more stringent observance of daiva varnasrama dharma. We are yet to become "*anyabhilasita-sunyam / jnana-karmady-anavrtam // anukulyena krsnanu-silanam bhaktir uttama* [*Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu* 1.1.11]

An honest introspection would reveal not so pleasant truths for most of us. Therefore, the relevancy of the message of "daiva varnasrama dharma" of the Lord and the guru to us. If we do not follow the instructions of our acarya we are no less than a "kali-chela". More than anything else it is like committing a spiritual suicide. It is this which will help us realize our original svarupa of true eternity, knowledge and happiness. Further, what is the difficulty? We take a step towards Him, He takes ten... I am just a puny practicing devotee, when the taste of licking the honey bottle from outside itself is so ecstatic, I wonder how it would be when I actually get to taste it? Hare Krsna!

Dealing with Unexpected Reversals In Life

- *H.H. Romapada Swami*



Question: Prabhupada told us to “Chant Hare Krishna and Be Happy”. I have been chanting the maha mantra since two years and I am following the rules and regulations but I am still very unhappy. I guess that there is a problem somewhere with me. My life is a mess. Krishna gives me too many tests which I can't handle. I have been struggling with my spiritual life and I am tired now. I am helpless....Please tell me what I should do to become stronger and to stop suffering from it.

Answer: Part of your struggle is clearly connected to the situation {you are in}. Your engagement. The feelings you have described are natural; although you have correctly accepted the course of events as being inspired by Krishna for some reason and are not begrudging or holding anyone at fault, it is nevertheless difficult for you to remain unaffected by the turn of events, and this is but natural.

When faced with such unexpected reversals in life, Krishna advises us to learn to tolerate. (See Bg 2.14) It is not easy, but this tolerance is a very important quality a devotee needs to cultivate in order to successfully chant the Holy names. (Siksastaka 3)

The ability to tolerate comes from the internal faith in Krishna's shelter, even if we don't yet have a strong realization of it. A devotee can always remain happy because of this shelter they feel. Knowing Krishna to be the Supreme Controller and my dearest well-wishing friend, the devotee is confident that Krishna will surely protect me and is orchestrating my life for the best. This trust that if I faithfully follow Krishna's instructions, He will surely protect me (avashya rakibe Krishna) is an important limb of the process of surrender. In addition, a devotee always feels deeply grateful for the numerous blessings Krishna has already provided in their life and is thus not too disturbed by apparent reversals or by what is seemingly lacking.

There is a beautiful verse in the Bhagavatam, Prayers offered by Lord Brahma (SB 10.14.8) which states that when a devotee faces a condition of so-called distress or reversal, rather than seeing it as a stringent punishment or unsurpassable test, he considers it a gift or benediction from the Lord. A devotee thinks: “Thanks to my past misdeeds I should suffer far, far greater than I am suffering now. So it is by the mercy of the Supreme Lord that I am not getting all the punishment I am due. I am just getting a little token, which is also for my purification.” Therefore he is always calm, quiet and patient,



despite many distressful conditions, and continues to serve the Lord with greater enthusiasm. Such a person is eligible to go back to godhead.

Krishna is not promising His devotee an idyllic life in the material world. Rather He warns us that this is a place of temporality and suffering, where there is danger at every step. And yet a devotee is always happy and satisfied because of the above-mentioned qualities viz, tolerance, gratefulness and faith in Krishna's shelter. These are not artificial adjustments of the mind but factually feelings of a pure devotee and by progressively cultivating these qualities, we can also be happy even amidst struggles.

Of course it is easier said than done, especially when the mind is disturbed and agitated. But it is possible to turn this into a wonderful opportunity for you to take deeper shelter and become further attached to Krishna. It becomes especially easy if you can have the association of devotees who carry such deep faith. Try to seek such association and hear and chant in their company. You could also associate with Srila Prabhupada through reading his biography and derive great strength from seeing how he persevered through all kinds of trials and reversals. Another powerful process is to cultivate the habit of offering heartfelt prayers to the Lord for His mercy and help.

So have faith and persevere. Please do not feel defeated, helpless or frustrated. Krishna consciousness is full of hope. In the ultimate picture of our eternal relationship with Krishna, even the most trivial of our services and attempts to connect to Him will be remembered and rewarded by Him abundantly, so your efforts in Krishna consciousness are not in vain. The present circumstance itself may be such reciprocation from Krishna to facilitate your advancement, and by continuing patiently with your devotional service, one day you may look back and appreciate how it was so.

One concluding thought: Consider what your reaction would be if you were to receive notice that you would die in 7 days, as was the case with Parikshit Maharaja. How would you respond?

Here is what Srila Prabhupada writes in SB 1.18.3 on the topic of meeting drastic reversals in life:

"Knowing the transcendental position of the Lord and the transcendental method by which one can approach that transcendental dhama, the

King was confident about his ultimate destination, and by knowing this he could leave aside everything material, even his own body, without any difficulty of attachment. In the Bhagavad-gita, it is stated, *param drstva nivartate*: [Bg. 2.59] one can give up all connection with material attachment when one is able to see the param, or the superior quality of things.... Unless one thoroughly understands this superior or eternal energy of the Lord, it is not possible to leave the material energy, however one may theoretically speculate on the true nature of the Absolute Truth."

[In Response to a Question Raised by a Devotee; Source: www.dandavats.com/?p=3465]



Unending Happiness: Possible?

- HG Urmila Devi Dasi



Happiness that is unending, increasing, interesting, and pure: Is it possible?

Can one find happiness in this world? For most of us what we call “happiness” is the temporary mitigation of distress, or sadness. Without sadness, there is practically no meaning to happiness in a material conception of life.

First, all that we term “happiness” depends on some sort of prior suffering. We enjoy eating because we feel the pain of hunger; without any hunger or appetite, eating will bring us no pleasure, no matter how tasty and well prepared the food. We find pleasure in sleep due to the distress of fatigue; a child who isn't tired will be told to “go to bed” as a punishment—not a reward. Sex is pleasurable because of the urgency of lust. Those who wish to increase their sexual pleasure therefore also desire to increase their lust. On the emotional level as well, company is meaningful when we have experienced loneliness. If we examine any type of material pleasure, we will find that the experience is enjoyable only in proportion to the amount of pain it alleviates. If there is no prior pain, the so-called pleasure will be meaningless or even perceived as distress also. On a full stomach, more food is painful, and to a well-rested person time in bed is an irritation. “Happiness” can therefore be defined as the temporary absence or mitigation of pain.

We need to have the lack of pleasure to experience pleasure for yet another reason than definition. Pleasure in this world diminishes with experience. If we eat our favorite food—say pizza—for breakfast, lunch, and dinner—in a few days, or certainly weeks, we will not only cease to gain happiness from it but will, in fact, abhor it. One who is constantly surrounded by even good friends will gradually cease to enjoy their company and will desire some time alone. All material pleasures, therefore, demand a “break” from them in order to experience their absence. This cycle is termed in Sanskrit as “bhoga-tyaga” or enjoyment and then renunciation of that enjoyment.



The cycle of enjoyment and renunciation of that enjoyment is seen in our patterns of work and vacation, eating and not eating, and so forth. There is simply not one type of pleasurable activity that will continue to give the same kind and degree of happiness continuously—there must be times of abstention in order to revive the original thrill. Even with breaks, the pleasure tends to diminish unless there is some time of prolonged or intense deprivation of the happiness.

However, the type of happiness described above is not the only type in existence. Evidence for the fact that another type of happiness exists is there in the fact that we humans desire happiness that doesn't require distance from it and is not based on suffering. We write and sing and dream of a happiness that will go on forever, increasing in intensity and pleasure with no concomitant suffering at all. Our love songs are full of promises of eternal bliss that grows by the hour, and we imagine that as we progress through life, gathering education, family, money, and various items and accomplishments, that our sense of satisfaction and happiness will grow.

Why do we desire a never-ending, ever-increasing happiness, a happiness not dependent on any experience of sadness, in a world that doesn't seem to afford such a phenomenon? In other words, if such happiness doesn't exist, why would anyone look for it?

The answer is that we are not of this world, but rather, are eternal spiritual beings unnaturally encased in a body of matter in a world of matter. We have as our spiritual heritage varieties of loving exchange with the Lord, exchanges that are, indeed, full of ever-expanding ecstasy which continues forever without a tinge of suffering. We search for and glorify such a state because it is our nature, although not visible here. Just as a forest dwelling animal in a desert will crave shade and water, though some desert animals can do without either (some animals get all their water from the plants they eat) so we spiritual beings crave the happiness that is our birthright in this land that conspicuously lacks it.

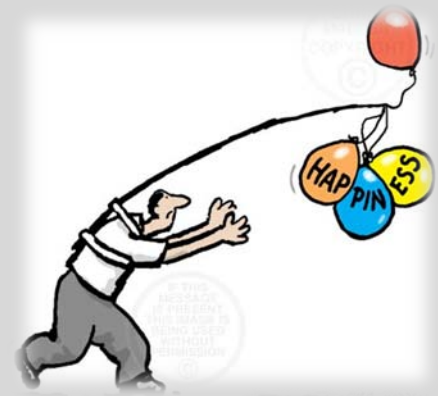
Of course, with our experience of happiness that is fleeting and dependent on sadness, some have concluded that all types of happiness will be boring and dull without periods of either lack or distress. They cannot imagine, however much they may want it on some level, that a world which is perpetually happy would be able to exist or be interesting. They consider the talk of spiritual happiness either a myth or to imply something insipid.

Actually, however, there are many saintly persons who describe spiritual happiness as dynamic and variegated. This happiness is based on an individual loving relationship with a personal yet unlimited Lord, Sri Krishna, who reciprocates with each devotee in an inexhaustible array of ways, in an endless variety of transcendent activities. In fact, there are many types of spiritual bliss, some of which appear externally to be what we would consider suffering—fear, grief, anxiety, and so on. Because of the similarity in superficial appearance between these advanced stages of ecstasy and material suffering, many of the most elevated activities of the Lord and His devotees are subject to misunderstanding because of our projection of material experience.

But don't we have experience of different varieties of the same material happiness? For example, one can eat many flavors of ice cream. Pistachio ice cream is quite different from butter pecan, which is radically different from strawberry. And when one combines the various flavors with toppings, there are so many ways to enjoy ice cream. The variety of spiritual pleasure is something like those ice cream flavors and toppings.

Types of pleasure in love of God can also be somewhat understood if we examine ways that people try to be happy within material life. It is not at all unusual for people to pay for movies and books which they know will make them frightened or sad or even horrified. Somehow, in those emotions we generally associate with a lack of happiness, they find some sense of pleasure. Truly, their pleasure is not in those "negative" emotions themselves but simply in a forgetting of their own life's difficulties or in the sense of a great rush of feeling, no matter what the type.

Yet, however misguided and unfortunate the search for happiness that drives one to see, for example, a gristly horror movie, the point is that there are a great diversity of ways in which even materialistic people seek happiness. Why should spiritual happiness be devoid of such variation? In fact, because the material is a reflection or shadow of the spiritual, spiritual happiness has far more permutations and nuances, all of which dynamically increase the thrill of those who love the Lord. Indeed, love of Krishna, even in this world, can bring us to a life that is a thrill at every moment, and where sadness has no definition or trace. [<http://www.dandavats.com/?p=75>]



• Varnashrama Developments



Yasodapura Ashram Siem Reap, Cambodia



- HG Gunavatara Dasa

The Kingdom of Cambodia still has many beautiful cows which are very helpful for both agriculture and local transportation. Every year in the month of May, the festival Bonn Chroat Preah Nongkoal (Royal Ploughing Day) is attended by all the Cambodian people. Since time immemorial, cows' crucial role in our everyday life has been acknowledged. In the last few years, however, many farmers have been selling both their cows and land as they gradually lose interest in their traditional village lifestyle. YASODAPURA ASRAMA aims to assist villagers to value their land and cows by demonstrating natural organic farming methods and traditional lifestyle for the benefit of the society and their own families. Plans are under way to establish a small community of devotees who will introduce Lord Krishna's original village atmosphere of Vrndavana. The residents will tend to cows as they engage themselves in agricultural work. The small community is called YASHODAPURA ECO-VILLAGE, in keeping with the ancient capital name of Angkor Wat itself.

On February 13, we adopted two cows, whom we are now keeping in the base camp near Angkor Thom temple. As soon as devotees are able to permanently stay in the farm, they will be brought to the farm. We did not buy them because of logistic issues and financial constraints. We can get another calf within a year. The neighbor who owns these cows comes to the base camp regularly, helping us in meeting the food requirement for these cows.

Garden and farming

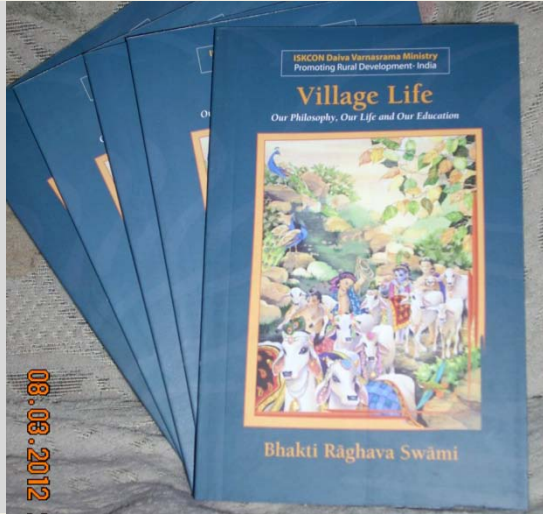
Now our farm has several vegetables and grains like brinjals, local green leaf called "Samau", besides cassava, turmeric, beans, bananas, and paddy. The produce is sufficient for meeting the brahmacaries' needs. There are over hundred fruit trees. Now we are making about hundred small compost pits which we will fill up with the dry leaf collected from the forest; during rainy season we can plant more fruits trees and bananas nearby. We are also making irrigation canals in our land and roads according to the *vastu*. We have one family which stays on the land with their three buffaloes. Even at our base camp in Siem Reap we have jack fruits, coconuts, cassava (a kind of orange), some local green leaves and others crops.



Harinam program

By the mercy of Lord Nityananda on February 6, we had fourth Harinam in front of Angkor Wat with some Russian friends. With just five devotees we sang for over one and half hours, from 5.00 pm to 6.30 pm, attracting many tourists to the temple. They could thus hear the transcendental vibration of the Maha Mantra. Interestingly there has also been some translation work, with *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* translated in Khmer language with the help of Prasanatma Prabhu (Canadian) and Kuntea mataji (Cambodian). Lord willing, it should soon be printed. Hare Krsna! [For more information please visit www.bhakticambodia.com]

● **Varnashrama Literature**

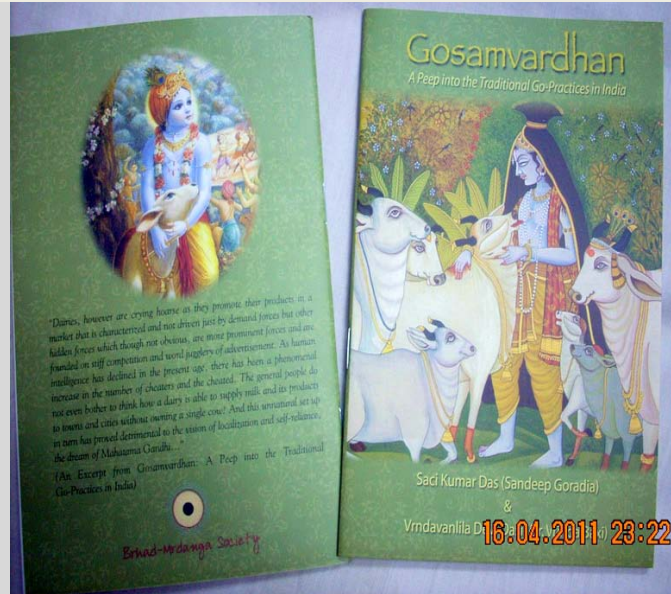


Village Life: Our Philosophy, Our Life and Our Education

Hot from the press it made waves at ISKCON Leadership Sangha and at 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 Srila Prabhupada'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.

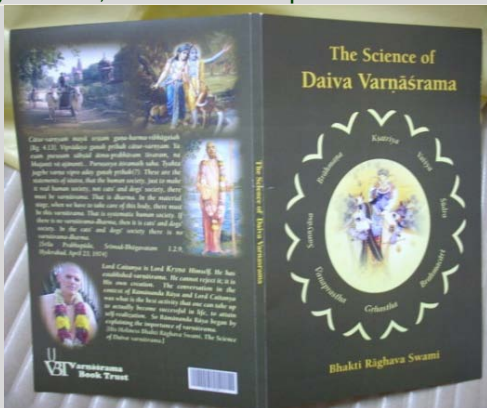
Gosamvardhan: A Peep Into the Traditional Go-Practices in India

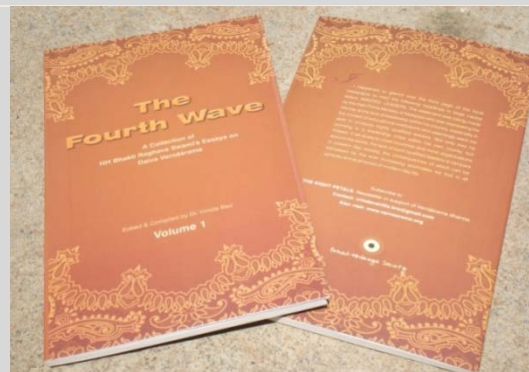
Authored by HG Sacikumar prabhu (with hands-on experience in farming and cow raising) and Vrndavanlila dd (Editor, *The Eight Petals*, a monthly e-newsletter in support of Daiva Varnashrama dharma). It makes an intensive reading as it pours information about the traditional practices related to cow conservation 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 none other than the Global Minister for Cow Protection & Agriculture, HG Balbhadra prabhu.



The Science of Daiva Varṇāśrama

The book by His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami is an effective attempt to address the general queries and doubts related 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.



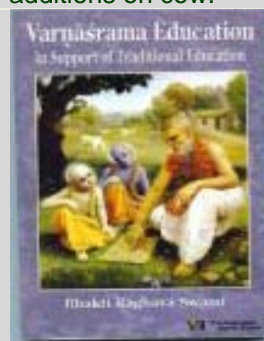
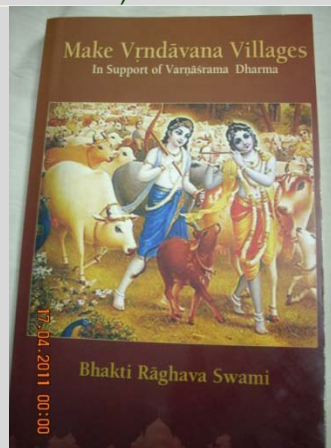


The Fourth Wave

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.

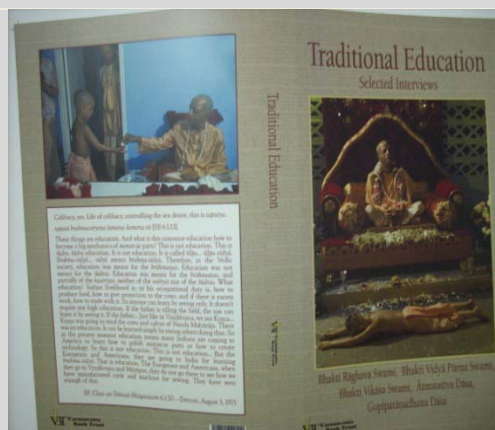


Varnasrama Education

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.

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.



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



After Swine Flu, Pune Hit by Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis

[Source: <http://health.india.com>]

March 22, 2012. Mumbai. After swine flu, Pune now has to deal with drug-resistant tuberculosis. 36 new cases of multiple-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) were reported in Pune district in the last 40 days. Professionals fear that MDR tuberculosis and its deadlier cousin – extensively-drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR) – may pose a bigger threat to the nation's healthcare system than AIDS.

GBC's Host the First ILS

[Source: <http://gbc.iskcon.org>]

Sridham Mayapur. The 2012 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Governing Body Commission (GBC) for ISKCON began in Mayapur, West Bengal with the GBC body participating in ISKCON's first International Leadership Sanga (ILS). In an effort to support and encourage leadership, the GBC invited more than 500 ISKCON leaders from 42 countries around the world to assemble from February 10-17 to participate in portions of the GBC's AGM, to attend and discuss presentations of GBC strategic planning efforts, and to spend time with one another in devotional sanga.

Big Retailers Hammered [Source: www.smh.com.au]

March 22, 2012. The slump in Australian retailing has worsened, with two more of the nation's leading chains unveiling wretched earnings figures.

Days after Myer disclosed a 20% profit dive, rival David Jones announced its own 20% profit reversal for the latest half-year and shocked the sharemarket by forecasting a 40% full-year slump.

Mali Soldiers Seize State Media, Attack Palace in Coup Bid

[<http://news.antiwar.com>]

March 21, 2012. Soldiers from the Malian military have taken control of the nation's state television and radio, and launched attacks on the presidential palace.

The violence may be an offshoot of the government's mishandling of the ongoing secessionist war against Tuareg tribesmen.

Sanghi Firm Seized for Rs 2000 Crore Default [Deccan Chronicle]

March 11, 2012. Hyderabad. Bank officials on Saturday seized the premises of Sanghi Polyesters Ltd at Sanghinagar in Hayathnagar mandal of Ranga Reddy district for failing to repay loans. According to officials, Sanghi Polyesters, part of the Sanghi Group promoted by brothers Girish Sanghi and Ravi Sanghi, had failed to repay loans worth about Rs 2,000 crore to 12 banks, including Allahabad Bank, the major lender.

Thefts Soar Along With Fuel Prices [The Connexion]

March 21, 2012. Paris. Soaring petrol prices have seen soaring numbers of thefts not just from petrol stations but from hauliers' yards, bus depots and even farmyards. Oil industry group Union Française des Industries Pétrolières (Ufip) says thefts from petrol stations rose 20% over 2011 from 2010, with drivers filling up and then driving off without paying. Regional newspapers also reported a rash of thefts:

* a gang suspected of stealing 6,000 litres of fuel from petrol stations caught in Vannes, in Morbihan;

* supermarket petrol tanks being emptied in Loir-et-Cher La Nouvelle République;

* a lorry driver's tank being emptied in Rhône Le Progrès;

* in Niort, a farmer caught a man siphoning fuel from his tractor-and said he had lost 160 litres of fuel within this year.



• **Mails to the Editor**

Hare Krsna,
Pranams. Jay Srila Prabhupada.

One question that arises in the mind when we talk about the importance of varnasrama dharma is: If we see historically Varnas system in India, (it) has been distorted in contaminated ideas of castes, how can we be sure that with time, the system does not degenerate equally in ISKCON, when we see that already exists in our society? For example, the caste of the disciples of Prabhupada, the devotees of the GBC leaders etc

- *HG Hare Krishna Das*

Hare Krishna Mataji,
Dandavats. Pranams!

I read your article on power of mantra. It was really touching and inspiring. Your article has increased my faith in chanting. Thanks alot for sharing your wonderful experience and I beg you pray for me also so that I can also try to chant attentively, sincerely with gratitude.

- *HG Shrikamini dd*

Hare Krishna Vrindavanlila mataji,
Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!
All Glories to Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga

I would like to make some small offerings to feed Mother Surabhi. I was very happy to hear about her. From last one year I am now realising the importance of mother COW in my life. I was very happy to hear about mother Surabhi. I would like to make small offering to feed her.

- *HG Ananta Shesh Das*

Mother Vrindavan lila devi dasi,
Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

I read your *Eight Petals at Sampradaya Sun*. Yours and mother Abhaya Mudra devi dasi articles are excellent pieces. I really liked both your matter-of-fact way of writing and the sastric backing you provide. But what I relished the most is the sharing of your methaphysical experiences. Great stuff....

- *HG Aniruddha Das*

Hare Krsna, Mataji,

I just read your article on how you came into Krsna consciousness. Thank you for sharing your inspiring story. May I ask the name of your spiritual master? ... Thank you again for sharing your story which allowed me to hear about one of Krsna's modern day appearances.

- *Bhakta Gail Cusmai*

The mails/ articles can be posted to eightpetalsnewsletter@gmail.com or vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com

Focus for the next issue -

Free Will

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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

Make Vrindavan Villages