

VARṆĀŚRAMA ILLUMINATIONS

*How to avoid messing up varṇāśrama
with goofy, unrealistic ideas*



Kaunteya das

a member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness
Founder-*Acarya*: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

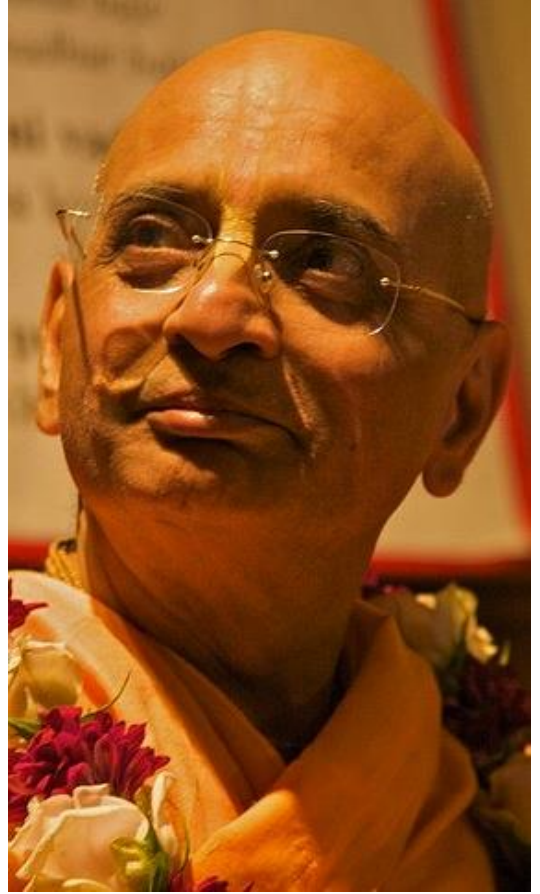


EYE of the STORM



"You have to establish varnasrama."

- Morning Walk, Mayapur, 5 Feb 1976



To His Holiness Bhakti Charu Maharaja; we miss his elegance, his sweetness, his living embodiment of Gaudiya-vaisnava culture, a tradition of respect, generosity and love.

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Facebook: Real Varnasrama

Website: <http://realvarnasrama.wordpress.com/>

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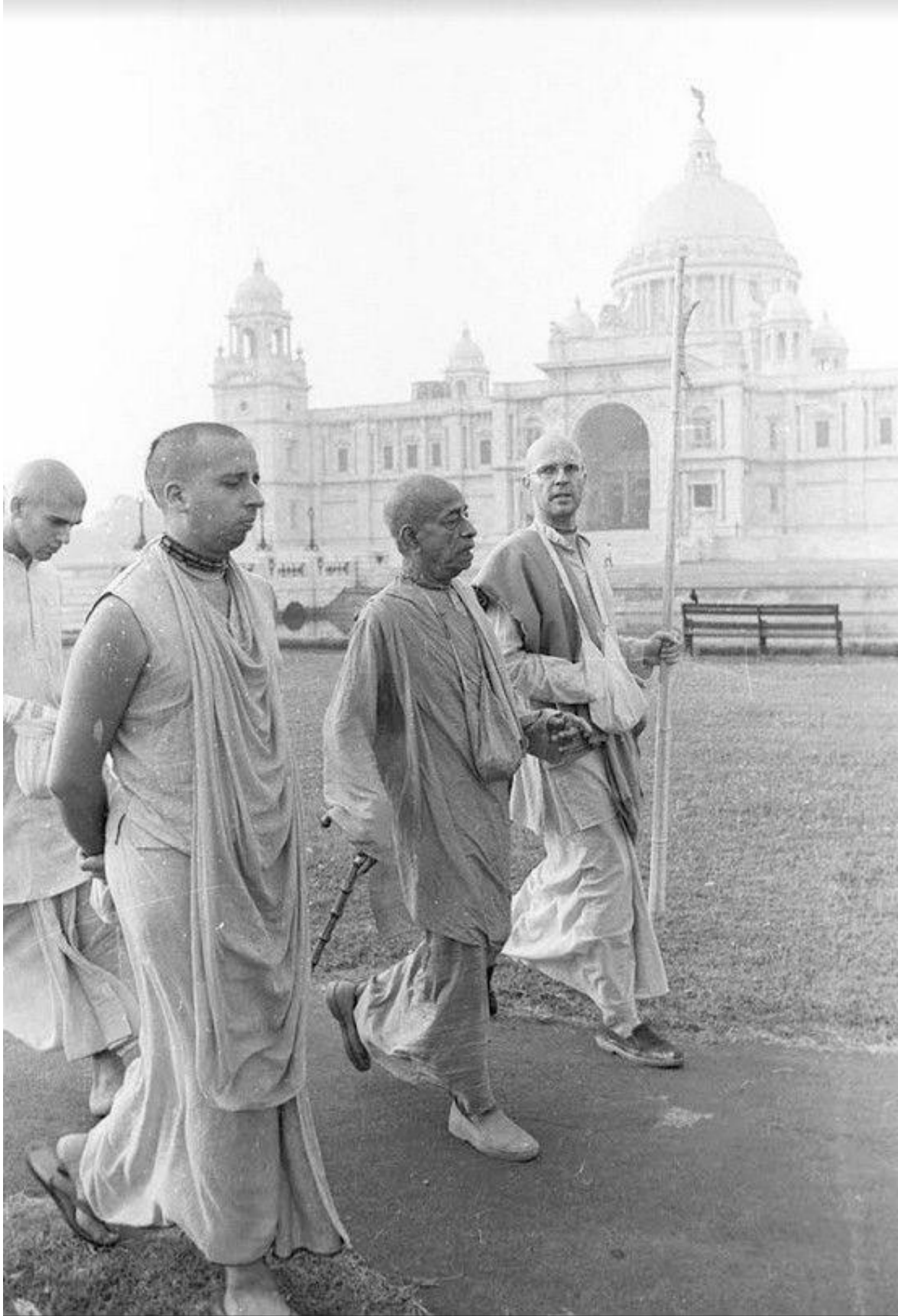


Table of Contents

9	Preface
13	Introduction
20	One - Thank You for the Opportunity for Dialogue on Varnasrama!
22	Two - "Compromised Yavanophile Members of the GBC"
24	Three - ISKCON Leaders who Loved the Seminar
27	Four - Please Don't Put Words in My Mouth
28	Five - No Gurukula?! Of Course Gurukula!!!
32	Six - How to Mess Up Your Life with <i>Maha-prasada</i>
35	Seven - Interdependence: "Common Sense" or "Pure Speculation"?
38	Eight - Interdependence - Why Some People Just Don't Get It?
41	Nine - Trouble with the <i>Gunas</i>
43	Ten - More <i>Guna</i> -generated Perplexity
45	Eleven - What's so Hard to Understand about Sudra-dharma?
47	Twelve - The Mysterious (and Fictitious) Case of the Policymaking Girls
50	Thirteen - Who Needs Srila Prabhupada's Letters, Lectures and Conversations Anymore?
53	Fourteen - More Denigration of the Founder-Acarya's Teachings
56	Fifteen - It Seems that My Seminar Promoted Sai Baba Worship
57	Sixteen - Abracadabra Varnasrama
59	Seventeen - Benthamite Utilitarianism? No, "Bhagavatamite Varnasramism"
60	Eighteen - Naive Monarchy Fixations
61	Nineteen - Monarcomania Strikes Again
62	Twenty - Long Live the King! (Even if Unqualified?)
65	Twenty-one - Who Said the <i>Bhagavatam</i> Is irrelevant?
67	Twenty-two - Did Rupa & Sanatana Goswami Go Against <i>Sastra</i> by Following Lord Caitanya?
69	Twenty-three - Reviewers Criticize the ISKCON India Management
70	Twenty-four - I Made a Mistake: Femicide is Much Bigger
72	Twenty-five - Caught Red-handed
74	Twenty-six - Finally a Reviewer Who Is Doing Something Concrete to Establish Varnasrama!
78	Twenty-seven - The "Anti-varnasrama Camp" - A Figment of the Imagination
80	Twenty-eight - Why No Names?
82	Twenty-nine - Child Marriage Blues
84	Thirty - A Doubt: Did Some Reviewers <i>Ever</i> Really Study Varnasrama?
86	Thirty-one - Description Is Not Necessarily Prescription
88	Thirty-two - The Real Obstacle to Varnasrama Revealed!
90	Thirty-three - "It's Taking time..."; "In the Long Term..." - Why the Sloth?
92	Thirty-four - To Properly Understand Varnasrama, One Shouldn't Have Too Many Emotional Issues
95	Thirty-five - Women Issues
96	Thirty-six - <i>Stri-dharma</i> , 50% of Varnasrama
99	Thirty-seven - More Perplexity about Sudra-dharma
101	Thirty-eight - A Breath of Fresh Air
103	Thirty-nine - The Reviewer Who Doesn't Use "Modern Gadgets"

105	Forty - Srila Prabhupada Did Warn Us that Varnasrama Can Be Misused
107	Forty-one - Scholarly, Really?
108	Forty-two - "Fear Mongering"? No, Benevolent Warning
112	Forty-three - The GBC College It's All about Varnasrama!
115	Forty-four - Ad Hominem Festival
119	Forty-five - <i>Dharma-sastra</i> Practices Called into Question?
121	Forty-six - Homosexuality "Not Allowed"? (Please Check the Dictionary)
124	Forty-seven - Another False Allegation
125	Forty-eight - More Made-up Stories
127	Conclusion - Let's Forgive & Forget
129	About the Author

PREFACE

In Defense of ISKCON India

ISKCON India is blessed with many mature, scholarly and wise leaders. At the same time there is a fringe of fanatics that promotes a very tamasic, anachronistic and insidious brand of varnasrama.

For instance, at the ILS (ISKCON Leadership Sanga) in Mayapur, in February 2020, I presented a seminar warning against recklessly promoting traditional Vedic practices (such as polygamy, child marriage or monarchy), which are very difficult to apply nowadays and are often banned by the state. The presentation was fully based on *sastra* and on Srila Prabhupada's instructions and was well received by the many senior devotees in attendance.

You can watch it here (directly recorded at the ILS):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jL5cWANQTyM&list=PLIbpe7jW24oFTJGlv-HfiPuuVFWu5_Keu&index=18

Or here (recorded a few days later; same message but better video and sound quality):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFiqx7KABGo>



The author speaking at the ILS; on the right, Gopal Bhatta Prabhu.

Some devotees completely misunderstood the spirit of the seminar - which was to *protect* varnasrama from deviation and misuse - and instead they thought that the seminar was *against* varnasrama. Without contacting me, they discussed among themselves, apparently stirring up one another, and even created a website slandering the seminar with false allegations.

This was time of the Indian lockdown, during the 2020 pandemic, and so these devotees had apparently a lot of time on their hands. They gathered twelve reviewers - most of them hiding behind anonymity - which produced more than 50,000 words of reviews (!) on my one-hour presentation.

The reviewers couldn't find any fault with the seminar and so they invented words and statements I never made, resorted to a range of logical fallacies, and expressed a monumental assortment of silly objections. I believe in their sincere desire for (whatever idea they have of) varnasrama, but in this case their collective performance was abysmal. One reviewer even attacked me for speaking against the caste system!



The site was presented as an official initiative of the IIAC - the ISKCON India Advisory Committee - although the IIAC never reviewed or approved the contents of the site before publication.

You can see the site and the reviews here:

<https://sites.google.com/view/protectvarnasram/home>

Now, I am not important - I am a small soul temporarily inhabiting a transient physical tabernacle - and personal attacks on me are not the issue. I am a fallen, sinful person and I deserve all the defamation, calumny and vilification I receive. I take it as an opportunity to burn some of my karma and welcome it.

The issue is that the site reveals a very strange and dangerous conception of ISKCON in general and varnasrama in particular. The site, for instance, contains harsh criticism of the GBC: "Can we vote out all the compromised yavanophile members of the GBC? Then we can nicely establish varnashrama."

How can such statements represent the Indian leadership?

How can such feelings be broadcasted on a site of ISKCON India?

Such unacceptable remarks are a direct insult to the many sober, learned, loyal and intelligent leaders serving within ISKCON India.

Irresponsible people are misrepresenting the Indian top leadership. They hide behind institutional cover and manipulate the opinions of inexperienced devotees. By promoting strange ideas about

varnasrama, they are spoiling ISKCON India's name and give a very bad reputation to varnasrama, Krishna's social system. If unchecked, these misconceptions will spread, and will badly affect the fame of the leadership of ISKCON India and its capacity to establish a healthy varnasrama.

I am lending my voice to defend the true spirit of ISKCON India, the spirit of respectful interaction, cultured dialogue, fidelity to the scriptures, loyalty to the Founder-*Acarya* and dedication to true varnasrama, but I am only an individual. Such deviations require a collective effort. Therefore I am calling out to all responsible leaders of ISKCON India: please stop all nonsensical representations of varnasrama.

Readers from outside India may wonder: "This seems a local issue, a conflict taking place in India. Why should I be interested?" Because ideas have no boundaries and, especially in the Internet age, freely flow and float around.

Think of the coronavirus: it started in China but quickly spread all over the world. Countries that minimized the threat suffered the most.

Similarly, the silly varnasrama notions that now circulate among a minority of devotees in India can rapidly reach your place, disorient the devotees, and produce social monstrosities. It's already happening. A Temple President in Europe, for instance, told me how a varnasrama extremist disturbed the harmony of the local families and the peace of the community by preaching bigoted, dogmatic notions of gender roles. Misleading ideas about varnasrama travel far and wide without a passport or a visa.



Someone has concocted that the warnings in my seminar were aimed at discouraging people from varnasrama, but this is meaningless. Why should I discourage devotees from applying Krishna's system of social organization? If I were actually trying that, I should be banned not only from ISKCON India but from the whole International Society for Krishna Consciousness. I should be excommunicated and then locked up in a lunatic asylum, because only a deranged person would preach against God's social system and against Srila Prabhupada's clear instruction to his leaders: "You have to establish varnasrama." (Morning Walk, Mayapur, 5 Feb 1976)

Let's remember that in working to establish a functional, beneficial varnasrama we are all on the same team: GBC members, GBC Standing Committees, SABHA members, ISKCON Ministries,



ISKCON India Bureau members, IIAC members, ICC members, Eastern India Divisional Council members, Southern India Divisional Council members, Western India Divisional Council members, Northern India Divisional Council members, all Temple Presidents of ISKCON India and of the rest of the world, all the members of all National Councils on the planet, and all devotees on all continents.

We are all in this together, as a family.

Varnasrama is sacred. It's Krishna's social system and we shouldn't allow it to get infected by misguided ideas. This book is my humble offering to inspire sanity - and sastric fidelity - in the varnasrama dialogue.

Srila Prabhupada said that establishing varnasrama was 50% of his mission. Such important undertaking requires wisdom and maturity. It cannot be left to a band of disturbed, disoriented zealots.

Sridham Mayapur, 26 October 2020, Sri Ramacandra Vijayotsava, Sri Madhvacarya Appearance

Your servant, Kaunteya das

(Dr Carlo Oppecini, PhD, Indovedic Psychology)

Co-minister, ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry

Trustee and faculty member, GBC College for Leadership Development

Co-chair, GBC Organizational Development Committee

Member, GBC Strategic Planning Team

Member, GBC Nominations Committee

INTRODUCTION

A Vaisnava Tragi-comical Journey



You can take this book as a work of Vaisnava socio-theological-comedy. The topic of daiva-varnasrama is solemn; the strange occurrences that generated this book are wacky.

This is what happened: in February 2020, in Sridham Mayapur, at the ISKCON Leadership Sanga (ILS), I presented the seminar "How to Mess Up Your Life with Varnasrama." I chose to speak about this during the ILS - the biggest world gathering of ISKCON leaders - because I believe it's important to defend varnasrama from misuse.

Someone misjudged the spirit of the title and complained. To minimize their agitation, after the ILS I changed the title into: "How to Mess Up Your Life with (Misapplied) Varnasrama." For me that was it. I continued to present the seminar (with the new title) and went on with my other duties. This seminar was really a small part of my life.

After about four months someone wrote to Gopal Bhatta Prabhu (Co-chair of the GBC Organizational Development Committee, Chair of the GBC Strategic Planning Team and chief organizer of the ILS) and to me: "I am reaching out to the both of you to share your side of the story on the seminar Kaunteya Prabhu gave this year at the Mayapura ILS . . . You may or may not be aware, but the title itself has very much offended . . . many devotees known to us throughout the world."

The image of "many devotees . . . throughout the world" being "offended" by my attempts at preventing devotees from messing up their life by misusing varnasrama appeared puzzling and inconsistent. Why should anyone be disturbed by my efforts at defending varnasrama from abuse and misappropriation? Talking against the offenses to the holy name doesn't mean talking against the holy name.

Senior devotees (who actually attended the presentation) had actually liked the seminar. An ISKCON guru, for instance, wrote: "Kaunteya Prabhu's seminar . . . was for me one of the highlights of the 2020 ILS . . . Kaunteya's seminar was soundly supported with references to sastra and to Srila Prabhupada. I appreciated it very much and encourage others . . . to enjoy it and learn from it." A renowned international Indian preacher wrote: "Only one complaint: it was only one hour; I could have listened for days to Kaunteya Prabhu."

(I can't take any credit for the success of the seminar; its attractiveness is not due to me; it is appealing because of being rich in relevant sastric references and Srila Prabhupada's quotes. I only served as the proverbial postman.)

The email continued in its grave, formal tone: "it was decided that a subcommittee would research the matter and report on the issue."

In one sense I am flattered: some Indian leaders, with all the things they have to accomplish for Srila Prabhupada, spent precious time during their national meetings to discuss my humble seminar. With thousands of devotees they have to take care of; with a country of more than one billion-three-hundred-million people to preach to; and with the coronavirus crisis heavily affecting Indian temples and communities, they took the time to talk about my seminar. I am honored by the attention.

Scholarly Reviewers?!

The email continued: "we reached out to 11 other senior and scholarly devotees to review the content of Kaunteya Prabhu's seminar."

"Scholarly devotees"? Well, I let you judge their scholarship. You can visit the site and evaluate the caliber of their reviews. (Scholarly? multiple reviewers didn't even know how to spell daiva-varnasrama - it's "daiva"; not "daivi.") Or you can just peruse this book, in which I amply quote from them and show how off are their comments.

Unfortunately, most reviewers show a deep confusion and an abysmal illiteracy in varnasrama matters. Besides a couple of them, most show themselves incapable to sustain an informed (or, in some cases, even civilized) dialogue on the subject. The bottom line: 50,000 words of reviews and they couldn't find even a single, genuine mistake in my seminar - although they tried really hard, taking shelter in various logical fallacies and even fabricating words I never spoke.

The email continued: "In order to provide a full picture to the concerned leaders here in India, we would like to have as soon as possible both of your responses to the report. Other ISKCON India leaders who are not IIAC members, also want to hear your side as well . . . On behalf of the subcommittee, we look forward to your responses."

Yes, and this is a secondary function of this book: it serves as the first installment of my response.

I hope there is a divine design behind all this questionable investment of time, energy and resources. I hope this book will be instrumental in restoring the reputation of the ISKCON India leadership and I pray that they will address the deeper malady, the serious misunderstanding of varnasrama, often due to deep psychological maladjustments.

And I pray that the hearts afflicted by acrimony and resentment can find peace.



A Fair Hearing

A senior friend, member of the ISKCON India Bureau, wrote me confidentially about this whole situation: "[name withheld] said that the issue was the content [of the seminar] as it was very offensive to Varnashrama. He never detailed what the offences were . . . but he wanted to have Bureau banning you from any preaching in India and request GBC to remove you." Of course, "he never detailed what the offences were"; there were none.

"But," the friendly heads-up continued, "the Bureau unanimously thought that you should be given chance to speak and that it is not good to take such a heavy decision without hearing your side."

There isn't anything as my "side": what I presented is from *sastra* and Srila Prabhupada's instructions. Of course, people are free to emphasize other quotes, but there is no my "side" as such.

What's more disturbing - what shows what level of consciousness we are dealing with - is that that Prabhu wanted to punish me (for a perfectly fine seminar) without due process. Fortunately, other leaders had more sense of civilized behavior and so he had to concede and give me a chance to respond.

I wonder: how can someone so impervious to basic notions of justice and fairness be a spokesperson for varnasrama, the most refined system of dharmic human interactions?

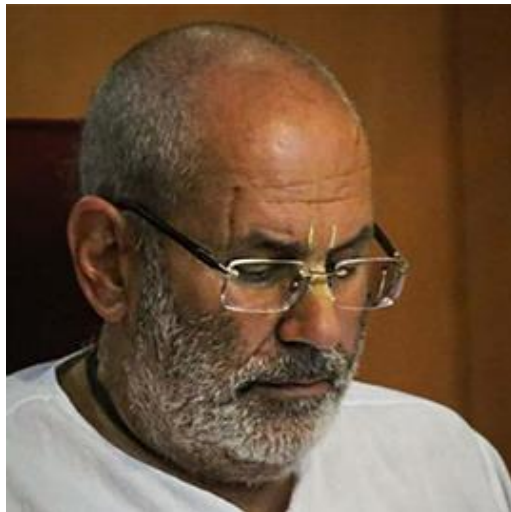
Anyway, the surrealness of procedure was topped by the weirdness of some of the objections from the reviewers... What peculiar circumstances! What unusual situation!

Allow me a moment of interval for a drop of Vaisnava poetry: *Kesava tuwa jagat vicitra*, sings Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura: "O Kesava, this creation of Yours is so strange and full of varieties!" Oh. My. God. I speak to protect varnasrama from tamasic extravagances, *smarta* extremisms, and immature misapplication, and I am put on trial?! Kafkaesque.

I replied to the email: "I am . . . thrilled by the opportunity for dialogue with the ISKCON India leadership on this most stimulating of subjects. Deeply grateful." As far as the request for a response, I wrote: "I see that the text of the reviews amounts to more than 50,000 words (more than 120 pages of a Word document). It will take some time to study them."



When I started looking into the site, among its many marvels, I found this: "During the ISKCON India Advisory Committee (IIAC) meeting on May 11 . . . it was decided that it would be best if a subcommittee studied the issue . . . After more discussion, Bhakti Raghava Swami, Basu Ghosh Prabhu, and Sumitra Krishna Prabhu were chosen as members of the subcommittee."



Very good; these are fine, dedicated Vaisnavas. Since they took the responsibility to get reviews and to publish them, this book will be in the form of a series of email messages respectfully addressed to them.

I won't mention the names of the reviewers (most of them hid behind anonymity anyway). The goal is not to expose them; the goal is to protect pure varnasrama ideals and counteract the loss of reputation of the ISKCON India leadership.

I am actually very grateful to Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu, and Sumitra Krishna Prabhu. Without their involvement this book (and the rest of the response) would have never seen the light. They might not be aware of it, but they fell into the vortex of the Streisand effect.

Have you heard about it? Wikipedia *uvaca*: "The Streisand effect is a social phenomenon that occurs when an attempt to hide, remove, or censor information has the unintended consequence of further publicizing that information, often via the Internet. It is named after American entertainer Barbra Streisand, whose attempt to suppress photographs of her residence in Malibu, California, inadvertently drew further attention to it . . . [She] had sued photographer Kenneth Adelman and Pictopia.com for violation of privacy. The US\$50 million lawsuit endeavored to remove an aerial photograph of Streisand's mansion from the publicly available collection of 12,000 California coastline photographs. Adelman photographed the beachfront property to document coastal erosion as part of the California Coastal Records Project, which was intended to influence government policymakers. Before Streisand filed her lawsuit, 'Image 3850' had been downloaded from Adelman's website only six times; two of those downloads were by Streisand's attorneys. As a result of the case, public knowledge of the picture increased greatly; more than 420,000 people visited the site over the following month. The lawsuit was dismissed and Streisand was ordered to pay Adelman's legal fees, which amounted to \$155,567."

As a result of her legal action, you can see that photo even right here!

This appear to be exactly what happened to the seminar "How to Mess Up Your Life with Varnasrama." It was attended at the ILS by some 150 or 200 devotees; but the intervention of these devotees already inspired the creation of one book, one website

(realvarnasrama.wordpress.com), one Facebook page (Real Varnasrama), and multiple videos. There are close parallels with the Streisand situation. The photographer was trying to help, showing where the coast of California was eroding but he was sued for an imaginary transgression. Similarly, I was concerned about the erosion of true varnasrama through fanaticism, and I was put on trial.



Barbra Streisand had to pay 155,567 dollars to that photographer (roughly one crore of rupees). I don't expect I will receive any monetary compensation, but certainly there will consequences on a higher, subtler levels for those who give a bad name to ISKCON India and to varnasrama.



I hope they keep their site up. It's embarrassing for ISKCON - the very enterprise is disconcerting both conceptually and content-wise - but it should remain as a proof of the level of varnasrama confusion affecting a section of our Society in 2020. It should be preserved as a time capsule of recklessness.

Ironically, most of the reviewers, even if anonymous, truly appear as people who mess up their life with (misapplied) varnasrama. That's why some of them are so furious and belligerent. With rare, notable exceptions, the reviews ran the gamut of the human frailties connected with socio-theological discourse: extensive employment of logical fallacies, lack of intellectual and academic integrity, distorted understanding of Srila Prabhupada's teachings, insufficient loyalty to or familiarity with the Founder-Acarya, flagrant ignorance of and disregard for Gaudiya-vaisnava

tradition, utopian daydreaming, lack of Vaisnava etiquette and pervasive infantilism. I have nothing personal against them (most of them chose to remain anonymous anyway), but their ideas are certainly dangerous, for themselves and for others.

We should respect them as practicing devotees, even if immature. I don't hope to persuade or "convert" the leading fanatics among them or the *smarta* diehards and their groupies. I am interested in warning the saner section: varnasrama is too important, too sacred, too crucial to be left to the sickly, the lunatic and the half-baked.

If anyone has any more invectives, vituperations, condemnations or denunciations, please send them. Such contributions represent the ammunition for shattering false varnasrama conceptions. Such arguments, even if shaky or irrational, can offer the spur for more books, articles, emails and videos to protect varnasrama. The saner section will benefit by the dialogue.



The tension between Lord Caitanya's pure sociological message and the *smarta* attitudes has persisted for centuries - and there is no indication that the strain would abate soon. When varnasrama is misused, people suffer. It has been observed in the past, it is being observed in the present, and it will be observed in the future if ISKCON leaders don't take steps to correct the situation.

The responsibility to implement a healthy varnasrama in ISKCON is mostly with the upcoming generations of leadership, those who will lead our movement, locally and globally, into the future. There are good signs - and there are bad ones. At any rate, I offer my respectful obeisances to all the readers - whether friendly, neutral or hostile.

Let's pray that ISKCON proceeds on the path of implementing a varnasrama illuminated by wisdom, maturity, real scholarship and compassion. And love for all his members - men, women and children.

-- Hare Krishna --

Om Tat Sat



ONE

Thank You for the Opportunity for Dialogue on Varnasrama!

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

We are all on the same team - the GBC, the Indian leadership and all the other loyal followers of Srila Prabhupada. We all wish to see varnasrama firmly established on the basis of the scriptures and of the instructions of the Founder-Acarya.



My speaking on varnasrama at the ILS was another aspect of the same mission. *While growing the plant we also need to remove the weeds.* I see a dangerous increase of *smarta* attitudes and immature tendencies creeping into the mission and contaminating it. Let's collaborate in extirpating such pollution.

It's remarkable that after scrutinizing my 60-minute seminar, your twelve reviewers could not find even one mistake. They tried hard, but they couldn't identify anything contradicting Srila

Prabhupada's teachings. Of course, because some of them were looking for faults, they had to resort to a plethora of logical fallacies, some convoluted semantics and some good, old, reliable labeling and name-calling. And, when nothing worked, they even made up words I never spoke. Overall, a very poor performance.

But don't worry; I still wish to believe in your good faith and the good faith of your reviewers. They might have failed intellectually and scripturally but I still want to believe that, in the core of their heart, they are sincere.

But their mistaken ideas - as it will be shown - can cause great damage to individuals and communities. They can really mess up people's life with weird varnasrama notions. One consequence is that by presenting their puerile statements as part of an official initiative of the ISKCON India leadership, the reputation of ISKCON India is getting tarnished.

We have to do something about it.

The reviews are of such poor quality that they constitute an embarrassment for the IIAC, the ISKCON India Advisory Committee. The Indian leadership must firmly distance itself to guard its status and good name. The reviewers even promote ideas that are illegal and if the Indian leadership doesn't take a stand there could be far-reaching repercussions.

My *response* is not a *defense* (if there is no indictment, there is no need for defense). My response is to protect the pure varnasrama ideals, the daiva-varnasrama Srila Prabhupada envisioned.

Obviously, I am not going to provide a line-by-line or sentence-by-sentence refutation of the reviews. Who wants to read the original 50,000 words *plus* my commentary on them?

I must say that I was impressed by the balanced, mature approach of two or the twelve reviewers. The other ten reviews... well, they are impressive in other ways, as I will show.

Good reading and always remember: *we are all on the same team.*

Srila Prabhupada ki jaya! Daiva-varnasrama ki jaya!

Your servant, Kaunteya das



TWO

"Compromised Yavanophile Members of the GBC"

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

One of your reviewers writes: "Can we vote out all the compromised yavanophile members of the GBC?"

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Bahu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu, is this the type of varnasrama you are promoting, in which junior devotees insult their seniors - their *guru-varga* - defining them lovers of the *yavanas*, lovers of *yavana* standards?

Is this the style of dialogue you wish to establish?

Do you think that this kind of communication would please Srila Prabhupada?



See, I understand that some immature person, in his misplaced zeal, in a moment of *tamo-guna* can slip into such insulting behavior towards seniors and saints. What I find perplexing is that you - dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Bahu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu - found his words fit for publication and post them on an official site of a formal IIAC project.

As you know, varnasrama is not just a mechanical system of social organization, sprinkled with a few Vedic rituals; it's a sophisticated culture; a refined ethos of how to deal with others, how to respect elders, especially those who have offered more service and done more sacrifices.



It should be obvious that the ISKCON India leadership must distance from such kind of discourse. I am sure you don't want to be seen by the devotees, in India and the world at large, as supporting this kind of offensive expressions (calling the GBCs "yavanophile").

This reviewer - hiding behind anonymity - explains that his calling the GBC "yavanophiles" was actually

an act of generosity, as others have called them worse things. He says: "To be safe, I generously and appropriately term this camp as, "yavanophiles" (yavana-priya); as opposed to simply calling them out (as other authors have) as "yavanas" (those who do not follow varnashrama-dharma), "yavana-compromised", "traitors", "demons", "insurgents", "moles" or "nama aparadhis."

Which members of the Governing Body Commission of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness do *you* consider "yavanophiles"?

His Holiness Gopal Krishna Maharaja?

His Holiness Jayapataka Maharaja?

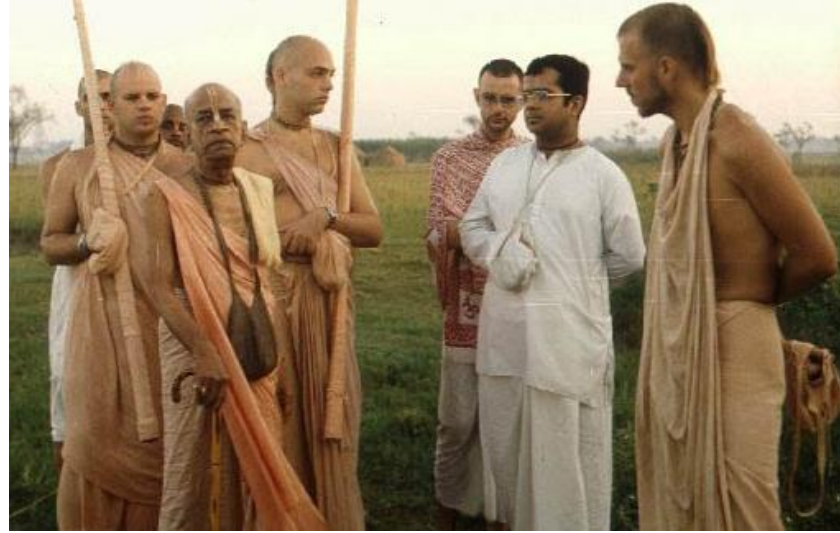
His Holiness Radhanath Maharaja?

His Holiness Bhanu Maharaja?

His Holiness Bhakti Purusottama Maharaja?

His Grace Revati Raman Prabhu?

His Grace Hridaya Caitanya Prabhu?



These are just the GBC members with important responsibilities in India.

Perhaps your list of "yavanophile" also included His Holiness Bhakti Charu Maharaja, who was still with us when the review was written?

Please, take a look at the whole list and tell us who do you consider as "compromised yavanophile members of the GBC":

<http://gbc.iskcon.org/members-profile>

Do you think some kind of apology is due to the GBC and to the other Indian leaders for publishing such insults?

The fundamental question remains: is this the daiva-varnasrama you have in mind, in which seniors and saints are publicly insulted by junior devotees?

Is this the varnasrama culture you wish to promote?

Your servant, Kaunteya das

THREE

ISKCON Leaders who Loved the Seminar



Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu, Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Despite the imprudent objections of some less-trained devotees, the seminar "How to Mess Up Your Life with Varnasrama," presented four times at the 2020 ILS, was actually very much appreciated, judging from the feedback of those who attended it.

By guru and Krishna's mercy, the presentation managed to be very informative, well grounded in *sastra* and in Srila Prabhupada's teachings. It especially "revealed" a number of quotes from Srila Prabhupada that most devotees were not familiar with.

The overall perception is that participants felt a sense of *relief*.

It's as if they felt that a burden was removed from their shoulders.

It's as if after the seminar they collectively sighed, "Oh, varnasrama doesn't have to be the suffocating mix of outlandish impositions, the grotesque hodgepodge of phobic aggravations that some of its fanatic promoters present!"

But let's hear directly from the attendees.

ISKCON guru and author Kalakantha Prabhu (ACBSP) wrote:

"Kaunteya Prabhu's seminar on "How To Mess Up Your Life With Misapplied Varnashram" was for me one of the highlights of the 2020 ILS. With his characteristic wit and scholarship, Kaunteya Prabhu exposed the fallacy of trying to cram one's round self into a square varnashram hole. The title is appropriate, as I have witnessed many well-intentioned devotees damage their spiritual lives and the spiritual lives of others by fanatically insisting that devotees are not allowed to be themselves in devotional service without risking condemnation to Patala-loka.



Satsvarupa Maharaja recounts asking Srila Prabhupada, "What kind of person does Krishna want us to be?" Srila Prabhupada smiled and simply replied, "You are very sincere."

From my understanding, this exchange directly relates to Kaunteya Prabhu's seminar. Srila Prabhupada is smiling at the sincere but immature devotee who is thinking that by his own grim effort he can (or needs to) change who he really is in order to please Lord Krishna.

Devotees who learn and apply this practical understanding of human nature as Srila Prabhupada did are better able to succeed in preaching, especially to Western audiences.

Kaunteya's seminar was soundly supported with references to sastra and to Srila Prabhupada. I appreciated it very much and encourage others, especially those who preach in the West, to enjoy it and learn from it."

Another ISKCON guru who, seeing the belligerence of the detractors, wished to remain anonymous, wrote:

"I found the seminar *How to Mess Up Your Life With Varnasrama* so well presented that I suggested that all devotees should listen to it, either for their own edification or for good lessons to share to the many younger devotees (and some older) who are not experienced in applying instructions well to time, place and circumstance.

Kaunteya Prabhu explained how traditional wisdom can be easily misapplied in a modern context if one lacks a sufficient understanding of the principles and context of statements of sastra, something that is not uncommon, not only in ISKCON, in religions in general.

I felt this seminar would be extremely beneficial for younger devotees to understand how sastra is practically applied in a modern context."

Divya Priya Devi Dasi, Zonal Supervisor for Ecuador and member of the Latin American RGB, wrote:

"For me and for many devotees Kaunteya prabhu's presentation on varnashrama is undoubtedly one of the best at ILS 2020.

His explanation based on the shastra and projected with a more updated and understandable vision for our society, is what we need for a conscious expansion of this movement."



Prema Rupa Madhava das (member of the National Council of ISKCON Argentina and secretary of the GBC, in charge of various preaching programs) and his wife, Prema Rupini Madhavi devi dasi, wrote:



"We would like to share our experience of having taken the lesson that Kaunteya Prabhu gave about Varna Ashram.

It's our experience, and the experience of many other devotees with whom we discussed about the seminar, that Kaunteya Prabhu presented each point citing the sastras, being faithful to the teachings of Srila Prabhupada.

His presentation brought clarity, understanding and insight on how to apply these points in our daily life.

Thank you very much."

And this is from an Indian traveling preacher, Bhakti-vaibhava graduate (honors) - who also wishes to stay anonymous:

"I found the seminar 'How to Mess Up Your Life with (Misapplied) Varnashrama' very balanced and useful. The presentation is steeped in sastric and Prabhupada's quotes and therefore it is very authoritative, very authentic. In the current ISKCON climate of extremism and conflict this seminar is very welcome, because it supports the principles of Varnashrama while warning about the possible misuses of the system (full disclosure: I am a great believer in Varnashrama).

Highly recommended.

Everyone interested in healthy Varnashrama in ISKCON should listen to it. Only one complaint: it was only one hour; I could have listened for days to Kaunteya Prabhu."

Now, these devotees - and many more who appreciated the presentation - are all Srila Prabhupada's followers who are actually doing something for the mission. I am sharing their feedback just to emphasize that liking or disliking a seminar is something subjective - but the fact that this seminar is based on *sastra* and sound philosophy is something objective and demonstrable.

I am useless, but Srila Prabhupada's message is not.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

FOUR

Please Don't Put Words in My Mouth

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!



It's frustrating when reviewers concoct words or concepts that I never presented.

One reviewer *creates* out thin air a sentence I never spoke. He writes: "The idea that "if the other party doesn't act properly then I do not have obligation to act properly" is very detrimental for society."

I agree that the idea is very detrimental for society. The point is that I never said anything like that. I have never ever *dreamed* to say something so irreligious; but the reviewer uses quotation marks as if I actually said it!

This kind of misrepresentation is totally against the varnasrama ethos.

The right idea is that we always have an obligation to "act properly"; but acting properly depends on the circumstances. Ordinarily, a sannyasi doesn't perform weddings, but Srila Prabhupada did - and he even wrote about it in *Sri Caitanya-caritamrita*: "Sometimes we take part in a marriage ceremony for our disciples. (Cc *Madhya* 5.24, purport)

It's unfortunate that this reviewer resorted to put words in my mouth to distort what I said; but fortunately the recordings are there and everyone can see that I never said anything like that.

Quotation marks should be reserved for quotations, for citing what someone said, not for defamations and fabrications.

Those who put words in other people's mouth disqualify themselves from talking about elevated socio-theological subjects, such as varnasrama.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



FIVE

No Gurukula?! Of Course Gurukula!!!

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

A common, puerile complaint of the reviewers was that the seminar didn't cover this or that; that it didn't speak about this or that (as if you can speak about *everything* in one hour).

We all give lectures and seminars. Imagine you give a detailed talk on Dhruva Maharaja and then someone complains, "Very bad! You didn't speak anything about Prahlada Maharaja!"

Or you tell the story of Varahadeva and someone protests, "But you didn't say anything about Vamanadeva!"

You speak about cow protection and people complain: "Oh, he spoke nothing about book distribution!"

You get the idea. How many subjects can you cover in one hour? In this case, the theme of the seminar was how to prevent misapplication of varnasrama. That was the focus.



But one reviewer complained: "Prabhuji is accepting Varnasrama principles but missing out on the instructions given by Srila Prabhupada to establish gurukuls."

Ironically, unknown to the reviewer, during the very same ILS I presented another seminar, this one focusing on the importance of establishing Gurukula. You can watch it [here](#).

The focus on education starts at 16:30.



Various ISKCON India leaders attended that seminar; some are visible in the video, some are not. When I asked how many temples ISKCON has in India they said 250. When I asked how many Gurukula schools, they said (perhaps) 10.

Now, those numbers were extemporarily expressed and might not be accurate; but even taking them seriously you would have one Gurukula every 25 temples. What about the other 24 cities and communities?

Gurukula is as essential to varnasrama as roots are essential to a tree. If we are serious about establishing varnasrama we need to make an effort to establish Gurukula.

Srila Prabhupada stressed the great importance of Gurukula in many ways, including directly in the pages of the Bhagavatam: "In our Krsna consciousness movement, the *guru-kula* plays an extremely important part in our activities because right from childhood the boys at the *guru-kula* are instructed about Krsna consciousness. Thus they become steady within the cores of their hearts, and there is very little possibility that they will be conquered by the modes of material nature when they are older." (SB 7.5.56-57, purport)

Srila Prabhupada kept stressing the essential role of Gurukula:



"I consider this Gurukula school to be one of our most important aspects of this movement and it should be given all serious consideration by the members." (Letter to Stokakrsna, 20 June 1972)

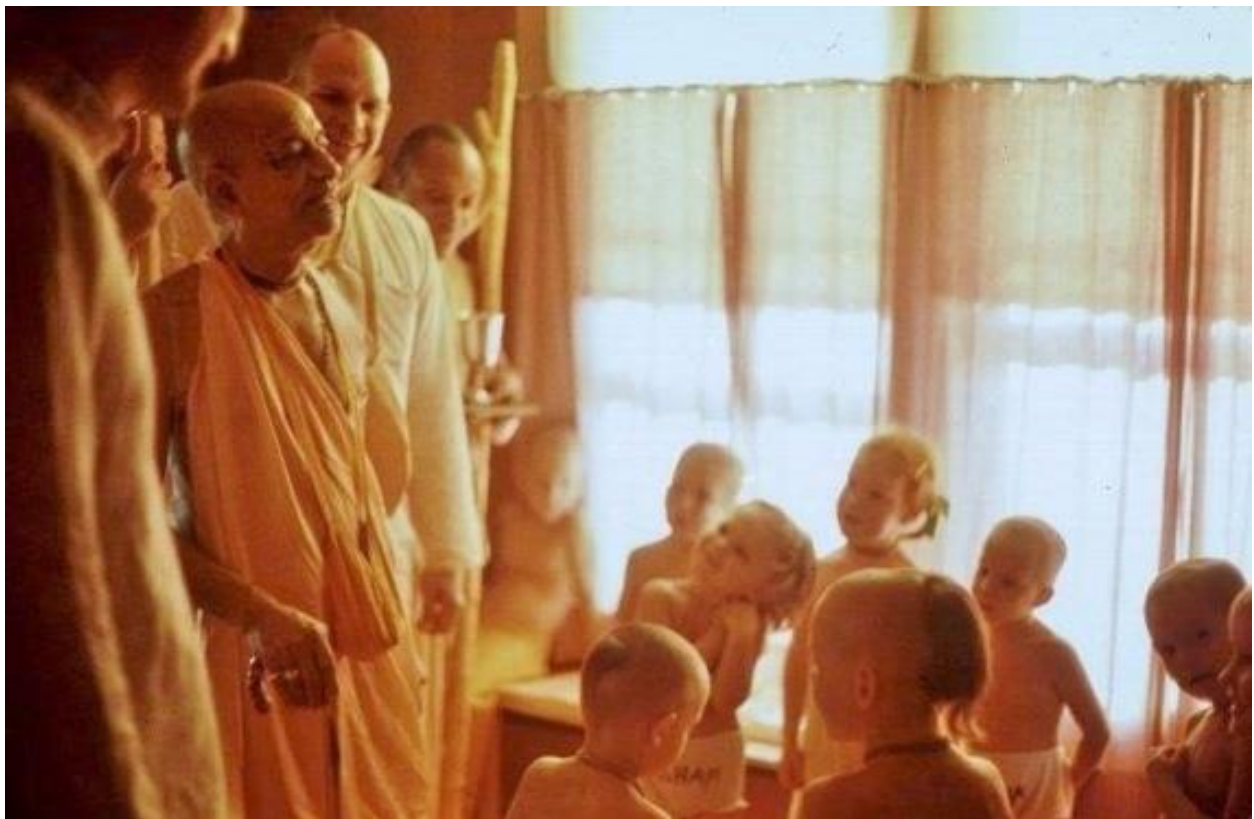
"Gurukula is our most important project." (Letter to Dayananda, Nandarani, 27 Jan 1973)

Srila Prabhupada considered Gurukula crucial not only for the children, but also as a powerful strategy in making the world Krishna conscious (emphasis mine):

"If you become Head Master of the Gurukula that is more important than going to South America. **This is the most important post in pushing on this movement**, practically, because you shall create our preachers of the future, many, many of them." (Letter to Mohanananda, 11 Dec 1972)

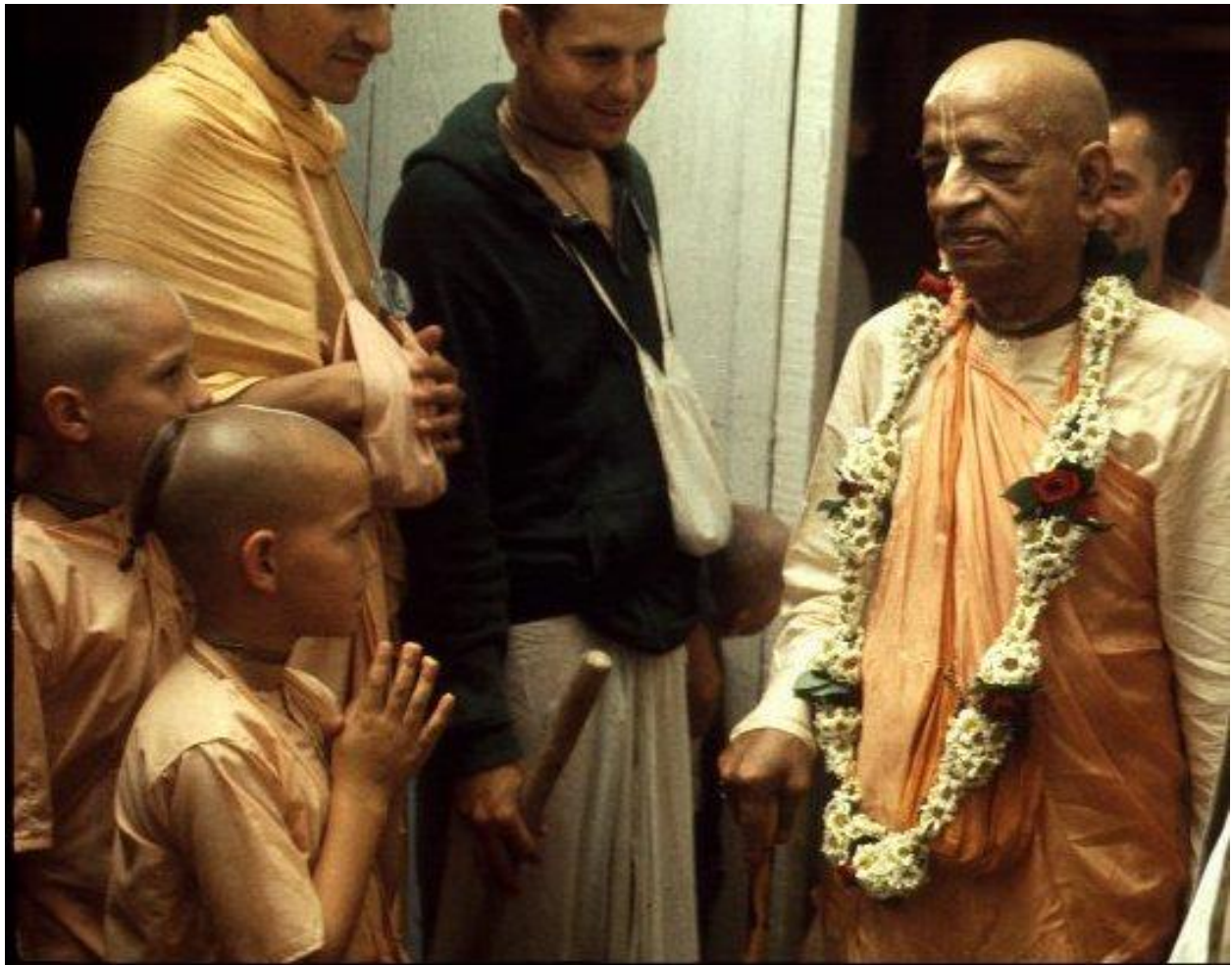
"What was possible for Dhruva Mahārāja is possible for anyone. Any five-year-old child can be trained, and within a very short time his life will become successful by realization of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Unfortunately, this training is lacking all over the world. **It is necessary for the leaders of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to start educational institutions in different parts of the world to train children, starting at the age of five years.** Thus such children will not become hippies or spoiled children of society; rather, they can all become devotees of the Lord. The face of the world will then change automatically." (SB 4.12.23, purport)

Unfortunately, Gurukula is badly neglected and the children of our devotees are often trained as mere technologists in the slaughterhouses of materialistic schools.



Due the hard work of the devotees (and the advantage of operating in a predominantly Hindu country), ISKCON India is blessed with vast resources of finance and manpower. I can do my best to defend the reputation of ISKCON India, but the leadership needs to focus more on Gurukula if they want to prove they are sincere in pursuing varnasrama. Gurukula and Varnasrama College are the root of varnasrama success.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



SIX

How to Mess Up Your Life with *Maha-prasada*

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Revealing their poor grasp of English composition and syntax, many reviewers were agitated by the title. One of them suggested: "The title itself induces the reader to feel that varnashram dharma could cause something untoward in one's life."

Misapplication of varnasrama can certainly cause trouble, individually and collectively.

The apple is a very healthy fruit. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," they say; but if you eat rotten apples you would rather attract medical attention. Varnasrama is divine and beneficial, but when filtered through the lower modes it can be very bad for your material and spiritual health.



Seeing the needless fuss about the title, one of the most senior ISKCON gurus wrote me:

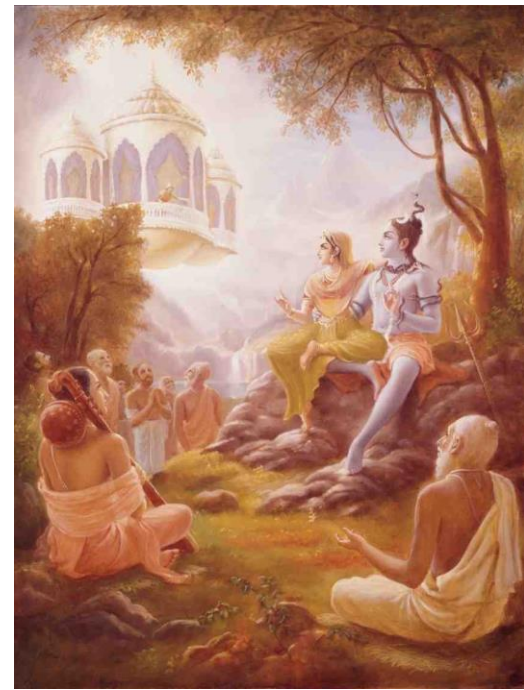
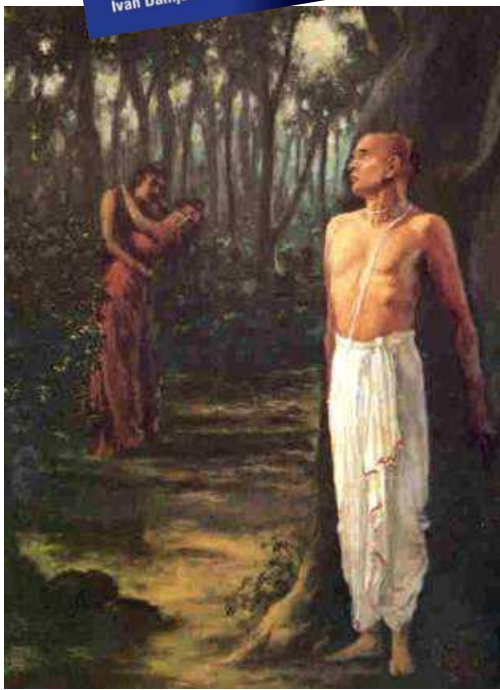
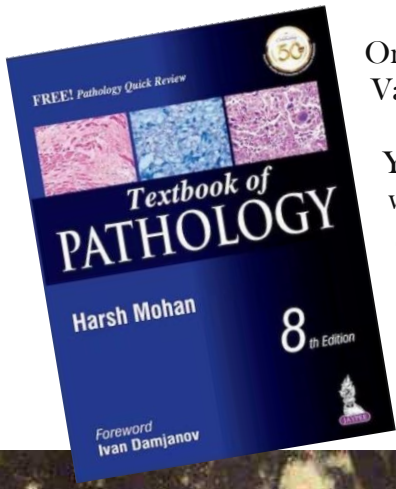
“My first impression is that they have no sense of humor or subtlety. They didn't consider the obvious, that you were speaking of an inappropriate application of varnashrama.”

His comment, of course, only applies to those who got so disturbed by the title.

I personally know many of the ISKCON India leaders, and I am sure they immediately understood the spirit of the title. They are intelligent and they have a good grasp of the English language; no need for them to be bent out of shape.

One anonymous reviewer writes: "Kaunteya's seminar shows only one aspect of Varnashrama - the dangers of misapplication of principles."

Yes, he understood the subject of the 60-minute seminar. He is right. Just like when studying medicine, you study anatomy and physiology, and at one point you study pathology, and you focus just on what can go wrong with the body. That's how things are studied in the "real world" and of course also in the *Bhagavatam*. We study, for instance, how Narada Muni attained perfection, but we also study how Ajamila, Bharata Maharaja or King Citraketu got into trouble. Because that's the universal approach of didactic: "Do this; don't do that."



Similarly, if we truly want to understand varnasrama - and we want to move away from being simply "varnasrama cheerleaders" - we need to investigate both the way of applying it properly and the ways in which it can be mismanaged. Just like we want to chant the holy name purely and therefore we study the ten offenses.

This is not fear mongering, it's "benevolent warning." Just like the scriptures, for our own good, describe so many ways in which the soul can degrade, we should maturely study the ways in which our application of varnasrama can be faulty and create problems to individuals and communities.

Therefore I wish to believe that most ISKCON India leaders saw the title for what it was - a warning against abuse.

The same approach can be applied to a number of sacred subjects.

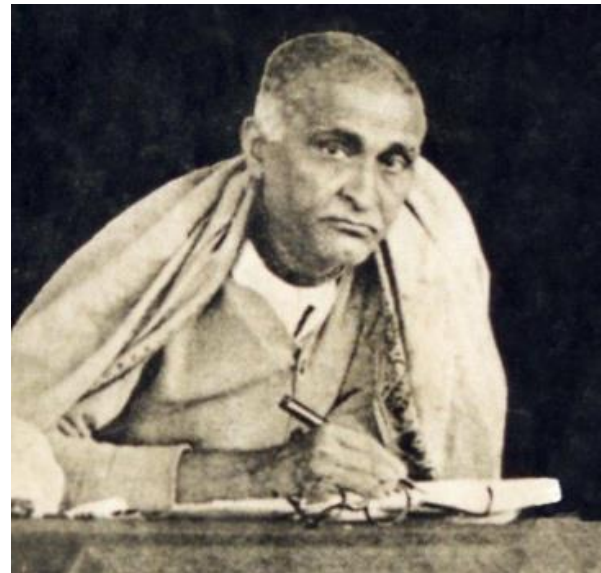
Maha-prasada, for instance, is sanctified, holy and purifying - but abuse of it and it can mess up your life:

1. Eat too much of it and you may become very much overweight, with a number of health consequences.
2. Eat too much and your preaching will be affected, as people won't trust you as a sense-controlled person.



3. Eat too many sweets and you may get diabetes.
4. Eat too much and you will sleep too much.
5. Eat too much and your sexual urge increases.

6. Eat too much, and you will displease both Srila Prabhupada and his Guru Maharaja: "We can definitely see that to advance in Kṛṣṇa consciousness one must control his bodily weight. If one becomes too fat, it is to be assumed that he is not advancing spiritually. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura severely criticized his fat disciples." (SB 4.28.35-36, purport)



I could go on, but you get the idea: *maha-prasada* is spiritual - it is mercy! - but it would be perfectly legitimate to entitle a seminar: "How to Mess Up Your Life with *Maha-prasada*" (and maybe we should present one at the next ILS).

Your servant, Kaunteya das

SEVEN

Interdependence: "Common Sense" or "Pure Speculation"?



Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

I made clear in the seminar that: "anytime we talk about sociology, social organization, we talk about roles that are interdependent. Social life is a life of relations and as one role changes, one position changes, others have to change accordingly . . . So if you were to remember just one word from this seminar I would like this to be the word 'interdependence.' If you were to tell your friend what this seminar was about, I like you to remember this word 'interdependence.'"

This is pretty basic stuff - "Varnasrama 101" - but one anonymous reviewer protested:

"Your new-found concept of . . . interdependence . . . is pure speculation."

"New-found"?! Interdependence is found everywhere in *sastra*, from time immemorial.

We have a role, which brings duties towards other people. If those people change their role, our duty gets modified. Interdependence is a fundamental reality of any and all social systems - including varnasrama: we have obligations to others, and the actions of those "others" affect our obligations. When a man takes *sannyasa* the duties of his (ex) wife change (she won't travel with him anymore, for instance). When a daughter gets married, the duties of her father change (he is not anymore

responsible for her maintenance). Another example: the relation guru-disciple, one of the fundamental Vedic and varnasrama relations. If a guru falls down and becomes confused about the philosophy, the disciple's *dharma* changes and he doesn't have to be submissively hear anymore from the now bewildered guru.

Lord Krishna himself says that the disciple needs to be submissive, inquisitive and service oriented:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena
paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

"Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized souls can impart knowledge unto you because they have seen the truth."

- *Bhagavad-gita* 4.34

We all know that. But, the same Mahabharata, in another part, explains that if the guru becomes a non-devotee the disciple's duty mutates and he doesn't have to serve him:

*guror apy avaliptasya
karyakaryam ajanatah
utpatha-prathipannasya
parityago vidhiyate*

"A guru who does not know what is to be done and what is not to be done, who has left the path of devotional service, should be abandoned."

- *Mahabharata, Udyoga-parva* 179.25

Let's take another example of interdependence, this time from the *Manu Samhita*:

"A woman can choose her own husband after attaining maturity. If her parents are unable to choose a deserving groom, she can herself choose her husband. (MS 9.90-91)

From the Vedic times up to now, in India it's the parents that arrange the marriage of their daughters. That's a very sacred religious duty. But what if they fail in that duty? Then, according to *sastra*, the girl can find her own husband. Interdependence, mutual dependence of the roles.



INTERDEPENDENCE IS
COMMON SENSE,
OBVIOUSLY.



NO, IT'S PURE
SPECULATION!

Merriam-Webster *uvaca*: Definition of interdependence: 1. the state of being dependent upon one another; mutual dependence; 2. a mutually dependent relationship.

Father does his duty to get a bridegroom for his daughter. Fine, daughter marries the boy. Father doesn't not do his duty to find a bridegroom; the daughter finds her own. Simple, no?

Interdependence is a pretty elementary concept, and, in fact, another reviewer readily accepts it. He first quotes my words: "Social roles are interdependent. They don't exist in a vacuum. They don't exist in isolation."

And he concludes: "Okay. That is common sense."

He then again quotes the seminar: "If a role mutates other roles change. If conditions change prescription change." Again, he agrees: "Yes obviously."

How is it that for a reviewer interdependence is obvious and for another is almost inconceivable?

We suggest you work out the differences of opinion among yourselves before going public. Otherwise such incongruences can result in serious embarrassment for the Indian leadership.

If one reviewer finds interdependence incomprehensible ("pure speculation") and another finds it perfectly normal ("common sense"), one of them is confused and he should not have been invited to comment on my seminar.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

PS - Interdependence is common sense, obviously.

EIGHT

Interdependence - Why Some People Just Don't Get It?

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

It seems that some of your reviewers desperately struggle with the concept of interdependence - a foundational notion of varnarama - although even an eight-year old could grasp it.

The idea is actually simple: as circumstances change, our duties in those circumstances also change.

Let me give an example that should be crystal clear to all the Indian leaders: a brahmachari living in the temple should obey the Temple President; right?

Agreed; but if that Temple President becomes a *ritvik* and steals an ISKCON temple, the duty of the brahmachari to listen to him is revoked, repealed, rescinded.

Would you tell a brahmachari who was serving in Hare Krishna Hill when Madhu Pandit became ritvik and stole the temple that he should keep obediently serving the temple and continue collecting funds, this time to fight (the real) ISKCON in court because that's what the Temple President wants him to do? No, the brahmachari should get the heck out of there and save his spiritual life.

Of course, other aspects of his brahmachari-dharma should continue; the celibacy, the initiation vows, the serving of (the real) ISKCON and so on, but the obligation to follow that particular Temple President is ended, done, kaput.



Another example of interdependence: in normal circumstances a little boy should obey his father; but not if the father is Hiranyakasipu and the boy is Prahlada.

Simple, no?

But somehow, showing a lack of philosophical training, some reviewers just don't get it.

It seems that unless they hear the *exact terms* familiar to them, they go into tailspin. They panic.



One of them adamantly proclaims: "Dharma does not change. Roles do not change. Duties do not change."

I am puzzled. I don't even know what he is actually trying to say.

How "dharma doesn't change"?! One performs brahmachari-dharma and then may move to grihastha-dharma. From there to vanaprastha-dharma and maybe to samnyasi-dharma. Individual dharma changes as the individual moves through various stages of life. That's fundamental to varnasrama-dharma!

Again, by their irrational claims, such reviewers risk to erode the good reputation of the many scholarly, insightful devotees of ISKCON India.

Another important consideration: the scriptures explain that there is dharma for normal times, and dharma for special circumstances (*apad-dharma*).

Srila Prabhupada writes: "In the scriptures there is mention of *āpad-dharma*, or occupational duty at times of extraordinary happenings. It is said that sometimes the great sage Viśvāmitra had to live on the flesh of dogs in some extraordinary dangerous position . . . In the *Bhagavad-gītā* (Bg 18.48) it is advised that one should not give up his occupational prescribed duties, even if they are not always flawless. Such *sva-dharma* might be violated in cases of emergency, if one is forced by circumstances, but they cannot be violated in ordinary times." (SB 1.17.16, purport)

We all agree that devotees should remain steady in their duties, steadily fulfilling their obligations. But we should also consider what Srila Prabhupada says above! We can't disregard that, especially in this age, where emergencies are rather the norm.

Our duties certainly depend on other people's actions. For instance, Srila Prabhupada always encouraged married couples to stay together. But there are limits to the tolerance we can expect of demand from a spouse. Srila Prabhupada therefore writes:

"It is recommended . . . that a chaste wife not associate with



a fallen husband. A fallen husband is one who is addicted to the four principles of sinful activity —

namely illicit sex, meat-eating, gambling and intoxication . . . Thus a chaste woman is advised not to agree to serve such a husband. It is not that a chaste woman should be like a slave while her husband is *narādhama*, the lowest of men. Although the duties of a woman are different from those of a man,



a chaste woman is not meant to serve a fallen husband. If her husband is fallen, it is recommended that she give up his association. Giving up the association of her husband does not mean, however, that a woman should marry again and thus indulge in prostitution. If a chaste woman unfortunately marries a husband who is fallen, she should live separately from him. Similarly, a husband can separate himself from a woman who is not chaste according to the description of the *śāstra*." (SB 7.11. 28, purport)

In other words, *interdependence*. We have duties towards others, but if others don't keep their side of the bargain, our obligations mutate or vanish. We should always act in a dharmic way, but what's dharmic for us is determined also by the actions of others. Refusing to adapt to changing circumstances and to adjust our *dharmā* accordingly, may result in adharmic behavior.

Of course, in cases like the above, in regard to challenges in marriage, nothing should be done abruptly or motivated by material desires. Before taking crucial decisions in life we should always consult wise, brahminical guides. This is another aspect of varnasrama culture.

But obdurately saying: "Dharma does not change. Roles do not change. Duties do not change" only shows that the person doesn't know the laws of dharma.

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu, I believe in your sincerity in wishing to promote varnasrama, but some of the people you engaged in reviewing my seminar appear to be theological illiterates, and their disorderly objections only muddle the dialogue.



Your servant, Kaunteya das

NINE

Trouble with the *Gun*as

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

It's important that the Indian leadership distances itself from the reviewers that show a very limited and distorted understanding of the philosophy.

I have many friends in ISKCON India and I know them as sober, learned and intelligent leaders. You and all other leaders need to take a stand so that the weird ideas presented by the reviewers do not appear as if they were ISKCON India's the official position.



To give an example, during the seminar I said something obvious to anyone who knows the *Bhagavad-gita*; I explained that varnasrama can be understood and applied according to the three *gun*as.

There is a conception of varnasrama that is more sattvic, more in goodness, more spiritually oriented, more inclusive, more aware of changing circumstances and of the needs of the individuals in those circumstances; more focused on principles than details.

People who are more in *rajas*, in passion, tend to be more attached to the hierarchical aspects; they strongly identify with their temporary roles, their bodies, genders and positions. They focus on exploiting the opportunity for prestige and privilege through stiff social stratification.

Then there is an idea of varnasrama that it's characterized by *tamas*, ignorance; it's unrealistic and nostalgic of an imaginary past. It's frozen in time and therefore it's very rigid. In such varnasrama the norms are

applied blindly without consideration of time, place and candidates. Remote, circumstantial details are mistaken for central tenets. It's sorely dogmatic and in fact intelligent devotees consider it irrelevant or even repugnant. But the tamasic are attracted to such misleading varnasrama.

This is a simple concept for everyone even slightly familiar with the *Bhagavad-gita*: varnasrama presentations are made by people; people are affected by the *gunas*; people's ideas, actions, faith and knowledge are affected by the *gunas*.

Even a new bhakta can understand this, but for one of the reviewers this simple concept appears unfathomable.

He says: "Varnashrama in the 3 Modes - Speculations . . . What is the basis for this new philosophy?"

New philosophy? The *Gita* speaks so much about the *gunas* and how they affect everything in this world. How can this devotee think that the *gunas* won't affect our sociological beliefs and approaches? How can he take the *Gita's* description of how the *gunas* affect the mind as a "new philosophy"?

I am wondering: where did you find such reviewers? How can they be so disconnected from Vaisnava philosophy and culture? Why did you call them "scholarly"?

Your servant, Kaunteya das



More *Guna*-generated Perplexity

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Another reviewer exhibits his sastric illiteracy by asking:

"Varnashrama in the three modes - I am hearing this for the first time. Is there a source for this?"

Did this devotee ever read the *Bhagavad-gita*?

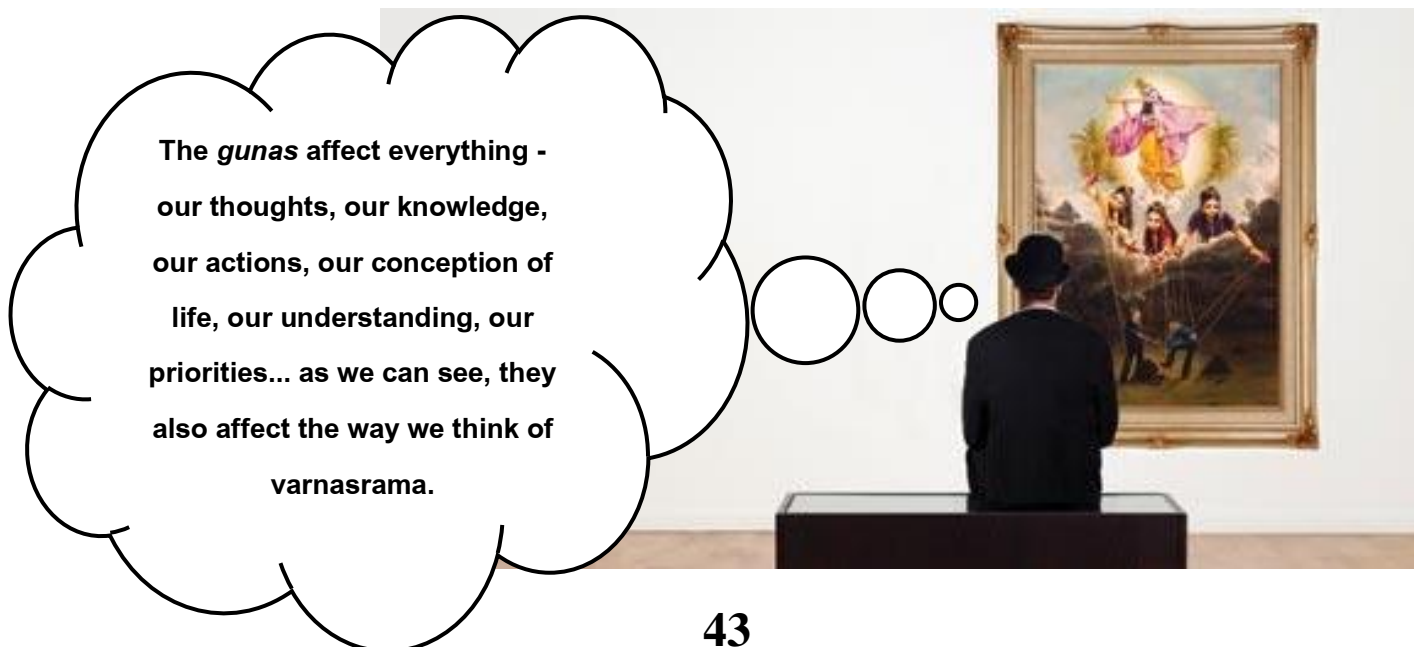
Lord Krishna explains (*Bg* 18.29): "O winner of wealth, now please listen as I tell you in detail of the different kinds of understanding and determination, according to the three modes of material nature."

Different people, even within the devotional community, understand varnasrama in different ways, as we have all experienced.

The *Bhagavad-gita* also explains (18.19): "According to the three different modes of material nature, there are three kinds of knowledge, action and performer of action."

These are basic concepts, well known to most devotees - in India and in rest of the world - but a particularly belligerent reviewer roars: "your description of Daiva Varnasrama in those three modes is pure speculation."

I am appalled at his lack of knowledge. And I am surprised that you engaged him in commenting on Vedic sociological truths.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A LITERALIST AND A KLEPTOMANIAC?

A LITERALIST TAKES THINGS LITERALLY.

A KLEPTOMANIAC TAKES THINGS, LITERALLY.



Unfortunately, such devotees are not trained to think. They are simply tutored to ingest and regurgitate doctrinal formulas that they have not assimilated or internalized.

When they see a basic sastric idea presented in terms they are not familiar with, they instinctively reject it with a knee-jerk reaction, taking it, as in this case, as "pure speculation."

Srila Prabhupada wrote: "There is no need to concoct anything new. You simply have to study carefully our books and then in your own words try to express what you have read." (Letter to Dasanudasa, 13 May 1977)

"In your own words." Unfortunately, these untrained reviewers appear to get agitated when they encounter even simple concepts expressed with different words than those they are accustomed to see.

With all due respect, you should have rather engaged people who at least can put two and two together. Most of the reviews you published are an embarrassment to ISKCON India.

Lord Krishna explains in the *Bhagavad-gita* (18.40): "There is no being existing, either here or among the demigods in the higher planetary systems, which is freed from these three modes born of material nature."

How can we expect that our views on varnasrama won't be tinged by the three modes?

What's I am talking is actually super-basic; even a child can get it. Let's try again.

1. There are three *gunas*.
2. People are influenced by the *gunas*.
3. People's knowledge, faith and understanding is influenced by the *gunas*. Therefore, there are perceptions of varnasrama in the three *gunas*. Sattvic people have sattvic filters, rajasic people have rajasic ideas and tamasic people have tamasic impressions.

How to explain it in a simpler way? I am open to suggestions.



Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu, please get better reviewers next time.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

ELEVEN

What's so Hard to Understand about Sudra-dharma?

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

In commenting on the central idea of the seminar, one reviewer says:

"The key word here is 'interdependence' . . . If a husband abandons his wife, she may have to take up a job. Kaunteya clearly means that roles and their associated duties change when other roles change. Roles and duties are interdependent on one another."

Yes, true, so far so good; but then, unfortunately, the reviewer messes things up.

I had quoted Srila Prabhupada (SB 1.9.26 purport), who says, "It is especially enjoined that a sudra should never bank money." And then I had explained: "Imagine if sudras become victims of a very greedy industrialist, a very ruthless businessman. He would just turn these workers into slaves." In that situation it's better than the sudra becomes financially independent so as not to starve himself and his family.

Really plain stuff.

But for that reviewer even this simple concept was too much to digest:

"Kaunteya, however, has overlooked a very important idea: *it may be better to be an unhappy but dutiful sudra than a happy but whimsical one.*"

1. Who said that the sudra has to become "whimsical"?

2. What is "dutiful" for a sudra? The primary duty is to provide for his family. If he is exploited by a greedy master that pays him so little that the sudra cannot perform his primary duty, the sudra's duty, his dharma, is to find another, better job - and serve another master that pays enough. Nothing "whimsical" about it.



A Gurkha, a Brahmin and a Sudra in an 1868 photo.

So, it's a really simple concept: a sudra should serve a master; but if serving a master doesn't allow the sudra to fulfil his *primary duty* to take care of his family, his primary duty supersedes the social custom of faithfulness to the master. A brutal master doesn't deserve the unquestioned loyalty of his workers.



Such a simple idea.

Another reviewer - also anonymous but particularly learned and balanced - fully embraces the idea of interdependence and even elaborates on it:

"That sudra who could not maintain himself by serving the higher varnas could resort to the work of vaisya is stated in many sources (cf. Mahabharata Santi 295.4 or Yajnavalkya-smṛti 1.120) . . . the general statement that sudras should have no personal finances should be seen within a broader, detailed context of the dharma-sastras . . . Thus, when a sudra cannot find a suitable master he can engage in agriculture, crafts, arts or even trading."

Exactly: one's duties are determined by one's situation. They are not frozen in time or permanently etched in stone.

This particularly well-read, mature reviewer not only accepts the idea of interdependence, but even supports it with sastric references.

"For a sudra to be under such ruthless master is āpad, abnormal situation in which he may not be able to maintain his family. So in such circumstances he may seek another master or may adopt the activity of vaisya and even ksatriya and accumulate some wealth to feed the family during the time of danger (vide Yajnavalkya-smṛti 1.120, Mahabharata Santi 295.4)."

So, here you have two reviewers with two completely different understandings. A philosophical project on behalf of ISKCON India should present consistent conclusions, not contradictory views. Otherwise the whole thing appears sloppy and disjointed. ISKCON India deserves better. Let's have a more mature, intellectually competent dialogue.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

TWELVE

The Mysterious (and Fictitious) Case of the Policymaking Girls

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

The title of a section of a review represents a bald-faced attempt at twisting the message of the seminar:

"Indian Girls Adopting Western Attitudes Should Dictate Our Policy"

Someone reading it might actually believe that I said anything like that. Nothing further from the truth.



What I said is (and it's recorded):

"We have been involved with the Congregational Development Ministry and premarital training. We see in India nowadays girls don't want to marry boys elder than them. They want boys of the same age. That's the culture now. We need to consider that."

That's all. I didn't say it's good; I didn't say it's bad. I am simply saying: you have a girl - it could be your daughter - who doesn't want to marry a man older than herself. You might want to try to persuade her otherwise (or not), but you certainly must consider her preference.

But the reviewer keeps repeating his twisted message:

"Indian Girl's Attitudes Should Dictates Policy" and "socially engineered liberal Indian girls should determine our policy." As if restating a distortion would make it more authentic.

It's sad that some reviewers chose to debase themselves in this way.

I hereby confirm my statement: "We need to consider." We need to consider the present attitudes and dispositions of the people we preach to. We may not agree with them, but we need to consider, analyze their thoughts, desires and beliefs. Otherwise how can we talk with them effectively?

When we - as teachers, brahmanas, advisers and preachers deal with - modernized girls or modernized boys, we need to bear in mind their present outlook. Simply condemning certain attitudes or trends is quick and easy, but it would represent a serious dereliction of duty, if we aspire to play the role of spiritual guides in society.

When Narada Muni met Maharaja Pracinabarhi and saw that the king was attached to fruitive activities and animal sacrifices he didn't just condemn him and left. He patiently preached to him through various chapters, narrating the whole story of Puranjana, till he was able to reshape and reorient the king's consciousness.



When Narada Muni met the hunter Mrigari he didn't just dismiss him as an incorrigible, sadistic aborigine. Narada considered the situation and showed the hunter the next step in spiritual life. Through Narada Muni's considerate preaching, Mrigari eventually became a totally non-violent Vaisnava.

That's all I am saying; we need to consider where the people are at. And then, after due scrutiny, see what we can do for them. We can't just ram Vedic norms down their throats, thinking that we are perfectly representing the *sampradaya*. We are missing the point if we just say, "Oh, they are westernized, they won't understand anything..."

Imagine the Founder-Acarya landing in America with that impatient, dismissive, contemptuous attitude. There wouldn't be an ISKCON right now.

There is a fundamental difference between *considering* people's viewpoints and *approving* of their ideas. Narada muni didn't approve the *karma-kanda yajnas* of Pracinabarhi or the half-killing hobby of Mrigari, but he certainly took them in consideration.

Another reviewer writes:

"What exactly is this 'consideration'?"

Good and legitimate question; a welcomed question.

Yes, let's discuss how to make the eternal, unchangeable principles of varnasrama relevant and applicable within the quickly mutating society. I am sure that together, armed with the instruction of *guru*, *sadhu* and *sastra* - and the desire to be relevant - we can come up with something useful and usable.

Unfortunately, the reviewer apparently wasn't interested in any answer or dialogue, and instead chose to manufacture a false accusation:

"He apparently believes that the social ideals Srila Prabhupada encouraged are no longer desirable or necessary to instil [sic] in our children, nor necessary for the benefit of their descendants."

Totally made-up.

In this case the leap in the reasoning is mind-blowing: I simply say that in dealing with people we need to consider their present beliefs and conditioning, and this reviewer concludes that I wish ISKCON children to grow up devoid of healthy "social ideals."

In a second my message morphed from: a) suggesting that we consider our interlocutors' present values; to b) promoting barbarianism.

That's a common problem with the reviewers, they just fabricate false allegations.

Attacking ideas that were never expressed represent the logical fallacy known as "straw man."

Your servant, Kaunteya das



THIRTEEN

Who Needs Srila Prabhupada's Letters, Lectures and Conversations Anymore?

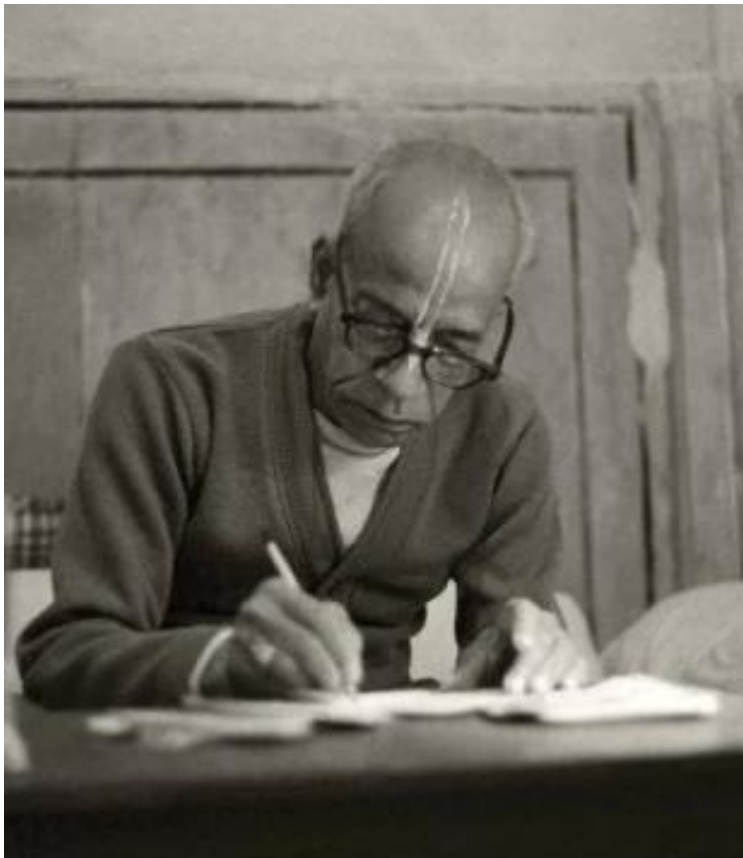
Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

An anonymous reviewer had the nerve to write:

"Most of the references cited are also culled from conversations, letters, and lectures that Srila Prabhupada gave to specific individuals and circumstances half a century ago . . . So then why does the presentation nonetheless depend so heavily upon it?"

Yes, we should throw away all the "conversations, letters, and lectures" Srila Prabhupada gave "half a century ago." Who needs them anymore?

Do you see what kind of mentality such reviewers bring to the table?



I am surprised you even considered publishing such drivel.

Is this the varnasrama you wish to promote, culturally orphaned from Srila Prabhupada instructions in thousands of "conversations, letters, and lectures"?

The ISKCON India leadership should make a public statement to distance themselves from such puerile and offensive attitude and confirm that we honor and cherish *all instructions* by Srila Prabhupada, in every form.

Some reviewers really hated the quotes from Srila Prabhupada's that I presented, not because they are irrelevant or dated, but because they clash with the reviewers' prejudices.

This is the problem: some of the reviewers would rather jettison Srila Prabhupada's words than reform their bigotry.

One of them wrote:

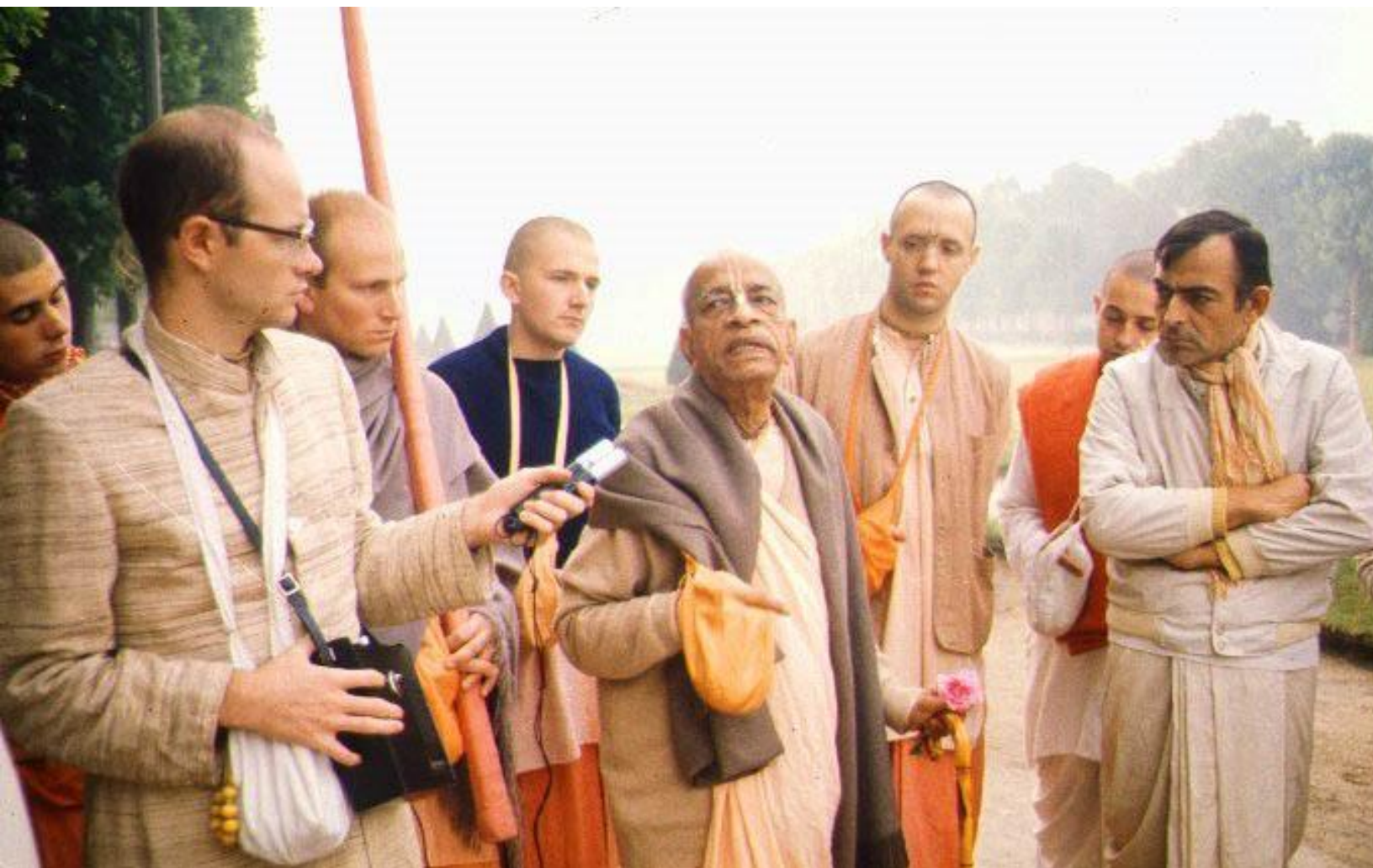
"the speaker's . . . need to go beyond the anecdotal quote approach."

In other words, the words of the Founder-Acarya on varnasrama are to be considered as "anecdotal," and not as "*guru mukha padma vakhya*" - spiritual utterances that should guide and purify us.

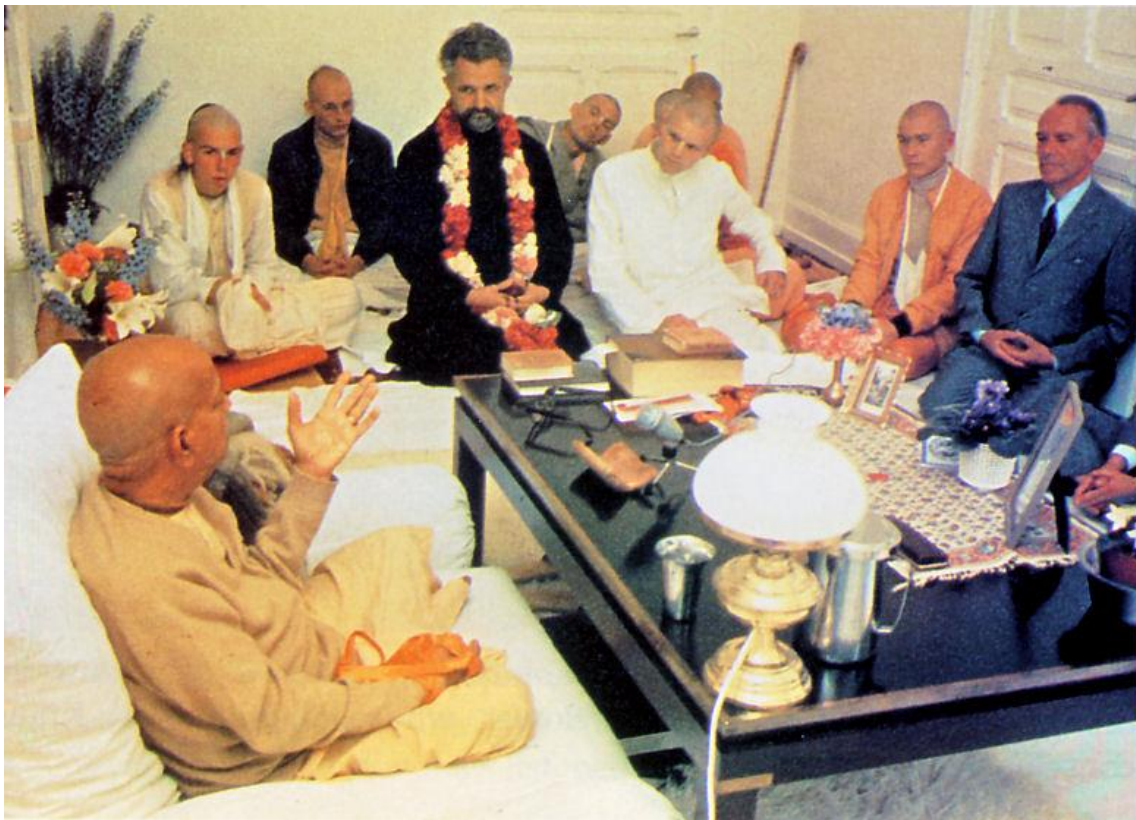
One wonders why Srila Prabhupada's conversations and morning walks were even recorded, if fifty years later some upstart reviewer - comfortably hiding beyond anonymity - would dismiss them as "anecdotal."

Is this reviewer suggesting that recording morning walks and conversations was a waste of tape? This reviewer seems to believe that those exchanges were just circumstantial chatter, inconsequential blabber, and not jewels of perennial philosophy as expressed by the pure devotee.

The reviewer stresses the "need to go beyond the anecdotal quote approach by diving deeper into deliberating the shastric basis of these vast topics." What he is actually saying is that we should "go beyond" Srila Prabhupada's instructions, as if they were not firmly based on *sastra*.



But Srila Prabhupada teaches differently: "So we have to take knowledge from *śāstra*. And who will teach *me śāstra?* *Tad-viṣṇānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet* [MU 1.2.12]. Go to guru." (Lecture on SB 6.1.42, Los Angeles, 8 June 1976).



The reviewer seems to suggest that, especially when we find his words uncomfortable, we should jump over the Founder-Acarya's directives, fish around the *puranas* and the *dharmasastras* and cherry pick the vamasrama practices that best suit our fancy. In other words, from the holy triad of *guru*, *sadhu* and *sastra* we can drop the *guru* (in this case the pre-eminent *siksha-guru* Srila Prabhupada) and just keep *sastra*. For *sadhus* we can use these genius reviewers.

Is the reader aware of the monumental danger and colossal gamble involved in such an approach?
Is it clear how offensive and disloyal are such propositions?

It's essential that the leadership of ISKCON India distances itself from such nonsensical and offensive ideas.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

FOURTEEN

More Denigration of the Founder-Acarya's Teachings

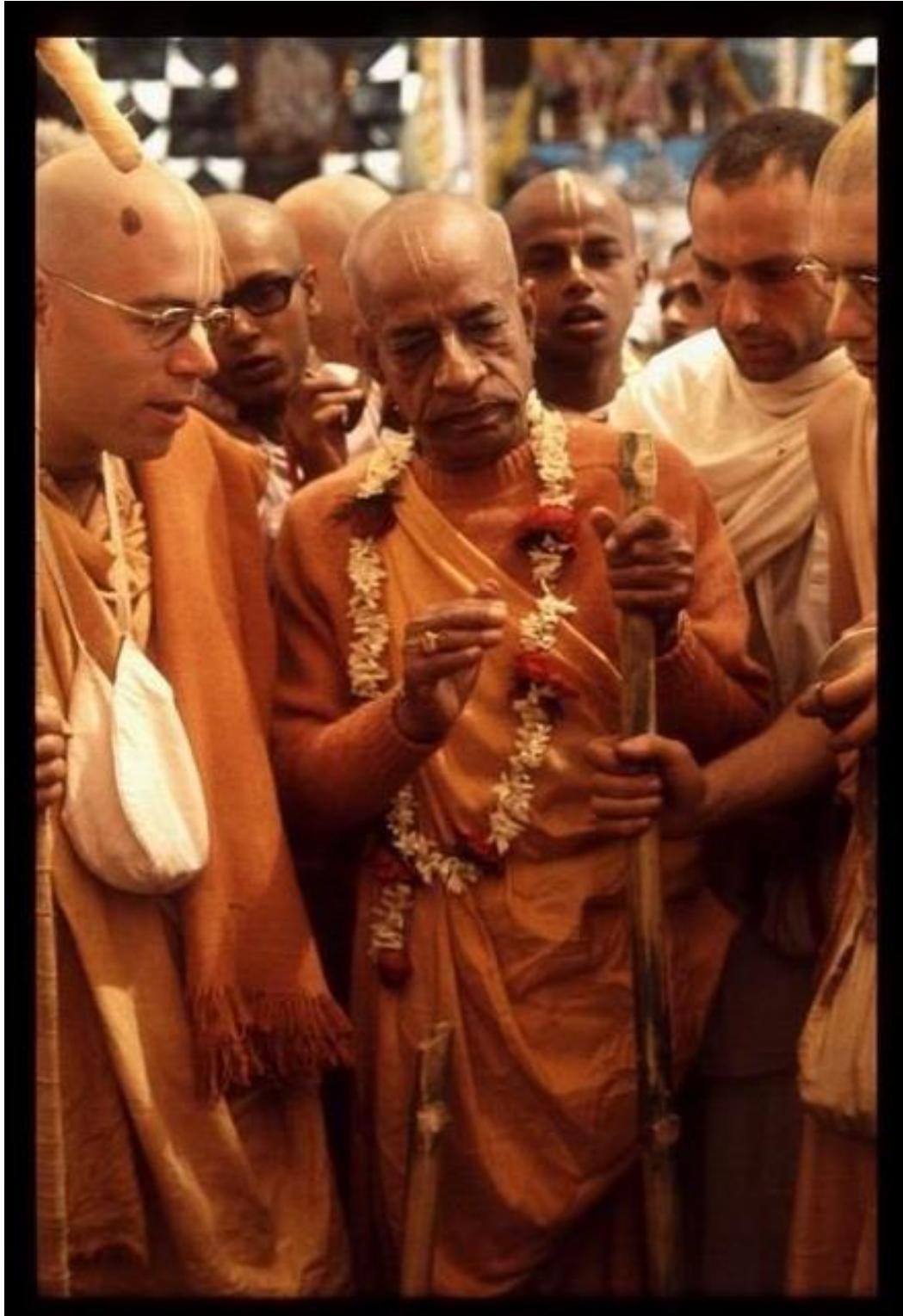
Dear Bhakti Raghava
Maharaja, Basu Ghosh
Prabhu and Sumithra
Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble
obeisances, all glories to
Srla Prabhupada, all glories
to the mission of establishing
varnasrama!

Another anonymous
reviewer tries to minimize
the value of the Founder-
Acarya's instructions, thus
disobeying the principle of
"*guru mukha padma vakhya*"
- the principle on which the
whole varnasrama
architecture rests.

About the seminar, he says
that, "most of the quotes of
Srla Prabhupada are taken
from room conversations,
personal communications,
etc., which are likely to be
exceptions conveyed
according to time, place,
circumstances and the
consciousness of the seeker."

Wrong.

In the seminar I quoted from
the *Atharva Veda*; I provided
six quotes from the *Manu
Samhita*; I quoted the *Gita*; I
quoted multiple *Bhagavatam*
purports; I also quoted
lectures on the scriptures,
which are public, not private,
statements.



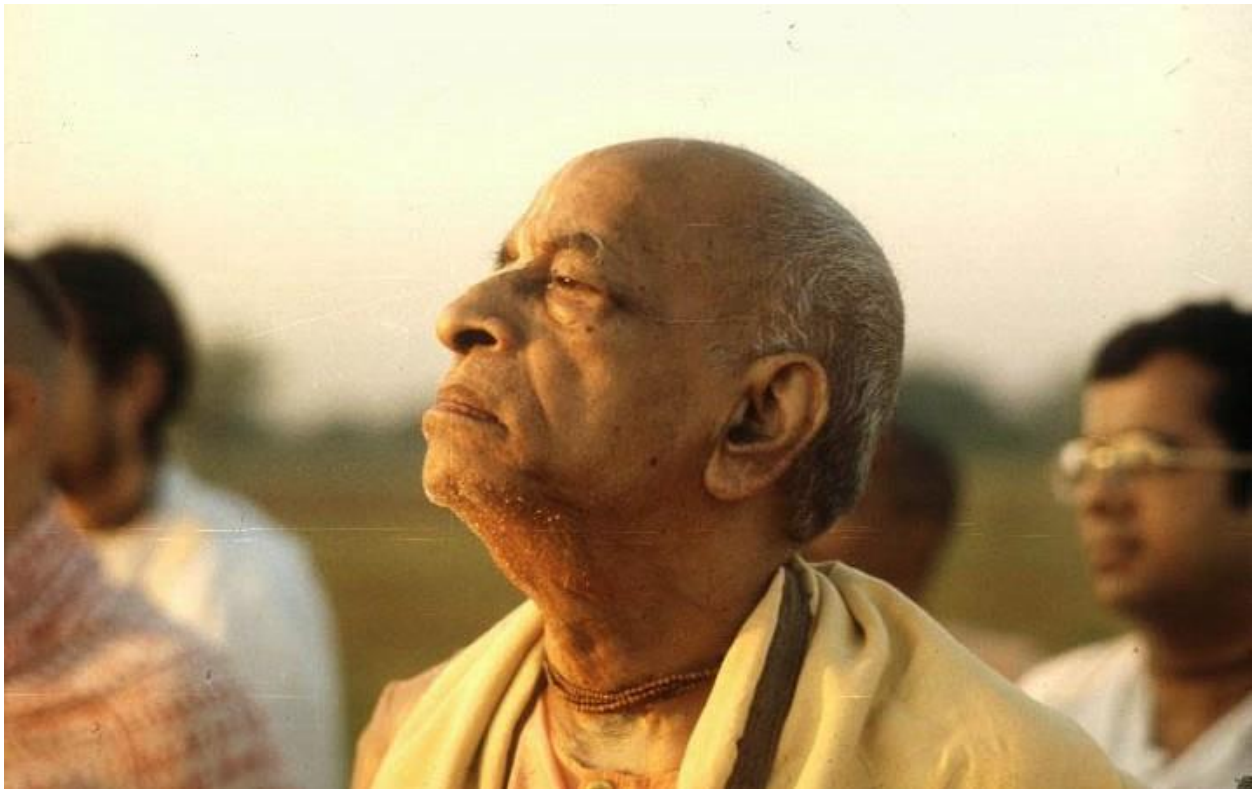
And some of the exchanges are with prominent disciples, such as GBCs and sannyasis. Those conversations possess a special significance: it's not just Srila Prabhupada speaking with a specific disciple; it's the Founder-Acarya teaching his top leaders so that they can teach the rest of ISKCON.

Yes, there are also few personal letters, but they also illuminate universal principles.

The problem is different, and it's not with the quotes. The problem is deeper; more subtle, more insidious.

It became apparent that many reviewers don't like the quotes because they don't like hearing Srila Prabhupada divinely empowered words delegitimizing their stereotyped conceptions of varnasrama. They don't like the quotes because they pierce the bubble of their illusion.

The selected quotes offer solid indications of Srila Prabhupada's intention and mood about varnasrama but some reviewers try hard to dismiss these references because Srila Prabhupada's vision collides with their opinions.



They are disoriented by the sharp, plastic intelligence of the Founder-Acarya and by his broad-mindedness. It's hard for them to process his multifaceted, nuanced instructions.

Some of them crave ossified formulas, predictable bromides they can recite verbatim, mindlessly, like archaic, arcane litanies.

Some of them apparently aspire for straight-jacketed labels, not for breathing truths.

It disconcerts them to witness the dynamic spiritual power and the capacity of synthesis of the Founder-Acarya.

They seem rattled, perturbed by the depth of his acumen and the span of his comprehension.

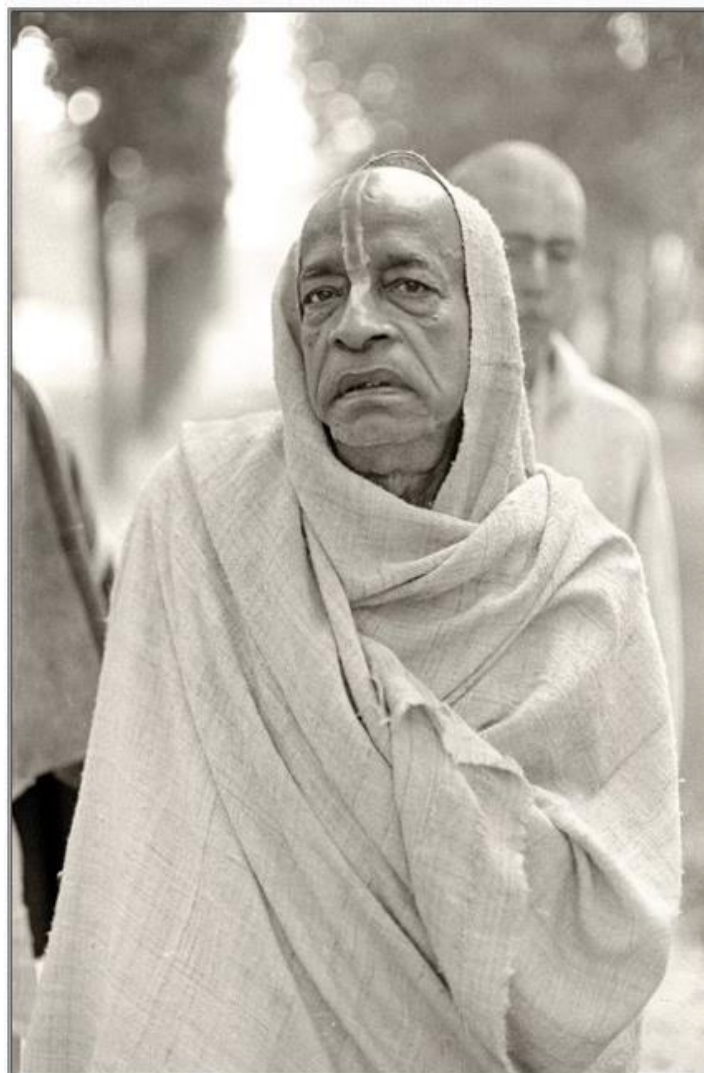
It seems they would rather have a frozen, mummified Srila Prabhupada. It would make them feel more comfortable in their mental pigeonholes, more secure in their dogmas.

They seem to hate the fact that Srila Prabhupada considers - *seriously considers* - time, place and circumstances; this clashes with their petrified, calcified, sclerotized ideas of varnasrama.

Srila Prabhupada's varnasrama is a living, growing, adaptable varnasrama; their idea of varnasrama a fossilized one.

That's why they hate the quotes.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



FIFTEEN

It Seems that My Seminar Promoted Sai Baba Worship

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

In the seminar I gave a simple analogy: in a pharmacy there are many medicines, but there are not all good for everyone; a particular medicine is prescribed for a particular disease. Similarly, in varnasrama there are different prescriptions for different people.

Super-plain stuff.

In a desperate attempt to find fault even with this basic idea, a reviewer takes a flight of fancy (KTD is me):

"KTD speaks that each medicine is for each kind of disease. Yes, we agree . . . No doubt. But if I bring Saibaba worship and say that this is according to the present circumstances, then I am bogus. This is exactly what KTD does."

Seriously?

Your servant, Kaunteya das



SIXTEEN

Abracadabra Varnasrama

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of
establishing varnasrama!

In your final report you write: "If varnasrama-dharma were meant for perfect people, then no one would need to follow it because they are already perfect. Varnasrama is instead meant for the imperfect."

Fine, agreed; but why, then, you publish a review that says:

"Just Viṣṇu ārādhana based varṇāśrama is "karma-miśra bhakti". Daiva-varṇāśrama is not tinged with karma and jñāna. It is "anyābhilāśita śūnyam" . . . Daiva Varnasrama is nirguṇa bhakti because it comes under the 4th principle of sadhana bhakti and that already "anyābhilāśitā śūnyam" is the basic step."

What is this reviewer trying to say, that nobody who takes part in daiva-varnasrama is tinged with *karma* and *jñāna*? You have, say, 100 million people involved in varnasrama and none of them is tinged with *karma* and *jñāna*? They are all practicing *nirguṇa-bhakti*?

You need to work on your message; on the consistency of what you want to present.

Is varnasrama "meant for the imperfect" or is it "already 'anybhilasita sunyam'" as this reviewer claims?

You need to present a common platform.

You shouldn't confuse people with contradictory messages.

All ISKCON devotees know that the varnas are *determined* by the *gunas*. How can you publish something that says that varnasrama is *nirguṇa* when the varnas are *based* on the *gunas*?

As Srila Prabhupada explains in *Bhagavad-gīta* (3.35, purport): "a *brāhmaṇa*, who is in the mode of goodness, is nonviolent, whereas a *kṣatriya*, who is in the mode of passion, is allowed to be violent . . . Everyone has to cleanse his heart by a gradual process, not abruptly."





It seems that some reviewers take the expression "varnasrama" as some sort of magic incantation - such as *abracadabra* - and that they believe that anything performed in conjunction with that magic formula is perfect and pure.

You are senior devotees and should correct such green reviewers - not publish their fantasies.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

SEVENTEEN

Benthamite Utilitarianism? No, "Bhagavatamite Varnasramism"



Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of
establishing varnasrama!

One reviewer hazarded: "His ethics [my ethics] . . . appear to follow Benthamite Utilitarianism,
which posits that society should secure 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.'"

Completely off-the-mark. My ethics posit that "society should secure" the greatest satisfaction for
Lord Krishna:

*ataḥ pumbhir dvija-śreṣṭhā
vaṇāśrama-vibhāgaśaḥ
svanuṣṭhitasya dharmasya
saṁsiddhir hari-toṣaṇam*

"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." (*Srimad-Bhagavatam* 1.2.13)

Enough said.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

EIGHTEEN

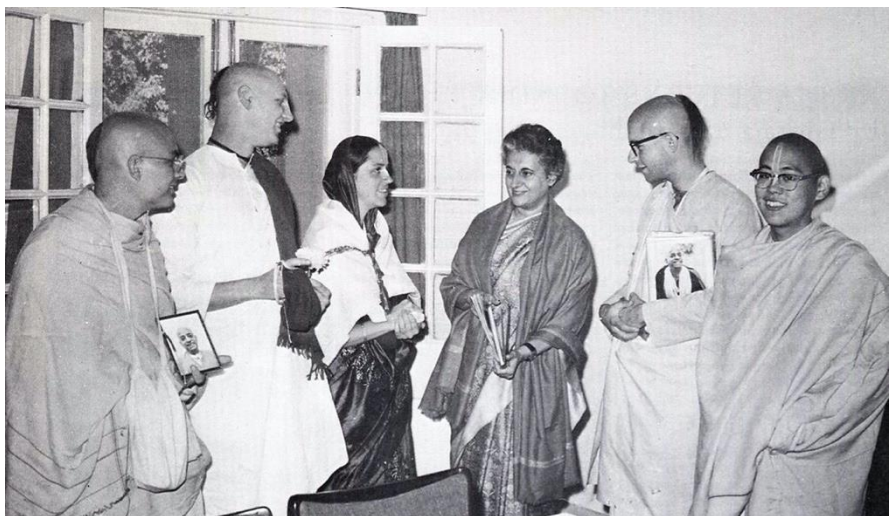
Naive Monarchy Fixations

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

I like to believe that's is not a common political fetish among ISKCON India leaders, but within the reviews we find an extraordinary obsession with monarchy.

In his unalloyed, unquestioned love for monarchy, a reviewer refers to the meeting between Srila Prabhupada and Indira Gandhi in 1975. He writes: "[Srila Prabhupada] wanted to say to Indira Gandhi (when she was the Prime Minister of India) that she should resign from the post and become *Rajamata* (queen) after appointing Sanjay Gandhi as the king."

OK, besides the clumsy mistake of translating *Rajamata* with *queen* (it means "queen mother"), the statement is accurate. But, let's consider:



1. In his meeting with Indira Gandhi, Srila Prabhupada never brought up the topic. Obviously, it was not his top priority.
2. We don't know *how* he would have presented it (because he never did). What arguments would he have used? We don't know. We also don't know what *type* of monarchy he would have suggested (there are several kinds) or how did Srila Prabhupada envisioned his suggestion to manifest, vis-a-vis the Indian Constitution. We just don't have any detail.
3. Srila Prabhupada had a specific suggestion; does the reviewer have any suggestion on who should become the king of India? Does he have any idea on what political process to follow?
4. Most importantly: does ISKCON India wish to actively promote the re-establishing of monarchy in India?

If not, watch out; such fanciful aspirations might embarrass and endanger ISKCON India.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



NINETEEN

Monarcomania Strikes Again

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

More unthinking monarco-fundamentalism from our dear reviewers. One of them proclaims:

"We can say for sure that SP wanted trained ksatriyas to rule the world as a king."

Yes, Srila Prabhupada often extolled the virtues of Vedic-age monarchs, but he also clarified: "Monarchy is good so long the king is as ideal as Bharata Mahārāja, Ṛṣabhadeva, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, Mahārāja Parīkṣit, Lord Rāmacandra." (Lecture on SB 5.5.28, Vrindavana, 15 Nov 1976) So, his support of monarchy is clearly contingent upon having the right kings; it's not just monarchy for monarchy's sake. With the wrong people on the throne, monarchy can be a disaster.

The fact of the matter is that, actually, Srila Prabhupada said: "Monarchy is out of date now." (Conversation, New Vrindavana, 9 June 1969)

When, on another occasion, in India, the topic again came up, this is what Srila Prabhupada said:

Rāmeśvara: Krishna conscious government must be monarchy. A real Krishna conscious government.

Prabhupāda: No. Why monarchy? You can continue democracy, but the legislators should be first-class men who has knowledge, not these rascals. (Conversation, Allahabad, 15 Jan 1977)

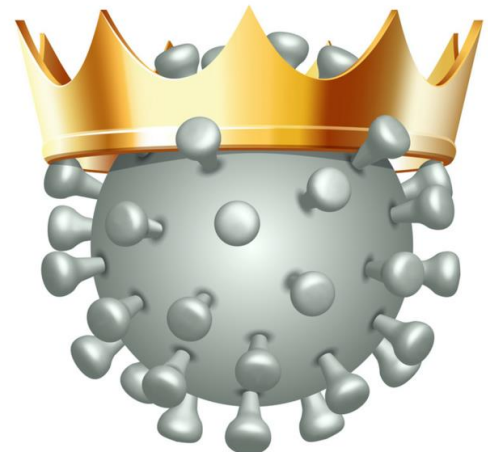
But the faith of this reviewer is unshakable; his conviction is fact-resistant and reality-proof.

He declares:

"It may seem impossible today to reestablish monarchy, but we never know. Corona virus brought unimaginable things to the world."

Yes, we might experience a pandemic of monarchy next.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



TWENTY

Long Live the King! (Even if Unqualified?)

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Some of the reviewers you chose are certainly unqualified, but at least they possess an unshakable faith in their fantasie

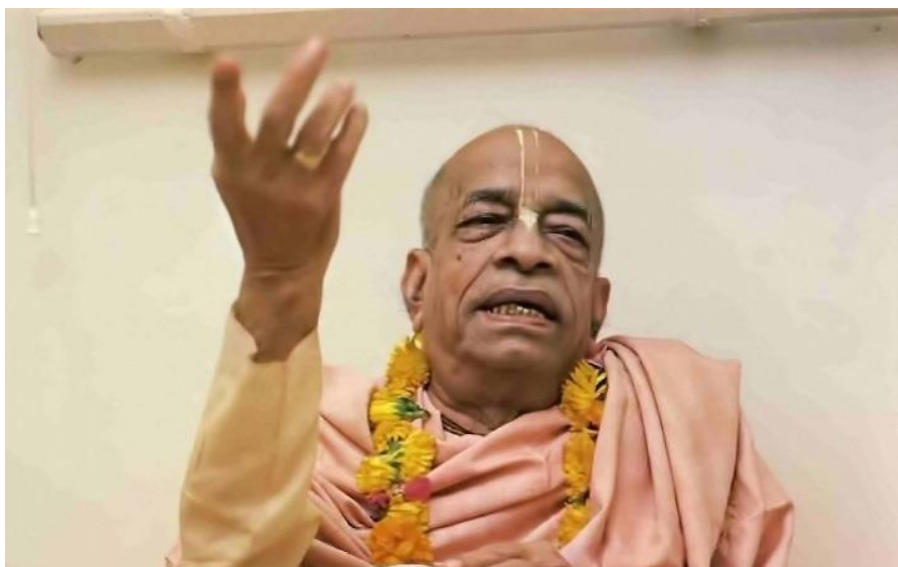
One of them writes:

"the system of monarchy (actually the whole Varnasrama) was established by Krsna Himself and that it cannot be wrong."

This is amazing.

Monarchy cannot be wrong? Then why Srila Prabhupada writes: "Because in this age kings have such demoniac propensities, monarchy is abolished by the laws of nature in every country" (SB 4.26.6, purport)

Varnasrama cannot be wrong? Then why Srila Prabhupada writes: "in the age of Kali the varnasrama-dharma is so degraded that any attempt to restore it to its original position will be hopeless." (*In Search of the Ultimate Goal of Life*)



We should work to establish varnasrama, but we should not try to resurrect every single practice from previous epochs. We should cultivate its essence - devotional service according to one's nature - and not worship anachronistic externalities.

It's like believing that because a *maha-prasada* samosa is sacred and spiritual, it can never grow fungus, and we should always eat it, at any stage of its decomposition. Even if it's munched on by rats, it will be always healthy for us.



*Monarchy... When,
oh when will that day
be mine?*

*After you wake up, I will tell you what
sastra and Srila Prabhupada actually say
about monarchy in Kali-yuga.*

Their puerile reviews reveal that a majority of reviewers are pitifully inadequate in dealing with such complex issues such as the political organization of a state. They are certainly very fervent in their dogmatic approach, but that's very embarrassing for ISKCON India.

It's sad. I have nothing personal against them. Their innocence is heart-rending. Such an idealism! Such fervor! Such romanticism! But some of their beliefs are dangerously off-the-mark.

The reviews show symptoms of *wishful thinking*. Wikipedia *uvaca*: "Wishful thinking is the formation of beliefs based on what might be pleasing to imagine, rather than on evidence, rationality, or reality."

To retain its moral authority and its intellectual integrity, the leaders of ISKCON India must distance ISKCON from such juvenile monarchical fantasies.

Don't the reviewers realize that their fanatical adulation of varnasrama in all its forms - including its obsolete fitments (such as monarchy) - represents the *worst publicity* for varnasrama?

A particularly faithful reviewer suggests: "it is our duty to always speak the sastra which favors monarchy, even if the situation is not favorable, and even if we are not going to implement it immediately."

Yes, go and tell Modi that ISKCON opposes the Indian Constitution.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

TWENTY-ONE

Who Said the *Bhagavatam* Is irrelevant?



Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Because they fail to grasp simple concepts, some reviewers resort to malicious attempts to discredit the seminar.

One of them wrote: "The *Bhagavatam* is full of stories that happened millions of years ago. If their antiquity makes them

irrelevant, then why read *Bhagavatam* at all?"

Obviously, I never said that the stories of the *Bhagavatam* are irrelevant. The *Bhagavatam* is fully relevant; but, as students of the *Bhagavatam*, our job is not to imitate, duplicate or impersonate whatever the *Bhagavatam* describes.

Should we try to set up a *rajasuya-yajna* because Maharaja Yudhisthira does so in the *Bhagavatam*?

The principle of *yajna* is eternal and universal - always relevant. What form the *yajna* should take will be taught by the contemporary *acaryas*.

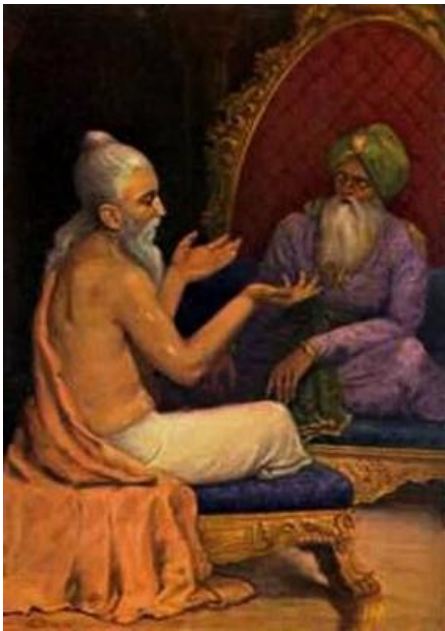


Should we try to meditate under water, as the Pracetas did?

The principle of austerity and of fraternal collaboration is eternal and universal - always relevant - the environment in which to execute them will vary.

Should we inspire some elder, materially attached relatives to leave home, go to the Himalayas and meditate till they burn to death from self-created fire, as Vidura guided Dhritarastra to do?

The principle of retirement at a certain age is eternal and universal - always relevant - what shape the retirement would take would depend on a number of factors.



Should daughters burn themselves to ashes - as Sati Devi did - if their biological father insults the devotees?

The principle of avoiding blasphemy of Vaisnavas is eternal and universal - always relevant - immolation by self-generated fire is not.

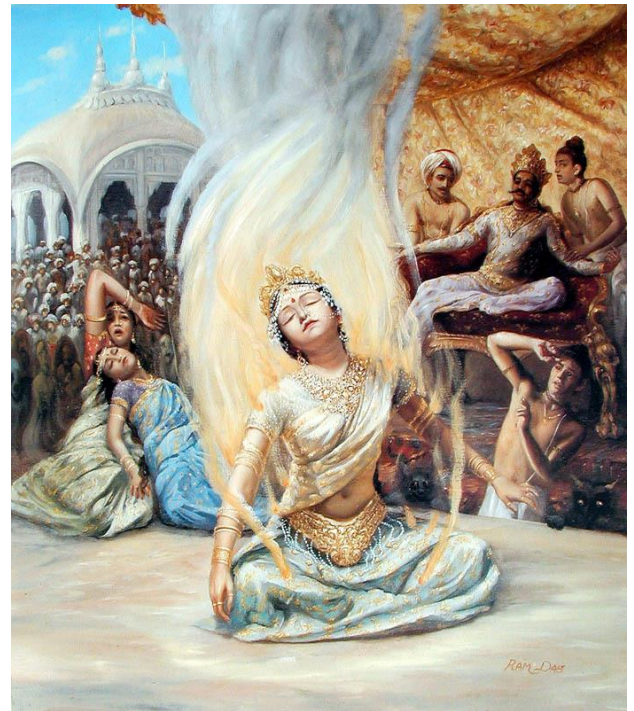
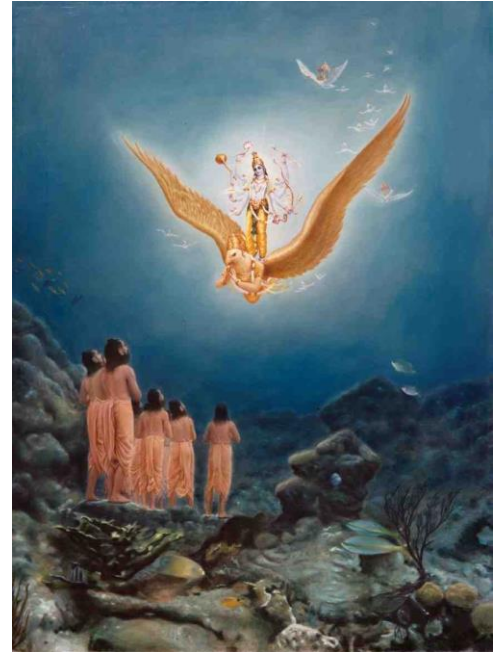
These are simple matters, which every sane Vaisnava understands. These are episodes from thousands and millions of years ago. The teachings in them are perennially relevant, but the specifics need adaptation.

The *Bhagavatam* is Krishna Himself, and Krishna is always relevant. The *acaryas* teach us how to serve Krishna, how to apply *sanatana-dharma* in particular ages.

Varnasrama is Krishna's system for social harmony; the principles are unchangeable; the details are variable. A successful varnasrama *must* take into consideration the changing external realities. Srila Prabhupada teaches:

"I have to arrange according to the country, according to the circumstances, as far as possible. So gradually, they are coming to the perfectional stage. So we have to adopt *deśa-kāla-pātra*: according to time, according to . . . but we are keeping our principles as it is, but making arrangement according to the circumstances. That is required." (Lecture in Delhi, 16 Nov 1973)

Your servant, Kaunteya das



TWENTY-TWO

Did Rupa & Sanatana Goswami Go Against *Sastra* by Following Lord Caitanya?

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

In some cases, the arguments of the reviewers are so illogical that they defy belief.

One reviewer - smart enough to remain anonymous - quotes the seminar, in which I brought up the purport to SB 1.9.26, where Srila Prabhupada says that a sudra "should never bank money."

I explained that for the sudra to completely depend on his master, the master must be qualified, caring and protective.

A truly simple, obvious point - and another illustration of the principle of interdependence.

But somehow the anonymous reviewer rejects the notion and tries to defeat it with a counterargument.



Unfortunately, his argument doesn't make any sense.

He quotes a passage in which Srila Prabhupada speaks of Srila Rupa and Srila Sanatana Goswamis:

"Similarly, when one is a servant, he has to perform abominable activities according to the orders of the master. Therefore, when Dabira Khasa and Sakara Mallika compared their position to that of Jagai and Madhai, they found Jagai's and Madhai's position far better. Jagai and Madhai never accepted the position of serving a low-class person, nor were they forced to execute abominable activities under the order of a low-class master." (Cc Madhya 1.194, purport)

His argument, in his own words: "a dutiful sudra must still faithfully serve even an abominable master." In other words, as Rupa and Sanatana served the Nawab, so the sudra should stay and serve the master, even if the master is bad.

Somehow the reviewer seems to forget that Rupa and Sanatana *abandoned* their master.

Rupa and Sanatana left the Nawab to join Lord Caitanya. How can anyone use their example to say that one should continue to serve a bad master under any condition? The reviewer's example works against his argument, demolishing it.

Undeterred by the irrationality of the argument, the reviewer continued: "Kaunteya's argument is against shastra because the Lord Himself says that one should follow his prescribed duty imperfectly rather than someone else's perfectly (BG 18.47)."

Is the reviewer implying that Rupa and Sanatana Gosvami's went "against shastra" by following Lord Caitanya? Was does he suggest, that they should have remained serving the Nawab instead of following Lord Caitanya?

The message of the seminar clearly stands: duties transform as circumstances change. After Lord Caitanya initiated Rupa and Sanatana, their "prescribed duty" became to serve and follow Lord Caitanya - and dump the ruler of Bengal. Their serving the Nawab was only a circumstantial, temporary obligation; when they assumed higher duties, higher identities, their previous, incidental duties were relinquished.

Despite muddling history and mangling logic, the reviewer unintentionally confirms the varnasrama principle of interdependence. Thank you.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



TWENTY-THREE

Reviewers Criticize the ISKCON India Management

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

One of your reviewers makes this drastic statement:



"Sudras with bank accounts and paper money salaries are a total speculation."

What he just did is lambasting all ISKCON managers in India, because, throughout India, ISKCON hires workers (cleaners, security guards, drivers, etc.) and pays them salaries; "money salaries."

Dear leaders of ISKCON India, this varnasrama specialist just characterized your hiring and remuneration standards as "total speculation."

Is this the kind of spokesperson you wish to represent you?

Your servant, Kaunteya das

PS - personally, I have no problem with the practice of paying workers - especially if we pay at least the minimum wages fixed by the government.

TWENTY-FOUR

I Made a Mistake: Femicide is Much Bigger

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

A reviewer implacably spots a mistake: "KTD says, 'In India it is very common to kill the baby girls. Either in the womb or after they are born. So there are millions and millions of girls missing . . . 25 million girls missing.' This is again an attempt to portray India and Indian culture in the wrong light."

Oh, so killing girls is now a bona fide part of "Indian culture"?



I thought "Indian culture" was to welcome a baby girl as Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune; not to murder her.

The reviewer concedes: "Yes, many girls were killed after the birth. No doubt . . . But 25 million is exaggerated, and cheating. Can he produce evidence for such a bold statement?"

I admit that my statement was wrong - the numbers of femicide in India are actually **much bigger**.

Estimates range from 46- to 63-million missing women in India:

"One in three girls missing globally due to sex selection, both pre- and post-natal, is from India – 46 million out of the total 142 million, according to the UNFPA's State of the World Population 2020 report."

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/46-million-girls-went-missing-in-india/article31957348.ece>

"More than 63 million women are 'missing' statistically across India, and more than 21 million girls are unwanted by their families, government officials say."

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/30/more-than-63-million-women-missing-in-india-statistics-show>

(And the above is an old article; the numbers must be up by now.)



I am sorry for being incorrect in saying that "only" 25-million girls are missing; but, mostly, I am sorry for the millions of *jivas* that had the chance of taking a human birth in *Bharata-varsa* but were assassinated for being of the wrong gender. Should any varnasrama supporter condone such oceanic slaughter of human beings?

In varnasrama no child should be killed (do I even need to say that?): "The Vedas says that everyone has right to live, every living entity." (Lecture on SB 6.1.39-40, Surat, 21 Dec 1970)

Another problem evidenced by this review is the laxity or disinterest in data, the inclination to rather go for *feelings* instead than solid information. The reviewer could have easily Googled "missing women in India" and found the above info. Instead he just expressed a *sensation* and an insult: "25 million is exaggerated, and cheating."

I don't care about the insult. The real insult is to ISKCON India, by publishing such a review on an ISKCON India website.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

PS - Did ISKCON India ever make a statement against killing baby girls? If not, today could be a good opportunity to take a stand against the millions of murders.



TWENTY-FIVE

Caught Red-handed

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

One reviewer quotes me saying: "This seminar is warning against the misuse, the misapplication of varnasrama norms. Just like the caste system. Caste system means the different varnas are identified by birth and not by education, qualification."

Plain stuff; clearly understood by all devotees. But this reviewer pounces on me, as if he had found the smoking gun of my depravation:

"Now he has come out with it: He is against the caste system."

Of course I am against the caste system.

Everyone should be against the caste system, defined as divisions based exclusively on birth. So, yes, I am against the caste system, and fortunately, I am in very good company; Srila Prabhupada writes that "when the *varṇāśrama* system becomes degraded, it appears as a hereditary caste system." (SB 3.21.52-54, purport)



**He is
against
the
caste
system!**

Srila Prabhupada also says that, "we are not introducing caste system, that any rascal born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, he becomes a *brāhmaṇa*. We don't accept that." (Conversation, Philadelphia, 13 July 1975)

Srila Prabhupada clearly writes: " Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu never acknowledged the stereotyped caste system by birthright." (SB Introduction)

Yes, of course I am against *that* caste system. What's the problem?

Yes, in some cases Srila Prabhupada translates "varna" with "caste." - big deal - but he never said that birth should be the deciding factor in determining one's varna.

Perhaps the leaders of ISKCON Indian should formally state that ISKCON is against the (hereditary) caste system?

Your servant, Kaunteya das

PS - This reviewer should thank me for not revealing his name.

TWENTY-SIX

Finally a Reviewer Who Is Doing Something Concrete to Establish Varnasrama!

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu, Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

I was glad to read the review of my old *Bhakti-vaibhava* student from my Mayapur Gurukula days, His Holiness BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

His review and the one from another (anonymous) reviewer were the only two that deserved a passing mark.

Maharaja had not attended the ILS seminar, and so he asked:

"it is not very clear who the seminar was meant for."



It was an ILS seminar; ILS is the ISKCON Leadership Sanga. The seminar was meant for ISKCON leaders, but it's beneficial for all classes of devotees.

Maharaja continues: "It is also not very clear what was the intent of it."

The ILS brochure, which every registered participant received, and which apparently Maharaja had not seen, explained the intent:

"As for everything else, VAD could be approached in *tamas*, *rajas* or *sattva*. ISKCON has been wrestling with the question of how to apply VAD; with what to take from VAD-based traditions and what is best left in previous ages. This seminar explores how the future of ISKCON could benefit from applying the unchangeable principles of VAD and avoid the pitfalls of *tamo-rajasic* VAD, nostalgias for imaginary pasts, fanaticism and the *smarta* mentality that has plagued Indian culture for millennia (and ISKCON recently) - especially in relation to gender-roles and gender-relations."

Maharaja hardly commented on the seminar; but make some very good universal points. He said, for instance:

"Srila Prabhupada wants us to follow varnasrama dharma."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

"Sometimes a need may arise to temporarily adjust or drop some of the instructions within the varnasrama due to changed circumstances."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

"But how do we decide which one to change or drop and which one not?"

Crucial question.

"Mental speculation? Democracy? No. We have to follow the guru, sadhu, and sastra advice."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.



"When some circumstances inversely change and it is not clear how to follow certain instructions, then there are basically two ways to approach the situation. One is that we adjust or change or drop the instruction to accommodate the changed circumstances, and the second is that we change the circumstances to accommodate the original instruction. Or it can also be a combination of both. To understand which of the above options we should apply under given circumstances, we should pay great attention to the descriptions of sastra, deliberate on how we can follow these descriptions at present, and endeavor to use the principles from these descriptions in our own lives."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

"We also need to learn how to discriminate between principles and details."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami. This is such an essential point for understanding varnasrama!

"Thus we will be able to understand how and when we can adjust some of the instructions describing details and leave the principles intact."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

"We have to develop a clear vision to understand how to preserve and develop the principles of daiva-varnasrama-dharma within our society."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

"The problem is that we are preconditioned by our upbringings, and thus it may be difficult for some to easily grasp these principles."

Yes, very valuable insight. I have observed, for instance, that devotees who didn't get enough motherly affection during childhood often find it very challenging to have a mature approach to comprehending the role of women in varnasrama.



"Fortunately there is a solution for society. Gurukulas. We need to train our children from a young age so that they learn to understand and apply the principles of the varnasrama dharma thoroughly."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

"In order to do that, we ourselves have to endeavor to try our best to understand and apply these principles in our lives. This way the next generations of devotees will be more capable to apply these principles."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami.

"Unfortunately the Gurukulas are not very much supported by our leaders, even though Srila Prabhupada considered it as one of the most important project, and that it should have been the model educational institution for the whole world."

I agree 100% with BA Priti Vardhana Swami; that's why in another 2020 ILS seminar I emphasized about the significance of the Gurukula for the future of ISKCON:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lMk7GsSE0g> The focus on education starts at 16:30.



Let's work together to establish a pure, unalloyed varnasrama, starting with a massive campaign to establish Gurukula and Varnasrama Colleges!

Varnasrama without Gurukula is like a tree without roots. We should take very seriously Srila Prabhupada's instruction - directly in the pages of *Srimad-Bhagavatam*: "It is necessary for the leaders of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement to start educational institutions in different parts of the world to train children, starting at the age of five years." (SB 4.12.23, purport)

If we are sincere about varnasrama, we must be sincere about Gurukula.

Varnasrama without Gurukula is just a hobby.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

TWENTY-SEVEN

The "Anti-varnasrama Camp" - A Figment of the Imagination

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja,
Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra
Krishna Prabhu,

Please accept my humble
obeisances, all glories to Srila
Prabhupada, all glories to the
mission of establishing varnasrama!

One reviewer talks about an "anti-
varnashrama camp" - which actually
doesn't exist.

In more than forty years in
ISKCON, I never heard any
devotee, at any level of knowledge or
experience, speaking against
varnasrama. Some may not
understand it (just like some of our

reviewers), some may be puzzled on how to implement it; most devotees may simply focus on their services, without discussing much the overall plan for varnasrama; but I don't remember anyone ever saying, for instance, that we should not have the four asramas, or that natural occupational divisions don't exist.

Anyone familiar with the *Bhagavad-gita* knows that the four social divisions are created by God, and that they are intrinsically present in every human society. Every devotee knows that varnasrama is good, that sincerely following the *dharna* of one's asramas is good; and that we should engage our acquired psycho-physical nature in the service of the Lord. Everyone knows that.

The anti-varnasrama camp simply doesn't exist.

Nobody in his or her right mind would talk against having a strong brahmacari-asrama; a healthy grihastha-asrama; a genuine vanaprastha-asrama; or a sound sannyasa-asrama. Nobody would talk against the fact that there are different natures and different occupations.

I never heard anyone talking against self-sufficiency or cow protection.

Why such reviewers conjure up false enemies? It probably makes them feel more special, more exclusive; as if they were part of a superior but endangered species, a purer but threatened breed of devotees. Someone may get a thrill thinking to be under (a non-existent) siege.

As Don Quixote fighting the windmills, these reviewers are fighting fictional enemies; antagonistic hordes that simply do not exist.



What exists is a growing number of devotees - thousands of them, including many leaders - who are sick and tired of *tamo-rajasic* theories smuggled as "daiva-varnasrama"; sick and tired of seeing Vaisnavis treated as second-class citizens of ISKCON; sick and tired of seeing psychologically damaged men filtering and twisting *sastra* to mitigate their mental discomfort; sick and tired of weird, dysfunctional ideas peddled as ideal, Vedic policies.

Yes, so many devotees are sick and tired of deformed social fantasies smuggled as "varnasrama."

But don't call them "anti-varnasrama." They might simply represent the saner part of ISKCON and the real friends of varnasrama.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



TWENTY-EIGHT

Why No Names?

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

A peculiar complaint came from an anonymous reviewer: "Why does he attack the views or practices of 'pseudo-varnasrama' proponents that he doesn't identify—even when asked to do so at the end of his presentation?"

1. Because I am not interested in personal attacks.
2. Because it's not a good practice to talk about individuals that are not present can't defend themselves.
3. Because people won't be around forever - today they are here, tomorrow they are gone - and I am more interested in discussing ideas and concepts, which survive particular individuals.



4. Often people emotionally identify with this or that individual; mentioning the name of this Prabhu or that Maharaja may muddle the discussion by kindling sentimental and clannish sentiments.
5. Since we are talking about "pseudo-varnasrama proponents," we need to understand that people are only *carriers* of certain mentalities and misconceptions - which are not necessarily exclusive to them. Coronavirus is coronavirus, either it lurks within Mr. John Smith, Mr. Pradeep Kumar, Mr. Pablo Sanchez, or Mr. Wang Wei Yang. Weird ideas are not endemic to particular individuals.

That's why I didn't mention any name.

(And it's funny that someone who remained anonymous would complain about not revealing names.)

Since we are keeping the dialogue to ideas and behaviors, and we are not revealing names, I take the opportunity to share a suspect: the motivation of this smear campaign against my seminar appears to be an attempt at personal vendetta.

Revenge for what? At the beginning of 2013 I had published a book, "Did Srila Prabhupada Want Women Diksa Gurus?" Very positively reviewed and well appreciated.

You can download it for free here:

<https://sites.google.com/site/eyeofthestormbooks/>

The book systematically addressed, one by one, the objections to allowing Vaisnavi *diksa-gurus*. The unnamed devotee had unintentionally provided a cornucopia of shabby and outlandish arguments, which the book systematically demolished. (What to do? In defending *dharmā* at times we need to take a firm stand.)

Also in that circumstance I had avoided mentioning him by name. I didn't wish to publicly shame him; but he must have felt humiliated, seeing his arguments shred to pieces. Now, seven years later, it seems that he is trying to get back at me by slandering me.

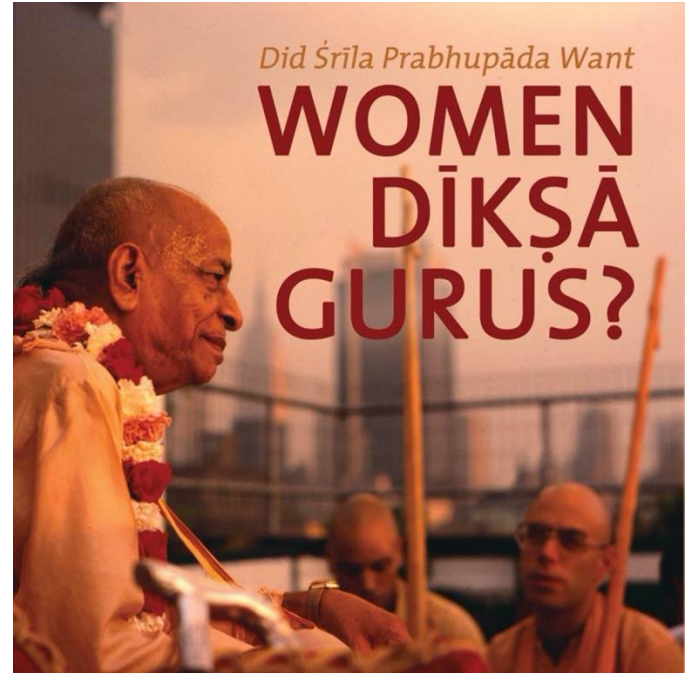
Hare Krishna.

At present, backed up by centuries of Gaudiya-vaisnava tradition, by plenty of Srila Prabhupada's instructions, and by multiple GBC resolutions - from 2005, 2009 and 2019 - Vaisnavi *diksa-gurus* are officially accepted in ISKCON. These must be trying times for someone who has always preached the false doctrine that having women *diksa-guru* is against varnasrama.

I have been an outspoken supporter of Vaisnavi *diksa-gurus*, while this devotee has been a loud opponent. If he is trying to vilify and defame me due to his VDG-frustration, I forgive him and wish him all the best.

And I am actually grateful to him: the slandering of my seminar offers a chance to talk about the real issue: how to prevent misuse and abuse of varnasrama, a very important and relevant subject; and so even a vindictive maneuver may end up being fruitful.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



TWENTY-NINE

Child Marriage Blues

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Unfortunately, some reviewers show themselves especially unqualified when they comment on child marriage. Some seem unable to accept the facts of the matter or Srila Prabhupada's instructions on the subject.

In the seminar I expose the dangers of child marriage (which is, by the way, illegal in India) and discourage the practice.

The reviewer that appears as the most learned, openly agrees with me:

"Certainly, we do not want to jeopardize ISKCON reputation. Certainly, we have to follow the laws of the country."



Rejecting the obvious, another reviewer takes shelter in misplaced semantics:

"There is nothing called as 'child marriage' in Daiva Varṇāśrama system."

Of course, you won't find any English term in Sanskrit *sastra*, but what's important for us is that Srila Prabhupada personally used the expression "child marriage" - a fact that a quick search in the Vedabase would have easily revealed:

"the system of child marriage..." (Back to Godhead magazine, 1958, Volume 3 Part 14)

"Formerly there was child marriage..." (Lecture on NOD, Vrindavana, 28 Oct 1972)

"formerly, child marriage..." (Conversation, Washington DC, 6 July 1976)

And these are not the only instances.

Confirming that child marriage was indeed part of traditional varnasrama culture, the wiser reviewer quoted earlier mentions a number of references where the practice child is recommended: "this . . . is a direct prescription from multiple dharma-sastras (vide Manu 9.89-90, Gautama 18.20-23, Baudhayana 4.1.12-15, Vasistha 17.67-71, Parasara 7.6-9, etc.)."

ISKCON India should be wary of such inconsistent, contradictory presentations, in which different reviewers publicly disagree.



Another reviewer impulsively dismisses the dangers of child marriage: "Another non-issue. Nothing can happen here without parental consent, and anything can happen with parental consent."

Obviously, this (anonymous) reviewer doesn't know Indian law. He imagines that "parental consent" can circumvent the law that the girl should be minimum 18 and the boy minimum 21.

The wiser reviewer quoted above provides a much more balanced and mature commentary. While agreeing that ISKCON shouldn't break the law, he suggests a legal way forward:

"considering the benefits of an early marriage and considering that nowadays teenagers usually start dating early, it is not illegal, for example, to engage a boy to a girl with the understanding that they are husband and wife but will be married officially later on (like mother Yasoda did with Krsna and Radharani). In this way one can simultaneously uphold the law and follow dharma-sastra (varnasrama)."

This is the kind of dialogue we should have: how to reconcile traditional practices with contemporary realities.

As some of the reviewers can get ISKCON in trouble with the government with their imprudent assertions, I suggest the leadership of ISKCON India should issue a clear, official statement that ISKCON is neither condoning nor promoting the (presently illegal) custom of child marriage.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

THIRTY

A Doubt: Did Some Reviewers *Ever* Really Study Varnasrama?

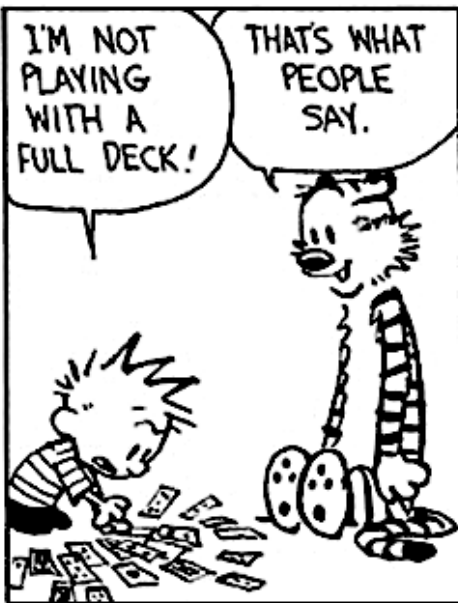
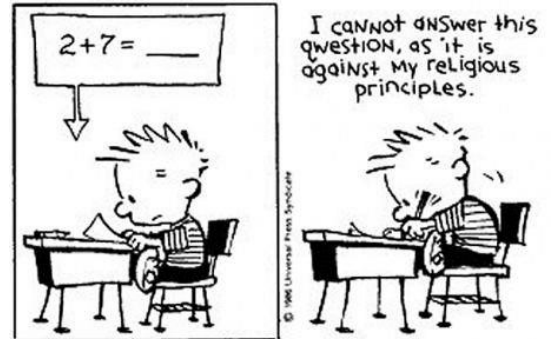
Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Sometimes the reviewers display an abysmal unfamiliarity with varnasrama and make statements diametrically opposed to Srila Prabhupada's views.

One (anonymous) reviewer writes: "In a human being participating in a varnashrama social system all the pieces can perform the function and assume the role of any other piece."

Above the muddled syntax, what is he trying to say, that the legs can perform the role of the head and vice versa? Actually Srila Prabhupada often stressed that three higher varnas won't accept the role of a sudra:

"In Vedic culture no brahmana will accept any job. No ksatriya will accept any job. No vaisya will accept any... Only sudras." (Morning Walk, Bombay, 17 Nov 1975)



Another varnasrama-incompatible opinion from the reviews:

"Any man in ISKCON who is following sudra standards is qualified to marry and direct any woman."

Why a woman with brahminical qualities and tendencies would marry a sudra?

Why a ksatriya woman should marry a sudra?

Why a vaisya woman should marry a sudra?

No, these ideas don't tally with the teachings of the Founder-Acarya.

Srila Prabhupada explains that, traditionally, a man can marry a woman of a lower varna; but if a woman marries a man of a lower varna it creates "a degraded *pratiloma* family." Their progeny will be considered of "low birth . . . According to the Vedic concept, there are two kinds of mixed family heritage, called *anuloma* and *pratiloma*. When a male is united with a female of a lower caste, the

offspring is called *anuloma*; but when a male unites with a woman of a higher caste, the offspring is called *pratiloma*." (Krishna Book, Ch. 78)

Srila Prabhupada explains in the First Canto: "The higher-caste men, namely the *brāhmaṇas* and *kṣatriyas*, could accept a woman of the *vaiśya* or the *sūdra* community, but a man from the lower castes could not contact a woman of the higher caste. Even a *kṣatriya* could not contact a woman of the *brāhmaṇa* caste . . . Such contact between man and woman was known as *uttama* and *adhama*. Contact of a *brāhmaṇa* with a *kṣatriya* woman is *uttama*, but the contact of a *kṣatriya* with a *brāhmaṇa* woman is *adhama* and therefore condemned." (SB 1.14.42, purport)

So much for the faulty idea that: "Any man in ISKCON who is following sudra standards is qualified to marry and direct any woman."

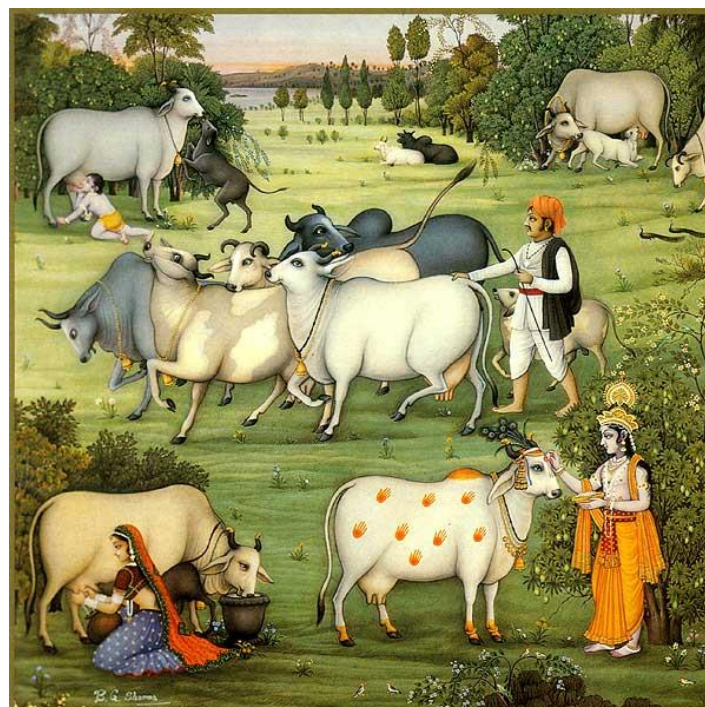
Of course, if one considers women as chattel, it doesn't make any difference what kind of woman one marries - but that's not varnasrama; that's the dark sexism of pathological misogynists.

One wonders: did these reviewers ever seriously studied varnasrama?

One also wonders: how could their wacky statements find their way into a site connected with the leadership of ISKCON India? Is someone trying to sabotage the reputation of ISKCON India?

Your servant, Kaunteya das

I FIND MY LIFE IS A LOT EASIER THE LOWER I KEEP EVERYONE'S EXPECTATIONS.



THIRTY-ONE

Description Is Not Necessarily Prescription

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!



There was another simple idea that some of the reviewers, surprisingly, struggled with. I said: "description is not necessarily prescription . . . So, what's described in Vedas, Puranas, dharma-sastras or what even Srila Prabhupada quotes is not necessarily normative, it's not necessarily directive."

It's really a simple idea, which should be obvious to anyone familiar with Srila Prabhupada's books. When the *Bhagavatam* describes, say, that Sukadeva Goswami was going around naked, nobody thinks that we should follow that. But apparently some reviewers couldn't digest the idea that description is not necessarily prescription.

One wrote: "It is a fact that Srila Prabhupada did not teach this type of analysis."

The plain and demonstrable fact is that Srila Prabhupada applied this dynamic throughout his teachings and by his example, in an ongoing, consistent way: in his books he *describes* many practices and rituals that he didn't necessarily *prescribe* to his followers.

Another reviewer was disturbed and tried to delegitimize the notion: "The philosophy of prescription versus description, with prescription being more important than description, is a clear deviation that appears nowhere in any form in Srila Prabhupada's written or spoken works."

My answer: the principle that a description is not necessarily a prescription appears everywhere, in multiple forms, in Srila Prabhupada's written or spoken words.

If someone had the patience to count them, perhaps hundreds of examples could be shown of customs, rituals and ceremonies *described* but not necessarily *prescribed*. A couple of examples should suffice here:





Srila Prabhupada translates SB 7.12.4: "Carrying pure *kuśa* grass in his hand, the *brahmachārī* should dress regularly with a belt of straw and with deerskin garments. He should wear matted hair, carry a rod and waterpot and be decorated with a sacred thread, as recommended in the *śāstras*."

Here we have a *description* - even a sastric recommendation - of the traditional brahmachari's attire, which includes wearing "deerskin garments" and "matted hair." Did Srila Prabhupada ever *prescribed* these things for ISKCON brahmacharis? Nope.

In the Nectar of Devotion Srila Prabhupada describes the "the worship of the demigod Gaṇapati." Was he *prescribing* it? No: "So far worshipping Ganesh is concerned, that is not necessary. Not that it should be done on a regular basis." (Letter to Sivananda, 25 Aug 1971)

One may protest, "But it's there in the Nectar of Devotion!" Yes, it's there as a *description*, not as a *prescription*.

The problem with stiff doctrinarians and rigid dogmatists is that they look for the *exact words* and *expressions*, not for the idea. When they can't find the *exact words* - even for a simple concept - they seem to get disoriented.

For instance, in the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase one will not find the word "empathic," the quality of someone being able to understand and share the feelings of another.

Does it mean that Srila Prabhupada never spoke about the need of being empathic?

Does it mean that he was not empathic?

Does it mean that Srila Prabhupada didn't want devotees to be empathic?

Actually he constantly stressed that devotees are compassionate and feel for the suffering of others: "*Para-duḥkha-duḥkhī*: a *Vaiṣṇava* is always unhappy to see the conditioned souls unhappy." (SB 8.7.39, purport)

Another example: "A *Vaiṣṇava* is *para-duḥkha-duḥkhī*; he is always unhappy to see the conditioned souls in an unhappy state of materialism." (SB 6.10.9, purport) Therefore, even if we don't find the exact term *empathic*, it doesn't mean the concept of being empathic is absent.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



THIRTY-TWO

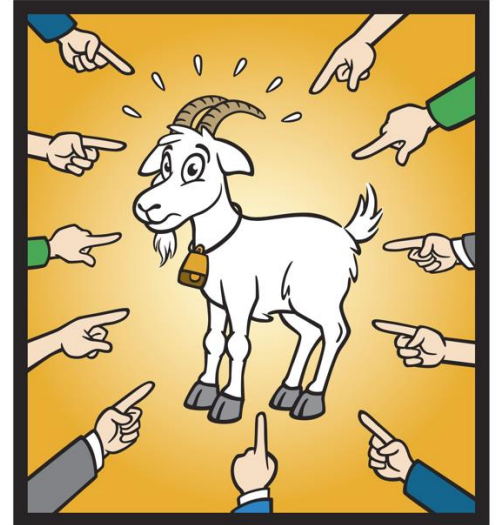
The Real Obstacle to Varnasrama Revealed!

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

A reviewer reveals:

"For the record, a number of senior devotees, in and out of Mayapur, have identified Kaunteya Dasa as a hostile obstacle to implementing varnashrama in ISKCON."

I am flattered; this reviewer must consider me extremely powerful - demoniac but powerful.



I must be really super-influential; especially as I am apparently creating insurmountable obstacles to varnasrama without being a GBC, without being a guru, without being a sannyasi, without being a disciple of Srila Prabhupada, without being a Zonal Secretary, without being a Zonal Supervisor, without being a Temple President, without managing any project and without controlling any ISKCON funds.

And what did I do to create insuperable hurdles to varnasrama?

I must have stopped all ISKCON brahmacaris from being good brahmacaris.

I must have stopped all ISKCON grihasthas from being good grihasthas.

I must have stopped all ISKCON vanaprasthas from being good vanaprasthas.

I must also have stopped all ISKCON sannyasis from being good sannyasis.



And I must have stopped brahmanas from doing their brahminical duties, creating obstructions to their Deity worship and sastric studies.

I must have impeded ksatriyas from protecting their people or administering their territories. (I must be truly powerful if I even neutralized the ksatriyas!)

I must have blocked vaisyas from protecting cows, from farming, from producing food and from trading.

And I must have stopped sudras from serving their masters, I must have blocked their performance of arts and the execution of their crafts.

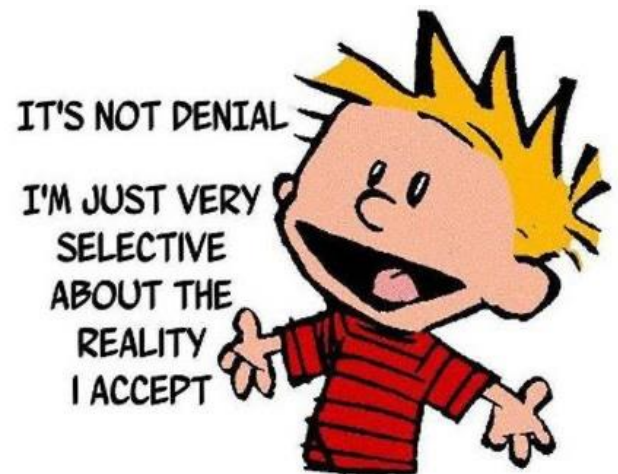
Because of me the asramas and the varnas could not properly function!

I must have closed down many Gurukulas, prevented the opening of countless Varnasrama Colleges and averted ISKCON ladies from being chaste.

Ridiculous.

I may feel amused at being considered so extraordinarily dominant that I could stop the manifestation of varnasrama; but such nonsensical allegation is actually greatly insulting to ISKCON India. The reviewer seems to say that *because of me* all the combined Indian leaders could not yet implement varnasrama despite all their knowledge, wisdom, experience, disciples, admirers, donors, political connections, all their temples, all their lands, all their cows and all their money.

Your evil but super-powerful servant, Kaunteya das



THIRTY-THREE

"It's Taking time..."; "In the Long Term..." - Why the Sloth?

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Although overtly claiming to support varnasrama, the reviews show a lack of urgency in establishing it.

A reviewer writes: "Varnashrama is a very deep subject matter which is taking time to put into practical application because of fluctuating social norms."

No, it's taking time because ISKCON is neglecting to open Gurukulas and Varnasrama Colleges.

It's taking time because those who have control of the finances are not investing in Gurukulas and Varnasrama Colleges.

It's taking time because most leaders hardly ever talk about Gurukula and Varnasrama College.

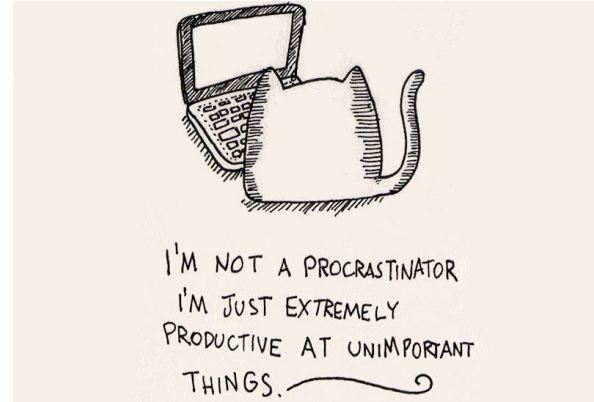
It's taking time because Temple Presidents don't preach to congregational devotees to send their children to Gurukula and Varnasrama College.

It's taking time because the predominant vaisya mentality doesn't see Gurukula and Varnasrama College as attractive sources of income.

Another laissez-faire (and rigorously anonymous) reviewer states:

"In the long term, ISKCON has to establish the varnasrama college."

In the long term?!?!



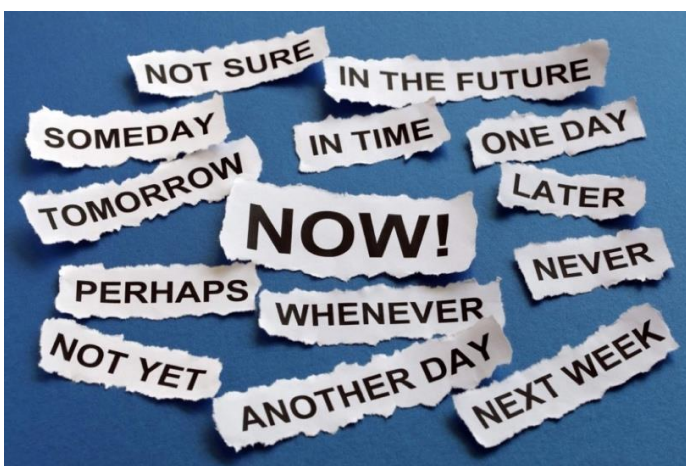
More than forty-six years ago Srila Prabhupada instructed: "The varnasrama college has to be established immediately." (Morning Walk, Vrindavana, 12 March 1974) "Immediately" - said Srila Prabhupada - and forty-six years later this reviewer suggests that ISKCON should establish Varnasrama College "in the long term"?!

What kind of mood is that? Why the indolence?

With all due respect, what kind of reviewers did you choose?

Are they varnasrama-friendly, varnasrama-hostile or just varnasrama-lazy?

Gurukulas and Varnasrama Colleges should be established NOW.



ISKCON India has both the human and financial capacity to do it; and should do it NOW. Delays, excuses and procrastination are all signs that, in reality, the talk of many people about establishing varnasrama is just hot air.

Enough idle talk.

GURUKULAS EVERYWHERE IN INDIA NOW!!!

VARNASRAMA COLLEGES EVERYWHERE IN INDIA NOW!!!

Your servant, Kaunteya das



THIRTY-FOUR

To Properly Understand Varnasrama, One Shouldn't Have Too Many Emotional Issues



Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

As expected, gender interaction was one of the most sensitive topics. Throughout the review I could almost sense an allergy, an incapacity to talk about it in a mature way.

During the seminar, I shared an important letter by Srila Prabhupada:

"[S]ometimes in the neophyte stage of devotional service, in order to withstand the attack of Maya and remain strong under all conditions of temptation, young or inexperienced devotees will adopt an attitude against those things or persons possibly harmful, threatening to their tender devotional creeper. They may even over-indulge in such feelings just to protect themselves." (Letter to Lynne Ludwig, 30 April 1973)



I then explained that even physically elderly devotees may react to "temptation" by over-indulging in feelings of antagonism towards the object of their attraction (women).

A reviewer attempts at dismissing this essential issue: "What does this have to do with establishing varnasrama? Nothing."

Unhealthy attitudes towards women have nothing to do with establishing varnasrama?!

Half of all varnasrama participants are women; it's critical that our attitude toward them be healthy.

Healthy attitudes towards women are central to varnasrama. Unhealthy mindsets create unhealthy dynamics in the individual, in the couple, in the family, in the village and in the whole of society.

Men with deep, unresolved issues with the opposite gender strive to establish a system that penalizes women and restricts their potential; a system diametrically opposed to the instructions of the *Manu samhita* on how to deal with women.

They may beat women - and then they will seek justification in "Indian culture."



Some of these damaged men may end up commenting on a seminar aimed at protecting varnasrama, and they would review it, not surprisingly, in grotesque ways.

For them it's very difficult to embrace and accept sastric injunctions about cherishing and respecting the womenfolk.

The *Manu Samhita* instructs: "A father, brother, husband or brother-in-law should keep their daughter, sister, wife or sister-in-law happy and pleased through gentle words, respectful behavior, gifts etc. Those who desire prosperity should ensure that women in their family are always happy and do not face miseries. (MS 3.55)

"A family where women remain unhappy due to misdeeds of their men is bound to be destroyed. And a family where women are always happy is bound to prosper forever." (MS 3.57)

Men who fail to see the connection between such injunctions and a functional expression of varnasrama are obviously unqualified to talk about varnasrama.

Men who didn't spend enough time in touch with the mother's body in their first year of life; men who were prematurely deprived of breast-feeding; men who have gone through the ordeal of romantic rejections... these and others with psychological problems are all very poor candidates for promoting real, mature varnasrama.

They cannot implement a salubrious varnasrama while still battling their demons, while struggling to exorcise their attraction, while fighting to overcome their traumas - especially if they don't work on resolving their issues.

Their psychological problems filter or incapacitate their ability to approach varnasrama in a wholesome, balanced way.

That's why varnasrama recommends that women spend enough time with their children.

The baby needs the body of the mother.



The baby needs the milk of the mother.

Varnasrama is scientific. The recommendation that the mother spend time with the child is not sentimentalism; it's the basis of a mentally healthy population.

Properly applying varnasrama prevents the deprivation of adequate interpersonal and environmental experiences in the early developmental years.

Men who lacked the breast-feeding of the mother may look for those breasts their whole life. Emotionally deprived men who lacked the embrace and the affection of their mother may become women-hunters or women-haters.

Both types are unfit to talk about varnasrama.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

THIRTY-FIVE

Women Issues

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Younger devotees often lack the maturity to deal with women in a grown-up, responsible way.

Because they are naturally attracted to women, they try - psychologically and socially - to keep aloof from them and to disempower them, although the *sastra* say that there should be appropriate empowerment, like in this instruction from *Manu Samhita*: "Women should be provided autonomy and leadership in managing the finances, maintaining hygiene, spiritual and religious activities, nutrition and overall management of home." (MS 9.11)

The Founder-Acarya was clear about the proper varnasrama engagement of ISKCON women, also outside the home. Here are just a couple of examples:

"Now you organize our KC school very nicely . . . Some of our girls may be trained in colleges and take teacher exams." (Letter to Satsvarupa, 25 Nov 1971)

"Our main business is to distribute books . . . the woman distributors who have left New York and Boston Temples and have gone to New Vrindaban, they should return immediately and resume their original service. In Caitanya Mahaprabhu's Movement, everyone is preacher, whether man or woman it doesn't matter . . . Everyone should go out." (Letter to Karandhara, 6 Oct 1973)

Junior devotees often struggle to imbibe Srila Prabhupada's instructions on *stri-dharma*, the role and duties of women.

They should learn how to behave with the opposite gender from the senior leaders of ISKCON India, such as Jasomatindan Prabhu and Basu Ghosh Prabhu, who, in this photo, act courteously, respectfully offering gifts to Srimati Anandiben Patel, the then Honorable Chief Minister of Gujarat. They treat her with the appropriate deference and regard, providing junior devotees a good example of proper varnasrama conduct.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



THIRTY-SIX

Stri-dharma, 50% of Varnasrama

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!



Srila Prabhupada said that 50% of his mission was to establish varnasrama. We could say that 50% of getting varnasrama right is getting *stri-dharma* right, because women are 50% of the human population (where they are not systematically killed).

Therefore the seminar not only focused on general varnasrama guidelines, applicable to both genders, but also on the role of women.

Another anonymous reviewer complained: "most of the issues raised were with regard to women or related issues be it education, culture, child marriage, exploitation, polygamy, etc."

Exactly. That was an important aspect of the seminar, as announced in the ILS brochure:

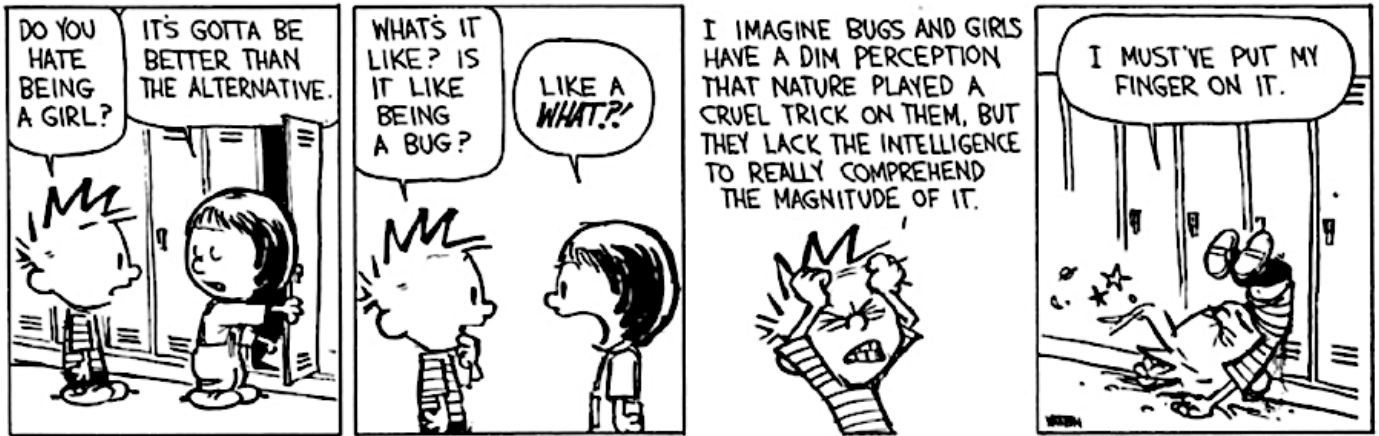
"This seminar explores how the future of ISKCON could benefit from applying the unchangeable principles of VAD . . . especially in relation to gender-roles and gender-relations."

It sounds as if this reviewer mistakenly considers "women and related issues" as a small, marginal aspect of varnasrama.

You don't get women right, you don't get varnasrama right. If your conception of women is off, your conception of varnasrama is off.

The unnamed reviewer also adds: "These topics are very controversial in nature and should be dealt on case by case basis."

"Controversial"? "Case by case basis"? What's controversial about "education, culture, child marriage, exploitation, polygamy"? The discomfort of the reviewer with these themes reveals that he might not be ready to discuss varnasrama in a mature way.



What's controversial about women's education?

According to Srila Prabhupada in the *Bhagavatam*: "The life of a human being is a chance to prepare oneself to go back to Godhead . . . in the system of varnasrama-dharma every man and woman is trained for this purpose." (SB 1.19.4, purport)

The details of the process of training may vary, but in varnasrama training for liberation is for "every man and woman."

What's controversial about exploitation? Can't ISKCON India just make a statement that ISKCON oppose exploitation of every kind, of every human being, male or female?

What's the problem? What's the difficulty? Why "case by case"? Would we condemn exploitation in one case and not in another?

The problem with immature reviewers is that they start fibrillating as soon as a female human enters the picture.

It freaks them out.

They appear to fancy a varnasrama in which women are invisible and inaudible. How can you talk about varnasrama without talking about women?





There are often serious psychological issues, deep-seated, unresolved problems behind the incapacity and unwillingness to address the female half of humanity.

How long they were breast-fed for?

For how long their mother held them as in infant?

How comfortable, loved and cherished they felt during their first year of life?

These are foundational varnasrama questions.

Unless the reviewers address these questions in a mature, vulnerable way, for them varnasrama would remain a smokescreen to hide their traumas.

Varnasrama is scientific. How much time the baby spends directly in touch with the mother's body *is an essential varnasrama issue*. It plays a big role in determining the mental health, the psychological balance of the adult person (and the quality of his reviews).

Your servant, Kaunteya das



THIRTY-SEVEN

More Perplexity about Sudra-dharma

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

A reviewer accuses me of "Bringing faithlessness in Srila Prabhupada's writings."

A serious accusation. What did I do?

During the seminar I showed the quote in which Srila Prabhupada says: "The śūdra class can attain all comforts of life simply by rendering service to the higher classes. It is especially enjoined that a śūdra should never bank money." (SB 1.9.26).

I explained that Srila Prabhupada never meant this as an absolute instruction. (Didn't Srila Prabhupada, as a grihastha, pay cash salaries to the workers of his pharmaceutical business?)

I described the dangers of fully surrendering one's life to an exploitative master. Why should the sudra fully depend on greedy and ruthless bosses? Instead of depending on the mercy of the merciless, it's better the worker find a master who pays a fair wage.

Plain common sense; and another illustration of interdependence: one's duties hinge on a number of factors. In the case of the worker, he is obliged to his master only in

certain conditions, such as if the master perform his duty to take care of him properly.



But the reviewer protests and insists: "This is a serious misunderstanding of SP's teachings, and serious misleading of the listeners . . . certainly the sudras should not bank money."

I may be wrong - I often am - but let's consider the facts: don't ISKCON temples in India, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, pay salaries to their workers? Cleaners, guards, kitchen assistants, etc. all receive cash for their work, money that they can put in a bank account.

So, who in ISKCON India follow the norm that "a sudra should never bank money"?

Is the reviewer saying that ISKCON India is "bringing faithlessness in Srila Prabhupada's writings" for paying its workers?

Maybe ISKCON India could produce a statement along the lines of: "Yes, in an ideal situation generous masters will take full care of their sudra workers without paying them and instead provide them with accommodation, food, clothing, healthcare, etc.; but applying this in contemporary India would involve a number of complex arrangements, some of which might even involve legal hurdles. Therefore ISKCON India prefers to simply pay salaries to its workers - according to the minimum wage norms imposed by state legislators."



Something like that.

One thing that certainly ISKCON India should not do is to be represented by these fervent but unrealistic fanatics.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

THIRTY-EIGHT

A Breath of Fresh Air

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Of the twelve reviews, ten are seriously embarrassing and inadequate. The remaining two reviews, though, contain useful insights.

A very refreshing change in style and in caliber of erudition comes with a particular reviewer, also anonymous. He is obviously well-read and soft-spoken; his discourse is very brahminical. He is remarkably balanced in his views and comments.

Not surprisingly, he appears to agree with the message of the seminar. He writes:

"The main, general message is accepted, though, – in order to lead a responsible life within varnasrama one has to be intelligent enough and not be foolish."



I guess it takes common sense to recognize common sense. This reviewer appears to be blessed with a good dose of common sense and with substantial reserves of scriptural knowledge.

One particular quality of this reviewer is that he does not assume an a priori belligerent stand. He is not trying to antagonize and delegitimize the teachings of the seminar.

For instance, he says things like: "Since all this is just a reiteration of the same idea that one has to be intelligent, no more comments here. Well taken."

I would like to know who he is, just to congratulate him on his performance and perhaps collaborate on some project. His fluent use of diacritics in his prose shows that probably he is a Sanskrit scholar.

With good manners, he comments on how the message could be perhaps misinterpreted (and I must agree with that, seeing the abundance of misunderstandings among other reviewers!). When he offers a suggestion on how a point could be better expressed, he does it with poise and cordiality; but often he goes for paragraph after paragraph without offering any comment - showing that he is fine with the ideas expressed.

When he does in fact comment on something, he often offers some very valuable angle, rooted in *sastra*, not to destroy a point, but to build on it.



For instance, he writes:

"The intention of the seminar seems good – how not to be blind or foolish while trying to apply rules and regulations "

And:

"even in varnasrama there should be intelligence and knowledge to understand what my duties are and how to execute them properly."

And also:

"There is a higher mission or standard – spiritual, chanting Hare Krsna and being Kṛṣṇa conscious. Varnasrama per se is not on the same level as Kṛṣṇa consciousness. ISKCON's main business is to 'how to make everyone Kṛṣṇa conscious'."

A very refreshing and edifying review indeed.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

THIRTY-NINE

The Reviewer Who Doesn't Use "Modern Gadgets"

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

A reviewer who forfeited his anonymity (bravo!), tells us, apparently to extol his varnasrama credentials, that, "currently" he is "staying at a varnasrama project . . . staying simple life based on agriculture and cow protection, not using modern gadgets."

We wonder how he wrote his review while "not using modern gadgets." Probably he etched it on palm leaves and someone else later entered it in a computer.

Suspicious, the reviewer asks: "Was the Speaker Really in Favor of Implementing Varnasrama?"

Yes, he was. The speaker - yours truly - has been studying, practicing and promoting varnasrama for more than forty years; and plans to continue to study, practice and promote varnasrama for the rest of his life.



To attack the title, the reviewer tries his hand at analogy:

"Just imagine if someone gives the title of his seminar 'How to mess up your life by following your temple president.'"

Hmm... good try but wrong choice.

Someone should explain to him that it has already happened, to mess up one's life by following one's Temple President. Think of all the devotees that followed Madhu Pandit Das in his *ritvik* deliriums and now imagine themselves to be "Srila Prabhupada's disciples."

The reviewer insists:

"The speaker has now changed the title to 'How to mess up your life with (misapplied) varnasrama.' However,

with the same above argument even such titles cannot be allowed. Would you allow a title 'How to mess up your life by following your (deviated) temple president'?"


Yes, I would. If the seminar was presented tactfully, intelligently and respectfully, why not?

Does anyone want to present it at the next ILS? If done properly, it could be a beneficial service to the Vaisnava community

It's a fact that we could be seriously harmed by putting our life in the hands of an unqualified leader, such as a deviated Temple President or a deviated guru. We have seen it happening; people messing up their life due to following the wrong person.

Anyway, we wish this reviewer all the best. If he keeps living in touch with the land and the cows, daily drinking fresh milk, his capacity for reviewing varnasrama seminars will certainly improve.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



Hallo? Me farm living. Heavy good! But me also having modern gadgets.

FORTY

Srila Prabhupada Did Warn Us that Varnasrama Can Be Misused

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

During the seminar I warned that varnasrama can be misused - thus messing up one's life and the life of others. An anonymous reviewer challenges: "Has Srila Prabhupada actually spoken like this?"

Oh, yes, even in the first book he brought to the West he wrote that varnasrama can be misunderstood, misused and misapplied. He says in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, First Canto, Chapter Two, Verse Thirteen:



"The *varṇāśrama* institution is constructed to enable one to realize the Absolute Truth. It is not for artificial domination of one division over another. When the aim of life, i.e., realization of the Absolute Truth, is missed by too much attachment for *indriya-prīti*, or sense gratification, as already discussed hereinbefore, the institution of the *varṇāśrama* is utilized by selfish men to pose an artificial predominance over the weaker section. In the Kali-yuga, or in the age of quarrel, this artificial predominance is already current."

So, yes, Srila Prabhupada warned us that varnasrama can be misused, has been misused and is being misused: The "artificial predominance over the weaker section . . . is already current." In other words, colloquially speaking, yes, you can mess up your life - and the life of others - by misapplying varnasrama.

Perhaps I should use the above quote in a future presentation of the seminar.

The *Bhagavatam* also directly describes the dangers of pollution: "[B]*rāhmaṇas*, members of the royal order and *vaiśyas*, even after being allowed to approach the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord, Hari, by receiving the

second birth of Vedic initiation, can become bewildered and adopt various materialistic philosophies." (SB 11.5.5)

Srila Prabhupada also writes (SB 3.21.52-54, purport): "The divisions of *varṇas* and *āśramas* will continue to exist, either in their original form or in degraded form."

Obviously practicing the varnas or the asramas "in degraded form" won't give the same benefit as practicing them in their pure form. Not only that, it can also cause a lot of problems to the individual and society. Imagine - as we have seen in India - a sannyasi using his saffron cloth to attract loose women or rich supporters. Wouldn't that be pretty deleterious for him and for his victims?

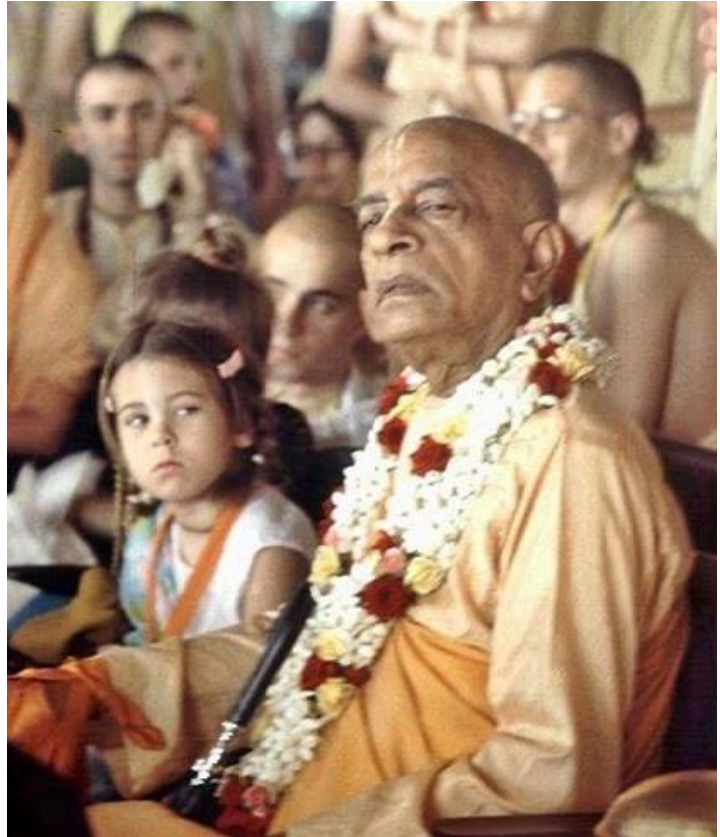
Srila Prabhupada also explains that: "in the age of Kali the varnasrama-dharma is so degraded that any attempt to restore it to its original position will be hopeless." (*In Search of the Ultimate Goal of Life*)

The key expression here is: "to its original position." You can't just lift the blueprint of varnasrama from, say, the pages of Mahabharata, and try a copy and paste operation on the twenty-first century. That's unworkable. That attempt, according to Srila Prabhupada, "will be hopeless."

The external accessories can often be jettisoned, but the perennial principles should be identified and applied.

It's necessary to distinguish between the permanent fundamentals and the impermanent details.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



FORTY-ONE

Scholarly, Really?

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Another reviewer, another previous student of mine, starts with a reasonable, respectful observation:



"The presentation of Kaunteya Prabhu starts very nicely and we can agree with the introduction. We also understand the need to warn against the misunderstanding and consequently misapplication of varnasrama."

Despite the good start, he gets embroiled in a long-winded elucubration about the title (as many of his colleagues do).

At one point he writes: "our daivi varnasrama system..." Oops! One would expect that a "scholarly" reviewer would know how to spell "daiva-varnasrama." (It's "daiva" - not "daivi").

And he is not the only reviewer that makes the same mistake.

Making a spelling mistake is not a mortal sin; but reviewers publicized as specialists should know better. *The real problem are the conceptual blunders*, which unfortunately abound throughout.

This reviewer is a good man, but does he fit the description you advertised on your site, about the "twelve devotees known for their seniority and scholarship"? I don't know about their seniority, because most of them hid in anonymity, but as far as scholarship, your appraisal is *extremely generous*, to the point of being euphemistic, too few of them showed any clear grasp of varnasrama. I suspect that some were chosen more for their belligerence than their erudition.

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu, I believe in your desire to establish (some form of) varnasrama, but it seems that this time you hastily put together a group of reviewers, apparently whoever you could get your hands on, and they performed very poorly on average. Whatever is done is done. It's not the end of the world. But in the future, please make sure that the Indian leadership gets a better representation.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

FORTY-TWO

"Fear Mongering"? No, Benevolent Warning

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!



A particularly feisty and long-winded reviewer writes: "Seminar Purpose Warn About Dangers of Varnashrama (really just fear mongering)"

Multiple times he accuses the seminar of "fear mongering."

This is puzzling, as we all know that the Vedic literature is replete with warnings about making mistakes and suffering their consequences.

CAUTION signs are there for the protection and wellbeing of people (and not for freaking them out), similarly, the forewarnings of scriptures and saints are there to prevent trouble - not to generate undue fear.

Would you call it "fear mongering" when Krishna tells Arjuna that, if he doesn't listen and acts through false ego, Arjuna "will be lost"? (Bg 18.58)

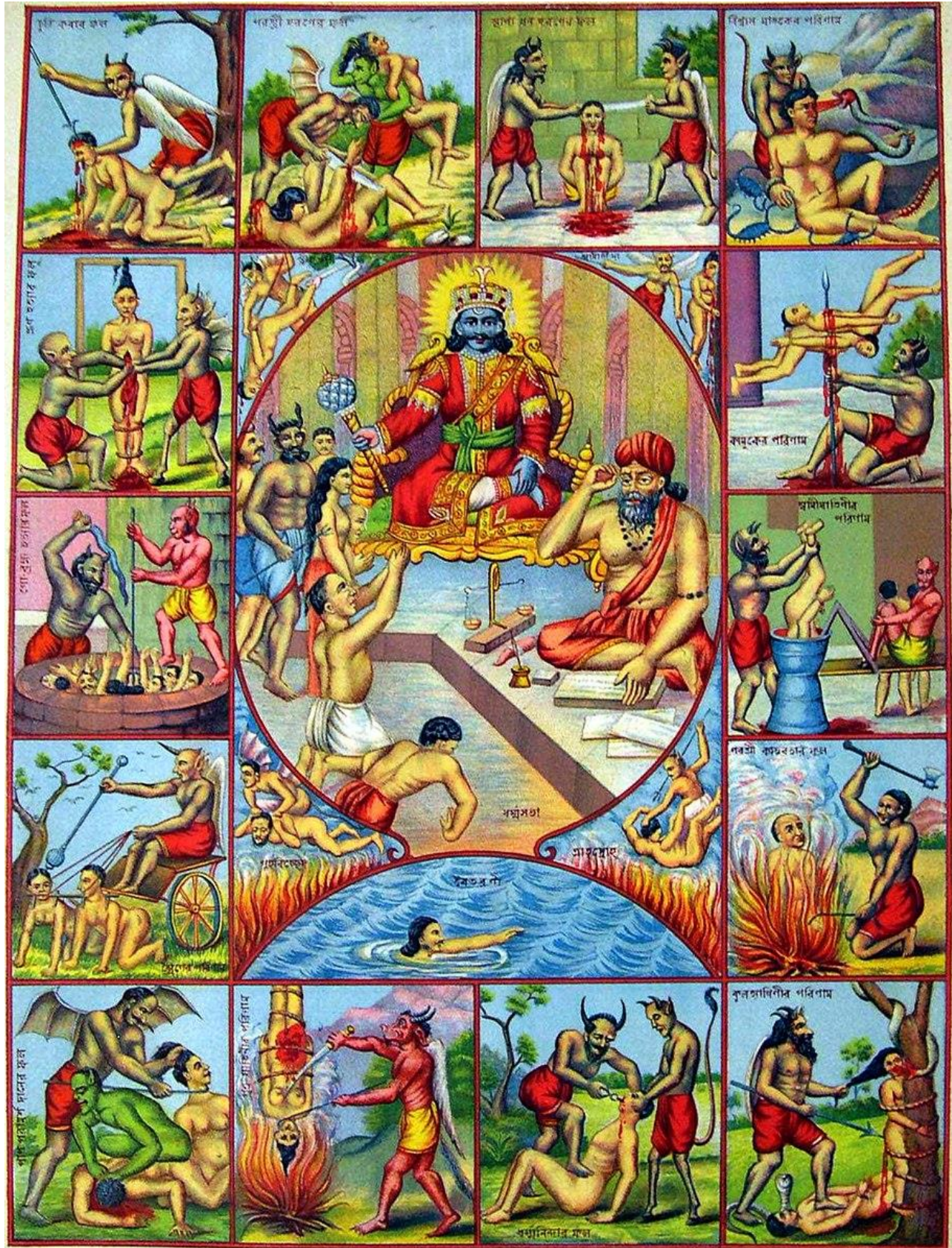
Is it "fear mongering" when Krishna tells Arjuna - and everyone else - about the dangers of developing attachment to "the objects of the senses," which gradually leads to more degradation, culminating in falling down "into the material pool"? (Bg 2.62-63)

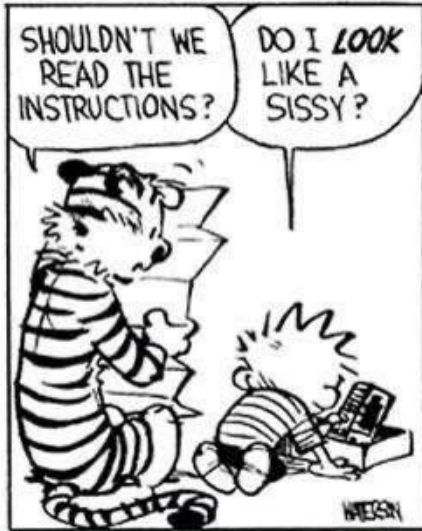
Should we consider it "fear mongering" when Krishna explains how He treats the "envious and mischievous," whom He "perpetually cast into the ocean of material existence, into various demoniac species of life"? (Bg 16.19)

These are all expression of the kindness and mercy of the Lord, cautioning us to avoid the dangers and consequences of wicked actions and attitudes.

The *Bhagavatam* follows the same script, with many descriptions of individuals getting into trouble for making mistakes.







The Fifth Canto, for instance, teaches that certain sins send the culprit to hell. Interestingly, some transgressions are depicted by varnasrama categories: "Any *brāhmaṇa* or *brāhmaṇa*'s wife who drinks liquor..." (SB 5.26.29), "A householder who receives guests or visitors with cruel glances..." (SB 5.26.35), "*Śūdras* who could not improve themselves..." (SB 5.26.23) and so on. Was Sukadeva Goswami "fear mongering"?

The *Sri Caitanya-caritāmṛita* also warns about multiple possible violations. Just think of the calumny of Srivasa Thakura by Gopal Capala or the offence of Devananda Pandita.

I could go on all day telling cautionary tales from *sastra*, or lists of "don'ts" such as the many offences to avoid in Deity worship.

We could choose to dismiss all these scriptural warnings as "fear mongering" and ignore them; but it wouldn't be wise. We should take them as friendly alerts, as benevolent notices for our safety and protection.

Similarly, it would be a grave mistake to dismiss the dangers of experimenting with varnasrama. The risks are real. Take the order of sannyasa too soon, then fall down from your vows; you will feel a burning remorse and will face public shame.

Marry the wrong person, and you may suffer for decades.

Conceive a child with the wrong consciousness (as in the story of the pregnancy of Diti in the evening), and that baby may become a huge burden for you and the community.

Immaturely follow customs from bygone times - such as polygamy and child marriage - and you can create so much pain, for you and for ISKCON.

Take too many unqualified disciples or accept them for the wrong reasons, and, as Srila Prabhupada explains in Chapter Seven of *The Nectar of Devotion*, you will mess up your life ("if one increases the number of disciples simply for some prestige or false honor, he will surely fall down.")

And what to speak of the offences to the holy name? To remind devotees to avoid them, in many temples we recite them every day. We don't read the ten offences to discourage people from chanting Hare Krishna; we read the list to protect devotees from committing them.



Would you call it "fear mongering" when Srila Narahari Sarakara Thakura in his *Sri Krishna Bhajanamṛita* explains what to do when the guru falls down? Would you say that he was trying to discourage people from accepting a guru in the first place? That would be absurd.

Narahari Thakura was simply teaching his readers *the facts of life* - that things sometimes do go wrong and we need to be prepared.

Yes, my humble seminar did warn about things that could go wrong in trying to apply varnasrama, things that could create problems when the elements of the systems are misplaced or misused. What's wrong with that? Calling these warnings "fear mongering" misses the point entirely.

We should not be naive and, with starry-eyes, dream that whatever we do under the label "varnasrama" will be perfect and complete, automatically infallible and immaculate. This would be foolish.

If you make mistakes, there will be consequences, difficulties that can mess up your life and the life of those around you. This is a healthy message, a healthy caution. One can take it as "fear mongering" and dismiss it out of bravado, irresponsibility or swagger - but dismissing friendly warnings is against the principles of varnasrama.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



FORTY-THREE

The GBC College It's All about Varnasrama!

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

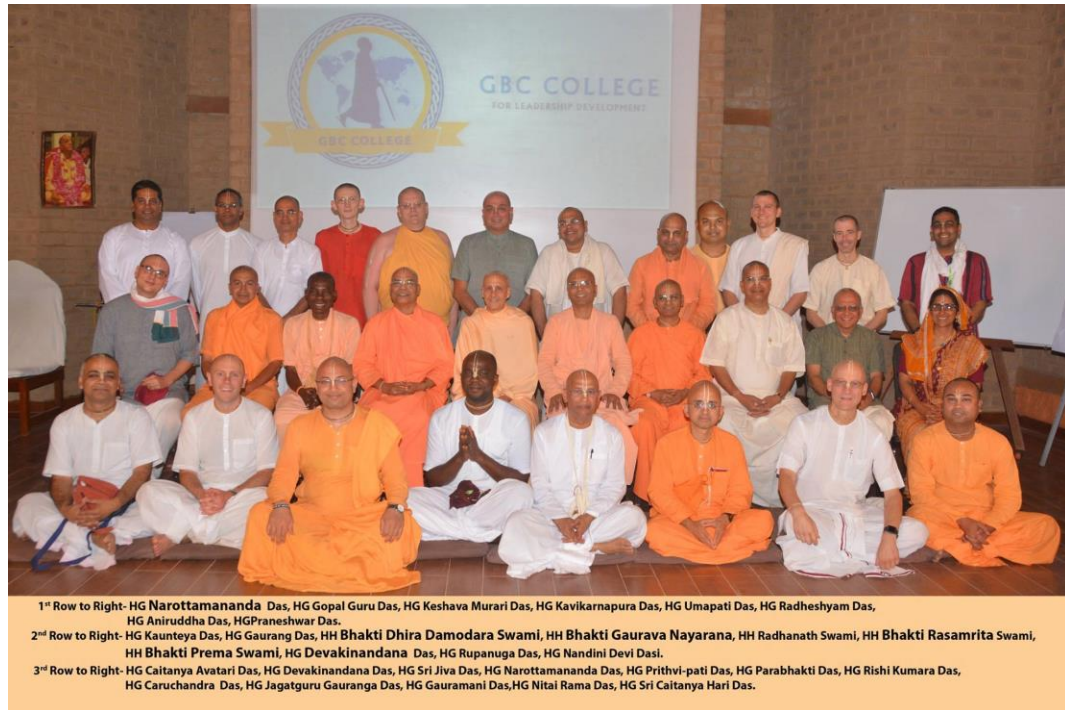
One reviewer chose to attack not only my seminar, but also the GBC College for Leadership Development. He wrote: "I met a graduate of the GBC College who said he graduated from it and the topic of varnashrama was never discussed once, which is very telling."

I can't help but smile while reading the comment: the GBC College for Leadership Development is all about varnasrama!

I don't know who that graduate is (sometimes we do get... simpler students) but obviously this devotee completely missed the spirit and substance of the GBC College in relation to varnasrama.

Perhaps in the future we should help students see the connection between the courses at the GBC College and the corresponding varnasrama aspects. We probably took it for granted that present and future leaders will make the connection themselves.

What is *leadership* in a Vaisnava movement? Mostly is brahminical leadership, practicing, supervising and promoting spiritual practices. There are also administrative aspects correlated with *ksatriya* functions, such as fighting for the cause of the Lord (in court or in the media, not on the battlefield), protecting the devotees, the temples, and so on. There are also elements of *vaisya* leadership, such as organizing food production and cow protection.



In other words, anyone who understands varnasrama will immediately recognize that the courses of the GBC College for Leadership development *directly* relate to the leadership functions within varnasrama. All of this, naturally within the context and the flavor of Vaisnavism, in particular according to the tradition and culture established by Srila Prabhupada.



I hope you get the idea and so I won't bore you by listing the whole curriculum - presented in the classroom or online - and by explaining how each lesson

correlates to varnasrama functions.



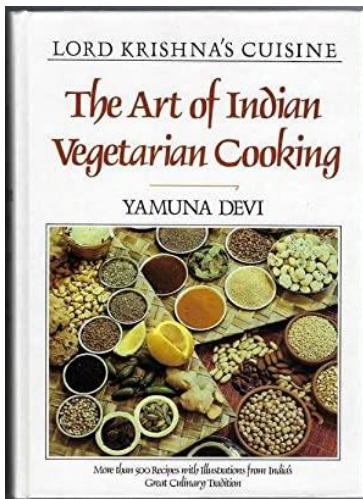
For instance, in the course for Zonal Supervisors, we have a series of lessons on managing farm communities. We have not called them "*Vaisya-dharma*" but obviously they illuminate the devotional *vaisya* work of *kṛṣi-go-rakṣya*: farming and protecting cows for Krishna.

Similarly, there is training in college preaching - a function for brahmanas.

Besides, just as an example, multiple times I personally presented the lesson "Varnasrama Without Gurukula? Just a Hobby" - which focuses on varnasrama education.

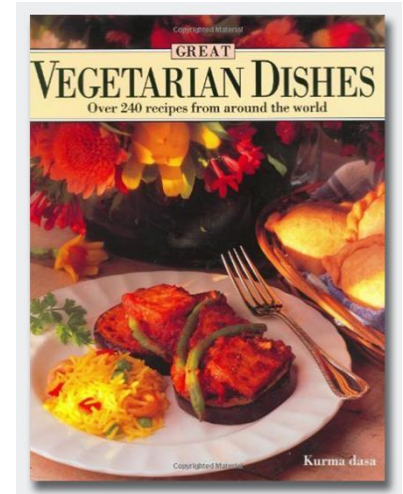
Let me share an analogy that might help readers to grasp the situation: there are many famous cookbooks, such as Yamuna Devi's *Lord Krishna Cuisine* or *Great Vegetarian Dishes* by Kurma Prabhu. Do they talk a lot about carbohydrates, proteins and vitamins? Probably very, very little, if





ever. The books describe recipes for dhals, breads, desserts, and so on. To the less knowledgeable it may appear that the recipes have nothing to do with carbohydrates and proteins, but the intelligent reader knows that breads are about carbohydrates, dhals are about proteins, fruits are about vitamin, and so on - because that's what food *is all about*.

Similarly, one who truly knows varnasrama immediately understands that everything in the GBC College for Leadership Development is about daiva-varnasrama - especially about the *dharma* of the higher *varnas*, the *dvijas* - because that's what Vaisnava leadership is all about.



Another example: when we talk about the importance of book distribution, we might not always mention the titles of all of Srila Prabhupada's books, but all of them are included in the topic. Similarly, when we talk about leadership in a missionary society, we are obviously talking about typical varnasrama roles, even if they are not mentioned specifically all the time.

You are senior devotees and these things are clear to you. Please help the younger, less experienced devotees to also understand these facts.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

FORTY-FOUR

Ad Hominem Festival

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

I already shared some positive feedback on the seminar.

Some of the reviewers you picked, though, expressed... less enthusiasm. Since they couldn't find any fault with the seminar, they resorted to ad hominem attacks or even to labelling and name-calling (which are not arguments at all, but just attempts at slurring and character assassination):

"very offensive to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna's Vedic Culture."

"This is adharma."

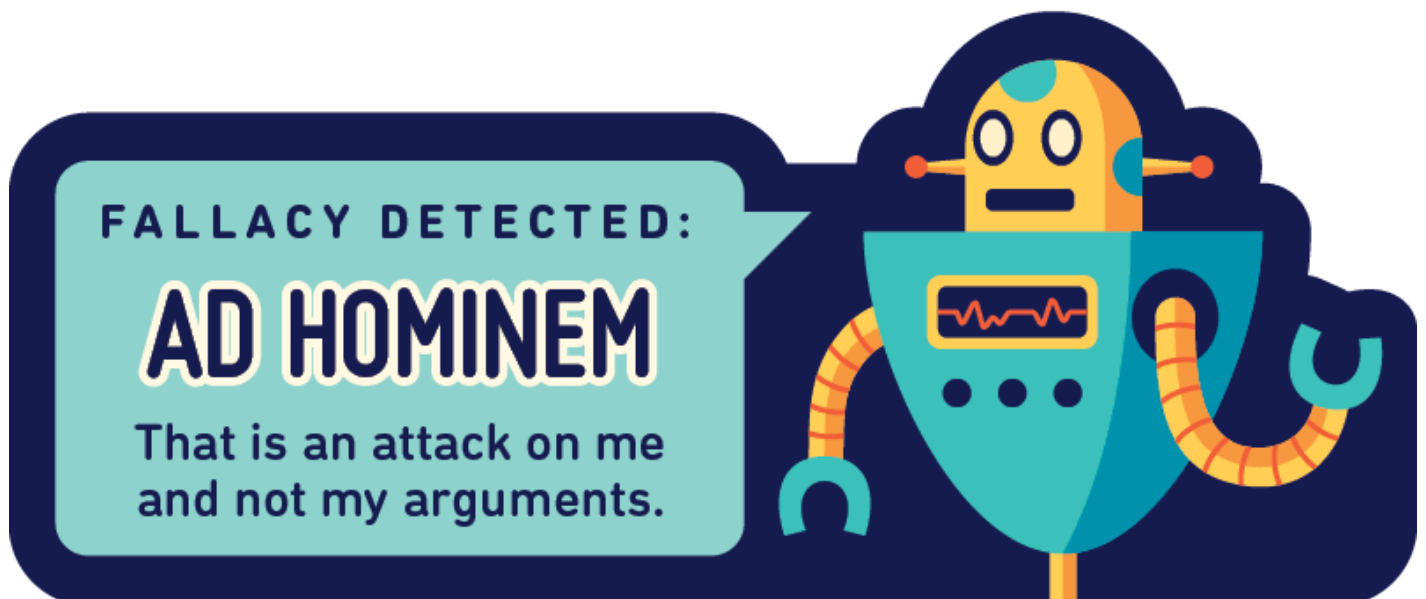
"the exact antithesis of what an ISKCON leader should be."

"hypocrisy at its height."

"Neo-Buddhism."

"This is . . . like a lecture on Darwinian evolution."

"the twisted eyes of KTD." (KTD is me: Kaun Teya Das)



"covered Marxism."

"modern marxist social engineering."

"He reminds me of the dalit politician Ambhedkar. [sic]"

"deceitful. [sic]"

"disingenuous."

"It is clear that creating 'aśraddha' in common minds about śāstra is the goal of this presentation."

"the seminar - if you can even call it a seminar."

"Mental gymnastics."

"such speakers (willingly) misunderstand (hate) varnasrama."

"he is knowingly misleading those who attend his seminar."



"he just blatantly concluded that Srila Prabhupada did not want to reform the society but merge with it."

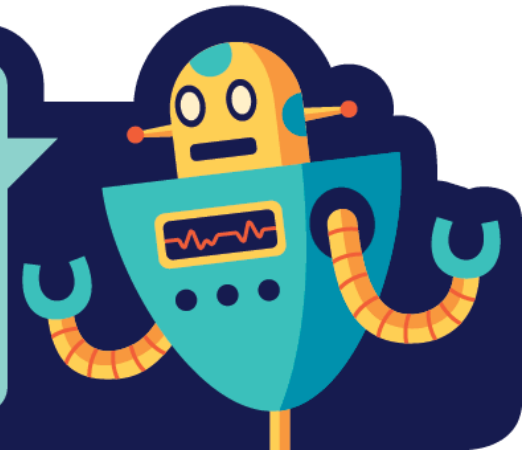
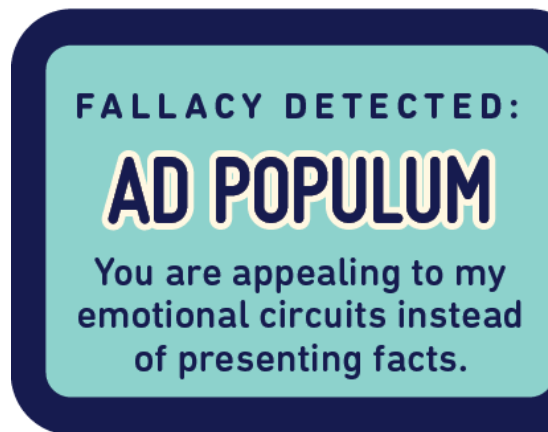
"I could easily understand what misconceptions the speaker has."

"Speculations."

"Western Mayavada."

"instigating division [and] battle of the sexes."

"bringing confusion and wrong conclusion."



By employing elaborate analogies, some reviews reached an almost poetic lyricism:

"Once at an ISKCON temple gift shop, I had trouble finding Srila Prabhupada's books, so I asked the twice-initiated devotee working there why the books weren't as prominently displayed as Srila Prabhupada generally asked. Without even a hint of irony, the devotee answered: 'Oh, but nobody is buying these books. They want the gift items, which sell better, so we put those up front.' Perhaps Kaunteya has a similar mindset." (Yes, unbeknownst to my acquaintances, I prefer the distribution of gift items instead of Srila Prabhupada's books.)

"a loose cannon on deck that needs to be bolted down."

"leading devotees into your stone-boat."

One reviewer suggest that the seminar might be a "case of Kaliya Lila," in which, "the speaker is poisoning the well . . . an example of the obstacle of Kaliya Lila described in Sri Krishna Samhita."



"he wants to be able to disregard shastra and do whatever the naraka he wants." (I like the Sanskrit-English mixture in this one.)

"He is a yes man parroting back and regurgitating the shallow anecdotal left wing social boogeyman narratives."

I feel relieved, comforted and encouraged: if the new smartas and other fanatical polemist are so upset with me, I must be doing something right.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



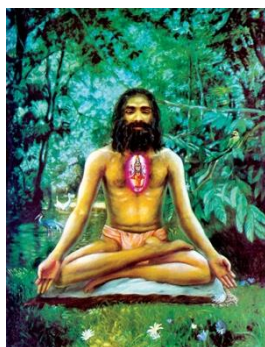
FORTY-FIVE

***Dharma-sastra* Practices Called into Question?**

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

One reviewer states: "Kaunteya Das . . . calls into question a number of practices sanctioned by dharma shastra."

Wrong; I don't *call into question* the practices themselves. I do call into questions the *applicability* of particular practices and their *relevance* to contemporary Vaisnavism. They are "sanctioned by dharma shastra" but we have to see for whom and for what circumstances.



When Arjuna said that he didn't think he could practice the *astanga-yoga* process, he didn't *call into question* the *astanga* process, only its applicability.

The difference is fundamental.

Just like in ISKCON we have committees discussing if people should take sannyasa. They are not calling into question the *sannyasa-asrama*; they are evaluating if a *particular individual* should take *sannyasa* or not.

The *sati* rite, for instance, the immolation of the widow on the pyre of the dead husband, has its place in specific settings and epochs, for suitable individuals. It's a Vedic custom, respectable in the proper context and for the right candidate; but, does it mean ISKCON should promote it nowadays?

Srila Prabhupada writes:

"This entering of a chaste lady into the fire of her dead husband is called the *sati* rite, and the action is considered to be most perfect for a woman. In a later age, this *sati* rite became an obnoxious criminal affair because the ceremony was forced upon even an unwilling woman. In this fallen age it is not possible for any lady to follow the *sati* rite as chaste as it was done by Gāndhārī and others in past ages. A chaste wife like Gāndhārī would feel the separation of her husband to be more burning than actual fire. Such a lady can observe the *sati* rite voluntarily, and there is no criminal force by anyone. When the rite became a formality only and force was applied



upon a lady to follow the principle, actually it became criminal, and therefore the ceremony was to be stopped by state law." (SB 1.13.58, purport)



Whatever is enjoined in the Vedas is valuable and recommendable - for someone, somewhere, at some time - but we have to intelligently see what's appropriate for us today, individually and collectively, otherwise we risk messing up people's lives, burning widows on pyres and burning witches at the stake.

Srila Prabhupada explains: "any messenger, any incarnation, *śakti-āveśa-avatāra*, they teach according to the time and circumstance: *deśa, kāla, pātra*." (Lecture, Surat 27 Dec 1970) The followers of such empowered messengers should follow in their footsteps and also consider time, place and candidates; they should not irresponsibly copy and paste from *dharmasastras*.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

FORTY-SIX

Homosexuality "Not Allowed"? (Please Check the Dictionary)

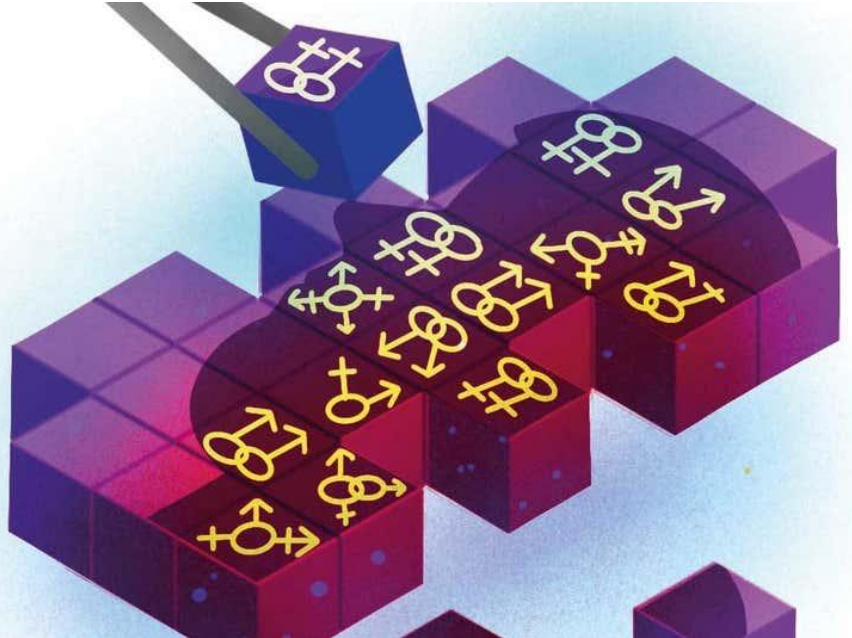
Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

Not surprisingly, some reviewers show their inadequacy especially in connection with varnasrama and sexuality.

In the seminar, in passing, I mentioned gay marriage: "What was unthinkable fifty years ago like gay marriage now is accepted by more and more and more countries."

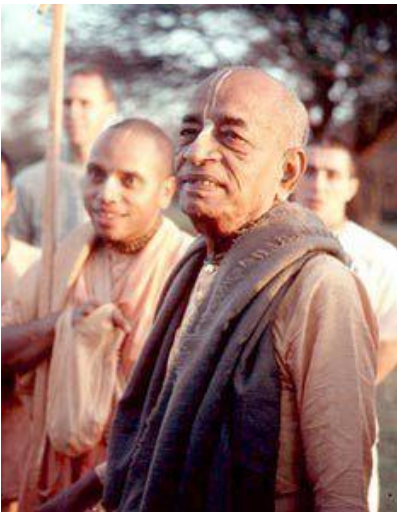
Just a statement of fact.

We may like it or not, but same-sex marriage is legally performed and recognized in at least 29 countries, and more governments are considering legalizing it.



One reviewer mistakenly affirms: "in varnasrama society . . . homosexuality is not allowed."

Obviously, his understanding of both varnasrama and homosexuality is very dim. He appears to ignore the dictionary meaning of homosexuality ("the quality or characteristic of being sexually attracted solely to people of one's own sex"), conflating it with sodomy.



As a congenital sexual orientation, there is nothing about homosexuality to be "allowed" or "not allowed." Millions of people in the world are sexually and romantically attracted to persons of the same gender. I am not saying it is good. I am simply saying that it is a fact we have to deal with, as preachers. We might try to just ignore it or condemn it, but this is not the example the Founder-Acarya showed us.

The reviewer also seems to forget that homosexuals can follow the four regulative principles as strictly as any heterosexual. Having a particular sexual orientation doesn't necessarily means indulging in illicit activities.

Another reviewer makes the same mistake: "a strictly Vedic society like ISKCON where homosexuality is not allowed."

Again, the same delusional theory that a particular sexual orientation could be "allowed" or "not allowed." Most people are heterosexual, and others - millions - are homosexual. It's not something that ISKCON can allow or disallow.

The fundamental anthropological question is fairly simple: either it is true that being gay or lesbian is a vicious or pathological form of a humanity which is only authentically heterosexual; or it is true that being gay or lesbian is simply something that is a non-pathological minority variant in the human condition. These immature reviewers apparently lean towards the first option - but don't provide any argument for it.

Of course, ISKCON (and varnasrama) recommends eventual abstention from all forms of illicit sex - be it heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or whatever - but it's absurd to say that ISKCON *does not allow* a particular sexual orientation. People are born in a certain way; and we shouldn't try to force them to change their inborn orientation - and we cannot stop them from chanting the holy names; in fact, we must encourage them to perform devotional service!

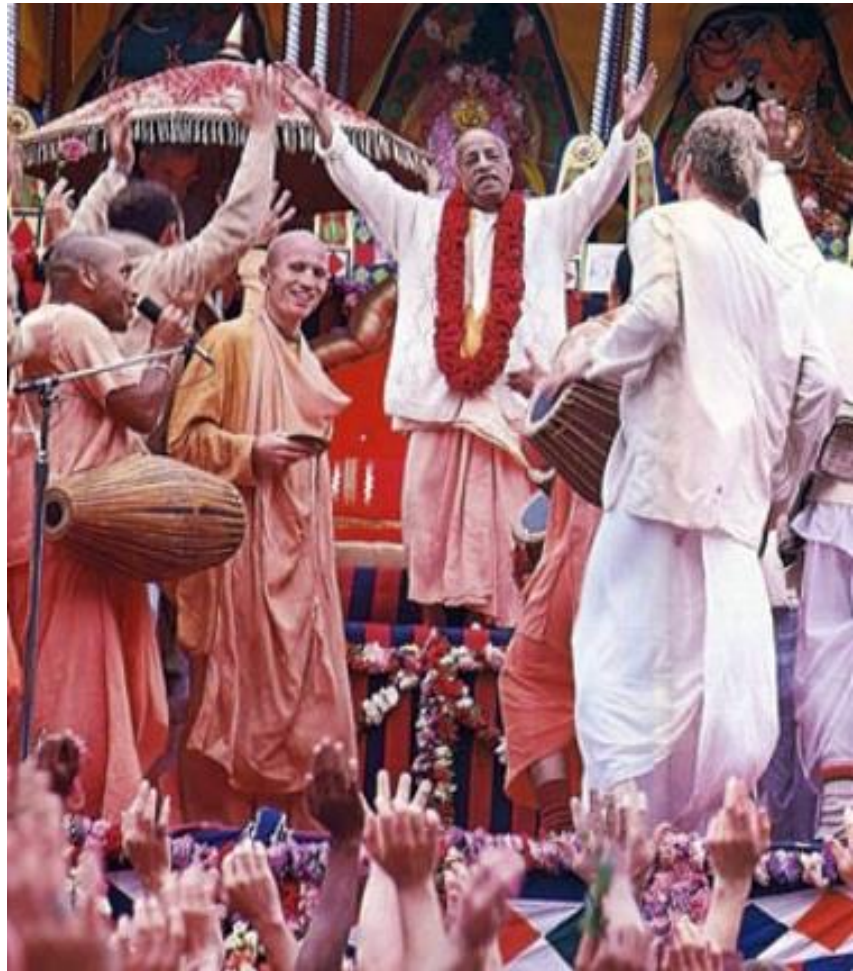
We always hear that Srila Prabhupada built a house in which the whole world can live; are persons of homosexual orientation an exception? In reality, everyone is warmly welcome to take part in ISKCON and purify their consciousness, to eventually reach pure love of God. Srila Prabhupada personally demonstrated that attitude and he wrote: "on the spiritual platform, everyone has an equal right to execute devotional service." (Cc Madhya 25.121, purport)

Everyone means everyone.

Do you know about the sexual orientation of Sudama Maharaja, the *kirtan* leader in the famous San Francisco Ratha-yatra photo?

These reviews reveal that some of these men, apparently sincere and idealistic, often lack the basic grasp of the idea they are pontificating about. Some of them are awfully immature. I don't mind the personal attacks, but I am worried about their poor representation of ISKCON.

They seem unburdened by the dictionary meaning of words and unfazed by facts; the high walls of their eco chambers shielding them from complex considerations. They take shelter in their imaginary black-and-white worldview. They appear to live in an alternative psychic dimension, aloof from the cumbersome demands of reality.



In any case, these are complex issues, with which other religious organizations are intensely wrestling. This theme needs to be approached with a cool head and peaceful heart, not with prejudiced bigotry and childish radicalism.

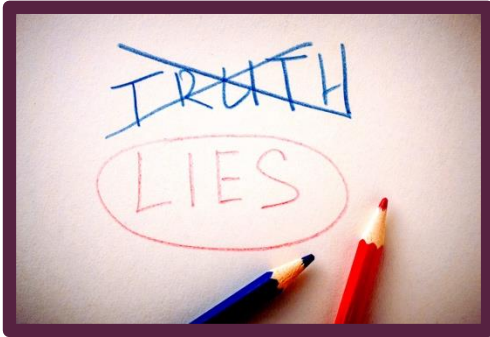
Your servant, Kaunteya das



FORTY-SEVEN

Another False Allegation

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!



Another reviewer completely misquotes me: "The very central (and repeated) thesis of the seminar was . . . that if one party is not acting properly (as per duty) the another party has no obligation to act properly according to his own duty."

Total misrepresentation.

I never said something like that. Actually I never even *dreamed* to say something like that.

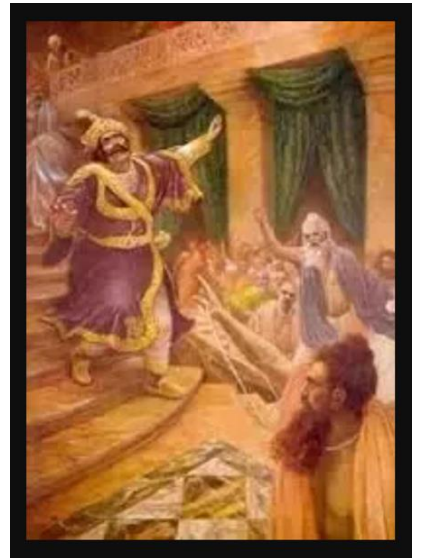
He is simply attacking a point I never made. The recording of the seminar is fortunately available.

One should *always act properly, according to one's duty*. But because man is a social animal, acting within a network of mutually dependent relations, one's duty is also determined by how others act.

Look at the story of the brahmanas and Maharaja Vena.

In the Eighteen Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita* Lord Krishna briefly describes the qualities and duties of different types of people, their functions dictated by their acquired nature. A brahmana, a spiritual teacher, for instance, is expected to practice *ahimsa*, non-violence. Competent brahmanas should be peaceful, due to their self-control and higher knowledge. In connection with rulers - such as kings and presidents - brahmanas should act as benevolent, wise advisors. This, of course, if the rulers are qualified and open to listen to the brahmanas' counsel.

Sinful King Vena not only refused to listen to the brahmanas' good advice, but also banned all traditional religious performances, prohibited worship of God, and imposed the exclusive adoration of the monarch (himself). Thus devilish Vena destabilized the whole kingdom, precluding the spiritual development of all citizens. Although naturally detached and pacific, the sages chose to waive their practice of non-violence and to intervene. For the greater good of the community, they killed the king. Without weapons, the brahmanas ended Vena's life simply by uttering special, lethal sound vibrations.



Another illustration of *dharmā*-interdependence.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

FORTY-EIGHT

More Made-up Stories

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

The message of the seminar has been seriously misunderstood and distorted.

Everything indicates that there the initial intention was to prove me wrong. This is sad. To be defamed may be my karma, and that's OK. What's more worrisome is that the reviews show a lack of intellectual integrity by piling up one false accusation after another. The puerile and fanatical views contained in the reviews are seriously embarrassing for ISKCON in general and for ISKCON India in particular.

For instance, in your final report you write something demonstrably inaccurate:

"In the presentation, the most important idea put forward is that someone is obliged to do his or her duties only if others do theirs."

Absolutely false.

Why inventing things that I never said?

The actual idea is very simple, and I repeat it here for the honest reader who wishes to understand it in its pristine form: one should *always* perform one's duty, but that duty will change according to circumstances, which include how others perform or fail to perform *their* duties.

Had Duryodhana not failed to perform his duty and instead had shared a little portion of his kingdom with the Pandavas, the Pandavas' duty would not have been to fight a war against him.



Mutual dependence - or interdependence - is a fundamental aspect of all social systems, including varnasrama. Interestingly, at one point, in your final report, you come closer to getting it, when you write:

"although duties may indeed change according to circumstance or others' failure to carry out their own, dharma itself cannot be given up."

To this, I agree 100%. And there is nothing in the seminar that recommends otherwise.

The extent and magnitude of misquoting have been mindboggling.



One reviewer, for instance, invents a theory I never presented: "in the examples given by the presenter—sudras and women need to have their sense desires fulfilled, or they should be allowed to earn money or seek some other man to live with."

Thank God the seminar has been recorded - more than once, and in more than one language - and everyone can verify that I never said anything like that.

So, it seems that some your reviewers were so bent in finding faults, that, finding none, they had to made them some up. Not a good example of varnasrama behavior.

Your servant, Kaunteya das

CONCLUSION

Let's Forgive & Forget

Dear Bhakti Raghava Maharaja, Basu Ghosh Prabhu and Sumithra Krishna Prabhu,
Please accept my humble obeisances, all glories to Srila Prabhupada, all glories to the mission of establishing varnasrama!

I studied the 50,000 words of reviews present on your site, and I can honestly conclude that there was nothing wrong with the seminar that I presented at the ILS. The seminar is just fine - and how could it be otherwise when it's firmly based on *sastra* and on the instructions of the Founder-Acarya?

Most of the reviewers (two of the ten were pretty good) tried hard to find faults but couldn't pinpoint any. Instead they embarrassed themselves and the ISKCON India leadership by resorting to:

- Discrediting, belittling and dismissing the instructions of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.
- Insulting the GBC and criticizing the ISKCON India management.
- Inventing words I never spoke and ideas I never had.
- Demonstrating poor grasp of basic scriptural and varnasrama principles.
- Displaying a profusion of logical fallacies: ad hominem, straw man, red herring, argumentum ad populum, labeling, etc.
- Showing (in some cases) poor etiquette and lack of civility.
- Exhibiting infantile and fanatical views.
- Making mistakes that could have been easily prevented by checking the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase (Folio) or Googling the subject.

Hare Krishna.

What is done is done. Was publishing their reviews as part of an official ISKCON initiative a very responsible act



on your part? I let you and the other ISKCON India leaders judge.

I suspect you didn't ever read all of the reviews before publishing them. I do believe that all reviewers truly aspire to varnasrama; the problem is that most of them don't understand it in a mature, developed way.

I forgive the personal attacks and the lies. If getting defamed is part of my karma, so be it.

Let's forgive and forget.

Two things though, I cannot forget:



First: the reviews are compromising to ISKCON India. There are so many wise, learned leaders in ISKCON India and the reviews risk to soil their reputation, if people start lumping ISKCON India and Srila Prabhupada with the childish and extremist views of the reviewers. I can't tolerate that their status and name be spoiled in this way.

Second: the reviews present ideas that are very deleterious to the harmonious development of varnasrama in ISKCON. Due to the prominence of tamasic and rajasic views, most reviews promote a dystopian and dysfunctional ideal of varnasrama, one very far from the varnasrama envisioned by Lord Caitanya and the Gaudiya-vaisnava acaryas.

The above issues need addressing, and this book - the first part of my written response - is a small offering in that direction.

You are also invited to watch the videos posted on the Facebook page *Real Varnasrama*

Let's all work together to fulfill Srila Prabhupada's instruction of establishing varnasrama!

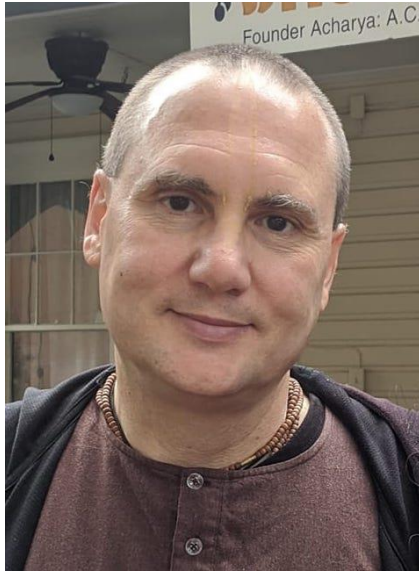
As Srila Prabhupada wrote: "Now, we have by Krsna's Grace built up something significant in the shape of this ISKCON and we are all one family. Sometimes there may be disagreement and quarrel but we should not go away. These inebrities can be adjusted by the cooperative spirit, tolerance and maturity." (Letter to Babhru, 9 Dec 1973)

"We are all one family" and we should work together.

Your servant, Kaunteya das



About the Author



Kaunteya das (Dr Carlo Oppecini, PhD, Indovedic Psychology) has been studying, practicing and promoting *daiva-varṇāśrama* for more than forty years.

He serves as co-minister of the ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry (with HH Jayapataka Maharaja, his *diksa-guru*), as trustee and faculty member of the GBC College for Leadership Development; as co-chair of the GBC Organizational Development Committee (with HG Gopal Bhatta Prabhu); as member of the GBC Strategic Planning Team and a member of the GBC Nominations Committee. He is also a teacher with the Centro Studi Bhaktivedanta.

In 2004 he received the ISKCON Global Excellency Award for his work in congregational preaching. He lives in Sridham Mayapur, India, with his wife, Sri Radha Govinda Dasi.

He authored the following books:

[Bhakti-vriksha Manual](#)

[The Book of Icebreakers](#)

[Super Sunday](#)

[Did Srila Prabhupada Want Women Diksa Gurus?](#)

Varnasrama Illuminations - How to avoid messing up varnasrama with goofy, unrealistic ideas

How to Mess Up Varnasrama - By Underestimating Women & Neglecting Gurukula

Varnasrama for the Twenty-first Century - But without the misogyny, the anachronism, the fanaticism, the irrationality, the smārta tendencies and other faults

His seminar "How to Mess Up Your Life with (Misapplied) Varnasrama" is probably the most reviewed presentation in the history of ISKCON.

For more information:

www.iskconcongregation.com

www.gbc.iskcon.org

www.gbc-college.com

www.gbcstrategicplanningteam.com

www.realvarnasrama.wordpress.com

Facebook: [Kaunteya das](#)

Facebook page: [Real Varnasrama](#)

Instagram: [Kaunteya das \(real-varnasrama\)](#)





"One of the objectives of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to establish this *daiva-varṇāśrama*, but not to encourage so-called *varṇāśrama* without scientifically organized endeavor by human society."

- SB 7.14.10, purport



EYE of the STORM