

# Lokanath Swami on Varnashrama

*Om Agyana timirandhasya Gyananjaya shalakaya chakshuh  
unmilitam yena tasmayi Sri gurave namah.*

*Namah Om Vishnu padaya Krishna presthaya bhutale, Srimade  
Bhakti Vedanta swamin iti namine, Namaste Saraswate Deve Gaura  
vani pracharine, nirvisesa shunyavadi paschatya desa tarine.*

*Jaya Sri Krishna Caitanya Prabhu Nityananda Sri Advaita  
Gadadhar Srivas adi Gaura Bhakta vrinda.*

All please say together, ***Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna  
Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare.***

Thank you for this opportunity to say a few words on **Global  
Varnashrama Mission**. I will quote from **Caitanya Caritamrita**,  
Madhya lila, regarding Varnashrama, or the vision of  
Varnashrama.

(CC Madhya 8.58) “varnashramachara vata purushena param puman,  
Vishnur aradhyate pantha nanyat tat tosha-karanam.” The  
Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Vishnu, is worshiped by  
the proper execution of prescribed duties in the system of  
varna and ashrama. There is no other way to satisfy the  
Supreme Personality of Godhead. One must be situated in the  
institution of the four varnas and ashramas.

***Harer namaiva kevalam, Varnashramaiva kevalam!***

The quoted verse is originally from Vishnu Puran 3.8.9. As we  
talk of daivi varnashrama, we are reminded of another kind of  
asuri (demoniac) varnashrama. But here we are talking about  
daiva varnashrama. How did we get from...not we...whoever got into  
this asurik varnashrama.

**Brahmana is described by the Lord as one who has vidya and  
vinaya (knowledge and humility). “Vidya-vinaya-sampanne  
brahmane gavi hastini, shuni caiva shva-pake ca panditah sama-  
darshinah”** (BG 5.18: The humble sages, by virtue of true  
knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle

brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].) These are the good qualities, qualities in mode of goodness. He has knowledge and he has humility. So in place of these good qualities, knowledge and humility, the brahmanas, they got degraded. Instead of humble, they became proud and arrogant. What mode would they or anyone who has arrogance and pride be? Not goodness. A little tint of passion, but lots of ignorance. This is how **"kalua shudra sambhavaha"** (In kali yuga, everyone is shudra). Not only shudras are shudras, in this age of kali, the brahmanas are also shudras.

There was a time when there were 'rajarshis' or saintly kings. Because of their association with the saints, they became saintly kings and then they were the first ones, the recipients of knowledge. **"evam parampara-praptam imam rajarshayo viduh."** (BG 4.2: This supreme science was thus received through the chain of disciplic succession, and the saintly kings understood it in that way.) Raja (king) is the first party, Krishna says (in **Bhagavat Gita**) to receive this knowledge. So as they did not get this knowledge anymore or could not imbibe this vidya, as a result in place of vidya, avidya took place. Avidya took place of vidya. (Knowledge was replaced by the lack of it). Then there were no more rajarshis (saintly kings). So there was a time when the Brahmana and kshatriya they were kings. Because of the brahmanas' pride and arrogance, they degenerated into lower nature and the kshatriyas were not getting direction or knowledge of how to implement the principles of dharma. They were not even hearing it, then what to speak of implementing.

Gradually the state and religion got separated in the west and in India also. It was said, "We have nothing to do with your religion! You are such kind of people; look at your face. You are so called brahmanas. No qualities. You speak of 'untouchables'. You say, "Hey, don't touch us, stay away, stay away." In India, they call it 'asprushyata' (untouchables) "don't touch us, we are extinguished... (Laughs)... no no... not extinguished, but distinguished. We are distinguished

personalities. Only brahmanas and nobody else. Stay away.” That kind of mentality they developed.

So Lord says in **Bhagavad Gita**, “**chatur varnyam maya srushtam guna karma vibhagashah.**” (BG 4.13: According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me.) This Varna and ashrama is not concoction or it hasn’t come from somebody’s fertile brain. It has come from the Lord. It is Lord’s creation. (maya srushtam: created by Me). So varma and ashrama. First you determine varna and then comes ashrama. Varnas are determined first and then the ashramas. They are governed by the three modes of material nature. “**Prakrite kriyamanani gunaihi karmani sarvashah ahamkar vimudhatma karta aham iti manyate**” (BG 3.27: The spirit soul bewildered by the influence of false ego thinks himself the doer of activities that are in actuality carried out by the three modes of material nature.) They think they are kartas (doers); their aham (false ego) is there. These beings, human beings are governed by the three gunas. Prakrite kriyamanani...

So the goal is how to dovetail... I am in goodness, I am in passion, I am in ignorance. So how to dovetail, how to spiritualize my situation so that the goal is to transcend the three modes of material nature. Krishna talks next in the 9th chapter. “**Mahatmanas tu mam partha, daivi prakritim ashritah.**” (BG 9.13: O son of Prutha, those who are not deluded, the great souls, are under the protection of the divine nature. They are fully engaged in devotional service because they know Me as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, original and inexhaustible.). Daivi varnashrama. Being handled, governed, dangled but the three modes of material nature... from that situation how to get into divine, how to spiritualize, how to devotail? (Is the goal). Utility is the principle. Making the goal of satisfying the Lord. Vishnur aradhyate. How to get into aradhana of the Lord... panthah... that path (how to choose), so that the result is ‘**tat tosha karaman**’ – Lord is satisfied by those activities of those situated in different varna and different ashramas. Eventually they transcend these three

modes of material nature.

There is karma, gyana, yoga and bhakti. This is the ladder. All these components, or all these stages could be just described as “bhakti” (devotion). The whole thing could be just bhakti. You are evolving from karma, to gyana to making further progress... karma... karma yogi... then there is some knowledge and renunciation... now he is gyani... then some ashtanga yoga... some devotion is added.. then he becomes bhakti yogi. But if they get stuck at certain level, and they think that this is it.. I got it.. I achieved it... then they end up in becoming the respective yogis on the yoga ladder.

I was just reading, **Prabhupada** uses the word ‘stuck’... they get stuck at karma level and then they become karma yogi... Some come to level of ashtanga yoga or gyana yogi... so if they get stuck there, then they become known by the names karma yogis, or gyana yogis or ashtanga yogis. If they keep moving forward... upward mobility... then the whole process from beginning to finish could be called bhakti process. So our goal is to become vaishnavas, to become free from all the “**sarvopadhi vinirmuktam tat-paratvena nirmalam**” (from **Narad Pancharatra**, quoted in **Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu** 1.1.12: One is freed from all material designations, and one’s senses are purified simply by being employed in the service of the Lord.’)

**Caitanya Mahaprabhu** said, “Oh I have nothing to do with this.” ***“Naham vipro na cha nara-patir napi vaishyo na shudro, naham varni no cha griha-patir no vanastho yatir va, kintu prodyan-nikhila-paramananda-purnamritabdher, gopi bhartum pada-kamalayor dasa-dasanudasam.”*** (Caitanya Caritamrita Madhya 13.80: am not a brahmana, I am not a kshatriya, I am not a vaishya or a shudra. Nor am I a brahmachari, a householder, a vanaprastha or a sanayasi. I identify Myself only as the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of Lord Shri Krishna, the maintainer of the Gopis. He is like an ocean of nectar, and He is the cause of universal transcendental bliss. He is always existing with brilliance.) Who are you? I am das dasanudas. So we get established – this is it; this is it. We have nothing to do with this varna and

we have nothing to do with ashrama. Hey, we are vaishnavas! We start jumping, we are vaishnavas, we have nothing to do with varnashrama. Naham vipro, naham... we are not this, we are not that. But it doesn't go away like that. That is the philosophy, that is the vision, that is the goal to become vaishnava, free from designations, free from three modes of material nature. But how to get there? How to achieve that level or status? So that is where the varnashrama or daivi varnashram, divine varnashrama comes into the picture.

So the goal is daivi varnashrama. Then all the principles of varnashrama are strategy. There is vision, obstacles, strategy, resources, time line for any activity. Consider these five factors. What is the vision? The maharaja has a vision or ISKCON has a vision. This is varnashrama. This mission has a vision. Global Varnashrama Mission has a vision. To achieve any vision, there are obstacles, stumbling blocks. To overcome those, there is strategy – how to get over so as to achieve the vision and who would do it? The resources, manpower, we also need money. Economics has to be there.

When I joined the movement, I was a brahmachari. During **Prabhupada's** days, most of us were brahmacharis or grihasthas. At least I was thinking – this is it. This **International Society for Krishna Consciousness** is going to remain this way. If there were some devotee wearing white clothes (householders), we thought that it was a black spot. That white was black. If someone was thinking of changing ashrama, so many brahmacharis would corner him and they would brain wash him. During **Prabhupada's** time; one time I remember, one temple president of Vrindavan, he was thinking of changing ashrama and there was heavy preaching by other brahmacharis. **Prabhupada** came to know. He was annoyed with the attempts of these brahmacharis. If someone wants to change his ashrama, this is natural. Everyone is not going to end up becoming brahmachari or sanayasi.

Scene changed after 20, 30 and now 40- years. It is other way round. The saffron cloth has become black spot. All there is now is this white background (householders). Mostly white.

Mostly grihasthas with few saffron spots. So lot of devotees did enter ashrama which was natural for them, grihastha ashrama.

So if we had varnashrama system strategy in place, then those who had to leave, those who could not remain brahmacharis or sanayasis, they could have stayed on within the family, within the society. But that was not the case. Devotees had to leave the society for economic reasons. That is the major factor, other reasons may also be there. So in order to keep all those, who came to **Krishna Consciousness** movement, there could have been planning about how to keep them in the house, which **Prabhupada** built for the whole world to stay. You need not step outside the house; you are taken care of whether you are brahmachari, sanayasi, whichever ashrama or varna you belong to, there would be a place for you in that house. There would be a situation for you, there would be some engagement for you. Economic arrangement for you, education for children, protection for the cows, the land is to be utilized, not lying around. **Prabhupada** would make comments, while flying over Australia or something, "see thousands of acres; no cultivation!" So land and the cows, **Prabhupada** always used to say, "land and the cows! Land and the cows!!" So you saw last year, **Bhakti Vaibhav Maharaja** came up with a documentary called 'Lost Village.' Did you see 'Lost Village'? It was my village. Maharaja picked up my village.

So what is lost? Varnashrama is lost. The cows and brahminical culture and other aspects of that varnashrama are basically rapidly vanishing/ diminishing. So within our family and world at large, we are at a serious juncture. So much loss. Everything is kind of getting lost. It is becoming unbearable for mother Earth. Her fever is going up. Global warming. She is warming up. And as a result human race is suffering to such an extent that no one seems to have any solution. Big scientists, they have been promoting this industrial civilization. There are two types of economies in the world, one is industrial economy and the other is agricultural economy. Agricultural economy is the only real economy. The

other one is just a trial and error. The trial is a failure. One big scientist, physicist in fact, he was asked, "What should be done now in this situation for the human beings on this planet". He said, "They should look for another planet!" Like in a boat, if there is a hole and hence it is sinking, then there are life boats attached to that boat. So they say, now this is sinking, now is the time to look for lifeboat. This is impractical. No solution. The only solution we could say on the basis of '**na anyat tat tosha karanam**'... there is no other way or cause but to go for varnashrama charavata. Practice of varnashrama. And the goal is Vishnu aradhyate. Sometimes, those who get into varnashrama, they have forgotten this Vishnu aradhana. So that is how they went the other way. There is exit. They become asuric.

So while practicing varnashrama, the goal of Vishnu aradhana has to be kept intact. The goal should remain in focus. I was just looking at the background information from Global Varnashrama Mission, and the very first quote I came across here, very interesting **Srila Prabhupada's** quote, "**Krishna consciousness** movement is the movement of brahmanas and vaishnavas." Sometimes we think the Hare Krishna movement is only for vaishnavas, sometime we think that way. Or it is only for the brahmanas because **Prabhupada** wanted to create brahmanas. Here **Prabhupada** is saying it is for both of them together, brahmanas and vaishnavas. So initially they are brahmanas. But to become Brahmana is not the goal of human race, or human form. To become vaishnava is the goal. But you cannot jump over, skip some steps. We need to go through the process of varnashrama. Varnashrama is the process of purification. **Sansiddhi haritoshanma**... there is another verse. (**Srimad Bhagavatam** 1.2.13: 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.) Perfection is in Hari toshana. (satisfaction of Lord Hari). If Hari becomes santushta or satisfied, then what we have done is perfect.

Varnashrama is also the name of dharma. Varnashrama dharma, sanatana dhrama, bhagavat dharma, sankirtan dahrama as we say now. So by protecting dharma, there is statement that says, ***"dharmo rakshati rakshitah"*** from Vedic source, from writings of vyasadeva. Very popularly used. Very scholarly words. ***Dharmo rakshati rakshitah***. Those who protect the dharma, they will be protected. So while protecting dharma, daivi varnashrama dharma, protection comes with it. No separate endeavor is necessary. Just protect, and you will be protected. Do everything in your mind to protect or practice. Protection is not just giving talks or speeches. **With Gyana (knowledge), there has to be vigyana or implementmentation. So by doing this, the whole human race would be protected.** It also applies to ourselves within our Hare Krishna movement. Protection: cow protection, children protection, elderly folks protection, land protection, deity protection, so many. This varna protection, that ashrama protection. This is all part of upholding the principles of dharma. Immediately there is an umbrella over you; you are protected.

So I have kind of overheard, something from a devotee talking. He is disturbed. He said that the body or the society is in very bad shape. Only lying down. Now if you want it to stand up, initially the crutches are used. You need crutches. But the crutches should not be there forever. At one time, you should be able to throw away the crutches and walk on your own and run. So degradation of this civilization or society is there. Like a dead state lying down. So get it up. So this varnashrama is providing some kind of crutches to lean against or some support system with the help of which you kind of stand up, rise and do some kind of fighting and walk. You can endeavor to walk. All that endeavor for the pleasure of the Lord, samsiddhi Hari toshanam. Here these crutches represent the three gunas. We have to become free from the three guna.. because guna has three mode of material nature. The goal is ***nistrai gunya bhavarjuna***, Lord declares. (Bhagavad Gita 2.45: O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes.) You become transcendental to the modes. Trai gunya vishava veda



(**Bhagavad Gita** 2.45: The Vedas deal mainly with the subject of the three modes of material nature.) Lord says, the subject matter of the Vedas is full of three modes of material nature. Lord has declared already in the Vedas, there is karma kanda section, gyana kanda section, this section, that section. The **Upanishadas** is for different folks. Different folks – different shloks. Different sections are for those in goodness, passion, ignorance. Lord says, become transcendental – like throwing away these crutches. No limitations anymore. You are not a brahmana. You are above the brahmaha. You are a vaishnava.

So keep up this good work and nice. Take advantage of this divine arrangement on divine varnashrama, within **Krishna Consciousness** movement. Sometimes, we do hear some controversy. **Prabhupada** said, “I have done 50% of my work and 50% has yet to come.” He was referring to Varnashrama as the remaining 50% of his mission. So we may want to get out, get away or have shortcut but I think it won’t work. We just cannot declare that we have become vaishnava and that we have nothing to do with varnashrama. While coming here, I was debating whether I should carry danda or just go without danda – dandaless. But I was going to varnashrama, I’d better carry danda. We kind of keep our dandas away. But **Prabhupada** was not happy with that. I was given sanayasa in Vrindavan.

**Prabhupada** returned to Bombay and we followed him. And we were together. Mostly I carried my danda. I was a good boy. It was **Sridhar Maharaja**, our god brother. Sometimes he would carry and sometimes he would not carry. Prabhupada would ask, “Why did he not carry?” You are a good boy, you are carrying, why is he not carrying?”

Sometimes, we quickly want to leave our varna, ashrama behind and transcend but we need to hang in there for the longer so that we leave these three modes and the crutches, this process behind and enter into divine divinity and the spiritual realm where we are only spirit souls. Here we are the body and the soul. We are put together. So while we are body, some varnashrama has to be there. When we are only soul, then we

are only vaishnavas. We have to leave this body behind. Until then we need to follow, practice this varnashrama. Once again thank you for being connected with varnashrama. Daivi varnashrama ki jay!

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