

NEW VARNASRAMA MINISTER FOR INDIA

On November 11, 2009, in Jagannatha Puri, Orissa, the leadership of India, IRGB, officially endorsed the establishment of the Varnasrama-based Rural Development Ministry, which will be known as the ISKCON RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY Promoting Daiva-Varnasrama-Dharma. His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami has been asked to head up the ministry. Soon after the meeting, Maharaja was interviewed by Varnasrama Media Productions, a division of the newly established ministry and he shared the following thoughts:

“I am very happy that the ministry for varnasrama development has finally been established here in India. I wish to thank all the members of the Varnasrama Development Committee who have been promoting varnasrama development since year 2007 and to all the leaders here in India who have all been instrumental in making this happen.

The varnasrama ministry will concentrate on establishing its national office as well as State offices across India where various information about the ministry will be made available. One of the immediate priorities of the ministry will be to select candidates for the post of Coordinators. At present we only have two Coordinators, our National Coordinator for India, Sriman Bharat Chandra prabhu and our State Coordinator for Andhra Pradesh, Sriman Hari Kirtan prabhu. In the coming new year, I plan to organize, with the help of Sriman Brhat-mrdanga prabhu who is the Chairman of ISKCON LEADS in India, some much needed seminars and workshops in each of the four divisions of India to solicit the involvement of various leaders and congregational members.

Beyond our city temples, congregational devotees living outside our temples can help establish Varnasrama Research Teams and in this way become involved in doing research about the varnasrama mission. The ministry will seek to establish special alliance with three specialized groups. The first will be the Nam Hatta Department in Sri Dham Mayapur which oversees the preaching activities with many devotees living in villages. Many such devotees can best become involved with the varnasrama mission. The second important group is the Pada Yatra Ministry which has been having devotees touring villages all around India since the last 25 years. The third very important group the ministry aims to link with are the various organized Youth groups around India. The varnasrama ministry will offer many exciting ways in which our youths can especially be involved at various levels.

Actually, the work of the ministry has been on-going since the last four years and already a number of books and documentaries promoting the varnasrama mission have been published. These will be made available in all the temples and in this way devotees and congregational members will get an opportunity to know more about the ministry's activities.

I would like to invite devotees to get involved as much as possible. At present here in India there is a very strong attempt being made by various religious organizations to protect Krishna's cows. Sadhus from different parts of India have started the Visva Mangala Gou Gram Yatra, a 108 day yatra travelling around India, with the aim of bringing awareness to farmers and

people in general about the need to protect our mother cow and maintain our villages. Varnasrama cannot be developed without giving protection to cows who are the pillars of dharma and without helping to support and revive our villages. Devotees can help by signing a petition which will help stop the unnecessary slaughtering of cows.

Within the coming month the varnasrama ministry will set up its own website and devotees can become more acquainted with the aims, objectives and strategic plans for the ministry. I welcome the input and involvement of any interested devotee. We can be contacted at www.varnasrama.org. Hare Krishna.

THE MANDATE

ISKCON RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY PROMOTING DAIVA-VARNASRAMA-DHARMA

Proposal Adopted by the Regional Governing Body for India Dated: 11 November, 2009

Whereas the India RGB established the India Varnasrama Development Committee in September, 2007, for the purpose of helping promote varnasrama development in India.

Whereas the Varnasrama Development Committee has drafted a Position Paper on varnasrama which was officially endorsed by the India RGB leadership in September, 2008, entitled *Promoting Vrindavan Village Development in India*.

Whereas in their meeting with Bhakti Raghava Swami in Mayapur, Sivaram Swami, Devamrta Swami, and Romapada Swami suggested that it would be advisable to establish Varnasrama Ministries at national levels before officially forming a Global Varnasrama Ministry.

Whereas the India Varnasrama Development Committee has recommended establishing a national ministry in India for the purpose of promoting varnasrama-based rural development.

Whereas there is an urgent need to train and educate our devotees about the varnasrama mission, to establish model rural projects based on varnasrama principles, and to develop a resource base to support the concept that "I want the world to see by our example that life can be lived naturally, peacefully if one is self sufficient with land, some cows and chanting Hare Krishna." (SP Letter to Jagadisa, 74-06-18)

Whereas the 2009 GBC resolutions (1) "310. GBC Participation in Farm Projects" and (2) "311. Purchasing from ISKCON Farms and Farmers" both lend support to the need for promoting the varnasrama mission.

Whereas Bhakti Raghava Swami has been active in promoting the varnasrama mission both here in India as well as in other countries and is agreeable to help set up such a ministry.

Therefore, the India RGB hereby establishes the Varnasrama-based Rural Development Ministry with the following mandate:

1. To encourage the establishment in India of models of Krishna-conscious rural communities (villages):
 - a. to demonstrate in a practical way how the principles of varnas (aptitude based occupations) and asramas (phased lifelong spiritual emancipation) are universal and standard principles meant to be implemented
 - b. To demonstrate the principles of self-sufficiency, sustainability, and localized economy based on proper utilization of land and cow protection.
2. To encourage, wherever possible in India, varnasrama-based rural development centered on the land, cows, and Krishna.
3. In order to accomplish the above, to establish training programs, publish resource materials, organize conferences and seminars, establish libraries and resource centers, etc.

Bhakti Raghava Swami is hereby appointed as minister.

The existing RGB Varnasrama Development Committee will continue with the following mandate:

1. To regularly review the activities of the ministry and advise on its functioning.
2. To organize periodic assessments of the work of the ministry when requested to do so by the IRGB.
3. To be available to advise the IRGB on any varnasrama development issue that may be brought to its attention, whether related directly to the ministry or not.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING

ISKCON RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY PROMOTING DAIVA-VARNASRAMA-DHARMA

STATEMENT OF PROJECTED MISSION, STRATEGY AND GOALS

DETAILS OF THE STATEMENT

- A. Mission Statement
- B. Mission Goals
- C. Strategic Plan
- D. Short Term Goals Defined
- E. Intermediate Goals Defined
- F. Long Term Goals Defined
- G. Duties of the National Varnasrama Development Minister

A. MISSION STATEMENT

The Varnasrama-based Rural Development Ministry seeks to promote, establish and demonstrate the ideals of simple living and high thinking, based on the concepts and principles of daivi-varnasrama dharma, as desired by Srila Prabhupada. The ministry will work with the ISKCON India leadership to establish self-sufficient rural (village) communities, giving special emphasis to training and education.

B. MISSION GOALS

1. To help set up models or micro-units of varnasrama communities (villages) where the principles of varnasrama dharma will be promoted.
2. To demonstrate in such communities how the principles of varnas (aptitude based occupations) and asramas (phased lifelong spiritual emancipation) are universal and standard principles.
3. To demonstrate in a practical way the concepts of self-sufficiency, sustainability and localized economy based on proper utilization of land and on cow protection.
4. To encourage the establishment of educational and training facilities such as Varnasrama Shikshalayas (pre-gurukula), Gurukulas (younger students) and Varnasrama Colleges (older students) for the purpose of realizing the above where both formal and non-formal education will be given.
5. To compile, publish and distribute literatures (pamphlets, booklets, books, magazines, newsletters, etc.) for the sake of informing and educating people about the varnasrama mission.
6. To help revive interest in India's traditional practices of village technologies.
7. To systematically and methodically conduct seminars and workshops to provide training and education on the concepts and principles of the varnasrama mission.

8. To work with other secular educational, scientific, social, religious and cultural institutions that may have similar goals and objectives.
9. To promote organic and natural farming avoiding the use of the following four dangerous practices: (1) chemical pesticides, (2) chemical fertilizers, (3) hybrid seeds and (4) modern machines, all of which create ecological imbalances in nature and destroy the environment.
10. To promote general research in and help increase awareness about the varnasrama mission.

C. STRATEGIC PLAN

1. To build working relationships with existing ISKCON ministries, temples, rural projects, educational institutions, etc.
2. In consultation with ISKCON authorities, to appoint Local, State and Regional Coordinators.
3. To invite the active involvement of ISKCON youth groups in India.
4. To encourage the participation of devotees, especially Nama Hatta devotees living in the villages, in helping realize the above mentioned Mission Statement and Mission Goals.
5. To establish libraries, asramas, cultural centers, residential quarters, small-scale cottage industries, etc., which will all help manifest and develop the varnasrama mission.
6. In consultation with the appropriate ISKCON authorities, to raise funds for the Varnasrama-based Rural Development Ministry.
7. To establish Varnasrama Research Teams for the purpose of involving more individuals in the varnasrama mission and whose members will work closely with various ISKCON entities.

D. SHORT TERM GOALS DEFINED (within one year)

1. To compile a list and maintain a Database of all existing varnasrama projects in India.
2. To distribute basic information about the varnasrama mission to all ISKCON temples in India.
3. To conduct a varnasrama seminar in each of the four Divisional Council zones of India.
4. To begin appointing State and Regional Coordinators for India.
5. To produce a Varnasrama Manual giving general guidelines about the varnasrama mission. This will be an official ministry publication.

6. To publish the *Varnasrama Guide and Resource Directory* for India. This will be an official ministry publication.
7. To hold a National Varnasrama Conference for State and Regional Coordinators.
8. To help organize the yearly on-going Global Varnasrama Seminar in Sri Dham Mayapur at Gaura Purnima.
9. To conduct a yearly 3 month Varnasrama College course.
10. To establish one model of a Varnasrama Research Team.
11. To produce one video documentary *Make Vrndavana Villages* before Gaura Purnima 2010. This will not be an official video documentary of the ministry.
12. To print the book *Traditional Education* before Gaura Purnima 2010. This will not be an official ministry publication.

E. INTERMEDIATE GOALS DEFINED (within 3 years)

1. To work towards establishing one Varnasrama College in each State of India.
2. To work towards establishing one Varnasrama Research Team in each State of India.
3. To work towards establishing Varnasrama Shikshalayas in each State of India.
4. To visit all the existing ISKCON rural/farm communities in India.

F. LONG TERM GOALS DEFINED (within 5 years)

1. To have one working model of a developing varnasrama community in each State of India.
2. To have dozens of Varnasrama Shikshalayas established in each State of India.
3. To have Varnasrama Research Teams set up in all the major cities of India.
4. To request the India RGB to make a formal proposal to the GBC for the formation of a Global Varnasrama Ministry.
5. To work towards establishing the Headquarters of the Global Varnasrama Ministry at Sri Dham Mayapur.

G. DUTIES OF NATIONAL VARNASRAMA MINISTER

1. To serve under the India RGB leadership as per their guidelines and directives and in consultation with the established India RGB appointed Varnasrama Development Committee.
2. To network with ISKCON India Zonal Secretaries, Regional Secretaries, Temple Officials as well as various other entities connected with the ISKCON India mission such as Bhaktivedanta Institute, BBT and other ministries, etc. for the purpose of advancing the varnasrama mission in India.
3. To oversee the overall implementation and development of the Varnasrama-based Rural Development Ministry.
4. To oversee the activities of Varnasrama State and Regional Coordinators.
5. To oversee the activities of Varnasrama Research Teams.
6. To help establish Varnasrama Shikshalayas at the village levels.
7. To organize annual seminars promoting the varnasrama mission.
8. To submit an Annual Report to the India RGB EC and to the India RGB appointed Varnasrama Development Committee.

For more information: www.varnasrama.org/india/ministry