

Homages



Ministries



Congregational Development Ministry

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmīnī itī nāmīne*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviśeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

We, your servants at the ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry, are honored to humbly assist your mission, which includes spiritualizing the homes of whoever connects with ISKCON. You wrote:

Members of the household should learn to worship the deity as we are doing, following the regulative principles, then it will be successful. We want every house to be a temple, not that our place should be the only place for the people to come. [Letter, 14 April 1972]

You envisioned that such homes would develop as reference points for seekers of spiritual knowledge and would function as representatives of ISKCON. You wrote:

It is not that we have to open different centers all over the world. Whoever cares for the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement can install Deities at home and, under superior guidance, worship the Deity regularly, chanting the *mahā-mantra* and discussing the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. We are actually teaching in our classes how to go about this. [*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 3.190, purport]

In fact, your own example in your *grhastha* years remains a bright beacon of inspiration and reference.

From a recent survey of twenty-three ISKCON initiating spiritual masters, we learned that ninety-six percent of their disciples are now home-based. Over the past forty years, ISKCON has undergone a wide social transformation. So if they want to remain relevant to the changing circumstances within ISKCON's devotional communities, your servants—especially those who provide leadership within ISKCON—need to carefully study the new situation and identify the enormous potential within ISKCON's congregations.

You wanted a movement of gurus, and home-based devotees are certainly included in your plans. You said:

That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instruction. . . . You deliver your village people and become a guru. Everyone is not going to be so big that he can go all over the world. But everyone can teach within his limit—within his family, within his community, within his village, within his town, within his district. As he is capable, he can increase. But everyone can become a guru and deliver the local people. [Room conversation, Bombay, 21 August 1975]

One cultural obstruction to seeing your vision fulfilled is the notion that home-based devotees are a kind of “second-class citizens” of your Society. Although you never introduced terms such as “part-time devotee” (as if adherence to *bhakti-yoga* were a job) or “external devotee” (as if one's place of residence determines one's devotional status), this language still plagues your Society. Such demeaning expressions, residues of the mentality that only temple devotees are true devotees, should disappear from the lexicon of your followers. In fact, even in the days when almost all devotees of ISKCON were temple residents, you wrote:

Actually there is no difference between devotees living inside the temple and devotees living outside the temple. [Letter, 29 September 1972]

Jaya Śrīla Prabhupāda! May your inclusive vision for elevating everyone to the stage of being a spiritual shelter for others be established all over the world.

Your servants at the ISKCON Congregational Development Ministry.

International Society for Cow Protection

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhū-tale
śrīmate bhaktivedānta-svāmīn iti nāmine*

*namas te sārāsvate deve gaura-vāṇī-pracāriṇe
nirviṣeṣa-sūnyavādi-pāścātya-deśa-tāriṇe*

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to you, our most beloved spiritual master and our most trusted well-wisher and friend.

Recently we have been having some difficult times in this material world. For so many years we have been able to push on, to the best of our ability, your message of cow protection. As we awoke each day we thought, “We are being allowed to serve the cows again for another day. Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda!”

Although our service seems to us to be less than perfect, and we always seem to be wishing we could be more potent, Lord Kṛṣṇa still allows us to serve the cows. This past year has been a reminder that it is only through Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy that we can continue this service. Due to the increased severity of Balabhadra Prabhu’s back problems, to the point of imprisonment in bed for two months and subsequent heart attack, we have been seriously reminded of how easily we can be separated from serving Lord Kṛṣṇa’s beloved cows.

Balabhadra was incapacitated, and our hands-on backup and office help, our daughter Lakshmi, broke her wrist falling on the ice on the way to the barn to serve the cows in Balabhadra’s absence. She had surgery, and for three months afterward she could not use her right hand and arm. Not only could she not do anything for herself, but she could not serve the cows in the capacity of either cowherd or office help. During most of the severe winter, the two cowherds could not serve the cows. This left Chāya Devī, who usually does only office work, as the main cowherd. We prayed to you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, for strength. You heard our prayers, and the cows received good care in the absence of their favorite cowherds.

Help came not only in the form of hands-on physical assistance, but also in the form of the heartfelt letters, phone calls, and visits from your devotees from all over the world. How little did we realize how immense a community of followers you have created with your loving example of pure love for Lord Kṛṣṇa! We have only received such attention and encouragement because we are an active part of this community that is dedicated to you. You, Śrīla Prabhupāda, are the inspiration encouraging these loving exchanges. Your exchange with us in the role of ever well-wisher and trusted friend is also the basis for our loving exchanges with the cows.

In our last report to you, we told you of Nanda the trained ox and how he had fallen due to long-term chronic nerve problems in his back legs. It was a joyous report, as Nanda surprised us by getting up by himself and grazing happily in a nearby grove. This winter we found Nanda down in the barn. We found

him in the morning; his soul had already left his body. He was huge—seven feet at his shoulder—but remained a gentle soul. He was 14 years old, which would make him 70 years old in human years. Our prayers go with him, an old friend who will be greatly missed due to his gentle brahminical nature.

We also reported about 14-year-old Bhumi, who had developed eye cancer and had an operation. Affectionately known as Bhum-Bhum, she would traditionally break out early every spring, and one would never know where she was, as every day she would break out in a different place. We often could not figure out how she got out, as we could not find any break in the fence. A very pretty cow with white markings and dainty, pointed horns, Bhumi was proud of her looks. Although we had been administering homeopathy and provided all allopathic medicine could offer, the cancer got the best of Bhumi. Again, another cow you allowed us to protect who we will miss.

You, Śrīla Prabhupāda, have given us the knowledge of cow protection, of the ideal life centered on the cows, the land, and the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. We cannot and do not wish to approach Lord Kṛṣṇa without you. You have been the messenger and the liberator. It is only through our prayers to you and our memories of you that during our full conscious service to the cows we are able to separate ourselves from the attachments, frustrations, anxieties, and jealousies of material life. Please, please, please do not let us fall away from the service that, somehow or other, you have found us worthy of performing. What would our lives be then? We have personal experience of misery in the material life. The pain is excruciating. The pain is greater than physical pain, for there is no way to transcend it; the consciousness does not have the power, since it is merged in matter. Ah! The deep dark hole of material existence out of which you have lifted us!

Now that Balabhadra and Lakshmi are improving and are able to do some service for the cows, the fear of separation from our service to the cows has lessened. We are readjusting ourselves to the changing-body scenario and serving accordingly. Our fervent prayer to you is that you intercede for us with Lord Kṛṣṇa and allow us to always remain in service to the cows in whatever way you can arrange. We do not believe we can live through another material life full of the pain we know awaits even the best of material lives. Please save us, O dearest well-wisher and friend! Please save us as you have done already. Please continue to save us even though we are often so lost in material consciousness of me, myself, and mine. This is really the greatest danger—to be lost in material consciousness, from which only you can save us. This is why you, Śrīla Prabhupāda, are our dearest friend and well-wisher. You do not wish us joy in this life but joy in transcendence of this material life.

In our hearts and minds, let us roam the Vṛndāvana forest and groves, running with the cows, with the warm breezes against our faces. Let us smell the sweet scent of each cow's forehead and listen to their deep satisfied breaths, let us caress their soft silky dewlaps and watch their sweet smiles begin in their large mouths and develop throughout their faces, culminating in their lotus-shaped eyes. Let us always see the cows, smell the cows, touch the cows, and love the cows.

Thank you, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

We beg to remain your humble servants in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa's cows,

The devotees at the International Society for Cow Protection (ISCOWP), a.k.a. ISKCON Ministry for Cow Protection and Agricultural Development.

ISKCON Central Office of Child Protection

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my most humble obeisances at your lotus feet.

In a *Bhāgavatam* purport (1.8.5) you write, "In the glorious days, or before the advent of the Age of

Kali, the *brāhmaṇas*, the cows, the women, the children, and the old men were properly given protection. . . . The protection of children gives the human form of life its best chance to prepare the way of liberty from material bondage.”

You deeply understood the rare and wonderful opportunity of taking birth in a devotee family, where one could receive Kṛṣṇa conscious philosophy and practice from the beginning of life. This would assure “liberty from material bondage.”

In the ISKCON Child Protection Office, we take with great seriousness that charge to protect devotee children. Any society should meet the needs and interests of all of its members, but it is most important to give shelter to those rare souls who have been blessed to take birth as devotees of the Lord.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, you have taught us this special respect and attention that we must give to all devotees. Your commentated translations of the Vedic literature, as well as your talks and lectures, continually emphasize both Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa’s *bhaktas*. So it is appropriate that we try to follow your instructions and example in giving protection to others.

But we cannot think we have any real capability of offering protection to others, since it has become increasingly clear that all protection is actually coming from you. Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is you who are giving shelter to all of your disciples, granddisciples, and followers throughout the world.

The Western world lacked any knowledge of the Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, had no conception of the depth of the Vaiṣṇava knowledge, and was utterly devoid of any semblance of Vedic culture. Our only shelter was concocted philosophies and the comfort of sense gratification. Our only destination was repeated birth and death.

Into this land of materialism you came and offered the truth of authentic spiritual life and the practice of devotional service. We learned that following this path means following the orders of the spiritual master and executing the process of *sādhana-bhakti* under the guidance of your perfect instructions. Once accepting you as our eternal spiritual master and guide, we achieved the shelter and protection we all sought. The karmic sentence to lifetimes of anxiety, doubt, and bewilderment had ended. The simple and sublime path of *bhakti-yoga* destroyed “all that is troublesome to the heart.” By taking shelter of your lotus feet, we attained peace.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the years pass, the realization that you are protecting our spiritual lives grows stronger. You had full realization of the process of *bhakti*, as given by our *ācāryas*. In the *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.2.238), Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī says that the five primary items of *bhakti* (serving the Deity, hearing *Bhāgavatam*, associating with devotees, chanting the holy name, and living in a sacred place) have “inconceivable and astonishing power.” You have so mercifully given us these same devotional practices, which will fully protect our fledgling devotional service. By taking shelter of the process of *bhakti*, as given in love by you, we are assured of all protection from the onslaughts of the material energy, and our devotional success is guaranteed. We have no way to repay this debt, other than to attempt to be worthy disciples and to carry on your work and mission. And to whatever degree we are capable, we must extend your protection to those under our charge.

Your servants at the ISKCON Central Office of Child Protection.

(written by Tamohara Dāsa)

Vaiṣṇavī Ministry

Dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to you!

A life of broken promises and misused moments brings me to this moment, when I find myself writing this offering.

More than thirty years have slipped by since you passed from this world in Vṛndāvana. In a few short

years, half a century will have passed since you journeyed to America aboard the *Jaladuta*.

Time. Time that has been so rich and realized as your devotee. Time that has been so insignificant in the soul's journey.

But what do I bring to you after all this time? I used to think I was such a fixed-up devotee who would do anything for you. But now I kneel before you, spiritually empty, with nothing but prayer, for I am still a self-serving fallen servant who cares more for my personal happiness and that of my family than for the happiness of our dear Lordships Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and our beloved spiritual master, Your Divine Grace.

Today I pray for the well-being of my family members. I pray for our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, but mostly I pray that we will always be engaged in your devotional service. Please allow us somehow to always serve you.

I pray for the well-being of all your devotees. You have brought so many wonderful souls to your movement, and they genuinely deserve your mercy and blessings. And I am so thankful to have these devotees in my life. Please allow me to serve these gentle souls in whatever manner is most pleasing to you.

I pray that we may all hold tightly to your lotus feet at the time of death, and that at that time we will be surrounded by encouraging, melodious voices glorifying the Lord here and in the afterlife. Thank you for bringing us the holy name in all its glory, beauty, and variegatedness. Thank you for being there for us.

I pray that we may leave behind a Vaiṣṇava society where all devotees and services are valued and respected and everyone feels welcome and comforted by Kṛṣṇa's mercy, a society where, despite all hardships, we may not cause any undue suffering to each other. This seems to be the very least we can offer you, as you have given us this and so much more.

I pray that one day soon I may be fully absorbed in preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness on your behalf. I have never experienced a happier day than those when I was in the homes of interested souls, sharing with them the glories of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, devotional service, and devotee association. Even in this life, I would once again like to become a strong preacher.

And I pray that all of our (your devotees') services will become so deeply gratifying to you that you may experience great pleasure when offering them to your Lord—just as you do when offering beautiful gardenias, yummy *kachorīs*, perfect *gulābjāmunis*, or your own loving moods and pastimes. Perhaps someday you may feel even greater pleasure offering our services as we truly come to know Śrī Kṛṣṇa and his loving exchanges.

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda, I feel alone, frightened, and sad. Please lift me up from this ocean of death.

I do not want to be a burden to you. I do not want you to have to worry about me or come back for me. And thus my final prayer is that one day my only prayer will be to be fully engaged in your devotional service, in the service of the great *ācāryas*, and in the service of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara and their associates, exactly as you and they desire.

Please help me to always feel 100% totally dependent upon Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the transcendental cowherd boy of Vṛndāvana. And please take care of Sundararūpa and Prema!

Thank you for everything.

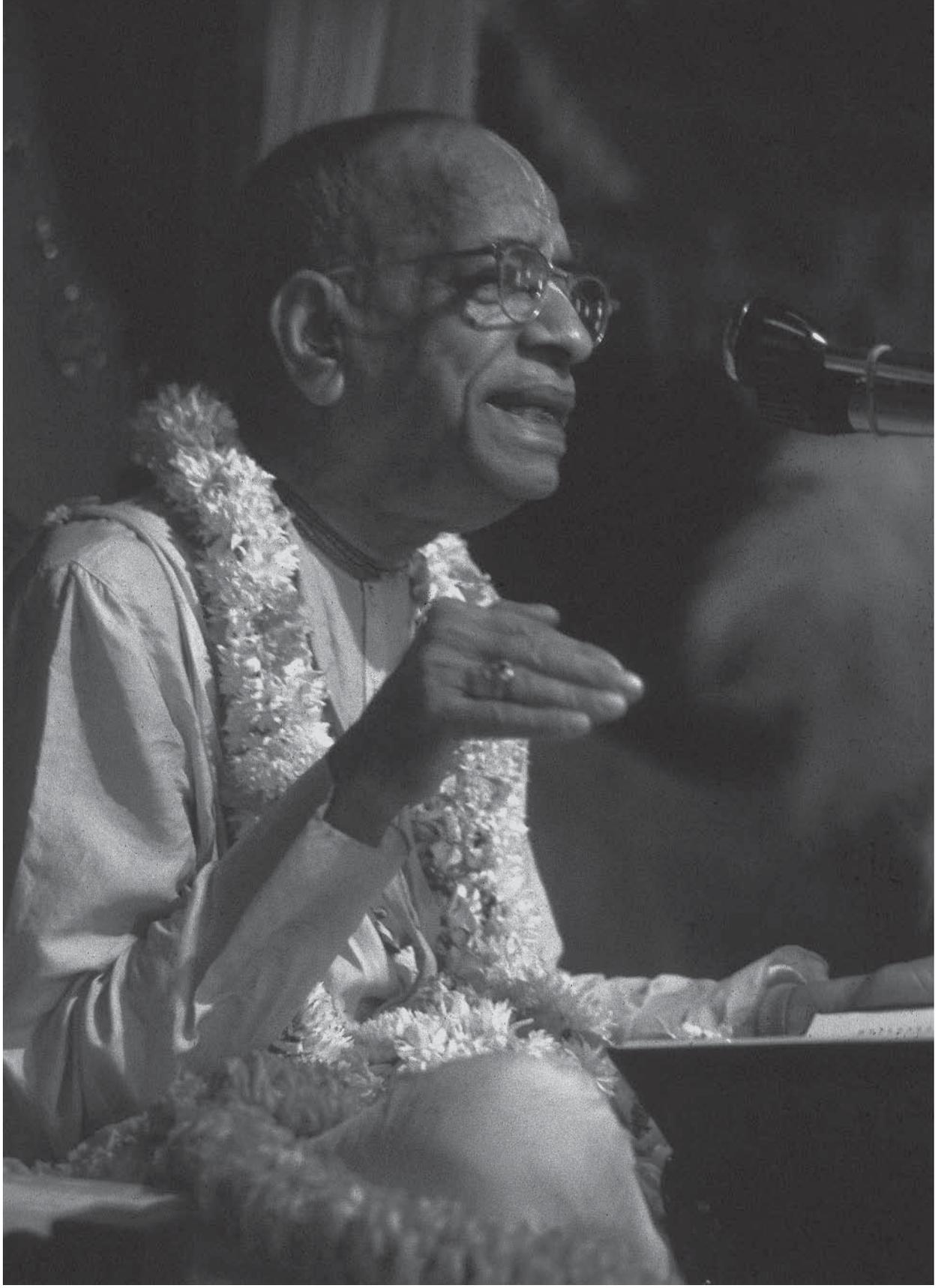
Your servants at the Vaiṣṇavī Ministry.

(written by Sudharmā Devī Dāsī)

Varṇāśrama-Based Rural Development Ministry (India)

My dear Śrīla Prabhupāda,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to you and your *varṇāśrama* preaching mission.



I am pleased to offer you the results of the proposals presented at the leadership meetings held in April this year in Visakhapatnam, India, regarding the establishment of a ministry for *varṇāśrama* development in India. The following proposal was adopted unanimously by the India Regional Governing Body (RGB) on April 12, 2009, and may serve as a general guideline for devotees serving in other countries.

Yearly, we hope to present you with a summary of our various activities. We beg for your kind blessings so that we can properly execute this great task of systematically introducing the *varṇāśrama* mission in the land of Bhāratavarṣa.

The proposals have been endorsed in two parts, one being (a) the mandate given by the India RGB to set up a ministry to promote the *varṇāśrama* mission in India, and the second being (b) a statement of projected mission, strategy, and goals.

We hope this is to your satisfaction and pleasure.

Your servants at the Varṇāśrama-based Rural Development Ministry (India).

(written by Bhakti Rāghava Swami)

A. The mandate: Varṇāśrama-Based Rural Development Ministry (India)

Whereas the India RGB established the India Varṇāśrama Development Committee in September, 2007, for the purpose of helping promote *varṇāśrama* development in India;

Whereas the Varṇāśrama Development Committee has drafted a position paper on *varṇāśrama* 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 Rāghava Swami in Māyāpur, Śivarāma Swami, Devāmṛta Swami, and Romapāda Swami suggested that it would be advisable to establish Varṇāśrama Ministries at national levels before officially forming a Global Varṇāśrama Ministry;

Whereas the India Varṇāśrama Development Committee has recommended establishing a national ministry in India for the purpose of promoting *varṇāśrama*-based rural development;

Whereas there is an urgent need to train and educate our devotees about the *varṇāśrama* mission, to establish model rural projects based on *varṇāśrama* 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 Kṛṣṇa,” (SP Letter to Jagadīśa, 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 *varṇāśrama* mission;

Whereas Bhakti Rāghava Swami has been active in promoting the *varṇāśrama* 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 Varṇāśrama-Based Rural Development Ministry with the following mandate:

1. To encourage the establishment in India of models of Kṛṣṇa conscious rural communities (villages):
 - a. to demonstrate in a practical way how the principles of *varṇas* (aptitude-based occupations) and *āśramas* (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, *varṇāśrama*-based rural development centered on the land, cows, and Kṛṣṇa.
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 Rāghava Swami is hereby appointed minister.

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

To regularly review the activities of the ministry and advise on its functioning.

To organize periodic assessments of the work of the ministry when requested to do so by the IRGB.

To be available to advise the IRGB on any *varṇāśrama* development issue that may be brought to its attention, whether related directly to the ministry or not.

B. Statement of Projected Mission, Strategy, and Goals

A. Mission statement

The Varṇāśrama-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 *daivī-varṇāśrama-dharma*, as desired by Śrīla Prabhupāda. 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 *varṇāśrama* communities (villages) where the principles of *varṇāśrama-dharma* will be promoted.
2. To demonstrate in such communities how the principles of *varṇas* (aptitude-based occupations) and *āśramas* (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 Varṇāśrama Shikshālayas (pre-gurukulas), Gurukulas (for younger students) and Varṇāśrama Colleges (for older students), for the purpose of realizing the above, where both formal and nonformal education will be given.
5. To compile, publish, and distribute literature (pamphlets, booklets, books, magazines, newsletters, etc.) for the sake of informing and educating people about the *varṇāśrama* 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 *varṇāśrama* 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 *varṇāśrama* 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 to realize the above-mentioned mission statement and mission goals.
5. To establish libraries, *āśramas*, cultural centers, residential quarters, small-scale cottage industries, etc., which will all help manifest and develop the *varṇāśrama* mission.
6. In consultation with the appropriate ISKCON authorities, to raise funds for the Varṇāśrama-Based Rural Development Ministry.
7. To establish Varṇāśrama Research Teams for the purpose of involving more individuals in the *varṇāśrama* mission; the members of these teams 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 *varṇāśrama* projects in India.
2. To distribute basic information about the *varṇāśrama* mission to all ISKCON temples in India.
3. To conduct a *varṇāśrama* 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 *varṇāśrama* manual giving general guidelines about the *varṇāśrama* mission. This will be an official ministry publication.
6. To publish the *Varṇāśrama Guide and Resource Directory* for India. This will be an official ministry publication.
7. To hold a national *varṇāśrama* conference for state and regional coordinators.
8. To help organize the yearly on-going Global Varṇāśrama Seminar in Śrī Dhām Māyāpur at Gaura Pūrṇimā.
9. To conduct a yearly 3-month Varṇāśrama College course.
10. To establish one model of a *varṇāśrama* research team.
11. To produce one video documentary, *Make Vṛndāvana Villages*, before Gaura Pūrṇimā 2010. This will not be an official video documentary of the ministry.
12. To print the book *Traditional Education* before Gaura Pūrṇimā 2010. This will not be an official ministry publication.

E. Intermediate goals defined (within 3 years)

1. To work towards establishing one Varṇāśrama College in each state of India.
2. To work towards establishing one Varṇāśrama Research Team in each state of India.
3. To work towards establishing Varṇāśrama Shikshālayas 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 *varṇāśrama* community in each state of India.
2. To have dozens of Varṇāśrama Shikshālayas established in each state of India.
3. To have Varṇāśrama 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 Varṇāśrama Ministry.
5. To work towards establishing the headquarters of the Global Varṇāśrama Ministry at Śrī Dhām Mayapur.

G. Duties of national *varṇāśrama* minister

1. To serve under the India RGB leadership as per their guidelines and directives and in consultation with the established India-RGB-appointed Varṇāśrama 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 *varṇāśrama* mission in India.
3. To oversee the overall implementation and development of the Varṇāśrama-Based Rural Development Ministry.
4. To oversee the activities of Varṇāśrama State and Regional Coordinators.
5. To oversee the activities of Varṇāśrama Research Teams.
6. To help establish Varṇāśrama Shikshālayas at the village level.
7. To organize annual seminars promoting the *varṇāśrama* mission.
8. To submit an Annual Report to the India RGB EC and to the India-RGB-appointed Varṇāśrama Development Committee.

