

REFLECTIONS ON BRAHMINICAL MANAGEMENT

Many senior devotees in ISKCON have realized that the next major task facing ISKCON is the institutionalization of an internal varnasrama system. (See Srila Jagadisa Goswami, "Varnasrama Dharma and ISKCON" in the Gurukula Newsletter). Such a system entails that ISKCON ought to be directed at the topmost levels through a brahminical style of management. This style is quite different from the autocratic, autonomous mode of management, characteristic of ksatriyas, that is now the prevailing model in ISKCON.

If we study all of Prabhupada's directives on management and review his own example and precept, we will see clearly that he was teaching and showing us brahminical management--an unattached, renounced style of management by preaching. One sometimes hears devotees say that brahmanas don't manage; management is for ksatriyas. This is false. Brahmanas manage the whole society. In a complete varnasrama institution, brahmanas manage by managing ksatriyas, who in turn manage everyone else. Brahmanas manage--control--ksatriyas by the potency of pure preaching.

Collegiality

If we examine our texts, we will see that a distinguishing feature or characteristic mark of brahminical management is collegiality. It is management by consensus achieved through open discussion and mutual consultation. We see, for instance, that when Vena misruled, "the great sages began to consult one another on how to get out of the dangerous atmosphere created by King Vena" (Purport, 4.14.7, my italics). During this whole episode we see the brahmanas acting concertedly through consultation and consensus. Srila Hridayananda Acaryadeva has remarked that the proper mode of relation among brahmanas is anarchy. Anarchy does not mean "chaos" but rather "having no [earthly] ruler." (In nonbrahminical societies the former is of course consequent upon the latter.) Although some brahmanas are more spiritually advanced than others, since there is no envy (because no passion), each person's spiritual position is recognized and all etiquette religiously observed; yet the basis structure is collegial equality.

Srila Prabhupada established once and for all the primacy of the brahminical form of management in ISKCON by forming a collegial group, the G.B.C., to be the highest managerial authority. However, not all our leaders have whole-heartedly

THE ISKCON ORGANIZATION

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A Reply to "Reflections on Brahminical Management"

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Page one...

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SECTION A - COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND UNITYDifferent Systems of Management

Ravindra Svarupa's paper "Reflections on Brahminical Management", which I read, as well as his previous writing on this subject, with great interest, contains many points, that seem agreeable. There are other points I would object to. On the positive side, I agree that the concept of brahminical management is very much applicable to our Society. If I correctly understand his (Ravindra's) definition of the term "brahminical management", I think it entails two principles. On the operational side it implies "collective, participative management" whereas in contents it seeks to establish a God-centered society. At this point we are primarily interested in discussing the principle of collective management, for no doubt, everyone in our Society agrees that ISKCON's aim is to establish a God-centered society. What appears to create a division of opinions is through what kind of management structure this objective is to be accomplished. There are basically three options, namely:

- 1) autocracy (= one man rule, including monarchy); or tyranny (=one man rule, in the negative sense.).
- 2) aristocracy (= rule by few, that is, the best and most qualified citizens; aristos = best); or oligarchy (= rule by few in the negative