

# Is Renunciation a Sign of Advancement in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness?

— Illuminations from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Śrī Bhaktyāloka* —

For a devotee, to remain a householder or to become a renunciate is the same thing. Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, Śrī Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi, Śrī Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, Śrī Śivānanda Sena, Śrī Satyarāja Khān, and Śrī Advaita Prabhu were all *gṛhasthas* and have shown us the way of faultless living. The difference between a householder and a renunciate is due to their different means of livelihood. If the home is favorable for a devotee's devotional service, then he should not leave. It is his duty to remain a *gṛhastha* with detachment. But when the home becomes unfavorable for his service, he then becomes eligible to leave home. At that time the detachment he develops for his house through his devotional service is accepted. For this reason, Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita did not leave home. For this reason, Svarūpa Dāmodara took *sannyāsa*. All genuine devotees have remained either at home or in the forest due to this consideration.



Human beings should worship Kṛṣṇa by considering their natural qualities and accepting the livelihoods of the previous and later *mahājanas*. Pure devotional service is proportionately enhanced by following a proper occupation, otherwise it is never achieved.

**Devotees should constantly take shelter of the Holy Name while passing their lives without duplicity or sin. There is no greater religious principle than this..... In Kali-yuga, chanting the Holy Name is the essential religious principle; no other religious practice can help one cross the material ocean of nescience.**

*gaura-prema-rasārṇave se taraṅge jebā ḍube  
se rādhā-mādhava-antaraṅga  
gṛhe vā vanete thāke hā gaurāṅga bale ḍāke  
narottama māge tā'ra saṅga*

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura concludes this song by saying, *gṛhe vā vanete thāke, 'hā gaurāṅga' bale ḍāke*. It is not necessary that one become a mendicant or give up his family life and society. One can remain wherever he finds it suitable, whether as a householder, as a *brahmacārī*, as a *vanaprastha*, or as a *sannyāsī*. *Vanaprasthas* and *sannyāsīs* are supposed to live outside of the city. *Vanete* means “forest.” Formerly, those who were in spiritual consciousness used to live in the forest to become free of the turmoil of city life. But that is not possible now. In this age no one can go into the forest. That requires practice, and no one is practised to that line. Therefore, generally one is recommended to live with his friends, wife, and children. That doesn't matter, but he must take to the process of Kṛṣṇa consciousness as introduced by Lord Caitanya. It is not difficult. The real thing is that one has to accept the movement of Lord Caitanya — chanting, dancing, and eating *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. Even if one is in family life, there is no difficulty. He can just sit down, chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, dance nicely, and then take *kṛṣṇa-prasāda*. Everyone can do this. Those who have renounced this world, *sannyāsīs*, also can do it; there is no difficulty. Therefore, **Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says that it doesn't matter whether one is a *brahmacārī*, *gṛhastha*, or *sannyāsī*. He says, “If you have taken to these principles of life, I desire your company, because you are a devotee of Lord Caitanya.”**

— Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport on *Sāvaraṇa-Gaura-mahimā* (NDT)