

In Support of Varnayama to Attain the Lord's Lotus Feet

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Focus on Sustainability



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Cow Progeny, Dung Economy and Sustainability



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Only under certain conditions do the planets float as weightless balls in the air, and as soon as these conditions are disturbed, the planets may fall down in the Garbhodaka Ocean, which covers half the universe. The other half is the spherical dome within which the innumerable planetary systems exist. The floating of the planets in the weightless air is due to the inner constitution of the globes, and the modernized drilling of the earth to exploit oil from within is a sort of disturbance by the modern demons and can result in a greatly harmful reaction to the floating condition of the earth. A similar disturbance was created formerly by the demons headed by Hiranyaksa (the great exploiter of the gold rush), and the earth was detached from its weightless condition and fell down into the Garbhodaka Ocean". [Srimad Bhagavatam 2.7.1 Purport]

Srila Prabhupada Speaks on Sustainability

Growing Food Gives Sustainability

“With his cane Srila Prabhupada pointed to the skyline and said, ‘Do you see this city? This city and all cities will collapse very soon. Do you know why?’ Everyone hesitated, wondering. But Tamal Krishna quickly said, ‘Because the people here don’t know how to grow food.’ Srila Prabhupada said, ‘Yes.’ Growing food is the whole purpose of our farm communities and we are still trying to grasp their importance.”

Simplicity Leads to Sustainability

“Now, this place I see, although I have not seen all, is a nice place. And the grhasthas may come here, have some small cottage, and grow your own food grains, vegetables, and have your cow's milk. Get nice foodstuff, save time. Why should you go in the city, hundred miles in car and again hundred miles come back and take unnecessary trouble? Stick to this spot and grow your own food, your own cloth, and live peacefully, save time, chant Hare Krsna. Very nice program. This is actual life. What is this nonsense life, big, big cities and always people busy? If he wants to see one friend, he has to go thirty miles. If he has to see a physician, he has to go fifty miles. If he has to go to work, another hundred miles. So what is this life? This is not life. Be satisfied. The devotee's life should be *yavad artha-prayojanam*. We require material necessities as much as it is required, no artificial life. That is spiritual life. Simply increasing artificial life, even for shaving, a big machine is required. What is this? Simply wasting time. Devil's workshop. Make life very simple. And simple living, high thinking, and always conscious to go back to home, back to Krsna. That is life. Not this life, that simply machine, machine, machine, machine. So if you show practical example that how you are living simple life and how you are advanced in Krsna consciousness, then people will learn from you. You American people, if you show example, people will try to follow you, and they will be happy. So I am very glad to see this farm. Develop it nicely, live peacefully, and chant Hare Krsna. Thank you very much.” (SB Lecture, New Talavan, August 1, 1975)

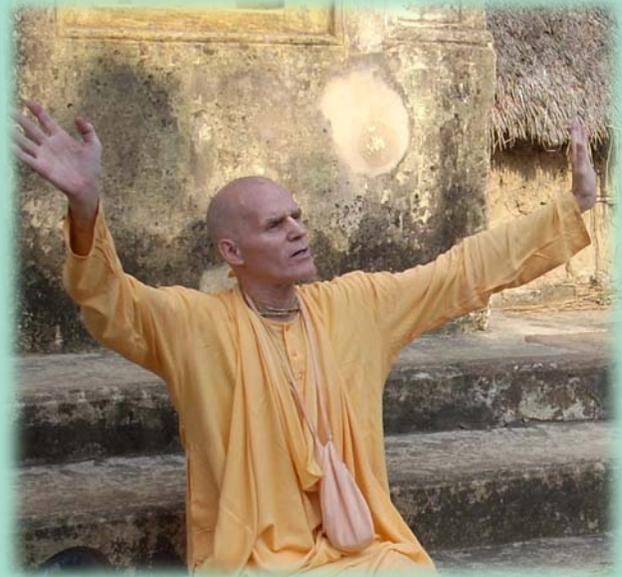


HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Speaks on Sustainability Cow Progeny, Cow Dung Economy and Sustainability

I recently attended an 8-day seminar in Hungary entitled “PILLARS OF SUSTAINABILITY” sponsored by the Eco-Valley Foundation. Representatives from 15 European countries took part in the seminar which covered three main areas, namely, social sustainability, ecological sustainability and economical sustainability.

Sustainability implies what is enduring, lasting, reliable, easily maintained and naturally renewable.

In the past few decades, with the advent of ever increasing industrialization and mechanization, fuelled by an incessant craving for consumerism and sheer greediness, mankind has witnessed an alarming crisis all over the world in the three above-mentioned vital areas of sustainability. Entire nations now



experience severe social anomalies and the entire planet suffers from unprecedented ecological imbalance resulting in drastic climate changes, due to massive deforestation and ever increasing air and water pollution. We are seeing a rapid extinction of various species and an on-going exodus from villages to urban lifestyle. Along with our global oil and food crisis, we are also experiencing global economic uncertainty that can result in devastating effects potentially destroying 80% of the present human population on the planet. We are certainly not living an ideal sustainable lifestyle.

Today many people want to derive benefit from the use of the word “sustainable”. These days we hear about “urban sustainability” a new term meant to convince us that simply by adopting a few changes or being a little innovative in our cities we can continue to maintain our newly-acquired modern comforts and facilities. We should know, however, that we are living in a world of fantasy. Mother nature is teaching us that by rejecting a particular lifestyle based on the combined presence and use of land and cows, we will never achieve sustainability, either economically, ecologically or socially. The truth must be spoken but for most city dwellers this simple truth will tend to evade them.

The fact remains that societies of the recent past remained largely sustainable due to being advanced naturally, educationally and spiritually. This was possible by remaining localized, by depending on the natural gifts of nature and by striving not for so-called economic development as the primary and ultimate goal of life but rather by striving for spiritual emancipation. The simple truth lies in our total dependence on land, cows and Krsna.

Dr. N.M. Kansara, an eminent Sanskrit scholar acquainted with several disciplines of modern and traditional knowledge, has compiled an interesting book entitled “Agriculture and Animal Husbandry in the Vedas”. In his concluding chapter entitled “Modern Indian problems and their Vedic solutions” he writes:

“So we come back to the importance of cow as the vital and crucial factor in our socio-economical and cultural life.

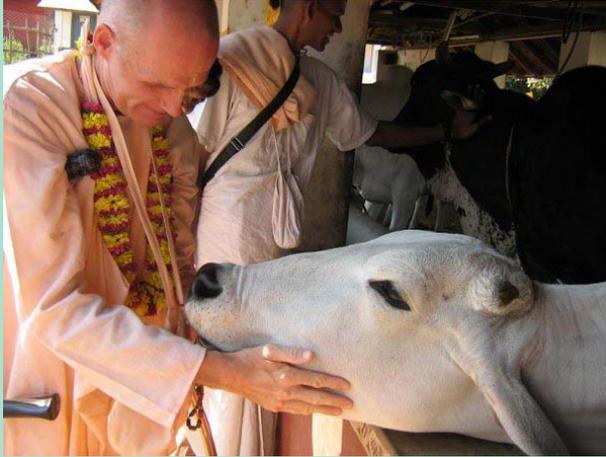
In fact cow is a **formidable** competitor for chemical fertilizers and tractors. In India, cow is not only a mere dairy animal. It does yield milk and ghee, but at the same time it also yields the bullock which is a mini tractor who can successfully compete with a tractor. It works without diesel, besides, cow is a mini-factory giving free dung manure. It is also a mini-



cement factory giving dung for construction of dwelling houses. It is also a mini-pharmaceutical factory preventing (which is better than curing) people from falling sick. It is also a mini-fuel factory giving free fuel. A famous veterinary expert Dr. B.D. Learder, has said that an adult and well maintained cow gives four tons of dung and about 1-1.5 tons of urine in a year. This can yield about 10 tons of farmyard manure. This is sufficient manure for a hectare of irrigated land”. And quoting from Dr. Charan Singh in his book titled “India’s Poverty and Its Solutions”:

“The cow has given us traction power in the form of bullocks and will continue to give it; it has given us sustenance for land in the form of dung and sustenance for man in the milk and will continue to do so. It is the base of our agricultural economy and our health. Our civilization, in fact, our very existence, depends on

agriculture. Cow, therefore, is rightly regarded as almost a member of the peasant's family and has rightly occupied a high place in our legend and folklore, in our history, in our sentiment”.



This is the secret to sustainability. Cows produce cows while tractors produce debts which lead to suicides. With cows, land and the proper spiritual culture, we can expect ever expanding wealth and prosperity. With industry, mechanization and diminishing cultural and spiritual pursuits, one can expect depleting assets and wealth. The choice is ours to make but our time is limited. The Founder-Acharya of ISKCON, His Divine Grace, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, was clear and direct in his simple message on sustainability: “Real intelligence means never to leave one’s village.” All of our basic necessities of life can be met through land, cows and devotion to Lord Krsna. That is how the residents of Vrindavana village lived and that is how they prospered economically, socially and ecologically. Interestingly enough, Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of America, said essentially the same thing i.e., agriculture was always and will always be the most sustainable economy for a nation. To be truly sustainable that agriculture must be based on cow progeny and dung economy.

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CHARAN SINGH, “India’s Poverty and Its Solutions”, Asia Publishing House, 1965, p 461-462.

• Varnasrama Musings



The Sustainability Mantra



- Vrndavanlila dd

When a butterfly sneezes in Africa, there is a hurricane in Caribbean Sea. This is true not just of stock markets but even in the real world that we live in. It brings out how fragile our systems are. A fall in subprime sector in the US melted down scores of sectors and economies across the globe; many big companies closed down, giant financial organizations turned paupers and sold out. This was further spread to other verticals like IT industry, Outsourcing industry, Real Estate and so on. Lucky survivors are still struggling to come out of it even though three years have already gone by. This phenomenon of depression was totally unheard of in the past. It is a modern development of a few centuries when we started moving drastically away from the Vedic standards. It is a 'reward' of our efforts to modernize, move from localization to globalization, from agriculture to industrialization, from village to cities, and from simplicity to consumerism. We take pride in calling ourselves developed but it has no value as it is not 'sustainable'. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The wide cracks in the edifice of 'development' have already started showing. It is now time to take action before it gets too late.

The primary pillar of sustainability for any country is *cow protection*. It is capable of nourishing other primary factors that contribute in attaining sustainability ie, *agriculture* and *education*.

Agriculture – It not only provides for the material requirement of food, but also helps purify the senses, if produced and consumed properly. The cow gives the dung and urine besides the next generation of cows and bulls, which is used as manure and in preparing pest resistants besides many more things, while the bull tills the land. But replacement of bulls with tractors, chulhas with gas stove, manure with chemical fertilizer, and growth of dairy industry have demolished the old culture of having a cow in every family.

Education – It helps answering a human being's fundamental spiritual queries and understanding his duty towards the society and the Supreme father. It educates and provides for even less evolved people to progress gradually in realizing the ultimate goal of human life.

Education, which helps in upholding the brahminical culture of knowledge and spiritual realization intact in a society, is also dependent on cows. Cow, being emblem of *prithvi* and bull of *dharma* provide for everything to sustain life. Both cows and brahmana, are in the mode of goodness and belong to the same family. While brahmanas are qualified to chant the Vedic mantras, the cows supply all the ingredients (*panchgavya*) required by a brahmana to perform his duty or sacrifices and yagnas. In the *Gomati-Vidya* it is said, "Only by the combination of brahmanas and the cows, is the performance of sacrifice for the pleasure of Vishnu complete." In this age where everybody is a shudra this has become a real task, unfortunately it gets further complicated by government policies.

One may find attribution of complete sustainability to cows little far fetched but it is well supported by scriptures and even by common sense. In reply to Lord Parasurama's questions, son of Lord of water Varuna, who lords over Pushkar Dwipa and is expert in scriptural knowledge spoke *Gomati Vidya (Vishnu-dharmottara, Part II, Chapter 42)*, which offers an insight into the spiritual and other wonderful attributes of mother cow. Even the material prosperity after which the whole world hankers cannot be achieved without cow protection and brahminical culture. Laxmi, the Goddess of prosperity, herself resides in cow's dung.

The example of serving the cow was set by the Lord Himself in His pastimes. The Supreme Lord, who is *sampurana* tended cows in Vrindavan; and Himself received his childhood Brahmin friend, Sudama *vipra*, by cleaning his feet with His own hands (*go-brahmana hitaya ca*). Importance of agriculture was also upheld by Lord Balrama, always carrying a plough in his hands (not the steering of a tractor). This is why, when Macaulay visited India, he was surprised not to see a single beggar, rather everybody was content and happy. This made him suggest Queen Victoria to strategically destroy India's cow-centric culture, educational structure and agricultural system, if England wished to rule successfully. History proves how successful they were in this. When India worshipped cows, India was a prosperous nation, called the golden bird; later when we got independence owing to mother cow (recall the first revolution for freedom because of cow fat being used in cartridges), the government chose to continue the policy of systematically slaughtering the cows! India ranks 6th in the world in Beef export. No wonder now we are a skeleton bird, dependent on MNCs and KFCs to even fill our stomach. What a stride of development we have taken!



This can be realized only if we take to the solution that Srila Prabhupada gave us just before he was to leave his body – taking to *varnasrama* and establishing our own farm community where the life revolves round cows, land and Krishna. In the last film footage of Srila Prabhupada we find him lying on his bed with HH Jayadvaita Swami holding a microphone to his lips. Carefully choosing the words for what were to become his final purports, he explained exactly why we need *varnasrama*:

...nasta prayesu abhadresu nityam bhagavata sevaya. Then raja guna, tama guna cannot do us harm. Therefore varnasrama dharma is so essential that people live in sattva guna. Tama guna, raja guna increases lust and greediness, and that implicates the living entity who exists in the material world in many, many forms. That is very dangerous. Therefore, they should be brought into sattva guna by the establishment of varnasrama dharma.

Srila Prabhupada clearly expected us to establish *varnasrama dharma* within the context of agrarian based self-sufficient communities, the actual norm and standard of Vedic society. And this is the only mantra for sustainability in all spheres of life, be spiritual, social, economic, political, or just anything.

The decision to implement *varnasrama* may be very difficult, but it is not impossible. Vedic culture is not completely lost. Today, things have exponentially worsened, but still it is not so late. It is also important to realize that everything exists in a context. If we had Vedic culture, we also had a set of traditions to follow which functioned as a support system to that culture, and offering conducive atmosphere for practicing it. For example, everything was more localized, be management, economy, transport or just anything. I remember the days as recent as 45 years

ago, when my father got a job in Indian Air Force and had to leave the village and get transferred in different parts of the country, it had become a very serious issue. Travelling within the country was so difficult; going overseas was just unimaginable in cultured families. No wonder it helps in protecting the culture. It was equally impossible for a person to accept any eatable from outside, where the cook is unknown or not related. This explains why their consciousness was elevated. The only time people travelled was when they went for *dharmayatra*. Then also they would carry a potful of *sattu* (powdered mixed grains) or beaten rice which could be eaten just by mixing water in it. No need of biscuits, hotels, etc. Life was so simple. You want to clean your teeth, don't need to keep a plastic tooth brush that you use for days and a fancy tooth paste. Just take a neem twig and brush, every day a fresh tooth brush, with an add-on tongue cleaner. There is such a deep science behind smallest of the actions that it is better to follow it with faith rather than challenge it at every step. Similarly India has an immortal tradition of cow worship. If we return to that and revive our old traditions, other structures will certainly follow on their own. This will ultimately lead to sustainability – both spiritually and materially.

A few may find cow protection as the *bija mantra* for sustainability as little far fetched. But recall *Srimad Bhagavatam*. In order to usher in his era of decadence, Kali chose to attack the cow and bull. He did this in complete wisdom that he was hitting at the very foundation of the entire structure. So, if we have to save ourselves the solution lies in cows. Further, sustainability of an economy is nothing; when complete creation can be sustained by mother cow. *Shiva Purana* and *Mahabharata* mention that seven entities can sustain humanity and creation – cows, brahmanas, Vedas, chaste woman, truthful people, not greedy people, and charity. *Mahabharata* says:



*Gobhiviprasya vedaischa, satobhih satyvadhibhi
Alubdhirdanashilaishcha, saptabhirdharyate mahi*

Therefore, any development or happiness is fragile, shortlived and unsustainable unless mother cow is happy. Srila Prabhupada commented that one can earn happiness by pleasing the bull and the cow. When the bull and cow are in a joyful mood, it is to be understood that the people of the world are also in a joyous mood (*SB 1.17.3 Purport*). Cow protection is not possible without villages, and naturally "India's civilization was based on village residence. (*Morning Walk 13/10/75 Gita Nagari*)" "Clever means that he must stay in his own land. He should not be cheated by the paper and go to the city [which will one day collapse]." (*Conversation 25/7/73 London*) "Actually, everyone should be engaged to produce food, but the modern set-up of civilization is that few people are engaged in producing food, and others are eating. ... They are artificially getting money." (*Conversation 25/7/73 London*) This scenario is certainly not sustainable in the long run. What is the solution for this? "So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to revive the original, constitutional position. So one of them, in Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, is village organization, as you are trying here." (*Lecture 15/7/76 Gita Nagari*). We have ever well wisher Srila Prabhupada's solution for sustainability, will we take it?



Sustainable Cow Protection

- HG Kurma Rupa Dasa

If a family keeps a cow and calf and has a few acres of land, a vegetarian diet is easily sustainable. I know a family in Colorado whose cow gives nine gallons of milk a day and she lactates for four to five years. They have enough land for the cow and her offspring to graze on and even with several months of winter they can easily maintain their cow. (see CFC News July 2010).

If you mean to ask will protecting a family cow produce enough income to maintain herself and provide for a family of five people with urban habits, then no, it won't. In an agrarian setting cows actually give more than they take. However, when one tries to produce milk for commercial purposes and requires expensive farming equipment (tractors, bailers, combines, silos etc.) has to pay outrageous prices for veterinary aid, purchase homogenization and pasteurization equipment, conveyances to transport the milk to urban areas and so on, sustainability becomes a problem. In short, what makes cow protection unsustainable today is urbanization and consumerism.

Remove these two from the picture and you have the formula for a peaceful existence. A large herd is sustainable in an agrarian community with common pasturing grounds and bordering forests, not otherwise.

I have visited village communities in India which still resemble the ancient Vedic model where every household hosts a few cows and a few cowherd men or women take the collective herd out to pasture daily leaving the calves behind. At the end of each day there is a celebration when the cows return with their stomachs full and many with udders full as well. The only investment is the time it takes for a few people to accompany the cows in their daily wanderings.



The cows are milked; the calves are fed; the milk boiled on a cow dung fire; hot milk is served; the remainder left overnight to become yoghurt; which is later churned to make butter; and the nourishing buttermilk is offered to unexpected guests and whoever else. I have never witnessed a more joyous existence. But the villagers I have examined pay their bills by farming, not selling dairy products.

“Excess males and unproductive females” are terms used by commercial dairy farmers that have nothing to do with cow protection but everything to do with cow exploitation. Urbanization and mechanization have rendered bulls unemployed whereas in the Vedic model the bull calves are valued more than the females as there is always ploughing and draught work to be done.

Since their dung and urine have numerous practical uses in agrarian life, and since Vedantists consider tending cows and pleasing them to be an activity which pleases God,

real cow protectors always consider cows and bulls productive even when dry, retired or diseased.

We do not encourage commercial dairy farming or any type of attempt to make living from selling cow products. A profit orientation invariably leads to decisions which sell the cow short.

The term “humane culling” is an oxymoron at best or a euphemism at worst. If you are humane, how can you take the life of a creature who has not agreed to give it up? Why not call it what it is? – killing to increase profit. People who coin such terms do so to minimize the guilt resulting from acting against their conscience.

Other examples are “terminating the pregnancy” instead of saying “killing the child in the womb”; or “pacifying the enemy” instead of bombing the hell out of them; and so on. When the sinister want to manipulate others to perform horrible and unbeneficial acts which may disturb their conscience, they employ such devices to facilitate the phenomenon of self-deception.

Creation and employment of such devices indicates malignant narcissism. In an agrarian society cows have a wonderful effect on the ecology. Their dung is known to be the best fertilizer and their hooves and horns have a nourishing effect on the earth.

You may find Rudolf Steiner’s (the founder of biodynamics) work interesting. A Google search will yield much on his work. Since in the Vedic formula, ahimsa is the first principle, I think a vegan diet is better than one including commercial dairy products obtained by violence. But the best and most wholesome diet is one which includes milk obtained from a loving cow who is treated like one’s own mother.



References to cow protection abound in Vedic literatures like *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Srimad Bhagavatam* and other Puranas which describe an agrarian social structure and lifestyle focused on attaining spiritual rather than material goals. Frankly, I think you will be hard-pressed to find much published research today condoning cow protection since it does not serve the purpose of urbanization which is to make the citizens dependent on exploitative and manipulative oligarchs.

Modern man has lost his roots. Cow protection hasn’t lost importance but because urban man has become so successfully indoctrinated and acclimated to artificial living and consumerism he no longer understands or values the fruits of it.

The real purpose of cow protection is to please the Supreme Lord Krishna. Milk, dung, urine, ghee, yoghurt and draught are the natural by-products and are considered most essential for religious rituals and producing the necessities for a wholesome life. In the Vedic agrarian model milk is not considered the goal of cow protection and a bull calf is celebrated more than a female calf as once trained, he is productive for more years than the dairy cows.

Go-raksha (cow protection) is done properly if one takes it as a religious duty rather than a career opportunity. In the former mindset one attempts to serve cows rather than be served by them; one aspires for spiritual gain rather than material gain. This is what makes it work.

One famous verse explains, "One should follow the cows, feed them sufficiently, and circumambulate them. If the cows are happy then Lord Gopala is understood to be satisfied." (*Hari Bhakti Vilas* 17.244)

When the Supreme Lord is satisfied with one, He carries what one has and provides what one lacks. Thus, cow protection, if done properly is completely sustainable from the spiritual viewpoint.

[Source: <http://www.careforcows.org>]

Sustainability is Achievable!



The concept of sustainability first appeared more than twenty years ago, but before environmental and economic crises of recent years, few people really understood what it really meant in practice. As a result of that today the global ecological system is in danger. The myth of sustainable economic growth has also been unveiled: a sustainable growth cannot be maintained.

The first step towards reaching real sustainability means changing one's everyday practices radically. Experts encourage reducing consumption above all and urge environmentally conscious practices.

The ecological farming of our model community, which is located in Krishna valley in Somogyvamos, Hungary, is a wonderful example that these principles can be achieved, put into practice and can be maintained in day-to-day life for the long term.

The goal of our adjoining Eco-valley Program is to show everybody interested that one can achieve a qualitative life in a way that is sustainable environmentally, economically and socially.

"[...] with its present consumption and technology, humanity could only live sustainability on an Earth that is 25-30% bigger than it really is. We crossed the threshold of the Earth's capacity in 1978 and ever since then we are extending our ecological footprints at the expense of nature's reserves."

[Gabor Vida, Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences]

The ecological footprint shows how many hectares of land one person needs to satisfy his or her needs (including the amount of land needed for neutralizing all the generated waste). It is important, because the amount of arable land is not unlimited: the Earth's capacity is finite. Unlike the figures calculated for Hungary and the entire planet, the life-style of Krishna Valley's inhabitants falls into the sustainable category. [The ecological footprint of one person in Krishna Valley is only 42% of that of an average Hungarian.]

Urban Farming and Self-Sufficiency

- HG Lalitanatha Das (Copenhagen)



One of the goals of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness is "teaching a simpler and more natural way of life," as Srila Prabhupada stated it in his seven purposes of ISKCON. This is generally understood to refer to a self-sufficient agrarian lifestyle based on land and cows.

In this year's GBC resolutions 310 and 311 the GBC asks its members to, as far as possible, commit themselves to spend 10 percent of their time helping to develop farm projects. The reasons are obvious. Although some farm projects have had their successes, "there has been a decline in the development of ISKCON farms, and most remaining farms are struggling."

Srila Prabhupada saw farming and cow protection not only as self-sustaining but as a means of generating prosperity for the rest of his society. This has not happened.

Readers may be thinking that I am proposing a mass exodus from the cities: "Let us all leave our congested dwellings and settle on farm communities in unspoiled natural settings, without modern amenities, electricity, running water and the Internet."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, I think what is hampering our attempts at natural living is the idea that natural living can only happen in some places and not in others. So I have something else in mind. If the ISKCON natural way of life shall be anything more than a few open-air museums with no relevance to the way most of us live, we'll have to let the farms and the natural lifestyle move into the cities and become an integral part of the urban life of each of us. We city slickers must become active and involved urban farmers, if we want to see "a simpler and more natural way of life" ever happen.

Rural life and industrial specialization

Let's imagine a small village from before the Industrial Revolution. Almost everyone made their living on farms or smallholdings, growing and producing most of their own needs. What they couldn't produce themselves was generally bought or bartered from other local producers; few things had to be brought in from far away.

Since they had to make most things themselves, most people were all-round experts as farmers, gardeners, carpenters, craftsmen, etc.; very few were highly specialized in a trade. Most families had a few cows, made their own milk products, grew grains and beans, vegetables, fruits and nuts, kept sheep for wool, grew seeds and herbs, ground their own flour, even built and repaired their own houses, etc.

The village was ecologically a closed unit. Dung from cows was fertilizer for grains and vegetables, and waste from vegetables and grains were fodder for cows and sheep. Only what came as a natural surplus from this ecological cycle was sold to markets outside the village. This also made for a stable economy. One kind of crop failing was almost always compensated by other things not failing; hardly ever did everything fail at one time.

The Industrial Revolution changed that. Industry meant to bring different raw materials from different places far away together at one place and process them to a finished, specialized product. Next the product was shipped out and sold at markets, and with the returns the industrialist and his employees could buy their necessities of life (which they previously used to make themselves).

The industrial life style was very attractive, for in good times one could make fantastic profits. Of course, it also had its downsides. In times of a low market one could also lose a lot, and everyone lost independence because their means of livelihood now depended not only on themselves but also on economic and political factors beyond their control.

This is not so much the issue; the real point is that, whether we like it or not, the Industrial Revolution changed the lifestyle. From being all-round, self-sufficient farmers and smallholders, people become one-sided specialists, often highly trained, in one field. Instead of growing and producing their own needs they now earned a wage through their particular expertise, which enabled them to buy all their needs on the market — producers and consumers. Today this is the regular life style of almost everyone. Many are not even aware that things have not always been like that, or that it is still possible to exist in some other way.

Urban agriculture

Today's urban life is the outcome of the Industrial Revolution with its armies of specialized producers and consumers. "Giving up our urban lifestyle" therefore means to give up the idea that the only way to exist is by selling a particular expertise in exchange for the power to purchase one's basic needs. If we want to exemplify "a simpler and more natural way of life," we'll have to return to a pre-industrial concept of living, even in the midst of modern urban life. This is, at least, my claim. In particular, whether living in cities or not, we should, as far as possible, strive to produce as many of our own basic needs as possible, in particular our food. Anything else is not "simple" or "natural."

I would much rather have had the GBC recommend something like this: "All ISKCON projects and devotees should as far as possible grow their own produce, flowers, and milk products. To the degree this is not possible, they should purchase these from other ISKCON projects or devotees, and as a last resort buy from the general market what cannot be procured in any of these two ways."

Some of you may object: "Wait a minute! We are living in big, polluted cities. There is no way we can grow our own food here." However, this is not true. Plenty of things grow in cities. Indeed, big cities are where one of the world's largest, if not the largest, agricultural crops are grown. Although written in 1988, the following observations from Bill Mollison are more true than ever:

"The single largest crop system in the USA, requiring 573 kilocalories per square meter to maintain — more than the energy used in the production of corn or vegetables — is....lawns! "In the USA, it is estimated that 16 million acres were devoted to lawn by 1978 ... and a vast expansion of lawns has taken place in recent years."



"By 1978, lawns used 15 to 20 percent of the annual fertilizer production in the USA; equal to that used on the total food agriculture of India. As for water use, 44 percent of domestic water consumption in California is used for lawns, which is another enormous public cost of lawns, as well as long-term groundwater, atmospheric, and soil pollution costs."

The astounding fact is that any modern society that grows extensive lawns "could produce all its food on the same area, using the same resources." Think about that. All the land now wasted to grow lawns could easily produce all the vegetables, fruits and flowers that we need.

What's more is, "the yields of this agriculture create a massive public disposal problem, consisting as they are of poisoned grass waste, rich in Dieldrin, DDT, biocides and nitrogen." Therefore Mollison laments: "The lawn has become the curse of modern town landscapes" (Bill Mollison, *Permaculture — A Designer's Manual*, Tagari Publications, Australia 1988, pp. 434-435)

Mollison points out that in the USA the average suburban lawn is about 650 to 900 square meters. Compare this with Srila Prabhupada's statement: "One can cultivate a garden. Anyone who has land — in India, at least, any poor man has a certain amount of land — can utilize that for Krishna by growing flowers to offer Him." (BG, 11.55 purp.) How many have thought when reading this passage, "Well, maybe it is like that in India, but where I live, not everyone has a certain amount of land." In fact, there is plenty of land everywhere, including most big cities; we just don't see the forest for trees, or, rather, we don't see the land for lawns. Do you still believe that urban farming is not possible?

Practical urban self-sufficiency

Many are not aware how little land is actually needed to easily grow more food than one family, or one temple community of devotees, can use. Of course, keeping cows may not be possible in many of the world's cities — mainly for legal reasons — but to fully supply one family with fruits and vegetables every day of the year can easily be done with 100 to 200 square meters of garden in most parts of the world. This includes northern places such as Scandinavia, where my wife and I for almost ten years have not even once had to buy fruits or vegetables from the market. Of course, we are obsessed with gardening, so we cultivate more than 500 square meters in our back garden, supplying not only ourselves but also many of our devotee friends and neighbours with first-class organic vegetables and fruits of a quality and freshness never to be found on the markets.



If one doesn't have a garden, it may be possible to lease a small patch of land from someone who has. Even a few square meters can be utilized. Indeed, in some ways one is better off with too little than too much land, because it forces one to learn the art of growing a lot on a very small area. Once you get started you'll be surprised to see how much yield you can get.

If even that is not possible, one must at least possess a balcony or some windows in one's apartment. There one can grow herbs, tomatoes, chilies, etc., along with Srimati Tulasidevi. Thus no one is barred from growing at least something.

Now, cities are polluted, so it goes without saying that one should not cultivate a vegetable garden next to a highway or other source of pollution (but one can still grow flowers there, or

even have a small nursery with trees and bushes which can be sold at a market at a good price). Still, by looking around one will find that there are plenty of patches in every city where one can safely grow vegetables for human consumption. Maybe it is not perfect, but it is in any case as good as, and often better, than what one would buy at the supermarkets.

The problem is not that urban farming is not possible. The real difficulty is that most of us have become so removed from Mother Nature that we don't have a clue how to grow a few potatoes or flowers. The good news is that it is not difficult. Everyone who wants to can become a self-sufficient urban vegetable farmer by learning it from someone who already knows it, by reading relevant books on the subject, and — most important — simply by doing it. There will be failures at first but also successes, and gradually, over the years, one will gain experience and become a very expert urban farmer.



Being an urban farmer requires no great investment except time. One doesn't have to wait to get the support of one's leaders in the community. No one has to step forward and start up a costly farm project that one can hope to fit into. Urban farming is extremely grassroots-friendly. Anyone can do it by simply starting with whatever is available where one is.

It is also not a losing business; rather, it is surprisingly profitable and doesn't need to be artificially subsidized. It is unaffected by good and bad times and can continue indefinitely and spread to others, once someone catches on to it.

Conclusion

It is very good that the GBC is concerned about the decline in the development of ISKCON farms, but the problem goes deeper than not enough money and time put into our existing model of what simple and natural living implies. More than anything, it is a conceptual problem, going back to the roots of the industrial mentality, which now defines our lifestyle and how it is feasible to maintain oneself. It is necessary, in particular, to give up the industrial concept of specialization, at least in regard to "a simpler and more natural way of life." Just like we don't hand over our eating to specialists, we also cannot hand over our lifestyle to specialists. A natural lifestyle is not meant only to be practised by a few specialist "farm devotees" on behalf of everyone else who in turn have their own specialized services to take care of. Natural living will never happen, and our agrarian program will continue to decline, until this industrial mentality is rooted out.

Once this is understood, the solution is not complicated or costly. What I call "urban farming" can be encouraged and implemented by devotees everywhere. Simply creating awareness through training and examples can change everything to the better and initiate what in the end may become a second wave — the urban wave — in ISKCON's agrarian revolution, thus actually "teaching everyone a simpler and more natural way of life." [Excerpt from the article with the same title as it appeared in http://www.chakra.org/living2/SimpMay27_09.html on May 27, 2009]

• Varnashrama Developments



From October 9th to 16th, 2011, sponsored by the European Union, the ISKCON associated Eco Valley Foundation of Hungary held one-week seminar called Pillars of Sustainability, at New Vraja Dhama, the Hare Krishna farm community in the South-Western part of the country. New Vraja Dhama, situated in a beautiful rural Hungarian setting and home to 130 devotees plus 40 cows and oxen, thus hosted 25 attendants, all devotees, from 14 European countries.

Inspired by the apparent slowdown, that ISKCON farm communities and varnasrama-projects have witnessed over the last decade, the organizers invited devotees from around Europe interested in the development of *Vaisnava* principles and varnasrama-principles with the hope of infusing more life into this most important mission of Srila Prabhupada's. The purpose of the conference was thus to increase the cohesion within the society of ISKCON and the awareness of ISKCON's spiritual duty to implement a dynamic vision of a Vedic devotee community that can accommodate the entire devotee society, and possibly the world – a house in which the whole world can live together.

The week consisted of a nice mixture of lectures, workshops, discussions, and practical field trips to inspect the different aspects of the community, such as the goshala, oxpowered technology, gurukula, fields, vegetable patches, grain and fruit storages, waste management, the infrastructure, the small cottage industries and oilpressing machines, devotee residential areas, and, of course, the temple with its restaurant.

Also during the week, the devotee participants were treated to training in several topics of social, economical, and environmental stability in rural farm communities, using New Vraja Dhama as the example for such a community in order to extract and possibly expand its principles more generally to the whole of Europe.

Every day started with a presentation on one of the topics of sustainability, such as what are the



needs to achieve social stability, the need for a constitution and clear mission, how to manage and control the economy in a large self-sufficient community, and the practical aspects of environmental and ecological sustainability and self-sufficiency. This was followed by workshops where participants sat together in groups to discuss how to practically realize a similar community of their own dreams.

The field trips in the afternoons took the participants to different areas of New Vraja Dhama, such as the vegetable fields and vegetable and grain storage rooms, the pastures, the cows and oxen, the community's own Vedic school, the private residential areas, the biologic sewage

plant (not the least important), etc. The participants appreciated how the community functions for 90 percents part without electricity with all heating done by woodburners using wood from the community's own forests (Perhaps the most unsustainable element are the cellular phones which, after a failed attempt to ban them a decade ago, now are an integral part of the devotees internal communication system J).

The last part of the day was devoted to a game fashioned by Radha Krishna Prabhu and other members of the Evo Valley where participants in a kind of monopoly fashioned around an ISKCON farm community amused themselves with questions and quandaries from real life management experienced by ISKCON community managers over the years.

Interesting was also one day when the field trip went outside the community into the surrounding village and neighbouring area. Here another 60 devotees have bought houses and are gradually having a very positive influence in this somewhat impoverished part of Hungary, so much so that after the last local election, three out of five members in the local village council are now devotees.



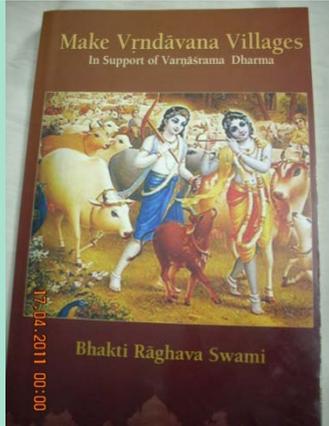
This caused some talk about how to practically affect and interact with our neighbouring communities in a positive way.

The six days seminar was concluded by an address by His Holiness Sivarama Swami who stated that only by supporting each other as devotees and as a devotee community, even in practical terms of, for instance, as much possible only buying from other devotees, can we survive and develop as a Krishna conscious society.

New Vraja Dhama briefly:

The community was started in 1993 on 150 hectares of empty fields. This has been increased to 266 hectares where devotees have constructed 53 buildings for residential purposes, barns for the animals, administration building, restaurant and, of course, a magnificent temple building for Their Lordships Sri-Sri Radha-Syamasundara. Pasturing lands and vegetable fields have been established, wells digged and around 300.000 trees planted. The farm community has attracted much attention, not only from within ISKCON, but also from the greater society, including the 30.000 tourists who visit it every year, as a very ideal attempt to establish an ecologically and socially self-sustaining community that can be a model for similar communities around the world. It is the hope of the community to be able to facilitate similar seminars and conferences for devotees over the years to come.

• Varnashrama Literature

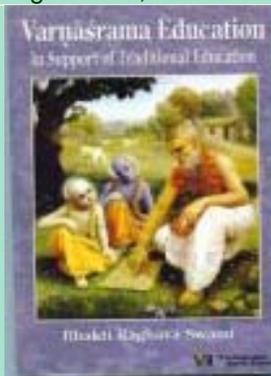
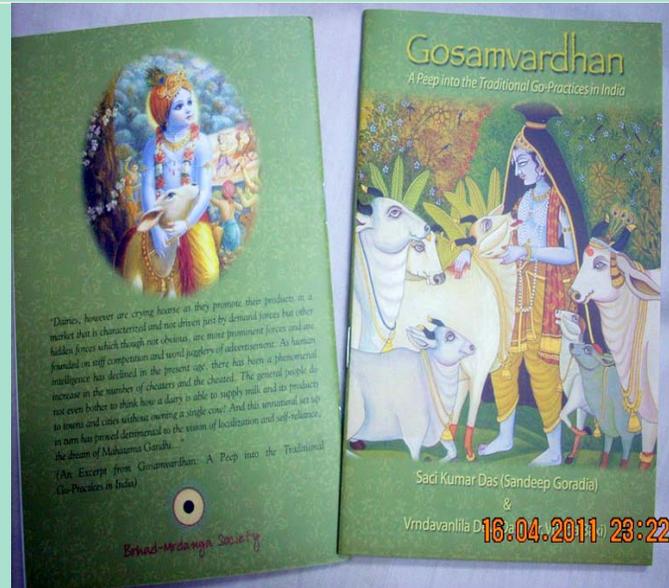


Make Vrndavan Villages

H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami, who heads the Varnashrama Ministry, India has authored several books on Varnashrama, including this. This book is meant to serve as a general introduction to some of the basic concepts of varnashrama-dharma. In essence, the subject matter deals with both the topic of education as well as social and spiritual upliftment through a well established and scientifically planned educational system and social structure which encompass all spheres and all dimensions of life. Its revised edition includes more information on the subject and exciting additions on cow.

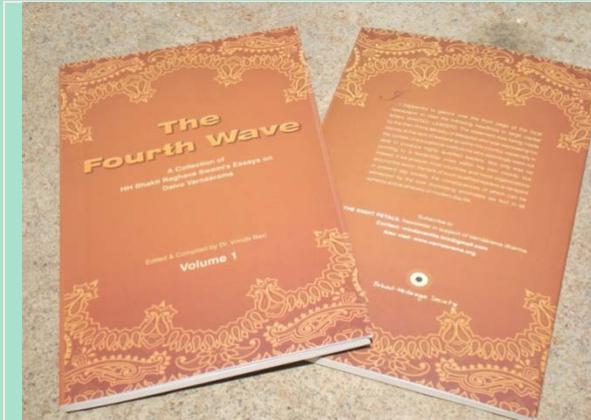
Gosamvardhan: A Peep Into the Traditional Go-Practices in India

Released just last month, on the occasion of Fourth International Seminar on Daiva Varnashrama, Sridham Mayapur, is authored by HG Sacikumar prabhu (with hands-on experience in farming and cow raising) and Vrndavanlila dd (Editor, *The Eight Petals*, a monthly e-newsletter in support of Daiva Varnashrama dharma). It makes an intensive reading as it pours information about the traditional practices related to cow rearing in traditional India and fragility of present situation. It should be of great help for those who are just not interested in keeping the cows in goshala, but also in reviving an ecosystem that supports mother cow in her old glory and not as a liability. Its 'Introduction' has been written by Indian Minister for Daiva Varnashrama, HH Bhakti Raghava Swami and 'Foreword' by none other than the Global Minister for Cow Protection & Agriculture, HG Balbhadra prabhu.



Varnashrama Education

The topic of education, a highly debated and controversial subject among many many educationalists and students alike, has always been of extreme importance and relevance to any society, especially in the most traditional oriental cultures. This books deals with the aspect of Education in the context of Varnashrama.

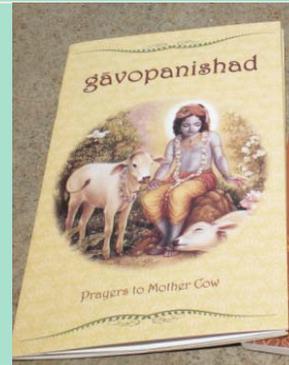


The Fourth Wave

It is a wonderful collection of HH Bhakti Raghava Swami's essays on Daiva Varnasrama addressing a wide range of concerns of daily life beginning from the very definition of the term 'dharma', administration, family system, education, food, to technology. The 'Preface' for *The Fourth Wave* has been written by HG Patita Pavan Adhikary, a senior disciple of Srila Prabhupada, a strong daiva varnasrama supporter, a prolific writer, and an astrologer who has the distinction of having served as ISKCON Temple President and Director (Book Reviews) for BBT.

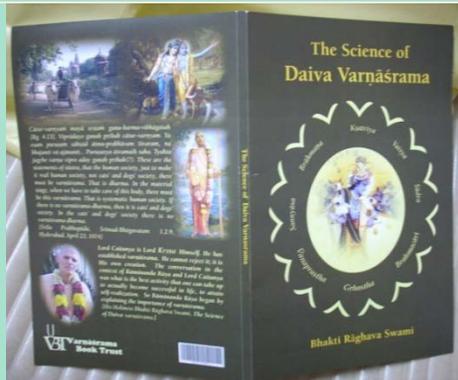
Gavopanishad: Prayers to Mother Cow

Cows, dear to the Lord Himself, have been integral to the concept of varnasrama and have functioned as the defining features of Vedic social, economic, and spiritual system. This small attractive book contains lovely prayers in the glorification of Mother Cow, complemented by short but interesting information on the significance of cow and panchgavya products. The 'Foreword' to *Gavopanishad* has been written by H.H. Bhakti Raghava Swami himself.



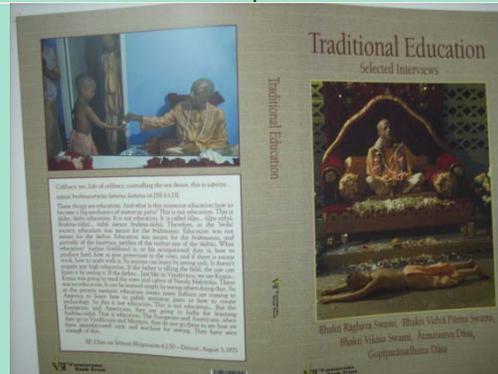
The Science of Daiva Varṇāśrama

The book by His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami is an effective attempt to address the general queries and doubts related varṇāśrama dharma. In order to make it convenient for the reader it has been divided into three sections, beginning with the very definition and understanding of the concept of varṇāśrama dharma as envisioned by His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada, to move to second section of the need or relevance of varṇāśrama followed by the third section dealing with the questions related to complications arising in the process of implementation of principles of daiva varṇāśrama dharma in the present situation.



Traditional Education

Traditional Education which is usually viewed with denigration if not scorn has been very interestingly dealt. It very effectively brings out the science behind the method, structure, curriculum, efficacy and even *patrata* of traditional education. It finds itself on insightful answers given to 20 questions related to different aspects of education. It includes interviews by HH Bhakti Raghava Swami, HH Bhakti Vidya Purna Swami, HG Gopiparanadhan Das and HG Atmatattva Das. It also includes an interesting lecture given by HH Bhakti Vikas Swami on the same subject.



In addition to the above there are many more books in the pipeline and several documentary movies. In order to get more information one can contact: vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com



Global Village Initiative Committee meets at Mumbai

(Source: www.dandavats.com by HG Bharat Chandra Das)

October 15-21. Mumbai. Global Village Initiative Committee (GVIC) met for the second time after its inception last year. The committee was formed under the auspices of GBC as a part of strategic planning initiative.



Committee is made up of 14 members lead by His Holiness Bhakti Raghava Swami as Chairman and HG Radha Krsna Prabhu of New Vrajadham (Hungary), HG Gokul Prabhu of New Gvardhan (Australia) and HG Bharat Chandra Das of Krishna Balaram Ksetra (India) as Executive committee. His Holiness Bhakti Dhira Damodara Maharaj, HG Dhanesvara prabhu, HG Samba Prabhu are few senior experienced devotees among the panel.

This global effort aims to facilitate the rural community development in ISKCON across the globe as very much desired by Srila Prabhupada.

There is an increasing interest amongst devotees all over the world for agrarian community living. There are ongoing efforts and few success stories of these efforts. Facilitating these efforts in various ways is the need of the hour.

Srila Prabhupada predicted that people will take shelter of our farms when difficulties arise in the modern world.

GVIC has got it clear. It is all set to push on this fourth wave of Srila Prabhupada's movement. GVIC invites participation. Contact the corresponding secretary - Bharat.Chandra.BRS@pamho.net

Final 14 Sustainable Energy innovators make shortlist for Zayed Future Energy Prize [Source: <http://www.wam.ae>]

November 28, 2011. Abu Dhabi. Following two days debate, the Selection Committee of the Zayed Future Energy Prize, comprising 11 of the world's foremost energy experts, have chosen the final 14 candidates out of a record 425 entries, who will get a chance to compete for the award in January 2012.

The candidates shortlisted demonstrate a wide geographic coverage in their activities and represent the potential in addressing the global demand for energy efficiency, sustainable and equal access to energy and novel approach to policymaking. The Selection Committee closely scrutinised candidates on areas such as their carbon footprint and the impact of their projects on local communities. The awards are based on three new categories for exceptional candidates in the renewable energy and sustainability field.

Nike & Puma, Reframing the Sustainability Message for a Younger Market

[Source: <http://www.triplepundit.com>]

November 28, 2011. 2011 has been a big year for the cause of sustainability in sports and athletics. In March, we saw the launch of the Green Sports Alliance, a nonprofit organization founded by a collection of Pacific Northwest pro-sport

teams and facilities in partnership with the NRDC. Since then, the coalition for furthering sustainable practices throughout the sports industry has grown to nearly 70 members and partners spanning all major North American pro leagues. In January of this year, Nike launched its cutting-edge website dedicated to its sustainability brand, NikeBetterWorld.com. In May, Puma released its first Environmental Profit and Loss statement, valuing its GHG impacts at \$194 Million USD, the first such triple bottom line documentation in its class. This November, Nike released its Material Sustainability Index (MSI). Puma also announced its current research and development of compostable clothing and footwear.

Both companies are committed to the challenge presented by Greenpeace to eliminate any discharge of hazardous chemicals by 2020, forming the Joint Roadmap Towards Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals along with competitor Adidas.

Sustainability on College agenda

[Source: www.businesscornwall.co.uk/]

November 28, 2011. Cornwall College has appointed a new programme coordinator to help integrate sustainability into its construction courses.

Clare Lenehan, a former teacher at both Mounts Bay and Humphrey Davy schools in Penzance, will be working with teaching staff at Camborne, St Austell and Saltash campuses to help teach students about sustainability and prepare them for the overall sustainable construction agenda.

John Stagg, Cornwall College's corporate curriculum lead for technology, said: "Sustainability has now become more of an issue than ever before and especially

within the construction industry, which can use a lot of natural resources and materials.

RICS Launches Sustainability Action Plan

[Source: www.build.co.uk/]

November 28, 2011. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has launched a sustainability action plan that spells out how it is engaging with the environmental agenda and working towards a fairer, more sustainable world.

Initiatives range from green business strategy to responsible engagement with employees, and from promoting fair access to the profession to action on the ground in international development.

Siemens accepting application for Sustainable Community Awards *[Source: www.nic.org/]*

December 05, 2011. For the fifth year, Siemens is sponsoring The Siemens Sustainable Community Awards in partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Business Civic Leadership Center (BCLC). Nominations for the 2012 awards will be accepted until January 13, 2012, in three categories: small communities, midsize cities and large communities. Each winning city will receive a donation of \$20,000 worth of trees.

Strong candidates for the award are able to demonstrate that their community has forged relationships with residents and the local private sector to set and achieve complementary economic, environmental and social goals. Communities will be judged by a panel of experts in three categories — environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and overarching sustainability.



• **Mails to the Editor**

Hare Krishna Mataji,
Please accept my humble obeisances.
All glories to Srila Prabhupada & Sri Krishna's Cows.
We went through your book *Gosamvardhan*. It's just fantastic. .. Many of our visitors find your book very interesting & informative. ...

Thank you very much,
Your Servant,

- **HG Kamalakantha Dasa**

Hare Krishna Mataji,
Please accept my humble obeisances.
I am very happy to hear that you have the blog now. Wonderful. Gita Coaching is closely related to Varnasrama as it helps each individual find his optimal *varna* and *asrama* and release his potential based on the *Bhagavad-gita*.
Your servant,

- **HG Akrura Dasa**

Hare Krishna,
Many many thanks for your kind emails [newsletter] that work as b-complex.
Hare Krishna
Thank you very much,

- **Vijayaraghava Chilkapati (Ramapaduka)**

".....if the process of varnasrama dharma is introduced, even in the age of Kali, the situation of Satya-yuga can be invoked. The Hare Krishna movement or Krishna Consciousness is meant for this purpose." (SB 9.10.51. Purport)

"...by establishing independent, God conscious, self-sufficient farm communities, we will bring about the collapse of this cheating, artificial way of banking, ultimately disempowering the Illuminati's demoniac New World Order agenda." [Conversation, January 1977]

The mails/ articles can be posted to eightpetalsnewsletter@gmail.com or vrindavanlila.brs@gmail.com

Focus for the next issue -

Astrology

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Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare