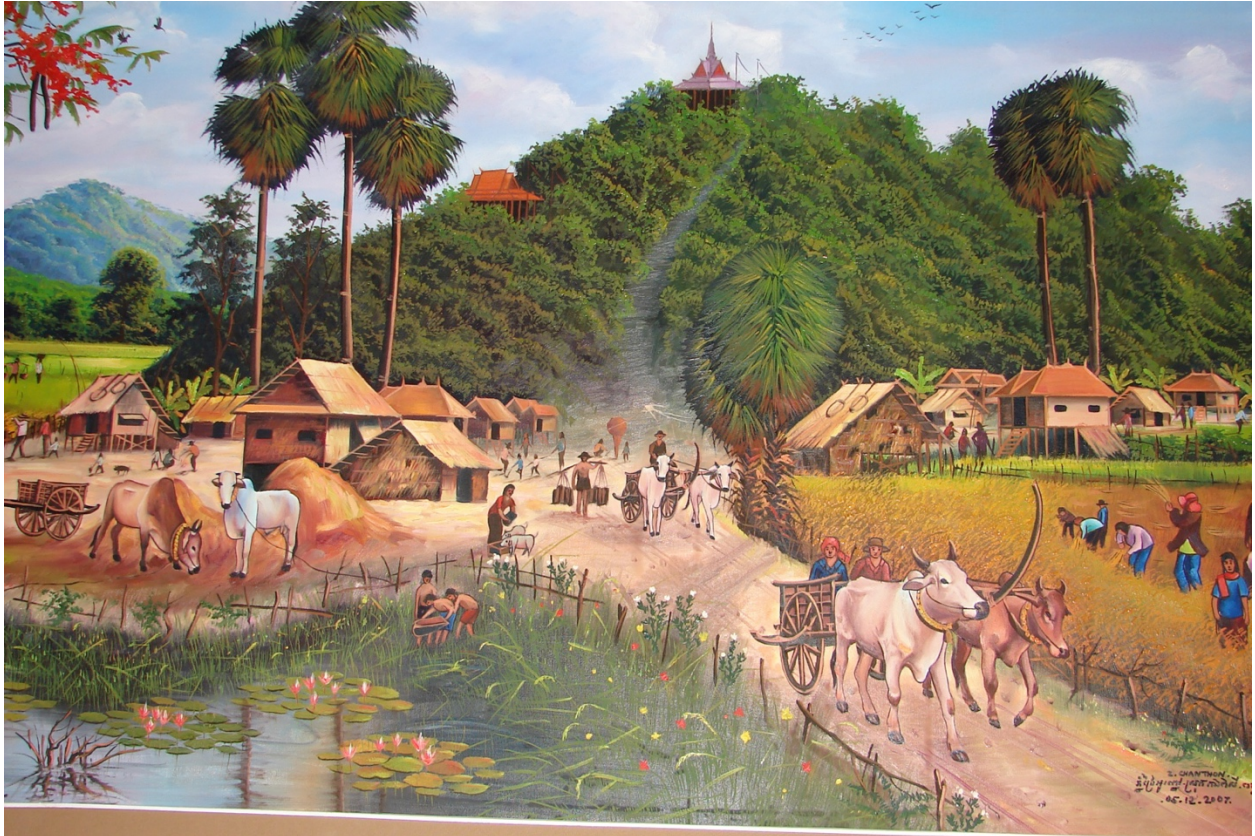


VEDIC VAISNAVA VILLAGES

Beginner's Guide to Simple Living and High Thinking



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ABSTRACT

Vedic Vaisnava Villages – Beginner’s Guide to Simple Living and High Thinking is meant to serve as a preliminary guide for devotees 1) to help them understand the importance of villages, 2) to help them value the underlying principles of a self-sufficient and sustainable lifestyle, 3) to help them know why village life forms the basis of the Vedic culture called *Sanatana Dharma*, and 4) to offer tangible steps towards establishing such rural self-sufficient communities.

Covered in the booklet are topics related to the ideological differences between the traditional rural lifestyle as advocated in the Vedic literatures and the more recent concept advocating living in modern cities where greater comfort and facilities are said to be more easily available. Advocates of simple living in the country are not only to be found in the Vedic times, indeed they are also contemporary, and the concept is increasingly being embraced by thoughtful men and women.

One will also learn practical ways by which one can prepare oneself to make such a change, what options one has in making a choice, some basic notions about how to select land, some basic but very important concepts about Vedic Education and Vedic Economy, both diametrically opposed to modern thought and ways.

The booklet *Vedic Vaisnava Villages – Beginner’s Guide to Simple Living and High Thinking* will arouse interest in the reader and guide him to specific sources of references where the various subject matters discussed in the booklet can be studied more deeply to further one’s understanding and to take up this more natural way of life in the midst of our ever increasing precarious unsustainable lifestyle we have adopted in the modern days of over mechanization and over industrialization.

The booklet will especially highlight the teachings of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, ISKCON, who spoke extensively on the subject matter and underlined the need to establish Varnasrama Colleges, Traditional Gurukulas and Vedic self-sufficient communities to help humanity more easily achieve the goal of life as advocated in the Vedic literatures, i.e. self-realisation and returning back home, back to Godhead.

INVOCATION

*namo brahmanya-devaya
go-brahmana-hitaya ca
jagat-hitaya krsnaya
govindaya namo namah*

My Lord, You are the well-wisher of the cows and the *brahmanas*,
and You are the well-wisher of the entire human society and world. ¹

*om surabhyai nama
itimantro 'yam tu sadaksarah
siddho laksa japennaiva
bhaktanam kalpapaadayah*

“OM Surabhyai namah” is the *mantra* which is six lettered
meaning “My respectful obeisances to *Surabhi*”. Chanting this
mantra one *lakh* times bestows all achievements and fulfils all
desires of devotees of the Supreme Lord. ²

*tratavyah prathamam gavah
tratah trayanti ta dvijan
gobrahmana paritrane
paritratam jagat bhavet*

First of all, cows should be protected. Cows thus protected will in
turn protect the *brahmanas*. This, when protection of cows and
brahmanas is achieved, then the whole world is protected. ³

¹ *Vishnu Purana 1.19.65*

² *Brahma Vaivarta Purana 2.47.16*

³ *Harivamsa Purana, 55.31*

INTRODUCTION

Vedic sociology essentially promotes an agrarian-based culture where most citizens live in traditional villages without having to commute to work daily as we experience in our modern world of ever-increasing urbanisation. The livelihood and lifestyle in such a societal setup are largely connected with natural agriculture which is directly related with the care and protection of cows that form an essential part of families and villages.

The 1951 census of India recorded the rural population to be around 85%. By 1960s, the number dropped to 82% and has reduced gradually. The recent 2020 census recorded the rural population of India to be around 65%.⁴

There is a direct connection with the events of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution in Europe that occurred a few centuries ago, both of which have shaped the present-day narrative which, from a Vedic point of view, in leading countries away from the more natural and simple traditional ways of living. In particular, the French Revolution, by suppressing the Church and Monarchy,⁵ the two predominant authoritative figures of the time, rejected what the Vedic teachings consider to be the most essential components of any society, the *brahmanas* (spiritual teachers) and the *ksatriyas* (public leaders).

Modern technology and industry have driven us on the dangerous path of ever-increasing consumerism and exploitation of natural resources. It is estimated that in the last 30 years alone, over 30% of the natural resources on our planet have

⁴<https://brainly.in/question/47771973#:~:text=The%201951%20census%20recorded%20the,India%20to%20be%20around%2065%25>.

⁵https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dechristianization_of_France_during_the_French_Revolution#:~:text=The%20new%20revolutionary%20authorities%20suppressed,priests%2C%20and%20killed%20hundreds%20more.

been depleted, all in the name of advancement and comfortable living. ⁶ Global natural resources are depleting by 45% every year. ⁷

Due to excessive use of chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides, our topsoil has lost up to 70% of its fertility and the global problem of desertification is threatening the ability for governments to feed the ever-increasing population with diminishing land to grow food. ⁸ The food that we consume daily has lost up to 45% of its natural food value and the old saying “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” no longer holds to be true. The average vegetable found in today's supermarket is anywhere from 5% to 40% lower in minerals than those harvested just 50 years ago. ⁹

Knowing and understanding that village life is the more natural lifestyle that best allows individuals and society to progress both materially and spiritually in keeping with the eternal principles of material *sva-dharma* (material duties) and spiritual *sva-dharma* (spiritual duties), followers of the Vedic culture naturally find the present ever-increasing urbanization trend alarming and destructive.

This short presentation on *Vedic Vaisnava Villages – Beginner's Guide to Simple Living and High Thinking* attempts to present some general guidelines to help re-establish Vedic life as the norm in society, and for this to happen, to revert to the long-standing and scientific social system of *varna* (aptitude-based occupations) and *asrama* (phased life-long education) as depicted in the ancient teachings of the *Vedas*, in particular the *Bhagavad-gita* ¹⁰ and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. ¹¹

⁶ <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/planet-earth/state-of-the-planet/overuse-of-resources-on-earth>

⁷ <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/cost-of-growth-global-natural-resources-depleting-by-45-a-year-44836>

⁸ <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/planet-earth/state-of-the-planet/overuse-of-resources-on-earth>

⁹ <https://learn.eartheasy.com/articles/fruits-and-vegetables-yielding-fewer-nutrients-than-in-the-past/>

¹⁰ *Bhagavad-gita*, 4.13

¹¹ *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, 1,2,13

The document is divided in the following sixteen sections: 1) Srila Prabhupada and the Vedic View, 2) Three Gifts of Nature – Grand-father Bhishmadeva, 3) Ethics of Canakya, 4) *Village Svaraj* – M.K. Gandhi, 5) Contemporary Sources, 6) Guiding Principles for Rural Communities, 7) Four Options to Create Vedic Villages, 8) Selection of Land, 9) Before Moving on the Land, 10) Thirty Qualities of a Human Being, 11) Vedic Economy, 12) Vedic Education, 13) Seven Essential Constituents, 14) Books of References, 15) Website References, 16) Conclusion.

1. Srila Prabhupada and the Vedic View

For those interested to relocate in villages, it is important to study what is meant to be an ideal village. One can do this in many ways, one being by reading various literatures that describe ideal Vedic life. One may also visit certain villages where the residents have been following practices that are part of Vedic tradition. For example, in Indonesia, Bali in particular, every village has two types of leaders directing the community. One is the Village Head, called *Kepala Dusun*, and the other is called *Adat*, the one heading up cultural activities. In the Hindu villages of Indonesia, no one can be part of a village unless one agrees to regularly participate in cultural and religious functions, of which there are many. In this way there are civic rules, as well as religious and cultural norms to respect. For devotees of course, we can get very good insights about villages and their importance by hearing directly from our Vaisnava Acaryas, in particular our Founder Acarya His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada.

The VedaBase or Folio, which contains all of Srila Prabhupada's books, lectures, conversations, letters, and morning walks is an excellent source of information for it contains 1391 references for the word "villages", 5,051 references for the word "village", and 64 references for "village organization".

When discussing topics related to *Varnasrama Dharma*, Srila Prabhupada would inevitably speak about villages always bringing us back to the original ideal village, *Vrindavan* Village where Lord Krishna performed His childhood pastimes.

Srila Prabhupada clearly explained how Vedic culture is an agrarian-based culture, where cows, agriculture and the cultivation of higher consciousness, Krishna consciousness, are the pivotal axes for simple living and high thinking. Although so many such references are to be found in Srila Prabhupada's books, conversations, and letters, I have selected but a few that help us understand Srila Prabhupada unequivocal mood and stance on the matter.

It is interesting to note that the devotees who were commissioned to research the topic of “Community Development” by the GBC body to commemorate Srila Prabhupada’s Centennial Anniversary in 1996 expressed a clear connection between establishing city temples and organizing varnasrama communities:

“In Vrindavan and Allahabad, we’ll see Prabhupada explain the role of city temples as staging grounds for organizing varnasrama communities. In the first phase, devotees should go into the cities and attract the people by establishing temples and distributing Krishna conscious literature. Second, as people become devotees, they can be brought to farm communities where they can live the Krishna conscious lifestyle described in the books and remain fixed up in devotional practice without the temptations and material allurements of the cities. According to Srila Prabhupada’s vision, the modern industrial cities provide an environment which crushes spiritual development: ‘This town life, industrial life, factory life, is asuric [demoniac] life. It is killing human ambition. It is killing human civilization,’ he tells devotees. The city temples can provide a way out of that environment by training devotees and directing them to Krishna conscious communities, where they can find wholesome occupations, favorable to spiritual development.”¹²

What is echoed in the introduction to the book compilation *Speaking About Varnasrama* that was published in 1999 was first echoed some 40 years earlier by Srila Prabhupada in a 1949 letter written to Dr. Patel, the then Deputy Minister of India, and again in the *Back to Godhead Magazine* of 1956, *Gita Nagari - Essay*,¹³ where Srila Prabhupada revealed a four-prong approach, the four movements as he coined them, four phases or four waves, for systematically introducing Krishna consciousness all over the world. He explained the four movements as follows: 1) *Sankirtan Movement*, based on the chanting of the holy names and accompanied by

¹² *Speaking About Varnasrama* -- Introduction

¹³ *Gita Nagari* – Essay, Folio, VedaBase, unpublished

distributing transcendental literatures; 2) *Temple Worship Movement*, by establishing temples where the deity of the Lord could be worshipped; 3) *Spiritual Initiation Movement*, where those joining the temple or closely associating with the temples would receive training and education culminating in accepting formal initiation or *Diksa* denoting their commitment to the mission; and 4) *Classless Society Movement*, where individuals and families would be encouraged to live in villages, self-sufficient communities in keeping with the prescribed Vedic lifestyle of agrarian living. That fourth movement or phase is directly the establishment of *Daiva Varnasrama Dharma*.

In the following morning walk conversation, Srila Prabhupada explains the need to become localized and self-sufficient, the basis of village life, a practical and ideal solution to the problems of life:

Prabhupada: So, we can discuss some of the problems. Discuss what are some of the problems... Yes, we are going to solve all problems. Let us have some preliminary discussion, how we are going to solve.

Devotee: The biggest problem now is that we have built up a type of society in which their needs are all coming from petrol energy. To produce what they need today is all coming from petrol energy... Recently Saudi Arabians raised the price of the oil double now... the price is still increasing. So, this is causing inflation.

Prabhupada: So, this problem will be solved as soon as we are localized. Petrol is required for transport, but if you are localized, there is no question of transport. You don't require petrol.

Devotee: Petrol they also use for heating. And electricity.

Prabhupada: No, heating. Heating we can do by wood. By nature.

Devotee: I remember, Srila Prabhupada, you were saying that all we require is some oxen, and the oxen can carry.

Prabhupada: Yes. The oxen will solve the problem of transport.... bullock cart... when we are localized, we don't require to go beyond ten miles, five miles, no. Because they have created a rubbish civilization therefore one is required to travel

fifty miles for earning bread, hundred miles, hanging ... 3 hours, four hours, they spend for transport.

Devotee: Is this an ideal solution or a practical one?

Prabhupada: This is practical.

Devotee: Because sometimes we say that we cannot change the course of the ...

Prabhupada: No, no. Our society will be ideal, by practical application.

Devotee: If we stop all the transportation industry there will be huge unemployment.

Prabhupada: No, no, we are not going to stop employment. We live like this. You see if you like you live like us.

Devotee: Example.

Prabhupada: Example.

Devotee: Not that we dictate to the ..., not that we're going to force everyone.

Prabhupada: No. We are not going to force anyone. "Our mode of living is like this. If you like you can adopt". Just like we chant Hare Krishna. So, we are not forcing anyone that "You also, you must chant." No. We live like this.

Devotee: We should start using bullock cart.

Prabhupada: Yes. No, first of all, you start the community project, as we have already started in New Vrindavana. Make this perfect. ¹⁴

There are many similar statements by Srila Prabhupada that clearly emphasise the need and the importance of reverting to this lifestyle. What follows is a series of such quotes from different sources.

"There should be a thorough overhauling of the social system, and society should revert to the Vedic principles, that is, the four varnas and the four asramas." ¹⁵

"Live village life, simple life, and be satisfied with the bare necessities."

¹⁴ Morning Walk, on May 27, 1974, in Rome

¹⁵ SB 4.29.54

*This town life, industrial life, factory life, is asuric life. It is killing human ambition. It is killing civilization.”*¹⁶

*“Those who are serious to cultivate the human spirit must turn their attention first toward the question of cow protection.”*¹⁷

*“Human society needs only sufficient grain and sufficient cows to solve its economic problems. All other things but these two are artificial necessities created by man to kill his valuable life at the human level and waste time in things which are not needed.”*¹⁸

*“Before I came to your country, I was thinking to establish an Ideal Vedic Community. So please work very hard to make New Vrindavan grow.”*¹⁹

*“Vrindavana conception is a transcendental village, without any botheration of the modern industrial atmosphere. My idea... is to create an atmosphere of spiritual life where people in bona fide order of social divisions... will live there independently, completely depending on agricultural produce and milk from the cows.... Persons who live there will accept the bare necessities of life to maintain the body and soul together and the major part of time should be engaged in development of Krishna consciousness.”*²⁰

“Nobody should take to very hardship labor. The modern civilization has discovered severe types of dangerous industries, and laborers are attracted for high wages. But they should not accept such work. Better one should be satisfied with agricultural produce than go into large cities to be engaged in industry. Peaceful life depending on agricultural produce can bring him real happiness and prosperity, not otherwise.

¹⁶ Lecture, Gita Nagari Farm, July 15, 1976

¹⁷ *Light of the Bhagavat* 27

¹⁸ SB 3.2.29

¹⁹ Letter to Hayagriva, Bombay, 8 November, 1970

²⁰ Letter to Hayagriva and Kirtananada Swami, 22/8/1968

The more persons will be satisfied at their home, with home economics, not to go outside the home, that is peaceful life. ²¹

From the series “Conversations” we hear the following:

Prabhupada: ...satisfied to remain in the village. That is the defect of the modern civilization.

Mother: In India, you mean. You’re talking of India now.

Prabhupada: Everywhere.

Prabhupada: The villagers, they have cows and land. That is sufficient for their economic problem.

Mother: Yes. But I think one has to be clever enough not to let people cheat you.

Prabhupada: Clever means that he must stay in his own land. He should not be cheated by the paper and go to the city. ²²

Bhagavan: The easiest way to manage, then, is to have everything more or less in small villages.

Prabhupada: Yes, that was Gandhi’s philosophy, village organization.

Our philosophy is that you produce your food anywhere. You stay, and keep cows, take milk, produce vegetables, food grains, and chant Hare Krishna. That’s all.

This is our philosophy. Make your life successful. ²³

In a conversation with the Governor of Uttar Pradesh Srila Prabhupada spoke about the need of village organization:

The immediate program should be village organization as Mahatma Gandhi contemplated.

*annad-bhavanti bhutani
parjanyaḍ anna-sambhavah
yajñāḍ bhavati parjanya
yajna karma-samudbhavah*

[Bg. 3.14]

²¹ Letter to Rayarama dasa, 17 October, 1968, Seattle

²² Conversations, July 25, 1973, London

²³ Conversations, May 25, 1974, in Rome, Italy

“All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of yajna [sacrifice}, and yajna is born of prescribed duties.”] I hope you will give your serious consideration to my suggestions, and I am prepared to cooperate with you to my best capacity if you think my suggestions are right.”²⁴

In a letter to Sriman O.P. Goelji, Australia, in May, 1975, Srila Prabhupada writes:

Prabhupada: That.. Gandhi wanted to solve it, but you rejected. Gandhi wanted them to..., village organization. That was Gandhi’s proposal, that “Don’t go to the city, town, for so-called better advantage of life. Remain in your own home, produce your food, and be satisfied there.” That was Gandhi’s policy. The economic problem he wanted to solve by keeping cows, by agriculture, by spinning thread. You want food, shelter, and cloth. You produce here; and remain here. Don’t be allured by the capitalists and go to cities and be engaged in industries. But Jawaharlal Nehru wanted overnight to Americanize the whole India. That is the folly.

In a conversation with his disciple Mahamsa Swami regarding the development of the Hyderabad farm, Srila Prabhupada responds:

Mahamsa: Now we are in the process of making a brochure so that we can present to trusts and foundations for bigger donations for the farm project.

Prabhupada: That’s nice. They have amassed money. Let them spend for this village organization. This is real Gandhi’s program. He wanted this village organization. But because they manufactured their own way, it was not successful. But if we follow this principle, it will be successful, without any doubt.²⁵

²⁴ Conversation, April 20, 1975, Vrindavan

²⁵ Conversation, January 6, 1976, Bombay

And yet again, in a room conversation in France, Srila Prabhupada warned about the dangers of city life:

Prabhupada: But it doesn't matter. Our purpose will be served anywhere. So, try to concentrate in this village organization life. Full of anxieties, city life. ²⁶

²⁶ Room Conversation, August 3, 1976, New Mayapur, France

2. Three Gifts of Nature – Grand-father Bhismadeva

The great Statesman of the *Mahabharata* (Great Epic of India history) affectionately referred to as “Grand-father Bhishmadeva”, not only a seasoned politician but indeed one of the twelve *mahajanas* or great spiritual authorities in the Vedic culture, describes the three **GIFTS of NATURE** to mankind, gifts that should actually never be sold, never be abused, misused or exploited, namely, 1) cows, 2) land, and 3) knowledge.

Bhishma said, ‘There are three gifts that go by the same name and that are productive of equal merits. Indeed, these three gifts confer the fruition of every wish. The three objects whose gifts are of such a character are kine (cow), earth, and knowledge. That person who tells his disciple words of righteous import drawn from the Veda acquires merit equal to that which is won by making gifts of earth and kine.

Similarly are kine praised (as objects of gifts). There is no object of gift higher than they. Kine are supposed to confer merit immediately. They are also, O Yudhisthira, such that a gift of them cannot but lead to great merit. Kine are the mothers of all creatures. They bestow every kind of happiness...’²⁷

These three gifts of nature serve exactly as three mothers. As a biological mother is needed to provide the care, attention, love, and affection to her child, similarly, these three natural mothers, 1) Mother *Surabhi* (the original spiritual cow in *Goloka*, the mother of all cows), 2) Mother *Bhumi* (land, nature), and 3) Mother *Sarasvati* (goddess of learning) are also needed for the overall welfare, health, and growth of not only human beings, but indeed for all of humanity. Modernity, through industrialization, mechanization, urbanization, and globalization, is

²⁷ *Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Chapter 69 called "Dana Dharma Parva"*

robbing humanity of these three natural gifts, three treasures that epitomize the real wealth of a nation, especially an agrarian-based society.

*“... modernity is robbing humanity of these three natural gifts, three treasures that epitomize the real wealth of a nation, especially an agrarian-based society. More specifically, since the Era of Indian Colonialism by the British and the Era of Western Industrialization and Mechanization by Europe and America, modernity has been plundering and desecrating what the Vedic culture reveres as three of her Sacred Mothers, namely: 1) Mother Surabhi (cow), 2) Mother Bhumi (land), and 3) Mother Sarasvati (knowledge). These three “Mothers” can best be understood and appreciated in a society that values the age-long occupation of natural agriculture.”*²⁸

²⁸ *Modernity is Killing Civilization,*

3. Ethics of Canakya (On Principles of Governance)

As we know, Canakya Pandit was a renowned diplomat and wise moralist whose writings are greatly appreciated by politicians, educators, and people in general. The book *Ethics of Canakya* summarizes some of Canakya's thoughts regarding the importance of statesmanship in terms of village self-governance, village sustainability and village autonomy:

*“While an effective control was kept on towns, villages were free from the active jurisdiction of royal officials. They were rather autonomous bodies and were administered by local men. They were not only self-sufficient units economically, but politically, they were self-governing. Under such a system, villages continued to exist as self-sufficient little republics, which remained the basis of higher political existence. They survived successive turmoil or changes of fortune, and continued to maintain the prosperity of the people, in spite of the change of dynasties or the rise and fall of empires. The village was regarded as a co-operative social unit, and its head was the Gramika. From the evidence of one passage, this man seems to have been invested with minor magisterial authority and was empowered to expel thieves, criminals, adulterers, and other undesirable persons.”*²⁹

It is clear from the above descriptions that villages were the norm for most people and that these villages prospered following principles of self-governance and self-sufficiency.

²⁹ Ramesh, T. Y. *Ethics of Chanakya* - Sahni Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p. 178

4. *Village Svaraj* – M.K. Gandhi

As often quoted by Srila Prabhupada, Gandhi was a strong advocate of village organization.

*“In the future set-up we shall have only two things, the village, and the world. We may have the names of countries on the map for the sake of convenience, but in reality, there will be no intermediary between the world and the village. All the authority concerning the material side of life will rest with the village. The village will have power to order its own life. The power of moral advancement of the whole world will rest in the world centre. The districts or the States will only be the agents of the village community. Thus, we shall have the village at the base and the world Authority at the Centre. Human society will be organized on the basis of small village communities of say, 2 to 3 thousand souls each. There would be real fraternity and co-operation in the village community. There would be no private ownership. The village will be a model of corporate life. The world centre will be the ultimate co-ordination link between these primary communities.”*³⁰

and from the Preface of *Village Svaraj*:

“The experience of mankind testifies to the fact the collective life is more genial, varied, and fruitful when it is concentrated in small units and simpler organizations. It is only small units which have had the most intense life. Collective life diffusing itself in vast areas would be wanting in cohesiveness and productiveness. Ancient Greet City States and Village Republics of India provided specimen of all-round development of rich and puissant life. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: “This system of village self-government was the foundation of the Aryan polity. It was this that gave it strength. So jealous were the village

³⁰ <https://www.amazon.com/Village-Svaraj-Mahatma-Gandhi-ebook/dp/B0779R59YZ>

assemblies of their liberties that it was laid down that no soldier was to enter a village except with a royal permit.

As late as 1830 a British Governor in India, Sir Charles Metcalfe, described the village communities as follows: "The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself... is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."

"Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Pancayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world."

"I want to resuscitate the villages of India. Today our villages have become a mere appendage to the cities. They exist, as it were, to be exploited by the latter and depend on the latter's sufferance."

"I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India, the WORLD also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth." ³¹

³¹ Village Swaraj, Preface, https://www.mkgandhi.org/village_swaraj/preface.htm

5. Contemporary Sources

The Founding Fathers of America were pious and very close to nature. Historically, agriculture has been accepted as the noblest of all professions. Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America concludes:

*“There seem to be only three ways for a nation to acquire wealth. The first is by war, as the Romans did, in plundering their conquered neighbors. This is robbery. The second is by commerce, which is generally cheating. The third is agriculture, the only honest way, where a man receives a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground, in a kind of continual miracle, wrought by the hand of God in his favor as a reward for his innocent life, and his virtuous industry.”*³²

Yet another Founding Father was Thomas Jefferson who concurs as follows:

*“I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural.”*³³

One of the foremost agrarian crusaders in India since the last three decades has undoubtedly been the well-known Dr. Vandana Shiva, scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and anti-globalization author.³⁴ She has traveled widely highlighting the plight of our farmers around the world, and she addresses key global problems such as climate change, peak oil, and food crisis. It is most revealing how she relates these problems to a major deviation from a central theme connected with Vedic Epistemology and Ontology, *dharma* (that which sustains). She makes the following pertinent observation:

³² <https://modernfarmer.com/2013/07/the-founding-fathers-on-farming/>

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ <http://www.navdanya.org/site/>

“Climate chaos and peak oil are converging with a third crisis – the food crisis. The food crisis results from the combined impacts of the industrialization and globalization of agriculture....The real solution must be to search for right living...right living is “dharma”... Ecological balance and social justice are intrinsic to right livelihood, to dharma. “Dharanath dharma ucyat” – that which sustains all species of life and helps maintain harmonious relationships among them is “dharma”. That which disturbs the balance and her species is “adharmā”.³⁵

A similar inspirational message is also echoed by one of ISKCON’s scholars, Michael Cremo, aka Drutakarma dasa, co-author of *Divine Nature*,³⁶ *Forbidden Archeology*³⁷ and author of *Human Devolution*³⁸ who makes the following statement:

“The current civilization with its emphasis on ever increasing production and consumption is destroying our planet. The material production of consumption is poisoning the air, is poisoning the land and the water.... Why do we have this problem? It is because of the greed that’s in the human heart. People want to consume more and more material things and in doing that they are destroying their own environment, destroying the foundation for their own happy life. So the solution is you have to go into the heart, you have to change the hearts of people and get them to live lives of voluntary simplicity with a spiritual purpose.”³⁹

³⁵<https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/184096/original/Soil-Not-Oil-Article-and-questions.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1746119>

³⁷ <http://www.mcremo.com>

³⁸ <http://www.humandevolution.com>

³⁹ Cremo, Michael, Unpublished Interview

We should try to understand that unless scientists, educators, scholars, Heads of State, private agencies, and Faith Based Organization recognize our present lacuna, the on-going decadence in the matter of economy, social governance, and education will continue to spiral downwards towards unimaginable and irreversible chaotic levels.

Daniel Webster, American lawyer, and politician with great interest in agriculture, had this to say:

“Let us never forget that the cultivation of the earth is the most important labour of man. Man may be civilized, in some degree, without great progress in manufactures and with little commerce with his distant neighbours. But without the cultivation of the earth, he is, in all countries, a savage. Until he gives up the chase and fixes himself in some place and seeks a living from the earth, he is a roaming barbarian. When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.” [Speech by Daniel Webster delivered to the Massachusetts Legislature (Boston, 13 January 1840)] ⁴⁰

Environmental lawyer and advocate James Gustave Speth makes the following observation: *“Materialism is toxic to happiness, and we are losing our connection to the natural world.”* ⁴¹ He goes on to explain:

*“I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science, we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy and to deal with those we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.”*⁴²

⁴⁰ From Blog of Madhava Ghosh at <http://yogaofecology.blogspot.com>]

⁴¹ James Gustave Speth, Quotes
http://www.azquotes.com/author/54497-James_Gustave_Speth

⁴² James Gustave Speth, Quotes
<http://winewaterwatch.org/2016/05/we-scientists-dont-know-how-to-do-that-what-a-commentary/>

6. Guiding Principles for Rural Communities

Village organization is meant to fall under the jurisdiction of the local *ksatriyas*. The local *brahmanas* are ordained to give general guidance to such local *ksatriyas*. One of the secondary objectives outlined by Srila Prabhupada is to help establish *varnasrama* communities based on the long-standing *varnasrama* system.

Such *varnasrama* communities by nature will be independent, self-sufficient, self-sustainable and self-governed, as envisioned by Srila Prabhupada and as demonstrated in the Vedic culture.

Our ISKCON society needs to recognize and uphold that rural communities, as they approach the traditional Vedic village model more and more, are intended to be primarily established and organized by *grhasta ksatriya* devotees, under the guidance of *grihasta brahmana* devotees, and this, independent from ISKCON's or any other faith-based organization's direct legal governance.

What we generally fail to understand is that the first three movements outlined by Srila Prabhupada in his essay on *Gita Nagari* more naturally fall within the domain of *brahmanas*, all three being primarily *brahminical* activities, while the fourth movement, *varnasrama*, more naturally falls within the domain of the other three *varnas*, beginning with *ksatriyas* who are the one meant to organize society, the *vaisyas*, who are the ones meant to produce food, and the *sudras* who will largely be serving mainly under both the *ksatriyas* and *vaisyas*.

Village organization is meant to fall under the jurisdiction of the local *ksatriyas*. The local *brahmanas* are ordained to give general guidance to such local *ksatriyas*.

There are thus three guiding principles to establish a successful rural community which will be localized and governed by its own *grihasta* devotees.

Principle No. 1: *"Governance of a village community is primarily the responsibility of its local residents"*. It should not be some committee or organization removed from the local community or village. This means that any group of devotees should be encouraged to set up such a rural community, following the general guidelines given by Srila Prabhupada and the *Vedic* literatures, and this, without feeling the need to obtain the official permission or sanction from any local, regional, or national authority. In other words, the establishment and governance of a village community is vastly different from the establishment and governance of a temple.

It is also the *Vedic* standard that, while temples are governed by the local priests (*brahmanas*, either *brahmacaris* or *grhastas*, assisted generally by full time celibate students, *brahmacaris*, and sometimes guided by some spiritual organization), the affairs of the village are governed by a council of local leaders (*ksatriya grhastas*) who work independently to administer the affairs of the community.

Principle No. 2: *"Governance of a village, among the local residents, is the responsibility of ksatriya and/or vaisya grhastas, as opposed to brahmana grhastas."* This is not to say that *brahmanas* do not have a role to play in village affairs. But that role is primarily an advisory one to the village leaders.

It is also important to note that within a village situation, the temple takes up but a small geographical area of the entire village, as it is but one building among hundreds. Its immediate area of jurisdiction lies within the temple compound. Its focus is essentially spiritual and, as such, the temple falls under the jurisdiction of the village administration.

Principle No. 3: *"A temple in a village is but one of many departments or services established by and supported by the local government or local Pancayat or the local Head of the village or in the more Vedic models, by the local King."*

Now this understanding is likely to become a point of contention and one which will need to be defended by *sastra*. *Varnasrama* is still new to most devotees and one of the controversial aspects has been and remains, "who should be in charge". In our city preaching, so far, our main attraction and center piece have been the temples. All attention and all support are given to the temples. The ISKCON society has set up various rules to administer these temples and all of them fall under the jurisdiction of the GBC body. But when it comes to a village, although the focus remains serving the Lord, and the Lord in the temple also remains the focus of everyone's attention, there is a marked difference as to who oversees the affairs of the village. It becomes obvious that the local "Temple President", if there is one, cannot oversee the affairs of the village. The position and role of the temple changes in a village environment and this needs to be acknowledged by ISKCON authorities and by the congregation of devotees.

In many ways, as we introduce and establish *varnasrama* communities, we must follow the prescribed *Vedic* norm: the King, or the local head of a village, is the entity who establishes and protects *dharma*, by building temples and supporting the *brahminical* culture. This will not happen overnight. Establishing *varnasrama* villages means gradually introducing the standard *Vedic* system of the *ksatriyas grhastas* upholding and protecting the principles of *dharma*.

More research is needed in these areas. As we endeavor to implement rural *varnasrama* communities, as envisioned by Srila Prabhupada, a good deal of sober thought and a good deal of realized knowledge, supported, of course, by *sastric* evidence, will be needed.

7. Four Options in Creating Vedic Villages

As more and more householders understand the importance, indeed, not only understand the importance but also the urgent need to establish themselves in rural communities, naturally the question will arise: should I join an existing community of devotees, or should I start a community afresh with other likeminded devotees? There is also a third option, that of moving in an existing village with the idea of gradually preaching and converting the residents of that village into a Vedic based village where most residents will become devotees or at least be favorable to Krishna consciousness.

The choice of any of the above will entirely depend on one's individual situation. There are both advantages and disadvantages in all three scenarios.

There is a fourth option for devotees who wish to relocate in a village. One can look for small villages where many residents have already left and where there are homes for sale at a relatively cheaper rate. This approach is interesting in that more and more villages are falling in this category, and a small group of determined devotee families can take up this challenge with the idea of more quickly and more easily becoming the majority residents of that particular village.

Our goal should be to make such an impact that the local leadership will be taken up by devotees. In some countries, this phenomenon is already taking place. I have witnessed this personally in at least four countries, India, Indonesia, Hungary, and Czech Republic where the head of the village is a devotee. In many ways this is an assured way of reviving villages and bringing them back to the proper Vedic way.

8. Selection of Land

Selection of land is vital. Once investing in land, it is practically impossible to change for another land. Therefore, very thorough research and all considerations need to go into proper selection of land.

8.1 Location

Srila Prabhupada indicated that within a 50 kilometers radius of a city temple we should have a rural community that will be closely connected with that temple. That is one consideration for establishing a rural community that will be either directly sponsored by the local temple or seen as the chosen or natural community and project that will interact with the temple in various ways.

Most rural communities, like most villages, will not be directly linked with a particular city temple, and therefore they may be established in any part of a country keeping in mind the various recommended considerations.

8.2 Land Condition (*Vastu*, Soil, Slopes, Water, etc.)

This is naturally a very important consideration that needs to be closely assessed before purchasing a land. There are many considerations that will directly impact on the viability of such a land in terms of the quality of the soil, the way the land is sloping, the availability of water, the presence of trees, the presence of rocks, etc. The *Kautilya Arthashastra* lists twenty-one excellences of a country, one of them being: “Devoid of mud, stones, salty ground, uneven land, thorns, bands, wild animals, deer and forest tribes.”⁴³

43. (27) *Arthashastra*, Book Six, Chapter One, Section 96/8, Excellences of the Constituent Elements

8.3 Forests and Trees

The Vedic culture give special importance to forests and has enumerated different types of forests for different purposes. One forest is for ascetics, another for kings, another for elephants. There is need to understand the immense value of trees and therefore all trees are protected.

In the *Vrikshayurveda* written by Surapala, we find this telling comparison underlying the value of one tree. We know that residents of any village cannot survive unless there is at least one source of water which traditionally is the open well. How valuable therefore is one well. The author begins by stating that ten wells are equal to a pond, ten ponds to one lake, ten lakes to one son, and he concludes by stating that *ten sons are equal to one tree*.⁴⁴

8.4 Manpower (4 to 6 families, minimum)

For a project to be successful, there must be a core group of families involved. This can vary from just a few families to dozens of families. Depending on how many families wish to be part of a project, accordingly one must plan for the needed amount of land.

A good system to follow is to select two families from a group of ten interested families and prepare for these two families to relocate to the land within a relatively short period of time, say within one year. The understanding is that unless some individuals relocate on the land, obviously the project will not develop. For a family or two to relocate, this will generally mean leaving ones occupation and thus putting oneself in a vulnerable position. Therefore, other families not ready to move to the land will need to financially support these two families for the first one or two years. Gradually as the transition takes place, that

⁴⁴ Vrikshayurveda, Surapala, <https://indosphere.medium.com/vrikshayurveda-the-science-of-plant-life-5e91ffaad7fd>

financial support will become less and less since there will be production of goods on the land. Gradually, other families can plan to likewise make the transition.

Best is to have younger families with many children.

8.5 Finances (for purchasing land, for initial infrastructure)

The group of devotees need to decide on how much will be needed to make the initial purchase of the land and for making the needed infrastructure for families to live on the land. Discussions are needed to clarify if the individuals will have private ownership of the land or if they will establish a Cooperative where the land is registered in the name of the Cooperative and members become shareholders. All these need to be discussed before proceeding.

8.6 Skills to Develop Before Relocating

There are many skills needed when living on the land. As many of those skills that will be needed can be developed even before moving to the land.

8.7 Master Plan

Those who will be part of the project need to discuss and project what will be the layout of the project, based on the amount of land, how many acres will be allotted for residential purposes, for cow grazing, for agriculture, etc.

8.8 Market (only for excess produce)

Although the main purpose for producing food is to provide for the inmates in the community, there will at times be excess produce that the community may exchange with other communities. The two basic Vedic maxims for self-sufficiency are enounced in the Vedic culture as follows: 1) produce only what you need, and 2) use only what you produce. The closer we can come to these two principles, the simpler our lives will be, and the further we deviate from these two maxims, the more complicated our lives will become.

8.9 Land Certificates

Whenever purchasing land from an owner, best is to take legal counsel from professional persons. Lawyers and advocates are experts in understanding the actual legal position of a particular land and they will make the needed search to make sure the land has proper certificates that are cleared of all potential complications such as multiple owners, liens on the property, etc.

8.10 Road Access

All land must have a clearly defined access road that allow the new owner direct access to the land.

8.11 History of Land

It is good to know how the land was previously used and if the land was in any way contaminated or tampered with in any way. This can best be done by speaking with neighbors or previous owners. It is also recommended that one live on the land, once having been acquired, and wait one year before starting to develop the land. This will give sufficient time to visit various parts of the land and understand more clearly the various features of the land.

9. Before Moving on the Land

For at least one or two years, families intent on relocating to the land need to meet and discuss in great details how they will proceed. Establishing successful Vaisnava village communities is based on the following four guiding principles like the four pillars of a successful business: 1- land, 2- labour, 3- capital, and 4) organization. The Bhagavad-gita also gives a fifth cause, *daiva*, the sanction of God,⁴⁵ so the intent of all our efforts must be to please the Lord, otherwise, unless He is pleased, the result will be different.

The natural habitat for most citizens in any country is the country. When one loses contact with the land and cows, one loses contact with the divine principle governing humanity. Thus, the five above mentioned guiding principles need to be introduced. Each of these can be seen as a prerequisite to establish a successful village community.

Pre-Requisites

1- Land: Suitable land must be located where such a community can be established. There are many aspects to consider in choosing an appropriate piece of land, in particular the availability of water and the quality of the soil. Various guidelines are given in the ancient texts of India called *Vastu-sastra*.

2- Manpower: Some interested persons must be contacted who are showing interest in establishing such a community. In the very least there must be one person or one family willing to help develop the concept of a Vaisnava Village Community. Ideally such persons should have some background knowledge and experience in farming or at least show a high motivation to learn about agriculture

⁴⁵ Bg 18.14

and the basic principles of self-sufficiency. In addition to material qualification, individuals must also show genuine interest in practical spiritual life.

3- Organization: Those interested in establishing a Vaisnava Village Community should be ready to set up a local committee to help develop and put in practice the necessary framework and infrastructure for actualizing their project. The ideal organizational structure follows the ancient guidelines found in the system of varna and asrama. On the local level, the system of government is called a *Pancayat*, a group of at least five individuals who will live on the premises and be the prime supporters and movers of the project.

4- Capital: As in any enterprise, seed capital is necessary to begin and to maintain such a project. Self-sufficient community projects take time to develop and require some initial investment. Those serious to establish a Vaisnava Village Community must be willing to provide basic economical support to give maximum chances for the project to succeed.

5- Orientation: In order to succeed, the Vaisnava Village Community project must be based on sound principles of spiritual life. The ancient literatures of India speak of daivi-varnasrama where the four social (varna) and spiritual (asrama) divisions of the community are based on clear principles of God-consciousness or Krishna consciousness. Without such orientation, no project will grow to maturity.

10. Thirty Qualities of a Human Being

In the seventh Canto of the Srimad Bhagavatam, ⁴⁶ Srila Narada Muni outlines the 30 qualities one needs to develop in the human form of life, otherwise, according to Vedic civilization, one is not considered human.

The first four of these 30 qualities form the pillars of *sanatan dharma*, the natural and eternal function of the spirit soul. To develop these qualities, one must refrain from certain activities or habits that go against dharma.

The first quality listed is *satyam*, truthfulness. To be truthful, one must refrain from all kinds of gambling activities, which also include mental speculation.

The second quality is *daya*, compassion. To develop compassion, one must show respect to all living entities and not be in any way a cause for suffering to any of them. Therefore, all activities that inflict pain or suffering upon other living entities such as eating of meat, fish or eggs, are avoided by one eager to be compassionate.

The third quality is *tapah*, austerity or discipline. It is said that our mind can be our greatest friend or our greatest enemy. An uncontrolled mind is our greatest enemy while a controlled mind is our greatest friend. The mind either controls or regulates the senses or the mind is controlled by the senses. Of all the senses, sex attraction is the most difficult to control or regulate. Material sex attraction is actually a perverted reflection of spiritual sex attraction. Our Vaisnava Acharyas explain this original sex psychology as being the pure and natural nature of all living entities, that of loving devotional service to Lord Krishna. Therefore, to develop the quality of *tapah* or discipline, one learns to regulate material sex life which is only possible when one awakens one dormant spiritual propensity for

⁴⁶ SB 7.11.8-12

loving Krishna. Without reawakening this dormant love called *prema*, one cannot give up the material love called lust.

The fourth quality is *saucam*, cleanliness or purity. To develop the quality of purity, one should refrain from all forms of intoxicants such as drugs, alcohol, including tea and coffee.

These preliminary qualities will help form the basis of strong communities. The more individuals are developing these qualities, the easier it becomes to establish the system of *varna* and *asrama*, which is the basis of the Vedic culture for building successful communities in Krishna consciousness.

What follows is the list of all the 30 qualities mentioned by Srila Narada Muni in his discussions with Yudhisthira Maharaja. The first twenty-one are qualities meant to be developed by all human beings and the remaining nine qualities are the devotional qualities for those engaged in the devotional service of the Lord beginning with *sravanam*, hearing and ending with *atma-nivedanam*:

These are the general principles to be followed by all human beings: 1) truthfulness, 2) mercy, 3) austerity (observing fasts on certain days of the month), 4) cleanliness, bathing twice a day, 5) tolerance, 6) discrimination between right and wrong, 7) control of the mind, 8) control of the senses, 9) nonviolence, 10) celibacy, 11) charity, 12) reading of scripture, 13) simplicity, 14) satisfaction, 15) rendering service to saintly persons, 16) gradually taking leave of unnecessary engagements, 17) observing the futility of the unnecessary activities of human society, 18) remaining silent and grave and avoiding unnecessary talk, 19) considering whether one is the body or the soul, 20) distributing food equally to all living entities (both men and animals), 21) seeing every soul (especially in the human form) as a part of the Supreme Lord, 22) hearing about the activities and instructions given by the Supreme Personality of Godhead (who is the shelter of the saintly persons), 23) chanting about these activities and instructions, 24) always remembering these activities and instructions, 25)

trying to render service, 26) performing worship, 27) offering obeisances, 28) becoming a servant, 29) becoming a friend, and 30) surrendering one's whole self. O King Yudhiñöhira, these thirty qualifications must be acquired in the human form of life. Simply by acquiring these qualifications, one can satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.11.8-12*⁴⁷

In a Purport to verse thirteen, Srila Prabhupada explains that the varnasrama mission will more easily be introduced when people develop these qualities.

*“A human being must be trained in the above-mentioned thirty qualities; otherwise, he is not even considered a human being. Then, among such qualified persons, the varnasrama process should be introduced.”*⁴⁸

⁴⁷ SB 7.11.8-12

⁴⁸ SB 7.11.13

11. Vedic Economy

The science of Vedic economy is defined in the *Bhagavad-gita* as follows:

krisi-go-raksya-vanijyam
vaisya-karma svabhava-jam

*“Farming, cow protection and business are the natural work of the vaisyas.”*⁴⁹

What is “*krishi*” or Vedic agriculture as opposed to modern-day agriculture that we refer to as “agri-business” and why does it matter? Also, what is “*go-raksha*”, cow protection as opposed to modern day system called “dairy business”? And finally, what is “*vanijyam*” or Vedic business that we refer to in our modern times as “economic development” through industry and commerce?

Each of the above three activities, namely agriculture, cow care and trade, are in themselves an art and a science. To this end, great rishis have written important books of knowledge on these subject matters, and it is essential to learn these sciences without which we cannot connect with the divine.

Agriculture is of course directly connected with the land, that forms an object of worship in the Vedic culture, land referred to as Mother *Bhumi* (Mother Nature). From land all necessities of life come. *Sarva kama dugha mahi* as mentioned in the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*:

kamam vavarsa parjanya sarva-kama-dugha mahi
sisicuh sma vrajan gavah payasodhasvatir muda

⁴⁹ *Bhagavad-gita*, 18.44

*“During the reign of Maharaja Yudhishthira, the clouds showered all the water that people needed, and the earth produced all the necessities of man in profusion. Due to its fatty milk and cheerful attitude, the cow used to moisten the grazing ground with milk.”*⁵⁰

From the land, therefore, one can get the four necessities of life namely: 1) food, 2) clothing, 3) shelter, and 4) medicines. Srila Prabhupada explains that *“if one had got a cow and four acres of land, he has no economic problem.”*⁵¹

The science of agriculture is delineated in various literatures such as *Kautilya Arthashastra, Vrikshayurveda, Krishi-Parashara, Kashyapiya Krishsisukti*, and others.

For example, when should crops be sown is intricately described in keeping with astrological calculations. The science as astrology is traditionally learned by brahmanas and farmers would always consult with them as to when which crops should be sown. According to Vedic agriculture, the waxing moon is the best time for grains to be placed in the soil. As the days progress toward the full moon, the energy of the moon rays becomes stronger and stronger thus giving maximum nourishment to the plant once sprouted. Both the sun rays and the moon rays play a critical role in helping the produce come to maturity.

In Vedic culture, food is not considered a commodity to sell. Rather crops are first and foremost grown for family consumption. Crops are also grown keeping in mind the duties of householders who are meant to distribute food to the needy. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam, four of the five

⁵⁰ SB 1.10.4

⁵¹ VedaBase, Room Conversation with Allen Ginsberg, May 11, 1969, Columbia

daily duties recommended for householders as instructed by Srila Narada are centered around food: 1) offering food to the Lord, 2) offering food to saintly persons, 3) offering food to other living entities, and 4) offering food to oneself, which means taking only Krishna prasadam.

In the context of Vedic agriculture, the following two important maxims are given: 1) produce only what you need, and 2) use only what you produce. We find the opposite in modern day agriculture where the vast majority of farmers are producing cash crops and the natural biodiversity built in nature has become compromised to the extent that we have lost the natural fertility of topsoil in many parts of the world. We thus find ourselves seriously affected by one of the most threatening global problems called ‘desertification’. Desertification has been described as “the greatest environmental challenge of our times” and climate change is making it worst.⁵²

The Vedas enjoin that one worship the land before ploughing it considering her to be sacred, our mother. Land is never meant to be exploited as we are doing in modern-day agriculture with the use of chemical fertilizers and chemical pesticides. Due to this artificial system of modern agriculture, we have severely depleted the topsoil to the extent that we experience the global problem of desertification and soil erosion. The UN has declared that 40% of the world’s land is now degraded.⁵³

How to keep the topsoil healthy and productive is a science and an art that has largely been forgotten. The soil cannot be properly maintained unless large number of animals pasture the lands. Hence the need for and importance of cows in the Vedic who are allowed to perform their natural

⁵² <https://www.carbonbrief.org/explainer-desertification-and-the-role-of-climate-change/>

⁵³ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/apr/27/united-nations-40-per-cent-planet-land-degraded>

function of grazing and pasturing. Unless cows are properly cared for, they will not be happy and without being cheerful, cows will not produce milk as they normally would. Unless there are qualified leaders to ensure such protection of the animals, especially the cows, then there will be scarcity. Thus, it is stated in the Srimad-Bhagavatam:

*“The basic principle of economic development is centered on land and cows.... It is said that the cows use to moisten the pasturing land with milk because their milk bags were fatty, and the animals were joyful.”*⁵⁴

One must be convinced that the only scientific and sustainable economy is that promoted in the Vedic culture as demonstrated by great personalities, in particular by Lord Krishna Himself when revealing His pastimes in the small village of Vraja Bhumi.

All the spiritual and material sciences needed of individuals, families, and society in general to become successful are to be found in the daily activities and pastimes of Lord Krishna and the inhabitants of Vrindavan. This is also Lord Krishna’s direct verdict: *Krishi go ricksha vaniyam, vaisya karma sva bhava jam.* \

Vedic agriculture was never done as a business where goods become a commodity to sell. In the Vedic culture, traditionally, food, land, milk, cows, and knowledge were never meant to be sold. They are meant to be gifted and that was the standard practiced by all great kings and great spiritual authorities. And we hear of kings donated land, cows, and food to brahmanas and others in need of help.

Our malady in the modern world is to have separated land and cows and turned the art and science of agriculture into a business undertaking thus severely

⁵⁴ SB 1.10.4 Purport

exploiting both mother nature and mother cow. As a result, the world finds itself in a severe crisis.

12. Vedic Education

Villages are essential to properly understand the type of ideal education to impart to the majority of our children. In a most revealing purport from the 10th Canto of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Chapter 11, verse 37, Srila Prabhupada helps us understand how for most young boys living a village, the activities related with taking out the calves when boys are around 7 or 8 years of age constitutes the standard and complete education. Although we generally think of Vedic education in terms of *Gurukula*, this type of formal and academic education was reserved for a very small percentage of the population, those boys generally born in *brahmana* families or those having the needed qualities to take up such study.

Vedic education is thus divided into formal or academic education, *Gurukula*, and non-formal education or apprenticeship, including skills related to various cottage industries. This means that most boys did not attend formal school as we know it today. This may not be appealing to most government boards of education; however, this is the Vedic reality.

This section on education will therefore deal mainly with non-formal education which is not immediately so easy to understand. The topic of formal education, *Gurukula*, will be covered in another booklet entitled *Gurukula Education – A Guide Manual*.⁵⁵

Srila Prabhupada writes as follows in his purport:

As soon as Krsna and Balarama were a little grown up, They were meant for taking care of the calves. Although born of a very well-to-do family, They still had to take care of the calves.

This was the system of education.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Gurukula Education – A Guide Manual*

⁵⁶ SB 10.11.37 - Purport

In this very short sentence of six words Srila Prabhupada sums up the meaning of Vedic education, taking care of the calves, becoming cowherds as Krishna and Balarama were doing from the early age of approximately six or seven years. The very word ***Gopal*** means the Protector of Cows. And this very activity of herding the cows is defined in this purport, and in other statements, as being the standard system of education.

Herein lies the mystery of both Vedic education and Vedic economy. They are closely interrelated. The *Bhagavatam* describes how hundreds and thousands of cowherd boys would accompany Krishna and Balarama in Their daily activity of herding the hundreds and thousands of calves, and later of herding the cows. This chapter, *The Childhood Pastimes of Krishna*, gives us insight in those daily activities of herding the calves.⁵⁷

Unless we read those descriptions with attention and submission, we will likely not be able to grasp the inner meaning of Vedic education. The standard form of education for the young boys in Vrindavan, Vrindavan being a village of *vaisyas*, was simply in doing this daily service of looking after the cows. In addition, of course, there were activities related to natural agriculture and all aspects that support such activities.

One may question, how can one get educated simply by looking after cows? The answer is easily available for those who have the ears to hear, the time to understand, and the heart to contemplate. Most of us have not been exposed to this type of education, and we cannot begin to imagine how this can be. We have become overly conditioned by the modern way of life and the way of thinking, or should we more accurately say the “way of not thinking”.

⁵⁷ SB 10.11

We can only begin to understand how this indeed was and is meant to be the standard form of education for most young boys in villages by familiarizing ourselves with the content found in the Vedic books describing the 64 Arts and Sciences, referred to as *Chatushashti Kalas or Chausath Kalas (64 forms of art)*.⁵⁸

It was also the practice of the cowherd boys to introduce and practice many of these arts and sciences in the pasturing field as part of their daily activities. One of these 64 Arts and Sciences is known as *Krishna Krida*, the art of engaging children in playful games.

According to Vedic psychology, also collaborated by modern psychology, for children and teenagers to develop as healthy human beings, physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually, they should interact with peers their age within a natural setting where interpersonal relationships can more easily, naturally, and spontaneously be enacted.

In an article entitled *Child and Adolescent Psychology*, the author writes:

*“What would childhood be without time to play? Play, it turns out, is essential to growing up healthy. Research shows that active, creative play benefits just about every aspect of child development. Play is behaviour that looks as if it has no purpose, says NIH psychologist Dr. Stephen Suomi. It looks like fun, but it actually prepares for a complex social world. Evidence suggest that play can help boost brain function, increase fitness, improve coordination, and teach cooperation.”*⁵⁹

In such a situation, individuals will learn more easily, and through play and interaction with others, one will become educated in these standard traditional arts and sciences which are especially found in a more natural setting as a village.

⁵⁸ <https://www.sanskritimagazine.com/64-kalas-arts-and-14-vidyas-techniques-of-ancient-india/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.collegesidekick.com/study-guides/atd-fscj-childpsychology/play-leisure-and-peer-relationships>

Of course, taking the cows for pasture was not the only activity in the village of Vrindavan. There were other trades and occupations, some of which fall in the category of cottage industries, various skills, and apprenticeship of various sorts. In addition to all the above, there were boys who also learned about agriculture.

Srila Prabhupada continues to elucidate in the same purport:

“Those who were not born in brahmana families were not meant for academic education.” ⁶⁰

This should not be misunderstood. Formal education was meant for those having such brahminical qualities by birth. When the Vedic culture was in place, generally, although not always, one born in a *brahmana* family would become a brahmana, after taking up proper training and education.

Therefore, Srila Prabhupada explains:

“The brahmanas were trained in a literary, academic education, the ksatriyas were trained to take care of the state, and the vaisyas learned how to cultivate the land and take care of the cows and calves. There was no need to waste time going to school to be falsely educated and later increase the numbers of the unemployed. Krsna and Balarama taught us by Their personal behavior. Krsna took care of the cows and played His flute, and Balarama took care of agricultural activities with a plow in His hand.” ⁶¹

We can therefore understand these two levels of traditional education, one being formal or academic education to train young boys in

⁶⁰ SB 10.11.37 - Purport

⁶¹ Ibid

Gurukula, and the other being non-formal or apprenticeship/trade/skills type of education, which includes agriculture and cow protection.

It will be helpful to the reader to read the list of these 64 Arts which can give one an understanding of the activities performed by residents of villages traditionally, some of which can still be found today in some of the more remote villages of India. Some of our readers may have seen this list, but few have studied it thoroughly. The subject matters are deep and varied.

Every-day when the cowherd boys would go out pasturing, they would put into practice many of these arts and sciences as we can read from the pastimes described in the pages of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. In other words, not only do we find spiritual instructions when reading or remembering these pastimes, but we can also find practical examples of daily practices.

1. *Geet vidya*: the art of singing.
2. *Vadya vidya*: the art of playing on musical instruments.
3. *Nritya vidya*: the art of dancing.
4. *Natya vidya*: the art of theatrical performance.
5. *Alekhyā vidya*: the art of painting.
6. *Viseshakacchedya vidya*: the art of painting the face and body with color.
7. *Tandula-kusuma-bali-vikara*: the art of preparing offerings from rice and flowers.
8. *Pushpastarana*: the art of making a covering for flowers of a bed.
9. *Dasana-vasananga-raga*: art of applying preparations for cleansing the teeth, cloths and painting the body.
10. *Mani-bhumika-karma*: the art of making the groundwork of jewels.

11. *Aavya-racana*: the art of covering the bed.
12. *Udaka-vadya*: the art of playing on music in water.
13. *Udaka-ghata*: the art of splashing with water.
14. *Citra-yoga*: art of practically applying an admixture of colours.
15. *Malya-grathana-vikalpa*: art of designing a preparation of wreaths.
16. *Sekharapida-yojana*: art of practically setting the coronet on the head.
17. *Nepathya-yoga*: art of practically dressing in the tiring room.
18. *Karnapatra-bhanga*: art of decorating the tragus of the ear.
19. *Sugandha-yukti*: art of practical application of aromatics.
20. *Bhushana-yojana*: art of applying or setting ornaments.
21. *Aindra-jala*: art of juggling.
22. *Kaucumara*: a kind of art.
- 23.. *Hasta-laghava*: art of sleight of hand.
24. *Citra-sakapupa-bhakshya-vikara-kriya*: art of preparing varieties of delicious food.
25. *Panaka-rasa-ragasava-yojana*: art of practically preparing palatable drinks and tinging draughts with red color.
26. *Suci-vaya-karma*: art of needleworks and weaving.
27. *Sutra-krida*: art of playing with thread.
28. *Vina-damuraka-vadya*: art of playing on lute and small drum.
29. *Prahelika*: art of making and solving riddles.

30. *Durvacaka-yoga*: art of practicing language difficult to be answered by others.
31. *Pustaka-vacana*: art of reciting books.
32. *Natikakhyayika-darsana*: art of enacting short plays and anecdotes.
33. *Kavya-samasya-purana*: art of solving enigmatic verses.
34. *Pattika-vetra-bana-vikalpa*: art of designing preparation of shield, cane, and arrows.
35. *Tarku-karma*: art of spinning by spindle.
36. *Takshana*: art of carpentry.
37. *Vastu-vidya*: art of engineering.
38. *Raupya-ratna-pariksha*: art of testing silver and jewels.
39. *Dhatu-vada*: art of metallurgy.
40. *Mani-raga jnana*: art of tinging jewels.
41. *Akara jnana*: art of mineralogy.
42. *Vrikshayur-veda-yoga*: art of practicing medicine or medical treatment, by herbs.
43. *Mesha-kukkuta-lavaka-yuddha-vidhi*: art of knowing the mode of fighting of lambs, cocks, and birds.
44. *Suka-sarika-pralapana*: art of maintaining or knowing conversation between male and female cockatoos.
45. *Utsadana*: art of healing or cleaning a person with perfumes.
46. *Kesa-marjana-kausala*: art of combing hair

47. *Akshara-mushtika-kathana*: art of talking with fingers.
48. *Dharana-matrika*: art of the use of amulets.
49. *Desa-bhasha-jnana*: art of knowing provincial dialects.
50. *Nirmiti-jnana*: art of knowing prediction by heavenly voice.
51. *Yantra-matrika*: art of mechanics.
52. *Mlecchita-kutarka-vikalpa*: art of fabricating barbarous or foreign sophistry.
53. *Samvacya*: art of conversation.
54. *Manasi kavya-kriya*: art of composing verse
55. *Kriya-vikalpa*: art of designing a literary work or a medical remedy.
56. *Chalitaka-yoga*: art of practicing as a builder of shrines called after him.
57. *Abhidhana-kosha-cchando-jnana*: art of the use of lexicography and meters.
58. *Vastra-gopana*: art of concealment of cloths.
59. *Dyuta-visesha*: art of knowing specific gambling.
60. *Akarsha-krida*: art of playing with dice or magnet.
61. *Balaka-kridanaka*: art of using children's toys.
- 62.. *Vainayiki vidya*: art of enforcing discipline.
63. *Vaijayiki vidya*: art of gaining victory.
64. *Vaitaliki vidya*: art of awakening master with music at dawn.

Like the original knowledge of the *Vedas*, many of these 64 Arts and Sciences remain lost or concealed in that they have not all been translated or discovered.

*“So, all together the Vedas consist of 1,130 Samhitas, 1,130 Brahmanas, 1,130 Aranyakas, and 1,130 Upanisads, a total of 4,520 titles. By the influence of time, however, many texts have been lost. At present only about 11 Samhitas, 18 Brahmanas, 7 Aranyakas, and 220 Upanisads are available. This constitutes less than 6% of the original Vedas.”*⁶²

Fortunately, some of our scholars have been doing research in these topics and after great endeavor some have uncovered a few of the old texts in *Sanskrit*.

We are thankful to HG Bharat Chandra das, Founder of *Center for Traditional Education* for having translated the 50th Art listed as *Nirmitti Jnana, The Art of Foretelling Events*,⁶³ also translated as “*Knowing Prediction by Heavenly Voices*”.

The author has also translated the book *Krsna-Krida, the Art of Engaging Children’s Playful Attitude*,⁶⁴ listed as the 61st. Srila Prabhupada writes the following in this respect:

“Make Vaikuntha. That is my request. Teach from the very beginning of life. Just like bala-krida, Bala-kridanakaih kridan. By playing, he's becoming Krsna conscious. ... Just produce a new generation, just like Pariksit Maharaja. Bala-kridanakaih, from very childhood. Krsna-yoga, (or) bhakti-yoga, can be practiced even by a child without interfering with his natural propensities... Without any education, without any knowledge. There is no need of high-grade knowledge or education to understand... It is already there in everyone's heart... It is not that one has to learn it artificially by some gymnastic. No, natural. Just like the children here, they are also dancing with their parents. They are offering flower, trying to

⁶² Sri Jiva Goswami, *Sat Tattva Sandarbha*, page 61

⁶³ *Nirmitti Jnana*, Bharat Chandra das

⁶⁴ *Krishna Krida*, Bharat Chandra das

*imitate how to chant (mantra). And they are very much pleased. So similarly...these things (should be) ...introduced, krsna. So, some way or other, they should be engaged in krsna. It doesn't matter whether (the child) understands it or not..."*⁶⁵

There was also a distinct difference and separation of the education for girls. Vedic culture does not advocate co-education as we find in modern times. It was only from the beginning of the 20th century that co-education was introduced. Special education called *stri-dharma*, was imparted to young girls, primarily to prepare them for being ideal wives and ideal mothers. O

Actual Vedic education is to prepare an individual for spiritual advancement in life. According to Vedic culture, if education does not foster such objective, that education is said to be *asuric*.

⁶⁵ Lecture on *Srimad Bhāgavatam*, 2.3.14-15, Los Angeles, May 31, 1972)

13. Seven Essential Constituents

We learn from the *Kautiliya Arthashastra*⁶⁶ that for a kingdom, a nation, or a community to become successful, there are seven essential aspects or constituents necessary. There are referred to by Chanakya Pandit as ‘*Seven Essential Constituents for the State*’ and are part of the training and education princes would receive before being given the responsibilities of leading a country. It would normally take many years for one to develop the many qualities that go hand in hand with each constituent.

It is interesting to note that these seven constituents remain relevant not only for a kingdom or a nation, but indeed for any organization, any company or any undertaking one wishes to take up desiring a successful outcome. Many young Indian entrepreneurs who have established themselves in the west have become highly successful simply by following these scientific tried out and tested principles of governance.

The first and most important constituent is the leader himself, in the case of monarchy, the preferred system of Vedic governance, the King, or in the case of a company, the Director. Without a highly qualified leader, no nation and no enterprise will be successful. Closely connected with the head of the state are Ministers who serve as the righthand men to a King or as Managers serving under their Director.

Following these first two constituents come the following five, as listed in the *Kautiliya Arthashastra*: 3) Kingdom, 4) Fort, 5) Treasury, 6) Army, and 7) Allies.

To be noted that for each of these constituents, a rather detailed list is given. For example, the qualities of a King are divided into four broad areas each having

⁶⁶ *Arthashastra*, Book Six, Chapter One, Section 96.1, Excellences of Essential Elements

a specific number of qualities to each. The Kautilya Arthashastra list fourteen qualities of one Easily Approachable, eight qualities of Intellect, four qualities of Energy and twenty-two qualities of Excellences, for a total of 48 qualities a king must possess.

Similarly, the qualities of a Minister are divided in three areas each possessing a number of specific qualities. Under Appointment of the Ministers, seven qualities must be present; under Excellence of the Ministers, twenty qualities are needed, and On the Qualities of a Minister, eight are identified for a total of 35 qualities.

Regarding the Kingdom, on the Excellence of a Country, twenty-one excellences are listed; on the construction of Forts, four types of forts are identified; on the excellences of a Treasury, four are mentioned; on the Excellences of an Army, eleven are mentioned; and lastly, on the Excellences of Ally, six, and Excellences of Enemy, 14 are listed.

In the modern context of an organization or company, the Kingdom relates to the Market, the Fort relates to the Office, the Treasury relates to Finances, the Army relates to the Team, and the Allies relates to Business Friends.

The same concepts can be applied at the village level. The King is the Village Head, the Minister is the Advisor, the Kingdom is the Village Land, the Fort is the Village Office, the Treasury is the Safe, the Army is the Security Team, and the Allies are the neighboring villages.

When dealing with principles of *Sanatana Dharma*, we are naturally dealing with eternal scientific principles. Eternal principles means that they are not subject to change. Once learnt, they can be applied successfully in any part of the world. That is the beauty of the Vedic teachings.

14. Books of References

The unparalleled writings of the Goswamis, under the direction and inspiration of the great Social Reformer responsible to revive the *Bhakti* Cult, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, sparked a re-awakening of the Vedic teachings to depths never before fathomed. Our great Vaisnava *Acharyas* (Preceptors) have since continued to expound upon such esoteric subject matters that deal simultaneously with the material and spiritual realms. By the mercy of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada who continued the work of the *Goswamis* by also writing extensively, now so many literatures are available for the conditioned souls of *Kali Yuga*.

Both the *Bhagavad-gita* and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* stand as our guiding torchbearers of knowledge in this dark age of *Kali Yuga*. Below are a few specific references that deal more directly with the topics discussed in this booklet and that can help readers further deepen the subject matter.

1. *Srimad-Bhagavatam*,⁶⁷ Canto 7, Chapters 11 to 15 by Srila Prabhupada
2. *Gita Nagari Essay*⁶⁸ [1956] (available in VedaBase/Folio) by Srila Prabhupada
3. *The Light of the Bhagavat*⁶⁹ [1961] by Srila Prabhupada
4. *Speaking About Varnasrama*⁷⁰ [1999] (VedaBase/Folio) by Hare Krishna Dasi
5. *Make Vrindavan Villages*⁷¹ [2007] by Bhakti Raghava Swami
6. *Modernity is Killing Civilization*⁷² [2018] by Bhakti Raghava Swami

⁶⁷ SB 7.11 to 15

⁶⁸ *Gita Nagari Essay*, Folio (Unpublished)

⁶⁹ *Light of the Bhagavat*, Srila Prabhupada

⁷⁰ *Speaking About Varnasrama*,

⁷¹ *Make Vrindavan Villages*

⁷² *Modernity is Killing Civilization*

15. Website References

Below are but a few selected websites that deal with various subject matters related to the *varnasrama* mission. As more and more devotees become inquisitive about natural lifestyle advocated in the Vedic culture, they will naturally turn towards these and other similar references, a testimony to Srila Prabhupada's unfolding cultural renaissance that is bringing about a global cultural revolution.

BRS Védique	www.brsvedique.org
The Vedic Way	www.thevedicway.com
Vedic Eco Villages	www.vedicecovillage.ca
Sri Surabhi Campaign	www.srisurabhi.org
Sustainable Eco Alliance	www.sustainableeco.org
Sahyadri Parasurama Gurukula	www.parasuramagurukula.com
Vaisnava Research Institute (VRI)	www.vaisnavaresearchinstitute.com
Varnasrama College ONLINE (VCO)	www.varnasramacollege.com
Varnasrama College Foundation (VCF)	www.vc-foundation.com

16. Conclusion

The meaning of *Daiva Varnasrama Dharma* and its practical application will remain largely concealed if individuals do not leave their present comfort zones in the cities. This requires the accommodation of another paradigm, the village lifestyle paradigm. Only by spending quality time in the villages will the inner truths and secrets of *Varnasrama Dharma* become revealed. The principles of self-sufficiency and sustainability will only become manifest when one learns to live in a localized way rekindling one's natural relationship with nature, the self (*atma*) and the super-self (*param atma*). This is what Srila Prabhupada meant when he stated that one must learn to live on the lap of material nature.

As nicely explained in his essay *Gita Nagari*,

*“When Gita-nagari will attempt to harmonise such sweet relation between man and God, man and the world and the world and God, at such an auspicious time only, the United Nation’s effort to establish peace in the world will be successful or the dream of a casteless society all over the world will be realised in practice. There is no other practical solution of the scientific basis of universal brotherhood or of universal religion without understanding this simple truth of the fatherhood of Godhead, motherhood of Nature, and childhood of all living entities.”*⁷³

This will require tremendous courage and determination on the part of those taking up the mantle given to us by Srila Prabhupada. The *varnasrama* mission or

⁷³ *Gita Nagari*, unpublished

daiva varnasrama dharma means re-introducing village lifestyle as the norm within general society, the most ideal norm which can best facilitate the advancement of our Vaisnava practices in devotional service.

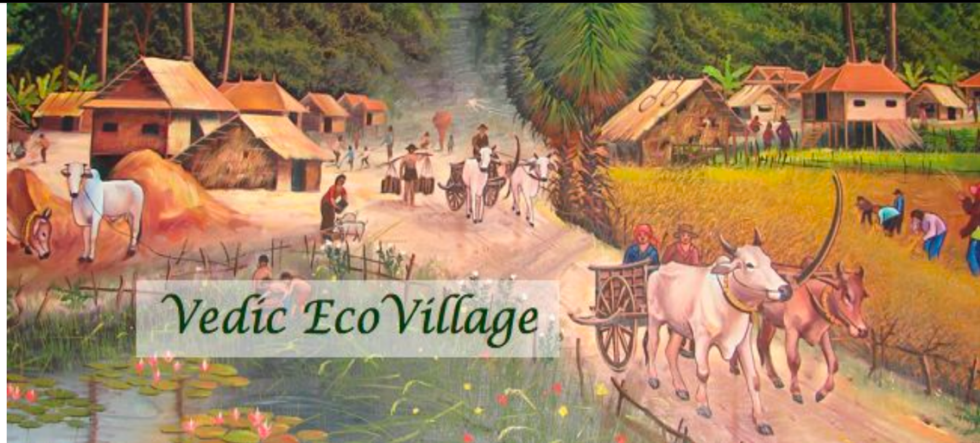
For this to take place, traditional education and training at the village levels must be re-introduced and for this reason both *Gurukula* and *Varnasrama Colleges* are of paramount importance. The *Varnasrama Shikshalaya* programs (pre-*Gurukula*) introduced in India are meant to serve as forerunners to these educational reforms.

Let us know, let us realize, and let us demonstrate the importance of village life. Let us become convinced that village life, based on the eternal principles of Krishna consciousness, is indeed part of our eternal philosophy, our eternal education, our eternal lifestyle, indeed our eternal *dharma*, *Sanatana Dharma*.

What follows is a Project Case of a community in the making in Western Canada called Vedic Eco Village. More updated information can be found at the website www.vedicecovillage.ca.

VEDIC ECO VILLAGE

www.vedicecovillage.ca



Western Canada
**Project
Showcase
2017**





**Temple Cabin: Our Starting Point
Vedic Eco Village, Spring 2017**



**Looking West from Temple Cabin
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017**



Sunset Over Home Lake Spring 2017



**Pond and View Facing North
Vedic Eco Village, Spring 2017**



Our Spring Water Source Vedic Eco Village



Building the Water Line System Vedic Eco Village, Spring 2017



**Community Field Harvest
Saranagati Village, Spring 2017**



**Village Exchange / Local Farm Market
Saranagati Village
Spring 2017**



Training Local Oxen
Saranagati Village, Spring 2017



**Feeding Cows at our Neighbouring
Govardhan Goshala
Saranagati Village, Summer 2017**



Bhagavatam Class at Temple Cabin Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017



**Go Puja on Purnima at
Govardhan Goshala
Saranagati Village, Summer 2017**



**Village Exchange / Local Farm Market
Saranagati Village, Summer 2017**



Guru Puja
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017



Saranagati Rathayatra
Saranagati Village, Summer 2017



Processing Trees For Construction Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017



**Building Colony Fence for our Cows
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017**





**Cordwood (Stack Wood) Building
Using Cob and Logs
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017**



**Sorting Forest Debris
for Garden Mulch & Wood Chips
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017**



Rathayatra Kirtan in Vancouver, Summer 2017



Book Distribution at Festival of India Kamloops, Summer 2017



**Kirtan Performance - Festival of India
Kamloops, Summer 2017**



Colony Fence - South Side
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017



**Summer Harvest
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017**



Srimad Bhagavatam Class
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017



Eco Village Workers
Vedic Eco Village, Summer 2017



End of Year Harvest
Vedic Eco Village, Fall 2017



Winterizing Water Line
Vedic Eco Village, Fall 2017



Winter View of Vedic Eco Village

Winter 2017



Gurukula Colony Map 2017

Vedic Eco Village

For More Information
Please Visit

www.vedicecovillage.ca



Contact Ramanath das at +1 250 313 4108
or email vedicecovillage@gmail.com

FOOTNOTES (Corresponding Page)

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