

# COMMUNITY BY DESIGN

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED

BG = <i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>	RV = <i>Rāja Vidya</i>
DS = <i>Dialectic Spiritualism</i>	SB = <i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i>
Iso = <i>Śrī Īṣopaniṣad</i>	SUGL = <i>In Search of the Ultimate Goal of Life</i>
KB = <i>Kṛṣṇa</i>	SVD = <i>Speaking About Varṇāśrama</i>

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Each endnote has a hyperlink at the end of it which takes you back to the point in the paper which was noted.

## PREFACE

In the spring of 2014 a discussion amongst friends centered on how we would go about starting a rural community in the United States if a large sum of money happened to fall into our laps. We thought about the need for intentional design and considered the logistical reasons as to why community development has not yet happened successfully for ISKCON in America.

When, in the fall, devotees from an urban temple expressed their desire to start an ISKCON rural community someday, my thoughts precipitated as a four-page letter which was meant to express my initial, rough understanding as to why ISKCON in America, due to limitations inherent in its federal tax-exempt church status, could not be the entity to establish such communities. I also shared information about an alternative legal structure which potentially could work—one referred to by the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as “501(d),” or tax-exempt “Religious or Apostolic Association,” which, according to the Internal Revenue Manual, is for the purpose of operating a “religious community where the members live a communal life following the tenets and teachings of the organization.”

I later met devotees in several places who fortuitously engaged me in conversations about rural community development. I found, however, that when I tried to explain my thoughts and understandings regarding the 501(d) legal structure, many responded with blank stares, doubts or objections. I realize now that before someone can accept the 501(d) model as being worthy of consideration, one needs background information concerning the need for, the purpose of and the nature of community—**particularly, the type of rural Kṛṣṇa conscious communities that Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for**, which he referred to as “our farms.” Thus, after further research, that original four-page letter has evolved into the form of this paper.

Although there are various types of communities that could be developed (e.g., “eco-villages” and the like), this paper only addresses the establishment of the type of communal farm projects which **Śrīla Prabhupāda specifically asked for**, namely, **examples of daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma (DVAD) communities**. Many devotees sincerely wish to establish such DVAD communities pursuant to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desires. This paper was written particularly to dialogue with them. **For such communes to manifest in America, this paper argues that the 501(d) legal model is the best suited**. Those interested in establishing other styles of communities will likely not find the 501(d) model practical or attractive—quite understandably.

## Did Śrīla Prabhupāda want communal farms?

We find that when Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke about revamping society so that people in general would be able to live a simpler, God-centered life, he consistently said things like, “Take some land from the government. You produce your food. Where is the difficulty? Keep some cows; you get milk,”<sup>a</sup> and, “Everyone should possess some land for growing food grains and some cows to take milk,”<sup>b</sup> and, “...if one man has got a cow and four acres of land, he has no economic problem...Let the people be divided with four acres of land and a cow, there will be no economic question. All the factories will be closed.”<sup>c</sup>

Notably, Śrīla Prabhupāda found modern man’s employment in factories and the like to be detrimental to the mission of human life. Thus, he prescribed that “everyone” should possess land and cows so as to independently solve their economic needs.

However, when he spoke about “our farms,” Śrīla Prabhupāda *did not* advocate that devotees get their own land and work independently, even if they were householders. Rather, he instructed that the devotees work **communally** and cooperatively on *our* farms:

**Nityānanda:** The householders on our farm, they should cooperate and produce the food centrally, or every householder should produce his own food independently?

**Prabhupāda:** No. Why they are living in a community centrally? Community means work everything for the community.<sup>d</sup>

And all who would reside on *our* farms would be equally provided for. “Anyone who comes to our Society we give shelter, we give food, we give instruction, we give dress, everything, without any condition. You please come and live with us. For such a nice building we have taken. Our farms are so nice, you can go and see how they are doing.”<sup>e</sup>

**Bhagavān:** So in our community, when we grow things, or we have need of someone’s services, how are these services distributed equally? Let’s say we grow cauliflower, we grow peas, we grow wheat. Is it that each family must be responsible and take only what he needs? How is it distributed?

...

But my question is, if the community produces... Some class of men produce vegetables and grains, some class produce cows, some class produce clothes, some class produce necessities for building. How are these things distributed equally?

**Prabhupāda:** Because we are community, we shall distribute whatever necessity for everyone.

**Bhagavān:** They will come and say, “I need this much cloth, I need this much milk.”

**Prabhupāda:** No, this much cloth... But if you become Kṛṣṇa conscious, then you will be satisfied with the minimum necessities of life. That is natural. You won’t demand.

**Yogeśvara:** So actually such a program can only be successful proportionately with the rise of Kṛṣṇa consciousness of the people.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. That is the main basic principle. Without being Kṛṣṇa conscious, if you arrange like this, that will never be successful.<sup>f</sup>

Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to show by example how to become freed from dependency on city life and satisfied with the village idea. “But we are not going to develop a competitive farming enterprise for making money. The basic principle is to become independent of artificial city life...Gandhi had this idea, the one defect was that there was no Krishna in the center. So the same idea of village organization, but keeping Krishna in the center should be introduced on our farm projects.”<sup>g</sup>

The purpose of this paper, *Community by Design*, then, is to churn discussion on Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire for devotees to establish communal farm communities which strive for self-sufficiency, sustainability and Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Herein we primarily want to address the aspect of design regarding American communities, for communes are indeed so by design, not by impersonal chance.

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Section One of this paper, entitled [Need for Community](#), is an overview of various concerns drawing our attention to the fact that there is a real, virtually urgent, need to develop rural communities based on DVAD principles.

Section Two, entitled [Economy and Community](#), argues that DVAD communities cannot actually accomplish their intended goals if the members are divorced from the economic system inherent to DVAD, namely, Spiritual Communism, including its ideals.

Finally, Section Three, entitled [Legal Structure and Community](#), argues that DVAD communities in America cannot be established, what to speak of operated successfully, if they are founded on an improper legal structure (entailing organizational form and tax status). We will show that the IRS "church" status, which ISKCON must and does operate under, cannot be used in the establishment of a DVAD community. That is, ISKCON (or any church) cannot, and thus will not, develop DVAD communities in America. This is not the fault of ISKCON's leadership; it is merely a matter of legal limitations. Lastly, an alternative legal structure which may be used by devotees will be described.

Admittedly, there is likely much lacking in this paper, but I have tried my best to ensure there is no false or misleading information within by consulting several learned devotees. However, if there are remaining flaws, the fault lies solely with me. I would appreciate feedback from anyone who perceives inaccuracies, improper conclusions or missing information that I should have included. I also do not claim that the views expressed in this paper are "the way and the only way" to understand the issue of rural DVAD community development in America; I see no reason why there can't be other valid understandings.

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- a. Lecture—Aug. 5, 1974
- b. Lecture—Feb. 6, 1975
- c. May 11, 1969
- d. Aug. 1, 1975
- e. July 14, 1976
- f. May 27, 1974
- g. Letter—Oct. 14, 1976

## INTRODUCTION

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire for us to establish rural communities is no secret. In reality, however, plans in pursuance of this desire of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s, at least in the United States, have either not gotten past the discussion level or have failed when actually attempted.

Now, before we can continue, it is necessary that we “get on the same page” as to what we mean by “community.” There are certainly a number of legitimate usages of the word, but we are only concerned herein with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s intended meaning. When Śrīla Prabhupāda would implore devotees to develop rural communities, he specifically was referring to *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* (DVAD) communities.<sup>1</sup>

It should go without saying, but we cannot design a DVAD community without first defining what it is and what it is not.

## PRINCIPLES OF *DAIVA-VARNĀŚRAMA-DHARMA*

Depending on time, place and circumstance, a DVAD community can appear in various forms—“old wine in a new bottle.” We should not expect to duplicate that description we read about which paints a picture of perfectly qualified *brāhmaṇas* who were maintained merely by charity, of noble *kṣatriyas* who could protect and rule simply by their personal prowess and who thus could be maintained by the exacting of taxes, of charitable *vaiśyas* who, without greed, could incessantly produce more, and of faithful *śūdras* who met their maintenance by expertly serving without resentment.

Nonetheless, some of the principles of DVAD which must be approximated as closely as possible in whatever form the modern community manifests include:

- i. ***Dharmic* social intercourse and division of labor:**  
Everyone serves interdependently (cooperative teamwork, like parts of a body) according to their natural qualities and capacity following the scriptural codes of conduct for their particular *varṇa* and *āśrama*.<sup>2</sup> [Unfortunately, many people today choose their occupation according to how many dollars per hour it pays rather than according to their natural inclination for work. This is due to the monetization of work.]
- ii. **Self-sufficiency—wealth is generated and needs are met internally:**  
Work and production are not monetized, and the internal economy is not fueled by profit motives but by gifting and sharing of one’s goods and services. There is no competition between community members.<sup>3</sup> Income is not obtained through outside employment. Rather, goods and services (if they happen to be in excess) may be offered to those external to the community in exchange for monetary payment<sup>4</sup>, since money is needed to pay for things such as property tax and for purchasing those things which the community cannot produce for itself. (In this paper we will regard this as self-sufficiency since the revenue is generated internally rather than from outside employment.)
- iii. ***Bhakti-yoga* maturing gradually into *ananya-bhakti*:**  
Every production is made and every service is done as an offering to Kṛṣṇa. [Whereas in a typical material community one person’s hour of work is considered monetarily more valuable than another’s, in an interdependent DVAD community, all work is understood to be devotional service. Thus one person’s hour of service is considered to be as valuable as another’s.<sup>5</sup> Such vision enables devotees to happily and honestly work according to their propensity, and eventually with real love, instead of being wage, or result, conscious.]

iv. **Sustainability:**

Education and training of community members facilitate ongoing following and passing down of the previous three principles.<sup>6</sup>

This, in a nutshell, is the substance of the community we believe Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned. And life with the land and cows is the substrate on which this DVAD, or brahminical, culture naturally grows.<sup>7</sup>

The following are forms of community which, although legitimate in their own rights, do **NOT** contain the substance which defines a DVAD community—that community we specifically want to design:

- i. A congregation of devotees living near a temple but having outside employment
- ii. Priests being maintained by a temple and doing agricultural chores
- iii. Householders on properties (be they rural or urban) living as non-interdependent neighbors, whether keeping outside employment or not
- iv. Devotees developing cooperative businesses and cohousing separate from life with the land and cows—that is, urban cooperatives

Please keep this working definition of DVAD communities in mind while proceeding through this paper.

### THE SEED ONE PLANTS

It is argued in the following pages that failures in executing Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision in America and the subsequent reluctance to make further attempts are, in part, due to the fact that to date we have been using the wrong legal structure as the foundation on which to build a community.

Once an entity has established its economic and legal (meaning federal tax status) structures, its operational trajectory into the future is basically determined. That is, once established, the economic and legal workings of a community cannot be easily morphed into another species. For example, if one legally establishes a project as a church (which has its corresponding economic parameters that are legally allowed by the IRS) one cannot later morph that church into, say, a business. In other words, the seed one plants determines the tree that grows and the resultant fruits. There's no option to change course!

**Therefore, it is imperative when designing a DVAD community—which functions with its inherent economy, referred to in this paper as Spiritual Communism (not to be confused with egalitarianism or material communism)—to choose AT THE ONSET a legal structure which best facilitates that economy and the perpetual success of the community.**

Indeed, if plans for a community are properly designed and executed, we will realize that Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire (the theory) is correct and that simply our attempts at its execution (the application) have been faulty. Otherwise, as Benjamin Franklin said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

## Section One: NEED FOR COMMUNITY

“A need or problem encourages creative efforts to meet the need or solve the problem.” – Plato, *Republic*

Unless we feel the need for community, we will not invest time, energy, money or creativity into establishing it. Much has been written on the benefits of community. What follows, then, is simply an overview of the advantages afforded by the kind of rural lifestyle Śrīla Prabhupāda desired for devotees. And why did he desire this? Because he realized that only a small percentage of his disciples and others who were interested in practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness were successfully remaining aloof from *māyā*. Out of deep compassion, Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to make Kṛṣṇa consciousness attainable by a larger percentage of people by establishing DVAD communities.<sup>8</sup>

So, **THIS IS THE PURPOSE:** Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to organize communities specifically for facilitating the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness by more than just a select few. And the scientific DVAD structure is most conducive to accomplishing this objective, for it was designed by the Supreme Intelligent Designer, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, precisely for this purpose.

Below are some concerns which are best addressed in such a community.

### BRAHMINICAL CULTURE PRACTICED

“Without protection of cows, brahminical culture cannot be maintained ...  
without brahminical culture, the aim of life cannot be fulfilled.”  
– Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 8.24.5)

Brahminical culture is not simply for *brāhmaṇas*; it is the culture on which the entire DVAD system thrives. A *brāhmaṇa*'s function is not complete if the other sectors of society are missing, just as the value of a head is not appreciated when it is separated from a body. Moreover, the four *varṇas* need to work interdependently for each of them to *actually* have meaning—thus the need for community.

For example, a person truly acts as a *brāhmaṇa* when he serves the society (the body) in that capacity. Can a *brāhmaṇa* serve the community by offering food for the pleasure of the deity with love and devotion if he is disconnected from the *vaiśya* who is planting, caring for and harvesting organic produce with love and devotion for Kṛṣṇa, or if he is disconnected from the *vaiśya* who is protecting the cows that give love-laden, pure milk for Kṛṣṇa and the bulls that plow and fertilize the fields? If he remains disconnected, the *brāhmaṇa* can only offer store-bought produce and milk, which is usually highly contaminated and not produced for the pleasure of Kṛṣṇa. Thus making an acceptable offering to the deity is a communal effort.

“Brahminical culture can advance only when man is educated to develop the quality of goodness, and for this there is a prime necessity of food prepared with milk, fruits and grains.”<sup>9</sup> If brahminical culture requires milk and grains, IT REQUIRES COWS AND LAND.

### COW PROTECTION

“Without cow protection...no human civilization can prosper at any length.”  
– Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.14.34)

*Brāhmaṇas* require fresh milk from protected cows in order to develop the finer brain tissues needed to understand transcendental knowledge;<sup>10</sup> without cow protection, brahminical culture is not practice-able. Additionally, “*Pañca-gavya*, the five products received from the cow, namely milk, yogurt, ghee, cow dung

and cow urine, are required in all ritualistic ceremonies performed according to the Vedic directions. Cow urine and cow dung are uncontaminated, and since even the urine and dung of a cow are important, we can just imagine how important this animal is for human civilization.”<sup>11</sup>

Grains are necessary for giving vitality to the body, and they need to be grown in great quantity to feed a community. Such fields of grain will not be tilled simply by human hands. Plowing such agricultural fields with oxen is the only sustainable choice. Certainly, using machines dependent on petroleum-based fuel is neither ecologically friendly nor Kṛṣṇa’s natural arrangement for man to get his food. Such machines pollute the environment, the soil and, ultimately, the consciousness of the farmer. They also demote the oxen to an unemployed status, causing them both physical and subtle diseases.

The oxen can additionally perform other valuable services in the form of pulling carts and loads; powering turnstiles for grinding items such as grains and seeds, or for generating electricity; offering their dung as the best organic fertilizer and as cooking fuel; and offering their urine for medicinal purposes.<sup>12</sup>

The cow and bull are considered our mother and father and are Kṛṣṇa’s favorite animal; thus, protecting them is extremely pleasing to Kṛṣṇa. This does not mean simply keeping them as pets but requires that we actually engage them in devotional service, especially in providing food (milk and grains) for humans.<sup>13</sup> This work requires many committed people who can pass this most important art down to the next generation, our children—thus the need for community.

## CHILD-RAISING, SCHOOLING AND PROTECTION

“...children should be taken care of. They are future hope.” – Śrīla Prabhupāda (Aug. 2, 1976)

Generally, children do not properly understand where their food comes from, a result of their living a life disconnected from the land and cows. Thus Kṛṣṇa’s statements, such as, *annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḥ anna-sambhavaḥ yajñād bhavati parjanya yajñah karma-samudbhavaḥ*, “All living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced by performance of *yajña*, and *yajña* is born of prescribed duties,”<sup>14</sup> don’t strike them as terribly relevant. How can a child become a preacher in adulthood if the modern relevancy of ancient scriptures is not appreciated? And Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted them to become preachers.<sup>15</sup>

Śrīla Prabhupāda rightly considered modern educational institutions to be slaughterhouses.<sup>16</sup> Although home-schooling is an option, most mothers quit after some time. A school based in a devotee community is best so that children can be trained and taught in an atmosphere devoid of the passion and ignorance found in the material world.

Many devotees’ grown-up children have entered the *ugra-karma* “work-force,” having no practical option for maintaining themselves when they marry. Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned children getting trained in *varṇāśrama* colleges so that they could be engaged according to their propensity in a DVAD community.<sup>17</sup> Communities will not endure unless they become intergenerational. This goal can be reached when a community’s economic base becomes centered locally on the land, cows and cottage industry. Training in skills and trades (*varṇāśrama* education) is therefore compulsory.

Proper protection of children entails attention on all levels—physical, emotional and spiritual.<sup>18</sup> To protect children from the influences of the dominant culture which insidiously seep into our lives is a great challenge. The efforts of a greater community are needed, for “it takes a village to raise a child.” But, this team effort won’t happen if the community members are running off elsewhere for their livelihood.

## COTTAGE INDUSTRY

“an industry whose labor force consists of family units or individuals working at home with their own equipment.”  
– Dictionary

“One cannot even maintain one’s physical body without work.”<sup>19</sup> Work, however, should be natural and simple so that **time and energy are conserved** for the real purpose of human life. Today’s economy simply exploits workers by making them slaves for a wage. Śrīla Prabhupāda envisioned devotees, who weren’t engaged in preaching activities, developing cottage industries by which they could maintain themselves independently from the outside economy.<sup>20</sup> Engaging in cottage industries with others is more easily done when people live as a community. **Work where you live; live where you work.**<sup>21</sup> Additionally, such home-based “industries” are naturally friendlier to Mother Bhūmi than modern industrialization is.

## ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HARMONY

“...neither God nor the living being nor Nature is in any way antagonistic toward one another, but that all of them exist in harmony as a complete whole unit.”  
– Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Conception of Gītā-nagari*)

Is it possible to truly love someone while ignoring or abusing people or things in relation to that person? Not likely. Similarly, all of creation is nothing but the energies—external and marginal—of Kṛṣṇa. To properly develop love for Him requires that devotees neither abuse nor neglect the environment, other living entities or the ecological systems which we are meant to live in harmony with, and that they utilize these in the service of the Lord. Rural living is more conducive to this mood than is urban life.

Community living affords the many hands needed to care for the land, manage the forests, etc. When Kṛṣṇa is pleased with how the earth is properly treated and used in His service, He allows her to provide many gifts and riches, freeing man from unnecessary economic development.<sup>22</sup>

## ECONOMIC PROBLEM SIMPLIFIED

“You keep cows and have sufficient grains, whole economic problem solved.” – Śrīla Prabhupāda (May 11, 1969)  
“...simple life...and save your time for advancing in Krishna consciousness. **Don’t be implicated in the *ugra-karma*.**”  
– Śrīla Prabhupāda (Aug. 22, 1968)

Struggle for existence in this material world consumes more energy and time than any other activity. It is *māyā*’s trick to distract us from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. If it weren’t for economic endeavors, man would be basically free. Necessarily, then, if one’s economic endeavors are simplified, life’s goal can be more easily reached. Śrīla Prabhupāda perceived that entanglement in *ugra-karma* was wreaking havoc in aspiring devotees’ lives.<sup>23</sup> Thus, he wished that devotees meet more of their needs through agriculture, cow protection and cottage industries. This type of economy can be naturally executed by healthy family units living as a community.

## FAMILY UNITS FORTIFIED

“Nature’s arrangement is so perfect that if you live natural life, there is no need of hard work.”  
– Śrīla Prabhupāda (Sept. 28, 1972)

The need to work hard for one’s livelihood often requires both a man and his wife to go out of the home for employment. Children, then, spend more time with paid baby-sitters and non-family than they do with their own parents. If one lives in a community which has developed a simpler economy based on

interdependence, however, parents can spend more time with their children, which results in happier, healthier children<sup>24</sup> less afflicted by the modes of passion and ignorance. Such children, in turn, are more likely to remain within the community to produce a further generation of devotees, for families that pray together and work together usually stay together. Stable families are the foundation of a sustainable community, and families generally cannot be stable outside of a community setting.

### FREEDOM FROM THE LOWER MODES

“In the country the pangs of this material world are less.” – Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Quest for Enlightenment*, Chapter 5)

The symptoms of passion and ignorance are many, such as, lust, anger, greed, avarice, envy, harshness, impatience and lamentation. Being victimized by these qualities, one must suffer the threefold miseries. Living in an atmosphere of goodness, however, facilitates those who are engaging in devotional service to steer away from these *anarthas*. Our association is a major ingredient of our atmosphere. If devotees live in a rural community, they can benefit greatly from the good association and natural setting. A lifestyle free from the lower modes facilitates one becoming peaceful, clean and healthy, internally and externally.

### HEALTHFUL LIVING

“Agriculture is the noblest profession. It makes society happy, wealthy, healthy, honest, and spiritually advanced...”  
– Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Light of the Bhāgavata*, verse 9)

If we are what we eat (and drink and breathe), most of us are chemical waste dumps! But the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* begins by saying, “Life’s desires should never be directed toward sense gratification. One should desire only a healthy life, or self-preservation, since a human being is meant for inquiry about the Absolute Truth. Nothing else should be the goal of one’s works.”<sup>25</sup> Śrīla Prabhupāda would consistently sign his letters written to disciples with, “Hope this meets you in good health.”

Life in a rural community in which devotees work interdependently to grow food, protect cows, engage in cottage industries and live more harmoniously with nature offers the best opportunity for good health on both the physical and mental platforms. This, in turn, facilitates the pursuit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness for conditioned souls.<sup>26</sup>

### KṚṢṆA CONSCIOUSNESS FACILITATED

“Human life should be peaceful. One should be able to acquire food easily, eat nicely, and save time for cultivating Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” – Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Dharma: Way of Transcendence*, Chapter 2)

“I’m too tired from working!” This is a common reply given to explain why one’s *sādhana* or service is slack. Śrīla Prabhupāda primarily wanted communities established to facilitate the practice of *sādhana* and devotional service by devotees in all *āśramas* and *varṇas*. All other purposes and advantages of living in a DVAD community are simply to facilitate this one—the attainment of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. By having an economy which is internally generated (based on land, cows and cottage industries), time, money, energy and vitality can be conserved for this higher pursuit. A community’s success in simple living and Kṛṣṇa consciousness can then be a shining example to be used in preaching to others about the relevancy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.<sup>27</sup>

## PREACHING

“So if you show practical example that how you are living simple life and how you are advanced in Krishna consciousness, then people will learn from you.” – Śrīla Prabhupāda (Aug. 1, 1975)

Being members of Lord Caitanya’s *saṅkīrtana* movement means that everything we do is ultimately for the sake of preaching; preaching is the essence. Because the practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness must be done in the association of devotees<sup>28</sup>, Śrīla Prabhupāda wished that those who joined the *āśrama* would not have to again enter the material whirlpool. Our preaching will be much more effective if we can demonstrate that once in, a person does not have to leave for the sake of material maintenance when they marry. Thus, DVAD communities not only will save so many devotees from leaving the *sat-saṅga*, but will also show others that full time devotional service is not just something practiced as a passing fad. Therefore, relationships among devotees can be long term.

## RELATIONSHIPS FORTIFIED

“Although much of modernity is based on people thinking that they are units unto themselves, community means seeing our interdependence. We each have an integral role in the function and success of society.”  
– Bhakti Tirtha Swami (*Leadership for an Age of Higher Consciousness*, 2)

This is an insidious disease, thinking that we are units unto ourselves. Some even claim they can be self-sufficient by themselves! A DVAD community (one with an interdependent economy) quickly reveals the interdependent nature we have. Relationships are fortified when we’re “in it together.” Without an interdependent economy—remember, “money is sweeter than honey” and it’s the possession we least like to share or lose or disclose—we will never truly realize our interdependency with others. Thus, self-sufficiency will simply be a pipe dream, for “no man is an island.”

## SELF-SUFFICIENCY

“We must become self-sufficient by growing our own grains and producing our own milk, then there will be no question of poverty.” – Śrīla Prabhupāda (Dec. 18, 1974)

Clearly, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s desire for self-sufficient farm communities was born from concern for his devotees. He wanted these farms so that devotees wouldn’t have to go to the city to work in order to maintain themselves, they wouldn’t find themselves without necessities (especially food), they could save time for chanting and preaching, and they could remember Kṛṣṇa more easily by living the lifestyle He did 5000 years ago in Vṛndāvana. Their lifestyle would be an example to others, too.<sup>29</sup> These are the PURPOSES of the self-sufficient communes Śrīla Prabhupāda asked for. And he so much wanted to see them manifest that he said this work was on an equal level with preaching as the “most important work.”<sup>30</sup>

Śrīla Prabhupāda did *not* ask for self-sufficient communities simply for the sake of preaching about “back to nature” or “survival” lifestyles, which other groups actively profess. Just as he did not approve of devotees teaching about vegetarianism separate from Kṛṣṇa,<sup>31</sup> so the pursuance and spreading of Kṛṣṇa consciousness were his only motives in teaching about simplicity and the DVAD system.

Self-sufficiency does not necessarily mean that a community produces everything it needs. Obviously, most land will not provide the residents with needed things like salt and metals. Additionally, in many climates, only certain food items may be grown, and that, only during short growing seasons. In much of America, for example, cotton cannot be grown, and it is illegal to grow the alternative fiber, hemp.

On a practical level, for Śrīla Prabhupāda, self-sufficiency means that one produces as much of what is required, as far as is possible, according to the time, place and circumstance, with the purpose of making life simpler so that there will be more time for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.<sup>32</sup> Nothing more than that. And achieving self-sufficiency was so important to Śrīla Prabhupāda—“The whole idea is that we are ISKCON, a community to be independent from outside help”<sup>33</sup>—that he sanctioned the use of modern techniques to achieve it, if necessary.<sup>34</sup>

By living self-sufficiently, devotees were to find their practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness more sustainable, rather than “here today, gone tomorrow.”

## SUSTAINABILITY

“...the root meaning of the word *dharma* is ‘that which sustains one’s existence.’”

– Śrīla Prabhupāda (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.2.6, purport)

By definition, there is nothing sustainable in this material world. But, Śrīla Prabhupāda felt that a simpler, more natural Kṛṣṇa conscious life centered on the land and cows would give devotees a more stable lifestyle which would be conducive to their lifelong practice of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But if a profit motive were to enter into the activities of self-sufficiency, Śrīla Prabhupāda felt the whole purpose would be lost.<sup>35</sup>

If the Kṛṣṇa-centered farm life is to be passed down to the next generation, education about and training in the DVAD principles is imperative. Indeed, sustainability generally means that something can be maintained over a large period of time, typically for many generations.

## TIME SAVED

“If we have food grains, milk and cloth, life becomes easy and we can save time for preaching and chanting.”

– Śrīla Prabhupāda (Jan. 19, 1975)

Because time is an energy or impersonal form of Kṛṣṇa, it is meant to be used wisely in His service. As material life becomes more and more complicated, though, it increasingly robs us of time. By establishing DVAD communities as explained above, devotees can save precious time for Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Time, like money, should be invested, rather than merely spent. If the newer generations inherit the practices of cow protection, agriculture and cottage industries from their elders, they will not need to unnecessarily spend time “reinventing the wheel” to figure out their maintenance. Thus the time invested by the “pioneers” of the commune to get the economic base settled would not be in vain; it would be a most valuable investment.

We now have the following to keep in mind as we go through the rest of this paper: The DVAD communes Śrīla Prabhupāda desired should be founded on certain principles—namely *dharmic* social intercourse and division of labor; self-sufficiency; sustainability and the culture of *bhakti*—and should engage in practices such as cow protection, growing of food utilizing ox power, cottage industries and schooling of children. And all of this should be done in pursuance of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mandate for us to show the world by example how one may become a pure devotee of Kṛṣṇa while living a simpler and more natural life in the material world, simply by serving in one’s natural position.

## Section Two: ECONOMY AND COMMUNITY

In this material world even our economic systems are influenced and defined by the three modes of material nature. As the modes are always competing with one another and one is never present alone without the other two, **an economy based on any one of the modes of nature is not sustainable**, by definition.

**The economic structure of a community undoubtedly plays a crucial role in determining its course.** One economic model may better facilitate interdependent relationships between the members than another. One model may be more conducive to the cultivation of Kṛṣṇa consciousness than another. One model may breed financial disparity in the community, whereas another equal financial stability for all. And one model may (perhaps inadvertently) foster a separatist mentality or a feeling of independence within community members more than another.

**It is wrong to argue that the economic system within which we work, or earn our livelihood, has no effect on our consciousness.** The following is an overview of various types of economies and their potential effects.

### ECONOMY MODELS

#### 1. MODE OF GOODNESS

- Based on interdependent relationships
- Productions made and services rendered for the benefit of the community
- Self-sufficiency, (relative) sustainability and harmony with the ecology
- Gifting of goods and services within the community; trade/selling done outside
- Personal connection with those providing things not produced by oneself
- Needs of everyone looked after by the community
- Conducive to developing relationships based on love and trust
- Conducive to cultivating detachment from selfishness, envy and competition with others
- Characterized by the seeing of equal self-worth and dignity of all
- Conducive to cultivating a sense of community

#### 2. MODE OF PASSION

- Based on independence; each man for himself; “The fruits belong to me.”
- Level “playing field” as each person “makes it or breaks it” according to his expertise or luck in his independent occupation; “May the better man win.”
- Envy-fueled competition
- Making a profit, not serving the community, as goal of one’s work
- Capitalistic economy resulting in financial disparity
- Exchange of money as the norm, rather than gifting
- Less personal relationship between provider and receiver (now known as “customer”)
- Competition for commodities and natural resources; less care for the ecology
- Monetization of work; self-worth measured by fruits gained in one’s occupation
- Not so conducive to cultivating detachment from results or freedom from selfishness
- Not so conducive to cultivating a sense of community

#### 3. MODE OF IGNORANCE

- Dependency as the norm (Being over-dependent on another’s mercy is a sign of Kali-yuga.)
- Unlevel playing field as those with an advantage exploit the disadvantaged as well as the ecology; “Winner takes all.”
- Fascist economy resulting in destruction of one’s enemy or competitor

- A virtual war between the “have’s” and “have-not’s”
- Mostly, people engaged as “wage slaves” rather than independently according to natural propensities; people reduced to dogs, hogs, camels and asses
- Money no longer gold-backed (cheating) and wealth mostly in digital form
- Inflation, bank crashes and devaluation of the dollar leading to economic catastrophes
- Cheating, bluffing, exploiting, hoarding and harming as name of the game
- Debts, loans and fines on overdue credit payments symptomatic of this system
- Conducive only to cultivating demonic qualities
- Destroys community, families and the sense of self-worth

#### 4. VARṆĀŚRAMA-DHARMA [VAD] \*

- Like #1 but with members of society following scriptural codes of conduct for their social and spiritual divisions; thus considered *dharmic*
- Members of this community not necessarily *vaiṣṇavas* (could be monists, Shaivites, etc.)
- Early stage on the path of elevation; followers generally interested in material promotion or *mokṣa*, having different conceptions of the supreme objective (*karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*)

#### 5. DAIVA-VARṆĀŚRAMA-DHARMA [DVAD] \* / SPIRITUAL COMMUNISM

- Like #4 but with each community member being first and foremost a *vaiṣṇava*, thus a truly classless society<sup>36</sup>
- Each *vaiṣṇava* engaged in their natural duties according to *varṇa* and *āśrama* for the sake of serving Kṛṣṇa, guru and devotees (*bhakti-yoga* culminating in *ananya-bhakti*)
- Kṛṣṇa as the center and goal, thus recognized as a transcendental system
- Relationships interconnected through Kṛṣṇa
- Most conducive to cultivating detachment from the results of one’s activities, freedom from covetousness, freedom from envy, purification from *anarthas* in general
- Most sustainable system as Kṛṣṇa is the center
- Operates according to the tenets of **Spiritual Communism**: “**Everything** animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and **owned by the Lord**. One should therefore **accept only those things necessary for himself**, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong.”<sup>37</sup>

\* For the sake of this presentation, the terms *varṇāśrama-dharma* and *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* are distinguished as follows (although these terms are most often used interchangeably):

VAD is used here to denote a social system organized according to *varṇas* and *āśramas* but which **does not explicitly state that Viṣṇu- or Kṛṣṇa-bhakti is the goal**. Thus this system is still considered material. Non-devotees may follow this system. (Śaṅkarācārya favored VAD, for example.)

DVAD, on the other hand, is used here to specifically denote that **same** system when it **explicitly states that Viṣṇu- or Kṛṣṇa-bhakti is the center and goal**. Being intentionally dovetailed with Kṛṣṇa, this system is considered transcendental—thus *daiva*.

### PROPRIETORSHIP

A salient feature of the above economic systems is **the manner in which “private ownership” is viewed**. In the mode-of-goodness model, people do not consider themselves proprietors of the land or her resources. Rather, in the mood of detachment, the land is considered a communal property and the residents as temporary tenants and stewards. When the mode of passion influences an economic system, however, the concept of private ownership becomes prevalent. The land and her resources/gifts are thus monetized and labeled as “ours” and “theirs.” The “owner” now considers land a private asset meant for his enjoyment and benefit and which his offspring can inherit. With the rise of the mode of ignorance, another’s private property is no longer honored, thus even a government may forcibly steal it from a citizen. Indeed, large-scale wars are fought over land and her resources, such as oil, as they are viewed as objects of exploitation.

The economic system of a VAD society, on the other hand, facilitates the gradual understanding that the **Supreme is the proprietor of the land—not the individual, nor even the community**. In DVAD, that supreme proprietor is understood to be specifically Kṛṣṇa. Thus the members of a DVAD society increasingly consider themselves servants of Kṛṣṇa with the responsibility to use all property in His service, while claiming none as theirs.<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, **devotees** should not be required to make their living in any of the unsustainable, material economic systems but rather **should be given the option of the transcendental alternative**, Spiritual Communism, as found in the DVAD social model.

One cannot refer to their community as DVAD if the economy of Spiritual Communism is not embraced (actually followed). In other words, **Spiritual Communism and DVAD are inseparable**.<sup>39</sup> The community *must* have an interdependent economic system, wherein the members practice viewing Kṛṣṇa as the sole proprietor of everything, including the land.

Therefore, in designing a DVAD community it is imperative **AT THE ONSET** to choose a legal structure that facilitates the Spiritual Communism economy and ideals. Let's next examine some legal structures (tax statuses) in hope of finding one or more that do so.

### **RED FLAGS!**

**Q: We don't need a legal form!** In “Vedic times” there wasn't a legal structure imposed on society. It was just a bunch of people who worked interdependently. They didn't go to the Secretary of State office or the state's Corporation Department to “register” their community. Why can't we just let things evolve organically as we see fit?

**A:** In those “Vedic times” the *kṣatriyas* were the government. We hear of many kings who were ultimately subordinate to a monarch or autocratic emperor, who in turn had excellent counsel from qualified *brāhmaṇas*. By their personal prowess, such *kṣatriyas* could properly organize society, and the citizens were so qualified and well trained by the *brāhmaṇas* that they naturally followed. Today, however, we lack such qualified *kṣatriyas*, *brāhmaṇas* and followers. Indeed, today practically no one would behave properly if there were not laws and enforceable rules. Furthermore, we are living in modern America where virtually every business, every organization, every church—practically any kind of societal endeavor—requires some kind of registration with the state and determination of their IRS tax status.

**Q: Since when is private ownership taboo?** In “Vedic times” there certainly was private ownership.

**A:** There's nothing wrong inherently with ownership; it's about the consciousness. But Vaiṣṇavas carefully pick that situation which is most conducive to cultivating an evolved realization of what ownership is. At lower stages, one feels “I am the proprietor.” In more advanced stages, one feels “Nothing really belongs to me; let me renounce it.” In even more advanced stages, one feels “Kṛṣṇa is the actual proprietor. Let me accept things to be used in His service and reject things not to be used in His service. In this way I am neither the proprietor nor the renouncer.” Devotees must always guard against the pitfalls of material consciousness, and proprietorship is one of the main challenges.

It is said that “proprietorship turns sand into gold.” That gold, however, is finite. On the other hand, Kṛṣṇa's proprietorship turns sand into *cintāmaṇi*, a touchstone that can produce gold unlimitedly.

## Section Three: LEGAL STRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote, “Every endeavor requires land, capital, organization and labor.”<sup>40</sup> A significant aspect of organizing a community is picking the legal (tax) structure which best suits the community’s stated purposes and intentions and which best facilitates its economic system.

Often when devotees speak of establishing DVAD communities in America, they ask, “Should we do it as an ISKCON project, or should we incorporate as a new church or nonprofit entity, or should we just have private parties purchase property next to one another, or...?”

To help answer this question we will consider some legal structures allowed by American law and the IRS. By looking at the pros and cons of each structure, we hope to make clear which legal structures are possible and practical for use in the development of a DVAD community. [Keep in mind that structures/models which work in other countries will not necessarily work in the USA, due to each country having its particular laws.]

And remember...we want to design a DVAD community in the true sense of the term (as defined at the end of Section One)—not merely a congregation centered on a temple, nor a group of devotees living as non-interdependent neighbors, nor simply priests who do some agricultural work as part of their chores at the temple which maintains them.

[NOTE: Statements in this paper pertaining to IRS codes and tax matters have been checked and verified as true and accurate by His Grace Mrigendra dāsa (Harvey Mechanic), an attorney at law specializing in the area of United States Federal tax exempt issues and activities of nonprofit organizations.]

### LEGAL MODELS

#### 1. CHURCH / MONASTERY

- A church or monastery is organized under IRS Code 501(c)(3) strictly for religious purposes with the aim of benefitting the public. This is a federally tax-exempt organization—that is, it does not pay taxes on its income. Furthermore, donations made to a church are tax-deductible for the donors. The net earnings of a church may not inure to the benefit of any individual.
- Churches/monasteries may provide nontaxable housing (room and board) to both religious workers and ministers [ministers are defined by the IRS as “individuals who are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed by a religious body constituting a church or church denomination”] who have taken a lifelong vow of poverty (which is filed with the IRS). This vow requires that such persons: irrevocably turn over all of their assets and possessions to the church upon joining it; irrevocably turn over any gifts, inheritances and the like which they receive while maintained by the church; not receive any stipend, wage or salary; not keep an outside source of income; and work for the church or as an agent of the church. **ISKCON does not require its religious workers or ministers to take such a vow filed with the IRS.**
- Churches may provide housing exempt from Income Tax to persons not taking a vow of poverty only if such persons are actually ministers. But these ministers must pay Social Security [SS] and Medicare taxes on the value of the room and board they are provided, unless they apply for a special exemption. And, of course, they must pay all taxes on any income (including stipends) they may receive.
- Any housing provided by a church to non-ministerial workers not taking a lifelong vow of poverty is fully taxable, as are their earnings/stipends, if any.

Since members of an ISKCON farm **community** would not be asked to take the vow of poverty and would be mostly persons not in the category of ministers, such persons **would have to pay Income Tax and SS/Medicare taxes on all room, board and living expenses provided to them by ISKCON**. The IRS has been overlooking ISKCON's residential-dependent devotees in regards to this taxation requirement, but one cannot and should not depend on that oversight being perpetual.

Although a DVAD community may not—indeed, is not intended to—live off of temple revenue gotten from tax-deductible donations or from temple businesses which are related to its tax-exempt purposes—activities such as the sale of books, gift shop items and *prasādam*—could it perhaps alternatively be maintained by other sources of income? For example, could a temple, for the sake of financing the upkeep of a community, conduct businesses not related to the temple's tax-exempt purposes?

No, because (i) a church generally must pay corporate income tax on revenue gotten from such “unrelated business,” (ii) **engaging in unrelated business can jeopardize the tax-exempt status of a church** and (iii) the residential devotees would still by law have to pay taxes on the room and board provided them, regardless. [It may be safe if income from unrelated business comprises no more than 15% of a church's total annual income.]

One option for a rural ISKCON temple in America would be for it to pay devotees salaries from which they could pay rent to the temple for room and board as well as pay their income taxes. [New Vrindavana does this for many devotees.] But this monetization of devotional service would be wandering far away from Śrīla Prabhupāda's intention for DVAD development. Furthermore, a community's economic base being dependent ultimately on the tax-deductible donations which a temple collects is hardly an honest example to the world of how to develop self-sufficiency and sustainability.

We have shown, therefore, that **“church status” is not the correct legal structure for building a DVAD community, and indeed the IRS did not intend for the church status to be used for this purpose**. For this reason ISKCON (or any church) cannot, and thus will not, develop DVAD communities in America. This is not due to any fault on the part of ISKCON's leadership, but simply due to limitations in the church legal status.

**This model is thus ELIMINATED from our list of options.**

That said, all of us will be responsible for our not moving forward on the implementation of DVAD communities in America if, after knowing the above information, we don't think outside the “church box” for a possible alternative legal structure.

## 2. TAX-EXEMPT NONPROFIT ENTITY

As with churches, any tax-exempt nonprofit entity recognized under the IRS code 501(c)(3) must be organized for purposes which benefit the public (educational, religious, charitable...). Therefore, its net earnings may not inure to the benefit of any individual or party. Such tax-exempt entities are also held to the same rule regarding unrelated business income.

In cases where a 501(c)(3) entity is allowed to provide housing to persons, the value of such room and maintenance is fully taxable. An exception in which nontaxable housing may be provided to persons is if (i) they are employees of the entity, (ii) the housing is on the employer's business premises and (iii) such housing is necessary as a convenience to the employer.

Clearly, **a community cannot use this model**, so this option must similarly be **ELIMINATED** from our list.

### 3. PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

In this model, property is individually purchased or leased by private parties who wish to live as a “community” without there being any official organization with a legal tax structure. Only persons having money to buy or rent can join this community. If a community member decides to sell his property, nothing can legally prevent him from selling to a non-devotee. Due to there being no official organization, no one has any authority over another. Thus community decisions are very difficult to make and enforce.

This has been attempted at Prabhupāda Village located in North Carolina, in Alachua, Florida, and elsewhere. However, each has failed to manifest a DVAD community. Devotees simply have other devotees as neighbors. Indeed, because there is no internal, interdependent economic structure, the private ownership model fosters devotees working separately in the outside economy, resulting in their not being very interconnected with each other on a daily basis.

**This model is very unlikely to give rise to a sustainable, self-sufficient DVAD community.** Therefore, this model must also be **ELIMINATED** as a practical option.

Perhaps someday a powerful *kṣatriya* will manifest to rule a community and, on the strength of his personal prowess, will organize it to have an internal, interdependent economy. But we’re concerned about the present time which lacks such qualified leaders (and followers). Due to such lack of personal prowess, today’s “*kṣatriyas*” need an official (legal) organizational structure through which they can exert or claim their authority.

### 4. COOPERATIVE OWNERSHIP

This model utilizes a housing cooperative (co-op). Some housing co-ops own (hold title to) land as well as the residential and common buildings that are on it. Such co-ops are membership-based, with membership granted by way of a share purchase in the co-op. In this case, each shareholder in the legal entity is granted the right to occupy one housing unit, but the right to occupy does not constitute ownership. There are other co-housing models (such as condominiums and homeowners associations) which allow persons to actually own their residences (rather than simply a right to occupancy).

#### CONCERNS:

- Only devotees who can afford to purchase a share or unit may join a co-op community.
- Can the co-op have a communal business and make a rule that members must work only for that business while keeping no outside employment?
- Would each member have a voting right or voice in community decisions? Usually, if people invest money into a project, they want to have a say in decision-making.
- Since the Federal Fair Housing Act does not allow discrimination on the basis of religion, a co-op will have a few challenges.
  - i. How will the co-op manage to have only devotees as members despite this law?
  - ii. How will it enforce any rules of *sādhana*, practice or beliefs despite this law?
  - iii. How will the issue of freedom of speech on religious matters within the community be dealt with?

After all is said and done, the Cooperative Ownership model may facilitate devotees working together (in a cooperative business) and living in a common housing area, but it will require that contracts, covenants, restrictions and conditions which are legally binding be drawn up to ensure that housing units/shares don’t get resold to non-devotees and that the residents stay within the boundaries of behavior and conduct desired by the co-op’s leaders. The monetization of work performed by members for the income-generating business is also a hurdle to overcome. Although the **Cooperative Ownership model has some merits, it is not likely to manifest a DVAD community.**

## 5. RELIGIOUS INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY

Interestingly, the IRS developed a tax-exempt category [IRS Code 501(d)] to specifically facilitate operation of a religious community where the members live a communal life following the tenets and teachings of the organization. The entity may engage in any number of businesses, be they religious or secular, passive (e.g., rental of property) or active, for the sake of supporting the community; there is no “unrelated” business.

To qualify for this 501(d) status, the community must (i) have a religious teaching and tenets it follows/practices, (ii) live communally and (iii) keep a common treasury.

Communal living means that the entity’s property and assets are owned in community, not by private persons or parties, and that the members are maintained by a common treasury. Common treasury means that all income from the community’s businesses and property is kept in the entity’s treasury, which in turn is used to defray costs of operating the community, its businesses as well as its members and their families, on all levels.

Members do not have to contribute all of their assets and possessions to the organization upon joining; that is, no vow of poverty is required. Indeed, they can live in luxury if the treasury permits. However, members and their families are asked to derive their ongoing maintenance exclusively from the communal businesses and activities. By law, members may have some outside income for “extras,” as long as acquiring such does not interfere with their full-time service for and responsibility toward the community.

Although a 501(d) entity is not taxed on its income, the net earnings (gross earnings minus deductible business expenses) are reported as pro rata shares on each member’s annual income tax return—as a dividend, not as wages. One may claim oneself and dependents as deductions on one’s tax return (Form 1040). [These tax payments are paid from the communal treasury.] Because the members are not considered employees of the 501(d) organization by law, they do not pay Social Security or Medicare taxes on their pro-rata share of the income of the organization.

The members receive no salaries, wages, stipends or compensations. If there is still “profit” remaining from the entity’s net earnings for the year, after paying the members’ taxes, such profit may remain in the treasury to be reinvested in the community.

Donations to the entity are NOT tax-deductible for the donors. However, the 501(d) entity may establish a 501(c)(3) corporation or trust and collect tax-deductible donations to fund charitable activities, such as free distribution of *Bhagavad-gītā* or free education about cow protection. Start-up capital for the 501(d) entity, as well as future income, may not be obtained as a donation from a 501(c)(3) entity. A loan may be taken, however, from a 501(c)(3) entity if the interest is at least at the market rate and the loan is secured.

### FLEXIBILITY OF THE 501(D) STRUCTURE

“Once this requirement of form [community follows religious teachings and tenets, lives communally and keeps a common treasury] is fulfilled, the exempt organization [501(d)] is unlimited as to function.”<sup>41</sup> Since DVAD is not something exclusive to a particular time, place or culture, the exoteric forms which DVAD communities take in modern America may or may not “look like” those descriptions we are accustomed to hearing of. Indeed, one DVAD community may have an entirely different “flavor” than another contemporaneous one.

- Depending on the entity’s bylaws and founding documents, any one of various management or governance structures (e.g., an autocratic leader, a board, a parliamentary system, democracy or consensus rule) could be allowed, by design.
- The entity’s bylaws and other internal managerial rules are to explicitly state the requirements, duties, responsibilities, rights, codes of conduct, etc., of the members, as well as the procedure for becoming a member and for losing membership status. There can even be different classes of membership, by design, with each class having its unique rules and codes, etc. [DVAD, after all, is meant to accommodate various *varṇas* and *āśramas*.]
- Because the community would not be governed by an ecclesiastical body, which typically does not allow differing interpretations of church doctrines, a 501(d) entity may establish its own rules as to how much variance, if any, may be allowed in religious interpretation, practice and “free speech.” Thus, by design, different “styles” of Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be facilitated or not.
- As the DVAD social system does not dictate formularies—prescribing neither language to be spoken; dress codes; style of music, art and cuisine; nor many other external details—the entity can establish cultural guidelines or not. Thus a community, by design, could accommodate “Krishna West” and/or “Kṛṣṇa East” adherents, for instance.

### HOW THE 501(D) STRUCTURE FACILITATES A DVAD COMMUNITY

Recalling our description of a DVAD community stated at the [end](#) of Section One, we may now ascertain how well the 501(d) structure potentially facilitates such a community.

- i. **Dharmic social intercourse:** Because the 501(d) model requires that there be religious teachings and tenets followed, the entity is permitted to make guidelines concerning conduct among its members. Thus scriptural codes in this connection may be enforced to whatever standard the entity’s bylaws and other managerial documents set.
- ii. **Division of labor:** Because the 501(d) model does not allow the members to be paid, work is not monetized. Consequently, no one picks their service on the criteria of how much it pays. Rather, each devotee can honestly engage according to his/her own propensity, or as needed, and be maintained by the community’s treasury, regardless of whether one is serving in the income-generating businesses or in some non-income-generating capacity.
- iii. **Interdependency:** The communal businesses and activities naturally facilitate an interdependent mood among the community members.
- iv. **Self-sufficiency and sustainability:** Because the 501(d) model does not allow the community to be supported by the outside income of its members, the community’s economy is internally fueled. Devotees can produce what they need, to the extent that they are able, and may conduct communal businesses to collect funds needed for purchasing items the community cannot yet produce and for paying for property tax and other such things. Such communal businesses and revenue generation may, among other things, consist of the typical activities that bring funds into ISKCON projects, namely book and *prasādam* distribution, as well as donations.
- v. **Pursuance of bhakti:** Again, because the 501(d) model requires that there be religious teachings and tenets followed, and because it does not allow payment of salaries, wages or stipends to members, advancement toward pure, unmotivated devotional service is greatly facilitated.
- vi. **Spiritual Communism:** The 501(d) model facilitates the practice of Spiritual Communism with the establishment of a communal treasury, communal businesses, communal property and non-monetization of work. The Kṛṣṇa conscious teachings followed by the community bring the sense of proprietorship from “me-centered” or “community-centered” to the level of “Kṛṣṇa-centered.”
- vii. **Practice of cow protection, agriculture, cottage industry, schooling:** Because communal living is a requirement, activities such as cow protection, agriculture and schooling (which require many hands) naturally become the concern of all members in an interdependent manner. The cows, fields, etc., are “our” rather than “somebody else’s” concern.

- viii. **Preaching by example:** There is strength, and therefore more probability of success, in numbers. The 501(d) model, with its communal living and communal businesses, allows devotees of different *varṇas* and *āśramas* to show a broader picture of cooperation and teamwork than, say, an urban temple (which mostly engages *brāhmaṇas*) or an ownership model (which can foster separatism). And because no input of money is required of members, anyone being preached to who desires to join the community can do so if he/she meets the community's requirements for membership, regardless of their financial standing.

The 501(d) Religious Intentional Community model, therefore, seems to be the DESIGN OF CHOICE for a DVAD community in the USA (as was the intention of the IRS).

### RED-FLAGGED CONCERNS ABOUT THE 501(D) MODEL

**Q: What about ISKCON and “our farms”?** Isn't a non-ISKCON project against Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision?

**A:** Surely, if Śrīla Prabhupāda is to build “a house in which the whole world can live,” one cannot expect the whole of society to be within the boundaries of an institution which is incorporated as a church. We have already shown how this is an untenable proposal. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness, at least in the United States, cannot develop or maintain DVAD communities. But the worldwide society of Kṛṣṇa conscious devotees can surely do so in numerous locations.

When Śrīla Prabhupāda gave instructions for communal farms, which he referred to as “our farms,” he gave those instructions not just for America, but for the worldwide ISKCON society. But laws differ from country to country. In America, the 501(d) model allows devotees to actually fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision, whereas the 501(c)(3) church model does not. Therefore, devotees ought to be encouraged to establish DVAD communities with this model.

As HH Bhakti Raghava Swami writes in his book *The Fourth Wave*, pages 37-40 [emphasis ours]:

One of the secondary objectives outlined by Śrīla Prabhupāda is to help establish *varṇāśrama* communities based on the long-standing *varṇāśrama* system:

Among the secondary objectives of the society, it shall undertake the following activities:

- To revive the scientific system of social orders of classification based on intelligence, martial spirit, productivity and common assistance, generally known as the four castes with reference to quality and worth for the common cause of world society. (from Founding Document of Association)

Such **VARṆĀŚRAMA COMMUNITIES** by nature will be **INDEPENDENT, SELF-SUFFICIENT, SELF-SUSTAINABLE AND SELF-GOVERNED**, as envisioned by Śrīla Prabhupāda 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 GRHASTHA DEVOTEES, AND THIS, INDEPENDENT FROM ISKCON'S OR ANY OTHER SPIRITUAL ORGANIZATION'S DIRECT LEGAL GOVERNANCE.**

...By definition, a *varṇāśrama* community, or a village, is a localized entity designed to be legally governed by its own members. ...This means that **ANY GROUP OF DEVOTEES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO SET UP SUCH A RURAL COMMUNITY**, following the general guidelines given by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the Vedic literatures, and this, **WITHOUT FEELING THE NEED TO OBTAIN THE OFFICIAL PERMISSION OR SANCTION** from any local, regional or national authority other than those given by state or central governments. In other words, the establishment and legal governance of a village community is vastly different from the establishment and legal governance of a temple.

...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 main focus remains on 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 is in charge of the village. It becomes obvious that the local "Temple President" cannot be in charge of the entire village. **THE POSITION AND ROLE OF THE TEMPLE CHANGES IN A VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT AND THIS HAS TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED BY ISKCON AUTHORITIES AND BY THE CONGREGATION OF DEVOTEES.**

**Q: Who wants to live communally?!**

**A:** The term "communal" may conjure up visions of persons living in or near poverty, having no personal space, having no freedom, being dependent on the mercy of the leaders, being disconnected from the "real world," and other such thoughts. Having seen failure in the past, or even having been the victim of mismanagement or of cheating, it is understandable that one may have concerns about a communal lifestyle. But, being cheated by water in a mirage is not legitimate reason to refuse to drink real water.

Communal living simply means that the entity's property and assets are held in community and that there is a common treasury. Communal living does not mean that everyone wears the same clothes and eats the same diet, or lives in the same house, or that one member cannot have something which another member does not.

If a 501(d) is maturely designed, established and managed and has a viable business plan for bringing in needed revenues (because money will always be needed), the community members can be comfortably (and legally) supported by the community treasury.

Understandably, there are persons who prefer to have private properties and independent incomes. These people could also be facilitated by the 501(d) entity in that it could sell or lease parcels of land to such devotees, assuming the community were to have extra land. Thus they could be neighbors (although not legal members) of the communal project.

There are many advantages, including economic, to living communally. "Community" infers commonality in terms of priorities, shared responsibilities and commitment to each other, as in a family. **WE WILL NEVER ACQUIRE THIS CONSCIOUSNESS UNLESS AND UNTIL OUR ECONOMY IS INTERDEPENDENT**, as it is within a family! Our current mode of struggling for existence individually and independently, rather than communally and INTERdependently, has not produced the fruit of advanced Kṛṣṇa consciousness and deep-rooted relationships. **The 501(d) tree may bear a sweeter fruit.**

**Q: Real DVAD communities were villages, and that's what Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted.<sup>42</sup> How would incorporating as a 501(d) entity fulfill his desire for villages?**

**A:** Actually, when a community becomes mature, it may become an "incorporated municipality" as a village, town or city. Each state will have its procedures for facilitating such incorporation. However, if a community decides to become an incorporated municipality, it must be able to provide the village with any basic municipal services which may be mandated by state or federal law. The village may also wish to provide services which are not required. However, whether a village is required or chooses to provide a service, it must meet whatever state and federal requirements exist for that service. For example, if the village is required or chooses to provide water service, it must meet all the applicable state and federal water quality standards. Other typical municipal services include sewer, police, streets, transportation, recreation, garbage collection and recycling, land use planning and fire protection.

## CONCLUSION

Attempts in America to form DVAD communities by independent householders or through the institution of ISKCON (a legal church) are failing because proper economic and legal structures for the communities were not set in place at the initial stages of community planning. This oversight, in turn, is due to devotees' lacking in understanding the role of economics and legal form in community dynamics and to the ISKCON institution's "in-the-box" vision—thinking that rural communities can be designed and operated much like temples and their congregations are in the urban-temple-paradigm.

It was concluded in this paper that the *daiiva-varṇāśrama-dharma* social system with its inherent interdependent economy of Spiritual Communism is the model to emulate when designing a commune pursuant to Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision. **It was then found that the United States Internal Revenue Service has a specific legal structure, namely 501(d), which, due to its flexible nature, can nicely facilitate both the economy and principles of a DVAD community.**

## AFTERWORD

Although this paper was written to dialogue with devotees who express desire to develop rural communities pursuant to Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions, it may be prudent here to mention that Śrīla Prabhupāda was the greatest pragmatist. He never wanted devotees who were capable of preaching to abandon that service for the sake of living on a DVAD farm.

On Oct. 19, 1974, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote one of his *sannyāsī* disciples:

Regarding the farm, farm opening is not very essential, but if you can do it conveniently, then do it. The *varṇāśrama* system is for convenience sake in the material world. It has nothing to do with spiritual life. Acceptance of *varṇāśrama* means a little easy progress to spiritual life, otherwise it has no importance to us. For example, all my European and American disciples have no *varṇāśrama* position, but spiritually because they have followed the rules and regulations and also my instructions, their advancement spiritually is being appreciated by everyone. Always remember that *varṇāśrama* life is a good program for material life, and it helps one in spiritual life; but spiritual life is not dependent upon it. After all the system of *varṇāśrama* has to be realized before accepting spiritual life; and the renounced order of *sannyāsa* is the last stage of *varṇāśrama*.

It is interesting to note, however, that this same *sannyāsī* disciple later fell away. In fact, this tendency to fall down, which Śrīla Prabhupāda increasingly recognized in his disciples, caused him to say, over two years after the above letter, the following during a conversation in Māyāpura:

**Hari-śauri:** But in our community, if the..., being as we're training up as Vaiṣṇavas...

**Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Hari-śauri:** ...then how will we be able to make divisions in our society?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Vaiṣṇava is not so easy. The *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be established to become a Vaiṣṇava. It is not so easy to become Vaiṣṇava.

**Hari-śauri:** No, it's not a cheap thing.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Therefore this should be made. Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava, is not so easy. If Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava is so easy, why so many fall down, fall down? It is not easy. The *sannyāsa* is for the highest qualified *brāhmaṇa*. And simply by dressing like a Vaiṣṇava, that is... Fall down.

And then, of course, there are always those unfavorable obstacles which are not under our control but with which devotees must contend, which Śrīla Prabhupāda could only empathize with, as evidenced in an exchange in Denver in 1975:

**Harikeśa:** Śrīla Prabhupāda, what would people do who live in areas where things are not grown so easily, like in the colder areas?

**Prabhupāda:** Why should you live there? Why don't you come where things are grown?

**Kuruśreṣṭha:** This excessive cold is only punishment.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Kuruśreṣṭha:** Previously there was not such excessive cold on the planet?

**Prabhupāda:** There was, for the punishable person.

## ENDNOTES

1. “This is the next aspect of Krishna consciousness which I wish to push forward. If I am able to travel again, then I shall visit the farms and make them perfect. On these farms we can demonstrate the full *varṇāśrama* system. If these farms become successful then the whole world will be enveloped by Krishna consciousness.”  
(Tamal Krishna Goswami letter to Hari Sauri dasa quoting Śrīla Prabhupāda—Aug. 10, 1977)

“Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, however, wanted to reestablish *daiva-varṇāśrama*...It is this *daiva-varṇāśrama* that should be established all over the world to continue a perfect society for Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This may be astonishing to foolish critics, but it is one of the functions of a Kṛṣṇa conscious society.”  
(SB 5.1.24, purport)

“The *gṛhasthas*, *vānaprasthas*, *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs* should endeavor together with their total energy to become Kṛṣṇa conscious. This type of civilization is called *daiva-varṇāśrama*. One of the objectives of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is to establish this *daiva-varṇāśrama*, but not to encourage so-called *varṇāśrama* without scientifically organized endeavor by human society.” (SB 7.14.10, purport)

“So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is trying to reestablish *daiva-varṇāśrama*, where *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*, everyone. Systematic. We are therefore proposing to start a college, *varṇāśrama* college. It is proposed... We are trying so many things, but this is also one of the program, that the people of the world, they should be educated according to the quality and work: *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, *śūdra*.”  
(Lecture —Jan. 22, 1977)

“*Daiva-varṇāśrama* make. There must be first-class *brāhmaṇas*, first-class *kṣatriyas*, first-class *vaiśyas* and first-class *śūdras* also. These are my ideas. The whole world will see that here is real culture, Vedic culture.”  
(Feb. 2, 1977) [\[back\]](#)

2. “...in *varṇāśrama*, the members of each *varṇa* and *āśrama* have specific roles to play to support the other groups in society, and to promote a cooperative, mutually supportive relationship. Each group must help the other groups, not only to provide the practical necessities of life and a wholesome sense of community, but, even more importantly, to facilitate the whole society's worship of the Supreme Lord.” (SVD, Introduction)

“The *varṇāśrama* system, originated by the Personality of Godhead, is spiritually significant because when all the *varṇas* and *āśramas* cooperate, society facilitates deliverance from the clutches of *māyā* or illusion. This is done by all *varṇas* and *āśramas* carrying out the plan of Godhead.” (SUGL, Real *Varṇa* and *Āśrama*)

“He must work hard. Any capacity. Work as a teacher or work as a *kṣatriya*, work as a ploughman. Or work as general assistant. He must work. Everyone should be employed. And his employment will be provided from any of these groups, according to his capacity. Either as a *brāhmaṇa*, or as a *kṣatriya*, or as a *vaiśya*, or as a *śūdra*.”  
(Mar. 14, 1974) [\[back\]](#)

3. **Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa:** Now the incentive in modern society to become educated or to become engineer is money. What is the incentive in Vedic culture?

**Prabhupāda:** There is no need of money. The *brāhmaṇa* teaches everything free of charge. There is no question of money. Anyone can take education as a *brāhmaṇa* or a *kṣatriya*, as a *vaiśya*...But that is free. Just find out a *brāhmaṇa* guru and he will give you free education. That's all. This is society...But in the Vedic society there is **no question of money**. Education free.

**Harikeśa:** So the incentive is the happiness in society?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. That is everyone is hankering after: "Where is happiness?" This will be the happiness. When people will be peaceful, happy in their living condition, that will bring happiness... (Oct. 16, 1975)

"If you start trading business, then so many problems will be there. You should produce just enough for our own use. **Trading leads to envy** and jealousy and cheating, then everything is lost." (Letter—Nov. 20, 1975)

"There was no competition among the divisions of society. The original conception of the caste system was so planned that one group of men engaged in a particular type of occupation would not compete with another group of men engaged in a different occupation." (KB, Chapter 90) [\[back\]](#)

4. "**If there is excess** milk product, if there is excess grain product, then you can sell to others." (Lecture—Dec. 29, 1973)

**Prabhupāda:** **When we have got excess** produce, either milk or grain or anything, we can sell that." (Feb. 18, 1977) [\[back\]](#)

5. "Such devotees follow the routine formulas and sometimes quarrel among themselves, considering one type of devotion better than another. These *kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs* are actually materialistic devotees..." (Iso, Mantra 6, purport)

"Don't think that if one is engaged in the Deity worship and if one is engaged in the gardening work there is distinction. No. The one who is working as a gardener, he is as good as the one who is dressing the Deity, because it is absolute plane. There is no difference between... **Just like in the material world, if one is working as manager and the other is working as menial servant there is difference of pay or difference of service.** No. In the spiritual world there is no such thing." (Lecture—June 8, 1975)

"To make the idea more clear, if I am translating *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and if you are contributing for its publication and helping for its distribution, this means there is **no difference between your service and my service**. In the absolute platform there is no such distinction. And service is always on the absolute platform. One has to make the best use of his talent for the service of Krishna. That is wanted." (Letter—June 7, 1968) [\[back\]](#)

6. "So according to this *varṇāśrama*, **there must be training**...By birth, everyone is *śūdra*. *Saṃskārād bhaved dvijaḥ*. By training, one becomes *vaiśya*, one becomes *kṣatriya*, one becomes *brāhmaṇa*. Where is that training? All *śūdras*." (Lecture—Nov. 8, 1972)

"At the present moment in the world state, there are *śūdras* and less than that. There are no ideal *brāhmaṇas* or *kṣatriyas*. But these four divisions are imperative. So our business is to keep fit as *brāhmaṇas* and to **train others** to be ideal *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* for advancing the whole society." (Letter—Apr. 28, 1974)

"It is very good news that there are persons there who want to cooperate to help us start a Varnasrama College Project and that they may supply us land for living as an ideal community producing our own food from the land. So this should be followed up carefully." (Letter—June 17, 1974) [\[back\]](#)

7. "Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that it is at these farm communities that the *varṇāśrama* system, the basis of civilized society, can actually take place." (Letter Tamal Krishna Goswami to Ramesvara—Aug. 22, 1977) [\[back\]](#)

8. **Prabhupāda:** No. Our position is different. We are trying to implement Kṛṣṇa consciousness in everything. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally took *sannyāsa*. He rejected completely material. *Niṣkiñcana*. But we are not going to be *niṣkiñcana*. We are trying to cement the troubled position of the... That is also in the prescription of *Bhagavad-gītā*. We are not rejecting the whole society. Caitanya Mahāprabhu rejected everything, *ihā bāhya*. Rejected meaning, “I do not take much interest in this.” *Bāhya*. “It is external.” He was simply interested in the internal, the spiritual. But our duty is that we shall arrange the external affairs also so nicely that one day they will come to the spiritual platform very easily, paving the way. And Caitanya Mahāprabhu, personality like that, they have nothing to do with this material world. But we are preaching. We are preaching. Therefore we must pave the situation in such a way that gradually they will be promoted to the spiritual plane...

...

**Prabhupāda:**...Therefore *varṇāśrama-dharma* is required. Simply show-bottle will not do. So the *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be introduced all over the world, and...

**Satsvarūpa:** Introduced starting with ISKCON community?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Yes. *Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriyas*. There must be regular education.

**Hari-śauri:** But in our community, if the..., being as we’re training up as Vaiṣṇavas...

**Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Hari-śauri:** ...then how will we be able to make divisions in our society?

**Prabhupāda:** Vaiṣṇava is not so easy. The *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be established to become a Vaiṣṇava. It is not so easy to become Vaiṣṇava.

**Hari-śauri:** No, it’s not a cheap thing.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Therefore this should be made. Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava, is not so easy. If Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava is so easy, why so many fall down, fall down? It is not easy. The *sannyāsa* is for the highest qualified *brāhmaṇa*. And simply by dressing like a Vaiṣṇava, that is... fall down. (Feb. 14, 1977)

“In big scale you cannot make all of them *brāhmaṇas* or *sannyāsīs*. No. That is not possible. This is small scale. What percentage of people of the world are we attracting? Very insignificant. But if you want to make the whole human society perfect, then this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement should be introduced according to Kṛṣṇa’s instructions—if you want to do it in a large scale for the benefit of the whole human society. Now we are picking up some of them, the best. That is one thing. But Caitanya Mahāprabhu said *para-upakāra*. Why only a certain section should be picked up? Let the whole mass of people get the benefit of it. But then it is required to be systematic. Therefore, we have to introduce this *varṇāśrama-dharma*. It must be done perfectly. It is possible, and people will become happy.” (Lecture—February 14, 1977) [\[back\]](#)

9. SB 1.16.4, purport

“The cow is very, very important animal. If you want to advance your spiritual consciousness, then you must have sufficient milk and sufficient grains. That is civilization. Therefore it is the duty of the *vaiśyas* to produce food grain, *annād bhavanti bhūtāni*. *Annād*. In the society, if you have got sufficient *anna*, both the animals and the man, they will be happy. These are the instruction in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, everything practical.” (Lecture—Oct. 17, 1975) [\[back\]](#)

10. “There is a miracle in milk [fresh from protected cows], for it contains all the necessary vitamins to sustain human physiological conditions for higher achievements.” (SB 1.16.4, purport)

“The cow is the most important animal for developing the human body to perfection. The body can be maintained by any kind of foodstuff, but cow’s milk is particularly essential for developing the finer tissues of the human brain so that one can understand the intricacies of transcendental knowledge.” (SB 3.5.7, purport) [\[back\]](#)

11. SB 8.8.11, purport

“When the *gopīs* saw little Kṛṣṇa fearlessly playing on Pūtanā’s lap, they very quickly came and picked Him up. Mother Yaśodā, Rohiṇī and other elder *gopīs* immediately performed the auspicious rituals by taking the tail of a cow and circumambulating His body. The child was completely washed with the urine of a cow, and the dust created by the hooves of the cows was thrown all over His body. This was all just to save little Kṛṣṇa from future inauspicious accidents. This incident gives us a clear indication of how important the cow is to the family,

society and to living beings in general. The transcendental body of Kṛṣṇa did not require any protection, but to instruct us on the importance of the cow, the Lord was smeared over with cow dung, washed with the urine of a cow, and sprinkled with the dust upraised by the walking of the cows.” (KB, Chapter 6) [\[back\]](#)

12. “In Vedic times cows were not bred to produce milk they were bred to produce bulls so that agriculture and transport could be accomplished. The second reason for breeding cows was to produce dung for many village uses such as fertilizer and cooking fuel for the village residents. The third reason was for the production of urine for medicinal purposes. The fourth reason, and it wasn’t even considered a reason, was milk. Milk was considered a by-product and would come automatically when the cow had a calf. It was not the main reason for breeding cows.” (ISCOWP News, Vol. 24, Issue 1, pg. 21)

“They get wheat and other cereals produced from the field. There is milk and vegetables and the fuel is cow dung, and thus, they are self-independent in every village. There are hand weavers for the cloth. And the country oil-mill (consisting of a bull walking in circle round two big grinding stones, attached with yoke) grinds the oil seeds into oil. (Letter—June 14, 1968) [\[back\]](#)

13. **Nityānanda:** ...This field here is millet. It’s a grass for the cows to eat. They give lots of milk because they eat this grass. Very nutritious.

**Prabhupāda:** You are not producing for man?

**Nityānanda:** Pardon?

**Prabhupāda:** Any grains for man?

**Nityānanda:** No, we’re not growing any grains for man right now. We have fruit trees in the yard: pears, peaches, plums, figs.

...

**Devotee:** Śrīla Prabhupāda? A materialist or someone who wouldn’t know, he may say that when the bull is not plowing, all he is doing is eating. You have to pay money to feed him grain or to grow grain to feed the bull.

**Prabhupāda:** They will grow, and they will eat. Rather, they will help you for your eating. The father also eats, but he maintains the family. Therefore the bull is considered as father and the cow as mother. Mother gives milk, and the bull grows food grains for man. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu first challenged that Kazi that “What is your religion, that you eat your father and mother?” Both the bulls and the cows are important, because the bull will produce food grain and the cow will give supply milk. They should be utilized properly. That is human intelligence. This is filling up with paddy or...? No?

**Nityānanda:** With food for the cows. This one has forage, or fodder, and that one has grain.

**Prabhupāda:** So everything is for the animals? Nothing for the man?

**Nityānanda:** The cows give us milk.

**Prabhupāda:** That’s all? And you are not growing any food grains? Why?

**Nityānanda:** Er... We’ve been trying to establish self-sufficient cow protection program first, to grow our own food for the cows.

**Brahmānanda:** There is no land available for growing rice or wheat?

**Nityānanda:** Yes, but the number of devotees we have to do it...

...

**Nityānanda:** Down the road we have fifteen acres of sorghum, grain for the cows.

**Prabhupāda:** And everything for the cows, but what for the man? They will give everything for cows because they will eat cows, other farmers. But you utilize the animals for growing your food.

**Brahmānanda:** The idea is we should maintain the animals, but then the animals should provide foodstuffs for the men.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Brahmānanda:** And that way there is cooperation.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. The animals, bulls, should have helped in spite of that..., instead of that machine. Then it is properly utilized. And others, they cannot utilize the animals. Therefore, what they will do? Naturally they will send to slaughterhouse. But we are not going to send to the slaughterhouse. Then what we will do? They must be utilized. Otherwise simply for growing food that the cows and bulls we engage ourself? You are already feeling burden because there are so many bull calves. You were asking me, “What we shall do with so many bulls?”

**Nityānanda:** Well, when they grow up we will train them as oxen.

**Prabhupāda:** No, now what the oxen will do?

**Nityānanda:** Plow the fields.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. That is wanted. Transport, plowing fields. That is wanted. And unless our men are trained up Kṛṣṇa conscious, they will think, “What is the use of taking care of the plows [cows]. Better go to the city, earn money and eat them.”

(Aug. 1, 1975) [\[back\]](#)

14. BG 3.14 [\[back\]](#)

15. “I consider this Gurukula school to be one of our most important aspects of this movement and it should be given all serious consideration by the members. If we are able to make a whole generation of our children into fine Kṛṣṇa Conscious preachers, that will be the glory of our movement and the glory of your country as well. But if we neglect somehow or other and if we lose even one Vaiṣṇava, that is very great loss. (Letter—June 20, 1972) [\[back\]](#)

16. “The modern educational system without any knowledge of Bhagavān, I may tell you frankly, not only in India, everywhere, they are practically slaughterhouse.” (Lecture—Nov. 20, 1971) [\[back\]](#)

17. **Prabhupāda:** Gurukula is only for the small children. Preliminary, primary. And when the children are grown up, they should be sent to the varṇāśrama school or college for further developed training.

...

**Prabhupāda:** You should remain always *sannyāsī* within. Outwardly, for others’ convenience, you may do something. Similarly, we are accepting this *varṇāśrama*. We are not *varṇāśrama*; we are above *varṇāśrama*. But to give others facility to come to the stage of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, this program must be done.

**Hṛdayānanda:** Prabhupāda, generally in colleges in the West, they charge some fee for going to the college. What is our position?

**Prabhupāda:** No, we don’t charge any fee. There is no question of money. Because the *brāhmaṇas*, they’ll teach free. They require money because they have to give fat salary to these rascals. But we haven’t got to. And even we have to feed them, we produce our own grain. So where is the question of taking money? Therefore it is required, somebody must produce food. Then there is no necessity of money.

**Hṛdayānanda:** The *vaiśya* students will produce the food.

**Prabhupāda:** Yes.

**Satsvarūpa:** Should our children who are at *gurukula*, when they grow up, should they go to that *varṇāśrama* college, or...?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes, yes. They should go.

**Hṛdayānanda:** We’ll start it right away.

**Prabhupāda:** *Varṇāśrama* college means for grown-up students. College means for grown-up students.

**Hṛdayānanda:** Is there a minimum age for beginning such a college?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. Ten to twelve years.

**Hṛdayānanda:** They can start at ten to twelve?

**Prabhupāda:** Yes. From five to ten years, *gurukula*. And after ten years, they should go to the *varṇāśrama* college. (March 14, 1974) [\[back\]](#)

18. “These children are given to us by Krishna, they are Vaisnavas and we must be very careful to protect them. These are not ordinary children, they are Vaikuntha children...” (Letter—July 30, 1972) [\[back\]](#)

19. BG 3.8 [\[back\]](#)

20. “West Bengal people may come and join us without any distinction of caste and creed. The occupation will be according to one’s capacity. They will be employed in cottage industry backed by spiritual advancement of life, to understand the mission of human life or relationship with God and act accordingly. The idea is that we are prepared to give all facility for maintenance of the body without sinful activities like illicit sex, meat-eating, intoxication and gambling. Everyone should live peacefully in healthy condition of life with the purpose of advancing in spiritual consciousness. In this concept we can accept anyone from any part of the world, what to speak of West Bengal, and give them shelter, food, occupation and enlightenment.” (Sept. 28, 1976)

“The whole idea is that people residing in New Vrindaban may not have to search out work outside. Arrangements should be such that the residents should be self-satisfied. That will make an ideal *āśrama*.” (Letter—June 14, 1968)

“If we have food grains, milk, and cloth life becomes easy and we can save time for preaching and chanting. Not that everyone should do these activities of farming, but if one is less intelligent, or not intelligent enough to preach nicely, he can do. If one is capable, then he should preach.” (Letter—Jan. 19, 1975) [\[back\]](#)

21. “You can live anywhere. You haven’t got to go fifty miles off with a car to attend your office at six o’clock with velocity of hundred miles’ speed. Is that successful life, do you think? So where is successful life? We are proposing successful life.” (Lecture—Mar. 23, 1969) [\[back\]](#)
22. “The Lord supplies the necessities of all living entities. These necessities come from the earth, and thus the earth is the source of supply. When there is a good ruler, that source produces the necessities of life abundantly.” (SB 6.14.10, purport)

“The natural gifts such as grains and vegetables, fruits, rivers, the hills of jewels and minerals, and the seas full of pearls are supplied by the order of the Supreme, and as He desires, material nature produces them in abundance or restricts them at times. The natural law is that the human being may take advantage of these godly gifts by nature and satisfactorily flourish on them without being captivated by the exploitative motive of lording it over material nature.” (SB 1.8.40, purport)

“We shall never use this artificial fertilizer on our farms. It is forbidden in the *śāstras*. If you plant easily grown crops once in the year, then the earth will not become exhausted. Don’t over use the land.” (Letter—Jan. 11, 1976) [\[back\]](#)

23. “What is this successful life? I see... I have got so many students. They are well-qualified. But they have got... When they work, they have to work so hard, they go at six o’clock to the working and comes again at six o’clock, all day, tired. They lost all vitality, all sense. Is that successful life, simply for one morsel of food, working so hard? And unless one works so hard, he cannot eat. We have created a civilization that one must earn thousands of dollars, then he can live like a gentleman. Is that successful life? And for earning that thousands of dollars he has to work so hard, just like animal, beast. No. That is not successful life. Successful life is that, that we should make our bodily necessities of life as far as required, not more than that. I want to eat something. God has given sufficient food. You grow. You live anywhere. You grow foodstuff. You grow grains. You grow fruits. You grow vegetables. Keep cows. Take milk.” (Lecture—Mar. 23, 1969) [\[back\]](#)
24. “The child’s comfort and discomfort depends on the mother’s attention.” (Letter—Aug. 21, 1968) [\[back\]](#)
25. SB 1.2.10 [\[back\]](#)
26. “Kṛṣṇa says, *annād bhavanti bhūtāni*. So it is not utopian; it is practical. You must have sufficient food grain to feed the human being and the animal, and everything will be peaceful immediately. Because people, if one become hungry, he is disturbed. So give him food first of all. That is Kṛṣṇa’s injunction. Is that very impossible, impractical? No. You grow food more and distribute.” (Lecture—May 24, 1975) [\[back\]](#)
27. **Bhagavān:** It seems they are struggling so hard for existence they do not have time to contemplate these simple things, working so hard.  
**Prabhupāda:** Yes. So show the example that how by simple living and thinking of Kṛṣṇa, one can become perfect and happy.  
**Hari-śauri:** People’s minds are so much agitated by false desire that they can’t appreciate anything. Real beauty they overlook, searching for something else.  
(Aug. 3, 1976)

“Our people should show example, just like we are trying to do in New Vrindaban, that you grow your food, and [indistinct] milk, weave your cloth. And little school, and chant.” (June 11, 1975) [\[back\]](#)

28. “Anyone who is trying to be aloof from this Krishna Consciousness Society and yet engage in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is living in a great hallucination, for this is not possible. From this statement by Dhruva Mahārāja it is clear that unless one is associated with devotees, his devotional service does not mature; it does not become distinct from material activities.” (SB 4.9.11) [\[back\]](#)

29. “So if you can stick to this village life and be satisfied whatever you produce... You can produce your necessities; there is no difficulty. If we keep cows and grow food grains, fruits, vegetables, then we can live very peacefully like that. There is no need of going to the city. That is the plan of God, Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa personally exhibited. Vṛndāvana is village; it is not city.” (May 25, 1975)

“So I am very glad that you are living here. So kindly stick to this place and make an ideal island so that others may see also: plain living, high thinking. Produce your own food; keep cows, milk. If there is food grain and milk there is no necessities. And you can produce your cloth also if you produce cotton. And we are trying in Māyāpura to produce our own cloth. So we require our own cloth, own food, and time saved for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is required. That is actual civilization.” (May 25, 1975)

“Our farm projects are an extremely important part of our movement. We must become self-sufficient by growing our own grains and producing our own milk, then there will be no question of poverty. So develop these farm communities as far as possible. They should be developed as an ideal society depending on natural products not industry... Therefore let everyone chant Hare Kṛṣṇa, eat nicely and keep their bodies fit and healthy. This is ideal life style.” (Letter—Dec. 18, 1974)

“This farm project is especially for the devotees to grow their own food. Cotton also, to make their own clothes. And keeping cows for milk and fatty products. Our mission is to protect our devotees from unnecessary heavy work to save time for advancing in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. This is our mission. So there is no question of profit, but if easily there are surplus products, then we can think of trading. Otherwise we have no such intention. We want a temple, a *gosala* and agriculture.” (Letter—Nov. 28, 1976)

“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. Kṛṣṇa, in His natural life, is a village boy in Vṛndāvana. Vṛndāvana is a village. There is no factory, there is no motorcar, there is no big, big skyscraper buildings; it is village. That Kṛṣṇa likes. In the *śāstra* it is said, *vṛndāvanam parityajya padam ekam na gacchati*. Kṛṣṇa is so fond of that Vṛndāvana village life, with His cowherd boys and cowherd girls, *gopīs*, mother Yaśodā, father Nanda, and Upananda, uncles, and big family, the cows and the calves, the trees, the Yamunā River. He is satisfied in that life. So at least those who are Kṛṣṇa conscious, they should be satisfied with simple life in the village. That is part of Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” (Lecture—July 16, 1976) [\[back\]](#)

30. “Cow protection is the business of the *vaiśyas* and along with our preaching, this is the most important work. We must have a good section of *brāhmaṇas* in our society and we must also have a good group of *vaiśyas* who can grow grains and tend cows, and thus supply the society with food grains and milk products from the cow like ghee, curd, cream, etc.” (Letter—May 26, 1975) [\[back\]](#)

31. “Just like cow eats grass, the goat eats grass. So eating vegetable, there is no credit. Then the goats and the cows are more credit, have more credit, because they don’t touch anything except vegetable. So we are not preaching to become goats and cows. No. We are preaching that you become servant of Kṛṣṇa. So whatever Kṛṣṇa eats, we eat. If Kṛṣṇa says that “Give me meat, give me eggs,” so we shall offer Kṛṣṇa meat and eggs, and we shall take it. So don’t think that we are after vegetarian, nonvegetarian. No. That is not our philosophy.” (April 23, 1976) [\[back\]](#)

32. **Guru-gaurāṅga:** He says that on a small level that may be valid, like the monks who had their monastery and they made food enough, but for most people, especially where the climate is so unfavorable... He said that the Swiss people, they could not even stay on the land in the past, but they had to go away to find food because of the climate. So, on the whole, he does not see the practicality.  
**Prabhupāda:** Well, after all, this is material world. The miserable conditions are there. But as far as possible, try to minimize. Our only aim is how to save time for spiritual cultivation. That is our main aim. So we have to find out

the opportunity according to the time, circumstances. We..., we do not reject anything. Whatever is favorable, we accept.

(June 6, 1974) [\[back\]](#)

33. Letter—Nov. 28, 1976 [\[back\]](#)

34. **Yogeśvara:** His first question was do we use machines and modern methods on our *āśramas* and farms.

**Prabhupāda:** We have no objection. We want to be self-sufficient. That is our point of view. We have no objection with... It is not that we don't touch machine. We don't say like that. But we want to be self-sufficient. That is our point. We have not taken a vow that we shall not touch any machine. No, no. We're not like that.  
(June 6, 1974)

**Yadubara:** How would the *kṣatriyas* kill the animals?

**Prabhupāda:** Eh?

**Yadubara:** How would they kill? With guns, or bow and arrow?

**Prabhupāda:** That, as it is suitable. It is not that because the *kṣatriyas* were killing by bows and arrows formerly, you have to continue that. That is another foolishness. If you have got... If you can kill easily by guns, take that gun. Just like formerly, *parivrāja*, Caitanya Mahāprabhu walked on the street. There was no aeroplane or... Or He did not use it. Does it mean that I shall have to follow that? I must take the jet engine, if it is available. If somebody criticizes, "Oh, Caitanya Mahāprabhu walked on leg, and you are traveling in the jet plane?" shall I have to take that ideal? [chuckling] These are rascaldom. When you have to work, you have to work with the greatest facility. That's all. Now I have got the facility of the talking in microphone, and... So why should I not take it? It will be recorded. It will be heard by so many others. I am speaking to four, five men; it can be heard by a big crowd of four hundred men.

(March 14, 1974) [\[back\]](#)

35. **Jñāna:** ...to attain the necessary finances to support the programs here.

**Prabhupāda:** Beg. Sell book. That's all. Otherwise, how you get finance?

**Jñāna:** One idea is to have a farm that we sell fruit or vegetables, like that.

**Prabhupāda:** If you open farm for financial help, then it will not be successful. You should take to farming for supporting yourself, that's all. Grow your own food. Grow your own cloth. There is no need of financial help from outside. You get your food grains sufficiently—rice, *ḍāl*, wheat, vegetables, milk, sugar. *Bās*. You get everything. From these five, six items you should be economically free. That you have to do, not for trade to get money. Then it will be failure.

(Oct. 28, 1975) [\[back\]](#)

36. "On the whole, our society should be divided into 4 divisions, but such divisions are not material. Just like Krishna belonged to the Vaisya community, but he is worshiped by the *brahmanas*. We shall utilize everything for Krishna's service." (Jan. 19, 1975)

"Vaiṣṇava is transcendental. But for proper management of the material world, one should be acting like *brāhmaṇa*, one should be acting like *kṣatriya*. That is required. Just like actually we are doing so. Some of you are preaching, and some of you are cleansing the temple. It does not mean that a *sannyāsī* who is preaching, he is better than that man who is cleansing. The... Their position as Vaiṣṇava is the same. But for the management, one is cleansing, one is seeing the construction, one is going to preach, like that. That should be there."

(Mar. 12, 1974)

"There must be cooperation for a central purpose, and a classless society is possible only when Kṛṣṇa is at the center. Then the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras* all work for His satisfaction."

(DS, Chapter 10) [\[back\]](#)

37. Iso, Mantra 1 [\[back\]](#)

38. "As for land ownership, in the Vedic civilization the land was given to the people for cultivation not for ownership..." (Letter—Apr. 28, 1974)

“The real proposal is that everything belongs to God. Then God’s representative, king, he gives you land. But you require for ten men’s foodstuff. You calculate the ten men’s foodstuff, for producing you require so much land, so the king gives you land. You work and grow your food. And because it is God’s property, you give some tax. Whatever you produce, twenty-five percent give to God or king, and balance you enjoy. If there is no production—no tax. This is peaceful life. You work. You take land, God’s land.” (Oct. 16, 1975)

“An individual may possess a large tract of land, and he may be proud of his ownership, but Kṛṣṇa claims to possess all planetary systems...No one can have peace as long as he thinks, ‘I am the proprietor.’ Who is capable of claiming proprietorship? Only a few hundred years ago the red Indians were considered to be the proprietors of America. Today we in our turn are claiming that proprietorship, but in four hundred or a thousand years perhaps someone else will come to claim the same...under illusion we are thinking that we are the proprietors. In actuality God owns everything, and therefore He is called the richest.” (RV, Chapter 1) [\[back\]](#)

39. “That is the whole program of *varṇāśrama-dharma*. That is a kind of spiritual communism. Spiritual communism.” (Aug. 12, 1966) [\[back\]](#)
40. BG 12.10, purport [\[back\]](#)
41. *Kleinsasser v. United States*, 707 F. 2d 1024 (9th Cir. 1983) [\[back\]](#)
42. “Yes! Go on acquiring the surrounding lands and in this way we will establish a local self governing village and show all the world a practical example of spiritual life as Krishna Himself exhibited in Vrindaban. Agriculture and protecting the cow, this is the main business of the residents of Vrindaban, and above all simply loving Krishna. The cows, the trees, the cowherd men and Gopis, their chief engagement was loving Krishna, and in New Vrindaban we want to create this atmosphere and thereby show the whole world how practical and sublime our movement is.” (Letter July 27, 1973) [\[back\]](#)

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