

# Govardhana Farms & ISKCON Govinda's Herd

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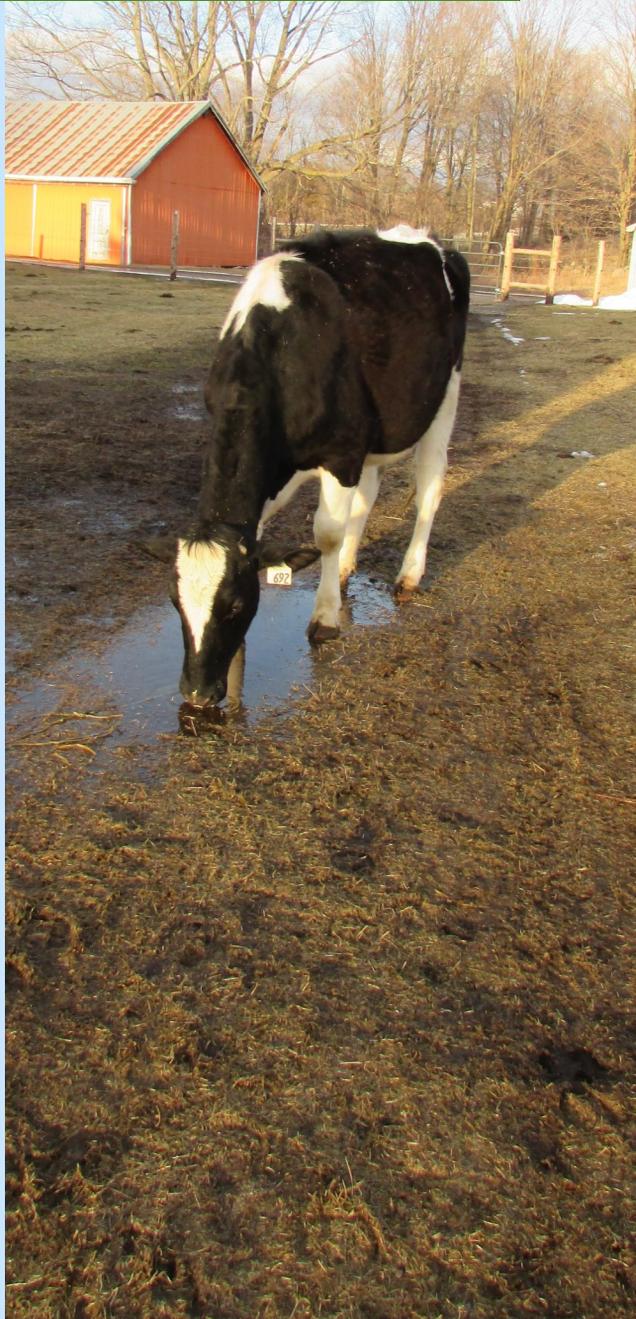
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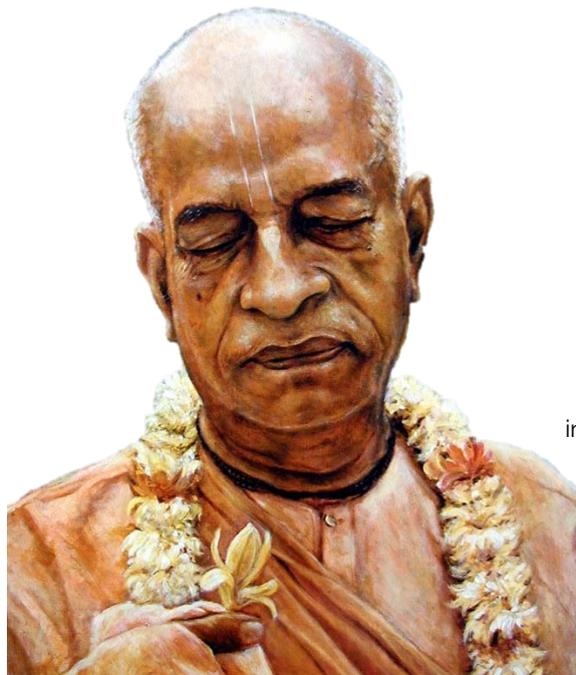
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We would like to dedicate this newsletter to HDG A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada upon whose teachings and inspiration our operations are based.

The following articles in this newsletter were written by Sukhayanti Devi Dasi and edited by Sheri Oz: *Latest Updates*, *Ancient Agriculture* and *My Story*. The article, *Did God Create Animals For Us To Eat?* was written by Samita Sarkar.

Images found throughout the magazine are all taken by Govardhana Farms & ISKCON Govinda's Herd.

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## Latest Updates

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**2**016 has been a year of new beginnings for us. This has manifested in all possible aspects. Fil and I have become new parents to twin girls and to a herd of cows and bulls. The winter months went by slowly as our operations on the vegetable field ceased to exist, but our care for the cows only increased. We are now no longer responsible for a field of vegetables which was being attacked by weeds, but for a herd of 6 cows and 2 bulls who need constant care and attention. The vegetables came and went in one season but the cows and bulls

are here to stay for the next 20 years if not more.

Another great responsibility is the care of our two precious angels who joined our family at the end of 2015. As new parents to two young babies, we had a lot to learn and with everything else that was happening in our lives, it was not an easy time.

During the winter months we had a lot of time to contemplate about our project and think about the direction in which it is heading and how we would like to see it grow. We have learned a lot from senior members of ISKCON and came to many new



realizations. If, when we first started the vegetable and cow protection projects we had a certain vision, this has changed drastically as we became more and more involved in this unique service. We have realized that in order to be able to truly live the life style that was taught to us by A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, of simple living and high thinking, much more needs to be done.

It cannot be a family operation, it needs to be a congregational, a community, operation. We realized that without the help of others, this project will become very stagnant. Our vision

evolved from just being able to protect cows and grow our own vegetables to a strong desire to create a rural community where many families work together, grow their food together, produce different natural products together, protect cows together and practice a spiritual lifestyle together. Although this realization gave us much joy when thinking of where we could be and what we could do once this is established, it also gave us sorrow to see how far away from the goal we are.

Now, as 2016 progresses and we are slowly entering into the growing sea-

son once again, we have decided to scale down our operations and focus on the family. We are no longer physically able to do all that we did last year. With two girls to care for and a herd of cows that needs a lot of attention and funds we realize that Fil is just one man facing many hurdles. We decided to focus on really scaling down our own personal expenses by learning to live more simply with minimal use of appliances that require electricity and which wastes money. By living simply, we want our farm to slowly evolve into one that is 100% self-sufficient, using close to no electricity and producing

all its food and essentials (such as soaps and other cosmetics as well as other day-to-day needs). As part of our scaling down, we have also decided to grow just enough vegetables to provide for our family year-long (by canning and freezing our produce, we will be able to live off them during the winter as well).

If we end up with extra vegetables we will try to sell in local farmers' markets. The labour and costs involved in growing large amounts of vegetables, harvesting them, cleaning them, preparing them for deliv-



ery and delivering them in the GTA, are not insignificant, and since I am unable to help Fil this year, it would not have been practical for us to continue performing such service. Since not enough people signed up for this programme this year in any case, we decided that we would not be earning enough from this work-intensive operation to make it worthwhile.

During the summer months, we look forward to hosting volunteers who can come and help out with the vegetable operation as they did last year. We also look forward to introducing volunteers to our growing herd. We are anticipating another labour-intensive but fun season and all the help that will come our way.

As usual, we invite you to submit your donations so that we are able to cover all the expenses associated with the cow protection project that operates as a nonprofit organization in service to Krishna. For more details on both operation and for placing donations towards the cows, you are welcome to visit our website at: [www.govardhanafarms.ca](http://www.govardhanafarms.ca). If you wish to hear in more detail how 2016 progresses, please subscribe to our printed newsletter mailing list at: <http://tinyurl.com/GF-IGH-newsletter> so that you will receive the December copy which will include a year in review article, covering all the new developments on our farm.

Thank you and enjoy your read.





# Ancient Agriculture

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## Introduction

**A**ccording to scientific research [1], agriculture has been present in this world for thousands and thousands of years, being an important source of food for all human beings. When we examine that which we eat today, we will without a doubt find agricultural products in practically everything that we con-

sume. Whether it is vegetables, fruits, oils, seeds, grains, beans, raw or processed foods, agriculture has a hand in it all. One does not need to be a vegetarian or vegan to depend on agriculture as almost everything we cook and eat needs to have some agricultural products incorporated in it. Therefore, what are the features of ancient agriculture and how have we developed, or as I would present in this article, degraded since then in our agricultural

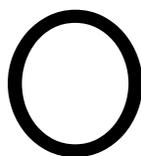
*"The animals, they are not coming to eat your foodstuff, your fruits.*

*They are, rather, producing milk not for drinking themselves. They are giving you, and you have no obligation? The milk produced by the cows, it is taken by the human being. They do not drink it. So they are giving milk.*

*And after death, you are taking their skin. So every way they are serving. The stool, cow dung, we have stacked here. I have seen. They are also fertilizer. In so many ways they are giving you service, and you are killing the poor animal. What is the human civilization?"*

Srila Prabhupada, room  
Conversation with  
Professor Durckheim, Dr. P.  
J. Saher and Professor  
Porsch, June 19, 1974,  
Germany.

## What were the methods used back then?



One of the main methods used during Vedic times was the use of bullocks to plow the

land. Whatever was not done with the help of the bulls was done by hand, the land would be fertilized by manure, the crop would be harvested with the use of simple harvesting tools, such as the sickle, and the land would be irrigated either by nature - the rain - or by man made devices - canals, channels and wells. [2] Agriculture was a team effort. Many were involved in the process of ploughing, sowing, fertilizing the land, irrigating and harvesting. A whole village may have been employed in the creation of food, something that is completely foreign to us since the introduction of the tractor onto the agricultural landscape.

Beyond that which is expected of a pre-machinery era, we learn of other interesting methods that were employed in agriculture. Of course, many know of the various demigods and goddesses that are an inseparable part of the Vedic culture. These would be worshipped and prayers

offered in order to promote high yields, plenty of rain and other types of help in the agriculture endeavor.

The Vedic culture is saturated with spirituality and every aspect of life cannot exist without its connection to a general understanding of man's dependence on higher forces. The Vedic scriptures teach us of a way of life in which we do not depend on our man made inventions that are eternally flawed, but on those higher forces that make everything alive, and particularly on God.

While the various demigods are in control of various aspects of the material realm, it is understood that they all receive their powers from the Supreme Being and, therefore, are not the ultimate source from which everything comes into existence [3]. Man would pray to a particular deity like Indra, for sufficient rainfall. Fire sacrifices would be performed to insure a successful season. But beyond these rituals and prayers we also learn of the use of heat (fire), sound (mantra) and light therapy (energy channelling) to the seeds in order to help them germinate better and react better to their natural surroundings (soil, water etc.). A recent study [4] that was

*"This is the way of human society. Killing the cows and spoiling the land will not solve the problem of food. This is not civilization. Uncivilized men living in the jungle and being unqualified to produce food by agriculture and cow protection may eat animals, but a perfect human society advanced in knowledge must learn how to produce first-class food simply by agriculture and protection of cows."*

Srila Prabhupada, Srimad Bhagavatam 10.7.13-15, Purport.

conducted in Maharashtra, India, has shown great success for a handful of farmers who used this ancient technique in their fields. It is not surprising, after all, we hear of peoples of other ancient world cultures who can talk to the plants and who can predict the weather simply by observing the appearance of the sky and the nature of the winds. It is a fact that once we rid ourselves of our dependency on technology and simply live close to the land, devoid of all the interference of modern day gadgets, we are able to perceive nature and connect with it at a much deeper level.

Vedic knowledge also teaches the art of natural fertilization which uses only natural resources and actually helps the environment by getting rid of what today causes the greatest environmental hazard, cow manure. *Panchagavya*, *Vermiwash*, *Compost tea*, *Makta Khad*, *Beejamrit* and *Jiwamrit* are all natural fertilizers utilized still today by some in India. (Please check the endnote of this article for the ingredients used in each one of these fertilizers). Another recent study [5] shows how the use of these fertilizers have significantly improved crop yields while

fighting off various plant diseases.

When we examine the world today and recognize the destruction that our modern day "advancements" have created we must admit that somewhere along the way of progress we made a fatal mistake. While desiring to increase crop yields and prevent food plants from being attacked by disease, pests and weeds, we have created a monster that is devouring the entire world and us in it. With the use of tractors and other related machinery in order to make work less draining on the human body and more efficient, we have eliminated team work, caused poverty and destroyed the very land which sustains us. Somewhere along the way of progress, we have forgotten about "the better good" and have become narrow minded in a world where everyone wants to become the richest man on earth, even farmers. While the world marches in the direction of progress it actually is causing its own destruction and degradation. We have lost touch with nature. We have increased qualities in man such as envy, deceit, addiction and hate. We have wrecked the environment and



*"When the bull and the cow are in a joyful mood, it is to be understood that the people of the world are also in a joyful mood. The reason is that the bull helps production of grains in the agricultural field, and the cow delivers milk, the miracle of aggregate food values. The human society,*



*therefore, maintains these two important animals very carefully so that they can wander everywhere in cheerfulness."*

Srila Prabhupada, Srimad Bhagavatma  
1.16.18, purport.



caused the deaths of thousands of wildlife animals.

The solution that was introduced to me by A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami and which I truly believe to be the only solution is to turn towards a lifestyle that entertains simple living. A lifestyle that entails dependency on the land and nature and on having a close, respectful relationship with it. And of higher thinking, which realizes that we are just one part of a much more complex creation, one that has a Supreme Being on which we depend.

#### Endnote

Ingredients of the different types of fertilizers:

Panchagavya – cow dung, cow urine, curd, cow milk and ghee.

Vermiwash – cow dung and earth-worms.

Compost tea – Vermin compost and water.

Makta Khad – cow dung, cow urine, water and Jaggary.

Beejamrit – cow dung, cow urine, cow milk, lime stone and water.

Jiwamrit – cow dung, cow urine,

jaggary, pulse flour fertile soil and water

#### Reference:

- [1] [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/History\\_of\\_agriculture](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/History_of_agriculture)
- [2] History of Agriculture in India, Up to C. 1200 A.D Vinod Chandra Srivastava. Pages 235-244
- [3] Bhagavad Gita as it is, Translation by A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami: "Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know My origin or opulences, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and sages."
- [4] Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions of South Asia. Sanjay Garg. Pages 88-97
- [5] Vedic Krishi: Sustainable Livelihood option for small and marginal farmers, Sanjay Chadha, Rameshwar, Ashlesha, JP Saini and YS Paul.



## My Story

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I was not raised on a farm; I never lived in the country-side. In fact, all my life I have spent in cities. And yet here I am, at the age of 33 finding myself living against a backdrop of Canadian rural scenery, on a farm, with cows and growing vegetables in the most natural way possible.

So how does one's life evolve and brings him or her to completely changing a lifestyle. It can't be something that happens over night, at least in my case it was far from it,

it has been a long process, I would say a lifelong process, that brought me to where I am today.

I think it started in childhood, I remember myself pondering about the meaning of life during school lunch breaks. I think many children have such thoughts go through their heads, but many are taught to just leave those thoughts aside, for more important issues at hand such as career, stability and security. That is what, after all, schools are all about:

*"I mean to say from cow you get milk. From milk you get butter and so many milk products. And from the fields you get sufficient grains and fruits. So your economic question is solved immediately... That is the miscalculation of the present civilization. They have forgotten that the aim of human life is to advance oneself in spiritual realization. So time should be saved as much as possible, and that time should be utilized for spiritual realization... And because we have neglected spiritual life there is no peace. If you want really peaceful life, then you have to make your material necessities simplified and engage your time for spiritual cultivation. Then you will have peace. And that is the best type of civilization. Plain living, high thinking."*

Srila Prabhupada, lecture on the Srimad-Bhagavatam 5.5.3, May 4, 1968, Boston

preparing you to eventually going to university, not for the sake of studying (meaning contemplating life, the world and other such "useless" stuff) but in order to learn skills to get you a better paying job. But that is beside the point.

In my case, I kept on pondering beyond those childhood moments. The friends I had in high school taught me about vegetarianism and urged me to join them in the adventure of not eating meat. They took me to activist meetings where issues such

as globalization, the environment and animal rights were discussed. They introduced me to Buddhist meditation and to yoga. While all of this was somewhat attractive, I was still not completely convinced. I still felt that something was missing.

It was during a European trip I made when I was 22 years old, that I finally found the answers I was looking for and in full. While attending a "Rainbow Gathering" in Germany, I met a group of Hare Krishna practitioners. I decided to try it out. I joined, basically immediately. I moved into

the temple, changed my dress, changed my life style, I was a believer!

But what does that have to do with living in the country, having cows and growing your own food? You may rightfully ask. Well, as I said, it has been a long process and it took me 9 more years after joining the Hare Krishna's to finally make a complete life changing decision.

In his books, A.C Bhakitvedanta Swami Prabhupada teaches us about spiritual topics such as the existence of the spirit soul, of God as well as the nature of this material

world and how these three topics relate to each other. These topics are so complex that his books in actuality are books that teach us not merely a philosophy or a religion, if you wish, but a complete lifestyle. If one studies his books, he or she will find that the topic of simple living and high thinking is not uncommon. According to Srila Prabhupada, if one wants to make spiritual advancement, one needs to surround one's self with favourable conditions.

Since modern society is so focused on gratifying our senses, our bodies,



by acquiring more wealth, becoming more beautiful and attracting more followers, living in such settings is not conducive to inquiring into ourselves, our spiritual identity. Therefore, he introduces to us the idea of simple living and high thinking. Living simply off the land, growing one's own food, protecting cows and bulls and using whatever free time one has for higher thinking, or for spiritual realization. In the serene settings of the country side, where the flashing neon lights of advertisements do not hunt one wherever one goes, one can actually dive deep into his or her meditation and spiritual practice.

After 9 years in the movement and with great help from my husband, I finally realized that it is time to make a change. It is time to live life the way Srita Prabhupada implored us to in his books. Not simply because he said so, but because it made sense. It made sense that cows and bulls who are so widely exploited, tortured and killed, and at the same time so giving, should be protected. It made sense to raise my daughters in an atmosphere that will not teach them values which so much go against what my spiritual practice stands for. It made sense to grow

our own food instead of buying those chemically enriched foods that they sell in the store. It made sense to retreat into the beautiful scenery of Canada's country-side so that I can focus on my meditation and not on the next door neighbour.

I will not fool anyone or even myself into believing that life has been a dream ever since my husband and I made the choices and changes that we have. But I can whole heartedly say that life has become an adventure, a journey towards making that dream come true not just for us but also for others, and every moment of struggle on the way to achieving it is just so worth it. Because living a meaningful life is worth living and for me, there is nothing more meaningful than the vision and dream that we have behind the lifestyle that we choose to live.



# Did God Create Animals for Us to Eat?

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Written by Samita Sarkar

**W**hen I say I'm vegetarian, a common reaction from some religious people is, "But didn't God put animals on Earth for us to eat?" As they have grown up believing that animals are food and not friends, they seem genuinely con-

fused as to why anyone would refuse to eat something granted to them by God. I was equally confused by their reaction: why would God want humans to harm any of his other creations? To better understand this sentiment, I decided to research a couple of key scriptures: the Christian Bible and the

Hindu Gita. Here are a few choice quotations.

### The Bible

Here is a quote from Genesis 1:29: "And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.'"

Romans 14:21 purports vegetarianism even more clearly: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

There is also the Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." It doesn't say "Thou shalt not murder."

Many people claim that the Bible frequently mentions that humans have "dominion" over the animals, but this means that we should protect and care for them. They are not to be killed or eaten.

### The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita (17:8, 17:10) describes the types of foods preferred according to one's qualities: "Foods dear to those in the mode of good-

ness increase the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such foods are juicy, fatty, wholesome, and pleasing to the heart," and, "Food that is tasteless, decomposed and putrid, and food consisting of remnants and untouchable things is dear to those in the mode of darkness."

The Gita is aligned with the Bible's assertion that flesh is unhealthy and "weakens" the human body, while juicy, fatty, wholesome foods (fruits, nuts, grains, etc.) promote vitality because they are full of life; meat is dead matter that elicits darkness as it contains no life force ("praan" in Sanskrit).

What kind of food does God himself prefer? In 9:26 He tells us, "If one offers Me with love and devotion a leaf, a flower, fruit or water, I will accept it."

Note that the Sanskrit word for "accept" is "asnami," which also means "eat."

Moreover, Chapter 5 of the Gita acknowledges animal (and human) rights, with the statement: "The

humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste]."

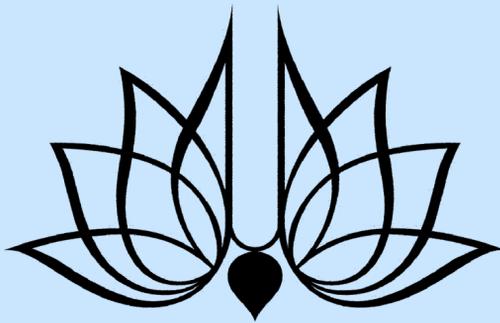
According to the spiritual texts of two of the world's major religions, God did not put animals on Earth for human consumption, but to live in harmony with us as we are both a part of nature. To kill is the ultimate act of disrespect, and we should therefore do no harm to any of God's creations. He loves us all.

*"The purpose of food is to increase the duration of life, purify the mind and aid bodily strength. This is its only purpose. In the past, great authorities selected those foods that best aid health and increase life's duration, such as milk products, sugar, rice, wheat, fruits and vegetables... Animal fat is available in the form of milk, which is the most wonderful of all foods. Milk, butter, cheese and similar products give animal fat in a form which rules out any need for the killing of innocent creatures. It is only through brute mentality that this killing goes on. The civilized method of obtaining needed fat is by milk. Slaughter is the way of subhumans. Protein is amply available through split peas, dhal, whole wheat, etc."*

Srila Prabhupada,  
Bhagavad Gita, 17.10,  
purport.



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