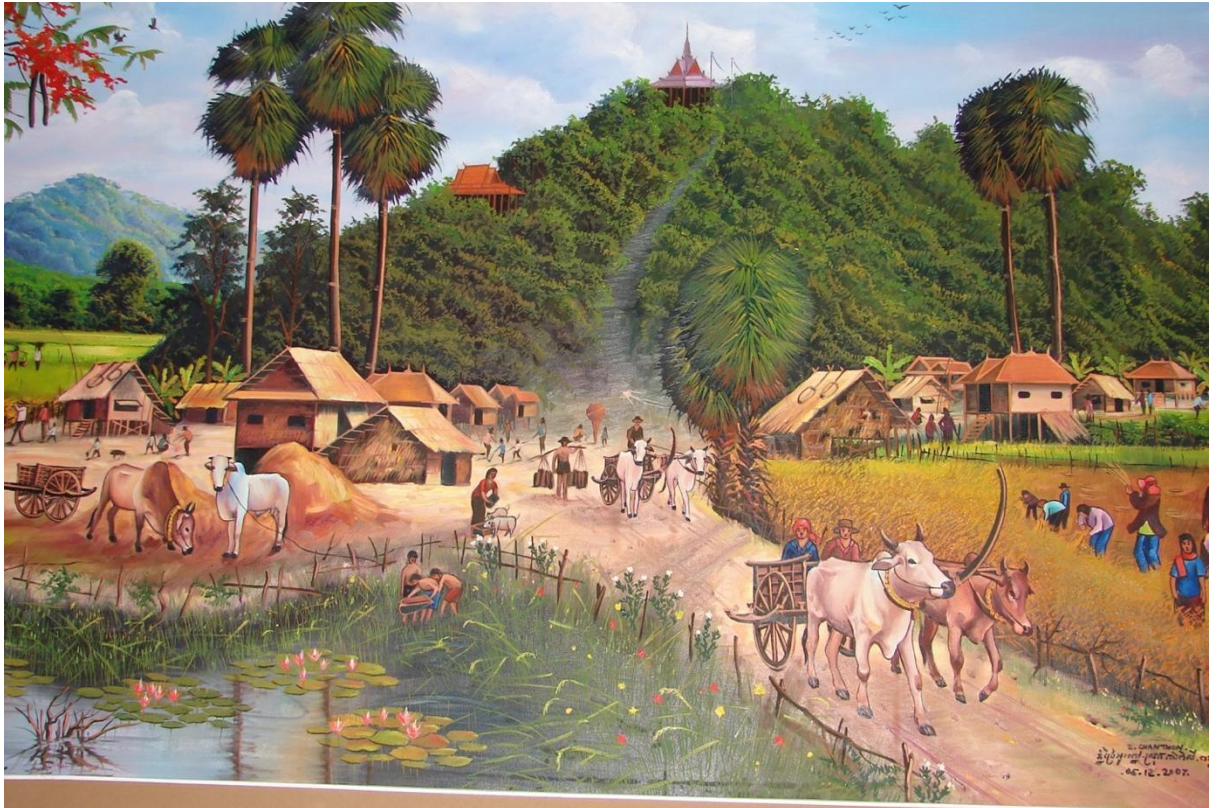


Vedic Vaishnav View of Sociology Its Application in the 21st Century



DOCTORAL THESIS SYNOPSIS

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**OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VASUDEVAYA
OM SURABHYAI NAMA**

Introduction

I undertook this study not only as a Research Scholar with Osmania University but also as a long-standing member and leader of a faith-based organization known as ISKCON, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, whose Founder Acharya, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada has strongly and repeatedly promoted Vedic sociology under the name *daiva varnasrama dharma* or divine culture. As the appointed National Minister for the ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry in India (IDVM-India) at the time of undertaking this initiative, without being commissioned by ISKCON, I voluntarily took up this research on Vedic sociology.

This paper is a Synopsis of my thesis entitled *The Vaisnava Vedic View of Sociology – Its Application in the Twenty-First Century*. The Synopsis will cover the following topics: 1) Statement of the Problem, 2) Aims and Objectives, 3) Review of Literatures, 4) Research Methodology, 5) Findings and Observations, and 6) Recommendations.

1. Statement of the Problem

Since the last three centuries, specifically since the French Revolution (1792) in France and the Industrial Revolution in England (1760 – 1840), countries around the world have witnessed major and unprecedented changes in their social fabric, educational policies, economic development, political reforms and agricultural practices. The fall of monarchy and the rejection of the church enabled French philosopher Auguste Comte to formulate the science of modern day sociology and the ideals of positivism that would subsequently revolutionise the way individuals think thrusting society towards ever increasing materialism and an atheistic world view.

Modernism, through planned and accelerated industrialization, urbanization, and globalization [see Kant's *Farewell to Modernism*]¹, fuelled by an ever-increasing consumer-oriented society, and sustained by an excessive, unnatural, destructive, and

¹ Kanth, Rajani, *Farewell to Modernism, On Human Devolution in the Twenty-First Century*, Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers; New edition, 2017.

highly irrational exploitation of natural resources, has disconnected individuals and society from land, cows, culture, tradition, and spirituality.

This has resulted in creating a continuous culture shock by imposing an artificial and unsustainable lifestyle causing massive global educational, political, economic, social, and health problems, coupled with life-threatening ecological disasters. In short, we find ourselves today with large numbers of alienated individuals world-wide, many of whom being unproductive, frustrated, and marginalised.

Fundamental to understanding the problems brought about by modernism is a clear understanding of the Vedic narrative that is based on four main sciences that have been the guiding principles and pillars of Vedic society since time immemorial. These four sciences are amply described in the ancient Vedic scriptures like *Bhagavad-gita* and *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and can be summarized as follows: 1) *Anviksiki*, the Science of Philosophy, 2) *Trayi*, the Science of Education, 3) *Danda Niti*, the Science of Politics and 4) *Varta*, the Science of Economics. The Vedic teachings unequivocally affirm that all the basic needs of mankind can best be met when the principles of *dharma* are followed. In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* we find the following statement made by one of the famous sages Srila Narada Muni:

*dharmamulam hi bhagavan
sarva-vedamayo harih
smrtam ca tad-vidam rajan
yena catma prasidati*

The Supreme Being, the Personality of Godhead, is the essence of all Vedic knowledge, the root of all religious principles, and the memory of great authorities. O King Yudhisthira, this principle of religion is to be understood as evidence. On the basis of this religious principle, everything is satisfied, including one's mind, soul and even one's body.

²

These four Vedic sciences encompass both the spiritual and material dimensions of life. They foster simplicity, clarity of thought and a peaceful and serene lifestyle. However, our excess fixation on gross materialism in modern day society, due largely to lust, anger and greed is blinding our vision and understanding of both the spiritual and material dimensions of life. As stated in the *Bhagavad-gita*:

² Bhaktivedanta Swami, A. C. *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. Mumbai: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1999. (SB 7.11.7)

*tri-vidhham narakasyedam
dvaram nasanam atmanah
kamah krodhas tatha lobhas
tasmad etat trayam tyajet*

“There are three gates leading to this hell—lust, anger, and greed. Every sane man should give these up, for they lead to the degradation of the soul.”³

This holistic approach to life is what is lacking in our present modern-day world centred largely on gross material pursuits falsely thinking that we will become happy in this way. It is interesting to note that some scientists are seeing beyond the external problems and beginning to recognize some of their root causes. For example, environmental lawyer and advocate James Gustave Speth makes the following observation: “*Materialism is toxic to happiness, and we are losing our connection to the natural world.*”⁴ He goes on to explain:

“I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. I thought that with 30 years of good science, we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy and to deal with those we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.”⁵

To summarize, we find ourselves at the peak-end of the humanistic pendulum swing, with our excessive passionate material obsessions causing a severe imbalance in society at all levels. This ever-existing struggle between Idealism and Humanism has again reached its apex and needs to be curbed to once again gain a healthy balance.

Idealism (Spiritualism) and Humanism (Materialism) need not conflict with one another if understood properly. While the promotion of the more idealistic view of life may lead to spiritual pursuits at the neglect of material needs and while the promotion of the more humanistic views may lead to material pursuits

³ Bhaktivedanta Swami, A.C. *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. Los Angeles: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1994. (Bg 16.21)

⁴ James Gustave Speth, Quotes
http://www.azquotes.com/author/54497-James_Gustave_Speth

⁵ James Gustave Speth, Quotes
<http://winewaterwatch.org/2016/05/we-scientists-dont-know-how-to-do-that-what-a-commentary/>

at the neglect of spiritual needs, there is a need to practically demonstrate how both can and should coexist.

The survey prompted individuals and communities to closely analyse their spiritual and material dimensions of life (in Vedic terminology, assessing their spiritual and material *sva-dharma*). This was done by measuring their level of satisfaction in meeting their basic needs at the physical, mental, intellectual, social, and spiritual levels as experienced in a rural atmosphere of village lifestyle.

Because the last 200 years especially have increased the emphasis on material or economic development, the research attempted to ascertain the levels of neglect to human values and natural resources.

2. Aims and Objectives

The following five areas comprise the primary aims and objectives of the research and underline the core principles of the Vedic culture in the matter of philosophy, traditional education, local governance, and economics.

2.1 Introducing cow based natural agriculture (*ahimsa* food/*ahimsa* milk), reviving traditional technologies (*ahimsa* cloth and other cottage industries), giving special protection to indigenous cows, and reintroducing the system of *gochara* (grazing), including *panchagavya* products as natural medicines to help meet the basic physical needs.

2.2 Re-establishing traditional education and training such as *Gurukulas* and Varnasrama Colleges to help create *Acharyas* and *Vaidyas* who will be qualified to develop traditional Vedic curriculum. This will help meet apprenticeship, mental, and intellectual needs.

2.3 Promoting community projects, festivals, counselling services and cultural events to help meet basic social needs.

2.4 Introducing Yoga, Meditation, and daily *sadhana* practices like hearing from scriptures and *mantra japa*, to help meet the basic consciousness/spiritual needs.

2.5 Re-establishing the dignity and respect to Mother Surabhi (cows), to Mother Bhumi (land) and to Mother *Saraswati* (knowledge) recognizing them as sacred and natural gifts of nature, not to be exploited, abused, neglected, or destroyed.

The research also established similarities and differences between the communities studied.

In addition to these primary objectives, the study looked at various secondary objectives found in Vedic concepts that are often less known to many western people, including intellectuals and scholars.

The research underlines the need for faith-based organizations and transcendentalists to become Social Stakeholders and Social Change-makers respectively by promoting and taking up programs pertaining to village and human resource development.

The research encourages farmers to revert to diversified farming as opposed to mono-crop, to use indigenous seeds as opposed to hybrid seeds by maintaining Seed Banks, to revert to cow-based organic farming by using natural fertilizers and natural pesticides as opposed to destructive chemical fertilizers and pesticides that harm both the soil and the food produced from such contaminated soil, and to use bullocks for ploughing the land as opposed to harmful machines such as tractors and combines that are the main cause for the global problem of desertification.

The research gives special attention to the absolute need for protecting cows, in particular the need to promote the breeding of indigenous cows for both better health and for development of *panchagavya* products and Ayurvedic medicines. The research aims to demonstrate how a more natural and sustainable economy lies within the scientific and natural practice of natural agriculture.

The research promotes the development of traditional technologies such as Persian Wheel and Mote (rope and bucket system) as water lifting devices, and the establishment of various cottage industries, in particular the revival of ahimsa cloth. The research shows the importance of maintaining a healthy balance of the ecology, techniques of watershed management and the need of renewed forestry.

The research also demonstrates the fallacies and dangers of modern-day Family Planning introducing the more natural Vedic methods of Family Planning.

For the above to take place, the research gives special attention and emphasis on proper training and education by helping to establish the traditional educational system of *Gurukula* for the young boys, Varnasrama College for the older boys and the 64 Arts and Sciences traditionally learned and practiced by the women folk.

Fundamental to all these best practices will be the introduction of systematic character formation in keeping with the culture of spirituality, regardless of religious

beliefs. If these practices are followed, then all the more vulnerable and dependent members of the society, in particular children, women, the elders and the diseased, as well as the cows and the land, will be properly protected and served.

3. Review of Literatures

Modernity, in its zest and zeal to free individuals and society from the bourgeois exploitation and ecclesiastic ascendancy prevalent 300 years ago in Europe, in its new found credo of freedom, fraternity, liberty and equality for all, has in fact neglected and severely exploited the basic fundamental rights and values related to 1) animal rights, especially the cows, 2) agriculture, and 3) education, all three being intimately related to three clearly defined Vedic sciences meant to help societies develop into holistic, balanced, peaceful and prosperous nations. Can we honestly say that we have evolved since the days of the French Revolution? Author Rajani Kanth opines the opposite in his book *Farewell to Modernism: On Human Devolution in the Twenty-First Century*:

It is the European, Modernist, Governors that have brought the ecological world to the very brink of existence, the societal world to breakdown, and the economic world to collapse. The world is suicidally nuclear today because of Their venomous invention(s)... As such, it is the European Modernist- in particular the Anglo-Am set of forces -that is squarely responsible for where we are today: in the Greatest Crisis in the History of Our Species. ⁶

Never before in the history of mankind has there been such rampant and unscrupulous exploitation among the human species, other species of life and of natural resources. Never before have we seen such degradation in the character, morality and ethics of leaders and the general mass of people. The three fundamental Vedic sciences meant to protect, nourish and give security to all, namely the Science of Economics (*Varta*), the Science of Governance (*Danda Niti*), and the Science of Education (*Trayi*), have practically been destroyed in modern day society. When we grossly neglect these fundamental principles of *dharma*, we can only but expect deterioration and corruption that results in ever increased suffering for all. And that is our unequivocal gloomy reality in this third decade of the Twenty-First Century.

⁶ Kanth, Rajani, *Farewell to Modernism* (p.vi).

I have argued that modernity is robbing humanity of three natural gifts, three treasures that epitomize the real wealth of a nation, especially an agrarian-based society. More specifically, since the Era of Indian Colonialism by the British and the Era of Western Industrialization and Mechanization by Europe and America, modernity has been plundering and desecrating what the Vedic culture reveres as three of her sacred mothers, namely: 1) Mother *Surabhi* (cow), 2) Mother *Bhumi* (land), and 3) Mother *Sarasvati* (knowledge). These three “Mothers” can best be understood and appreciated in a society that values the age-long occupation of natural agriculture. Thus, the research will highlight the importance, value and absolute necessity of preserving an agrarian-based society, the foundation of which are traditional villages in keeping with the Vedic principles of self-sufficiency, sustainability, local governance and human development through the preservation of the sacred family nucleus with cow care at its basis, a symbiosis that is meant to culminate in the highest level of perfection, spiritual emancipation.

Such original Vedic villages, the archetype for simple living and high thinking, can best be described in our modern times as “Vedic Eco Villages”. In the past few decades there has been an emergence of Eco Villages in various parts of the world. One of the well-established organizations, *Global Eco Network* (GEN),⁷ has achieved substantial success in promoting and helping re-establish such communities. The research will encourage and assist local villagers to preserve, or in many cases, to revive and re-establish such ideal villages that are regarded in the Vedic teachings as essential to maintain and enhance human development with emphasis on the three areas under study, namely 1) cow protection, 2) natural agriculture and 3) traditional education, all being the basis of a culture that will lead to healthy, progressive and prosperous communities and nations.

Historically, agriculture has been accepted as the noblest of all professions. Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America concludes:

“There seem to be only three ways for a nation to acquire wealth. The first is by war, as the Romans did, in plundering their conquered neighbours. This is robbery. The second is by commerce, which is generally cheating. The third is agriculture, the only honest way, where a man receives a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground, in a

⁷ <https://ecovillage.org>

kind of continual miracle, wrought by the hand of God in his favour as a reward for his innocent life, and his virtuous industry.”⁸

Yet another Founding Father of the Nation, Thomas Jefferson concurs: “I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural.”⁹

One of the foremost agrarian crusaders in India since the last three decades has undoubtedly been the well-known Dr. Vandana Shiva, scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and anti-globalization author.¹⁰ She has travelled widely highlighting the plight of our farmers around the world, and she addresses key global problems such as climate change, peak oil and food crisis. It is most revealing how she relates these problems to a major deviation from a central theme that I will be introducing in the section on Vedic Epistemology and Ontology, *dharma* (that which sustains). She makes the following profound observation:

“Climate chaos and peak oil are converging with a third crisis – the food crisis. The food crisis results from the combined impacts of the industrialization and globalization of agriculture....The real solution must be to search for right living...right living is “dharma”... Ecological balance and social justice are intrinsic to right livelihood, to *dharma*. “*Dharanath dharma ucyate*” – that which sustains all species of life and helps maintain harmonious relationships among them is “dharma”. That which disturbs the balance and her species is “*adharma*”.”¹¹

A similar inspirational message is also echoed by one of ISKCON’s scholars, Micheal Cremo, co-author of *Divine Nature*,¹² *Forbidden Archaeology*¹³ and author of *Human Devolution*¹⁴ who makes the following statement:

“The current civilization with its emphasis on ever increasing production and consumption is destroying our planet. The material production of consumption is poisoning the air, is poisoning the land and the water.... Why do we have this problem? It is because of the

⁸ <https://modernfarmer.com/2013/07/the-founding-fathers-on-farming/>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <http://www.navdanya.org/site/>

¹¹ <https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/184096/original/Soil-Not-Oil-Article-and-questions.pdf>

¹² <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1746119>

¹³ <http://www.mcremo.com>

¹⁴ <http://www.humandevolution.com>

greed that's in the human heart. People want to consume more and more material things and in doing that they are destroying their own environment, destroying the foundation for their own happy life. So, the solution is you have to go into the heart, you have to change the hearts of people and get them to live lives of voluntary simplicity with a spiritual purpose.”¹⁵

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

Therefore, it is imperative to first clearly understand the basis upon which the Vaishnava Vedic perspective is grounded by becoming familiar with 1) Vedic Epistemology, 2) Vedic Ontology, 3) Vedic Sociology, 4) by understanding the four standard Vedic sciences (*Catur Vidya*), 5) by putting in perspective the ideological clash on “caste” between M. Gandhi and Dr. Ambedkar, 6) by looking closely at the Vedic Hierarchy of Human Needs, an interesting resemblance to Maslow's¹⁶ Hierarchy of Human Needs, and 7) by acknowledging the neglect and desecration of values in our modern society.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Time and Location

The time and location varied for the two geographical areas of the research, namely Field Work A, covering 105 villages in India, and secondly Field Work B, covering 10 Vedic Eco Villages outside of India.

4.1.1 Research Time

The Field Work in India was carried out from April 2018 till March 2020, approximately two years. For each of the 105 villages, I spent on average five days to conduct the interviews with local leaders and to administer the Basic Needs Questionnaire.

The Field Work outside India was carried out during the same two-year period, spending between 7 to 10 days in each community. This excludes the time travelling from one country to another.

4.1.2 Research Location

¹⁵ Cremo, Micheal, Interview

¹⁶ <http://www.managementstudyguide.com/maslows-hierarchy-needs-theory>

Using the convenient sampling method, I selected one hundred and five (105) villages in India covering twenty-four (24) districts spread over seven (7) states, namely 1) Andhra Pradesh, 2) Jharkhand, 3) Maharashtra, 4) Karnataka, 5) Kerala, 6) Telangana, and 7) West Bengal.

Similarly, I selected 10 Vedic communities outside India covering the following countries: 1) Australia, 2) Canada, 3) France, 4) England, 5) Germany, 6) Hungary, 7) Indonesia, 8) Sweden, 9) Ukraine, and 10) United States of America.

4.2 Research Assistants

To carry out the research I engaged three levels of assistants beginning with 1) a Research Team, 2) a Support Team, and 3) a Field Work Coordinators.

The Research Team consisted of 6 to 10 members of IDVM-India who helped in researching different aspects of the proposed research.

The Support Team consisted of a core group of devotees who constantly travelled with me in the villages of India. One served as a driver, one as a cook, and two others as general assistants. For the communities outside of India, I was assisted by local devotees in those communities.

The Field Work Coordinators varied from state to state. They were pre-selected devotees who were familiar with a particular state and could therefore more easily contacted the villagers ahead of time to schedule interviews and other programs in each village.

4.3 Research Approach

To carry out the research I used principles found in the methods of 1) Research Development, 2) Action Research, and 3) Ethnography Research. The Interview Schedule portion of the research involved data to be analysed using the quantitative measurement while the open-end interviews with select local leaders and demographic observation for each village were more of a qualitative nature.

4.4 Research Population

For India, the total population for the 105 villages was 4,223 candidates and 613 local leaders for a total of 4,836 subjects.

For countries outside India, the research similarly targeted 40 candidates per community for the Basic Needs Questionnaire, in addition to 6 selected local leaders within each community. Due to varying factors, the final number came to 361 candidates and 65 local leaders for a total of 426 subjects.

The final grand total Survey Population for both Field Work A (India) and Field Work B (Foreign) came to 4,836 + 426 for a grand total of 5,262 subjects.

4.5 Research Questions

The research questions centred on the aspects related to three areas of neglect, namely the neglect of knowledge, the neglect of land and the neglect of cows with a view to uplift both individuals and the communities being studied.

4.5.1 To help remedy the neglect and desecration of cows, how can the needs of individuals and the community under study be enhanced at physical, mental, social, and spiritual levels?

4.5.2 To help remedy the neglect and desecration of land, how can the needs of individuals and the community under study be enhanced at physical, mental, social, and spiritual levels?

4.5.3 To help remedy the neglect and desecration of knowledge, how can the needs of individuals and the community under study be enhanced at physical, mental, social, and spiritual levels?

4.5.4 What level of satisfaction do individuals experience in meeting their needs at physical, mental, social, and spiritual levels?

4.5.5 What are the similarities and differences among the villages in India, among the Vedic Eco Villages in the West and between the villages in India and the Vedic Eco Villages in the West?

4.6 Primary Source

For collecting data, I prepared five documents, some using the Interview Schedule method and some using the open-ended method. The five documents are entitled as follows: 1) Village Head Interview, 2) Local Head Interview, 3) Community Survey, 4) Basic Needs Questionnaire, and 5) Biodata Survey.

4.7 Techniques of Data Collection

For all the subjects I utilized the Interview Schedule method as well as the open-ended interview to assess the needs and best practices of each individual.

In addition to interviews and questionnaires, I took photos and videos for each village and Vedic Eco Village.

4.8 Validity and Reliability

The recommended method to validate Likert Scale survey is the Cronbach's alpha test which provides reliable estimates for summated scales. I also used the method of triangulation to verify some of the statements written or spoken.

4.9 Data Analysis

All the raw data was transferred to a spreadsheet and from the spreadsheet the data was entered in a computer software program called Tableau Reader ¹⁷ from where various charts and statistics were generated. Mostly, I have analysed the data using Pie-Charts for the Basic Needs Questionnaire as well as other charts to display demographics.

Wherever possible, I have also analysed the data showing the mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation.

5. Findings and Observations

One of the foremost observations when visiting the villages in India is to witness the pitiful condition of cows and bulls. There is practically no pastureland left for the cows to graze and in many villages, the number of cows and bulls has drastically reduced. In some instances, we cannot find the presence of even "one" bull in the village. Therefore, by visiting villages, one can directly witness the rapid urbanization taking place.

Many of the elders in villages are very conscious of the crisis prevailing in their village and they openly admit that there is no second generation to continue agriculture. The youth in general have lost interest in agriculture and are leaving the villages at increasing numbers. A very high percentage of villages have serious alcohol problems, with but a few that have tackled the problem. Young boys from the age of 12 are drawn into drinking alcohol which is readily available and become addicts, many for their whole life. Naturally such addiction negatively affects their natural physical and emotional growth. In one village, a local leader confessed that it was the open policy of the government to increase the quota of alcohol sales to get more revenue. This is apparently promoted by the government itself.

¹⁷ <https://www.tableau.com/about/mission-values>

As the survey results have shown, the main area of concern is about meeting the physical needs of villagers, which include the need for better roads, for better education, for more accessibility to both drinking water and water for agriculture. From the Vedic point of view, villages are meant to be the backbone of a nation. If villages fail by not producing food in both quality and abundance, by not maintaining its progeny for cows and bulls, by not keeping its youth and its elders in a satisfied condition, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, it is but a matter of time that a nation will reap the ill effects of such neglect.

These phenomena that I have observed are not only to be found in the villages of India, but they are present practically in all countries. Two pertinent questions have been placed before me by the establishment: 1) is it possible to revert or return to an agrarian way of life and 2) can we prove that it is actually economically viable for people to live off the land in the villages?

To answer the first question, unless society is governed by leaders who are willing to take guidance from those who are both wise and knowledgeable of the four traditional sciences called *Catur Vidya*, as found in the ancient teachings of Vedic literatures, then it will not be possible to revert or return to an agrarian-based lifestyle. Discussions on agrarianism are very much contemporary as attested in the book *The Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics* by author Paul B. Thompson.¹⁸ The return to the land, the need to be localized, the need to establish wholesome relationships with nature and among humans, the need to grow our own food and to keep cows are not only found in ancient texts such as the Vedic teaching, but were also promoted in the early days of the foundation of America by one of the Founding Fathers of the nation, Thomas Jefferson. More contemporary to him to again remind us of the dangers of modernization was Wendel Berry in his book *The Unsettling of America. Culture and Agriculture*. Therefore, proper education is at the very foundation of any social change that needs to take place. I have already elaborately discussed these four sciences which formed the basis of traditional *Gurukula* education. Thus, only when we can produce such qualified leaders in the field of education, politics and economics will this be feasible.

To address the second question, living off the land was a reality for centuries before the Industrial Revolution took place some 250 years ago. Due to disparities in

¹⁸ *The Agrarian Vision: Sustainability and Environmental Ethics*, Paul B. Thompson, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jcgjc>

leadership, in particular within the church and monarchy at the time, certainly there were abuses, exploitation, and malpractices, however, the formula has been amply tested and practiced, that with a relatively small piece of land and a few animals, one can meet his various necessities of life. The proof is that people were living this way in the past and even today a number of villages still follow this practice of depending on cows and land, but this is not possible without the imbibing the principles of simple living and high thinking which are intimately connected with the four principles of dharma, namely 1) *satyam* (truthfulness), 2) *daya* (compassion), 3) *tapah* (austerity), and 4) *saucam* (cleanliness).

Looking at the foreign Vaishnava communities, although some significant progress can be seen in a few communities surveyed, my general observation is that many of these communities have yet reached significant levels of self-sufficiency and have not been able to attract a significant number of families. There are many factors involved, one being the lack of commitment on the part of the ISKCON leadership to support and promote this aspect of its mission. What follows are the sentiments of one sannyasi who openly deplored the present social condition in general society and that of the ISKCON society in regard to neglecting taking up this fundamental aspect of self-sufficient communities:

“We are now faced with horrible obstacles to our very existence... Gradually, it is getting worse and harder to live. Now the prices of food, fuel, and goods in general are creating serious challenges for the common man to live their daily life. Instead of creating shelter for the citizens, the demoniac leadership is making life harder and harder on the citizens day by day. A war is raging in Ukraine, and the world is being forced to accept poison in their body. It appears that even worse things are yet to come.

You warned us Srila Prabhupada. You told us it would become horrible in the cities, that there would be no food to eat...and that millions of people who would be coming to live on the self-sufficient farms. But we did not listen. We failed to make the self-sufficient farms that you asked us to create... The share of our failure in this regard is monumental.”

The findings from the Basic Needs Questionnaire covering both India and Foreign countries echo some of the above-mentioned observations.

5.1 Basic Needs - Physical (INDIA)

The accumulated data for all the seven states in India in regards to Physical Needs shows that out of 42,230 responses a total of 24,840 Candidates or 58.82% responded in support of the various Statements while 16,264 Candidates or 38.51% did not support. This indicates that close to 40% of those responding were not able to meet some of their physical needs.

To give some insight as to which areas were of particular concern, I have noted which of the 10 questions have scored below 60. Specifically, in response to having sufficient cows to meet their family needs, all the 7 states responded below 60 indicating the respondents do not have sufficient cows. The second area of concern centred on the lack of water accessibility where 5 of the 7 states scored below 60. The other two areas of concern were regarding their (in)ability to grow their own food, where in 4 states the score was below 60. And the last item of concern was in regards to not living close to self-sufficiency, which scored also at 4 out of 7 states. The data shows how close to 40% of the respondents do not support the statements, indicating that a sizable percentage of the Candidates are not able to meet their physical needs.

5.2 Basic Needs – Emotional (INDIA)

The accumulated data for all the seven states in India in regards to Emotional Needs show that out of 42,230 responses a total of 36,437 Candidates or 86.28% responded in support of the various Statements while 4,928 Candidates or 11.67% did not support. This establishes a very high level of support for the Statements which thus indicates that the vast majority of Candidates are able to meet their emotional and social needs satisfactorily.

5.3 Basic Needs – Spiritual (INDIA)

The accumulated data for all the seven states in India in regards to Spiritual Needs show that out of 42,230 responses a total of 33,236 Candidates or 78.70% responded in support of the various Statements while 7,965 Candidates or 18.86% did not support. This indicates a high level of support for the Statements which thus shows that the vast majority of Candidates are able to meet their spiritual needs satisfactorily.

5.4 Basic Needs - Physical (FOREIGN)

The accumulated data for all the 10 foreign Vaishnava Villages in regards to Physical Needs show that out of 3,610 responses a total of 2,392 Candidates or

66.26% responded in support of the various Statements while 1,178 Candidates or 32.63% did not support. We can conclude that over 30% of those responding were not able to meet some of their physical needs.

To give some insight as to which areas were of particular concern, I have noted which of the 10 questions have scored below 60. Specifically, in response to having sufficient cows to meet their family needs, all the 10 Vaishnava communities responded below 60 indicating that the respondents do not have sufficient cows. The second area of concern was the level of satisfaction with modern education where 9 of the 10 Vaishnava communities scored below 60 indicating dissatisfaction with the modern educational system. The other two areas of concern were in regards to living close to self-sufficiency, where in 6 Vaishnava communities the score was below 60. And the last item of concern was in regards to growing their own food, where 4 out of 10 Vaishnava communities scored below 60.

5.5 Basic Needs - Emotional (FOREIGN)

The data shows that the vast majority of Candidates, 92.08% are supportive of the Statements indicating that the majority are meeting their emotional needs. Statement 6 (Q12) referring to “maintaining a good relationship with the residents of the village” scored the highest with 8 out of ten communities scoring a mean of 100. Statement 7 (Q13) “I have a strong faith in our local leadership” scored the lowest with 5 of the communities showing a mean at less than 80, four of which are less than 70, the lowest being at 55. This indicates some issues in regards to local leadership. Indonesia showed the highest mean in the category of emotional needs at 99 and Ukraine showed the lowest mean at 81.

5.6 Basic Needs - Spiritual (FOREIGN)

The response that received the highest positive feedback was in regard to Statement 4 (Q19), “I follow morals/ethics like truthfulness, compassion, discipline and cleanliness.” Out of 10 Vaishnava communities, 8 scored a mean of 100 indicating a very high level.

The lowest means were in regards to Statement 5 (Q20), “I regularly recite prayers before going to bed” where 7 of the Vaishnava communities scored below 80, the lowest mean being 62.

Overall the findings indicate a high level of satisfaction in regards to meeting spiritual needs.

6. Recommendations

To do justice to the subject matter at hand, one would need a more in-depth analysis of the data accumulated from the research. Indeed, one of the first recommendations is that the very information itself collected can serve other Research Scholars to further study various aspects of the original research.

To IDVM-India, my recommendations are many. There is a need for such ongoing village outreach initiative throughout all the states of India. We could clearly understand the appeal many local villagers were making in asking us to return to their villages. One of the objectives would be to establish a Bhaktivedanta Library in each and every village at an easily accessible location. In addition to establishing such a facility, representatives from IDVM-India should visit villages on a regular basis to hold study sessions at these libraries.

However, the outreach program from the Varnasrama Ministry in India, (IDVM-India) should not be purely a spiritual exchange program but as demonstrated in the *Dharma Gau Gram Yatra*, must also include practical information and training on all aspects of rural life, in particular, what is natural agriculture and why it should be adopted, what are traditional technologies and why we must not discard them, what is ahimsa milk and why we must give prime importance to protecting cows and utilize various *panchagavya* products as opposed to chemically based products that are harmful to the body and the soil. Other areas should include traditional cottage industries like weaving, handloom, and the importance of diet and good health, and many other similar aspects of daily life in the villages.

To the Government of India. There are important initiatives that have been undertaken in the last few years by the central and state governments of India in the matter of reviving organic farming, cow progeny, ayurvedic treatment, youth camps, Sanskrit and more. These are very much welcomed and need to be expanded and made available to a larger section of society. We cannot under-estimate the crucial role of natural agriculture in any society. Since the 20th century, the more developed countries have feverishly taken to unnatural farming introducing all types of chemical pesticides, chemical fertilizers, machines and hybrid seeds. In the name of the Green Revolution, these have severely destroyed the quality of our soil, destroyed the natural biodiversity in nature and directly affected both the quality and quantity of food production.

However, some of the policies taken up by the government of India in relation to cow and bull progeny are not in keeping with what is recommended in the Vedic writings and this can have devastating effects in the long run to both the cow progeny as well as the well-being of villagers.

As shown in our survey, one of the common problems faced by most villagers is the scarcity of cows. But simply providing cows to farmers will not necessarily solve the present dilemma. Proper training and education are also needed, and it must come from the top-level leadership.

Government leaders in India in particular, and around the world as well, should learn to enact their various policies in keeping with long established norms and traditions. India has a wealth of knowledge pertaining to natural agriculture and animal husbandry. A concentrated effort should be taken up to identify such literatures and make them available to the common people.

Vedic Sociology factually means a sociology based on principles of *dharma*. This may initially appear to be sectarian, but it is not. These principles of *dharma* are not only to be found in India or among Hindus, rather, but these principles of *dharma* are also based on universal and eternal concepts and principles. Leaders of parliament in India, as well as in other countries, should become well acquainted with the classic writing of India that contain a wealth of information in the matter of education, governance and farming. These are not sectarian teachings for some community, but indeed, such literatures like the *Bhagavad-gita* must be seen as standard and universal books of knowledge meant to be studied by those who will take up any leadership position within society.

To Faith-based Organizations. Faith based organizations (and I include ISKCON here also) have failed in their responsibility to address some of the crucial issues of the day. Not only is it the duty of spiritual organizations to give spiritual guidance to its members and followers, but indeed, it is also the duty of such organizations to teach the underlying principles behind politics, behind economics and behind environmental issues affecting climate change, desertification, loss of biodiversity and similar global issues, all of which have a direct connection with non-conformity with higher principles at play, which, although material in nature, affect the physical, emotional, social and spiritual members of everyone.

To Osmania University. Institutions such as Osmania University, in keeping with the present trend in India to return to traditional lifestyles found in ancient Vedic

texts, should encourage such courses that help revive the original teachings of India. There is ample research to be conducted by educational institutions such as Osmania University, as they relate to rural development. All educational institutions, both within India as well as outside India, have a responsibility to provide knowledge and education that will teach basic principles of *dharma*, not simply seen in terms of its spiritual dimension, but also its implications on the material levels.

To Merchants and Industrialists. Merchants and Industrialists are important members of society who have an obligation to help establish and maintain a sustainable economy which, according to the Vedic culture, is based on *Krishi* (land) and *go Raksha* (cow protection). We should note that when merchants and industrialists deviate from this standard, they help create all types of anomalies in society.

To the general public. The general mass of people should seek out the good association of those who are genuinely interested in promoting the principles of *dharma* at all levels.

To researchers. We need more individuals to take up to research in the rural areas as well as in the ancient texts that describe the importance of natural farming and cow progeny.

To the educated youth of India. Youth is that special period in life which determines our future in this life and the next. Vedic culture gives all importance to character formation and good behaviour. In order to foster a healthy physical, emotional, social and spiritual growth and development, the merits of celibacy are strongly emphasised. This remains a major challenge in modern society and in particular in the context of modern education because of the free mingling between boys and girls through co-education. It is both the duty and responsibility of parents and educationalist to provide the ideal environment for such natural development and emancipation to take place.

To women. The respect, honour, and protection of women is of paramount importance in the Vedic culture. Both young boys and young girls are taught to remain celibate until they enter marriage life for which proper training and education needs to be provided. The role of mothers and that of housewives are glorified in all the Vedic literatures as fundamental to help mould a stable and progressive and healthy society. Without such ideal women, proper education is not properly imparted to the children. The first education is given by the parents from birth till the age of

five according to Vedic tradition. Therefore, women should seek out the good association of persons who are after their real welfare.

To farmers. Farmers should know that natural agriculture, devoid of an exploitative mentality, is the noblest profession. Their contribution to society is the most vital for without their produce the people in general cannot live. Natural farming, according to Vedic culture, is the basis of a sustainable economy wherein a family and a community can meet all of their necessities of life from “mahi”, the land:

kamam vavarsa parjanya sarva kama dughha mahi
sisicuh sma vrajan gavah pasyasodhavatir muda

“During the reign of Maharaja Yudhisthira, the clouds showered all the water that people needed, and the earth produced all the necessities of man in profusion. Due to its fatty milk bag, and cheerful attitude, the cow used to moisten the grazing ground with milk.” (SB 1.10.4) ¹⁹

However, due to having deviated in a major way from this norm, and having practically destroyed the natural eco-systems needed to make this happen, policy makers should intelligently introduce such organic farming leaving sufficient time for farmers to make the transition.

Many of the farmers whom I interviewed expressed a desire to reintroduce natural farming and a need to educate young people in the value and importance of farming for which proper training and education needs to be introduced at the local village level. Such training and education must be both theoretical and practical.

To Teachers and Educators. Teachers in general have a tremendous responsibility to play in first imbibing the values found in ancient Vedic texts, and first and foremost must themselves become exemplary in their behaviour and lifestyle. The qualities of teachers have been elaborately explained in the beginning of this research and to the extent communities are blessed with such qualified teachers, to that extent individuals and communities can prosper and succeed. Teachers are meant to be the guardians of civilizations by their wisdom, dedication, knowledge and detachment.

To the communities surveyed. The purpose of the research was to help ascertain the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual conditions of those living in

¹⁹ *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, B 1.10.4, Bhaktivedanta Swami,

villages. Rural communities form the basis of a sustainable culture where both material and spiritual values must be maintained. As shown through the findings of the survey, although the emotional needs and spiritual needs seem to be met at a satisfactory level, there are two areas that need immediate attention, one being the production of food to avoid reliance on food production that is unreliable, and secondly, there is a need for communities to value the importance of cow culture knowing that our very existence is intimately connected with how well we look after cows in our villages.