

# **Srila Prabhupada's awareness of the importance of agrarian culture**

**Varsana Swami:** Prabhupada went for a morning walk in Talavan [New Vrindavana]. Prabhupada came out in this open field, and as soon as he stepped out of the woods and onto the field he stopped and looked at the devotees. He had a serious concern in his countenance and he asked, "Why are these fields fallow and why aren't there any men working these fields and where is the oxen?" And that really impressed me. I was the only one farming at that time. I didn't say anything, but it really touched me that Prabhupada was attentive to what was being done in the agricultural realm.

He had an awareness of the importance of an agrarian culture, not just for the sake of having your own food if and when the economy fails and all that, but for the sake of, as he explains, living off nature's gifts as a matter of relationships where everything and everyone is assisting everyone and everything else in serving Krishna. And that kind of spirit fosters an appreciation for everyone and everything, which also fosters more appreciation of the designer of this whole perfect arrangement. And also seeing food as more than food and water as more than water, but sacraments.

I had been doing farm work and conservation work all my life, and I had seen the plight of the American farmer from 1950 on. I saw the introduction of tractors and how they displaced the draft animals, from which came overproduction of food, from which came government paying the farmers more for not growing than they get for the crops, from the farms all going under, being bought up by the big exploitive farmers. I saw this whole syndrome.

And then I saw by this concern, and it wasn't just a question, you could see on his face a serious concern that this would befall the devotees in New Vrindavan because he was aware of this whole tendency and syndrome. His terminology, like defining the tractor as the killer of the bull. If you're not seeing yourself as dependent on the land and dependent on the oxen, then you're not going to have the proper appreciation, you're not going to have cow protection on the level of what he defined as the cows are jolly. They're not jolly unless they're contributing to society. So seeing these things that Prabhupada would pick up on gave me such an appreciation of the depth of his wisdom and the integrity of his understanding of all aspects of spiritual life.

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