

VEDIC VILLAGE REVIEW # 27

July 28, 2013. Adventures in New Jayapur, Prabhupadanuga Farm in Fiji

ESTABLISHING COW PASTURES

In Mississippi we had Bahia grass pastures that originated in Argentina. In North Carolina we had fescue grass pastures that was high protein, and even grew in the milder winters (deep blue-green tufts sticking out of the snow). In Hawaii there was Guinea grass (from Africa), and in Panama we planted bracharia decumbens (from Africa), commonly called signal grass. But when I visited Fiji in 2002 and trekked through hundreds of acres of koronivia pasture (bracharia humidicola) while examining a large property not far from today's New Jayapur farm, I thought I had found the ultimate pasture grass. It was three feet high, a thick and rich forest green sea of vertical spiked blades, quite difficult to walk through. The ground could not be seen anywhere through the lower mat of layered grass stems, and the breeze caused the field to undulate in a slow-motion shiver- what a sight.



With the excavator busy clearing the beach field (triangular in shape, between the river, the beach, and the wet rice field) last year, I seriously researched the best pasture grasses for Fiji. Koronivia was a top choice- it grows even on infertile and barren, eroded soil, but if left ungrazed it can become less palatable. The signal grass was also common in Fiji, but does not like wet soils, and would be very good for our hillside pastures. Rajnesh from Agriculture in Suva sent us five sacks of rooted mulatto pasture plants, and we installed a small test nursery site next to the river and boat dock. Later I decided not to transplant it into pastures as it appeared thin, stemmy, and tended to fall over on itself.

Setaria grass (*S. sphacelata*) was recommended by Sarawan Hari from the local Agriculture station. Out here in the bush country (loosely defined as anywhere past an hour's drive from town...) setaria was known as batiki grass, or blue grass due to its slight bluish tint. We engaged locals digging it up from behind the proximate Naviavia village, buying it for \$1.25 a sackful, twenty sacks per pickup load. With about 500 sacks we seeded clumps of setaria into the 15 acre beach field. Gradually the grass filled in the gaps and became the most wonderful and luscious pasture of all I had ever seen. Definitely, in my view, setaria is the best tropical pasture. From above on the hill, looking down from the dharmashalla veranda at the new beach pasture filled with tall coconut trees, the setaria was truly beautiful- a clean, bunchy, thick sea of soft thin-bladed, bright-green grasses that would be the delight of any grazing animal. It is high in nutrients, fast-growing, tolerates wet soil, and of course, grows year-round.

Of course, variety will be the spice of life for our future milk cows, so we have established a mixture of setaria, signal, and koronivia pastures for rotational grazing. But I should confess an error made before settling on these three top pasture grasses- at first, on bad advice, we planted cuttings of para grass volunteering along the river. Fortunately, before it spread too much, I learned of its seriously inferior qualities and then had it all meticulously dug up and burned. Once established, it is almost impossible to get rid of it again. That was a big step in wrong direction, and it was Krishna's mercy we could rectify it timely. At present we have three fenced pasture paddocks totaling maybe 25 acres, all ready for the milk cows that are still not here... what's a farm, or a Vedic village at that, without cows??

I can clearly, as though it was yesterday, remember one day in Chiriqui, Panama (2008) and stumbling into Gour Nitai Prabhu in the supermarket. He always had this amused and thoughtful look about him, and before I could say a word, he raised his finger and exclaimed with wide open eyes in his deep Scottish accent, "It's all about the cows, prabhu! That's what we're missing, prabhu, it's the cow protection, the cows! We've got the holy name, the prasadam, the books, but... where's the cows?"

THE COWS

Unfortunately we have not been able to find anywhere in Fiji the pure breed quality and A2 type of milk cows to meet our decided upon requirements. There are probably no purebred cows at all here in Fiji, neither any A2 type. Any semi-decent cows are tightly held by a few diaries on the other island, from which the government has banned any movement of cows due to a long-standing brucellosis epidemic. We considered starting with mediocre cows from our own island and then gradually, by artificial insemination, raising their quality step by step over many generations (like adding milk to water). However, this plan entails retiring many lesser quality cows (with average 20 year lifespan) from each generation in large pastures. This idea was rejected quickly.



To start a serious Vedic village project with anything less than first-class cows would be a shame, a gross mismanagement and waste of resources, as "common" mixed-breed cows are much less efficient and productive. As Krishna's devotees, we accept cows into our care for life, protecting them as our own children (or mothers, actually). So we must choose wisely, otherwise our opportunity to have a pukka cow program will be compromised by lifelong responsibility for second or third class cows.

This is not to say that protection of any and all cows is not worthy. It is just that we now are at a critical, one-time juncture where, by our proper choices, our preaching could be greatly enhanced by clearly demonstrating locally the far superior value of a good milk cow compared to the common beef cow. If a cow is not profoundly more valuable for its milk than its flesh, people will be hard to convince that cows are for milk production, not for eating. Due to the

degradation of Kali yuga, cows here (excepting the few dairies on Viti Levu) are very poor as milkers, being mostly of beef breeds. They are seen as meat providers, and our challenge is to demonstrate that quality cows provide the most wonderful of all foods- milk and butter, and then made into yogurt, cheese, curd (panir), milk sweets, whey, buttermilk, ghee, and so on. There is good reason and advantage to begin our dairy program with first-class cows. We hope that in the future, the amazing Vedic village milking cows will become famous throughout the Fiji islands!

After deliberate and considered research, and based on our experience from past farming projects, our choice is the pure Guernsey breed. Jersey and Brown Swiss are also very good breeds, but Guernseys are known for their high quality milk made by consuming 20-30% less feed than larger dairy breeds, and that with no high protein supplements necessary, provided the pastures are good quality. Being of medium size, Guernseys produce high-butterfat, high-protein yellowish milk with a high concentration of beta-carotene. They lack undesirable genetic recessives (surprise defects appearing in future generations) and they adapt very well to tropical climates. They are excellent and efficient grazers, a cow made by Krishna for pasture-based milk production. They have a gentle disposition, calf easily, and have 5% butterfat milk, equal to the best of all breeds. They are almost always A2 type milk producers, another most critical consideration since science has discovered that most western dairy cows have a mutated gene (A1 type cows) so that their otherwise healthy milk actually contributes to heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension. What better cow than a thrifty and healthy one that gives plenty of buttery A2 milk?

Despite the bureaucratic red-tape and high cost, we are opting to try importing Guernseys from New Zealand. Our agents estimate that four top-genetics Guernseys, already bred to the best sires, can be air freighted to Fiji for about US\$16,000, including all costs. Although a very steep initial investment, it will give New Jayapur a small herd with sufficient genetic variety to quickly be able to dispense with further artificial insemination. We also would have the best milk cows in Fiji, dairies included (who focus on the problematic, low butterfat Holsteins). Our future labor, expense, and time in cow protection and milk production will thus be most rewarding and powerful preaching as we pioneer a return to the Vedic civilization of simple living by the grace of the land and cow.

Last year we had researched importing cows from Australia, but the costs, biosecurity, and shipping problems proved insurmountable. Relying on Krishna, we are hoping that bringing the Guernseys from New Zealand proves viable. Reader's donations could help make this a reality ...
(More soon...)

FULL MOON OVER THE OCEAN

A few days ago, around 7 in the evening and after dark, I came out of the office onto the veranda, and beheld a scene from out of a fantasy dream. The full moon had just arisen over the far edge of the glistening silvery ocean, glowing yellowish and lighting up the early night, with the wispy clouds, forested hills, and coconut trees framing the calm waters stretching out before me. Why would I ever want to live anywhere else? Concrete jungles, air pollution, chaotic noises of modern cities... gone forever. When I



rose in the morning, the moon had passed to the other side of the dharmashalla- and at first I thought the outside lights had been left on... but it was the bright moonlight. I looked out into the distance and saw all the moon shadows... and thought about someday walking in the moonlight to Sri Sri Radha Govinda's temple that we intend to build higher up on this ridge. *(Of course, sometimes Krishna's service may require us to stay in hellish cities, but Prabhupada also encouraged families with children to move to farms.)*

VILLAGE COTTAGES

Somehow things are moving along nicely. The excavator has just leveled six more cottage sites, in addition to the first cottage which has its concrete slab completed. A second cottage slab has begun taking shape, and concrete should be flowing there by next week. They are all a short walk from the temple site, and have ocean and river views, facing the prevailing breezes on a hillside above the ricefield. They are smallish but expandable in the future, and they will have concrete walls with wood and metal roof. When the concrete slabs with plumbing are ready, we will bring in an expert blocklayer from town. Finally, our carpenters will do the roof, windows, doors, and fixtures.



We are receiving inquiries from interested parties, and we are confident the village will manifest in the due course of time, in Krishna's time. Srila Prabhupada wanted these daivi-varnashram Krishna conscious Vedic villages, and he gave us so many instructions how to make them, so we should just try to implement those instructions patiently, and be satisfied with whatever the results may be. We have faith that our formula is perfect: Prabhupada is the diksha guru, Prabhupada has given us all the basic instructions, and if we try to implement them



sincerely, that is success in itself. Further, free homes and leased land for qualified devotees in beautiful tropical Fiji, with fertile soil and safe location, with a solid plan and constitution- is

practical for transition into an agrarian, simple living devotee village. This is the purpose of our newsletter- to share our ideas, inspirations, realizations, successes and failures with other devotees interested in or actually involved in Prabhupada's farm vision. We see in recent times that Prabhupadanugas are working in this direction in the Bangalore group, Nelson (New Zealand), Hilo Hawaii, etc. It is the future of the planet.

Yours in Prabhupada's service,

Nityananda das

New Jayapur, Vanua Levu, Fiji Islands

PS. If you would like to be added to our regular mailings of Vedic Village Review news bulletins, please send us an email at srigovinda@gmail.com, or send us your feedback and news from your side. Please write us if you would like to make any donation to New Jayapur. Please help with the cow protection program if you can.

Hare Krishna! All Glories to Srila Prabhupada!

PHOTOS: Ridge view of our rainforested valley, river picnic, roadworks, cottage #2, starfruits, boys.