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## VRINDAVAN: THE HUMAN SANCTUARY

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### Abstract

*This critical essay explicates several key ideas associated with Vrindavan environmentalism and the hypothesizing of the holy pilgrimage town as a Human Sanctuary. The nature and rationale of environmental fieldwork spanning more than 17 years is outlined along with the foundation of the resultant philosophy which is labelled the Vrindavan Ecological Concept (VEC). Several connections between idealized scriptural depiction of the town of Vrindavan as the center of Vraj pilgrimage and actual modern environmental manifestations are made which lead to a posing of Vrindavan as place and ecological idea(l) as a reconciliation of past, current, and possible environmental futures. Self-introspection (sadhana) lies at the (human focused) center of this resolution and harmonization.*

Vrindavan is unusual, and faces special ecological problems. . . . it is also a specifically religious problem for the devotee of Krsna. . . . Pilgrims come to Vrindavan with the hope of seeing Krishna's land, that is, having *darshan* of God in the form of his ponds and forests. . . . Devotees have cited the appearance of the region as causing despair. . . . The conflict between descriptions in ancient devotional texts and the reality of Vrindavan today is stark.<sup>1</sup>

### *Vrindavan is everywhere*

**T**o be granted "sanctuary" can be equated with being granted asylum. Philip Marfleet tells us about early sanctuary and how it relates to the non-secular:

The Church had disseminated ideas about refuge across Europe, so that one of the most consistent features of religious observance throughout the medieval

period was acceptance of the special status of cathedrals, abbeys, monasteries, shrines and local places of worship as sanctuaries . . .<sup>2</sup>

Sanctuaries have been associated directly with the gods, with the sacred. Often they were specifically designated spaces in the inner area of temples or other places of worship, which contained manifested representations of deities and symbols—statues, paintings, engravings—and were used for rituals including offerings and sacrifices. The Greek sanctuary “was a sacred space located within or outside city walls or in the countryside near springs, rivers, caves, hilltops, woods (‘sacred groves’) and other natural phenomena.”<sup>3</sup> I apply the idea of sanctuary as “sacred grove” to the trinity of Human-Nature-Divine as a conceivable and appreciable complex within scriptural and modern realizations of Vrindavan ecology. Specifically, I employ what is not yet a well-known catchphrase within academic and Vaishnava circles—*Vrindavan: The Human Sanctuary*—to explicate the basis of the *Vrindavan Environmental Concept* (VEC), a philosophical, practical, and *sadhana*-focused directive I have been a part of since first traveling to Vrindavan as an environmentalist pilgrim in 1998.

Modern environmental concerns are not new to Vrindavan. Friends of Vrindavan (FoV), set up in 1996 by British devotee and writer Ranchor (Richard) Prime, the World Wide Fund for Nature–India’s Vrindavan Conservation Project (WWF–India’s VCP), begun in 1991 as the Vrindavan Forest Revival Project, and many other environmental initiatives have existed for more than three decades and continue to exist. These directives comprise what I term the modern Vrindavan environmental movement, a loose descriptor for a conglomerate of Indian based and international people and bodies who do not necessarily agree on what Vrindavan conservation should entail. The position I take is based in my practical and personal involvement with local Vrindavan *sadhak*, ecologist, and teacher Shri Hitkinkar Sevak Sharan and our development of the VEC.<sup>4</sup>

I entered Vrindavan for the first time in early 1998 around the time WWF–India’s VCP was drawing to a close. At that time, Sevakji was the director of the project, after which he retired to his garden *ashram* (hermitage) at Lata Bhavan (the Abode of Flora and Fauna), also known as Tehriwala Bagicha on the Parikrama Marg, the circumambulation path around the town. The personal report I wrote which described my experiences as an outsider being a part of a once burgeoning project was one of the final documents ascribed to the work of WWF–India in Vrindavan.<sup>5</sup> Although quite a naïve and unpolished piece of work, I eventually tended several of these nascent ideas in the fertile devotional, emotional, and spiritual soil of Lata Bhavan in subsequent years, primarily from 2003–2011. While

the details of the relationship between Sevakji and myself, the *sadhana* practice we devised based on environmental principles, and the VEC philosophy are the subject of a forthcoming book, this shorter essay serves a briefer and more precise program: to summarize a philosophical core around which the basis of the following argument can stand: *Vrindavan is a human sanctuary because Vrindavan—as a metaphor for nature, the world, jagat—is everywhere.*

***Vrindavan = Nature + Divinity***

The external reason I travelled to the subcontinent was to work for WWF-India. The internal reason was associated with the seeking of adventure, language, culture, and eventually a way to reconcile my own personal conflict and internal journeying as a devotee and as an environmentalist as well. In this sense, my presentation is both a personal document and an objective documentary. I am both the *sadhak* and the writer.

Although Sevakji at this time was the director of the VCP, a position, title, and job I believe he most likely was not overly interested in pursuing, by the late 1990s he was the most qualified candidate to continue the work WWF-India had begun on the Project in 1991. By the time I arrived, Vrindavan had already had a steady influx of Western pilgrims, the majority arriving in the early 1970s, with some in the late 1960s, in connection with Bhaktivedanta Swami's then rapidly expanding Krishna consciousness movement: the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). There had by this time been serious interest, both Western and Indian, in protecting the town as a cultural and religious pilgrimage centre of significance, around which the environmental focus was paramount. Vrindavan was posed on the world environmental stage as a pilot case study in religion and environment in 1986 when some 800 people gathered for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy.

My 1998 impressions are critical. I believe I caught a glimpse of a Vrindavan which is no longer, one of an unasphalted Parikrama Marg, a final moment before what seems to have become a hyper commercialization and commodification of Krishna consciousness and Vrindavan pilgrimage. The cogs of this system were moving forward by the late 1990s but the wheels were not yet in full motion. The fact that one could still find resting places of ecological significance and potential quietude during one's pilgrimage around the town stands in glaring contrast to the mushrooming Delhi-esque suburbia that lines the now highway-like Parikrama Marg. The preliminary thoughts relating to my work as an environmentalist and a devotee, and their connection to the state of the Vrindavan environment

and to researching the history, philosophy, and ontology of Vrindavan perspectives on the environment led to my *sadhana* practice there and my deeper study of Vrindavan environmentalism.

When I returned to Vrindavan in the heat of May 2003, by which time I was 27 years old, I was more equipped to appreciate the depth of experience that Sevakji possessed of both practical Vrindavan ecological understanding as well as its ontological and *sadhana*-based realities. I wanted to learn more, and I felt able to grapple with and note down the majority of the ideas he was presenting. For 14 days I sat, listened, and wrote by Sevakji's blackboard and chalk slate, tools from another age that appeared to work just as well as any modern technology available at that time. I questioned Sevakji on the intricacies of the eco-philosophy he had developed around his own *sadhana* practice, his *nature worship* as he called it. He and his wife, Shrimati Chitra Sharan, had embarked upon this spiritual journey learning directly from nature since the beginning of their stay at Lata Bhavan in the Atal Van area on the Parikrama Marg in Shri Vrindavan Dham.

The garden, which began as a desolate landscape back in the late 1970s and early 1980s, became one of the last remaining natural hermitage *ashrams* in Vrindavan. My 2003 stay led to more than five years of intense association with Sevakji, his wife, and his garden *ashram* within the greater Vrindavan community, an association that is ongoing. I now wish to chronicle the personal connection and involvement between Sevakji and myself. It is our cooperation and the combined *sadhana*-focused aspiration that was driven by an environmental integrity represented by Vrindavan. Sevakji's own practice and work and my own pilgrimage-focused seeking and personal spiritual practice (*sadhana*) within India and elsewhere informs my presentation.

There are several conceptual foundations of the VEC. It is worth repeating an already published summation in order to inform my explication of modern environmental perspectives relevant to a more perennial conceiving of Vrindavan as an abstract model of idealized ecological thought and behavior:

1. Vrindavan is conceptualized both as the transcendental realm of Krishna and the physical environment. Both of these locations are very important ecologically, with the latter serving as a terrestrial representation of the former.
2. Religious and spiritual methods of understanding Krishna theology and its relationship to Vrindavan must involve ecological considerations.
3. The mismatch between scriptural depictions and the actual physical state of Vrindavan reflects a lack of balance in human priorities and human mismanagement.

4. Idealized stances including the idea that only the transcendental Vrindavan matters as opposed to managing and addressing the current ecological state of the terrestrial Vrindavan are not taken seriously.
5. Self-introspection (*sadhana*) and spiritual practice through service (*seva*) are integral to achieving a balanced personal state for the individual and hence a balanced ecological state with the natural and cultural world. Krishna's personal example of self-balance and its resultant nature-world balance serves as a model of personal ecological awareness creation and environmentalism.
6. In Vrindavan, nature is inherently divine. Trees, plants and animals are our teachers, and we should become aware of their divinity and worship them.
7. Ontologically, the actual location of Vrindavan provides the understanding that any place or environment, when perceived with awareness of its inherent divinity, is Vrindavan. The *raison d'être* of Krishna's incarnation as an environmentalist in Vrindavan is to teach and live this.<sup>7</sup>

Within the underlying philosophy of the VEC is the premise that nature—realized appreciably in the world as Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh—is holy and deific. The natural world of Vrindavan is an integral aspect of the posing of the four compositional elements of a devotee's *sadhana* practice: *nam*, *rupa*, *leela*, and *dhama*. It has been Sevakji's position since his *chintan* (contemplation, meditation) about the inner meaning and role of the *dhama* of Vrindavan began in his childhood, and which developed into more evolved philosophical and scriptural based thinking in the mid-late 1970s, that of the four elements of *sadhana*, *dhama* (place, physical environment, nature) is the most available, most present, and easiest element to approach. This stance is at odds with many of the more conventional forms of Krishna worship both in and beyond the devotional confines of modern Vrindavan, i.e., those schools that advocate chanting the holy names of Krishna (*nam*), worship of the deity of Krishna (*rupa*), and meditation on the pastimes (*leela*) of Krishna. The VEC and Sevakji's point of view is that *nam-sadhana*, *rupa-sadhana*, and *leela sadhana* are contained within a *dhama-sadhana*—a self aware or what he termed a *concentric dhama-sadhana*.

When Sevakji began his environmental work in earnest in the 1970s, most Vrindavan temple traditions maintained, and still maintain today, *nam-sadhana* is the principal basis of leading a spiritual existence. The departure away from an explicitly focused *nam-sadhana* toward an inculcation of the role of *dhama-sadhana* in personal and group devotional life has several crucial implications. First, modern environmentalism and environmental science are implied within

*sadhana*-driven and ecologically aware spiritual practice. Second, through a reconciliation of “other-worldliness” and “this-worldliness,” the devotee’s preoccupation with “Krishna-loka” and “the spiritual world” rather than “the material world” or the “here-and-now” is appeased. The human is in the material-natural world; if the human is able to conceive, perceive, and realize nature as teacher, the source, and the representation of the Divine (Krishna) in the world and God made flesh, the trinity of Humanity-Nature-Divinity is achieved.

This philosophical treatise can be typified as a mathematical equation:

Vrindavan = Nature + Divinity

That is, when/where the aspirant looks to nature with divine vision, that place becomes Vrindavan. And that place, which becomes Vrindavan, the place where there is consonance in the Humanity-Nature-Divinity trinity, becomes a *Human Sanctuary*, a place of sanctity, solace, and the sacred. This understanding, which came to Sevakji around the time I was first in Vrindavan, forms the fundament of the *sadhana* practice synthesizing a nature focused, *dham-sadhana*-centric process. We termed such *sadhana hit-sadhana* (compassionate devotional practice), with the *hit* element being derived from Sevakji’s family association with Hit Hari Vansh Goswami and the Radha-Vallabh Sampradaya.<sup>7</sup> This individual and group *sadhana* is intended to take place in nature within what is hoped would involve vibrant environment-culture interaction. The significance of the natural and cultural environment of the terrestrial modern Vrindavan is both implicated and implied. Radha and Krishna’s land is not only our source of inspiration and vision; Vrindavan is our teacher and ecological and aesthetic sustainer.

Although everywhere is Vrindavan (provided the *sadhak* or pilgrim has the correct vision to make the Vrindavan = Nature + Divinity scenario a reality), the actual town’s physical environment and devotional culture have a vital role to play. If nothing else, according to scriptures from all of the prevalent temple traditions, Vrindavan should render the epitome of environmental awareness and thus divine awareness real. Those who have seen the modern state of the town would most likely agree that its physical environmental condition has little of the bucolic scriptural descriptions that we expect of Radha-Krishna’s cosmic stadium of delight, especially of the sort we hear in, for example, Hari Vansh Goswami’s *Hit Chaurasi Pad*:

1. Come, wise Radhika! For your sake Shyam has arranged a round dance,  
a store of joy, on the bank of the Yamuna:
2. groups of young girls dance in great eagerness at the music and merriment

- as the joyful flute, source of delight, is playing.
- 3 . In that most pleasing place near the vamshivata  
a soft breeze blows from the [sandal-clad] Malaya mountain,  
yielding all joys.
  4. the forest is strongly fragrant with half-blown jasmine,  
and there is bright moonlight in the full-moon autumn night.
  5. Cowherd girl, feast your eyes on Naravahana's Lord,  
whose head-to-toe beauty removes the agony of desire;
  6. lady! Experience this ocean of delight, rejoice with your arms joined around  
his neck.  
For Shyama's sport in the fresh bower is worthy of the world's praise!<sup>8</sup>

There is obviously a large chasm between an idealized Vrindavan and how the town appears today. Because I have not visited the town since July 2011, I am unable to comment on any subsequent changes to the physical, social, and religious environment since this time. Still, my position in this section is more philosophical than empirical, less actual and more abstracted and hopeful. Because of its place in the theological and cultural literature of northern India and particularly the Radha-Vallabh and Gaudiya temple traditions that are so prominent, one could proffer that Vrindavan should and would be held in the highest ecological esteem, a place where the sanctity of nature, humanity, and the Divine could be realized, lived, and experienced.

Although this equation does not exist in the way modern Vrindavan subsists to my eyes, this zero kelvin-cum-ground zero posing of Vrindavan does offer much to thought experiments and actual pilot studies of religion and ecology. While the actual town of Vrindavan is being developed, sub-divided, and the last remaining tracts of nature are all but gone, Vrindavan consciousness or the essence of Vrindavan remains. As sad as it may be that the present town is in such a degraded ecological state, lessons can definitely be learned: Vrindavan is not only a place in western Uttar Pradesh, India, but is, with the right self, other, and nature consciousness, everywhere.

It is this point of view that led to the reconciliation of what is apparently a large contradiction in theological and manifested precepts: if Krishna, the Divine, is "all powerful," "all knowing," and is actually Bhagavan, the possessor of all opulences and powers, why would He let His earthly abode, which is so important when considered a part of the *nam-rupa-leela-dham* rubric of ecological awareness and consciousness, fall into such a denuded state? The answer that has arisen out of many years of experimentation appears quite simple but has a deep purport: because Vrindavan is actually not only a geographical place but is everywhere

as long as we humans and seekers are able to see or have the *drishti* (vision) to see and experience Vrindavan. And this revelation comes from looking at and perceiving nature with a divine vision and through being introverted and personally reflective. In brief, through living a life full of *chintan*.

### *Vrindavan consciousness and chintan*

The practice of *chintan* requires a return to the symbolic representation and peacefulness of nature in human life. *Chintan* is a type of return, a sojourn into transcendence, to the Other, through the realization of the inherent divinity and immanence of nature and of the human condition in relation to the rest of existence. This vision is common to both Indian and Western “deep” environmental perspectives and is similar to the philosophy of deep ecology.<sup>9</sup> *Chintan* develops an emotional thread related to a self and self with other focus within spiritual practice and awareness creation. Four aspects of the interrelationship between *atma-chintan* (contemplation on self) and *prakriti-chintan* (contemplation on nature) are:

1. Self awareness
2. Other awareness
3. Nature awareness
4. Societal (external) awareness.

These four are a summary in English of the four awarenesses or consciousnesses, which Sevakji and I developed in Lata Bhavan. From a scriptural perspective, these four levels of awareness can be labelled (1) Krishna consciousness, (2) Radha (or love) consciousness, (3) Vrindavan consciousness, and (4) Vraj consciousness (Vraj is the geographical area in Uttar Pradesh, India where Krishna descended to perform His pastimes). The relationship intersecting scriptural injunctions, Vrindavan conservation, and the practice of *chintan* gives insight into natural environmental change in the town and elsewhere and individual and group based reasons for this breakdown between the human, nature, and self.

Based on his and his wife’s initial research in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, which was refined during my lengthy stays in Sevakji’s *ashram* in the 2000s, the need for a resolution and synthesis involving these four levels of our existence became obvious. Our claim is that awareness of nature and our placement within ecology as not only custodians but integral *chintan* creatures pervades all of our dealings in life. And this is embodied in Krishna’s living and practical role as a transcendent environmentalist.



Vrindavan consciousness or *Nature awareness* is the state where we realize our connectivity, dependence, and role in the natural and cultural world and within the greater cosmic setup. In this domain it was Radha and Krishna as the dual cosmic entity and contradiction—*yugal bhava*—who expressed these blissful events in the sacred and secluded groves of the resplendent forest of Vrindavan. In seclusion, Radha and Krishna and their playmates enjoyed the forest splendor—*van-vaibhava*—and abundance of nature so much so that nature would be pleased and would continue to give. In fact, the more in consonance with nature Radha, Krishna, and their friends were, the more nature would give, more than they could ever receive. Their example shows us how we can live in consonance with ourselves, with our intimate partner, and close friends and thus enjoy the bounty of enjoyment in life that is only offered in and by living in close proximity to nature.

It is with an amalgamation of Vrindavan consciousness and Vraj consciousness or societal awareness, the awareness that we are living our lives in human society surrounded by customs, accepted behaviors, and norms that Radha and Krishna's example really makes its impact as a yardstick for natural and societally balanced human behavior. That is, concentric behavior. When we know ourselves, can group intimately with our partner and close friends, be natural and at peace with nature, then and only then can we lead a life that is balanced with the outer human world, a world that is by nature generally egocentric. This is dubbed Vraj consciousness because it is in Krishna's worldly pastimes in Vraj, the surrounding areas around Vrindavan, that he revealed his inner strength and self-mastery. This is the culmination of these four aspects of cosmic worship as presented by modern environmental ideals in Vrindavan.

In this template the focus is on the human, the spectator in the game of life in the natural and bucolic setting consisting of the five elements of nature plus time in Indian cosmology—*prithvi, jal, vayu, tej, akaash, kaal*—the spectators being a societally yet self aware onlooker being conscious of the cosmic drama as a play of spirit—*brahma*—the Divine Center.

### *Is the actual Vrindavan necessary?*

The focus of this polemical piece has been on an explication of the specific environmental case study of Lata Bhavan as it relates to greater environmental concerns in Vrindavan. I have argued that the ideals practiced and realized in Shri Sevak Sharan Ji's *ashram* Lata Bhavan have not only an applicability to the greater Vrindavan environment but to ecological projects worldwide. Although the empirical and practical research has focused entirely on an examination

of Sevakji's *ashram* and the role it plays as a case study of human-nature-divine interaction, the implications of this work extend well beyond the geography of this property, the town boundaries of Vrindavan, and even India. As long as the equation of Vrindavan = Nature + Divinity is adhered to, and that the sanctity of nature is maintained in any particular environment, that place can have the same spiritual vibration and environmental reverence as that which is required in the VEC of Vrindavan and elsewhere. With the awareness, clarity of purpose, and realizing the natural environment and its manifestations in and of culture are imbued with sanctity and divinity, the lessons of Radha and Krishna in Vrindavan are applicable and attainable anywhere.

So Vrindavan can be anywhere and everywhere can be Vrindavan providing the awareness and intent of human cultures are such that nature is held in the highest esteem. What then for the actual pilgrimage town of Vrindavan? While this place of pilgrimage will undoubtedly continue to house pilgrims and the many devotional groups that converge year after year, my experience leads me to the position that I do not believe the state of the environment will improve substantially in the coming decades. Based on my observations of more than 17 years since first visiting Vrindavan, I have not seen many of the initiatives dedicated to improving the physical state of the environment lead to much success. By success I mean that the town could be considered in a clean and ordered state with the management of the physical environment, e.g., garbage collection, planning, infrastructure, housing, and retail development, in a well kept, maintained, and dependable state. The conditions of and surrounding the main temple compounds and *ashrams* are less than ecologically ideal and are commonly in a disordered and dirty state. From a purely physical point of view, Vrindavan is one of the most putrid and filthy places I have ever visited.

Because it is the temples that are the principal pilgrimage and commercial drawcards, much of the environmental and conservation focus has been on the Parikrama Marg and the temple areas themselves. In brief, the town is not the most natural setting for an idyllic, modern playground of what-where Radha-Krishna *leela* could or may take place in. As a former long-term resident of Vrindavan, I have in many ways given up ever seeing a palpable re-representation or enactment of the stories and narrations present in the scriptural injunctions and emblematic presentations of the pastimes of Sri-Sri Radha-Krishna into actualized happenings in the town. Because of this experience cum-subjectively claimed fact, I believe that the tenets of the Vrindavan ecological concept should now travel well beyond the confines of the *gheras* (temple compounds) and the *shastras* (scriptures) of the medieval town and become the potential basis upon which

further studies into religion and ecology can progress and persist. This is the proselytizing associated with a sectarianized posing of Vrindavan environmentalism onto what I hope would be taken as a God-less and institution-less environmentalism. The actual Vrindavan is necessary, but only if seen with the right eyes and ears, an evolved *pashyanti-vak*.

It is not my claim nor was it my task to proffer that if everyone followed or practiced some or several of the practical *sadhana*-based aspects that have arisen out of experiments in Vrindavan that the town itself would necessarily become a template for what can be considered “holistic life science,” a label Sevakji and I used in describing our take on Vrindavan environmentalism in the early-mid 2000s. My claim has been that the *sadhana* practice and theory of environmentalism which have come out of many years of *chintan* and contemplation in Vrindavan are replicable and can be extrapolated. Vrindavan environmentalism offers an occasion where science, religion, ecology, and human possibilities merge in a proposed idealized way, a manifestation of possibilities where the trinity of soil, soul, and society is maintained, upheld, and even worshipped.

I telephoned Shri Hitkinkar Sevak Sharan Ji on 5 January 2015. It was more than a year since we had spoken. His voice was frail, a little listless, though he did perk up on discussing matters relating to Vrindavan and the environment, his life’s work. In Hindi and an altered and slow variety of English I questioned how he was, how his garden—Lata Bhavan—was, and whether anyone was looking after him. He told me he was mainly bedridden, the garden was not in a healthy state, and that there were people coming and going but no one staying. He said, “*Thakurji mere paas hai*” (“my deity—Pariyavana Bihari, the ‘environmental Krishna’—is here with me”). Sevakji’s wife died in October 2011, a few months after I last visited Vrindavan in July 2011. As I had said to him several times before, I gave my word to Sevakji that our research about the Vrindavan environment would not be lost; I will publish it. This essay is part of my chronicling of our work. I invite other scholars and interested devotees of all denominations into a dialogue based on the ecological lessons practiced and learned in Vrindavan.

### Endnotes

1. Sullivan, B. (1998). “Theology and ecology at the birthplace of Krsna.” In *Purifying the earthly body of God: Religion and ecology in Hindu India*, Lance E. Nelson (ed.) New York: SUNY, pp. 253–254.
2. P. Marfleet (2011), Understanding ‘Sanctuary’: Faith and Traditions of Asylum, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24(3), p. 440–441.

3. Ibid, p. 442.

4. I affectionately refer to Shri Hitkinkar Sevak Sharan Ji throughout as Sevakji.

5. This document was published in hard copy as J. Nash (1998). *Vrindavan conservation – A perspective*. New Delhi: WWF-India. It was available online at HYPERLINK “<http://www.fov.org.uk/india/report.html>” <http://www.fov.org.uk/india/report.html> until 2013 but is now offline. Digital copies are in possession of the author.

6. Nash, J. (2012b). Re-examining ecological approaches to Vrindavan pilgrimage. In L. Manderson, W. Smith, & M. Tomlinson (Eds.), *Flows of faith: Faith, migration and symbol in Asia and the Pacific*. Dordrecht & New York: Springer, p. 109.

7. This is not the place to present a summary of the ontological and scriptural foundations of the Radha-Vallabh Sampradaya (temple tradition) nor the aesthetic and environmental import of Hari Vansh’s *Hit Chaurasi Pad*. F. S. Growse’s (1882), *Mathura: A district memoir*, Allahabad: North-West Provinces & Oudh Government Press, pp. 199–200, gives background into Hari Vansh’s birth and some of the reasoning behind his establishing the medieval Radha-Vallabh temple. There are two principal texts dedicated to the academic study of Hari Vansh’s poetry: R. Snell. (1991), *The Eighty-Four Hymns of Hita Harivamsa: An edition of the Caurasi Pada*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass; C.S. White. (1977), *The Caurasi Pad of Sri Hit Harivams: Introduction, translation, notes, and edited Braj Bhasa Text*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. Pratibha Goswami’s (2010) translated and edited volume, *Hit Harivamsa Hit Chaurasi: The 84 hymns of Divine Love*, Bensheim, Germany: Tattva Viveka Edition, is a more popular and devotionally focused volume.

8. Rupert Snell, *ibid*, p. 193.

9. For more details on the philosophy of deep ecology see Warwick Fox. *Approaching Deep Ecology: A Response to Richard Sylvan’s Critique of Deep Ecology*. Centre for Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, 1986, and Arne Næss. *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy* (translated by D. Rothenberg). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.