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Dharma Focus



Highlights of the issue:

- Man's dharma is to render service to the Lord
- What is Dharma?
- The First Civil Disobedience Movement in India
- Papaya that Turned to Mango
- Dharma: The Only Saviour of Mankind
- Self-sufficient Farm Communities
- Village Out-Reach Program: Gundaipalem Visit

Varnasrama Dharma should be Established

Prabhupada: Vaisnava is not so easy. The varnasrama-dharma should be established to become a Vaisnava. It is not so easy to become Vaisnava. ..., why so many fall down? It is not easy...

Hari-sauri: Where will we introduce the varnasrama system, then?

Prabhupada: In our society, amongst our members.

Hari-sauri: But then if everybody's being raised to the brahminical platform...

Prabhupada: Not everybody. Why you are misunderstanding? Varnasrama, not everybody brahmana.

Hari-sauri: No, but in our society practically everyone is being raised to that platform. ...

Prabhupada: That is - Everybody is being raised, but they're falling down.

(Room Conversation: Mayapur, February 14, 1977)

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Srila Prabhupada Speaks on Dharma

Man's *dharma* is to Render Service to the Lord

“As we moved along the park’s winding path, Prabhupada took each step decisively, first testing the ground with his cane to insure that the footing was solid. Some of the snow had melted, forming puddles of water, but the freezing temperatures of nighttime had created a thin coating of ice over the water. Each time we came to a puddle of ice, Prabhupada would stop and, gripping his cane firmly, smash it down upon the ice. It was something that a child would have done, and yet Prabhupada’s expression remained grave. After he repeated this for a fourth time, I inquired what the purpose behind it was. Prabhupada looked from the broken pieces of ice to explain, “This ice is maya. The natural state of water is liquidity. Now it has become hard. And just as we have to apply heat to melt the ice, similarly, by applying the *mahamantra*, the hard hearts of the materialists will melt.” And Prabhupada walked on, smashing each puddle, breaking maya’s back. To break each and every frozen puddle was an expression of Prabhupada’s firm determination not to allow maya’s icy grip a single foothold...In the distance we saw an old man giving dried crumbs of bread to a flock of birds. Prabhupada remarked that just like with this old man, it is a natural propensity of everyone to render service to someone or something. But only by directing our service to Krsna can we actually become happy.”



Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

[cf. HH Tamal Krishna Goswami, *Servant of the Servant*, p.228]



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HH Bhakti Raghava Swami Speaks on Dharma What is 'Dharma'?

One of the great Indian saintly persons of the 20th century, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura, Founder-Acārya of the well-known Gaudiya Math all over India and spiritual preceptor of yet another well renowned spiritual leader, Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Founder-Acārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness [ISKCON], has given humanity a new dimension and deeper insight to the term religion when he explained that "philosophy without religion is mere speculation" while "religion without philosophy is but sentimentalism which sometimes leads to fanaticism". According to Vedic scriptures, in particular Srimad Bhagavad-gīta and Srimad-Bhagavātam, religion cannot be man-made. "Actually, the principles of religion can only be laid down by the Lord Himself. *Dharmam tu sāksād bhagavat-praṇītam* (SB, 6.3.19). No one can manufacture a religious principle by imperfect speculation. One must follow in the footsteps of great authorities like Brahmā, Śiva, Nārada, Manu, the Kumāras, Kapila, Prahlāda, Bhīṣma, Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Yamarāja, Janaka, and Bali Mahārāja." [BG, 4.16, Purport].

By observation, we can see that over the centuries, the term "religion" has remained either a source of great inspiration for some, thus helping to bring peace and harmony in society, or has been a source of great anxiety for others; thus bringing disunity and disparity among individuals, communities and nations. This is largely because of man-made religious systems which are rampant in the present Age of Kali- the age of quarrel and misunderstanding. For most people, religion remains somewhat abstract, nebulous and difficult to define. However, religion can best be understood and defined when we consider the Sanskrit term "dharma", an essential word in the Vedic literatures. Indeed, without understanding what is *dharma* in its deepest sense, even practicing devotees will tend to misjudge what is religion and what is not religion.

The beginning of this understanding comes when we master the ABCs of spiritual life. Without receiving this basic knowledge, it will remain very difficult for most people to understand what religion is. It will also remain impossible for people to put into practice the actual meaning of *dharma*. The five basic truths about religion or *dharma* are summarized in the perennial teachings of the Bhagavad-gīta as 1) *isvara* [God, the controller], 2) *jivātma* [the spirit soul], 3) *prakṛiti* [the material nature], 4) *kāla* [the time factor] and 5) *karma* [reaction to good or evil deeds]. Of these, the first four are eternal principles while the fifth one, karma, is temporary.

Religion as *Dharma*

Religion is generally defined and understood as some spiritual belief which is based on faith. We have observed that people sometimes change their faith, from being a Christian to becoming a Muslim, or from being a Hindu and becoming a Christian, etc. *Dharma*, on the other hand, refers to something



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which does not change because it is based on facts and reality which is further supported by philosophy and confirmed by scriptures, not simply by some belief which can change. *Dharma* refers to the original nature or character of something or someone. We can easily understand that all things have their natural characteristics which cannot be changed. For example sugar is sweet, that is its *dharma*. The moment sugar is no longer sweet, it cannot be called sugar. It may be white and looking very much like sugar, but if it has a different taste, it may likely be salt. If we take any object, it has a particular characteristic and that particular unchangeable characteristic is called its *dharma*. Similarly, we find that human beings have a natural character which is common to all human beings; by nature everyone has a propensity to love and to serve. Therefore, service is the common and universal *dharma* of all human beings; either service to the family, community or nation, but generally service to our own self. *Dharma* is thus known to be something common and universal to all living entities.

Religion is One

Because we are first and foremost spirit souls, *aham brahmasmi*, different than our physical or mental body, our first and superior nature is spiritual. Therefore, religion in its true sense refers to the natural identify and natural character of all spirit souls and is thus meant to be a common concept for all concerned. When we have that understanding, we can more easily accept the fact that religion, in its highest and purest expression, is one and universal. Due to lack of this understanding, we have created artificial differences between religious beliefs calling one group Christian, another Hindu, another Buddhist, etc. But since the spirit soul is of the same nature in all forms of life and at all times, the religion is also meant to be the same. Understanding and acting on the platform of our eternal identify as eternal spirit souls is the real religion.

Dharma as Dual in Nature, Spiritual, and Material

While *dharma* in its pure and highest expression in the spiritual realm generally refers to the duty or characteristic of the spirit soul, *dharma* in the material realm takes on a second meaning or dimension that of the natural and standard material duties of conditioned or embodied souls. Not only does one become a proper follower of *dharma* by awakening ones spiritual consciousness, Krishna consciousness, but also by acting according to the principles of material *dharma*. In the same way the spirit soul can best be situated and thus experience full happiness by acting on the natural platform of his eternal spiritual nature, i.e., of service to Lord Krishna. The conditioned soul in the material world can experience happiness by being situated on the platform of natural occupation [varnas] and in its natural spiritual divisions [asramas] as defined in the God-made system of varnasrama *dharma*:

cātur-varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ

tasya kartāram api mām viddhy akartāram avyayam

"According to the three modes of material nature and the work associated with them, the four divisions of human society are created by Me. And although I am the creator of this system, you should know that I am yet the non-doer, being unchangeable." [BG, 4.13]

Religion as Bhagavat *Dharma* and Varnasrama *Dharma*

Unless we understand both levels of *dharma*, 1) *bhagavat dharma*, refers to the duties of the spirit soul, i.e., pure devotional service to Lord Hari or Krishna, and 2) *varnasrama dharma*, refers to the duties of conditioned soul, i.e., standard and ideal activities connected with the body, we will not be able to properly discharge our spiritual and material duties. Religion in its fullest sense means acting properly



both on the spiritual and material platform. To understand that *dharma* has a dual nature is easier than to understand that religion has two features- spiritual and material. Since religion is generally connected exclusively with spiritual activity, all material activities are generally regarded as not falling in the category of religion. To be religious means to practice some spiritual activity such as going to the church or mosque, synagogue, temple or wat. Religion is generally more closely connected with rituals and prayers which are often performed at specific times of the day and at particular places. However, the Vedic literatures teach us something else. Within the context of *varnasrama dharma*, guidelines are given to address both the material and the spiritual natures. We have our material duties called *varnasrama dharma* as well as our spiritual duties known as *bhagavat dharma*; we thus have our material religious duties as well as our spiritual religious duties.

Modern Day Deviations from *Dharma*

Modern day occupations connected with factory, industry and all kinds of recently invented hard technologies, have deviated mankind from his more natural occupations connected with land, cows, nature, and God. Modern day lifestyle in urban cities has also diverted mankind from his more natural and simplified living condition, within an agrarian based environment. This has brought about unprecedented imbalances in nature, in social conduct, and in mental outlook on life; resulting in increased disparities and anomalies at all levels. For those who understand the dual nature of *dharma*, the present way of modern life based on consumerism, competition for material acquisition and material well-being is but a major deviation from *dharma*. We need to clearly understand this. The remedy lies not in making adjustments through legislation, but in returning to the natural way of life- both materially and spiritually, as defined in our standard scriptures and as advocated by all the great spiritual leaders.

***Dharma* as Standard for Material and Spiritual Duties**

In the same way that we can more easily understand that *dharma* is meant to cater to the duties and activities of both the body and soul, similarly, religion is also meant to cater to the duties and activities of the body and soul. Peace and harmony can only come when we are able to synchronize both levels of religion or both levels of *dharma*. When we deviate from the standard norm, as is the case in modern day society, we create what is called "varna sankara", unwanted and unplanned population which makes for a chaotic society and where people are engaged in abominable activities called "ugra karma". In a situation of "varna sankara" and "ugra karma" no one can be happy and satisfied because both the material and spiritual duties of persons are neglected. To rectify this chaotic condition, one must acquire proper knowledge so that one can begin to discriminate and not remain on the platform of sentimentalism and mental speculation. Our sastras give us clear understanding of our duties at both levels, one being devotional service to the Lord through devotional activities [*bhagavat dharma*] and the other being adhering to the principles of varna and asrama [*varnasrama dharma*]. Unless we take this up, there is no possibility of peace and happiness in this present chaotic world or in the next world.



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The First Civil Disobedience Movement in India

- HH Bhakti Raghava Swami

HH Bhakti Raghava Swami in conversation with the AP State Coordinator, HG HariKirtan Dasa.

HG HariKirtan dasa: Devotees generally argue that, "Na me bhakta pranashyati", that ... devotees are generally practicing devotional services like sravanam, kirtanam, smaranam... So what is the need to build villages and shift there? As it is people's lifespan is very short. How to defeat this argument?

HH Bhakti Raghava Swami: Yes. Well, sravanam, kirtanam, yes but who's hearing Prabhupada's instructions to get back to the villages? That's the answer. We are doing so much chanting, we are doing so much hearing, but, what is the quality of that chanting, what is the quality of our hearing? When the Founder Acārya of our society makes a statement that 50% of my work is not done, what are we doing sitting around, doing so called hearing and chanting?



We should be hearing not only selected instructions from Srila Prabhupada. It is a fact, of course, that one can become realized simply by any one of these activities of devotional service. But the fact remains that hearing is most important, and if we do not hear those important instructions by Srila Prabhupada we are going to miss out. This, I would say, is a very crucial instruction. That is a crucial instruction in the present context and world situation where the suffering of individuals and of animals, especially the cows, is getting increasingly atrocious. We are not aware of.... That means we are not hearing, we are not attentive, and we are seeing that we are disobeying the orders and committing *nama aparadha* – third offense – disobeying the orders of the spiritual master. So, that's a whole different subject matter. Why do we have so many problems in our society, individually, collectively, amongst ourselves, in relationships? Well, we have to come back to these basic things. Until we do that our problems will not be resolved. There are people who are not even devotees who understand some of these things better than we do.

...Some practical things we should do, yes, both individually and collectively, because we are a society, even more so as a society, as a society in different cities around the world, we should be much more active in terms of making propaganda against the slaughtering of cows, cruelty to animals in general, but especially the cow. There are organizations, groups of people, who are, again, not devotees, who are much more active than we are to protect specifically the cow. **Lord Chaitanya, 500 years ago, organized the first civil disobedience movement by having 100,000 people march to protest against the Chand Kazi.** In that particular purport, Srila Prabhupada explains that as devotees we have a **right to protest**, not only a right **but it's our duty to protest against activities which are against *dharma***. And the most obvious thing that is promoting *adharma* is the lack of cow protection. There are many things that can be done in the city, like working with other groups which are concerned with animal rights movement. Every year, they have "Meat Out" program. There have been campaign going on for many years and our society is active in supporting their activities. So, in other words, there are people, who are not devotees, as we understand, with tilaka, etc., but there is another brand of devotees, we could say, who have similar concerns and working with them is one possibility.



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Papaya that Turned to Mango!

- By Vrndavanilila dd



January 30, 2010 was a welcome day for all the devotees at New Govardhan, Secunderabad, especially HG Gour Gopal dasa, Vrndavanilila dd and Bhaktin Nandita, and Little Radhika, the caretakers of the Sri Sri Radha-Kunjabihariji there. They had been jobless from past more than a year with absolutely no source of income. The situation had made them more dependent on Sri Sri Radha-Kunjabihariji. HH Bhakti Raghava Swami, Minister, ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry for Promoting Rural Development had graciously agreed to accept lunch prasadam at Govardhan. The place had witnessed and facilitated the birth and growth of Varnasrama mission in India, like establishing the VRT (Varnasrama Research Team), VBT (Varnasrama Book Trust), and VMP (Varnasrama Media Productions); so much so that all of them outgrew the physical precincts of Govardhan. The silent but dedicated work that has been going on from past three or more years despite the inclemencies of city life and ravages of Kali has been possible only because of the mercy of Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga.



The presence of HH Bhakti Raghava Swami had surcharged everybody inside. Though everybody was invited for the evening program, devotees feeling the seamlessness of Govardhan had freely come to welcome HH Bhakti Raghava Swami even in the afternoon. HG RamaLaxman prabhu, full time inmate at Govardhan, greeted everybody with his trademark smile. Soon about 1:30 pm maharaj arrived. His Holiness was given a warm welcome by the devotees, as everybody loudly sang the kirtan at his arrival, showering him with loads and loads of fresh red rose petals from all possible sides. The long garland put by HG Gour Gopal prabhu seemed starving to touch His Holiness's feet, but in the process making it a little difficult for him to climb the steps. All the children and even elders took a childish pleasure in showering petals on him. This was followed by a resonating Guru puja. As HG Sridhar prabhu led the kirtan, HG Gour Gopal prabhu took over welcoming maharaj, lovingly washing his lotus feet with panchamrta-honey, rosewater, milk, ghee, curd, coconut water. Flower abhishekam followed. The children got the rare opportunity of touching his lotus feet and in a natural loving gesture, held on to them while showering petals on them. His holiness's feet were deep in the heap of fragrant roses, lending beauty to the pervading atmosphere. The rose fragrance blended with the strong purifying smell of freshly done cow dung application on the walls and created a new aroma.

Maharaj's well lit but tiny room was a picture of simplicity in a peachish paint, but was tastefully decorated to please his holiness. Now a sumptuous prasadam comprising delicious chappan bhog (56-items) in his honour waited for its turn. Every devotee was engaged in transcendental competition of pleasing him. Many of them had brought different

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preparations for maharaj. Bhakta Narsimhamam prabhu brought two sweets and one salty rice Sri Sri Radha-Govind prasadam. Manasaganga dd prepared many paneer based delicacies, while Gangagati dd brought her patented confectionary items along with baked vegetables. The prasadam was offered in the banana leaves taken from the garden. The garden grown papaya trees, which so far had been serving Sri Sri Radha-Kunjabihariji and other devotees, got an opportunity to serve a brave soldier of Srila Prabhupada's army. The ripe one was artistically designed as a big lotus flower by Bhaktin Nandita. The famed sweet papayas were now there to please him. Everybody waited for his response but he took them without articulation and moved on to the next dish. There was another preparation, semi-ripe papaya halwa- this was also a much looked forward dish by the devotees from Govardhan. This was accepted even by Lord Narsingha dev at Mayapur, offered by HG Panchagiri prabhu and prepared by Manasaganga dd (another interesting story). Maharaj cracked jokes at everything, seemingly pleased with every preparation but not uttering a word for the papayas. Never mind as long as he was happy with our effort.



Slowly the evening set in, the terrace was readied for the small evening program for the devotees. In no time devotees thronged in hundreds, waiting for his darshan. HG Gour Gopal prabhu led the kirtan, while other devotees like Murali prabhu, HG Ramsharan prabhu, HG Sridhar, HG Anantasesha prabhu, Little Bhaktin Radhika, Vrndavanlila dd along with many more devotees strived to arrange the things comfortably for the devotees and maharaj. HG Ramlaxman prabhu, Bhaktin Nandita, HG Stoka Krishna prabhu were busy readying the evening prasadam for the devotees. There was an air of excitement everywhere and everybody worked relentlessly. After a while, Maharaj emerged from his room to occupy the asana. Everything came to a standstill, no sound in the backdrop, only his melodious voice resonated the terrace as he sang *Bhaju re mana sri nanda nandana...* The fresh chill air made everything interestingly crispy.

Everything comes to an end, so did this short one day long festival. Now it was getting time for maharaj to depart for Sri Sri Radha-Gopinath temple, Secunderabad. The next day he was leaving for his week long village yatra in Andhra Pradesh along with the state coordinator, HG HariKirtan prabhu.

Next morning we got the message through another devotee, maharaj was interested in getting papaya from Govardhan. There was a wave of happiness and HG Gour Gopal prabhu almost flew to take them for his pleasure. As he offered them the next day, he said that these papayas are so sweet that they are mangoes of Secunderabad. The sound tingled in his ears, they had got a new name, papayas could be mangoes, what a transformation even for a fruit just through its selfless service- the mangoes of Secunderabad! Maharaj also expressed his desire of taking their seeds to Hebri, headquarters of newly formed ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry- a big compliment to the city team! Hari Bol! Hari Hari Bol!

Sunday Program at Govardhan

Mangalarati: 5 am

Group chanting: 5:30 am – 7:30 am

Darshan arati: 7:30 am- 8:00 am

Kirtan: 8:00 am- 8:30 am

Srimad Bhagavatam: 8:30 am-9:30am

Prasadam: 9:30 am-10:30am

Varnasrama Meeting:10:30 am–12:00
md

Music class(Instruments):12:00 md–
2:00 pm

Everybody is welcome to participate.

- By Vrndavanlila dd



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Dharma: The Only Savior of the Mankind

- By HG Rasamandal Dasa



If one were to rip apart one's mother in the "reductionism" process of scientific enquiry one would only find DNAs, RNAs, molecules or on a grosser level flesh, bone, blood, etc. It does not require a lot of academic knowledge to understand that 'mother' represents much more than what our scientific "reductionism" can explain to us. She represents in her an ability to manage existential requirements of her children and is endowed with cognitive energy (loving, caring, etc), which is beyond the subject-matter of scientific exploration. These energies are inherent and they are endowed to her for the survival of living beings by the Creator and are not taught at some point of time. These energies can only be understood and realized if one becomes conscious of the all-pervading energy emanating from the Personality of Godhead. These are attributes of the Personality of Godhead reflected in all the species of living beings. Life comes from life and not from matter as is sought to be established by scientific theories. When we lose this important aspect of one's relationship with the God we fail to understand the reality of the "various energies" that exist in all of us. In the absence of understanding this reality the human beings tend to fill the vacuum by occupying the place of God as "provider" of existential requirements, well-wisher, storehouse of knowledge, etc. Unfortunately, this covers only the human beings and they are not interested in the welfare of other constituents of the mother nature in the form of animals, insects, plants, aquatics, etc. We conveniently forget that the needs of all living species are taken care by the mother nature without any problem except, of course, the greed in human beings!



In the near future human beings may come up with a model of a 'mother' with all gadgets and gizmos hooked to it to act as the foster mother for a child. The argument advanced for such an invention could be that "human motherhood is lacking or defective" in fostering the child. One reason of the motherhood lacking this could also be due to exploitative nature of the human beings itself. If the mother is not able to provide required support/nutrition to the child it is not that the mother is deficient it is just that she has been deprived of nutritious food--again due to various manmade reasons. The same stands with the mother nature also. Last half-century or so we have been pursuing an exploitative policy with complete disregard and disrespect to mother nature. She has been deprived of the nutrition by various human interventions and today it is argued that mother nature can no more support the food requirements of the "human" species. So we require scientific (human) efforts to enhance agricultural production again designed with exploitative technology.

All the arguments for human interventions are justified on the grounds of meeting the food and nutrition requirements of the human race. They highlight the issue of human starvation and the need for food security. At the same time they proceed to "patent" what has been given by mother nature to siphon off wealth leading to deprivation, especially the poor. The scientists themselves claim that nothing can be "created" and everything is a transformation of energy. But how does one justify the patenting of something which exists in nature and only a transformation has been made? If there is a genuine concern for the welfare of the people where is the need for "patenting"? The food prices are on the rise solely because of the exploitative attitude of the human beings. The

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Provider of the resources like water, air, sunlight, seed, etc., has neither patented them nor have at any time charged for these resources due to His causeless mercy. The primary reason why man tends to adopt this exploitative tendency is due to his stone-hearted nature because of prolonged deprivation of God's love. When one is bereft of this loving propensity it transforms into lust and greed, and tends to exploit and manipulate everything in nature for his sense enjoyment. This exploitative tendency can only be reversed when the living being is reconnected to God in a true sense. When this relationship is reestablished then there is respect for the mother nature since She represents an energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Krsna. We will start respecting nature as one of our "mothers" once this relationship is reestablished. There may be limited scope for religion in science but definitely science is part of religion if one undertakes the process of religion which is to revive the loving relationship with Godhead. In the *Bhagavad-gita* the qualities of those who are bereft of the love of Godhead is described as:

They say that this world is unreal, with no foundation, no God in control.

*They say it is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust.
Following such conclusions, the demoniac, who are lost to themselves and
who have no intelligence, engage in unbeneficial, horrible works meant to
destroy the world. (Bhagavad-gita As It Is - 16.8-9).*

Now a question arises: if everything emanates from the God then the qualities for destruction also emanate from Him! It is like saying that God has given us the knowledge to create knife. Yes, it is true, but we all know that knife cannot act by itself because it is made of dull matter. But we know that a knife in the hand of a child or a lunatic can be dangerous because both are in ignorance of the consequences of holding a knife. The knife *per se* is not to be blamed. The consciousness of the holder of the knife is important. If the knife is in the hands of a person in good consciousness, then its use is beneficial; in the hands of a person in passion then its use is chaotic and in the hands of an ignorant person it is destructive and unpredictable. Similarly, science and technology *per se* are not the problem like the knife but in whose hand it goes is important. Human concerns of starvation, food shortage and many other concerns on one hand and patenting makes the whole intention strange bed fellows.



Declaration of Bio-Diversity Meeting

- Provided by HG Rasamandal dasa

Declaration of the "High-level National Meeting on Genetically Modified Crops - Merits and Demerits" at Trivandrum:

We, the Ministers, Senior Officials, Scientists, and representatives of civil societies, from various states after participating at the national high level brainstorming workshop on the merits and demerits of GM crops, especially Bt Brinjal, on 2 and 3 February 2010 at Trivandrum, in the context of the present agrarian crisis, climate change and the debate on the release of Bt Brinjal into the country recognize that:

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- ✦ As the custodian of the third mega-biodiversity centre of the world, we have the moral (constitutional) responsibility to protect our rich biodiversity, from any action that destroys it.
- ✦ As a country with a historical agriculture record of more than 7000 years, with thousands of cultivated plants, hundreds of domesticated animals, a collected germplasm of around 3 lakh land races, we have to nurture this rich agro-biodiversity, (one of the richest in the world), many of which, including brinjal and rice, have their origin in India.
- ✦ Agriculture as is known today is the result of the immense collective traditional knowledge and wisdom, evolved over generations, and hence this knowledge system has to be protected and developed further for the sustainable development of the villages in the country (food and livelihood security)
- ✦ The present modern agriculture, which was developed, based on the traditional practices and the goodwill of the farmers, and with the support of the public research and extension systems in independent India, has to be continued with government support so as to develop farmer friendly, environment friendly, location specific technologies and practices.
- ✦ Seeds and food systems are primarily the heritage of the communities; they are the custodians of it and they continue to practice, conserve and share.
- ✦ The growing movement in all the States in India which uses sustainable practices, local resources, and empowering farmers and communities is the beginning of a new agriculture revolution that has the potential to address issues of climate change, food security, nutritional security and livelihood security without harming environment, biodiversity and public health.
- ✦ Agriculture system in India, where 62% engaged in farming, 70% of the population living in villages and 85% being small and marginal farmers, should follow the Gandhian principle of “production by masses” that ensures both food sovereignty and livelihood security.
- ✦ The demand for safe and diverse food in the country and outside is growing, and India has great potential, with its rich biodiversity, wide agro-climatic situation and hard working farming community to cater to this demand.
- ✦ The traditional healing systems such as Ayurveda, Sidha and Unani and the folk medicines are primarily dependent on the biodiversity and are gaining more global significance.
- ✦ We recognize that there is more than enough evidence to show that Genetically Modified Crops such as Bt Brinjal will have serious impact on biodiversity, agro-biodiversity, farmer control of seeds, traditional knowledge systems of farming, safety of the food, people's health and the traditional healing systems.

The growing understanding of Genetic Engineering as a technology applied in food and agriculture is highly reductionist, and the evidences show that there is no long term sustainability.

We also recognize that there is an undue haste in introducing Bt Brinjal, seriously compromising on even mandatory biosafety tests and without even establishing its relevance; and underlying this haste is the monopolistic, private, commercial interests that is pushing this technology into Indian agriculture. This will be highly detrimental to national sovereignty.

In the International Year of Biodiversity, considering the various reasons cited above, the plenary concludes that India should not allow the commercial cultivation of Bt Brinjal and other GM crops, and should be kept Free of Genetically Modified Crops and Food.

The meeting was jointly organised by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board and the Kerala Agriculture Department. It was attended by Government representatives, including Ministers from 9 States.



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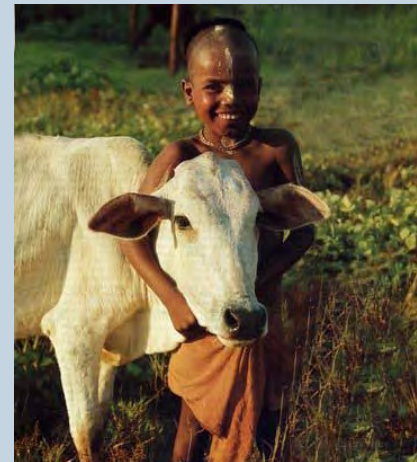




Self-Sufficient Farm Communities- A Real Answer to Global Crisis

- By Bhakta Szilvia Rév

Issues in connection with climate change have become an everyday topic in media. While some years ago even greater mass of the leader scientists did not want to openly raise this question, now more and more studies come to light which declare global climate crisis as not a question but a fact. These studies urge measures at global scale and international cooperation. All of us can feel the effect of climate change - we see extreme weather phenomenon, we hear about natural disasters and its aftermath in spiraling prices of food. Number of countries have reported riots triggered by hunger.



Leading scientists advocating sustainability concluded that the only proper answer to the crisis could come from self-sufficient farm communities. Their common stand is that all human beings should reduce their needs and consumption, but the best solution would be to start cultivating the land. If we produce our food, we will not be defenceless to global food provision system. Further, we best know what exactly we eat. We can use ecological methods for growing them (for production is not for commercial purpose but for personal usage), we can pick fresh vegetables and prana-enriched foodstuffs. Beside we do not contribute to the maintenance of nature devastating intensive agriculture and to the unnecessary transportation of foodstuffs. Everyone should make effort to have at least a little vegetable garden. But the complex and long term solution is more than this. It lies in village communities joining hands and working together. There is lot of strength in cooperative communities. In Hungary, 15 years ago Krishna-valley was established as part of the ISKCON farm communities. This project presents us with an alternative as to how we can tackle not only environmental problems but also the pressing social and economical problems. The village-size experiment involved 150 volunteers, the community has evolved the complete structure of agricultural system. As part of the extensive organic gardening, the farm has vegetable and fruit gardens, grainfield, a cow protection center and an apiary. It is astonishing how small field is enough to provide food for 150 people: 8 acre vegetable and fruit gardens, 6 acre of grain fields, 125 acre of forest can provide enough firewood. The farm has experience how cow manure can be used to increase the productivity of the soil and the vitality of the plants. There have been diverse experiments in the field of associating different plants in a way that they give protection to each other from different insects and be more productive and even on how one can use herbal extracts to enhance their resistance. Further, plants can be adopted to dryer, warmer weather due to climate change, and can be grown productively in smaller plots. The oxen can be used to till the fields, effectively removing the need of maintaining

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tractors. Further, the set up totally erases the need to unnaturally get milk from heifers (cows that never had a calf), instead one can have rich milk from happy cows.

All the houses here have wells that provide pure and safe drinking water in sufficient quantity. The planned reed-bed zone waste water system is environment friendly and gives independence from public utilities. The simple life close to mother earth does not need endless amount of electricity. Solar panels and small size windmills are sufficient to provide for the basic needs of the families. Candles and other oil-based lamps could be made at home. For heating, wood is the renewable energy. The foundation of the healthcare of the community is based on Ayurveda. The main stream is prevention through proper nutrition, lifestyle, and natural healthcare.

The Eco-village has become a well known experiment internationally. Its aim is to emphasize sustainability at every level of life. The goal is to reach full range self-sufficiency and to share the experiences with a wide audience. For this purpose the community established a foundation called Applied Ecological Sustainability Research Institute (formerly the Sustainability Sciences Research Institute) in 2007. Through the Eco-valley programme (EVP) – the main programme of the foundation – the community is in collaboration with research institutes, universities, colleges, intellectual workshops, NGOs and leading scientists. The EVP is developing dynamically. The number of the participants, the number of the running and the planned projects is increasing rapidly. The incomparable international collaboration programmes are giving opportunity to answer complex ecological-economic-social questions. The residents of the eco-village realize the practice of self-sufficiency in everyday life through their social- and private life considering ecological-, economic-, social-sustainability. The participant researchers, NGOs contribute to the project with their own research and experiences in different fields like education, eco-tourism, gardening etc. Their aim is to execute different research programmes synthesizing the results to propagate it to a wide range of audience including the leaders of scientific world. The EVP conducts scientific conferences, establishing a network of educational centers, educational paths, courses, versatile communication so that other communities could also start developing their own self-sufficient farms. Beside this, EVP documents information and experiences as it organizes study tours. The EVP-members also maintain international relationships. Members of the EVP are ready to receive volunteers and to share the experiences of applied ecological sustainability.

(Source: Based on <http://www.dandavats.com/?p=7048>)



Prayer of the Soul

- By Manasaganga dd



Show me the way dear Radharani!

Please protect me O Lord Narsimha dev!

If I am wrong, please correct me and find me the right way.

Always guide me and keep me at the lotus feet of Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga.

I know I am not qualified at all, but please give me the strength to gain more purity and humility.

My ego is so big, please crush it with Your lotus feet. Please be there for me as I have no one else.

May this misery end very soon in the blink of an eye. And may there be nectar of total surrender and constant devotional service.

May the divine light of my Guru's causeless mercy always light up my life.

May I be forgiven and may there be peace and calm so that I can relish the holy name, in its nectrean sweetness always, always and always.



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• Village Out-Reach Program

Village Out-Reach Program - Gundaipalem Workshop (From January 9-10, 2010)



- H.G. Ramalaxman Dasa

After the inspiration from Vrindavan yatra, devotees from Secunderabad team planned to lead life like in Vrindavan. In the direction, decided to have a workshop on “MAKE VRINDAVAN VILLAGES”. For this, our State Coordinator, HG Harikirtan Prabhu, arranged two-days programme in a village located in coastal Andhra Pradesh named as Gundaipalem (to be read as Govinda palem) which means village of Govinda. We have been having regular village out-reach programmes in this village for the last couple of years. A drastic metamorphosis has taken place. Now this village has about 8 cows where there had none till sometime ago. The people who had predominantly been engaged in fishing as their main occupation have now moved to small-scale organic farming.



The village is far-flung and takes a couple of hours drive from Ongole town. It is surrounded by open agricultural fields. One can also see the advent of modernism by way of many abandoned aquaculture farms which were once paddy fields. These aquaculture farms increased salinity in the adjacent soils and had to be abandoned because of unsustainable practices.



As soon as we reached the village we were greeted by devotees living there and those who had reached earlier. These group of devotees worked very hard to make necessary arrangements for the two-days programme. About 15 devotees who had arrived along with me from Hyderabad got fresh and joined the programme.

The day started with ecstatic kirtan followed by briefing about the two-day workshop. The devotees were divided into five teams each consisting of four male devotees and one mataji team. As a warm up we were told to make mud bricks using local clay, cow dung, straw and other ingredients. Devotees could make about forty bricks in a couple of

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hours. Other groups tried their hand in making *beejamrita* and *jeevaamrita*, which are used as natural pesticide. Basic ingredients like cow urine, cow dung, moong dal, jaggrey, etc., were sprinkled on our small garden where we had vegetable and flowers plants. Another team which had more local devotees like HG Braja Vrindavan prabhu, Bhakta Srinivas and Bhakta Rambabu made tooth powder using dried cow dung, sendh namak (rock salt), and green camphor. The tooth powder turned out to be extremely tasty and had good cleansing effect on the teeth. Another group which had a mix of city and village devotees made flour from ragi, churned curd and extracted good amount of butter and later made it into ghee. Last but not the least, our team had hands on experience in rice pounding.



By noon the devotees were treated to delicious prasadam made from organic vegetables and dal; however, as the farming activity was just new we depended on the inorganic rice. After a long day's engagement in various varnasrama activities, the devotees decided to have a nap. By evening we headed towards the nearby sea, Bay of Bengal, to have refreshing bath and some friendly sporting fun. In the late evening we all came back to village and attended the Gaura arotika. After this we shared our experiences of the day and retired for the day to be up early for the next day's mangala aroti.



After the morning programme the devotees shared their realizations and their understanding of varanasrama *dharm*a. All the devotees came to an understanding that these activities should be conducted more frequently at their local places--to conclude this was taking one step towards 'MAKE VRINDAVAN VILLAGES'.

This workshop may be a small step towards this goal but we are sure that Srila Prabhupada will be guiding us through the transcendental medium of HH Bhakti Raghava Swami, the newly appointed Minister for ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry, in fulfilling this mission.

- HG Ramalaxman Dasa



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Over 8.36 crore signatures presented to President Smt Pratibha Patil, Save the govansh, save the nation (*Source: Gougram.org*)

January 31, 2010. New Delhi. A 18-member delegation including yoga Guru Baba Ramdev, many other senior saints and Shankaracharyas, religious leaders from Islam and Christianity, cow scientists, experts, organic farmers and leaders belonging to various organisations of the country met the President of India Smt Pratibha Patil on January 31 and handed her over 8.36 crore signatures collected from all over the country during the 108 day Vishwa Mangal Gou Gram Yatra.

Describing the killing of the cow as violation of the fundamental rights of billions of Hindus, the delegation urged the President to declare the cow as cultural legacy of the nation, enact a central law for her protection and ensure complete ban on the slaughter of entire govansh. In the memorandum submitted to the President the saints and leaders also demanded to form a separate ministry at the centre for protection and promotion of Indian breeds of cow.

Demanding the formation of at least one Kamdhenu University in all the states, the delegation appealed to the President to create the atmosphere in the country where all the farmers could live a dignified life and no farmer needs to commit suicide anywhere in the country.



New Varnasrama College off to a Sacred Start (*Source: Iskcon News*)

January 4, 2009. Udupi. The day saw the official opening of Iskcon's new varnasrama college, based at Sri Krishna Balarama Ksetra in Udupi, South India, near the national headquarters of the newly established ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry. Varnasrama, a traditional vedic social structure of natural vocations and life stages, is often confused with the birth-based caste system—which Vaishnavas consider to be a missapplication of the original ancient system.

The Varnasrama College's upcoming three-month course teaches students this original system, a vision of ISKCON's founder Srila Prabhupada. Entitled "Land, Cows and Krishna," the course will cover

topics such as holistic farming, cow protection, and composting. It will also discuss pottery, mud-brick housing construction, manual water-lifting devices that eliminate reliance on electricity, village technologies such as oil ghani, and many other activities related to traditional occupations.

In the mornings, students will visit the fields in Sri Krishna Balarama Ksetra and other rural projects, and will learn from faculty members through observation and practical application. Meanwhile, afternoons will be spent learning the theory and ideology of Varnasrama-based living and occupations. Many international teachers will visit the College throughout the duration of the course to share their areas of expertise, and add to the students' learning experience.

The College's own resident faculty, present at the opening ceremony, included project overseer Bhakti Raghava Swami, agricultural manager Giriraja Dasa, Master Potter Laksminatha Dasa, and student counselor Kanai Thakura Dasa.

Also present were yoga therapist Pranana Dasa and Sundarananda Dasa, manager of the company "Panchagavya Shala Surabhi" which produces various traditional medicines from cow dung and urine.

For now, students will observe a one-week Orientation Period, during which they will visit the neighbouring area, acquaint themselves with the details of the course, learn about some of the basic conditions of the soil and local forest, observe the various flora and fauna in the area and get to interact with fellow students and faculty members.

The course was off to a sacred start at the opening ceremony, with teacher Raya Ramananda Dasa performing a fire sacrifice to invoke auspiciousness, and the traditional "Go-Puja" being offered to resident cow Subhadra and her calf Rama.



Karnataka to enforce cow slaughter ban (*Source: Thaindian News*)

February 10, 2010. Bangalore. The Karnataka government will enforce a ban on cow slaughter strictly by amending a 1964 act to prohibit the sale and consumption of beef, Home Minister V.S. Acharya said Wednesday. "An amending bill will be introduced in the coming budget session to make cow

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slaughter, sale of cows and consumption of beef a cognizable offence under a new law," Acharya told reporters after a cabinet meeting here.

The amending bill will replace the Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Prevention Act, 1964. According to section four of the proposed bill, no person shall slaughter or intentionally kill any cattle. The definition of cattle in the bill includes cow, calf, bull, bullock, and buffalo. Section five of the proposed bill prohibits sale, use and possession of beef. The cabinet also decided to enhance punishment with seven years imprisonment and a penalty of Rs.100,000 for serious offences against cows.

"The minimum punishment will be one year imprisonment and a fine up to Rs.50,000 for smaller crimes against the domestic animal," Acharya said. The month-long budget session will commence Feb 25 with an address by state governor Hans Raj Bhardwaj to the joint legislature and the state budget will be presented March 5. In a related development, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) protested against the cow slaughter ban and criticised the first Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the state for hurting the sentiments of Dalits, Muslims and backward classes with an anti-retrograde measure.

"Each individual is entitled to his/her own food habits. The government has no right to force people to not consume a particular food," BSP vice-president N. Mahesh said.



Varnasrama Seminar February 14-17 at Sridham Mayapur

February 13, 2010. Mayapur. An upcoming Annual Global Varnasrama Seminar is to be conducted in Sridham Mayapur from February 14-17, 2010 (4 days, each having 4 modules of 90 minutes each). This seminar marks the third annual one on the subject and first one after the formal formation of Daiva Varnasrama Ministry Promoting Rural Development by ISKCON. Senior devotees, sannyasis, and renowned delegates are expected to be on the list of speakers and attendees.

The Global Varnasrama Mission Seminar is being organized by the newly formed ISKCON Daiva Varnasrama Ministry for India, headed and conved by HH Bhakti Raghava Swami in collaboration with the Mayapur Institute which is overseen by Atul Krishna Prabhu.



Six Continents Join in Global Prayer for the Yamuna River (By Madhava Smullen)

February 7, 2010. As urban developers threaten to destroy the rich culture and heritage of Vrindavan, India—the holy place of Lord Krishna's birth—devotees around the world united in a globe-encompassing kirtan to pray for the future of Vrindavana and its sacred Yamuna River this January 30th.

Organized by members of the ISKCON second-generation project the Kuli Mela Association, the Global Kirtan for the Yamuna River was held in 128 locations, covering all six inhabited continents: Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, and Australia. Six of the events ran for a full 24 hours, while others ran for 12 or less.

With building of a controversial bridge across the Yamuna currently paused by court order, devotees and environmentalists wait with baited breath for the next high court hearing on February 23rd. In the meantime, however, their chanting resounded across the globe in a valiant effort to raise consciousness and awareness of the Yamuna River's plight.



Following a procession in which ISKCON founder Srila Prabhupada rode into the Kumbha Mela camp at Keshi Ghat on the back of an elephant, devotees from all traditions and lines gathered as one, forgetting their differences to pray for the Yamuna River. Flower petals and possibly the biggest ghee lamp ever seen were offered to her holy waters, as devotees—including Aindra Dasa of ISKCON Vrindavana's 24 Hour Kirtan—chanted Krishna's names.

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● **Mails to the Editor**



Om Surabhyai namah!
Om Sri Gurave namah!

Please accept the blessings of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

...Overall the newsletter is nicely put together and informative. As usual, very attractive layout and full of colours.

- **HH Bhakti Raghava Swami, Minister,
ISKCON Rural Development Ministry Promoting Daivi Varnasrama
Dharma, India**



Dear Vrindavan Lila mataji,

... I read the article about vishwa mangal gau gram yatra. It is nice that through such yatras people are made aware about the importance of cows. However such yatra cannot assure of cow protection in a sense that simply conducting a yatra is like doing patch work but wont provide any concrete solution. Anyone reading this may become angry with me but ... Hardly anyone has information about actual history of last 500 years related to cow protection. During the time of Akbar (farman of Akbar for total ban on cow slaughter is still available - it is secured in the Gwalior fort) there was a total ban on cow slaughter which continued till Shahjahan. It was during 1610-20 that the Dutch & British got the permission from Jahangir to establish their factories in India. However it was not possible for either Dutch, Portuguese, French & British to engage in cow killing till then fall of Bengal in 1756. Cow slaughter started in mass after 1756.

If we read Srila Prabhupada's purports on 1st canto, we find he describes how by protecting cows one can not only get their daily needs but can also prosper materially. Also, in bhagavatam or other puranas we find that whenever demons attack their first target is cows & brahmans. British did exactly the same. Their ways were so crooked that ordinary persons can't understand & the same policies continues even today. Several measures adopted by the British were, 1) cows were not allowed to graze in the forest, 2)they increased the rent/tax for cultivation of the land & also took away agricultural products by force, 3)they forced the farmers to grow crops like opium, indigo, tobacco, sugarcane, cotton instead of articles of staple diet like jowar, bajra & other millets, 4)they even exported oil cakes, 5)forest land was cleared for cultivation of cash crops, 6)started killing the cows directly & openly. All these and other measures had direct impact on people's capacity to keep cows.

Gandhi wanted total ban on cow slaughter after independence but Nehru did exactly the opposite. Same policies of the British is continued more vigourously by the desi angrez. Unless, we strictly and sincerely follow what Srila Prabhupada desired of self-sufficient farm communities and simple living high thinking and utilizing simple tools it will not be possible.... If we have indegenious oil mill worked by bulls, we will have oil cake which will give nourishment to cows & bulls. If we grow our own cotton & make our own

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clothes then we will have cotton seeds which can be fed to the cows. At the moment oil cake is either sold in the villages by the big oil companies at a high price or is largely exported...

- HG Sachi kumar dasa



Thank you for your work in producing THE EIGHT PETALS.

I'm very soon visiting India with 2 friends and I would be interested to try and see some of the work of the the projects such as the one in Secunderabad.

- HG Kaliya Krsna Dasa, Temple President



...discussing about varnasrama, SIMPLE LIVING HIGH THINKING, we have already begun our first meeting on January 17, 2010, and I gave the information about VRT-Newsletter the first edition. I am still in the process of translating it into the Indonesian language.

I do really thank you for sending the newsletter, it really helps us here, ...once again thank you mataji...I do really hope that this little thing can be useful for us in the future...

- Kalahansi dd



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Focus for the next issue- **Village**

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