



I have often been asked how to grow vegetables without using violent methods. The short answer to that question is there is no such thing as non-violence, ahimsa, in Horticulture and Agriculture. The short answer according to Srila Prabhupada is that "eating vegetables is violence." (Srimad Bhagavatam 3.29.15.) From the text and from Srila Prabhupada's purport to that verse the nearest we can hope to achieve is minimum-violence, natihimsrena.

In ISKCON the myth that has been expanded by some devotees is that there is such a commodity as "Ahimsa Milk", this romanticised illusory concept could not be further from the truth. They think and speculate that just because the cow is not killed or slaughtered then the milk must be non-violent milk. Of course, only a live cow can produce milk. So when the cow is slaughtered in commercial milk producing herds is there such a principle as retrospective violence to the milk produced when the cow was alive! But this is an extremely superficial understanding of Agriculture and the Dairy industry. In fact, there is only violence in farming and gardening, that's just about the only activity on offer.

Firstly we must plough the land either by hand or by oxen or by tractor. But in all cases a lot of living entities are killed. If we are preparing some land for vegetable planting then the next violent activity is to weed. That's removing all the roots of plants you don't want to grow in your vegetable patch. And just as in your heart when you water the bhakti-lata-bija, you are also watering the weeds, so it is the same when you water your vegetables, the weeds will also grow. Discrimination is vital to discern the difference between the weeds and the vegetables and if you have a lousy technique, you may easily wind up pulling out the vegetables and leaving the weeds, or the vegetables just being smothered. Is it not similar in your heart???? The technique in your heart is to flood the heart with the Holy Name 24 hours a day so no more

weeds can take root and whatever weeds are already in your heart wont be able to grow because of the flooding. In all circumstances we want to obliterate the weeds, anartha-nivrtti in the heart, anartha-nivrtti in ISKCON, and weeding in the vegetable patch, just more violence. But this violence is for a good goal, so it's good violence, isn't it, prabhus?

In the UK there are many perennial type plants that grow as weeds that we want to remove. If you don't weed, then your crop is severely compromised and if you are actually dependent on your crop, then it serves you well to maintain a weed-free environment. If you don't do it then the commercial growers will do it for you, either mechanically or with sprays of chemicals. That's what you support when you buy at the markets, so either way weeds are killed. And then finally, when it comes to eating vegetables most have to be killed. Carrots, potatoes, beetroot, brassicas and spinach, etc. As Srila Prabhupada writes, "eating vegetables is violence." (SB 3.29.15)

One of the hardest minimum violent materials to find is fertiliser for actually growing the crops. Plants must be fed nourishment (N.P.K.) so they grow healthy and produce a good healthy bountiful crop. The healthier the crop is the less likelihood the plants will suffer from pest attacks. And if we plant a companion crop in with the crop we are growing then we can divert pests and other problems to the companion crops that we don't want. Or else we can trick pests away from our crops so they are not attacked and decimated. One example is the Brassica family of plants (cauliflowers, broccoli, cabbage etc.) They all give off a quite unpleasant smell and this attracts the Cabbage White Butterfly. Once the crop is infested with caterpillars then it's just waving goodbye to it all. Caterpillars are just eating machines and they are eating your food. So there are different ways of fending off butterflies. Either a barrier can be erected like a cage to physically stop them from laying their eggs, or you can erect stakes with a creosote soaked flag which disguises the attractive smell, or you can postpone growing these types of vegetables to a time when the butterflies have finished their laying season.

How this family of Brassicas gets to your market without insect damage, in pristine condition is a nightmare story of chemicals, chemicals and more chemicals. But the worst vegetable for chemical usage is the carrot. If you buy a normal chemical grown carrot and just leave it on the side and watch it turn black then you know what you could have put in your body: carrot-flavoured systemic chemicals. A normal "organically" grown carrot in a similar circumstance just dries up and shrivels into a limp orange carrot.

All Brassicas need high Nitrogen feed to uptake to grow decent plants, otherwise they may not even produce anything you want. So one of the best nutrient origins is Cow Protected manure that is well rotted and combined into the soil prior to planting. There should be at least 2 feet

Written by Dusyanta Dasa

Tuesday, 01 July 2014 05:32 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 July 2014 21:22

between each plant because they are quite hefty plants by the time they bear "fruit". But a homegrown cauliflower is well worth growing over the commercialised chemically grown one. As devotees we can still grow "organically", but we just have to be careful OF the source of the organic fertilisers. So cow protected manures are the first choice if you can access it, then there are numerous animal sanctuaries around the country where the animals are just protected, so their manures are also available. But avoiding organic fertilisers such as blood, bones, hooves and horns is a must for devotees if it's possible. We can still use seaweed based fertilisers in the form of calcified seaweed and a fluid seaweed feed, which can be mixed with water and fed in a watering can and sprayed onto the whole plants. There are many other fertilisers we can grow and mix with water in much the same way. comfrey is a very good example, but the final product is particularly smelly. When you spray this product over plants then many insects will just keep away from them because of the smell. It's quite a good natural organic pesticide as well as a good source of fertiliser for aubergines, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers etc. So with a comfrey mixture two goals can be achieved in one go.

In all commercial growers, mostly, the motivation for the business is money. That's why it is commercial and that's the penalty for being capitalists. When we buy our "foods" from the markets a good deal of the products are grown in this way. They use anything to make sure they have a product to sell at the end. Pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, chemical fertilisers, violent organic fertilisers and exploitative techniques and cheap labour, and of course, carbon-based travel miles. So by growing your own vegetables, flowers and fruits a lot of this can be avoided and by-passed. And being a devotee makes this self-sufficient principle one of our goals. Even if not self-sufficient, we can all commit to providing and contributing a partial amount to our diet.

What we might not know and understand when it comes to commercial vegetable growing is what are the exploitative techniques that they employ? One such vegetable that is exploited to the max is tomatoes. Most commercial tomatoes are grown inside a glass greenhouse. It's a good controlled environment for the growers. They can spray chemicals to their hearts' content and feed them to grow more rapidly and produce more fruit. But the technique they use is almost unbelievably exploitative.

They grow the tomato up a piece of nylon/string and they pick out all the lateral buds so there is just one main stem, a "cordon", with the flower frons and axil leaves. But when the plant has grown say four meters high the bottom placed tomatoes are ready to pick. So when they have been picked and the bottom leaves removed then the whole plant is lowered back down on the string so that the next flowers that bear the next fruit is at the ground level and the plants' stem is spiralled on the floor. This means the tomato never stops producing flowers and never stops growing forever. It is trained to grow upwards following the string, the side lateral buds are removed and the next flowers are produced. The plant is again lowered down so the next layer

Written by Dusyanta Dasa

Tuesday, 01 July 2014 05:32 - Last Updated Tuesday, 01 July 2014 21:22

of flowers is at ground level and when the tomatoes are harvested the plant is lowered again. This technique is repeated ad infinitum. It grows and is lowered after the tomatoes at the bottom are harvested. Eventually if you unravelled the spiralled coil-like stem and laid the plant out to measure the length of the one continuous plant it would exceed thirty meters or 100 feet, that's how much the tomato plants are exploited. Of course, this same technique is repeated throughout the commercial industry via other crops grown in glass houses. It's scary! And we just thought it was the Dairy industry. So much for non-violence in the vegetable business. Hopefully one day in the not too distant future ISKCON is going to grow up, plant seeds, be mature and invest in community living and food production.

For devotees embarking on this fruitful way of life its best to sit down in winter months to make plans. A crop rotation plan is a good start using four different sections of land to rotate crops annually. The idea behind crop rotation is to not grow the same thing in the same place year on year, thus starving the land of particular nutrients by the end of it, which can increase the chances of disease through stressful plants. There is a good natural way of rotating which experience and knowledge will take you to. Leguminous crops like peas and beans naturally fix Nitrogen into the soil so it's important not to pull the roots out of the soil when the plants have finished cropping. The nodules of Nitrogen are located on the roots that the plants collect from the atmosphere. The next crop of Brassicas, Nitrogen-demanding plants, can access this Nitrogen. The Nitrogen on the nodules is Nitrates that plants can access better than Nitrites from composted manure.

In the natural scheme of growing vegetables here in the UK the pattern emerges that after peas and beans are grown, it's the Autumnal period where Brassicas can follow on in the same soil as beans and peas, and the Butterflies have now stopped laying eggs. So as the Autumnal period approaches the seeds of Brassicas can be sown in a separate nursery for them to be later thinned out and be planted outside into the old beans and peas place. As you become more experienced then there are so many secrets to learn and fantastic techniques to discover, all of which can be lessons learnt in a Krishna conscious way. The whole Horticulture picture can be analogous towards the picture in the heart of the living entity. In fact, there are some great texts in the Bhagavad-gita As It Is about the Moon, about food in the different modes and about the unwanted weeds in the heart and how these impact our lives as devotees.

When we combine the cultural principles of Cow Protection in the mode of goodness there is an integrated knock-on effect right through the food chain for us devotees to benefit from. The multiple facilities that Cow Protection affords to devotees are a phenomenal success. When we relate to cows through symbiotic principles, then that action causes us to work in a particular way. We act by logically going from one principle to the next, in the plan that it all comes together for the benefit of cows and devotees simultaneously. Cows produce milk, and bulls produce grains, that's the first stage of the food chain. But within that context the manure

produces a reusable sustainable energy in the form of methane gas and the by-product of that activity is the perfect manure for fertiliser. This fertiliser that is produced after the anaerobic process of producing methane gas is actually the best fertiliser on the planet. It provides better nutrients than just composting cow manure, which is a wasteful process because all the ammonia, which contains the methane, evaporates.

The fertiliser is then used to grow more food and produce wholesome green grass which in turn produces milk from cows and grains from bulls. Thus we have the food chain cycle that services both cows and devotees, and all set in the harmonious mode of goodness. This sets forth the self-sufficient and self-determined nature of Cow Protection culture. The facilities that Cow Protection brings to mankind are enormous both materially and spiritually. And the cows themselves become so content within the community that is symbiotically related to them, at the heart of the devotee village. The cows enjoy serving the devotees by producing large quantities of wholesome milk and the devotees reciprocate by maintaining the cows at the centre of the village life and by worshipping the cows. The cows are kept within earshot of the community centre so they are all included in festivals, kirtana and personal relationship.

Cow Protection culture is an inclusive dynamic. The cows are not kept miles away from the Temple and the Community Hall, no, the goshalla complex is an integrated building close in physical proximity to the Deities and the social Community Hall, where the accessibility for the devotees and cows is a completely perfect dynamic. The concept of "visiting" the Cows like tourists does not exist because of where they are located and the natural symbiotic relationship. Cow Protection is not an isolationist project just for "vaisyas", but is an all-inclusive component of community life because it is the hub of life.

As long as the village community follows the strict guidelines of community life by following the mode of goodness principles, then the Cow Protection facilities are gained by all who follow. The only component of Cow Protection culture that is variable is the way devotees interact with cows; this is what makes the difference between the Cow Protection projects. The cows are always consistent and constant, but react sensitively according to the animal husbandry available, their given diet, the agricultural activities and direct personal relationships. Because the farm activities are based on agricultural principles then a yearly pattern is developed, and as the seasons pass by, so do the applicable activities for the community. This pattern of activities is so beneficial for the cows and devotees alike, because it follows the natural seasons, and a sense of identity is associated to the like-minded community feeling. So two goals are achieved simultaneously: the collective goal and the individual goal.

An obvious conclusive point that distinguishes Cow Protection projects and their successes, or

not, is the nature of how it is run, the goals it has set and the relationship of devotees to cows. This is absolutely crucial to the outcome and the *raison d'etre*. It is an absolute requirement that Cow Protection exists within an agricultural model of self-sustainability where there are no outside influences and outside inputs that determine how Cow Protection functions. Cow Protection dynamics need to be able to function within a freely enterprising agricultural exclusiveness. In other words, cows and bulls are not tourist attractions with tourist commitments.

Because in ISKCON the only model that is really manifest in any significant way is the Temple model, this sense of identity is only partially felt. In the Community model of ISKCON, by following the wholeness of the Purposes of ISKCON, then the full realisation of being part of a dynamic ISKCON community with its intended goals is felt. Nowadays in ISKCON the Temple model can be a sectarian identity depending on the structure of the Temple model and the personnel who run it. That type of Temple model is unable to fully manifest the wholesomeness of ISKCON identity for the members of ISKCON, whereas the Community model can only deliver unity in the diversity, or as described in the 6th Purpose of ISKCON -- "bringing the members closer together" through a more natural and simple lifestyle. A lot of Temple models can't deliver a "Simple Living - High Thinking" lifestyle so it's a mutually exclusive dynamic.

One of the downsides of Temple ISKCON is the dependency on Capitalism. To actually manifest the Community model of ISKCON, Capitalism is actually a detrimental principle. And no matter how much we apply capitalistic principles to an ISKCON community based on agrarian simple living, it will never be able to aspire to the mode of goodness nature. And in my book that means it's a failure. The mode of goodness would be a minimum standard to follow for Community-styled ISKCON, so capitalistic dynamics have to be by-passed somehow or another. The mode of goodness has to be applied to all the gates of the body (Bg 14.11), so that real knowledge is gained and the step before Brahman realisation is attained. Capitalism restricts the nine gates of the body from attaining this valuable step.

Within this wholesome community dynamic the magical secret of community is found, because within community the wholeness of relationship is found. The ISKCON purpose for bringing the members of ISKCON closer together is found in this dynamic. If it were to be found in the Temple model then there would have been no need of the 6th Purpose of ISKCON. We all would have found solace within the Temple model of ISKCON automatically, but this is not the case for all the members of ISKCON, nor was this intended and nor could this ever work. Our remit and mission goal is to fulfil the requirements outlined in all the Purposes of ISKCON simultaneously. And this 6th Purpose is exactly served by the Community model of ISKCON based in agrarian situations, relating fully through a symbiotic dependence of cows, bulls and land that is conducted all through the mode of goodness. That's our mission specifically for the members of ISKCON.

We follow the path of this culture because it fulfils all our desires, both materially and spiritually. In the community model of ISKCON we are self-sufficient in all our food needs. Some food is produced communally and some produced individually. The cow manure is used to perpetuate the health of the soils that maintains the health of plants and grass, which has the knock-on effect of really healthy energetic devotees. One of the by-products of this dynamic is also very importantly the reduced influence of the mode of passion, specifically on the mind. So the next knock-on effect is the social life of devotees. Less passion and more goodness mean less social contaminations in terms of marriage, renunciation and single individuals. The main ashramas have more exposure to a balanced well-defined social intercourse where there is more responsibility due to symbiotic relationship. We depend on each other to live, not to individually earn money at a job and then pay all our own bills. That's a dangerous effect of Capitalism, which brings out inequality within community and society. Community is a balanced social event that is made up of the ingredients of relationship, social support groups, social intercourse, sharing wealth and just being there for each other. Capitalism is an impersonal influence whereas community or society is a personal relationship of sharing, friendship and support.

In community that is based on a simple living ethic everyone draws out some kind of positive benefit from it. For example in community, Sannyasis that may come to visit will find friendship, support and a nourishing climate at their disposal. They will find a holistic approach to agriculture and the whole integrated lifestyle. Each component that makes society work is related, it's not independent; each one depends on the other one in some way. And each devotee fits into that dynamic in a natural symbiotic way, just as the tiny screw of a massive machine has its place in the whole integrated machine. Society and community are unable to function without all the components in place otherwise the whole structure is dysfunctional. For example, if we just detach the spark plugs from petrol engines the whole engine is dysfunctional. No matter how sophisticated the technology of the rest of the engine, it will not work.

If we compare and understand the workings of Community to that of the human body then we have a perfect understanding of how it all works. Once we have the legs and feet working properly, then the food basket in place for nourishment, the arms of the body for protection and head of community to direct and control the workings of all the components including itself, then the opportunity for the body of community to work is available. Otherwise with out all these components in place, either we are dysfunctional, imbalanced or else severely handicapped and compromised. Our aim, our goals, our purposes and our existence are all based on this Community model of ISKCON. Because ISKCON can only ever grow and expand from its humble Temple model beginnings, then the only way for ISKCON to grow is through the Community model that includes everyone. It's a universal principle, whereas the Temple model is not.

Only in this way, from humble beginnings of seed planting and growing and nurturing, Cow Protection and all its fabulous facilities for mankind, will ISKCON ever be able to have the body of communities stretched out around the planet in any meaningful future. The Temple model of ISKCON is already included in Community ISKCON but not vica versa. Community ISKCON does not exist in the Temple model and it's only the Temple model that is keeping ISKCON from expanding exponentially, as ISKCON was expected and designed to expand. Just because we witnessed the Temple model of ISKCON first does not mean that it takes priority over Community ISKCON. Just because we in ISKCON have followed Temple ISKCON exclusively also does not mean we should dispense of and not establish Community ISKCON. Community is the only way to expand ISKCON permanently. It's only within Community that each devotee will feel the freedom that we so desire, freedom from the capitalistic trap, freedom from the material energy and the freedom to serve, love and share Srila Prabhupada and then engage ultimately in a beautiful free loving relationship with Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

([This article has originally been posted in the Sunpradaya Sun](#))

