

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SPIRITUAL FOOD CSA
Part II
PRACTICAL LIFESTYLE CHANGES
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PREAMBLE:

Namaskar Divine Souls:

Sorry for the delay on completing the message we shared with You at the beginning of the season. Summer has its own demands, but finally here it is. Our willingness is to bring us all more together in this important times in which community building plays an ever increasingly important role, given the economic, environmental (read climate change) and socio-political challenges.

Our personal attitude towards the work we do uses as an inspiration one of The Buddha's most important precepts "Right Livelihood". This means that The work to earn one's living, that of our families and due contribution to society, should be of such nature that it results in no harm to any sentient being, nor causes unnecessary destruction, nor is useless for the basic necessities of life. This implies the principles of frugality and efficiency, which means no waste in any of its forms.

In Part I of the Philosophy of CSA given at the beginning of the season, we offered to give some examples of the practical effects and lifestyle changes that may be attributed to the CSA. These are best understood by looking at the ethical principles that are the foundation for the philosophy.

They are – nonviolence (ahimsa) – truthfulness (satya) – non misappropriating (asteya) – self-restraint (brahmacharya – and non hoarding (aparigraha). These five principles, which come from yoga teachings will foster harmony with our fellow humans, sentient beings and the environment. Besides those, purity (saucha), santosha (contentment), character guiding discipline (tapas), self-knowledge (swadyaya), surrender to God (ishwara pranidhana), are the five principles that will foster inner peace within ourselves. *(These are the yamas and niyamas, the first 2 steps of the Raja system of Yoga by Patanjali.)*

The lifestyle changes resulting from our participation in the SFCSA start with changing the habit of eating. This could mean more cooking at home for the family (could be a big change in some cases, but a beautiful labor of love) fitting perfectly under the discipline principle (tapas) and the practice of Karma (action) Yoga. This has several offshoots - the first being eating what is provided by the farmer and another eating according to the seasons, which is part of a natural health-giving law. No more going to the grocery store and buying what our taste buds dictate, therefore eating not for pleasure but for real nutrition. That does not mean we have to suffer but it means we have to research or rely on the team work (yahoo group of the CSA) to find recipes that will make the use of the produce that comes in the CSA, even those we are not familiar with.

This can become a new and wonderful experience for the whole family. Unfamiliar produce will make it more challenging or fascinating depending on how we choose to perceive it. On the other hand when we eat out in restaurants etc, we eat food whose origin we don't know, and that may be grown under exploitative conditions or be carriers of not only toxic elements (pesticides etc.) but negative energy of suffering laborers in the fields, handlers, preparers, etc. To some, the expense and additional stress waiting in line for a table, loud voices, etc, are also not ideal for a peaceful, appetizing, nurturing meal.

The new modality of picking our vegetables only on the established one day a week between certain hours, in a fixed location, means planning our day and our route, getting familiarized with

rush hour, traffic patterns etc. No more easy stopping at any grocery store on the way and buying at the most convenient location and time.

Of course the upside is that the CSA model forces us to develop more awareness, concentration and discipline which are useful for all of our daily activities.

Evidently it is mounting to a lot of inconveniences, some would say even sacrifice ! They are right, because sacrifice comes from the word sacred. It is the conviction that we are doing something that is in agreement with the natural, spiritual and cosmic laws, which is a response to the impulse of the soul prompted by the spirit, that inspires us to choose the CSA option.

The “sacrifices” don’t stop here, There are other “sacrifices” that come with participation in an innovative, economic, morally-based modality like a CSA. For example, as a policy of solidarity for our fellow members it is suggested that when You pick up Your produce from the bins, take the ones that are most accessible, without choosing the best, which would mean leaving Your neighbor with the ones that are not the best. This doesn’t mean to pick the worst, but to allow life and circumstances to determine who gets what. This correlates to another, perhaps the most important practice in Yoga Ishwara Pranidhana – Surrender to God

Another change from ordinary practices is paying in advance for the whole year, or season, knowing that we run the risk of a bad crop due to weather or any other circumstance and that we would share in the loss. CSA members understand that this advance payment eliminates the risk that other farmers must take when they borrow money from the bank that would then need to be paid back even if it means losing the land or the loan collateral.

“Sacrifices” don’t stop here either. Our CSA involves Karma Yoga, selfless service. This is true volunteering, (no remuneration of any kind) There is no payment nor anything good for the resume. Would bagging beans be used for that purpose? Or setting up or pick up? Or washing the bins? (Although we must say that plenty of young members have earned community service hours for school requirements.)

Members are encouraged and most do participate! The reports are fantastic, as many have commented on the resulting benefit of such practice. One of the secrets is that when there is no ulterior motivation for an action but just the fulfillment of one’s Dharma – responsibility to oneself and to society - there is experience of real satisfaction that with time transforms into happiness. The realization comes that Happiness cannot be obtained from any external material or even immaterial source. These might bring excitement, or even temporary satisfaction but not the true lasting happiness, inherent to our spiritual nature. The reason is that excitement may promote imbalance, and temporary satisfaction may result in a subsequent sense of loss.

So we can see that these practices have multiple benefits, i.e. that inconveniences turn into benefits. In contrast, in ordinary situations providers (chain stores for example) are motivated by profit making, rather than simply earning a living, (sometimes this is forced by law to compensate shareholders) and customers may be lured by deceptive practices and apparent low prices, We say apparent because the environment and workers pay for the difference in price in addition to paying the consequences of breaking natural, spiritual and cosmic laws. Selfish driven behavior leads not only to problems in the world but to isolation and separateness, which are sources of great suffering as they translate to depression and anxiety, which, along with violence, are among the most pervasive maladies today for humankind. In other words, business as usual, if it is self-centered and not other-centered can lead to dire consequences for the population at large and miss the opportunity to contribute to the upliftment of soul force. We believe that alternative models such as CSA offer the opportunity for right living that benefits all.