

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS & THE ROLE OF ISKCON IN ITS MITIGATION

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I. Introduction

The environment all over the world, and particularly in India, is passing through hard times. The desire to change the life style in order to lead a luxurious and comfortable life is responsible for the prevailing environmental crisis. The tendencies of the modern man witness that it is not going to be over until some firm step is taken by every individual in the society. The noise pollution, the water pollution and the air pollution along with the cultural pollution have made life difficult to such an extent that it has become difficult for the people to attain the goals they set and to live in peace. However, it cannot be denied that some of the organizations are conscious of the evil consequences of environmental pollution. The members of these organizations are well aware of the fact that until they are determined to root out the environmental crisis, it will continue to create obstacles in the path of those who are desirous of living in peace. One of such organizations is ISKCON (INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS). Through the lesson of piety of Lord Krishna, ISKCON is teaching its devotees to mitigate the environmental crisis, and thus, to motivate others to observe cleanliness and perfect hygiene. Obviously, the purpose of ISKCON is to communicate the message to the people that only religion can play a dominant role in mitigating the environmental crisis which has horribly engripped the entire world, and particularly India, the country which was once known for perfect peace, serenity and rich spiritual environment. In fact, at present, India is facing the problem of pollution which can be noticed more or less everywhere but particularly in the metropolitan cities where the rapidly increasing density of population has put a question mark on the existence of man. The situation is that due to air pollution it has become difficult to breathe properly; due to water pollution it has become difficult to get pure and drinkable water and due to sound pollution it has become difficult to enjoy even a single moment of peace.

II. Etymological Meaning & Classification of Environment

Word “environment” is most commonly used describing “natural”

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environment and means the sum of all living and non-living things that surround an organism, or group of organisms. Environment includes all elements, factors, and conditions that have some impact on growth and development of certain organism. Environment includes both biotic and abiotic factors that have influence on observed organism. Abiotic factors such as light, temperature, water, atmospheric gases combine with biotic factors (all surrounding living species). Environment often changes after some time and therefore many organisms have ability to adapt to these changes. However tolerance range is not the same with all species and exposure to environmental conditions at the limit of a certain organism's tolerance range represents environmental stress.

Environmentalism is very important political and social movement with goal to protect nature environment by emphasizing importance of nature role in protection of the environment in combination with various actions and policies oriented to nature preservation. Environmentalism is movement connected with environmental scientists and many of their goals. Some of these goals include reduction of world consumption of fossil fuels, reducing and cleaning up all sorts of pollution (air, sea, river...) with future goal of zero pollution, emphasis on clean, alternative energy sources that have low carbon emissions, sustainable use of water, land, and other scarce resources, preservation of existing endangered species, protection of biodiversity etc. Herskovits, the sociologist, classifies environment into two parts, namely, the physical environment and the cultural environment.

III. Etymological Meaning & Classification of Pollution

Pollution can be anything - which damages the ecosystem and destroys the delicate balance in the ecosystem. Thereby, it creates health hazards to human beings and animals besides damaging the ecosystem. For e.g., industries polluting air has set imbalance in composition of air and made it unworthy to breathe - thereby causing innumerable health problems to human and animal life. Extensive use of pesticides on crops has set imbalance in ecosystems of lands besides causing drinking water pollution. The literal meaning of 'pollution' is to pollute or to make foul. Pollution is undesired effect of desired human activities with which water, air and soil lose their natural quality by physical, chemical and biological processes, which causes adverse effect on human and living world. According to National Environmental Research Committee, "The adverse changes occurring from wastes, their disposal and release of energy originated from human activities is called pollution." Herskovits, the sociologist, classifies environment into two parts, namely, the physical environment and the cultural environment. The question is- Who is responsible for the environmental pollution? Obviously, man alone is responsible for it. At the root of entire pollution lie man's needs that force him to invent more and more in order to lead such a comfortable and luxurious life as knows hardly any manual work and struggle. The modern man is not ready to wait for

things and he lacks patience. He wants to get things at once without making proper efforts. While seeking this type of life-style, he causes pollution which is leading him to havoc. His insatiable lust for materialism has made him blind to his environmental limits. He believes that the environment is an opportunity for him to lead a princely life. In spite of being a rational creature he is unable to brood over the pollution which he is causing to himself as well as to his generations to come. While enjoying the luxurious modes of living he forgets that what he is doing is leading him towards pollution, and that these ways of living are taking him too far away from perfect health. He hardly has any idea that only clean surroundings, love of nature and simplicity can keep him safe and allow him to enjoy a perfect peaceful life.

Environmental pollution is now unanimously taken as a seriously threatening social problem which must be rooted out at every cost. This is the very reason why several environmentalists are working for the safeguard of pollution, and why the Governments of the various states are making efforts to teach the people the evil consequences of pollution. The formation of the environmental laws, environment awareness campaigns, passionate appeals to the people to make plantation, to save water, to use smokeless fuel etc. witness the Governments' consciousness to the safety of the environment. Apart from the Governments, some of the religious organizations are also making successful attempts to teach the people of the world at large the lessons of cleanliness, greenery and hygiene. In fact, some of the people like the French Sociologist Emile Durkheim classify the things into sacred and profane and believe that religion can play a vital role in rooting out the pollution, as religion is a great force. One such religious organization as is motivating its devotees to enjoy a clean and healthy environment is ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), the famous religious movement of the twentieth century pioneered by A. C. Bhaktivedant Swami Srida Prabhupada. Its role in the revival of the ancient vedantic culture and in the eradication of environmental pollution through the lessons of association of cleanliness and ritualistic activities is so immense.

IV. Types of Pollution

1-Noise or Sound Pollution

Noise, by definition, is unwanted sound. What is pleasant to some ears may be extremely unpleasant to others, depending on a number of factors. The natural environment contains many sources of noise – wind, volcanoes, oceans, and animal sounds are all familiar intrusions accepted at various levels. Man-made noises- from machines, automobiles, trains, planes, explosives and firecrackers etc.-are more contentious. Both kinds of noise affect sleep, hearing, communication, as well as mental and physical health. It is now increasingly understood that pollution from noise is an important component of

air pollution, which was previously understood as being limited to material pollution. Noise is an inseparable by-product of the industrial environment, which is increasing with advances in industrialization and urbanization. Even in non-industrial areas, noise from such activities as printing, auto-repair, grinding, affects those living in the immediate surroundings. Noise causes not only irritation or annoyance but also constricts the arteries, and increases the flow of adrenaline and forces the heart attacks and strokes. Health experts are of the opinion that excessive noise can also lead to neurosis and nervous breakdown. Noise travels through air and hence it is measured in ambient air quality level. Noise is measured in decibels. Experts believe that continuous noise levels in excess of 90 decibels.

2-Water Pollution

When toxic substances enter lakes, streams, rivers, oceans and other water bodies, they get dissolved or lie suspended in water or get deposited on the bed. This results in the pollution of water whereby the quality of the water deteriorates, affecting aquatic ecosystems. Today, many people dump their garbage into streams, lakes, rivers and seas, thus, making water bodies the final resting place of bottles, plastics and other household products. The various substances that we use for keeping our houses clean add to water pollution as they contain harmful chemicals. In the past, people mostly used soaps made from animal and vegetable fat for all types of washing. But most of today's cleaning products are synthetic detergents and come from the petrochemical industry. Most detergents and washing powders contain phosphates, which are used to soften the water among other things. These and other chemicals contained in washing powders affect the health of all forms of life in the water. The effects of water pollution are not only devastating to people but also to animals, fish and birds. Polluted water is unsuitable for drinking, recreation, agriculture and industry. It diminishes the aesthetic quality of lakes and rivers. More seriously, contaminated water destroys aquatic life and reduces its reproductive ability. Eventually, is a hazard to human health and nobody can escape the effects of water pollution.

3-Air Pollution

One of the formal definitions of air pollution is as follows: "The presence in the atmosphere of one or more contaminants in such quality and for such duration as is injurious, or tends to be injurious, to human health or welfare, animal or plant life." Air pollution causes health problems and it can also damage the environment. Modernisation and progress have led to air getting more and more polluted over the years. Industries, vehicles, increase in the population and urbanization are some of the major factors responsible for air pollution. Thermal power plants, cement industries, steel industries, refineries, petrochemicals and mines are unanimously taken as responsible for causing air pollution. Air pollution results from a variety of causes, not all

of which are within human control. Dust storms in desert areas and smoke from forest fires and grass fires contribute to chemical and particulate pollution of the air. Some of the major air pollutants are- Carbon monoxide, Carbon dioxide, Chlorofluorocarbons, lead, ozone and nitrogen oxide.

4- Chemical Pollution

Like the other forms of environmental pollution, the chemical pollution is also a seriously threatening form of pollution. As the name suggests, it is the type of pollution which is caused by the excessive use or misuse of various types of chemicals. As we know, the modern age is characterized by several processes such as, globalization, westernization, industrialization. In all the industries several harmful chemicals are used as a result of which the chemical pollution is caused. In some parts of the world, the bodies of whales and dolphins washing ashore are so highly contaminated that they qualify as toxic waste and have to be specially disposed of. There are many different sources of chemical pollution, including:

- ◆ Domestic sewage
- ◆ Industrial discharges
- ◆ Seepage from waste sites
- ◆ Atmospheric fallout
- ◆ Domestic run-off
- ◆ Accidents and spills at sea
- ◆ Operational discharges from oil rigs
- ◆ Mining discharges
- ◆ Agricultural run-off

5- Cultural Pollution

Cultural pollution is another prevailing form of pollution in India. It is indeed shocking to note that the people and environmentalists are worried about the natural or physical pollution, but they hardly brood over the cultural pollution. On the basis of the regional level the cultural pollution can be further sub-classified as the pollution at the local level, at the state level, at the national level and at the global level; and on the basis of source it includes population pollution, agricultural pollution, mining pollution, industrial pollution, vehicular pollution, Metropolitan-pollution and nuclear radiation pollution. The fact is that the environmental pollution in each of the above-mentioned forms is at the peak these days, and that if serious steps for its eradication are not taken, very soon in future it will pollute the whole social system to such an extent that life will be scarce and it will be difficult for man to breathe properly and to exist. However, it cannot be denied that the most threatening form of pollution that has shaken the roots of the ancient culture is the cultural pollution. The cultural pollution includes social pollution in the form of crimes, such as, snatching, rape, murder, kidnapping, robbery etc.; economic pollution in the

form of poverty and unemployment; religious pollution in the form of violence and religious outrage; political pollution in the form of the deterioration of the political values and criminalization of politics, and moral pollution in the form of corruption, dishonesty, dissembling, bribery, cheating etc. All this has created a danger to the existence of man. The physical environmental pollution is apparent in the form of air, water and noise pollution while the cultural pollution is prevalent in the form of the people's imbibing the traits of the other cultures as a result, the ancient Indian culture is going to lose its originality. If the Indian culture continues to degrade with the same speed and degree, it is likely to lose its existence on the earth. The question is- Who is responsible for the environmental pollution? Obviously, man alone is responsible for it. At the root of entire pollution lie man's needs that force him to invent more and more in order to lead such a comfortable and luxurious life as knows hardly any manual work and struggle. The modern man is not ready to wait for things and he lacks patience. He wants to get things at once without making proper efforts. While seeking this type of life-style, he causes pollution which is leading him to havoc. His insatiable lust for materialism has made him blind to his environmental limits. He believes that the environment is an opportunity for him to lead a princely life. In spite of being a rational creature he is unable to brood over the pollution which he is causing to himself as well as to his generations to come. While enjoying the luxurious modes of living he forgets that what he is doing is leading him towards pollution, and that these ways of living are taking him too far away from perfect health. He hardly has any idea that only clean surroundings, love of nature and simplicity can keep him safe and allow him to enjoy a perfect peaceful life.

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V. ISKCON

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), is also known as the Hare Krishna movement. It is worldwide non-sectarian movement dedicated to propagating love of God, particularly through the yoga practice of chanting holy names of God:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare !
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare !

Krishna is the Sanskrit word for God, the Supreme Lord. The society is based on the message of Vedic literature (India's vast legacy of spiritual knowledge), and upon the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the sixteenth century incarnation of Lord Krishna. Founded by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Parbhupada in 1966, ISKCON has steadily grown in popularity and influence and today is known and respected all over the world. ISKCON is a spiritual, cultural, and educational institution with branches throughout the world. At all ISKCON centers members congregate, and interested visitors learn about the movement's philosophy and spiritual practices. Anyone may participate in ISKCON activities, according to his or her particular interests and level of commitment. Grounded firmly in Vedic literatures, including Bhagavad Gita (spoken by Lord Krishna Himself) and Srimad-Bhagavatam, ISKCON'S philosophy gives explicit details about Lord Krishna (God), the nature of the self, and the relationship between the two. Vedic literatures, which are highly respected by scholars the world over, give practical guidelines for living a fulfilling, happy life and for evolving spirituality.

The sincerity and purity of ISKCON's members have enabled the movement to expand rapidly. ISKCON devotees are not Sunday religionists, but practitioners of Bhakti-yoga, the science of always engaging everything in service of God. This ancient yoga system is the art of spiritualizing all human activities, thereby remaining God conscious always. Initiated members chant the Lord's names (Hare Krishna Mahamantra- chant of great deliverance) for a minimum of 1-1/2 to 2 hours per day as a regular meditation. This is called mantra meditation. Those who have taken the vow of initiation also refrain from meat-eating, intoxication, illicit sex, and gambling. ISKCON's lay, uninitiated congregation today numbers over fifty million worldwide, and is still growing. Currently, ISKCON is hundreds of thousands strong, with over 400 centers worldwide, self-sufficient farming communities, movies, recording studios, publishing companies, restaurants, a scientific organization, and even its own school system. By sincerely cultivating bona fide spiritual science, we can be free from anxiety and come to a state of pure, unending, blissful

consciousness in this life time. We are not our bodies, but eternal spirit souls, parts and parcels of God (Krishna). As such, we are all brothers, and Krishna is ultimately our common father. Krishna is eternal, all knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, all attractive and all pleasing. He is the seed giving father of all living beings, and He is sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation. The Absolute Truth is contained in the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in the history of mankind. The essence of the Vedas is found in the Bhagavad-gita, a literal record of Krishna's words. We should learn the Vedic knowledge from a genuine/bona-fide spiritual master- one who has no selfish motives and whose mind is firmly fixed on Krishna.

ISKCON has absorbed many western influences and maintains mandirs (temples) in more countries of the world than any other Hindu sect. Unlike other branches of Hinduism, it is actively evangelical, seeking converts throughout the world. **Ravindra Swarup** in his research paper entitled '**ISKCON AND VARNASRAMA-DHARMA: A MISSION UNFULFILLED**' observes about the mission of ISKCON: "On the eleventh of July, 1966, in New York, Srila Prabhupada incorporated the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. By then, Prabhupada had already discovered an audience for his exposition of Srimad Bhagavatam, an exposition he characterised as 'a cultural presentation for the respiritualisation of the entire human society' (Bhag. Canto 1, Preface). In a further step toward the culture of 'respiritualisation', he established ISKCON. ISKCON was to be an exemplary society, within which the culture of Srimad-Bhagavatam would be realised and by which it would be spread to the rest of the world." ISKCON members refer to their organization as the "ISKCON family." Everyone is either a "godbrother" or a "godsister," and Prabhupada is referred to as the "spiritual father" of all ISKCON devotees. GBC leaders use the analogy of the ISKCON family to reinforce the concept of unity. This became a form of denial as the organization disintegrated in Prabhupada's absence. The idealized concept of the ISKCON Family was much better than the reality. However, some of the scholars are not ready to accept ISKCON as a family. **Schaeff** explains, 'ISKCON is a family in which membership is dependent on playing by rather rigid rules and behaving according to established norms. This kind of corporation is a "family" whose main mode of operating is control. Thus, acceptance in the family is won by learning the right thing to do and doing it (just as in the addictive family). The main thing learned about family from the promise of the organization is that membership is conditional upon not being oneself and following one's own path. The other lesson learned is to keep attuned outside oneself and to be constantly vigilant about those things one needs to do to stay in the company's good graces and win approval. Control and conformity were requirements for membership in the ISKCON family. The family had rigid expectations for every aspect of life, including attendance of temple services and functions,

participation in temple jobs, giving up outside activities, standards for child rearing, what to wear, how to eat, and even recommendations of what to think and how to pray. Non-participation and non-compliance could be punished or simply disapproved. That disapproval often came in the form of “chastisement,” or correction from a more tenured devotee. Some had financial assistance cut off, others were physically or emotionally abused; one man was murdered for his dissidence. To say the least, members who were unable to meet an organization’s codes found themselves living in an inhospitable and unloving environment. As a result, the more the time is passing, the more branches of ISKCON all over the world are being opened. Not only this, all fascinated by the spiritually rich and sound environment many of the people of the world are settling down in the various parts of India to lead a serene and peaceful life. No doubt, often they find themselves disturbed and diverted by the pollutants, but with their own determination and efforts they create for themselves a pollution-free environment and thus, enjoy a perfect cleanliness, health and hygiene.

VI. PRABHUPADA: The Founder of ISKCON

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada appeared in this world in 1896 in Calcutta, India. He first met his spiritual master, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Gosvami, in Calcutta in 1922. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, a prominent religious scholar and the founder of sixty-four Gaudiya Mathas (Vedic institutes) in India, liked this educated young man and convinced him to dedicate his life to teaching Vedic knowledge. Srila Prabhupada became his student and, in 1933, his formally initiated disciple. At their first meeting Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati requested Srila Prabhupada to broadcast Vedic knowledge in English. In the years that followed, Srila Prabhupada wrote a commentary on the Bhagavad-gita, assisted the Gaudiya Matha in its work, and, in 1944, started Back to Godhead, an English fortnightly magazine. Single-handedly, Srila Prabhupada edited it, typed the manuscripts, checked the galley proofs, and even distributed the individual copies. The magazine is now being continued by his disciples in the West. In 1950 Srila Prabhupada retired from married life, adopting the vanaprastha (retired) order to devote more time to his studies and writing. He traveled to the holy city of Vrndavana, where he lived in humble circumstances in the historic temple of Radha- Damodara. There he engaged for several years in deep study and writing. He accepted the renounced order of life (sanyasa) in 1959. At Radha-Damodara, Srila Prabhupada began work on his life’s masterpiece: a multivolume commentated translation of the eighteen-thousand-verse Srimad-Bhagavatam (Bhagavata Purana). He also wrote Easy Journey to Other Planets. After publishing three volumes of the Bhagavatam, Srila Prabhupada came to the United States, in September 1965, to fulfill the mission of his spiritual master. Subsequently, His Divine Grace wrote more than fifty volumes of authoritative commentated translations and summary studies of the philosophical and religious classics of

India.

When he first arrived by freighter in New York City, Srila Prabhupada was practically penniless. Only after almost a year of great difficulty did he establish the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, in July of 1966. Before he passed away on November 14, 1977, he had guided the Society and seen it grow to a worldwide confederation of more than one hundred asramas, schools, temples, institutes, and farm communities. In 1972 His Divine Grace introduced the Vedic system of primary and secondary education in the West by founding the gurukula school in Dallas, Texas. Since then his disciples have established similar schools throughout the United States and the rest of the world. Srila Prabhupada also inspired the construction of several large international cultural centers in India. The center at Sridhama Mayapur is the site for a planned spiritual city, an ambitious project for which construction will extend over many years to come. In Vrndavana are the magnificent Krsna-Balarama Temple and International Guesthouse, gurukula school, and Srila Prabhupada Memorial and Museum. There is also a major cultural and educational center in Bombay. Major centers are planned in Delhi and in a dozen other important locations on the Indian subcontinent. Srila Prabhupada's most significant contribution, however, is his books. Highly respected by scholars for their authority, depth, and clarity, they are used as textbooks in numerous college courses. His writings have been translated into over fifty languages. The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, established in 1972 to publish the works of His Divine Grace, has thus become the world's largest publisher of books in the field of Indian religion and philosophy.

In just twelve years, despite his advanced age, Srila Prabhupada circled the globe fourteen times on lecture tours that took him to six continents. Yet this vigorous schedule did not slow his prolific literary output. His writings constitute a veritable library of Vedic philosophy, religion, literature, and culture.

VII. Objectives of the Study

- ◆ To study and explore the ways of living of the ISKCON devotees
- ◆ To learn about the rituals they observe in order to develop closeness to Lord Krishna
- ◆ To study their faith in simplicity and spirituality
- ◆ To observe their healthy association with environment
- ◆ To learn about their approach to the increasing air, water and noise pollution
- ◆ To explore the ways they adopt in order to mitigate the pollution
- ◆ To understand their contribution in the revival of the ancient

Vaishnav Hindu culture

- ◆ To know about their love of nature and greenery
- ◆ To assess their pollution free environment

VIII. Hypothesis

- ◆ Environment is divisible into the physical environment and the cultural one
- ◆ The environmental pollution has made the life of man
- ◆ The physical environmental pollution is apparent in the form of air, water and noise pollution while the cultural pollution is apparent in the people's imbibing the other cultures of the world
- ◆ Man alone is responsible for the environmental pollution, as his unlimited and insatiable desires force him to pollute the environment
- ◆ Religion is a great magnetic force to root out every social problem
- ◆ ISKCON is making a tremendous contribution in mitigating and rooting out both the types of environmental pollution
- ◆ The ISKCON devotees being the lovers of Lord Krishna strictly follow the rules of cleanliness and hygiene
- ◆ They keep their surroundings all neat and clean, and their disciplined ways of living help them enjoy a healthy environment
- ◆ Their sense of piety and deity worship motivate others to observe cleanliness
- ◆ The ISKCON is a great motivating factor , as it brings the people of the world closer to the spirituality, nature and Lord Krishna.

IX. Methodology

The research paper is an empirical study of 100 ISKCON devotees of Mayapur in West Bengal. **Mayapur** is located on the banks of the Ganges river, at the point of its confluence with the Jalangi, near Navadvip, West Bengal, India, 130 km north of Kolkata (Calcutta). It is The Head Quarters of ISKCON and is considered a holy place by a number of other traditions within Hinduism, but is of special significance to followers of Gaudiya Vaishnavism as the birthplace of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, regarded as a special incarnation of Krishna in the mood of Radha. **Mayapur** is located on the banks of the Ganges river, at the point of its confluence with the Jalangi, near Navadvip, West Bengal, India, 130 km north of Kolkata (Calcutta). It is The Head Quarters of ISKCON and is considered a holy place by a number of other traditions within Hinduism, but is of special significance to followers of

Gaudiya Vaishnavism as the birthplace of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, regarded as a special incarnation of Krishna in the mood of Radha. The headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) have been located in Mayapur since the 1970s. In addition, there are a number of other Gaudiya Vaishnava organisations in Mayapur, such as the Gaudiya Math. The town is heavily centred around this particular Vaishnava religious tradition, officially known as the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya Sampradaya, with temples devoted to Radha and Krishna or Gaura-Nitai throughout. The investigator made the selection through the random sampling method and adopted the participant observation method for the purpose. He prepared a schedule with 75 questions in it on the various aspects. Of them there were 10 questions were on environment and their consciousness to it. It is amazing to note that each of the 100 units showed their interest in the maintenance of environment. Similarly, each of them was sure that religion is closely associated with environmental cleanliness. Of the 100 units 88 believe that the people's straying from the religious values is responsible for the increasing environmental pollution in India, 2 of them hold the idea that the environmental pollution has nothing to do with religion, 9 remained neutral and 1 unit of information showed ignorance. When they were asked how they manage their surroundings, 51 replied that they managed their surroundings by having greenery, making plantation, growing flowery plants and by not allowing the vehicles throwing smoke in the ISKCON campus, 47 replied that they did so by passing most of their time in meditation, performance of rituals in order to please Lord Krishna, reading of the Srimad Bhagwat Gita and by enjoying chanting. Again it is conspicuous to note that each of the units of information blame man and his irresponsible attitude to his surroundings for the environmental pollution. Similarly, they hold the idea that the religious organisations like ISKCON are playing a great role in mitigating the pollution. 87 of them consider the importance of ISKCON in teaching the people of the world the lesson of clean surroundings and healthy environment while the other 13 devotees do not agree to it and say that it is the environmentalists and not ISKCON that are working for the mitigation of the environmental pollution by discovering new devices of pollution mitigation. They also believe that there are social and scientific factors of pollution, and so it can be mitigated only through the scientific means. It is the observation that the ISKCON devotees are making a tremendous contribution in the protection of environment, and that through their sacred modes of living and working they are teaching the people of the world the lesson of clean, hygienic and healthy surroundings.

X. ISKCON'S Contribution in the Protection of Environment

ISKCON is making a tremendous contribution in the protection of environment. Some of the ways it has adopted for the purpose are- the protection of the cows, having greenery in the campuses and around them, making plantation regularly, growing various types of flowers, maintaining

peace in the campus, motivating the people for spiritual meditation, making pure and distilled water available to the visitors, sacred activities etc In Mayapur the library, with 6000 books, provides an orderly environment for study. The next thing the ISKCON does to protect the environment is the ban of mobile phones in the campus. A heavy penalty is made on the person who is caught with a mobile. It does not allow its members to eat non-vegetarian food or to kill animals and birds. Spiritual upliftment is the most appealing thing that it suggests its devotees to observe for the sake of the protection of the environment. The following appeal of Swami Prabhupada reveals ISKCON'S true contribution in the protection of environment: What is the true path to happiness for the whole world? His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of the Hare Krishna Movement, has said that the happiness of mankind is directly connected to the happiness of the cows. He stated "Because the poor animals are always in anxiety, humanity is also put in anxiety by different strains of hot and cold wars." These simple, gentle creatures eat only grass and produce nutritious satisfying milk, like a gift from God to the world. And out of love for the world herself the cow produces more milk than her calf can drink. Even her stool and urine have unlimited agricultural and medicinal uses. We also learn from the saints and sages that she is dear to God Himself. At New Govardhana, our mission is to show the spiritual and material benefits that result from protecting and caring for the cows. To do this, we want to make New Govardhana a place in the world where everyone can see this demonstrated practically. A place where anyone, regardless of religious persuasion, can experience the peace and satisfaction that comes from personally caring for cows - our mothers who have been sustaining us with milk since we were small children. Is there anyone who can say that they have not been nourished throughout their life by that ambrosial elixir called milk? And practically demonstrating our gratitude to her, not only will we receive her blessings, but God himself will smile upon us in appreciation. Of this there is no doubt. In 2009, ISKCON New Govardhana invested over \$250,000 for the welfare and protection of the cows. (Of course this was in addition to the monthly overhead of \$50,000 for maintaining the New Govardhana temple and farm community.) Projects undertaken have included excavation of new dams and causeways so the cows have ample water and easy access during flooding. We have constructed fourteen kilometers of top grade fencing, essential for pasture improvement and herd maintenance. We have purchased a new tractor, and have erected a barn to give shelter to the cows during inclement weather. We are establishing a walking trail for the public to come and see the cows happy in their habitat. We have beautified this environment with newly planted gardens as well as hundreds of fruit trees. Veterinarian care, feed, equipment, supplemental minerals and medicine are also significant expenses in the care of the cows. We also provide for those who care for the cows full time. Would you like to experience the happiness that comes from showing affection to Krishna's own cows? Consider

this a personal invitation. We would like to announce the inauguration of our New Govardhana Adopt a Cow program. It's a chance to get up close and personal with these beautiful and divine creatures by personally contributing to their care.

The appeal of Srila Prabhupada for the protection of cow and other birds and animals still has its effect on the ISKCON devotees, and they practise the things taught by him in order to protect the environment. It will not be any exaggeration to say that every activity of these devotees is environment oriented, and they try their best to keep their environment away from pollution, and thus, to teach others several ways of how to protect the environment. Indeed, now ISKCON has become a magnetic force, and that is why, the spiritual-peace and clean environment seekers from the various parts of the world are joining it in a large number. ISKCON provides them a platform both to develop Krishna-consciousness and to live quite peacefully amidst the clean surroundings that guarantee them full privacy to make spiritual meditation. ISKCON is the platform where everything is sacred, pure and dignified and which does not allow anything which falls in the category of profane.

XI. Findings

- ◆ The environment in the world is passing through hard times, as it has lost its actual values and the various pollutants have disfigured it in such a way that the modern man finds it difficult to breathe and to live peacefully.
- ◆ All the forms of environmental pollution, such as, the sound pollution, the water pollution, the air pollution, the chemical pollution and the cultural pollution are apparent in India.
- ◆ Man and his unlimited and uncontrolled desires to lead a comfortable and luxurious life are responsible for pollution.
- ◆ Religion divides the things between sacred and profane, and relates only to sacred.
- ◆ Pollution is now the most threatening social problem which requires some immediate solution.
- ◆ Apart from the environmentalists and social workers, some religious organizations are also working for the protection of environment and for the mitigation of pollution.
- ◆ ISKCON is a religious sect founded in the United States in 1966 by A.C. Bhakti Vedant Swami Srila Prabhupada. It is based on Vedic scriptures. At all the branches of ISKCON, groups engage in joyful

- ◆ Chanting of 'Hare Krishna' and other mantras based on the name of the Hindu god Krishna. The ISKCON devotees usually wear saffron robes and practice vegetarianism and celibacy.
- ◆ In the modern age ISKCON is playing a dominant role in teaching the lesson of clean and hygienic environment.
- ◆ Its devotees contribute to the protection of the physical environment by spiritualistic meditation, ritualistic approach, fascinating greenery and beautiful fragrant flowery plants and shrubs, cow-worship, sanitation, protection of cows, ban on mobiles in the campus etc.
- ◆ They are working especially for the protection of the cultural pollution by practicing Vedic culture which strictly keeps them away several materialistic tendencies, such as, non-vegetarian food, drinking, illicit sex and monetary corruption.

XII. Bibliography

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