

GOVARDHAN ECO VILLAGE

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Ever heard of chemical food? Look no further, it's right there in your plate, everyday! Nearly 3,000 additives and preservatives are used in food processing industry today to preserve and alter. Even as the natural produce grows right off the soil, it is heavily contaminated by various chemicals. Agriculture today is practically all about growing food from petrol! Post world war, the highly capital intensive ammunition industry needed an alternate market to supply all of its toxic chemicals. And thus was born the chemical fertilizer industry.

Though increasing the yield in the initial years, these chemicals have proven to be detrimental to the fertility of the soil, making it highly toxic and unproductive. With progress in technology, the

power to manipulate the subtle arrangements in nature was discovered through practices like Genetic Engineering. This saw the rise of genetically modified seeds, which are 'tailored' to have greater resistance against pests and higher yields. But they too are heavily dependent on chemical based fertilizers and herbicides. In just a few decades petroleum based farming has become the de-facto, overriding centuries old traditional practices. Consequently we see today

that the food we eat is literally a broth of chemicals. With decreasing yields and decaying resistance against pests, even by the much acclaimed genetically modified crops, a global food crisis seems imminent. History has proven that crisis like these have always been the impetus for wars, destroying populations and economies. Is the world ready to face another global economic meltdown?

Let's try to get to the root of this crisis - Food, the very sustenance of mankind. In spite of all the advancements in technology, the basis of all farming is still Nature, in the form of soil, air, water, rains etc. Until we find a method of farming that is in harmony with Nature, we cannot expect long term sustainability. Chemical usage and productivity are not directly

proportional in organic systems. For example, performance enhancing drugs may increase the stamina and strength in athletes, but usage beyond certain limit proves detrimental to the health of the athletes. Similarly chemical usage may increase the soil productivity temporarily, but prolonged use doesn't ensure sustained productivity and may cause permanent damage to soil. Any system in nature that has an innate capacity to produce also has a natural



ECO-SUTRAS

need to rejuvenate, be it humans, animals, plants or even soil. Failing to realize this essential fact, chemical based farming has practically ruined farmlands all over the world. The only way to rejuvenate soil capacity is by switching to more natural farming practices.

Organic farming, a form of agriculture that relies on traditional practices like use of native seeds, crop rotation, biological pest control, green manure etc, is a natural way of farming that not only ensures good yields, but also maintains soil productivity. In his book "The Gift of Good Land", Wendell Berry states "An organic farm, properly speaking, is not one that uses certain methods and substances and avoids others; it is a farm whose structure is formed in imitation of the structure of a natural system that has the integrity, the independence and the

benign dependence of an organism." This concept of treating natural systems as an integral organism is a vital concept in Vedic culture. It treats Mother Nature as a person, who gifts us the required necessities of life when we lead a life in harmony with the laws of ecology. The Vedic culture treats farming not as a means to exploit Nature for satisfying one's demands,

but as a means of fulfilling all of one's needs by harmonious coexistence. Bringing about this paradigm shift is the need of the hour.

At Govardhan Eco Village (GEV), we are constantly

striving to bring about this cultural revolution by blending the wisdom of traditional farming practices and the convenience of modern technology. Farming here is completely done employing native seed varieties, which are a rarity today. With an objective to create a seed bank for rice, many rare native varieties have been planted this year. Using manure and other chemical free alternatives like vermiwash, the requirements for chemical fertilizers and pesticides is completely avoided. Bull-driven ploughing systems are being used demonstrating the utility and importance of cow-protection. Simultaneously some of the modern practices like micro sprinklers for vegetables are also being

employed, creating a perfect harmony of traditional and modern technologies. Like all changes in the past, this culture of Eco-friendly living has to be brought about by first changing our attitude towards nature, and organic farming is the first step towards this change.



FIVE REASONS TO GO ORGANIC

- 1. Clean food**
No residues of toxic pesticides and fertilizers in the food you eat
- 2. Clean environment**
Organic farming releases less greenhouse gases than non-organic farming - choosing organic, local and seasonal food can significantly reduce carbon footprint
- 3. Cow protection**
Organic farming techniques employs bulls for ploughing, protecting them from slaughter
- 4. Wildlife protection**
Organic farms are havens for wildlife and provide homes for bees, birds and butterflies.
- 5. GM-free**
Genetically modified crops and ingredients are banned under organic standards thus providing natural produce to the consumers

Kids day out

Childhood is an age of learning when one's grasping power is at the peak. Utilizing this natural potency, many novel teaching techniques can be employed to expand

the depth of understanding in children and simultaneously providing a stimulating and fun filled learning experience. And such out-of-the-box learning is the way to go at Lady Northcote Hindu Orphanage(LNHO) at GEV.

On 7th and 8th of August this year, the students of LNHO were taken on an educational tour to Jawar, the residence of the famous fort, located 70km north of Nasik road. The objective behind this exercise was to give the kids an exposure to varieties of situations, incidences, people and societies and thus providing them a fantastic opportunity for experiential learning. The students were given prior information about all the places they would be visiting, so that they can prepare by reading and collecting information about the same.

On the way to Jawar, the students were taken to Hanuman point and Sunset point, two famous mountain tops, that attracts a lot of tourists to that area. Their visit to the Dabos water falls, added more adventure to their nature excursion.

Upon reaching the Jawar's historic fort the children were awestruck at the beauty and the amazing architectural ingenuity. In spite of the monsoon showers accompanying the troop all along, the enthusiasm of the students was not at all dampened.

Later the kids visited the Bharatiya Agro Industries Foundation (BAIF) facility in Jawar and got a first-hand experience in organic farming.

Mr Sanjay Patil of BAIF spent time educating the students about various trends in organic farming. The students were given a demonstration in preparation of vermiwash, a serum harvested from earthworms, which has natural antifungal properties and can act as an organic supplement for pesticides.

Later the kids also observed the preparation of Dasparni, another organic pesticide, made from the extracts of leaves of ten different trees. Jivamruta, an organic compost used for nourishing and culturing plants was also shown.

The BAIF facility in Jawar also displays a host of organic and traditional farming techniques, which are very rare to find in the post industrial age. Seeing the exhibition of rare aromatic plants, medicinal plants and fruit trees, the students got an opportunity to see a live demonstration of what they study in their books.

On the way back the students visited a 'Wadi', a self-employment project where in people from rural areas develop financial sustenance by different farming ventures. In this particular village, different youth with modest academic background, started a seed bank preserving varieties of traditional rice. The speciality of these seeds is that the harvest obtained from these native breeds is much more than the much sought after hybrid varieties. This inspirational example of developing self-sustenance from farming was very much appreciated by the kids. Overall in a fun-filled way, the kids at LNHO got their first lessons in organic farming defying the popular notion that learning can't be fun.



Oil Oil Everywhere

The recent ecological disaster in the Gulf of Mexico is still making ripples in the news. Dubbed as The Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, this ecological disaster is the largest marine oil spill in the history of petroleum industry. Triggered by an explosion in the drilling rig, the uncapped oil well spewed out a staggering 4.9 million barrels of crude oil, by the time the situation was brought under control nearly after 2 months. The total loss in the entire fiasco was estimated to be over \$12 billion. Financial losses aside, this disaster has caused major damage to marine and wildlife habitats in that area. Kayakers in the area of Grand Isle reported seeing dolphins blowing oil through their blow holes as they swam through oil-slick waters. As of August 13, 4,768 dead animals had been collected,



Heavily oiled Brown Pelicans wait to be cleaned

including 4,080 birds, 525 sea turtles, 72 dolphins and other mammals, and 1 reptile. What to speak of those not collected yet!

With protesters from ecological societies, welfare organizations, financial institutions and legal institutions condemning this catastrophe, the blame game has already begun. BP the oil company behind this disaster is now facing many lawsuits and claims for compensation. As the clean-up

act continues, it is time to reflect on the lesson we can learn from this disaster. Mankind has always depended on Mother Nature for its sustenance. But since the beginning of Industrial revolution, this relationship has turned into an exploitative one. Time and again Mother Nature has made her indignant protests in the form of hurricanes, droughts, forest fires and other natural disasters. Yet mankind has not changed its attitude. Real wisdom lies in learning to live in harmony with nature and with respect towards other inhabitants of this planet.



“What is the use of a house if you haven’t got a tolerable planet to put it on?”

Henry David Thoreau

ADDRESS

**Govardhan Eco Village, Galtare,
Hamrapur (P.O.), Wada (Taluka),
Thane(District) - 421303,
Maharashtra, India.**

Website: www.ecovillage.org.in

Email: contactus@ecovillage.org.in

**Telephone: +91 99301 41781,
+91 91672 04666**