



ISKCON Western India Division council Meet

ISKCON Western India Division Council (WIDC) Brahmachari Sanga was conducted recently at Govardha Ecovillage, Mumbai. It was a 2 day event in the serene and natural setting of GEV located near the Kohoj mountain ranges. The venue provided a naturally refreshing and spiritually enlivening experience to devotees participating from various cosmopolitan cities and rural centers in different parts of Maharashtra. The event was attended by 350 plus devotees from over 43 ISKCON centers.

Explaining the vision for this sanga, HG Gauranga Das, Chairman, WIDC, said, "The inspiration for this brahmachari sanga came from the EIDC brahmachari sanga which happens in Mayapur every year. We were inspired to follow in their footsteps last year and this is the second WIDC brahmachari sanga we organized at ISKCON Govardhan Eco Village (GEV). The gathering of hundreds of sincere, dedicated devotees in the renounced order giving shelter and hope to each other and hearing from experienced sannyasis and brahmacaris is a powerful element of Devotee Care. We hope that one day we can have a pan India and a global gathering of devotees in the renounced order spreading Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mission."

Day 1 : Srimad Bhagavatam Class by HH Bhakti Purushottam Swami Maharaj

The event began with the morning Srimad Bhagavatam Class by HH Bhakti Purushottam Swami Maharaj. He spoke from the section of *Teachings of Lord Kapila* describing the devotional service in three modes - goodness, passion and ignorance. The highlight of the class was the systematic presentation of the characteristics of the three types of Bhakti. He spoke about the separatist mentality (bhinna drk or prithak bhava) that exists in each of the three types of Bhakti. Then he explained about the nirguna or pure Bhakti.



Morning Breakfast

Contemplating on the systematic and application-oriented presentation in the class, the devotees departed from the temple hall for having their morning breakfast. After a short break of an hour, post breakfast, all the devotees assembled in the main lecture hall, which is located near the GEV goshala and bears a majestic panoramic view of the mountain ranges. A perfect sattvic setting for a long and uninterrupted spiritual discourse!

Talk on 'Artha Pravritti' by HH Devamrita Swami

The morning session was commenced by HH Devamrita Swami Maharaj. He spoke on the subject Artha Pravritti. Quoting from his book – Bhakti Bhava, he pressed the importance of developing emotions on spiritual plane for sustaining as a long life of monkhood. A life without meaning and spiritual love makes one feel despair which eventually drags one away from spirituality. He said bhakti is the perfection of emotional development.



Absorbed emotional state of being a servant is the aspiration of a true renunciant. The real wealth of a celibate is to develop the wealth of emotions for the Supreme (Bhakti Bhava). A monk without this wealth starts to feel a sense of limitedness or as being en-caged. He presented a very different perspective of lust. He said the lust of a servant is to engage everything in Krishna's service. A servant feels that I am incapable of actualizing all potential in Krishna's service. That is the lust of a servant. He further said that we are not anti – titles or anti-position in an institute. We just want to serve Krishna as He wants. It is our career to become servant of servant of servant.

The devotees were enlivened hearing the realizations of the stalwart sannyasi on how to sustain a long life of Brahmacharya,



Talk on Anartha Nivritti by HH Badrinarayan Swami

The next session conducted by HH Badrinarayan Swami was on Anartha Nivritti where He stressed how the simple life of a celibate in ashram can be favorable for practice of Krishna Consciousness.

At the same time he highlighted how the life of a householder is also honorable. For those who are inclined to find faults

with each other, he quoted a beautiful statement of HH Niranjana Swami Maharaj – “If one studies one's own heart one will find sufficient subject matter”.

In reply to a question on fault finding, he said that if one really wants to help others one must set a good example. He presented a graphical example of how material attachments are like arrows, that have pointed tips, that enter very easily but removing them is a tough job.

Responding to a question on identifying favorable setup for services, he shared his personal experience that how we may want to render some service at a particular place, but if Krishna sends us there immediately we may fail. Krishna prepares us to success by putting us through various settings which we may not like, but will provide opportunity for us to learn before we go to our desired setting. After hearing many more such jewel like statements, the devotees dispersed for lunch and after a short break again gathered for more nectar.

Afternoon Lunch Prasadam



Turning Points – Heart transforming experiences

In the post lunch session, in order to inspire the audience, the speakers were asked to speak on the turning points in their lives, which made them serious in spiritual life.

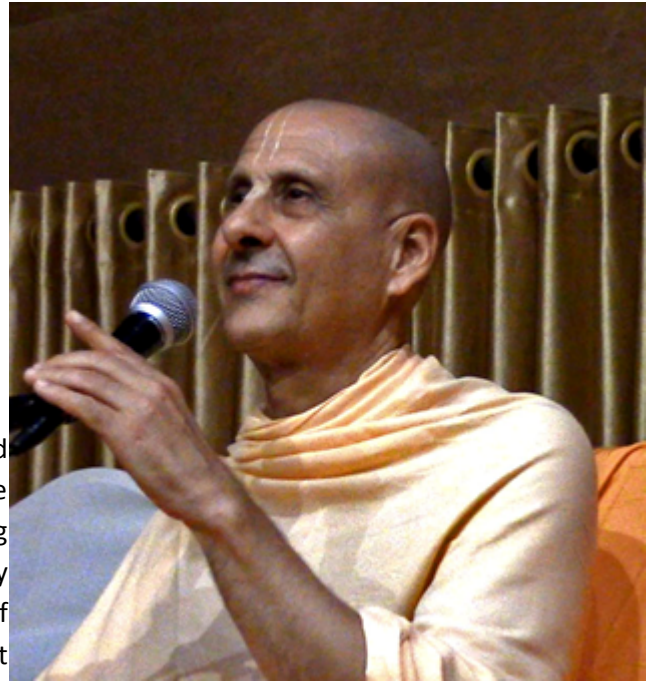
The first speaker to address was HH Bhakti Purushottam Swami. He mentioned that association with devotees was actually a turning point in his life.

He first met 2 Kannada devotees in a bus and they gave him a book to read. He got attracted to the well bound books with spiritual pictures. He started to feel greedy to know the subject matter of more of such books. Second turning point was meeting with HH Jayapataka Swami. The sight of a western person having marks of vaishnav tilak over his body and sitting on a simple wooden bed with out any mattress, convinced him about the authenticity of ISKCON sadhus. He said darshan of a great vaishnava brings change in heart. Another turning point was the meeting with the then HH Bhavanada Swami, inspired by whom he stayed back in temple, although he wanted to return to his home. Then when he started to assist HH Jayapataka Maharaj in preaching, he forgot everything about his home. In this way, he glorified the association of devotees.



The second speaker was HH Devamrita Swami. He started explaining with the heart transformation Srila Prabhupada experienced on the first meeting with Srila Bhakti Siddhanta Saraswati. He transformed from a nationalist to spiritualist. That is real initiation. Then he made a very beautiful statement – “Real initiation can happen before the ceremony, during the ceremony, after the ceremony or not at all.” Then he spoke about his transformative experience which occurred when he read the following statement of the page 2 of *Trancendental teaching of prahlad maharaj* – “The taste of sense gratification is the same no matter what body you have. So why to work so hard just to get the same taste that the cats and dogs are anyway getting”. After that he decided to read all the books of the swami whose name he could not even pronounce back then. Every day he read 4 hours, for 6 months at a stretch, even without meeting the devotees. In this way he narrated several of his beautiful experiences which drew him closer to be with devotees.

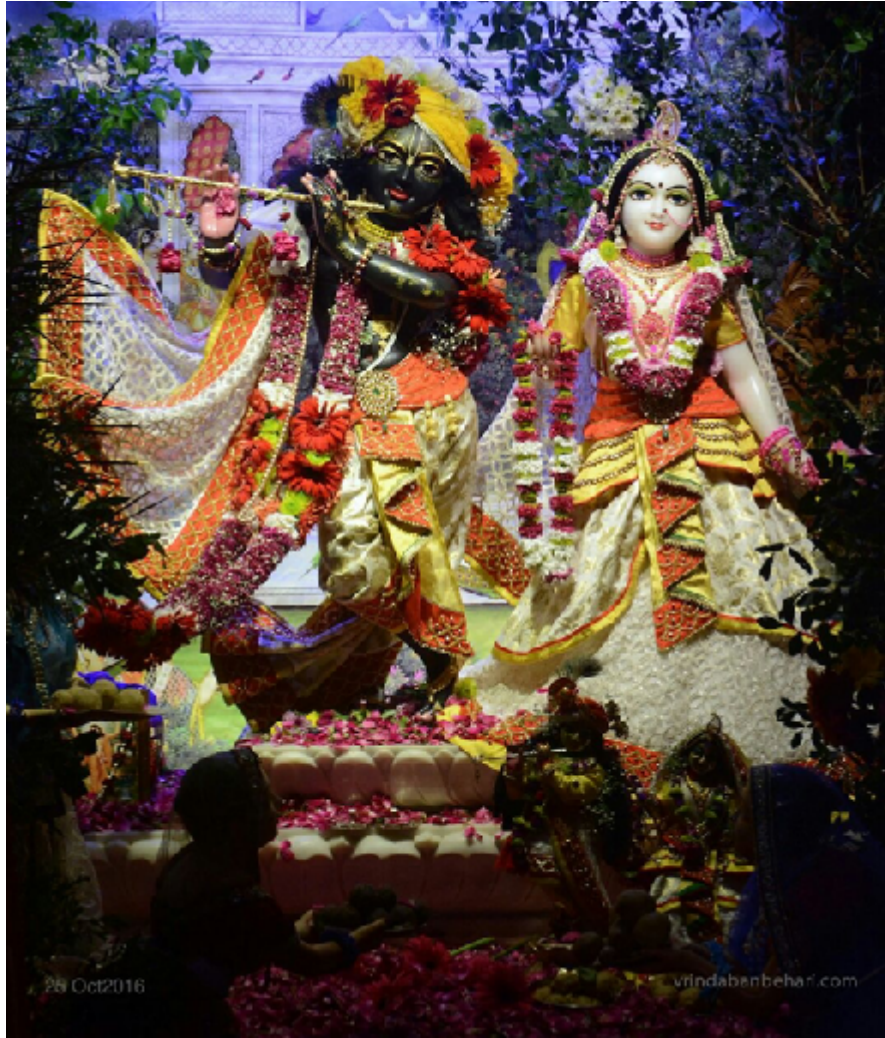
The third speaker was HH Radhanath Swami. He spoke about the dangers of kama, kamini and prathistha. The desire for these, results into becoming envious of those who have it in a better way. This may further result into committing offenses unto devotees and consecutively being disconnected from Krishna. He said that following the regulative principles is active surrender to Krishna. And the resultant consequence is that one attains the mercy of Krishna. When Krishna is pleased by us, we become attached to Krishna. To become the servant of the servant of the servant is what gives Krishna the greatest pleasure. To become a bramhachari in spirit means to become the servant of the servant.



Bramhacharya means “My life is for Krishna and I want nothing else”. A turning point in our life is when we become attached to pleasing Krishna and His devotees. Whatever we may know, but if we are not servant of servant of servant, we don’t know anything. The worst thing in spiritual life is to think that we are advanced and feel that others should also think that we are advanced. One goes nowhere. Just like if a wheel of a car is stuck in mud, the speedometer may show the speed to be increasing, but the car is going nowhere. Renunciation means to not think how I feel but to try to please Krishna.

Sharad Pournima celebrations

GEV celebrated sharad pournima in the evening. The beautiful darshan of Radha Vrindaban Behari were breathtaking. The devotees filled the temple hall and sat with rapt attention beholding the beautiful form of the Lord. HH Radhanath Swami led the Damodarastakam prayers. The devotionally surcharged ambiance of the temple vibrated with the ecstatic sound of devotees repeating the astakam in chorus following Maharaj. Others offered lamps to the Lord.



After having dinner, devotees took a tour of the replicas of the Vrindavan forest and the river Yamuna at GEV, which was artistically decorated by dioramas of pastimes of Lord Krishna. Filled with gratitude and remembering the spiritual experiences throughout the day, the devotees happily retired for the day.



DAY 2

The second day's program started with ecstatic morning mangal aarati, followed by tulsi aarti and japa. Then was morning darshan of Their Lordships which was followed by Guru Puja being lead by

BalGovind prabhu from ISKCON pune. It was followed by the Srimad Bhagavatam class by HG KamalLochan Pr, the temple president of ISKCON Mira Road.

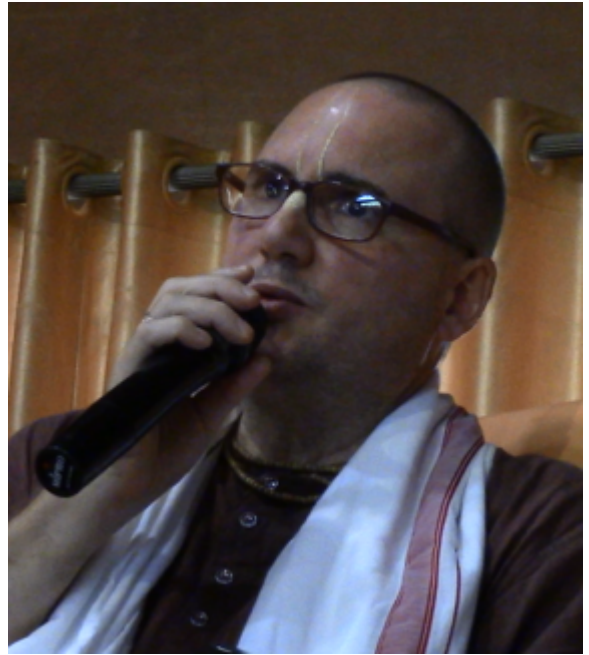
Srimad Bhagavatam class by HG Kamal Lochan Prabhu

Kamal Lochan Prabhu spoke on the *Prayers of Prahlad Maharaj*. He quoted prahlad maharaj - "one is put in the most regrettable condition of life because of combination with pleasing and displeasing circumstances and because of separation from them. Although there are many remedies by which to get out of miserable life, any such remedies in the material world are more miserable than the miseries themselves. The only remedy is to engage in the devotional service of the Lord." He said that to see misery in material happiness is knowledge. To see happiness in apparent misery in Krishna consciousness is self realisation. The



mode of passion is one in which one enjoys his suffering. The mode of ignorance is one in which one suffers his enjoyment. One becomes so attached to suffering that one cannot remain without suffering. Material enjoyment is not there at all. There is only material suffering. Repulsion manifests from knowledge, but vairagya or real renunciation can manifest, only by devotional service.





Questions and answers by HH Devamrita Swami and HH Radhanath Swami



The last and perhaps the most engaging session of the retreat was the Q&A session by HH Devamrita Swami and HH Radhanath Swami. Different devotees opened up their heart and asked various questions relevant to the life of a sadhaka in a brahmachari ashram.

The two day retreat ended by an ecstatic kirtan lead by HG Radheshyam pr, who was also the anchor of this 2 day event.



Golokera Prem Dhan Sri Harinaam Sankirtan Ki jai !!!