

[Graduates, Feed the World!](#)

Category : [October/November/December 2002](#)

Published by Anonymous on Oct. 02, 2002

FROM THE VEDAS

Graduates, Feed the World!

Swami Chinmayananda expounds Vedic hospitality

Do not turn away anybody who seeks shelter and lodging. This is the vow. Let one therefore acquire much food by any means whatsoever. They should say, "Food is ready." If the food is prepared in the best manner, the food is given to him, the guest, also in the best manner. If food is prepared in the medium manner, food is also given to him in the medium manner. If food is prepared in the lowest manner, the same food is also given to him. He who knows thus, will obtain all the rewards as mentioned above."

KRISHNA YAJUR VEDA

TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD 3.10.1

Commentary by Swami Chinmayananda

The upasaka (lay follower), generally a boy returning to society and who is to live as its pillar in working out the Hindu culture, is exhorted to live in recognition of the spiritual oneness with all. The culture of Hinduism is based mainly upon duty, and the Hindu code of Dharma is mainly a textbook explaining one's duties. The duties of a householder instill into him the idea of charity and the spirit of hospitality. A duty unavoidable to a householder is that he should entertain every guest that comes to him 'without date or invitation' (atithi). Thus, the householder student, during his upasana, was told to consider this atithi seva as his vow. To fulfill this vow the students will have to entertain and worship the sick, the poor and the deserving travellers, with shelter and food; which shows that the householder must have the necessary means. Therefore, it is said, "Let

one acquire much food by any means whatsoever." The latter may sound as a declaration of the modern lusty rich to whom procuring wealth by "any means" seems to be the ambition and the occupation. Here it only means that the one who wants to live a healthy spiritual life in the world must be able to work hard in whatever field of activity he finds himself, with all sincerity and perseverance, so that he may get enough honest profit.

This is not a message prescribing an unethical way of living or immoral way of procuring wealth. It only insists that a boy, after education, when he goes back to his village, in the arrogance of his undigested knowledge should not prove himself impotent in life. He is told to act diligently and sincerely in whatever field of life he finds an opening and through sincere and hard work to earn as much as he can, and

with that earning keep a house warm with charity and hospitality.

As soon as a guest comes into the house, at a time which is appropriate, then, a noble Hindu householder must say, "Food is ready." The meaning of this passage and the ardor of love and warmth it indicates, cannot be better expressed than by a contrast with how we are now behaving under the influence of our un-Hinduistic education. In many homes, we rarely hear the ready cry of "Food is ready." Instead, we hear suggestive soft hissings, such as, "I hope you must have come after your meals," or "Perhaps you will have to return for your lunch at home."

To keep a hospitable home today is not very easy, even for the richest man in the country, because of the dire poverty and

stupendous idleness that have come to curse the land of the rishis. The main cause for this is certainly not the foreign rule but the foreign "Way" we live in our society, divorced from our culture, perpetrating dangerous experiments with the life and wealth of society. The Hindu dharma alone can flourish in Arya Varta. Any other weed gathered in the jungles of other nations must necessarily die away upon this sacred soil. The modern madness for a secularism divorced from sacredness, the lunatic hurry with which we strive to encourage the worship of gold in this land of Gods, all these are bringing about more and more confusion and instability into our midst.

Under circumstances of poverty and the consequent privations, it is absurd to say that a Hindu should try to be as openly charitable as his forefathers were in the Golden Era of our civilization. We have to

add many buts and ands to the statement. It would be sufficient for us if we made our homes charitable enough for the near and dear, and also for the respected and revered members of the society who are the upholders of our sacred culture and are the champions of our national and religious progress along the right lines.

To be charitable does not mean to be foolish. To borrow so that we may give plenty in charity is suicide. In a vulgar and misconceived sense of vanity, to overdo charity is again an ugly mischief which none but fools would appreciate. The sruti here says that if you have prepared the food in a particular standard, feed your guests with the same food. If the householder had prepared but medium quality or the simplest of food, he is not asked to prepare anything extra for his guests, but the mantra commissions him

only to share his food, whatever it be, with others.

Swami Chinmayananda (1917-1993), Vedantist writer, lecturer, translator, dynamic spiritual leader and Hindurenaissance founder of Chinmaya Mission International

The Vedas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, sruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1,200 bce), Bible New Testament (100 ce), Koran (630 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). Four in number, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, the Vedas include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6,000 BCE.