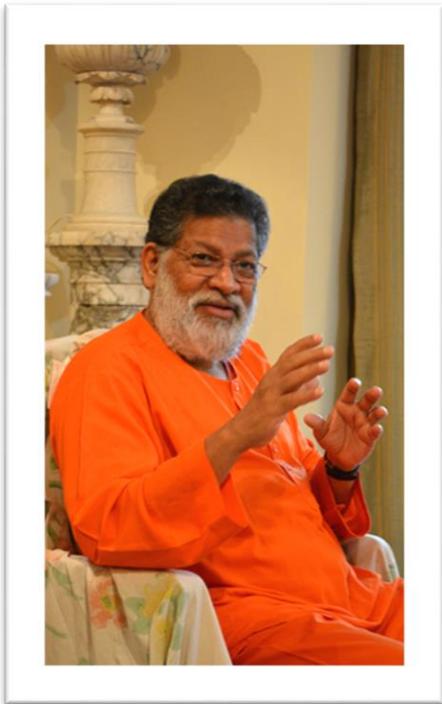


# Dharma, Colonisation & a Democratic Framework of Decision

SWAMI BODHANANDA

4 August 2003



... I returned from the retreat yesterday.

Let me try to state some definitions of Dharma:

- a. that which sustains,
- b. the natural/moral order that exists,
- c. the individual and collective conduct that secures material and spiritual fulfillment,
- d. duty dictated by one's innate nature and station in life,
- e. non-injury/co-existence/multi-dimensionality,
- f. God's Law/ dharmasya prabhu achyutah,
- g. contemplative engagement,
- h. moral choice,
- i. personal responsibility,
- j. the law of cause and consequence.

'Colonization' is not a law written on stone. 'Decolonization' should not become a cliché, a kind of obsessive compulsive reaction.

Remember the adage: 'once bitten twice shy'. It is true that the white race taking advantage of their superiority in

rational thought (S&T) did expand their influence globally. But that wave is plateauing out.

It is time for us, the rest versus the west, to engage the Judo-Christian, Greco-Roman, Anglo-Saxon mind set and civilization constructively in our effort to create new modalities of thinking, being and living.

Colonization is a collective experience that the east and the west went through. It is our collective heritage. You can identify different layers and hierarchies in the colonial pyramid. It is not the 1000 civil servants that ruled 350 millions of Indians for 250 years. The rich Indians colonized the poor Indians, the upper caste the lower cast, the north the south, the white the black, the zamindar the tenant, the literate the illiterate, the bully the benign, the strong the weak, the city the village, man colonized women... the list goes on and on.

We have to purge the colonial mind set from all of us. When you use the term 'western categories' and dump a whole lot of our collective experience in that box it reeks of an irrational value judgment and is denial of a part of our own unconscious. With that attitude we will never learn. The title, 'Heathen in his blindness' reminds me of a story of a Nambudiri Brahmin who scolded and cursed a crocodile which was dragging his wife into the depth of the waters.

As far as I can see the important task is to build institutions, frameworks, code of conduct, checks and balances to unleash the creative potential of individuals, groups and communities. A wide based democratic framework of decision making is the only mechanism for this task.

... we will continue this dialogue.

Source: Swami Bodhananda  
In an email response to JK  
Sent: Monday, August 04, 2003 9:59 AM

*Swami Bodhananda is Chairman, Sambodh Foundation, India; The Sambodh Society Inc. USA; and Bodhananda Research Foundation for Management & Leadership Studies. He is the Inspiration and Guiding Force for all Sambodh institutions.*