

Divine Foods Hare Krishna Ramabar Factory

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More and more Americans are purchasing all-natural products and health foods, especially granola bars. Unfortunately, many smaller health food companies have been bought out by larger corporations, including Balance Bar (Nestle) and Power Bar (Phillip Morris). Smaller companies today often prefer to stay small in order to avoid compromising product quality, especially when their quality is reflective of the manufacturer's beliefs. This is the case with Ramabars, a small but growing granola bar company in Marshall, North Carolina. Ramabars offer more than natural ingredients such as sea salt and honey; their secret ingredient is Krishna.

Based originally in Raleigh, North Carolina, Ramabars was started as a hands on approach to serving Krishna. Graham, the manager, even refers to the workday as an "eight hour meditation." While many would think of making granola bars as a monotonous, physical-labor job, the Hare Krishnas of Ramabars incorporate work as part of their religion.

Most employees of Divine Foods are Krishna devotees from India making the transition to life in the United States. Working at Divine Foods has helped them to adjust to American culture while maintaining continuity with their own tradition even in their place of employment. The leaders of Divine Foods go out of their way to make this transition easier for employees by seeking to engage every employee's talents in the company services at which they are best. This is a part of their religious philosophy as

well as efficient management. The management believe that when employees prepare Ramabars with love and devotion, these qualities are released into the food and consumed by those who eat the bars. For the workers, the making of the bars is a religious experience.

Every day the employees offer the products of their labor to Krishna. At 9:00 A.M., the devotees formally come together to chant. At noon, finished granola bars are offered to Krishna, resulting in semi-transubstantiation. Colin, who is responsible for the design of bar labels and new recipes, explained that "Once the Lord tastes it, the food becomes Lord."

Because Ramabars are divine, they are prepared only with the best ingredients. No preservatives are ever used in Ramabars, and all ingredients are organic. Ramabars imports these ingredients from all over the world-- date syrup from India, macadamia from South Africa, apricots from Turkey, dates from Saudi Arabia. . . Converse Pluralism Project researchers were highly impressed by the delicious taste of these bars-- they were fresher than anything we have ever tasted in an energy bar before. We were further blown away by the cleanliness of the factory. Not only was the factory immaculately clean, but we admired the company efforts to protect all living things through not using harsh chemical pesticides. They use all natural options to prevent living things from entering the factory.

We feel that Ramabars are so good that they cannot even be compared in quality to many other health food bars. But despite the quality of this product, Divine Foods as a company is having a difficult time finding its place in America. Though the company is relatively new, it has already faced discrimination from neighbors who have complained

about their singing and chanting. And sadly, many health food fans are also religiously conservative and would object to the idea of consuming Krishna. For this reason, Ramabars does not openly use their religious background for advertisement. Instead, they take a customer-based approach by sending samples of their products to consumers, asking for feedback in return. They also sell to health food stores, through telesales, and over the Internet. In the future, the internally financed company hopes to fund displays at food shows. However, these displays are very costly. Ramabars hopes to be featured in a show in Anaheim that will cost \$15,000.

The employees of Ramabars all work eight hour days five days a week, making between 2-8,000 bars per day. Approximately twenty devotees work with the company. Most of them are young Asian-Indian men, including Gujeratis, Hindus, and Bengalis. The predominance of men in the company also stems from the Hare Krishnan tradition of men cooking in the temples. Most of the devotees' wives stay at home with their families, but may work from their homes. Graham's wife bakes elaborate cakes for many of her customers.

The two leaders of the company, Colin and Graham, have fascinating backgrounds. Colin, who previously designed clothing for Hindu gods in India and holds a B.S. degree in Physics and Mathematics, met South African native Graham near Calcutta. Both devotees have also lived in England, San Diego, and Florida. Graham and Colin lead the company with incredible faith and determination. They believe that society is "comatose" and needs to be reawakened due to the cycles of our generations: Dharma, Arta, Karma, and Moshka. These devotees have faith that by being "hands" in our society and through chanting of mantras, they can help accomplish the

reawakening of our culture's Brahmenical side. Aside from these goals, they also provide other devotees with employment and religious opportunity, as well as numerous health food junkies with delicious granola bars.

Divine Foods deeply believes in being actively engaged in the community, both on a local level and in the world. This is why they donate a portion of the profits from every Ramabar purchased to feed hungry children. Perhaps the mission statement on their [website](#) sums up their goals best:

Food is the gift of God. Therefore all living entities have it in abundance. Just as an ant gets plenty of sugar, an elephant in the forest also has all the food it needs. The scarcity is there only in the human society. In some parts of the world human beings have so much food that in order to maintain the price level they dump huge amounts of food in the ocean, whereas in some other parts millions die out of starvation. Divine Food, an international organization, has embarked upon a mission to properly distribute this gift of God to the people around the world.