



Spiritual Perspectives

Seeing the World through Spiritual Eyes
For Friends and Followers of Mukunda Goswami

Untouchable

By Radha devi dasi

In an ironic twist, a Delhi based Dalit women's group just finished a two month tour of the U.S. where they reached out to civil rights activists for strategies in combating discrimination. These women, once called Untouchables, are seeking aid from groups who owe their existence to the work of Martin Luther King. The Reverend King, in his turn, built off the passive protest movement used by Mohandas K. Gandhi in fighting the British occupation of India. Protest strategies have moved from India to the U.S. and now back to India again.

One might think that those who have suffered from discrimination might not want to do to others what was done to them. Those who suffered under British rule could be expected to respect the rights of others. History shows, however, that suffering does not make anyone more likely to behave any better than their oppressors.

The British occupation of India was devastating. They introduced various oppressive laws that led millions of people to starve to death, forcing farmers to produce crops that were not food grains during seasons of famine. They taxed the population heavily during periods of famine. Overall, the British treated the native population as second class citizens, limiting their economic and civil rights.

Having been freed of British oppression, one might expect members of the Indian government to eradicate laws and practices that treat other Indians as second class citizens. Unfortunately, discrimination against Dalits remains deep-rooted in India and has been making headlines in the country recently. Particularly reprehensible are murders and rapes against Dalits. Many of these crimes are never prosecuted by government officials.

A new campaign is taking on caste violence, reaching out to activist movements like Black Lives Matter in the U.S. The All India Dalit Women's Forum chose to come to the U.S. to exchange civil rights strategies, leaving us with



the question of why compassion is not a natural reaction to suffering and why oppression is so difficult to eradicate.

A brief reflection from a spiritual perspective reveals that political protests and legal changes do not alleviate the root cause of oppression. People mistreat others due to the consciousness that tells us that we are entitled to exploit the material energy for our own sense enjoyment. Until we understand that Krishna is the proprietor of everything and the well-wishing friend of all living entities, our compassion for others is limited by our own selfish desires. Without spiritual training, we tend to believe that our own selfish desires should be fulfilled.

Srila Prabhupada wanted us to distribute the knowledge found in *Bhagavad-gita* and other scriptures so that people around the world could benefit. With this knowledge, we can all learn that selfishness will not satisfy our hearts no matter how much material power and prestige we obtain. When we understand that we are all sparks of Krishna's energy we will have real compassion for one another.

UK Devotees Meet With Prime Ministers Cameron and Modi

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, November 20, 2015
<http://bit.ly/21gSIY1>



Srutidharma speaks with British Prime Minister David Cameron

ISKCON devotees in the United Kingdom recently got the chance to meet with both British Prime Minister David Cameron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On November 10th, for the third year in a row, Bhaktivedanta Manor temple president Srutidharma Das was invited to chant prayers at an official Diwali function at Number 10 Downing Street.

Around 100 religious leaders from the Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities, as well as leading Hindu businesspeople, attended the event at David Cameron's office/residence.

Indian High Commissioner in London Ranjan Mathai, and Minister for Employment Priti Patel were also present. After the lamps were lit, Srutidharma chanted the first verse of *Sri Isopanishad*, beginning "*Om purnam adah purnam idam*," in which the Personality of Godhead is described as the "perfect and complete" source of

this world. He then chanted the Hare

Krishna maha-mantra, and wished everyone a happy Diwali.

"I then got to shake the Prime Minister's hand and expressed how lovely it was to celebrate Diwali with him again," says Srutidharma. "I also mentioned to him that the Krishna Avanti primary school's first results had come out, and that the children were in the top two per cent academically in the country."

In his speech, the Prime Minister praised the different Diwali celebrations happening around the UK, and said, "When we think of this religion, we think of the importance of Karma, and inner peace and pleasure. But of course, what's really at the heart of it all, is Dharma rather than Karma. The guide to life, and how to do the right thing. And as we bring up our children, I think explaining to people good conduct, and doing the right thing, and the importance of conduct is so vital. So to me, that's what I take from this extraordinary festival, and the extraordinary story of the *Ramayana*."

Before leaving, Srutidharma presented the Prime Minister with a box of *Mangala Arati*

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sweets offered to Bhaktivedanta Manor's presiding Deities Sri-Sri Radha Gokulananda.

Two days later, at a Wembley Stadium event where 60,000 people welcomed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Srutidharma was one of just fourteen people selected to officially greet both Modi and David Cameron. When Srutidharma shook his hand, Cameron commented, "My kids are still eating all the sweets you left at Diwali!"

Meanwhile, Modi fondly recalled his 2005 visit to Bhaktivedanta Manor for its *Janmashtami* festival. At the Wembley event, during which Modi spoke about his economic goals for India and partnership with the UK, children of the Krishna Avanti School recited the national anthems of both India and the UK, and got to meet both Prime Ministers.

Devotees Safe But Atmosphere Tense at ISKCON Paris

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, November 18, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1NdESQr>



<http://bit.ly/1NdESQr>

Devotees on harinama in Paris before the attacks

No ISKCON devotees or congregation members were hurt during the terrorist attacks on Paris on Friday, November 13th, in which 129 people were killed at six locations throughout the French capital.

Yet some congregation members living close to the Bataclan concert hall, where 80 people died, were shaken when they overheard the violence.

"In the middle of the night, they heard machine guns and everything," says ISKCON Paris temple president Nitai Gaurasundara Das. "It was very traumatic."

Later, at a VIP function organized by the Indian High Commissioner, three ISKCON devotees – Srutidharma, Gauri Das and Manor head of communications Vinay Tanna – were counted amongst the 1,000 VIPs. There Gauri also got a chance to meet with Modi, and presented him with a box of *Mangala Arati* sweets too, saying, "These are made with milk from our own cows," which delighted the Indian PM.

"Because we are introduced as ISKCON, attending these kinds of events builds our international reputation and brings us political support for any future ISKCON campaigns we might have," says Srutidharma.

Fortunately, the ISKCON temple in the village of Sarcelles – twenty minutes by train from Paris – was a safe distance from the city center attacks.

However, the temple is only 4 or 5 kilometers away from Saint-Denis, where two suicide bombers botched another attack and blew themselves up outside Stade de France during a France vs Germany football match.

Police also raided a flat in Saint-Denis on Wednesday, November 18th in a search for alleged terrorist mastermind Abdelhamid Abaaoud, during which they shot one suspect and another blew herself up. Meanwhile, police are everywhere, and alarms are regularly going off in stores due to suspect packages.

"So the mood is quite tense," Nitai Gaurasundara says. "Especially as the government has put military personnel in place to guard other religious centers like churches, synagogues, and mosques – but not our temple. Perhaps because we are smaller and not so well-known."

Still, he says that devotees are finding security and solace in their spirituality and philosophical understanding.

Besides the tense atmosphere, devotees' normal lives have been disturbed. Congregation members who own stores have lost income due to their shops being closed down for several days. The weekly Saturday Harinama in Paris was canceled

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because no public shows or events are allowed for safety reasons. And with the risk involved in traveling, only half the usual number of attendees came to the Sunday Feast and Prabhupada's Disappearance day festival.

"But about fifty people did come," says Nitai Gaurasundara. "And with several metro lines discontinued, it wasn't easy to get to the temple. That shows how determined they were to come at any cost."

Janananda Goswami, who had been visiting to attend the canceled Harinama, gave an extensive class on Srila Prabhupada at the gathering.

<http://bit.ly/1NdeSqr>



Devotees hold a Harinama in London in memory of Paris victims

Sadaputa Digital Channel Facebook Page Launched

By Sunanda das, *ISKCON NEWS*, November 20, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1PZS3Fo>

November 15th celebrated the one year anniversary of the Sadaputa Digital Channel on YouTube featuring over 100 lectures and videos about Vedic perspectives on modern science by Sadaputa Dasa, Dr. Richard L. Thompson, one of Srila Prabhupada's original founding members of the Bhaktivedanta Institute. He is responsible for much of the design of the planetarium in the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) in Mayapur and for other exhibits planned for the project. He passed away in 2008, leaving behind a valuable legacy of lectures, videos, books and other writings which are now in the process of being made available for serious study and research.

During this first year online, the YouTube Channel has reached almost 1,000 subscribers, over 82,000 views, and almost 2 million minutes of watching time. We hope to double this by the same time next year. The Sadaputa Digital Channel Facebook Page is an extension of the YouTube Channel to help further promote his work to the Vaishnava community and serious spiritual seekers. It features a weekly lecture post, videos and many of Sadaputa's written articles, monographs and other writings. There is also a FundRazr Tab to contribute to the cause of promoting his works.

The lectures of Sadaputa Dasa are currently being transcribed by a team of eight devotees with the aim of publishing them in several volumes

along with matching CDs. A website is also underway which will give further opportunity to serious researchers to examine and learn from his works.

Those interested in assisting in some way can contact Sunanda das at:

spchannel108@gmail.com

Sadaputa Digital Channel Facebook Page:
www.facebook.com/sadaputadigitalchannel

Sadaputa Digital Channel Youtube Channel:
www.youtube.com/user/SadaputaChannel

<http://bit.ly/21h2sln>



Sadaputa Das also known as Richard L. Thompson

Devotees Participate in Parliament of the World's Religions

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, on October 29, 2015
<http://bit.ly/1MSqhpN>

Several ISKCON devotees contributed to the Parliament of the World's Religions – the largest interfaith gathering in the world – this year, with kirtan, japa, and an introduction to the Bhakti philosophy.

The first Parliament was held in 1893 and is recognized as the birth of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide. It wasn't held again until one hundred years later in 1993, but has been held every five years since then.

This year's Parliament, which ran from October 15th to 19th at the Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, drew somewhere between eight and ten thousand people from eighty nations and fifty different faiths. It was so successful that outgoing chairman Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid announced it would be held every two years from now on.

Major speakers included interfaith scholar Dr. Karen Armstrong, professor of contemporary Islamic studies Dr. Tariq Ramadan, United States Ambassador for International Religious Freedom Rabbi David Saperstein, and conservationist Dr. Jane Goodall.

ISKCON GBC member and Communications Director Anuttama Das, meanwhile, spoke on a panel about Hinduism and Humanitarian Service. As a Vaishnava, he was the only panel member not from an impersonalist school.

"I talked about our Hare Krishna Food Relief programs being the largest vegetarian food relief program in the world, including the Annamrita program in India which feeds 1.2 million children a day," he says. "I also spoke about our eco farms, like our Govardhana ecovillage North of Mumbai, and our hospitals such as Bhaktivedanta Hospital."

"Finally," he adds, "I mentioned that ultimately our focus is on the spiritual benefit of all people, and that's why we published and distributed 512 million books in the last fifty years."

Anuttama also participated on a panel about Abuse within Religious and Spiritual communities. He talked about the need for spiritual leaders to be transparent and accountable, and about what practical steps organizations, communities, members, and leaders can take to ensure healthy social dynamics and interpersonal care.

Other speakers included scholar Radhika Ramana Das (Ravi Gupta), who gave a presentation on "Creation and Chaos" according to the *Upanishads*, and family team Lokadhyaksha Das, Vidarbha Dasi, and their son Nimai from Baltimore, Maryland.

Vidarbha Dasi participated in a panel on Remembering the Divine, with members of different faiths talking about how they remember God in their practice.

"I talked about how our remembrance is mainly based on the chanting of the Holy Name, and recited the first verse of the *Siksastakam*, which lists the benefits of chanting," she says. "I mentioned that we must develop the qualities of humility and tolerance to approach this meditation, and that its purpose is to develop a loving relationship with God."

Other faith representatives on the panel also prioritized chanting the Holy Name of God, with the Sikh representative speaking about chanting Sat Nam, or "True Name," and the Muslim representative speaking about chanting the 99 names of Allah.

"It was very nice," says Vidarbha. "It felt like there was a lot of connec-

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<http://bit.ly/1MSqhpN>

Nimai Agarwal, 16, speaks on a Kids Spirit panel at the Parliament



http://bit.ly/1MSqhp0N

Devotees chant onstage at the Parliament

tion, and that we were all speaking the same language – our meditation processes sounded very similar.”

Vidarbha’s son Nimai, 16, who writes for the interfaith online teen magazine *Kids Spirit*, also participated, speaking at a *Kids Spirit* panel. Discussing how religious practice came naturally to him growing up as a Vaishnava, he talked about how his faith was enriched by writing about it in the magazine, and also by bringing it into conversation with other traditions.

A highlight of ISKCON devotees’ contribution to the Parliament was the Bhakti Experience hour from 7 to 8 every morning. It was led by Radhika Ramana on the first day, and by Anuttama, Spanish Fork temple president Charu Das and Lokadhyaksha Das on the following days. It drew between 25 and 50 people every day, and included kir-

tan and japa meditation, along with readings from Srila Prabhupada’s writings. “People were very enthusiastic to chant, and asked a lot of deep questions,” says Lokadhyaksa.

Meanwhile Charu and a group of twenty devotees from the Spanish Fork and Salt Lake City temples were invited to sing kirtan in the main hall during lunch hour on Friday.

They were joined by three Jewish rabbis, and alternated between chanting

the Hare Krishna maha-mantra, and chanting Hebrew names for God. Then on Monday, local band Ananda Groove, a mainstay at the Utah Festival of Colors, performed a Mantra Rock kirtan in the main concourse. On both days, hundreds of people danced and chanted along with the devotees.

“One 85-year-old Jewish lady even got out of her wheelchair and was dancing for ten minutes,” says Charu. “I think everybody received the kirtan as an extremely refreshing component of the Parliament.”

Devotee participants felt it was important for ISKCON to have a presence at the Parliament of the World’s Religions, and also for them to see the work of different faith traditions.

“It was nice just to experience and appreciate how God is being worshipped in so many different ways – every tradition seems to have some unique, special richness,” says Vidarbha.

Cloistered Hindu Sect Comes Alive In ‘Gates of the Lord’ Exhibition

By Antonia Blumberg, *The Huffington Post*, November 16, 2015

<http://huff.to/1PZSeQU>

In the Indian temple town of Nathdwara, which translates as “The Gates of the Lord,” followers of the Hindu Pushtimarg sect venerate an image of the god Krishna as a 7-year-old child. Founded in the 16th century, the denomination is little known, even within India. But its rich aesthetic traditions have captured the imagination of scholars and curators around the world.

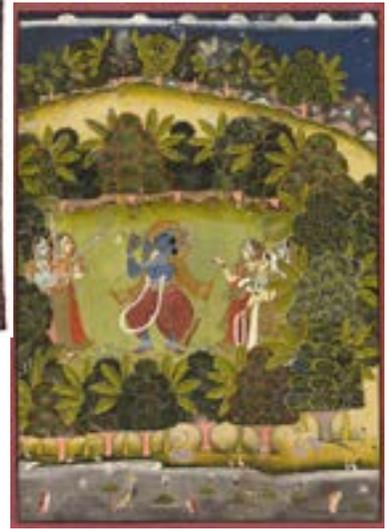
“Gates of the Lord,” an exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, brings these traditions alive with elaborate paintings and textile hangings that depict Krishna’s younger incarnation, known as Shrinathji.

Madhuvanti Ghose, the show’s curator, noted the “cloistered” nature and “private devotions” of the Pushtimarg sect. “Even today, phones and cameras are not allowed within the precincts of its

main temple at Nathdwara,” Ghose said in a press release. “Thus, outside of the sect, there is little appreciation of its unique traditions that have been strictly preserved and elaborated upon since the 16th century.”

The exhibition includes drawings, pichvais (textile wall hangings), paintings and historic photographs. The show runs through January 3, 2016.

“This is a chance to showcase this very special artistic tradition to our audiences in the United States,” Ghose said in the release. “Nathdwara and its artists are renowned for having preserved painting traditions in an unbroken legacy for more than four centuries. The exhibition provides us with an opportunity to celebrate these living traditional artists who have gone unrecognized for too long.”



Samplings from the “Gates of the Lord” exhibition



SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Mukunda Goswami

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Hari-kirtan das

EDITORS
Mukunda Goswami
Radha devi dasi

PROOFREADING & EDITING
Haridasa das
Padma malini devi dasi

GENERAL CONSULTANT
Devaprastha das

DESIGN AND LAYOUT
Raj Dutia

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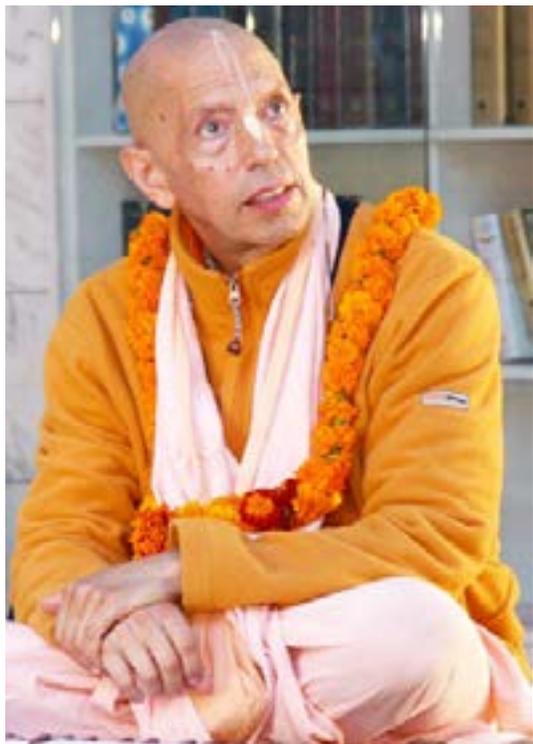
Message...



Devotees Worldwide Rally for Mukunda Goswami

By Madhavendra Puri dasa

Although Mukunda Goswami has been living a quiet, off-the-grid existence as of late, when difficulty struck, a worldwide community brought their hearts and minds together to offer loving prayers for his well-being. On Friday, the 23rd of October, Maharaja slipped in his bathroom, fractured his hip, and was ambulated to Murwillumbah Hospital. He was later transferred to Tweed Hospital for optimal care and pre-operation tests, which showed irregularities in his heart. To make matters even worse, Maharaja suffered a heart attack while in the hospital. He was transferred to Gold Coast Hospital and underwent triple bypass surgery on Tuesday, the 27th



of October. Three days later the critical hip operation was performed.

As all of this was unfolding, prayers were flooding in from all corners of the world.

“I have been thinking of Mukunda Goswami constantly and praying for him intensely,” said Giriraja Swami. Mukunda Goswami’s brother, Tom Grant (an established Jazz musician), also asked for prayers on the night of Maharaja’s first surgery, pulling together thousands of correspondents in wishful thoughts. Niranjana Swami posted: “Please continue with prayers for Mukunda Goswami and as much as possible have kirtans for him.” Devotees organised kirtans in New Govardhana, Krsna Ksetra Swami organised kirtans in Radhadesh, Belgium, disciples organized kirtans in the UK, Russia, and the US, and there were many more kirtanas all around the globe dedicated to Maharaja. “We pray to Radha Madhava that your operation

is successful and you give your association again,” said Jayapataka Swami, and Lokanatha Swami organised 1,500 devotees on Vraja-mandala parikrama to pray for Mukunda Goswami’s protection and recovery.

Maharaja has been discharged from the hospital and is now back at his residence in Murwillumbah. Please continue to pray for Maharaja’s full recovery, who through this terrible ordeal has brought devotees all over the world closer to each other and Krishna through their love and appreciation for Maharaja. As Kavicandra Swami aptly put it: “We all owe Mukunda Goswami a great debt for his going out to preach with nothing but his love for Srila Prabhupada.”

