



Spiritual Perspectives

January 2016

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

Garbage In/Garbage Out

By Radha devi dasi

People and communities trying to develop material solutions to the world's problems assume they can identify such problems and find ways to ease or eliminate them. Governments, corporations, and other groups spend billions of dollars and untold man hours developing policies designed to eliminate poverty and disease, extend human life, bring an end to wars, and create ever increasing material prosperity for all – or at least for those developing the policies. But what if the assumption that we are capable of solving global, or even regional, problems through our own efforts is wrong? If so, we are constantly wasting time and resources in a fruitless endeavor.

In the introduction to *Sri Isopanisad*, Srila Prabhupada pointed out limitations on the knowledge of any conditioned soul. Because we are prone to make mistakes, to be illusioned, to cheat, and have imperfect senses, we do not see the world or ourselves clearly. The axiom of “garbage in, garbage out” applies. If we do not have accurate perceptions and understanding of what transpires in the material world, we are incapable of crafting solutions to problems.

Examples of the failure of our understanding appear constantly in world headlines. In March 2015, a mob killed an Afghanistani woman for burning a *Koran*. In October 2015, a mob in Northern India killed a Muslim man for eating beef. The problem? Neither of these murder victims had committed the crime that the mob sought to punish. In the woman's case, an envious cleric appears to have simply lied in order to get her killed.

One might dismiss these examples as failures of uneducated populations to understand the need for judicial process. However, even respected statesmen and institutions promote inaccurate information and policy based on mistakes.

The December 2015 debate between American presidential candidates provides a compelling example. A strong theme of the debate was the failure of US immigration officials to identify the radical Muslim leanings of mass killer Tashfeen Malik before allowing her into the country. Days before the debate, Tashfeen and her husband, Syed Farook, attacked a social service agency in California, killing 14 and wounding many others. The *New York Times* reported that Malik had openly advocated violent jihad on social media. The presidential candidates lambasted US immigration standards and outlined policies to “secure the border.”



Survivors of the San Bernadino shootings

The only problem with this situation is that the *New York Times* article was completely wrong. Malik's writings were posted in a private account under another name. No one saw them except a small circle of her friends. Worse, the *Times* story was repeated by news agencies around the country with no verification.

Thus, the narrative became one of incompetent government officials and unsafe borders that

allow violent terrorists to roam the US at will. This debate served to further inflame the fears and xenophobia of Americans. The fact that all of the discussion was based on a lie has been overwhelmed by hysterical cries for excluding all Muslims from the US. Hate crimes against Muslims are on the rise in the US.

All of this is not to say that we should put an end to debate or news stories; nor that we should eliminate policy making. These things produce helpful results as well. However, we must be aware that material solutions are fundamentally limited. Without developing God consciousness, no one can really do much to improve the world.

ISKCON Can Play a Part in Reducing Climate Change

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, December 17, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1mliEI7>

After the historymaking climate change talks at COP21 in Paris concluded this past weekend, ISKCON leaders and members are looking to increase their part in fighting climate change.

On December 12th world leaders and representatives of 195 countries agreed to work together to limit average global warming to 2 degrees Celsius

(3.6F) above pre-industrial temperatures. If possible, they'll strive for a safer limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 F).

This means stopping use of fossil fuels like gas, oil and coal altogether between 2050 and the end of the century to meet the 2 degrees Celsius cap. To meet the more ambitious 1.5 degree cap, the world will have to stop using fossil fuels between 2030 and 2050.

According to CNN, "Failure to set a cap could result in superdroughts, deadlier heat waves, mass extinctions of plants and animals, megafloods and rising seas that could wipe some island countries off the map."

So what can ISKCON do? Even secular world leaders agree that the world's religions can motivate change by presenting the moral reasons for living a green lifestyle.

During the COP21 talks, French President Francois Holland met with the leaders of twenty faith-based groups at Elysee Palace, where they presented him with 1.8 million signatures supporting a fair climate change agreement. The leaders included ISKCON devotee GopalLila Das, who was there representing multifaith environmental campaigners OurVoices.

Holland – an atheist himself and the president of a largely secular nation – thanked the religious



Leaders of faith-based environmental groups, meeting with President Francois Holland of France (center) hold up their petition numbers. Gopal is in the back row wearing glasses.

leaders for their efforts and said, "We must protect the planet... Through the petitions, through the walks and pilgrimages, you have committed to defend life."

ISKCON "committed to defending life" back on November 23rd, by signing a Hindu Declaration on Climate Change put together by the Bhumi Project at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, both of which count ISKCON devotees amongst their staff.

The Declaration presented the moral reasons for living a green lifestyle by quoting the *Sri Isopanisad*, "*Isavasyam idam sarvam*," meaning, "This entire universe is to be looked upon as the energy of the Lord." It also included a quote from the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (11.2.41): "Ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions, trees and plants, rivers and seas, they are all organs of God's body. Remembering this a devotee respects all species."

Meanwhile, many organizations and centers throughout ISKCON are doing their part to save the environment in a Krishna conscious way.

In Lord Krishna's hometown of Vrindavana, India, Rupa Raghunath Das' Varahadev project plants trees throughout the sacred village, cleans and maintains the *parikrama* route, and organizes

Continued on page 3

monthly cleaning drives townwide. It also started a paper recycling plant and supplies the area with organic vegetables grown without any pesticide or unnatural fertilizers.

Interestingly, the unlikeliest of celebrities – actor Arnold Schwarzenegger – is raising funds to green Dwarka, another city extremely sacred to Vaishnavas, through his Regions 20 charity.

“They’re planning to green a number of pilgrimage sites across the world,” says GopalLila, who talked to R20 Executive Director Christophe Nuttall at COP21. “They’re talking millions of dollars worth of investment in each site. If Dwarka goes ahead, for example, every single street light in Dwarka would be solar-powered, there would be a total overhaul of the waste management systems, and green transportation would be provided.”

Another major contribution of ISKCON’s to the environment is its promotion of vegetarianism.

“At COP21 I spoke to Olga Kikou, European Affairs Manager of Compassion in World Farming,” says Gopal. “We were talking about how people are increasingly saying that going vegetarian is one of the quickest and best things an individual can do to reduce their carbon emissions.”

In this regard ISKCON has served 3 billion plates of sanctified vegetarian food (*prasadam*) worldwide so far. 1.2 million plates are served daily to Indian children as part of the “Midday Meal” program by ISKCON Food Relief Foundation. And ISKCON has 110 vegetarian restaurants worldwide, many of which have made a sizeable impact on local attitudes toward vegetarianism. What’s more, the society provides deep philosophical and spiritual reasons, as well as health reasons, for becoming vegetarian.

“That’s something that ISKCON should be really proud of,” says Gopal. “And I think if we make more connections to mainstream environmental and animal rights organizations, we can have an even bigger impact than we have now.”

ISKCON also has sixty-five farms or ecovillages around the world, including Krishna Valley in Hungary, which is fully self-sufficient in vegetables and fruit and has its own wastewater management system and solar panels that cover 70% of its electricity needs.

There’s also Govardhan EcoVillage north of Mumbai, India, which practices organic farming, green building, and water conservation, and produces clean, renewable energy that powers the entire village with solar panels and biogas. “It is such an enchanting place,” commented renowned Filipino climate activist Yeb Sano after visiting. “Govardhan ecovillage is of course a spiritual sanctuary, and also a very good refuge for those who seek solutions in this world where we face so many problems that pervade our society and problems that pertain to the environment.”

Meanwhile, many ISKCON centers are starting to use compostable or reusable cups and plates during their feasts, and some city temples like ISKCON of Washington D.C., are running organic community gardens.

Next up is the ISKCON Environmental Initiative, which was unanimously approved by the North American GBC in August and is now in the process of getting off the ground. “Firstly, it’s aiming to help ISKCON temples build on and increase the good environmental work that they’ve been doing across North America,” says GopalLila, who presented the initiative to the GBC. “Secondly, it’s aiming to educate members on how to lead more environmentally friendly lives in line with ISKCON’s philosophy. And thirdly, it’s aiming to help temples share what we’re doing with the wider community, the American public.”

* * *

Gopal-Lila is looking for a good team to take the ISKCON Environmental Initiative forward. If you are interested — even if you are not based in the US — please contact him at: gopal@bhumiproject.org.

We Would Appreciate Your Feedback
Please Send Your Response To :
feedback@mukundagoswami.org

Giving Up Beef Will Reduce Carbon Footprint More than Cars, Says Expert

By Damian Carrington for The Guardian on December 2, 2015
<http://bit.ly/UkWjWW>

Beef's environmental impact dwarfs that of other meat including chicken and pork, new research reveals, with one expert saying that eating less red meat would be a better way for people to cut carbon emissions than giving up their cars.

The heavy impact on the environment of meat production was known but the research shows a new scale and scope of damage, particularly for

beef. The popular red meat requires 28 times more land to produce than pork or chicken, 11 times more water and results in five times more climate warming emissions. When compared to staples like potatoes, wheat, and rice, the impact of beef per calorie is even more extreme, requiring 160 times more land and producing 11 times more greenhouse gases.



<http://bit.ly/UkWjWW>

Factory farming in the US

Bhakti Without Borders Gets Grammy Nomination

By Madhava Smullen, ISKCON News, on December 10, 2015
<http://bit.ly/1QV8ogq>

Bhakti Without Borders, a charity kirtan album featuring mostly second generation ISKCON singers, has been nominated for a Grammy – the biggest music recognition award in the United States.

The album has been nominated in the Best New Age Album category, along with four other artists.

It's only the third time a kirtan album has ever been nominated, following Jai Uttal's "Mondo

Rama" in 2004, and Krishna Das' "Live Ananda" in 2013 (neither won).

However it's the first time an album entirely in the Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, featuring only traditional Sanskrit or Bengali bhajans, has been nominated. Songs include *Radhe Jai Jai Madhava Dayite*, *Namo Maha Vadanyaya*, *Bhaja Govindam* and *Jagannathastakam*.

It's also the first time an ISKCON devotee has been nominated. Havi Das won a Latin Grammy

Continued on page 5



in 2010, but the prize was for a Venezuelan folk music album, and the Latin Grammys are completely separate awards to the US version.

Bhakti Without Borders is also unique in that 100% of its profits go towards helping underprivileged girls in Lord Krishna's hometown of Vrindavana, India.

"I couldn't believe it when I woke up to a text saying we had been nominated," says Madi Das, who came up with the idea for the album and sings on it with eleven Vaishnavi covocalists. "I thought I was being pranked! I had to go check for myself." The singers (From top left

to bottom right): Carmella Gitanjali Baynie, Chaytanya, Acyuta Gopi, Nalina Kaufman, Jahnavi Harrison, Gaura Mani, Gaurangi, Tulsi Devi, Madi Das, Sudevi, Mallika Des Fours, and AnandaAmrita. Madi and most of his cosingers Gaurangi, Achyuta Gopi, Jahnavi Harrison, Gaura Mani, Chaytanya, Sudevi, Mallika, Ananda-Amrita, Nalina Kaufman and Tulsi Devi – all grew up chanting bhajans in ISKCON temples with their gurukuli friends (The eleventh artist, Carmella Gitanjali Baynie, is a prominent chanter in the broader kirtan community).



In addition, the record label cited in the nominations list on Grammy.com and Billboard.com is Kuli Mela, a non-profit organization that connects a global community of second generation devotees by holding events and supporting worthy projects. "This all started as a grassroots crowd-funding campaign, and now it's become an actual legitimate presence," says Madi. "I mean, we're in *Billboard* magazine with Taylor Swift and Kendrick Lamar. That's crazy." Madi is very

Continued on page 6

emphatic that the success belongs to the team, the family behind Bhakti Without Borders. He says he feels “a bit sheepish” to be the only one named on the ballot. He tried to include all his co-singers, but was thwarted by the Grammy rule that the named artist had to be featured on at least 51% of the album.

“I very much want to impress that there have been so many parts of the team behind us from the start,” he explains. “From our friends and family, and even people we don’t know, put-

ting in their money to make it happen, to the actual individual artists who donated their time for free, to the various team members that did the graphic design, website, videos, and other backend support.”

IIT Kharagpur Students on a Spiritual Quest

By Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey, TNN, November 3, 2015
<http://bit.ly/1Uce1Vt>

KOLKATA: The 9th All India Students’ Conference on Science and Spiritual Quest (AISSQ) was held at Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur from Oct 30 to Nov 2. The conference was organized by Bhaktivedanta Institute, Kolkata, a notforprofit organization that spearheads and catalyzes academic campaign on science-spirituality synthesis and its application in personal, professional and social spheres of life. Being the brain child of Dr. T. D. Singh (His Holiness Bhaktisvarupa Damodara Swami), a well known visionary and scientist-saint of the

modern age, the AISSQ conference aimed to encourage deeper exploration of scientific and spiritual disciplines so as to encourage the confluence or synthesis of the knowledge acquired in these streams for the betterment of peace, prosperity and purpose in the humanity. The central theme of the conference was, “Role of Spirituality in the Age of Science and Technology.”

On Oct 30, the conference was inaugurated by K. N. Tripathy, Governor of West Bengal. Among others present were Souvik Bhattacharya (Officiating Director, IIT



<http://bit.ly/1OZK0nd>

Hijli Detention Camp which served as the first academic building for IIT in 1951

Continued on page 7



Kharagpur), G. Satheesh Reddy (advisor to the defence ministry), His Holiness Sri Sri Sri Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji (Sri Adichunchunagiri Mahasamsthana Math, Karnataka), B. D. Mundhra (Managing Director, Simplex Infrastructures Limited) and H. P. Kanoria (Chairman, SREI Foundation, Kolkata). The conference received significant monetary support from Department of Science and Technology (DST).

The Governor appreciated the unique conference. He emphasized the need of more such conferences which serve as an integration platform for science and spirituality and rising above the narrow view of particular disciplines. The conference had scintillating and vibrant sessions with lectures delivered by finest authorities in the field of science and spirituality interface. Noted personalities including Prof. Chandra Wickramasinghe (Director, Buckingham Centre for Astrobiology, UK); Prof. Chirstoph Benz Muller (Heisenberg Fellow, Freie University, Berlin, Germany); Dr. A. K. Mukhopadhyay (AIIMS, New Delhi); Prof. P. B. Sharma (Vice Chancellor, AMITY University, Gurgaon) who spoke at the conference. In addition, reputed faculty from various IITs converged on the conference to deliberate upon the subtle coherence and connection between science and spirituality.

Prof. Chirstoph Benz Muller in his session emphasized ontological proof of God through

Dr. Kurt Godel's Theorem and using it in computational metaphysics the existence of God can be proven. Prof. Chandra Wickramasinghe presented advent of life on earth from cosmic bodies in the form of dormant microbial forms. The present Director of Bhaktivedanta Institute, Dr. Varun Agarwal, who is also an IIT Kanpur alumnus, motivated students to go beyond general mode of studies in schools and colleges and learn about intuitionistic mathematics by Prof. Luitzen Egbertus Jan Brouwer, concepts of Quantum Mechanics as discussed in books authored by Dr. Erwin Schrodinger, Dr. Werner Heisenberg and other celebrated Quantum Physicists.

The conference hosted students and professionals from more than 50 institutions in India. Apart from a Vedic Quic Competition and two workshops on personality development and *Bhagavad-gita*, the conference hosted ten plenary sessions in diverse themes such as quest for the ultimate reality; science, spirituality and education; young minds speak; spirituality in the lives of modern scientists; science and God; mystic elements in science and spirituality; spirituality and health; life and consciousness and science and technology in ancient India. The conference also hosted a dedicated session to address the views of the prize winners of the all India essay competition for students that was held in the past one year on the theme "Contribution of Ancient India to Modern Science".

Bhaktivedanta Institute announced the launch of Graduate Diploma and Certificate correspondence courses in sciencespirituality for the betterment of understanding in the vast field of sciencespirituality, thus paving the way for academic emphasis on sciencespirituality in the modern education.

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

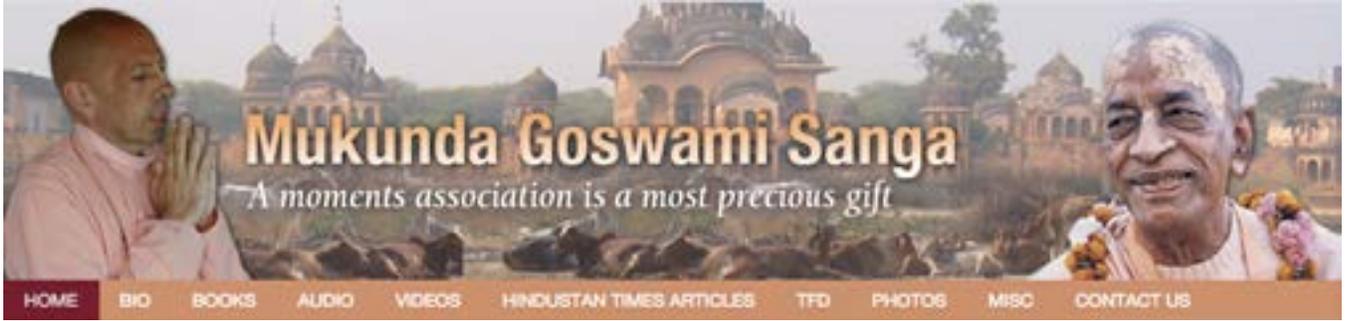
GENERAL CONSULTANT

Devaprastha das

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Raj Dutia

Articles published in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinion of *Spiritual Perspectives* or ISKCON.



During Mukunda Goswami's recovery period you can find all of his latest lectures at:
<http://MukundaGoswami.com>



You can also find updates from time to time on his Twitter feed at:
https://twitter.com/Mukunda_Goswami

