



Spiritual Perspectives

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

July 2021

The Cheaters and the Cheated

By Radha Devi Dasi

Srila Prabhupada told us that cheating is one of the characteristics of the conditioned soul. People cheat and people want to be cheated. The conditioned soul is not looking for real treasure but for fool's gold. This point was dramatically illustrated in recent art news.

An invisible sculpture sold for about \$18,000 at an Italian auction in June 2021. Salvatore Garau called his sculpture, which he said does not really exist, "Io Sono," Italian for "I Am." That there is someone in this world willing to pay thousands of dollars for literally nothing is a little surprising. Even more surprising is the willingness of the art world, galleries, reporters, collectors, to join in what amounts to a collective delusion over the value of the invisible work.

Not only has the buyer spent \$18,000 for empty space, he is committed to "housing" the sculpture in an unobstructed five-foot by five-foot space. According to the artist, exhibiting an immaterial sculpture in a given space concentrates "a certain quantity and density of thoughts in a precise point," creating a sculpture that will take varied forms. "After all," he says, "don't we give shape to a God we have never seen? You do not see it, but it exists."



"Buddha in Contemplation" - Piazza Della Scala, Milan. An invisible sculpture by Salvatore Garau

The reader might be pardoned at this point for assuming that the sale of the invisible work is a parody news story, making fun of the (sometimes) condescending world of art. In fact, the art world is simply exemplifying the conditioned soul's cheating nature. When we allow the larger society to tell us what is valuable and what is important, we are no different from the art buyer in this story. For materialists, property and prestige are the most important goals.

But profit, adoration, and distinction are just "invisible sculptures," having no real value or substance. It is only our identification with the material world that deludes us into thinking these are goals worth pursuing. What price are we paying for these "treasures?" Rather than setting aside an area of our hearts for the display of meaningless accomplishments, Vaishnavas rightly seek to fill the heart with love for Krishna. While we may laugh at those who buy non-existent artworks, we should make sure we are not wasting our time and energy pursuing useless goals.



Artist Salvatore Garau

<https://bit.ly/2TfbEIT>

<https://bit.ly/2TrxkWi>

World Book of Record Honors ISKCON Gurugram with Certificate of Commitment

By: Parijata Devi Dasi, *ISKCON News*, June 19, 2021

<https://bit.ly/363nWeh>

ISKCON Gurugram was awarded a Certificate of Commitment by the World Book of Records (WBR) to recognize the exceptional services offered by the devotees at ISKCON Gurugram in serving the needy during the Covid pandemic. The award was received by Rambhadra Das, President – ISKCON Gurugram. Rambhadra Das stated that, “I dedicate this award to the global ISKCON family, my mentor His Holiness Gopal Krishna Goswami, and Vivo India, Rapido, IOCL, GAIL, PTC and Sudhir Generators and all others who supported and volunteered with us.”

Devotees at ISKCON Gurugram initiated several Covid relief measures that included distributing hot meals to the needy, Covid Counselling, Covid Yoga Aid, and regular prayer sessions.

The ISKCON Gurugram relief kitchen started its operation on April 21, 2021 and delivered hundreds of hot meals to needy families and deprived citizens on the roads. A total of four teams oversaw the food relief operation – three people for taking requests, about 10-12 to prepare the meals, a team for packaging and another for delivery to ensure lunch was ready by 10 a.m. and delivered by 2 p.m.

Despite practical hurdles like shortage of delivery vehicles and staff, the kitchen team continued to reach out to the needy and distribute meals.

To support its food relief effort, ISKCON Gurugram coordinated a team of ten experienced, mature devotees to speak with families who felt traumatized due to the loss or infection of a loved one. Aggrieved families were offered spiritual insights and medical assistance as needed.

Covid Yoga Aid was offered to patients who recovered from Covid to help them regain physical, mental and spiritual strength and return to normal life as soon as possible. Regular kirtan and prayer sessions were held to support Covid affected families experiencing infections or griev-



Devotees at ISKCON Gurugram prepare meals

ing the loss of a loved one, and aid them in their recovery. Padasevana Bhakta Das, the Communications Coordinator for ISKCON Gurugram, shared the motivation behind the initiative by stating that, “The primary reason for initiating this Covid Outreach was to help people who had been requesting meal deliveries due to being infected with Covid. Once we came in touch with them, we realized we could help them with yoga, counselling, prayers and spiritual sessions as well.”

Gurugram, located in Haryana, southwest of Delhi, is home to hundreds of Fortune 500 companies operating in India and it has many software and IT service hubs. Gurugram was the most severely Covid affected district of all Haryana State, with up to 5000 daily infections during the second wave.

ISKCON Gurugram received the “Certificate of Commitment” from World Book Records which is an International Records Institution, with headquarters in London. The certificate was awarded under a Global Pledge Scheme, which is an effort by the WBR to recognize and promote exceptional efforts done during the Covid pandemic to serve society and make the planet a happy and more liveable place.



Award-Winning Bhakti Charu Swami Documentary to Premiere on July 24th

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, June 19, 2021

<https://bit.ly/3y8tz70>



Bhakti Charu Swami talks about his childhood in the upcoming documentary “Seeking Shelter: The Life and Legacy of Bhakti Charu Swami”

A new 37-minute documentary entitled “Seeking Shelter: The Life & Legacy of Bhakti Charu Swami” is set to premiere on ISKCON News and Youtube on July 24th, as part of the global celebration on the beloved ISKCON guru’s disappearance day.

“The pandemic has claimed millions of lives — ordinary humans, celebrities and saintly people alike — leaving loved ones grappling with the tragic loss and burning existential questions such as ‘Why do bad things happen to good people?’ and ‘Where do we find shelter from the tragedies of human life?’” reads the film’s official summary. “Among the lost treasures is the world-renowned spiritual teacher Bhakti Charu Swami from Bengal, India, who passed away due to complications from Covid-19 on July 4, 2020, in Orlando, Florida, at the age of 74. This documentary captures his major life events and achievements while providing a glimpse into his inner journey seeking ultimate shelter (*saranagati*), through his own words, music and art.”

The film is written and directed by Krisztina Danka, Ph.D. (Krishna Lila Dasi) - a multi-award-winning filmmaker of documentaries like “The Joy of Devotion,” “The Stolen River” and “Nature’s IQ.” The Director of Photography is Filip Cargonja (Gaura Govinda Das), who has worked with Krishna Lila on many previous films. Seeking Shelter is also executive produced by Rishi Singh (Rasabihari Krishna Das), and produced by Sharon Hamilton-Getz (Saranagati Dasi), a disciple of Bhakti Charu Swami who works for several United Nations NGOs.

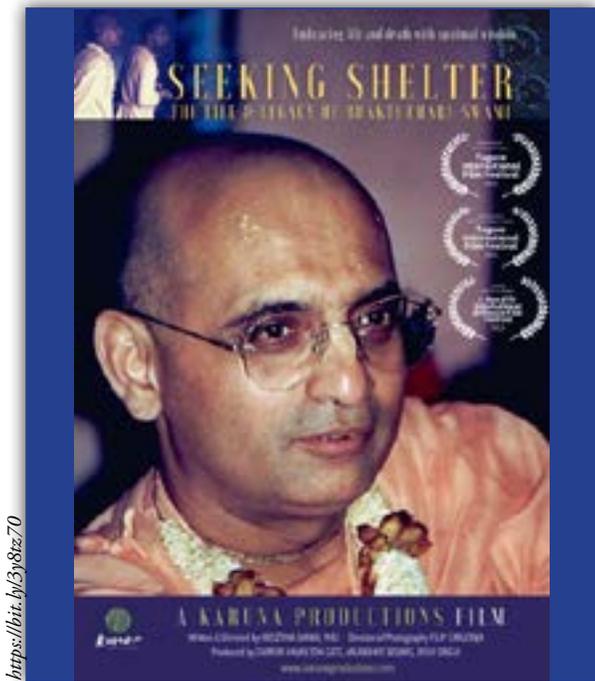
“The shock of losing Guru Maharaja was so severe for everyone,” Saranagati says. “It was better to do something productive. I discussed this with my Godsister Aparajita Radhika and suggested contacting my dear friend Krishna Lila about making a documentary. The result is a wonderful way of keeping Bhakti Charu Swami’s legacy alive in the hearts of all devotees, and to inspire others who may not know him. Through the film and Krishna Lila’s artistic skills, it will be an opportunity to amplify the heart and soul, through his example of ethics, devotional arts and dedicated service to Srila Prabhupada and ISKCON.”

“Seeking Shelter” depicts the major events and main achievements in Bhakti Charu Swami’s life through archival footage and photos as well as interviews with the Swami himself, who tells his story in his own words. Some of this is unseen footage from a 2015 interview in Mumbai for the film “The Joy of Devotion.” The rest comes from interviews Krishna Lila conducted in February 2020 with GBC Members in Mayapur, with the aim of shedding light on the details of their service for the international devotee community.

“When I interviewed Bhakti Charu Maharaja, for some reason, there was something pushing from inside me to ‘just keep the camera rolling, and ask personal questions,’” Krishna Lila recalls. “So as well as discussing the GBC topic, I ended up asking a lot about his whole life.”

The film also includes Zoom interviews with others about Bhakti Charu Swami’s impact on the world, including GBC Anuttama Das on what it was like to work with him on the

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<https://bit.ly/3y8tz70>

The poster for “Seeking Shelter - The Life and Legacy of Bhakti Charu Swami”

GBC body; Professor Graham M. Schweig on his contribution to promoting Vaishnava culture; Visvambhar Sheth about his impact on the kirtan movement; devotees from Deland, Florida on his 116-acre farm project there; and Yadunath Das about the experience of working as an actor on Maharaja’s Abhay Charan series about the life of Srila Prabhupada, which was broadcast on national television in India.

Other interviewees highlight Bhakti Charu Swami’s artistic achievements as a musician or filmmaker; his managerial capabilities at projects like Deland and the ISKCON temple in Ujjain, India, which feeds tens of thousands of schoolchildren

a day; and his personal relationship with Srila Prabhupada and deep commitment to preserving Prabhupada’s legacy.

“Obviously in 37 minutes, you can’t cover all his wonderful achievements,” Krishna Lila says. “But we could shed a little bit of light on the magnitude of the impact he left on thousands and thousands of people’s lives.”

Another interesting element of “Seeking Shelter” is the narrative theme, from which the film gets its title. “A good biopic only works if you have some kind of storytelling device that holds it together, a universal element that is appealing to broader human nature,” says Krishna Lila. “For this film I found it in Bhakti Charu Swami’s own art and teachings, on the process of *Saranagati*.”

Saranagati, or seeking shelter, was a key theme that was very important to Bhakti Charu Swami, who released a music album named “*Saranagati*,” and taught many lectures on the process around the world.

“Through his art and teachings, we were able to address the universal issue of the quest for shelter from the suffering of this world,” Krishna Lila says. “Whether it’s a pandemic, trauma, or just life and death, everybody’s on that journey of trying to find relief, trying to find some sort of shelter. So we were able to look at that, and also to provide the audience a little bit of insight about how he felt, what was going on inside him, and how the inner journey corresponded to the outer journey.”

Such a universal message was important for the filmmaking team, who wanted to share Bhakti Charu Swami’s impact not only with devotees, but also with wider audiences. Sure enough, “Seeking Shelter” has been connecting with the outside world, having won three awards already: Best Documentary Film and Best Film on Religion at the Tagore International Film Festival, and Best Film on Religion at the L’Age d’Or International Arthouse Film Festival.

“The purpose of this film was to ease the pain of separation for those attached to him, and to give Maharaja a platform to



<https://bit.ly/3y8tz70>

Kolkata, where Bhakti Charu Swami grew up, in the 1950s

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keep preaching, keep reaching out, even though he's not physically present," says Krishna Lila. "The awards indicate that yes, his story does resonate with a lot of people even outside of the ISKCON circle. Maharaja is a treasure of ISKCON, and we wanted people outside of ISKCON to know about him and appreciate him, and appreciate Srila Prabhupada's movement through his personality and his journey."

"Seeking Shelter" will premiere on ISKCON News and Youtube on July 24th in English, with the option of subtitles in Hindi and other languages; and will be part of the global celebration of Bhakti Charu Swami's disappearance day, which will feature online events, and in-person observances in those places where Covid regulations allow.

Producer Saranagati Dasi hopes that audience takeaways from the film will include the realization "That death doesn't cause the life of such a great personality to end; that the life and legacy of Bhakti Charu Swami will live on and continue to inspire." She also hopes that the film will show "his humble love



Bhakti Charu Swami as a child

and dedication to Srila Prabhupada, who gave him Krishna-bhakti, and thus revealed himself to be truly an 'ocean of mercy.'"

Watch the trailer for "Seeking Shelter" here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcHfUfRr1xw>

To set your reminder for the film premier, click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enVfsJSzk-4>

Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Given to Food For All Charity in the UK

By: Food For All, *ISKCON News*, June 19, 2021

<https://bit.ly/3688tK5>



The *prasadam* distribution team, Food For All (with bases around the U.K.) just received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the greatest award possible for a charity in the U.K.

For the next 5 years, the Queen's Logo will appear on their websites, letterheads, vans, and centers. They will receive trophies from the Queen's Lord Lieutenant this month, and if safety permits, they will attend a garden party with Her Highness herself next March.

"At the beginning of lockdown, I was wondering what will happen next, everything was closing, people were struggling for their basic needs and my usual corporate volunteers were now working from home and unable to chop vegetables," said Parasuram Das, Food For All Director. "Spontaneously an army of good-hearted volunteers came forward to offer their time and talents, and the project instantly expanded. By Valentines Day, February 14, 2021, Big Love, we had reached the millionth plate of *prasadam*."

The Rock n' Roll community has played a big part in the project by their generous financial support. In fact 80% of the funds have come from kind-hearted rockers from members of

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the bands: The Libertines, One Direction, The Vibrators, Sex Pistols, and Madness.

Chrissie Hynde from The Pretenders, was very generous as always. Jen from The Bellestars helped run three food banks during the year at St. Giles Hotel Food Bank, Rock N Roll Rescue, and the People's Theatre.

Meanwhile, *Harinams* have increased, using innovative strategies. Since the beginning of 2021, Food For All's book distribution score is just over 100,000 small books from the BBT.

Devotees have come together to set up local food hubs, sharing the *prasad* as well as cooking for sick devotees.

"The beauty of this award is that it's a team award," Parasuram Das said, "we have many elderly volunteers and many children doing important jobs, all services big and small in devotional service and they have all been appreciated here in the U.K."



Parasuram Das Leads the Team

Learn more about the work of Food For All:

WEBSITE:

<https://foodforalluk.com/>

INSTAGRAM:

<https://www.instagram.com/foodforallhq/>

TWITTER:

<https://twitter.com/FoodForAllHQ>

FACEBOOK:

<https://www.facebook.com/FoodForAllHQ/>

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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Chief Justice of India Seeks Blessings of Sri-Sri Radha Govinda at Tirupati

By: Kaliarupa Jagannath Dasa, *ISKCON News*, June 13, 2021

<https://bit.ly/3xaXGdR>



On June 11, 2021 the Honorable Chief Justice of India, Shri NV Ramana, sought the blessings of Sri Sri Radha Govinda at ISKCON Tirupati along with the presence of His Grace Roopeshwara Chaitanya Das, Vice President of ISKCON Tirupati. NV Ramana had talks with HG Roopeshwar Chaitanya Das in regards to the temple development and welfare activities. Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Govinda blessed him with strength and knowledge for serving the society in his tenure as the Chief Justice of India.

(Left to right) His Grace Roopeshwara Chaitanya Das, Vice President of ISKCON Tirupati next to Honorable Chief Justice of India, Shri NV Ramana

Personal Message



Dear Friends,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

William Shakespeare in the play “As You Like It” wrote, “All the world’s a stage and all the men and woman merely players; they have their exits and their entrances...”

The renowned Vaisnava speakers always spoke from a raised platform, often called a *Vyasasana*. The elevated platform or “stage” has been a common phenomenon for those adopting the position of guru.

Whenever Srila Prabhupada delivered a discourse, it was always from a throne-like sitting place, and ISKCON public speakers usually deliver their message from a stage and/or a podium, designating they have something important and memorable to say.

When the Radha Krsna temple’s 45 RPM vinyl recording achieved “hit” status in most of the so-called civilized world, devotees were temporarily elevated to the somewhat dubious rank of rock icons.

Everywhere we went, people sought our autographs, which we duly signed after writing, “Chant Hare Krishna and your life will be sublime.”

We appeared three time on “Top of the Pops,” one of the most watched weekly TV programs of the BBC.

Music agents scheduled appearances for us all over Britain and in several European countries.

On one occasion a wealthy Mexican gentleman arranged for us to appear on stage, a platform erected about 50 feet about the ground in a rural area of Sweden called Lincoping, at an event called “Festival of the Midnight Sun,” which occurred on June 21st (summer solstice), 1970. Two large black speaker cabinets on either side of the stage housed spinning speakers, then called “Leslies” meant to achieve a mild vibrato effect. The jumping of the devotees caused the speakers to bang against the inside of the cabinets, producing the sound of explosions. The thousands of spectators below all thought it was part of the act and cheered us on after each thunderous sound.

At every performance in the wake of our unexpected popularity we sat on a stage, and because we only knew one song, sometimes in order to fulfill the sometimes two-hour contracts, we had to resort to dancing, circling, twirling, providing interesting light shows, playing western instruments and even feeding the audience the Lord’s *prasadam*.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

